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THE STRATEGIC TRIANGLE AND REGIONAL CONFLICTS: LESSONS FROM THE INDOCHINA WARS

by

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DECLARATION

Except where otherwise indicated
this Thesis is my own work.

Min Chen
May 1990
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ABSTRACT

Rapid development in the international political arena may render the Sino-Soviet-American triangular games much less important, but this particular triangle will very likely continue to command attention in the study of big power politics. Although the strategic triangle has been widely studied in the West, the triangular literature still leaves much room to be desired. This thesis is an effort to build a compound triangular model and to study the triangle in the context of the Indochina conflicts from 1964 to 1980, in which all the three powers were heavily involved. The thesis is divided into three parts: theoretical analysis, case study and conclusion.

The first part (two chapters) consists of triangular literature review and triangular model building based on the critique of the existing triangular literature. In the chapter of triangular literature review, five basic schools, i.e., system analysis, power politics approach, triangular nuclear deterrence, linkage politics and triangular models are identified, with each of them having both strong and weak points. The term "polarity" is redefined so as to clarify the vagueness in the definition of the strategic triangle. In order to better understand the structural characteristics of the strategic triangle and the relationship between the strategic triangle and regional conflicts, the author creates a compound model of the triangle. One of the most important concepts associated with this model is "triangular restriction", which is used to explain limitations of triangulation. And nine basic propositions are raised with regard to the model: (1) the tendency of a coalition or collusion between two of the three poles and the fear of this tendency in each pole constitute the main dynamic of the triangle; (2) the weak pole in a triangle that contains two strong poles is not only the most susceptible to the impact of balance shift in the triangle, but also able to benefit far out of proportion to its real power through triangulation; (3) each pole wants to triangulate itself into a better position, and whenever possible, tries to get and keep the leverage of the pivot, which is based on the competitive wooing by the other two mutually conflicting poles; (4) the strategic triangle is an inherently restricted triangle, with the degree of its restriction varying in different situations; (5) the more restricted the strategic triangle is, the less effective the triangulation and the pivot would be; and the less restricted the strategic triangle is, the more effective the triangulation and the pivot leverage would be; (6) the strengths of the big powers in the global triangular relationship may not necessarily correspond with
those at the regional level; (7) the more restricted the strategic triangle is, the easier
would be the triangulation of the state in the focus of big powers' contention; the less
restricted the strategic triangle is, the harder would be the triangulation of that state;
(8) since the strategic triangle is inherently a restricted triangle, the state in the focus of
big powers' contention would always have some room to manipulate among the three
powers; (9) balance shifts in the strategic triangle can influence a regional conflict, in
which the big powers are actively involved; and such a regional conflict may also influence
the pattern of the strategic triangle itself.

The second part, a case study of the strategic triangle in the context of the Indochina
conflicts (1964-80), is divided into three chapters in accordance with the three major
periods in the evolution of the general patterns of the strategic triangle and the
corresponding periods at the regional level. In the first pattern (1964-69), China was
located in the negative pivot position, while there was no (positive) pivot actor at all. The
United States escalated the Indochina war under the old bipolar assumption and both
China and the Soviet Union responded in like manner. This situation created a golden
time for the North Vietnamese to play between China and the Soviet Union. In the second
pattern (1970-1975), China's position was significantly improved with the onset of the
Sino-American rapprochement, while the United States was in the pivot position. This
period witnessed various triangulations of the United States, which were employed for
the purpose of achieving its "peace with honor". And in the third pattern, the Soviet
Union was located in the negative pivot position, while the United States and China were
moving toward a quasi-alliance. But in the regional balance, China was in the most
unfavorable position, facing a growing challenge from a unified Vietnam, which sought
regional dominance with the support of the Soviet Union.

The final part (two chapters) summarizes the contributions of the research as well as
the strengths and limitations of the compound triangular model. In terms of the strategic
triangle itself, the contributions include the reasons for and the likely consequences of
triangular rigidity, the triangular restriction and its impact, and the dynamic interaction
between the strategic triangle and regional conflicts. The contributions to the study of the
Indochina conflicts during this period lie in the fact that the use of the model simplifies
the work of coping with such a complex subject as the involvement of the three powers in
detail within the limited space available. This approach makes it possible to obtain a
more comprehensive understanding of the regional conflict itself, highlighting the impact
of the triangular struggle to the development of the conflicts, and the risks and
opportunities of the Vietnamese Communists. In the end, the strengths and limitations of the compound model are analyzed.
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"Empires wax and wane; states cleave asunder and coalesce."

Lo Kuan-chung in Romance of Three Kingdoms

PART I. INTRODUCTION

The famous ancient Chinese military strategist Sun Zi has a well-known saying: "If you know both yourself and your enemy, you will never be defeated; if you know yourself and do not know your enemy, you will only win half of the battles; and if you know neither yourself nor your enemy, you will never win." Here, he reveals the relationship between the knowing and the result of war. This is true not only with war, but also with other human struggles. However, in studying the triangular relationship, we may find it necessary to elaborate his above-quoted saying in the following way: You will never be defeated if you also know the third party, in addition to knowing both yourself and your enemy. While running the risk of over-simplifying Sun Zi, this arrogant attempt at elaboration does in a way show the complexity of the triangular strategy. Three major powers in our world, China, the United States and the Soviet Union, find themselves involved in such a relationship. Therefore, how to use the leverage of the strategic triangle has become a lively topic of research in the field of international relations.

Even more complicated is the fact that the strategic triangle has its regional dimension: Rivalry of the great powers leads them to grabbing for regional spheres of influence while the regional powers need the support of the great powers. This interdependent relationship is a mixed blessing for both sides. By involving themselves in regional conflicts which have little bearing on their own national security, the great powers may establish their own sphere of influence, thus improving their strategic positions. While benefitting from the support of the great powers to advance their regional interests, the regional powers may have to support the global objectives of the great powers which are not of their immediate concern. This involves the concept of the great power triangle and regional conflict. This research is an effort to understand the dynamics of the great power triangle in the context of a regional conflict by using a compound triangular model.
Since American President Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972, Sino-American-Soviet triangle has attracted wide attention in the study of international relations. Therefore, there is a vast body of literature on the topic in the West. Before we can proceed to explain our triangular model, we must review the existing literature. For the convenience of our study, we have identified roughly five schools: system analysis, power politics approach, triangular nuclear deterrence, linkage politics and triangular models. As the division between those schools is not absolute and the schools are related to each other in one way or another, some scholars may be found in more than one school.

A. Triangle and International System

The first major approach to the strategic triangle can be found in the works of such important authors as Morton Kaplan, Donald Zagoria, Gerald Segal, Martin Wight, Carsten Holbraad, Ronald Yalem, John Spanier, Michael Ng-Quinn, etc., whose explanations of the formation and development of the strategic triangle are largely based on their analysis of the change of the international system. They also try to understand the relationship between stability and tripolarity in a certain international system and the dynamics of the strategic triangle.

According to Morton Kaplan, there exist basically six models of the international system, which are "balance of power" system, loose bipolar system, tight bipolar system, universal system, hierarchical system and unit veto system. Above those basic systems are a few variations of the loose bipolar system and of the unit veto system. While they seem to be more fluid than the basic systems, they are definitely worth studying because they have the potential for development.

In the very loose bipolar system, Kaplan describes conditions in which an embryonic triangle may take shape. According to him, the nations belonging to neither of the two blocs are mainly ex-colonies of the nations comprising NATO. Adopting ideologies incompatible with that of NATO, those nations try to break away from their economic troubles in order to achieve modernization. With the increase of nuclear stability, the chance of central war has decreased. This has not only led to the reduction of classical international crises but also to the increase of guerrilla and other sublimited and rare limited wars. As a result, the two blocs have been weakened. The United States and the
Soviet Union have identified more common grounds and interests; but China has emerged as a potential threat to both of them. Kaplan's research may not be directly relevant to triangular study; however, it does draw attention of other scholars to the relationship between the change of international system and the formation of the strategic triangle.

Donald Zagoria has also observed a similar progression from bipolarity to multipolarity. The centrifugal tendency of the Communist regimes was greatly reinforced by the Sino-Soviet split. There was a similar tendency in NATO, as the spectre of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe diminishes. Subsequently, the bipolar relationship was gradually replaced by a multi-lateral one. But, the triangular relationship of China, the United States and the Soviet Union was crucial in the emerging multi-polar world.

Ronald Yalem believes that "the present bipolar system is in the process of yielding to a tripolar structure composed of the United States, the Soviet Union and Communist China." Therefore, he works out a tripolar system as a supplement to those of Kaplan's, which is characterized by an inherent tendency for two actors to combine against the third: China and the United States may coalesce against the Soviet Union, China and the Soviet Union against the United States and the United States and the Soviet Union against China. This tendency can be easily activated when the interactions between two of them are more cooperative than hostile. As the number of bilateral interactions in a tripolar system triples that of a bipolar system, the chance of conflicts therefore is higher. To maintain stability in a tripolar system, each actor must operate independently of the other two without attempting to form a dyadic coalition. Each actor has also to restrict its bilateral relationships to a level necessary for maintaining a rough tripolar equilibrium. The system, however, will most likely remain continually unstable due to the absence of a "balancer" power to offset this built-in tendency or a strong supranational actor to coordinate tripolarity.

John Spanier holds an entirely opposite view on the tripolar system and stability. In his opinion, the stability of a tripolar system requires avoidance of confrontation and military clashes that may escalate into a nuclear war, nonintervention in one another's sphere of influence as well as temperate behavior and demands of each pole. Since slighting its relations with the other two poles may be unfavorable to itself, each pole is obliged to concentrate its attention on its interaction with its two rivals. There are four basic rules of behavior: firstly, to cope with number-one enemy requires collusion with number-two enemy; secondly, each pole would try to reduce collusion between the others
to a minimum; thirdly, meanwhile, it tallies with the interests of each to blackmail number-one enemy with a threat to collude with the other; and fourthly, excessive aggressiveness displayed by one pole leads to collusion of the other two.

For him, a tripolar system is likely to be stable, and probably more stable than a bipolar system, because the shift of emphasis from constant crises and rigid confrontation to flexible manoeuvre has rendered unnecessary the sensitivity to slight increase of power by any pole. While each state in a bipolar system can hardly tolerate any superiority of its adversary, a triangular pole may be able to allow some increment of power in one pole since this increment, once it becomes menacing to the other two poles, may cause the latter to coalesce. If one of the poles suffers from an aggressive pole, it will shift toward the third pole. And the third pole may be in a position to mediate the dispute because it can change the balance by joining hands with the weaker. In sum, as Spanier emphasizes, "Rational calculations of power and self-interest, not ideology, will be the basis of each pole's foreign policy."9

For Carsten Holbraad, the term "triangular system" has three different senses: first of all, it is a descriptive expression; secondly, it is used to refer to a set of ideas and principles; and thirdly, it functions as a tool of analysis. For him, "the dominant pattern of interaction in contemporary international politics may be best described as a triangular system, even though its outlines are blurred by the older dualistic pattern, which still lives on, as well as by a more complex pattern which has not yet assumed distinct shape."10

He subsequently classifies the "triangular system" into two types: the simple triangle and the complex triangle. The former contains three types of triangular relationship, i.e. concert of three, trilateral conflict, and a trilateral mixture of cooperation and conflict. In his opinion, the last one is most likely, in which three states, like the three characters in Sartre's play *Hui Clos*, move sometimes closer and other times apart without casting off their triangular relationship. In the lopsided triangular situations, two states may cooperate against one or two states have conflicts with the third playing the part of an onlooker. In his analysis, three sorts of division can be found in the Sino-American-Soviet triangle: the first constitutes a conflict between the two Communist powers and the biggest capitalist power; the second between the two have-states and one have-not state; and the third between two status quo nations and one expansionist nation.11
By the "complex triangle", Holbraad means "a triangle on each side of which one or more middle powers figure prominently". Three subsystems may be identified with each centering on a separate region dominated by a different group of major powers. These regions are different in both structure and stage of development. The one in East Asia tends to be quadruple, with Japan emerging as a more independent power while the South-Asian system remains largely bipolar due to India's reluctance to balance between China and the Soviet Union. And the European and Mid-Eastern system becomes more triangular, as the nations of the EEC, politically more independent of the United States, have improved relations with the Soviet bloc.12

In comparison with the above authors, Gerald Segal's conception of a tripolar system is much vaguer.13 According to Segal, a tripolarity is only an analytical tool for the observer to understand the interaction between the three powers rather than tangible or measurable phenomena. Triangular diplomacy is guided by national interests instead of ideology. To avoid dangerous isolation in the tripolarity, each pole seeks to collude with one of the other two so as to cope with the main adversary while preventing collusion between the other two. Each wants to be in a pivot position which has the most cooperative and least conflictive relations with the other two. The tripolar system contains a mechanism capable of regulating the interactions between the three poles.

For Martin Wight, what is really important is to distinguish between open and closed states-systems.14 By "closed system", he means a system free of outside interference, such as Italy in the fifteenth century and Germany in the nineteenth century. Most states-systems, however, have been open, with undefined bounds. A triangle or duel is best identified in a closed system.

He classifies triangles in terms of the decisiveness of conflict they result in: (1) end game, in which one of the powers has singly defeated the other two; (2) semi-final, in which two of the powers, having defeated the third in a coalition, are faced with each other in a new relationship; (3) first round, in which the three powers, having been exhausted in their inter-conflicts, run the risk of being conquered by an outsider; and (4) preliminary round, in which a coalition of the two fails to defeat the third, and a new balance will be formed.

According to Wight, the process from the U.S. post-war monopoly to duel has for the ensuing 20 years led to repeated predictions that a multiple balance will come, with China, United Europe, India, Brazil, Indonesia and Japan figuring as the potential
poles. China has been most promising among all those candidates. Nevertheless, he thinks:

For all this, there are today only two powers that qualify for the SALT talks. If the first requirement of society is political order then the most important aspect of the states-system at the present moment is that if the Russo-American duel could be converted into a firm diarchy or condominium, or if either could be eliminated without the other disappearing in the same process, the states-system would be reducible under a single authority.15

In terms of the nature of the international system, Michael Ng-Quinn holds a view similar to that of Martin Wight.16 He argues that Beijing's foreign policy and its dealings with the United States and the Soviet Union can be best explained in terms of strategic bipolarity. In the 1950s, Beijing regarded the United States as its chief enemy, which attempted to eliminate the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union. Before it could do so, the United States would be bogged down in a vast zone, comprising many capitalist, colonial and semicolonial countries in Europe, Asia and Africa. The concept of an intermediate zone raised by Mao, in Ng-quinn's opinion, does not necessarily contradict with that of bipolarity, since the zone could not be intermediate without two poles. Sino-Soviet conflict led Beijing to challenge strategic bipolarity from 1962 to 1969.

As for the Sino-American rapprochement and Beijing's Three-Worlds Theory, Ng-Quinn renders a unique interpretation. According to him, there is no such thing as the differentiation of three worlds in an operational sense; the so-called Three-Worlds theory betrays signs of a bipolar scheme. What China was advocating was a united front against the Soviet Union, which included not only the third and second world countries, but also the United States. This means that the world was again divided into two poles: the Soviet and non-Soviet. Therefore, international politics remained to the Chinese very much strategically bipolar. He further contends that since China does not possess the same capabilities as the Soviet Union and the United States, the tripolar system is merely a castle in the air.

While generally recognizing the close connection between the system and triangle, the authors in this school tend to have polarized views on such questions as the existence of a triangular system and its impact on stability. Nevertheless, the really important question, as it will be argued later in this research, should be whether China can be regarded as a pole in the strategic triangle rather than whether there exists a tripolar system or multi-polar system or even the old bipolar system. To solve this problem, we should have a better idea of pole or polarity. Moreover, the analysis of the
dynamics of triangle in this school is based on a supposedly self-contained triangular system that does not give sufficient attention to the interference of other factors.

B. The Power Politics Approach

So far, this has attracted the largest group of scholars, among whom we can find such important authors as A. Doak Barnett, Robert Sutter, Harold Hinton, William Griffith, Henry Kissinger, Allen Whiting, and Michael Yahuda. To explain the formation and development of the strategic triangle, this school focuses its attention on the change in Sino-Soviet relations. The general line of argument of this school is as follows:

The August 1968's Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia under the pretext of the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine of limited sovereignty served as an alarm bell to the Chinese that the Soviet Union might also use its superior military forces to settle its dispute with China. The Sino-Soviet border skirmishes in 1969 further enhanced the Chinese concern over the Soviet threat. To offset the perceived Soviet threat, Mao Ze-dong and Zhou En-lai found it necessary to end China's self-imposed isolation resulting from the earlier radical thrust of the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

In the view of the Chinese leadership, the only power that had sufficient military might to help China offset the Soviet pressure was the United States. Since the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, Moscow had showed some signs of concern about the possibility of Sino-American reconciliation. In this regard, China's leaders seemed to have an option of changing China's long-term antagonistic relationship with the United States as a way to reverse its unfavorable balance against the Soviet Union. At the same time, the Chinese, as Michael Yahuda has noted, had long been worried about the possibility of Soviet-American collusion against China, due to its poor relationship to both of them. They suspected that the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia had the 'tacit understanding' of the Americans, thus linking American acquiescence in the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia with Soviet acquiescence in the American war in Vietnam.

At this juncture, a significant change in American policy presented the Chinese with an opportunity. The newly-elected American President Richard Nixon began to give clear signs of reducing American commitment and military presence in Asia. The Nixon Doctrine served to alleviate the long-held Chinese perception of the American threat. This created the very circumstances that China needed to improve its relations with the United States.
In a nutshell, four factors contributed to the Sino-American rapprochement: First, the Chinese need to use Sino-American rapprochement to offset the Soviet threat against China; secondly, the signs of American withdrawal from the periphery of China; thirdly, the Chinese desire to reduce Soviet-American collusion to a minimum; and fourthly, the American intention to utilize the Sino-Soviet split. In a blunt expression of Henry Kissinger, "China needed us precisely because it did not have the strength to balance the Soviet Union by itself;" therefore, the United States should play a game between them to "give each communist power a stake in better relations with us."

Contrary to the widely-held view that the Sino-American rapprochement resulted from President Nixon's initiatives, Allen Whiting argues that the actual record shows that the strategic initiative came from China first. The Chinese were so worried about the Soviet threat that they had the urgency to push ahead with a detente with the Americans. Once the perceived Soviet threat waned in 1970-71, this urgency was also reduced. Therefore, the official versions of both China and the United States that Beijing accepted Nixon's "request" to visit China have not reflected the true picture of the start of the Sino-American detente.

As for the structural characteristics of this new strategic relationship, A. Doak Barnett draws special attention to the wording of the Sino-American Shanghai communique, in which both the Chinese and American leaders pledged that they would not seek hegemony in the Asian-Pacific region and would also oppose the attempts of any other state to do so there. The latter part of the statement, which apparently referred to the Soviet Union, was counterbalanced with an avowal of their opposition to collusions between any major powers against others. This was further strengthened by the statement that neither would enter into any agreements with the other aimed at other states. "These statements", in the words of Barnett, "were of great importance to China since they constitute an American promise not to collude with Moscow against Beijing, but they could also be interpreted as an assurance to Moscow that it should not fear U.S.-China collusion." Hence, the United States seemed to be in a favorable position in such a triangular relationship, because, as William E. Griffith points out, the United States, which had better relations with both Moscow and Beijing than either had with each other, could promote detente with both, thereby consolidating its weakened positions in Asia, Europe and the Middle East.
To further illustrate this favorable U.S. position, Harold Hinton describes the "double tilts" of both the Chinese and Soviets toward the United States. In his opinion, the most promising strategy for either the Soviet Union or China in their confrontation would be to gain American leverage against the other by improving its relations with the latter. The gradual moderation of Cold War mentality in the U.S. seemed to have made such a strategy feasible. These "double tilts" consequently led to "competitive wooing" of the United States, in which they both moderated their American policies. The best example was their much discounted commitment to North Vietnam: In spite of the American bombing and mining campaign in North Vietnam, Brezhnev decided to proceed with his summit with President Nixon while Beijing later on threatened to cut off its aid if Hanoi refused to sign an agreement with the United States.

This generally-perceived U.S. advantage in the triangle has resulted in a heated argument among American policy-makers and scholars in regard to the feasibility of playing the "China card" in which Robert Sutter identifies three schools: manipulative, non-manipulative and low-impact. The first school holds the view that the United States should play the "China card" in order to have more leverage against the Soviet Union. It believes that the escalating Sino-Soviet conflict has been a great blessing to the United States in the big-power triangular relationship and that the Americans should strengthen the weaker of the two conflicting parties by expediting U.S. arms sales and technology transfer to China so as to maintain a situation favorable to the U.S. Among this school, to name the most famous, are Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski.

The second school, holding the completely opposite view, believes that the leverage that the United States could gain by playing the "China card" is extremely limited if not dangerous. Hans Morgenthau believes that by playing "China card", the Americans would gain just the opposite of what they have wished. Instead of being frightened, the Russians would be provoked to wipe out the Chinese for the time being from the big power game. To some scholars, this "China card" can be an American dilemma. On the one hand, substantial American military assistance to China would be viewed by the Soviets as a most severe challenge, threatening the Soviet-American detente and provoking them to take preemptive action against the Chinese. On the other hand, the very basis of Sino-American cooperation would be undermined if America renounces its military assistance to China in view of Soviet sensitivities. Beijing may even be pushed into the arms of Moscow.
Scholars of the third school simply dismiss the perceived U.S. favorable position in the triangle as a myth: i.e., the United States could hardly manipulate both ways. Kenneth G. Lieberthal's conclusion in his *Sino-Soviet Conflict in the 1970s: Its Evolution and Implications for the Strategic Triangle*, is typical of this view:

There seems little chance that the United States could increase its leverage significantly in its bilateral relations with the PRC by orchestrating moves toward detente with Moscow. Indeed, should relations between Washington and Moscow become more cordial, Peking is apt to prove even less willing to bend its policies to place Sino-U.S. ties on a firmer footing. Similarly, the fact that the Sino-Soviet-U.S. triangle has been an international fact of life since 1972 has diminished the leverage the United States can gain in its relations with the Soviet Union by manipulating its relationship with Peking. Moscow has by now developed a keen sense of the limits of Sino-U.S. cooperation—limits imposed by the internal political processes of each country, by sharply differing interests concerning Taiwan, and by the fact that many U.S. allies in Asia would feel greatly dismayed if the United States were to provide aid and assistance that would permit China to increase significantly her own ability to affect events throughout the region. The remaining major outstanding issues between China and the United States are, from the Chinese side, the core problems limiting the entire relationship, and therefore in a real sense, Washington's ability to conjure up the ghost of a far-reaching Sino-U.S. relationship in front of Moscow's eyes has diminished during the mid to late 1970s.30

In sum, this school is fairly strong in observing the shift of the balance in the strategic triangle as a result of the Sino-American rapprochement, but rather weak in analyzing the structural characteristics of the triangle. As will be shown later, Sino-American rapprochement is not the beginning of the triangle, but instead marks the beginning of a U.S. pivot role in the triangle. The concept of the "China card" reveals the fact that almost all the authors have an identical goal in mind, i.e. exploring the way for the United States to take advantage of the new situation in order to best protect its interests. This stance has naturally led to biased research, leaving the treatment of both China and the Soviet Union in an unfavorable position in the triangular literature.

C. Triangular Strategic Deterrence

Strictly speaking, this is not a school, as many authors in other schools have discussed this topic in their more general analyses. Nevertheless, as triangular deterrence has occupied a specifically important position in the field of triangular studies and drawn a great deal of special research31, we classify it as a separate school for the convenience of study. While appreciating the fact that emergence of China as the third most important nuclear power has significant influence on the United States and the Soviet Union, they disagree on their evaluation of China's role in the triangular deterrence.
Richard Rosecrance views strategic deterrence in a multi-polar world as bipolar in the technical sense, because nuclear weapons have been developed in the context of alliance protection. Even China, the most independent of the new nuclear powers, has benefited from a Soviet hesitation to preempt China for fear of American involvement. Nevertheless, he claims that China constitutes a restraint on both superpowers, because conflicts between the two would undermine their security \textit{vis-à-vis} China.

Rosecrance's view on the bipolarity of the strategic deterrence in a multipolar world may be shared by many scholars, but his claim of China's stabilizing role is certainly disputable for other scholars. Leo Yueh-Yun Liu, for example, thinks that when China becomes a major nuclear power, the stability of the international system would face serious challenge due to its foreign policy objectives and its relations with other countries. Some major changes would occur, such as the diminishing restrictive power of the superpowers over other national actors, the reduced effectiveness of the existing nuclear deterrence and the decreasing roles of the universal actor like the United Nations and of the non-aligned actors.

As for what role China could play with regard to the stability of the international system, Yalem seems to be in the middle of the two opposite views. On the one hand, he contends that in comparison with trilateral deterrence, the bipolar system has apparent strategic advantage, for a stalemate is easier to achieve the fewer the poles. On the other hand, he argues that an additional nuclear power should not be greatly destabilizing, because, as Hedley Bull has pointed out, the existing bipolar stalemate can be complemented by an emerging triangular deterrence among China, the United States and the Soviet Union.

Other authors try to understand China's triangular role in the context of SALT, examining the impact of SALT on China and vice versa. The Chinese, in Michael Pillsbury's analysis, have identified three reversals in the overall strategic balance. The first shift was reflected in Mao's comment in 1957 on Soviet success in ICBM tests and Sputnik satellites that the "East wind prevails over the West wind." 1965 witnessed another shift, when Beijing denounced the American decision to deploy a limited ABM system as the best evidence of Soviet-American collusion against China. In the early 1970s, Beijing came to be aware of the danger of the superpower arms competition to the security of China and the Third World.

While the same kinds of shifts as described by Pillsbury may be observed by other authors, they would certainly disagree on some of Pillsbury's differentiation and
analysis. Barnett, for example, points out that the Chinese attack upon the Soviet-American collusion in strategic weapons can be traced back at least to 1963, when Beijing denounced the limited test ban as a U.S.-Soviet effort to prevent other states, especially China, from developing independent nuclear deterrence. While agreeing to Pillsbury's comment on Beijing's awareness of the danger of superpower contention, William Garner thinks of the thrust of Beijing's foreign policy as creating the broadest united front against a Soviet expansion. Therefore, the Chinese worried that the Soviet Union might benefit too much from SALT, emphasizing the danger of the Soviets overtaking the United States in strategic arms. And the Chinese opposed European force reductions (MBFR) mainly out of their fear that more Soviet troops would be available for deployment against China.

The impact of the China factor on SALT can not be ignored either. According to Michel Tatu, the China factor compels the two superpower to seek an agreement while promoting their respective armaments. The parity between them can hardly be achieved even at a high ceiling, because the Chinese development could draw closer to the ceiling in due course. Their options would be either to maintain their quasi-monopoly at all costs, leaving China far behind, or reach a bilateral agreement for arms control by ignoring the danger of China upsetting their calculations sooner or later. Hence the SALT dilemma. On the basis of analyzing various factors in the triangular relationship and the Chinese foreign policy, Robert Scalapino draws the similar conclusion that China will remain a negative factor to arms control in the near future.

The Soviet dilemma with respect to the China factor has been stressed as another element influencing the SALT negotiations. In the context of Sino-Soviet-American triangular deterrence, as Harry Gelber indicates, the Soviet Union has to consider three possibilities: first, Washington could seek a reconciliation with China; secondly, it could be involved in Sino-Soviet conflict; and thirdly, it could play tertius gaudens, while forcing deals on a weakened Moscow.

According to Dan Strode, this Soviet dilemma can be traced back to 1963, when Khrushchev brought pressure on China by signing the limited Test Ban Treaty. After the first Chinese nuclear test in 1964, the Soviet Union called once again for a complete test ban, involving all the nuclear powers and also asked the United States to join in retaliation against any attack by a third party, i.e. China.

This dilemma is further reflected in the SALT I agreements. The Soviet Union was allowed to keep its ABM complex around Moscow, in spite of its inability to defend
against a U.S. attack; ICBM launcher construction was frozen at 1,054 for the United States and 1,618 for the Soviet Union, the surplus of which was believed to be used to deal with China. Strode also observed the Soviet attempt to prevent the Carter administration from forming a "quasi-alliance" with China by pushing ahead with SALT II. And in view of a perceived possibility of U.S. nuclear arming of China, Brezhnev even threatened to preempt China's nuclear instalment.

With regard to the overwhelming concern for the China factor, some authors warn against the danger of its over-estimation. Barnett, for instance, indicates that it is not necessary to worry that China would achieve a first-strike ability in the immediate future nor to make a fuss at China's limited deterrent capability because it could not upset the overall balance. Moreover, China's behavior will be most likely restrained, as much as others are, by the realities of mutual deterrence. Even when China eventually achieves a credible deterrent, there is no need for panic, as the Chinese leaders may feel obliged to reevaluate their policy of arms control.43 Arthur Cox goes so far as to discourage the idea of using the China card in arms control negotiations. The high priority, in his view, should be given to bringing China into the existing arms control framework. The United States and the Soviet Union should proceed with their efforts in arms control, even if China is not involved; because they can afford substantial reduction without feeling threatened by China, as they both are far ahead in terms of strategic weapons.44

D. Triangle and the Chinese Politics

The fourth approach is unique in the sense that it focuses its attention not upon the study of the triangle itself but instead upon the linkage between Chinese domestic politics and the formation and development of the strategic triangle. The important authors in this area include Thomas Gottlieb, Kenneth Lieberthal, John Garver and Harry Harding. While generally recognizing the linkage between Chinese domestic politics and the strategic triangle, they tend to disagree on the explanation of Chinese politics and the way in which it has influenced the formation of the triangle. While challenging the traditional model of Mao dictating China's foreign policy, they project a picture of bureaucratic politics in which Mao has to balance between different factions. They are related to the power politics school in the way that they treat the change of the Chinese attitudes towards the two superpowers as a key link to the formation and development of the triangle and different from the latter in that they concentrate their efforts on the study of Chinese factional politics.
In *Chinese Foreign Policy Factionalism and the Origins of the Strategic Triangle*[^1], Thomas Gottlieb explains the origin of the Sino-Soviet-American strategic triangle by throwing light on the debate which led to the strategy of giving priority to China's national security. He identifies three factions on foreign policy in 1968-69 by using such criteria as their different views on Moscow and Washington's threat to China and the nature of Sino-Soviet conflicts and their policy proposals.

The moderates consisted of Zhou En-lai, Chen Yi, Ji Peng-fei, etc., who perceived a far greater Soviet threat than American threat to China's national security. Therefore, they strongly advocated that China normalize relations with the United States as a counterweight against the Soviet pressure. The military faction, headed by Lin Biao, differed with the moderates on almost every issue of foreign policy. For them, the United States remained the greatest threat to China. It was extremely dangerous to further provoke the Soviet Union. The "gang of four", the radical school, adheres to the policy of double objections, i.e, opposing both the imperialist America and the social-imperialist Soviet Union. According to Gottlieb, despite the fierce opposition of the military faction to Sino-American reconciliation, there was no truly pro-Soviet faction within the Chinese leadership since mid-1966:

> After mid-1966, none of the available data suggests that anyone advocated compromising with the Soviet Union on ideological issues to defuse the military threat. While there were certainly varying degrees of anti-Sovietism and different ways of expressing hostility, we found no traces of any "pro-Soviet" sentiments.^[47]

Gottlieb's argument goes as follows: Zhou En-lai, backed by Mao, began to seek a reconciliation with Washington in 1968. Because of the pressure of the other two opposing factions and Nixon's failure to make a timely response, Mao was probably obliged to change his mind. The Zhen Bao Islet clashes of March 1969 served as evidence for the moderates' evaluation, injecting a new impetus to Sino-American rapprochement.

While sharing Gottlieb's division of the three factions, John Garver identifies, on the contrary, a pro-Soviet tilt in Chinese foreign policy in 1970-71, thereby negating the common view reflected in Gottlieb's research that Beijing's chief motive for improving relations with Washington was deterring Soviet invasion, for China rejected American overtures and courted the Russians when it needed American deterrence most.[^48] He observes that Beijing began its rapprochement with the United States when the direct Soviet threat had greatly diminished. Therefore, he concludes that Beijing's aims for detente with Washington were much broader than deterrent needs.

His analysis of the pro-Soviet tilt of 1970 is derived from the study of intra-elite politics. He argues that Mao and Zhou approved the pro-Soviet tilt advocated by the military faction, hoping to undermine the strength of the latter by tactically uniting with it. The coalition between the radicals and the military faction would be weakened. Moreover, with Sino-Soviet relations improved on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence, the military faction would risk the danger of being labelled as "pro-Soviet", if it refused to apply the same principles to Sino-American relations; whereas, the moderates would not look too "pro-American" in their bid for better Sino-American ties. Contrary to the generally-held view of non-existence of the pro-Soviet faction, Garver concludes that the military faction could be regarded as truly pro-Soviet, favoring a certain degree of rapprochement with the Soviet Union while persisting in struggle against the United States.

Harry Harding depicts more rounds of debates in the period from 1973 to 1978. In Round One (1973-75), Chinese leaders tried to decide whether the "theory of three worlds", put forward by Mao and interpreted by Deng later, should be the sole basis of China's foreign policy. In Round Two, which coincided with Round One in time, the debates were conducted on the nature of the Soviet threat and a proper strategy to cope with it. Round Three (1974-77) and Round Four (1978) were more concerned with domestic politics such as the four modernizations.

Harding observes the objections of the "gang of four" to the three implications of China's new international strategy: (1) that the United States, a lesser threat to China than the Soviet Union, could be included into the united front against Soviet hegemonism, (2) that China should not encourage domestic revolutions in third world countries with different social systems, which constitute an important part of the united front; and (3) that the capitalist countries of the Second World are important allies of China in resisting Soviet expansionism. They boycotted the formal adoption of the "three-worlds theory" between 1974 and 1977. The constant debates in China's policy making process resulted in uncertainty in Chinese foreign policy in this period.

The approach via Chinese domestic politics is obviously helpful for a better understanding of the origin and development of the strategic triangle, but it is still subject to considerable uncertainty. While it is true that Chinese leaders differ on issues of Sino-Soviet and Sino-American relations, the first-hand materials on the factional disputes are limited. And analyses based on open sources may suffer from misleading nature of propaganda.
E. Triangular Model Building

Compared with the first four schools, the model building approach represents a fairly different direction, which combines the triangular research with other sciences, such as sociology and mathematics. Small in number, this school is attracting increasing attention from scholars. Among various triangular models, we can basically distinguish two main types: sociological triadic model and triadic model of states.

a. Sociological Triadic Model

The sociological triadic model can be regarded as the pioneer of triadic model building in the field of international relations. By studying triadic relationships of persons, sociologists try to come to some generalizations which may be applicable to situations in which interactions are conducted between larger units like political parties and states.50

Vinacke-Arkoff's pachisi experiment represents an early effort in this direction51, in which three players, are involved with each of them assigned a "weight" to reflect an uneven power distribution (see Figure 1-1). The board has sixty-seven spaces numbered consecutively; a single die is thrown instead of a pair; and at each move the player advances his marker a number of spaces equal to the number thrown times his assigned weight. The game, an instrument for studying the effect of any initial power distribution on the formation of coalitions in triads, is unusual in that every player moves on every throw of the die. All together, six types of coalitions are predicted on the basis of the assigned weights, as are shown in Figure 1-1. In the experiment, each group of their students played 18 games and repeated six power distributions in random sequence. The following table illustrates the results obtained by Vinacke and Arkoff:

Table 1-1. Coalitions Formed in the Six Types of Power Patterns in Triads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Type 1 1-1-1</th>
<th>Type 2 3-2-2</th>
<th>Type 3 1-2-2</th>
<th>Type 4 3-1-1</th>
<th>Type 5 4-3-2</th>
<th>Type 6 4-2-1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Coalition</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
<td>&lt;.10</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
<td>&lt;.70</td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
<td>&lt;.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1-1. Vinacke and Arkoff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Assigned Weights</th>
<th>Predicted Coalition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Type 1  | A = 1
         | B = 1
         | C = 1             | Any |
| Type 2  | A = 3
         | B = 2
         | C = 2             | BC  |
| Type 3  | A = 1
         | B = 2
         | C = 2             | AR or AC |
| Type 4  | A = 3
         | B = 1
         | C = 1             | None |
| Type 5  | A = 4
         | B = 3
         | C = 2             | AC or BC |
| Type 6  | A = 4
         | B = 2
         | C = 1             | None |

Source: After Vinacke and Arkoff, *op.cit.*
Although the results correspond generally to the theoretical expectations, there are some notable exceptions, as, for example, in Type 2 game, in which BC coalition is proved in 64 of the 89 games played, with a 28 percent deviation. In the real world, more exceptions can be found to various predictions in their game models. Nevertheless, the experiment is a good pioneer project for understanding various triangular mechanisms.

Theodore Caplow's model of eight basic types of triads (see Figure 1-2) has analyzed various aspects of triangular inter-personal relationships which may be quite beneficial to scholars of international relations in their understanding of triangles among states. According to him, structural changes in those eight types of triads may take place under three situations. Under a *continuous* situation, a coalition is formed or dissolved for a number of purposes, and its process is characterized by informality, spontaneity and irregularity. The triad is subject to internal divisions, though there is a certain degree of unity in it. While one coalition may hold a dominant position throughout, the other two coalitions can also be formed at a suitable juncture. Under an *episodic* situation, a coalition is to take shape at predictable intervals for the purpose of securing advantage in a regulated contest. As soon as the goal has been achieved, the coalition dissolves. Each episode may leave some impact upon the ensuing development. And under a *terminal* situation, a coalition is formed because all actors in a triad are reluctant to coexist with the other two, therefore attempting to eliminate them. In a nutshell, each situation gives rise to a different result upon the formation of a coalition. See the following table:

**Table 1-2. Expected Coalitions in Triads**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Continuous</th>
<th>Episodic</th>
<th>Terminal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>A=B=C</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td>Any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>A&gt;B, B=C, A&lt;(B+C)</td>
<td>BC</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>A&lt;B, B=C</td>
<td>AB or AC</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>A&gt;(B+C), B=C</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>A&gt;B&gt;C, A&lt;(B+C)</td>
<td>BC or AC</td>
<td>Any</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>A&gt;B&gt;C, A&gt;(B+C)</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>A&gt;B&gt;C, A=(B+C)</td>
<td>AB or AC</td>
<td>AB or AC</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>A=(B+C), B=C</td>
<td>AB or AC</td>
<td>AB or AC</td>
<td>BC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Theodore Caplow, op. cit., p. 290.

*Figure 1-2. Theodore Caplow*
Figure 1-2. Theodore Caplow

Type 1
A = B = C

Type 2
A > B
B = C
A < (B+C)

Type 3
A < B
B = C

Type 4
A > (B+C)
B = C

Type 5
A > B > C
A < (B+C)

Type 6
A > B > C
A > (B+C)

Type 7
A > B > C
A = (B+C)

Type 8
A = (B+C)
B = C

b. Triadic Model of States

In comparison with triadic inter-personal interactions studied by sociologists, triadic models of states appear to be more complicated, and thereby more disputable and uncertain. Having benefited from the models of sociologists, scholars of international relations put their emphasis on the study of symmetry and asymmetry of triangular relationships of states. And whatever we have in this area marks only the beginning.

An early effort in this direction was made by P. Terry Hopmann, who, by using Theodore Newcomb's A-B-X model of interpersonal communication, tries to understand triadic behavior of states.\(^5\) If both A and B have symmetrical relations with X (the term

"symmetrical" here means either both "positive" or both "negative"), relations between A and B should also be positive, because the system is in balance. Nevertheless, if their relations with X are not symmetrical, their relationship with each other must be negative, as the system is not balanced.

These models are obviously based on the general rules of non-competitive inter-personal relations. When a person is on extremely good term with someone, he will not usually be on extremely bad term with the latter's friend. Nor will he usually like very much someone who is the enemy of his closest friend. But in a competitive inter-personal relationship, the rules might be just the opposite. In a triangular love affair, for example, two men may fall in love with one woman while hating each other, because they both fear losing the woman in their competition. The more positive the two men's relationship with the woman is, the more negative their mutual relationship might be. In another situation, suppose A and B and X have a negative relationship with each other. It is not right to exclude the competitive character of communications in studying inter-state triangular relationship.

\[\text{Figure 1-3}\]

\[\text{Figure 1-4}\]
Patterns of Asymmetry in Triads, adapted from Steven J. Grams, "The Search for Structural Order in the International System: Some Models and Preliminary Results", *International Studies Quarterly* 13 (September 1969), p. 256. An arrow represents the direction of asymmetry for linked dyad (AB or BC or CA). A→B in forms 2, for instance, indicates that the relationship between A and B is asymmetrical with the direction of asymmetry being from A to B. On the other hand, two arrows going in opposite directions, as in B<=>C and A<=>C in form 2, indicate a symmetrical relationship between the two actors. A symmetrical linkage indicates a balanced relationship between two actors, while an asymmetrical linkage an imbalanced relationship.
For Steven Brams, all human behavior, no matter whether interpersonal or international, is partly relational; i.e. most of the actions of people and nations are responsive to how others have acted or are expected to act. His model attempts to understand external relationships between actors in a triad in terms of symmetry or asymmetry (See Figure 1-5). Brams describes twenty-seven possible ways of combining three poles in a triad, which he calls "indecomposable forms". The problem is, as he points out, that the model is unsatisfactory when applied to data on international visits in an attempt to predict patterns of influence relationships in the international system. Therefore, this approach, even in his eyes, seems to have a long way to go.

In comparison with both Hopmann's and Bram's models, Lowell Dittmer's game model seems to be much simpler. According to Dittmer, the structure of the state system causes states to cultivate patterned relationships with one another, with their interactions being conducted in the way of transaction and exchange. Owing to their differences in size, population, economic strength, etc., the exchanges between states may be symmetrical or asymmetrical, positive or negative, and are influenced by such variables as the behavior of the two actors in a bilateral relationship, the power ratio between the two actors and their respective relationship with a third actor.

**Figure 1-6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Balance</th>
<th>symmetrical</th>
<th>asymmetrical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Type 1 indicates a mutually beneficial exchange of equal values, such as balanced trade; type 2 may be deterrence or stalemate; type 3 involves a dependent relationship and unequal trade; and type 4 may include blackmail or even conquest.


Dittmer has observed three triadic patterns of exchange relationship: the "*menage a trois*", which is characterized by symmetrical amities among all three actors; the "romantic triangle", which consists of amity between one "pivot" actor and two "wing"
actors, but enmity between the latter; and the "stable marriage", in which two actors enjoy amity with each other while having an enmity against the third. In Dittmer's analysis of the Sino-American-Soviet triangle, the period of 1949-1960 marked a stable marriage between Moscow and Beijing. Later on, with U.S.-Soviet detente and Sino-Soviet polemics, the stable marriage was changed into a kind of stable affair, or competitive-collusive relationship. From 1970 to 1978, a romantic triangular relationship took shape when Beijing sought a rapprochement with Washington to cope with the Soviet pressure. See the following figures:

Figure 1-7


(3) 1970-78: Romantic Triangle
Source: Lowell Dittmer, op. cit.

John Hunter's model of the arms race explores the Sino-American-Soviet triangular relationship from a slightly different angle. His research is based on the famous Luce and Raiffa assumption of n-person games that three-person games are fundamentally unstable, because any two of them can form a coalition against the third. The three models he uses in his study include the model of the Hobbesian all-against-all race, the model of two-nation coalitions against one and the model of one nation being secretly allied with each of the other two.

He assumes that all nations believe that a war between equals may destroy both sides and that the enemy will not attack without some margin of strength over us. Therefore, we feel threatened if our enemy enjoys the margin to attack us, and we feel safe if he does not. Therefore, we increase our arms expenditure to the extent that we feel threatened while decreasing our expenditures to the extent that we feel safe. Hence his general model which is in the form of an equation:
our = a { enemy - (our + margin)} = a (enemy-our-margin) (For more details of the equation, see footnote58)

The equation is subsequently applied to the three models. In the first situation, the model predicts an infinitely explosive arms race as each nation fears an alliance of the other two. In the second situation, an initial increase is predicted. As soon as the weaker side reaches parity, there will be a mutual deescalation. In the third situation, a two-sided arms race will be conducted between the other two nations. As soon as parity is reached, there will be a mutual deescalation. It can be concluded that two-way arms races would not infinitely escalate if it were not for the fear of third party alliances. This conclusion coincides in a way with Tatu's analysis on the superpower dilemmas vis-à-vis the China factor. It also sheds light upon the characteristics of triangular relationships in general.

There is no doubt that model-building is an important step towards understanding the structural characteristics of triangle. The strong point of model-building, however, is also its Achilles' heel, i.e. abstraction. While the triangular figure seems to be theoretically simple, its implications are much more complex than Euclidean geometry would suggest; because the triangle exists in the manner in which it is perceived from each apex. In the real world, no triangle, no matter whether at personal or state level, can function as a pure triangle is expected to. To overcome this weakness, it is necessary to study the limitations of the triangular rule developed under an abstract situation, as we shall do in the following chapter.

In sum, the five schools discussed above are not only different from each other but also related to each other in one way or another. The present studies on the strategic triangle are comparable to the scholastic situation of China's period of the Spring-Autumn and Warring States, in which "a hundred flowers bloomed and a hundred schools of thoughts contended". While different schools have different arguments and cover different aspects of the strategic triangle, they also complement each other, pushing ahead with the research in this area. With the passage of time, more books and papers will undoubtedly be written. The study of the strategic triangle will continue to prosper on controversy.
CHAPTER 2. A COMPOUND MODEL OF THE STRATEGIC TRIANGLE

The above review of the literature on the strategic triangle has brought home to us that the studies of triangle have not only been highly controversial but have also caused vagueness and confusion about the concept of the triangle. It seems to us that the following four aspects need further clarification: (1), While most of the authors agree that a triangular relationship has existed among China, the United States and the Soviet Union, they differ in their understanding as to when the strategic triangle took shape. (2), Although various aspects of triangular communications have been discussed respectively by various schools, there is a serious lack of synthetic study on the structural characteristics of the strategic triangle. (3), The checks and balances among the three powers at global level have been abundantly analyzed, but studies on the structural inter-relationships of the strategic triangle and regional conflicts are still insufficient. (4), Various ways as to how to maximize American interests within the framework of the strategic triangle have been enthusiastically explored, whereas China, the weakest pole, has not received due attention with regard to its interests in the existing literature.

A. A Tentative Definition for Polarity

Since the historic visit of President Nixon to China, most scholars of international relations have come to recognize the importance of studying the strategic triangle, but have differed from each other as to when this triangle took shape. For some authors, the triangular patterns of China, the Soviet Union and the United States can be observed as early as the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, and even earlier than that. Others would observe the formation of the triangle as late as the beginning of Sino-American rapprochement in the early 1970s. Still others would think that the triangle might take shape somewhere in between. To ascertain the time as to when the strategic triangle took shape, we have to define the poles of the strategic triangle.

Various authors have used the term "polarity" differently; and there are also several ways of explaining the concept of polarity and power. Apparently, a polar state possesses great power, which is, in the words of Morgenthau, "able to play a major role in international politics." But, power is a vague concept, with only some of its components easily quantifiable. Tangible elements of power include population, territory, natural resources and industrial capacity, agricultural capacity, and military strength and mobility. Intangible elements of power include leadership and personality,
bureaucratic-organization efficiency, type of government, societal cohesiveness, reputation, foreign support and dependency, accidents, etc. Ray S. Cline has even worked out a useful way to measure the concept of power, which is in the form of a formula: \( P_p = (C+E+M) \times (S+W) \). \( P_p \) means perceived power; \( C \) critical mass, i.e. population and territory; \( E \) economic capability; \( M \) military capability; \( S \) strategic purpose; and \( W \) will to pursue national strategy. Nevertheless, intangible factors such as the will to pursue national strategy elude easy measurement. It is no wonder that no one has been totally successful in defining power.

To avoid unnecessary complexity, some authors use only military power as a criterion to define a pole. Michael Haas, for example, depicts a pole "as a militarily significant cluster of units with an international arena." But it is still difficult to set a cut-off point between a pole and a non-pole power. Britain, France, India, Vietnam, even small Israel, all possess significant military strength, but none of them is generally regarded as a polar actor. Others would add nuclear capability as an additional criterion. Although few powers can be located in this category, the criterion also fails to set a clear cut-off point between a pole and non-pole actor. At the other extreme, a pole is defined as a military power, which, first of all, possesses the second-strike capability to strike core territories of their adversaries, secondly, maintains large numbers of troops at home and abroad, and thirdly, has many military and quasi-military alliances with other states. According to this standard, only the two superpowers are qualified as poles.

Since our concern is not with the number of poles in the existing international system but rather with the qualification of a pole in the strategic triangle, the concept of pole here is used in a much restricted sense. To constitute such a pole, one must be an independent power with significant strategic weight. A pole in the strategic triangle, therefore, can be defined as an independent nuclear power, which can pose a threat to either or both of the two superpowers and change the basic balance of a geographic area that is not merely its immediate neighbor.

By "independent", we mean that the nuclear power not only has an independent ability to develop its nuclear industry which secures it from any sort of blackmail, but also an independent international posture in the world political arena. Among the existing nuclear powers, the Soviet Union, the United States and China obviously fall into this category. Although both Britain and France have an independent ability to produce nuclear bombs and other advanced weapons, their independent international
posture is questioned, as they still belong politically to the western bloc. Britain is a full member of NATO; whereas, France, though formally withdrawn from the peacetime military structure of NATO, is still coordinating strategically with NATO. India's independence is compromised as it is heavily dependent upon the Soviet Union for advanced military technology and equipment.

Our second operational definition concerns ability "to pose a threat to either or both of the superpowers and change the basic balance of a geographic area that is not merely of its immediate neighbor." Britain, France and India do not pose a serious threat to the two superpowers in terms of their nuclear system. While both Britain and France have the ability to fight distant wars, as happened in the Falkland Islands War and Chad Civil War, they can hardly change the basic balance of an area that is not merely their immediate neighbor. And India can merely pose a threat to its immediate neighbors, such as China, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, having no direct threat to either of the two superpowers nor the ability to influence the basic balance in a geographic area other than the sub-continent and its vicinity.

China's threat to the two superpowers can be found from their reactions to the development of China's nuclear system. It was reported that beginning from the mid-1960s, the Soviet Union continued to improve the capability of its far-eastern forces by supplying them with sophisticated weapons such as missiles and surface-to-surface nuclear tipped rockets in order to cope with the perceived Chinese threat.72 The Russians have even thought of preventive strikes at China's nuclear installations.73 The initial Chinese nuclear capability was also regarded as a threat to the United States. A Chinese-oriented ABM deployment and actual production of the system began in 1967. According to Robert S. McNamara, the former U.S. defense secretary, the light deployment of U.S. ABMs was meant to "deter China from nuclear blackmail."74 As for China's military weight in the balance patterns of the areas both around and far away from China, Raju G.C. Thomas has the following depiction:

While its ability to influence politics and military balances in Africa or Latin America is negligible, China's foreign and defense politics clearly affect the regions of Asia and Europe. Nearly every Asian state must consider China's military posture. China, for instance, could tilt the military balance between India and Pakistan, between North and South Korea, or between Vietnam and its Southeast Asian neighbors. It could threaten the security of Japan and Taiwan. Some countries such as North Korea and Pakistan may seek to invite Chinese military support to deal with their more powerful regional rivals, South Korea and India. In other instances, such as those of Taiwan, Vietnam and India, the issues and the threats are more direct. These states have unresolved territorial or political differences with China and must take into account the possibility that the Chinese government may attempt to resolve these issues
through military means. Thus the size and central location of China makes almost every Asian state take note of Beijing's military posture. Similarly, China's military power may affect the Euro-strategic military balance between NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries. In the case of Europe, it is Beijing's ability to draw and pin down Soviet forces in Asia that makes China important in European military calculations.75

Apparently, China can be regarded as a pole power in the strategic triangle; but still, it is unwise to argue that China constitutes an equally important pole in the triangular relationship, nonetheless, it is beyond doubt the third most important force in the world, even in the eyes of both the Soviet Union and the United States.76 According to the operational definition of a pole discussed above, the formation period of the Sino-American-Soviet strategic triangle could be around 1964-65.

Politically, 1964-65 witnessed the transition of Sino-Soviet polemics within alliance to the thorough break-up of the Sino-Soviet alliance, which de facto was no longer existent in the eyes of the Chinese as a result of Soviet signing of the 1963 Test Ban Treaty.77 If the Chinese had hoped that the change in the Soviet leadership would restore Sino-Soviet comradely relations, the fall of Khrushchev in 1964 shattered this dream. In response to Chinese greetings, the new Soviet leadership told the Chinese that "there was not a shade of difference between themselves and Khrushchev on the question of the international Communist movement or of relations with China."78 The Chinese leadership, as Yahuda points out, was then convinced that the Soviet Union had gone beyond the stage of revisionism to that of a counter-revolutionary power. China was prepared to stand alone as a revolutionary fortress with the people of the world.79 This new stance was reflected in the long programmatic statement of November 11 1965, entitled "Refutation of the New Leaders of the CPSU on 'United Action'," in which a united front was advocated in the developed and undeveloped world for the struggle against both the United States and the Soviet Union as well as all reactionaries.80 Moreover, 1964-65 witnessed the birth of China's nuclear power, which would break the monopoly of nuclear weapons by the superpowers. The emergence of China as an independent nuclear power posed a serious challenge to the traditional strategic pattern, which neither the Soviet Union nor the United States could ignore. As already analyzed above, the potential threat of China was subsequently felt by the two superpowers, thereby forcing them to adopt a series of measures from the mid-1960s on to cope with this perceived threat. It was therefore during 1964-65 that the strategic triangle began to take shape.
B. Model Building

As the review of the literature has shown, we have, on the one hand, a body of research devoted to the understanding of the triangular manoeuvre, which lacks in the structural study of the strategic triangle; on the other hand, a number of attempts to understand the structural characteristics of a triangular relationship by resorting to abstract models, which fail to take into consideration various interfering factors that exist in the real world. A bridge is obviously needed to combine the two.

In order to better understand the structural characteristics of the strategic triangle in a non-abstract context and the relationship between the strategic triangle and regional conflicts, we have built a compound model of triangle. The advantage of using a model, as Joseph Frankel points out, lies in the fact that a model simplifies reality without needing to answer the strict criteria of a theory and helps us to organize the field, handling its major problems in a convenient way. With the assistance of a model, we are able to examine a topic from a specific angle, thus avoiding complexity. Most importantly, we can thereby systematize and clarify our approach without losing the benefit of alternative angles.

a. The Shape of the Strategic Triangle

According to Martin Wight, the ideal characteristics of a triangle at state level are three: (1) The existence of a state-system. (2) Three great powers of about equal strength within the system come to possess respectively enough power to dominate the rest of the world in the absence of the other two. (3) With mutual unremitting suspicion, tension, hostility, no coalition, even a temporary one, can be formed between any two of the three great powers. The strategic triangle of China, the United States and the Soviet Union is obviously characterized in a less ideal way.

First of all, the Sino-American-Soviet triangle does not consist of three poles of equal strength. With China much weaker than either of the two superpowers which are about equal in terms of strategical weight, the strategic triangle more or less takes the

\[ B = C, A < B \]

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Figure 1-8
shape of Type 3 of Caplow's eight types of triads. According to Caplow, A in the continuous situation of Type 3 can strengthen his position by forming a coalition with either B or C and will in turn be welcomed as an ally by either B or C. On the other hand, if B forms a coalition with C, he does not really improve his pre-coalition position in which he is equal to C and superior to A. His only motive to join C is to prevent the formation of an A-C coalition. On the other hand, C will have the same approach as B, preferring A to B as an ally. Therefore, there are only two likely coalitions, AB and AC. Nonetheless, it is impossible for either A or B or C to win a particular contest without joining forces with one of the other two in the episodic situation. As they are equally strong in this sense, it makes no difference that B and C are each stronger than A. A coalition can be successfully made between any two of the three. With the passage of many episodes, all the possible coalitions are likely to take place. But in the terminal situation, the only likely coalition is between B and C, which achieves a dyadic equilibrium after partitioning A. Without an unequal division of spoils which is to bring up A to the strength of his partner, A has no good reason to form a coalition with either B or C; because he will easily fall prey to his partner after the triad becomes a dyad.

Caplow's point is clear that situations study is crucial to this kind of triangle. One difficulty is to set a cut-off point for different situations, because one situation contains the factors of another situation. Moreover, Caplow's propositions sound a bit too rigid, as even in the continuous situation, there is always a likelihood for the two strong to coalesce to deal with the weak and in the terminal situations, there exists the possibility of A forming a coalition with either B or C for the purpose of coping with the pressure of the rest. But one thing is clear that the tendency towards a coalition or collusion between two of the three poles and the fear of this tendency in each pole constitute the main dynamic of the triangle (Proposition 1).

Another important point is that A is generally in a more delicate position than the other two, simply because A is much weaker and more vulnerable single-handedly. But the status of the weak pole is not absolutely unfavorable. On a one-to-one basis, the weak pole is obviously in a vulnerable position; but in certain triangular situations, the weak pole may have its position greatly strengthened through dexterous manipulation. According to Georg Simmel, the weak person in a triad, which contains two strong players, can benefit far out of proportion to his real power when he aligns himself with one of the two much more powerful players. And this benefit can be even more conspicuous if the two strong players are locked in contention.
the weak pole's position in a triangular situation can be significantly improved through manipulation. We could thereby expect that the weak pole in a triangle that contains two strong poles is not only the most susceptible to the impact of balance shift in the triangle, but also able to benefit far out of proportion to its real power through triangulation (Proposition 2).

In order to better understand various positions in which the weak pole may be located and its options, we would examine Sheldon Stryker and George Psathas' pachisi triadic game series of Caplow's Type Three, which involve four series of games with each leading to different results for the weak pole (see Figure 1-9). In the first series, all three coalitions were allowed. Two strong players would choose the weak player twice as often as they choose each other, on the condition that the weak player should be willing to accept a lesser share of the prize. The implication of this game therefore was that the weak pole should accept its inferior position to either of the other two poles. Only in this way could the weak pole avoid or significantly reduce the chance of a B-C coalition against it. A's average share of the prize was 34%. In the second series, C alone was the chooser with A having problems with B. A was chosen two out of three times on the same terms. Under such a situation, A could easily be blackmailed by C. And C was located in the most favorable position—the tertius gaudens, which benefited from the contentions between A and B. A's average share of the prize was 35%.

In the third series, A assumed the tertius gaudens, which was held by C in the second series. A was clearly in the strongest position, as B and C had to seek a coalition with A. Considering the fact that A was the weakest of the three, A could benefit much more than either B and C in obtaining this position. A's average share of the prize was 53%, the highest among the four series. In the fourth series in which B had antagonistic relations with both A and C, A and C had to form coalition with each other to fight against B. As long as B was not eliminated, A might benefit from its coalition with C, as the latter had the incentive to keep A within the coalition by adopting a more lenient policy to A. Most of the A's in the experiment managed to negotiate an approximately even division with C. But still in this coalition, A was more dependent upon C than C dependent upon A, because A was much weaker than B in a single-handed contention.

The Stryker-Psathas' experiment illustrates that the relative strength of each pole, especially the weakest pole, can be significantly influenced by the triangular position each pole assumes. Here comes the concept of a pivot power, which, according to Gerald Segal, is one which has "the most cooperative and least conflictive relations with the
Figure 1-9. The Stryker-Psathas Game.

First Series

Condition: Any coalition allowed

Outcome: Equal frequency of AB, BC, and AC coalitions

Second Series

Condition: AB prohibited

Outcome: AC coalition two out of three times

Third Series

Condition: BC prohibited

Outcome: AB and AC coalitions

Fourth Series

Condition: AB and BC prohibited

Outcome: AC coalition in every game

other two members of the triad and desires to retain it if not enhance its co-operative relationship."87 The concept of triangular leverage highlights the significance of manipulations within the triangle. The tertius gaudens is, of course, not reserved only for the weak pole, because any one of the three poles can achieve this position, as C is in the second series. And the two strong poles also have the incentive to improve their triangular position. Therefore, we can expect that each pole wants to triangulate itself into a better position, and whenever possible, tries to get and keep the leverage of the pivot, which is based on competitive wooing by the other two mutually conflicting poles (Proposition 3).

With this proposition, we hope to understand the triangulations and triangular leverage of the three poles in general, and the triangular positions of the weak pole in particular. There are two reasons for the special interest in the positions of the weak pole: First, the weak pole in Caplow's type 3 commands more study, since it is in the most unstable position; Secondly, the existing literature is filled with arguments as to how to play "the China card" from an American stand-point, because the overwhelming majority of the scholars covering this topic are Americans.

Apparently to best protect itself, the weak must assume the pivotal role in the triangle. To do so, it must not form a coalition with either of the two strong poles for the purpose of eliminating the other, because it would fall prey to its stronger partner when the third is wiped out; but it must not give up its right to coalesce temporarily with either of the two strong poles for the purpose of weakening the one that is more threatening to its own security or to the balance of the triangle.

The Red Cliff war in China's Three Kingdoms period in the third century is a classical example in which the weak succeeded in strengthening itself by using triangular mechanism.88 The rapid development of Cao Cao's force threatened to destroy the balance in China, leaving both Sun Quan and Liu Bei in danger. Zhu Ge-liang, the military adviser of Liu Bei, knew that Liu Bei must form a temporary coalition with Sun Quan in order to save himself, but also knew that Cao's life should be spared if he was defeated in the planned fire attack at the Red Cliff. For Sun was much stronger than Liu at that time and he would turn his forces to crush Liu immediately. But if Cao could pull back to his northern base, Sun had to keep good relations with Liu because there was still Cao's threat in the north. Therefore, Zhu Ge-liang appointed General Guan Yu to guard a narrow pass which Cao had to cross on his way of retreat. As Guan had special personal relations with Cao, he would for certain set Cao free in defiance of Zhu Ge-
liang's orders; and because of his special brotherhood with Liu Bei, Zhu Ge-liang had good reason to excuse him. Cao Cao thus escaped to the North and rallied his forces. Sun Quan consolidated his position in the South while Liu Bei seized some territories in the West. And Liu survived in the West.

The episode not only serves as an evidence that the weak can turn the unfavorable into the favorable through triangular manipulation, but also demonstrates that triangular strategy is not new for the Chinese. The early attempts of the Chinese Communists to play a triangular game, though not successful, can be traced back to the period of 1944-46. When the Chinese Communists were to take over power in 1949, Zhou En-lai allegedly asked the U.S. for assistance so that China could function as an intermediary between the United States and the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, the Chinese triangular strategy, lacking in theoretical justification, has long been vague and uncertain. With the help of the compound model of triangle, we could hopefully better understand China's options and limitations in the strategic triangle at both global and regional levels; and this, in turn, may contribute to the study of triadic models in general and Caplow's type 3 triad in particular.

b. The Restriction of the Strategic Triangle

Another difficulty is that the three situations are still too abstract to be used to analyze the strategic triangle. In the initial stage of the triangle, for example, China adopted the strategy of two oppositions--against both the United States and the Soviet Union. It is difficult for any of the three situations to explain the weak pole China's behavior. Apparently, other factors are involved to influence the rule of triangle. To understand how the triangle is restricted, we introduce the concept of incompatible national role conceptions of a state as a major factor contributing to the restriction of the strategic triangle. The conflicts of those incompatible national role conceptions usually result in the discounting of each individual national role conception, thus making the behavior patterns of a state more complicated.

According to K.J. Holsti, a national role conception is "the policy maker's definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules, and actions suitable to their states, and of the functions their state should perform in a variety of geographic and issue settings." It reflects basic likes, dislikes, attitudes towards the external world, and systemic, geographic and economic variables. A national role conception not only embodies the general or specific objective of a state in a region or in the world, but also guides the actions of a state under specific circumstances. Therefore, a state may have
various national role conceptions in a certain period; when the situation changes, national role conceptions may be also subject to change.

Figure 1-10. Role Theory and Foreign Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foreign policy role performance (decisions and actions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policymakers' national role conceptions → Nation's status ← Alter's role prescriptions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \text{Sources of} \]

- \text{Locations, resources of state capabilities, socio-economic needs, national values, ideology, traditional roles, public opinion, personality, political needs}

\[ \text{Sources of} \]

- \text{System structure, system-wide values, general legal principles, treaty commitments, informal understandings, world opinion}


In a study of foreign policies of seventy-one states in a three year period, Holsti has identified some seventeen distinct role conceptions, which are: bastion of revolution/liberator; regional leader; regional protector; active independent; liberation supporter; anti-imperialist agent; defender of the faith; mediator-integrator; regional-sub-system collaborator; developer; bridge; faithful ally; independent; example; internal development; isolate; and protectee. His study also shows that the average number of role conceptions per country was 4.6. His hypothesis is that the more active a state is in international affairs, the more national role conceptions will be perceived by its policy makers. Thus, all of the major powers have five or more role conceptions. The conflicts of various incompatible national role conceptions of a state lead to either a shift from
one national role conception to another or to the compromise of the various national role conceptions, i.e., the discounting of certain individual role conceptions.

In the Sino-American-Soviet strategic triangle, each power has not only to take into consideration its national role conception identified in this triangular relationship but also to balance its triangular national role conception with its other national role conceptions. This means that none of them can behave strictly according to their respective triangular national role conception. Therefore, their triangular pattern is at best a mixture of triangular manoeuvre and actions guided by other national role conceptions; and this kind of triangle can be called restricted.

China's behavioral patterns in the initial stage of the strategic triangle best illustrate this point. From 1965 to 1968, the Chinese national conceptions as faith defender, bastion of socialism, and anti-imperialist agent were strong enough to hinder the development and performance of China's triangular national role conception. The result of this national role conflict was that China adhered adamantly to a policy of double oppositions directed against both superpowers while preaching world revolution, thus leaving itself in a dangerously isolated position. It was not until the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia of 1968 and the Sino-Soviet military conflict of 1969 that the Chinese triangular national role conception began to gain ground due to the drastic deterioration of China's security circumstances.

We could hereby expect that the strategic triangle is an inherently restricted triangle, with the degree of its restriction varying in different situations (Proposition 4). The more restricted the strategic triangle is, the less effective the triangulation and the pivot leverage would be; and the less restricted the strategic triangle is, the more effective the triangulation and the pivot leverage would be (Proposition 5). This means that the three actors in the strategic triangle do not necessarily always behave according to the rule of a triangle. When other national role conceptions of one pole become stronger, its interactions with the other two poles will be less triangular. When other national role conceptions of all three poles become stronger, their triangular role conceptions will be weaker, and the strategic triangle will be more restricted. The restrictive factors, of course, are not limited to different national role conceptions. Among others, closely connected to the concept of national role conceptions are the impact of domestic politics, the formation of various national role conceptions are heavily influenced by domestic politics. For the convenience of our study, we would concentrate our efforts on the restrictive
effect of these two closely-related factors—national role conceptions and domestic politics. This concept of restriction helps us not only to explain the complexity of triangular manoeuvre between the three powers and but also to understand better the structural inter-relationship between the strategic triangle and regional conflict (see the compound model in the next section).

c. The Compoundness of the Strategic Triangle

The complexity of the strategic triangle also lies in its involvement of small regional actors. Contrary to the argument that small regional actors are helpless victims of the big powers, they lose no time in grabbing the opportunities emerging from the nature of any given international system, trying to manipulate the contests between the great powers to their own benefit, and thereby exerting a substantial impact upon the system itself. To better understand the structural inter-relationship between the strategic triangle and regional conflicts, we have created a compound model of triangle, whose standard form is as follows:

Figure 1-11.

O represents small actors in the focus of contention of the three powers, A China, B the United States and C the Soviet Union.

From the model, we can see that there are three small triangles inside the triangle ABC. In its standard form, O is located in the middle; therefore, the three small triangles are isosceles. Theoretically, O enjoys equal leverages with three poles, thereby finding itself in the most advantageous position in the standard triangular form. But the leverage that O enjoys is also influenced by the structural characteristics of the triangle ABC. When the latter is less restricted, the leverage that O enjoys should be weaker. This situation may occur when the three big powers, more concerned with their strategic interests at global level, are willing to make compromises at the expense of small actors in their focus of contention at regional level. As Michael Handel comments, "when the chips are down and long-range interests of the highest importance are involved, the great powers will not hesitate to sacrifice their weak allies." But when the triangle
ABC is more restricted, O supposedly enjoys more leverage \textit{vis-à-vis} three poles. That means that the state in the focus of the big powers' contention may utilize their contradictions to its own ends.

In reality, O normally will not be fixed in the exact middle point, but move in an area between the three poles. In those varied positions, O may enjoy good leverage with two of the three poles or with only one of them while maintaining certain leverage with the rest. This means that the state in the focus of big powers' contention may rely on two powers to resist the third without giving up its independent ground, a leverage for the third power, because the third may hope to make a compromise in return for its more independent stance. The compound model may also take the following forms:

\textit{Figure 1-12.}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure.png}
\end{center}

O may be at any one pole.

In this form, O belongs to a part of any one pole, thus losing much of its triangular leverage or have no leverage at all. Obviously, this position represents a nightmare for O, as it attaches its fate to one pole. In the terminology of international relations, this kind of state may be called "client", "protectorate", "puppet state", "satellite", or "vassal", according to the nature of its relationships with the great powers.\textsuperscript{96} Besides its lack of leverage with the big powers, its legitimacy may be seriously undermined by its dependence upon an outside power for survival. The presence of a large number of foreign troops on its soil may threaten the cultural integrity of the weak state\textsuperscript{100} and the legitimacy of the government. To improve its position, O needs to move back towards the middle.

In dealing with the relationship between the strategic triangle and regional conflicts, one point needs to be further clarified: i.e., the strength of each pole at global and regional level may be significantly different. For example, a conflict, which is geographically close to the weak pole, may enhance its weight in the triangle \textit{vis-à-vis} this particular conflict, though its general strategic weight remains low. Other factors may also contribute to such a difference. For example, the big power triangle in Figure 1-13 is operative at global level, but faulted at regional level with one big power having
no direct influence on that area. The result will be a bipolar contention at regional level, with the third power exerting a strategic influence at global level. Although the third power may withdraw from the regional conflict, it is still a part of the big power triangle at global level. Therefore, its influence is still felt in the regional bipolar contention. Nonetheless, the result of the regional contention will be largely decided by the balance of the remaining two powers and the orientation of the state in the focus of contention, which may maintain its leverage with both by remaining neutral or form alliance with one of them to resist the other or even become totally dependent upon one of them.

In sum, by using this compound model of the strategic triangle, we are in a better position to understand the structural relationship between the strategic triangle and regional conflicts. The following propositions may be made:

Proposition 6: The strengths of the big powers in the global triangular relationship may not necessarily correspond with those at regional level.

Proposition 7: The more restricted the strategic triangle is, the easier would be the triangulation of the state in the focus of big powers' contention; the less restricted the strategic triangle is, the harder would be the triangulation of the state in the big powers' contention.

Proposition 8: Since the strategic triangle is inherently a restricted triangle, the state in the focus of big powers' contention would always have some room to manipulate among the three powers.

Proposition 9: Balance shifts in the strategic triangle can influence a regional conflict, in which the big powers are actively involved; and such a regional conflict may also influence the pattern of the strategic triangle itself.

C. The Compound Triangular Model and Case Study

Ideally, a model builder in the field of international relations should play a combined role of the data collector, index constructor, and the ad-hoc-hypothesis tester who has to explain in what way he is going to test his model. But in reality, this is
hardly true. Many model builders are merely able to put forward the assumptions, derive the hypotheses and leave the matter at that point.\textsuperscript{101} It is both difficult and complicated, and sometimes even unnecessary to go through all these procedures to devise a model.

By model, we mean its most modest sense in this research. On the one hand, it is somewhat more than a conceptual framework; on the other hand, it is significantly less than a theory, if the latter means a body of organically-organized empirical generalizations which are consistent with each other and have some predictive and explanatory power. As ours is not a theory, it is mainly analytical with some normative or prescriptive connotations. Therefore, this model will not undergo a systematic research of various cases from which some empirical generalizations will be drawn. While such kind of research is not valueless, it might represent at this stage a premature effort, because empirical tests are best taken after we know what kind of data we need. Without a better knowledge of the sort of data we need, the empirical tests, though they might result in some useful insights, would probably be misleading in theory building due to their inability to provide an organic whole of empirically tested and logically consistent hypotheses.

Nevertheless, our model, though significantly less than a theory, represents a tentative step forward from a slightly different angle towards triangular theory building. As an old Chinese saying goes, it may serve as "the brick which is cast for the purpose of attracting jade." It is hoped that our humble adventure may attract the attention of scholars, whose critique may serve as an inspiration for new exploration on the basis of the vast body of the triangular literature.

For the purpose of examining our model, we prefer to concentrate our efforts on the study of a crucial case. The term "case study", coming originally from medical and psychological research, refers to a detailed analysis of an individual case that explains the dynamics and pathology of a certain disease. Its method supposes that one can obtain knowledge of a matter by resorting to intensive exploration of a single case.\textsuperscript{102} In Harry Eckstein's words, a case study can be compared to a clinical study, whereas a comparative study to an experimental study. While the objective of experimental study is to obtain generalized knowledge and theoretical propositions, clinical study aims at capturing the particular and unique, for "if anything about an individual whole is such, so must be the whole per se."\textsuperscript{103} Besides, he thinks:

At the very least, one can obviously, other things being equal, go more deeply into a single case than a number of them, and thus compensate for loss of range
by gains in depth; to that extent, at least, the clinicians have a fool proof case. In crucial case study, the advantages of traditional scholarship, as displayed in configurative-idiographic studies, can thus be combined with those of modern technique and rigor. And it is also more possible to apply in crucial case study certain techniques, developed in social science for overcoming the imperfections of single measures.\textsuperscript{104}

According to Eckstein, a crucial case should closely fit a theory if the theory's validity is to prove well-founded. Moreover, any rules opposite to the theoretical propositions should not be equally well fitted by the case.\textsuperscript{105} As ours is a crucial case study, the case that is chosen must be closely relevant to the model, if it is not a "must-fit".\textsuperscript{106} With respect to our compound model of triangle, it is necessary to choose a case in accordance with the following criteria: (1) The case must involve all the three powers. A case study in the Middle East, for example, might look a bit too far-fetched, as China has had little influence in that area. (2) The regional state in the focus of big powers' contention must be relatively independent. Otherwise, its triangular leverage is very limited, if not naught. It would be more difficult for us to observe the relationship between its triangular leverage and the structural characteristics (the degree of restriction) of the big power triangle. (3) It must stretch over a period in which we could observe the shifts of the balance in the strategic triangle and its impact upon the regional conflict and the shifts of the regional balance and its impacts on the strategic triangle.

According to these three standards, we have chosen Indochina conflicts from 1964 to 1979 as our crucial case, while earlier traces of triangular manipulations of the three big powers in this area will be discussed as an introduction to our case study. First of all, three big powers were involved in the Indochina conflicts during this period, with the United States and China for a time sending their troops to Vietnam. Secondly, North Vietnam (Vietnam from 1975 on) manipulated pretty much as an independent actor among the three major powers while South Vietnam is dismissed as an independent factor in the analysis due to its over-dependence upon the United States for survival. And finally, this period of the Indochina conflicts witnessed several major shifts in the triangular balance at both global and regional levels.

Since the Vietnam wars were the most important component part of the Indochina conflicts during this period with Hanoi as a major regional actor, our analytical efforts would be concentrated on the developments in the Vietnam wars without missing important links of Cambodia and Laos. The significance of studying Vietnam Wars, as Donald Zagoria comments, lies in the fact that apart from its local roots and dynamics, Vietnam Wars can hardly be assessed except in the framework of the big power triangle.
"For the Americans, as for the Russians and Chinese, Vietnam has been a pawn in a global ideological and power struggle."\(^{107}\)

In fact, Indochina was the only drawn out armed conflict since World War II with direct or indirect involvement of all the great powers. Though a local war in a strict geographical sense, this was in reality a global conflict.\(^{108}\) After years of transformation, this conflict gradually evolved from a traditional bipolar one into "a clear case of great power tripolarity".\(^{109}\) It is true that Indochina conflicts did not begin in 1964 nor end in 1979. But 1964 marked not only the beginning of the big power triangle but also the beginning of the escalation of the Vietnam war with the U.S. being directly involved for the first time; whereas 1979 witnessed the last direct attempt by one of the three big powers to change the balance in the area, after which the regional balance has not been seriously disrupted for a number of years.

Indochina conflicts during 1964-79 consisted of three stages, which were characterized by different patterns of triangular balance at both global and regional levels. The first stage included a period from 1964 to 1969, in which China occupied the negative pivot position in the triangle. Having antagonistic relations with both the United States and the Soviet Union, China was confronted with a relatively positive Soviet-American relationship, which might evolve into a Soviet-American collusion against it. There was no positive pivot power at the global level; but the Soviet Union seemed to be in a better position at the regional level due to its relationship with the United States. At the regional level, the United States escalated the Vietnam War, while China and the Soviet Union competed rather than cooperated with each other in supporting North Vietnam. Holding a neutral posture between the Soviet Union and China, North Vietnam fought against the United States while showing its willingness to bargain with it.

In the second stage, between 1970 and 1975, the triangular structure changed dramatically from the previous pattern. China improved its position in the triangle by having a rapprochement with the United States, though it was still in the most disadvantaged position within the triangle. The Soviet-American détente was more dynamic than the Sino-American rapprochement. The United States seemed to be in the positive pivot position. At the regional level, great changes also took place. The Vietnam War spilled over to both Laos and Cambodia. With the cooperation of both the Soviet Union and China, the United States managed to pull out of Vietnam through the
framework of the Paris Peace Agreement. Soon, North Vietnam unified while both
Laotian and Cambodian Communists took over power.

From 1976 to 1979, the third stage, the Soviet Union was situated in the most
negative position in the strategic triangle. It had tense relations with both the United
States and China, while facing a rapid improvement in Sino-American relations. At
global level, the United States lost its positive pivot position vis-à-vis both the Soviet
Union and China. At regional level, the strategic balance presented another picture.
With the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Indochina and the downfall of South Vietnam,
the Lon Nol regime and the Laotian United Government, the United States could hardly
exert any direct influence at regional level. Therefore, the triangle at regional level was
fragmentary with only the Soviet Union and China left. In the Soviet-Vietnamese-
Chinese triangle, Vietnam, freed from the U.S. military pressure, could afford to give up
its neutral position between the Soviet Union and China to pursue its own regional
interests. This culminated in the Vietnamese occupation of pro-Chinese Kampuchea and
the Sino-Vietnamese War in 1979.

This research will concentrate on the following three main lines: (1) The
development and change of the strategic triangle at global level. (2) The development
and change of the regional balance under the shadow of the strategic triangle. (3) And
the reaction of the shift of the regional balance on the strategic triangle. Each of the
three chapters in the case study is structured into four organic parts in accordance with
the three main lines: the basic triangular pattern of the period, the development of the
regional conflicts, the transitional trend of the triangular pattern toward a new period
and an analytical summary of the period. The propositions will be examined in the
context of the three periods in order that some conceptual conclusions will be drawn at
the end of the dissertation. The true test of the model, as has already been pointed out
earlier, has to wait for future application of it to the study of other cases. Although the
dissertation is not an exercise in model testing, it will include in its last part a
discussion of the possibility of generalization.

D. Contributions and Limitations of the Research

This research project seeks to make a number of contributions to the existing
literature on the strategic triangle. The most important is associated with the list of
propositions. The examination of those propositions in the 1964-80 period will contribute
to the theoretical study of the strategic triangle and the triangular model. In addition,
this study, with its propositions and special organization, will also contribute to the study of the Indochina conflicts. Although much has been written in the area, the study approaches the Indochina conflicts from a unique angle and thereby is likely to produce some interesting conclusions. Finally, we have provided the most extensive review of the triangular literature and the bibliography. No other such review is currently available.

Like other scholastic studies, this project has its own limitations. While the model can simplify a complicated reality and help make our research manageable, it certainly runs the risk of missing many important factors which may have various degrees of influence on the strategic relationships of the three big powers and the linkage between the strategic triangle and the regional conflicts. In the model, for example, we have employed "national role conception" and "domestic politics" as our conceptual assistance to understand the limitations to triangular manipulations. To be sure, this approach itself is not sufficient, as the making of foreign policy is influenced by a number of variables. This approach is not adopted willingly, but to include in the analysis all the factors that may influence triangular policy is an impossible task. And, the way in which the chapters in the case study are structured (i.e., the triangular pattern of the period, the development in the regional conflicts, the transitional trends of the triangular pattern toward a new period and an analytical summary) may also give rise to some repetitions or even confusions, though such a structure is convenient for observing various relationships spelled out by the propositions.

Summary

In sum, we have reviewed the existing Western literature on the Sino-American-Soviet triangle. Five schools have been identified: international system analysis, power politics approach, triangular deterrence approach, linkage politics analysis, and triangle model building. The five schools are inter-connected to each other and mutually complementary. Nevertheless, their controversies have led to some confusions and vagueness about the triangular concept which entails a further clarification. Among them are the concept of polarity in the strategic triangle, some triangular structural characteristics, and the dynamics of the interrelationship between the strategic triangle and regional conflicts.

In order to clarify those confusions, we have introduced a compound model of the strategic triangle, which is based upon the following propositions: (1) The tendency towards a coalition or collusion between two of the three poles and the fear of this tendency in each pole constitute the main dynamic of the triangle. (2) The
weak pole in a triangle that contains two strong poles is not only the most susceptible to the impact of balance shift in the triangle, but also able to benefit far out of proportion to its real power through triangulation. (3) Each pole wants to triangulate itself into a better position, and whenever possible, tries to get and keep the leverage of the pivot, which is based on competitive wooing by the other two mutually conflicting poles. (4) The strategic triangle is an inherently restricted triangle, with the degree of its restriction varying in different situations (for the convenience of this study, analytical efforts will be concentrated on the effect of the two closely-related restrictive factors—national role conceptions and domestic politics). (5) The more restricted the strategic triangle is, the less effective the triangulation and the pivot leverage would be; and the less restricted the strategic triangle is, the more effective the triangulation and the pivot leverage would be. (6) The strengths of the big powers in the global triangular relationship may not necessarily correspond with those at regional level. (7) The more restricted the strategic triangle is, the easier would be the triangulation of the state in the focus of big powers' contention; the less restricted the strategic triangle is, the harder would be the triangulation of the state in the big powers' contention. (8) Since the strategic triangle is inherently a restricted triangle, the state in the focus of big powers' contention would always have some room to manipulate among the three powers. (9) Balance shifts in the strategic triangle can influence a regional conflict, in which the big powers are actively involved; and such a regional conflict may also influence the pattern of the strategic triangle itself.

The Indochina Wars from 1964 to 1979 have been chosen as a crucial case study. The whole period is divided into three stages in accordance with the changes of triangular balance. Some conceptual conclusions will be drawn on the basis of a detailed examination and analysis of those propositions in the context of the three stages. Possibility of generalizations and applicability of the model to other cases will be discussed in the last part of the study.
ENDNOTES


4 Kaplan, op. cit., pp. 300-1.
6 Yalem, op. cit., p. 1051.
7 Ibid., pp. 1054-55.
10 Holbraad, Superpowers and International Conflict, op. cit., p. 130.
11 Ibid., pp. 117-30.
12 Ibid., pp. 131-73.
13 Gerald Segal analyzes four cases to show that a tripolar system began to take shape in the 1960s. The four cases are the Laotian crisis (1961-62), the Sino-Indian border conflict (1962), the Vietnam War (1963-1968) and the Nuclear Arms Control Negotiation (1963-68). For more details, see Segal, op. cit.
14 Wight, op. cit., pp. 174-221.
15 Ibid., pp. 193-94.
16 Ng-Quinn, op. cit., pp. 102-30.

19 For more details, see Robert G. Sutter, op. cit., pp. 1-2.
22 Whiting, op. cit., pp. 70-89.
30 Lieberthal, op. cit., p. 186.

Ibid., op. cit., p. 39.

Liu, op. cit., pp. 85-89.


Cox, op. cit., p. 1.


Gottlieb, op. cit.

Ibid., p. 28.

Garver, op. cit.

Harding, op. cit.


51 Vinacke and Arkoff, op. cit.
58 The equation derives from the following process:

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\text{Hunter, op. cit., p. 243.}
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59 Tatu, op. cit., p. 15.
60 For a good description of this situation, see Franz Michael, China Through the Ages: History of a Civilization (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 44-55.
61 Lowell Dittmer, for example, traces the formation of the triangle to 1949 when the People's Republic of China was first founded. For more details, see his "The Strategic Triangle: An Elementary Game-theoretic Analysis", op. cit. James Reardon-Anderson observes an initial triangular pattern in the Chinese Communist foreign policy during 1944-46. (James Reardon-Anderson, Yenan and the Great Powers [New York: Columbia University Press, 1980]).
62 Most of the authors in the school of power politics share this view.
63 Gerald Segal, for example, believes that the triangle gradually took shape during the period from 1961 to 1968. See Segal, The Great Power Triangle, op. cit. And Donald Zagoria's estimate is even a bit earlier. See, Zagoria, op. cit., pp. 1-30.


According to Joseph Whelan, there were reports circulating in Moscow of a possible Soviet preventive strike against Chinese nuclear installations in Sinkiang. See details in his *World Communism, 1967-1969: Soviet Efforts to Re-establish Control: A Study Prepared for the International Security Subcommittee at the Senate Judiciary Committee*, 11 June 1970 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 1970), p. 152. Victor Louis, one of KGB's "channels" to the West, also wrote an article in the *London Evening News* in which he revealed that the Soviet Union was prepared to go significantly further against China than it had done to Czechoslovakia. In his view, there was no reason why the Brezhnev Doctrine could not be applied to China. Moreover, Soviet rockets were able to destroy China's nuclear centre at Lop Nor, Sinkiang. See also Thomas W. Robinson, "The Sino-Soviet Border Dispute: Background, Development, and the March 1969 Clashes", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 66, No. 4 (December 1972), pp. 1175-1202.

On August 15 of 1963, a Chinese government spokesman stated that: "First, the Soviet Government tried to subdue and curry favor with the US imperialists by discontinuing assistance to China. Then it put forward all sorts of untenable arguments in an attempt to induce China to abandon its solemn stand. Failing in all this, it has brazenly ganged up with the imperialist bandits in exerting pressure on China." Therefore, China has to rely on itself against the US nuclear threats, having no more illusion about the Soviet Union. See *Peking Review*, August 16, 1963, pp. 7-15 for more details.


Segal, The Great Power Triangle, op. cit., p. 6

For a vivid description of various triangular games, see Lo Kuan Chung, op. cit.


Ibid.


Ibid., p. 284.


For a detailed description, see the works of the power politics school. Michael Yahuda, for example, describes four possible Chinese role conceptions in the 1960s and up to the time of the Tenth Party Congress: First, China linked in some way to what was once called the "Soviet bloc." Second, China as a "bastion of socialism" along with the "people of the world" defying "the anti-China, anti-socialist holy alliance" of the U.S. imperialists and the Soviet revisionists. Third, China as an important Third World country combining with other such countries against colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism (especially of the two Super Powers) and China as one of the small and medium Powers defending their independence against Super-Power imperialism. Fourth, China as one of the Big Powers dominating world politics and being drawn into power-politics even though with a Leninist/Maoist orientation. According to him, some of these roles involve quite different and conflicting views as to the nature of socialism and as to how best China can achieve and consolidate it. Beyond that they involve different analyses of the main characteristics of world affairs, the shifting forces underlying them and how China should relate herself to them. It will be argued that despite the great successes of Chinese foreign policy over the last few years the tensions and incompatibilities between especially the third and fourth of their roles have not been entirely reconciled. (See, Michael B. Yahuda, "Chinese Conceptions of Their Role in the World", in William Robson and Bernard Crick eds., China in Transition (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1975), pp. 79-98.


Ibid., p. 180.

Handel, op. cit., p. 129.


Ibid., p. 122.

Ibid., p. 118

Ibid., p. 118.


Segal, The Great Power Triangle, op. cit., p. 79.

PART II. THE STRATEGIC TRIANGLE AND THE INDOCHINA WARS (1964-1979)

It is probably not far-fetched to claim that there is no region in the world where the security interests and roles of the United States, the Soviet Union and China so closely overlap as in East Asia, within which Indochina constitutes the most typical area reflecting this collision of big power interests. Consisting of three countries, Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea, Indochina has long been one of the few hot spots of the world which can touch off heated direct conflicts between the three big powers. One reason for this sensitivity may be derived from the lack of agreement between the three powers on their spheres of influence in that area, whereas other areas have been more clearly demarcated, as in the post-war division of Europe between the Soviet Union and the United States, or even in the Korean peninsula. Indochina has been important for the three big powers not only politically but also strategically. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the conflicts in the area in the context of the politics of the three big powers.\(^1\)

INTRODUCTION: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE BIG POWER INVOLVEMENT

In order to better understand the period of the Indochina War (1964-1980) that we have chosen as our case study, we should briefly recall the earlier involvement of the three big powers in this area as an introduction. Before 1964, there were two International Peace Conferences on Indochina which involved the three big powers: the first took place in 1954, the second in 1961.

In the first few years of the post-Second World War period, the United States was largely influenced by the deceased President Roosevelt's January 1, 1945 statement that the United States should not "get mixed up in any Indochina decisions."\(^2\) Meanwhile the Soviet Union and Mao's Chinese Communist forces pursued similar lines. Stalin focused his attention on rebuilding a war-wrecked country, consolidating the newly-gained Soviet position in Eastern Europe and enhancing Soviet influence in Western Europe. In the two years following World War II, Stalin gave strong backing to the French Communist Party's supportive position on French colonial rule in Southeast Asia in order to gain influence over it. From 1945 to 1947, Soviet policy in Indochina was well-nigh dominated by Stalin's desire to help the French Communist Party take power in Paris so as to forge a Franco-Soviet alliance in a Soviet-dominated Europe.\(^3\) The Chinese
Communists, on the other hand, were preoccupied with their struggle for power against Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist forces.

Throughout the summer of 1946, Franco-Vietminh relations rapidly deteriorated. On 23 November, the French navy bombarded Haiphong and killed 6000 people. The Franco-Vietminh War had finally begun. In January 1950, the French Parliament endorsed the Elysee Agreements, formally recognizing Bao Dai as the ruler of an independent Vietnam which remained within the framework of the French Union. Before long, the United States extended recognition to Bao Dai's regime. Both China and the Soviet Union had earlier recognized Ho Chi Minh's government. Vietnam had thus been drawn into the whirlpool of the Cold War.

In spite of Ho Chi Minh's repeated overtures, the United States remained suspicious of him because of his Communist affiliation. The Soviet and Chinese recognition of Ho's regime confirmed American suspicions, which "removed any illusion" on his "nationalist nature." The American views on Indochina were subsequently influenced by three factors. First, Asia as a whole was regarded as an area of increasing significance in world politics. Second, the various world Communist movements were seen as part of a monolithic bloc. Third, the Vietminh's drive to overthrow French domination over Indochina was believed to be "part of the Southeast Asian manifestation of the Communist world-wide aggressive intent."

While recognizing Ho Chi Minh as a Communist, the Soviet Union mainly kept its attention elsewhere, even though the French Communist Party later changed its position on independence for Vietnam. Although the Chinese Communists got themselves involved in the Vietminh's campaign against France immediately after coming into power in China in 1949, it was not until the end of the Korean conflict that they could afford to support the Vietminh to wage a larger-scale war. From the autumn of 1953 on, the Vietminh forces began to receive Chinese military materials, including bazookas, mortars, and artillery. The monthly average tonnage of Chinese military supplies was estimated as 250 tons in 1952, and 400 to 600 tons in 1953. In comparison, by 1954, U.S. military aid to the French side had reached $1.1 billion, covering 74 percent of the cost of the war.

Although there existed different priorities among China, the DRV, and the Soviet Union, the three Communist countries during this period followed a basically concerted strategy toward the war. China and the Soviet Union could still reach agreement on the best possible actions, and the Vietminh had little room to manipulate them. The
Vietminh's priority was to establish its rule over all of Vietnam within the shortest possible time. Besides, the history of the Indochina Communist Party also pointed to a broader goal of promoting Vietnamese influence over all Indochina. China's dominating national interests lay in the eviction of Western power from Indochina and the replacement of French colonial rule by a pro-Beijing Vietnamese regime. China could also put up with a neutralized and friendly Southeast Asia, which could prevent the formation of a regional anti-Communist security organization in Asia, whereas the Soviets had concentrated their attention on foiling the European Defense Community (EDC). While the National Assembly in Paris was debating the issue of French participation in the EDC, Moscow indicated clearly that the quid pro quo for a satisfactory end to the Franco-Vietminh war was French repudiation of the EDC.\(^9\)

In January 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower endorsed the policy statement delivered by the National Security Council on "United States objectives and courses of action with respect to Southeast Asia", which would serve as the guide for American policy for the ensuing fifteen years. The central idea of this policy was that "Communist domination, by whatever means, of all Southeast Asia would seriously endanger in the short term, and critically endanger in the longer term, United States security interests ... The loss of the struggle in Indochina, in addition to its impact in Southeast Asia and in South Asia, would therefore have the most serious repercussions on U.S. and free world interests in Europe and elsewhere."\(^10\) The domino theory was thus applied in the context of Southeast Asia.

The Geneva Conference on Indochina began in May 1954 to discuss a ceasefire in Vietnam in the wake of a total French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, with the participation of all three big powers. A series of peace agreements was reached after considerable bargaining. According to the Geneva Accords, French and Vietnamese forces were to withdraw from Cambodia and Laos, which were subsequently recognized as independent states, whereas Vietnam was temporarily divided into two parts along the seventeenth parallel. Within two years of the Accords, general elections were to be held, so as to bring about the unification of the country.\(^11\)

The Soviet Union and China played a constructive role in reaching the agreement. Regarding Indochina as a low priority area in its global strategy, the Soviet Union was willing to use the Indochina issue to "establish the authenticity of Soviet interest in detente."\(^12\) For Moscow, an acceptable armistice in Indochina would mean reduced chance for French endorsement of the EDC, since the French Assembly would be less
worried about a Communist threat in Europe if the Communist threat in Vietnam were diminished.\textsuperscript{15} Besides, failure to reach an agreement could get the U.S. militarily involved in the conflict and even risk a third world war. If China participated on the Vietminh's side and was thereby attacked by the United States, the Soviet Union would have to honor its 1950 defence treaty with China.\textsuperscript{16}

But for the Chinese, the most important goal in the negotiations was to exclude any American military presence from Indochina, and to achieve the neutralization of Indochina, with the Vietminh having control of the area bordering China. An American historian sums up Chinese diplomacy at Geneva as follows: "Simply put, the Chinese were negotiating for their own security, not for Vietminh territorial advantage."\textsuperscript{17} Although Zhou En-lai failed to get the United States to approve the Geneva Accords, he might have been satisfied with the unilateral American guarantee not to sabotage them; therefore, he was willing to put pressure on the Vietminh to compromise on a number of issues on Cambodia and Laos. One other reason was that China needed a period of peace for its first five-year economic plan, which had already been postponed by the Korean war. That was why China began to emphasize "peaceful coexistence" with the West.\textsuperscript{18}

The United States and North Vietnam had a much less positive approach toward the Accords; but their dissatisfactions were based on entirely different considerations. The Accords put the Eisenhower administration in a dilemma. If Eisenhower formally approved the Accords, he would have been vulnerable to McCarthyite charges that his administration had allowed the Communists to control part of Indochina. But if he opposed the Accords, he would have upset the French government, which was in desperate need of a peace settlement. It seemed to him that the only way to break away from this dilemma was for the United States to act as an interested party.\textsuperscript{19} In order to avoid the so-called "domino" effect, the United States organized the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) in September 1954. This marked the beginning of direct U.S. involvement in the Indochina conflicts.\textsuperscript{20}

The Vietminh thought that they had lost an opportunity to unify their country, as well as to consolidate their influence in Laos and Cambodia.\textsuperscript{21} They felt that they had been pressured by their allies into granting concessions on several key issues.\textsuperscript{22} With regard to the location of the demarcation line for the temporary partition of Vietnam, Pham Von Dong was first persuaded by Zhou En-lai to move north two parallels to the sixteenth, and then by Molotov to move north one further to the seventeenth. As for the timing of the proposed elections, Molotov dismissed their demand that the elections
should be held within six months after the Accords, and accepted the Western proposal for holding elections two years after the Accords. Moreover, Zhou En-lai had privately promised Anthony Eden that the People's Army of Viet Nam (PAVN) would be persuaded to withdraw from Laos and Cambodia, and that China was ready to recognize the Royal governments of the two states.

The Vietminh disgruntlement beyond doubt contained something real but the possibility could not be excluded of a negotiation strategy concerted by the three Communist countries, in which the Vietminh held on to extreme positions while Moscow and Beijing took a more balanced stance. The Vietminh were at this stage highly dependent upon Chinese support. Their calculations of how much they could win at the negotiating table were largely based on their appraisal of the strategic situation, especially a possible U.S. intervention. It was the Vietminh delegation itself that first raised the idea of partition. They counted on success in two years, when general elections were to be held. Apparently if compromises were not made, the conference would probably break down. There would be a real danger of a joint U.S.-British-French military intervention to solve the conflict; and the Vietminh would have to ask for more Chinese involvement, probably including the direct use of Chinese troops, which was not desirable for the Vietnamese. As Ho once reportedly said, "It is better to sniff French dung for a while than eat China's all our life." With this worry in mind, Ho Chi Minh probably shared Zhou's comment that the best bargain had been struck for the moment, and Khrushchev's more optimistic claim that "we gasped with surprise and pleasure" at the French acceptance of the partition at the 17th parallel, which was "the absolute maximum we would have claimed ourselves."

By the end of the 1950s, Beijing had begun to break with Moscow on the very question of relations with the United States. As long as Washington maintained its confrontational stance toward the People's Republic, Beijing had nothing to gain but much to lose from Khruschev's drive for peaceful coexistence with the United States. His unilateral pursuit of detente with the United States was perceived by the Chinese as undermining the unity of the socialist world and sacrificing Chinese interests. Meanwhile Khrushchev refused to satisfy Mao's demand for due recognition of his role in the international Communist movement, because such a concession would seriously undercut Khrushchev's authority in the movement, even threatening Moscow's control over Eastern Europe. Mao subsequently advocated a radical confrontation policy toward the United States and began to challenge the Soviet leadership of the socialist camp on
this basis. While the Soviets announced that "it has become a practical and feasible goal to entirely exclude warfare from human life", the Chinese retorted that "it would reduce people's vigilance to disseminate any impractical illusion on peaceful coexistence", emphasising that "tolerance of peace strategy of imperialists would dampen the revolutionary enthusiasm of people's war." As Hanoi's interests were consistent with the confrontational policy, it was in the early 1960s gradually drawn closer to the Chinese side.

In 1959, the neutralist government headed by Prince Souvanna Phouma was overthrown by a right-wing coup and Phouma fled to Cambodia. The three Communist countries reacted strongly against this situation. The Soviet Union delivered aid by air to Prince Souvanna Phouma's neutralist government upon his request. The North Vietnamese, backed by the Chinese, sent troops to the wild highlands of eastern Laos in early 1961, where they began to open up the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trail, a secret passage for the later infiltration of North Vietnamese troops and war materials into the South. The active involvement of the United States and the Soviet Union threatened to bring about a war between the two superpowers. To prevent the situation from further deteriorating, President Kennedy and Khrushchev agreed to maintain the neutrality of Laos, and to limit their aid to both sides.

As far as the Soviet Union was concerned, the Geneva Peace Conference was probably the ideal solution, as it could not only prevent a war with the United States but also vindicate its new "liberation" theory that a Communist regime could be established through peaceful transition rather than by resorting to armed struggle. On 8 July, 1960, Khrushchev said at a press conference in Vienna that any small "local war" might spark off the conflagration of a world war, both of which, therefore, should be avoided. He was convinced that Hanoi's attempt to aggravate the situation in the South did not accord with his own "peaceful coexistence" policy, and thus had little enthusiasm for the newly-established National Liberation Front in the South (NLFSV). As for the United States, accepting a neutral Laos as a buffer state seemed to be an appropriate option, since the rightist army could hardly defeat the Communists in Laos. Such a solution could not only hinder China from exporting revolution to Southeast Asia, but also, as American representative to Geneva William Sullivan pointed out to the Chinese in front of the Soviet representatives, foil the Chinese intrigue to provoke a Soviet-American nuclear war. The Soviet embarrassment at the comment reflected their similar worry.
The Chinese and the North Vietnamese, however, continued to support the Pathet Lao forces, and expanded their aid for the NLFSV. While pleased with the fact that Laotian neutrality imposed some limitations on the expansion of the U.S. military presence, Beijing was willing to take some low-level risks in continuing to support North Vietnam and its allies. If the Soviet ideological commitment to Hanoi was in conflict with its hoped-for detente with the United States, the Chinese found that theirs was consistent with their national interests, as detente with the United States was simply not possible.31

The Geneva Conference on Laos had given North Vietnam what it had most wanted, but failed to force the United States to change its policies in South Vietnam. In fact, the United States was stepping up its aid to Saigon. Although the Third Labor Party Congress emphasized the importance of economic construction in the North and endorsed the Soviet ideological line, Hanoi did not give up its claim to the South.32 With the continued Chinese support and Soviet indifference, Hanoi had no alternative but to lean towards China. The Chinese President Liu Shao-qi's May 1963 visit to Hanoi pushed Sino-Vietnamese relations to an unprecedented height. The July 1963 issue of Hoc Tap, the Lao Dong theoretical monthly, openly adopted the Chinese view on wars of national liberation.33 Le Duan claimed that as the "revolutionary storm" already was "sweeping away whole sections of the imperialist system", an effort to "reach detente with imperialism" for the sake of economic construction meant "checking the growth of the revolution."34 He also said that "the Party's line is a revolutionary line which is incompatible with modern revisionism."35 Moreover, despite Soviet pressure, the North Vietnamese joined China in refusing to sign the nuclear test ban treaty.36 Hanoi followed Beijing in criticizing Yugoslav revisionism and denouncing Marshal Tito as "a tool of the U.S. imperialists."37 The continued North Vietnamese infiltrations and instability of the South Vietnamese regime would finally contribute to the escalation of the Vietnam war.

In sum, during this period, the three powers were involved for different reasons and at different levels. Although the triangular strategic relationship of the three big powers had not been formally established, China had gradually emerged throughout this period as an independent actor to be involved in Indochina.

In the first crisis, the Soviet Union and China, firmly allied with each other, both had ideological as well as reapolitik motives for supporting the Vietminh. The Chinese and Soviet objectives in Indochina were pursued in the context of broad and generally
compatible strategic goals in Beijing and Moscow. The conflict in Indochina had a full bi-polar character, whereas by the time of the second crisis the Chinese and Soviet policies operated in the framework of a hostile rivalry. At this time the Soviet ideological commitment to Hanoi clashed with its hoped-for détente with the United States, while China's ideological and national interests were consistent, since accommodation with the United States was not at the time a possible alternative for Beijing. The Soviets would not like to see the Indochinese conflict destroy their efforts for détente with the United States. No wonder Khrushchev even threatened to forsake Soviet involvement in Southeast Asia, if the conflict in Indochina continued to escalate.\textsuperscript{38}

The United States, though worried about the Communist expansion in the area, only committed itself to a very limited extent. President Kennedy, for instance, rejected the idea of American military intervention in Laos, and quickly gave up the efforts of the Eisenhower administration to create an anti-Communist government in Laos. But the American presence in Vietnam increased sharply from 1,650 U.S. advisers in Vietnam at the end of 1961 to 12,000 the following year. By mid-1963, there were altogether 15,000 U.S. advisers in Diem's army.\textsuperscript{39}

As for North Vietnam, the Sino-Soviet ideological dispute and growing Soviet apathy toward the Indochina conflicts had put Hanoi in an ambiguous position, leaving it with very limited options between the two. Even if they at the time felt bitter with the Soviets, the North Vietnamese could not afford an open break with them; meanwhile, they could not help betraying their dissatisfactions by tilting slightly towards China, though they could never fully trust the Chinese. In general, as Melvin Gurtov has summarized, North Vietnam’s policy had been "to avoid a full-fledged ideological or political commitment to either power" and to keep both "at bay with piecemeal gestures of approbation."\textsuperscript{40}
ENDNOTES


5 Ibid., p. 32.

6 Ibid., pp 29-31.


18 Joyaux, La Chine, op. cit., p. 82.


25 For a good analysis, see Camilleri, Chinese Foreign Policy, op. cit., pp 58-77.

26 Pravda, June 4, 1960.


37 Nhan Dan, October 12 and 30, 1963.
CHAPTER 1. THE FIRST STAGE (1964-1969)

A. The Basic Structure of the Strategic Triangle

From 1964 to 1969, China was situated in the most disadvantaged triangular position. Although initial Sino-American contacts could be traced back to as early as 1953 when China and the United States held peace talks on the Korean war, their relations had been extremely antagonistic. On the other hand, China and the Soviet Union, former staunch allies in the socialist camp, had completely broken up by the mid-1960s, due to their conflicts in ideology and national interests. At the same time, Soviet-American detente mitigated their world-wide confrontation bequeathed by the Cold War. While each still regarded the other as the chief adversary on many international issues, they had taken steps to regulate the arms race, especially in nuclear arms, and managed to find various fields for cooperation beneficial to both sides rather than continuing the past all-round conflicting relationship. There were three most decisive developments in the triangular pattern during this period: the continued Soviet-American detente especially in the field of arms control, the escalation of Sino-Soviet conflicts and China's Cultural Revolution. It was during this period that the rigid structure of bipolarity of the 1950s was completely shattered.

Although Soviet-American detente could be traced back to the late 1950s, the most recent dynamics of this relationship were mainly derived from the lessons of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, which almost pushed the two big powers to the brink of a nuclear war. The fear of such a dire consequence and the necessity to prevent this kind of incident which could touch off a nuclear collision constituted the main drive for improving their relations (cf. proposition 9). Both sides seemed to have realized the need to deal with each other in the nuclear age on a less ideological but more practical basis and to curb the nuclear arms race. Therefore, the Cuban missile crisis served as a watershed from the conflict of highly ideological character to a relationship of more practical dealings. The signing of the Test-Ban Treaty in the summer of 1963 marked a
turning point in Soviet-American relations, which would give precedence to controlling nuclear weapons over confrontation, even though the Cold War legacy still lingered on.

"An essential aspect of triangular politics was the alterations along one axis reverberating through the other two." This new trend had an extremely negative impact upon Sino-Soviet relations, which, having already suffered from heated ideological disputes, in turn underwent a change from intra-alliance conflict to a final breakup. For Beijing, the Test Ban Treaty was no less than open Soviet-American collusion against China; therefore, further attempt to dissuade the Soviet Union from seeking detente with the United States became meaningless (cf. proposition 1). Throughout the 1960s, Chinese views of Soviet-American relations centered on the following themes: collaboration, collusion, alliance, encirclement of China, superpowers, nuclear plot, struggle for hegemony, Soviet capitulation, the superpowers colluding and at the same time contending with each other, and the Soviet Union as an accomplice of U.S. policies. By 1964, the Sino-Soviet ideological polemics expanded to include such thorny problems as the Soviet-held former Chinese territories, which were ceded to Tsarist Russia in the nineteenth century. In 1964, Mao for the first time openly raised the territorial problems, saying that "about a hundred years ago, the area to the east of Lake Baikal became Russian territory, and since then, Vladivostok, Khabarovsky, Kamchatka and other areas have been Soviet territory. We have not yet presented our account for this list." The Soviet Union reacted strongly by accusing Mao of having expansionist aspirations and began a massive buildup of ground forces along its border with China. The relations between the two countries deteriorated to a new low point.

Reluctant to sacrifice its highly-cherished ideological purity in return for better relations with the two superpowers, Beijing embarked on an entirely independent course between Washington and Moscow, which entailed the promotion of its relations with the third international force (cf. proposition 4). For the Chinese leaders, the two superpowers were the common enemies of both China and national liberation movements while the newly-independent and underdeveloped countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America were the natural friends and allies of China. The efforts to seek friends among the countries outside of the two world camps headed by the United States and the Soviet Union could be traced back to as early as the Bandung Afro-Asian Conference in 1955, though the goal at the time was to break American political and economic blockade and military encirclement. But the new drive took on a much greater dimension. Consequently, China had obtained more diplomatic recognitions, increased
its international contacts, thereby significantly enhancing its political prestige in the world. This independent stance, coupled with its growing influence in the world, made China not only an important power neither the Soviet Union nor the United States could ignore but also had a strategic effect on the global balance which both superpowers had to take into account in regulating their mutual relationship. The Chinese economic aid to those countries under the eight principles of economic cooperation explicated by Zhou En-lai during his African tour in December 1963 and January 1964 proved to be a very successful way to promote China's diplomatic goals.

In 1966, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution broke out in China. When the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution reached its peak in 1967, China's foreign relations suffered great losses. Not only was Beijing not able to take any diplomatic initiatives, but even normal diplomatic activities were severely hampered. All the Chinese ambassadors except the one to Egypt were eventually recalled back home and the Red Guards were for a time in control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the heat of this upheaval, China claimed to be at odds not only with many western and neutralist but also with leftist and communist regimes. As Mao Ze-dong Thought had become a critical factor in the spread of revolutionary fervor beyond the boundaries of China, even liberation movements were judged by the extent to which they were willing to practice Maoist ideological tenets, which was supposedly "carrying forward with the force of a thunderbolt the world revolutionary movement of our time." This radical trend not only isolated China in the world but also further dimmed its relations with the two superpowers, leaving China in an even more dangerous position in the triangle (cf. proposition 4).

Nineteen sixty-seven marked further progress in Soviet-American détente when a draft Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty was agreed on by the United States and the Soviet Union. Designed to discourage other countries from developing nuclear weapons, the treaty was perceived by the Chinese as another attempt by the superpowers to maintain their nuclear blackmail, which implicitly contained the ability to deliver or to threaten to deliver a nuclear strike without fear of retaliation in kind. Therefore, the Chinese called the draft Non Proliferation Treaty "counter-revolutionary collaboration on a world-wide scale--a means of pushing their criminal activity against China." More ominous were the American and Soviet decisions in the same year to build "thin", i.e. anti-China, anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems. The implication of mutual superpower deployment of anti-China ABM systems was that they wanted to remain invulnerable to
a possible Chinese nuclear strike, while conceding their vulnerability to the missiles of the other superpower. In other words, the two superpowers were cooperating to deny China a credible nuclear retaliatory capability (cf. proposition 1).

Strategically, China was threatened from both front and rear: In the Southeast and East, China had military confrontation with the United States, engaged in an indirect war with the latter in Indochina. In the North, there were growing tensions with the Soviet Union, whose military forces had been dramatically built up since 1964 along the Sino-Soviet border. These two threats were both real and increasing in the eyes of the Chinese leaders. The logical way out of this dangerous situation was for China to improve its relations with at least one of the two superpowers. Nevertheless, it was not until the end of the 1960s that the conditions for a reassessment of China's strategic position became favorable; this will be discussed later in the chapter.

Generally speaking, the strategic triangle in this period was very unstable and immature, with merely low-level triangular interactions between the three poles. Although the Soviet-American detente aggravated the Sino-Soviet dispute and made China seek an independent course which would eventually enhance China's triangular role, neither of the two developments seemed to have any significant influence upon Soviet-American relations, which were characterized by limited detente throughout the whole period. The United States, which could have utilized the Sino-Soviet disputes to take measures toward improving its relations with China and become the pivot in the triangle, simply remained inert and let the opportunity pass by. Therefore, there was no positive pivot power in the pattern at all, but only a negative pivot power (China).

As the triangular interactions were low, the structure of the strategic triangle was obviously highly restricted. One important reason was that their national role conceptions were still dominated by the bipolar struggle for ideological supremacy. Therefore, the three actors could not incorporate the significance of the Sino-Soviet split into their basic structure of relationship. In other words, actors in the triangle still based their foreign policies toward each other on bipolar premises. Such a restricted triangle would inevitably determine low-degree triangulations among them and thereby produce an interesting phenomenon, in which the existence of a triangular structure was not coupled with active triangulations (cf. proposition 4).

This could be best reflected in the policy reactions of the United States, the expected beneficiary of the Sino-Soviet conflict. Some American strategists did realize that the earlier American assessment of Beijing's ideological unity with Moscow had
become out-dated as a result of the growing Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s and that as China was determined to pursue a policy contrary to Soviet interests, the United States should improve its relations with China in order to use it as a source of leverage against the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, these views were not endorsed by the highest level of the American government. As the Kennedy administration enjoyed merely a slim margin of support in Congress, it was extremely reluctant to challenge the main stream of U.S. opinion which still thought containment a morally correct policy to deal with the aggressiveness of fanatical Chinese Communism. In his 1963 State of the Union message, President Kennedy maintained that "the Soviet-Chinese disagreement is over means and not ends. A dispute over how best to bury the free world...."\textsuperscript{10}

This die-hard American view toward the Chinese was reciprocated by China. As one major reason for Sino-Soviet split was Chinese perception that the Soviet Union had betrayed it by initiating detente with the United States, China could not justify a softened attitude toward the United States. Furthermore, the world, in Mao's view, had entered a new historical period of struggle against U.S. imperialism and Soviet revisionism, (later social-imperialism). Obviously the Chinese thinking was still dominated by the bipolarity concept.\textsuperscript{11} The character of the Sino-American conflict was of course not changed by the Sino-Soviet conflict. The Chinese regarded American imperialism and Soviet revisionism as birds of a feather. The only correct way to deal with them was to fight against them instead of maneuvering between them. This double-antagonistic approach had also restricted the room for manipulation by the United States and the Soviet Union (cf. proposition 4).

The failure of the United States to realize the significance of the Sino-Soviet split and the continuance of China's die-hard militancy towards the United States deprived the United States of the possibility to improve its relations with China. Therefore, the United States could not utilize the Sino-Soviet split to put itself in a pivot position in the triangle; and without a pivot power, the triangle itself simply lacked in dynamics, though some very limited triangulations could still be detected. This state of the triangular situation would, of course, leave its imprint upon the on-going Indochina conflicts, in which all three powers became actively involved (cf. proposition 9). Given the high restriction of the strategic triangle, it would be very interesting to study the propositions concerned with the restrictive characters of the triangle and its impact upon the regional conflicts (cf. propositions 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9).
B. The Escalation of the Vietnam War-Views from the Three Powers

By the mid-1960s, all the three powers had become heavily involved in the conflict in Indochina. Beyond doubt, the conflicts in Indochina would have proceeded in different ways without the interference of the three big powers. Each power seemed to have by now identified a stake in influencing the conflicts in its own favored direction. To better comprehend the interrelationship of such a strategic triangle and the regional conflict in Vietnam, it is necessary to review the respective perceptions by the three big powers of the Vietnam war, their reactions to the war and interactions in regard to the war. It is also important to understand whether there was a vigorous triangulation vis-à-vis the war between the three powers and the reasons for the presence or absence of such a vigorous triangulation.

a. The Cold War and the Escalation of the Vietnam War

What were the main motives that eventually got the United States bogged down in the Vietnam war? Had the Sino-Soviet split any significant influence on American perceptions of the developments in Vietnam? And where did the Chinese and Soviet factors stand in the American war scheme in Vietnam? These are the major questions that most concern this section.

In November 1963, three weeks after the overthrow of Diem, Lyndon Johnson succeeded to the presidency following the assassination of President Kennedy. He was immediately faced with a crisis in South Vietnam which was far more serious than the one faced by Kennedy in 1961. Kennedy's advisers had thought that political stability and internal harmony in South Vietnam would be restored as soon as Diem was ousted from power, but the result was quite the contrary. No political force was strong enough to take Diem's place. Although both Buddhists and Catholics comprised quite significant social forces, neither represented a viable political force, and both harboured deep-rooted animosity toward each other. The Catholics were better organized, but they had little support from the broad masses, while the Buddhists, who consisted of many conflicting factions, could not rally together into a viable political entity. What was worse, so many new political forces emerged in the more relaxed political atmosphere of the post-coup period that the situation became hopelessly complicated. In contrast, the Vietcong took full advantage of the confusion created by the coup in expanding its influence in the countryside. During the two months following the coup, the Vietcong moved into the Delta provinces just south of Saigon. South Vietnamese government troops suffered heavy losses and were confined to the few province capitals.
The overall situation, as McNamara reported on his return from South Vietnam in December, "is very disturbing. Current trends, unless reversed in the next 2-3 months, will lead to neutralization at best and most likely to a Communist-controlled state." Under such a severe situation, Johnson signed National Security Action Memorandum 273 four days after his inauguration, affirming that "it remained the central objective of the United States in South Vietnam to assist the people and government of that country to win their contest against the externally directed and supported Communist conspiracy." While it was true that the North Vietnamese were involved one way or another in the commotions in the South, the internal problems of the Saigon regime could not be overlooked. The deep-rooted fear of Communist expansion in the Johnson administration had not only dampened the urgency to handle the internal problems of the Saigon regime, but also restricted its ability to utilize the Sino-Soviet dispute in the context of Indochina (cf. proposition 4).

On January 29, 1964, a group of young officers led by General Nguyen Khanh staged another coup in an attempt to save the situation from a total collapse. This only increased Washington's worry about the ability of Saigon to survive. The challenges that the Khanh government had to face were tremendous: the cities were in a constant state of anarchy while the government had lost its authority throughout much of the countryside. The situation in South Vietnam worsened rapidly, as the Vietcong, with the increased support from the North Vietnamese after the end of 1963, expanded their influence in the countryside. American intelligence warned that "even with U.S. assistance as it is now, we believe that, unless there is a marked improvement in the effectiveness of the South Vietnamese government and armed forces of South Vietnam has at best, an even chance of withstanding the insurgency menace during the next few weeks or months." Throughout 1964, the Johnson administration was faced with a difficult choice, i.e. either to expand its commitments, even including direct military intervention or to keep its involvement at a low level, risking the loss of South Vietnam. President Johnson chose to hold a tough position that the United States "when necessary, would not hesitate to maintain peace." On August 2, the U.S. destroyers Maddox and Turner Joy were attacked 60 miles off the North Vietnamese coast. U.S. retaliation followed what was erroneously interpreted as a second attack two days later. The incidents gave Johnson the sort of evidence that he needed to obtain domestic support for carrying out his threat. In response to this incident, the
U.S. Congress resolved that it "approves and supports all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression."  

Although American policy planners had by 1964 already perceived the significance of the changes in world politics as a result of the Sino-Soviet split, they had different evaluations of the Sino-Soviet split itself. For some, the fundamental relationship between the Soviet Union and China was not changed by this split; and they could always be reunited in a war with the West. Dean Rusk, for example, saw the split as a "family problem" and therefore the United States could not act, even though he recognized the importance of the Sino-Soviet rift. Others insisted that the split, by no means superficial, could eventually escalate into a war between the two Communist powers. Some officials in the Johnson administration thought that the Sino-Soviet dispute had had a great impact upon the conflict in Vietnam. Soviet influence in Vietnam was almost excluded when Hanoi took the side of Beijing in 1963. Some strategists also argued that Hanoi would be very likely to restrict Chinese aid out of its deep-rooted fear of Chinese domination. On the whole, the new trends of events weakened the old assumptions in Vietnam, as elsewhere, that the United States was dealing with a monolithic Communist drive for world domination. But as long as the Johnson administration continued to treat the Sino-Soviet split as a "family problem", it could not readjust its policies toward the two Communist powers by taking advantage of the newly-formed triangular relationship and change the bipolar assumption on Vietnam (cf. proposition 4).  

Therefore, the dominating view of the Johnson administration was that the Vietnam conflict was still a part and parcel of the traditional bipolar confrontation. Southeast Asia at the time seemed to be the most ideal place for the Chinese Communists to export revolution. As South Vietnam was in a last-ditch struggle for its survival, the Laotian agreement of 1962 was increasingly assailed by both the Left and Right, thus threatening to leave the country in a state of internal turmoil. To keep his country from being involved in the Vietnam conflict, Prince Sihanouk was playing a difficult game to maintain a less than neutral policy to please the Vietcong. While renouncing American aid, he appealed to the international community to guarantee the neutrality and independence of his country. And the nationalistic Indonesian leader Sukarno went many steps further by building up a special tie with China. In March 1964, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara predicted that unless the United States succeeded in
maintaining an independent noncommunist South Vietnam", almost all of Southeast Asia will probably fall under Communist dominance."21 Had McNamara made a distinction between the two basically conflicting Communist (Chinese and Soviet) dominances, he could have detected the American opportunity to triangulate between them, or to keep the Americans out so as to sit on the top of the hill and watch the two tigers fight in Indochina ten years earlier than the United States did after 1975 (cf. propositions 3 and 4).

But, the Johnson administration felt obliged to hold fast to South Vietnam. If Johnson, like Kennedy before him, saw containment as required by the negative example of Munich, and Korea as an expression of the seriousness of containment, he also agreed with Kennedy in his belief that containment applied no less certainly to Vietnam than to Korea. In Johnson's words, "The leaders of North Korea had demonstrated that they were willing to use force to get what they wanted.... Ho Chi Minh was another leader willing to use force to realize his dreams: Communist control over all of Vietnam as well as Laos and Cambodia. Peking had helped North Korea and was helping Ho Chi Minh."22 For him, the first priority was to prevent Chinese aggression in Southeast Asia and "give the people on the periphery of Asian Communism in time, the confidence, and the help they needed to marshal their own resources in order eventually to live in peace and stability with their powerful neighbors."23 Having resurrected the "domino theory", first created by Eisenhower in 1954, Johnson and his advisers were firmly convinced that their reaction to Communist expansion in Vietnam would have profound consequences everywhere. In his policy statement of February 18, 1964, McNamara asserted:

South-East Asia remains for us and for the entire Free World the area in which the struggle against Communist expansion is most acute, and, in that area, South Vietnam is the keystone. Here, the North Vietnamese and the Chinese are putting into practice their theory that any non-Communist government of an emerging nation can be overthrown by externally-supported, covert armed aggression, even when that government is backed by U.S. economic and military assistance. Indeed, the Chinese Communists have made South Vietnam the decisive test of that theory....Thus, the stakes in South Vietnam are far greater than the loss of one small country to Communism. It would be a serious setback to the cause of freedom throughout the world.24

This speech reflected the fact that the traditional American national role conception based on the bipolar assumptions simply did not allow the existence of the national role conception based on the triangular reality as a result of the Sino-Soviet split (cf. proposition 4). This led to the tragedy in which the United States fought a perceived unified Communist enemy where there was no such unity to speak of.
As the election was approaching, President Johnson avoided further military actions in order not to jeopardize his election campaign. Meanwhile, political turmoil in South Vietnam continued. Vietcong harassment increased and grew bolder. In the Christmas Eve attack, two Americans were killed and many others wounded, whereas Johnson did not permit reprisal attacks against the North. In fact, during this period, he found himself in the dilemma of either facing the charge of cheating the American people by escalating American involvement to save South Vietnam or simply losing it. In mid-January of 1965, McNamara and McGeorge Bundy forwarded a memorandum to the President emphasizing that hard decisions on increasing U.S. involvement could no longer be delayed. On January 27, another coup brought general Nguyen Khanh back to power. His new government was allegedly favoring neutralism, thus making the situation more unpredictable for the Americans. By now, most of Johnson's advisers adopted the view that continuing instability in the South could only be controlled by American bombing the North. Assistant Secretary of Defense John McNaughton argued that even if the United States could not save South Vietnam, it would at least look stronger to both allies and enemies by not humbly accepting defeat.

On February 6, Vietcong troops raided a U.S. Army barracks at Pleiku and a nearby helicopter base, killing nine Americans and wounding 128 others. After a meeting of less than two hours in the evening, the Johnson administration ordered a retaliation named FLAMING DART. And shortly afterwards, the administration had moved from reprisals to a continually escalating program of air attacks against North Vietnam. On his return from a visit to South Vietnam the day after the Pleiku raids, McGeorge Bundy warned that "without new U.S. action defeat appears inevitable--probably not in a matter of weeks or perhaps even months, but within the next year or so. There is still time to turn it around but not much." Bundy also urged the immediate implementation of a policy of "sustained reprisal" against the North, arguing that "once such a policy is put in force, we shall be able to speak in Vietnam on many topics and in many ways, with growing force and effectiveness." Ambassador Taylor had similar strong arguments for "graduated reprisal", which, in his view, would weaken the wills of Hanoi's leaders and damage installations in North Vietnam from which the DRV could aid the Vietcong. The administration subsequently adopted ROLLING THUNDER, which was a policy of gradually increasing air attacks.

Following the air attacks against the North, a small number of U.S. marines were ordered to land at Da Nang in March for the purpose of defending the air base against
Vietcong retaliation.\textsuperscript{31} Through the Spring of 1965, various policy planners in the administration were locked in a heated debate as to whether to deploy more ground forces and to give them a more active role in the war. In May and June, South Vietnamese suffered severe losses in several battles, while American troops nearby did not provide any substantial assistance.\textsuperscript{32} This reflected the dilemma of the administration. But rapid collapse of the South Vietnamese troops in the face of the Vietcong attacks sounded the alarm in the administration. Westmoreland observed that as the Vietcongs were entering the stage of large unit actions, the only solution would be "to put our own fingers in the dike."\textsuperscript{33}

The stakes were now enormous, while the options were limited. For President Johnson, there seemed to be five options available: The First was to use the Strategic Air Command "to bring the enemy to his knees; or contrarily the Second, the United States troops should "pack up and go home"; the Third, the Americans simply stayed there at the present level; the Fourth, the United States could "go on a war footing" and "declare a state of emergency;" and the last, the administration could give American "commanders in the field the men and supplies they say they need." Johnson chose the last one.\textsuperscript{34} On July 28, 1965, he announced that "I have today ordered to Vietnam the Airmobile Division and certain other forces which will raise our fighting strength from 75,000 to 125,000 men almost immediately. Additional forces will be needed later, and they will be sent as requested."\textsuperscript{35} Having given Westmoreland almost a free hand to involve American troops, Johnson seemed ready to Americanize the war in South Vietnam.

The July decision, a watershed of American involvement in the Vietnam War, was made in a much broader historical context, in which the Democratic administration likened the withdrawal from Vietnam to the fall of the Chinese nationalist regime in 1949, thereby determined after one year and a half's hesitation, not to commit the same mistake and lose South Vietnam in the hands of the Democrats. Johnson once said clearly that he was "not going to be the President who saw Southeast Asia go the way China did."\textsuperscript{36} President Johnson was convinced that the loss of South Vietnam would revive the debate of a decade previously about the responsibility for having "lost" China, which in Johnson's words, "would shatter my Presidency, kill my administration, and damage our democracy."\textsuperscript{37} What worried him more, as has been analyzed earlier, was the international consequences of withdrawal. This fear was clearly expressed by the panel of his advisers right before the decision to commit American ground troops.
Almost all of them agreed that the stake in South Vietnam was concerned not only with Asia, but also with Europe, where deGaulle would have many takers for his argument that the United States could not now be counted on to defend Europe. Vietnam was a test case of "war of national liberation." And a "US defeat would lead to widespread questions whether U.S. commitments could be relied on." At all events, he clung to the view that to withdraw from Vietnam would lead to disorder throughout the world and greatly weaken American influence. As Johnson indicated in his State of the Union message of January 10, 1967: "We have chosen to fight a limited war in Vietnam in order to prevent a larger war--a war almost certain to follow if the Communists succeed in taking over South Vietnam by force." Here again, the significance of the Sino-Soviet conflict was lost (cf. proposition 4).

By making the July commitments, the Johnson administration had taken a middle way between the two unacceptable extremes of withdrawal and total war. As Johnson himself pointed out, the decision was made to do "what will be enough, but not too much." To withdraw would mean the imminent collapse of the South Vietnamese government, which might in return cause a series of chain reactions in the area in accordance with the Domino Theory. But a total war might risk a military confrontation with both the Soviet Union and China, a dire consequence that the Johnson administration had been trying to avoid. In fact, "acceptance by the principals of the constraints which Russia and China imposed explains why the United States never fully went to war or never launched a ground invasion of North Vietnam, whatever contingency plan may have at one time or another existed in the minds or file cabinets of U.S. military commanders during the latter stages of the war." It was believed that the Soviet Union and China were not likely to intervene in the war unless the survival of North Vietnam was directly threatened. Therefore, President Johnson took great care in each step so that "U.S. intentions not be inadvertently misread in Moscow or Peking."40

In sum, the lack of imagination in policy making was a general characteristic of U.S. strategy in Vietnam as a whole, but it had specifically harmful effects on Washington's relations with the two other great powers. As a matter of fact, one of the power-political consequences of the Vietnam war was that it obscured, by probably almost a decade, Washington's recognition of the extent of the Sino-Soviet split--and thus its chance to develop a policy to take advantage of it (cf. proposition 4). The greatest irony was that a deepening American involvement in the Vietnam War under the Johnson administration only served to strengthen Beijing's anti-American attitude and to harden
American opinion against the allegedly uncompromising brand of Asian Communism
typefied by the People's Republic of China (cf. proposition 9).43 The United States, bound
by ideological tenets and driven by fear of the Domino effect, had not only lost its chance
to play between the rivalling big Communist powers and utilize their contradictions to
press Hanoi for a favorable solution in the South, but also played itself into the hands of
the latter, as it will be discussed later (cf. the Model).

b. The End of the Khrushchev Era and Soviet Reinvolvement

The most significant change in the Vietnam balance of strength in early 1965 was
the participation of the Soviet Union which, under the previous Khrushchev regime, had
been kept to a minimum. Owing to its rigid perceptions of the American escalation and
the need to compete with the unyielding Chinese, the Brezhnev regime was obliged to
take a hard line toward Indochina, even though it had been trying not to provoke the
United States. This reflected the conflict of incompatible national role conceptions of the
Soviet Union, notably, between the national role conception as "the head of socialist
camp" and the one identified in the big powers' politics, thus severely restricting Soviet
ability to manoeuvre in the triangle (cf. proposition 4).

On December 30, 1964, the new regime strongly reacted to the new U.S. moves to
escalate the war by increasing the level of warning significantly.44 This new direction of
Soviet policy toward Indochina was immediately put to the test by the FLAMING DART
raids, which took place while Soviet Premier Kosygin was in Hanoi on an official visit.
The day before the bombing reprisal, the Soviet premier had again promised to extend
"necessary assistance" to North Vietnam if it was attacked by the United States.
Although the United States "took pains to assure Moscow that Kosygin's presence in
Hanoi during the reprisal strikes of 7-8 was an unfortunate coincidence and no
affront to the Soviet Union was intended"45, the Soviet reaction to the February 7 and 8 air raids
well reflected the Soviet embarrassment (cf. proposition 9).

The first official Soviet government statement on the bombings came out on
February 9. The statement condemned the air raids in a very restrained tone, which
formed a sharp contrast to both the Chinese and North Vietnamese reactions that were
couched in harsh terms.46 The Soviet Union was aware of the fact that the U.S.
destroyer patrols in the Gulf of Tonkin, which were originally scheduled to begin the day
after Kosygin arrived in Hanoi, had been suspended so that they would not give any
semblance of provoking the Soviet Union.47 Nonetheless, under the circumstances, the
Soviet Union had not other options but to fulfill its promise for more aid to North
Vietnam. Among other reasons, most importantly, the Soviets could hardly afford to
damage their prestige in the dispute with China by taking any other course. With the
conference of 19 Communist parties scheduled to be convened in early March, the
Maoists would have been more than happy to take advantage of any signs of Soviet
collusion with the United States. In this sense, the Soviet leaders were virtually
compelled to support North Vietnam and oppose the United States for reasons of
showing solidarity with a Communist state and of competing with China (cf. proposition
4).48

A hardened perception of the American escalation constituted another major reason
for Moscow's increased involvement. In spite of the fact that the American air attack
was a retaliation to the North Vietnamese raid, Moscow believed that the real reason
motivating the U.S. action was the United States' fear of its weakened position in South
Vietnam and the diminishing ability of the South Vietnamese government to survive.49
Therefore, the air raids, in the eyes of the Soviet leaders, were to bolster the worsening
positions of the Americans and South Vietnamese and reverse the trend in the South.
Moscow warned Washington that further raids on North Vietnam could lead to a
deterioration in Soviet-American relations.50 To the Soviets, the Americans were
striving at any cost to keep the "especially important economic and strategic
positions...in the sphere of their influence."51 Therefore, the American escalation was
the continuance of the containment policy. This perception, which ironically
 corresponded with the Domino theory of the United States, reflected the domination of
bipolarity in Soviet foreign policies (cf. proposition 4).

For Moscow, another reason for the United States to adopt such a harsh policy was
the disagreement within the socialist bloc.52 Therefore, Izvestiia asserted that Kosygin's
stops in China and North Korea following his trip to Hanoi were intended "to strengthen
the cohesion of socialist countries in every way."53 In April 1965, the Soviet leadership,
in a secret letter to the Chinese party, proposed a summit meeting of the Soviet, Chinese
and North Vietnamese leaders on the ground that "the very fact of a demonstration of
the unity of all the socialist countries, and particularly of the USSR and China....would
constitute serious support for the DRV and cool the ardour of the American
militarists."54 By emphasizing socialist unity, the Soviet Union was also trying to
discourage the United States from attempting to take advantage of its disagreements
with China. Such an attempt, guided by bipolar assumptions, was of course, unrealistic:
the "socialist unity" proved to be no more than an illusion (cf. proposition 4). Only 18 out
of 26 Communist parties invited to the March 1-5 Conference of Communist parties had promised to participate, with both China and North Vietnam refusing to send representatives. In another move to show its solidarity with North Vietnam, the Soviet Union even openly talked about the possibility of sending volunteers if they were requested.\textsuperscript{55} This was probably meant to bluff the Americans; and the Soviet Union showed no signs of actually preparing to do it.

With the war continuing to escalate, the Soviet Union perceived a new U.S. policy—a "Johnson Doctrine" of globalism, which, in Soviet eyes, implied that the United States had decided to become "the aggravator of international tension" in the world.\textsuperscript{56} To Moscow, the United States seemed to be trying to expand American interests in Asia and Africa on the pretext of anti-Communism. The Soviet leaders believed the United States was taking advantage of the fear of Communism among nations in those areas to establish more foreign military bases from which to launch offensives against national liberation movements.\textsuperscript{57} For the Soviets, the difference between the old "strategic containment" concept and the new "Johnson Doctrine" was as follows: Under the old "strategic-containment" concept, the U.S. was hesitant to use direct, overt military force; whereas under the new Johnson Doctrine, this hesitancy was no longer apparent, at least in the context of Third World areas.\textsuperscript{58}

The U.S. escalation under the "Johnson Doctrine" gave rise to the traditional Soviet fears of the formation of military alliances around the Soviet Union as a result of tense international situations. At the time of escalations, such a danger was embodied in the discussion of forming a Northeast Asian Treaty Organization (NEATO). Guided by a goal of anti-Communism and anti-national liberation, the hypothetical NEATO was presumably to include some European countries, the Philippines, Japan and Taiwan, with the United States at its head. The Japanese-South Korean Treaty of January 1965 was subsequently regarded as the first step toward the creation of NEATO, and the South Korean dispatch of troops into South Vietnam was interpreted as clear evidence that NEATO would soon come into being.\textsuperscript{59} Therefore, after the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic, the Soviet Union came to believe that the United States had begun to carry out an active policy of suppressing national liberation movements throughout the world. According to Brezhnev, "the ruling circles of the U.S. appear to want to assume the role of the supreme arbiter in regard to other people. They want to lay the law for the people of other nations, to tell them how to live, and to defeat with the force of arms those who refuse to bend to their will."\textsuperscript{60} With these perceptions in mind, the
Soviet Union, as "the head of socialist camp", should of course lead the struggle against the imperialist plot. Therefore, no attempt to reach a compromise with the United States could be justified (cf. proposition 4).

Johnson's July 28's decision to Americanize the war was regarded as part and parcel of the "Johnson Doctrine." Moscow believed that the Americanization of the Vietnam War reflected the American determination to save South Vietnam and remain in Vietnam for a long time. The continued escalation presented Moscow with a real challenge, which put its relations with both the United States and North Vietnam to the test. The recalcitrant attitude of the Chinese further restricted Soviet options. There seemed to be little room for Moscow to manipulate triangularly (cf. proposition 4). The Kremlin's reasoning could have followed these lines: As the United States seemed to be strongly committed to reaching its objectives in Vietnam on the one hand, and as Hanoi and the Vietcong were apparently just as determined to achieve their goals on the other, it was likely that U.S. ground forces in the South would increase while U.S. air strikes against the North could be prolonged. This meant that the Soviet Union would have to increase its support of North Vietnam. Nevertheless, Moscow did not intend to be involved in a confrontation with the United States because of North Vietnam. The logical option for Moscow seemed to be an increased and yet discreet support aiming mainly at protecting North Vietnam and providing effective air defenses without provoking the United States (cf. proposition 3).

These air defenses, surface to air (SAM) missiles, required trained personnel to operate. Since the only personnel qualified for the job were Soviet technicians, Moscow had to dispatch them to North Vietnam. In order to minimize the possibility of confrontation with the United States, Moscow intentionally kept secret the presence of those Soviet technicians at the missile sites of North Vietnam. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union also made it clear that it had no interest in provoking a Soviet-American confrontation. The lack of official American criticism of the Soviet presence in North Vietnam seemed to convey a similar message to the Soviet Union that Washington also did not like a confrontation. The limited maneuverability of the Soviet Union in regard to the situation in Indochina was largely due to the restriction of its national role conception as "the head of socialist camp", which forbade any semblance of Soviet-American collusion on the issue (cf. proposition 4).

By the latter part of 1965, Moscow began to worry that the United States was trying to overwhelm the Vietcong and North Vietnam militarily, and its gestures for
negotiations were probably a smokescreen behind which further escalations could be undertaken. In addition, it appeared during late 1965 and early 1966 as if the Americans and Chinese were on a "collision course" over Vietnam. Dean Rusk's belligerent statement "there are, of course, risks of war with China" served only to strengthen the Soviet view that the Americans would not stop at risking a war with China to win in Vietnam. Since North Vietnam and the Vietcong were determined to win in the eyes of Moscow, the Soviet leadership had obviously perceived a long and strenuous struggle in Vietnam. In contrast to the situation in the summer of 1964, when the Soviet Union wished to leave China and the United States to fight against each other in Indochina, the new Soviet leadership felt it unjustifiable to withdraw from the area, as such a move would have put the new Soviet leadership in an ideologically and politically difficult position. With the Sino-Soviet dispute increasing in intensity, Moscow would by no means like to take the risk of being capitalized upon by Beijing, which claimed that the Kremlin had betrayed national liberation movements (cf. proposition 4). Moscow's dilemma lingered on until the momentum of the "Johnson Doctrine" in Vietnam had diminished. Only by then, increased Soviet aid to North Vietnam became much less risky; and, the Soviet Union became more active in Southeast Asia and more committed to North Vietnam.

In short, Moscow's policy in Vietnam at this time, like its policies elsewhere, seemed best defined by what it sought to avoid rather than what it sought to gain. It sought to avoid both a Chinese "victory"—that is, an outcome which would greatly enhance Mao's "liberation war" thesis and leave China with dominating influence in North Vietnam—and an American victory, which would greatly undermine Soviet prestige. It also sought to avoid a confrontation with the United States, which would impair Moscow's fundamental strategic interests, especially in the context of the growing Sino-Soviet conflicts. Without the bondage of its national role conception as "the head of socialist camp", the Soviet Union, which had neither a direct strategic stake nor traditional national interests in the area, could have assumed a much more advantageous position for manipulations. At least, Moscow's dilemma with regard to the Indochina wars would not have been so profound as to greatly restrict its diplomatic options (cf. propositions 3 and 4).

President Johnson's July 12, 1966, speech in White Sulphur Springs was viewed by the Soviet Union as the foundation for a new policy, according to which the United States was determined to "fulfill its commitments in Asia as a Pacific Power." The
central point of this new policy was to justify the American right to intervene in any place in Asia. Moscow condemned the "Asian Doctrine" as an attempt to "create a new block that would be linked to the U.S. by military and economic bonds." The military beachheads of the American imperialists in Thailand, South Korea and South Vietnam would be connected with the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand, thereby creating "an American bridge to Asia, as it were, across which the imperialists could extend their ambitions for military and economic expansion." In Vietnam, where American troops were increasingly bogged down, Moscow believed that the United States was desperate for a military reversal of the situation under the "Asian Doctrine" basically through a gradual escalation. Therefore, the replacement of the "Johnson Doctrine" by the "Asian Doctrine", in the eyes of the Soviet leaders, did not change the American goal of a military victory in Vietnam.

For Moscow, the American strategy of escalation under the Johnson administration consisted of three parts: First, to overwhelm the thriving national liberation movement in Indochina. This would achieve the effect of "executing one as a warning to a hundred", showing international society that the United States intended to crush it and could indeed crush it. Second, to force socialist countries to abandon their duty to support people throughout the world by isolating the national liberation movements from them. Third, to strengthen America's control over its allies and its positions in Southern Asia by building up the latter's confidence in America. One other important reason for this continued escalation, according to Moscow was that the United States found it lucrative to utilize China's opposition to Soviet policies and attitudes. The refusal of the Chinese leaders to take joint actions with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries created in Vietnam an opportunity for the American imperialists (cf. proposition 4).

This allegation seemed to be supported by the reactions of the United States toward Sino-Soviet polemics. George Kennan's assertion that it would be foolish for the United States to ignore the Sino-Soviet dispute was cited as evidence that the Johnson administration was using this dispute for its own benefit. In Moscow's view, all of the escalations in Vietnam were conducted on the basis of careful estimates of Beijing's reaction. It is clear that Moscow was aware of the danger of American utilizing the Sino-Soviet split to achieve its goals in Vietnam (cf. proposition 9), though it was not sure how far the United States could go in terms of readjusting its relations with China. While Sino-American collusion over Vietnam seemed highly unlikely to Moscow under the circumstances, it was already watchful against the possibility of a sort of
understanding by the two powers on Vietnam, which would in return improve their relations (cf. propositions 1 and 9).

The major differences, between the "Johnson Doctrine" and the "Asian Doctrine", in Soviet eyes, was the increased flexibility and "insidiousness" of the "Asian Doctrine." Whereas the "Johnson Doctrine" relied on anti-Communist propaganda, military forces, escalation, and alliances, the "Asian Doctrine" supposedly expanded the possible courses of policy available for the United States to other unspecified actions. The insidiousness of the "Asian Doctrine" was illustrated to the Soviets, by the United States' argument that the Vietnam War did not cause a deterioration in Soviet-American relations. The Russian leadership quickly and emphatically rejected this argument.69

The Soviet Union, vulnerable to Chinese attack over its half-hearted support for the Vietnamese revolutionaries and angry with the American attempt to expand its influence in the world through the framework of the "Johnson and Asian Doctrines", could in fact do little else. If the Soviet Union had not had to maintain its ideological pretensions, it could have been in a much better position to manipulate. It could have been much more flexible in its relations with China: with Chinese support, it could have been in a stronger position to negotiate a deal with the Americans. Or, it could have played down the impact of the Vietnam war and continued its detente with the U.S., thereby gaining more bargaining chips vis-à-vis the Chinese. Moscow could also have sought for a pivot position over the conflict between China and the United States and between North Vietnam and the United States or even simply got itself out of the cockpit to watch them fight against each other (cf. proposition 3).

Nevertheless, the only feasible option for Moscow under the situation seemed that it had to compete with Beijing for Hanoi's favor while downgrading its relations with Washington. Soviet Premier Kosygin stressed that the Vietnam War darkened all Soviet-American relations and that a meeting between President Johnson and Soviet leaders was unsuitable as long as the bombing of North Vietnam continued.70 The Glassboro meeting between Johnson and Kosygin was fruitless. While Soviet-American contacts had not been suspended, they had in fact become very limited. The escalations in Vietnam during 1965 and 1966 had greatly dampened the euphoria of the Soviet-American detente built up by Kennedy and Khrushchev (cf. proposition 9).

c. Unfailing Revolutionary Zeal and Chinese Reactions to the Escalation

The Chinese perceptions of the Vietnam war were basically the same as the other two in the sense that the war was a part of bipolar confrontation, the only difference
being that the Chinese was located in a much weaker position in the triangle, but yet adopted a far more rigid approach toward the war (cf. proposition 4). Chinese apprehensions about Soviet-American collusions were exacerbated by the escalation of the Vietnam War (cf. propositions 1 and 9). Encirclement and collusion became the themes most frequently mentioned in the Chinese press and by the Chinese leaders. The United States was seen as shifting the emphasis of its global strategy step by step from Europe to Asia in order to complete its "arc of encirclement", while the Soviet Union went out of its way to encourage this shift by promoting detente with the United States and supporting the resurgence of Japanese militarism. Chinese reaction to the FLAMING DART raids, unlike the Soviet, was as strong as earlier Chinese reaction to the Gulf of Tonkin affair. With regard to that crisis, Beijing warned that "aggression against the DRV is aggression against China." On the one hand, the Chinese repudiated Soviet calls for "socialist unity", on the other hand, they lashed out at Moscow's efforts for a conference on Indochina during February of 1966 as helping the United States to "find a way out of Vietnam." The seemingly contradictory phenomena (fear of collusion between the other two powers and yet refusal to reduce the chance of collusion by at least accepting Soviet proposals for cooperation) reflected the dominance of the Chinese ideological national role conception, which restricted the Chinese ability to play big power games. This was very harmful to the security interests of China (cf. proposition 4).

With the continued escalation of the war after ROLLING THUNDER, the Chinese reaction became tougher. Beijing began to play with the idea of sending volunteers to fight in Vietnam. The American escalation also led to an internal policy debate in China during March which contributed to the breakout of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. One faction of the Chinese leadership advocated an improvement in Sino-Soviet relations so that China could be protected by the Soviet nuclear umbrella, thereby reducing the danger of American retaliation on China while continuing to offer North Vietnam a rear base. This faction, headed by Liu Shao-qi and Luo Rui-ching, emphasized the possibility of an immediate conflict with American imperialism while playing down the threat from Soviet revisionism. Liu and Luo therefore favored rapprochement with the Soviet Union. The other major faction, which included Mao, Zhou En-lai and Lin Biao, put the Soviet and American threats at the same level. As far as Mao was concerned, Sino-Soviet polemics would last 10,000 years. According to Edgar Snow, they subsequently purged the Liu-Luo faction due to its revisionist
tendency, which was characterized by its advocacy of a compromise with the Soviet Union (cf. proposition 9). Later, Moscow proved this by claiming that Liu Shao-qi had in fact advocated a "united action" with the Soviet Union in Vietnam. The reason that Chinese leaders gave for rejecting "united action" was published in an article "Refutations of the New Leaders of the CPSU on United Action", which went as follows: First, Khrushchev revisionists and all true Marxist-Leninists were never reconcilable; second, united action was impossible with those who take enemies for comrades and comrades for enemies; third, "united action" could only promote splittism; and fourth, "united action" was "a slogan to deceive the Soviet people (cf. proposition 4)." In a nutshell, the Chinese could not trust the Soviets, as was reflected in a secret letter of the Chinese to the Soviet leaders.

This almost insanely rigid approach toward the two superpowers in a war so close to its border reflected the rising ideological zeal in China, which interfered with the priority of protecting its own national interests, thus leaving China in a very dangerous strategic position (cf. proposition 4). But on a much lower level, the Chinese also attempted some tactics to prevent a Soviet-American collusion again them. For example, to refute the Soviet charges that China obstructed Soviet aid for North Vietnam, the Chinese emphasized that besides ground and air communications, there were sea routes to link various countries. If the Soviets could send rockets to Cuba by ship, why could they not send weapons to Vietnam by sea. If the Soviets went by sea, they might risk a confrontation with the United States. The Soviets were clearly aware of the chance. Nevertheless, the Soviets did use searoutes to take supplies to Vietnam, and the Americans did not interfere with them at sea.

It was clear that the Chinese response to what they saw as a Soviet-American collusion in Vietnam was to seek to embroil the superpowers in open conflict (cf. propositions 1 and 3). And having perceived a real danger of American air raids on China during 1965-66, Mao attempted a strategy of avoiding such a danger by threatening the Americans with a grave consequence of such attack while giving them clear signals that China had no intention of becoming involved in a direct military conflict with the United States if it was not directly attacked (cf. proposition 3). Zhou En-lai, for example, warned that if the United States attacked by air, China could hardly be restricted in its method of response. As a matter of fact, Zhou made it clear that China would respond to such a raid with land war in Southeast Asia. Later on, People's Daily asserted that if China were forced to be involved in a war, the United
States would be drowned in the ocean of a people's war. At the same time, Mao himself made it clear in an interview with Edgar Snow: "Only if the United States attacked China, would the Chinese fight. Wasn't that clear? The Chinese are very busy with their internal affairs. Fighting beyond one's own border was criminal. Why should the Chinese do that? The Vietnamese could cope with their situation." The most systematic expression of this strategy was made in Lin Biao's famous "Long Live the Victory of People's War!"

Lin's article embodied the guideline of the ideological framework for Chinese foreign policy at the time, and devoted a large portion to the situation in Indochina. In Lin's view, South Vietnam was a test-ground for the United States to put down the national liberation movements; and the heroic people of South Vietnam foiled the schemes of American imperialism. The more the American imperialists escalated the war to avoid the fate of defeat, the more crushing would be its debacle, and the heavier the loss. The defeat would in return be followed by a chain reaction in the area, a perception that ironically coincided with that of the American Domino theory. If other "rural" parts of the world saw that "U.S. imperialism can be defeated", by the Vietnamese people, they would have more confidence in repeating the same. The American ruling class was fully aware of the consequence, (again Chinese confirmation of the Domino theory). The Chinese people armed with Mao Thought was perceived by the U.S. imperialists as their major threat; therefore, they were waging another large-scale ground war on the Asian continent aiming at China. While he rhetorically challenged the United States to send troops, Lin expressed his confidence in the ability of the Chinese People's Liberation Army to annihilate as many as the Americans would send.

Apparently, much of this was only swashbuckling rhetoric typical in the heat of the domestic radical trends. In contrast to his radical wording, Lin's central point was to call for a much more moderate revolutionary "do-it-yourself." By drawing a parallel between the Vietnamese war and the Chinese revolution, Lin warned against "defeatism" and "blind optimism", thereby sending implicit message to Hanoi that it should neither be bullied by American military might nor underestimate the tremendous difficulties. What was important was that Lin did not threaten Chinese intervention throughout the entire article. If Hanoi adopted Lin's view on self-sufficiency and the Chinese tactics in warfare, then Beijing would have achieved the following goals. First of all, the increasing threat of an American attack on China would have been decreased, as the scale of the Vietnam war would have been controlled. Second, the
Soviet influence in Hanoi would have been curbed, with a reduced need for Soviet aid while Chinese influence would have grown, since the ideological correctness of the Chinese policy line would have been thereby proved. Third, American troops would have been bogged down in Vietnam with a protracted war, reducing the chance of American action elsewhere (cf. proposition 3). Nonetheless, North Vietnam did not accept Lin's advice. Whatever may be said for Hanoi's tenacity in the Vietnamese conflict and apparent resolve to fight for years if necessary, unlike Beijing, it would prefer quick victory rather than a prolongation of war. Its cardinal aim, after all, was not to exhaust and humiliate the United States, but rather was to extend Communism to all of Vietnam, and to build a thriving socialist society.

Unfortunately, Lin's idea was also not appreciated by Washington. The Americans were indignant at Lin's call for world revolution and his offer of Chinese support (cf. proposition 4). The article only served to provide the U.S. administration another pretext to increase its involvement in Southeast Asia. Throughout late 1965 and early 1966, the Americans reacted so strongly, that China could hardly have any chance of adopting a more flexible stance. By the autumn of 1965, Chinese engineering troops began to enter Vietnam, ultimately totalling some 50,000. Meanwhile, Chinese material aid to North Vietnam increased substantially. Obviously deeply worried about the American intentions, the Chinese were driven to step up their commitment in the war, even though they were unwilling to risk an all-out war with the United States.

With American troops continuing to build up in the first half of 1966, Chinese fear increased that the United States might be prepared for an open confrontation with China. Meanwhile, the air aids against North Vietnam moved gradually up to the Chinese border and in May the railroads linking China and North Vietnam were cut by B-52 bombers. According to The New York Times, the United States adopted the policy that U.S. bombers were authorized to assault the base of any aircraft that intercepted American fliers, even though those bases were located in China. The situation was aggravated by the lack of direct communication channels between Beijing and Washington. Although the representatives of the two countries touched upon the Vietnam crisis at the Warsaw ambassadorial talks held in February, there was no clear sign that any constructive discussions were held.

It was not until February 23, 1966 that President Johnson sent a clearly conciliatory message to the Chinese that the United States did not want a war with China. Around the same time, Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi told visiting
Japanese Liberal Democratic Party leader Zentaro Kosaku that the Chinese did not believe the United State would attack China. He also assured his listener that the Chinese "have no intention of provoking a war with the United States." Rusk's statement of April 17 on U.S.-China policy to the House Subcommittee on the Far East and the Pacific was published. While emphasizing the need to continue Asian containment, he pointed out that the Chinese had behaved with caution when they anticipated a collision with the United States over Vietnam. Rusk further stressed that the United States was acting "with restraint" in the Vietnam War, thereby hoping that the Chinese would "guide their actions accordingly." Soon afterwards, the Chinese responded to Rusk, by publishing Zhou En-lai's explanation of China's policy toward the United States in the May 10 issue of People's Daily. Zhou claimed that China would "not take the initiative to provoke a war with the United States." According to some reports, Beijing had by this time reached a tacit understanding with the United States to avoid the danger of a direct confrontation, even though Beijing continued to react strongly to any signs of escalation in the Vietnam war (cf. proposition 3).

At the same time, Washington sent more signals to Beijing. On May 18, McNamara asserted that the danger of potentially disastrous misunderstandings could be diminished by "breaching the isolation of great nations like Red China (cf. proposition 3)." But, with the further escalation of the Vietnam war, Beijing was obliged to take a more unyielding stand, notably following the U.S. bombing of Haiphong. In an official statement on September 7, 1966, the Chinese announced that "the U.S. imperialist aggression against Vietnam is aggression against China", warning that Washington would be committing "a grave historical blunder" if it underrated the determination of the Chinese people to support the Vietnamese. There were probably two major reasons for this harsh stance: First, China found it necessary to protect its prestige in the world as the bastion of socialism and the national liberation movement by openly denying any complicity with the United States. The Soviet Union could easily use the alleged Sino-American "tacit understanding" for its own benefit (cf. proposition 4). Second, on May 9, the first article attacking the capitalist roaders within the Party was published in People's Daily, ushering in the radical Cultural Revolution, in which even Mao himself could hardly justify a more conciliatory approach toward American imperialism (cf. proposition 4).

Beginning from the end of 1966, China came to believe that the United States would be engaged in ground war in South Vietnam and in air war in both Vietnam. The
Chinese clearly did not desire war with the United States. In an attempt to convey that message to the Americans, Chen Yi asserted in replying to questions about the Chinese participation in the Vietnam War that "the Vietnamese people will be able to defeat the United States without outside aid." And he was convinced of the Vietnamese ability to fight on their own, thus excluding the possibility of Chinese participation (cf. proposition 3). By now, Washington was already quite sure that Beijing was sincere in trying to avoid a military confrontation with the United States. As President Johnson clearly expressed, "China doesn't want to get into a war and you know damned well that we don't want to get into the big war (cf. proposition 3)."

With the breakout of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the Chinese leaders were bogged down in violent internal political strife. This radical turmoil significantly reduced the possibility for the Chinese to readjust their foreign policies so as to improve their triangular positions, because the Chinese leaders had to maintain militancy towards both the United States and the Soviet Union in the heat of domestic radicalism. This further contributed to the restriction of the strategic triangle (cf. proposition 4). Even if the United States had attempted to improve relations with China, the Chinese leaders would have baulked at a quick response. Ironically, as the American escalation of the Vietnam War deepened factional divergences within the Chinese leadership, eventually leading to great turmoil, the Cultural Revolution in return further worsened Sino-Soviet relations to the point that Beijing in due course had to reconsider its relations with the United States for the sake of China's security (cf. proposition 9). In contrast, what seemed to be a logical development in the direction of the proposed Sino-Soviet "united action" never took place.

In sum, owing to the rigidity of their perceptions of the war in Vietnam, the three big powers failed to achieve an understanding on a possible compromise arrangement. Having failed to utilize the Sino-Soviet conflict, the United States eventually got itself bogged down in Vietnam. Another potential pivot power, the Soviet Union, also failed to assume that role, as it could not obtain "united action" with China, partly due to its own policy inflexibility. And by adopting a radical ideological stance in its relations with the other two powers, China found itself in a most dangerous position. Such a highly restricted triangle made big power compromise on Vietnam well-nigh unlikely (cf. proposition 4); whereas the regional actor, North Vietnam, had plenty of room to manipulate (cf. proposition 7). During the following three years, a regional military power, North Vietnam, backed up by the two competing and mutually antagonistic big
Communist powers, created a miracle by successfully withstanding the military intervention of the world's most powerful nation. All the three big powers would realize that a protracted war in Vietnam would have a tremendous impact on the correlation of forces among them and the character of their inter-relationships (cf. proposition 9).

C. The Sino-Vietnamese-Soviet Triangle

The rigid perceptions on the Vietnam war of the three big powers and their inactive triangular relationships had obviously presented the independent regional power--North Vietnam--much room to manipulate (cf. proposition 7). First, the fact that the United States had to restrain its war efforts to a certain degree for fear of getting the Soviet Union and China directly involved, reduced the chance of an American military victory. Therefore, the United States would have to be interested in a negotiated deal with North Vietnam. Second, owing to the Sino-Soviet conflict, North Vietnam, was willy-nilly located in the pivot position in the small Sino-Vietnamese-Soviet triangle. If this was well played, the North Vietnam could obviously benefit tremendously. Development during this period would prove that Hanoi was well aware of those favorable conditions. This period was good for the testing of the relationship between the restrictions of the strategic triangle and the leverage of the regional actor as spelled out in the propositions.

a. The Heightened Sino-Soviet Competition in Vietnam

Nineteen sixty-five witnessed a series of policy readjustments in Moscow, Beijing and Hanoi under the new situation in Indochina. Brezhnev got the Soviet Union reinvolved in Indochina. Toward China, Moscow shifted its emphasis from expelling Beijing from the international Communist movement on an ideological basis to "waving a carrot plus stick policy." The international conference of Communist parties in Moscow was not designed to isolate the Chinese Communists as it was originally planned under Khrushchev, but rather represented an effort to avoid the loss of face involved in cancelling it. To improve its position in the triangular structure, Moscow was also eager to enlist Chinese "united action" in dealing with the growing American challenge in Indochina (cf. propositions 3). On the other hand, the Soviet Union began to put on China more traditional power pressure by deploying more Soviet troops along the Chinese border. Furthermore, the Soviet Union increased its aid to North Vietnam, even though the new Soviet leadership, especially after Kosygin's visit to Hanoi, understood the risks involved there. The Soviet leaders quickly realized that the
Chinese objection to a concerted aid program for North Vietnam could be utilized to the disadvantage of China (cf. proposition 3). All in all, to achieve its goal, Moscow had to demonstrate that Soviet aid could make the difference between triumph and failure.

The Chinese, disappointed with Khrushchev's successors, became determined to seek a totally independent course, leaving no room for ideological compromise (cf. proposition 4). Nonetheless, the renewed Soviet interest in Indochina was perceived as a serious challenge to Beijing's position in the area. On the one hand, the Chinese could not justify their objection to greater Soviet aid for North Vietnam, as this, contrary to their call for supporting national liberation movements, would certainly irritate Hanoi. On the other hand, Soviet aid could enhance Moscow's influence over Hanoi, thereby further complicating the issue of security to the south of China. Just as Moscow used its aid to North Vietnam to challenge the Chinese position, Beijing increased its aid for the purpose of undermining Moscow's influence. Through competition, both Moscow and Beijing had an increased stake in carrying favor with Hanoi (cf. proposition 3).

For North Vietnam, this situation improved its position, though Hanoi had initially hoped that a concerted action would be taken by China and the Soviet Union to help with its war effort. Hanoi was extremely delighted at Moscow's renewed interest in Indochina and had also attempted to get the Soviet Union further involved by attacking US barracks at Pleiku during Kosygin's visit, a successful instance of Vietnamese triangulation (cf. proposition 3). To cope with American air raids and troops, Hanoi was in need of more modern weapons made in the Soviet Union. Moscow's willingness to moderate the ideological polemics against Beijing could be conducive to the restoration of bloc unity. Prime Minister Pham Van Dong publicly endorsed Moscow's call for "united action", appealing to the Chinese leaders to accept the Soviet proposal. Le Duan sought to persuade the Chinese leaders to join hands with the Soviets on Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh even sent a letter to the 23rd Congress of the CPSU, urging unity of the Communist parties and countries against U.S. imperialism. But once it became evident that China and the Soviet Union would not cooperate, North Vietnam decided to make the best of a bad situation. Since both Moscow and Beijing had a stake in North Vietnam, the fighting outpost against imperialism, Hanoi sought to take advantage to gain support from both (cf. proposition 3). Therefore, for several years following the Spring of 1965, North Vietnam put less emphasis upon the importance of Communist unity and made no more significant attempts to iron out the Sino-Soviet differences.
Moscow and Beijing were now utilizing their own policies toward the Vietnam War to attack each other. Each condemned the other for offering the North Vietnamese insufficient support. But both also attempted to use their aid to North Vietnam to improve their respective position to manipulate Hanoi to their own favor (cf. proposition 3). North Vietnam could not afford to take sides too openly with one or the other since it might risk losing leverage over both. To cope with such a delicate situation, Hanoi adopted a policy of a tightrope dancing, i.e. playing its two big supporters off against each other, showing appreciation for both while not deviating from its own goals in Indochina (cf. proposition 3). This was not an easy game. Hanoi sometimes found that the room was very limited between the two big brothers. In other words, the pivot actor not only enjoys some leverage, but also is subject to various restrictions from the other two poles (cf. proposition 3). The Chinese, for example, repeatedly emphasized that Soviet revisionism should be first resisted before American imperialism could be completely defeated and that Hanoi should not adopt an opportunistic approach toward the Sino-Soviet ideological dispute. The different approaches of the three partners became more conspicuous during and after two American bombing pauses in 1965 and 1966. The first pause, fairly short, lasted from May 12 to 18, 1965. The second, relatively longer, began at Christmas, 1965, and lasted until January 31, 1966.\footnote{112}

During the first pause, Beijing maintained the harshest stance, repudiating any possibility of negotiations and deriding the bombing halt as a trick. It denounced this as the result of Soviet collusion with the United States.\footnote{113} This could be a Chinese strategy to keep the Soviet Union and the United States apart (cf. proposition 3). The North Vietnamese reiterated Dong's four point position, claiming that the American bombing pause was an example of the failure of U.S. policy.\footnote{114} The four points were (1) recognition of the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam and the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the area pending reunification of Vietnam; (2) respect for the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements, including those barring foreign forces; (3) settlement of South Vietnam's internal affairs by the South Vietnamese in accordance with the program of the NLF; and (4) peaceful reunification of Vietnam by the peoples of North and South without foreign interference. While claiming that the United States had not stopped its provocative activities against North Vietnam, a North Vietnam's Foreign Ministry's statement did not close the door to negotiations.\footnote{115} Moscow's reaction was the mildest of the three; it was merely a factual report of the North Vietnamese reaction.\footnote{116}
As the war further escalated following the first bombing pause, Hanoi took a much tougher position. By this time, the North Vietnamese leaders had become more confident of their ability to cope with the rising American military pressure. Hanoi began to stress that they would not consider negotiations until the United States unconditionally and permanently ceased bombing North Vietnam. President Johnson ordered another bombing pause as a sign of his willingness for peace. Meanwhile, American officials travelled to a number of countries to present the latest American peace ideas embodied in fourteen points. American Ambassador to the United Nations, Arthur Goldberg visited Pope Paul VI, French President Charles De Gaulle, and British Prince Minister Harold Wilson, Ambassador-at-large W. Averell Harriman travelled to Poland, India and Yugoslavia in an attempt to arrange negotiations. Ambassador to the Soviet Union Foy Kohler met with Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny, Secretary of State Dean Rusk talked with Hungarian officials.... As no progress was made, Washington soon resumed bombing.

The reactions from both China and the Soviet Union largely corresponded to their earlier reactions to the first bombing pause. Beijing reiterated its allegation of Soviet involvement in helping bring about the new pause. The Chinese press continued to denounce the Soviet policy on the Vietnam War while criticizing the idea of negotiations. The Soviet position was very different. Their real hope for influence over the North Vietnamese seemed to lie in working out a compromise agreement between the United States and North Vietnam. Therefore, Moscow could hardly conceal its favorable attitude to peace in Vietnam in its reactions. The Soviet Union also dispatched Politburo member Alexander Shelepin to Hanoi in an attempt to persuade the North Vietnamese to consider negotiations seriously. Nonetheless, as soon as the attitudes of the North Vietnamese leadership convinced Shelepin that the Hanoi leadership had no interest in moving toward negotiations under the situation, the Soviet Union had to harden its own attitudes towards negotiations (cf. proposition 4). Izvestiia denounced the United States to "talk endlessly about peace and still carry out a war."

This time, Hanoi's perception was much closer to that of Beijing, as its Foreign Ministry quickly denounced the pause as a trick which was part of a deceptive peace campaign, insisting that the United States should recognize Dong's conditions for negotiations and stop the bombing and other acts of war permanently and unconditionally. There were several indications that Shelepin and the North Vietnamese leaders had different views on the conduct of war in the South. The clearest
indication was the joint Soviet-North Vietnamese communique released at the end of the Shelepin's visit. While the communique did promise more Soviet aid for North Vietnam, it was very ambiguous on a series of issues, thereby implying that the Soviet Union and North Vietnam had significant disagreement, mainly on the conduct of war in the South. After Shelepin's departure, the North Vietnamese leaders continued to hold a tough position toward negotiations. Hanoi made it clear that North Vietnam was determined to fight a long war no matter how hard it might be. As far as Hanoi was concerned, the Americans could not be expected to change their minds and withdraw of their own accord until they had been defeated on the battlefield. Ho Chin Minh wrote to many heads of state and government, denouncing U.S. peace offensives and stressing that the Vietnamese had to fight until all the American forces left Vietnam.

Hanoi's policy on negotiations was closely related to its estimate of its ability to both cope with American bombing of the North and resist American combat forces in the South rather than to the principle of non-negotiation, as had been preached by the Chinese. North Vietnamese confidence in its ability to continue fighting grew significantly during 1965, therefore by the end of the year, North Vietnam was in no hurry to negotiate with Washington. As concluded in January, 1966 by Nguyen Van Vinh, vice chief of the Vietnamese People's Army, "we have defeated the American army, which is the best equipped and most modern in the imperialist camp, right from the beginning of its direct invasion of our country." While disagreeing with Moscow on the feasibility of negotiation, Hanoi leaders also openly challenged Mao's advocacy of a protracted war. In his letter to Communist commanders to the South in March 1966, Le Duan stressed that "tremendous efforts are to be made to obtain decisive victory within a relatively short time." In this regard, they probably shared Moscow's view that the war should not last interminably. In short, Hanoi's decision whether or not to negotiate with the United States was not controlled by either Moscow or Beijing, but rather based on its own need. It only adopted those views of the two big Communist powers that were favorable to itself. This showed that Hanoi had much room for independent actions under such a triangular structure (cf. propositions 7).

Hanoi's attitude on negotiations was also related to its tactics of manoeuvre between the Soviet Union and China. To have negotiated would have put Hanoi clearly on Moscow's side and might lead to the suspension of Chinese aid, thereby leaving the future of Vietnam at the mercy of Soviet influence, a risk that Hanoi leaders would not like to take. Nonetheless, to have totally repudiated negotiations under any conditions
would have put North Vietnam under the influence of China, as the Soviet Union might lose its interest in supporting a Maoist Vietnam. At the time, Hanoi's leaders still thought that American negotiating terms in 1965 were not alluring enough to begin negotiations at that juncture. Therefore, they decided not to talk to the Americans for the time being (cf. proposition 3).

Nevertheless, the Soviet Union seemed to have obtained one reward from Hanoi for Shelepin's offer of more aid to North Vietnam: Hanoi promised to send Le Duan to the CPSU Congress scheduled for March 1966. The Chinese boycotted the Congress and warned Hanoi to "draw a clear line" between themselves and Soviet revisionism, or face the consequences. From the Soviet viewpoint, this might help offset Hanoi's support of Chinese efforts to exclude the Soviets from the Afro-Asian Conference scheduled for Algiers in the autumn of 1965. Hanoi apparently believed that the CPSU Congress was less sensitive to the Chinese than the Moscow conference of 1965, as the CPSU Congress was a party conference while the Moscow conference was an international meeting designed originally to isolate and exclude the Chinese. Le Duan's speech to the Congress, devoted to a detailed explanation of the North Vietnamese approach to the Vietnam War, carefully evaded all Sino-Soviet problems. To make a clearer distinction between a Soviet-sponsored international Communist Conference and a party congress, the North Vietnamese leaders deliberately ignored suggestions by Bulgarian Communist Party First Secretary Todor Zhivkov and some other Communist leaders that the condition for such an international conference was already mature (cf. proposition 3).

b. The Issue of Chinese and Soviet Aid and Hanoi's Manipulation

With the further escalation of the war, the situation in Vietnam deteriorated to the extent that there was little chance for political, diplomatic or military breakthroughs of the deadlock in the battlefield. Neither North Vietnam nor the United States could accept the preconditions for negotiations offered by the other. Although North Vietnam received various aid from most Communist countries to continue its war efforts, the aid from the Soviet Union and China was the most crucial. Without massive aid from the two biggest Communist powers, the North Vietnamese would have had much more difficulty in withstanding American bombing of the North and might not have been capable of infiltrating forces into South Vietnam and expanding the war there. No wonder the North Vietnamese leaders took pains to offer balanced expressions of
gratitude for Soviet and Chinese aid on whatever appropriate occasion (cf. proposition 3).\textsuperscript{132}

Soviet aid, which increased rapidly after Kosygin's visit in 1965, was mainly related to heavy industry such as complete factories, petroleum products, iron and steel and nonferrous metal equipment and advanced weaponry.\textsuperscript{133} The Soviets also trained North Vietnamese cadres of all sorts. In both 1967 and 1968, for example, 5,000 Vietnamese cadres received Soviet training.\textsuperscript{134} About 3,000 Soviet military technicians were sent to North Vietnam to teach the North Vietnamese how to use and maintain the Soviet weaponry, while large numbers of North Vietnamese technicians studied in different Soviet institutions to receive various levels of training.\textsuperscript{135} According to an article published in \textit{Krasnaia Zvezda} on December 11, 1967, Soviet military instructors occasionally worked side by side with Vietnamese missile operators, therefore they must have participated in shooting down American aircraft. Soviet officials later acknowledged that "more than a few hundred" Soviet citizens died in Vietnam during the war.\textsuperscript{136} Besides, the Soviet Union also sent North Vietnam considerable amounts of food and other agricultural supplies.\textsuperscript{137} Most Soviet military aid was used in the defence of North Vietnam.

Chinese aid was more related to light industry and transportation.\textsuperscript{138} Military aid consisted mainly of light infantry equipment and occupied probably 70 percent in quantity of the total military aid to North Vietnam; but, owing to the general low-level sophistication of Chinese weapons, it only amounted to 25 percent of the monetary value. The Chinese also supplied a large quantity of food.\textsuperscript{139} In addition to the light weapons, such as rifles, machineguns and mortars, the Chinese also provided approximately 50 percent of the anti-aircraft ammunition fired at American planes.\textsuperscript{140} According to Western estimates, a fairly large number of Chinese engineering troops, between 35,000 and 60,000, operated in North Vietnam to help maintain railway lines, building air strips and repairing lines of communication.\textsuperscript{141} According to a later Chinese report, a total of 320,000 Chinese had served in Vietnam at Le Duan's request between January 1965 and March 1968 for purposes of defense, construction, maintenance of roads and transportation, and that at one time as many as 170,000 Chinese worked in North Vietnam, so that Hanoi could afford to send more troops to fight in the South. It also revealed that thousands of Chinese gave their lives to help Hanoi's war efforts, with their remains being buried in Vietnamese soil.\textsuperscript{142} The Chinese also taught the North Vietnamese air force how to use Chinese airfields in the event of a large-scale American
raid, though the North Vietnamese were not allowed to launch fighters from them to intercept American aircrafts over North Vietnam.\textsuperscript{143}

For a time, Beijing was said to supply 70 percent of Hanoi's aid\textsuperscript{144}, a lot of which was obviously not reported in the earlier Western estimate. A senior North Vietnamese official Hoang Van Hoan, who defected to China in the midst of Sino-Vietnamese conflict in the late 1970s, disclosed that China also built a transport line to South Vietnam via Cambodia, a secret port on Hainan Island to handle south-bound supplies and a pipeline to carry gasoline from North to South Vietnam. He also revealed that the Chinese shot down many U.S. aircraft with anti-aircraft fire, and offered Hanoi millions of U.S. dollars for it to purchase what it needed most on international market.\textsuperscript{145} In contrast to Soviet aid, a large portion of Chinese aid was used by Vietcong in its war efforts in South Vietnam.

This tangible assistance could not, of course, give a full picture of the aid provided by the Soviet Union and China to the North Vietnamese. The Chinese military presence on the border of North Vietnam coupled with constant and foreboding hints at intervention as well as lessons of Korea, beyond doubt contributed to American restraint against resorting to a more comprehensive attack against North Vietnam. On the other hand, the Soviet Union, as a superpower, was in the position to exert various diplomatic and strategic pressures to keep the Americans restrained. As a matter of fact, the perceived need for the American government to compete with the Soviet Union in terms of strategic weapons led the rightwing strategic current to join with the leftwing Vietnam current in forcing the center Vietnam current to make concessions in the late 1960s, so as to scale down the intervention and achieve a low-cost stalemate.\textsuperscript{146} In a nutshell, the Chinese and Soviet support and aid to North Vietnam was abundant and many-sided. Without this crucial support, North Vietnam would have found it much harder to resist the American military pressure and the conflicts might have had quite different outcomes (cf. propositions 2 and 7).

The difference in the direction between Soviet and Chinese aid could have had political and technical implications. The Soviets not only could offer more sophisticated types of modern equipment to help defend North Vietnam against American air assaults, but they also found it necessary to be politically committed to that defense rather than to North Vietnam's strategy of infiltration into South Vietnam. After the Cuban crisis, the Soviets might have become so cautious as to be unwilling to run the risk of provoking a major American reaction by openly supporting North Vietnam's
adventure in the South. Or they might not have sufficient confidence in the Vietcong ability to win. In contrast, China had openly commited itself to a Communist takeover in the South for a long period, even though it disagreed with Hanoi's strategy. Moreover, as Beijing was more concerned with the consequences of a strong and yet not necessarily friendly united Vietnam on its own Southern border, it was more eager than Moscow to supply Vietcong as well as North Vietnamese forces fighting in the South. Finally, the aggravation of the situation in the South could endanger the Soviet-American detente, thereby reducing the chance of their collusion against China.

With the Cultural Revolution launched by Mao in 1966, China soon slumped into a great turmoil. At its peak, railways were clogged with Red Guards who were on so-called revolutionary propaganda tours. There were also reports of serious factional fights between various mass organizations all over China. Even after the intense radical heat wave of the Cultural Revolution had receded by March of 1967, normal social order still remained a serious problem. This internal turmoil must have hampered Soviet aid shipments for North Vietnam, especially since some of the worst affected areas were in Southern China. The Soviet Union quickly picked up this opportunity in an attempt to prove its earlier charges that the Chinese leadership had deliberately obstructed aid shipments, due to their refusal to cooperate with the Soviet Union for a united action (cf. proposition 3).

By the end of 1966, such Soviet accusations had significantly increased. Obviously, Moscow had found it very handy to use the issue of support for Vietnam as an instrument against Beijing. The majority of the Soviet accusations were only concerned with the Chinese delaying of shipments to North Vietnam. Nonetheless, rumors went around in late January of 1967 that the Chinese had removed from trains some of the advanced military equipment and ground-to-air missiles and duplicated some of this equipment in order to develop the Chinese missile program. The Soviet press claimed that the Chinese harassed Soviet experts who were on their way to Vietnam together with the equipment. Moscow also alleged that the Chinese sabotage of aid transit was deliberately intended to undermine Hanoi's effort against American escalation, thereby offering a classical example of collusion with the United States against North Vietnam. According to Moscow, Beijing was "giving a stab in the back to the heroic people of Vietnam." Moscow drew attention to the fact that the Cultural Revolution, which called for more anti-Soviet feelings, had brought about renewed hopes for the American hawks and helped American imperialism.
Beijing indignantly denied the various Soviet charges as slander and stressed Soviet collusion with the United States (cf. propositions 1 and 3). In protesting Soviet accusations, the Chinese Foreign Ministry declared that Chinese railways had transported Soviet goods and personnel free of charge by special military express trains. The Soviet Union was charged as perfidious for their refusal to accept the protest note. Beijing also repudiated the rumors concerning Soviet missile transport, asserting that the purpose of the rumors was "to belittle our great achievement in guided missile-nuclear weapon tests and to besmirch the good international reputation now enjoyed by the Chinese." Some Chinese public announcements alleged that the Soviet aid as obsolete equipment. Other Chinese denunciations of the Soviet Union condemned it for attempting to sow seeds of discord between China and Vietnam. But the Chinese leaders also admitted in public occasions that factional fights had caused difficulties for the transit of aid, some of which, including weapons, had even been looted on the way to Vietnam.

While deliberately omitting to mention the various charges and counter-charges, North Vietnamese official news agencies harped on Hanoi's gratitude to both the Soviet Union and China for their aid on whatever appropriate occasion as a way to please both of them (cf. proposition 3). Nonetheless, North Vietnamese did feel obliged sometimes to deny the Soviet allegations that Soviet transit of aid was obstructed in China. In April 1966, Pham Van Dong openly praised China for its help in transit of aid. Soon afterwards, the Vietnamese news agency denounced rumors about difficulties in transit through China. The Vietnamese denials offered a handy opportunity for the Chinese to denounce the Soviet charges as libellous. As the Sino-Soviet conflict became worse over the transit issue, the North Vietnamese became increasingly worried. In 1967, the Soviet Union considered sending goods to North Vietnam by air. This idea of setting up an air corridor was apparently repudiated by China. Before long, reports went around that Hanoi had mediated between the Soviet Union and China to bring about an arrangement on the transit of Soviet goods. The Sino-Soviet arguments on the transit issue also reflected the dilemma of the pivot power, which not only benefits but also suffers from the conflicts of the other two poles. But Hanoi seemed to have played the games very successfully (cf. proposition 3).

While the North Vietnamese leaders were trying to please Beijing by eulogizing its role in helping with the transit of Soviet aid, they were increasingly upset by the radical fanaticism and blind idolatry of the Cultural Revolution. On the one hand, they feared
that such a turmoil would be spread to North Vietnam, weakening its internal cohesion. On the other hand, they were worried about the possible impact upon the international politics of North Vietnam, especially the disastrous prospect of seeing it ruin the already frail Sino-Soviet collaboration in support of North Vietnam's war effort. Such a dire prospect might make Hanoi's triagulation impossible. Furthermore, the continual turmoil might severely sap China's own capacity to help Hanoi's war effort.

Therefore, while keeping generally silent about the Cultural Revolution, North Vietnam did resist Chinese efforts to propagandize the "thought of Mao" into Vietnam. During 1966 and 1967, Chinese news media carried frequent reports on so-called Vietnamese enthusiasm for the Cultural Revolution, especially for Mao Ze-dong's Thought. According to one report, Vietnamese allegedly said that the Cultural Revolution was "necessary to prevent the possibility of our coming generation becoming revisionist." Therefore, all the truly revolutionaries should support the Cultural Revolution. What was worse, the overseas Chinese in North Vietnam were mobilized by the Chinese Embassy to help them pass out little red books with quotations from Mao. According to Bao Tan Viet Hao (New Vietnam-China News—a Chinese language newspaper published in Hanoi), the Overseas Chinese in North Vietnam had primary loyalty to Chairman Mao rather than to Chairman Ho.

As the cult of personality reached an unprecedented height in China during the Cultural Revolution, Hanoi made use of the occasion of Ho Chi Minh's birthday in May 1967 to release an article in the theoretical journal of the Labor Party, which contained an almost unveiled attack on Mao's personality cult:

> If a certain leader, at a certain time, regardless of the objective rules and the subjective situation, acts in accordance with the subjective wishes, he will not be able to avoid all failing or falling into a situation in which every move will be in vain, like Don Quixote struggle against the windfall. We respect and love our leader, but we do not deify him. Deification of a leader will lower the position of the masses of people and even the leader himself.

North Vietnam also took specific precautions to keep Mao's cult from its borders. For example, Chinese crew members were told by the North Vietnamese officials to take off their little Mao badges and leave their little red Mao Quotation books in the ship, before they could go ashore. To further demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the Chinese, North Vietnamese leaders did not mention Chinese aid while stressing their gratitude for Soviet aid at the 1967 May Day rally in Hanoi.

With these policies, North Vietnamese leaders succeeded in avoiding some of the worst likely impacts of the Cultural Revolution. This was mainly due to the fact that
they kept a tight hold on their own people. Furthermore, the competitive Sino-Soviet interest in furnishing aid to North Vietnam and in accusing each other of undermining that aid was in fact to Hanoi's advantage. Nevertheless, what happened between North Vietnam and the two big Communist powers kept reminding Hanoi of what happened at 1954 Geneva Conference. Instead of putting Hanoi's struggle in the first place, Moscow and Beijing were far more deeply committed to their own interests. Caught in the center of big power contentions, Hanoi felt compelled to remain watchful for any harmful impact of big power games and to deal with them on a realistic basis (cf. proposition 7).


Hanoi's manipulation was not restricted to its relations with the two Communist powers, but also included the United States. Already a pivot power between Moscow and Beijing in the small triangle, Hanoi also sought to further its leverage by getting Washington interested in negotiating a deal (cf. proposition 7). That was why Hanoi never really forsook the prospect of a negotiated solution with Washington; only the time was not ripe yet. After the second bombing pause, no substantial progress toward negotiations seemed to be made, though various efforts continued in the remaining months of the year. The Chinese maintained that without U.S. withdrawal of troops, "there is no possibility for peace talks of any kind," whereas the Soviet Union had an interest in persuading Hanoi for a negotiated solution, even though Hanoi was reluctant under the situation. This was partly confirmed by Ho Chi Minh's complaint that "some people of good will (obviously referring to the Soviets), deceived by U.S. propaganda, have advised us to negotiate with the aggressors at all costs."172

Hanoi's strategy toward the United States was best embodied in its strategy of "fighting while negotiating." In a secret speech of April 1966, Le Duan told the Labor Party cadres that the Party Central Committee had recently decided that the Labor Party would pursue a strategy of "fighting while negotiating." Le Duan emphasized clearly that the diplomatic struggle was an indispensible part of the party's political strategy, while drawing attention to the fact that some of Hanoi's friends (referring presumably to the Soviet Union and some East European countries) desired early peace negotiations. He asserted, however, that the time for negotiations was not ripe yet. Upon giving this speech, Le Duan and his colleagues were, of course, well aware of China's opposition to negotiations at the time, and of possible consequences if they chose to begin negotiations without having obtained Beijing's consent. On the other hand, the Soviet pressure was clearly existent. If the North Vietnamese openly adopted China's
line, the consequences could also be serious. Apparently, Hanoi did not like the idea of having to wage a war indefinitely and resented Beijing's theory of "protracted war." But, as Le Duan's speech revealed, the North Vietnamese leaders themselves were convinced that they should hold out for a while for more bargaining chips. It was this conclusion of their own rather than Chinese opposition that kept Hanoi out of talks. Therefore, as far as the issue of negotiations was concerned, they were not pushed around by either the Soviet Union or China (cf. proposition 3).

Nonetheless, by early 1967, Hanoi began to consider seriously peace talks with the United States. In January 1967, Phan Van Dong announced that the four conditions of 1965 constituted the basic conditions for settlement of the Vietnamese problems. Soon afterwards, Foreign Minister Nguyen Trinh sent an even clearer signal to the United States when he stated in an interview that North Vietnam might be prepared to move toward negotiations. He said that there could be peace talks between the United States and North Vietnam after the United States unconditionally ceased the bombing of North Vietnam.\textsuperscript{175} This gave rise to hopes that negotiations might be closer, particularly in view of America's insistence that it would not suspend bombing without some assurance that negotiations would follow. There were clear signs this time that the North Vietnamese seriously wanted to stop the war.\textsuperscript{176} Premier Kosygin, in a visit to London, approved the North Vietnamese position and expressed his willingness to transmit messages between Washington and Hanoi and to help bring about a breakthrough toward negotiations.\textsuperscript{177} If a negotiated solution could be worked out between North Vietnam and the United States, the Soviet Union's triangular position could be significantly improved at both the strategic and regional levels. First, with a deal in Indochina, Soviet-American relations could be improved and the Soviet Union could deal with China from a stronger position (cf. proposition 3). Secondly, such a deal could also help bring North Vietnam closer to the Soviet Union, leaving China in isolation in the small triangle, since Hanoi would be in less need of Chinese aid and the success of negotiation would vindicate Moscow's ideological line (cf. proposition 1). Confronted with the double pressures, the Chinese might have more incentive to improve relations with the Soviet Union and thereby could probably put it in a pivot position (cf. proposition 3).

The Chinese remained obstinate, since they saw significant advantages in the continued fighting, among which, most importantly, was to "freeze Soviet-American relations" as Brezhnev had complained.\textsuperscript{178} Soviet-American collusion could be the worst nightmare for China in terms of its triangular position (cf. proposition 1). The Chinese
believed that the Soviet Union and the United States were "backstage managers" of an international anti-China campaign. The conclusion of an agreement on Vietnam would increase the chance of Soviet-American collusion against China (cf. proposition 9). Furthermore, peace talks were against the Chinese ideological line of protracted war based on the principle of self-reliance. After Kosygin's effort to arrange talks broke down, Beijing immediately condemned the London talks as "a triple U.S.-Soviet-British intrigue" to extinguish the revolutionary flames in Vietnam under the framework of the U.S. peace proposal. The radical ideologist Chen Bo-da announced that China would never permit an unfavorable peace solution to be "imposed" upon the Vietnamese people. Having ridiculed imperialists, modern revisionists and reactionaries for their support of negotiations, Beijing asserted that as long as there was an American presence there, the United States "remained the aggressor" regardless of whether it bombed North Vietnam. This time, again, no progress was made on the issue of negotiations, as the basic conditions of the two sides were still too far apart.

Then, what were the essential reason for and the content of the strategy of "fighting while negotiating?" How should the North Vietnam and Vietcong coordinate their military and political tactics? A cadre's reorientation course in 1967 gave a clear account:

Negotiations, if we are to have negotiations, will serve mainly to provide us the groundwork from which to launch our general offensive. Another reason is to expose the enemy's political attack upon us and to show that ours is the just cause and his the unjust. This means that the war will be settled only on the battlefield, not in the conference room. To have negotiations, we must fight more fiercely. Only in such a situation can we authorize negotiations to take place. Thus, when hearing that negotiations are about to take place, we must attack the enemy more strongly all over the country. Negotiations will follow when we are really strong. We must take precautions against the illusion of peace at all cost.

This strategy would strengthen Hanoi's bargaining position vis-à-vis the United States and help maintain its pivot position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and China, as the strategy contained elements of both the Soviet and Chinese policies (cf. proposition 3).

One year later, the North Vietnamese demonstrated what they meant by "fighting while negotiating." At night between January 28 and 30, 1968, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces in South Vietnam launched the "Tet Offensive", which was a series of attacks against military installations and centres of population in South Vietnam. The offensive, which was designed to generate popular uprisings against the South Vietnamese Government, failed to achieve its military objectives due to the gross
miscalculation by Hanoi's strategists in immediate tactical terms, but it certainly left such a deep impact on the Americans that many of them came to realize that the war in Vietnam could not be won militarily. Chinese leaders interpreted it as a proof that the Vietnamese could expel the United States by persisting in fighting a protracted war rather than negotiating. Zhou En-lai hailed it as a "great victory", though the success of the Tet Offensive could increase Chinese fear of an American attack on China. The Soviet appraisal of the Tet Offensive was at first restrained, but became more and more vocal. Moscow described the Tet Offensive as "a major U.S. military defeat." The only way out, in Moscow view, was for the United States to stop bombing.

On March 31, President Johnson offered a partial suspension of bombing over North Vietnam if Hanoi would be ready to negotiate. On April 3, Hanoi finally agreed to negotiation. Hanoi regarded the peace negotiations as having these significant advantages: First, the suspension of U.S. bombing over its territory afforded it a brief respite to recover from the exhaustion and losses resulting from the Tet Offensive, repairing the badly damaged infrastructure and communications. Secondly, the location for negotiation--Paris--gave Hanoi access to Western media, so that it could exert greater influence on U.S. domestic politics and Western public opinion. And thirdly, peace talks could serve to sow suspicions between Saigon and Washington, thereby further enfeebling the already-unstable position of the South Vietnamese government.

While the Soviet reaction to the Tet Offensive was slow in coming, it lost no time in praising this development as a laudable step. The Chinese ridiculed the bombing suspension as a U.S. trick designed to obtain a respite before escalating the war. The Chinese did not report that the North Vietnamese had agreed to meet with the Americans, but instead urged North Vietnam to forsake negotiations and fight on. Moscow and Beijing maintained their respective approaches throughout the summer and autumn while talks on terms for a full bombing suspension continued in Paris. It was not until October 19, 1968, the eve of an agreement on a bombing halt, that the Chinese reported the talks. When the agreement on a complete bombing halt was finally announced by President Johnson, the Soviet Union issued positive commentaries on the agreement for a bombing suspension, claiming it as a significant success, whereas NCNA merely reprinted the reports but gave no further comment. Apparently, Chinese opposition to negotiations continued.
The events leading to the peace negotiations have shown that North Vietnam basically made its own decisions without apparent deference to the pressures from either Moscow or Beijing. As a matter of fact, those conflicting pressures could serve the interests of North Vietnam in counter-balancing each other (cf. proposition 3). As has already been analysed above, Hanoi’s decision to play diplomatic games with the United States in addition to fighting was made much earlier than it was actually carried out. Negotiations for Hanoi did not merely represent a means for compromise but rather served to facilitate their fighting. The decision to negotiate could only be implemented after certain conditions had been met. Until then, Beijing’s strong oppositions to negotiations provided Hanoi with a convenient excuse in its dealings with the United States and the Soviet Union. Those favoring negotiations condemned Beijing rather than Hanoi. This strategy was also used by the Soviet Union to its own advantage: By charging the Chinese with obstructing American peace efforts, the Soviet Union could at least delay the process of Sino-American contacts, improving its own relations with Washington (cf. proposition 3).

When Hanoi finally decided that the time for negotiations was ripe, it moved quickly despite Beijing’s persistent opposition. There was no evidence that the Chinese opposition to peace talks was any less in 1968 than in 1966. Hanoi’s decision aroused for certain some anger in Beijing. Nevertheless, Hanoi might have kept the Chinese informed of the progress of the talks to appease them. The fact that the Chinese began to report on the Paris talks in October 1968 may serve as a proof that Hanoi had told the Chinese that a breakthrough was imminent. In short, whatever Hanoi’s balancing tactics toward Moscow and Beijing might have been, Hanoi had apparently proceeded with peace talks on the basis of its own perceptions of its national interests instead of making one concession after another to either the Soviet Union or China (cf. proposition 3). As P. J. Honey has earlier commented, North Vietnam

has sought to avoid causing offense to either the Soviet Union or China and at the same time to extract the maximum benefit for North Vietnam from their dispute; but always the primary consideration has been to preserve their own independence and freedom of action.197

In sum, the inertia of the triangular relationships between the three big powers in the period of 1964-1969 had created a very favorable situation for North Vietnam to manipulate among them, especially between China and the Soviet Union (cf. proposition 7). It could be concluded that without the generous support of the two big Communist powers, Hanoi’s options would have been much more restricted. It would have been
much more difficult for Hanoi to practice its "fighting while negotiating" strategy. Without fearing the interference of both China and the Soviet Union, the United States could have even pushed its ground war efforts up to the North while its air raids could have been much more effective. Moreover, Hanoi might not have had enough food and ammunition to support its war efforts. Nevertheless, such was not the case in this period. In addition, Hanoi used its leverage very skillfully so as to protect its own interests to the maximum rather than to be captive to any ideological tenets. This is a lesson that all the three big powers would have to learn (cf. proposition 4).

D. Emerging Factors Conducive to a Shift in the Triangle Pattern

By the end of the 1960s, there appeared two major developments in the relations of the three big powers that would eventually bring about a dramatic change not only in the structural pattern of the strategic triangle, but also in the on-going war in Indochina. The first development was the escalation of Sino-Soviet conflict to a crisis point, so much so that Beijing had to reconsider its relations with the United States (cf. propositions 2 and 3). The second development was America's intention to withdraw from Vietnam due to its failure to win the war on the battlefields. To achieve this goal, the new American administration believed that it should enlist Chinese cooperation (cf. proposition 6). This intention to withdraw in return would lead the Chinese leaders to reestimate the American threat to China's security, thus clearing the way for Sino-American rapprochement. And the development in Indochina acted as both the catalyst and the key link to the eventual change in the triangular pattern of the three big powers (cf. proposition 9).

By 1968, the radical heat wave of the Cultural Revolution had begun to recede. Tensions emerged in the temporary coalition of radicals, moderates and generals, with the military faction headed by Lin Biao and the radicals headed by Mao's wife Jiang gaining strength noticeably. Mao played the role of balancing among those factions. Zhou En-lai's moderates who remained in or were restored to power at different governmental levels formed a new coalition with some regional military leaders and radicals who came to power in the Cultural Revolution in order to cope with Lin's military clique. Those officials who were identified as members of the Liu-Luo faction and deposed earlier, began to return to their posts in government, army and foreign affairs. Their struggle did not come to a head until September 13, 1970 when Lin Biao died in Mongolia. Meanwhile, Zhou En-lai, who had managed to keep considerable strength at the power centre with Mao's blessing after 1967, began to make plans for
restoring dynamics in Chinese foreign affairs. Such a change in Chinese domestic politics would help pave the way for Sino-American rapprochement in the sense that it reduced the impact of the radical Chinese national role conception upon decision making in Chinese foreign policy (cf. proposition 4).

The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 under the "Brezhnev Doctrine" of "limited sovereignty" of socialist states and Beijing's suddenly cooled relations with Hanoi provided a strong impetus for a more realistic Chinese foreign policy that would expand China's diplomatic options while reducing its self-imposed isolation in international society (cf. propositions 2, 3 and 9). The enlarged 12th plenum of the 8th Central Committee of the CCP in October 1968 served as a watershed in the evolution of foreign policy during the Cultural Revolution. The communique of the 12th plenum reemphasized the necessity of forming a "broad united front" to maintain close unity with all Marxist-Leninists and the revolutionary people of the world.... The terminology, used in the communique of the plenum, was similar to that used in the August 1966 communique of the 11th plenum, with which the Cultural Revolution was formally launched. But the difference was that in 1968 those with whom common cause could be made against Soviet revisionism were not limited to revolutionary Marxist-Leninists as was stated in 1966, but included all the revolutionary people.

After the 12th plenum, two significant changes took place in the direction of reducing China's dangerous isolation while increasing its diplomatic options. The Chinese fear engendered by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, played a dominant role in shaping these two changes (cf. propositions 2 and 3). And the fact that Hanoi implied its support for the Soviet action by publishing the news further alienated Beijing from Hanoi, thereby contributing to the reconsideration of China's strategy in Indochina (cf. proposition 9). On November 26, 1968, the Foreign Ministry issued a statement which, though harsh in tone called for the Warsaw talks on the basis of what amounted to its pre-Cultural Revolution position that the United States and China should conclude an agreement on peaceful coexistence. Given the political circumstances in China, this was a significant signal to the United States that China was willing to improve its relations with it (cf. proposition 3). Nevertheless, the Warsaw talks scheduled for February were abruptly cancelled, because, according to the Chinese, the U.S. government "engineered the defection" of a Chinese diplomat in the Netherlands.

During 1969, China shifted its attention on to the Soviet menace from the North. Although the Soviet Union had been building up its forces along the border since 1965
and conducting rather provocative patrolling in disputed areas, it seemed fairly obvious that the Chinese side initiated the skirmishes of March 2, on Zhenbao Island. This bold strike, according to Jay Taylor, was in conformity with the Mao's operational code in deterring a superior and threatening enemy: i.e., when the enemy adopted a menacing posture, he must not overlook the determination of his adversary. But it could also be the result of factional disputes, in which the radicals took the upper hand. The Soviet Union struck back on Zhenbao Island and other places on 15 March with overwhelming force and began to spread rumors that it was preparing a preemptive strike against China. The increasing Soviet threat pushed Chinese leaders to promote the United Front line in Beijing's foreign policy, which would help China counterbalance the pressure presented both from the North and from the South—the United States. This was reflected in Lin Biao's report to the Ninth Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in April, in which Lin pointed out four major contradictions in the world: the contradiction between the oppressed nations on the one hand and imperialism and social imperialism on the other; the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in the capitalist and revisionist countries; the contradiction between imperialist and social imperialist countries and among the imperialist countries; and the contradiction between socialist countries on the one hand and imperialism and social imperialism on the other. Lin Biao called that "all countries and people subjected to aggression, control, intervention or bullying by US imperialism and Soviet revisionism, unite and form the broadest possible united front and overthrow our common enemies." The Congress in which Lin was appointed as Mao's heir to power, marked his prime period.

The reluctance of both the Soviet Union and China to see their border clashes deteriorate into an all-out war led them both to take measures to quiet down the border situation. Nonetheless, the fact that Kosygin met Zhou En-lai at Beijing airport and reached an Agreement of Understanding after they both attended Ho Chi Minh's funeral, suggested that Hanoi must have played an important role in drawing its two big allies away from the brink of war. By this time, the Sino-Vietnamese relationship had already been slowly warmed up partly due to Hanoi's willingness to return to a protracted war strategy and partly to Hanoi's worry about further reduction of Beijing's aid. Although North Vietnam benefited from the rivalry of the Soviet Union and China, Hanoi had a growing worry that escalating hostilities between its two biggest sponsors would have profound consequences for its own war effort. Therefore, during the
funeral ceremony of Ho Chi Minh, the North Vietnamese leaders must have had meetings with the Soviet and Chinese premiers who came at different times, pressing them to start a negotiation (cf. proposition 3).

A Chinese government statement of October 7, 1969 announced that in spite of irreconcilable differences of principles, normal state relations should be maintained between China and the Soviet Union on the basis of peaceful coexistence. Meanwhile, Chinese anti-Soviet polemics decreased notably. On the other hand, Beijing also attempted to launch a diplomatic offensive within the socialist world, which was guided with a more moderate ideological tone. The chief goal of this diplomatic offensive was to improve relations with both North Korea and North Vietnam. Significant progress was to be made with both countries in 1970, though there was no chance for the Chinese to resume the kind of relationship that they had forged with the two during 1963-1964 in opposing Soviet revisionism.

While perceiving a growing Soviet threat from the North, Beijing also began to see that the American threat in the South was decreasing and that American policy toward China was beginning to change (cf. proposition 9). As has been analysed earlier, the Chinese did not in fact like the Tet Offensive, which, for them, could end the protracted war, leading either to U.S. reprisals, perhaps including China as its target or to a negotiated compromise settlement, which was favored by the Soviet Union. Even when the Johnson administration had adopted a defensive stance and actually abandoned its 1964 goal of militarily defeating the Vietcong in the South, Beijing was still worried that the new Republican administration would pick up the old strategy and adopt a harsh posture. The Chinese could still remember the Eisenhower-Nixon administration's threat to use nuclear weapons in the Korean War unless compromises were made by the Chinese nor could they hardly forget that Nixon used to be an anti-Communist hardliner as vice-President, who once asserted that "China is the basic cause of all of our troubles in Asia", and strongly supported a massive U.S. air intervention in Indochina if the situation so required. Therefore, the Chinese did not take any actions in the direction of provoking the new administration during the February 1969 North Vietnamese offensive. Beijing must have been relieved to see that Hanoi's adventurous offensive had not incurred massive U.S. military reprisal from either the Johnson or Nixon administrations but instead had obtained some political and military concessions, the most important of which was the beginning of the withdrawal of American troops.
In a January 1969 article in Foreign Affairs, President Nixon's national security adviser, Dr. Henry Kissinger argued that seeking an American military victory was futile, as was proved by the Tet Offensive and that a negotiated solution was the key. In May 1969, he secretly met with the North Vietnamese negotiator Le Duc Tho in Paris, thereby beginning the process that would in due course result in a U.S. total and unilateral troop withdrawal from South Vietnam. In June, Nixon announced his initial program for withdrawing U.S. forces from South Vietnam unilaterally. And a month later, the president declared the "Nixon Doctrine", which was to reduce the U.S. commitment in Asia. As the third crisis of the Vietnam War ended, the danger of a U.S. attack on China which had seemed serious to the Chinese leaders at the time of the North Vietnamese general offensive in 1968 had largely diminished. For the Chinese leaders, especially the moderate faction headed by Zhou En-lai, the Republican administration in Washington also had no intention of escalating the goals of the war but had drawn conclusions similar to those of the previous administration that the primary goal should be to level off on involvement so as to work toward gradual disengagement.

More important was the apparent change of the American attitude toward China under the Nixon administration. Before Richard Nixon was elected President, he asserted in 1967 that "any American policy toward Asia must urgently come to grips with the reality of China." On April 21, 1969, Secretary of State William Rogers acknowledged China's central role in the Asian-Pacific region and stressed the American desire to develop a constructive dialogue with Chinese leaders. In July, the United States relaxed restrictions on travel to China. Foreign subsidiaries of U.S. corporations were permitted to trade with China in nonstrategic goods. In September, Nixon spoke to the United Nations' General Assembly and emphasized that the United States was ready to talk to representatives of the People's Republic of China whenever its leaders were ready. Even more significant was the American November announcement of the termination of the regular patrolling carried out by the Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Strait. Although the decision was justified on economic reasons, its diplomatic implications were immediately conveyed to Beijing.

For the two decades, before Nixon's inauguration as President, the fundamental basis of U.S. policy in Indochina had been the traditional bipolar assumption that behind the drive of North Vietnam to annex the South were the ambitions of Communist China. And for the first half of this period, the Americans were convinced that behind
Beijing's radical anti-Americanism lay the expansionist plan of Moscow. For the Americans, an extension of North Vietnamese control to South Vietnam would also impair the credibility of the Western security system in Asia and other parts of the world, not to speak of encouraging the fanatical Chinese Communists to threaten and even overthrow other noncommunist governments in the area—a perfect example of the Domino effect (cf. proposition 4).

The Nixon administration seemed to come into power with a different philosophy, which held that American national interests should be the sole determinants of foreign policy, and that the ideological obsessions that had entangled all the previous administrations since the end of World War II had to be eradicated. Obviously Nixon and Kissinger viewed U.S. involvement in Vietnam and its policy toward China from a new angle. Besides, the Nixon administration was confronted with the economic and political impossibility of maintaining the large-scale American involvement, not only in Vietnam but all over the world. Economic situation and American public opinion demanded that the United States should retrench from its over-stretched commitments. Kissinger realized the limitations of American power, not only in the sense that the United States could not afford to wage a protracted war in the jungles of Indochina while maintaining its other, more vital interests, but also because he and Nixon recognized that the world's balances were shifting, and new forces were weakening the hitherto unchallenged domination of the two superpowers.

A tremendous American commitment to the security of Southeast Asian non-Communist countries against both external interference and domestic subversion could only be justified if it was aimed at containing Chinese expansion. Nonetheless, since the Nixon Doctrine was aimed at stabilising the situation in Asia, it would be more realistic for the United States to achieve a sort of accommodation with China rather than continue its isolation. Furthermore, if Washington wanted to achieve its "honorable" withdrawal from Indochina, it had to reach out to China for help, since Hanoi could hardly continue its war efforts without substantial aid from both China and the Soviet Union (cf. proposition 7). Therefore, before such an "honorable" end could be accomplished, it was necessary to isolate Hanoi diplomatically from its two major allies and to reduce its ability to play them off against each other. As Kissinger pointed out, "Hanoi is extraordinarily dependent on the international environment...Its bargaining position depends on a fine assessment of international factors—especially of the jungle of intra-Communist relations." It was also obvious that the Russians really wanted to
avoid an open-ended involvement that would endanger basic Soviet-American relations and their global interests. Therefore, in his press conference on March 4, 1969, President Nixon asserted that the Soviet Union was in a very delicate position, that Moscow had been helpful in terms of getting the Paris peace talks started, and that it would like to use what influence it appropriately could to help bring the War to a conclusion.222 This implied that Beijing had also to be given a stake in its relations with the United States (cf. proposition 3). The best way to achieve this was for the United States to extend detente to China, accommodating some of its interests in a broader dimension, such as the issue of Taiwan. In Nixon's words:

All of North Vietnam's war materials came from the Soviet Union and Communist China. I had long believed that an indispensible element of any successful peace initiative in Vietnam was to enlist, if possible, the help of the Soviets and the Chinese. Though rapprochement with China and detente with the Soviet Union were ends in themselves, I also considered them possible means to hasten the end of the war. At worst, Hanoi was bound to feel less confident if Washington was clearing with Moscow and Peking. At best, if the two major Communist powers decided that they had bigger fish to fry, Hanoi would be pressed into negotiating a settlement.223

Obviously, the evolution of the regional conflicts in Indochina played a crucial role in reshaping the big power relations (cf. proposition 9). If Washington had not felt the need of resorting to big power games to solve its dilemma in Indochina (cf. proposition 7), the further deterioration of the Sino-Soviet conflict itself could hardly reshape the big power relationships.

The Chinese desire for Sino-U.S. rapprochement also entailed a reassessment of goals on the part of the United States. China's drive from 1963 to 1968 to establish its own international movement, especially in Asia, while actively supporting Communist rebellions and national liberation movements world-wide appeared to justify the American fear that China was the main source of threat to stability and peace. Nonetheless, Mao's efforts to detach the Communist movement in Asia from Moscow proved to be unrealistic. In fact, most Asian Communist Parties did not agree with Beijing in its anti-Soviet campaign since the Soviets were also willing to provide substantial support to them which could be much bigger than Beijing's. Only some Southeast Asian insurgent parties that were ignored by Moscow, especially the Communist Parties of Thailand, Burma and Malaysia, continued to direct their loyalty to Beijing. By the end of the 1960s, there was little political incentives for Beijing to maintain its militant posture against the United States. But instead, faced with a growing Soviet threat, the Chinese leaders tended to view the United States as
becoming an increasingly important power to offset the threat of the Soviet Union and Japan (cf. proposition 3).\textsuperscript{224} By improving relations with the United States, Beijing could not only increase its leverage but also gain more international recognition of its legitimacy as the sole representative of China, especially among the western countries.

In sum, the Nixon administration, not having abandoned its threat to resume regular U.S. bombing of the North, hoped that "Vietnamization" would continue to prevent Hanoi from conquering the South. By now, Beijing must have been convinced that there was little possibility of a U.S. invasion of the North or of U.S. attacks against China in 1969. Nonetheless, at the same time, the Chinese perceived an imminent Soviet surprise attack on China and were busy preparing for a war with the Soviet Union. At this juncture, a new balance of power in the world political structure was about to emerge. And the development in the regional conflicts, which contributed to the American intention to withdraw from Indochina with the help of both the Chinese and the Soviets, in addition to the Chinese perception of reduced American threat in the South, played a key role in the formation of such a new balance (cf. proposition 9).

\textbf{E. Analytical Summary}

In the first pattern, globally, China was in the worst position, as it had extremely negative relations with both the superpowers. China's position was made even more dangerous by its being much the weakest of the three (cf. proposition 2). The special position of China also left the strategic triangle in a state of inertia, because, as is shown in Figure 2-2, there was no actor in the triangle which could assume a pivot role. Under the circumstances, triangulations were very difficult, if not entirely impossible (cf. proposition 5). The most likely triangular activity was Soviet-American collusion against China, which China was very much worried about (cf. proposition 1). Nevertheless, owing to their ideological rigidity and various conflicts of national interests, the Soviet Union and the United States could hardly take any steps in this direction (cf. proposition 4). Therefore, there was a very low degree of triangulation among the three powers. The strategic triangle was highly restricted.

\textbf{Figure 2-2.}
In view of such a situation, the triangular relationship of the three powers had no direct linkage with the escalation of the Indochina war, which was conducted on the traditional bipolar assumptions (cf. proposition 4). The Chinese perceived it as the continuation of the U.S. imperialist containment and encirclement. Even the Soviet Union, which desired detente with the United States, had to be involved due to its ideological commitment more than its geopolitical interest. In Sino-Soviet ideological polemics, the Soviet Union simply could not afford to give Beijing a good opportunity to denounce it as a traitor to the revolution (cf. proposition 4). The war remained largely a bipolar war.

Since the strategic triangle was highly restricted, the regional actor, North Vietnam, was in a better position to manipulate (cf. proposition 7). As Figure 2-3 shows, there was an active small triangle within this inert strategic triangle—the Sino-Vietnamese-Soviet triangle, with the Vietnamese at the centre (a pivot power). The North Vietnamese was almost in an ideal pivot position (cf. proposition 3).

![Figure 2-3.](image)

Of course, the North Vietnamese wanted to have concerted support from both China and the Soviet Union in order to achieve their goal of unifying the country. For this reason, they kept emphasizing unity of the socialist camp. But as soon as they realized that such unity simply did not exist, they played quite well between the two Communist powers by keeping themselves flexibly neutral. As both China and the Soviet Union found it necessary to win over the North Vietnamese to their sides in their ideological disputes, the latter enjoyed a good leverage (cf. proposition 3). And as the strategic triangle itself was quite inert, this leverage was not restricted by it. This was almost a golden period of the triangular leverage of the North Vietnamese (cf. proposition 7).

In a sense, the American escalation of the Vietnam War saved China from a combined U.S.-Soviet partnership aimed against it, for Moscow was drawn into support for Hanoi (cf. proposition 9). The continuation of the war served China's national security interests by keeping Moscow and Washington in an adversary relationship. The consistent harsh attitudes of the Chinese toward negotiations could in a sense be
regarded as a moderate attempt to keep the Soviet Union and the United States apart (cf. proposition 3). But when Hanoi agreed to negotiate with the United States after U.S. resolve had been broken in the wake of the Tet Offensive of 1968, the situation changed radically for China. Once again there loomed the prospect of a super-power collusion against China (cf. proposition 1).225

By the end of the 1960s, new factors emerged in the strategic triangle that would eventually change the triangular pattern drastically. On the one hand, China was faced with a real Soviet threat as a result of Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and Sino-Soviet 1969 border clashes. On the other hand, the U.S., which was bogged down in Vietnam, wanted to withdraw without losing face. To do so, the United States should improve its relations with China so that it would be in a pivot position which would in return contribute to a more favorable situation in Indochina (cf. propositions 3 and 7). The U.S. thus had good reasons to improve its relations with China (cf. proposition 9). And the Chinese also perceived a reduced U.S. threat as a result of Nixon Doctrine. In order to counterbalance the Soviet pressure, the Chinese needed a better relationship with the U.S. These factors were conducive to the formation of a new pattern of the strategic triangle, which in return would have a tremendous impact upon the regional conflict in Indochina (cf. proposition 9).

This period shows the following characteristics: first, the strategic triangle can be highly restricted, as the three big powers are preoccupied with other national role conceptions, such as those based on ideological tenets; second, owing to the fact that the triangle was highly restricted, triangulating activities of the three actors were very low; third, as a result, the local power had some leverage with the three powers; and fourth, the regional conflict can have a tremendous impact upon the triangular pattern.
ENDNOTES

4 Dennis J. Dodin, *Territorial Claims in the Sino-Soviet Conflict* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institute, 1965), pp 42-44.
9 This sense of an impending war was expressed by Mao in late March. According to Mao, "A war between China and America is inevitable. This year at the earliest, or within two years at the latest, such a war will occur. America will attack us from four points, namely the Vietnam frontier, the Korean frontier, and through Japan by way of Taiwan and Okinawa. On such an occasion, Russia with the Sino-Russian defense pact as its pretext, will cross the frontier from Siberia and Mongolia to occupy China starting at Inner Mongolia and Northeast China. The result will be a confrontation across the Yangtze of the Chinese Liberation Army and the Russian Army....It is a mistake to say that in the world today there are war powers and peace powers confronting one another; there only exist revolutionary war powers and anti-revolutionary war powers. World revolution cannot come about by the evasion of war." Mao was quoted in Kikazo Ito and Minoru Shibata, "The Dilemma of Mao Tse-tung", *The China Quarterly*, No. 35 (July 1968), p. 67, note 11.
16 Quoted in *The Pentagon Papers* (Gravel), Vol. 3, p. 41-42.
21 Quoted from *The Pentagon Papers* (Gravel), Vol. 3, p. 500. The full text goes as follows, "Unless we can achieve this objective in South Vietnam, almost all of Southeast Asia will probably fall under Communist dominance (all of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia), accommodate to Communism so as to remove effective U.S. and anti-Communist influence (Burma), or fall under the domination of forces not now explicitly Communist but likely then to become so (Indonesia taking over Malaysia). Thailand might hold for a period with our help, but would be under grave pressure. Even the Philippines would become shaky, and the threat to India to the West, Australia and New Zealand to the South, and Taiwan, Korea, and Japan to the North and East would be greatly increased."
23 Johnson to Charles Bohlen, February 28, 1964, *DDRS* (75) 97C.
29 *United States-Vietnam Relations*. Books 4, C 3, pp 31-34.
30 Ibid., pp 40-42.
31 *The Pentagon Papers* (Gravel), Vol. 3, p. 236.
34 Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, op. cit., p. 149.
43 Sutter, *China Watch*, op. cit., p. 64.
49 The Soviet belief could be found in *Pravda*, February 26, 1965.
50 *Pravda*, February 9, 10, 11, 1965.
52 See I. Lemin, "Foreign Policy of the U.S.: Motive Force and Tendency", *Mirovaia Ekonomika i Mezhdunarodnye Otosheniia*, No. 6 (June 1965), p. 3.
60 *Pravda*, May 9, 1965.
64 For Details of Dean Rusk's statement, see Franz Schurmann, *The Logic of World Power* (New York: Pantheon, 1974), pp 508-11.
65 Zagoria, *Vietnam Triangle*, op. cit., p. 34.
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See Papp, Vietnam: The View from Moscow, Peking, Washington, op. cit., pp 77-78.


For a detailed discussion of the various interpretations of the essay, see Donald Zagoria,


For an example of such a reaction, see The New York Times, February 20, 1966, July 12,

1966, and August 23, 1966, made respectively by Habert Humphrey, Lyndon Johnson, and

William Fulbright.


The New York Times, April 27, 1966. Reportedly, the President himself made this decision.


Services, 1967), pp 185-86.


104 The text of the four points can be found in JUSPAO, Vietnam Documents and Research Notes, No. 8, p. 3.


109 Ibid., April 1, 1966.


112 Ibid., April 1, 1966.


115 The text of the four points can be found in JUSPAO, Vietnam Documents and Research Notes, No. 8, p. 3.


141 Ibid., August 12, 1966.
147 Smyser, op. cit., p. 97.
148 Zhou En-lai was reported to have confirmed the killing of Vietnamese emigrants. Moreover, the firing into the air of 10,000 anti-aircraft shells intended for Vietnam seemed to him a deliberate sabotage rather than armed factions' fighting. South China Morning Post (Hong Kong), April 1968.
149 TASS, February 2 and 4, 1967.
152 Radio Moscow, February 17, 1967.
153 TASS, February 17, 1967.
157 See, for example, NCNA, January 23, and February 2, 1967.
159 NCNA, April 25, 1966.
160 VNA, June 19, 1966.
164 NCNA, April 21, 1967.
165 Bao Tan Viet Hao, January 3, 1968, p. 3; March 8, 1968, pp 1,4.
166 Ibid.
170 For a good description of those efforts, see Cooper, Lost Crusade, op. cit., pp 284-342.
172 VAN, October 30, 1966.
174 Le Duan, "Speech Before the Conference to Disseminate the Resolution of the 12th Conference of the Central Committee", attached as document No. 303 to Department of State Working Paper.
175 VNA, January 28, 1967.
179 NCNA, August 30, 1967.
180 NCNA, February 20, 1967.
181 NCNA, May 12, 1967.
183 See Young, Diplomacy and Power, pp 294-96.

See, for example, *Peking Review*, February 9, pp 6-8, and February 16, pp 7-10, 1968.


VNA, April 3, 1968.


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NCNA, April 5, 15, 1968.


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For more details on Chinese factional politics and its impact upon China's foreign policy, see Thomas Gottlieb, *Chinese Foreign Policy Factionalism and the Origins of the Strategic Triangle*, R-1902-NA (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand, 1977).


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Ibid., 42-43.


A. The Basic Structure of the Strategic Triangle

During the period from 1970 to 1975, the strategic triangle underwent a dramatic shift from the previous pattern, which turned out to be much better for China since it achieved a rapprochement with the United States and at the same time succeeded in containing its tension with the Soviet Union within a manageable scope. In view of China's position as the weakest of the three, this improvement appeared even more significant (cf. proposition 2). Nonetheless, China was still located in the most unfavorable position in the triangle. The Soviet Union had a much stronger competitive edge over China in terms of their respective relations with the United States. The Soviet-American detente, which had its origin in the late 1950s, soon gathered momentum stronger than that of the Sino-American rapprochement. Therefore, China still had a strong incentive to seek a change in the pattern by the end of the period so as to improve its position in the triangle.

The most significant change from the First to the Second Pattern was the Sino-American rapprochement. One important reason for this change, as has been analysed in the last chapter, was the urgent American need to pull out of the Vietnam quagmire, a typical case of the regional conflict influencing the evolution of the big power relations. A rapprochement with China seemed to be the only feasible way for the United States to withdraw from Vietnam at less cost, since China was one of the two main supporters of the North Vietnamese (cf. proposition 9). In other words, the weight of China was much heavier in regard to the Vietnam war than globally (cf. proposition 6). Another reason, which lay within the strategic triangle itself, was the perceived strategic need on the part of both the United States and China to bury the hatchet and join hands in dealing with a growing Soviet expansion (cf. proposition 1). For China, it was extremely crucial to reduce the danger of a possible "two-front war" by improving relations with the United States so as to concentrate its strength to deal with the greater threat, the Soviet
Union. For the United States, it became increasingly important to narrow the range of the "two-and-a-half-war strategy" to "one and a half war strategy" by improving relations with China so as to concentrate its main military strength on deterring the Soviet Union in key spots around the world.\footnote{1} After the Zhenbao Island Incident, in June 1969, Brezhnev proposed the "Asian Collective Security System", the purpose of which, as seen by China and the United States, was "to encircle" China and also to weaken and replace the U.S. as a Pacific Power.\footnote{2} This constituted a two-pronged threat that both had to cope with. But on the whole, the influence of the regional conflict in this case was the more direct reason of the two.

The two powers each also had some other incentives to move closer to each other. For China, the Sino-American rapprochement might contribute to some possible solution to the Taiwan issue and the ending of its international isolation. As for the United States, the Sino-American rapprochement enabled the United States to take advantage of the Sino-Soviet split to gain leverage over both the Soviet Union and China, while reducing the chance of a Sino-Soviet rapprochement (cf. proposition 3).\footnote{3} These different expectations would be in the short term conducive to improving Sino-American relations, but in the long run might give rise to conflicts which could hamper the further development of their relations.

Since one of the two major incentives for Nixon to improve relations with China was to put pressure on the Soviet Union, the rapid improvement in Chinese-American relations would inevitably cause serious concern to the Soviet strategists. By the end of the 1960s, Soviet detente with the United States had sunk to an unprecedented low level due to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and a series of competitions between the two superpowers in the third world. Already beset with growing tension with China, the Soviet Union had to cope with an increasingly conflictive relationship with the United States. The emergence of the Zhou pragmatists was perceived by Soviet leaders to be more dangerous than the seemingly more fanatic Maoist ideological purists who were in control of China’s policy at the height of the Cultural Revolution. And the Soviets also lost hope for a reversal of the virulently hostile anti-Soviet policy.\footnote{4} The positive thrust in Sino-American relations naturally aroused Soviet vigilance at the potentiality of Sino-American collusion against the Soviet Union (cf. proposition 1). Moscow was also worried about the possibility of becoming an isolated pole in the triangular relationship.\footnote{5} To avoid this, Moscow should either seek to improve its relations with Beijing or upgrade its relations with Washington. Under the
circumstances, only the latter seemed feasible, though Moscow also tried with the former. On balance, Moscow found itself a captive of Sino-U.S. politics rather than a shaper of that relationship.7

The Americans were probably the first of the three to clearly take a "triangular" view in their world strategy, according to which there were five major economic power centres, but only three powers of strategic significance: the United States, the Soviet Union and China. Washington took pains to explain that the embryonic Sino-American rapprochement was not directed against any other country and that it took no sides in the Sino-Soviet dispute. Thus a romantic triangle was taking shape, with the United States at the pivot: The logic of the new relationship was stated most explicitly by Kissinger: "Our relationships to possible opponents should be such...that our options toward both of them are always greater than their options toward each other."9 The two more positive sides of the triangle were thus premised on a conflictive relationship between the Soviet Union and China, but the United States was careful not to aggravate that relationship: "Triangle diplomacy must avoid the impression that it is 'using' either of the contenders against the other; otherwise one becomes vulnerable to retaliation or blackmail. The hostility between China and the Soviet Union served our purposes best if we maintained closer relations with each side than they did with each other."10 This idea constituted an important part of the concept of the pivot and its leverage, but it might be difficult to carry out in reality (cf. proposition 3).

Washington must have been satisfied to see that the strategy of increasing the leverage on Moscow through Sino-American rapprochement had worked. If the Soviet Union had also wished to play the game of triipolarity, it was not able to do so when one hand was tied behind its back (cf. proposition 3).11 The Soviet-American detente, which had gained momentum as a result of Sino-American rapprochement, would soon be stronger than that of Sino-American rapprochement, as Moscow demonstrated that the Soviet-American relationship was more important than the Sino-American relationship.12 On the whole, Washington seemed to be situated in the pivot position in its dealings with both Beijing and Moscow, which were still in a very negative relationship. In particular, the United States seemed to be able to push Moscow and Beijing toward restraining rather than encouraging Hanoi (this will be discussed in detail later) so that the United States could disengage itself from Indochina (cf. propositions 3 and 7).
On the other hand, the Chinese also had good reasons to be happy with their dramatically-improved position in the triangle following the Nixon visit. China's improved relations with the United States forced Moscow to consider seriously the possible international response to any use of force to compel China to accept its terms over the border disputes or other issues. In March 1972, Brezhnev revealed that proposals had been made to China for a non-aggression treaty, a border settlement and even for improving relations on the basis of the principles of peaceful coexistence. As tension along the Sino-Soviet frontier gradually eased, the Chinese felt confident enough to minimize the immediate danger from Moscow. Zhou En-lai, for example, showed a reduced Chinese concern over the Soviet military threat in his report to the Tenth Chinese Communist Party Congress in August 1973, claiming that the Soviet Union was merely making a "feint to the East" while preparing to attack the West in Europe.

What is noteworthy is that the United States did not maintain the momentum of its pivot role for long. One important reason was that Washington did not have a symmetrical relationship with both Beijing and Moscow (cf. proposition 3). As the improvement of its relationship with China had quickly produced a higher level of Soviet-American detente, the United States shifted its major attention to its interaction with the Soviet Union. This would naturally cause China's concern over American sincerity in their bilateral relations. Inasmuch as the Sino-American rapprochement appeared to have lost its momentum for a while, the Soviet Union found itself in a better bargaining position vis-à-vis the United States. Since the American government had displayed an intense interest in Soviet-American detente, the Soviet Union became more adventurous in its expansion around the world, thereby leading to a further American perception of decline of American influence in the world. Ironically, Soviet eagerness for further improvements in relations was reduced by the slackening pace of Sino-American rapprochement (cf. proposition 1).

In fact, even if the United States had managed to treat its relations with China and the Soviet Union in an evenhanded manner, it would have been difficult to maintain the momentum of the pivot. First, since the latter two had a tense relationship with each other, neither would be happy to see the other developing a positive relationship with Washington. Therefore, both of them would try their best to prevent the other from developing such a relationship. Moreover, neither would like Washington to occupy the pivot position, playing them against each other. As a result, such a "romantic triangle" could not be very stable, with the pivot power situated in a very delicate position. In
such a triangle, the leverage is generated by the competitive wooing (cf. proposition 3),
but also restricted by such a competitive wooing, as each of the competitors tends to
perceive the positive relations of the pivot powers with the other as a sort of collusion,
thereby having little tolerance of it. Therefore, the conditions that help generate the
leverage also are liable to restrict it. This ambivalent phenomenon reflects the dilemma
of a pivot power. Secondly, it seemed unlikely that the United States could greatly
increase its leverage over China by stepping up its detente with Moscow. In fact, as
relations between Washington and Moscow became more friendly, Beijing proved even
less willing to show flexibility in consolidating Sino-American ties. Similarly, because
the Sino-Soviet-American triangle has been an international fact of life since 1972,
Washington could hardly increase its leverage significantly over Moscow by
manipulating its relationship with Beijing. The Soviet Union had also developed a keen
sense of the limits of Sino-American cooperation. The dilemma of the pivot is an
important supplement to Proposition 3.

Since China remained in the most unfavorable position during the second pattern of
the triangle, it was still most dissatisfied with the structure. In view of the heated Sino-
Soviet conflict, China was logically obliged to promote its positive relations with the
United States. Nevertheless, American incentive for a better Sino-American relationship
could only be increased when there was a decline in Soviet-American detente. Largely
for this reason, the Chinese had never stopped, since the early 1970s, warning the
Americans of the consequences of detente with the Soviets. Beijing argued that detente
could only make Moscow more aggressive. Therefore, Soviet expansion, in the Chinese
view, could only be curbed by a hardline U.S. military posture.

In sum, the interaction of the three powers in the second pattern seemed closer to
real triangular politics. As an independent actor, each member fully realized the
strategic significance of the others in a triangular context. There were also active
interactions among the three subrelationships, with each having an impact on the other
two. The origin of the triangular manipulation of this period was Sino-American
rapprochement that in turn boosted Soviet-American detente to an unprecedented
height. There was a visible competitive wooing of the United States by China and the
Soviet Union. And the United States enjoyed a certain degree of leverage over the other
two mutually conflicting actors. But the pivot was also subject to the pressure of the
conflicting demands of the other two poles. As the Soviet-American detente gathered a
stronger momentum in 1972-73, the Sino-American rapprochement lost its dynamic,
which in turn dampened the Soviet incentives to make further concessions to the U.S. for better relations.

The restrictions to the strategic triangle during 1971-73 were relatively low, with the three powers having very high triangular role conceptions to guide their foreign policy lines. During certain periods of this pattern, the triangle was much less restricted in comparison with the last pattern, with the pivot power enjoying visible leverage (cf. proposition 5). This was basically not favorable to the local actors, as the big powers could be more willing to sacrifice their local interests in order to promote their strategic interests as embodied in the triangular relationship (cf. proposition 7).

Nonetheless, even at the prime time of the triangular manoeuvre, the restrictive factors could hardly be ignored, as the strategic triangle is inherently restrictive (cf. proposition 4). The Chinese and Soviet "tilts" toward the United States were not universally popular in either Moscow or Beijing. One hard-line Soviet opponent of American "imperialism", the Ukrainian boss Pyotr Shelest, for example, evidently favored cancelling the Moscow summit in May 1972 because of the American bombing and mining of North Vietnam, only to be outvoted in the Politburo and demoted. Serious objections to Sino-American rapprochement also existed on the Chinese side, simply because ideological and military fundamentalism was running high in Beijing. Lin Biao's fall in September 1971 removed the most powerful Chinese opposition faction to the tilt toward the United States, but Sino-American rapprochement was far from completely acceptable to all the Chinese leaders.17 After the announcement on October 5 of a second visit by Kissinger to Beijing, objections at the higher levels were kept under control by Mao's intervention. Further progress in Sino-American relations was never freed from the oppositions of the radicals, later known as the "gang of four", who strongly opposed the Three Worlds Theory, which had the following three implications: (1) that the United States constituted a lesser threat than the Soviet Union and that concessions could be made to have Washington's participation in a united front against Moscow; (2) that all Third World countries, regardless of social systems, could be a part of the same united front and that China should make more effort to mobilize their opposition to hegemonism than to promote revolutions in those countries; and (3) that the Second World, which included Eastern Europe, capitalist Western Europe and Japan, could also be an important ally of China in opposing the Soviet Union.18

There were also other restrictive factors which will be discussed later in the Chapter. These restrictive factors would to a great extent limit the utility of pivot
leverage and decide that North Vietnam was still able to manoeuvre (cf. propositions 8). The following sections will discuss the role of the regional conflicts in shaping the Sino-American rapprochement, the impact of American triangulation upon the development of the regional conflicts and the limitations of the triangulation.

B. Building Up the Dream of a Triangular Solution: A Twisting Road to Sino-American Rapprochement.

If the Vietnam war was originally escalated in the direction of bipolar conflicts, then Nixon had by the end of the 1960s found it necessary to end the war in a triangular way, i.e., by resorting to the help of the other two powers through triangulation. It was against this background that Sino-American rapprochement became possible (cf. proposition 9). Nevertheless, this triangular move would encounter serious obstructions from a series of restrictive factors; therefore, the whole process would prove to be much more difficult and tortuous than could have been expected (cf. proposition 4). Despite this, the budding Sino-American rapprochement would not only change the structure of the strategic triangle, but also exert great influence on the other two actors in regard to the on-going war in Indochina. The nervous reactions from both Moscow and Hanoi would clearly corroborate this point.

a. A Two Pronged Strategy for Ending the War: "Vietnamization" and Big Power Diplomacy

Unlike Johnson, Nixon came to power in 1969 with a clear understanding that he had to end the war somehow. He repeated his departure from the past Vietnam policy, claiming that he "could not have continued the inherited policy on Vietnam", but at the same time stressing that "the way in which we set about to resolve this problem has a major impact on our credibility abroad and our cohesion at home." This means that the question was not whether to withdraw or not, but how to withdraw. For this, Nixon had his own plan, which was designed to offer the U.S. "a prospect of honorable disengagement that was not hostage to the other's side's cooperation."

The core of the plan for "honorable disengagement" was that the withdrawal must not result in the collapse of the South Vietnamese government, which had so long relied upon American protection. An uncompromising anti-Communist Congressman in the early 1950s, Nixon was very active in attacking Truman for his alleged responsibility for the loss of China. Like J.F. Kennedy and L.B. Johnson, he also feared that a similar internal political debate might occur as a result of the fall of South Vietnam to Communism. The consequences would be catastrophic, as he stressed in May 1969, "we
would destroy ourselves if we pulled out in a way that wasn’t really honorable... It would be destructive to our own moral.” Moreover, Nixon was deeply worried about the international consequences of a withdrawal with undue haste (the likely impact of the regional conflict on the structure of the big power relations described in proposition 9). A practical politician of power politics who had seized the Sino-Soviet conflict as an opportunity to play triangular games to help end the war, Nixon had also viewed a new relationship with both the Soviet Union and China as the long-term cornerstone of American foreign policies in an age of detente. But the way in which the United States met its responsibilities in Vietnam could have a crucial impact upon the Soviet and Chinese assessment of American will, thereby influencing the success of any new relationship with those two powers. In sum, as Kissinger concluded, though the initial American descent into Vietnam had been a "tragic blunder", the United States could not afford to accept a military defeat, because the loss, "may unloose forces that would complicate prospects for international order.”

To achieve such an "honorable" solution, according to Kissinger, a negotiated settlement was the key. Nevertheless, it had to be delayed until South Vietnam had enough confidence in its own political capabilities. Kissinger strongly opposed a coalition government in South Vietnam, which would, in his view, destabilise the political structure of South Vietnam and lead to a Communist takeover. Therefore, the United States should take the position of seeking a mutual withdrawal of forces over a fairly long duration so that a truly indigenous political system had a chance to be established. Whether a negotiated settlement could be reached was to a great extent dependent upon the success of Vietnamization, which, in Nixon’s words, was to "train and equip the South Vietnamese army so that it would have the capability of defending the country itself." And Nixon stressed that "our whole strategy depended on whether this program succeeded.”

With a dexterous use of power, Nixon was initially quite confident that he could force the North Vietnamese leaders to accept the terms they had repeatedly refused in Johnson’s period, if he could triangulate the two biggest supporters of Hanoi (cf. propositions 3 and 7). The Soviet Union had demonstrated its clear interest in reaching an agreement to limit strategic arms, while the Chinese had begun to show signs of willingness to improve relations with the United States. This leverage with the two largest Communist sponsors of Hanoi could be employed to secure their assistance in compelling North Vietnam to accept a "fair" settlement. Moreover, great power
diplomacy could be complemented by the threat and actual use of force. For Nixon, military pressure had failed in Johnson's period because it had been applied in a limited manner, which was as good as telling Hanoi that the United States had no intention of threatening the existence of the North Vietnamese regime. With the improved relations with both China and the Soviet Union, he believed that he could afford to resort to his madman theory, which Johnson couldn't. As he explained it in late 1968, "I want the North Vietnamese to believe I've reached the point where I might do anything to stop the War. We'll just slip the word to them that for God's sake, you know Nixon is obsessed with Communism." Comparing his situation to that Eisenhower faced in Korea in 1953, he was certain that the threat of "massive retaliation" would intimidate the North Vietnamese as it had the North Koreans.27 A "fourth-rate power like North Vietnam", Kissinger claimed, must have a "breaking point"; and he and Nixon were prepared to use maximum force, threatening the very existence of North Vietnam, to obtain what they wanted.28

Throughout the first half of 1969, Nixon and Kissinger tried to influence the Soviet Union to pressure Hanoi into adopting a more conciliatory stance in the Paris talks. The Soviet leaders were told that Vietnam would be linked to a wide range of issues. If no progress was made in Paris, then no SALT agreement could be reached. Moreover, Kissinger threatened that bombing attacks against the North would be resumed and that the United States would escalate the War. On May 14, Nixon made it clear that the continuing war would affect "other decisions" with respect to Soviet-American relations.29 To further demonstrate to both Hanoi and Moscow that he meant what he said, Nixon ordered large-scale bombing attacks against North Vietnamese sanctuaries in Cambodia, an action which had been consistently avoided by the Johnson administration for fear of the international consequences. In Cambodia, rightists in Sihanouk's government were so encouraged by the bombing that they pressed for closing the sanctuaries. In April 1969, war materials ceased to pass through Sihanoukville.30 Having realized the importance of at least a semblance of domestic support to the success of diplomatic and military manoeuvres, Nixon announced in May what he termed as a "comprehensive peace plan", thus making public the proposals he had privately made to North Vietnam. Nixon specifically advocated "mutual withdrawal of all non-South Vietnamese forces from South Vietnam" on a staged time table basis and "free choice for the people of South Vietnam" under fixed procedures overseen by an international body.31 To demonstrate his intention of ending American involvement in
the War to the domestic opinion, Nixon approved the withdrawal of 25,000 men, following a discussion with South Vietnamese President Thieu on Midway Island in June and initiated a phased withdrawal for a total of 115,000 men in the first year.32

Nevertheless, these did not bring about the expected concession from Hanoi, because one element of Nixon’s two-pronged strategy, Vietnamization, did not create strong enough pressure for Hanoi to negotiate a solution, but rather hampered the process of negotiation. As far as Hanoi was concerned, Vietnamization showed that the Americans were not prepared to make concessions right away; therefore, it had no reason to accept American conditions immediately. And Vietnamization weakened the American position for negotiation, as Hanoi pointed out that if American troops could not achieve their goals in Vietnam, it would be incredible that South Vietnamese troops supported by American aid could fulfill those goals.33 Neither did the Soviets prove very helpful; even if they could help smooth out some difficult points, they would, in the words of Harriman, definitely "take Hanoi’s side in negotiation."34 This initial sign of Moscow's reluctance to cooperate augured ill for the future of Nixon’s triangulation, as the influence of conflicting national role conceptions in both Moscow and Beijing would inevitably dampen their willingness to be triangulated at will (cf. proposition 4). Hanoi continued to insist on the unconditional withdrawal of all American troops from Vietnam and appealed for the formation of a provisional coalition government without Thieu, while Hanoi's representatives expressed their determination to sit if necessary in Paris "until the chairs rot."35 Nevertheless, owing to the heavy losses suffered during the Tet Offensive, Hanoi in 1969 shifted to a defensive, protracted war strategy, allocating more resources to the rear base in the North than to the war effort in the South.36

Now, Nixon was running against time, as further delay in a negotiated settlement might cause a new wave of the anti-war movement in the United States, which would in return further weaken his bargaining position (cf. proposition 4). He hoped to end the war in the second half of 1969 by resorting to a covert threat to Hanoi that he would have to use "go-for-break" strategy "to end the war one way or another", if it remained unconciliatory at the bargaining table. In his secret message to Ho Chi Minh, Nixon set his deadline on November 1.37 In the summer of 1969, National Security Council aides started to plan Operation Duck Hook, which was a series of proposed escalations against the North Vietnamese should the November 1 deadline pass without any conciliatory move from them. Although a number of options were proposed, including invading North
Vietnam, blockading Hanoi and Haiphong and bombing dikes, Duck Hook never went beyond the planning stage. The failure to make a comprehensive plan for the approaching November deadline suggested that Nixon’s covert threat was probably not much more than a bluff. For Nixon now, the key to the success of his withdrawal plan lay in the success of Vietnamization. Nixon asked the British counterinsurgency expert, Sir Robert Thompson, to go secretly to Vietnam “for a firsthand, candid, and completely independent report on the situation there.” Thompson brought back a very optimistic estimate on progress in the Vietnamization program. According to him, the security situation in Saigon and the rural areas had been improved. Although the American goals had not been fully achieved, the United States was in a winning position to obtain a just peace and maintain an independent, non-Communist South Vietnam. What was most needed was “confidence” which, in Thompson’s opinion, would increase with a steady application of “the-do-it-yourself” concept and continued U.S. support. Thompson’s report once again built up Nixon’s confidence in the prospect of Vietnamization as an option to goad Hanoi into negotiating a peace.

By October, Nixon found himself in a contest “with the anti-war movement for the public minds in the United States and the private mind in Hanoi.” In view of the danger of domestic politics spoiling his two-pronged strategy, he was determined not to “allow national policy to be dictated by street demonstrations.” On November 3, Nixon tried very hard to win over some American public support by giving a tempting speech entitled “the Silent Majority”, in which he described an appealing prospect based on his Vietnamization Policy that would not only diminish American casualties but could also bring out American troops in an honorable way. By offering a policy of achieving an honorable peace with minimal American sacrifice, he ingeniously took advantage of the patriotism of the Americans (his “silent majority”), who by no means wished to accept anything resembling defeat, whatever their attitudes toward the War. The population had rallied around his perceived moderate policy; most of them supported Vietnamization, peace talks and staged withdrawal of American troops. Nixon temporarily assuaged the impendence of the domestic politics to the implementation of his two-pronged strategy.

Nonetheless, Vietnamization proved to be much more difficult than Nixon’s manipulation of American public opinion. By the time Nixon revealed his own plan to terminate the war, the program had been under way for more than a year. While American combat forces tied down the North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces on the
battlefield, American advisers tried by every means to strengthen and modernize the South Vietnamese government forces. The ARVN, which had around 850,000 men in early 1969, was inflated to over one million in a few months. Meanwhile, the United States transferred to South Vietnam huge quantities of the newest weapons, including more than a million M-16 rifles, 12,000 M-60 machine guns, 40,000 M-79 grenade launchers, and 2,000 heavy mortars and howitzers, plus ships, planes, and helicopters and vehicles. The value of U.S. arms transfers to Saigon rose from $725 million in 1968 to $925 million in each year of 1969 and 1970. In addition, the Pacification Campaign, which was initially designed as a contingency plan to expand government control over the countryside prior to negotiations, was institutionalized during 1969 and 1970. In March 1970, the South Vietnamese government launched an ambitious land reform program--Land to the Tiller--which fixed about one million hectares for redistribution.

During early 1970, Vietnamization was at full steam; however, its achievement was still doubtful. Although a great effort had been made in wooing the villages, there was little to show that the pacification program had produced any really good opinions for the Thieu government. In spite of some economic improvements, the CIA reported in April 1970 that there was no "substantial degree" of support for the Thieu regime in the countryside. The withdrawal of American combat troops from some key provinces had immediately led to a deterioration in the security situation. The ARVN proved to be less than capable of filling the vacuum left by the Americans. Its newly-replenished manpower and American weapons could not overcome its basic weakness. There were still a very high desertion rate and a severe shortage of qualified officers at various levels. The army was suffering from low moral and widespread corruption, and ARVN had still to rely heavily on American air, artillery and logistic support.

By the spring of 1970, Nixon's Vietnamization strategy had proved to be anything but satisfactory. His "Silent Majority" speech had only quieted the opposition temporarily, but Nixon had to support his words with deeds. In order to forestall a new wave of anti-war protest, he announced in April the phased withdrawal of 150,000 troops over the next year. No matter how essential this action looked in terms of domestic politics, Nixon was aware that such an action could be disastrous to the Vietnamization program, leaving South Vietnam vulnerable to enemy military pressure. Furthermore, the "Silent Majority" speech, which served to show Hanoi both Nixon's determination and public support to achieve his goal in Vietnam, failed to bring Hanoi back for negotiations with more conciliatory terms. Even worse, he realized in
desperation that his announcement of further troop withdrawals would probably encourage Hanoi to put off negotiation. Caught in the dilemma between ineffective Vietnamization and deadlocked talks in Paris, Nixon felt again compelled to take strong actions against North Vietnam, and the Cambodian crisis offered a timely opportunity. For Nixon, invading North Vietnamese sancturaries in Cambodia could buy more time for Vietnamization and avenge the humiliations arising from Hanoi's refusal to meet American negotiating demands in the previous November 1. Nevertheless, this escalation would, against Nixon's wish, complicate his efforts to improve American relations with China. Once again, the evolution of the regional conflicts would exert a strong influence on the process of big power relations (cf. proposition 9). This time, the influence on Sino-American rapprochement would be negative.

b. A Winding Road to Sino-American Rapprochement

Largely for the reasons analyzed in the last chapter, China also had a strong incentive to seek an accommodation with the United States. Nevertheless, this did not mean that Chinese opposition to American "imperialist" activity had come to an end. In other words, the emerging Chinese national role conception identified in the triangular politics did not replace its national role conception as a revolutionary centre. Having seen signs of an increasing opposition throughout the world to the policies of the two superpowers, especially in underdeveloped and non-aligned countries, Beijing shifted the focus of attention from "imperialism" and "revisionism" to "superpower hegemonism." This shift in Chinese foreign policy was evident in Zhou En-lai's interview with a group of French correspondents in July 1970. According to him, there were one or two superpowers in the world that continued to oppress others by resorting to force and threatening the weak and small rudely, while fighting against each other for world hegemony. He claimed that the days when they decided the destiny of the world were gone forever. Their difference lay only in the fact that the Soviet Union was growing in strength while the United States was declining in power.

The coexistence of the two basically conflicting national role conceptions would inevitably present some confusion in Chinese foreign policy. It was therefore not surprising that even when the Chinese and American leaders were secretly exploring the possibility of improving relations between the two countries, the Chinese continued to denounce American policies in Vietnam, even though the Chinese had an interest in using the Americans to counterbalance Soviet pressure. The Nixon Doctrine was condemned as a vicious policy of having "Asians kill Asians." Vietnamization was
described as a gangster policy and Nixon's troop withdrawal program was dismissed as a "smokescreen." The Chinese national role conception as a revolutionary center, which was still very influential in Chinese foreign policy making, would, of course, compromise the utility of Nixon's triangulation (cf. proposition 5).

The slight movement toward better Sino-American relations that had taken place during late 1969 and early 1970 was suddenly suspended due to the Cambodian crisis of Spring 1970 (cf. proposition 9). Cambodia's Prince Norodom Sihanouk had barely managed to keep his country out of the conflict in Vietnam by maintaining a balance between North Vietnam, China, the Soviet Union and the United States, but in March 1970, his balancing game finished abruptly. While Sihanouk was in Moscow, the Cambodian National Assembly deposed him as the head of state. The Soviet Union declined Sihanouk's request for arms and was reluctant to serve as his exile base. Upon his arrival in Beijing, Zhou gave him "formal assurance of complete support in all fields...multifarious aid, militant solidarity, and de facto recognition." And Hanoi immediately denounced the coup as "part of the U.S. plan to invade the Indo-Chinese countries", aiming at opposing the Vietnamese people's resistance.

Although initially attempting to maintain some form of neutrality, the Lon Nol government soon proceeded to terminate its acquiescence in North Vietnamese-Vietcong operations within Cambodia. On March 23 the Cambodian-Vietnamese border was officially proclaimed closed. On March 25, Sihanoukville was closed to any ships carrying arms for Communist forces. On the same day the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed Hanoi of its desire to negotiate the withdrawal of North Vietnamese forces from Cambodia. On March 29 North Vietnamese forces launched attacks against Cambodian forces. Throughout April the Cambodian situation continued to deteriorate. South Vietnamese forces stepped up their military actions across the border, while Hanoi appeared to be determined to keep its forces in Cambodia, rejecting any attempt to negotiate a deal with the Lon Nol government.

The Soviet Union recognized the new government in Phnom Penh, while extending merely moral and propaganda support to Sihanouk and his allies. This left the latter in bitterness against the Soviets. Whereas the Chinese, who strongly condemned the Cambodian coup itself as an American plot to expand the war into Cambodia so that Washington could extricate itself from the quagmire of Vietnamization, withdrew their tentative feelers for improving relations with the United States. The mutually identified Sino-American strategic interests were thus seriously damaged by this crisis, which
drastically tipped the balance of the two conflicting national role conceptions in favor of the revolutionary centre (cf. proposition 4). Meanwhile preparations were under way for an Indochinese summit in some place in South China, which would serve to show the unity and determination of the three Indochinese peoples to fight against the United States. The conference, which convened under the sponsorship of Zhou En-lai, was attended by Sihanouk, Souphanouvong of Laos, and Pham Van Dong. Zhou promised the conference representatives that the "700 million Chinese people" would provide a "reliable rear area" for the "three Indochinese countries." This promise was backed up by an official Chinese pledge that China would provide a "powerful backing" for the three Indochinese peoples in their war against American aggression. Representatives from the three Indochinese countries also affirmed their solidarity and their determination to give "mutual support" to each other's efforts. The Cambodian events turned out to be an asset for the Chinese, since unity and concerted efforts would clear the way for more Chinese influence over the various resistance forces.

On April 30, Nixon announced an incursion by U.S. and South Vietnamese forces across the border to attack the Vietnamese sanctuaries in Cambodia. On May 5 Sihanouk proclaimed the formation of the Royal Government of National Union (RGNU), which sought "to overthrow the fascist, racist dictatorship of the American imperialists' flunkeys headed by Lon Nol-Sirik Matak" and support the peoples of the world against U.S. imperialism. Sihanouk's long-term enemy, the Khmer Rouge, was included in the government. On May 20, Mao issued a strong foreign policy statement, read by Lin Biao at a mass rally in Beijing that urged the people of the world to unite against "US imperialism and condemned the U.S. as a "paper tiger." The statement seemed to signal a return to a strong anti-U.S. posture, which could have been result of the internal struggles between Zhou En-lai and Lin Biao around the situation in Cambodia. Unlike Zhou, Lin Biao had been giving primacy to the struggle against U.S. imperialism. Thus, the national role conception as a revolutionary centre against imperialism for a while occupied the leading place.

The withdrawal of American troops from Cambodia, which relaxed Beijing's worry over the sincerity of America's expressed intention to withdraw from the area, influenced once again the factional struggle within the Chinese leadership, tipping the balance again in favor of developing Sino-American relations (cf. proposition 9). At the Second Plenum of the Ninth Congress of the Party held in the autumn of 1970, Mao probably accepted Zhou's proposal for seeking a normalization with the United States in
spite of Lin's opposition. According to Edgar Snow, who visited Beijing after the Second Plenum, Chinese leaders received several urgent inquiries from the United States, signalling the wish of President Nixon to visit Beijing. Mao told Snow that President Nixon would be welcomed to Beijing "either as tourist or as President." Zhou En-lai also expressed the view that Sino-American negotiations could be opened if the Americans demonstrated a "serious desire to negotiate." Both sides soon began to work to start the process. The American bombing raids against North Vietnam in November brought only routine Chinese recriminations. By the end of 1970, China's overall security situation seemed to have significantly improved, except for its northern border with the Soviet Union.

Nonetheless, the Laotian incursion by South Vietnamese troops during February 1971 incurred much stronger reactions from China and once again impeded the progress of Sino-American rapprochement (cf. proposition 9). For years, Chinese construction troops had been building a road from China to the Laotian border with Thailand, which was protected by Chinese forces of between 14,000 and 20,000 equipped with 395 radar-directed anti-aircraft guns. There were probably a number of reasons for the direct Chinese involvement in this area. First, in view of the increase of American involvement in Laos between 1969 and 1971, the Chinese road was probably built to counter US presence in the area. Second, the road could be used to supply Communist forces in North-East Laos and step up infiltrations of Thai Communists to Thailand or simply deter greater Thai involvement in the Laotian conflict. Finally, the road could help control the Northwest area of Laos, linking the Chinese influenced Communist zones together along the Chinese southern border from North Vietnam to India. When South Vietnamese troops invaded Laos, Beijing perceived an increased danger of its own involvement in the Indochinese conflict: Not only was Laos adjacent to China but also Chinese troops were near the area of military conflict.

Chinese fears of a major conflict were further enhanced as Hanoi seemed to be determined to strike a decisive blow at the invading ARVN force. To handle the ARVN troops, North Vietnam had withdrawn troops from its southern part along the demilitarized zone, thus leaving itself vulnerable to attack from South Vietnam proper. China was aware of this danger and its likely consequences. During the whole period of the Laotian incursion, Beijing warned that the South Vietnamese and American actions in Laos represented a "grave menace to Chinese security", and mentioned the possibility of American use of nuclear weapons as a last resort. China stepped up its
aid to Hanoi. On February 15 the two countries signed a supplementary economic and military aid agreement for 1971. In early March, Zhou En-lai made a dramatic three-day visit to Hanoi, pledging that China was ready to endure "the greatest national sacrifice" to fulfill its commitments to North Vietnam. By now, the Chinese national role conception as a revolutionary centre seemed to have resumed its prominence.

Nonetheless, it later became clear that Beijing and Hanoi were divided by some fundamental differences about the Laotian crisis and that even more significantly, the disputes within the Chinese leadership became even more heated. In Hanoi, North Vietnam's military leaders regarded the Laotian crisis as the failure of Vietnamization. Quan Doi Nhan Dan and other North Vietnamese press comment began to emphasize battles of annihilation by main forces as the tactics in the war, which was a major departure from their tactics in the previous two years. The retreat of the South Vietnamese troops from Laos further convinced the North Vietnamese leaders that the war was entering a final stage and goaded Giap to begin planning his 1972 offensive.

For the Chinese, such a rash advance would enhance the danger of Chinese confrontation with the United States. They also came to a different conclusion that "people's war" tactics of close-quarter fighting and night operations could overcome the massive use of American air power. The continued withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam after the failure of the joint American-South Vietnamese actions must have led Mao and Zhou to conclude that the United States would before long have to withdraw from Vietnam. Therefore a main force campaign was not only needless, but also provocative. A more rational strategy, in their view, would be to drive out U.S. imperialism "bit by bit", because it was impossible to "kill a big tiger with a single blow." The Laotian experience further strengthened Mao and Zhou's earlier estimate that the strength of U.S. imperialism was rapidly declining, thereby presenting less threat of the Chinese security than it had before.

Mao and Zhou's conclusion was certainly not shared by Lin Biao, who had earlier opposed the decision of the Second Plenum to improve Sino-American relations gradually. In his view, the United States remained the primary enemy, while for Mao and Zhou, the Soviet Union had taken the U.S. place. Lin Biao and the radical Chen Bo-da received appropriate warning in the Plenum for their radical stance against improving relations with the U.S. By the end of 1970, Chen Bo-da had been purged while seven of Lin's closest military associates had been forced to make self-criticism. Lin began to plan a coup against Mao who was trying to weaken Lin's power base.
this time, Beijing had conveyed the message through private channels to Nixon that he would be welcomed to Beijing. In January 1971, the United States responded positively and inquired how a high-level official would be received in Beijing.\textsuperscript{73}

Lin Biao must have hoped that the incursion could support his argument that the United States remained number one enemy and argued that steps toward accommodation should be taken with the Soviet Union, which was correspondingly moving to promote the option of a Sino-Soviet rapprochement. Triangularly speaking, Moscow's conflicts with Beijing only served to undermine its position \textit{vis-à-vis} Washington (cf. proposition 3). Therefore, Moscow made a significant concession on July 1 1971 by agreeing to conclude a new border treaty rather than simply amending the existing accords.\textsuperscript{74} The Soviets also allegedly offered to accept the main navigation channels of the Amur and Ussuri Rivers as the international boundary with the exception of the Big Ussuri Island opposite Khabarovsk.\textsuperscript{75} Nonetheless, Mao and Zhou were by now already determined to take further steps in improving relations with the United States as a counterbalance against the perceived most urgent Soviet threat. In April, Beijing sent an invitation for an American table-tennis team to visit China. The continued progress in Sino-American relations must have pushed Lin Biao to expedite his plot of a coup against both Mao and Zhou. But as his plot was exposed half-way, Lin Biao reportedly fled toward the Soviet Union on September 13, only to be killed in Mongolia where his plane crashed.\textsuperscript{76} The defeat of Lin Biao's faction gave a dramatic boost to the Chinese triangular role conception, paving the way to rapid progress in Sino-American rapprochement.

In short, the Laotian invasion and its debacle served as a catalyst for a major change in world politics. Chinese ping-pong diplomacy was immediately rewarded by a series of American reactions (cf. proposition 9). In March, the U.S. State Department abrogated passport restrictions for travel to China. During April, currency controls were relaxed; imports from China were legitimized and nonstrategic goods were permitted to be exported to China. In May, controls on dollar transactions with China were terminated.\textsuperscript{77} On July 1, 1971, the Vietcong proposed a Seven Point Peace Plan; Beijing quickly endorsed it in a statement in \textit{People's Daily}--the first approval of a "peaceful settlement" of the Vietnam conflict since 1965.\textsuperscript{78} In July, Zhou privately assured a high-ranking Australian Labor Party delegation that China might be prepared to consider a Geneva conference on Indochina.\textsuperscript{79} On July 15, Beijing and Washington simultaneously announced the recent secret visit of Henry Kissinger to Beijing, and the planned visit of
President Nixon to China. Shortly thereafter, on July 28, the United States ceased its SR-71 and drone aircraft spy flights over China...Sino-American relations subsequently improved.

The fact that the Sino-American rapprochement followed a tortuous road even after the two countries had clearly identified its strategic importance for both of them, is significant in two senses in terms of triangular studies: First, it has highlighted the close linkage between the patterns of the big power triangle and the regional conflicts, in which the big powers are actively involved, and repeatedly testified to proposition 9 that a particular regional conflict can play a very crucial role in changing the process of big power triangular relations. Secondly, the conflicting national role conceptions in one power (China in this case) can vigorously interfere in the process of the triangular readjustment and dampen the effect of triangulations. A triangular policy which grossly overlooks this factor is liable to failure (cf. propositions 4 and 5).

c. Soviet and Vietnamese Immediate Reactions

As Victor C. Funnell has commented, one of the strangest things about the whole triangular relationship of Beijing-Hanoi-Moscow was the extreme tendency of each to abhor in the others any emulation of its own example in negotiating with the United States. Actually, nothing was too strange, since any single cordial move toward the United States would dramatically change the balance in this compound triangular situation (cf. proposition 1). The Sino-American rapprochement would at least seriously weaken Soviet bargaining position vis-à-vis the United States, if not put the Soviet Union in the most negative pole position. And the North Vietnamese pivot position in the Sino-Vietnamese-Soviet triangle would be greatly undermined, if not totally lost. Hanoi would have to bargain with Washington from a much weaker position. In the worst scenario, if Moscow should follow suit, Hanoi would have to face the stern reality of big power collusion, losing its dynamic leverage (cf. proposition 7).

Soon after the April announcement of the imminent visit by an American table tennis team to China, Soviet news media began to follow the development closely. In Moscow's view, the Sino-American rapprochement was not only a bad omen for the Soviet Union in terms of global balance, but also had a negative impact on the Vietnamese situation. Nixon's initiative toward China by no means signified that the United States had changed its goals in Southeast Asia. Instead, Washington's detente with Beijing was trickily designed to achieve its neocolonial and imperialist goals without fearing the interference of China. Therefore, Pravda quoted The New York
The Times to the effect that the success of the Nixon Doctrine and Vietnamization depended "in large measure on at least the tacit cooperation of the Chinese People's Republic."82 The Soviet leaders apparently feared that Soviet interests in Vietnam could be undercut by a Chinese-American understanding.

If the Soviet Union was worried about the Sino-American diplomacy started by ping-pong initiatives, then the July 15 announcement that Nixon would visit Beijing in early 1972 was even more ominous (cf. proposition 1). Too shocked to cope with the unexpected turn of events, the Soviet media published a brief factual report on the proposed visit without commentary.83 After a ten-day silence, the Kremlin cautiously commented in an obvious attempt to make the best of a bad situation, that although there were few indications that either China or the United States had undergone a fundamental reevaluation of general foreign policy lines, the Soviet Union did not oppose normalization of relations as long as it was not anti-Soviet or anti-socialist in nature.84 Besides, the Soviets also worried about the negative impact of Sino-American rapprochement on the bipolar primacy. Therefore, following the announcement of Nixon's proposed visit to China, Soviet media seemed to concentrate on a search for reassurance from the United States that the complication would not be carried to the point where the essential priority of the Soviet-U.S. dialogue would be lost sight of. It is from this angle that Arbatov's carefully-worded admonition in Pravda could be understood:

A dialogue on a broad range of problems has long been under way between the USA and the USSR. This dialogue is very important, but not easy, both because of the complexity of the problems and because, above all, confidence is needed for their successful solution. There can be no stronger blow at confidence than unscrupulous diplomatic maneuvers, backstage intrigues and ambiguities.85

In the view of the Soviet leaders, the emerging Sino-American rapprochement thus had both strategic implications and regional effects for Southeast Asia. In an effort to trace the evolutions of Sino-American relations within the context of the Vietnam War, a Soviet article cited both "disengagement" by America and "Vietnamization" as based on the recognition of a Chinese sphere of influence and as "necessary preconditions for the normalization of American-Chinese relations."86 For its part, the United States wanted China to "become an accomplice in its Asian policy."87 Disengagement would bring about a situation in which the two powers could encircle the Soviet Union from "positions of strength", since the basic rationale of the strategy was that the Chinese leaders "offer peaceful coexistence with the USA in return for a switch in the center of gravity in US aggressive policy from Asia to Europe."88 Moscow was apparently alarmed at the
unfavorable implication of the American disengagement from Vietnam for the global balance (cf. proposition 9). To offset this danger, the Soviet Union quickly strengthened its ties with North Vietnam. Shortly after the July 15 announcement, it was revealed that Soviet President Podgorny would visit Hanoi. On October 3 1971, Podgorny arrived in Hanoi with a high-level delegation and promised Soviet aid to the Vietnamese people. He emphasized that the relations between the Soviet Union and Vietnam could be "described as being in complete mutual agreement and complete mutual understanding on all the most important questions." One of these, of course, was Sino-American relations. The Soviet bid was naturally responded to by Hanoi which was embittered by the Chinese approach to the Americans.

Moscow also took advantage of this case to sow dissension between Hanoi and Beijing. In a broadcast, Radio Moscow declared that the Chinese leaders had gone over to the imperialist camp:

They have whole-heartedly tried to make friendly contacts with the U.S. imperialists, the fiercest enemies of Vietnam and other Indochinese countries. They have displayed more and more openly their indifference of the interests of Vietnamese patriots. We must point out that in the recent Sino-American formal conference held in Beijing, the Chinese side did not even ask the United States to stop obstructing the Paris peace talks and to withdraw its troops from Vietnam.

The Soviet Union also ridiculed Chinese denunciation of American bombing of North Vietnam. Drawing attention to "what damage the Chinese invitation to Nixon will inflict upon the Indochinese people's anti-imperialist struggle", Moscow claimed that "the Chinese leaders place their friendship with the U.S. ruling clique above the interests of the Indochinese people." The Soviets asserted that one of the "main purposes" of China's invitation to President Nixon was to "disintegrate" the socialist camp and to "reach an agreement with the United States behind the back of the Vietnamese people." Moscow also stressed that there was only one way to solve the Indochina problem, i.e., to stop the War and meet the just requirement of the Indochinese people. "The United States should unconditionally abandon its policy of invading Indochina and withdraw all its troops from that area. Otherwise, Washington can never solve the Indochinese problem, no matter what political tricks it may use."

Some isolated US air attacks in the end of 1971 were deliberately, or otherwise misinterpreted by the Soviets as escalation, in order to support a Soviet allegation of Beijing's collusion with the U.S. For Moscow, the U.S. had made bold to escalate bombing simply because Washington was assured that Beijing would not react strongly.
Nixon's visit served as a proof of this collusion. The exact content of this collusion, according to Moscow, was that whereas "China used to demand United States withdrawal from Asia, now it wanted the United States to play a role in the area." Obviously Moscow was deeply worried about the danger of Sino-American collusion, which would put it in a negative pivot position, a position that Beijing occupied during the first pattern (cf. proposition 1).

As for the Vietnamese themselves, the Sino-American detente could not have been more ill-omened. Sino-American talks in Warsaw had never caused Hanoi serious concern. Even when China made an unprecedented overture by inviting an American table tennis team to China, Hanoi had shown little sign of significant anxiety. This unusual quietude could be partly attributed to Zhou's visit to Hanoi one month before the launching of ping-pong diplomacy in 1971. During his stay, Zhou reassured the North Vietnamese of China's unreserved support for their efforts against the American invaders, and tried to convince them in the strongest language that Hanoi would not be sold out. Nonetheless, it could also be argued that North Vietnam might have adopted a policy of wait-and-see without provoking China into further action, since it was very vulnerable to any Chinese change of policy.

North Vietnam's patience with respect to Sino-American relations began to run out soon after the disclosure of President Nixon's invitation to Beijing. At first, North Vietnam's reaction to the July 15 announcement was limited to the news blackout of the announced visit. On July 18 the Chinese communicated to Hanoi an American initiative to end the Vietnam War, which included: first, withdrawal of U.S. troops and release of U.S. POWs within twelve months as from August 1, 1971 and second, a ceasefire throughout Indochina and a Geneva-type solution in 1954. Displeased with the announcement and China's unwarranted attempt at intermediation, Hanoi published an editorial in Nhan Dan on July 19 as its first public reaction to the development. The editorial remarked that although Vietnam was not a big country, with neither a vast territory, nor a large population, it had defeated big imperialist powers, one after another. The time when the imperialist powers could dictate their will to the world was gone forever. It called for the Vietnamese army and people to follow the independent and sovereign line of the Party in order to win still greater victories and crush the "Vietnamization plan" and the "Nixon Doctrine." According to the editorial, the "Nixon Doctrine", the outcome of bitter defeats suffered by the United States in Vietnam, was the American imperialists' counter-revolutionary global strategy aiming at
disintegrating the socialist camp. It was designed to seek a compromise among the big powers so as to impose their own arrangements on small countries. In the end, the editorial reaffirmed Hanoi's determination to carry the war of resistance against U.S. aggression to complete victory.

On the next day, in a clear reference to Chinese foreign policy, Hanoi asserted that:

Only daydreamers remain blind to today's changing world and to the fact that small countries are capable of standing on their own feet and deciding their own fate...The period of big powers bullying small countries and the strong oppressing the weak has passed and will never return. Nixon is trying to open a new path but has entered a dead end. Despite difficulties and risks, the people of North Vietnam will persist in their ultimate goal--they are determined to fight until they win a total victory.102

North Vietnam's delegation to the Paris peace talks indicated clearly that Sino-American relations would not affect the Paris talks and that North Vietnam would defend its national interests against outside pressure.103 Hanoi also warned the Chinese that their attempt to coax North Vietnam into abandoning its war effort and making peace with the United State would not be successful. Hanoi openly exhorted China to heighten its vigilance against "the character of the US policies toward socialist countries and its evil doing forces."104 This harsh reaction, which reflected Hanoi's worry about Sino-American collusion, was also a strategy aimed at avoiding further Chinese moves toward the United States. Unlike Moscow, Hanoi's immediate concern was the consequence of a changing triangular structure for its own war effort (cf. proposition 7).

Hanoi's strategy was not of no avail. Since China still upheld its national role conception as a revolutionary centre, it was extremely vulnerable to Hanoi's innuendo about its collusion with American imperialism and Hanoi was well aware of that. Therefore, the Chinese leaders spared no efforts to dispel Hanoi's misgivings. During his interview on July 19 with fifteen members of the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, Zhou announced that the Indochina conflict was one of four big obstacles in the way of normalizing relations between Washington and Beijing and that to solve this problem, the United States should withdraw all its troops from Indochina.105 On August 9, during his five hour interview with James Reston, vice President of The New York Times, Zhou stated that Beijing would not be a mediator in the Indochina War, but, on the contrary, would persist in the anti-U.S. struggle in that area until the United States withdrew all its troops.106 And The People's Daily emphasized in its commentary that the dream of the U.S. imperialists to rescue themselves from defeat by a new Geneva Conference was not realizable.107
But these did not seem to impress Hanoi. The North Vietnamese army newspaper, *Quan Dai Nhan Dan* denounced Nixon’s visit to China as "beneficial only to the United States and the counter-revolutionaries. His sole purpose is to obstruct revolutions and to preserve neocolonialism." North Vietnamese complaints were not dropped until Beijing sent a large economic delegation to Hanoi, headed by vice-premier Li Xian-nian. In a speech at the welcoming banquet, Li reaffirmed to Hanoi leaders that "in order to support the Vietnamese people in their anti-U.S. and national salvation war, the Chinese people are willing to endure the greatest national sacrifice. This is our country’s firm and unshakable stand and is the principle guiding the action of the entire Chinese people. If one fails to do so, he is neither a proletarian internationalist nor a Communist; this will mean betrayal of the revolution." North Vietnamese complaints were dropped after Li gave a clear hint that continued Chinese aid could not be expected unless Hanoi moderated its criticism of China’s policy of rapprochement with the United States.

While seeking to strengthen their ties with the Soviet Union to offset the unfavorable impact of Sino-American rapprochement, the North Vietnamese were well aware of the fact that if they were going to win final victory, Chinese aid was indispensable. Hanoi had an important stake in keeping its pivot position between Moscow and Beijing (cf. proposition 3). North Vietnam’s Premier Pham Van Dong led a party and government delegation to Beijing on November 20-27, 1971. His visit was not only to secure continued Chinese support but also to assure the Chinese that closer ties between Hanoi and Moscow were not at the expense of China. China and North Vietnam reaffirmed a tough no-compromise line on the Indochina war, which was based on Hanoi’s terms for settlement of the war. They concluded that settlement of the Indochina conflict should be left to the Indochinese themselves.

Hanoi’s worry apparently increased as the Nixon’s visit to Beijing drew nearer. The day before Nixon was to arrive in Beijing, Hoang Tung, editor-in-chief of *Nhan Dan* and a member of the Central Committee of the Labor Party was quoted as saying that "while Nixon gets his 21 gun salute in Peking, we’ll be giving him a different kind of salute in South Vietnam. There will be more than 21 guns. And they won’t be firing blanks." Hanoi’s initial reaction to President Nixon’s trip to Beijing was to embargo the news. The North Vietnamese press provided no coverage of Nixon’s visit throughout the week. One article in Nhan Dan, published during the summit, reflected Hanoi’s worry on Sino-American rapprochement. It charged Nixon of employing "negotiations with
China and the Soviet Union to create a position of conciliation between big countries at the expense of small countries...trying also to create new and greater contradictions between those socialist countries."¹¹⁴ During Nixon’s trip, the North Vietnamese convened a second summit meeting of the three Indochinese Communist or pro-Communist entities, which was apparently designed to show the independence of the Indochinese peoples from any big power manipulation. After Nixon returned to Washington, Hanoi indirectly attacked the Sino-American communique, reasserting that the United States was "the most dangerous enemy, the enemy number one of all nations in the world."¹¹⁵ The Spring Offensive of 1972 was probably launched partly for the purpose of disrupting the process of an emerging Sino-American understanding, which would seriously undermine Hanoi’s bargaining position vis-à-vis the three powers (cf. proposition 1).

Nonetheless, for reasons analysed above, both the Chinese and the North Vietnamese made efforts to keep their relations normal, at least on the surface. Chinese aid continued to pour into North Vietnam in large quantities. Official visitors were exchanged as usual between Beijing and Hanoi. Activities of Friendship Associations in both countries continued. National celebrations were attended in each capital by representatives from both countries.¹¹⁶ However, North Vietnam seemed to have by this time developed a much stronger tie with the Soviet Union than with China.¹¹⁷

North Vietnam might have been able to accuse China of having deviated from its revolutionary line of supporting national liberation movements by alleging that Nixon’s invitation to Beijing was a case of collusion with American imperialism. And China’s self-claimed national role conception as "a revolutionary centre" made the Chinese very vulnerable to such an attack (cf. proposition 4). China’s position in this situation was not different from that of the Soviet Union in 1959 when President Eisenhower met Nikita Khrushchev at Camp David. The Chinese denounced this as betraying the world revolutionary struggle. Nonetheless, Hanoi did not react as strongly as Beijing did in 1959, because it knew that it could not afford to lose Chinese support at that stage of the war. To maintain its pivot position between Moscow and Beijing, Hanoi had no option but to avoid further insistence on the ideological significance of the matter, as this would obviously be used by the Soviet Union to attack China (cf. proposition 3).

B. American Withdrawal from Indochina: Illusion and Reality

It is generally agreed that the pivot actor in a triangle enjoys some leverage over the other two actors, and that the pivot’s leverage depends on the concern of the other two
actors with the danger of a possible coalition between the pivot actor and one of them as
well as on the competition of the other two actors for its friendship. These two
conditions are, of course, very important, but not exclusive. The triangulations of the
pivot power are usually influenced by a number of other factors, such as conflicting
national role conceptions and domestic politics. The utility of triangulations, even under
the prime triangular situations, is less effective than many would have expected. This
section is an effort to analyse the utility and limitations of American triangulations on
Vietnam.

a. The Spring Offensive and Nixon's Triangulation

In late March of 1972, North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops launched several
large-scale offensives across the demilitarized zone and routed ARVN's Third Division.
The People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF) then attacked An Loc and the central
highlands so fiercely that ARVN forces simply ran away without putting up any
resistance. For the first time, the Nixon administration was confronted with the grisly
reality that South Vietnam could actually lose the War. According to American
intelligence agencies' reports, the demoralisation of the South Vietnamese soldiers could
soon deteriorate to the point where they would no longer fight. The 1972 Spring
Offensive probably had two strategic goals: internationally, it was aimed at disrupting
the Sino-American rapprochement and obstructing the upcoming Soviet-American
summit, so as to keep Hanoi's own leverage and avoid big power collusion (cf.
proposition 7); in terms of the war, the key goal of this offensive was to change the
military-political balance in South Vietnam and to force the United States "to end the
war by negotiating from a position of defeat." Since Nixon and Westmoreland were informed that Hanoi had committed 12 of its
13 operational divisions to the offensive against the South, they both thought it as a "go-
for-broke offensive." On May 8 Nixon appeared on national television, telling the
world that there was only one option to "stop the killing...to keep the weapons of war out
of the hands of the international outlaws of North Vietnam." This option, as Nixon
revealed, was his order to mine Haiphong Harbor, blockade North Vietnam and impose
massive and sustained bombing against the North, especially land communication
networks. With this announcement, Nixon had undertaken actions against the North
which had been proposed much earlier but never implemented. Although reluctant to
send American ground forces back to Vietnam, Nixon felt it necessary this time to revive
his "end-the-war" madman strategy which he had been forced to abandon in 1969.\textsuperscript{123} The air attacks against the North had reached an unprecedented level.

The reasons for Nixon to take these harsh measures were multifold, but the most important one was the rapid progress of the North Vietnamese offensive. By early May, Nixon felt that Saigon was very likely to lose the war. By the end of April, the ARVN defending the large city of Duang Tri had disintegrated and abandoned the city and the whole province. The fall of Duang Tri left Hue in immediate danger. And by now, the ARVN was too demoralized to mount an effective resistance. The war would probably had ended in Spring 1972, if the United States had not used its air power in the South. So Nixon was actually forced to select a policy rejected by Johnson.\textsuperscript{124} The second most important reason was the improved American positions following Sino-American rapprochement, which objectively enabled the United States to be more venturesome. Adroit diplomatic manoeuvres by Nixon and Kissinger had further enhanced the impact of the Sino-American rapprochement.\textsuperscript{125} Beijing's and Moscow's reactions to the raids and mining were surprisingly mild, with no threat made to retaliate with their own escalations. This, of course, did not imply that either Beijing or Moscow had abandoned Hanoi, but they both had now a stake in improving relations with Washington. This to some extent proved the usefulness of the triangular strategy, which was only possible when the other two conflicting actors were so eager to accommodate the pivot that they played down the national role conceptions which conflicted with their triangular role conception or, in other words, when the triangular restriction was relatively low (cf. propositions 3 and 5).

Although the Chinese expressed solidarity with the North Vietnamese, they did not take any drastic actions following the U.S. escalations. When Kissinger visited Beijing in late June, Zhou rhetorically repeated the standard line of Beijing's historical debt to Hanoi, in which Kissinger became aware of a growing "undercurrent" of the Chinese concern over Hanoi's future role in Indochina.\textsuperscript{126} The Sino-American Shanghai Communique published at the end of Nixon's February trip to China reaffirmed the previous positions of both sides on Vietnam, with China sticking to its support of the Vietcong's Seven Point Proposal.\textsuperscript{127} Nevertheless, Washington thought a "correction of misperceptions on both sides" had probably been achieved over the Vietnam issue, on which "potential for misunderstanding" had been lessened.\textsuperscript{128}

If the Chinese government had identified a stake in maintaining the momentum of Sino-American accommodation, Moscow could hardly afford to forego its own stake.
Even when the American B-52s were attacking the North, preparations for Nixon's visit to the Soviet Union were under way. As Kissinger later justifiably assessed, Moscow had found it necessary to "cut loose from its obstreperous small ally." On April 20, Kissinger flew to Moscow on a four day visit to discuss a series of issues with Brezhnev, but mainly, Vietnam. Kissinger pressured Brezhnev on Soviet arms shipments to North Vietnam and threatened to take "whatever steps are necessary" to halt the offensive, meaning that the United States would step up its bombing. Brezhnev's response was to spare no efforts to resume the peace negotiations, and he indicated that the Soviets would use their influence to encourage some progress at the next private talk between Kissinger and Hanoi's representatives in Paris.

The correctness of Nixon's and Kissinger's assessment was further borne out by the extremely mild Soviet reaction to damage done to Soviet vessels in Haiphong. The April 12 B-52 raids sank a Soviet ship, but Moscow did not even lodge a protest. As more Soviet vessels were hit, Moscow merely protested that the raids had damaged these ships. In response to the Soviet protest, Kissinger told a news conference that the Soviet Union was responsible for the evolution of the situations in Vietnam, because it had provided North Vietnam with "offensive equipment" to invade South Vietnam. The Soviet Union took no further steps regarding the issue.

In spite of the continued escalation of U.S. military activities in North Vietnam, Nixon was cordially welcomed in Moscow for his first summit meeting with Brezhnev, which covered a variety of issues, including, most importantly, Vietnam. Although Brezhnev's response to Nixon's insistence that the Soviet leader prevail upon the North Vietnamese leaders to accept the U.S. peace plan was in keeping with Hanoi's hard line, this was mainly rhetorical in the circumstances. And the Soviet-American summit communique did not even mention the mining of the North. The Soviet Union and the United States struck a "perfect deal" during the mining and air attacks. In the words of Jonathan Schell, "the United States...was willing to pay in solid gold...to protect its credibility" while "the Soviet Union...was willing to pay in credibility to get goods." In his later assessment of the summit, Kissinger concluded that "by proceeding with the summit, Moscow helped neutralize our domestic opposition, which gave us freedom of action to break the back of North Vietnam's offensive. Our strategy of detente--posing risks and dangling benefits before the Soviets--made possible an unfettered attempt to bring our involvement in the Vietnam war to an honorable close."
Apparently, Hanoi was left in the cold. Nixon had played his triangulation skillfully and convinced both Mao and Brezhnev that their improved relations with Washington were more important than reacting to the escalated American war activities against North Vietnam (cf. proposition 3). Hanoi's policy of playing off the Soviet Union against China to secure aid and diplomatic support seemed now to work much less effectively. Nixon's position was further improved by the mild domestic U.S. reaction to the mining. The American public had always regarded bombing as a more acceptable option than the use of ground forces. Many of them thought that the bombing and mining were justified by the North Vietnamese invasion. The success of the summit reduced the worries that Nixon's escalation would destroy detente. Nixon enjoyed broader support this time, with Congress having done nothing against him. He ended up in a much stronger position at home than he had ever been before the North Vietnamese invasion.135

Disappointed with the result of the offensive and with the reactions from both Moscow and Beijing to the American bombing and mining, Hanoi responded to Nixon's May 8 proposal of a ceasefire in all of Indochina which called for an end to three wars rather than one as a precondition for complete American troop withdrawal within four months after an agreement. The North Vietnamese leaders modified their position for a tripartite coalition government, which included the Saigon government without Thieu, the PRG and neutralists.136 As its leverage was visibly reduced as a result of Nixon's triangulations, Hanoi was now willing to be more flexible (cf. proposition 7).

Kissinger met Le Duc Tho frequently after mid-July. For Nixon, the negotiations were far more significant in the sense of winning more votes for him in his reelection effort than with regard to the War itself. He became confident enough to slow down the progress of the negotiations until after his reelection. His domestic position had been greatly strengthened by his summit meeting in Moscow. Nixon also enjoyed considerable latitude of action, as he had raised the public popularity of his Vietnam strategy to a two to one margin. He seemed to be in a position to play with his own preferred solutions to the Vietnamese issue as the Democratic candidate McGovern had only a slim chance of beating him by using the Vietnam question.137 By mid-summer, all this had become obvious to Hanoi, which soon made further concessions, the most significant of which was to drop its demand for the ouster of Thieu.138

Throughout the summer and fall of 1972, Nixon and Kissinger were concerned with ways to use the Chinese and Soviet leverage to pressure North Vietnam into adopting a more obedient stance. The limited success of triangulations may have exaggerated their
expectations as to the ability of Moscow and Beijing to help Washington obtain its goals in negotiations. In spite of various evidence of the limited utility of triangulation, triangular diplomacy constituted the guideline of the Nixon administration's foreign policy up to the end of the war (cf. proposition 4). The fact that both powers did not hesitate to continue their detente with the United States even at the height of the bombing escalation provided Nixon and Kissinger with strong enough incentives for their triangulation. Nevertheless, while it might be true that both the Chinese and the Soviets recommended negotiations in the summer of 1972, neither of them was actually pressuring Hanoi to provide Washington with anything more than a face-saving way to withdraw its forces from the War. In fact, even during the prime time of triangulations, the triangle did not change its restrictive character, though the degree of restriction was for a while low. Although both Moscow and Beijing had strong incentives to improve their respective triangular positions, neither of them could even venture to abandon their national role conceptions as "the head of the socialist camp" (the Soviet Union) and as "the revolutionary centre" (China) and openly sell out Hanoi's interests (cf. proposition 4).

In July French Foreign Minister Schuman informed Washington that Mao had persuaded the PRG to soften its position on the issue of Thieu's removal. The White House took the view that Podgorny's and Mao's combined efforts, however subtle, held the promise of a settlement. This served to enhance Nixon's confidence in his ability to isolate North Vietnam. Hanoi's bitter reactions to Moscow and Beijing's detente policies toward Washington seemed also to corroborate the effect of the triangulation. On August 17, Nhan Dan published a clear-cut attack on both Moscow and Beijing, denouncing their cooperation with Nixon's detente plot as giving him a free hand to suppress national liberation movements and throwing a life-buoy to a drowning pirate. "This is a harmful compromise advantageous to the enemy, and disadvantageous to the revolution." In dealing with Moscow and Beijing, Nixon was so eager to vindicate his detente strategy that he played down and even ignored some obvious signs that did not encourage his schemes for the two countries. Although during October, Kissinger asked Dobrynin for an explicit assurance that the Soviets would restrain arms shipments to Hanoi after a peace settlement and received no clear answer on the point, he told Thieu apparently sincerely on their meeting that China and the Soviet Union had already promised to cut down shipments of arms to North Vietnam. The White House had been
too optimistic about its vision of successfully utilizing Sino-Soviet conflicts. Nonetheless, while Hanoi became very bitter about Moscow and Beijing for their low-keyed reaction, there was no clear evidence that Washington had got sufficient cooperation from either Moscow or Beijing to undermine Hanoi's basic power.142

What Nixon and Kissinger failed to understand in this connection was that even if China and the Soviet Union had had enough incentives to cooperate with the United States over Vietnam, they might not have been able to do so due to other restrictive factors in their foreign policies. The Soviet policy makers, for example, were incensed at Nixon's linkage concept that made progress in detente conditional upon Moscow's cooperation over Vietnam. Part of this anger simply stemmed from Soviet "impotence", as Soviet leverage in dealing with Hanoi "was not as great as the United States believed." North Vietnam was not an obedient marionette. "Moscow, proclaiming that its help to the North Vietnamese and others represented its 'international duty' and solidarity with 'fraternal, progressive allies', also limited its own ability to employ its aid as a device for pressuring its comrades in behalf of its own interests."143 In fact, neither Beijing nor Moscow was willing to put itself in the position of actually corroborating the charges of betraying the Vietnamese revolution, by cutting down their aid to Hanoi to the extent that the latter could hardly continue its military activities in the South. Both of them actually increased their military and economic aid to North Vietnam to an unprecedented high by the end of 1972 (cf. proposition 4).144

Another limitation of Nixon's triangulation is that by playing them against each other, Nixon also played himself into their hands, as both the Chinese and the Soviets also attempted to exploit the White House's triangulations to promote their own interests. Even American officials openly acknowledged that detente with the two Communist powers "also tends to threaten the stability of the Western alliance." No matter what the implications for Hanoi, Moscow also had something to gain in Europe.145 Moreover, Moscow and Beijing's primary concern with detente was to maintain or improve their respective positions in the triangle. As soon as the opportunity allowed, each would exploit the United States to oppose the other. In fact, the Vietnam war had been perceived as their own leverage over the United States and both of them would hope to utilize this leverage to bargain for better deals with the United States in other areas of their respective relations with it (cf. proposition 3).

Most importantly, Nixon's triangulations did not change the real balance of strength in Vietnam nor reverse the failure of Vietnamisation. Unless South Vietnam could
miraculously prove able to stand on its own, the United States would eventually lose the game. The restrictive character of the strategic triangle determined that neither Moscow nor Beijing would be able to cooperate with Washington whole-heartedly in bringing the war to an end in accordance with Washington's scheme (cf. proposition 4). While the willingness of Moscow and Beijing to use Hanoi's struggle to serve their own interests was certainly not favorable to the latter, the damage hardly crippled North Vietnam's ability to continue fighting. Ironically, the limited success of the American triangular diplomacy so encouraged Nixon and Kissinger that they inattentively allowed North Vietnam to combine its military victories with diplomatic success. In less than half a year following the 1972 offensive, Nixon accepted the Paris Agreement, believing both the Soviets and Chinese would and could help enforce it by drastically reducing military aid to Hanoi. And this unrealistic expectation of the Soviet Union and China would soon prove to be only a mirage.¹⁴⁶

b. The Signing of the Paris Agreement--A Peace Without Honor

Despite the fact that the effect of Nixon's triangulations was very limited, Hanoi did feel the pressure of big power manipulations and thereby displayed more flexibility. Such a strategy could in a sense avoid further distancing North Vietnam from both the Soviet Union and China, which were so keen to improve their respective relations with the United States that they would beyond doubt have a strong aversion to an uncompromising attitude. And to maintain a strong bargaining position, Hanoi needed at least a semblance of solidarity with its two biggest supporters (cf. proposition 7). On October 8, Le Duc Tho presented to Kissinger a detailed draft, which made the concession that Kissinger had been waiting for.¹⁴⁷ According to the draft agreement, the government in South Vietnam would be determined by general elections within six months under international supervision. The United States was required to refrain from supporting "any political tendency or any personality" in South Vietnam. With the American troop withdrawal, civilian detainees were to be released along with POWs. The draft also provided that reunification would be realized "step by step through peaceful means" and that any movement of military forces which would come in contact with those of the other side or extend the area of control was to be prohibited after the ceasefire. By making those concessions, Hanoi was also trying to use the imminent American presidential election to its advantage and thereby reduce the pressure of Nixon's triangular diplomacy (cf. proposition 4).
Believing that the draft had made the concessions he had been expecting, Kissinger decided to accept it as the basis for negotiating the final agreement. He asked his staff to write a counter-draft based on North Vietnam's draft. After Washington approved Kissinger's request for negotiations, three days of intensive talks took place in Paris. By the end of October 11, Kissinger and Tho had agreed on most of the chapters in the draft, with only two issues remaining unresolved. Meanwhile, Kissinger twice revised the time-table so that the final date for signing would be October 30. The general reactions of Washington were that the draft agreement was basically acceptable, though some areas needed further readjustments. Nonetheless, much to the anger of Tho, Thieu's determination to block any agreement was used as an excuse to block the agreement; for Tho Kissinger had committed himself not to let Saigon obstruct the agreement, by claiming repeatedly that the United States was representing Saigon in the bilateral talks. And Hanoi's indignation was not without reason, as the Saigon regime had not proved itself as an independent and viable player in the game (cf. Model). Besides, the United States and North Vietnam had agreed that North Vietnam would initial the draft with the consent of the PRG while the United States would initial with the consent of the Saigon government.

Thieu regarded the agreement as totally unacceptable and termed the draft a "sellout" to the Communists. He was strongly opposed to the implied acceptance of North Vietnamese troops in the South. The United States, of course, had enough influence to pressure Thieu into accepting the draft since at least 85 percent of his military supplies and economic aid came from the United States. The central issue in the White House was whether or not the administration should commit itself to accepting the agreement at that stage. Among other factors was, most importantly, Nixon's concern with the progress of his Vietnamization program. The White House had already planned to furnish large quantities of aid to Saigon in 1973 to bolster the Vietnamization program and an early conclusion of the agreement could cut short the aid. Thieu was, then, virtually endowed with the power to veto the October draft agreement. With elections drawing near, Nixon decided to wait until after he had been reelected. Then he could demand that North Vietnam settle or "face the consequences of what we could do to them." He was not prepared to allow Thieu to block an agreement indefinitely, but a temporary delay could not only help shore up South Vietnamese military strength but also win the time necessary to make the revisions in the agreement possible. Meanwhile, Kissinger was sent back to Paris to
negotiate the remaining two issues (the release of Vietnamese civilian prisoners and the provision for replacement of war materials) on which he was ordered to stand firm so as to justify the delay in signing.

Hanoi soon understood what was going on in Washington. On October 26, North Vietnam startled the world by releasing a public statement charging that Nixon was using Thieu's objections as an "instrument of the United States to sabotage all peaceful settlement of Vietnam problem." With election only two weeks away, Nixon found it very embarrassing to face a charge that he was using the draft agreement for political purposes. Hanoi's announcement increased the restraint imposed by American domestic politics upon Nixon's foreign policy options (cf. proposition 4). Kissinger was put in the difficult position of having to disprove the charges of delaying the agreement. On October 26, he held a press conference, declaring that peace was "at hand" and that an agreement was "within sight." Only one more round of negotiations of three or four days could solve the problem. With this assurance, Nixon succeeded in winning reelection with an earlier-predicted landslide.

After the elections, the Americans returned to the talks with much less restraint. The North Vietnamese had attempted to get the Chinese and Soviet support reaffirmed to counter the pressure of Nixon's triangular diplomacy; but the two powers gave not much more than routine statements of support and aid. Hanoi was well aware of its own strength and weaknesses in this situation (cf. proposition 7). When North Vietnamese representatives came back to Paris, they were not surprised to face a long list of American demands for changes, some of which were quite significant. While agreeing to the less important changes sought by the United States, Le Duc Tho rejected the demands for major changes. Hanoi insisted that the October text should be signed intact. On December 4, the North Vietnamese delegation began to withdraw concessions it had made earlier, hoping that this act would make the White House realize that it had to give up its new demands in order to reach an agreement. By December 14, negotiations were deadlocked over three major issues--the movement of civilians across the demilitarized zone, the status of the PRG and its controlled areas, and the nature of the National Council.

Kissinger's reputation was under severe challenge as his promised peace did not come quickly and his options were very limited. In mid-December, Kissinger warned the North Vietnamese that unless they accepted Washington's peace terms, they would suffer greater destruction than ever before. He also tried to increase pressure upon
North Vietnam by enlisting Chinese and Soviet help; but neither of them proved to be really useful. The Soviets made ambiguously helpful noises while the Chinese did not even pretend to do anything. If they had consented to put pressure on Hanoi at this juncture, they would have fully exposed themselves to the danger of being accused of colluding with American imperialism (cf. proposition 4). When Kissinger returned to Washington and told Nixon that his choices were either to back down or to expect the North Vietnamese refusal to continue negotiations, Nixon decided to pressure Hanoi into accepting his terms by bombing North Vietnam. Again, one of his reasons for resorting to this coercive policy was his belief in the utility of his triangulations, as he asserted that "the Russians and Chinese might think they were dealing with a madman and so had better force North Vietnam into a settlement before the world was consumed by a larger war." On December 15, Nixon himself sent an ultimatum to Hanoi to the effect that the North Vietnamese had 72 hours to accept American terms; if they did not, they would face indiscriminate bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong. As the North Vietnamese refused to be pressured, Nixon authorized attacks on Hanoi and Haiphong beginning December 18 and asserted that they would continue until a settlement was reached.

All 200 B-52s in Southeast Asia, and some F-111s and F4s, participated in the wave of raids, dubbed LINEBACKER II. Nonetheless, the air raids achieved only limited results at high cost. The Hanoi-Haiphong area proved to be no easy target to attack. Three weeks before the B-52s began their missions, North Vietnam had already begun to prepare for them and moved factories, schools, hospitals, and even government itself out of the city areas. Hanoi claimed that thanks to earlier evacuation of the city and its large system of air raid shelters, only 2,200 people were killed in the capital. This figure was much smaller than the up to 10,000 deaths estimated by the United States. In contrast, U.S. strategists were shocked by the toll of B-52s. In the twelve days of bombing, the United States admitted that fifteen were shot down, whereas North Vietnam put the figure at thirty-four. A high American official conceded that the actual number of B 52s seriously damaged approached the North Vietnamese figures. Nor did these figures include aircraft written off as unserviceable after returning to their bases. The White House claimed that Hanoi had been brought to its knees; and the bombing might have given Hanoi good reason to seek peace, as Hanoi and Haiphong were devastated, and their major residential districts and industrial areas reduced to a
"mess of rubble." But it was also true that the Air Force, as Pentagon officials conceded, could hardly endure losses at this rate much longer.

Even worse, the Christmas bombing isolated the Nixon administration politically, putting it on the defensive. In contrast to the relatively low-keyed reactions to bombing in the earlier months, a large majority of the American press was extremely negative about such a large-scale bombing during Christmas. The reactions in some pro-American countries and American allies such as Britain and West Germany in the West were also very critical. Much more significant was the opposition from the Congress. Forty-five of seventy-three senators polled a few days after the bombing started were against it, with merely nineteen in favor. Forty-five made known their intentions to support legislation to end the war. As one of Nixon's aides later recalled, the threats from Congress were so serious that the White House had only the option of either stopping the bombing or facing "stern action." The pressure of American domestic politics had by now decisively limited Nixon's ability to manoeuvre (cf. proposition 4).

Again, Nixon's triangulations to pressure Hanoi fell far short of expectations, though Kissinger believed that the Soviet Union and China had apparently subjected Hanoi to pressure. In contrast to their low-keyed reactions of April, both Moscow and Beijing were virtually compelled to strongly reaffirm their commitment to Hanoi, even at the expense of their relations with the United States. Nixon's actions actually served to tip the subtle balance between the two conflicting national role conceptions in the two Communist powers to his own disadvantage (cf. proposition 4). In his public attack on "the longest and dirtiest war" in American history, Brezhnev stressed that the future of Soviet-American relations was threatened. There were distinct signs of Soviet and North Vietnamese discussions of military aid at that time. In early January, it was revealed that the Soviets had stepped up deliveries of anti-aircraft equipment and jet fighters to Hanoi during the December bombing. Apparently not to be outdone, the Chinese held a mass rally in Beijing against the bombing activities, with Foreign Minister of the PRG Nguyen Thi Binh and Zhou En-lai attending. Beijing made it clear that it was not interested in any further negotiations with Washington as long as the bombing continued.

Under mounting pressures both domestically and internationally, Nixon softened his position, announcing that the bombing would stop when Hanoi indicated its willingness to negotiate "in a spirit of good will and in a constructive attitude." On December 30, Nixon gave in and the bombing ended. Ironically, as a result of its political
and military failure, the bombing made the Paris agreement possible, for it forced Nixon and Kissinger to accept the terms they had consistently rejected. While the threat of bombing might have seemed to provide Nixon with a leverage over Hanoi, the latter's struggle demonstrated "how that apparent strength could be transformed into diplomatic weakness." On January 8, Kissinger and Le Duc Tho resumed talks. Tho made it clear that the Vietnamese side was not prepared to make any concessions on any of the remaining issues. Kissinger was in a much weaker position, since Congress was on the verge of taking decisive actions to end the war, and the White House was unable for both political and technical reasons to resume bombing North Vietnam. Eager to have a peace accord quickly, Nixon was quite willing to accept the October draft, though Kissinger insisted on wrenching some face-saving concessions to justify the Christmas bombing. In the end, Kissinger accepted in general the very terms specified in the October accord, with merely some modifications of wording, which did not influence the substance. Among other matters, there was discussion of a massive U.S. aid program to North Vietnam. While agreeing to a sum of 3.25 billion dollars to assist in the rebuilding of the bomb-ravaged North, Kissinger told Le Duc Tho that such assistance would be subject to approval by the United States Congress and the implementation of all provisions of the agreement. This time, Nixon imposed the agreement on Thieu by threatening that if Thieu continued to refuse, he would cut off further aid and sign the treaty alone. Finally on January 27, 1973, the United States and North Vietnam signed "the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam." American direct involvement had officially ended.

In general, the Paris agreement could hardly be defined as "peace with honor." It allowed the Americans to withdraw from Vietnam peacefully and to get back their POWs, while leaving the Thieu government intact on the paper. Nonetheless, North Vietnamese troops were permitted to remain in the South; and the PRG was given the status of a state. The most important question over which the war had been fought, i.e., the political future of South Vietnam, was left unresolved. Although the Paris peace treaty stipulated that it would be resolved by political means, the mechanism to achieve this purpose was so ambiguous that it was inherently unreliable. All the parties concerned believed that it would ultimately be settled by force. Even at the very time Kissinger and Le Duc Tho showed up at the Hotel Majestic in Paris, celebrating their accomplishment, the antagonistic parties in South Vietnam began war preparations.
"Peace with Honor" only signified the beginning of another phase of the thirty-year conflict in Vietnam.183

Although Nixon had taken great pains to achieve "peace with honor" in order to maintain America's position in the world, the United States emerged from the war with its power considerably exhausted and its image greatly damaged. For the Americans, the Vietnam War was the longest, the first lost, and in terms of domestic politics the most divisive war since the Civil War of 1861-65. Three million Americans were involved in Vietnam at different periods throughout the War, and 58,000 of them died there. From 1965, when the first American combat troops were introduced to 1973, when the last American troops were pulled out, the United States spent U.S. $120 billions trying in vain to prevent the Vietnamese Communists from taking over South Vietnam.184 Moreover, given the basically different priorities of the United States, China and the Soviet Union, plus various interfering factors, notably the pressure of American domestic politics and the failure of Vietnamization, Nixon's detente strategy and triangulation were doomed to be ineffective in Vietnam.

C. The Failure of the Nixon Detente System and the War's End

In spite of various obvious evidences of the limitations of triangulations in the context of Indochina, Kissinger continued his efforts to utilize detente to regulate the Vietnam issue until the war finally came to an end, but his activities were concentrated in 1973. At that time, Nixon and Kissinger still clung to the belief that their triangulations might give the Soviet Union and China enough incentives to help keep the South Vietnamese government in power. With Sino-Soviet cooperation, in addition to the continued American "carrot and stick" policy to North Vietnam (the bait of post-war economic aid plus a threat of intervention if the latter did not behave itself) and a quickly beefed-up Thieu regime, they seemed to have due confidence in the implementation of their "peace with honor" (cf. proposition 7). In a White House briefing of May 12, 1973, for example, Kissinger, referring to his talks with Soviet leaders, said they had been helpful on Vietnam. "It is correct to say" that the Soviet Union "recognizes its responsibilities" as a signatory at the Paris peace conference.185

In fact, Nixon's triangulations through his detente strategy became even more difficult in the post-war period, if not totally impossible. No matter how efficient it had been in terms of improving American relations with the two antagonistic powers, detente broke away neither from the everlasting realities of a complex world which could not be controlled by great power manipulations nor from the inveterate legacies of
American anticommunism. Besides the ingrained complexity of triangulating between the Soviet Union and China, the White House had to cope with too many domestic pressures from Congress and too many international commitments in Europe, the Middle East and other places. These conflicting demands, which embodied the restrictions of the triangle, soon overcame Sino-Soviet-American triangular games focused on resolving the American predicament in Vietnam. The conflicts between American detente strategy and other American role conceptions were fundamental (cf. proposition 4). The American government, for example, needed the image of the Soviet Union as a threat to peace to maintain its troops in Europe and its own high military expenditure. And whatever understanding the Americans had achieved with the Soviets over Vietnam could not prevent Moscow from sending arms to the Arab countries in the October Middle East war. By the end of 1973, Kissinger noted with disappointment that "selective detente" did not work. Vietnam by this time was only one of a series of major issues between the Soviet Union and the United States instead of being the most important one.186

A similar dilemma was found in American relations with China in terms of the triangular strategy. The signing of the Vietnam peace agreement in Paris ironically might also have contributed to American unwillingness to "sacrifice" Taiwan in order to normalize relations with China. The United States had originally undertaken its new Chinese policy in part to secure Beijing's help in bringing North Vietnam to a final peace agreement. The "success" of this policy had thus partly reduced the Nixon administration's original incentive to pay a substantial political price (which not only represented another strategic loss but also severe damage to America's image as a reliable ally and the defender of the free world, cf. proposition 4) so as to put relations with China on a more solid basis. The Vietnam settlement, coupled with the effects of Watergate, led the Nixon administration to adopt a policy of "treading water" in regard to relations with China.187 This in return could only dampen Chinese enthusiasm for strategic cooperation. Although the American observation that China preferred a "Balkanized Indochina"188 might be true, Mao, who had to maintain a precarious balance among China's leadership factions at that time, had every reason to avoid striking an open bargain with the United States on either the strategic or the Vietnamese issues (cf. proposition 4).

Nixon's triangulations also met strong resistance from Hanoi, which continued to utilize the contradictions between Beijing and Moscow to serve its own interests (cf.
proposition 3). By the end of 1973, the Vietnamese had become more worried about China, since their relations declined as both began to develop various conflicts in the region. On the one hand, North Vietnam sought again to reemphasize the broad implications of the Vietnam struggle as the forefront of world revolution and socialism in the international arena (cf. proposition 4). On the other hand, beginning from late 1973, the North Vietnamese exhorted both the Soviets and the Chinese to put pressure on the Americans to stop interfering, threatening that they would resume active fighting. Owing to their ideological pretensions, both the Soviet Union and China had to compete for Hanoi’s favor as a way to show the correctness of their respective ideological lines; but as an interested party in the big power relations, they also intended to strike the best deal with Washington with regard to various interests of their own outside of Indochina. This dilemma, the result of the two conflicting national role conceptions, lasted to the very end of the war in 1975. North Vietnam’s relations with its two biggest allies, in the meantime, were continuously characterized by both cooperation and conflict.

Nonetheless, Moscow and Beijing had indeed advised the North Vietnamese leaders not to provoke a crisis in the South, and had warned that they would not supply arms for any escalation. During his trips to Moscow and Beijing in 1972, Kissinger had received assurances that aid shipments to North Vietnam would be reduced following an agreement. According to a Defence Intelligence Agency estimate, combined Soviet-Chinese military aid to North Vietnam in 1973 was $290 million, less than half of the estimated $600 million in arms aid during 1972. According to *The Far Eastern Economic Review*, Soviet and Chinese military aid to North Vietnam was estimated at $200 million in 1974, which was almost one third less than the 1973 figure. It could therefore be said that the Soviets and Chinese had to some extent met the needs of the Americans (cf. proposition 3). What they could not do, of course, was to help Nixon overcome the obstruction of a rebellious Congress, much less to keep Thieu’s internal structure from collapsing (cf. proposition 4). As a matter of fact, the danger to Nixon’s peace efforts was not so much from a full-scale invasion from the North as from the sapping by indigenous forces of the Saigon regime that had barely kept itself in power by means of massive American support.

In addition to triangulation, the White House also tried to employ other leverage to prevent North Vietnam from tipping the sensitive military balance in the South. During the spring of 1973, Nixon threatened to withhold the promised American aid for
reconstruction unless North Vietnam abided by the agreement, and he suspended talks on postwar aid within half a year of the agreement in response to the continued North Vietnamese infiltrations into Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam and the continued fighting in Laos and Cambodia.\textsuperscript{195} Nixon and Kissinger also tried to keep alive the threat of American military intervention. In March, Nixon hardly veiled his threat in an announcement that "based on my actions over the past four years, the North Vietnamese should not lightly disregard such expression of concern...with regard to a violation."\textsuperscript{196} Although all American troops were withdrawn from Vietnam by the end of March 1973, the United States maintained a fairly large naval and air force in the Gulf of Tonkin and in Thailand. The bombing of Cambodia was resumed to support the Lon Nol regime against an escalating Khmer Rouge offensive. Several times Nixon issued slightly veiled threats that he might resume the bombing of North Vietnam. In April, he ordered reconnaissance flights north of the seventeenth parallel.\textsuperscript{197}

Nonetheless, the low credibility of these threats gave good reasons for Hanoi to ignore them, as it was by now convinced that final victory could be accelerated because of the restrictions imposed by the American domestic politics on Nixon (cf. proposition 5). In fact, by the spring of 1973, Hanoi was already confident that the United States had withdrawn "never to return."\textsuperscript{198} This action in part reflected the common mood of the Americans that once American troops had been taken out, the United States should be entirely disengaged from Indochina. Nixon's credibility was further undercut as evidence of White House involvement in the Watergate scandal became clearer. On June 31, Congress endorsed an amendment calling for an immediate end to all military activities in Indochina and forbidding future military actions there without Congressional approval. For the first time, Congress had adopted decisive measures to curtail American involvement in the war. By the end of 1973 Nixon had become well-nigh powerless due to Watergate, which was soon to cost him his presidency. By now, whatever ability to manoeuvre Nixon might have obtained through his triangulations was rendered almost completely void by the strong restraint imposed by the American domestic politics (cf. proposition 5). In November, Congress voted to override Nixon's veto of the so-called War Power Acts, another act to constrain the exercise of presidential power over Vietnam. The legislation obligated the President to inform Congress within forty-eight hours of the deployment of American military forces abroad and to withdraw them in sixty days if the Congress did not endorse it.\textsuperscript{199}
Meanwhile, the Paris agreements had become non-effective. The talks on a political settlement on South Vietnam had begun in March 1973 but were deadlocked due to the enormous gap between the proposals presented by the two sides and remained so until they were broken off for good in May 1974. By now, most Vietnamese had come to realize that "the purpose of the agreement was to let the United States withdraw and leave the Vietnamese to resolve their irreconcilable differences as they see fit."\(^{200}\) At this time, the balance in arms, men and equipment in South Vietnam was temporarily to the advantage of Saigon.\(^{201}\) In late 1973 Thieu launched a series of land-grabbing operations, especially in the Iron Triangle, and the Mekong delta, but the North Vietnamese and PRG soon turned the tables and inflicted heavy losses on ARVN troops. They not only recovered the territory that had been lost, but also occupied additional territory formerly controlled by Saigon. By the autumn of 1974, the military balance had shifted in Hanoi's favor. By this time, the North Vietnamese had infiltrated large forces into the South.\(^{202}\)

In parallel with military defeats of the South was growing political unrest throughout 1974, which was heightened by the deteriorating economic situation. The twin impacts of reduced American economic aid and the withdrawal of a half-million-strong American forces led to massive unemployment and startling inflation. Corruption ran rampant. While Buddhists became more rebellious, calling openly for reconciliation with the Communists, the Catholics, a traditional base of the Government, launched an anti-corruption campaign, aiming at Thieu himself. Pessimism became widespread in the general population controlled by Saigon. It had become increasingly clear that all the American political, economic and military achievements in South Vietnam were now in danger.\(^{203}\)

With the resignation of Nixon in August, Saigon lost the very person who guaranteed Thieu continued support, even if this guarantee was no more than placebo.\(^{204}\) Ironically, the over-dependence of South Vietnam had not only insured its own doom, but also the destructions of its guarantors. As one of Nixon's aides remarked, "the Vietnam war destroyed Nixon as completely as it shattered President Johnson....Without the Vietnam War there would have been no Watergate. Without the Vietnam War, Richard Nixon might have had the most successful Presidency since Harry Truman."\(^{205}\) President Ford reaffirmed the commitment made by his predecessors, but this was a promise that no American president henceforth was in any position to keep. Tragically, Saigon still hoped against hope that President Ford could
keep his commitment, despite his apparent powerlessness in the face of congressional pressure. In September 1974, Congress merely approved an aid program of $700 million, half of which covered shipping costs. As North Vietnamese Chief of Staff Van Tien Dung later put it, Thieu was now forced to fight a "poor-man's war." The inescapable signs of waning American support had a disastrous effect on morale in the ARVN, which had already suffered heavily from the North Vietnamese offensive. The aid cutbacks heightened Thieu's economic and political difficulties, generating widespread feelings of defeat.

The collapse came so rapidly that even the North Vietnamese seemed not to have expected it. With an overwhelming force, Dung occupied Ban Me Thuot in the Central Highlands on March 10. To capture the whole highlands before the end of the dry season, he immediately ordered his troops to attack Pleiku and Kontum. Thieu, who was on tenterhooks, gave his forces the imprudent order to withdraw from the highlands. While seemingly a sound decision in theory, it is a difficult military manoeuvre to carry out smoothly and with poor execution it resulted in a debacle. Pleiku and Kontum fell within a week. Hanoi now felt for the first time that total victory could be achieved in 1975 and swiftly adopted contingency plans to conquer all South Vietnam. As North Vietnamese forces moved on Hue and Danang, the defending South-Vietnamese troops along with hundreds of thousands of civilians fled pell-mell for Saigon. Dung could now concentrate all his forces for the "Ho Chi Minh Campaign" to take over Saigon.

America's reluctance to interfere sped up the collapse. In a note to Hanoi in early April, the Ford administration warned Hanoi that unless it "reversed its present military course, it should have no doubt that it will be held responsible for the consequences." This threat by now was more for the purpose of reassuring American allies than for intimidating Hanoi. Apparently, the Ford administration had neither the intention nor the power to use American air and naval force to back up its threat. On April 10 President Ford requested $972 million in emergency military and economic aid for the Saigon government, arguing that one reason the North Vietnamese were to be winning the war was because the Soviet Union and China had "maintained their commitment", whereas the United States had not. But Congress' reaction was that no aid would be sufficient to save a regime that could not hold itself from within. It was time that the United States terminate all its involvement. The Congress eventually passed a bill authorizing $327 millions for humanitarian aid and evacuation. By now, the war had already ended for the United States.
The fact that the United States had not intervened stamped out whatever faint hope of survival South Vietnam might have cherished. The American influence in Indochina was to be wiped out in the following months. The Khmer Rouge took over Phnom Penh on April 17. At the same time, North Vietnamese troops rapidly moved forward from Danang to the outskirts of the capital, merely encountering some resistance at Xuan Loc. On April 20, U.S. Ambassador to Saigon Graham A. Martin privately informed Thieu that neither his supporters nor his enemies believed he could lead the South out of its crisis; and the following night, Thieu was forced to resign. Tran Van Huong, who replaced Thieu, tried in vain to negotiate a settlement on the basis of the 1973 agreement. Shortly afterwards, Duong Van Minh, who schemed and headed the 1963 coup, replaced Tran Van Huong and soon surrendered unconditionally. On May 1, 1975, Saigon fell into the hands of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong armies, thus formally ending the Saigon regime.

Although the eventual North Vietnamese victory was not something totally unexpected to the signatory parties of the 1973 Paris Peace agreement, the end came much faster than expected. For the Americans, one important lesson was that triangulations (big power manipulations) are not a panacea. Neither the Soviet Union nor China could be fully mobilized to serve American interests by the American triangulations, nor could they prevent the internal structures of the corrupt Saigon government from collapsing and help Nixon overcome the opposition of a rebellious Congress (cf. proposition 4). Another important lesson, which was related to the first, was that the superior military power and big power diplomacy could be seriously restricted by the lack of adequate domestic consensus. Hanoi knew that better than Washington. Throughout the war it had used all the channels, including a Vietnam Committee for Solidarity with the American people, to help the anti-war movement in America. At different stages of the war, Hanoi successfully utilized internal American disagreements to help bring the White House to stop the bombing of the North, to get the American troops out of the war, and finally, to cut down aid to South Vietnam at a time when Hanoi was preparing its final push.

In short, in spite of the newly-acquired American pivot position in the strategic triangle, the Americans still could not overcome various restrictive factors to their triangulations. Therefore, Nixon's and Kissinger's triangular diplomacy was much less effective than would have been expected otherwise.
D. The Strategic and Triangular Implications of the U.S. Defeat in Indochina

The fall of Saigon to North Vietnamese forces in April 1975 radically changed not only the politics of Indochina and Southeast Asia but also the strategic triangle. A united Vietnam, with a population of more than 50 million and a powerful army dramatically altered the regional balance of power, having a tremendous impact on the foreign policy thinking of its neighbors. The rapidity of the American defeat in Vietnam probably caught both China and the Soviet Union by surprise. Bordering on Vietnam with a traditional interest in the region, China was particularly affected by the new situation in East Asia. When the triads became dyads in Indochina, China, the weakest, would of course be in a more disadvantaged position (cf. proposition 2).

The American withdrawal from Indochina spurred a reverse trend from a global intervention policy which had been pursued for almost three decades. Even before the end of the American involvement, the traumatic experience of Vietnam, combined with the detente with the Soviet Union and China and the increasing importance of internal issues, led to a dramatic shift of national priorities. From the late 1940s to the late 1960s, foreign policy had consistently occupied the dominant position in American national concerns; but by the mid-1970s, it had fallen to a position of secondary importance. The Vietnam experience also led to strong opposition to military involvement abroad. According to polls taken shortly before the fall of Saigon only 36 percent of Americans still deemed it necessary for the United States to keep commitments to other countries, while merely 34 percent were willing to send troops should the Soviet Union attempt to occupy West Berlin. Exhausted from its overstretched international commitments, the United States seemed now to be more than happy to resume its more traditional isolationist tendency.

The American debacle in Indochina damaged the American image as a defender of the free world and a reliable ally. The fact that President Ford tried in vain to obtain military and economic aid for South Vietnam when the latter's existence was in immediate danger must have produced serious doubts about American credibility among many countries, including China. Such doubts were clearly expressed by South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu when he concluded upon his resignation that the United States was not a "trustworthy" ally. For the Chinese, the United States was situated in an "increasingly weak and strategically passive position." The U.S. weight in the strategic triangle was also correspondingly reduced (cf. proposition 6).
U.S. credibility was further devalued by a series of repercussions in the area. The day following the fall of Phnom Penh, the United States and Philippines began to reexamine their mutual defense treaty and the status of the U.S. bases in the Philippines. President Marcos remarked that he was to discuss with Philippine government officials the issue of total Philippine control of Clark Air Force Base and the U.S. naval base at Subic Bay. On May 17, about two weeks after the fall of Saigon, the government of Thailand announced an immediate review of "all aspects of cooperation and commitments between the United States and Thailand", setting March 1976 as the deadline for the withdrawal of all the 23,000 U.S. servicemen in Thailand.

To make this even worse, U.S. presence in Laos was soon entirely rooted out. The Communist takeover in Cambodia and South Vietnam had disrupted the delicate balance in the Laotian coalition government. May Day demonstration in Vientiane had its spearhead directed at both the Laotian conservatives and the continued American presence in Laos. Radical students occupied the Agency for International Development (AID) in Vientiane and refused to leave until the United States undertook to terminate its AID programs in Laos. The Pathet Lao seized this opportunity to force five conservative cabinet members to resign, thereby putting Laos under its control. The fall of Laos marked the end of American presence in the whole Indochina. It also represented a great victory for Hanoi and the extension of Hanoi's influence, because the Pathet Lao had long been under the control of Hanoi.

For the Chinese, it now seemed clear that the American debacle in Indochina had thrown some doubt upon the basic spirit of the Shanghai communique, which obligated the United States to serve as the primary strategic guarantee for China against the perceived Soviet threat in East Asia (cf. proposition 9). The Chinese leaders observed with anxiety that the United States had been so utterly exhausted in Indochina that it might have lost much of its strength and interests in East Asia. According to Kissinger, the Chinese leadership wished the United States to remain involved in Asian politics. Beijing was even "ready to accept a continuing American military presence in countries like Thailand and the Philippines."

The growing Chinese anxiety about the American withdrawal was based on the Chinese view evolving since the late 1960s that the Soviet Union was becoming more dangerous than the United States. In the summer of 1974, Deng Xiao-ping, for example, expressed this view to a group of visiting Japanese. "The United States", in his words, "is not as dangerous as the Soviet Union up to a certain point. The United States is
rather on the defensive in order to maintain its rights and interests throughout the
world. On the contrary, the Soviet Union has gone into the offensive with a view to
intruding on U.S. vested rights."230 The People's Daily further pointed out that "taking
advantage of the U.S. imperialists' defeat in Indochina, the Soviet revisionists are trying
in every way to squeeze into Southeast Asia to 'fill' the so-called 'vacuum'."231

What made Beijing feel worse against this background was the perceived
accommodating attitude of the Ford administration towards the Soviet Union. For
Beijing, the United States government was increasingly trying to appease Moscow at the
expense of the interests of other countries. Chinese media even went so far as to
compare Ford's policy to the appeasement policy towards Hitler adopted by British
Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain at the Munich conference shortly before World War
II. Chinese criticism was particularly concentrated on the repeated American
concessions to the Soviet Union at the August 1975 European Security Conference
summit meeting in Helsinki, and on the U.S. grain sale to the Soviet Union.232 By
signing the Helsinki agreement, Beijing asserted that Washington had "stood on China's
shoulders" to improve relations with Moscow.233 During 1975, Sino-American relations
appeared to come to a standstill. The collapse of both Cambodia and South Vietnam in
the Spring of 1975 produced general uncertainties about the American position in East
Asia. In an attempt to reemphasize American commitment elsewhere in the region,
Washington felt it important not to abandon another ally--Taiwan--in return for
normalizing Sino-American relations.234 This only further heightened Chinese worry
about American reliability and the Soviet threat.

The Chinese worries about the Soviet Union were not groundless, for Moscow lost no
time in identifying the opportunities in East Asia caused by the American withdrawal.
When Communist troops took over Saigon, Moscow commented to the effect that as
more propitious time finally came for a dramatic improvement of the situation
throughout the Asian continent, detente and peaceful cooperation among countries with
different socio-political systems became more likely.235 As the Soviet Union was far from
being a traditional power in the region, Moscow had to justify its interests by
reaffirming the concept of "collective security." Moscow warned that although the
imperialists had suffered bitter defeats in Vietnam and Cambodia, they had not
abandoned their ambitions to dominate Asia.236 A worldwide Soviet naval exercise at
the time when Saigon was taken over could be even more ominous to Beijing, which
regarded the exercise as a clear evidence of Moscow's ulterior motive to "swallow all the oceans and seas at one gulp." 237

Moscow's post-war moves in Indochina were designed to serve general strategic objectives, with a reasonably clear rationale. The Soviet Union sought to contain China militarily and diminish its influence in the region. Moscow wished to strengthen its strategic position in the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean. This, of course, entailed a claim of legitimacy for involvement in regional affairs. And Vietnam could contribute tremendously to these goals. 238 Therefore, the Soviet leaders saw it as crucial to move Hanoi away from its relatively neutral position in the Sino-Soviet conflict (cf. proposition 1), even though they were worried about the prospect of taking on costly obligations of reconstructing Hanoi's war-devastated economy. The Soviet leaders were privately upset by Hanoi's hint that they had done it all and that Moscow owed them the aid. 239 To secure Hanoi's loyalty, Moscow made the point of reminding it that the victory was inconceivable "without the aid rendered to Vietnam by the countries of the socialist community", and that "the unshakable solidarity" of the Soviet Union with the Vietnamese revolution played a key role in the Vietnamese victory against the United States. 240

Meanwhile, Moscow spared no effort in sowing discord between Hanoi and Beijing by harping on the consequences of the non-cooperative attitudes of the Chinese in aiding Vietnam, arguing that Hanoi would have achieved victory much earlier if China had "acted in unison with the socialist community countries." Moscow also drew attention to the Chinese efforts to retain an American presence in East Asia, pointing out that Beijing even went out of its way to influence the Thai leadership to allow the United States to preserve its bases in Thailand. 241 This time, Moscow's anti-Chinese preaching had a more sympathetic reaction in Hanoi. In a speech at the victory celebration in Hanoi in May, 1975, Le Duan pointed out that "this glory belongs to the heroic people of Vietnam, in whose veins flows the blood of the Trung sisters; of Lady Trieu, Ly Thuong Kiet, and Tran Hung Dao; of Lei Loi, Quang Trung..." 242 These heroes were either rebel leaders or kings who fought against the Chinese invaders in the old days. Reportedly, when South Vietnam fell, China immediately sent relief goods to Danang; the ship was, however, not permitted to enter the harbor right away. Nevertheless, a Soviet ship, which arrived several days later, was allowed to enter at once. The next day, in a public announcement on aid, Vietnam reported that the Soviet Union was the first country to send aid after the Vietnamese victory. 243 Moreover, the Vietnamese Foreign Minister
visiting Moscow less than two weeks after the Vietnamese victory openly guaranteed to his Soviet hosts that Vietnam has "been and will forever be worthy of the confidence and close friendship of the Soviet Union."²⁴⁴

Shortly after the Vietnamese unification, Moscow and Hanoi signed an aid agreement, which provided Vietnam with grain, gasoline, transport vehicles and various other items of "non-reimbursable" aid.²⁴⁵ In an attempt to dispel Hanoi's misgivings, Brezhnev reassured Vietnam of unflinching Soviet support for its anti-China policy. Having warned Vietnam to "remain vigilant against external forces hostile to the Vietnamese people's interests", Brezhnev guaranteed that in dealing with those new challenges, Vietnam could fully "count on the unswerving support of the CPSU and the entire Soviet people."²⁴⁶ The Soviet Union followed closely border issues between China and Vietnam since they could become one major source of Sino-Vietnamese conflict. The Soviet Union lost no time in giving clear-cut support to Vietnam's occupation of some of the Spratly Islands, which had long been claimed by China.²⁴⁷

With reduced confidence in the sincerity and ability of the United States to resist Soviet expansion in the area, Beijing adopted a policy of avoiding pushing Vietnam into the embrace of the Soviet Union, restricting its potential conflicts with Hanoi in the area to a manageable extent, as Vietnam might become a Soviet satellite, "a block in the wall of containment that Peking argues is Soviet strategy in Asia."²⁴⁸ (cf. proposition 1) But, even this seemingly moderate goal was hard to achieve. With its victory, Hanoi was in a much better position to deal with Beijing, as it was no longer that dependent upon Beijing's aid for survival. Moreover, Hanoi's victory destroyed a centuries' old Sino-Vietnamese relationship, one based on a teacher-pupil association. Victory required, in Hanoi's view, that a new and more equal relationship be established.²⁴⁹ Hanoi for the first time since 1960 when the Sino-Soviet dispute broke out, no longer needed to continue its balancing act between its two biggest partners.

Notably, Hanoi differed from Beijing in the assessment of the post-war East-Asian power balance. While Beijing was increasingly worried about the American withdrawal from Southeast Asia, Hanoi was greatly encouraged by Washington's debacle in Indochina. Hanoi certainly did not share Beijing's concern that "a superpower is trying to impose hegemony" in Vietnam, requesting the use of military bases there.²⁵⁰ But instead, Hanoi viewed the new political situation in Southeast Asia in a way similar to that of Moscow. Nhan Dan, for example, published an editorial in May asserting that "following the effective change of the balance of forces in the world..., Southeast Asia...is
facing unprecedentedly favorable perspectives", with "many governments" in the area discussing plans "to revise their military alliances with the U.S."\textsuperscript{251}

Whatever the differences in evaluating the post-war situation between China and Vietnam, the emerging new power balance did in a way give prominence to the Sino-Vietnamese territorial dispute.\textsuperscript{252} The land border between China and Vietnam had been a source of friction since at least 1974. In 1975, according to Vietnamese sources, 284 border incidents took place, which was one and half times the figure for 1974. Besides, there was a serious difference of views on the border issues in the Tonkin Gulf. The Vietnamese side suggested that the offshore boundary established by the 1887 Sino-French convention be accepted as the basis for determining the boundary of the mutual territorial seas in the gulf; while the Chinese side rejected this proposal, asserting that the Vietnamese claim gave Hanoi two-thirds of the total area of the gulf.\textsuperscript{253} Vietnam's territorial claims to the offshore islands in the South China Sea also posed a challenge to Chinese leaders. In October 1974, Huang Tung, Editor-in-chief of the *Nhan Dan* told a group of foreign journalists that China "is not a country of this region and should not have as much offshore waters as it has claimed", thereby openly challenging China's claims to all the South China Sea Islands. In April, 1975, as Communist forces moved south toward Saigon, Vietnam occupied some of the Spratly islands from South Vietnamese forces.\textsuperscript{254}

Vietnam's post-war strategic goals in Indochina also constituted a source of Chinese concern. As soon as the Communists took over Phnom Penh, Hanoi expressed its determination to strengthen the special ties forged between Hanoi, the Khmer Rouge and the Pathet Lao in 1970. In its congratulatory message to the new Phnom Penh rulers, Vietnam stressed "the strong resolve and unshakable stand of the Vietnamese people and the Government of the DRV to always strengthen" their "solidarity and friendship", promoted their "relations of cooperations and mutual assistance with the Cambodian people."\textsuperscript{255} Meanwhile, Hanoi reminded the Khmer Rouge that their victory was the result of "correct, creative leadership which...has advanced joint and coordinated struggle with the Vietnamese and Lao peoples."\textsuperscript{256}

On April 25, the fifth anniversary of the Indochinese People's Conference, *Nhan Dan* published an editorial, stressing that "the military solidarity between the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia was "a firm guarantee" of genuine cooperation and mutual assistance among them."\textsuperscript{257} Notably, the Chinese role in organizing the 1970 Conference was not mentioned. Even more ominous for the Chinese was Hanoi's pressure on the
Khmer Rouge after their taking over of Cambodia. According to Beijing, Vietnamese leaders urged the Khmer Rouge to implement a common diplomatic policy and common economic policy with Hanoi and to form a united army.\textsuperscript{258} With Laos clearly under Hanoi's control, Beijing would not like to see Cambodia follow suit. A united Indochina would further strengthen the bargaining position of Vietnam, create serious security problems for China in its Southern border and undermine China's traditional influence in the area.

Obviously, Beijing was confronted with a grim reality. The U.S. debacle in Indochina combined with its damaged credibility in Southeast Asia, its isolationist tendency and its reluctance to further its relations with China at the expense of Soviet-American detente and Taiwan tipped the triangular balance to the disadvantage of China; this was further aggravated by Moscow's diplomatic offensive in the whole area of Southeast Asia. In Indochina, Hanoi sought to strengthen its special ties with both Cambodia and Laos and refused to compromise with respect to disputes over Sino-Vietnamese borders and South China Sea islands. Moreover, the Soviet Union and Vietnam shared common interests regarding the power balance in Southeast Asia. If Vietnam chose to forge an alliance relationship with the Soviet Union in order to achieve its aspirations in Indochina, China was to return to the predicament of facing enemies front and rear. This would, in the eyes of the Chinese, be a great gain for the Soviets in their bid to encircle China. Furthermore, Chinese strategic options were hampered by the domestic political struggle between Zhou and the radical "gang of four" which strongly opposed the Three World Theory, in which the United States appeared to be the lesser of the two evils, and called on China to "stand together with the proletariat and revolutionary people of the world" against "imperialism, modern revisionism and all reactionaries (cf. proposition 4)."\textsuperscript{259}

In the new regional balance, the Soviet Union turned out to be the biggest winner. And in comparison with the United States, China was much more uncomfortable with this situation. Obviously, China had to readjust its strategies to cope with the potential Soviet-Vietnamese threat. Given the fact that the Sino-Vietnamese conflicts of interests were growing in the area and that the post-war Vietnam could afford to give up its balancing act between China and the Soviet Union, China was faced with the real possibility of Soviet-Vietnamese coalition against it. Under the situation, the more likely way for Beijing to break away from this predicament was to seek a strategic balance by strengthening its ties with the United States. Once again, the development in the
regional conflicts paved the way for the change in the strategic balance of the three powers (cf. proposition 9).

E. Analytical Summary

As has already been discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the structure of the strategic triangle has undergone a dramatic change during this period. With Sino-American rapprochement, China significantly improved its strategic position, succeeding in avoiding the danger of two-front war with the two superpowers. The United States, which also sought to improve its relations with China, enjoyed some pivot role in the strategic triangle, which to some extent helped the United States withdraw from Indochina (cf. propositions 3 and 9). In comparison with that of the first period, the strategic triangle seemed much less restricted at certain stage, thus enabling some vigorous triangular manipulations. Triangularly speaking, the United States was in the best position, as China and the

Soviet Union still had strongly conflictive relations with each other. By utilizing this benefit, the United States managed to obtain some cooperation from both the Soviet Union and China in pressuring North Vietnam during the 1972-73 peace process. Since the triangular restrictions were relatively low in this pattern, the North Vietnamese felt the pinch of the big power manipulation. North Vietnam's ability to manoeuvre was significantly curbed, but it still had some room for manoeuvre (cf. propositions 7 and 8).

Nevertheless, the advantage of the U.S. triangulation was not a panacea. While the restriction of the strategic triangle was relatively lower than that of the first period, it still existed (cf. proposition 4). Politically speaking, neither the Soviet Union nor China would risk open cooperation with the United States on the issues of Indochina conflict, even though both of them desired very much to boost their respective relations with the United States so as to improve their triangular positions. To cooperate with it would seriously damage their other interests as perceived by their various national role conceptions, such as "the head of the socialist camp" in the case of the Soviet Union and "the revolutionary centre" in the case of China. Therefore, their willingness to cooperate
with the United States was at best partial or half-hearted. Therefore, the leverage that the United States obtained from its vigorous triangulation was not omnipotent. And the conflicting national role conceptions of the United States and the Soviet Union on Europe and the Middle East soon overshadowed whatever understanding the Americans had achieved with the Soviets on Vietnam while the Sino-American rapprochement did not eliminate their differences over a number of other issues, notably Taiwan, thus further limiting the utility of American triangulations on Vietnam.

Moreover, the triangulation could not influence the key factor in the Indochina conflict: the failure of Vietnamization, which decided the basic trend of post-1973-agreement development. The South Vietnamese became so dependent upon the Americans that they could hardly hold on any longer as soon as their patron withdrew. And the less support they got from the United States, the less confident and likely they could be to resist the Communists. On the other hand, the poorer performance they displayed, the more unwilling the U.S. Congress to give more aid to them. This eventually became a vicious circle, which could hardly be reversed by big power manipulation. And Hanoi had consistently used all the channels available to influence American domestic politics to its own advantage and thereby reduce the pressure of Nixon's triangular diplomacy (cf. proposition 5).

With the withdrawal of the American forces in Indochina, and the collapse of the pro-American regimes, the strategic triangle took the following shape locally.

Figure 2-7.

Freed from the U.S. pressure, the North Vietnamese began to have more room to manipulate between the Soviet Union and China. They could afford to be less neutral now, if the situation so required. And Sino-Vietnamese conflict began to emerge from this background. China was obviously in a bad position, as it had lost the counterbalance of the United States in the area (cf. propositions 2 and 9). What was worse, the United States became less interested in cultivating its strategic relationship with China by 1974. To improve its positions, China had only two options: either to promote its relationship with the United States or to improve its relations with the
Soviet Union. While the domestic politics of China around 1974-75 and strategic circumstances made the former very difficult, the latter appeared almost impossible in view of the serious conflicts of interests between the two countries. Nevertheless, the development in the next period favored the first option.
ENDNOTES


6. In a public speech, Brezhnev took a more conciliatory tone: "Official Chinese representatives tell us that relations between the USSR and the PRC should be based on the principles of peaceful coexistence. Well, if the people in Peking are not prepared for more in relations with a socialist state, we are ready to develop Soviet-Chinese relations on this basis too." Reported in *Times*, March 21, 1972.


8. For more details, see the discussion of Dittmer's model in the first part of the research.


10. Ibid., p. 712.


24. Ibid., p. 211-34.


CIA April 17, 1970, 14, DDRS 77:270C.


Small, op. cit., 199-200.

*Peking Review*, July 31, 1970, p. 3.

For a few examples of the large bulk of Chinese condemnations of Vietnamization and the Nixon Doctrine, see *Peking Review*, May 8, July 3, and July 17, 1970.


NCNA, March 19, 1970.


NCNA, May 6, 1970.


64 Taylor, China and Southeast Asia, op. cit., p. 164.
65 NCNA, February 13, 1971.
68 Quan Doi Nhan Dan, March 24, 1971, April 2, 1971.
71 NCNA, March 12, 1971.
74 Pravda, July 1, 1971.
77 Rogers, United States Foreign Policy 1971, op. cit., p. 62.
82 See, Pravda, July 9, 1971.
83 Izvestiia, July 16, 1971.
85 Ibid., August 9, 1971.
86 Yukhananov, op. cit., p. 50.
88 V. Pavlov, "Europe in Peking's Plans", International Affairs (Moscow), March 1972, p. 17.
90 Pravda, October 5, 1971.
92 Radio Moscow, August 14, 1971.
95 Ibid., August 5, 1971.
97 Ibid., February 20, 1972.
99 The Truth About Vietnam-China Relations over the Last Thirty Years (Hanoi: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1979), pp. 40-41.
100 Nhan Dan, July 19, 1971.
103 Nhan Dan, August 1, 1971.
One evidence to indicate the trend of Hanoi's relations with Beijing and Moscow was Chinese and Soviet aid to North Vietnam as shown in the following table (in millions of U.S. dollars):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Soviet Aid (military)</th>
<th>Soviet Aid (economic)</th>
<th>Chinese Aid (military)</th>
<th>Chinese Aid (economic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1954-64</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>530</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

140 Szulc, "Behind the Vietnam Ceasefire Agreement", op. cit., p. 45.
140 Szulc, "Behind the Vietnam Ceasefire Agreement", op. cit., p. 45.
144 The following summary is based on the summary of the draft agreement published in *The New York Times*, October 27, 1972.
146 Ibid., November 30, 1972.
147 Ibid., December 21, 1972.
150 Szulc, "Behind the Vietnam Cease Fire Agreement", op. cit., pp. 54-55.
153 Nixon, RN, op. cit., p. 701.
158 Ibid., December 21, 1972.
159 See Kalb and Kalb, op. cit., p. 400.
161 Quoted from Thomas L. Hughes, "Foreign Policy: Men or Measure?" *Atlantic*, October 1974, p. 56.
162 Kalb and Kalb, op. cit., p. 412.
178 Porter, op.cit., p. 165.  
180 For details, see Newsweek, May 16, 1977, p. 49.  
182 See Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, January 29, 1973, pp. 45-64 for the agreement.  
183 Herring, America's Longest War, op. cit., p. 250.  
191 Ibid.  
192 Letter from Defense Intelligency Agency to Congressmen Les Aspin, quoted from Porter, A Peace Denied, op. cit., p. 188.  
204 In a letter to Thieu carried by General Alexander Haig, White House Chief of Staff, President Nixon guaranteed that "if Hanoi fails to abide by the terms of the agreement, it is my intention to take swift and severe retaliatory actions." See text of Nixon's letter to Thieu as published in The New York Times, April 30, 1975.  
207 Congressional Record, 93th. Cong. 2d., 29176-29180.  
212 Ibid., April 12, 1975.
213 Ibid., April 16, 17, 1975.
214 Congressional Record, 94th Cong., September 1, 10101-10108.
219 Warner, op.cit., pp. 185-86.
222 Thieu's complaints could be found in The New York Times, April 21, 1975, pp. 1, 14.
225 Ibid., May 18, 1975.
227 See NCNA, May 25, 1975, for an example of the Chinese assessment of the United States.
239 Shevchenko, op. cit., pp. 262-63.
245 Nhan Dan, June 20, 1975.
247 See TASS, May 6, 1975.
248 Donald E. Weatherbee, The USSR-DVR-PRC Triangle in Southeast Asia (Carliele Barrack, Penn.: Strategic Studies Institute, 1976), p. 11.

For a detailed analysis, see Pao-min Chang, "The Sino-Vietnamese Territorial Dispute", *Asia-Pacific Community*, No. 8 (Spring 1980), pp. 130-65.


For Huang Tung's talks to foreign journalists, see *The Voice of The Nation* (Bangkok), November 23, 1974. Also see "Baring the Teeth", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 11, 1975, p. 5.

*VNA*, April 17, 1975.


A. The Basic Structure of the Strategic Triangle

From 1976 to 1980, the Soviet Union, for the first time since 1965, landed itself in the most unfavorable position in the triangle. Having failed to improve its relations with post-Mao China, the Soviet Union ran into a series of conflicts with the United States, while there was a renewed surge of enthusiasm in Sino-American relations. Therefore, it was the Soviet Union this time that found itself most in need of a change in the unfavorable triangular pattern.

The US-Soviet relations experienced some ups and downs during this period, with general trend being negative.

The most significant development in the Third Pattern was the remarkable deterioration of Soviet-American relations, which formed a sharp contrast to the height of Soviet-American detente in the early 1970s. A number of factors contributed to this change, including incompatibility of Moscow's and Washington's expectations in respect of detente, growing mutual disillusionment with the unravelling of detente, a series of Soviet offensives in the Third World and the post-war conservative trend in American politics. Nevertheless, the most important cause for the demise of the detente was the conflicting nature of their fundamental goals for detente. For the Soviet Union, detente was not only a means to achieve parity with the United States strategically, but also could help it expand its influence into areas where the traditional American influence was under serious challenge. For its part the United States hoped to use the detente to withdraw from Vietnam and also to curb the perceived trend of Soviet expansion in the world. Therefore, with the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam, the importance of detente was also reduced. And Hanoi's rapid conquest of South Vietnam served to heighten the importance of curbing Communist, especially Soviet expansion (cf. proposition 9).

While the Americans interpreted detente as a mutual acceptance of status quo, the Soviets assumed that detente meant an acknowledgement of Soviet attainment of parity.
with its rival. Moreover, the Soviets argued that detente applied mainly to superpower relations, but not to the Third World developments, such as the struggle of national liberation movements. For the Americans, the Soviets, believing that the power transition was shifted in their favor, adopted a strategy of a classic "revolutionary" power, which sought to change the status quo. As a result, there was a growing attack on detente by conservatives in both parties and liberal "neoconservative" Democrats. Therefore, as 1976 began, President Ford was concerned about the domestic vulnerability of his administration to a rising anti-detente tide. With the failure to reach a SALT agreement in the beginning of 1976, Ford began to campaign for policy of "peace through struggle", personally jettisoning the very word of "detente" in the Spring of 1976.

In the framework of the triangular relationship, the deterioration in Soviet-American relations coupled with the conflictive relationship between China and the Soviet Union paved the way for a renewed surge in Sino-American rapprochement (cf. proposition 1). Furthermore, post-war developments in Indochina, as was discussed in the last Chapter, greatly increased China's incentive to strengthen its relations with the United States (cf. proposition 9), and the internal political development of China, including the arrest of the radical "Gang of Four", reversal of the ultra-leftist party line and implementation of the four modernization programs, cleared many of the ideological obstacles to the promotion of Chinese relations with the United States on the Chinese side (cf. proposition 4). By now, China no longer upheld its national role conception as "the centre of revolution", which had consistently interfered in its ability to maneuver.

Nonetheless, the process did not take place in the initial stage of the Carter administration in 1977, as President Carter seemed to be in favor of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's "evenhanded" approach (cf. proposition 3), which was based on the priority of "stable U.S.-Soviet relations" and "a realistic appreciation of the limits of Sino-American cooperation." Moreover, President Carter had adopted a stance opposed to Kissinger-style power politics and "decided to make a concern for human rights the cornerstone of his foreign policy." This highly ideological approach interfered with its ability to utilize the Sino-Soviet conflicts to American advantage (cf. proposition 4). As Raymond A. Moore argued, "the failure to perceive the 'centrality of power' in international politics at the outset meant that costly lessons had to be learned the hard way." On the whole, this "evenhandedness" not only embittered the Chinese but also
failed to cope with the perception of geopolitics--Soviet military buildup and its expansion in the Third World. Sino-American relations reached a low ebb in 1977.

By the end of 1977, hardliners within the U.S. government and Congress had combined to pressure the administration to adopt a tougher position in the SALT talks by withdrawing compromise proposals made earlier by the United States. Congressional and public reaction to the active Soviet and Cuban involvement in Ethiopia's war with Somalia over the Ogaden Desert further worsened U.S.-Soviet relations, so much so that by early 1978 Soviet-American relations had reached their lowest level since 1973 (cf. proposition 4). The Chinese were also putting increasing pressure on the administration to adopt a tougher stance towards Moscow, warning the administration not to make the same mistake of appeasing the Soviet Union as Chamberlin had made at Munich in 1938. The Chinese openly raised doubts about U.S. credibility as an ally or a friend. To escape from the dilemma, the Carter administration shifted from Secretary of State Vance's "evenhandedness" to National Security Adviser Brzezinski's balance of power. Firmly convinced that the United States and China shared a common interest in containing the Soviet threat, Brzezinski tried to reinforce Sino-American ties by pushing these relations toward normalization. Meanwhile he had hoped to use the pending U.S. recognition of China to pressure the Soviet Union to sign SALT II agreement. Sino-American relations reached an unprecedented high level in late 1979, as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan pushed the two countries to further strengthening their military and security ties to cope with perceived Soviet expansionism (cf. proposition 1).

Thus, by the end of the 1970s, some of the worst Soviet nightmares since the late 1960s seemed to have come true. Although Chinese internal policy moved away from the Cultural Revolution, the Soviet leadership viewed this as a change for the worse, because it made China potentially a much more powerful opponent. An anti-Soviet China began to move into a sort of close alignment with developed countries in the West--particularly the United States. As much as being used as a "card" by the United States against the Soviet Union, it was itself using the "American card" in its struggle with the Soviet Union. With a faint hope that the succession process would mitigate their China predicament, the Soviets made a number of gestures toward Beijing in the first half of 1977, including cooling off attacks, resuming border talks and sending congratulatory messages to Beijing's new leaders (cf. proposition 3). Nevertheless, these efforts to please the new Chinese leadership proved to be useless, as the Chinese soon began to denounce Moscow even more vigorously than their predecessors. What was worse,
Moscow perceived a growing tendency for the United States to utilize China as a tool for achieving American global aims.\(^{13}\)

Although Moscow attempted to woo Washington and revive detente as a counterbalance against the danger of a Sino-American alignment, it found its options reduced from what they had been in the early 1970s.\(^{14}\) By 1978, Soviet leaders had become increasingly convinced that the Carter administration had decided to shelve the detente policy in favor of forging closer ties with China, warning that alignment with China on an anti-Soviet basis would rule out the possibility of cooperation with the Soviet Union to reduce the danger of a nuclear war.\(^{15}\) In the United States there were increasing doubts about arms control and trade with the Soviet Union and growing worries about Soviet intentions and capabilities. Subsequently, the Americans were more enthusiastic about improving relations with China than with the Soviet Union. At the same time, the Soviets had reason to think that detente had already lost its meaning, as it had failed to keep the United States and China apart. They were therefore not in a particularly compromising mood, but rather ready to take more adventurous actions in face of a Sino-American alignment, as they probably felt that they had nothing to lose.\(^{16}\) This observation may serve to supplement proposition 1 in the sense that once the coalition becomes a fact, the isolated pole does not necessarily adopt a more flexible stance. In other words, the triangle can lose its dynamics due to the formation of a coalition between the two poles (cf. proposition 1).

As a result, the triangular structure and each member's position therein were substantially different from the previous pattern by the end of the 1970s. The Soviet Union was located in the most unfavorable position in the triangle. One study of the evolution of Brezhnev's foreign policies in the latter half of the 1970s described the 1976-78 period as "drift" followed by "crisis" in 1979 and 1980.\(^{17}\) The clumsiness of Soviet policy actually forced the United States to seek a closer relationship with China. As Brzezinski later commented, "more restrained Soviet behavior would have left little room for those who favored a closer relationship with China on the grounds that that was in keeping with U.S. national interests."\(^{18}\)

As for the United States, its position in the pattern also deteriorated in comparison with the previous pattern. The Sino-American coalition-type relationship not only served to undercut American leverage in dealing with the Soviet Union but also ironically mortgaged American ability to manoeuvre to China, which might benefit from Soviet-American hostility to handle its relations with the Soviet Union in a much freer way (cf.
proposition 3). This illustrates the profound dilemma of the pivot power, which seems to be the power most responsive to pressures from the other members of the triad. The benefits accruing from holding the position were not nearly as visible as the liabilities. On the one hand, Sino-Soviet conflicts enabled the United States to play one against the other; on the other hand, the dynamics engendered by these conflicting demands on the United States caused instability in the triangular relationship, because the Soviets and Chinese each sought to undermine American "evenhandedness" toward the other. "These efforts play into--and upon--deep policy disputes in Washington, which aggravated the tendency toward instability." Eventually, the Carter administration gave up its "evenhandedness" and tilted towards China, thereby losing the pivot position. This dilemma of the pivot has already been observed in the last Chapter. Therefore, proposition 3 may be supplemented in the sense that it is difficult for the pivot actor to keep its position, when the other two poles are in bitter conflict with each other (cf. proposition 3).

While the Soviet Union was the net loser in the third triangular pattern and the United States lost much of its pivot advantage, China became a pure gainer, succeeding in overcoming its worst triangular position for the first time (cf. proposition 2). After the two years' immobility of 1975-76, which resulted from a heated internal struggle for power, the new Chinese leadership emerged with a much freer hand to handle its relations with the two superpowers, as the ideological obstacles diminished significantly with the downfall of the "Gang of Four" (cf. proposition 4). A closer relationship with the United States reduced the possibility of Soviet-American collusion and increased China's sense of security vis-à-vis the perceived Soviet threat. Throughout this pattern, China maintained an extremely belligerent stance against the Soviet Union--a triangular tactic that China had used in the 1958 Taiwan Straits crisis when China adopted a similar stance against the United States (cf. proposition 3).

The argument that China could have further improved its triangular position by improving its relations with the Soviet Union was sound in theory, but seemed not feasible at the time. To have a strong bargaining position vis-à-vis the Soviets, the Chinese had to foster a strong link with the United States first. Before early 1979, China had an increasing urgency to normalize its relations with the United States, due to the growing Vietnamese harassment which was perceived as a part of the Soviet encirclement. Even to toy with the idea of playing the "Soviet card" was not only impractical for China, but also dangerous, as China might run the risk of losing
American support. To play pivot in the third series of the Stryker-Psathas Games, the weak pole may be subject to severe restrictions, because it is much weaker than the other two and risks playing itself into the hands of the other two poles. This is an important supplement to proposition 3 (cf. propositions 2 and 3).

While the structural balance of the strategic triangle at global level was such, it presented a radically different picture at the regional level in Indochina. With the United States well out of the local conflict, the strategic triangle became actually a strategic dyad, and the United States only exerted indirect influence over that area (cf. proposition 6). Obviously, the strategic triangle itself had a lower degree of influence on the regional conflict in Indochina, whereas Vietnam, the strongest local power, enjoyed much better positions in its relations with the three powers. Freed from the direct U.S. threat and pressure, a unified Vietnam could finally afford to shake off its former carefully maintained neutral stance between China and the Soviet Union, if the situation so required. In such a structure, none of the big powers could mobilize the other two powers to deal with local problems, as two legs of the strategic triangle were strongly conflictive and no pivot power existed (cf. proposition 7). If China had improved its triangular position in the strategic triangle at global level, it had to face a deteriorated position at regional level, as it was not equal in strength to the Soviet Union and the leverage that it could borrow from the United States in this particular area could be very limited due to the end of its direct involvement and subsequent low interest in Indochina (cf. proposition 6).

The balance sheet of the compound triangle was much more complicated during this period. If the Soviet Union found itself heading toward the negative pivot position in the Sino-Vietnamese-Soviet triangle, China could hardly avoid becoming the negative pivot in the Sino-Vietnamese-Soviet triangle. One major difference between this pattern and the last one would therefore be that there were only negative pivots in the strategic and Sino-Vietnamese-Soviet triangles. Since triangulations would be conducted by the non-pivot actors, its utility could be even more arguable. Another major difference was that the restrictive effect of ideology was much less visible in Chinese and Soviet policies than in the last two patterns. One reason for that was that with the withdrawal of "American imperialism" from Indochina, the ideological intensity of any further conflicts in the area would be inevitably diminished. The end of the Mao era and the downfall of the radical Gang of Four also cleared the way for Beijing to adopt a much more practical policy. But the American triangular strategy was restricted by the domestic conservative
trend and Carter's opposition to power politics. This was one of the major reasons for the United States to lose its pivot position and push the Soviet Union to the negative pivot position. Therefore, in comparison with the second pattern, the triangle seemed to be more restricted.

B. Sino-Soviet Rivalry and the Triangular Tangos in Indochina

If the conflicts in Indochina were not purely regional in origin, then the end of direct American involvement in the region did not change this basic character. Developments in the new Indochinese conflicts in the post-1975 period were closely related to the framework of a new balance of the big powers in the region. The Sino-Vietnamese-Soviet triangle had undergone significant change as a result of the American defeat. The old balance could no longer suit the new realities. The regional conflicts only served to expedite alterations in the Sino-Vietnamese-Soviet triangle. The historical situations in which China became the negative pivot in the Sino-Vietnamese-Soviet triangle while Vietnam lost its positive pivot position between the Soviet Union and China will be analysed in the following sections of this Chapter.

a. The Shifting Sino-Vietnamese-Soviet Triangle in the Post-War Regional Balance

As already briefly discussed in the last chapter, the Communist victory in Vietnam aggravated the Sino-Soviet conflict. China had already made it clear that American military presence in East Asia was indispensable to prevent the Soviet Union from filling a power vacuum in the region. In separate meetings in June and July, 1975, with President Ferdinard Marcos of the Philippines and Prime Minister Kukrit Pramoj of Thailand, Deng Xiao-ping warned both leaders "to beware of the tiger coming from the back door while pushing out the wolf from the front door." Obviously Beijing feared that Moscow would replace Washington in the region, a change that would present a serious challenge to Chinese security (cf. proposition 9). The Chinese maintained that the Soviet Union's policies, especially its Asian collective security proposal were "a new move...to take the place of the United States and establish hegemony in Southeast Asia...", so that they could "bring small and medium-sized Asian countries into their sphere of influence." This reflected the vulnerable position of the weak pole of Caplow's type 3 triangle, which is most susceptible to change in the triangle. When the triad becomes a dyad of one weak and one strong poles, the weak one is under pressure (cf. proposition 2).
The Soviets counter-attacked the Chinese by warning of China's alleged expansionist ambitions in Southeast Asia. The Soviets observed that "following the normalization of relations with the countries of the area, Peking will exert greater and tougher pressure on these countries in order to wrest onesided concessions from them." Beijing had stepped up its drive to "convert Southeast Asia into a sphere of prevailing influence of China." Therefore, "enhanced vigilance on the part of the peoples of Indochina" and other Southeast Asian countries was "imperative." The Soviets were also calling for an end to the U.S. military presence in the region. In their view, "the Maoist leaders now not only accept the imperialist military presence in Asia, but are helping the Pentagon to build it up." Moscow was well aware that without an American counterbalance in the region, Beijing would be in a very unfavorable position (cf. proposition 2). In order to be treated as a "natural power" in the region, Moscow stepped up its efforts to build up its influence in Indochina and to restrict that of China. Post-war developments in Indochina also presented the Soviet Union with an opportunity to squeeze into the region.

If the Sino-Soviet rivalry over Indochina was the key factor in determining the trend in the region, the North Vietnamese victory in 1975 greatly intensified this rivalry (cf. proposition 9). Like all great powers, China had always preferred divided and weak neighbors to potentially challenging powers on its doorstep, even if they were officially its allies. If Stalin could have nipped in the bud Dimitrov's and Tito's dream of a Balkan Federation, Mao found no reason to react differently to Hanoi's "mini-imperialism", especially when Vietnam's attitude towards Beijing was less than differential. As early as 1972, Zhou En-lai had hinted privately that he was opposed to the prospect of Indochina being dominated by one country. A unified Vietnam placed for the first time in history a successful military power on China's southern border, which was not only independent of China's influence but also had various conflicting goals with China. To contain China, the Soviet Union needed a strong and united Vietnam on the southern border of China (cf. proposition 3). As for the Vietnamese, their options in dealing with their two largest partners were broadened with the end of the war; it was no longer so imperative for Hanoi to maintain its neutral status between them (cf. proposition 7). Naturally, Hanoi would rather have a powerful but distant Soviet Union to balance a much closer but historically hostile China (cf. proposition 3). Furthermore, in pursuing its own national interests in the region, post-
war Vietnam found a much more sympathetic ally in the Soviet Union than in China. Therefore, a pro-Soviet tendency was inescapable.29

Further signs of Vietnam's tilt toward Moscow came in October, 1975, when Le Duan visited Moscow after his successful trip to some Eastern European countries. The joint communique demonstrated how close Hanoi had moved toward the positions of the Soviet Union on a series of international issues. It announced that the two sides held completely identical views on the matters discussed and also demanded the withdrawal of all U.S. military presence in the region.30 Of particular importance to China was Hanoi's support for the Helsinki conference on European security and its open approval of the Soviet assertion that the course of detente was "irreversible." This signified a dramatic shift from Hanoi's past views of detente as an American plot for splitting the socialist world and undermining national liberation struggles.31 At the end of Le Duan's visit, Vietnam and the Soviet Union concluded significant economic agreements under which the Soviet Union undertook to provide interest-free credit for Vietnam's next Five-year Plan.32 Moreover, Le Duan led a high-level Vietnamese delegation to the 25th CPSU Congress in February 1976, in which he asserted once again that the Communist victory in South Vietnam was "inseparable from the powerful support, the all-round, tremendous, valuable, and effective aid of the Soviet Union."33

In contrast, Vietnam's interaction with China was relatively low-keyed. In August 1975, Vice Premier Le Thanh Nghi led an economic delegation to Beijing but only managed to get a long-term $400 million agreement.34 Le Duan's September visit to Beijing, was not very successful either. Although received with great fanfare, including a big welcome at the airport, a large welcoming banquet and a personal interview with Mao, he did not stay in Beijing for the expected five days, nor did he give the customary return banquet to his Chinese hosts. The hosts and guests did not even sign a joint communique at the end of the visit. More importantly, although Le Duan urged that the Americans withdraw from the whole region, he did not join the Chinese in condemning superpower hegemonism. As the Vietnamese revealed later, the issue of the American presence in Asia became a major difference between Vietnam and China.35 In this compound triangle, the more the Americans were involved in the region, the more the Chinese felt assured in their struggle against Soviet encirclement; nevertheless, the Vietnamese expected that they would have more leverage against China if the Americans were absent from the region (cf. the Model). Besides thanking China for its past assistance, Le Duan stressed that "our victory is inseparable from the profound
sympathy and great and valuable assistance that the people of the other fraternal socialist countries and all progressive mankind extended to our just patriotic struggle."36

Le Duan left Beijing a mere two days before the Chinese National Day on October 1; and Hanoi did not send a high-level delegation to Beijing for the occasion.37

Apart from being upset by Hanoi's tilt toward Moscow, Beijing was also angry with Vietnam's occupation of some of the Islands in May 1975. In November 1975, China raised its dispute over the Spratly Islands publicly with the Vietnamese for the first time, warning them that "some of the islands have not yet returned to the hands of the Chinese people."38 To answer Chinese claims of sovereignty over the Spratly Islands, Hanoi published a map which clearly included the Paracels and the Spratlys as parts of the newly-united Vietnam.39 Several months later, General Vo Nguyen Giap said, "We must steadily protect our nation's inalienable independence and sovereignty and the sacred territorial integrity of our fatherland with all its land, air space, and territorial waters from the frontier and mainland to the islands and continental shelf..."40 He did not specify against whom these must be defended, but many if not most of his hearers would have understood that he was referring to China. The South China sea dispute was not merely a question of sovereignty but was related to strategic concerns. Connecting the Indian Ocean through the Malacca-Singapore Straits to the East China Sea, the South China Sea possesses a major navigation route between the Paracel and Spratly Islands, which is convenient for the navies of the Soviet Union and the United States and for the trade ships of Japan.41 There are also rich oil resources which may be commercially exploitable in the region.

When the Vietnamese Communist Party held its Fourth National Congress in December 1976, the Soviet Union sent Mikhail Suslov, a Politburo member and leading theoretician, whereas China did not send any delegation to the Congress. During the leadership changes at the Congress, ex-Ambassador to Beijing Hoang Van Hoan, who was to defect to China in 1979, was dropped from the Politburo. Among those sacked from the Central Committee were the then Vietnamese ambassador to China, Nguyen Trong Vinh, and two other former ambassadors to Beijing, Ngo Minh Loan and No Thryen.42 By now, Beijing must have concluded that its role in the traditional competitive wooing was no longer able to ensure the neutrality of Vietnam in the Sino-Soviet rivalry (cf. proposition 3).

Meanwhile the Soviet Union stepped up its aid to Vietnam and undertook to supply Hanoi with $2.4 billion in aid over the period from 1976 to 1980, whereas China
promised only $300 million annually.43 This further expedited Vietnam's tilt toward the Soviet Union (cf. proposition 1). Hoang Tung, the editor-in-chief of *Nhan Dan*, did not even bother to conceal Hanoi's tendency to lean toward Moscow in 1976 by openly claiming that "there is a tangible strong Soviet interest coinciding with Vietnamese interests—to reduce Chinese influence in this part of the world."44 This tilt was further confirmed by the Soviet claim that "the Big Han Chauvinists were compelled to reckon with the firm stance of the united Vietnam."45

Apparently in the post-war balance, China's weight was seriously weakened as a result of the American defeat, while the Vietnamese enjoyed a much stronger position *vis-à-vis* their two biggest benefactors (cf. proposition 7). Theoretically, it was still in Vietnam's best interests to keep its positive pivot position in the Sino-Vietnamese-Soviet triangle; nevertheless, the competitive wooing of Vietnam by China and the Soviet Union could no longer be based on ideological commitment due to the withdrawal of "American imperialism" and the deideologising process in post-Mao China, but rather on national interests. Since China's national interests in the region were in contradiction with those of Vietnam, conflict between them was inevitable. Although the restrictive effect of ideology on the strategic triangle was visibly reduced, the fact that there was no positive pivot power showed that any attempt to coordinate big power interests in the region was doomed to failure (cf. proposition 5).

**b. The Cambodian Issue and Its Strategic Implications**

If Sino-Vietnamese relations had already rapidly deteriorated in the context of a changing regional balance, then the emerging Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict greatly expedited this process. Like the conflicts between South and North Vietnam before 1975, the Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict was not a purely regional conflict. As the conflict could influence the balance patterns in the region and the strategic interests of the big powers, they were inevitably involved. And the involvement of the big powers would in its turn exert tremendous influence on the conflict (cf. proposition 9).

Cambodia was the only one of the three Communist states in Indochina that aligned itself clearly with China. Therefore Cambodia became a key-link in the Chinese struggle against what were perceived to be Soviet-supported Vietnamese efforts to dominate Indochina. Although the Soviets secured a firm tie with Vietnam and enjoyed a much stronger influence in Laos than the Chinese, their relations with the Khmer Rouge were basically negative. Owing to the long Soviet refusal to recognize Sihanouk's government-in-exile, the Kremlin had become very unpopular with the Khmer Rouge. Not until the
Lon Nol regime was on the verge of collapse did Moscow decide to dissociate itself from it and switch its attention to the Khmer Rouge. By this manoeuvre, the Soviets attempted to reduce the influence of the Chinese who had been furnishing the Khmer Rouge with most of their weapons throughout the war in Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge rejected this belated gesture of friendship. When they occupied Phnom Penh in April 1975, they looted the Soviet Embassy and then deported the Soviet diplomats along with the Western diplomatic corps.46

On May 10, 1975, the new regime announced that "Cambodia's great victory is also a great victory of the Chinese people."47 The first agreement that the new regime signed with a foreign country was an agreement for economic and cultural cooperation with China on August 18, 1975, in which Beijing undertook to give unconditional military and economic aid.48 Beginning in mid-1975, China reportedly supplied Cambodia with extensive military aid, including MIG 15 jets, 130 millimeter artillery, tanks, weapon carriers, transport and communications equipment.49 The joint Sino-Cambodian communique following the agreement declared that "the contention for world hegemony between the two superpowers is becoming more and more intense", thereby indicating clearly that Cambodia stood firmly on the side of China.50 Chinese aid was a major exception to the Khmer Rouge's ultranationalist policy of accepting no foreign aid.

Although the Vietnamese and Khmer Rouge had cooperated in the latter stages of their struggle for power, their relations had been interwined with various problems, which were greatly aggravated after the double victory in 1975. During Prime Minister Pol Pot's visit to Hanoi in June 1975, the two sides discussed the future relationship between their countries. The Vietnamese requested a "special relationship" with Cambodia, based on their history of common struggle. They also sought Cambodian cooperation on foreign policy issues and proposed economic cooperation, offering Vietnamese technical assistance. The Cambodians rejected their proposals.51 Their dispute on border issues was not solved. A Vietnamese delegation led by Le Duan, visited Phnom Penh in late July 1975. The talks appeared to have been cool; and relations remained strained.52 In April 1976, President Khieu Samphan, in a speech outlining Cambodian foreign policy, again emphasized that Cambodia "does not allow any foreign country to establish military bases in Cambodia, and resolutely opposes all forms of outside subversion and aggression."53

As Sino-Vietnamese relations were visibly worsening, Cambodia strengthened its good relations with China as a counterbalance to Vietnamese pressure. Since the Khmer
Rouge had no trust in the Soviet Union and regarded the United States as their deadly enemy, they had a great stake in their relations with the Chinese. In this sense, Cambodia did not have much triangular leverage with the big powers, as it had closed its doors to both the United States and the Soviet Union, partly due to its fanatical ideology (cf. the Model). In September 1976, Pol Pot eulogized the late Chairman Mao as "the most eminent teacher" of the international proletariat "after Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin." On China's National Day, the Khmer Rouge confirmed its support for China's Cultural Revolution and its campaign against the revisionist leaders including Deng Xiao-ping. After the downfall of the radical "Gang of Four", Phnom Penh lost no time in declaring its support for the new leadership in Beijing. Unlike some other radical friends of China, including Albania at that time, Cambodia did not hesitate to congratulate Hua Guo-feng on his "victory of smashing the counterrevolutionary Gang of Four anti-Party clique." In view of Cambodia's historical concern about its powerful Vietnamese neighbor, the Khmer Rouge found it necessary to rely on a more distant but powerful China and, therefore, support whoever was in power in China.

The immediate cause of Cambodian-Vietnamese conflicts was an ill-defined boundary imposed by the French colonial administration in 1939. This boundary was a line of administrative convenience which did not follow topographical features. Once the victories were achieved, the conflict quickly escalated. The roots of this conflict could be traced to the long history of hostility between the Vietnamese and Khmer peoples. The southern third of Vietnam, traditionally known as Cochin China was once Kampuchea Krom (Southern Cambodia), and Saigon was once a Cambodian provincial capital called Prey Nokor. The Vietnamese also attempted to assimilate the Khmers, replacing their values and institutions with Vietnamese ones. The steady pressure of Vietnamese absorption and the consequent danger of the disappearance of the Cambodian nation made the Cambodians ethnically detest their Vietnamese neighbors and have referred to the Vietnamese as "yuongs" or savages. Ironically, the French colonization in the nineteenth century may have prevented Vietnam from annexing the whole of Cambodia. In 1967, Prince Sihanouk offered a solution, under which Vietnamese would make a unilateral declaration of a recognition of Cambodia's existing border based on the so-called Brevie line. Hanoi and the NFL eventually agreed to give written undertakings to respect the frontiers of Cambodia; but by then, they were already in control of large tracts of Cambodian territory along the Cambodian-Vietnamese border.
On top of this historical enmity was the Khmer Rouge's frustration with Hanoi. The Khmer Rouge did not forget the 1954 Geneva conference in which Hanoi made the worst possible deal for the Cambodian Communists, though China was actually more to blame (see pp. 55-57). By 1959, about 90 per cent of the Cambodian Communists had been eliminated. The Cambodian Communist Party (CPK) was founded in September 1960 by the survivors with those educated in Marxism in France at the centre. Their distrust of Hanoi grew as it pursued a policy of conciliation with Sihanouk in return for his tolerance of the Ho Chi Minh trail and the Cambodian sanctuaries.

The overthrow of Sihanouk in March 1970, which immediately threatened the Vietnamese Communist sanctuaries, changed Hanoi's policy toward the Khmer Rouge, with whom it formed a tactical alliance between the Vietnamese and the Khmer Rouge against the pro-American Lon Nol regime. Hanoi embarked on an intensive assistance program for the Khmer Rouge's fight against Lon Nol. Nevertheless, even during the best cooperative days of 1970-72, the Khmer Rouge still regarded Vietnam as its "enemy number one." The Paris Peace agreement in 1973 left Cambodians to bear the brunt of American bombing. Hanoi was asked by Washington to pressure the Khmer Rouge into peace talks with the Lon Nol regime, but they had little influence with them. The Khmer Rouge continued the war. Hanoi, subsequently, cut off its arms supplies to the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge saw the Vietnamese aid cut-off as another betrayal comparable to the one in 1954.

If the Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict had been restricted to border disputes and historical hatred, it might not have caused serious concern to China. In a divided Indochina, Vietnam might have had less incentive to challenge China over other issues. And China might have been in an almost perfect position to coordinate between Vietnam and Cambodia. There might have been a competitive wooing for China (cf. proposition 3). In order to keep China neutral in its dispute with Cambodia, Vietnam might have had enough incentive to maintain its own neutral position between China and the Soviet Union (cf. proposition 3). Nevertheless, the Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict took on a much deeper significance. It was actually concerned with a much more sensitive issue of whether Indochina should be under the control of Hanoi. A unified Indochina could further disrupt the subtle balance in the Sino-Vietnamese-Soviet triangle and greatly promote Hanoi's strength. This was not only the biggest fear of the Khmer Rouge, but also what China had worried most. No matter what was the real intention of Hanoi in
dealing with Cambodia, the possibility of an Indochina Federation or the fear of such a possibility exerted a strong influence on the evolution of the conflict in the region, which would not only influence the triangular balance of the big powers but also get them involved one way or another in the escalating Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict (cf. proposition 9).

The Khmer Rouge had been very vocal about their ingrained fear of Vietnamese domination. The Indochinese Communist Party (ICP), founded in 1930, upheld the concept of a federation of the three Indochinese nations after their liberation from France. As the Party history later related, "the Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian proletariat have politically and economically to be closely related in spite of their difference in language, custom, and race." Since then the Vietnamese Communists had long regarded Cambodia and Laos as a part of their sphere of domination. Although the ICP was dissolved in 1951 into three separate parties, the Vietnamese Labor Party's platform called for eventually "bringing about an independent, free, strong and prosperous federation of the states of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, if the three peoples so desire." While the federation theme was not mentioned later on, Hanoi had repeatedly stressed the importance of the relationship between the three Indochinese states, which reminded the Cambodians of the old theme. This fear was well revealed in Pol Pot's accusation:

At first Vietnam desired to have an Indochinese federation composed of one single state. Later the Vietnamese pretended to raise the possibility of forming a special friendship and special solidarity through agreements or treaties for cooperations—particularly in the fields of domestic and foreign policy, military affairs, economy and culture—without any borders...The essence of Vietnam’s Indochina Federation is to abolish the border in order to weld Cambodia into Vietnam." Partly out of this fear, the Khmer Rouge physically eliminated Hanoi-trained Cambodian Communists and accused them of being "lackeys of Vietnam" plotting a coup against the Pol Pot government.

Against this background, border clashes, which actually began between Cambodia and the Vietcong in 1974, increased in intensity and scope. Soon after the end of the Indochina war, Cambodian forces attacked Phu Quoc and Tho Chu Islands and along the border around Tay Ninh and Ha Tien, but were soon driven back by the Vietnamese forces, which also took over Vai Island. In May 1976, the delegations of the two countries held talks in Phnom Penh, but these soon broke down completely. The Cambodians described the breakdown as proof of Vietnamese "plans of annexation of a big part" of Cambodia.
In March-April 1977, there was an ominous buildup of troops in South Vietnam. And Cambodian forces stepped up their attacks along the borders, especially in the region of Ha Tien. These areas had been settled by Vietnamese whom Hanoi banished from the Southern cities for the purpose of consolidating political and economic control in the South. The Cambodians waged a major assault in September 1977, into Vietnam's Tay Ninh province, the approach route to Ho Chi Minh City, where anti-Communist Vietnamese guerrillas were operating. The Cambodian incursions into this already unstable region hampered Hanoi's drive to strengthen control in the South. The Khmer Rouge might have thought that if Hanoi's rule within Vietnam had been consolidated, Vietnam would be able to concentrate its forces to expand into Cambodia. Believing that their country was in danger of following Laos into Hanoi's orbit, the Khmer Rouge appeared to have stepped up their border harrassments to at least delay Vietnamese internal consolidation, if not to take back some of the territories.

In December 1977, the Vietnamese invaded and occupied Cambodia's Parrot's Beak, which sticks out deeply between Tay Ninh and Kien Tuong provinces to within less than sixty kilometers of Ho Chi Minh City. Vietnam threw into the battle six divisions, supported by tanks, artillery, and warplanes. On December 31, 1977, Cambodia severed diplomatic relations with Vietnam. Following a complete victory in the area, the Vietnamese withdrew from the area taking with them many Khmer refugees. One purpose of this invasion was to seek "to trigger a coup d'etat in Phnom Penh, or generally to cause the Cambodian political scene to unravel into an authentic civil war." Attacks and counterattacks between Cambodia and Vietnam continued for much of 1978. On February 5, 1978, Hanoi presented a three-point proposal that called for (1) putting an immediate end to fighting and establishing a demilitarized zone of five kilometers on each side of the border; (2) meeting at once to conclude a treaty that would pledge mutual respect and noninterference in each other's affairs, independence and territorial integrity; and (3) reaching an agreement on a proper form of international supervision and guarantees of the truce. Cambodia flatly rejected Hanoi's proposal as deceitful and refused to return to the negotiating table until all Vietnamese troops had evacuated its territory. Cambodia's suspicion may have had some foundation. In fact, Hanoi's peace offensive was accompanied by an intensified effort to foment rebellions among the Khmer people in border areas, and Vietnam's Vice Foreign Minister Vo Dong Giang insisted clearly that the Khmer Rouge first agree to negotiate.
before the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from occupied positions could be considered.83

On May 15, Phnom Penh made a counter-proposal, requiring Vietnam to meet four preconditions in order to get talks started. Hanoi, Phnom Penh demanded, must: first, cease any aggression and annexation against Cambodian territory and stop machine-gunning, bombing and air-raids on Cambodian territory; second, suspend cross-border intelligence gathering missions and cease all acts of subversion and interference in Cambodian domestic affairs; third, renounce the strategy of forcing Cambodia into an "Indochina Federation" under Vietnamese leadership; and fourth, respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Cambodia and the rights of the Cambodian people to decide their own destiny.84 For Hanoi, the Cambodian peace proposal was as good as flat rejection. Since neither was willing to compromise, border skirmishes continued till the Vietnamese invasion at the end of the year.

The further exacerbation of the Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict was significant to the Sino-Vietnamese-Soviet triangle in two ways: First, it would force the other two poles, especially China, to give up any semblance of neutrality, thus destroying whatever possibility China might theoretically have to play a pivot role between the two (cf. proposition 3). Secondly, this would in return force Vietnam to readjust its policy toward the two poles. This would obviously put China in a difficult situation, as such a change would expedite the process of Soviet-Vietnamese coalition, leaving China in the negative pivot position. Therefore, it was in China's interests to contain the Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict within a limited scope (cf. propositions 1 and 3).

c. The Sino-Soviet Involvement

As the Cambodian-Vietnamese border clashes kept escalating, China continued to maintain overt neutrality between Cambodia and Vietnam, while encouraging Cambodia to negotiate.85 Despite its growing hostility to Vietnam, China carefully refrained from siding openly with the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia's escalating border war in late 1977 and early 1978. As has already been discussed above, China would undoubtedly be in a disadvantaged position if it was dragged into an Indochinese conflict and a semblance of neutrality might at least give it some leverage on Vietnam (cf. proposition 3). Furthermore, the post-Mao Chinese leadership gave its modernization program priority over involvement in conflicts. There was also a formidable logistical problem for the Chinese in sending their emergency aid to Cambodia in the case of a major war, simply because China had no common border with Cambodia so that its
supplies could reach Cambodia only via Thailand or by sea. Therefore a major war would probably end with a victory for the more powerful Vietnam, and the overthrow of the only pro-Chinese regime in Indochina, thereby furthering the expansion of Soviet influence. For these reasons, Beijing must have considered mediation to be the best policy.

Throughout 1977, Beijing continued to give "cordial and friendly" welcomes to visiting Vietnamese leaders, and avoided criticizing Vietnamese actions. With a low-keyed public reaction and private mediation, Beijing probably hoped that Hanoi could be persuaded to distance itself from Moscow. Vietnamese Deputy Premier Pham Hung reportedly went to Beijing for a secret meeting with Pol Pot in October 1977 and spent two weeks there trying to negotiate with the Cambodians. Pol Pot arrived in Beijing in late September ostensibly to attend the Chinese National Day celebration on October 1, but did not leave until October 22. Besides receiving reassurances of continued Chinese support, Pol Pot was also criticized by his hosts for his radical border policy. In December, Beijing sent to Phnom Penh a high-level delegation, which was to reassure the Khmer Rouge of Chinese support, but also probably to explore the possibility of bringing Cambodians back to the negotiating table with the Vietnamese.

After Phnom Penh severed diplomatic relations with Hanoi on December 31, Beijing continued to avoid openly committing itself to Cambodia. NCNA reported both Hanoi's offer to negotiate and Phnom Penh's preconditions for negotiating. Chinese evenhandedness was further evident when NCNA covered both Cambodian and Vietnamese charges. On January 10, 1978, the Chinese, by signing a new agreement on supply of goods and payments with Hanoi, seemed to be reaffirming their desire not to see relations with Vietnam further deteriorate over the conflict. A few days later, when Vietnam's Vice Foreign Minister Phan Hien was in Beijing to discuss a Chinese plan to control the Vietnam-Cambodian conflict, Beijing sent to Phnom Penh another high-level delegation led by Deng Ying-chao, Zhou En-lai's widow in an apparent effort to persuade Phnom Penh to begin negotiations with Hanoi. But again the Chinese efforts to mediate was unsuccessful.

As was shown in the 14 May, proposal, Cambodia was determined to maintain complete national sovereignty within the boundaries agreed upon by the Sihanouk regime and the Vietcong in 1967, even at the risk of having to fight a protracted war with its more powerful Vietnamese neighbor. The Khmer Rouge regarded anything less than that as a long-term threat to the very existence of the Cambodian nation. In
addition, Cambodia resolutely opposed a relationship with the Vietnamese which bore resemblance to the Laotian-Vietnamese relationship. With regard to the issue of sovereignty and independence, the Khmer Rouge were much less flexible than in their approach to ideology. While they could quickly switch from a radical to a moderate line in China, they would not budge an inch on the boundary issue, even at the risk of offending their Chinese patron. The Chinese hint that an unchanged Cambodian position could have negative effects on Chinese aid provoked anger on the part of the Cambodians, who then asked the Chinese indirectly to base their relationships on "the principles of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit, on sentiments of solidarity in accordance with the principle of respecting its own destiny."92

The Vietnamese responded to Cambodia's hard stance with continued occupation of its eastern area. They also insisted on a special relationship with Cambodia. In responding to Cambodia's December 31 1978 charge that Vietnam was waging an aggressive war against it, Hanoi reiterated as its basic strategy the necessity "to preserve and develop the special relationship between the Vietnamese people and the peoples of Laos and Cambodia, strengthen the militant solidarity, mutual trust, long-term cooperation and mutual assistance in all fields..."93 In February 1978 Hanoi reached a new decision to oust the Pol Pot regime by December 1978.94 By April 1978 Vietnam began to call for Cambodian troops to cross over to Vietnam and form liberation forces to overthrow the Pol Pot regime.95 According to a report from Hanoi in September 1978, several thousand Cambodian refugees had been resettled on the Vietnamese-Cambodian border in Tay Ninh province.96 Many of these refugees were soon be recruited, trained and armed by Hanoi to form a pro-Vietnamese Cambodian army fighting against the Khmer Rouge.

While Beijing was trying to bring both Vietnam and Cambodia back to the negotiating table, Moscow seemed interested in adding fuel to the flames. This was the easiest way to alienate Vietnam from China. Strategically speaking, the isolation of China in the Sino-Vietnamese-Soviet triangle could serve to compensate for the Soviet isolation in the Sino-American-Soviet triangle (cf. proposition 9). For Moscow, Hanoi's domination of Indochina was probably the best available way to prevent the formation of a pro-Beijing bloc in Asia. Moreover, a Hanoi-dominated Indochina could flank China to the south, thus contributing to Soviet containment of China. Unlike China, the Soviet Union had been much more clearcut in its support of Vietnam in the Cambodian-
Vietnamese conflict in the apparent hope that Vietnam would be completely drawn into Soviet orbit.

Soviet and East European aid to Vietnam after 1975 was approximately one billion dollars a year, and grew to approximately 1.3 billion dollars a year after the termination of Chinese aid to Vietnam in mid-1978. The Soviet Union took advantage of its economic aid to Hanoi's post-war reconstruction to gain some control over Vietnam. In addition to economic aid, Moscow also extended large amount of military aid. As the Cambodian-Vietnamese border war escalated in 1977, General Vo Nguyen Giap visited Moscow three times between January and May. On his second trip in March, Soviet Defense Minister Dimitri Ustinov promised to help the Vietnamese army to build up its "combat capacity." Giap's third trip to Moscow in May, brought him two destroyers and four squadrons of MiG 21 fighters.

In spite of the apparent incentive for Hanoi to form a closer tie with the Soviet Union, it was still hoping to avoid over-dependence on the Soviet Union and leave its options open with both the West and China (cf. proposition 3), but its attempt to preserve balanced relations was to little avail. In January, Vietnam obtained a U.S. $35 million loan from the International Monetary Fund. In order to attract Western investment, Hanoi further liberalized its foreign investment rules. Nevertheless, aid from the West remained very limited. Pham Van Dong's visit to various West European countries in April failed to produce the hoped-for results, and the United States refused to implement its obligations to provide aid for post-war reconstruction under the Paris agreement. In China, Hanoi had a similar experience when Beijing turned down its request for economic assistance in February on the ground that China's limited funds had to meet the pressing domestic economic priorities. The cold shoulder from the West and China, coupled with territorial conflicts with both China and Cambodia, left Hanoi no choice but to look to Moscow for help.

Soviet assistance to Vietnam in the Cambodian-Vietnamese border conflict was substantial. The Vietnamese division, which spearheaded the December 1977 Parrot's Beak invasion, was fully equipped with highly sophisticated Soviet weapons and other equipment, including T-62 tanks and jet aircraft. In February, General Ivan Pavlovskiy, the first deputy minister of defence of the Soviet Union, visited the Laotian-Cambodian border region where there was a large concentration of the Vietnamese army.
The Soviet Union also attempted to aggravate the already strained Sino-Vietnamese relations by denouncing China over the Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict, a strategy that placed China in an even more difficult position. Moscow alleged on January 3 that "the worsening relations between the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam and Kampuchea have obviously been provoked by Peking", whose authority "refused to be reconciled with the presence of a unified socialist Viet Nam." Soviet media repeatedly reported the allegation that many Chinese military advisers were involved in the military actions of the Khmer Rouge. Moreover, the Soviets asserted that the Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict was exacerbated by Sino-American collusion. China's behavior toward the conflict was tantamount to offering the United States a hand to dampen the struggle of the Asian people for independence. Moscow claimed that the Cambodian inflexibility was abetted by "the advocates" of heightening international tensions, who were averse to "the unification of Vietnam."

As the Soviet Union increased its support of Vietnam, China observed that Vietnam had clearly decided to move to the Soviet side. A militarily powerful and unified Vietnam which was eager to put Cambodia and Laos under its control was already intolerable for the Chinese. To make this even worse, such a Vietnam had become closely aligned with the more dangerous of the two superpowers and had obtained unreserved support from it (cf. proposition 1). Should China fail to stop the Vietnamese assault on its Cambodian ally, it would not only face a security problem of its own but also see its influence and credibility throughout Southeast Asia severely damaged. As the Cambodian-Vietnamese conflict heated by the turn of the year, China airlifted substantial quantities of ammunition to Cambodia and soon afterwards increased its arms shipments by sea. Chinese military advisers also joined Cambodian forces.

In this situation China could no longer sustain a mediatory role. On January 22, 1978, Zhou's widow Deng Ying-chao, on returning to Beijing after a five-day trip to Phnom Penh, reportedly told the visiting French Premier Raymond Barre that "from the Chinese point of view, Cambodia has fallen victim to aggression by Vietnam, which is now occupying three points on Cambodian territory." This was the first time that Beijing directly denounced Hanoi over its border war with Cambodia. At the same time, Deng Xiao-ping warned Hanoi implicitly that the country which had initiated the Cambodian-Vietnamese hostilities would suffer the consequences. Having failed to wean Hanoi from Moscow, China now linked the Soviet Union and its Southeast Asian strategy to the border conflict. Foreign Minister Huang Hua accused the Soviet Union of
complicity in it. He asserted that the Soviet strategic goal was to turn Cambodia into an "advanced base for Soviet expansion in Southeast Asia." In his report to the Fifth National People's Congress in February 1978, Chairman Hua Guo-feng indirectly warned Vietnam not to seek "hegemony" in Indochina and "impose its will on the others."

In return, Hanoi accused China of inciting Cambodia against Vietnam. Insisting that "the Kampuchean authorities could not conduct their anti-Vietnamese campaign alone", it denounced China for having aided the Phnom Penh government to build up overnight a dozen divisions with equipment which Cambodia did not possess before 1975. Hanoi also asserted in a thinly-veiled way that Beijing had expansionist ambitions toward Southeast Asia and had tried to sow dissension between the Vietnamese and Cambodian peoples. By June, Hanoi was publicly accusing Beijing of having "ceaselessly given all round support to the Cambodian authorities in launching their border war of aggression against the Vietnamese people."

By July, China further escalated its allegations of Vietnamese aggression against Cambodia. Beijing openly accused Vietnam of pursuing "regional hegemonism" with the support of the Soviet superpower, and serving as "a junior partner for the Soviet Union" in its striving for expansion into Southeast Asia. Beijing asserted that Hanoi's victory against the United States and its acquisition of vast quantities of weapons had "made the Vietnamese authorities heads swell and their hands itch;" and by resorting to armed aggression and subversion against Cambodia, Vietnam was attempting, in the eyes of the Chinese, to realize its dreams of "rigging up an 'Indochina federation'."

The analysis in the section has shown that although the new Indochina conflict had a regional origin, it could not break away from the influence of the strategic relationship in the Sino-American-Soviet triangle. If the Soviet Union had had a positive relationship with the United States and China, it would not have had a strong incentive to give a full support to Vietnam in the new conflict. Without Soviet support, Vietnam would have been much more cautious in dealing with its problems with China and Cambodia. The Cambodian-Vietnamese border dispute could have been contained, and the theme of the Indochina federation could have been played down by all the parties concerned (cf. proposition 9).

C. The Sino-Vietnamese War: Triangulations of A Non-Pivot Power

As the regional conflicts became more acute, China's position in the Sino-Soviet-Vietnamese triangle rapidly deteriorated. Nevertheless, as has been discussed earlier in
this chapter, its position in the strategic triangle itself was significantly improved by 1978 as a result of a worsening Soviet-American relationship, which contributed to the abandoning of "evenhandedness" in Carter's triangular policy, thereby leading to a renewed push for closer Sino-American ties. This special structure of the compound triangle means that China's unfavorable position in the small Sino-Soviet-Vietnamese triangle was counterbalanced by the unfavorable Soviet position in the big Sino-American-Soviet strategic triangle (see Figure 2-11 of the Model in Section E). The Sino-Vietnamese war was to occur in this general framework.

a. The Sino-Vietnamese Breakup

As Sino-Vietnamese relations rapidly deteriorated in the Spring of 1978, another sensitive issue, the ethnic Chinese, was brought into the open. According to Vietnamese estimates, there were approximately 1.2 million ethnic Chinese in Vietnam in 1978, two hundred thousand of whom lived in North Vietnam. Although the issue of ethnic Chinese was only one of the issues that soured Sino-Vietnamese relations, "it is an important barometer of the nationalist psychologies, which...work behind the scenes in both China and Vietnam." In March, Hanoi launched a campaign to abrogate capitalist trade in Vietnam. While the Vietnamese government asserted that the new policy would be implemented "regardless of nationality", its campaign was in reality aimed at the Chinese community in Ho Chi Minh city, which controlled a major part of the city's commercial activities. Many of them were transferred to the so-called New Economic Zones in the remote and backward areas of the country to endure hardship. This crackdown in turn heightened pressure on the ethnic Chinese in North Vietnam, who were mainly engaged in coal mining, manufacturing and other small trades. Hanoi's actions eventually resulted in a mass exodus of ethnic Chinese, which immediately caused serious concern to the Chinese government.

According to Chinese sources, more than 50,000 Chinese refugees from Vietnam crossed the border into China between early April and mid-May. Beijing saw the exodus of the ethnic Chinese as part and parcel of Moscow's strategy of encircling China. Since the Soviet-Vietnamese collusion had in the eyes of the Chinese become a fait accompli, China felt it necessary to adopt a tough line toward Vietnam (cf. proposition 1). In retaliation, Beijing informed Hanoi on May 12, 1978, that China would withdraw twenty of its aid projects and 800 technical personnel from Vietnam, starting on May 19, in order "to divert funds and materials to making arrangements for the life and productive work of the returned Chinese...as a consequence of the Vietnamese policy
of ostracizing the Chinese nationals.” An April 13 People's Daily article retorted Soviet allegations of ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia playing the role of a "fifth column" for China, accusing Moscow of attempting to "disrupt China's friendly relations" with countries in the region and "to gain supremacy in Asia."

Different understanding of the citizenship of the ethnic Chinese in the two countries made the solution on the Chinese exodus a difficult task. The Vietnamese claimed that the majority of Vietnam's ethnic Chinese (Hoa) are Vietnamese nationals according to the 1955 agreement between North Vietnam and China and to the naturalization program under the Saigon regime. Thus, Chinese protests were tantamount to repudiating the 1955 agreement and ignoring the fait accompli in the South on the pretext of the traditional Chinese doctrine of jus sanguinis, thereby interfering in Vietnam's internal affairs in the name of protecting Vietnamese nationals. The Chinese argued in rebuttal that the Chinese in the North were never given a chance to adopt Vietnamese nationality on a voluntary basis as specified in the 1955 agreement. As for the ethnic Chinese in the South, China never endorsed the legitimacy of the Saigon regime and therefore had no obligation to accept as valid the forced acquisition of Vietnamese citizenship under that regime. According to the Chinese, Hanoi agreed to this position till 1975. Beijing demanded Hanoi stop "ostracising, persecuting and expelling Chinese residents" and sent ships to bring back the ethnic Chinese.

At the same time, Beijing rejected the Vietnamese call for negotiations as "purely out of propaganda needs." According to the Chinese, the Vietnamese already as early as in 1977 embarked on a policy of "purifying" the border areas and expelling the Chinese settlers in the provinces adjacent to China. In early 1978, tens of thousands of Chinese were transported overland by the Vietnamese to border areas and then driven out to China, while large numbers were forced to leave on small boats. These incidents apparently took place before the beginning of the socialist transformation campaign. On May 30, 1978, Beijing informed Vietnam that it was "compelled to cancel" another fifty-one aid projects, because Hanoi "continued to persecute and expel "Chinese residents." Deng Xiao-ping further warned Vietnam that it would have to pay for any more escalation in attacks on Chinese interests:

We tolerated patiently until the Vietnamese had taken ten steps. When they took the eleventh step, we took our first retaliatory step. When they take the twelfth step, we will take our second step.
Deng's warning reflected that the Chinese no longer felt it possible to keep Vietnam away from the Soviet Union and therefore were ready to take harsh actions (cf. proposition 1).

In fact, China was more concerned with the strategic implications of the ethnic Chinese issue than the fate of the ethnic Chinese. Thousands of ethnic Chinese were killed by the radical Pol Pot regime in Cambodia while many others fled from the country. Although the Pol Pot regime took equally harsh measures against many native Cambodians, the ethnic Chinese suffered much more, simply because many of them were classified by the Khmer Rouge as capitalists. According a CIA estimate, approximately 200,000 ethnic Chinese were eliminated in Cambodia. Although the exact figure was difficult to obtain, the fact that large number of Chinese were killed should have caused at least some concern of the Chinese leadership. Nevertheless, neither had the Chinese government expressed any clear concern nor did its embassy in Phnom Penh make any apparent attempt to save the Chinese in Cambodia, a fact that made the Vietnamese very bitter. Obviously, the Chinese government put its strategic concern above the well-being of the overseas Chinese in Cambodia. If Phnom Penh should be saved as the only Chinese outpost in the region against Soviet-Vietnamese expansion, Hanoi should be attacked for its pro-Soviet tendency. The Chinese asserted that "Soviet social-imperialism is the behind-the-scene provocateur and the supporter of the Vietnamese authorities in ostracizing Chinese residents and attacking China." The Soviet reaction to the exodus of the ethnic Chinese served to prove Chinese perceptions. In May 1978, some Soviet Pacific Fleet warships carried out military exercises in the Philippines Sea. Beijing related this unusual move to the tension in Sino-Vietnamese relations. While denouncing Beijing's interference in Vietnamese internal affairs, Moscow openly supported Vietnam's treatment of ethnic Chinese as a just policy "that the peace-loving public of Asia and the whole world welcomes." In the words of Pravda, "Beijing is deliberately using the issue of ethnic Chinese to worsen relations between the two countries. By shedding crocodile tears over the fate of the ethnic Chinese in Vietnam, Beijing is trying to cover up its hegemonistic plan toward its neighbor." It further stated that "Vietnamese people had not defended their independence from imperialist encroachment to please the great power chauvinists in Beijing."

On June 15, 1978, Beijing recalled its ambassador from Hanoi; and on the next day, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the Vietnamese that owing to Hanoi's
persistent rejection of the Chinese request to establish a Chinese consulate in Ho Chi Minh city, Haiphong and Danang, the Chinese government felt compelled to order Vietnam to close down forthwith its three consulates-general in China. The People's Daily denounced the Soviet Union as "the main backer and instigator of the anti-China and anti-Chinese campaign in Vietnam", which intended to strain Sino-Vietnamese relations so as to fish in troubled waters and achieve hegemony in Asia. For Beijing, there were broad strategic implications behind the Soviet instigating Vietnam to persecute Chinese nationals. Vietnam could not only offer the Soviet Union a base but also serve as its pawn in its drive for "world domination." This was "a move both to oppose China and to edge out U.S. influence, gain control over Southeast Asia and improve its own strategic position in the world."  

By mid-June, China and Vietnam had become open enemies. For the first time, Chinese media charged that Vietnam was a "Cuba in Asia", citing the foreign press. On June 28, Vietnam applied for membership in the Soviet-dominated COMECON (Council of Mutual Economic Assistance, CMEA); its application was approved the following day with unprecedented speed, since the application process normally took two or three years. On the same day, Brezhnev assured Vietnam of Soviet "resolute support in its efforts" to uphold "its inalienable sovereign rights." On July 3, 1978, only five days after Vientnamese admission to COMECON, Beijing formally ended all Chinese aid to Vietnam and recalled all its specialists and technicians.

By now, Beijing was convinced that Vietnam, supported by the Soviet Union, was determined to carry out an anti-China policy by expelling the ethnic Chinese and by attempting to overthrow the Pol Pot regime. Since Chinese aid, totalling 30 billion JPM (equivalent to about 21 billion U.S. dollars) by the time of suspension, had failed to prevent Vietnam from moving closer to the Soviet Union, China apparently felt that it would be a waste of money to continue pouring into Vietnam its already limited funds, which were badly needed in the Chinese modernization program. As Vietnam became so closely associated with the Soviet Union, the Chinese must have believed that they would lose nothing by suspending Chinese aid. Beijing apparently was willing to accept the short-term risk that its punishment would lead to greater Soviet influence in Vietnam. But in the long-term, the unnatural and incompatible nature of Vietnamese relations with the Soviet Union, in the Chinese view, would in due course intensify the contradictions between Moscow and Hanoi to the extent that the Vietnamese would have to pursue what the Chinese had done with the Soviets in the 1950s. The more
dependent the Vietnamese became upon the Soviets, the more necessary they would feel it to reassert its independence from them.\textsuperscript{142} Therefore, the suspension of Chinese aid was not only a punitive measure but also a tactic. This was in a way a special triangular strategy, which was based on the inherently unstable coalition (cf. proposition 3).

For Hanoi, aligning with the Soviet Union was a natural result of the developments in the previous few years; given its interests in Indochina and its historical enmity toward China, there seemed no other option (cf. the Model). Vietnam was already displeased with the Chinese reduction in aid for its post-war reconstruction promised by Zhou En-lai.\textsuperscript{143} In reply to China's announcement that it was ending its aid to Vietnam, Hanoi on July 6, 1978 criticized Beijing's anti-Vietnamese activities and its all-out support for the Khmer Rouge "to conduct a war of aggression" as "part of premeditated scheme...to force Vietnam to give up its correct line of independence, sovereignty and international solidarity." Having failed to force Vietnam to take an anti-Soviet line, China had chosen to cut off aid as a way to prevent or slow down the "building of socialism."\textsuperscript{144}

On July 12, 1978, Beijing unexpectedly closed the border, leaving some 2,500 refugees stranded on the Vietnamese side of the "Friendship Pass", which links Vietnam and China's Guangxi province. After July 12 only those ethnic Chinese with official repatriation documents issued by the Chinese embassy to Hanoi and the Vietnamese authorities were permitted to cross. Soon the ships sent to receive ethnic Chinese returned to China without taking on any of them.\textsuperscript{145} With large crowds of Chinese refugees stranded at the border, the situation in the area deteriorated rapidly. On August 25 at "Friendship Pass", the Chinese and Vietnamese armed personnel were reportedly engaged in a bloody skirmish following a Vietnamese attempt to drive the ethnic Chinese over the border to China.\textsuperscript{146}

Meanwhile, the Sino-Vietnamese border dispute had escalated into a major source of Sino-Vietnamese friction. China and Vietnam share 800 miles of common border, which was basically delineated in the 1887 and 1895 treaties between China and France. In 1957-1958, China and North Vietnam agreed to respect the delineated boundary line and to maintain the status quo along it, though some differences existed over the actual sites of border markings. In 1974, when Sino-Vietnamese relations started to cool, border situations rapidly deteriorated and the dispute over the ownership of the Paracel and the Spratly Islands also came into the open (discussed earlier). The Chinese released the following figures for Vietnamese provocations and
incursions: 1974-121; 75-439; 76-986; 77-752; 78-1,108. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese offered their statistics on Chinese provocations and encroachments along Vietnamese borders: 1974-179; 75-294; 76-812; 77-873; 78-2,175. If the figures are taken at face value, it would seem that the Chinese were deliberately provocative in 1978, probably to divert some of Vietnam's forces from the Vietnamese-Cambodian border.

Again, the Soviet Union was inseparable from the increased border tensions as it was in the case of the ethnic Chinese. Moscow not only transferred large quantities of military equipment to Vietnam, but also castigated Beijing over the border incidents. One day after the Friendship Pass skirmish, for example, the Soviet Politburo gave its full support to Vietnam's efforts to maintain "the inviolability of its territory." The Chinese comment on the August 25 skirmish reflected Beijing's view on Soviet-Vietnamese cooperation. The comment dwelt on the Soviet role in the determination of Sino-Vietnamese relations, pointing out that Moscow's reason for supporting Hanoi's border policy was that it facilitated Soviet use of Vietnam for its expansionist aims, and the border issue served Hanoi's "hegemonistic aspirations", as Hanoi could obtain "more Soviet money and ammunition."

By mid-1978, both China and Vietnam had embarked on a military buildup along the common border. Western observers had noticed some signs that China was building up its military forces along its border in Guangxi and Guangdong Provinces, where military strength was estimated at over 150,000, with an unknown number of lightly-armed frontier guards. China had also reportedly dispatched a large number of ships from its South China fleet based in Guangzhou to Yulin on Hainan Island, and some of them had begun to patrol the Gulf of Tonkin. On October 21, China went so far as to warn that "our patience is not unlimited. Vietnam must pay the price and attack will be met with counterattack." This warning, in the eyes of the Vietnamese, was equivalent to declaring a war on Vietnam.

Actually, Vietnam's preparations for war with China had already started in the mid-1970s, when they began to build fortresses and defense works against the perceived possible Chinese invasion. The Vietnamese had reportedly installed barbed wire fences, land mines, trenches, and anti-aircraft machine guns along the border. After mid-1978 Hanoi enlarged military recruitments and increased exercises in the northern areas. Border villages were militarized while strength of militia forces were increased. Local people were being trained to resist invasion in both urban and rural areas. On National Day on September 1, 1978, Hanoi issued a nationwide call to arms. In the
same month, the Vietnamese warned that "we must actively prepare ourselves to successfully cope with a large-scale war of aggression if ever the enemy should recklessly launch one."\textsuperscript{157}

Vietnamese-Soviet cooperation reached an unprecedented level. Along the Sino-Vietnamese border there was substantial Soviet assistance in Vietnamese road-building and other military-related projects.\textsuperscript{158} In June, General Giap made a secret visit to Moscow which was followed by massive shipments of Soviet military equipment to Vietnam.\textsuperscript{159} By mid-October, Vietnamese harbors were reportedly filled with Soviet ships, waiting to unload aircraft, tanks and munitions.\textsuperscript{160} In return, Vietnam gave its full support to Soviet policy in Africa, openly praising the Cuban military intervention there.\textsuperscript{161} Vietnam also changed its relatively passive approach toward the possibility of a Friendship Treaty similar to the Soviet-Indian Friendship Treaty of 1971, which included a clause calling for the two parties to consult with a view to taking effective measures when either was attacked.\textsuperscript{162} The Vietnamese and the Soviets were heading for a coalition against China, pushing it toward the negative pivot position in the Sino-Vietnamese-Soviet triangle (cf. proposition 1).

b. The U.S. Tilt toward China and Moscow-Hanoi Alliance

As Vietnam became openly and closely associated with the Soviet Union, China perceived a requirement for U.S. involvement to counterbalance the pressure of the perceived Soviet encirclement (cf. proposition 9). The dramatic shift in American foreign policy in 1978 created favorable conditions for a closer Sino-American link (cf. Section A). In early May, Vice President Mondale visited the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand to reassure them of American support in the event of a crisis and to strengthen military cooperation.\textsuperscript{163} The United States virtually abandoned the plan to withdraw American troops from South Korea, and instead announced the decision to deploy there a squadron of aircraft capable of carrying nuclear weapons. In late May, Brzezinski visited China to convince the Chinese leaders that the United States attached great importance to its strategic relations with China. He openly used such anti-Soviet terms as the Soviet "polar bear", stressing the need to foil Soviet plans to "achieve strategic superiority" and "to encircle China." While informing his Chinese hosts of American willingness to normalize relations with China, he promised to encourage Japan to sign a Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty with China. Brzezinski tried to tell the Chinese that the United States shared Chinese interest in curbing Vietnam's role as a Soviet surrogate in Indochina and Southeast Asia by asserting that "we recognize--and
share--China's resolve to resist the efforts of any nation which seeks to establish global or regional hegemony." The American tilt to China, as has been discussed in Section A, had a number of strategic reasons, but was also facilitated by the Vietnamese tilt to the Soviet Union (cf. proposition 9).

American support of China was not limited to words. In late May, as Chinese ships went to Vietnam to evacuate the ethnic Chinese, the Soviet Union conducted naval exercises in the South China Sea to demonstrate its support for Vietnam's anti-Chinese policy. As a gesture of American sympathy with China, Washington sent a Seventh Fleet aircraft carrier task force to anchor in Hong Kong harbor to counter the Soviet pressure in the area. While in Hong Kong, the officers of the carrier received Chinese officials on board. The carrier soon afterwards left Hong Kong for the South China Sea. Chinese confidence in American foreign policy continued to grow through the end of 1978 as the hardliners in the Carter administration gradually gained the upper hand in the foreign policy debate. While Carter tightened up on transfer of technology to the Soviet Union, he encouraged sale of sophisticated technology to China. The Chinese were also cheered up by the Carter administration's decision to manufacture the neutron bomb, claiming this as a "step of decisive significance...to match the increased military buildup of the Warsaw Pact." The failure of Secretary of State Vance's October trip to Moscow to achieve significant progress toward SALT II served as another sign of encouragement for the Chinese leaders. By the end of October 1978, Beijing could assert with some satisfaction that the Soviet expansion was "leading to the ever growing expansion of the international anti-hegemony united front." Of course, most significantly, it helped bring about a Sino-American united front, thereby greatly enhancing China's position (cf. propositions 1 and 2).

In contrast, U.S.-Vietnamese relations had been at a standstill since 1975. To punish Hanoi for its invasion of the South, the United States imposed a trade embargo against Vietnam. Although the two countries held talks, no progress had since been made. While the United States insisted on normalization without preconditions, Vietnam demanded that the United States fulfill its promise of reconstruction assistance under the 1973 Paris Agreement before resuming diplomatic ties. Nonetheless, the need to play the "American card" with China compelled Vietnam to adopt a more flexible approach (cf. proposition 3). In a September meeting at the UN with the Americans, the Vietnamese informed them that Vietnam had officially dropped its demand for assistance as the pre-condition and was prepared to normalize relations at that very
moment. Although American and Vietnamese representatives soon began to discuss issues concerning normalization, such as settlement of frozen assets, and planning for the respective embassies, the Carter administration was no longer eager to establish U.S.-Vietnamese diplomatic relations. 169

The most important factor contributing to the change of Washington's attitudes toward normalization with Vietnam was its likely effect on Sino-American relations (cf. proposition 9). Normalization at this juncture would be perceived by Beijing as an encouragement to Vietnam's pro-Soviet and expansionist policy, a heavy blow to Beijing's anti-Vietnam strategy. By October, the Carter administration had become determined to normalize relations with China. Considering the importance of the negotiations with Beijing, major policy makers, especially Brzezinski and Ambassador to China Leonard Woodcock, argued vigorously that a simultaneous establishment of diplomatic relations with Vietnam would be harmful to American interests. Brzezinski was convinced that establishing diplomatic relations with Vietnam would hamper the normalization process with China. Woodcock personally told President Carter that if Washington should attempt to simultaneously normalize relations with Vietnam and China, Beijing would perceive that Washington had taken advantage of improved U.S.-China relations to achieve objectives detrimental to Chinese interests. He and Brzezinski shared the view that Washington must choose between normalizing with China or establishing relations with Vietnam. 170

In fact, as Fox Butterfield wrote after the fall of South Vietnam in 1975, the "precipitate end of the Indochina war" had contributed to "a congruence of Chinese and United States interests in Asia " in containing Soviet influence (cf. proposition 9). 171 It was, of course, against the U.S. interest to weaken its link with China. Besides, it had by now become clear that Vietnam was prepared to invade Cambodia with the support of the Soviet Union. American recognition of Vietnam could be tantamount to a political support to Hanoi's planned invasion. In addition, the Vietnamese deportation of countless people by sea had significantly eroded whatever American political support still existed for recognizing Vietnam. 172 Therefore, one can see that Vietnamese-American relations were quite inseparable from the matrix of U.S.-Soviet-Chinese relations on the international stage. 173

To assure itself protection from the American-backed Chinese pressure, Vietnam on November 2, 1978 signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union, which included an article that:
In case one of the parties becomes the object of attack or of threats of attack, the High Contracting Parties will immediately begin mutual consultations for the purpose of removing that threat and taking appropriate effective measures to ensure the peace and security of their countries.\textsuperscript{174}

It is evident that the main reason for Vietnam to enter into the treaty was the Chinese threat, which became more dangerous with the American tilt toward China (cf. proposition 9). For the Soviet Union, the goal of the treaty is much wider, as explained by the Soviets: "It contains a special article saying, among other things, that the Soviet Union and Vietnam are firmly determined to promote a more solid peace in Asia and the rest of the world, and that they will support the aspirations of the Southeast Asian peoples to peace, independence, and mutual cooperation."\textsuperscript{175}

China immediately condemned the treaty as an out-and-out military alliance paving the way for Vietnam's military expansion in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{176} Deng Xiao-ping, who was in Bangkok at the time, claimed that the treaty "is not only directed at China, but also constitutes an important component part of the Soviet Union's global strategy in the Asian-Pacific region."\textsuperscript{177} To cope with the threat of a Soviet-Vietnamese alliance, the Chinese leaders decided to "play the American card" in a high level meeting in mid-November to expedite Sino-American normalization (cf. proposition 9).\textsuperscript{178} The treaty also brought a sudden trip to Cambodia by Wang Dong-xing, a Vice Chairman of the CCP. In Phnom Penh, Wang reiterated Chinese support for the Cambodian people's "just struggle in defense of their state independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity."\textsuperscript{179} But he did not go further, i.e., promise to commit Chinese troops. China's reluctance to commit itself fully to the defense of Cambodia could have been the very reason for Phnom Penh to propose in October and November to sign "immediately in Phnom Penh, Hanoi, or any other place a treaty of friendship and non-aggression" with Vietnam, if only the latter would cease its military actions against Cambodia.\textsuperscript{180}

The Soviet-Vietnamese treaty, which significantly relieved Hanoi of Chinese pressure to the North, served to encourage Vietnam to achieve its goal of overthrowing the Pol Pot regime. Since early 1978, the Vietnamese had been taking the strategy of eliminating Cambodian forces bit by bit in small-scale conflicts, which was coupled with intensified subversive activities and building up a force made up of defectors from the Khmer Rouge in Vietnam. By the late autumn of 1978, the Vietnamese fear of Chinese reactions had largely dissipated, as Beijing failed to follow its high posture with corresponding actions. For Vietnam, if China had not reacted strongly to issues concerning its sovereignty, it would certainly be less likely to make a fuss over a conflict in Cambodia. In fact, Deng Xiao-ping made it abundantly clear in mid-October that
China would not send troops to Cambodia, even though it continued to support it. Meanwhile, the requirement for direct actions by the Vietnamese army was increasing, because of Vietnam's inability to subvert the Khmer Rouge internally or to build up a strong enough Cambodian rebel force. Besides, Vietnamese troops proved vulnerable to the hit-and-run tactics of the Cambodian forces in small-scale conflicts. Therefore, by October, Hanoi had apparently concluded that a massive offensive during the dry season was necessary to solve its conflicts with Cambodia. And the Treaty with the Soviet Union served to remove whatever worries Hanoi might still have in carrying out the war.\(^\text{181}\)

The Soviet Union had also a number of interests in forming an alliance with Vietnam. First, Vietnam was the only country in Southeast Asia that had a close political and strategic relationship with the Soviet Union. In addition, Vietnam's anti-Chinese and anti-Khmer Rouge policy conformed with Soviet policy, as Brezhnev claimed in his speech on November 3 that the Soviet Union and Vietnam "have reached complete understanding, our attitudes and view proved to be identical."\(^\text{182}\) Helping Vietnam achieve its foreign policy goals was equivalent to helping the Soviet Union reach its own foreign policy goals in the area. Next, the Soviet-Vietnamese alliance could push China into the predicament of facing enemies front and rear, thereby forcing China either to take a more flexible policy toward the Soviet Union or to expand its defence at the cost of its modernization. By challenging China in the South, Vietnam could help contain Beijing's anti-Soviet drive in the region and its growing influence. Last but not least, by forming an alliance, Moscow would hope to get access to the Cam Ranh Bay base, which had been declined by Hanoi on the ground of Chinese objections and possible serious consequences. In fact, the Soviet Union began to base ships and aircraft in Vietnam at precisely the time when Sino-Vietnamese relations sank to their lowest level.\(^\text{183}\)

On December 3, 1978, Hanoi radio announced the formation of the Cambodian National United Front for National Salvation (KNUFNS) in the "liberated" areas of Cambodia, whose creation was the final step in the whole series of Vietnamese actions with regard to its conflicts with the Khmer Rouge. Soon afterwards, Vietnamese and KNUFNS troops began to penetrate Cambodian territory along the entire border. By mid-December the Vietnamese troops had reportedly solidified their positions in the entire Parrot's Beak and Fish Hook areas and were pressing on towards the Mekong cities of Kratie and Kompong Cham, both of which lies at least fifty miles inside
Cambodia. In order to take advantage of the dry season, Hanoi launched a swift and full-scale invasion on December 25, with more than 100,000 Vietnamese troops. Twelve days later Phnom Penh fell almost without resistance; and on the next day, the Hanoi-sponsored "Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Council" (KPRC) was formally proclaimed as the new government of Cambodia. The Council was headed by Heng Samrin, a former divisional commander in the Khmer Rouge army until his defection in May.

Conspicuously, Hanoi kept a low profile during its campaign in Cambodia. The reason for this might be less concern about world opinion than anxiety about the possibility of a strong Chinese reaction. Hanoi may well have expected that widespread initial condemnation of its invasion would be swallowed up in general relief at the end of a genocidal pariah regime. But China would be less affected by such considerations, and could cause serious problems if too overtly humiliated. Hanoi admitted only that it had launched a "counter-attack" to repulse the Khmer Rouge's "territorial encroachments" after the capture of Phnom Penh. To consolidate its control over the new regime, Hanoi quickly concluded a Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation with the new Cambodian government after the model of its similar treaty with Laos in 1977. On February 23, Nhan Dan openly advocated the creation of an "Indochina Union" among the three countries on the basis of their "military solidarity and traditional friendship."

On January 11 and 12, 1979, the UN Security Council debated a resolution condemning Vietnam. The Soviet Union vetoed the draft resolution passed by thirteen to two with China and the United States in the majority. In fear of further Vietnamese and Soviet expansion into the region, ASEAN called for the removal of all foreign troops in a special meeting. Thailand found itself for the first time in history directly confronted with an expansionist and militarily strong Vietnam. Meanwhile, to get the notorious Khmer Rouge sympathy from the international society, the Chinese pressured it to form a united front in Cambodia in January, 1979. Beijing continued its aid to the Pol Pot forces by transporting various materials through the southern Thai border.

With the formation of two antagonistic coalitions--Soviet-Vietnamese and Sino-American--in the compound triangle, the conflict in Indochina became ever more difficult to solve through coordination. First of all, there was no positive pivot power at both strategic and regional levels to help regulate the difference of the big powers over the
regional conflict. Secondly, two members of the strategic triangle were located in the negative positions, with the Soviet Union at the strategic level and China at the regional level. Being the negative pivots, they tended to be much less flexible and conciliatory. Such a compound triangle could be even more dangerous than the first two patterns, as both China and Vietnam were reassured against higher-level conflict by the United States and the Soviet Union respectively.

c. The Sino-Vietnamese War and the Chinese Triangulation

As the war between Vietnam and Cambodia continued, tension along the Sino-Vietnamese border increased. On January 6, Deng Xiao-ping, while indicating that the Chinese would not intervene in the war, did not rule out the possibility that China could be compelled to "take measures contrary to its wishes for peace." This statement was followed by Vice Premier Li Xian-nian's warning two days later that "the patience of the Chinese people has a limit" and that "if we are attacked, we will certainly counter-attack." And by denouncing Vietnam's invasion as "part of Kremlin's global strategy", Beijing went a step further to warn both the Soviet Union and Vietnam:

Soviet social-imperialism is only day-dreaming when it thinks that, armed with its own weapons and supported by a few hatchetmen, it can lord it over the world. Even if it succeeds in an act of aggression, it can never check the historical trend characterized by the world people's struggle against hegemonism. History will mete out due punishment to the aggressions.

This time, the Chinese backed up their warnings with actions. In early January of 1979, a massive military build-up along the Chinese border with Vietnam was detected by Western intelligence. A large number of PLA troops were assigned to Guangxi and Yunnan, including MIG-19 fighters and IL-28 bombers. By early February, when China had concentrated 160,000 regular troops, 700 aircraft, and hundreds of heavy armors and artillery along the Sino-Vietnamese border, Hanoi began to take the threat seriously and hastily built up its border defences work. In February, Chinese forces launched a one-month invasion of Vietnam. There are several possible explanations for this action, which also reflected the critical nature of the strategic triangle:

The first one was the openly-admitted intention "to teach Vietnam a lesson." Since 1975, China, in every possible way except for war, had warned Vietnam not to go too far in its anti-Chinese direction. To begin with, it had repeatedly warned the Vietnamese against building up close relations with Moscow. This was followed by secret and later open admonitions about the territorial issue, the maltreatment of the ethnic Chinese and border conflict. Most important, Hanoi ignored various Chinese postures on
Cambodia. On December 24, 1978, on the eve of Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia, China made a last-ditch attempt to deter the Vietnamese by warning: If the Vietnamese authorities "emboldened by Moscow's support, try to seek a foot after gaining an inch and continued to act in this unbridled fashion, they will decidedly meet with the punishment they deserve. We state this here and now. Do not complain later that we've got given you a clear warning in advance." That the Vietnamese ignored numerous Chinese warnings seemed to China's leaders sufficient reason to teach them a lesson, especially in view of the historical and cultural tendency of the Chinese to regard Indochina as China's natural sphere of influence. In a sense, the Chinese action illustrated the desperation of a negative pole which tended to be less conciliatory.

No less important, China's invasion was also designed to demonstrate Chinese determination to curb Soviet expansion, "manipulating the triangular relationship to China's advantage (cf. proposition 3)." Beijing had been repeatedly criticizing the West for having failed to resist the spread of Soviet "hegemony." By attacking Vietnam, Beijing signalled Moscow that it was not afraid of running the risk of a military conflict with the Soviet Union. As a matter of fact, the Chinese had already made full preparations for a Soviet attack. The Chinese invasion would serve in the long run to deter Kremlin strategists when they considered plans against China. As Deng Xiao-ping clearly told President Carter in February 1979, war with Vietnam was a proper means to "disrupt Soviet strategic calculation..." In addition, the Chinese invasion was also meant to disrupt whatever little detente was left between the United States and the Soviet Union and show the United States that China was a "dependable" and "effective" ally in combating Soviet expansion", thus deserving advanced technology, economic aid and weapon sales. This action might put the Sino-American coalition on a more solid basis--a classical example of a non-pivot triangulation (cf. proposition 3).

Furthermore, China's invasion would be used to protect Chinese credibility in Southeast Asia. By risking war with the Soviet Union in response to Vietnamese invasion, the Chinese hoped to promote China's strategic value to the ASEAN states. Deng Xiao-ping made this point explicit in Japan in February that "Vietnam must be punished for its actions", for "if we remain inactive, the military actions in Cambodia might be spread to ASEAN." With some credible assurance from China, ASEAN countries would be less likely to accommodate themselves to Soviet pressure by tilting toward Moscow and more willing to take China seriously even if they did not like China. Such considerations became all the more important as China's credibility had already
been significantly eroded by its inability to deter Vietnam from escalating its anti-China activities.

Finally, China's leaders must have had a military goal, which was unannounced. They hoped to force Hanoi to transfer at least some troops from Cambodia to the Sino-Vietnamese border, thereby easing pressure on the Khmer Rouge. As long as those forces survived, Vietnam could hardly realize its plan of putting the whole Indochina under its control. The Chinese media described the aim of the invasion as "nipping in the bud" of an "Indochina federation." China's invasion and its threat to teach another lesson were meant to increase the cost of a long-term Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia and strain Vietnamese limited resources.

All these considerations favored the use of force. Nevertheless, the advantages had to be assessed against the possible costs. As Hanoi had just secured a treaty commitment from Moscow, a Chinese attack on Vietnam would mean an attack on a Soviet ally, and might compel the Soviet Union to make reprisal attacks on China. An option to reduce the likelihood of a Soviet reprisal, in the eyes of the Chinese, was to strengthen U.S.-Chinese ties. Deng's January visit to the United States, following the normalization of the Sino-American relations, gave him an opportunity to determine how Washington would respond to a PRC invasion of Vietnam. While the decision had probably already been made to invade Vietnam by this time, the Chinese leaders still needed a clearer picture of American attitudes towards such an action. If he could at least secure a tacit consent from the United States, China could proceed with its plan in greater certainty.

In spite of various differences within the Carter administration with regard to the American posture to Deng's trip to the United States and Chinese preparations for a war in Indochina, Deng's talks with Carter and Brzezinski led to an understanding that an attack of self-defensive nature would not damage Sino-American relations. In fact, the United States had long shared Chinese interests in preventing the Vietnamese domination in Indochina. Kissinger revealed in his memoirs that at a confidential dinner with Chinese deputy foreign minister Qiao Guan-hua on November 13, 1971, the two had agreed that they had common interests in preventing Cambodia "from becoming an appendage of Hanoi." While in the United States, Deng openly hinted at the possibility of a war with Vietnam. In one occasion, for example, he asserted, "the role the Vietnamese play will be even worse than the Cubans. We call the Vietnamese the Cubans of the Orient. If you don't teach them some necessary lessons, it just won't
do.209 From these strongly-worded statements during his visit in the United States, which were not refuted by the Americans, Deng managed to establish that Washington agreed to the Chinese positions vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and Vietnam and at least acquiesced in the Chinese invasion.210 The triangulation of the non-pivot power was successful in this sense (cf. proposition 3).

Nonetheless, the possibility of war with the Soviet Union could not be overlooked. Deng told President Carter that China was prepared to accept even the "worst possibility", implying that Beijing had taken into account Soviet reprisal strike on Chinese territory.211 To cope with the potential retaliation of the Soviet Union, a Northern Front command system was created to include all the forces in Xinjiang, Lan Zhou, Beijing and Shenyang Military Regions. This was a huge command system, covering all provinces and autonomous regions facing the Soviet Union and Mongolia.212 At the same time, the Chinese also took great pain to stress that the "counter-attack" was only a defensive, limited, brief operation to retaliate against Vietnamese-instigated incidents along the Chinese border, and issued a call for negotiations on the day of the attack.213 With these steps, Beijing sought to promote the credibility of its signal to the Soviet Union that China was well prepared to risk Soviet retaliations while simultaneously taking discreet measures to diminish the likelihood of such a danger.

The Chinese invasion constituted the first major test of the strategic triangle after the normalization of Sino-American relations. The invasion of its ally-Vietnam, which clearly enjoyed Soviet protection in the newly-signed Soviet-Vietnamese treaty posed a serious challenge to the Soviet credibility, thereby putting the Soviet leaders in a profound dilemma. For them, the Chinese action was an important test of Sino-American and U.S.-Soviet relations.214 It would give a clear indication of the new Soviet triangular position in the strategic triangle. Although the United States expressed its opposition both to the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and the Chinese invasion of Vietnam and called for "the immediate withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia and Chinese troops from Vietnam", this policy, under the situations, simply made the Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia a precondition for withdrawal of Chinese troops. The United States also implicitly warned the Soviet Union not to attack China or get involved in war in this region.215

Moscow reacted by accusing the United States of giving tacit support to the Chinese invasion. On February 28 Pravda said that the Carter administration had given Deng the green light for the invasion by not objecting and its reactions to the Chinese invasion
was giving "at least more definitely and indirectly encouragement" to Beijing. At the time of the invasion, Hanoi also charged that the United States, "professed to be neutral and impartial and pretended to know nothing...But its actual deeds were not in line with its words...It had shaken hands with an encouraged and supported Beijing ruler."

Apart from charging the United States with collusion or at least tacit support of the Chinese invasion, Moscow warned Beijing of possible Soviet retaliation and demanded an immediate Chinese withdrawal "before it is too late." This hard stand was soon repeated with added stress by Gromyko when he said: "The Soviet Union decisively demands that the Beijing leadership stop its aggression against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam before it is too late...I repeat, before it is too late." On March 1, Brezhnev assured the Vietnamese that the Soviet Union would be loyal to the treaty. But Moscow also stressed that "the heroic Vietnamese people...are capable of standing up for themselves", thus precluding an imminent Soviet intervention.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union undertook to airlift and sealift military supplies to Vietnam. A Soviet naval task force of fourteen vessels was dispatched to the South China Sea as a warning to the Chinese. Moscow also stepped up its aerial surveillance of the Chinese border. But the Soviet Union did not seem likely to open a second front to relieve the pressure on its ally by committing its own troops in the North as the Soviet Army did not even bother to get all its Far Eastern border divisions into full combative capacity by calling up the reserves.

Apparently throughout the war, Moscow was not seriously prepared to be directly involved either because it did not want to have a war with China or because it feared a strong American reaction. If a war with China for its own sake was considered a bad option in 1969, when China was still isolated internationally and divided domestically, a war for the sake of Vietnam in 1979 could be almost unacceptable. Already in the worst position in the triangle, Moscow was reluctant to risk its own relationship with Washington. On March 5, Moscow openly announced that the Chinese invasion had failed to bring the Soviet Union in conflict with the United States. Therefore, the Soviet Union could rightfully congratulate itself. Specifically, Moscow did not want to further jeopardize the already strained Soviet-American relations. Even while condemning Chinese invasion, Brezhnev expressed the hope that a summit meeting would be held with President Carter concerning the conclusion of a SALT II treaty. By insisting that the U.S. had connived at China's invasion and yet keeping such a low profile, Moscow demonstrated that it attached great importance to its strategic
relationship with Washington. The low-profile Soviet reaction reflected that the Chinese triangulations had some effect. But the development of the Sino-Vietnamese war also enabled the Soviets to keep a low profile, because their clients were never in serious trouble.

After the Chinese had occupied Lang Son, Beijing announced on March 5, that its troops were withdrawing from Vietnam after having achieved "the goals set for them." Beijing also stated that "the Chinese side reserves the right to strike back again in self-defence in case of a recurrence of such Vietnamese activities." The announcement ended with a call for the Vietnamese to withdraw from Cambodia and for world pressure to force Hanoi to that end. On the same day, denouncing the Chinese announcement as a trick, Hanoi ordered general nationwide mobilization to defeat the Chinese invaders. But the following day, Hanoi announced that it would hold talks with Beijing on improving relations if Chinese forces implemented their promise to withdraw from Vietnam. By March 18, 1979, Beijing announced the end of the thirty-day war and the withdrawal of all its troops.

Then what had Beijing achieved from its punitive strike: First, the Chinese army, at a heavy cost to its own forces, had inflicted substantial casualties and severe destruction. Material losses were estimated at "several billion dollars." In the long term, Vietnam seemed to have a good enough reason not to make China its deadly enemy. Ironically, this might be a foundation for Sino-Vietnamese reconciliation. Second, although the Chinese action failed to deflect Vietnam from its course in Cambodia, the Chinese invasion served as a psychological boost to both the Khmer Rouge resistance forces and the ASEAN nations. The Chinese will to use force had no doubt enhanced the Chinese credibility in Southeast Asia, having showed that Vietnam could be attacked despite its treaty with the Soviet Union. This would provide some support for ASEAN's diplomatic efforts to form a united front against Vietnamese occupation in Cambodia in the region.

Beyond doubt, Chinese invasion had also serious drawbacks. First, while inflicting heavy casualties on the Vietnamese army, the Chinese army had also suffered great losses and exposed its weaknesses in a modern war. The lessons of the war pushed the Chinese army towards its long overdue modernization. Second, the invasion exposed the limitations of the Sino-American strategic cooperation. The Chinese apparently failed to obtain explicit support they had hoped from the United States. Uncertainty as to the degree of American commitment explained in part why the Chinese kept their
invasion within a very limited scope. And third, the Chinese invasion provoked more nervousness than support from the Western world and dampened its zeal to push for closer military and political ties with China.234 But on the whole, as Robert Ross concluded, even though "China’s invasion of Vietnam was costly and militarily embarrassing", it seems "to have served China well in the succeeding years." Ironically, "China’s successful use of force was the culmination of four years of unsuccessful diplomacy.”235

D. The Triangular Moves in the Wake of the Sino-Vietnamese War

After the invasion, Chinese and Vietnamese representatives met for peace talks in April 1979. Beijing rejected Hanoi’s three-point proposal of April 18 which called for both sides to mutually withdraw forces from the border, establishment of a demilitarized zone, restoration of normal diplomatic relations and solution of the border dispute and other territorial problems on the basis of the Sino-French agreements of 1877 and 1895.236 Hanoi completely omitted the Cambodian issue and attempted to settle its conflict with China within a bilateral framework. Beijing countered on April 26 with an eight-point proposal of its own, demanding, among other things, that Vietnam withdraw its troops from Laos and Cambodia, that Vietnam renounce hegemony in Indochina and that Hanoi pledge not to join any military blocs directed against China. For Beijing, the question of opposing hegemonism was the "crux of the matter" and the "root cause" of the Sino-Vietnamese conflict.237 In short, Beijing was demanding that Hanoi give up at the negotiating table what it had won on the battlefield. This demand was particularly unacceptable to Hanoi; it was exactly what China and the Soviet Union had made it to do in 1954, leading over time to the Second Indochina War.238

Beijing continued to threaten Hanoi with what it called a "second lesson", while maintaining a high military pressure on Vietnam’s northern border, and tying down already-strained Vietnamese defence resources.239 While continuing massive aid to the Khmer Rouge and waging a diplomatic offensive against the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, Beijing also began to pressure the Vietnamese on Laos by supporting insurgency there. Apparently, China wished to bleed Vietnam white. In March 1980, Beijing unilaterally announced its decision to halt talks. In view of the deteriorating economic circumstances, Hanoi had no alternative to greater dependence on Moscow for political and material support. During 1979, Vietnam received $1 billion worth of Soviet military aid and similar amount of economic aid from Moscow.240 The Soviet-Vietnamese alliance was subsequently further consolidated.
At the global level, Beijing unexpectedly proposed to start negotiations with the Soviet Union to improve relations within a month following the withdrawal of Chinese forces from Vietnam. The Chinese initiative touched off a series of actions and reactions with triangular connotations, since both China and the Soviet Union found it necessary to readjust their policies in the wake of the Sino-Vietnamese war (cf. proposition 9). Beijing informed Moscow on April 3 that it would not extend the thirty-year Sino-Soviet treaty of friendship, alliance and mutual assistance between China and the Soviet Union which was to expire in the same year, as it had long lost its meaning. Nevertheless, Beijing offered to start talks with Moscow without preconditions to solve outstanding problems and improve relations between the two countries. It was a major concession for the Chinese to drop preconditions for the negotiations with the Soviets, as Beijing had consistently demanded in the past decades that the Soviet Union first withdraw its troops from disputed border areas before negotiations would be considered.

Moscow immediately denounced Beijing's decision to end the treaty as "contrary to the will of the Chinese people and dismissed the call for negotiations as propaganda." It was obvious that Moscow was caught unawares by the unexpected Chinese move. On June 4, however, the Soviets took over the ball by proposing that the two sides hold talks on normalizing relations at the deputy foreign minister level in Moscow in July or August. Moscow also suggested that the two sides "should agree to deny recognition of anyone's claims whatsoever to special rights or hegemony in world affairs, and should build relations with each other on the basis of peaceful coexistence." The fact that the Soviet Union explicitly expressed its willingness to talk about such issues as "hegemony in world affairs", the cliche of the Chinese diplomacy against the Soviet Union, was a major concession and signified Soviet eagerness to improve relations with China.

The Soviet Union also hoped to increase its triangular leverage over China by pushing ahead with its detente with the United States, which was by the time embodied in the Carter-Brezhnev Vienna summit on June 15-18 and the signing of the SALT II agreement. Although the summit was low-keyed and the results limited, Foreign Minister Gromyko, in an attempt to heighten Chinese fears of potential American-Soviet collusion revealed at a June press conference that Carter had concurred with Brezhnev that "it was inadmissable for any power to use its relations with China to the detriment of the Soviet Union." Moscow was also wary of the possible gain for Beijing from Soviet-Chinese talks, especially with respect to the United States.
While publicly acknowledging their low expectations from the talks, Moscow and Beijing continued with full force their mutual denunciations throughout the early sessions of their negotiations in late September. Not until mid-October, after a series of initial talks did the Soviet and Chinese representatives agree to hold the first full session. It was reported that the two sides had agreed in principle that they could basically regard each other as a socialist state and therefore should refrain from further attacks on the character of each other's political systems and domestic politics.246 This was an important step forward from the past deadlock; but, the talks were soon suspended by the Chinese as a result of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

The Chinese had a number of reasons to open talks with the Soviets, among which two were most important: The first was associated with the Soviet military pressure. While wanting to curb Soviet support for Vietnam and drive a wedge between Vietnam and the Soviet Union, the Chinese also sought to diminish the danger of a two-front war which could be triggered by another Sino-Vietnamese conflict. Moreover, they intended to ease Soviet military pressure so that they could concentrate more resources on the ambitious four modernization program. The relatively poor performance of Chinese army in Vietnam exposed the country's potential weakness in a war with the Soviet Union and increased the urgency of military modernization (cf. proposition 9).

The second, more importantly, was aimed at the United States. This could have been the key motivation of Beijing's sudden initiative toward the Soviet Union. During the Spring of 1979, the Chinese highlighted their frustration with the course of Sino-American relations since normalization and with American policy toward the Soviet Union. Deng went so far as to warn visiting American senators in mid-April that congressional legislation on Taiwan had almost nullified Sino-American agreement on normalizing relations a few months ago.247 The Chinese were also greatly disappointed with American policy toward the SALT negotiations which were about to be completed. For Beijing, Washington had been too soft on Soviet expansion in Asia and Africa.248 The Chinese were also reportedly very bitter about the absence of active and practical American support for their attack against Vietnam.249 Apparently, for fear of being dragged into a confrontation with Moscow by the Chinese action and wanting to finalize the SALT II agreement, the Carter administration had refused to give explicit backing to China during the latter stages of its attack on Vietnam and reemphasised its so-called "evenhanded" approach toward China and the Soviet Union (cf. proposition 9).
For the Soviets, the talks on improving relations with China could not only reduce the chance of a Sino-American alliance against them, but also gave them a potential triangular leverage to play the "China card" against the United States. Even though Moscow recognized that such talks could easily give rise to Vietnamese suspicions, the Sino-Soviet discussion itself on any basis was a clear gain for the Soviet Union (cf. proposition 3). In addition to the benefit within the triangular framework, the Soviets must have been somewhat relieved at the possibility to relax tension with China after so many years. With reduced tension, the Soviet Union could concentrate more resources on competing with the United States in Europe and other places. Furthermore, the Soviets may have drawn some lessons from the Chinese determination to fight at whatever pressure. Under no circumstances was a war with China a desirable option.

China's effort to play its "Russian Card" was rendered more effective by the problems in the Soviet-American relations and the growing pressure from those who favored a closer Sino-American relationship within the Carter administration and in the Congress (cf. proposition 3). Once again the Carter administration gave up its "evenhanded" approach, and sent Vice President Mondale to China in August. This change again proved the difficulty the pivot power faces in maintaining its pivot position by attempting to play evenly between the other two antagonistic poles in the triangle. To maintain its still relatively more favorable position in the triangle, the United States needed now not only to play the game but also to show some commitment to China.

An explicit American commitment on economic matters was expressed by Mondale in Beijing, when he announced that the Sino-American trade agreement, reached on July 7, would be submitted to Congress before November. Mondale also suggested an even stronger American security commitment to China than that indicated by Henry Kissinger in October 1976, when he assured his Chinese hosts that "any nation which seeks to weaken or isolate you in world affairs assumes a stance counter to American interests." Mondale also drew attention to the "unprecedented and friendly relations among China, Japan and the United States", which, he claimed "bring international stability to Northeast Asia." Mondale's announcement could be easily interpreted by the Soviet leaders as a new effort by the Carter administration to play the "China card" and forge a Sino-Japanese-American military alliance aiming at containing the Soviet Union. Given repeated Chinese warnings of a possible second lesson against Vietnam, Mondale's announcement was tantamount to guaranteeing of an American support for such an action. These steps to strengthen American economic commitment to China and
expand Sino-American trade formed a sharp contrast with the Carter administration's cautious attitudes towards Soviet-American economic relations, as Mondale confirmed when he said that the Sino-American trade agreement "is not linked to another issue", i.e., equal treatment of the Soviet Union. Mondale's trip laid the basis for a major step toward a quasi-alliance with Beijing, whereas U.S.-Soviet relations underwent a momentary crisis over U.S. intelligence reports of a Soviet combat brigade in Cuba.

The Carter administration was divided as to how to respond to what was initially seen as the most severe Soviet challenge since the 1962 missile crisis. Vance and the State Department insisted that the first priority was to be given to SALT II and that a major confrontation with the Soviet Union should be avoided. In order to mitigate domestic pressure, the administration should take measures to pressure the Cubans rather than the Soviets. Brzezinski and NSC, on the other hand, intended to utilize the crisis to curb Soviet expansion in other parts of the world as well, though they did not link SALT II to Soviet withdrawal from Cuba. Carter's public response to the troops issue, made in a major speech on October 1, was largely based on the State Department's proposals, while containing some elements of strong global reaction by the NSC. Announcing a series of steps aimed primarily at Cuba, the President stressed the importance of avoiding a confrontation, especially a nuclear one, with the Soviet Union and appealed to the Senate to endorse SALT II.

Nevertheless, Carter's fairly moderate response to the crisis was accompanied by a series of moves, which had a serious impact upon U.S.-Soviet relations. While tightening control over the sales of high technology to the Soviet Union, the U.S. government took further steps to strengthen U.S.-Chinese military ties. It was revealed on the day of Carter's speech that Secretary of Defense Brown would make an official trip to China in late 1979 or early 1980. Although American officials asserted in public that the United States would not sell weapons to China, they did not exclude the possibility of offering military training and technical assistance. Meanwhile an important Pentagon research report was leaked to the New York Times, which suggested that the U.S. promote Chinese military potential so that it could help the West in the event of war with the Soviet Union. The report also urged the government "to encourage Chinese actions that would heighten Soviet security concerns."

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late December pushed American relations with the Soviet Union to their lowest level since the Cuban missile crisis, and greatly enhanced the perceived urgency of Sino-American cooperation in containing Soviet
expansion (cf. proposition 9). On the eve of Brown's visit to China, Washington made it clear that the Soviet invasion had given Brown's trip a "new dimension", because "the Soviets have forced us and the Chinese into a posture in which we both see the world in the same way." Ironically, while the Chinese invasion of Vietnam served to distance the United States from China, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan pushed the United States almost into a quasi-military alliance with China. During his visit to Beijing in February 1980, Brown stressed the parallel views "of the U.S. and China in Southeast Asia", asserting that the Moscow-supported Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia was "the central fact to which attention has to be called", and calling for economic sanctions on Vietnam. The need to raise Soviet fear of Sino-American collusion once again pushed the United States to adopt a more cooperative policy with China over Southeast Asia (cf. proposition 1).

In the words of Banning Garrett, "just as triangular concerns and strategies of the three powers were key factors in determining their orientation toward the Indochina crisis before and during the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and the Chinese invasion of Vietnam, those factors continued to be important in the post-crisis period and are likely to shape relations in the future." The linkage between Afghanistan and Indochina brought the United States and China into a closer military relationship, which, in turn, strengthened Beijing's position in handling Indochina issues and complicated Soviet efforts to protect Vietnam from another Chinese "lesson." But, it was questionable that the United States would actually encourage another Chinese invasion, which would risk involving the United States in a dangerous Sino-Soviet confrontation and that China really meant another "lesson", which had proved to be too costly.

Ironically if worsening U.S.-Soviet relations had contributed to the further improvement of Sino-American relations, thereby bringing China more American commitment, it also increased the possibility of a Soviet retaliation to another Chinese military invasion against Vietnam (cf. proposition 9). As Soviet-American detente melted into thin air, the Soviet Union could feel less restrained against adventurous activities in the world arena. China, the staunch opponent of the Soviet-American detente, might also suffer from the removal of the restraints on Soviet behavior which might result from the collapse of the Soviet-American detente. If the Sino-American alignment could not form a strong deterrence to the Soviet Union, the latter could care less to restrain its aggressive actions. By the late 1970s the limits to Sino-American alignment were already clear to the Soviets. Under such logic, the less hope there was
for Soviet-American detente, the more likelihood there was for the Soviet Union to behave recklessly. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was the best example, as by December of 1979, the SALT II agreement stood very little chance of ratification by Congress while Sino-Soviet dialogue had become deadlocked by the end of November. Therefore, the dynamics of the triangle could in fact serve to further discourage the Chinese from attempting to teach Vietnam another lesson, whatever assurances they might have secured from the United States (cf. proposition 9). The truth is that the leverage of the triangle lies in the fear of one pole for the prospect of collusion between the other two poles rather than in the actual establishment of such a collusion (cf. proposition 1).

E. Analytical Summary

As has already been discussed, the basic pattern of the strategic triangle at global level represented a significant change from that of the previous period, with the United States losing much of its pivot role and the Soviet Union being located in a negative pivot position.

This change demonstrates that it is extremely difficult for the pivot power to maintain its pivot position for any extended period, when the other two poles have a bad relationship with each other (cf. proposition 3). Since there was no pivot power in the triangle, it was very difficult for any power in the triangle to mobilize the other two powers through triangulation to achieve its goal fully or partially in regional conflict, as the United States tried in the last period. Therefore, we can say that the triangle was highly restricted (cf. proposition 4).

One other outstanding characteristic of the triangle was that with the American withdrawal from Indochina and the clear indication of its low interest in being involved again in the conflict there, confrontation was mainly bilateral between the Soviet Union and China. As the difference in strength between China and the Soviet Union was great,
China was obvious in a very unfavorable position (cf. proposition 2). In addition, Vietnam, freed from the American pressure from the South and unified, could afford to give up its carefully-preserved neutral position, moving much closer to the Soviet Union. Whereas in the previous period, Vietnam had to play down its conflict of interests with China, it no longer had to do so. In order to handle its conflicts with Cambodia and the pressure from China, the Vietnamese openly sought alliance with the Soviet Union. With its conflict with Vietnam, China perceived an increasing pressure of Soviet strategic encirclement.

Nevertheless, the United States was not a totally unrelated factor in this new conflict. As U.S.-Soviet relations became strained, the United States strengthened its ties with China (cf. proposition 1). The Vietnamese tilt toward the Soviet Union further expedited this process (cf. proposition 9). Therefore, in the global context, China was not the most unfavorably placed power, whereas the Soviet Union felt the danger of a Sino-American alliance, which threatened to change the balance patterns to its disadvantage. With this more favorable balance in view, China felt itself free to teach Vietnam "a lesson" by attacking it for its occupation of China's ally Cambodia and a number of other issues, even though Vietnam had just signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union (cf. proposition 3). The relatively low posture of the Soviet Union during Sino-Vietnamese war showed that the Soviet Union was reluctant to risk its relationship with the United States by getting itself directly involved in military conflict with China for the sake of Vietnam. In this sense, the Chinese triangulation was successful (cf. proposition 3).

But again, the utility of the Chinese triangulation was limited. First, precisely as had been the case with the United States in Vietnam in the early 1970s, the triangulation could deter the Soviet Union from intervening but could not decide the war itself. The poor performance of the Chinese army reduced the significance of its triangulation. Secondly, American support was not strong enough to constitute a counterbalance to exclude the possibility of a Soviet reprisal attack. Thirdly, the United States did not directly assist the Chinese war effort.
During this period, Vietnam was very active in manipulating triangularly by trying to open dialogue with the United States, even giving up its request for U.S. post-war reconstruction aid. Had its manipulation succeeded, Vietnam would have been in a much better position. It could be in pivot position between the Soviet Union and the United States, while dealing with Chinese threat (cf. proposition 3). This would have been the worst nightmare for the Chinese if it had happened. In the end, as China did not get all it had expected from the United States in its war with Vietnam and its confrontation with the Soviet Union, it came to realize the necessity of opening talks with the Soviet Union, thereby playing the Russian "card" with the Americans (cf. propositions 9 and 3). Actually, if China had reduced its tension with the Soviet Union on the basis of a strong Sino-American tie, China could have been in a much better position both globally and regionally. The same need to improve its triangular position was also felt by the Soviet Union, which was in the most unfavorable position by the end of the period. By playing its China "card", the Soviet Union hoped to be in a better position to deal with the United States (cf. proposition 3). However, the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan plunged it into its worst strategic position.

In sum, the new Indochinese conflicts since 1976 had been closely linked to the major shift in the American-Soviet-Chinese strategic relationship. The regional conflicts were initiated in the shadow of Sino-Soviet conflict. The failure of the American evenhandedness toward China and the Soviet Union sharpened the regional conflicts and expedited the Soviet-Vietnamese alliance. And the Sino-American quasi-alliance helped prevent the Soviet Union from being directly involved. And the development of the conflicts in Indochina also exerted a strong influence on the relationships between the three big powers, giving both China and the Soviet Union more incentives to improve their relations (cf. proposition 9).
ENDNOTES


A. Sergeyev, "The Just Cause of the Indochinese Peoples Has Triumphed", *International Affairs* (Moscow), No. 7 (July 1975), p. 49.


See Zasloff and Brown, *Communist Indochina*, op. cit., pp. 81-82.


VNA, May 6, 1976.


NCNA, April 2, 1979.


FBIS-PRC, August 18, 1975.


Cameron, op. cit., p. 23.


In this respect, Sihanouk's comment may look a bit extreme, but reflect the degree of the Khmer Rouge's dependence upon China. He said, "The People's Republic of China...has had to take charge in so-called 'Democratic Kampuchea' of finance, the pretended "national" economy, industry, national defence, river and maritime ports, diplomacy et cetera...The reality is that whether China wanted it that way or not...the 'foreign' policy of the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary government has always been, in fact, in the tow of the Chinese government." Norodom Sihanouk, *Chroniques de Guerre et D'Espoir* (Paris: Hachette/Stock, 1979), pp. 25-26.


65 In his memoirs, Kissinger noted that "the failure of the Vietnam agreement (of January 27, 1973) to include a ceasefire in Cambodia was clearly one of its tragedies. But there should be no doubt where the fault lies. I constantly pressed Le Duc Tho for a ceasefire in Cambodia; he pleaded his lack of influence with the Khmer Rouge." Kissinger, *The White House Years*, op. cit., p. 1414. Sihanouk, *My War with the CIA* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), pp. 172-74.


67 In his memoirs, Kissinger noted that "the failure of the Vietnam agreement (of January 27, 1973) to include a ceasefire in Cambodia was clearly one of its tragedies. But there should be no doubt where the fault lies. I constantly pressed Le Duc Tho for a ceasefire in Cambodia; he pleaded his lack of influence with the Khmer Rouge." Kissinger, *The White House Years*, op. cit., p. 1414. Sihanouk, *My War with the CIA* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), pp. 172-74.


Ibid., June 17, 1978.
White Paper, October 4, 1979, p. 31.
Chinese leaders later pointed out that the 170,000 Chinese who entered China between April and July were mostly from northern Vietnam, where socialist transformation had taken place in the 1950s. See On Vietnamese Expulsion of Chinese Residents (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1978), pp. 23-25.
People’s Daily, April 13, 1978.
Ibid.
VNA, June 7, 1978.
Quoted from Ross, op. cit., p. 186.
Pravda, June 1, 1978.
TASS, June 29, 1978.
"China Compelled to Terminate Economic and Technical Aid to Viet Nam", Peking Review, July 14, 1978, p. 27.
Goh Keng Swee, "Vietnam and Big-Power Rivalry", in Richard H. Solomon, ed., Asian Security in the 1980s: Problems and Policies for a Time of Transition (Cambridge, Mass.: Oelgeschlager, Gum & Hain, Publishers, 1979). According to him, “This belief is based on Chinese perceptions of the character of the Vietnamese people and the way the Soviet Union administers aid to Third World countries. In the Chinese view, the Vietnamese suffer from both arrogance and xenophobia: arrogance born of successes against two of the most powerful nations in the world in two Indochina wars; and xenophobia arising from conflicts with China over the centuries and from experiences in the years following World War II.”, p. 161.
143 VNA, June 17, 1978.
149 TASS, August 26, 1978.
152 NCNA, October 21, 1978.
155 Chanda, "War by Accident", op. cit., p. 7.
156 VNA, September 1, 1978.
161 "Vietnam", op. cit., p. 320.
162 Gareth Porter, "Vietnamese Policy and the Indochina Crisis", in Elliott ed., The Third Indochina Conflict, op. cit., p. 10.
175 See Genady Chufrin, Southeast Asia: History and the Present Day (Moscow: Social Sciences Today, 1982).
177 Ibid.


*FBIS-AP*, January 18, 1979, p. H1. And according to *Some Evidence of the Plots Hatched by the Beijing Expansionists and Hegemonists Against the Kampuchean People* (PRK: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1987). Pol Pot was initially reluctant to form an alliance with Sihanouk; and Deng Xiao-ping actually made him do so.


Ibid.


Bellows, "Proxy War", op. cit., p. 27.

NCNA, February 6, 7-8, 1979.


See *AFP*, February 21, 1979.


Banning Garrett, "The Strategic Triangle and the Indochinese Crisis", in Elliott, op. cit, p. 209.
23 Yury Zhukov, "The King of the Monkeys and the Two Tigers", Pravda, March 5, 1979.
26 Beijing Review, March 9, 1979, p. 12.
27 Radio Hanoi, March 5, 1979.
34 Garrett, "The Strategic Triangle and the Indochina Crisis", op. cit., p. 212.
35 Ross, op. cit., p. 236.
36 VNA, April 18, 1979.
39 Newsweek, July 16, 1979, p. 59.
41 Beijing Review, April 6, 1979, pp. 3-4.
42 TASS, April 4, 1979.
44 For the full text of Gromyko's Moscow press conference, see Soviet Life, August 1979.
51 The full text and other remarks of Mondale in China can be found in State Department Bulletin, October 1979, pp. 10-13; and for Kissinger's assurance, see Stars and Stripes, October 20, 1976.
53 Vance, Hard Choices, op. cit, pp. 358-64.
257 Ibid., January 3, 1980.
PART III. CONCLUSION

The above analysis has shown the complexity of not only the strategic triangle itself but also the regional conflicts in Indochina during this period. It is not possible to isolate understanding of the Indochina wars from understanding of the interrelationships of the three big powers and the effect of their interactions on the wars. It is true that several other countries were also involved in the wars to varying extents and at different times; but their involvement could not have a decisive influence on the wars, whereas if one of the three big powers had taken an entirely different stance, the wars would have developed differently. The case study has clearly testified to the close relationship between the strategic triangle and the Indochina wars, though such a linkage would not necessarily be found in all such regional conflicts. The triangular approach has assisted understanding of the Indochina wars in ways which would not necessarily be open to research based on a bilateral approach. It is hoped that this study also opens a possibility to understand some of the rules of the strategic triangle in a regional context. In the interests of theoretical generalization, we shall now attempt to identify and summarize whatever triangular rules of significance emerge from our case study and discuss some likely uses and limitations of our model in application to some other cases.
A. Contributions to Triangular Studies:

a. Triangular Rigidity and Its Implications for China

The first lesson that we can draw from our case study is the rigidity of the strategic triangle in the period 1964-80. By rigidity it is meant that each of the three has a very low degree of tolerance of better relationship between the other two actors in the triangle. The structural reason for this rigidity is the existence of at least one very negative subrelationship within the triangle. In the first pattern, there were two negative subrelationships, with China in the negative pivot position. In the second pattern, one negative subrelationship remained between China and the Soviet Union. And in the third pattern, the Soviet Union gradually played itself into the position of a negative pivot power. Within each pattern, there was no period when the three subrelationships were concurrently positive.

The existence of the negative subrelationship inevitably increases one pole’s fear of collusion by the other two poles, especially if the one pole is associated with a negative subrelationship, and decreases its capacity to tolerate the improvement of the relations between the other two poles. Under such rigidity, any improvement of the relations between the other two poles equals a threat to the security of the third pole itself; and the purpose of improving the relations of one pole with one of the other two poles was usually to disadvantage the third instead of coordinating the common interests of the three poles.

Since the improvement of relations between the other two poles tends to be viewed so negatively, the third pole would either compete with the one which is in a negative relationship with it for the favor of the other, so-called competitive wooing as happened during the Sino-American rapprochement in the 1972-73 period1 or lose any interest in
playing triangular games, thus posturing against the other two powers at any cost, as in
the case of China in the first pattern and the Soviet Union in the late third pattern. This
seemed to be the usual posture of a negative pivot. Neither of these options is conducive
to the stability of the triangle. The undue aggressiveness of a negative pivot would very
probably further provoke the other two into collusion.2

In the first situation (the second pattern), even if the pivot power treats its relations
with the other two powers in an "evenhanded" fashion, the very fact that the other two
have a tense relationship with each other would make it very difficult for the pivot to
keep its position. Neither would like to see the other developing a positive relationship
with the pivot power; each, instead, would do its best to hinder it. Therefore, the
leverage is generated by the competitive wooing, but also restricted by it. Moreover
neither would like to see its own interests harmed to enable the pivot power to enjoy its
position. Thus, the so-called "romantic triangle" would not be very stable. The power in
the pivot position would have difficulty in maintaining its positive relations with the
other two powers when these had a negative relationship with each other. Therefore,
Proposition 3 should be enlarged to include the clause that the pivot actor has difficulty
in maintaining its position when the other two actors are in bitter conflict with each
other. Nevertheless, this conclusion does not exclude the possibility that the pivot power
can maintain its pivot position in a "romantic triangle."

In the second situation (the first and third patterns), since the third power is
assured that the other two powers are determined to collude against it, and that to
improve its relations with one of them would not reverse the situation, or simply is not
feasible, it would maintain a strong hostile and rigid policy toward the other two,
refusing to play any triangular games. Tensions would rise within the triangle. The
third power would be less flexible over various conflicts of interests with the other two
powers, as happened with China in the first pattern and to the Soviet Union in the
latter part of the third pattern. This inflexibility on the part of the isolated pole was also
reflected in China's reactions toward American escalation of the Second Vietnam war
and Soviet support of the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and its anti-Chinese line.
The logic is that since there is nothing to lose, the third power (the negative pivot) would
be less worried about the concerns of the other two powers. This course of action could
be very provocative and dangerous. Therefore, Proposition 1 should be modified in the
sense that once the coalition becomes a fait accompli, the isolated pole (the negative
pivot) tends to adopt a more belligerent stance. In other words, the formation of a coalition between two poles can cause the triangle to lose its dynamic.

One direct impact of this rigid triangle on regional conflicts which directly involve the three powers is the reduced chance of a comprehensive and lasting solution of the regional conflicts, even though certain expedient compromises could be exacted by the pivot power at certain points. The best example of this was the American attempt at triangulation during the period 1972-73 so as to achieve an honorable withdrawal from Vietnam. While the Soviet Union and China were mobilized by the United States to the extent of pressuring the North Vietnamese to negotiate a peace with it, neither of them did much to help the United States preserve the Paris peace agreement. One reason for this was simply that as they could not coordinate their interests with each other over Vietnam, they could hardly coordinate their interests over the same issue with the United States to its satisfaction. Therefore, their cooperation with the United States was not only limited but also short-lived.

This challenges the concept of tertius gaudens, according to which the conflict between two powers results in benefits to the third power. In other words, there has to be a certain amount of common ground between A and C before the pivot B can play off A and C. The pivot would have more room for manoeuvre if A and C were somewhat closer to each other, for if A and C had only highly conflictive relations, then the pivot B would either have to maintain a delicate neutral position and avoid the impression of using either against the other, or to choose one or the other. It is obviously difficult to play the former game, as each of the two conflicting poles are very sensitive to any positive reactions between the pivot and the other. But if the pivot plays the second game by choosing one of the two, it automatically loses its pivot position. The failure of the Carter administration to maintain its "evenhandedness" is the best example.

Then, under what situations could the triangle be less rigid and more stable? Theoretically, this would be the triangular pattern in which there is no negative subrelationship, with each pole having a positive relationship with the other two.

Figure 3-2.
Consequently the three actors should have less inducement to alter the pattern drastically. Of course, as far as its own interests are concerned, each power still desires to have its own relations with the other two better than the relations between the other two. But this drive for pivot power has a lower probability of producing the kind of vicious competition as happened in the three patterns we have analysed, simply because the incentive for the pivot power to improve its relations with one of the other two at the expense of its relations with the third is much lower. This situation seems to have been developing among the three powers since the early 1980s.

We have discussed the four situations of the Stryker-Psathas Game in the second chapter of the first part of this thesis. According to Stryker and Psathas' investigation, the third situation is the optimal for the weak pole, as both B and C have

![Figure 3-3.](image)

Figure 3-3.

to seek an alliance with A. Theoretically, there is nothing wrong with this conclusion. But did China have the possibility of working itself into that position in the first three patterns? And if not, what lessons should China have learned for its policy toward Indochina conflicts?

As we have already shown, China was in a negative pivot position in the first pattern. China's negative relations with the United States were a continuation of the Cold War of the 1950s, further complicated by American escalation of the Vietnam war in 1964, which China regarded as another antagonistic American step toward containing and threatening it. As long as this war continued to escalate, there was little chance for China to improve its relations with the United States, even leaving aside other Sino-American conflicts, such as ideology and Taiwan. As for China's conflict with the Soviet Union, a major reason for the complete break-up of their alliance relationship had been the Soviet Union's efforts to improve its relations with the United States. Soviet-American detente was viewed by China not only as an out-and-out betrayal of revolution but also as a conspiracy against China. Therefore, as long as the Soviet Union continued its detente with the United States and its betrayal of revolution, China could not improve its relations with the latter. This mutual alienation was further strengthened
by the internal radical wave in China, culminating in the Cultural Revolution of 1966. It was not surprising that China adopted the seemingly insane double-antagonistic policy toward both the United States and the Soviet Union.

In the second pattern, the main thrust of Chinese foreign policy was to counterbalance the growing Soviet military threat in the North by improving its relations with the United States. One major condition for doing this was Chinese perception that the United States was tending to withdraw from the area around China, particularly from Indochina, thereby reducing the direct threat it presented. For China, the threat from the North was both real and urgent; thus it had to justify use of the traditional Chinese strategy of "using one foreign power to fight against another foreign power", even though it had no liking for either. Therefore Sino-American rapprochement did not in Chinese eyes mean the abandonment of China's revolutionary principles, and China's domestic politics would not allow any close cooperation with the United States. China had to be continually committed to North Vietnam in its bid for unification. Therefore, while China could not improve its relations with the Soviet Union, neither could it further its strategic relationship with the United States.

In the third pattern, China's efforts to build up a closer strategic relationship with the United States were based upon the fact that Sino-Soviet conflict in Indochina escalated further, while the danger from the North continued. The Soviet Union had become the only main enemy of China. Although China was frustrated at the initial American reluctance to build up relations with it at the expense of those with the Soviet Union, it was in no position to play the Soviet Union against the United States. The only way out for China seemed to lie in the stronger Sino-American strategic relationship. The deterioration of U.S.-Soviet relations over a number of conflicts in the third world only facilitated China's effort. It would be extremely dangerous for China to even try to play with the idea of using the "Soviet card" against the United States, because it would seriously damage China's effort to build up its strategic cooperative relationship with America. Therefore the answer to the first question is clearly negative.

Then, what lessons could China draw from its policy toward Indochina in such situations? To answer this question, we must first go back to our compound model, in which China was the weakest of the three poles, even though its closeness and its heavy commitment to Indochina may have increased its weight in the area. However, China could benefit far out of proportion to its real power through triangulation. The Sino-American rapprochement in the early 1970s and the Sino-American quasi-alliance in the
late 1970s could provide the best evidence of this. But as the weakest of the three, it was also the most vulnerable to any unfavorable shift in the balance. When American influence was severely weakened by the Communist victory in Indochina in 1975, China's strategic weight in the area was severely undercut. In other words, the serious

weakening of one strong pole could severely tip the balance against China. What was worse, China's potential conflict with the main local power, Vietnam, was never negligible, even during the time of their close cooperation. The two major reasons that North Vietnam was for a long time reluctant to antagonize China were its need of China's support in the war and the influence of elements among its elite, including some of the leadership, who favored close relations with China for cultural and ideological reasons. The biggest lesson for China, then, was that it did not play a more active role in establishing a feasible agreement, under which North Vietnam would have had much less incentive to conquer South Vietnam quickly. China could also have undertaken to reduce or even stop its war supplies to North Vietnam during and after the Paris peace agreement without seriously damaging its international image as a staunch supporter of revolutionary movements. Such an act would have had a strong impact on the Soviets who were by no means willing to see China gain significantly in their competitive wooing of the United States. The broader implication of this lesson is that China should not contribute to the serious disruption of balance in a regional conflict which involves the three powers, because it is in a much worse bargaining position with either of the two single-handedly. Propositions 2 and 6 have proved very useful for us to understand this lesson.
b. Triangular Restriction and Its Significance

The study of the three patterns shows that rigidity of the strategic triangle is closely related to its restrictions. When the triangle is more restricted, it is usually more rigid. In other words, if one pole's relations with the other two are dominated by its ideological orthodoxy or its domestic politics, the triangle is very restricted, with its three subrelationships being less sensitive to each other.

In the first pattern, the American policy toward China was the continuation of the policy shaped by McCarthyism in the early 1950s. The U.S. escalation of the Vietnam war was based on containing the expansion of Chinese Communism, behind which loomed the shadow of the Soviet Union. The two Communist powers were in the midst of heated conflicts, which had already gone beyond the boundary of ideological dispute, but this was not fully appreciated by United States leaders at the time. Thus the United States lost an opportunity to readjust its foreign policy so as to utilize the on-going Sino-Soviet conflict. During the mid and late 1960s, China was in the midst of the Cultural Revolution, and this aggravated its tensions with both the United States and the Soviet Union. Indeed, ideological and domestic political factors help explain why changes in both Soviet-American and Sino-Soviet relations seemed to have had little immediate impact on Sino-American relations during that period.

However in the second period, when the United States became less ideologically oriented in its policies toward both major Communist powers, the Soviet Union and China had to carry the burden of ideology, even though they too were both less ideologically bound than in the first pattern. This was particularly true of China. After the signing of the Shanghai Communiqué, Hanoi charged that Beijing had tried to pressure it into accepting the maintenance of the Thieu regime in Saigon "in exchange for American withdrawal from Taiwan."5 A tacit agreement was allegedly reached between the United States and China in 1972, whereby a coalition government would be set up in Saigon to include the Vietcong and be supposedly closer to China than to the Soviet Union; and it is easy to speculate why Beijing might have decided in favor of a continued division of Vietnam and the maintenance of some American military presence in South Vietnam. As Hanoi ignored Chinese advice in 1968, and pursued a strategy entailing more reliance on the Soviet Union, Beijing had good reason to worry about the prospect of North Vietnam throwing itself into the Soviet embrace sooner or later. Besides, the moderate faction in the Chinese leadership had hoped to use U.S. power to block Soviet expansion in the Asian-Pacific region. Therefore, a continued division of
Vietnam, with an American presence in South Vietnam might be the best option possible for Beijing.

Nevertheless, various pieces of evidence show that Beijing had actually expected a Communist victory over Saigon. The difference between Beijing and Hanoi was over strategy rather than objectives. Beijing still wanted the Americans to leave Vietnam and supported Hanoi's effort to conquer the South. Beijing also hoped that Hanoi could wait for a few years before making a renewed effort to crush Saigon. If Beijing had been actively trying to pressure Hanoi, it could have done so very effectively by foregoing any of the moves it had undertaken to support it in 1971 and 1972; certainly it would not have increased its aid. If Beijing had put pressure upon Hanoi, it would have warned by innuendo that Beijing was endangering its revolutionary credentials and its future relations with Vietnam. This continued commitment to Vietnam, based on the justification of ideology, not only hampered U.S. triangulation but also sowed the seeds of future trouble for China.

The third pattern witnessed a further reduction of the ideological factor in the triangular policies of the three powers, but it continued to have fairly strong influence upon them. It is true that the post-Mao Chinese leaders were not in a position to rapidly improve China's relations with the Soviet Union, which kept calling for a Sino-Soviet rapprochement; such an act would risk the fragile relationship with the United States that China had been trying to strengthen. Nevertheless, China could have taken measures to reduce tensions with the Soviet Union so as to be at least in a better position in its dealings with Vietnam. Among other factors, ideological pretensions continued to play an obstructive role in Sino-Soviet conflict until the early 1980s, while Carter's growing fear of Soviet expansion and his outspoken human rights policy toward the Soviet Union, including a personal letter to Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov, helped abort his administration's effort to keep an "evenhanded" triangular policy toward China and the Soviet Union.

Over-emphasis of ideology in foreign policy tends to blur the perception of reality. "An ideology is not a strategy." Policy-makers "act on their beliefs, with potentially disastrous effects", or "they try to close the gap and to adapt to reality." As ideology often hinders a proper perception of one's national interests, policymakers will have to try reducing its influence and in due course take a more pragmatic approach in the making of foreign policy, though ideological factors may always have an influence. Since the early 1970s, the three powers have gradually reduced the interference of ideological...
factors in their strategic relationships, despite some relapses, notably in the first years of the Reagan administration. Such a development results in a triangular politics which has significantly reduced the tensions in the Sino-American-Soviet triangular relationship. Any attempt to reverse this trend by any one of the three would only hamper its own national interests. The best example was the consequence of the ideological resurgence in the early years of the Reagan administration, which worsened Sino-American relations while U.S.-Soviet relations continued to be tense. As Stephen S. Rosenfeld points out, Reagan's "instinctive anti-Communism" made him "hesitate to accommodate a Communist power, here China, even when it was demonstrably in the American interests", especially in terms of containing the Soviet Union.8 The only way to get out of this dilemma was to reduce the ideological pretensions in its dealings with China. And the Reagan administration had gradually realized this in its conduct of foreign relations.

The study of the three patterns proves Proposition 4 that the strategic triangle is an inherently restrictive triangle, with the degree of restriction varying in different situations. Even when the triangle was least restricted, during 1972-73, the restrictive factors, such as the Chinese national role conception as "the centre of revolution" and the Soviet one as "the head of the socialist camp", served to dampen the effect of the American triangular advantage. When the triangle was more restricted, as in the first pattern, triangulation was correspondingly more difficult. Since there was no pivot in the first period, there was no pivot leverage to speak of. But when the triangle became less restricted as in the second pattern, triangulation seemed much easier, with the United States, the pivot power, enjoying increased triangular leverage. In the third pattern, triangulation seemed more difficult when the Soviet Union assumed the negative pivot position, refusing to play a triangular game. And owing to its tilt to China, the United States lost its pivot position. Thus, there was no pivot leverage to speak of. In sum, the relationship between the restriction and the effectiveness of triangulation and pivot leverage as spelled out in Proposition 5 is proved.

One major impact of the triangular restrictions upon regional conflicts was that the regional power had opportunities to manipulate the three powers. It is usually more difficult for three powers than for two to achieve compromise on regional conflicts. Under a triangular pattern in which at least one subrelationship was negative, the pivot power enjoys very limited chance of success with its triangulation over certain issues, simply because the other two could not reach a compromise with each other to
coordinate their policies to the satisfaction of the pivot power. In Michael Handel's words, "when no agreement can be reached between the great powers, they neutralize each other and their mutual jealousy strengthens the positions of weak states." This was well shown in the case of U.S. triangulation during 1972-73, not to speak of other restrictive factors such as the domestic politics of the United States.

What has been revealed in the case study is that the Vietnamese Communists have been conscientiously utilizing the restrictions of the triangle for their own benefit. In the first period, they manipulated China and the Soviet Union very successfully. In a classical example of triangulation, North Vietnam attacked the U.S. Pleiku garrison during Kosygin's visit to Hanoi in an effort to boost Soviet involvement.* Later on, it opened a channel to the United States by adopting a policy of "fighting while negotiating." In the second pattern, the Vietnamese Communists tried successfully to contain the damage by the Sino-American rapprochement. They displayed flexibility towards the United States by accepting the American proposal of post-war reconstruction aid in return for an "honorable peace." And in the third pattern, they utilized the Soviet Union to counterbalance China while trying (although without success) to keep the United States neutral by offering concessions over establishment of diplomatic relations, such as abandoning their demand for U.S. aid as a precondition.

In short, as Proposition 8 goes, since the strategic triangle is inherently restrictive, the state in the focus of big powers' contentions would always have some space to manipulate among them. Hanoi had always been able to manipulate, even during 1972-73 when the triangle was the least restricted. When the triangle was more restricted, Hanoi found it easier to triangulate, as in the first pattern; but when the triangle was less restricted, as in the second pattern, Hanoi found it difficult to triangulate. Therefore, Proposition 7 also proves to be correct. Nevertheless, although it is very difficult for three powers to achieve a sweeping compromise at the expense of the interests of regional powers, it is possible to do so. When the three subrelationships are concurrently positive, the chance of such a compromise is greater. The recent development in the solution of Indochina conflict seems to fall in with this generalization. But as long as it adopts flexible policies, Hanoi will continue to have some room to manipulate, so as to reduce the damage of such a compromise.

*See footnote 107 on page 89.
c. The Dynamic Relationship of the Strategic Triangle and Regional Conflicts

The case study shows that the relationship of the strategic triangle and certain regional conflicts can be very dynamic, as spelled out in Proposition 9, with the developments of both having strong impacts upon each other. In other words, the relationship of the three powers at the strategic level could decide the character and development of a regional conflict, and the development of a regional conflict which heavily involves the three great powers could influence the pattern of the relationships of the three powers.

To begin with, the American escalation of the Vietnam war was not only based on the deterioration of the South Vietnam situation but also on the expansion of Chinese Communism, behind which the Soviet Union was seen. Chinese and the Soviet perceptions of the American escalation, based on their traditional image of U.S. imperialism, were that it was the continuation of the American containment policy devised in the late 1940s. Therefore the attitudes of the three powers decided the basic character of the Vietnam war during the first pattern: i.e., it was a basically traditional bipolar type of conflict.

Nevertheless, the American escalation of the war itself saved China from a combined U.S.-Soviet partnership aimed against it, as it hampered the progress of U.S.-Soviet detente. As "the head of the socialist camp", the Soviet Union felt obliged to support North Vietnam. The continuation of the war served China's national security interests by keeping Moscow and Washington in an adversary relationship. By 1968, new factors emerged which were to change the general patterns of the strategic triangle. Among them, very importantly, was the American failure to win the Vietnam war. The United States wanted to withdraw without losing face. To do so it had to improve its relations with China, because China was one of the North Vietnam's two biggest supporters. If the United States succeeded in improving its relations with China, it would be in a pivot position vis-a-vis the two Communist powers, thereby inducing them to cooperate on the issue of the Vietnam war. And the tendency for America to withdraw from Vietnam and the areas around China was one of the major factors that dramatically changed the traditional Chinese perception of the threat of U.S. imperialism, thus enabling China to reach out for the Americans as a counterbalance against the growing Soviet pressure in the North. This eventually led to the beginning of the Sino-American rapprochement in the early 1970s.
The Sino-American rapprochement helped boost the Soviet-American detente. With the continuation of the Sino-Soviet conflict, the United States was in a pivot position. This enabled the Nixon administration to put more pressure upon the North Vietnamese for a compromise solution, which would allow the Americans to withdraw from Vietnam. The North Vietnamese felt the pinch of the big power triangulation and finally signed the Paris peace agreement, though they managed to obtain fairly good terms in the agreement.

The withdrawal of the United States from Vietnam changed the balance in Indochina. In two years, with the support of both China and the Soviet Union, the North Vietnamese conquered the South and unified the whole country, while the Khmer Rouge and the Pathet Lao respectively took over power in Cambodia and in Laos. The change of situation in Indochina had a great implication for the structure of the big power relationships. Freed from the U.S. pressure, the Vietnamese could afford to stand firm in their disagreement with the Chinese in terms of territory and their developing conflict with the Khmer Rouge. This development pushed the Chinese to further their strategic cooperation with the United States, an act that contributed eventually to the formation of the third triangular pattern.

Partly for fear of the strengthened Soviet encirclement as a result of the Vietnamese leaning to the Soviet side, the post-Mao Chinese leaders overcame the obstacles of ideology and carried out a strategy of forming a quasi-alliance with the United States. As U.S.-Soviet relations began to deteriorate rapidly by the end of 1977, this Sino-American relationship seemed to begin to take shape. The two countries established normal diplomatic relations in early 1979. The immediate impact of the change in the strategic relationship of the three powers on the Indochinese conflict was that China felt more secure to wage its war against Vietnam with the implicit support of the United States, as the Soviet Union was more reluctant to be engaged in direct conflict with both China and the United States for the sake of Vietnam.

Nevertheless, one of the results of the Sino-Vietnamese war was that China began to explore the possibility of improving its relations with the Soviet Union, because having seen the limitation of its relations with the United States, it felt compelled to improve its position by reducing Sino-Soviet tensions. The Soviet Union responded almost immediately, as it also realized that continued tension with China would only enhance the danger of Sino-American collusion. By improving its relations with China,
the Soviet Union might be able to play a "China card" in its dealings with the United States.

From the dynamic relationship between the strategic triangle and the regional conflict, we can also come to some broader generalizations. First, the tenser the relationship between at least two of the three powers, the more likely they are to provide more military aid to smaller states which are involved in their conflicts. This was true in all the three periods. Ironically, the reduced tension between the United States and the two Communist powers China and the Soviet Union failed to stop their military aid; the continued tension between the two Communist powers led to the continuation of their competitive aid to North Vietnam. Second, smaller states are likely to advance the interests of the great powers of their own accord in return for the protection and expansion of their own regional interests by the great powers concerned. Vietnam, for example, supported the Soviet global strategy, such as its detente system in Europe in return for Soviet support to it in its conflict with China and Cambodia. Third, smaller states are likely to use great power confrontation to achieve their own goals. Vietnam, for example, tried to use Sino-Soviet conflict to enhance its own national interests. And finally, regional conflicts often reflect the conflicts among the great powers, and smaller states' foreign policies on regional issues are often influenced by the global strategy of the great powers. Therefore, regional conflicts are often aggravated or lessened by changes in the big power relationships.

In short, the relationship between the strategic triangle and Indochina conflicts during the period of 1964-80 was very dynamic. To miss their linkage would result in a less than satisfactory understanding of the development of both the strategic triangle and the Indochina conflicts. Nevertheless, such a dynamic relationship is not found in all regional conflicts, most of which do not usually get the three powers heavily involved concurrently. This question will be discussed in our next section.

B. Contributions to the Study of Indochina Conflicts (1964-80)

As it has already been pointed out, the contribution of the triangle study lies not only in the understanding of various triangular aspects, but also in the understanding of the Indochina conflicts of the 1964-80 period. As the three big powers were strongly involved throughout in the Indochina conflicts, works which deal with them vary greatly in the aspects they choose to emphasise. Before the contributions of this dissertation can be discussed, the literature must be briefly summarised.
The study of the Indochina conflicts in this period which includes the analysis of the big power involvement can be roughly divided into five groups: The first and largest group deals with the American involvement, especially during the Second Vietnam war (1964-75). These works concentrate mainly on the origins of America's involvement and the reasons for its withdrawal. The second group concerns the Chinese involvement in Indochina conflicts. Most of the works in this group were published after 1975, when the Sino-Vietnamese conflict emerged as a major conflict in the region, while discussions of China's policy toward Indochina before 1975 can be found in many books of broader scope, such as Zagoria's *Vietnam Triangle*. The third group deals with the Soviet involvement in the Indochina conflict, with an emphasis on Soviet interaction with the Vietnamese Communists. This group is far smaller than the first two, especially in terms of book-length studies. The fourth group includes the works which emphasise the study of the Sino-Vietnamese-Soviet triangle, though some of the discussions also involve the American factor.

Although they refer to the relationship between the regional conflicts and the intervention of the big powers, the first four categories have the following two deficiencies which make our research especially desirable: first, each category is devoted to a detailed study of certain aspects of one or two big powers' involvement, thus lacking a systematic study of the linkage between the involvements of the big powers. Second, the majority of the works only cover a certain time-span of the 1964-80 period, thereby lacking in synthetic understanding of the general change throughout the whole period and its implications.

The fifth and last group comprises research more specifically devoted to the study of the relationship between the strategic triangle and Indochina conflicts. Not only are they few in the number, they are mostly of article length only, and deal with a limited time-span or aspect of the conflict. The two most substantial works in this category are Gerald Segal's *The Great Power Triangle* and Daniel Papp's *Vietnam: the Views from Moscow, Peking, Washington*. Segal used the Vietnamese war from 1963 to 1968 to show the formation of the strategic triangle and its impact on the war itself. Papp's book is an analysis of the perceptions of the three powers in regard to the Vietnamese war from 1965 to 1975. While various triangular manipulations are depicted briefly, the book lacks a theoretical framework to link those perceptions together. Neither of the two books covers the whole period from 1964 to 1980.
The strong points of our research in understanding the Indochina conflicts are as follows: First, by using the model, we have avoided the difficulty of manageability by discussing the involvement of the three big powers in detail in one project. This has in turn enabled us to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the conflict itself. As our analysis has already shown, the involvement of each of the three powers in each pattern is important to the understanding of the conflicts during that period. Simply dismissing or overlooking the involvement of one of the three powers for lack of space would undermine our more comprehensive understanding.

Owing to the heavy involvement of the three powers, we could conclude that one major policy change on the part of one big power toward the Indochina conflicts throughout the period could lead to a corresponding major change of process in the conflicts. If China, for example, had decided to stop its military support of the North Vietnamese in 1971-72 by giving up its ideological assumption, the North Vietnamese would have very likely faced a possible reduction of Soviet support, thereby landing in a worse bargaining position with the Americans in 1973. If the Sino-Soviet relations had improved dramatically after Mao's death, then Vietnam would not have had full Soviet support for its invasion of Cambodia; it might then instead have adopted a more flexible policy toward China. This conclusion offers us an important clue to the understanding of the solution of the current Indochina conflicts: i.e., the key to the solution was not entirely controlled by the Vietnamese themselves in this continuous conflict; therefore, a compromise had to be reached between the big powers before a meaningful solution could be reached in Indochina. This seems to be proved by the recent development over the Indochina conflicts, which will be discussed briefly in the next section.

The intensive description of the interactions between the Vietnamese Communists and the three big powers throughout the whole period, which was undertaken under the framework of the compound model, also helps explain the nature of their independence, which could be best described by the words of General Nguyen Van Vinh in a Party Conference in South Vietnam in 1966: "We must have an independent line. We must be confident in no one but our own Party." What the research has confirmed is that the first goal of Vietnamese Communism was nationalism, i.e. to achieve first of all the unification of the whole country and then to establish a sort of hegemony in Indochina. The Communist ideology only takes a secondary position, which has always to be subordinated to the needs of nationalism. This relationship is best shown in the mixture of consistency and flexibility that they had shown throughout the whole period.
In their struggle to unify Vietnam, they had to fight the United States while relying on the support of both China and the Soviet Union. Therefore, they had to maintain neutrality between the two disputing Communist powers. Nevertheless, their neutrality was not absolute but relative. When one argument of one big Communist power was more favorable to their cause for unification, they would support it, thereby moving a bit more closer to that power and vice versa. Therefore, it was very difficult to trace a clear Vietnamese ideological line. As N. Khac Huyen has commented, "The North Vietnamese was neither pro-Chinese nor pro-Soviet. In his relations with Peking and Moscow, the cunning Communist leader (Ho) followed a middle-of-the-road position, upholding the principle of the mean, a virtue advocated long ago by the Oriental sages and the ancient Roman thinker who preached In medio stat virtus." This was also reflected in their attitudes toward negotiations with the United States.

Their attitudes toward negotiations with the United States had never been a matter of principle but a matter of expediency. "A shrewd calculator as always, the DRV leader decided to please both Communist big brothers by fighting (the Chinese way) and talking (the Soviet way)." Their uncompromising attitude toward negotiations in 1965 did not mean that they accepted the Chinese preaching that the American forces had to leave Vietnam totally before there could be any negotiation, but rather that they did not think the time was ripe for them to do so. And their later decision to begin such a negotiation was not a product of Soviet influence, but rather their own reestimation of the situation.

When China stood in the way of their ambition to establish hegemony in Indochina, they quickly formed an alliance relationship with the Soviet Union. But to reduce their dependence on it, they did not hesitate to attempt to open doors to the United States by offering such great concessions as giving up their demand that the United States honor its promise to provide reconstruction aid before they would establish normal diplomatic relations. The fact is that the Vietnamese relationship with the Soviet Union was based on the mutual need to contain China, rather than on the Vietnamese submission to the Soviet demand to serve its interests of encircling China. In this sense, Vietnam was not a satellite nor a client of the Soviet Union, despite its heavy military and economic dependence upon it.

Our research suggests that the Vietnamese are extremely nationalistic and quite sophisticated in their relationships with the big powers. Their driving force is nationalism. Their approach toward dealing with the big powers was not passive but
rather manipulative. This conclusion serves as an important clue to the understanding of the solution of the current Indochina conflicts: i.e., can any one of the big powers rely on the Vietnamese to maintain their interests in Indochina and Southeast Asia? If the solution is finally reached according to the wish of the Vietnamese, will they remain committed to their benefactor—the Soviet Union? As a Vietnamese official is quoted as saying on the relationship of his country to the Soviet Union at the height of the Sino-Vietnamese conflict in 1979 when Hanoi needed Moscow most, "We survived French conquest. We survived American hostility. And we can survive Russian friendship."19

Finally, the triangular study of the Indochina conflicts also reveals the unwillingness and inability of the big powers to understand regional issues. They would often justify their involvement in a regional conflict by linking it to a global concern, while ignoring the real cause and development of a regional issue. Such a blind and sometimes absurd linkage politics overshadows the crux of the regional issue. Hence, the repeated failure of the big powers in their involvement in regional issues.

The crisis of South Vietnam during 1963-64 had more of an internal dimension than external one. The crux of the issue was the incompetence of the corrupt and divided South Vietnamese government. The situation was aggravated by the mounting offensive of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong troops. Nevertheless, the United States linked this development simply to the expansion of Communism, especially that of the Chinese brand, thereby escalating the Vietnam war to contain China. This in return would only deepen the concerns of the latter over its own security and push it to increase its commitment to the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong. Both the Soviet Union and China also made similar mistakes by overstressing their ideological commitment to the Vietnamese. As Paul M. Kattenburg has commented in his article "The U.S. and Indochina: Then and Now."

The major 'lesson of Vietnam', at least for the U.S., is that given these constraints on the great powers and superpowers in late twentieth century world politics, policymakers in these powers must strive infinitely harder to become issue-specific and not tie their fate to globalistic notions of interlinkage which fails to judge consequences of local developments in local, issue-specific terms...A policy automatically upholding the status quo without consideration of its local merits, such as was followed in Vietnam, stems from misperceived notions of the national interests like the domino theory, or mechanistic conceptions of linkage such as those which suggest US power must be 'credible' everywhere or it is 'incredible' anywhere or it stems from good-versus-evil casts of world politics in which the U.S. as well as its enemies contract ideological Frankenstein's who then tend to devour both. The de-emphasis of ideology in world politics is long overdue. It is not social revolutionary change that must be feared. What must be feared, and defeated, is the incapacity to recognize and to adapt to necessary and appropriate change. This, if it cannot be corrected, will in the end lead to newer, larger, and worse Vietnams.20
CHAPTER 2. THE STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE COMPOUND TRIANGULAR MODEL

As has already been pointed out in the first part of this dissertation, a triangular model is to be built for a better understanding of some rules of the strategic triangle and its relationships with certain regional conflicts. The model, which is built on the combination of ideas contained in Caplow's model building, the Stryker-Psathas Game and Holsti's role conceptions, has been applied to the case study. The propositions raised according to the Model have been examined in the concrete historical circumstances. This has so far revealed that the model has the following strengths.

First, while it is built on the basis of abstract thinking, it contains elements which may help analysts to avoid some adverse effects of abstraction. What it has successfully shown is that the strategic triangle has not consistently followed the abstract rules of a triangle, but rather has been subject to interference by various restrictive factors. This would enable us to avoid the mistakes that some scholars have made by deeming the triangulation a process free from interference of other factors, and therefore that any moves taken by the three powers could be understood exclusively in the logic of their triangular interactions.

Second, the compound model also shows that the strategic triangle can be analyzed around a specific regional issue. The model enables us to move from the global strategic balance to a regional conflict situation and step back from it to the global strategic balance, thereby linking them together. On the basis of this experiment, we could in the future develop various compound triangles in accordance with the specific issues.

Third, as the model is a very flexible framework, it could be used in a number of similar situations, such as Afghanistan, the Korean Peninsula and the current Indochina conflict, to name only a few. They differ from the Indochina conflicts (1964-1980) in various ways, but we can still use some concepts raised by the model to analyze them.

In the case of Afghanistan, the Soviet Union played the role that the United States played in the Vietnam war. The intervention of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan constituted an important source of tension in its relations with both China and the United States, and their support for the Afghan resistance played a significant role in frustrating the Soviet war effort in Afghanistan. To solve this dilemma, the Soviet Union had to improve its relations with at least one of the two powers; but both regarded the Soviet Union's continued military intervention in Afghanistan as a major obstacle to
improvement of their relations with it. This was a typical triangular dilemma for the Soviets, and the way they chose to get out of it was to withdraw all their troops.

**Figure 3-6.**

In the case of the Korean Peninsula, the model could help us to understand what is the basis of stability there. As the security interests of the three big powers in this part of North East Asia are very great, any serious conflicts between the two Koreas would inevitably get the three powers involved, thus endangering their mutual relationships. In the age of Sino-Soviet, Soviet-American and Sino-American detente, it is against their interests to see the balance in Korean Peninsula disrupted. This is the so-called triangular restraint upon regional conflict. And what South Korea is trying to do in

**Figure 3-7.**

relations with both China and the Soviet Union is to avoid the fate of South Vietnam, which was too dependent upon the United States, having no triangular leverage among the three powers. And both the Soviet Union and China are now keen on developing relations with South Korea for economic benefits. Under such a situation, the leverage of North Korea is significantly reduced.

The most interesting development that can be analysed with the compound model is again the same Indochina conflict, which is the continuation of the third pattern. Nevertheless, as the triangular relationships of the three big powers were undergoing a significant change, the process of the regional conflict was inevitably seriously influenced. As the Soviet Union was so keen on improving its triangular position by improving its relations with China, it had to consider the obstacles raised by the Chinese toward improving their relations, the most important of which was the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. This time Vietnam felt the pinch of the big power
triangle and eventually withdrew from Cambodia. This reflects the impact of the change in the big-power triangular relations on the course of the regional conflict.

Like most other models, the compound triangular model has limitations. To begin with, China is not a global big power in the sense of the Soviet Union and the United States, and its influence is mostly felt in the region around it. It would, for example, be pointless if we try to use our compound model to analyse the Middle East conflict, in which China has had only nominal influence.

Next, the model itself does not give a satisfactory answer to some theoretical questions. For example, how different could be the strength of a power at global and regional level, and what would be its exact impact upon regional conflict? China, for example, is more powerful in Indochina than its proportionate strength globally would suggest, simply because of its proximity to and intense interest in the region. Although this difference was postulated in Proposition 6 and confirmed in our case study, more work seems to be needed for a better evaluation of the significance of this difference.

Finally, the compound model, as compound as it can be, still runs the risk of missing many important factors which may have significant influence on the strategic relationships of the three big powers and their relationship to a regional conflict. The reality is far more complex than what can be analysed in accordance with the logic of a triangular model. A model can not include all the factors that have various levels of influence on the issues we have discussed.

In spite of those limitations, we would think that the model has been useful to enhance our understanding of the strategic triangle and regional conflicts. The limitations of the model, however serious, should not be a reason for not using it at all. As Abraham Kaplan has nicely summarized, "the dangers are not in working with models, but in working with too few, and these too much alike, and above all, in belittling any efforts to work with anything else. That Euclid alone has looked on beauty bare is a romantic fiction."
ENDNOTES

1 Harold Hinton, op. cit., pp. 111-16.
3 See for a similar conclusion, Segal, "China and the Great Power Triangle", op. cit., p. 509.
5 Chinese Aggression against Vietnam, op. cit, p. 23.
6 For a detailed discussion on this topic, see John W. Garver, "Sino-Vietnamese Conflict and the Sino-American Rapprochement", Political Science Quarterly, Vol 96 No.3 (Fall 1981), pp. 445-64.
10 For a detailed catalogue of the tremendous amount of books and articles discussing the big power involvement in Indochina conflicts, see the Bibliography on Indochina conflicts attached to this dissertation.


16 This was a quotation from a speech by General Nguyen Van Vinh to the Fourth Congress of the Central office of South Vietnam, April 1966. The speech was captured by U.S. forces and published in U.S. Department of State, Working Papers on the North Vietnamese Role in South Vietnam, May 1968, Annex, Document No 303, p. 22.


18 Ibid.


21 An interesting discussion on the interaction of the great power triangle and Asian security is found in Raju G. Thomas, ed., The Great Power Triangle and Asian Security (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1983), which includes situations in Afghanistan, the Indian subcontinent, Indochina and Southeast Asia, Taiwan, Japan and the Korean Peninsula.

22 Interest in the triangular aspects of certain regional conflicts in which China had no strategic influence can be found in a number of studies, among which was, for instance, Arnold Hottinger's "The Great Powers and the Middle East", in William E. Griffith, ed., The Great Power Triangle, op. cit., pp. 97-184.


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