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RESEARCH ARTICLE

'Winning the Peace': The Chinese Maritime Customs Service, foreign technocrats, and planning the rehabilitation of post-war China, 1943–1945

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Abstract

Through the lens of the multinational staff of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service (CMCS), this article argues that a technocratic programme of reconstruction evolved in the Nationalist government's wartime efforts on post-war planning, which refashioned a cadre of foreign (semi-)colonial-era experts into technocrats serving a sovereign state. This episode, in which the weakened Customs Service reclaimed its significance for the Chinese state, occurred in China's wartime capital, Chongqing. After the abrogation of the so-called 'unequal treaties' with foreign powers in January 1943, China entered a post-treaty era, and the question of retaining long-serving foreign Customs Service employees perplexed Nationalist leaders. Eventually, China's huge post-war need for foreign expertise, networks, and imports led to a moderate staff reorganization of the CMCS, with foreign technocrats being kept on and other bureaucrats either shifted to advisory positions or being forced to retire. Technical expertise provided a new guise for the European and American presence in post-imperialist China. Taking the rehabilitation of coastal lighthouses as an example, this article demonstrates the significance of foreign technocrats to the Chinese state during the last phase of the Sino-Japanese War and in its immediate aftermath. In showing the ambition and preparations of the Nationalist government for a post-war era, this article corrects a narrative of an all-out collapse of the Nationalist government from the mid-1940s. The wartime evolution of the Customs Service further highlights the growing importance of technocrats in the decolonizing world.

Keywords: Post-war planning; China; the Chinese Maritime Customs Service; the Second World War; expert

Introduction

'We must not only win the war but also win the peace.'[1] This statement appeared on a plan for post-war rehabilitation drawn up by the Marine Department of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service (CMCS) in January 1944. It marked the period during which planning for post-war reconstruction was a major part of the daily activities of Customs Service staff in China's wartime capital, Chongqing, under the leadership of Lester K. Little (1943–1950), the first American and last foreign inspector-general of the Customs Service. Before Little's arrival, there was uncertainty among foreign Customs Service staff as to whether they would still occupy any significant position in the CMCS. This should be understood in a context where the rise of Japan had overthrown European power across East and Southeast Asia. Whereas the European empires reasserted their presence in the colonial states after the Second World War, the situation in China was different: extraterritoriality was abrogated in January 1943 and China would emerge as a fully sovereign state once the war ended.

The confusion over the future existed widely among various foreign experts and officials, including administrators and policemen of foreign concessions and specialist staff in philanthropic organizations, who had seen their future careers in China.[2] As these seasoned officials and experts struggled to come to grips with their role in post-war China, a new group of foreign experts arrived. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) sent over 2,000 relief workers and experts to China during its brief existence from 1943 to 1947.[3] Foreign experts seemed to be even more active in post-war China than in the pre-war years.[4] This article will show that when the Chongqing government focused on planning for China's post-war reconstruction during the last phase of the Sino-Japanese War (1943–1945), a period we can characterize as the first few post-treaty years, it tailored its reliance on foreign Customs Service employees to the post-war need for rehabilitation. This article argues that the evolution of the Nationalist state during the war is crucial to understanding both change and continuity in the role of foreign experts in China—and the fact that the space for foreigners without

[1] 'Rehabilitation scheme for Customs post war marine affairs', in Xu Zushan to Zuo Zhangjin, 22 January 1944, 679(1): 1058, Second Historic Archives of China, Nanjing (hereafter SHAC).

[2] Robert Bickers, *Out of China: how the Chinese ended the era of Western domination* (UK: Allen Lane, 2017), pp. 245–288; Christine Cornet, 'The bumpy end of the French Concession and French influence in Shanghai, 1937–1946', in *In the shadow of the rising sun: Shanghai under Japanese occupation*, (eds) Christian Henriot and Wen-Hsin Yeh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 257–278; Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: community, culture and colonialism, 1900–1949* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 234–244; Mary Bullock, *The oil prince's legacy: Rockefeller philanthropy in China* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2011).

[3] Rana Mitter, 'Imperialism, transnationalism, and the reconstruction of post-War China: UNRRA in China, 1944–7', *Past and Present*, vol. 218, supplement 8, 2013, pp. 51–69.

[4] For foreign experts in the pre-war Nationalist state, see James C. Thomson Jr., *While China faced West: American reformers in Nationalist China, 1928–1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969); William Kirby, *Germany and Republican China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1984).

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the technical expertise to secure a position in the Chinese government was narrowing.

An expanding body of research on China's struggle in the Second World War (1937–1945) illustrates that this episode of modern Chinese history was not just about the war with Japan, but also about negotiating China's post-war international position with the Allied nations and reclaiming sovereign rights both from treaty powers and over border regions.[5] These studies highlight the ability of the Nationalist government to enhance China's international status at a time of national crisis. Compared to this image of a capable government at war, the general understanding of the Nationalist government is that it was extremely corrupt and incompetent in the immediate post-war years (1945-1949). This perspective, which is bolstered by such phenomena as the deterioration of hyperinflation, provides a compelling answer to the question of what led to the communist victory in 1949.[6] The shadow of 1949 falls across the post-war period and obscures the Nationalist vision for post-war rehabilitation and further development. As a result, our understanding of the Nationalist state is impaired. This article will instead present the ambitions of the Nationalist government in wartime and its capacity to embrace a new post-war world where China as a sovereign state would benefit from revived foreign trade and close international cooperation.

The CMCS was a multinational-staffed Chinese civil service that operated uninterruptedly from the mid-nineteenth century to the Communist Revolution in 1949. The Customs Service initially only assessed revenue for the Qing state, but it became more important in the twentieth century. It began to collect revenue after the 1911 Revolution and served as security for China's foreign loans and indemnities.[7] Indeed, the Customs Service was more than a tax agency. In its century-long history it accumulated multiple responsibilities, including establishing and maintaining a lighthouse network along the China coast (and later a meteorological network), and supervising the Translators College that trained China's diplomats and translated Western academic works in many fields, including natural science.[8] While aiming to facilitate China's international trade, the Customs Service's extensive

[5] Hans van de Ven, Diana Lary and Stephen MacKinnon (eds), *Negotiating China's destiny in World War II* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015); Rana Mitter, *China's war with Japan, 1937–1945: the struggle for survival* (London: Penguin Books, 2013).

[6] For research on the Chinese Civil War, see Odd Arne Westad, *Decisive encounters: the Chinese Civil War, 1946–1950* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Diana Lary, *China's civil war: a social history, 1945–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Suzanne Pepper, *Civil war in China: the political struggle, 1945–1949* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

[7] Hans van de Ven, *Breaking with the past: the Maritime Customs Service and the global origins of modernity in China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

[8] Ibid., p. 69; Robert Bickers, 'Infrastructural globalization: lighting the China coast, 1860s–1930s', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2013, pp. 431–458; Robert Bickers, '"Good work for China in every possible direction": the foreign Inspectorate of the Chinese Maritime Customs, 1854–1950', in *Twentieth century colonialism and China: localities, the everyday, and the world*, (eds) Bryna Goodman and David Goodman (London: Routledge 2012), pp. 25–36.

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activities helped to spread Western navigational and engineering technologies and, more widely, a knowledge of the West in China.

One theme in the history of the wartime and post-war Customs Service is its decline. Felix Boecking and Benjamin White illustrate, respectively, the normalization of the CMCS, highlighting its reducing importance as a revenue-collecting agency after the Nationalists lost control of China's southeast provinces in 1937, and a vision of the Customs Service being integrated within the Nationalist state.[9] Furthermore, Hans van de Ven outlines how the Customs Service irretrievably lost its discipline, cohesion, and reputation as a bureaucracy in the immediate post-war years.[10] In parallel with the narrative of its decline, historians like Chihyun Chang are interested in a variety of the experiences of Chinese and foreign Customs Service staff during the outbreak of the Pacific War and later when the Nationalists withdrew from mainland China in 1949.[11] Little of this scholarship explores the role of this international civil service in helping the Nationalist government rebuild its war-torn economy and adapt to a new post-war international order. Philip Thai's *China's War on Smuggling* is an exception but it focuses on the change in the government's foreign trade policy during the Chinese Civil War (1946–1949).[12] In this article, I aim to outline the role of the Customs Service in planning the rehabilitation of lighthouses as a necessary measure to restore China's maritime connections. The Customs Service continued doing 'good work for China in every possible direction', and this time its utility was defined by the Nationalists.[13]

Broadly, this case study of the CMCS reveals the ability of a post-colonial government to harness foreign experts who had developed place-based expertise in a 'semi-colonial' setting.[14] These foreign Customs Service officials secured their positions in a post-colonial sovereign state with their expertise,

[9] Benjamin Geoffrey White, '"A question of principle with political implications"—investigating collaboration in the Chinese Maritime Customs Service, 1945–1946', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2010, pp. 517–546; Felix Boecking, *No great wall: trade, tariffs, and Nationalism in Republican China, 1927–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2017), pp. 203–231.

[10] Van de Ven, *Breaking with the past*, pp. 259–301.

[11] Chihyun Chang, 'Zhongguo Haiguan guanyuan de yiliu he jueze (中国海关关员的遗留和抉择, To stay or to leave? The choices of the CMCS staff members), 1949–1950', in *Jindai zhongguo waijiao de dalishi yu xiaolishi* (近代中国外交的大历史与小历史, Macrohistory and microhistory of modern China), (eds) Wang Wenlong, Chen Liqiao and Huang Wende (Taipei: Chengchi University Press, 2016), pp. 79–109; Chihyun Chang, 'Zhongguo Haiguan guanyuan de guanyuan shencha he zhanhou fuyuan (中国海关的关员审查和战后复员, Staff investigation of post-war rehabilitation of the Chinese Maritime Customs Service), 1943–1945', in *Guoji zhixu yu Zhongguo waijiao de xingsu* (国际秩序与中国外交的形塑, International order and the shaping of China diplomacy), (ed.) Zhou Huimin (Taipei: Chengchi University Press, 2014), pp. 189–219; Robert Bickers, 'The Chinese Maritime Customs at war, 1941–5', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2008, pp. 295–311.

[12] Philip Thai, *China's war on smuggling: law, economic life, and the making of the modern state, 1842–1965* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), pp. 205–240.

[13] Bickers, '"Good work for China in every possible direction"', p. 26.

[14] China was never formally colonized. Historians used the term 'semi-' to foreground the multi-layered colonial structure in China: see Shu-mei Shih, *The lure of the modern: writing modernism in semicolonial China, 1917–1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 34.

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which was closely tied to their knowledge of the China coast and modern machinery. It indicates a different pattern to how foreign experts found positions in the decolonizing world to that described by Donna C. Mehos and Suzanne M. Moon who argue that both the United Nations and private firms strategically increased the portability of experts in the face of challenges during the Cold War.[15] David Webster also contributes to the understanding of the rise of more mobile experts in the early Cold War years by highlighting that Indonesian nationalists saw the United Nations advisers as allies for their national planning work.[16] Technical expertise was a scarce and treasured resource not just for 'Third World' politicians but also for the Nationalist government after it came to power in 1927. As William Kirby argues, the Nationalists attempted to modernize China by bringing technology into government work during the 'Nanjing decade' (1927–1937).[17] This article will show that the wartime staff reorganization of the Customs Service (which had an early start in 1929 when foreign recruitment ceased, except for 'irreplaceable specialists') continued to exclude technical staff from its purview.[18] While this Nationalist government practice coexisted with its other attempts to secure mobile expertise from UNRRA and the United States, this article highlights the role of non-Western state actors in shaping the landscape of expertise prior to the expansion of United Nations technical assistance and other development programmes during the Cold War.[19]

The first section of this article shows that before Lester Little took office, the Nationalists asserted the significance of the Customs Service to the postwar Chinese state: it was more than simply a tax agency. Its marine duties of maintaining a lighthouse network would be crucial to the recovery of China's foreign trade. It then explores the uncertainties of Customs Service foreign staff about their future careers in China: not until the establishment of Little's Inspectorate in Chongqing did the Nationalist government promise to retain a multinational-staffed Customs Service. In the second section, I situate the Customs Service's planning work as part of a broad picture of enthusiasm

[15] Donna C. Mehos and Suzanne M. Moon, 'The uses of portability: circulating experts in the technopolitics of Cold War and decolonization', in *Entangled geographies: empire and technopolitics in the global Cold War*, (ed.) Gabrielle Hecht (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), pp. 43–74.

[16] David Webster, 'Development advisors in a time of cold war and decolonization: the United Nations Technical Assistance Administration, 1950–59', *Journal of Global History*, no. 6, 2011, pp. 249–272 (pp. 263–268).

[17] William C. Kirby, 'Engineering China: birth of the developmental state, 1928–1937', in *Becoming Chinese: passages to modernity and beyond*, (ed.) Wen-hsin Yeh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 137–160 (pp. 150–153).

[18] Chihyun Chang, 'Chongxin jianzhi Zhongguo Haiguan huayangyuan jian de bupingdeng daiyu (重新检视中国海关华洋员间的不平等待遇, Reassessing the unequal pay scale between Chinese and foreign employees in the Chinese Maritime Customs Service), 1927–1937', in *Jinxiandai Zhongguo Guojihezuo Mianmianguan* (近现代中国国际合作面面观, International cooperation in modern Chinese History), (ed.) Wang Wenlong (Taipei: Chengchi University Press, 2019), pp. 183–211 (pp. 190–196).

[19] For example, see Sara Lorenzini, *Global development: a Cold War history* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Sunil S. Armith, *Decolonising international health: India and Southeast Asia, 1930–65* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

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for planning in Chongqing before exploring the Customs Marine Department's lighthouse rehabilitation plan which aimed to adapt to the post-war political situation and technological developments. I then move on to Little's decision to reappoint a foreign national as head of the Marine Department, and the pressure he encountered from Chinese staff who protested against foreign leadership in the department. China's lack of senior technical staff, as I will show, bolstered the position of foreign technical staff in the Customs Service.

Envisioning a cosmopolitan customs in immediate post-war China

On 8 August 1943, the day after Lester Little arrived in China to begin his new job as inspector-general, he wrote in his diary: 'War news good. Outlook for Customs very dark'.[20] It was no exaggeration. By the time Little arrived, the Chongqing Inspectorate faced a range of problems: low morale, impaired efficiency, and more widespread corruption than at any time in its history.[21] This situation was largely caused by the Customs Service's lack of preparation for the Japanese occupation under the inspector-generalship of Sir Frederick Maze. After 1937, Maze chose to stay in Shanghai, rather than follow the Nationalist government westwards either to Wuhan or into Chongqing. Maze, and most of the foreign staff, believed that the Japanese would still see the Customs Service as a non-political civil service and allow Allied nationals to continue their work.[22] After Pearl Harbor, the Customs Service was divided in two. While Kishimoto Hirokichi was appointed by the Wang Jingwei collaborationist regime as inspector-general in place of Maze to lead the Customs Service in Japanese-controlled areas, the Nationalist government called in Cecil Joly, a British commissioner, to Chongqing to re-establish the Inspectorate in unoccupied China. By then, as Robert Bickers argues, the job was 'nearly impossible' because there was no staff, no money, no archive, and no support from the treaty powers.[23] Given these challenges and the new role of the United States in the unfolding war, the Nationalists decided that it was time for an American to lead the Customs Service.[24]

Lester Little fully realized that he would not have been appointed inspector-general had he not been an American.[25] He had joined the Customs Service in 1914. Staying on in the post of Canton commissioner from 1934, Little was repatriated from China in an internee exchange in August 1942. Like many other repatriated foreign employees, he served in the Allied war effort thereafter. Over 20 years of service had given him a strong sense of belonging to the CMCS, and he immediately agreed to return when asked. Little had an entirely

[20] 8 August 1943, in Chihyun Chang (ed.), *The Chinese journals of L. K. Little, 1943–1954: an eyewitness account of war and revolution* (London: Routledge, 2017), Vol. I, p. 9; L. K. Little was appointed acting inspector-general of the CMCS in June 1943 and was promoted to inspector-general in April 1944.

[21] Little to all Foreign Commissioners, 6 September 1943, 679(1): 31741, SHAC.

[22] Van de Ven, *Breaking with the past*, p. 271.

[23] Bickers, 'The Chinese Maritime Customs at war', p. 301.

[24] For research on the appointment of an American inspector-general and American interests in the Customs Service, see Van de Ven, *Breaking with the past*, pp. 284–285.

[25] 26 August 1943, in Chang (ed.), *The Chinese journals of L. K. Little*, Vol. I, p. 13.

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different attitude towards the post of inspector-general than Cecil Joly. Compared to Joly who was 'afraid of the job', Little ambitiously saw it as a 'great opportunity' that he should seize.[26] It was not merely an opportunity for his own career, but, more importantly, an opportunity to make a great contribution to China, like those foreigners who had worked for the Customs Service in its nearly 90-year history, one that he had always been personally invested in. For example, in the 1960s, Little approached historians and librarians in London and at Harvard to deposit Sir Robert Hart's official correspondence, which was a landmark in the historiography of the CMCS.[27] In his diary Little expressed admiration, without reservation, for Robert Hart and Francis Aglen, second and third British inspectors-general—for example, 'Hart alone stands head and shoulder above any foreigner who came to China'.[28] Influenced by these good examples, in 1943 Little felt obligated to save the Customs Service from collapsing, albeit in a different context from that of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

One crucial issue for Little was to ensure the post-war position of the Customs Service within the Nationalist government. During the war, the Customs Service had experienced a dramatic decline in revenue extraction—by early 1938, the Nationalists had lost control of eastern ports, which yielded 80 per cent of Customs Service revenue, while tariffs in the last pre-war year accounted for 43.7 per cent of central government revenue.[29] The end of extraterritoriality meant that the Customs Service became more of a Chinese civil service than a debt-collecting agency for foreign powers. However, it also meant that the Customs Service became less important to the Nationalist state as a tax agency, since the government no longer permitted the hypothecation of any source of national revenue for either a domestic or foreign loan.[30] Aside from revenue collecting duties, the Chongqing Inspectorate still shouldered a variety of responsibilities, including running the Customs College and dealing with marine affairs along the upper Yangtze River.[31]

Indeed, the Chongqing authorities had considered the post-war utility of the CMCS before Little took office. In August 1943, Kong Xiangxi (H. H. Kung), the minister of finance, told Little to run 'an efficient, reliable Customs Service for post-war collection and encouragement of international trade'.[32] The Nationalists expected the Customs Service to be more than a tax agency in

[26] Bickers, 'The Chinese Maritime Customs at war', p. 301; 10 August 1943, in Chang (ed.), *The Chinese journals of L. K. Little*, Vol. I, pp. 9–10.

[27] Henk Vynckier and Chihyun Chang, '"Imperium in imperio": Robert Hart, the Chinese Maritime Customs Service, and its (self-)representations', *Biography*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2014, pp. 69–92 (pp. 85–86).

[28] 5 February 1944, in Chang (ed.), *The Chinese journals of L. K. Little*, Vol. I, p. 43.

[29] Boecking, *No great wall*, pp. 193–194, 216–217.

[30] Little to Hsu, 7 February 1944, 679(1): 1058, SHAC.

[31] In wartime, the Customs Service also collected the Revised Interport Duty; this was abolished in April 1942 and replaced by the Wartime Consumption Duty until December 1943. See Boecking, *No great wall*, pp. 190–212.

[32] 12 August 1943, in Chang (ed.), *The Chinese journals of L. K. Little*, Vol. I, p. 10; also see Kung to Little, 1 February 1944, 679(1): 31741, SHAC.

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the post-war years and to operate as a pillar of China's future liberalized foreign trade policies, about which Nationalist leaders had assured foreign trade powers in wartime. For example, on 6 July 1944, after the Bretton Woods Conference, Chinese delegate Kong Xiangxi stated that China welcomed foreign investment and technical cooperation for its post-war reconstruction.[33] As Thai argues, the Nationalist government realized that it needed foreign imports to help it tackle its economic problems, like chronic shortages and inflation.[34] It was not the first time that the CMCS had buttressed the Nationalist government's foreign trade policies. After 1929, the Nationalist government reclaimed China's tariff autonomy from all treaty powers except Japan; as part of its high tariff policy it then assigned new responsibility for preventing smuggling to the Customs Service.[35] The CMCS therefore built and operated a preventive fleet.[36]

The question then was how to encourage post-war China's foreign trade. As early as September 1942, American Arthur Young, chief financial adviser to the Nationalist government, recommended that the Customs Service should maintain a smooth system of 'customs administration and aids to navigation' to facilitate a post-war 'vital flow of trade'.[37] Unusually for a customs service, providing navigational aids through a national lighthouse service—consisting of lighthouses, buoys, light vessels, shore beacons, and other light apparatus—had been a major duty of the Customs' Marine Department since its establishment in 1868 under the inspector-generalship of Robert Hart. Prior to this, China's coastal and riverine lights had been'practically non-existent'.[38] A lit-up China coast secured safe navigation for foreign trade powers, brought revenues to the Chinese states, and created a basis for meteorological development.[39] In addition to trade and science, lighthouses could also serve the military. Thus, during their retreat to southwest China in 1938–1939, the Nationalist military destroyed the light aids along the lower and middle Yangtze River and at certain points along the coast.[40] For the post-war Customs Service, its most urgent task was to rehabilitate coastal aids to navigation, which would serve as a solid foundation for the recovery of China's foreign trade and the shipping of international assistance, notably UNRRA aid, to China ports. Thus the Customs Service would still be significant to post-war

[33] 'Huanying waizi zhuwo zhanhou jianshe, youpan Meiguo ziben jishu hezuo (欢迎外资助我战后建设, 尤盼美国资本技术合作, Welcome foreign capital to help China with post-war construction, especially hope for cooperation with American capital and techniques)', *Da Gong Bao* (Chongqing), 6 July 1944.

[34] Thai, *China's war on smuggling*, pp. 207–209, 239.

[35] Boecking, *No great wall*, pp. 32–45.

[36] Van de Ven, *Breaking with the past*, pp. 242–247.

[37] Arthur Young, 'The Customs problem', 10 September 1942, 679(1): 31752, SHAC.

[38] T. Roger Banister, *The coastwise lights of China: an illustrated account of the Chinese Maritime Customs lights service* (Shanghai: Inspectorate General of Customs, Statistical Department, 1932), p. 2.

[39] Bickers, 'Infrastructural globalization'; Robert Bickers, '"Throwing light on natural laws": meteorology on the China coast, 1869–1912', in *Treaty ports in modern China*, (ed.) Robert Bickers (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 179–200.

[40] Little to Tso, 22 January 1944, 679(1): 1058, SHAC.

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China, but more for its marine duties than for its revenue-collecting responsibility.

Before exploring the Marine Department's lighthouse rehabilitation plan in the next section, we need to ask who would be working for the post-war Customs Service or whether the Nationalist government would retain any foreigners once the war ended—this is also what its foreign staff were anxious to know at a time of dislocation. After Pearl Harbor, foreign employees of the Customs Service had a variety of wartime experience: out of 157 senior foreign employees, 34 were involved in the Allied war effort, 104 were interned in Japanese camps, and the rest remained on active duty in unoccupied China.[41] All of them were greatly worried about their careers during this crisis, no matter they were in China or not. Of course, the appointment of a foreigner as inspector-general indicated that perhaps the Nationalist government did not intend to liquidate all foreigners in its administration. Still, upon his arrival in Chongqing, Little received letters from foreign employees asking about the future of the Customs Service and that of their own careers; some even seriously considered resigning.[42] It was an entirely different situation from Bickers' description of some Allied personnel in Pearl Harbor being unable to understand 'why the position of foreigners in the service should have been affected by the political situation'.[43] Their wartime experience had dented their confidence that they would be able to hold a position in the Nationalist government.

We should understand their uncertainties in the context of rising Chinese nationalism, which was stimulated by the abrogation of the so-called 'unequal treaties'. As Rana Mitter argues, the opening of a post-treaty era in January 1943 was accompanied by the intention of Chiang's regime to internationalize its anti-imperialist agenda and experience.[44] An unofficial translation of Chiang Kai-shek's book *China's Destiny* reached a Euro-American audience in 1944 and surprised and shocked them with its strong nationalist arguments that seemed 'anti-foreign'.[45] Whereas the Nationalist government seemed to adopt an anti-imperialist outlook to solidify nationalism, foreign Customs Service men who remained in unoccupied China felt this 'anti-foreign' tension deeply. The Kunming commissioner Everitt Groff-Smith, for example, reported that 'the Chinese public are practically boycotting us, and our own Chinese staff are ashamed to be connected with us and resent every order passed down to them through foreigners in the Service'.[46]

In addition to tangible Chinese hostilities towards foreigners, economic hardship forced the Chongqing Inspectorate under the leadership of Cecil

[41] Little, 'Remarks at Customs College, Chongqing', 21 May 1945, Ms Am 1999.2, Little Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University (hereafter Little Papers).

[42] Little to all Foreign Commissioners, 6 September 1943, 679(1): 31741, SHAC.

[43] Bickers, 'The Chinese Maritime Customs at war', p. 299.

[44] Mitter, 'Imperialism, transnationalism, and the reconstruction of post-war China', p. 68.

[45] Chiang Kai-shek, *China's destiny*, (trans.) Wang Chonghui (New York: Macmillan, 1947), pp. 231–232; 'Views of Dr. K. C. Wu on Sino-British relations', 14 July 1944, F 3308/127/10, FO 371/41607, The National Archives, London.

[46] Everitt Groff-Smith to A. C. H. Lay, 1943, 679(1): 31741, SHAC.

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Joly to cut down on its foreign staff. 'Nearly 100 of the foreign staff may be retired,' Arthur Young concluded; and he suggested that it was better to act now because 'the longer such persons are retained the more will be required for their retirement as their privileges increases with greater length of service'.[47] On the list were some foreigners who were entitled to retirement after their long service, while 71 junior employees were forced to retire because their services could be spared.[48] At this time of financial difficulties and rising nationalism, foreign employees wanted a guarantee from the Nationalist government regarding their future careers.

On 1 February 1944, Kong Xiangxi formally stated the government's policy towards the post-war position of foreign employees in the Customs Service:

> The service of many, if not all, of the present foreign employees will be required for some years after the war. It is obvious that the administrative posts in the Customs must be filled as rapidly as possible by Chinese members of the Service, but this development will not be accelerated to a degree which will imperil efficiency; and foreign employees will be used where they will be most needed, whether in administrative, advisory or technical capacities.[49]

This directive tells us that the Nationalist government still wanted an efficient foreign-staffed Customs Service rather than a purely Chinese service with impaired efficiency. In other words, instead of hastily replacing all foreign staff with Chinese employees, the government chose to retain a filtered group of foreign staff to keep the Customs Service operating smoothly so that it could fulfil multiple duties in post-war China, including the rehabilitation of lighthouses. This was an even milder policy than Arthur Young had proposed in 1942: to immediately pay off all foreign employees and to re-engage about 60–70 per cent of them on contract as advisers or experts.[50] The Nationalists proved to be consistent in harnessing the skills of a filtered group of foreign Customs Service employees. Yu Hongjun, the minister of finance after Kong Xiangxi stepped down in November 1944, expressed to Little the hope that 'all capable foreigners should remain in the Service'. Likewise, in October 1945, Song Ziwen, then president of Executive Yuan, a strong ally of the Customs Service since the 1930s, told Little to 'recall all the foreigners' he needed and, if necessary, to recruit additional foreigners.[51] Aware that sooner or later Chinese employees would completely replace them, foreign officials were satisfied with this government policy that promised to postpone the time when there would be no room for foreign employees in a Chinese civil service.[52] Ultimately, by the end of 1949, Little had paid off all

[47] Young, 'The Customs problem'; on this retirement, also see 16 August 1943, in Chang (ed.), *The Chinese journals of L. K. Little*, Vol. I, p. 11.

[48] Young, 'The Customs problem'.

[49] Kung to Little, 1 February 1944, 679(1): 31741, SHAC.

[50] Young, 'The Customs problem'.

[51] Little to F. Chang, 3 October 1946, Ms Am 1999.3, Little Papers; Chang (ed.), *The Chinese journals of L. K. Little*, Vol. I, p. xxvii.

[52] Little's comments, 6 September 1944, 679(1): 31741, SHAC.

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the foreign staff, after which he handed over the Customs Service to two Chinese members in Taiwan, while in mainland China a Chinese inspector-general was appointed. In 1951 Little became a consultant to the Ministry of Finance of the government in Taiwan and stayed on in the position of adviser.[53]

In fact, foreign Customs Service staff had been living on 'borrowed time', as Van de Ven describes, since 1929 when foreign recruitment came to an end.[54] However, not until the arrival of a post-treaty era did the Nationalists begin to scale back on foreign employees. In the meantime, the Customs Service could no longer provide its foreign staff with appreciable salaries after it lost budgetary independence in 1942; as a result some decided to join private firms and foreign governments, like the French colonial officials who chose to work for recently established regional companies in newly independent countries in Africa in the 1950s and 1960s.[55] Those who remained in the Customs Service rapidly adapted to a new political reality that China had become a sovereign state. Little gently, but firmly, reminded his foreign colleagues that post-war China would 'insist that she be mistress in her own house'.[56] Some foreign staff concluded that in the post-war years the Customs Service would require the ability to assist, rather than the ability to lead.[57] Foreigners could be advisers, but it would be less likely that they would take on administrative duties. We can see this principle in the Nationalist government's use of other sources of foreign expertise, such as UNRRA. After negotiations during the last year of the Sino-Japanese War, it was agreed that UNRRA employees would not have executive duties; instead, they would serve as technical and administrative advisers to a new Chinese state relief agency, the Chinese National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.[58]

The decision to maintain a multinational Customs Service was underpinned by China's military alliance with the United States and Britain. The Chongqing Inspectorate only consisted of personnel whose loyalties were to the Allied nations. Little once rejected re-employment of a foreign national who had not 'participate[d] actively in the war effort'.[59] Still, China's wartime alliance could not explain why one group of foreigners was needed by the Nationalists, but not the other. Next I will show the indispensability of their technical expertise, experience, and foreign networks to the Nationalist

[53] Chihyun Chang, *Government, imperialism and nationalism in China: the Maritime Customs Service and its Chinese staff* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 170–176.

[54] Van de Ven, *Breaking with the past*, p. 221.

[55] Sabel to Little, 26 June 1945, 679(1): 31728, SHAC; Sara B. Pritchard, 'From hydroimperialism to hydrocapitalism: "French" hydraulics in France, North Africa, and beyond', *Social Studies of Science,* vol. 42, no. 4, 2012, pp. 591–615 (pp. 600–602).

[56] Little to all Foreign Commissioners, 6 September 1943, 679(1): 31741, SHAC.

[57] 'Remarks and proposals re present and future organization of the Customs Service', undated, 679(1): 31752, SHAC.

[58] Jiang Tingfu, *China National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration: what does it do? how does it do it?* (Shanghai: International Publishers, 1946), pp. 6–7.

[59] Little to Arthur Burling, 31 August 1945, 679(1): 31728, SHAC.

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state, by exploring the Marine Department's planning for the rehabilitation of China's lighthouse network.

Planning for the post-war period in a transnational context

The Customs Marine Department's work evolved in the context of growing enthusiasm for planning in wartime Chongqing. In September 1943, Chiang Kai-shek ordered the government to prepare for a shift in emphasis from war affairs to post-war reconstruction.[60] The future for China looked promising. The year 1943 began with China's reclamation of full sovereignty after over a hundred years of what many described as 'national humiliation'. The Allied advance in Italy and the progress of the conflict with the Japanese in the Pacific delivered a hope that the war in China would soon come to an end. At that time Chongqing was not yet frustrated by the collapse of the Nationalist military after it faced Japan's Ichi-go offensive in 1944–1945. The Nationalist government's zeal for planning can be observed in two dimensions: one in debate and the other in practice. As Tehyun Ma argues, there was a heated debate in Chongqing about whether to follow the British planned model to build a welfare state.[61] In the meantime, Chinese politicians and businessmen who saw opportunities in reoccupation and reconstruction were eager to join the talks on post-war governance and recovery.[62] As Arthur Young observes, there were numerous meetings in Chongqing about post-war recovery, but they usually did not get far, with 'same old idea of theoretical nationalism and generalities' to rule.[63]

Meanwhile, a group of Chinese bureaucrats whose service could not advance China's war effort devoted themselves to an enormous amount of planning work. By at least January 1943, the Central Planning Bureau (中央设计局, Zhongyang Sheji Ju), a state agency of an interim nature established in 1940 under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, was working on a five-year plan for post-war reconstruction.[64] Chongqing further saw cooperation by experts in different fields and from different nations around planning. In

[60] Chiang Kai-shek, 'The Kuomintang and the nation: an address to the Eleventh Plenary Session of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang on September 6, 1943', in *The voice of China: speeches of Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek between December 7, 1941, and October 10, 1943* (London: Hutchinson and Co. Ltd, 1944), pp. 66–71.

[61] Tehyun Ma, 'A Chinese Beveridge plan: the discourse of social security and the post-war reconstruction of China', *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, vol. 11, 2012, pp. 329–349 (pp. 337–338).

[62] Sherman Cochran, *The Lius of Shanghai* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 259–260.

[63] Arthur Young, *China and the helping hand, 1937–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 383.

[64] 'Guoji laogong dahui jianyi ge huiyuanguo zuzhi zhuanmen jigou yanjiu zhanhou jiuji ji jingji jianshe fangan (国际劳工大会建议各会员国组织专门机构研究战后救济及经济建设方案, International Labour Conference suggested member countries organise a specific institution to study post-war relief and economic reconstruction plans)', 20 January 1943, 217: 171, SHAC.

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1944 UNRRA sent three relief experts to Chongqing to help investigate China's post-war needs.[65]

The Customs Service was one of the bureaucracies that helped the government to work out its post-war needs. The Chongqing Inspectorate's regular duties, as this article has shown, were greatly reduced by the war. As a result, its multinational staff were working on planning for post-war reconstruction from an early date. It was also a way to demonstrate their usefulness and expertise to the government. In September 1942, Arthur Young advised Cecil Joly to create a committee to prepare a detailed plan for post-war rehabilitation.[66] By the time Little took office, this committee had made 'considerable progress'; Little continued to prioritize the planning work: he appointed a full-time secretary to take charge of Customs Service rehabilitation plans.[67] The Chongqing Inspectorate's early start in planning allowed it to remain useful to the Nationalist government. Little once recorded in his diary with pride, 'I bet no other department of the government could have done it'—referring to the urgent task of listing what the Customs Service required under the US Lend-Lease Aid, which had been assigned by Guanwushu, the Office of Customs Affairs under the Ministry of Finance.[68]

Planners had to live with uncertainties, as did Customs Service staff. They knew little about the situation in Japanese-occupied China, neither could they anticipate to what extent the last phase of the war would destroy infrastructure, especially during Japan's retreat.[69] Taking the Customs Marine Department as an example, its staff drew up a rehabilitation plan for China's lighthouse network, even though their activities and information were restricted to the upper Yangtze river. At that time, Xu Zushan (徐祖善, Tu Shan Hsu), the first Chinese head of the Marine Department, was responsible for drafting the rehabilitation scheme. Xu divided the lights required into two categories: those immediately needed on conclusion of the war, and those for later reconstruction.[70] Based on Xu's work, Little had a list of numbers and types of lights waiting to be procured. In the pre-war years, most of the light apparatus had been obtained abroad, through the foreign-staffed Customs Service London Office as a purchasing agent. However, the post-war needs were enormous. Little organized a special purchasing committee to negotiate with foreign firms and the Allied forces.[71] This committee, as I will later show, was led by a foreign national.

Before exploring the role of foreign staff in planning for lighthouse reconstruction, let us take a closer look at the Marine Department's rehabilitation

[65] 'Program and estimated requirements for relief and rehabilitation in China', September 1944, S-1129-0000-0095, United Nations Archives, New York (hereafter UNA), p. 7.

[66] Young, 'The Customs problem'.

[67] Little, 'Memorandum for secretaries, planning for post-war Customs rehabilitation and functions', 18 September 1943, 679(1): 31752, SHAC.

[68] 28 January 1944, in Chang (ed.), *The Chinese journals of L. K. Little*, Vol. I, pp. 40–41.

[69] 'Minutes of the first secretarial meeting, 12 January 1944, 679(9): 486, SHAC.

[70] Hsu, 'The Marine Department of the Chinese Marine Customs: post-war requirements', 15 June 1944, 679(1): 1058, SHAC.

[71] Little to Hsu, 15 December 1943, 679 (1): 1058, SHAC.

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plan. In brief, planners aimed to accommodate the post-war political situation and technological development, rather than return to the pre-war status. First, as a result of the end of extraterritoriality and the approaching collapse of the Japanese empire, the Customs Service would take over lighthouse and harbour administration in additional areas, including Taiwan and the Liaodong Peninsula. Xu ventured that Hong Kong and Macau might be returned to China by 'friendly powers', though this did not happen until the late 1990s.[72] His scheme aimed to relight the whole China coast—from the Hainan Strait and Canton Delta in the south to Tianjin and Dalian in the north.[73] Customs Service planners imagined an expansion of the lighthouse network and a departure from a treaty port-centred trade system as well. Notably, Xu proposed to build new lighthouses to adjust the current situation in which light aids were 'mostly placed on the outer islands for the benefits of ocean vessels trading between treaty ports'.[74]

Second, aside from building new stations, the Customs Service also sought to upgrade the existing lighthouse network to keep pace with the world's technological development. As Bickers argues, in his time Robert Hart had been keen to secure for the Customs Service a leading role in scientific or technological innovation.[75] In later decades, the Marine Department continued to develop China's coastal lighthouse system by keeping an eye on the United States and European lighthouse service, but the Sino-Japanese War delayed much of its progress.[76] Customs Service planners considered replacing the pre-war equipment with the 'most up-to-date' types of aids to navigation, such as electric fog signals and radio-direction beacons, and preventive vessels for its anti-smuggling activities—another rehabilitation task for the Customs Service since all the preventive vessels had been sunk or damaged in wartime.[77] However, such an upgrading of infrastructure required money, new experts like electrical engineers, and further fieldwork. The Marine Department did not plan to reconstruct a preventive fleet as large as it had owned in 1937. This was costly, and unnecessary, considering an international tendency to low tariffs after the war ended.[78] Customs Service planners were relatively ambitious about lighthouse reconstruction, but still cautious. For instance,

[72] 'Original list of basic points suggested for study in connexion with rehabilitation plan', undated, 679(1): 1058, SHAC.

[73] Hsu, 'The Marine Department of the Chinese Marine Customs'.

[74] Little to Tso, 22 January 1944, 679(1): 1058, SHAC.

[75] Bickers, '"Throwing light on natural laws"', p. 181.

[76] Yu Chin Pang, 'Rehabilitation plan', attached in Little to Hsu, 29 February 1944, 679(1): 1058, SHAC.

[77] Hsu, 'Coast Inspector's comments on rehabilitation plan', 10 June 1944, 679(1): 1058, SHAC; 'Remarks', in Hsu to Little, 7 March 1944, 679(1): 1058, SHAC; 'Rehabilitation scheme for Customs post war marine affairs', 22 January 1944, 679(1): 1058, SHAC.

[78] Customs staff believed that high tariffs and official restrictions were an incentive to smuggling: see Little to Hsu, 15 December 1943, 679(1): 1058, SHAC.

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they planned to establish seven radio-direction beacons where there had been only three in 1937.[79]

Although this plan was basically drawn up by Xu, in 1944–1945 the Chongqing Inspectorate unusually had two coast inspectors (heads of the Marine Department): one was Xu Zushan, the other was its pre-1941 foreign chief, Fred L. Sabel. Before Pearl Harbor, only foreigners had been appointed to the position of coast inspector. After Sabel was detained by the Japanese in Shanghai, Cecil Joly looked for a Chinese in unoccupied China to lead the Marine Department. In 1909 Xu Zushan had graduated from the Jiangnan Naval Academy (江南水师学堂), a modern-style academy established during the self-strengthening movement in the late nineteenth century. Unfortunately, after its most significant modernized navy, the Beiyang Fleet, suffered heavy losses in the first Sino-Japanese War of 1894, the Qing government could not afford the reconstruction of a strong navy and neither could the Republican government.[80] Xu thus did not follow a military career. He engaged with a variety of Chinese civil services, including the Customs Service in the 1920s and the 1930s, and participated in the negotiations around the return of British-leased Weihaiwei in around 1930.[81] Xu returned to the Navy in 1937. Pre-war and wartime experience moulded him into a nationalist politician and militarist. After Cecil Joly reached out to him in July 1942, Xu agreed to join the Customs Service because of his firm conviction that 'the China coast should not be in the hands of foreigners'.[82] He was then appointed as acting coast inspector. When Sir Frederick Maze briefly resumed charge in April 1943, Xu was confirmed as coast inspector.[83] All this happened before Little arrived in Chongqing.

Unlike Maze and Joly, Lester Little decided to recall Fred Sabel, who at that time was serving in the United States War Shipping Administration in Australia after he was repatriated from occupied China in 1942.[84] Sabel had joined the Customs Service in 1915 and was the most senior member of the Marine Department by 1943. Little hoped that Sabel could lead the Customs Service's purchasing commission to negotiate with foreign firms and the Allied naval forces. Sabel was trusted not just for his expertise and experience but also for his foreign networks. Indeed, Little himself was keen on maintaining good relations with foreign agencies in China, such as UNRRA and the British Red Cross.[85] He was also a member of the Chongqing Committee of the United China Relief (UCR), which decided on the allocation of UCR funds

[79] 'Rehabilitation scheme for Customs post war marine affairs', 22 January 1944, 679(1): 1058, SHAC.

[80] Jerome Ch'en, *Yuan Shih-k'ai* (California: Stanford University Press, 1972), pp. 29–43.

[81] Liu Bensen, 'Nanjing Guomin Zhengfu shouhui Weihaiwei de tanpan jiqi shixian (南京国民政府收回威海卫的谈判及其实现, Weihaiwei negotiation and its return to the Republic of China)', *Jiangsu Social Science*, no. 4, 2015, pp. 243–250.

[82] Hsu to Little, 5 May 1944, 679(1): 31741, SHAC.

[83] T. S. Hsu to Little, undated, 679(1): 31741, SHAC.

[84] Little to Sabel, 13 September 1943, 679 (1): 31741, SHAC; Little to Kung, 12 January 1945, 679 (1): 31741, SHAC.

[85] Little to Nick, 29 August 1945, 679(1): 31744, SHAC; Little, 16 August 1945, 679 (1): 31744, SHAC.

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to China.[86] These activities sometimes benefited the Service: Little once approached the British Admiralty for technical advice on whether to put a new echo sounding machine along the upper Yangtze River.[87] At a time when various government agencies such as the Ministry of Communications tried to take over the Customs Service's multiple duties, foreign networks maintained the Customs Service as a useful agency to the Nationalist state.[88]

After he received Little's call, Sabel immediately agreed to return. Unlike his foreign colleagues, Sabel was 'very optimistic' about the Customs Service's administrative capabilities in post-war China.[89] He was entrusted with assisting in overseas procurement for post-war rehabilitation of the Marine Department.[90] The roles of the two coast inspectors in 1944 were distinct: while Admiral Xu headed the Marine Department in China, Sabel was the Customs Service representative abroad.[91] In the United States, Sabel did an effective job and he worked closely with Kong Xiangxi.[92] Little endeavoured to keep a delicate balance between the reliance on foreign staff and the Chinese desire to administer the Customs Service.

Unsurprisingly, the reappointment of a foreigner as coast inspector greatly irritated Xu Zushan. He understood the main duty of coast inspector to be to defend the China coast, rather than encourage foreign trade. Furious, Xu wrote to Little, stressing that the head of the Marine Department should be a Chinese and not a foreign national; he reminded Little how the Japanese had utilized the light aids along the coast for the transportation of their troops and military supplies.[93] Little's response was brief but strong: it was the government's decision to appoint Sabel as coast inspector.[94] Indeed, Little retained Sabel in the Customs Service until the last possible moment. When Sabel requested permission to retire in 1946, Little declined his request because the Customs Service 'more urgently required' him than any other time in the history of the Marine Department.[95] Sabel stayed on the post of coast inspector until 1949. The prolonged careers of Sabel and other foreign Customs Service staff highlight the strategy of the Nationalist government that sought to reuse its colonial-era technocrats. Their experience in post-treaty China was different from that of British colonial bureaucrats in Southeast Asia. The latter were disappointed by the eagerness of the Malays to 'do everything on their own' after the transfer of political power.[96]

[86] 8 March 1944, in Chang (ed.), *The Chinese journals of L. K. Little*, Vol. I, p. 49.
[87] Little to Hsu, 21 March 1944, 679(1): 1058, SHAC.
[88] Little to Sabel, 12 April 1945, 679(1): 31741, SHAC; Van de Ven, *Breaking with the past*, pp. 292–295.
[89] R. G. Everest to Little, 7 July 1944, 679(1): 31741, SHAC.
[90] Carl Neprud to Little, 9 February 1945, 679(1): 31741, SHAC; Little to H. H. Kung, 12 January 1945, 679 (1): 31741, SHAC.
[91] Little to Hsu, 6 May 1944, 679(1): 31741, SHAC.
[92] Sabel to Little, 3 March 1945, 679(1): 31741, SHAC.
[93] Hsu to Little, 5 May 1944, 679(1): 31741, SHAC.
[94] Little to Hsu, 6 May 1944, 679(1): 31741, SHAC.
[95] Little to Sabel, 9 June 1946, 679(1): 31727, SHAC.
[96] T. N. Harper, *The end of empire and the making of Malaya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 365–366.

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Xu was not the only Chinese Customs Service employee critical of the persistence of its foreign staff and culture. Since a cadre of foreigners remained in the Customs Service, English as a language was still used in inter-office documents in the post-war years, although it was no longer an official language of the CMCS from 1943.[97] This practice, arguably a British imperial legacy, caused wide outside criticism and protests from Chinese staff inside.[98] In fact, despite Nationalist leaders' insistence on using foreign Customs Service employees, a group of Chinese staff wanted to remove foreigners from the CMCS, or at least from its leading positions. They had different motivations. As Little observed, some 'sincerely' deplored the employment of foreigners in a Chinese civil service, while others wished to occupy the senior posts held by foreigners for their own interests.[99] Xu Zushan did not want an immediate removal of all the foreigners. He saw the usefulness of foreign technocrats in training Chinese technicians, and he was fully aware that technical expertise—in this case the ability to operate and maintain a lighthouse service—provided an extra space for foreigners in the Marine Department.[100] Xu therefore urged Little to train Chinese technicians so that they could completely replace the foreigners.[101] Technical expertise, though in different forms, also underpinned the post-war reconstruction programmes in the Southeast Asian states. As Tim Harper argues, the colonial state in post-war Malaya harnessed technical specialists to initiate a series of relief and social reintegration programmes through which to remedy colonial relations and to merge the returned colonial power into a strong central government.[102]

A bitter reality for Xu Zushan was that the Customs Service had a severe shortage of appropriately trained or skilled Chinese senior technical staff, although Chinese staff with administrative capacities were almost ready to take the place of foreigners. This difference is best understood in terms of the history of the CMCS. In the late nineteenth century, as Bickers argues, Europeans, usually of lower class and among the least well-educated foreign servants in China, were deliberately placed in charge of each light, with ancillary Chinese staff, mostly uneducated, recruited from nearby local communities.[103] This practice occurred within a colonial culture. With the technical innovation that occurred in later decades, this pattern of staffing changed in a certain way: until the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, most senior lightkeepers were well-trained foreigners with maritime experience, but junior Chinese keepers remained uneducated and could not be expected

[97] English remained an official language until 4 February 1943; see Bickers, 'The Chinese Maritime Customs at war', p. 299.

[98] For Little's insistence on using English and the complaints, see Little to Ding Guitang, 11 May 1946, 679(1): 32649, SHAC.

[99] Little to F. Chang, 3 October 1946, Ms Am 1999.3, Little Papers.

[100] Hsu to Little, 11 April 1944, 679(1): 1058, SHAC.

[101] Little to Hsu, 7 February 1944, 679(1): 1058, SHAC; Hsu to Little, 11 April 1944, 679(1): 1058, SHAC.

[102] Harper, *The end of empire*, pp. 56–59.

[103] Robert Bickers, *The scramble for China: foreign devils in the Qing Empire, 1832–1914* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), pp. 270–271; Bickers, 'Infrastructural globalization', pp. 448–450.

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to take the place of senior foreign technicians.[104] While British colonial administrators rarely focused on technical education in pre-war Africa and southeast Asia, in the 1950s this had become a priority so as to facilitate orderly decolonization.[105] In the case of the CMCS, its lack of training and promoting of Chinese technicians can be primarily attributed to the incomplete and biased staff reorganization under Sir Frederick Maze's leadership (1929–1943). During this period, many Chinese were promoted to senior ranks for the first time. Nevertheless, Maze was more interested in promoting Chinese secretaries like Ding Guitang and his clique who could help him capture the position of inspector-general than in training technicians.[106] Cecil Joly put aside this issue as well.

Wartime training for Chinese marine staff was initiated only after Little took office. As Xu urged, Little pushed the negotiation of training projects with the Allied navies and foreign firms like the Chance Brothers from which the Customs Service had ordered lights for nearly 70 years.[107] Some of the training schemes were successfully carried out, while others did not take place for a variety of reasons such as the 'lukewarm' attitude of the Allied naval forces towards training Customs Service personnel.[108] In addition, financial difficulties that had once led to the retirement of nearly 100 foreign Customs Service staff again hampered these training projects. 'We must economise,' stressed Ding Guitang when he rejected a proposal to train Chinese clerks at the Customs College at Chongqing.[109] These cases indicate the difficulty, if not impossibility, of providing Chinese recruits for the Service in wartime and, as a result, retaining even a reduced number of foreign staff became a must.

However, there was no time left for further training. Japan's surrender on 15 August 1945 came as a surprise to many who had assumed that the final phase of the conflict would be more drawn out.[110] In 1944, Chongqing planners had believed that they would have two years to continue procurement and training projects.[111] Xu Zushan must have been disappointed with the Nationalist government's continued reliance on foreign employees because two months after the Sino-Japanese War ended, he resigned from the

[104] Hsu to Little, 11 April 1944, 679(1): 1058, SHAC; Hsu to Little, 2 March 1944, 679(1): 1058, SHAC; 'Memorandum', 3 March 1945, Ms Am 1999.2, Little Papers.

[105] Loh Kah Seng, 'Rupture and adaptation: British technical expertise to the Singapore Polytechnic and the transition to a nation-state', *Journal of the History of Education Society*, vol. 44, no. 5, 2015, pp. 575–594; Paul Bennell, 'Engineering technicians in Africa: a Kenyan case-study', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1983, pp. 273–291.

[106] Chang, *Government, imperialism and nationalism*, p. 225.

[107] Little to Hsu, 28 June 1944, 679(1): 1058, SHAC; Bickers, *The scramble for China*, pp. 271–272.

[108] Sabel to Little, 12 July 1945, 679(1): 31728, SHAC; 6 April 1944, 20 April 1945, in Chang (ed.), *The Chinese journals of L. K. Little*, Vol. I, pp. 117–118.

[109] 'Minutes of the ninth secretaries' conference', 19 February 1945, 679(9): 486, SHAC.

[110] Mitter, *China's war with Japan, 1937–1945*, pp. 351–371; also see 'Memorandum of the negotiations leading up to the executions of the Basic Agreement between the Chinese Government and UNRRA in November, 1945', S-1121-0000-0003, UNA, pp. 3–4.

[111] Hsu to Little, 3 February 1944, 679(1): 1058, SHAC.

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Customs Service.[112] In the immediate post-war years until 1949 the Marine Department was again under the control of a foreign coast inspector.

Conclusion

Japan's sudden surrender brought about a range of unexpected social, political, and military problems. Chinese communist forces immediately went on the move, ahead of the Nationalists, to northeast China. The remaining Allied forces in China, notably from the United States, provoked anti-foreign sentiment in Chinese society. To put it bluntly, war did not end in China. When Customs Service staff rushed to Shanghai to carry out their rehabilitation plan, they found that, as they had anticipated, practically all the lighthouses in the Shanghai and Ningbo districts had been either destroyed or damaged prior to Japan's surrender.[113] While a Chinese was appointed commissioner of the Shanghai Customs Service, British Roy G. Everest, then officiating coast inspector, was nevertheless in charge of taking over the Japanese-controlled Marine Department and the rehabilitation of aids to navigation in Shanghai, at the time China's largest port.[114]

The Marine Department's rehabilitation plan was only carried out in a limited way in the immediate post-war years. By 1946, the Marine Department had installed new lights on the coast of Canton and along the Yangtze River at Hankou, Jiujiang, Wuhu, and Zhenjiang, though it could not take care of lights in communist-controlled China.[115] The partly relit China coast helped the Nationalist government to implement liberalized foreign trade policies in the first post-war year; however, as Thai argues, the Nationalists soon reintroduced wartime controls on trade as a response to the deteriorating economic situation.[116] The Customs Service was also plagued with low morale and corruption problems. After Marine Department officials went on strike in March 1946 against the low pay scale, Little admitted in his diary that 'I don't know how I can take care of lighthouses.'[117] Rehabilitation proved to be more difficult than Customs Service staff had anticipated.

The importance of the episode of wartime planning lies less in how these plans were carried out, which was almost completely out of the control of Customs Service planners, than in what it tells us about the position of foreign experts in a post-colonial government. During the war and in the immediate post-war years, Nationalist leaders never thought of forcing the retirement of all foreign Customs Service employees. The Nationalist government's dependence on foreign experts was multifaceted. It relied on the Americans

[112] Little to S. Frandsen, 15 October 1945, 679(1): 31728, SHAC.

[113] Chen Yu-jen, 'Engineer-in-Chief's memo', 29 October 1945, 679(1): 25847, SHAC.

[114] Ding Guitang to Little, 16 September 1945, 679(1): 1059, SHAC; Everest to Little, 17 December 1946, 679(1): 21016, SHAC.

[115] Several lighthouses in these places were first established in 1945 and 1946: see *List of lighthouses, light-vessels, buoys, beacons, etc., on the coast and rivers of China, 1947* (Shanghai: Statistical Department of the Inspectorate General of Customs, 1948), pp. 8–63.

[116] Thai, *China's war on smuggling*, pp. 209–214.

[117] 7 March 1946, in Chang (ed.), *The Chinese journals of L. K. Little*, Vol. II, p. 14.

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and on an efficient, multinational-staffed Customs Service, largely a legacy of British dominance of the administration. We can see from the case of the Marine Department's rehabilitation that it was impossible to expect a purely Chinese-staffed service to face post-war challenges, because of a critical shortage of Chinese senior technicians, an issue ignored by earlier British inspectors-general.

Apart from this unsolvable staffing problem, retaining a multinational-staffed Customs Service and treating its long-serving foreign employees well were the Nationalist government's deliberate political choices which coordinated with its foreign trade policies and cooperation with international organizations. Zhang Fuyun, director-general of Guanwushu, said in 1947, 'if the foreign staff of the Customs Service are to be paid off so soon after the final victory by China in joint effort with her allies, such action would create an impression in the world that China is proceeding along the line of nationalism'.[118] The Nationalist government's policy towards its own foreign staff was not just a domestic affair, nor was the planning for China's post-war reconstruction. Rana Mitter argues that Jiang Tingfu, the senior Nationalist official for relief affairs, had a set of modern ideas for post-war reconstruction drawn from Soviet and American examples.[119] In addition to this individual case, Nationalist officials in Chongqing worked with foreign experts to calculate China's post-war needs, make detailed plans, and negotiate with foreign firms and the Allied military for training projects and procurement. In planning the rehabilitation of a lighthouse network that would encourage China's foreign trade, the Nationalist government adapted itself to a post-war world which it assumed would witness intimate international cooperation.

Yet, the history of wartime planning was not merely about seizing the chance for international cooperation so that China could alleviate its resource and staff shortage. It began as soon as China's so-called 'unequal treaties' with foreign powers ended. The utility of foreign experts to Nationalist governance had to shift from one of leadership to the position of advisers, with some forced to retire and others staying on in technical positions. Still, this change did not meet the expectations of Chinese nationalists. Coast inspector Xu Zushan represented the attitude of a group of Chinese staff towards foreign employees: it was time for the Chinese alone to run the Customs Service. In wartime, this nationalist tension was overshadowed by a military alliance with the United States and Great Britain. For example, the Customs Service cooperation with the Allied navies was legitimated and encouraged. The Customs Service reasserted its position in the Nationalist government through its efficiency and foreign networks.

After the war ended, hostilities towards foreigners in the Nationalist governance reached a peak. The Chinese public found it increasingly unbearable to see foreigners in government posts like Customs Service commissioners

[118] Ts'ai Hsioh Tuan to Little, 14 April 1947, Ms Am 1999.4, Little Papers.

[119] Rana Mitter, 'Statebuilding after disaster: Jiang Tingfu and the reconstruction of post-World War II China, 1943–1949', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 61, no. 1, 2019, pp. 176–206.

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or the American military presence in China. The Nationalist government, however, continued to harness foreign expertise. Senior Japanese military officers like Okamura Yasuji assisted Chiang Kai-shek's anti-communist strategy, while a group of Japanese technicians were employed by the Nationalists in northeast China as advisers.[120] Chiang's use of Japanese expertise is complicated by the context of the Chinese Civil War and the unfolding Cold War; however, this strategy did not break with the Nationalist government's wartime policy to use foreign Customs Service staff to prepare for lighting up China's coasts. It was a consistent and deliberate Nationalist policy to harness foreign, notably technical, expertise, rather than make a hurried decision under pressure from the communists. If we further take the Soviet and East European technological advisers active in the early People's Republic of China period into the long trajectory of foreign experts in China, we will find that the Customs Service's wartime staff reorganization was the prelude to an era when technical expertise rationalized the continuation of the European and American presence in Asia.[121]

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[120] Amy King, 'Reconstructing China: Japanese technicians and industrialization in the early years of the People's Republic of China', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2016, pp. 141–174; Barak Kushner, 'Ghosts of the Japanese imperial army: the "white group" (baituan) and early post-war Sino-Japanese relations', *Past and Present*, vol. 218, supplement 8, 2013, pp. 117–150.

[121] Anne-Marie Brady, *Making the foreign serve China: managing foreigners in the People's Republic* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2003), pp. 1–3.

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