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INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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**Summary of the PhD thesis: Balance of Power
Policy of the Asia-Pacific Region States in the
Context of the Rise of China's Power**

PhD thesis under the supervision

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Warsaw 2017

The subject of the thesis entitled “Balance of Power Policy of the Asia-Pacific Region States in the Context of the Rise of China’s Power” is the balance of power/balancing policy and its conducting by the states of the Asia-Pacific region in response to the rise of China’s power. The research goal of the thesis is to identify factors, which make some Asia-Pacific states use a balance of power policy. This issue can be partially explained by the balance of threat theory, proposed by Stephen M. Walt, which claims that the decision of a state if it will resort to balancing, depends on the question if it perceives another state as a threat. Identification of other countries as threatening is the product of such factors as aggregate power, proximity, offensive capability, and most importantly offensive intentions.

As it was pointed out in the thesis, the first three factors are common for all neighbours of China, the 4th factor, offensive intentions, should decide if they employ a balance of power policy. However, the question is why some countries perceive one state as aggressive and possessing offensive intentions, while other countries do not see it in this way. It seems that the answer to this question is in the perception of rising power from other states based on historical experience and opinions of society and, first of all, political elites, which determines foreign policy.

Regarding the research goal and the abovementioned observations, several research questions are posed:

- To define if the concept of balance of power is actually in the modern world;
- To define how most important states of Asia-Pacific region do perceive China and the rise of its power;
- To define, which nations do conduct a balance of power policy toward China;
- To define why some countries conduct a balance of power policy toward China, while other states do not;
- To verify if there is a connection between the perception of China and the rise of its power and conducting a balance of power policy by neighbouring states;

The author of the thesis put a strong focus on defining the terms balance of power and balance of power policy as well as, analyzing their evolution, summing up the knowledge about the topic, and identifying the gaps and shortages in the existing theory. Although the balance of power is one of the fundamental terms in International Relations, it is an ambiguous expression with many, sometimes contradictory definitions created through history. For the purpose of this thesis, the author choose the definition by R. Bierzanek, which states that the “balance of power in International Relations means such an arrangement of power among states and alliances, that no one decisively preponderate over the others, or foreign policy strategy aimed at establishing or maintaining the abovementioned arrangement of power, thus not allowing for excessive rise of power of any state or alliance.” Regarding this definition, in the thesis, the term balance of power – or different arrangements of power among states and alliances in which no nation decisively preponderate over other countries – is distinguished from the term of a balance of power policy/balancing policy.

There are disputes over universality and timelessness of the balance of power concept. According to some researchers, the balance of power as foreign policy strategy has existed almost since the idea of a state appeared. Other scientists claim that the balance of power is the European concept created in the Renaissance, so its universality is at least controversial. Although some displays of thinking in the balance of power terms can be found in ancient times, the concrete development of this theory took place in the modern period. The balance of power concept was first described in the second half of the 15th century by Italian thinkers, and not long after, it was popularized in Europe. It gained, even more, appreciation in the 18th century. Numerous theoretical works on the balance of power then were issued, and it generally had positive connotations.

In the century between the Napoleonic Wars and World War I, the Europeans experienced the two longest periods of peace in the modern history of the continent (1815-1853 and 1871-1914). It was caused partly by the balance of power policy carefully conducted by the European powers. The intellectual background of this policy was developed as well.

The interwar period, in turn, was not an advantageous time for the development of the balance of power concept. This policy was blamed for starting World War I, so presenting the policy of a state in a balance of power terms became highly unpopular. Nevertheless, the balance of power policy continued to be used by nations.

World War II and the failure of The League of Nations undermined idealism, which dominated in the interwar period and researchers of International Relations turned into realism with the balance of power as one of its essential terms. After World War II almost all most important IR theoreticians, such as Hans J. Morgenthau, Hedley Bull, and Kenneth Waltz, referred to this concept. Nowadays works of Stephen M. Walt and John J. Mearsheimer seemed to be especially valuable.

Although the balance of power policy is mainly considered as a European concept, it does not mean that examples of its use can not be found in other regions, including Asia. The strategy of foreign policy similar to balancing was known in ancient China, nevertheless because of centuries-old domination of East China and Southeast Asia, South Korea or Vietnam did not have the possibility of conducting balance of power policy. Kind of exception in this regard was Japan, which after the Meiji Restoration in late 19th century joined the group of great powers. In turn, Russia has had a centuries-old tradition of a balance of power policy.

Author of the thesis also closely analyzed a phenomenon of China's rapid rise. The way of China's development from the victory of the Communists in the Chinese Civil War in 1949 to the current status of the 2nd biggest economy of the world was long and complicated. Mao Zedong enterprises, such as the Great Leap Forward or the Cultural Revolution, on the one hand: stopped or even took China back in development, on the other hand: they prepared a social structure to the later economic reforms. Launched in 1978 economic changes of Deng Xiaoping have brought unprecedented economic growth to China and its current status of economic power. However, it does not fulfill ambitions of China's authority and society. Thus, the PRC has intensively also developed armed forces and increased its presence around the world. The question about what influence the rise of China will have on the international order is still open.

In Chinese politics, one can notice some incoherence. On the one hand, China officially has carried on the policy of "peaceful development," assuring other countries about its honorable intentions while denying the idea the nation is seeking hegemony in the region. On the other hand, it promptly develops military capabilities and threatens neighbouring states assertively. How the situation in the region will evolve depends not only on China. An important factor is also the perception of China's rise and the reaction of regional powers. The following chapters concentrate on the perception of China's rise, as well as searching what

individual and multilateral actions states take to respond to this rising Chinese power and if they can be identified as a balance of power policy.

A crucial part of this thesis is the chapter concerning the perception of China and its power by Asia-Pacific states. The understanding of China is different across the region, nevertheless ambivalence and fear dominate. China historically waged many wars or invaded its neighbours, which has determined its relations with e.g., Vietnam and India until now. In the case of Japan, although China did not take aggressive steps against them, bilateral relations seemed to be influenced by a Japanese fear of the Chinese revenge for Japanese actions during imperial times. Even in the case of Russia and South Korea, which have good relations with China, after careful consideration, a dose of distrust can be seen. In the case of Russia, it manifests itself in reluctance to sell to the PRC advanced types of weapons or seeking for alternative economic partners and raw materials recipients.

Perception of the PRC is also influenced by territorial disputes between China and its neighbours. Among the analyzed nations, China has open territorial disputes with Japan, India, and Vietnam, but also in the case of Russia and South Korea there are suspicions concerning the territorial claims of China. Moreover, China does not correctly inform about an extension of its territorial claims, which additionally reinforces the fears of their neighbours. Trust is to some extent strengthened by mushrooming trade relations – for the majority of evaluated states China is the most prominent trade partner. Nonetheless, the positive influence of economic ties is limited due to concerns about significant dependence on Chinese markets, which is visible in the case of South Korea, Russia, and India.

The last part of the thesis touches upon actions, which China's neighbouring states take in response to the rise of its power. The increase in the strength and assertiveness of the PRC poses one of the most severe challenges influencing the security environment in the Asia-Pacific territory, and it determines the behavior of the countries of the region. As it was pointed out, some of the evaluated countries fear China – especially its military build-up – because of historical experiences and open territorial disputes with the PRC. It notably concerns Japan, India, and Vietnam from taking actions, which can be defined as classic – known from the IR theory – balance of power policy, both concerning “external balancing” (alliances, military cooperation) and “internal balancing” (development of own armed forces). For the Asia-Pacific nations, the US, which plays a role of a peculiar offshore balancer, remains a primary partner in balancing China, but the cooperation between countries of the

region themselves, as in case of Japan, India, and Australia as well as Japan and Vietnam, is burgeoning. It has not reached the level of hard balancing or military alliance yet, but it can be described concerning soft balancing, and one may expect that it will be evolving toward the former in case of a more aggressive policy taken by China.

Japan reinforces and reinvigorates the alliance with the United States, as well as: aids in the development of the trilateral military cooperation with the US and South Korea; the US and India and the US and Australia; as well as, bilateral security cooperation with India, Australia, Vietnam and the Philippines. Japan in recent years has launched one of its most extensive changes in its security policy for decades. They aim at losing restrictions imposed on the country after the Second World War. India along with a quickly developed strategic partnership with Washington, improved by succeeding security components, cooperates in the trilateral format with Japan and the US, as well as Japan exclusively. New Delhi also makes a great effort to modernize its armed forces and bolster the Indian defence industry. Vietnam enhances its relations with its former enemy – the United States to balance China. Hanoi and Tokyo have also developed their relationships as well. Vietnam has been building new military capabilities (such as submarines), which could cost increased Beijing losses in the case of conflict.

On the other hand, South Korea does not seem to be willing to cooperate with Japan more closely. The trilateral format Japan-South Korea-United States also does not excel beyond the North Korea issue. Results from South Korea's strategic documents for the ROK armed forces regime in Pyongyang remains a top priority. Cautious trials of Russian rapprochement with Japan failed due to the illegal annexation of Crimea and the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. Moscow continues a practice of ambivalent policy toward the region. On the one hand, it develops economic cooperation with China. On the other hand, it remains suspicious of Beijing and it maintains extensive military forces in the East. Nevertheless, for Moscow, it is the West, which is the priority and the Asia-Pacific region is of secondary importance.