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Are US allies Japan and South Korea hedging China?

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of**

Masters of Arts

in

Politics

at Massey University, Manawatu,

New Zealand.

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2013

Abstract

The rise of China has led to much debate about the strategies Asia-Pacific states are utilising in response to this rise. This has led to the development and application of theories about 'hedging'. The concept of hedging is strongly grounded in realism and balance of power theory, but it has been defined and applied in a wide range of ways and there have been limited attempts at applying models to determine if a state is in fact hedging. As a result, the literature has lacked consistency and replication in its application. This thesis has identified two broad camps of thought; those that view hedging as a security focused strategy, and those that view it as a combination of strategies. There has been no application of the latter view to the United States allies in the Asia-Pacific.

The aim of this research is to therefore determine if the US allies of Japan and China can be said to be hedging China and provide a robust analysis of hedging through application of the view that hedging is a combination of strategies. To do this the thesis has applied a model developed by Cheng-Chwee Kuik. This analysis focuses on the risk contingency options of indirect balancing and dominance denial, and the return maximising options of economic pragmatism, binding engagement and limited bandwagoning. The study applies several quantitative and qualitative indicators, developed by the researcher, to determine if these indicators have been adopted, placing the two countries along a spectrum between balancing and bandwagoning. It concludes that Japan and South Korea have both adopted hedging but to differing degrees, with Japan close to neutrality, and South Korea closer to power acceptance of China. However, the overall inconclusive nature of the conclusion to whether South Korea is pursuing dominance denial has led the researcher to recommend that the model be applied to a broader range of countries to determine if this indeterminacy is due to the indicators developed, or if this is more a case of South Korea's intentions being unclear.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank Dr Beth Greener for her support and guidance not only on this thesis, but over the last couple of years. Your feedback has caused me to challenge and push myself and this thesis is a better product as a result. Thank you also for the opportunities you have provided to me along the way. Who would have known taking your undergraduate International Relations paper would lead here!

Special thanks to my parents and my sister Kate who have not only been an invaluable sounding board but provided the encouragement and support to start on this journey in the first place. Thanks Kate for deciding to do your own thesis at the same time! I'll always be grateful we got to do this together-I wouldn't have wanted to share this experience with anyone else.

Thanks also to my friends, whose friendship and support have been so important in working through the more challenging times. In particular I'd like to thank Julie for not only reading my work but for providing such a steadfast friendship over the years. It means a lot.

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