Upstart: How China Became a Great Power

A Shorenstein APARC Book Talk with Oriana Skylar Mastro


George Krompacy, Publications Manager at APARC, henceforth GK: Oriana Skylar Mastro is a center fellow here at the Shorenstein Asia Pacific Research Center and a courtesy assistant professor of political science at Stanford University, where her research focuses on Chinese military and security policy, Asia-Pacific security issues, war termination, and coercive diplomacy. Along with her academic duties, Mastro continues to serve in the United States Air Force Reserve at the Pentagon, as Deputy Director of Reserve Global China Strategy. Her most recent book, “Upstart: How China Became a Great Power,” was recently published by Oxford University Press.

Dr. Mastro, thanks for doing a Shorenstein Asia Pacific Research Center book talk.

Oriana Skylar Mastro, henceforth OSM: Yeah. Thank you for having me.

GK: Your book, Upstart, uses a novel approach to analyze China's strategies over the last years or so to rapidly grow its economy, foreign relations, and military readiness. Your methodology doesn't come purely from political science. So can you break down your analysis of China's meteoric rise and how you came up with this approach?

OSM: Yeah, sure. There was personal experience and also some experience with the political science literature that inspired this book. So on the anecdotal side, anyone who works on China or any other country for that matter, you often find yourself, not only in academic writing but also in policy advising, telling people it's not a good idea to mirror image, right?

To assume that another country is like the United States when trying to understand it. Well, this is an acceptable practice. Everyone thinks mirror imaging is bad. people usually say it, and then in the next sentence, make an assumption about China based on our understanding of what the United States would do in that context. And so the political science literature does talk about emulation. And the idea is that to become a great power, you do what previous great powers did that were successful. You basically emulate the established great power. It is a theory that argues precisely that mirror imaging is not so bad because all countries act alike. When looking at China's rise, I recognized that as a rising power, you have a lot of different incentives.

You have a weaker resource position, maybe, as a second-mover in certain areas, you don't have certain advantages. You're a different country, and so there's some strategies or processes that don't suit you and your competitive advantages. And in thinking about this, you mentioned I worked with another literature. I turned to the business literature on competition, and this proved
very fruitful for two reasons. First, the rise and fall of powers are rare events in international relations. We study it because it's so impactful, but we don't have a lot of cases. While the start and end of companies is something for which there are thousands and thousands of cases, and because of that, there's a whole literature on how a start-up, a new company, should try to approach competition.

And when I read that literature, it really resonated for me about China's approach to competing with the United States. And so the book builds on the political science literature and the business literature to put forth this strategy, which I call the upstart strategy, which is the mix of emulation or pursuing US strategies, in similar areas where the United States is doing it; exploitation, which is adopting U.S. strategies, but in different a new areas of competition where the United States isn't so present; and then entrepreneurial actions, which is when China does something completely differently. And the book consists of case studies in the economic, military, and political realms, that talk about, when they emulated, when they exploited, and when they were more entrepreneurial in their approach and then tries to put forth an argument about why a certain pathway was chosen at a given period of time.

**GK:** Thanks for explaining that. If you were to boil your book down into one sentence, do you think this would be accurate — “Don't assume China will act the same way as the United States or other would-be superpowers.”

**OSM:** Exactly, exactly. And then I would follow that up with a caveat or an additional statement, which is: just because they do things differently doesn't mean it's ineffective.

**GK:** In the three areas that you mentioned — emulation, exploitation, and entrepreneurship — can you provide a successful and unsuccessful example of each?

**OSM:** Right. So thanks for pointing that out. I don't want to give the impression that China is so strategic and everything they do is perfect. There are also examples in the book, where I argue that they chose the wrong strategy. So five factors determine whether China chooses emulation, exploitation, or entrepreneurship. And those are things like whether or not they have competitive advantages, how they think the United States will respond, will they see it as threatening or reassuring a certain Chinese behavior, the Chinese view on whether or not the US strategy is efficient or effective, and whether or not there are gaps to exploit to begin with. And then in terms of that competitive advantage, also their liabilities, which in this case includes a very strong focus on how it would impact Communist Party rule.

And so I look at a lot of the Chinese literature to try to really understand why they choose one over the other. And this is very important because the rationale provides us insight into what would change, right? If the reason to do something different is, “Wow, the US strategy is really great, we wish we could do that, but we're not powerful enough” Maybe as they become more powerful, they would change course. But if the rationale is, you know, “What the United States is doing is really stupid,” then even as they become more powerful, they won't change course.
So some of the examples and the case studies we think about, like the entrepreneurial approach, emulation, and exploitation. In foreign policy, one area of emulation is China's approach to mediation diplomacy. They're trying to present themselves as an international mediator, to buy power and influence in the international system but also to reassure countries of their responsible role in the international system.

Exploitation is something like arms sales, which the United States uses as a tool of foreign policy. But in this case, you know, China does sell arms, but only really to countries that can't buy them from the United States, right? So there are these gaps that they can exploit and they sell them to countries that can't buy from the United States, either because of human rights embargoes or they're just too poor to be able to afford those arms or certain types of technologies, like drones, for example, that the United States, due to some treaty obligations, couldn't, couldn't sell and then more entrepreneurial are things like strategic partnerships instead of alliances. China doesn't have formal alliances with countries.

One of the failures of emulation in foreign policy is when they try to emulate in soft power. The Chinese do not have competitive advantages in soft power. It does not support CCP rule; soft power is something that comes from civil society, which China doesn't have. So they spend a lot of money trying to promote that soft power image, but they still can't really catch up with the United States.

In the military realm, where my work is most heavily focused, there are similar type of approaches. For emulation, China does humanitarian aid in disaster relief or peacekeeping operations, the same way the United States does. In exploitation, one of the main things they do is something called the anti-access area denial strategy, and there's nothing that is about exploiting gaps and vulnerabilities more than this. The Chinese military spent a lot of time and effort trying to figure out where U.S. gaps and vulnerabilities were, then they developed specific weapon systems and doctrines to to target those. And then entrepreneurship. I talk about nuclear strategy and how they protect overseas interests because China doesn't have overseas bases the way the United States does, and they haven't relied on a large nuclear arsenal the way the United States has. And there's many other differences with their nuclear posture, strategy, and organization, and such. And one of the failures there is aircraft carriers, again, trying to spend a lot of time and effort on building those aircraft carriers. And it doesn't even come close to reaching the capability the United States has.

And then in the chapter on economics, I discuss things like their attempts to internationalize the renminbi, which is more like an emulation that hasn't been successful to date. Entrepreneurship, where I put the Belt and Road Initiative in that, and exploitation, which is partially BRI and also free trade and their approaches to the free trade in some aspects is exploitation and in others emulation. And then, industrial policy, which is another thing that they do differently than the United States to promote innovation.

**GK:** Before we take a look at foreign policy and economics, I have a somewhat offbeat question. I wonder if it’s your background in the military and as a strategic planner that
informed your tendency to avoid the use of normative language as much as possible. You state in your introduction, “This book is not meant to be a condemnation of China, nor is it meant to praise the country. When I say that a strategy is effective or successful, I do not condone that approach.” Was this a hard needle to thread? At times you do seem to be somewhat in admiration of China's choices. On the other hand, when you talk about mediation, you say “Whether mediation leads to conflict resolution is, for our purposes, a secondary consideration.” See what I mean?

OSM: Yeah. Like when I talk about the Belt and Road Initiatives, similar things. Right. Whether Belt and Road is good for the countries that sign up to it, that's a separate question from whether it gives China power and influence. I don't know if it's my military background to think more strategically about this, or that I decided to join the military because I'm naturally inclined to do so. But the problem is, and what I'm trying to get at here in maybe a more diplomatic way, is the issue of China's rise and U.S. competition with China has become a highly sensitive and politicized topic, among US elites, I would say at universities, in particular, but also in government.

And as a researcher who works on these very sensitive areas, I find that people have a hard time accepting new ideas that run contrary to their value systems, which is why I had to write this whole book with so much data. Many think that what China does is not supposed to work, or it's hard for them to believe that China is regime agnostic because, as an autocracy, we have this notion that they prefer working with autocracies, which is actually not the case.

And so I do think I try to be a little bit more pragmatic because, for the United States to have effective and correct strategies, we first have to understand what the situation is. Now, in terms of admiration, it's funny you say that, as my husband always jokes that people always think I'm a China hawk because I write a lot about conflict with China and actively plan and think about conflict with China.

And of course, you know, in my U.S. military role I spend a lot of time doing that, though I'm obviously participating in this podcast in my civilian capacity. But I don't want us to be blind to the realities that a lot of what China does has been effective. And that's why I start out with it in the book—Political scientists would argue, “What is success?” It's hard to measure success. So I try to nip that question in the bud by having a whole chapter about different approaches and metrics for power, whether it is social power, you know, discourse power, basically every political scientist and what they've said about what makes a country a great power, and show that China has met that standard.

So whatever we think about China, whatever we think their impact is on the international world order, I think it's somewhat indisputable that over the past years — when they went from a country with a smaller GDP than France, a nonexistent, nonfunctioning military, very few foreign relations, and not really a participant in international institutions — to where they are today that it has been impressive, what they've managed to accomplish in the past years.
GK: Thanks. That's a very illuminating answer. Turning to foreign policy in a section of your book called Manipulating International Institutions. You say, “The logic that institutional enmeshment would lead to reform, encouraged the United States to grant China most-favored nation status and support its accession to the WTO” (the World Trade Organization). So was the United States duped, or did it fool itself? Should it have blocked accession? Or were the United States and other nations short-sighted to assume that China would play strictly by the rules?

OSM: This is a great question because this really highlights the undercurrent of why I wrote this book. I don't like to say that we underestimated or overestimated the Chinese threat. I just think we mischaracterized it.

So in this case, for example, it's not like I think we shouldn't have promoted Chinese involvement in the WTO. But again, because we saw that institution in a certain way, and we see international institutions largely in a certain way, and we understand how we interact with them, we assumed that's how China was going to interact with them. Now, in a lot of cases, especially with the UN, it's exactly that China is working within the rules and norms of the international institution that has made them successful.

The co-opting of international institutions was things like (and I have a data set about this in the book) focusing on getting Chinese nationals in senior management positions and leadership positions so that they could set the agenda and direct the work of key international institutions. Now, is this not following the rules? Well, I think, from the U.S. perspective, it's more that what they ended up doing was more effective than we thought they'd be. And they were able to change the direction of the institution while following a lot of the rules within it. And then there are some loopholes, like with trade organizations, where China is not following the rules in certain areas. They see a loophole and they're going to exploit it.

So the way I think about it is if we just had thought a little bit more about those institutions and hadn't assumed that China was going to act the way we were going to act, then maybe we could have protected some aspects of it and created new norms or rules in certain areas to constrain Chinese behavior more. For example, to be a member of the UN Human Rights Commission or be at a high level you have to subject yourself to more internal reporting or verification of your human rights practices, or something that would have created a hurdle that China would have said, “You know, this isn't worth it to us.” So I think part of the problem was, we assumed that China was going to see the world the way we saw it once they participated more in it.

And we also learned that a lot of things we think are rules are actually not. They're norms of behavior, and a lot of those norms of behavior weren't as strong as we thought they were. And so having to do more of the work to build international consensus on norms is now very important. But it's not so much, I think, the fault of China for recognizing those weaknesses and exploiting them. It's also on the United States for not recognizing those weaknesses and buttressing them as we get China more involved in the international order.
GK: What about China’s activities in the South China Sea? China ratified the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in Why would it do that if the convention was going to cause China so much pushback a couple of decades later? Is it to some degree forced to engage in its current behavior because of its reliance on anti-access area denial strategy?

So this is the Chinese approach to lawfare. And I do talk about these gray zone activities in the book as being somewhat entrepreneurial, and that they're different from how the U.S. military operates. But this is a good example of — so, China signed UNCLOS, right? But then they wanted to use that legal foundation as a framework for promoting their own understanding.

So China then also added an addendum of their domestic interpretation of what UNCLOS means, which undermined some of that power in terms of legitimacy, maybe not legally, and then they used that law to build their claim for control of the South China Sea.

People always say, “China just says the South China Sea is theirs.” It's actually much more complicated than that. It's multiple steps. They use the UNCLOS definition of internal waters, which are waterways, like a river inside a country. Foreign powers are not allowed to sail down the Mississippi River. Some countries, because they are a collection of islands, they get this UNCLOS ruling that they are an archipelagic nation, meaning that you can't sail between the islands.

So the first thing China did is sort of misapply this and say, “this applies to some of the islands in the South China Sea, so that those waterways are internal waters.” So that's their first level of legal argument for why they control it. Then, because they treat those islands as a grouping, they measure the territorial sea, an exclusive economic zone from that. Then, the problem is exclusive economic zones. What is the interpretation of the level of control a country has in that — there are gaps there, right? The United States says it's just economic activity that you are in control of, and China says that military vessels, by definition, don't constitute peaceful passage. So military, any sort of military activity — sailing, patrolling through another country's EEZ — has to be declared.

And it isn't only China that says this. Brazil, India, and some other countries have similar views. Again, you need a consensus on some of these issues to make China really look bad. And so the majority of their claims is actually using some of that international law, like misapplying it.

And then engaging in these gray zone activities, which is using a lot of nonmilitary vessels like coast guards and other law enforcement, risk manipulations, so engaging in dangerous activities to convince other countries to leave the area versus directly attacking them, as a way to operationalize that control. So again, we would say, “Okay, you've signed this and you're in violation of it,” but they would say, “No, we're not in violation, but let me tell you all the ways we aren't.” And by the way, the United States hasn't even ratified it, which makes it hard on the international stage for the United States to get the support to criticize China.
GK: So I guess it's a combination of exploitation and an entrepreneurial subversion of understandings.

OSM: Yeah, exactly. So manipulation is very important. And only if you're a part of the group can you then change what the group is doing.

GK: Turning to another big subject, Taiwan, which I guess falls under both headings of foreign policy and military strategy, you've spoken extensively about the possibility of war over Taiwan. I wonder if there's a chance that you yourself have fallen into the trap of looking at the situation through a traditional superpower lens. Could there be the possibility that China would prefer to maintain the status quo with Taiwan and that a U.S. misunderstanding of its wishes could create the very conflict that we're trying to avoid?

OSM: Well, I guess I was very vocal on the issue because the conventional wisdom was the opposite. The conventional wisdom, I think, largely until recently, was that, because China is so enmeshed in the global economy, they would never want to risk the costs, the economic costs associated with taking Taiwan by force, that Taiwan was not so important to them, that countries no longer use force to achieve territorial aims.

And so what I tried to do in my work on Taiwan is to say, "Okay, the United States, you think Taiwan isn't worth it?" But from the Chinese perspective, it is an extremely important interest, very connected to CCP legitimacy. And on top of that, while we assume, maybe like we assumed those international institutions would constrain China somehow, we assume that their role in the global economy has changed their thinking about the role of the use of force.

But from what I can tell of my interactions and interviews in China, as well as reading Chinese literature, that's just not the case. And indeed, a lot of these strategies I lay out about building power and influence were designed to neutralize responses to any activities that China wants to engage in that the world might not like, for example, an attack on Taiwan. I don't focus heavily in my own research on the economic realm. But in my discussions with leaders around the world, from Singapore to Japan to European countries, if asked if they would cease all trade with China if China attacked Taiwan, the answer is usually no. And those strategic partnerships that I alluded to, most of them have a clause in which countries sign on to agreeing that they won't let political issues like Taiwan get in the way of their economic relationship.

So that's kind of the Chinese use of economic power. And so I would say that I don't fall in the trap because what I'm trying to do is explain that China views the situation differently and its leadership measures the costs and benefits differently. And while we might think there are all these constraints to Chinese behavior, those are not actually in place. And then add on to that military balance of power. Hopefully, my readers get a sense from the book of how that military balance has changed.
One of the things that people often say is “Oh, but the United States would stop that invasion, so China would never do it,” which just suggests that there isn’t a deep understanding of how this type of operation would work.

**GK:** Thanks for clarifying that for me. You mentioned economics and I was wondering about economic sanctions. They are a foreign policy tool that the United States has long employed. And you note that beginning around China too, has increasingly used this tool. How does China's use of sanctions differ from the US case?

**OSM:** So I put this more in the category of exploitation, like using a U.S. strategy in a different way. Because the Chinese use more of these unilateral sanctions to show their discontent about how that country is approaching largely Chinese domestic political situations. That's not how the United States does it. We're usually showing we're unhappy with human rights or other behaviors that go against international norms. But it's not like if a country makes a statement about our immigration policy at home there would be sanctioned for it. So this is a unique Chinese way.

Also how they do it: U.S. sanctions are very direct and open and the U.S. government will put on those sanctions. Then we'll say why we're doing it. We'll say when they're going to stop. But Chinese sanctions, a lot of them are not even official. What we see is just the Chinese not engaging in certain types of economic activity or buying certain things, but they might say, “No, we never sanctioned Australia. We never sanctioned South Korea.” But it is much more of a political statement of, “We don't like what you’re saying about China,” versus specific types of activities.

**GK:** That gives us good entry into economics. I know you’re not an economist, but I'm currently editing Michael Bowman's book, “Walking Out,” which is about how the United States has turned its back on the international system of trade that it helped create. One of the issues that Beeman discusses is domestic disagreement over incorporating values like environmental protection and labor rights into trade agreements. With China's financial might, is the era of being able to export U.S. democratic and other values by relying on economic leverage over?

**OSM:** So I think the United States truly hasn't had a clear strategy towards the developing world for a very long period of time. It is clear in all aspects of the book. Whether it is high-level visits where Xi Jinping has visited some of the poorest countries in Africa, places a U.S. president has never stepped foot in, or some of the language about regime agnosticism that is really popular with the developing world. And again, not just autocracies. We have this view that autocrats want to do whatever they want. And of course, that's the case but there's also this history in the developing world, that they didn't have great experiences maybe dealing with certain international institutions or with the United States. And they like the idea that China says, “Listen, this is how we did it. And if you want to learn from us, we're happy to tell you how we did it. But we recognize that your country is different, and what you need is different from what we did.” And I think we underestimate how powerful this message is to the developing world.
So again, I don't want to say that we should abandon any sort of support for human rights, but these are things that, in some cases, can't be forced. And what you want to do is think of the factors that support more democratic principles and then support those factors instead, like building civil society or helping countries build a stronger education system, or doing media training for what free and open media looks like to certain journalists to encourage that kind of direction, versus just saying, “Either do this and figure it out or we can't have this type of relationship with you.”

**GK:** Your final chapter is recommendations for the United States. But before that, when you discussed how China approached certain challenges or acted on them, I often thought that such an approach would not work for the United States because of the problem of the four-year presidential cycle, especially now with the extreme divisions that are manifesting in our culture and our politics. In your introduction, however, you note the other side of the coin, saying “This drive for power and influence is not the only motivation for China's behavior. Unsurprisingly, the Chinese Communist Party's insistence on strong state control to maintain domestic power also shapes how China competes, often in ways that are problematic both for the US-led world order and for China itself.” So I wonder if you could give an example of how the CCP’s concern with keeping its place domestically has caused the Chinese government to act against its best interests internationally?

**OSM:** So again, I don't want to make the judgment, you know, “what is China’s best interest” is kind of a hard judgment to make. But I would say that there are some things that seem like it makes their strategy less effective. So, like the internationalization of the renminbi. Most economists would say if they lifted export controls, they would be much more successful in internationalizing the renminbi. But lifting export controls would undermine aspects of party rule. So it won’t be done. Same with, maybe against their interests, something like soft power, where that kind of heavy-handed censorship tends to create certain products that are just not interesting or fun. And so they have a hard time promoting soft power largely because of that CCP rule.

Now, what I like to say is, it's not that China is in any way better than the United States at this step. It's not like China is more strategic, but what they are better at, I think, is recognizing what their weaknesses are and then not competing in those areas. So since BRI came out, the United States is now trying to compete with China by building infrastructure because China is building infrastructure, when we don't have an advantage in that. Is that really the area that we want to compete with China in, building infrastructure, especially in the developing world? Or do we have different competitive advantages?

So I think the Chinese are much more open regarding what their strengths and weaknesses are. They might say, “Okay, because we're not a democracy, this isn't going to work for us.” But I very rarely hear the United States say, “Okay, because we are a democracy, this is not the best strategy for us. Let's pursue something different that caters to what we're good at.” So I think
that is the the distinction, and not so much that the system is better than the other in terms of competition for power.

Let me be clear that obviously, I think democracy is the better system for a lot of other reasons. But when it comes to competing for global power, I think there are some advantages to both systems. It's your ability to cater to your advantage and avoid competition in areas where you can't compete. That really determines how far our country goes.

**GK:** This touches on my next question. You recommend that the United States commit more funds to developing countries, and stop tying development assistance to political reform, to even engage with authoritarian regimes. You say the United States should play the long game, but is that realistic in today’s political environment? Some of the flexibility that you illustrate in China’s behavior is a product of the one-party state. How can the United States compete with that?

**OSM:** I think, even before you get to the duration of a policy, it’s whether or not an administration even puts a policy in place. And I think in some cases, our politics even prevents that, because, in government, the way it works is — unless you are 100 percent sure that something will go through and work, so your critics can’t throw you under the bus for it — you don’t even want to try it. The issue with entrepreneurial actions, in some cases, is they require a degree of experimentation. China, before they announced Belt and Road or before they announce strategic partnerships, they always try and see how they go.

It’s like telling a company CEO “You need to come up with a strategy for growth of profits and you can’t deviate from it for the next years.” How well would that company do? You have to be able to adjust. And I think one of the difficulties is any adjustment in policy is seen as a failure.

So leaders are unwilling to give things a try, to be able to even figure out what would be the best approach. For example, maybe it makes sense to enhance our engagement with autocracies instead of disengaging when they’re doing things we don’t like to try to shape their choices. What would be the best way of doing that? Increasing embassy personnel, having them over for visits, whatever it is. Some of those things might be bad ideas, but it’s hard to tell until you’ve tried it. And so I think our domestic political system not only makes it difficult for policies to continue administration after administration, but it also increases the cost of entrepreneurial thinking for any one administration that might be interested in implementing a new approach during their four years.

**GK:** So maybe what the United States needs is a spinoff that could take on more risks and respond to these challenges?

**OSM:** Yeah. Or just leadership. That's my understanding. It depends on how you think about leadership. Is leadership a U.S. president just doing what the American people say they want right now? Or is it also creating a vision for the American people and leading them in that direction? We can have different views on that.
I tend to follow more of the latter. And I think this rise of China and the challenge of China is of such importance and such urgency that you need leaders to put their political aspirations aside and think in this more calculated, strategic way, of just like, “What would be best for the United States in the future, even if in the short term it costs me politically.” We need that kind of leadership and that kind of courage in our system for us to be able to compete with China.

GK: I know we're running short on time, but I wanted to tell you that I had a laugh-out-loud moment with one of your recommendations. You say that since the United States often enjoys an advantage when China tries to directly emulate its behavior. That, quote, “Given this situation, the United States should encourage more emulation on China’s part, possibly through messaging about how China cannot be considered a legitimate great power until it possesses certain capabilities or engages in certain types of activities.” I read this and, just the image of Tom Sawyer, trying to trick people into painting, into whitewashing, rather, his fence, popped into my head. It seems like a real psychological trick. Do you think this could work?

OSM: Well, one of the arguments for when China does deviate from the strategy — I've already listed a few of these cases, like soft power and the aircraft carrier. It's because they're not considering primarily those five factors that I laid out, but instead, they seem to be driven by concerns of prestige. So even though it goes against their interests, does it make sense strategically?

They're putting a lot of money into things, not getting a lot of bang for the buck. It seems as if their desire for prestige can drive them to make irrational decisions, and that's why I actually think it's possible. If you get into that prestige cycle with China and be like — “Well, you know, you're not really a great power unless you have an aircraft carrier; you're not really a great power unless you have soft power; you're not really a great power until you do certain things that are difficult and costly” — that I think it could work. But I think the hardest thing is not so much whether it can work with the Chinese, but getting over our own understandings, because a lot of what happens with emulation, and one of the reasons China doesn't always do it, is it can often be seen as a direct challenge to U.S. interests.

I like to give this example: If, years ago, John Mearsheimer was right and China pursued military alliances with Mexico, we would have recognized China as a threat much sooner because that's what we do. So part of the reason to do things differently, a lot of research shows, is that it takes longer to identify those activities, and you tend to underestimate them.

So when we look at China building up its nuclear force or speculation about China having overseas bases, this heightens people's threat perceptions because it's what we do for power. And the immediate response is, “How do we make sure China doesn't do these things?” But what I'm saying, very controversially, is actually, it would be good for us If China did those things. Because they would be spending a lot of money in certain areas that would decrease their key power in other areas, and they would not be able to compete with us in global power projection, for example.
GK: All right, Dr. Mastro, last question. You've worked on this book for a long time. What's your next project?

OSM: I am two-thirds of the way through my next book, which is on the history and drivers of China-Russia military alignment and implications for global security. So that's the next project I'm currently drafting the manuscript for.

GK: Sounds great. Thanks for taking the time out and talking with us.

OSM: Yeah. Thank you for having me.