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October 20 2013 19:20

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Essays on Monetary Policy Stance in East Asia

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Publication info: The Claremont Graduate University, ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 2013. 3558350.
[ProQuest document link](#)

Abstract: Monetary policies in East Asian countries, i.e. Indonesia, South Korea, Thailand, and Malaysia, have undergone major changes after the Asian crisis. Indonesia, South Korea, and Thailand have switched to a more flexible exchange rate system and seek price stability through an inflation targeting monetary policy framework. Malaysia, on the other hand, imposed fixed exchange rate with selective capital controls in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis.

In this dissertation, I use a Structural Vector Autoregression (SVAR) model developed by Bernanke and Mihov (1998) over the pre and post-Asian crisis period to measure monetary policy stances and to estimate the possible impacts of the monetary transmission mechanisms to real output, prices, and capital flows. Following recent research that shows that monetary stances should not be measured by one variable alone, I consider three policy variables, short-term interest rates, monetary aggregates, and the exchange rate for this analysis. I also replicate the study by replacing variable exchange rate with the exchange market pressure (EMP) index in order to have a comparison.

Both models plausibly identify a shift in monetary policy framework between pre- and post-crisis periods. The models show that Indonesia, South Korea, and Thailand have switched to a more flexible exchange rate system and adopted inflation targeting in monetary policy. The impulse responses analysis also provides results that are consistent with monetary theory.

In the third essay, I analyze the monetary policy reaction functions to see to what degree monetary policy strategies in Indonesia, South Korea, and Thailand are concerned with future inflation relative to the output gap, real exchange rate and the Fed funds rate by utilizing the Generalized Method of Moment (GMM) of Hansen (1982). I find that for all of those monetary authorities in these countries act to stabilize inflation by increasing the real interest rate when inflation increases. I also find that the sensitivity of domestic monetary policies to U.S interest rate and real exchange rate has declined since they adopted a more floating exchange rate regime after the crisis.

Links: [Linking Service](#)

Subject: Economics; Finance;

Classification: 0501: Economics; 0508: Finance

Identifier / keyword: Social sciences, Capital flows, Exchange market pressure, Monetary policy stance, Monetary rule, Asian financial crisis

Number of pages: 166

Publication year: 2013

Degree date: 2013

School code: 0047

Source: DAI-A 74/08(E), Feb 2014

Place of publication: Ann Arbor

Country of publication: United States

ISBN: 9781303027659

Advisor: Willett, Thomas D.

Committee member: Bird, Graham, Efremidze, Levan

University/institution: The Claremont Graduate University

Department: School of Politics and Economics

University location: United States -- California

Degree: Ph.D.

Source type: Dissertations & Theses

Language: English

Document type: Dissertation/Thesis

Dissertation/thesis number: 3558350

ProQuest document ID: 1350640330

Document URL:

<http://ccl.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1350640330?accountid=10141>

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Database: ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text

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