

China's Strategic Transformation Towards the US in the 1970s

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Abstract

In the 1970s, China began to adjust its foreign policy based on the judgment on the complex domestic and international situation, and promote the strategic adjustment of China towards the United States and the normalization of Sino-US relations. From the perspective of strategic triangular theory, this paper reviews the background and process of China's policy on the transformation, noting that China's motivation for its strategic transformation towards US is mainly to promote the status of its own role in the China-US-Soviet strategic triangle, and at the same time, China's recognition of the security threats and economic benefits in the China-US-Soviet strategic triangle also has strengthened its determination to push forward the normalization of Sino-US relations.

Keywords

Normalization of Sino-US relations; China-US-Soviet strategic triangle; Strategic triangular theory.

1. Introduction

In the 1970s, Chinese leaders such as Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping began to push forward the transformation of China's foreign strategy, especially towards the US, in light of the complex domestic and foreign situations. In the context of the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations, China gradually changed its diplomatic strategy of "one-sided" ("一边倒") towards the Soviet Union in the 1950s and "two fists to strike" ("两个拳头打人") in the 1960s. With the development of the normalization of Sino-US relations in the 1970s, the diplomacy of the People's Republic of China entered a new stage, which showed the characteristics of being with the Western countries led by the United States to fight against the Soviet Union's hegemony.[1]

Due to the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, the United States did not recognize the government of the PRC for nearly 20 years after its founding, blocking China economically and contained it militarily. Meanwhile, Sino-US relations were subordinated to Sino-Soviet relations because of China's "one-sided" foreign policy. Also, China and the United States are not friendly enough to each other because of their ideological opposition, and in countries such as the North Korea and Vietnam, China and the United States even had military confrontations and conflicts. In a word, the relationship between China and the United States seems to be subtle, sensitive and fragile at that time. Nevertheless, in the 1970s, the Chinese government still decided to ease relations with the United States and aim to promote the development of relations between the two countries. Although there are many factors that have been promoted in the normalization of china-us relations, among which China's role is critical. So why is China abandoning its pre-diplomatic strategy and temporarily putting the differences such as ideology aside to develop a constructive relationship with the United States?

This shift is not only due to the sharp intuition and the accurate judgment of the situation of China's leaders, the result of China's strategic interaction in the dynamic structure of China-US-Soviet strategic triangle, because the development of Sino-US relations is inseparable from the larger background of the cold war. Some scholars have explored the structural reasons for the

normalization of Sino-US relations from the perspective of of China-US-Soviet strategic triangle. Harry Schwartz argues that in the early 1970s, the Soviet Union and China simultaneously unleashed a competing pursuit of the United States, and that historic changes such as Nixon's and Kissinger's visits to China were contributed by the breakdown of Sino-Soviet relations.[2] Roger Glenn Brown holds that the complex relation between domestic and foreign policy contributed to the formation of the China-US-Soviet strategic triangle in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and that the Sino-Soviet border crisis in 1969 and the downfall of Vice Chairman of the China's Central Military Commission, Lin Biao in 1971 were the trigger points for the shift of China's foreign policy.[3] Some scholar thinks, the domestic politics of a single actor will play a more important role in the management of the relationship in the China-US-Soviet strategic triangle.[4] Strategic triangle theory focuses on analysis at the international level[5], from the perspective of the power structure in the international system (including the political, economic, and even ideological levels), discussing the actions of the three actors, the bilateral and even the triangular interaction influenced by the three actors' behaviors. Due to the interaction between the China, Soviet Union and the United States, the foreign strategy transformation of any country towards the another is not influenced by their bilateral relationship, but should be viewed as one of the strategies of the interaction between the three countries.[6]

This essay aims to observe the process of China's strategy towards the United States from the perspectives of the China-US-Soviet strategic triangle, and discusses the reasons for the transformation of China's strategy towards the United States.

2. The International Background of China's Strategic Shift Towards the US

2.1. China-US-Soviet Strategic Triangle

According to the strategic triangle theory, any three interrelated actors in international relations have trilateral relationship. If any two sets of bilateral relations among the three actors influence the other two sets of bilateral relations, then the three state actors would constitute a small subsystem of international relations, a strategic triangle. It was not until 1981 that Lowell Dittmer first proposed the rudimentary form of strategic triangle analysis framework. He brought the concept of game theory into the strategic triangle theory, and established the theoretical foundation of the theory. [7] According to this theory, the interactive game relationship of the three state actors under the triangular framework is affected by three factors (Figure. 1): first, the value of behavioral interaction between two actors in a bilateral relationship (positive/negative); second, balance in the relative power of bilateral relationships (symmetry/asymmetry); third, the value and balance of any bilateral relationship in a triangle is slightly affected by the relationship between the third actor. [8]

		Balance	
		symmetrical	asymmetrical
Value	Positive	1	3
	Negative	2	4

Figure 1. "2×2" matrix model of strategic triangles

According to the matrix model, there are four types of triangle(Figure. 2), which shows different triangular relationship: (1) "ménage à trois". It would involve a mutually beneficial exchange of

equal values as in balanced trade. (2) “unit-veto”. it might involve deterrence or military stalemate. (3) “romantic” triangle. There exists a “pivot”, which maintains friendly relations with the other two countries, but relations between the other two are negative. It would include economic dependency, population brain drain, and other such unequal trades. (4) “marriage” triangle. In this type, there is a “pariah”, which does not have a friendly relationship with the other two countries, while the other two countries have a relatively high level of friendly relationship, which often exists in the alliance between the two countries.

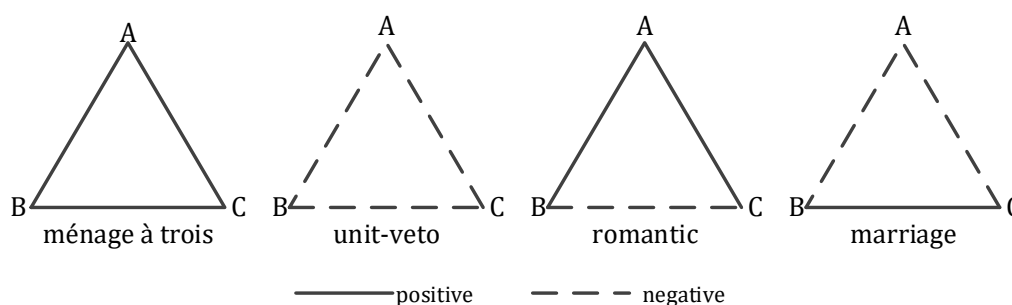


Figure 2. Four types of strategic triangles

Under this framework, according to Dittmer, the China-US-Soviet strategic triangle(1949-1960) was "stable marriage", when China and the Soviet Union were in harmony and constituted a positive relationship, while the United States was a “pariah”. then, the China-US-Soviet strategic triangle(1960-1969) was developed into a “unit-veto”, when the three actors were hostile to each other, with no positive relationship among them. Also, this triangular relationship had formed the strategic backdrop for China's diplomatic shift from confrontation to normalization of Sino-American relations in the late 1960s.

2.2. Sino-US Relations

In the China-US-Soviet strategic triangle, the relationship between China and America is both sensitive and delicate in the late 1960s.

After the founding of the PRC, Sino-US relations experienced a difficult period of confrontation. Since September 15, 1958, the Warsaw Talks between China and the United States have lasted for more than ten years, and the negotiations mainly involved the Taiwan issue, the exchange of journalists' visits, nuclear weapons and the issue of Indochina. Because the United States insisted on interfering in China's domestic affairs, by 1970, a total of 136 talks had been held without any fruits. [9]

However, since the middle and late 1960s, the US began to released diplomatic signals of amity and detente towards China. US President Richard Nixon, who entered the White House in 1969, pursued the Nixon Doctrine, which was officially announced by Nixon during a stopover on his international trip to Guam. [10] He declared the United States would honor all of its treaty commitments in Asia, but "as far as the problems of international security are concerned ... the United States is going to encourage and has a right to expect that this problem will increasingly be handled by, and the responsibility for it taken by, the Asian nations themselves"[11]. The long-term goal of the Nixon Doctrine was to reduce tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union and China, in order to better implement the US's detente policy.

Therefore, from the end of World War II to the late 1960s and early 1970s, the U.S.-China relations was contradictory. On one hand, this period has witnessed the ongoing rivalry between China and the United States, for example, the early diplomatic frictions, the Korean War, the US not abandoning its support for Taiwan, the Vietnam War, the Tibet issue, etc.. On the other hand, both countries are seeking an opportunity for a dialogue. The United States wanted to improve

relations with China in order to defuse strategic pressure from the Soviet Union. China also has tried to engage with the United States cautiously, or at least, begun to seek solutions to some issues between the two countries, such as ambassadorial talks in Geneva and Warsaw. For all this, at that time, it is still no exaggeration to say that the confrontational elements of the Sino-US relationship had outweighed the positive ones, and the Sino-US relations had stagnated without achieving any substantive progress.

2.3. Sino-Soviet Relations

In the 1960s, Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated. The Soviet Union took a series of measures to expand the differences between the two ruling parties in both countries to the level of state-to-state relations, increasing economic, political and military pressure on China. In July 1960, the Soviet government suddenly decided to withdraw all Soviet experts working in China and tear up hundreds of bilateral cooperation agreements with China, after which USSR greatly reduced the supply of sets of equipment and important spare parts, and implemented a trade policy of restrictions and discrimination against China, thus causing heavy losses to China's economy. In the 1962 border conflict between China and India, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev stuck to the position of favoring India, unfairly accusing China. [9] Since 1963, the two ruling parties of both countries have engaged in open debates on the general route of the internationalist movement and the general view of the world situation. [9]

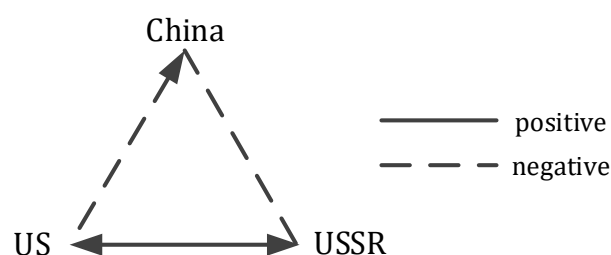
Meanwhile, China and the United States are still at a stand-off. Out of war preparedness, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) held a meeting of the Political Bureau on April 12, 1965 to discuss the CPC's draft directive on war preparedness. Mao Zedong reviewed and approved the draft the next day, which pointed out that China should be well prepared for small, medium and even large battles. [12] It can be seen that at that time, China was facing security threats from the two great powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, and its situation was extremely severe.

The Battle of Zhenbao Island in March 1969 marked the break-up of the Sino-Soviet alliance relations that had deteriorated irretrievably at this time. In June, Mao Zedong, Chen Yi, Ye Jianying, Xu Xiangqian and Nie Rongzhen discussed the international situation, and then proposed that "the struggle against the United States and the Soviet Union should be firm in principle and flexible in tactics. Now that Nixon is eager to lump with China out of strategic consideration so as to deal with the Soviet Union, China should shift to open the door for the US. Mao Zedong said, "Between the two great powers, we must be with one at least, because we could not fight on both sides." [13]

The breakdown of Sino-Soviet relations has a profound and huge impact on the international structure. China became an important state actor independent of the two superpowers, and former form of the China-US-Soviet strategic triangle started to change, which made it possible for China change its former foreign policy towards the US.

Before the 1970s, China-US-Soviet strategic triangle had gone through an ambiguous period of transition. During this period, none of the four types of triangle according to the strategic theory could fully fit the shape of the China-US-Soviet triangle. Strictly speaking, the China-US-Soviet triangle should be in the intermediate state between the "unit-veto" and the weak "marriage" based on the US-Soviet detente. Despite the first exploratory contact between China and the United States during this period, the relationship between China and the United States remained negative. The detente between the United States and the Soviet Union offset some of the negative factors between the two countries, although the detente was only a new form of continuing rivalry in the reality. [14] This kind of competition-collusion relationship is not a true "marriage", at best it can be called "extramarital affair" or weak "engagement", but it is indeed a little more positive than the Sino-China relations (Figure. 3) The arrows indicates the direction of the relationship value. The arrow pointing to China indicates the intention of the

United States to build a more positive relationship with China. Similarly, both the United States and the Soviet Union have the intention of detente.



Unit-veto with weak “marriage” characteristics

Figure 3. The China-US-Soviet triangle (in the late 1960s)

3. The Process of Normalization of Sino-US Relations

3.1. The First Period (January 1970-August 1974)

The normalization of China-US relations began with the establishment and expansion of official channels of communication between China and the US. On January 8, 1970, China and the United States agreed to resume the ambassadorial level talks in Warsaw. When making the announcement, the U.S. State Department for the first time used the full name of “People's Republic of China”, indicating that the United States recognized the new Chinese regime. On October 25 and 26, during the Yahya Khan and Ceausescu's visit to the United States, Nixon establish the "Pakistan channel" and "Romania channel" to contact Chinese government. [15]

In March 1971, at the World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya, Japan, the United States table tennis team proposed their desire to visit China after the match. Mao Zedong considered three days later, instead of disagreeing, he agreed to invite the American table tennis team to China. This is the "ping-pong diplomacy", which is a crucial step in breaking the ice in China-US relations. In July of the same year, Kissinger visited China secretly, and on October 20, he visited China again publicly.

On February 21, 1972, Nixon of the United States visited China. The two sides jointly formulated and issued the Shanghai Communique, a historic document guiding the future development of China-US relations. [16] Besides, with the absence of diplomatic relations, China and the United States set up a liaison office and officially began work in May 1973, fundamentally changing the situation of mutual isolation between China and the United States.

3.2. The Second Period (August 1974 - January 1978)

Since 1974, Sino-US relations have progressed slowly or even regressed, and the main factor restricting the normalization of Sino-US relations is the Taiwan issue.

At that time, China's domestic "Cultural Revolution" was still continuing, and the rampant "left-leaning" ideological trend interfered with the country's foreign policy. China's attitude towards the relationship with the United States was rigid and lacked flexibility, advocating “Japan model”, that is the United States must break diplomatic ties with Taiwan, withdraw its troops from Taiwan, and abrogate the "Mutual Defense Treaty between the USA and Taiwan". Although both Kissinger and President Ford agreed to China's terms when they visited China, no substantive agreement was reached on how to implement the Taiwan issue. The Ford administration tried to hedge its bets between Taiwan and mainland China, maintain friendly relationship with both sides. In the face of China's tough attitude, it create and maintain "two Chinas" or "one Taiwan, one China" in disguise, in violation of the "One China" principle. In addition, during Ford's visit to China in 1975, the Chinese government criticized the US for

making compromises with the Soviet Union on some international issues, which was regarded as "regression" of the relationship. [17, 18]

After the Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping put the construction of Sino-US relations as the first issue to strive for a good international environment.[19] China's willingness to normalize relations with the United States has been further strengthened. Deng Xiaoping pointed out, "The international situation is constantly changing. Although our two countries are in different positions, it is always critical for the both leaders of our two countries to have frequent contacts and exchange views with each other. We have different social systems, so it is natural that we have many differences. But we can have in-depth exchanges of views, even if we have differences or quarrel." He also quoted Mao's saying: "We advocate small quarrels and great unity. Our two countries have a lot in common." [17]

3.3. The Third Period (January 1978 - January 1979)

Since 1978, China and the United States have simultaneously realized the security threat of the Soviet Union to both countries, and cognition of the increasing security threat of the Soviet Union had brought the stalled normalization of Sino-US relations back on the agenda. At that time, for China, for the sake of China's domestic need to build the "four modernizations", the establishment of relations with the United States became more urgent to deal with. For America, it also felt urge to "unite China against the Soviet Union" because of the Soviet Union's increasingly expansionist and aggressive behavior. In May 1978, Special Envoy of the US President Zbigniew Brzezinski paid a visit to China and expressed America's determination to normalize relations with China.

With the joint efforts of the two sides, Deng Xiaoping met three times with American negotiator John Woodcock. [20, 21] On December 15, 1978, both China and the United States made concessions and reached an agreement. The United States accepted the three principles proposed by China for the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries on the day of January 1, 1979. The next day, China and the United States issued a communique on the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States, where the United States recognizes the People's Republic of China as the only legitimate government of China. China, while shelving other disputes and differences, seized the moment and finally realized the normalization of Sino-US relations.

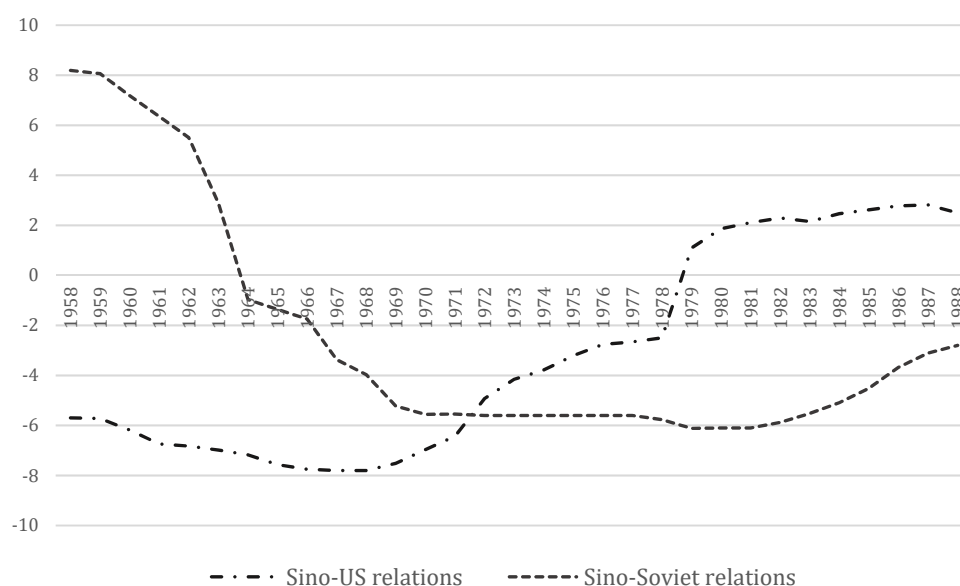


Figure 4. The scores of Sino-US and Sino-Soviet relations (1958-1988)

Source: Institute of International Relations, Tsinghua University

To be concluded, after the normalization of Sino-US relations, great changes have taken place in Sino-US and Sino-Soviet relations (Figure. 4), and also in China-US-Soviet strategic triangle (Figure. 5). Since 1979, China, the United States and the Soviet Union have formed a weak "romantic" triangle, with the pivot of the US. In the early 1970s, there was also some progress in the US-Soviet detente. In 1972, the United States and the Soviet Union reached the Rebound Missile Treaty and the Interim Agreement on Certain Measures to Limit Offensive Strategic Weapons. The two sides froze the number of intercontinental missile-guided missiles and submarine-launched missiles that they could have respectively. Besides, other cultural, commercial, scientific and technological agreements were signed at the summit between the two countries. They also signed a document on the 12 basic principles guiding the US-Soviet relationship. This detente is more practical and has more realistic strategic significance than the first stage of the process of normalization of Sino-American relations. [14] Anyhow, as China and the United States established diplomatic relations at ambassadorial level, the relationship between China and the United States changed from negative to positive (see Figure 4). Also, there is a willingness on both sides to improve the relationship.

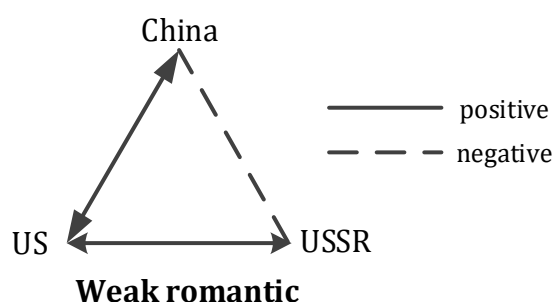


Figure 5. The China-US-Soviet strategic triangle in the 1979

4. Reasons for China's Strategic Transformation Towards the US

4.1. China's Drive to Elevate Its Role as "Pre-pariah"

From 1970 to 1978, China-US-Soviet strategic triangle was changing towards a weak "romantic" triangle, which was characterized by the improvement of Sino-US relations, the detente of US-Soviet relations, and the hostile state of Sino-Soviet relations. Before the normalization of Sino-US relations, China's triangular role was defined as the "pre-pariah" of a weak "marriage" triangle or the "pre-poe" of a weak "unit-veto". Due to the fragile detente relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, the "unit veto" shape of the China-US-Soviet strategic triangle was more prominent, so China's role in the triangle was closer to the "pre-poe" role in a weak "unit-veto", which is better than the role of "pariah" according to the strategic triangular theory.

The Taiwan scholars Bao Zonghe and Wu Yushan used to quantify the role status and benefits of the actors in the triangle relationship. They assigned 1 point to each positive relationship and -1 point to each of the negative relationship. The total score for each actor/role is equal to the score for its relationship with the other two parties minus the score for the mutual relationship between the other two actors. [22]

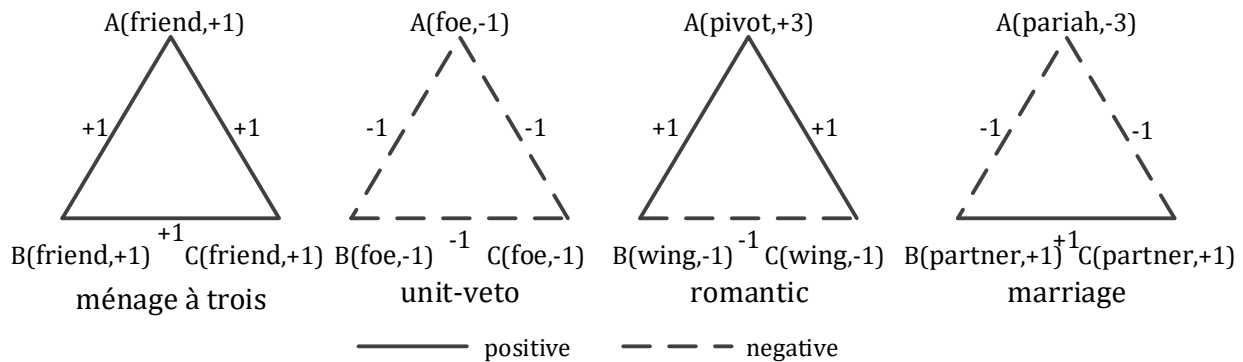


Figure 6. Role models of triangular relationship

Table 1. The score of the benefit of the triangle roles

Triangle roles	Triangular relationship	Positive relationship	Total scores
pivot	romantic	2	$+3=(+1)+(+1)-(-1)$
friend	ménage à trois	2	$+1=(+1)+(+1)-(+1)$
partner	marriage	1	$+1=(+1)+(-1)-(-1)$
wing	romantic	1	$-1=(+1)+(-1)-(+1)$
foe	unit-veto	0	$-1=(-1)+(-1)-(-1)$
pariah	marriage	0	$-3=(-1)+(-1)-(+1)$

Further inspiration can be obtained from the calculation of benefits of different actors by Wu Yushan and Bao Zonghe: according to the status of score of the benefit, the six roles of the strategic triangle model can be divided into four levels from low to high: pivot, friend/partner, wing/foe, pariah (see Figure 7). [23]

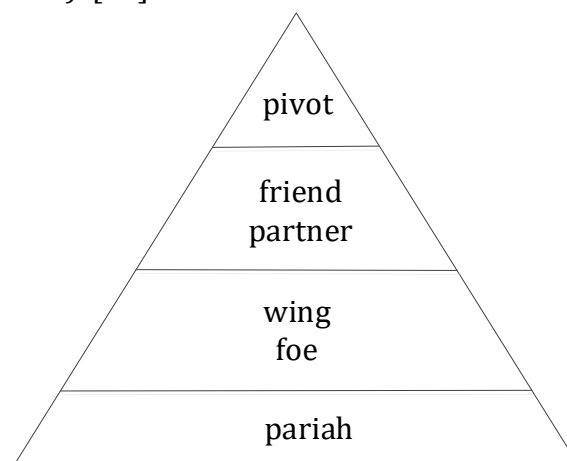


Figure 7. Status of different strategic triangle roles

China's role as "pre-poe" rather than "pre-pariah" suggests that while China is internationally isolated, it is not a worst case scenario in which the United States and the Soviet Union join forces to counter China. And China has plenty of room for strategic maneuvering away from a situation in which it is simultaneously antagonizing both the United States and the Soviet Union, as long as it worked hard to build positive relations with either the Soviet Union or the United States, China's current dilemma could be solved.

According to the strategic triangle theory, the actor with the advantageous role always tries to maintain the advantage and obtain the maximum benefits; however, the actor with a

disadvantageous position always tries to get rid of its dilemma to improve its position, which leads to the continuous evolution of strategic triangle shape. Therefore, the strategic triangle is not static, but in a constant process of balance and rebalance. Friendly relations often brings benefits, such as trade and information exchanges, while hostile relations can lead to tariff barriers, sanctions and even military wars. Other things being equal, any state actor will tend to choose "friendly" interactions with other states. Under the same conditions, state actors will tend to choose "friendly" interactions with other states. In other words, there is a promotion drive of role driven by rational choice in the triangle system, and it is applied to different triangle roles. At that time, as a "pre-pariah", China also had the internal drive of seeking advantages and avoiding disadvantages, improving its role status and benefits, as well as avoiding strategic risks. It was the driving force that drove China to change its existing diplomatic pattern and adjust its strategy toward the United States.

During the process of the normalization of Sino-US relations, as a "pre-foe", China has established ambassadorial diplomatic relations with the United States, which completely conforms to the evolution logic of the actor in triangle relationship according to the strategic triangle. From the objective perspective, the three actors in the triangular framework are all rational actors, and the three actors can cooperate or confront with any other according to their own will, that is, the three actors have the possibility of cooperation with each other, as well as the potential of conflicts. In the 1970s, as the "pre-foe" of a "unit-veto" triangle with weak "marriage" characteristics, China's triangle role is in a transitional place between level 1 and level 2. To increase its role status, it can choose to be either a "wing" of the "romance" triangle or a "foe" of the "unit-veto", both of which would promote its role's status into level 2 as well as increase its benefit.

But why did China abandon the strategy of being a "foe", or maintaining confrontation with both the United States and the Soviet Union? Rather, finally it chose to be a "wing" by constructing positive relation with the US. This is because, although China could maintain a confrontational relationship with the United States and the Soviet Union at the same time, which could drive the China-US-Soviet strategic triangle to develop into a "unit-veto" triangle. However, the "unit veto" shape of the China-US-Soviet triangular relationship would be extremely unstable under the strategic background at that time, when China needs to be wary of any secret detente between the US and the Soviet Union, and once the United States and the Soviet Union achieve detente in a real sense on the premise that China maintains confrontation with both of them at the same time, then China's strategic position will become a complete "pariah", which would place China in a very unfavorable and isolated situation.

4.2. China's Cognition of Security Threats in the Triangular System

But in terms of Sino-American and Sino-Soviet relations, why did China not develop a positive relationship with the Soviet Union, and instead, choose to build amicable relations with the United States?

This is because that China at that time was facing difficulties in terms of Sino-Soviet. In the early 1970s, when the United States frequently released goodwill to China, the Sino-Soviet relations tended to deteriorate. The contradictions between the two countries, which had broken up their relations and could not rebuilt in a short time.

Additionally, Chinese leaders at the time already perceived a greater security threat from the Soviet Union than from the United States. The 1969 incident on Zhenbao Island was not only a symbol of the breakdown in Sino-Soviet relations, but also a direct factor to urge Chinese government to view of the Soviet Union as the No. 1 national security enemy.

China's perception of the security threat from the Soviet Union in the Triangle mainly stems from three aspects: First, the Soviet Union posed the most threat of replacing Chinese political regime formed by the ruling government at that time. Second, the dispute and struggle between

China and the Soviet Union for the discourse power of orthodox Marxist and Leninist theory caused the two countries finally fell into the ideological conflict and opposition, and directly led to the split within the socialist camp. Third, the Soviet Union intended to isolate China internationally and form an encirclement with other countries to "contain" China. At that time, most of the countries in the world that had diplomatic relations with China had gone over to the Soviet Union and turned their backs on China after Sino-Soviet relations broke up.

Therefore, from the perspective of the security threats posed by the Soviet Union and the United States, China naturally sought advantages and avoided disadvantages and finally chose "the lesser of the two adverse ones", and decided to build a harmonious relationship with the United States rather than the Soviet Union, so as to break the limitation of its own role as the "pre-poe" in the triangle of "unit-veto with weak 'marriage' characteristics". At the same time, the security risks of a rapprochement between China and the United States have been reduced by the success of Chinese atomic bomb test. Under such circumstance, Chinese leaders' strategic thinking on how to deal with the threat of the Soviet Union became more and more mature. In the process of China's strategic transformation towards the United States in the 1970s, "balancing the Soviet Union with the United States" became the main melody of China's policy towards the United States. [24]

4.3. China's Cognition Of Economic Benefits in the Triangular System

It is worth noting that it was the United States, not China, that initially showed a willingness to normalize relations with China. In the late 1960s, China was still wary of the United States. Since the middle and late 1974, when Sino-US negotiations stalled because of the Taiwan issue, but at that time China still showed great determination and patience to promote Sino-US negotiations. Why was China willing to shift from the "one-package" principle ("一揽子"原则) to a negotiation approach that combines both flexibility and principle of state sovereignty and independence? At the end, both China and the United States had put aside their differences, seek common ground and successfully build diplomatic relationship.

Actually, in addition to security threats, China's perception of the economic benefits of the China-US-Soviet strategic triangle based on its own domestic development needs, has also led it to actively adjust its foreign strategy towards America, shifting the national strategic focus from class struggle to economic development.

First of all, Deng Xiaoping, as the chief designer of the policy of reform and opening up, adjusted the direction of China's development, placing economic construction as the core task of national development. In fact, the normalization of Sino-US relations served China's domestic development needs. For instance, the first turning point of Sino-US relations was Nixon's relaxation of economic and trade restrictions on China. In a National Security Resolution Memorandum of 26, 1969, Nixon decided to amend certain trade restrictions on China.[25] With the normalization process of Sino-US relations, the economic exchanges between China and the United States have expanded rapidly. In 1972, when trade relations between China and the United States had just began to resume, the bilateral trade volume was only \$12.88 million. By 1978, it had grown to \$ 990 million, 76.9 times that of 1972. [26] It can be seen that improving the relationship with the United States is not only for counterbalancing the threat of the Soviet Union, but also for China's own economic interests and as an opportunity to promote greater progress in the political dialogue between China and the United States.

Moreover, as relations between China and the Soviet Union deteriorated, there was an urgent need for China to seek the diplomatic and economic benefits that it had lost to the Soviet Union in the Triangle System. Deng Xiaoping always looked at and dealt with major issues in Sino-US relations from a long-term strategic point of view. The day of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the US was just three days apart when China decided to carry out the reform and open up policy. What China really needs is to go out and connect with the world.

By normalizing relations with the United States, China is also sending a signal to the world, especially the western countries, that it will actively participate in an American-led international order.

According to the strategic triangular theory, triangulation will produce "transference" effect, which means that the improvement of the relationship of the inferior actor and other actors will contribute to forming more positive relationship within other numerous triangular systems. There are frequent interactions and complex relations between different countries in the world. [27] As a subsystem of international relations, the relationship between China and the United States can indirectly spread its influence through other triangular systems outside the China-US-Soviet strategic triangle. After the establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States, China has successively established or resumed normal diplomatic relations with other countries, made China get rid of isolation, and build up cooperation and promote development with more countries.

5. Conclusion

To be concluded, the adjustment of China's strategy towards the United States in the 1970s was the result of its strategic consideration and choice under the dynamic structure of the China-US-Soviet strategic triangle. With the interaction of the China-US-Soviet triangle, the solution of China's diplomacy lies in breaking the situation of being isolated by the United States and the Soviet Union at the same time, improving the level of its own role in the triangle system, so as to gain more role benefits. In order to avoid security threats caused by the breakdown of Sino-Soviet relations and to alleviate the economic sanctions and strategic blockade from the Soviet Union, China showed its strategic autonomy, actively sought a way out, and promoted the normalization of Sino-American relations. At the same time, this was also the objective demand of China's domestic and international development. On the premise of fully considering subjective threats and objective benefits, China had adhered to an independent diplomatic position and the principle for state sovereignty. Last but not least, the organic combination of flexibility and principle also contributed to the normalization of China-US relations.

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