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Strategic coordination between China and Russia and triangular relations among China, US and Russia

Li Jingjie *

Abstract: The current Sino-Russian relations are at their best in history and have become a model of a new type of major power relations. Mutual respect and equality are the most important premise of this bilateral strategic partnership. As time goes by, Sino-Russian ties will usher into a new era of development. The main external factor that can influence this bilateral relationship is the US. China and Russia have structural contradictions and interest conflicts with the US, but the current triangular relationship differs fundamentally from the one among China, the US and the former Soviet Union. In politics and security, Sino-Russian relations outweigh Sino-US relations; in the economic and social aspects, the relationship with the US far exceeds that with Russia. The governments play a leading role in promoting Sino-Russian ties, while the driving forces behind China-US relations are the public and the market. If the US tries to target China and Russia at the same time, it will definitely fail. No matter how the strategic conditions of the two change, China and Russia must stick to the principle of a strategic partnership, or their friendly foundations will be shaken. A favorable Sino-US relationship matters greatly to China. China and the US should avoid conflicts, as great powers often did in history, and be determined to establish a new type of major power relations based on respect and mutual benefits. In an ever-changing multi-polar world, a proactive and balanced diplomacy should be a wise choice for China.

Keywords: Sino-Russian strategic partnership of coordination, triangular relations among China, US and Russia, triangular relations among China, US and the former Soviet Union

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The title of this thesis is “Strategic coordination between China and Russia and triangular relations among China, US and Russia.” As the title suggests, it includes two parts: the strategic coordination between China and Russia and the triangular relations among China, the US and Russia. A great number of articles about the China-Russia strategic partnership of coordination have been published, so the focus of this thesis is to summarize the development history of Sino-Russian relations in the past 20 years, and explain the two conclusions: that this relationship is at their best in history, and that it has become a model of a new type of major power relations. In 2000, I published an article entitled “*Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership Cooperative Relations and the US Factor*”.¹ In addition to a supplementary introduction of the triangular relations (or trilateral relations) among China, the US and Russia in this new century, the thesis focuses on comparing the current triangular relations among China, the US and Russia and those among China, the US and the former Soviet Union in the 1970s, so as to reveal the new characteristics of this triangular relationship in new times.

1 Smooth development of China-Russia strategic partnership of coordinations

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, China-Soviet relations evolved into China-Russia relations. In the past two decades, the world has undergone profound changes, but the development of Sino-Russian relations has gone smoothly with remarkable achievements in all aspects. Both sides are satisfied with this result and believe this relationship is “at their best in history” and has become “a model of a new type of major power relations”.

1.1 Development and progress of Sino-Russian relations

In the past 20 years, the remarkable progresses have been made in the following 10 aspects:

(1) Sino-Russian relations are gradually becoming more important in respective diplomatic strategies.

On December 17-19, 1992, then Russian president Boris Yeltsin visited Beijing and both sides announced the two were “friendly countries.” On September 2-6, 1994, then Chinese president Jiang Zemin visited Russia and the two sides announced to raise their relations to “constructive partnership in the 21st century”. On April 24-26, 1996, Yeltsin paid his second visit to China

¹ *East European Russian & Central Asian Studies*, No. 3, 2000.

and the two lifted bilateral relations to a new level – strategic partnership of coordination in the 21st century based on equality and mutual trust. That's to say, within five years, China-Russia relations had made three steps, from “friendly countries” to “constructive partnership” and then to “strategic partnership of coordination.”

In a certain sense, the establishment of bilateral strategic partnership of coordination is a major step forward. The *China-Russia Treaty of Good Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation* signed on July 16, 2001 legally regulates that the “strategic partnership of coordination in the 21st century based on mutual trust” is a long-term goal of Sino-Russian development.

On June 6, 2012, when then Chinese president Hu Jintao and then Russian president Vladimir Putin met, based on the new development of bilateral relations, the two put “comprehensive” before “strategic partnership of coordination.” They noted that the “comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination” is one of the priorities in their diplomacies.² On March 22, 2013, when Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Russian President Vladimir Putin, they further defined the status of Sino-Russian relations: that both are the other's most important strategic partners of coordination and that deepening their comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination is in a prioritized strategic position in their diplomacies and foreign relations.³ On May 20, 2014 when the US accelerated its pivoting to Asia and the Ukrainian crisis erupted, Putin visited China during such a sensitive time. The two sides published the *Joint Statement on a New Stage of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination*, which signaled the new scale and depth of their strategic coordination.

(2) China and Russia set up periodic high-level meeting system.

During the past years, the leadership of the two countries has established close relations. Whenever the presidents of the two countries take office, they choose the other as the destination of their first state visit, which has become routine in Sino-Russian relations. On March 14, 2013, Xi Jinping was sworn in as Chinese president and he visited Russia on 22nd. The two countries established periodic meeting systems between top leaderships, government officials and speakers of the congress. Under the framework of prime minister level periodic meeting systems, the following organizations have been established: Committee on Regular Meeting between Prime Ministers, Committee on Humanities Cooperation, China-Russian Investment Cooperation Committee, High-Level Supervision Working Group for Major Projects of Economic Cooperation and

2 “Hu Jintao and Vladimir Putin agreed that both sides should deepen strategic mutual trust and strengthen the comprehensive China-Russia strategic cooperative partnership”, *People's Daily*, June 7, 2012.

3 “President Xi Jinping holds talks with President Vladimir Putin”, *People's Daily*, March 23, 2013.

Special Working Group for the Energy Sector, etc. They almost cover all aspects of bilateral cooperation. This is China's most senior and comprehensive meeting and communication system in its foreign relations. For China, this is the only instance, and it's rare in the world.

(3) They signed the *China-Russia Treaty of Good Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation*.

On July 16, 2001, then Chinese president Jiang Zemin and then Russian president Vladimir Putin signed the *Treaty of Good Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation in Moscow*. Based on historical experiences, the treaty summarized the main principles and doctrines of the development of bilateral relations in the new era and established the peaceful idea of "generations of friendship" and of "never being enemies" between the two peoples in a legal form. Noticeably, article six of the treaty regulates on the most sensitive issue in bilateral relations, which reads that "each has no territorial claim on the other and both are resolved to make active efforts in building the border between the two countries into one where ever-lasting peace and friendship prevail." Article nine of the treaty regulates that "When a situation arises in which one of the contracting parties deems that peace is being threatened and undermined or its security interests are involved or when it is confronted with the threat of aggression, the contracting parties shall immediately hold contacts and consultations in order to eliminate such threats." Some observers believe that if this article is abided by, China-Russia relations will usher into a new stage of semi-alliance.

(4) They co-founded the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Through the effort of China and Russia, leaders from the Shanghai Five countries, namely China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, began to meet on a timely basis since 1996. In June 2001, leaders from the Shanghai Five countries and Uzbekistan announced the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Currently, the SCO has become a unique force in international relations and is playing an important role in dealing effectively with trans-border threats and challenges and promoting cooperation among member states in security, economy and other fields.

(5) They resolved historical border issues thoroughly.

In October, 2004, China and Russia signed *Complementary Agreement on the Eastern Section of the China-Russia Boundary*. Together with the *Agreement on the Eastern Section of the China-Soviet Union Boundary* signed on May 16, 1991 and the *Agreement on the Western Section of the China-Russia Boundary* signed on September 3, 1994, the China-Russia borders, with a total length of 4,300 kilometers, were all clearly defined, and this sets a solid foundation for generations of neighborhood friendship. With border issues resolved, there is no

more pending political problem between the two countries.

(6) Transparency and demilitarization have been achieved in border areas.

After years of negotiations, in April, 1996, the Chinese president signed the *Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in the Border Areas* and the *Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions* with his counterparts from Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. According to the agreement, with China as one side and Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as the other, each military deployed along the border of 7,300 kilometers should not exceed 134,000 personnel. The two sides should communicate with each other with regards to all military activities within 100 kilometers of the border areas. With the two agreements being implemented, the border between China and the other four countries has realized demilitarization and transparency.

(7) The two have been strengthening military cooperation.

Russia has long been the main source of China's import of advanced military technologies. China buys from Russia not only advanced airplanes, submarines, surface vessels, missiles and so on, but also production technologies of advanced weapons and equipments. Since 2002, the two have annually held joint military drills either on land or on sea. The military exercises have deepened mutual trust between the two and enhanced cooperation and coordination in defense and security between the two countries and their militaries. They also have raised their ability to jointly respond to new challenges and threats faced by the region and the world.

(8) Economic cooperation has made breakthroughs.

In 2013, bilateral trade volumes reached \$89.2 billion. It is projected to reach \$100 billion by 2015 and \$200 billion by 2020. One important representation of a "new era" of bilateral strategic coordination is the breakthroughs in big projects cooperation, especially in the energy field. Since 2011, Russia has been transferring oil to China through the Eastern Siberia–Pacific Ocean oil pipeline. In 2013, the volume reached 15.75 million tons. According to the long-term crude oil trade contract signed by PETROCHINA and its Russian partners, Russia will deliver 46.1 million tons of crude oil annually by 2018, which equal roughly 10 percent of China's crude oil imports. During Putin's visit to China last year, the two sides signed a *Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the China-Russia Cooperation on the East Route Natural Gas Pipeline* and a *Purchase Contract of Gas Supply through the East Route*. According to the agreements, Russia will provide natural gas to China for a consecutive 30-year term starting from 2018. Each year it will deliver 38 billion cubic meters with a total net worth of \$400 billion, which was dubbed as "the gas deal of the century" by international analysts. All these have a significant impact on

enhancing the two's mutual dependence, consolidating the material foundation of bilateral strategic partnership of coordination and ensuring economic security of the two countries.

(9) Close cooperation at the international level.

In 1997, 2005 and 2008, leaders of China and Russia released joint statements on international issues several times. The two have wide common concerns and interests. The two support each other in core interests such as national sovereignty and unity and territorial integrity. Russia supports China's stance in issues relating to Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang and supports China to maintain its national unity and territorial integrity. China supports Russia's efforts in promoting peace and stability in the Caucasus region and former Soviet republics. China and Russia have coordinated effectively in maintaining the authority of the United Nations, solving key regional problems, containing US unilateralism and hegemony. The two have implemented "network diplomacy" by promoting the establishment of regional and multilateral cooperation institutions such as the SCO and BRICS. They cooperate closely in global and multilateral frameworks such as the UN and G20 and push forward world multilateralism and democratization of international relations.

(10) Social foundation of China-Russia friendship is expanding.

To enhance mutual understanding and friendship among the two peoples and consolidate and expand the social foundation of China-Russia strategic partnership of coordination, since 2006, the two countries have held big events such as "Year of Countries," "Year of Languages," "Year of Youth Friendship" and "Year of Tourism." The Chinese public believes that Russia is one of their top friends. China's image in Russia has been improving. The mainstream public in Russia views China as a friendly country and believes China's development translates to their country's opportunities.

1.2 China-Russia relations: at their best in history and a model of major power relations

Both sides have been very satisfied with the development of bilateral relations and believe the ties are at their best in history and the strategic partnership of coordination has become a model of international relations. As the *Joint Statement* signed on March 22, 2013 stated, "China-Russia relations have developed to an unprecedented high level and set an example for the harmonious coexistence between major powers".⁴

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China-Russia

4 "China-Russia Joint Statement to Comprehensively Deepen the Strategic Partnership of Coordination", *People's Daily*, March 23, 2013.

ties have experienced two best periods. The first is the era when China and the former Soviet Union were allies during the 1950s. On February 14, 1950, then Chinese leader Mao Zedong and leader of the Soviet Union Joseph Stalin signed the *Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance*. The political and military alliance led the two to enter an era of "honeymoon." At that time, China launched a full campaign to copy from the Soviet and imported its technology, culture, theories and political and economic systems. The Soviet lent comprehensive support to China and helped China build modern industries and national institutions. There were close exchanges among the two peoples and profound friendship has remained memorable among the generations of that period. However, then China-Soviet alliance was the product under special historical conditions. Since the moment when the alliance was established, the foundation of their ties brewed factors for split. As an alliance, the two countries were supposed to have the same social systems as well as same theories and domestic and foreign policies. However, as two different countries and ethnicities whose development was at different stages, how could the two be the same in all these aspects? Once discrepancies emerged, they would blame each other for deviating from Marxism and proletarian internationalism or label each other as "traitors." They even called for people from the other country to overthrow their own regime. Such actions were actually violently interfering with the internal politics of the other. It was inevitable to some extent that such an alliance resulted in split and isolation and later, even in hostility.

Compared with the 1950s, the current Sino-Russian relationship has a completely different basis. Due to the June 4 Tiananmen riot in 1989, the West condemned and imposed sanctions on China and China was forced into isolation by the international community. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia clung to the West. In Russian foreign ministry's list of neighboring countries, China was even not included.⁵ The democrats often pointed their fingers at China's "democracy" and "human rights" issues. In China, leftist scholars published articles to criticize the "betrayal" of Mikhail Gorbachev, much like what they did in criticizing Nikita Khrushchev's reforms. At this sensitive juncture, a new subject was testing the wisdom of Chinese

5 In April 1992, then Russian foreign minister Andrey Kozyrev, when referring to Russian foreign policies, said Russia should step into the list of most actively developing democratic countries so as to take a position in these countries, a position endowed by history and geography. He said Russia's neighbors included the US (through the Bering Strait), Japan and Western European countries. "We don't have any discrepancies or conflicts of interests that were unsolvable with them, but there is possibility that we establish friendly relations and future alliances. The key of both is the friendly relations with our neighboring countries. This is perhaps the US, Japan, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, or South Korea." See *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, April 11, 1992.

leaders: How could China which insisted on the rule of the Communist Party and socialism cope with Russia which abandoned the Communist Party and socialism and tried to integrate itself into the Western community? Here was the answer: Chinese leaders publicly stated that what happened to the Soviet Union belonged to its “internal affairs.” In December 1992 when then president Yeltsin visited China, the two sides reached a consensus that the rights of people from different countries to choose their own development paths should be respected and that different social systems and ideologies shouldn’t hinder the normal development of inter-state relations.⁶ Thereafter, respecting the free choice of their people and non-interference had become principles of Sino-Russian ties. As the bilateral relationship evolved and international situation changed, this principle had further developed – from “respecting” people’s choice to “supporting” their free choice. Both “support each other in the right to choose the path of development as well as social and political systems, and offer firm support in core interests involved in each other’s sovereignty, territorial integrity and security”.⁷ In the past 20 years, the two respected each other on an equal footing with no interference of each other’s domestic politics. Therefore, the two stayed in a harmonious manner with no sense of humiliation.

Mutual respect, equality and non-interference have become the most important premises of the formation and development of China-Russia strategic partnership of coordination. In inter-state engagement, respect and equality bear great importance for Chinese people. Since the First Opium War in 1840, China had been suffering invasion and bullying of imperial powers. In the past century, Chinese people with lofty ideals have been struggling to gain equality from the world. But before the establishment of the China-Russia strategic partnership of coordination, no world power had treated China on an equal footing. Japan’s colonial rule of China lasted for half a century and Japan seized numerous resources from China and killed so many Chinese people without any sincere apology so far. Old powers like the UK and France are not as bossy as in the past, but whenever some unrest took place in China, they would support the opposition. Socialist Soviet Union supported China’s revolution on the one hand, but intruded China’s national interest on the other hand. Former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping said the Chinese people had a sense of humiliation when he concluded the history of China-Soviet Union relations.⁸ After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russians finally put down their centuries-old arrogance and

6 “Joint Statement on the Basis of Relations between China and Russia”, *People’s Daily*, December 28, 1992.

7 “China-Russia Joint Statement to Comprehensively Deepen the Strategic Partnership of Coordination”, *People’s Daily*, March 23, 2013.

8 Deng Xiaoping, “End the past, open up the future”, *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Volume 3, People Press, 1993, p.292.

treated the rising China in an equal manner. Therefore, the Chinese people who lived in enormous humiliation especially cherish the real equality and mutual respect in their relations with Russia.

Mutual respect and equality is an important representation of Sino-Russian strategic partnership of coordination as a model of a new type of major power relations. Of course, it can be seen in many other aspects, such as that the two have abandoned the traditional mode of major power relations in history and got rid of the Cold War mentality. They would never run into an arms race or set up a military alliance. Instead, they established a new security concept with mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination as its core. They built up common security with disarmament and establishing trust, and their relationship does not target any third country.

2 China-US-Russia triangle in new era

The development of Sino-Russian relations is mainly driven by domestic factors. But external factors still play a role. If Japan facilitated closer Beijing-Moscow ties before World War II, now it is the US that constitutes the biggest external element in China-Russia friendship.

2.1 US factor and the formation of China-Russia strategic partnership of cooperation

Following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, some Western powers viewed China as the second Soviet Union. Russia was keen on integrating into “Western civilization” back then but the dream was soon shattered. In the first half of 1993, NATO decided to expand eastward to squeeze Russia’s strategic space. The US overtly objected to Russia enjoying any “privileges” in the former Soviet Union region and extending its sphere of influence beyond its borders. Consequently, Russia and China gradually developed closer ties and found converging interests in international issues. In September 1994 when Chinese and Russian state leaders met for the second time, they articulately indicated that they would firmly oppose hegemonism and power politics, and with these terms, they meant Washington.

In 1995 and 1996, Moscow further felt the major threat to its national security came from the West. Meanwhile, Beijing-Washington ties tangled over the issue of Taiwan. Therefore, seeking cooperation in international issues became a common need of China and Russia and establishing a strategic partnership of coordination stood well to reason. If we say the partnership was forged

owing fundamentally to domestic factors, then the US factor was the direct and practical cause.

2.2 China-Russia-US triangle in the 21st century

The development of international landscape and especially Washington's unilateralist and belligerent policy in the name of fighting terrorism and promoting democracy exerted massive influence upon Beijing-Moscow relations.

In March 2003, the US circumvented the UN and invaded Iraq on an unwarranted charge.⁹ The War in Libya in 2011 was another large-scale military strike launched by the US-led Western alliance after the Kosovo War, the War in Afghanistan and the Iraq War. In 2013 the White House was itching to reach to Syria. The conflicts caused some serious uproar in both Russia and China.

Though mired in the Iraq War, the US did not loosen its strategic grip on Russia. NATO admitted the three Baltic states in 2004, expanding its sphere to the former Soviet Union territory. Russia sensed further threat from the West when the US set up anti-missile systems in Poland and the Czech Republic in 2006.

The US incited and supported the Rose Revolution in Georgia and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine by taking advantages of internal contradictions in the two countries, in a bid to establish pro-Western and anti-Russian "democratic governments" there. The new governments asked to join NATO, which meant a nightmare to the Kremlin. The Ukrainian crisis that has rolled out since the end of 2013 is not only an after-effect of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, but also an outcome of the evolution of contradictions in the post-Cold War era. Ukraine has fallen victim to the strife between Russia and the West. According to the Russian elite, if Ukraine swings completely to the West, Russia will never have its day as a global power and will be isolated in Europe, which will turn to a grave geopolitical incident. In reality, the West is intent on reducing Russia to the age of the Grand Duchy of Moscow and descending it to a third-rate country in international affairs.¹⁰

Washington's interference with Moscow's internal affairs constituted a deep-seated cause for their freezing bilateral relations. Russian President Vladimir Putin has ceased regarding "integration into the West" as the country's strategic goal since he assumed office. Instead, he has chosen an independent development path to build a powerful Russia based on social and political

9 The reasons the US gave for invading Iraq were that the country owned weapons of mass destruction and supported Al Qaeda. Later the American government acknowledged that the two reasons do not exist.

10 Интервью С. Рогова, Москва и Вашингтон: нестабильное партнерство//Независимая газета, 31 мая 2006, с.8.

stability. Western nations, including the US, overtly endorsed the opposition forces in Russia as well as accused Putin of embarking on a totalitarian and anti-democratic road and the CIS member states of adopting Sovietization and neo-imperialist policies. This has immensely alarmed and irritated the Kremlin.

Russia underlines independence and opposes external inference, which represents the same stance as China. This shows that the two nations have common positions in major issues related to the path of national development. Russian scholars have noted this point acutely. "In relations with the West and in particular in political and cultural development, Beijing can count on Moscow because the latter is also confronted with the same conundrums".¹¹

The arms race between the US and Russia, though in no way balanced, is far from over.

Since the dawn of the new millennium, China and the US saw considerable development in their bilateral relations, with deepened economic interdependence. Despite constant frictions over issues involving Taiwan, Tibet and human rights, the ties have generally been stable. Nonetheless, problems have been popping up since 2010. Facing a rising Middle Kingdom, the US has somewhat fallen into the Thucydides trap.¹² The US government introduced the "pivot to Asia" policy in 2011, which includes adjusting its military strategy and deployment to transfer its center to the Asia-Pacific region; strengthening its relations with Japan and other allies; intimating connections, including military cooperation with India, Vietnam and other countries which have prolonged border disputes with China; and dominating regional economic collaboration by promoting the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement.

China's disputes with Japan over the Diaoyu Islands and with some Southeast Asian countries over the South China Sea are unresolved historical problems. It is difficult for any statesman to make unilateral concessions when nationalist sentiment is strong. That's why Beijing has been advocating the policy of "shelving territorial disputes and seeking joint development". Objectively speaking, it is a very rational and pragmatic proposal that once led to quite a long time of peace on the East and South China seas. However, these issues have started to escalate rapidly since the White House declared the "rebalancing toward Asia" strategy, straining ties between China and countries involved. In April 2014, US President Barack Obama travelled to Asia to bolster the anti-China clamor in its allies, notably Japan and the Philippines amid an intractable

11 Яков Михайлович Бергер, Оправдание имени. Глобальная стратегия Китая//Независимая газета, 27 июня 2006.

12 Ancient Athenian historian Thucydides cited the growth of the power of Athens and the alarm this inspired in Sparta "made war inevitable."

Ukraine situation.

Prior to the breakout of the Ukrainian crisis, Washington regarded Beijing as its biggest rival and Russia the second largest. Though some in Russia proposed that the country should just watch the fight between the two biggest powers in the world and then reap the spoils, the mainstream society did not dampen its interest in forging a strategic partnership of cooperation with China. Evgeny P. Bazhanov, Rector of the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, said that Russia has every reason to view a rising China as its long-term reliable partner when talking about the triangle relations among China, Russia and the US. Why? Because Washington is unwilling to share its global leadership with any other nation, and has been putting greater pressure on Beijing. In order to boycott the US hegemony, China needs a partner and Russia looks like a good companion. On the one hand, the relatively weaker Russia has yet to threaten China and on the other, it is also reluctant to see extending US hegemony. He said, "Now it seems that Washington wants to hold back Beijing from rising but we support Beijing's effort. China views Russia as a reliable partner, so we have every reason to do the same".¹³

In general, China, Russia and the US have some profound contradictions that are insurmountable in a short time. First, the US has been trying to prevent powers possible to pose threats to it from rising in order to dominate the world. It regards Russia as a potential rival and thwarts it from expanding its sphere of influence by enlarging of NATO. Second, there is the CIS issue. Moscow tries to defend its sphere of influence in the former Soviet Union region via reintegration while Washington strives to consolidate the status quo and urge other CIS members to lurch to the West to prevent resurgence of the Soviet Union. At the same time, the Taiwan question has been a standing thorn in Sino-US relations which are also perplexed by disputes in the South and East China seas recently. The White House has been making trouble for Beijing with various interventions to hinder the rise of China. The third point is that the US thinks Russia and China as "autocratic" states and often interferes with their internal affairs in the name of "democracy" and "human rights". Last but not least, Russia seeks to keep relative balance in strategic nuclear forces while the US tries hard to break the balance and gain unilateral advantages. Washington has deployed anti-missile systems in Europe and Asia, posing a threat to both China and Russia. Therefore China and Russia have the converging need to make concerted effort to constrain the US hegemony.

13 Евгений Петрович Бажанов, Не бойтесь китайского дракона. Как России строить отношение с Поднебесной//Независимая газета, 2 августа 2013.

2.3 Comparison between China-US-Russia triangle and China-US-Soviet Union triangle

The China-US-Russia triangle constitutes a major influential factor upon the world's strategic architecture. Nonetheless, the current triangle is apparently different from the China-US-Soviet Union relations in the 1970s.

In the first place, the two triangles have different natures. In the Cold War era when the West and the East were at a stalemate, ties among China, the US and the Soviet Union featured an clear and explicit structure. But now in an age of economic globalization amid multipolarization, the China-US-Russia triangle is a complicated situation. There are neither confrontations between Washington and Moscow nor standoffs between Washington and Beijing. Between China and the US, and between Russia and the US, there are contradictions and conflicts as well as numerous common interests. Beijing and Moscow make concerted effort in a bid to check Washington instead of forming an anti-US alliance. After the breakout of the Ukrainian crisis and the integration of the Crimea into Russia, Washington-Moscow relations have reached the lowest point since the end of the Cold War. But Obama said, "This is not another Cold War that we're entering into. After all, unlike the Soviet Union, Russia leads no bloc of nations... The United States and NATO do not seek any conflict with Russia."¹⁴ The US "pivot to Asia" policy to contain China is generally preventive, with the purpose of creating a favorable strategic environment for itself. Washington has been striving to promote a new type of major power relations with Beijing while keeping it at bay.

Then, the then China-US-Soviet Union triangle was more of a zero-sum game, as any bilateral relations would directly have impact on the other two. But today's China-US-Russia triangle poses a different shape. As stated above, the Sino-Russian strategic partnership of coordination abides by the basic principle of respecting each other's right to make independent decisions on internal affairs. China is glad to see the improvement and development of Russia-US relations, so is Russia.

Third, fundamental changes have taken place regarding the bilateral ties among the three countries. Washington and Moscow have far gone beyond their status during the Cold War. Russia has become a member of G8 and set up the NATO-Russia Council with NATO, a permanent cooperation mechanism. even thou it has been suspended due to the Ukrainian crisis. Russia and NATO have conducted effective cooperation in counter-terrorism, arms control, disarmament and prevention of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Russia-

14 Part of a speech by Obama at the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels, reported by Time.com on March 26, 2014.

US trade volume in 2012 mounted to almost \$40 billion. The US and China are the two biggest economies in the world, with a trade volume of more than \$520 billion in 2013 alone. They are highly interdependent on each other. In addition, the two powers keep close relations in people-to-people exchanges. The US' education and technology systems as well as its legal environment have been attracting an increasing number of Chinese, many of whom expect to send their children there for further study. From 2007 to 2012, the number of Chinese students in the US increased by 30 percent per year. In 2013 the number reached 236,000, accounting for a quarter of international student in the US.¹⁵ Overseas Chinese have become the fifth biggest ethnic minority in the US, with its number rocketing from 430,000 in 1970 to 4.03 million in 2010. This once mysterious oriental country has been appealing to more and more Americans with its long-standing history, splendid culture and present economic prosperity.¹⁶ In 2009, Obama announced a plan to send 100,000 US students to China within the next four years, which is said to be close to finalization.

The China-US-Russia triangle suffers from imbalanced development, and each has its own unique features. If Beijing's ties with Moscow have surpassed its relations with Washington in politics and national security, then China-US relations have far exceeded the ties between China and Russia in economic and social aspects. And if we say it is government that has played the primary role in putting ahead the development of Sino-Russian relations, then it is people-to-people exchanges and market that advance China-US ties.

3 Conclusion

- The China-Russia Strategic Partnership of Coordination is driven by powerful internal and external forces and therefore boasts comprehensive institutional guarantee. It can be predicted that the two countries will enter a new era of development based on the current foundation.
- The US will not change its hegemonic policy in the foreseeable future and China and Russia will not change their path of independent development, which determines that Washington's contradictions with Beijing and Moscow are structural, with inevitable conflicts of interests. It is necessary for China and Russia, now at a relatively disadvantageous

15 *Trend Report on Chinese Students for Overseas Study 2013*, <http://www.eol.cn/html/lx/baogao2013/pagel.shtml>.

16 *Report on Overseas Chinese 2012*, Huaqiao University and the Social Sciences Academic Press (China), <http://chinese.people.com.cn/n/2012/1218/o42314-19930192.html>.