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Why Do States Hedge in East Asia? An Empirical Study on Hedging

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Abstract

The purpose of project is to investigate whether countries in East Asia are acting anomalously from traditional balancing and bandwagoning assumptions in the face of China's reemergence as a significant regional power. In East Asia, hedging takes the form of sending ambiguous alignment signals toward the United States in return for more autonomy by states that have no official alliance with Beijing. Incorporating Lim and Cooper's (2015) redefinition of hedging, this study focuses on the conditions under which China's neighbors adopt hedging behaviors. This paper aims to show that coercive capability indicators, including national capability and a U.S. military presence, are major factors in decisions by countries in East Asia to adopt hedging strategies. The findings suggest that when countries in this region seek to maximize economic benefits with Beijing, they also decrease certain security assurances from Washington as a hedge against Beijing's influence over their national affairs.

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