

THE SINO-AMERICAN RAPPROCHEMENT AND THE IMPACT OF CHINA'S POLICY CHANGE TOWARD NORTH VIETNAM, 1968-1972

Xiao Shao¹, Yuan Wang², Li Li³ and Peng Zhu^{4*}

¹ Associate Prof. Dr., Jinan University, PR China, shaoxiao@jnu.edu.cn

² Graduate Student, Jinan University, PR China, wang199422@163.com

³ Graduate Student, Jinan University, PR China, 511186613@qq.com

⁴ Associate Prof. Dr., Jinan University, PR China, 83696861@qq.com

*Corresponding author

Abstract

China had a strong impact on North Vietnamese policy-making in 1965-1968 as Beijing had actively supported Hanoi's war against the U.S. However, the failure of Tet Offensive in 1968 forced Hanoi to agree with Washington to have peace talks at Paris. Hanoi's new decision did not inform Beijing in advance, which made Chinese leaders very angry. Thereafter, the Sino-Vietnamese relationship became distorted. After the Sino-Soviet border conflict broke out in March 1969, Beijing considered Moscow an immediate threat, and looked for an opportunity to relax tensions with the U.S. from the second half of 1969. Beijing's attitude experienced subtle changes, from protesting to hinting its support to negotiations and probing Hanoi's attitude. Hanoi, nevertheless, began suspecting Beijing's real intent, especially after September 1970 when Beijing explicitly supported the American-Vietnamese talks. In 1971-1972, Kissinger's and Nixon's visits to China brought about more Vietnamese concerns and worries that Beijing might have sold Hanoi in exchange for the Sino-American rapprochement. Beijing had made all kinds of efforts to prove that it did not betray Hanoi, but they failed when Chinese leaders insisted in rapprochement with the U.S. Hanoi launched the Easter Offensive Campaign on March 30, 1972 to change its unfavourable strategic position. Again, it became another military disaster. Beijing did not intervene in Hanoi's military decision and continued to provide aid and supplies, even though it remained a rapprochement with the U.S. Eventually, the failure of the new offensive changed Hanoi's strategy, and North Vietnam finally agreed with the U.S. to end the Vietnam War by signing a peace agreement. But the contradictions between China and North Vietnam had become irreconcilable, which foreshadowed their conflicts afterwards.

Keywords: the Sino-American Rapprochement; the Sino-Vietnamese Relations; the Vietnam War

1. INTRODUCTION

In the late Vietnam War, one challenge facing Chinese leadership was how to balance the Sino-American and the Sino-Vietnamese relations. Realistically, China needed to defuse tension with the U.S. as its part of efforts to counteract the threats from the Soviet Union; ideologically, seeking easement with the U.S. meant the betrayal of North Vietnam (Democratic Republic of Vietnam, DRVN) in the war against the U.S. aggression. Finally, Beijing resigned itself to the general policy of détente between China and America, and gradually changed its Vietnam policy without prejudice to the interests of the DRVN to the maximum degree. This issue involved a series of research achievements published in around 2000 by Chinese scholars. Yang Kuisong focused on the Sino-Vietnamese relations and China's Vietnam policy in the 1950-60s, held that Mao changed the attitude towards two Indochina wars in four stages "support, oppose, re-support, and re-oppose". However, his analyses of China's policies after 1968 were relatively general (Yang 2001). Li Danhui and Shen Zhihua held that China remained there with Hanoi and kept extending large-scale aids even in its efforts to seek détente with America. They failed, however, to perform detailed studies of the adjustment of China's policy and its influence on Hanoi (Li 2000; Shen 2000). And this issue gradually fell into oblivion after these researches due to limited materials and shift of individual focus. For all some studies of issues concerning China and the Vietnam War led by Chinese scholars subsequently, the focus was on the antagonism and easement between China and America.

The research of this issue by Western scholars is neither systematic nor comprehensive. Chen Jian, via an earlier use of the Chinese literatures and works available then, elaborated on China's supports and aids for the DRVN between 1965 and 1969, and made analyses of the reasons for Chinese leadership's growing radical attitude towards the Vietnam War and souring Sino-Vietnamese relations (Chen 1995). Afterwards, Chen Jian also analyzed the Sino-Vietnamese relations and détente between China and America from 1968 to 1973, with focus on the latter and without detailed discussion about the change of China's Vietnam policy and relevant influences on the DRVN (Chen 2006). Subsequently, Qiang Zhai gave a panoramic description of how China aided North Vietnam to resist French and American aggressions, with focus on the analysis of differences between China and North Vietnam in viewing their bilateral relations from the perspective of complexity of alliance politics. He, however, dealt with less issues such as the Change of China's Vietnam policy and the evolution of Sino-Vietnamese relations after 1968 (Zhai 2000). According to Lorenz M. Lüthi, China did not forsake North Vietnam for the easement of Sino-American relations, but extended large amounts of aid during the early 1970s (Lüthi 2009). For all the complete analysis of the conflicts and differences between two governments in the two Indochina wars by Xiaoming Zhang in its works, he focuses on the Sino-Vietnamese border war in 1979 (Zhang 2015). Besides, Any Cheng Guan and Lien-Hang T. Nguyen have analyzed issues concerning the DRVN's decisions and the Vietnam War from point of Vietnamese view by use of numerous Vietnamese materials (Guan 2004; Nguyen 2012), while the works of Pierre Asselin and Larry Berman focus on the Paris negotiations and the American-Vietnamese Relations (Asselin 2002; Berman 2001). Some Vietnamese works make humble analyses of China's Vietnam policy and relevant influence, with evaluations given mainly in negative tone (Luu 1996, 2000).

To conclude, the international academic community remains weak to some extent in the research of this issue. This paper is designed to meticulously elaborate on the change of China's stand on the American-Vietnamese peace talks, the influences of Sino-American détente on China's Vietnam policy, and the evolution of Sino-Vietnamese relations by use of materials from the three countries.

2. CHANGE OF CHINA'S STAND ON THE AMERICAN-VIETNAMESE PEACE TALKS

During almost the whole 1960s, Beijing gave vigorous supports to the DRVN in its efforts to resist the U.S. aggression and opposed any negotiation between Hanoi and Washington, which brought significant influence on Hanoi's policies. On meeting the DRVN's military delegation led by Vo Nguyen Giap, Minister of Defense of the DRVN on October 5, 1962, Mao Zedong encouraged Hanoi to exert continuous struggling efforts by holding that "America would become more overwhelmed by another 5 or 10 years of depletion, and until then they had to compromise." The Gulf of Tonkin Incident marked the complete escalation of the Vietnam War, followed by rising of Leonid Brezhnev as a new USSR leader, who began to get involved in Vietnamese affairs and increase supports for North Vietnam. These factors spurred Beijing on to more supports and resolutions to support North Vietnam in its struggle against the U.S. aggression to the end. This attitude remained unchanged in the following years and had influenced the DRVN's policies on peace talks.

Despite that the U.S. had remained tentative about the peace talks, it reported no progress until the early 1968. The setback of the Tet Offensive had, however, changed all this. The DRVN leadership had long expected to seek a decisive victory of a large-scale battle like the Battle of Dien Bien Phu to force Americans out of Vietnam. On January 31, 1968, DRVN launched the Tet Offensive, with nearly 100,000 troops predominated by People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF) attacking simultaneously all cities in South Vietnam, including Saigon, its capital. From military perspective, the large-scale offensive ended up with failure: the PLAF suffered great losses with 32,000 dead and 5,800 captured, compared with over 3,000 loss of U.S. army and Saigon forces; besides, grassroots organizations of the National Liberation Front (NLF) suffered unprecedented damage in South Vietnam, with casualties of 30% of cadres in the Tet Offensive in addition to many who were captured, exited or betrayed.

Given military setback, the DRVN made instant adjustment of policies on peace talks. Johnson declared on March 31 the termination of all operations of U.S. air force and navy against North Vietnam, but not including the neighbouring areas of the Demilitarized Zone, and expressed his abandonment to seek a second term. The DRVN made positive response to this. Hanoi agreed to hold talks with Washington for the first time in a statement on April 3, which put this way: "It is clear that the U.S. Government has not seriously and fully met the legitimate demands of the DRVN Government, or of progressive public opinion in the U.S. and the world. However, for its part, the DRVN Government declares that it is prepared to send its representative to meet and to determine with the U.S. representative the unconditional cessation of the bombing and all other acts of war against the DRVN, so as to start the talks."

Hanoi's military defeat disappointed Chinese leadership very much, and its sudden change of stand took China by surprise. As a matter of fact, Mao ever pinned much hope on the Tet Offensive. Not long after the launch of this offensive, Mao noted on February 7 in meeting Ho Chi Minh in the Great Hall of the People that despite America's developed industry and large amounts of weapons, close combats could offset its advantages in this aspect. "Americans are eclipsed by your people in terms of courage and fighting strength." "You promise to win this war, and this takes some time. Not too long, however." For the decisive victory, Mao also suggested that the DRVN "establish some field operations corps, each of which can launch 3 or 4 operations each year to sap the effective strength of enemies in their organic units."

On hearing the statement from Hanoi, Zhou Enlai instantly inquire of Ho Chi Minh who received medical care in Beijing, who, surprisingly, said that he was unknown about this. Hanoi's decision caused howls from Chinese leaders. Zhou said on April 13 in meeting Pham Van Dong, premier of the DRVN, that the April 3

Statement meant compromise, which helped Americans out of trouble. "So many people don't understand why the Vietnamese comrades were so hurried in making this statement...It is the judgment of the world's people." "In the eyes of the world's people, you have compromised twice." "The situation showed that Vietnamese comrades find it easy to compromise." Zhou also persuaded Hanoi not to have any expectation for peace talks. "We entirely believe in your fighting experience. But we are somewhat more experienced than you are as far as conducting talks with the U.S. is concerned." Zhou also couple this statement with the assassination of Martin Luther King on April 4, saying: "Had your statement been issued one or two days later, the murder might have been stopped." After several days, on April 17, Zhou stressed to Pham Van Dong that Hanoi should prepare to struggle for 3 years, i.e. from 1968 to 1970, since "Comrade Mao said that the question is not that of success or failure, nor of big or small success, but of how you gain the great victory. It is high time you gain a complete victory. That task gives rise to the need for large-scale battles." Two days later, dispute occurred between Zhou and Pham Van Dong in their talks. Zhou re-blamed the DRVN for compromise and held that Pham Van Dong planned to give up the revolution in South Vietnam, which was intensely retorted by Pham Van Dong. Finally, Pham Van Dong said in strong tone that the DRVN would take into account China's suggestions. However, "after all we are the ones fighting against the U.S. and defeating them. We should be responsible for both military and diplomatic activities." In addition, in meeting Xuan Thuy, leader of the DRVN government delegation at the Paris Negotiations on May 7, Zhou warned him again of no expectation for peace talks and even expressed regret for the signing of the Geneva Agreement. Zhou said that "the general point is that what cannot be obtained in the war cannot also be got from negotiations anyhow. Negotiations in the Geneva Conference came to a conclusion thanks to the victory of the Battle of Dien Bien Phu, with 17° north latitude determined."

However, China's opposition failed to change the decisions of Hanoi. On May 13, Vietnamese and American held the first public talks in Paris, which evolved into four-side talks with the entry of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) and the NLF on January 25, 1969. Due to low efficiency of public negotiations, the U.S. and the DRVN held the first secret negotiation in Paris on September 8, 1968 without informing the RVN. With four-side talks held weekly, the secret talks were held irregularly. And such two types of talks continued until the signing of the Paris Agreement on January 27, 1973.

With no regard to Beijing's opposition, Hanoi unilaterally agreed to negotiate with Washington, which caused complaint from the Chinese Government. China began to withdraw part of forces in Vietnam from the end of 1968 until July 1970, when all troops aiding Vietnam returned to China. Although China interpreted officially this as "to have completed the mission of internationalism", more rational explanation may be China's complaint from Hanoi's attempt for peace talks. Besides, China reduced its aid significantly. Take military aid as an example (from 1968 to 1970). For guns, the number fell to 101,800 in 1970, from 139,900 in 1969 and 219,899 in 1968, less than half of that in 1968; for bullets, the number fell to 29,010,000 in 1970, from 119,170,000 in 1969 and 247,920,000 in 1968, less than 1/8 of that in 1968; for various types of canons, the number fell to 2,212 in 1970, from 3,906 in 1969 and 7,087 in 1968, less than 1/3 of that in 1968; for shells, the number fell to only 397,000 in 1970, from 1,357,000 in 1969 and 2,082,000 in 1968, less than 1/5 of that in 1968.

The Zhenbao Island Incident happening on March 2, 1969, however, had major influence on China's diplomatic strategy. The armed conflict between Chinese and Soviet forces gave prominence to the USSR's grave threat to China's national security. For this reason, Mao began to shift the policy featuring "anti-American imperialism and anti-Soviet revisionism" to that featuring "uniting the U.S. against the USSR".

From the second half of 1969, Beijing began to take a non-interference attitude towards the American-Vietnamese peace talks in seeking easement with Washington. In meeting the Romanian political party delegation on September 7, 1969, Zhou said: "For the issue concerning Vietnam, we keep hands-off in the following cases: Vietnam's insistence on struggling, or engagement in the Paris talks." "We won't make even a fuss about the progress of the talks."

By 1970, Beijing began to imply the support for peace talks and gradually explore Hanoi's stand. On May 11, 1970, Mao received personally, for the first time since 1964, Le Duan, the first secretary of central committee of Vietnam Worker Party (VWP). Following Le Duan said "we should fight a prolonged war", Mao probed however, "You should prepare to fight a prolonged war, but isn't it better if the war is shortened." Mao's tentative attitude was specially reflected in the evaluation of the Geneva Conference in 1954. In the talks with the DRVN delegation on July 23, Zhou changed his longstanding total denial of the Geneva Agreement, and gave evaluation from positive and negative perspectives. This was completely different from remarks featuring repeated self-criticism of Chinese leaders, and their sheer denial of the Geneva Agreement with a view to encouraging the DRVN to continue the military struggles.

3. BEIJING'S SUPPORT TO PEACE TALKS AND HANOI'S HESITATION

Chinese leadership's tentative attitude did not last long, and China began to express its clear-cut support for the American-Vietnamese peace talks two months later. Mao expressed his belief about low probability of new world war in meeting Pham Van Dong on September 23. For the Paris Negotiations, "I see that you can conduct the diplomatic struggle and you do it well. Negotiations have been going on for two years. At first we were a little worried that you were trapped. We are no longer worried." "You are fighting very well on the battlefield. Your policy for the diplomatic struggle is correct. We must give you what you want. I have no further comments." In addition, Mao added in the talks: "The Americans still want to go to Beijing for talks. It is what they propose. They said that Warsaw was not suitable and we replied that if they wanted to go to Beijing, [they should] just go. Later, they did not dare to go." Mao may implied that more direct and higher-level negotiations may be in progress between China and America. But Pham Van Dong failed to realize this. China's shift of attitude was immediately reflected in Chinese aids. According to the agreement on the economic aids signed between China and North Vietnam on October 6, China agreed to extend 1.2 billion RMB yuan worth of gratuitous materials and complete sets of equipment, together with 60 million dollars to the DRVN in 1971. These far outnumbered those agreed in 1969 and 1970.

China's change of attitude, however, failed to carry forward the peace talks, but caused hesitation of Hanoi. Just as failing to give up negotiations due to opposition from China, Hanoi became hesitated in negotiations and reluctant to make greater concessions in negotiations after the removal of pressure from China. And the slow progress made in negotiations forced Nixon to lower terms. On October 7, Nixon made public announcement in the radio speech that America accepted a standstill ceasefire. Kissinger said in his memoir: "The decision to propose a standstill cease-fire in 1970 thus implied the solution of 1972. That North Vietnamese forces would remain in the South was implicit in the standstill proposal". However, Nixon's proposal met refusal from the DRVN, leaving the peace talks in a deadlock again. And from October 1970 to the late May 1971, not any secret negotiation was held between America and North Vietnam. The DRVN held such attitude mainly because of the change of Sino-American relations.

While the Sino-USSR relations are turning sour, the Sino-American relations were on the upturn. On December 18, 1970, Mao, in meeting Edgar Snow, an American writer, asked him to send word to Nixon, "I

hope you can send a message to him that if he wanted to visit China, he should better come in a covert way by plane. Make or break, why leave the negotiations in a deadlock?" Afterwards, Zhou, taking advantage of "the Ping-pong Diplomacy", wrote officially on April 21, 1971 to invite Nixon to visit China. In keeping contact with America, the Chinese Government attempted to pacify Hanoi. On February 15, 1971, agreements signed between China and DRVN on the economic and military complementary aids in 1971, according to which China would provide Hanoi with 400 million RMB yuan gratuitous aids on the basis of the original huge amounts of gratuitous aids to the DRVN. Zhou also led the Chinese communist party delegation to visit Vietnam from March 5 to 8, when he said: "the Chinese Government and people will stand firm with the Vietnamese people in their righteous struggles against American aggression as always."

Zhou's visit, however, failed to fill the fissure between China and North Vietnam, and differences existed in their America policies. In the talks on March 7, Zhou appreciated the American-Vietnamese peace talks, but Hanoi became unsatisfactory at this. Le Duan proposed the anti-American front among the people all over the world, but Zhou declined on the ground of China's opposition to the USSR membership. Accordingly, Le Duan held that it was necessary to establish a front led by China among the people from all over the world. Considering its striking anti-American feature of the front, Zhou declined it again, and said that "we need more time to think. Sometimes, you are in a more advantageous position than us."

For the contact between China and America, Hanoi worried about the conspiracy on the betrayal of its interests and planned secretly the Easter Offensive in 1972. On May 21, 1971, Serbakov, USSR ambassador to the DRVN, noted in his report to Moscow: "Vietnamese comrades are gaining strength to launch extensive offensive in Southern Vietnam in the dry seasons of 1972, which coincides with the U.S. presidential election. This was aimed at 'overturning Nixon'. According to the opinions of friends, this promised to facilitate the efforts for peace in Vietnam and the whole Indochina region."

Meanwhile, once-stagnant peace talks began to turn smooth. In the secret negotiation on May 31, Kissinger gave seven proposals to the DRVN. And in the secret negotiation on June 26 and the public negotiation on July 1 between America and North Vietnam, the DRVN raised nine and seven proposals respectively. Comparing these proposals, it was suggested that Washington and Hanoi shared general consistency in major issues over armistice, withdrawal of the U.S. troops and the data of withdrawal, except for the only major difference concerning whether to overthrow the RVN government. Unlike before, the DRVN just required America to "stop supporting" the RVN government rather than to directly overturn it. Kissinger put it this way: "To 'stop supporting' our allies could mean anything from withdrawing our forces to ending all economic and military aid, or even conniving in their overthrow." However, Hanoi's compromise proved a trick, because the political bureau of the DRVN has decided "to win a decisive victory in 1972, compelling the U.S. imperialists to end the war through negotiations in a losing position, and at the same time to prepare perseveringly for the intensification of the war in case of war prolongation."

4. NIXON'S VISIT TO CHINA AND HANOI'S REACTION

Kissinger made his secret visit to China from July 9 to 11, with negotiations between two sides on Nixon's visit to China before May 1972. Afterwards, Kissinger made his second visit to China from October 20 to 26, making specific arrangements for Nixon's visit, and conducted negotiations on the issue over Sino-American Joint Communiqué. Zhou carried out 10 negotiations with Kissinger. Since the development of Sino-American relations harmed the Sino-Vietnamese relations, the Chinese Government took multiple measures to patch up the latter. According to the agreement on the aid signed between China and North Vietnam on September 27,

China agreed to extend 1.8 billion RMB yuan worth of gratuitous materials and complete sets of equipment together with 80 million dollars to the DRVN. And in 1971, China and the DRVN and the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) signed 7 agreements on gratuitous aids including this agreement, involving about 3.614 billion RMB yuan.

Besides, China “organized an exceptional, warm and ceremonious reception” to Pham Van Dong, who made his visit stay in China from November 20 to 27. Some members of standing committee, committee members and alternate members of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee including Zhou and Ye Jianying together with 5,000 masses to come to the airport for reception, with hundreds of thousands of people standing along the road for the reception. During his visit to China, Pham Van Dong was accompanied by Zhou even in his trip in Shanghai and Guangzhou. And in the joint communique published on November 25, China fully showed its support and endorsement for North Vietnam’s stand and safeguard firmly North Vietnam’s assertions and interests. The communique put: “supporting the people of three Indochina countries including Vietnam in their efforts to resist U.S. aggression remains established policy of the Communist Party of China and the Chinese Government and the incumbent international obligation of the Chinese people.” “To support the people of Indochina countries including Vietnam to resist U.S. aggression, the Chinese people has made preparations, even at the expense of the maximum national sacrifice.” The communique also endorsed two basic requirements of the DRVN—America must put an end to the Vietnam War and forsake the RVN Government. However, on the issue over the Paris peace talks and the Sino-American détente, the Chinese leadership remained firm on its established stand. For instance, Mao refused Pham Van Dong’s request that the Chinese Government cancel the arrangements for Nixon’s visit to China in their talks on November 22.

As scheduled, Nixon made his official visit to China in February 1972, opening the window for the normalization of the Sino-American relations. This was, however, to add insult to injury for the already crumbling Sino-Vietnamese relations. In order to reduce the anxiety of Hanoi, Zhou visited Hanoi on March 4 to inform Nixon’s visit. The meeting room fell into silence immediately following Zhou’s speech, which suggested that Zhou’s explanation failed to convince the DRVN leaders. Of no help, China’s initiatives further increased Hanoi’s anxiety and dissatisfaction at the détente between China and America.

In the mid-March, according to the resolution passed in the 20th assembly of the Central Committee of the VWP, Hanoi decided to intensify both the military and political engagements to force America at disadvantage to accept the peace agreement to the benefit of North Vietnam. On March 30, the DRVN launched the Easter Offensive against South Vietnam in three directions by crossing the demilitarized zone with 125,000 troops including 14 divisions and separate regiments under the cover of over 200 soviet-made tanks and heavy canons including soviet 130mm calibre recoilless rifles.

The challenge facing this offensive lies in the coming rainy season in May, pressing the People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN) to launch large-scale attack. But the striking advantage lies in the withdrawal of majority of the U.S. troops: the U.S. had pulled over 410,000 troops back by the early 1972; and it kept withdrawal even after the Easter Offensive launched by the DRVN. On January 13, Nixon declared the withdrawal of 70,000 U.S. troops. Finishing this target, Nixon declared reduction of another 20,000 in Vietnam on April 26. By July 1972, the number of U.S. troops garrisoned in South Vietnam fell to 45,600. Nevertheless, the Easter Offensive ended with the military defeat of Hanoi. According to the U.S. evaluation, the offensive, lasting till the summer of 1972, brought about 100,000 and 25,000 deaths in the battlefield to the DRVN and the RVN. It turned out again that, as long as Americans stayed in the South Vietnam, Hanoi could not win the war

militarily.

Despite anxieties about the easement between China and America, Hanoi had got far-fetched to continue this war. Meanwhile, even though Beijing kept seeking détente with Washington, it did not oppose or intervene in Hanoi's military operations but again extended massive gratuitous aids, with a view to proving its unchanged commitment to Hanoi. On June 28, China and North Vietnam signed the agreement on complementary aids, according to which China agreed to extend Hanoi 207 million RMB yuan and 20 million dollars as complementary aids in 1972. Days later, Zhou fled from Shanghai to Kunming to join talks with Pham Van Dong and exchange ideas on the Paris Negotiation on July 6. Zhou fled back to Beijing the next day and met Xuan Thuy. Zhou informed them of the talks with Kissinger on the issues over Vietnam, noting the period between July and October 1972 was crucial to whether the Vietnam War continued or would be ended via negotiations. Following that instantly, Zhou proposed Hanoi for fighting-and-talking in meeting Le Duc Tho, member of the central political bureau of the VWP in Beijing on July 12. Zhou also persuaded the DRVN to be flexible in negotiations without overemphasis on whether Nguyen Van Thieu, president of the RVN, would step down. He said, "On the one hand, it is necessary to prepare for fighting. On the other hand, you have to negotiate." Zhou said that accepting Nguyen Van Thieu could make America acceptable to a political solution and help gain advantage in the negotiations.

The development in the battlefield and suggestions from allies promoted Hanoi's change of its policy on negotiations. From the late June to the early July 1972, the political bureau of the VWP convened a series of meetings to analyze the current developments. It was believed in these meetings that the battles became promising with the dilemma of the U.S. and the RVN. And both the USSR and China hoped to solve the issue over Vietnam, especially military issue, and Nixon also agreed not to require the DRVN to pull its troops from South Vietnam and supported the resignation of Nguyen Van Thieu. "Prompted by these real conditions ,Hanoi decided to change its strategy, from a strategy of war to a strategy of peace. This was a turning point in leading the revolution in SVN."

In such case, the DRVN published 10 new suggestions in the negotiation between America and North Vietnam on August 1, which did not press Nguyen Van Thieu to resign immediately any more but do so after the signing of the peace agreement. Till then, there existed no substantial differences between Washington and Hanoi. Several rounds of secret negotiations between October 8 and 12 led to consensus on the major issues about the termination of the Vietnam War: the U.S. unilaterally withdrew from Vietnam and the DRVN gave up the requirement for the resignation of Nguyen Van Thieu; besides, Washington also agreed to provide economic aids for Hanoi. Kissinger, satisfied at the outcome of negotiations, said: ".....that we got a much better deal by far than we had expected. The net effect is that it leaves Thieu in office. We get a stand-in-place cease-fire on October 30 or 31."

The consensus reached between America and the DRVN met strong opposition from the RVN Government. Together with the increasingly imminent general election on November 7, Nixon did not expect to sign separately a peace agreement with the DRVN with opposition from the RVN to the detriment of his own approval rate. Such being the case, Nixon and Kissinger extended peace talks purposely until the general election. After the successful re-election, Nixon resumed negotiations with the DRVN on the one hand, stick and carrot policy, and forced the RVN to finally agree to sign the Paris Agreement on the other hand by threatening to sever alliance and cut off aids and decoying RVN with economic and military aids. In this aspect, the consensus reached in October had laid the foundation for the Paris Agreement signed on January 27, 1973. In this process, however, the Sino-Vietnamese relations deteriorated further.

5. CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, the Chinese leadership's attitudes toward the Vietnam War had changed totally between 1968 and 1972, which underwent three phases:

Phase I: from early 1968 to the first half of 1969, opposed firmly the negotiations between the DRVN and the U.S.

Phase II: from the second half of 1969 to August 1970, transferred from non-intervention in the American-Vietnamese peace talks to the support of such negotiations and probed Hanoi's attitude.

Phase III: From September 1970, supported clearly the Paris peace talks.

China's stand on how to settle the Vietnam War and the change of this stand had significantly influenced the Sino-Vietnamese relations. China had long opposed peace talks from the late 1950s to the outbreak of the Zhenbao Island Incident, stressing that only through war could solve the issue, and hoping that the DRVN could stand on China's side to act in antagonism with the Soviet Union. But this did not prevent the DRVN from negotiating with the U.S. After the Zhenbao Island Incident, China had gradually changed the former stand and encouraged Hanoi to hold peace talks with Washington with a view to a thaw in the Sino-American relations and solving the issue over Vietnam in peaceful manners. This equally failed to carry forward the peace talks. And both of the different stands stirred up strong complaints from the DRVN, which contributed to the souring relations between the two countries.

In the process of the Sino-American détente, the Chinese leadership sank into a "moral dilemma" between the Vietnam War and the Sino-Vietnamese relations. Realistically, China needed to seek détente with the U.S. in order to counteract threats from the USSR. From the perspective of morality and international obligations, however, the Chinese leadership remained convinced at its core that the Sino-American détente meant the betrayal of commitment to Hanoi's efforts in resisting American aggression. China's such contradictory conception had impacted its diplomatic policies. It follows that Beijing stuck to the Sino-American détente while remained reluctant to intervene in Hanoi's actions and decisions to undermine peace talks. Therefore, Beijing sustained large-scale gratuitous aids to Hanoi partly because it hoped to prove its well-worn commitment to the DRVN and ease its guiltiness. As it should be, this was the only initiative to steer Hanoi amid Beijing's increasingly less influence on Hanoi. But Hanoi's failure to understand Beijing's contradiction finally led to the increasingly souring relations between China and the DRVN.

Although the Sino-American détente facilitated the end of the Vietnam War consequently, from the perspective of the Vietnam War and the specific process of the American-Vietnamese Paris Talks, the Chinese Government's expectation that the DRVN could end the war through peace talks instead had negative effects on the Paris peace talks, and spurred Hanoi to launch the Easter Offensive.

The contact and détente between China and America further expanded the rift between China and North Vietnam, whose differences cannot be patched up any more. As a matter of fact, China had been making its utmost efforts to strike a balance between its national interests and international obligations for the DRVN, but not at the cost of the DRVN's interests while seeking the Sino-American détente and encouraging the DRVN for peace talks. To make compensation for the Sino-Vietnamese relations, and prove its support for Hanoi, China also granted large amounts of gratuitous aids to the DRVN, which had, however, failed to lift Hanoi out of the grudge and anxiety towards China's policies. Despite that China and North Vietnam should have reached "win-win" results on the Paris peace talks, for Hanoi, Beijing's détente with Washington meant

betrayal. Despite that Hanoi had to resume its efforts in the American-Vietnamese peace talks under pressure from the defeat of the Easter Offensive, the contradictions between China and the DRVN had become irreconcilable with souring bilateral relations accordingly, which foreshadowed their conflicts afterwards.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was financially supported by “the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities” and the National Social Science Foundation of China (Grant NO. 15FSS009)

REFERENCES LIST

- Asselin, Pierre. (2002). *A Bitter Peace: Washington, Hanoi, and the Making of the Paris Agreement*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Berman, Larry. (2001). *No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger, and Betrayal in Vietnam*, New York: The Free Press.
- CCP Central Document Research Department and PLA Military Science Academy. (2010). *Mao Zedong's Military Paper since the Founding of the Country*, Vol. 3, Beijing: Military Science Press, pp. 151-153, 341-342.
- CCP Central Document Research Department. (1997). *Chronicle of Zhou Enlai*, Vol. 2, Beijing: Central Documents Press, pp. 441-442, 452-453, 467-468, 490-491, 497, 534.
- CCP Central Document Research Department. (2013). *Chronicle of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976*, Vol. 5, Beijing: Central Documents Press, pp.150-151, 297-298, 358-356, 377.
- Chen, Jian. (1995). China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-69. *The China Quarterly*, No. 142, pp. 356-387.
- Chen, Jian. (2006). China, the Vietnam War, and the Sino-American rapprochement, 1968-1973. *The Third Indochina War: Conflict between China, Vietnam and Cambodia, 1972-79*, London: Routledge.
- Diplomatic History Research Office of Foreign Ministry of the PRC. (1993). *Major Chronicle Records of Zhou Enlai's Diplomatic Activities*, Beijing: World Knowledge Press, pp. 524, 538-539, 561, 608-610, 614-615, 636-637.
- Guan, Any Cheng. (2004). *Ending the Vietnam War: The Vietnamese Communists' Perspective*, London: RoutledgeCurzon.
- Li, Danhui. (2000). Conflict between China and the Soviet Union over the Issue of Assisting Vietnam and Opposing America. *Contemporary China History Studies*, No. 4-5.
- Li, Ke and Hao, Shengzhang. (1989). *People's Liberation Army in the Cultural Revolution*, Beijing: CCP Party History Material Press, p. 416.
- Lüthi, Lorenz M. (2009). Beyond Betrayal: Beijing, Moscow, and the Paris Negotiations, 1971–1973. *Journal of Cold War Studies*, No. 1 (11), pp.57-107.
- Luu, Van Loi (2000). *Fifty Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy, 1945-1995*, Volume I, Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers.

- Luu, Van Loi, and Nguyen, Anh Vu. (1996). *Le Duc Tho-Kissinger Negotiations in Paris*, Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers.
- Nguyen, Lien-Hang T. (2012). *Hanoi's War: An International History of the War for Peace in Vietnam*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Odd, Arne Westad, and Chen, Jian, eds. (1998). *77 Conversations between Chinese and Foreign Leaders on the Wars in Indochina, 1964-1977*, Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center, pp.123-126, 177-178, 182-184.
- PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ed. (1981). *Collections of Treaties of the People's Republic of China*, Vol. 21, Beijing: People's Press, pp. 289-291, 298-299, 303-304, 308-309.
- Shao, Xiao. (2010). Nixon, Paris Agreement and the U.S.-South Vietnam Alliance. *History Teaching and Research*, No.1, pp. 99-104.
- Shen, Zhihua, and Li, Danhui. (2000). Sino-U.S. Rapprochement and China's Diplomacy toward Vietnam, 1971-1973). *The Chinese Journal of American Studies*, No. 1, pp. 98-116.
- Yang, Kuisong. (2001). Evolution of New China's Policy from the War of Assisting Vietnam and Opposing France to the Fight for Peace in Indochina. *Social Sciences in China*, No. 1, pp. 193-204.
- Yun, Shui. (1996). *Chronicle of Missions to Seven Countries: General Ambassador Wang Youping*, Beijing: World Knowledge Press, pp. 135, 139.
- Zhai, Qiang. (2000). *China and the Vietnam War*, Chapel Hill: The University Press of North Caroline.
- Zhang, Xiaoming. (2015). *Deng Xiaoping's Long War: The Military Conflict between China and Vietnam, 1979-1991*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Zhou, Enlai and Pham, Van Dong. (1968). Discussion between Zhou Enlai and Pham Van Dong, 1968-04-17. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112174>.
- Zhou, Enlai and Pham, Van Dong. (1968). Discussion between Zhou Enlai and Pham Van Dong, 1968-4-19. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112175>.