

# Lobbying and Legislative Uncertainty

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# The Questions

1. When is endogenizing political pressure important for answering optimal design questions?
  - ▶ Exogenous vs. endogenous politics
2. Can trade agreements be used to manipulate domestic lobbying incentives?
  - ▶ Government objective function

# Political Economy of Trade Institutions

With a few exceptions, TA literature has taken political economy forces to be exogenous. I:

- ▶ endogenize politics into a standard model for studying TA design questions
- ▶ carefully distinguish between dynamics induced by exogenous and endogenous politics for
  - ▶ base case with tariff caps
  - ▶ tariff caps with escape clause
- ▶ examine escape clause design when both exogenous and endogenous forces are present

# Results

- ▶ Show that TAs may be used to manipulate domestic political actors (no long-run distortions)
- ▶ For both tariff caps and escape clauses, outcomes are very different with endogenous politics
- ▶ Demonstrate that (standard, theoretical) escape clause can't work in the presence of endogenous political pressure
  - ▶ Points to real-world design of WTO Agreement on Safeguards
  - ▶ May explain why escape clause has fallen out of use

# Role of Trade Agreements: TOT Externality

Bagwell and Staiger (2002)

- ▶ Joint social welfare maximized at free trade
- ▶ Trade war (i.e. no agreement)
  - ▶ Maximize with respect to home country welfare only
  - ▶ Terms of trade (TOT) externality  $\Rightarrow$  positive tariffs
- ▶ Trade agreements
  - ▶ Now take into account impact on foreign welfare
  - ▶ Internalize TOT externality  $\Rightarrow$  free trade

# Design of Trade Agreements

- ▶ Tariff caps: Bagwell and Staiger 2005, Horn et al 2010, Amador and Bagwell 2012; Beshkar and Bond 2012
- ▶ Escape clause: Bagwell and Staiger 2005, Horn et al 2010,
- ▶ Shallow vs. deep integration: Bagwell and Staiger 2001, DeRemer 2014
- ▶ Dispute settlement: Maggi 1999, Ludema 2001, Maggi and Staiger 2011/2013, Klimenko et al 2008
- ▶ Retaliation: Bown 2002/2004, Beshkar 2010

# Economy

Two countries: home and foreign (\*)

- ▶ Separable in two goods:  $X$  and  $Y$ 
  - ▶  $P_i$ : home price of good  $i$
  - ▶  $P_i^*$ : foreign price of good  $i$
- ▶ Demand identical for both goods in both countries
  - ▶  $D(P_i) = 1 - P_i$
- ▶ Supply:  $Q_X^*(P_X) > Q_X(P_X) \forall P_X$ ; symmetric for  $Y$ 
  - ▶  $Q_X(P_X) = \frac{P_X}{2}$ ;  $Q_Y(P_Y) = P_Y$
  - ▶ Home net importer of  $X$ , net exporter of  $Y$

# Policy and Politics

Home levies  $\tau$  on  $X$ , Foreign levies  $\tau^*$  on  $Y$

- ▶  $P_X = P_X^W + \tau$  increasing in  $\tau$
- ▶  $\pi_X(P_X)$  increasing in  $P_X$ , therefore also  $\tau$

Non-tradable specific factors motivate political activity



# Timeline

Each period:

## 1. Trade Agreement Formed

- i. Governments set trade policy in international agreement

## 2. Domestic Politics Played Out

- i. Exogenous shocks are realized AND/OR
- ii. Import-competing industry lobbies government for protection

## 3. Tariffs are Applied

- i. Given political pressure, governments choose applied tariff levels

# Applied Tariff Decision

Baldwin-style government objective function:

$$W = CS_X(\tau) + \gamma(s, e)\pi_X(\tau) + CS_Y(\tau^*) + \pi_Y(\tau^*) + TR(\tau)$$

- ▶ Standard *except* weight on import-competing industry profits  $\gamma(s, e)$ :
  - ▶  $s$ : exogenous shock
  - ▶  $e$ : lobbying effort
- ▶ Optimal applied tariff is a function of  $\gamma(s, e)$ 
  - ▶ Ignores foreign welfare
  - ▶ Takes into account trade agreement enforcement
- ▶ Assume  $\gamma, \gamma^*$  is private info of each government

# Domestic Political Pressure

Two potential sources

## 1. Exogenous shocks

- ▶ Shock directly to  $\gamma$  as in Bagwell & Staiger (2005):  $\gamma, \gamma^*$  with CDF  $H(\gamma)$  on support  $[\underline{\gamma}, \bar{\gamma}]$ ; or
- ▶ Can take  $\gamma$  as a function of  $s$ :  $\gamma(s)$

## 2. Endogenous effort choice of lobby, $e$

- ▶ Lobby chooses effort to maximize profits,  $\pi(\cdot)$ , net of lobbying effort,  $e$
- ▶ Call lobby's optimal effort choice  $e^L$

$$e^L = \max_e \pi(\tau(\gamma(e))) - e$$

# Trade Agreement Negotiation

Model as Nash bargain between the two countries' governments

- ▶ Maximize joint political welfare
- ▶ Disagreement point: non-cooperative outcome

Once agreement is set, cooperation enforced by repeated-game punishments conditioned on history, history + DSB signal

# Restraining Political Pressure through TAs

- ▶ Will TA be used to discourage lobbying? Depends on how gov't welfare varies in  $\gamma$
- ▶ With standard Baldwin-style objective function, welfare always increases with  $\gamma$ :

$$W = CS_X(\tau) + \gamma \cdot \pi_X(\tau) + CS_Y(\tau^*) + \pi_Y(\tau^*) + TR(\tau)$$

- ▶ Note 'Protection for Sale' objective function is isomorphic
- ▶ If we instead make weights sum to 1, welfare is no longer monotonic in  $\gamma$

## Tariff Caps: Exogenous vs. Endogenous $\gamma$

Must set tariff at or below specified level (aka tariff cap)

- ▶  $\gamma$  exogenous (Bagwell & Staiger 2005): Negotiated weak bindings (a) are higher than those gov'ts would choose if they instead negotiated strong bindings and (b) imply that governments with low realizations of  $\gamma$  set their applied tariffs strictly below the bound level.
- ▶  $\gamma$  endogenous: Governments will not set applied tariffs strictly below the bound level. They may use the weak tariff binding either to encourage and/or restrain endogenous political pressure.

# Tariff Caps with Self Enforcement

- ▶  $\gamma$  exogenous (Bagwell & Staiger 2005): if governments patient enough ( $\delta$  high enough), optimal externally-enforced weak binding can be self-enforced
- ▶  $\gamma$  endogenous: not necessarily true
  - ▶ Problem: lobby is an additional repeated-game player
  - ▶ Lobby's incentive constraint is harder to satisfy as  $\delta$  increases

# Escape Clause with Exogenous Politics

When  $\gamma$  is *only* exogenous (Bagwell & Staiger 2005):

- ▶ Simple escape clause: add a second (higher) negotiated weak binding
  - ▶ Escape clause is designed to allow higher applied tariff when realization of  $\gamma$  is high
- ▶ Improves political efficiency
- ▶ Can improve self-enforcement
- ▶ Incentive compatibility becomes an issue



# Incentive compatibility

Escape clause is meant to allow higher applied tariff when realized  $\gamma$  is high

- ▶  $\gamma$  is private information
- ▶ We want truthful revelation, but truth-telling must be in the best interest of each gov't
- ▶ Gov't can exploit TOT externality by reporting high  $\gamma$  even when  $\gamma$  is low
  - ▶ Only way to prevent this is with some cost of using escape clause

## Escape Clause with Endogenous Politics

When  $\gamma$  is *only* endogenous:

- ▶ Benefit of escape clause from exogenous case is gone
- ▶ Assuming lower binding is set to maximize political welfare, escape clause encourages inefficiently high lobbying effort / protection
- ▶ Incentive compatibility still an issue, but often not the central one
  - ▶ If lobby's preferred tariff  $\geq$  escape clause binding, gov't experiences high  $\gamma$ , no need to lie

If  $\gamma$  is only endogenous, escape clause causes problems, provides no benefits

## When the world is more complicated...

Now suppose political pressure is a result of both endogenous and exogenous forces (i.e.  $\gamma(s, e)$ ):

- ▶ Want escape clause to deal with exogenous shock
- ▶ But endogenous part  $\Rightarrow$  lobbying incentives make it hard to implement escape clause

### Ineffectiveness of Political Criterion for Escape Clause

Assume  $\gamma(s, e) = \gamma(s) + \gamma(e)$ . If an escape clause conditions on  $\gamma(s, e)$  and  $\gamma(s^L) < \gamma(s^H) < \gamma(e^L)$ , the lower “normal” tariff binding will never be applied.

## An Escape Clause for Endogenous Politics

Assume a WTO-like set up: gov't can choose between  $\tau^a$ , 'escape' tariff  $\tau(s)$ , or politically-optimal  $\tau$  matched to  $\gamma(s, e)$

- ▶ Assume  $s$  verifiable, so no punishment for  $\tau(s)$
- ▶ Punishment for  $\tau(\gamma(s, e)) > \tau(s)$

Optimal  $\tau^a$  may lead to government applying  $\tau(\gamma(s, e))$

- ▶ When this happens, it leads to dispute, not valid escape
- ▶ Otherwise, no extra rent-seeking is encouraged

May explain why escape clause has fallen out of use

## Future Work

- ▶ Application of framework to other design questions
- ▶ Interactions between  $\gamma(s)$  and  $\gamma(e)$
- ▶ Choice between protective measures over time

# Conclusion

Taking into account endogenous political forces alongside exogenous ones...

- ▶ provides additional general explanation for tariff caps
- ▶ demonstrates that TAs can be used to discourage lobbying activity in general
- ▶ helps explain the structure and enforcement of the WTO Safeguards measure