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# Exchange rate depreciation and exports: The case of Singapore revisited

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## **Abstract**

This paper revisits the weak relationship between exchange rate depreciation and exports for Singapore, using a bivariate GARCH-M model that simultaneously estimates time-varying risk. The evidence shows that depreciation does not significantly improve exports, but that exchange rate risk significantly impedes exports. In sum, Singaporean policy makers can better promote export growth by stabilizing the exchange rate rather than generating its depreciation.

**Journal of Economic Literature Classification:** F14, F31

**Keywords:** depreciation, exchange rate risk, exports, bivariate GARCH-M model

## **Exchange rate depreciation and exports: The case of Singapore revisited**

### **I. Introduction**

A traditional view expects that exchange rate depreciation improves exports. For example, Junz and Rhomberg (1973) and Wilson and Takacs (1979), employing data from a fixed exchange rate period, and Bahmani-Oskooee and Kara (2003), using data from a flexible exchange rate period, find that depreciation improves exports for developed countries. In an interesting paper, Abeysinghe and Yeok (1998) discover that exchange rate appreciation does not adversely affect exports for Singapore because exports possess high import content. This paper argues that exchange rate risk provides another channel for the exchange rate to affect exports in Singapore, showing that exchange rate risk reduces exports, although exchange rate depreciation does not.

The probable effects of exchange rate risk received considerable attention, since the collapse of fixed exchange rates in the early 1970s. Little consensus regarding its effect on exports, however, exists. Ethier (1973) argues that exchange rate risk could lower exports due to profit risk. De Grauwe (1988) suggests that exporters might increase volume to offset potential losses. Broll and Eckwert (1999) note that the price of an option to export increases with risk.

Pozo (1992) uncovers a negative effect of exchange rate risk on UK real exports to the US. Chowdhury (1993), Arize (1995, 1997), Weliwita et al. (1999), Arize et al. (2000), Arize et al. (2003) and Fang and Thompson (2004) find negative effects of exchange risk on US, G7, LDC, and NIC exports. Contrary evidence exists, however. Asseery and Peel (1991) find positive relationships for multilateral exports, except for the UK. Kroner and Lastrapes (1993) discover positive effects of conditional variance on exports of France, Germany, and Japan, but negative effects for the UK and US. McKenzie and Brooks (1997) report a positive risk relationship for Germany and the US. Klaassen (2004) finds no effect on monthly bilateral US exports to the other G7 countries.

The effects of the exchange rate or exchange rate risk on exports individually may produce biased inference, if both affect exports and one is omitted. No research combines the two possible exchange rate effects together to analyze the relationship between exchange rates and exports in the previous literature.

Generalized autoregressive conditional heteroscedasticity (GARCH) models specify the relationships between means and variances (e.g., Engle et al. 1987 and Bollerslev et al. 1992). We apply the bivariate GARCH-M modeling approach to Singapore to consider the effects of exchange rate depreciation and its time varying variance on exports. Our methodology differs from the study of Abeysinghe and Yeok (1998) that uses OLS estimation with no exchange rate risk variable. Their specification may overestimate the effect of depreciation, if exports and exchange rate risk correlate negatively (see Arized et al. 2003). This paper estimates simultaneously the effects of exchange rate depreciation and its risk.

## **II. Data and time-varying variances**

To assess the net effect of exchange rate depreciation and its risk on exports, we employ a nonstructural partially reduced-form approach of Rose (1990) and Klaassen (2004), where real exports ( $x$ ) depend directly on real foreign income ( $y$ ), the real exchange rate ( $q$ ), and real exchange rate risk ( $h_q$ ). Real foreign income positively affects the demand for exports. An increase in the real exchange rate, a depreciation, implies cheaper exports abroad and improves real exports. The effect of real exchange rate risk proves theoretically ambiguous.

To provide evidence, we use bilateral exports between Singapore and the U.S. on a monthly basis from January 1979 to October 2002. Seasonally adjusted real export revenue equals nominal export revenue in domestic currency deflated by the consumer price index (CPI). We convert the bilateral nominal exchange rate, defined as the Singaporean currency price of the

U.S. dollar, into a real exchange rate by multiplying the nominal rate by the ratio of the U.S. CPI to the Singaporean CPI. Foreign income equals US industrial production with base year 1995. All data come from the International Financial Statistics and Direction of Trade of the IMF.

Two reasons argue for the bilateral approach. First, the ratio of bilateral exports between Singapore and the US to Singapore's total exports is 15.3 percent over the sample period, accounting for a substantial share of Singaporean exports. Second, using bilateral exports avoids the asymmetric response of trade flows to exchange rate depreciation and its risk across countries. We, then, can focus on the simple relationship between exchange rate changes and exports. In addition, Klaassen (2004) finds that exchange rate risk in developed countries does not exhibit enough variability to determine its effect on exports, and suggests studying the risk effect, using data on developing countries, for which more volatile exchange rate risk may exist.

Statistical analysis of the variables identifies appropriate GARCH models for further analyses. In our sample, Singapore experienced exchange rate depreciation and export growth. The average rate of export growth equals 0.53 percent while the average depreciation rate equals 0.093 percent. Both the mean and the standard deviation of export growth greatly exceed those of the rate of depreciation. Skewness statistics for the growth rate of real exports ( $\Delta l x_t$ ) and the growth rate of the real exchange rate ( $\Delta l q_t$ ) cannot reject symmetry, but Kurtosis statistics significantly exceed 3 at the 5-percent level, implying leptokurtic series with fat tails. The Jarque-Bera test rejects normality. Non-normality and the fat-tailed nature suggest estimating GARCH models under the Student-t distribution.

After selecting lag length by the AIC criterion, the Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) test shows that  $\Delta l x_t$  and  $\Delta l q_t$  prove individually stationary [i.e.,  $I(0)$ ] series at the 5-percent level. Valid inference in GARCH models requires stationarity in variables. The Ljung-Box Q-statistic tests for autocorrelation. The number of lags ( $k$ ) affects the power of the test. Tsay (2002)

suggests choosing  $k = \ln(T)$ . The number of observations,  $T$ , in our sample equals 285, accordingly, we set  $k = 5.65$ , using up to 6 lags. Ljung-Box Q-statistics indicate autocorrelations in  $\Delta x_t$ , but no autocorrelation in  $\Delta q_t$ . Ljung-Box Q-statistics for squared  $\Delta x_t$  and squared  $\Delta q_t$  suggest the possible presence of time-varying variance for the two series. To adequately capture the dynamic structure of the data, we employ an ARMA process for both the mean and variance equations of the two variables.

We estimate univariate GARCH(1,1) models first to identify properties of the changing variances for  $\Delta x_t$  and  $\Delta q_t$ . The Ljung-Box  $Q(k)$  statistics for the standardized residuals of  $\Delta x_t$  show no autocorrelations up to 6 lags, suggesting that the AR(2) process achieves white noise. Since the exchange rate does not possess autocorrelation, we specify the mean equation of  $\Delta q_t$  as a constant. No evidence of autocorrelation emerges, given the low Ljung-Box  $Q(k)$  statistics for the standardized residuals of  $\Delta q_t$ . The estimates in the two variance equations are significantly positive. Moreover,  $\alpha_1 + \alpha_2 = 0.933 < 1$  and  $\beta_1 + \beta_2 = 0.807 < 1$  show that each time-varying variance process is stable for  $\Delta x_t$  and  $\Delta q_t$ . The higher coefficient of volatility persistence of  $\Delta x_t$  relative to that of  $\Delta q_t$  is consistent with the higher standard deviation of  $\Delta x_t$ . The low Ljung-Box Q-statistics for the squared standardized residuals up to 6 lags show no remaining heteroscedasticity. The estimated coefficients of the degree of freedom  $\nu$  are significant at the 5-percent level, implying the appropriateness of employing the GARCH(1,1) for both  $\Delta x_t$  and  $\Delta q_t$  under the t-distribution.

The two variables,  $\Delta x_t$  and  $\Delta q_t$ , possess time-varying variances, suggesting the use of bivariate GARCH models to examine the link between exports and exchange rate changes.

### **III. The empirical bivariate GARCH-M model and estimation**

The following eclectic GARCH-M model provides the framework for assessing the net effect of

exchange rate depreciation and its risk on exports.

$$\Delta x_t = a_0 + \sum_{i=1}^2 a_i \cdot \Delta x_{t-i} + b \cdot \Delta y_{t-1} + c \cdot \Delta q_{t-1} + d \cdot h_{q,t-1} + \varepsilon_{x,t}, \quad (1)$$

$$\Delta q_t = e_0 + \varepsilon_{q,t}, \quad (2)$$

$$\varepsilon_t = (\varepsilon_{x,t}, \varepsilon_{q,t})' \quad \varepsilon_t \mid \Psi_{t-1} \sim \text{Student-t}(v), \quad (3)$$

$$H_t = \begin{pmatrix} h_{x,t} & h_{xq,t} \\ h_{xq,t} & h_{q,t} \end{pmatrix}, \quad (4)$$

$$h_{x,t} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \cdot \varepsilon_{x,t-1}^2 + \alpha_2 \cdot h_{x,t-1}, \quad (5)$$

$$h_{q,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot \varepsilon_{q,t-1}^2 + \beta_2 \cdot h_{q,t-1}, \text{ and} \quad (6)$$

$$h_{xq,t} = \rho_{xq} \cdot \sqrt{h_{x,t} \cdot h_{q,t}}, \quad (7)$$

where  $\Delta x_t \equiv 100 \times (\ln x_t - \ln x_{t-1})$ ,  $\Delta q_t \equiv 100 \times (\ln q_t - \ln q_{t-1})$ ,  $\Delta y_t \equiv 100 \times (\ln y_t - \ln y_{t-1})$ ;  $\varepsilon_t$ , conditional on the information set  $\Psi_{t-1}$  available at time  $t-1$ , follows a bivariate Student-t distribution with degrees of freedom,  $v$ .  $h_{x,t}$  and  $h_{q,t}$  equal conditional variances while  $h_{xq,t}$  equals the covariance. Now,  $\rho_{xq}$  equals the correlation coefficient of  $\Delta x_t$  and  $\Delta q_t$ . The presence of  $h_{q,t}$  in equation (1) means that equations (1) to (7) constitute a bivariate GARCH(1,1)-M model. The conditions that  $\alpha_i > 0$ , and  $\beta_i > 0$  ensure positive conditional variances. The conditions that  $\alpha_1 + \alpha_2 < 1$  and  $\beta_1 + \beta_2 < 1$  imply stable variances. The constant correlation specification (Bollerslev 1990) is modeled through (7). This specification reduces the number of parameters and increases the degrees of freedom of model estimation. All parameters in equations (1) to (7) are estimated by maximizing the following log-likelihood function of the bivariate Student-t distribution:



$$\ln L_t = \ln \Gamma\left(\frac{\nu+2}{2}\right) - \ln(\nu-2) - \ln \Gamma\left(\frac{\nu}{2}\right) - 0.5 \ln |H_t| - \left(\frac{\nu+2}{2}\right) \cdot \ln\left(1 + \frac{\varepsilon_t' H_t^{-1} \varepsilon_t}{\nu-2}\right) \quad (8)$$

where  $\Gamma(\cdot)$  equals the Gamma function.

The model explains changes in exports. The reduced-form equation includes the depreciation rate and its risk as well as the rate of change of foreign income as explanatory variables. The statistical significance and sign of the estimated  $c$  and  $d$  coefficients in equation (1) provide a simple and straightforward test of the relationship between real export growth and exchange rate depreciation and its volatility. If the estimate of  $c$  exceeds zero, then exchange rate depreciation improves exports. Exchange rate volatility affects exports through exporters' responses to perceived risk. When exchange rate uncertainty leads to profit risk, then, *ceteris paribus*, the demand for exports falls (i.e.,  $d < 0$ ). The net effect on exports includes the exchange rate depreciation and its volatility.

The estimation results are as follows:<sup>1</sup>

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta x_t &= 1.485 & -0.621\Delta x_{t-1} & -0.266\Delta x_{t-2} & +0.880\Delta y_{t-1} & +0.229\Delta q_{t-1} & -0.254h_{q,t-1} \\ &(0.431)^* & (0.051)^* & (0.050)^* & (0.711) & (0.277) & (0.150)^* \\ \Delta q_t &= 0.032 \\ &(0.082) \\ h_{x,t} &= 2.692 & +0.104\varepsilon_{x,t-1}^2 & +0.864h_{R,t-1} \\ &(0.666)^* & (0.014)^* & (0.011)^* \\ h_{q,t} &= 0.362 & +0.154\varepsilon_{q,t-1}^2 & +0.700h_{q,t-1} \\ &(0.054)^* & (0.028)^* & (0.026)^* \\ h_{xq,t} &= 0.104 \cdot \sqrt{h_{x,t} \cdot h_{q,t}} & & \nu = 7.955 \\ &(0.072) & & (2.261)^* \end{aligned}$$

$$Q_2(3) = 4.173 \quad Q_2(6) = 11.153 \quad Q_2^2(3) = 8.995 \quad Q_2^2(6) = 22.145$$

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<sup>1</sup>  $Q_2(k)$  and  $Q_2^2(k)$  are the bivariate Ljung-Box statistics (Hosking, 1980) for standardized and squared standardized residuals for autocorrelations up to  $k$  lags;  $\nu$  is degree of freedom. \* denotes significance at the 5% level.

Estimated coefficients in the two variance equations are positive and significant. Volatility persistence equals 0.968 for  $\Delta l x_t$  and 0.854 for  $\Delta l q_t$ . The two variance processes converge. The estimated correlation coefficient between  $\Delta l x_t$  and  $\Delta l q_t$  equal 0.104 that nearly equals the coefficient of 0.102 calculated from the two series. The degree of freedom of the t-distribution, estimated jointly with other parameters, is significant. That is, the hypothesis of using a standardized student-t distribution is not rejected at the 5-percent level. The bivariate Ljung-Box  $Q_2(k)$  statistics (Hosking, 1980) for the standardized and squared standardized residuals of  $\Delta l x_t$  and  $\Delta l q_t$  do not detect any remaining autocorrelation or conditional heteroscedasticity at the 5-percent level. The bivariate GARCH-M model in equations (1) to (7) proves adequate for further inferences.

The marginal effect of real US income (industrial production) on exports exhibits the expected positive sign, but proves insignificant at the 5% level. Thus, bilateral exports from Singapore to the US do not respond to US economic activity.

Exchange rate depreciation exhibits the expected positive effect, but proves also insignificant. Exchange rate risk possesses a significantly negative effect on exports, however. Regarding the magnitude of the effect, the mean value of conditional variance  $h_{q,t}$  in the bivariate GARCH-M model is 2.55. The *ceteris paribus* average monthly effect of the risk on export revenue (mean value of  $h_{q,t} \times d$ ) equals -0.65 percent. The standard deviation of  $h_{q,t}$  of 1.75 implies that the range of potential monthly influences on export revenue calculated by (mean of  $h_{q,t} \pm$  standard deviation) $\times d$  covers the range [-0.20%, 1.09%], a rather substantial

effect, since the mean growth rate of real exports equals just over 0.5 percent, as noted above.<sup>2</sup>

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Previous research that investigated the responsiveness of exports to exchange rate depreciation generally concluded that exports react increasingly to exchange rate depreciation. This paper has revisited the weak relationship between exchange rate depreciation and exports in Singapore by using monthly data over the period of 1979-2002. Unlike Abeysinghe and Yeok's (1998) OLS estimates based on annual data of 1975-1992, we account for the time varying variance of the data, employ bivariate GARCH-M modeling technique to estimate the effects of exchange rate depreciation and its risk on exports.

In sum, the effect of exchange rate depreciation on exports is positive but insignificant, supporting the findings of Abeysinghe and Yeok's (1998). Second, time-varying real exchange rate risk exhibits a significant negative effect on exports of substantial magnitude. Third, the exchange rate risk effect dominates the depreciation effect in magnitude, leading to a negative net effect of exchange rate changes on export revenue.

The policy implications suggest that Singaporean authorities can elicit stronger export growth by ensuring a more stable exchange rate rather than by engineering its depreciation.

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<sup>2</sup> While the exchange rate effect is insignificant, its magnitude is also small. The mean value (=0.093) and the estimated coefficient (=0.229) of the depreciation rate imply that the average monthly effect equals 0.02 percent. Gauging the net effect of the exchange rate movement against the sum of the two average effects, the significant risk effect also dominates, leading to a negative net effect.

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