



Title	Liselotte Osgaard, China and Coexistence : Beijing ' s National Security Strategy for the Twenty First Century, Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore: 2012. 242 p., ISBN-13: 978-1421405636
Author(s)	Zolotukhin, Ivan
Citation	Eurasia Border Review, 4(2)
Issue Date	2013
Doc URL	http://hdl.handle.net/2115/54130
Type	bulletin (other)
File Information	EBR4_2_006.pdf



[Instructions for use](#)

**Liselotte Osgaard, *China and Coexistence: Beijing's National Security Strategy for the Twenty First Century*, Johns Hopkins University Press:
Baltimore: 2012. 242 p., ISBN-13: 978-1421405636**

Ivan Zolotukhin*

The rise of China is seen by many scholars and politicians as a great challenge, not only for the U.S. but for the whole world. The increasing geopolitical, financial, and economic significance of China is indisputable, despite Beijing's insistence on its own security concerns and problems of insufficient natural resources for industrial development. Meanwhile the contemporary global security system is very fragile, and dependant on the aspirations of rising powers challenging the international order. The book of Liselotte Osgaard of the Royal Danish Defence College, Institute for Strategy, outlines Beijing's strategic agenda regarding China's position and interests in relation to the rest of the world.

By focusing on the issues of principal concern for Chinese leaders and their international counterparts, the author provides an account of the background, substance, and development of China's national security strategy during the past two decades. Peaceful coexistence has been the key to understanding China's national security strategy since the emergence of the People's Republic of China (PRC). It stemmed from the PRC's desire to carve out an independent position in the 1950s, and for approximately 40 years Chinese foreign policy was based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, which were subsequently written into the Chinese Constitution in 1982. However, in describing contemporary China's national strategic security, the author demonstrates that coexistence is interlinked with nationalism, which in turn reaches back to the nineteenth century expansion of the European imperial powers. Thus a combination of two strategies are examined in the monograph and diverse cases are used to analyze the extent to which China uses a strategy of coexistence in order to enhance its relative international position.

Chapter 1, is entitled "The Art of Walking on Two Legs: China's National Security Strategy," in which Osgaard remarks that she considers national strategy as a complex object that "can be seen to operate on three different levels: grand strategy, security strategy and theater strategy" (p.3-4). The first two strategies are the practical expression of peaceful coexistence adjusted to the interests and demands that emerge as a result of inherent dynamics within specific issue areas. Theater strategy involves the coordinated and synchronized application of methods and instruments within a defined area. As stipulated in the book, China's theater strategy encompasses the planning and implementation of strategies in the South China Sea; the Sino-Russian border dispute; the Sino-Indian border dispute; China's United Nations Security Council (UNSC) strategy on the Iranian nuclear issue; the Darfur issue in Sudan; civic and political rights in Myanmar; China's Taiwan

* Ivan Zolotukhin is an Associate Professor at the School of Regional and International Studies at the Far Eastern Federal University, Vladivostok. He can be contacted at: zolivnik@mail.ru.

strategy; its strategy in managing internal uprisings in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region; and relations with Japan.

Chapter 2 presents an overview of the different approaches to peaceful coexistence available in the international relations literature, the different concepts of coexistence applied by other states after World War II, and alternative methods for the application of coexistence presented in the strategic studies literature. The author writes that historically states have applied different concepts of coexistence, focusing on comparing the “Chinese style” with that of the Indian and Soviet ones.

Chapter 3 discusses the application of a strategy of coexistence in four historical cases: Austria in the first half of the nineteenth century, Prussia in the second half of the nineteenth century, Great Britain during the interwar years of the twentieth century, and the Soviet Union during the early phase of the Cold War. Osgaard remarks that the cases of these four states were chosen because the change in their relative international position during the period of analysis is inadequately explained by other factors, such as economic development, influence from other powers, or significant changes in military capabilities.

Chapter 4 is devoted to instances of China’s strategy to establish conflict resolution mechanisms that circumscribe the use of force in the international system. The author cites three reasons for selecting the case-studies of the South China Sea, the Chinese-Russian border, and the Chinese-Indian border disputes: 1) border disputes are fundamental to the definition of China as a physical entity; 2) they represent a type of conflict that must be addressed by the regime because a state cannot avoid minimum interaction with its neighbors; 3) they engage the issue of Chinese nationalism due to the fact that the Chinese concept of nation is closely intertwined with the territory defined as part of the Chinese homeland. China’s policies on borders have formed a central part of its co-existence strategy (p. 87).

The above-mentioned cases highlight the similarities in China’s conflict resolution strategies in different settings and among different actors. It has shown that maritime disputes in the South China Sea are more troublesome for China than that of territorial ones with Russia and India. This is partly because one of China’s main concerns is its location in a region where the US alliance system is especially strong, and China’s goal in the South China Sea is to maintain its presence and gradually expand its control over critical sea lanes without jeopardizing policy coordination with the other littoral states (p. 92).

Sino-Russian relations are integrated within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and China has managed to establish defense cooperation with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, which provides China with a military presence in Central Asia. To some extent, China sees the development of close ties with the Central Asian states and Russia as necessary for stability in its Far West, and Russia views its partnership with China as a means of securing the Russian Far East.¹ As a consequence, the idea of consolidating peaceful coexistence by means of non-aggression, equality, and mutual benefit has been used to restore mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity

¹ Bobo Lo, *Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the New Geopolitics* (London: Chatman House, 2008) p.21.

between China and Russia (p. 112).

China has adopted a strategy of coexistence in its border dispute with India, while simultaneously expanding its presence and influence on the Indian subcontinent. However, China also appears to violate border agreements that have already been signed by the two parties in order to secure its alleged entitlement to jurisdiction over Tibet, which it defines as part of the Chinese homeland. India is likely to split its interests evenly between Washington and Beijing, maximizing its national interests by increasingly relying on US security guarantees while expanding policy coordination and cooperation with China. New Delhi is therefore an unlikely replacement for Russia as Beijing's principal strategic partner vis-à-vis global security (p. 125).

China appears to apply different standards in its strategy for resolution of border disputes, which gives rise to uncertainty about its intentions. It is obvious that China's model of coexistence is aimed at compromise and stability, and the peaceful pursuit of national interests without encroachment on the common interests. However, the occasional manifestation of elements of coercion in Chinese activities in its borderlands undermines its efforts to convince its neighbors of its long-term commitment to coexistence (p. 127).

Chapter 5 examines Chinese strategies in the UNSC to determine the extent to which China uses coexistence to make within-system adjustments by means of conference diplomacy. The three selected cases: the Iran nuclear situation, the Sudan-Darfur crisis, and the Myanmar civic and political rights situation vary in geopolitical context, actor involvement, and the level of conflict.

China's UNSC performance indicates that Beijing has succeeded in presenting an alternative to Western suggestions for a reinterpretation of the UN system. About half the UNSC's member states tend to support Chinese rather than Western rules of conduct when a disagreement arises. This behavior pattern allows China to be a maker rather than merely a taker of the international order.

Chapter 6 assesses how China uses a strategy of coexistence to establish global agreement on common definitions of legitimate political authority. Being China's pivot area, northeast Asia appears to be the worst-case scenario for the application of peaceful coexistence in China's national security strategy. This chapter as a whole clarifies that peaceful coexistence is incompatible with the coercive strategies that often dominate China's approach to Taiwan, Xinjiang, and Japan. As a result, in the eyes of its neighbors, Beijing's policies on legitimacy call into question the sincerity of its peaceful coexistence strategy (p.179-180).

Chapter 7 concludes that China's national security strategy gives rise to a dual-themed international order that has a coexistence approach to conflict resolution, diplomacy, and legitimacy as the dominant theme but also has Chinese nationalism as a secondary one. Meanwhile, Osgaard insists that "in the event that China emerges as a full-blown great power on a par with the US, we should expect it to discard the coexistence approach... Given that China's nationalist objectives are likely to remain unacceptable aspirations in the eyes of the rest world, Beijing will likely have little choice to opt for strategies of coercion and imposition to fulfill these objectives" (p.202).

Therefore, China seeks to follow a coexistence strategy in global issues resolution, and yet retain a Sinocentric understanding in dealing with regional problems that can be seen as challenges and threats. The author demonstrates the role of coexistence in Chinese national security strategy, at

the same time as recognizing a gradual shift in this balance towards coexistence with a flavor of nationalism. The book is recommended for students and academics in international relations and political science as well as politicians, diplomats, professionals and others who are interested in the history and foreign policy of China, and its rising role in the regional and global sphere.