

Price-Setting with Menu Costs

Matthew Rognlie

(based on Auclert, Rigato, Rognlie, Straub 2022)

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Time dependent vs. state dependent pricing

Time dependent vs. state dependent pricing

(TD) **Time dependent:** $Pr(\text{price change})$ depends on **time** since last adjustment

- **tractable**, e.g. for Calvo with constant probability get **Phillips curve**

$$\pi_t = \kappa \widehat{mc}_t + \beta \mathbb{E}_t \pi_{t+1} \quad (\text{NK-PC})$$

- κ = slope of the Phillips curve, rises with probability
- \widehat{mc}_t = **arbitrary real** marginal cost \sim output gap \rightarrow easy to embed in DSGE

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- **better micro fit** (e.g. menu cost), but hard to simulate \rightarrow **no NK-PC!**
- simpler experiments: e.g. **permanent nominal** MC shocks
- key result: “selection effect”, price level more flexible than Calvo

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This paper characterizes the **analogue of the NK-PC** for **menu cost models**

The Phillips curve for menu cost models: 3 main results

- Introduce **generalized Phillips curve (GPC)**: linear map from $\{\widehat{mc}_t\}$ to $\{\pi_t\}$, represented as matrix \mathbf{K} in the space of $MA(\infty)$ coefficients:

$$\pi = \mathbf{K} \cdot \widehat{mc} \quad (\text{GPC})$$

- here, π , \widehat{mc} are coefficients of $MA(\infty)$ representation, stacked in vector
- first order + certainty equivalence \Rightarrow can think of \widehat{mc} as small MIT shock
- \mathbf{K} exists for any pricing model, including menu cost models
- Calvo NK-PC is a special case of GPC for some \mathbf{K}

The Phillips curve for menu cost models: 3 main results

- Introduce **generalized Phillips curve** (GPC)
- (1) **Menu cost GPC** = GPC of a mixture of **two TD models**
 - gives exact sense in which **SD** and **TD** are “the same” for small shocks
 - **TD's** depend on steady state moments \rightarrow “exact sufficient statistics” for **K**

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- Introduce **generalized Phillips curve (GPC)**
- (1) **Menu cost GPC** = GPC of a mixture of **two TD models**
- (2) **Menu cost GPC** \approx **Calvo NK-PC**: for some κ

$$\pi_t \approx \kappa \widehat{mc}_t + \beta \mathbb{E}_t \pi_{t+1}$$

- holds for all shocks $\widehat{mc}_t \rightarrow \kappa$ is “approximate sufficient statistic” for **K**
- new models, same old Phillips curve (just a higher κ)
- extends Gertler-Leahy result to much larger set of models

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- (2) **Menu cost GPC** \approx **Calvo NK-PC**
- (3) Measuring **K**, κ directly from the data
 - can measure sufficient statistics for **K** straight from cross-sectional data on price changes; no need to simulate the menu cost model

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- (2) For quantitative macro literature, approximate equivalence result rationalizes the Calvo New Keynesian Phillips curve with better microfoundations
- (3) For literature trying to match both micro and macro, both optimism and caution
 - **Optimism**, because micro-based menu cost models can be taken to the macro data using the generalized Phillips curve
 - **Caution**, because these seem so close to the Calvo model that they suffer from the same macro deficiencies, like lack of internal persistence and extreme forward-lookingness

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- (2) For quantitative macro literature, approximate equivalence result rationalizes the Calvo New Keynesian Phillips curve with better microfoundations
- (3) For literature trying to match both micro and macro, both optimism and caution
- (4) **Limitation** : following Phillips curve literature, aggregate analysis is mostly first-order

Pricing models and GPC

Canonical menu cost model

- Discrete time, quadratic approximation to firm's objective function
- Firm i chooses **price gap** $x_{it} = p_{it} - p_{it}^*$:
 - log price p_{it} net of idiosyncratic optimum $p_{it}^* = p_{it-1}^* + \epsilon_{it}$, $\epsilon_{it} \sim f(\epsilon)$ iid
 - if p_{it} is unchanged, x_{it} inherits random walk, $x_{it} = x_{it-1} - \epsilon_{it}$
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$$\min_{\{x_{it}\}} \mathbb{E}_0 \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t \left[\frac{1}{2} (x_{it} - \log MC_t)^2 + \xi_{it} \cdot \mathbf{1}_{\{x_{it} \neq x_{it-1} - \epsilon_{it}\}} \right]$$

- $\xi_{it} \in \{0, \xi\}$ iid random menu cost, $\mathbb{P}(\xi_{it} = 0) = \lambda$

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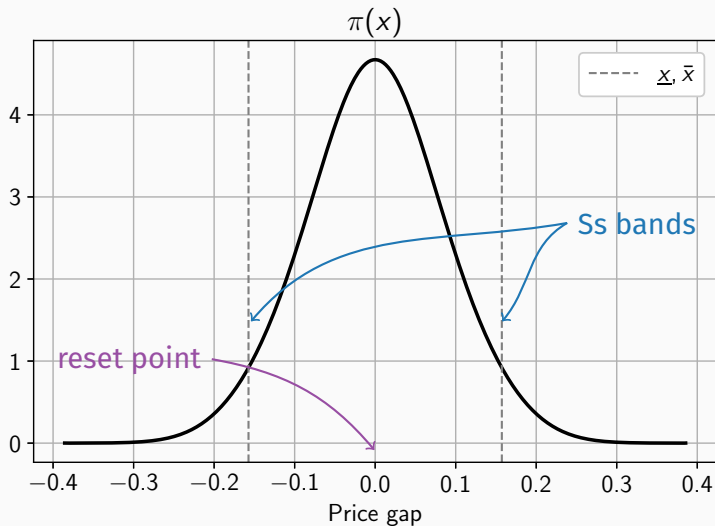
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 - $\lambda = 0$ is **Golosov-Lucas (GL)**, $\lambda \in (0, 1)$ is **Nakamura-Steinsson (NS)**
- Price index and inflation: $\log P_t = \int x_{it} di$, $\pi_t = \log P_t - \log P_{t-1}$

Solution to menu cost model

- Optimal pricing policy consists of three objects: $(\underline{x}_t, \bar{x}_t, x_t^*)$
 - $[\underline{x}_t, \bar{x}_t] = Ss$ band, $x_t^* = \text{reset point}$
- Law of motion based on these policies:
 - x_{it} follows random walk (no adjustment)
 - ... until it leaves $[\underline{x}_t, \bar{x}_t]$ or free adjustment is drawn
 - ... then price gap jumps to x_t^*
- Steady state: $\underline{x} = -\bar{x}$, $x^* = MC_{ss} = 0$. Distribution: $\pi(x)$ before adjustment.

Ss bands and steady state price gap distribution



General time dependent model

- Exogenous probability of adjusting after s periods without adjustment

[Whelan, Sheedy, Carvalho-Schwartzman, Alvarez-Borovičková-Shimer]

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- When resetting at t , firm i solves

$$\min_{\{x_{it}\}} \mathbb{E}_t \sum_{s=0}^{\infty} \beta^s \left[\frac{1}{2} \phi_s (x_{it+s} - \log MC_{t+s})^2 \right]$$

- **Calvo**: $\phi_s = (1 - \lambda)^s$ (constant adjustment hazard λ)
- Hazard rate can have any shape: increasing (e.g. Taylor model), decreasing...

Aggregate dynamics: pass-through matrix

- Start in steady state, consider MIT shock to nominal cost $\{MC_s\}_{s \geq 0}$
- Both models boil down to functions \mathcal{P}_t such that

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- Define the **pass-through matrix** Ψ as sequence-space Jacobian with elements $\Psi_{t,s} \equiv \frac{\partial \log P_t}{\partial \log MC_s}$. Then:

$$\hat{\mathbf{P}} = \Psi \cdot \widehat{\mathbf{MC}}$$

$$\text{where } \hat{\mathbf{P}} \equiv (\hat{P}_0, \hat{P}_1, \hat{P}_2, \dots)', \widehat{\mathbf{MC}} \equiv (\widehat{MC}_0, \widehat{MC}_1, \dots)'$$

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- column s = IRF of price level to small aggregate nominal cost shock at date s
- IRF to permanent shock: $\hat{\mathbf{P}} = \Psi \cdot \mathbf{1}$ [Golosov-Lucas, Alvarez-Le Bihan-Lippi, ...]
- flexible prices $\Leftrightarrow \Psi = \mathbf{I}$

- For TD model with survival curve $\{\phi_s\}$, optimal reset point at t :

$$x_t^* = \frac{\sum_{s \geq 0} \beta^s \phi_s \widehat{MC}_{t+s}}{\sum_{s \geq 0} \beta^s \phi_s} \quad (\text{Policy equation})$$

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Implies **rank-one fake news matrix**:

$$\mathbf{F}^\phi \equiv \frac{1}{\left(\sum_{s \geq 0} \phi_s\right) \left(\sum_{s \geq 0} \beta^s \phi_s\right)} \begin{pmatrix} \phi_0 \\ \phi_1 \\ \phi_2 \\ \vdots \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \phi_0 & \beta \phi_1 & \beta^2 \phi_2 & \cdots \end{pmatrix}$$

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Can read off $\{\phi_s\}$ from IRF to permanent shock: $(\psi^\phi \cdot \mathbf{1})_t = \sum_{s=0}^t \phi_s / \sum_{s=0}^{\infty} \phi_s$

- In simple GE models, $\hat{\mathbf{P}} = \Psi \cdot \mathbf{1}$ gives IRF of price level to money shock
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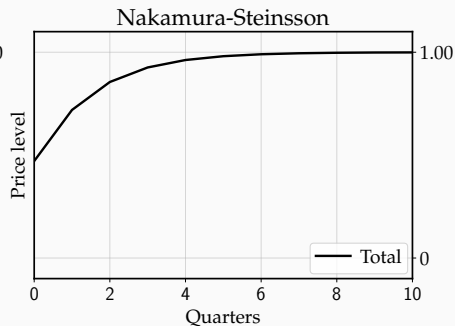
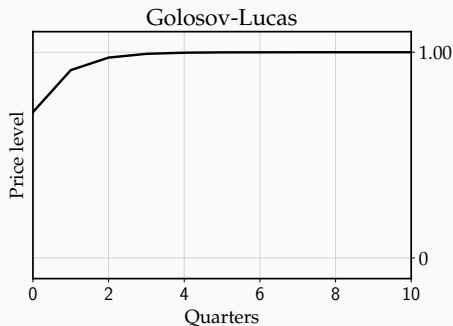
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- Models with the **same** Ψ also have the **same** \mathbf{K} .

Exact equivalence: Menu cost model $= 2 \times \text{TD}$

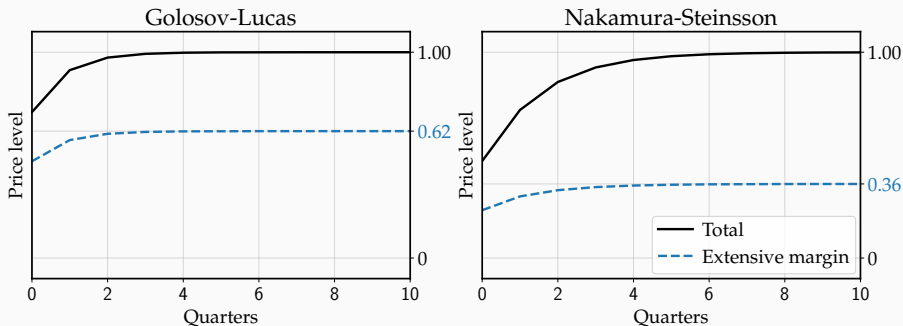
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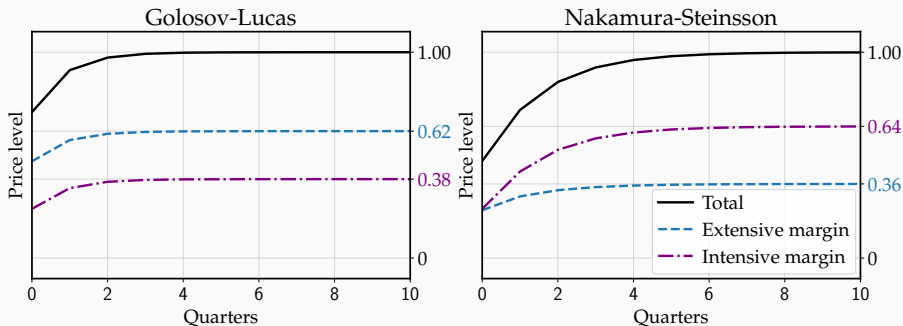
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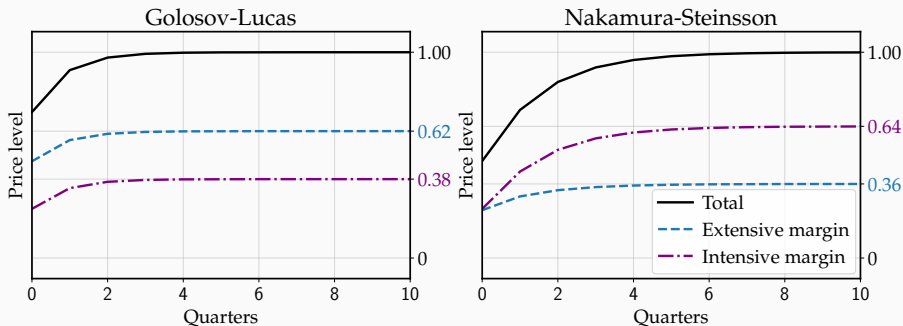
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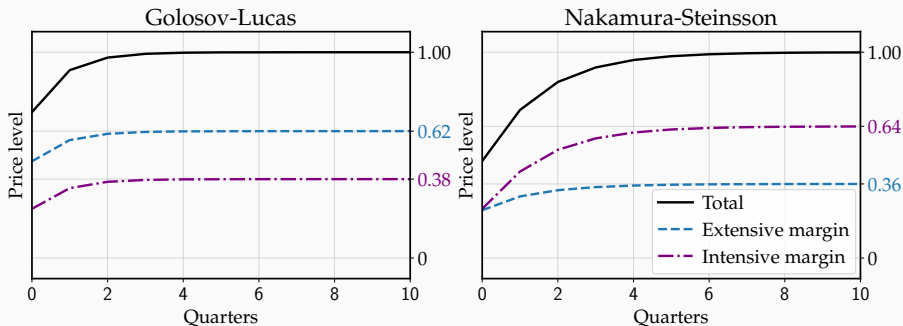
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- Let α be the long-run price level in the extensive margin experiment

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Proposition

The pass-through matrix Ψ of the canonical menu cost model with any λ, ξ and any symmetric f is the weighted average of the two TD pass-through matrices

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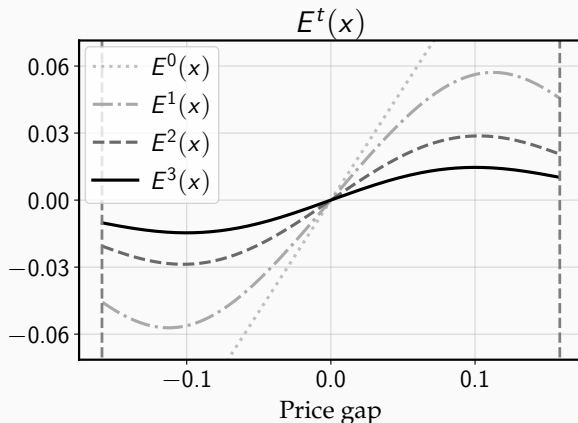
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- Menu cost model = $2 \times$ TD model. Also: Menu cost GPC = GPC of $2 \times$ TD
- Next: Proof idea + what ϕ^e and ϕ^i look like

- Key objects in the proof: **expected price gaps**
- $E^t(x) \equiv \mathbb{E}[x_t | x_0 = x]$ is the expected price gap in t periods starting from any x



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- For a small shock, using symmetry

$$d \log P_t = \pi(\bar{x}) (d\underline{x}_0 + d\bar{x}_0) E^t(\bar{x})$$

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- Consider a shock that only affects $\underline{x}_0, \bar{x}_0$. What is its effect on price at t ?

$$\log P_t = \int_{\underline{x}_0}^{\bar{x}_0} E^t(x) \pi(x) dx + \underbrace{\left(1 - \int_{\underline{x}_0}^{\bar{x}_0} \pi(x) dx\right)}_{\text{freq}} \underbrace{E^t(0)}_0$$

Given **steady state policies**, transition dynamics are governed by $E^t(x)$
[Alvarez-Le Bihan-Lippi, Alvarez-Lippi]

- For a small shock, using symmetry

$$d \log P_t = \pi(\bar{x}) (d\underline{x}_0 + d\bar{x}_0) E^t(\bar{x})$$

- With many changes at dates $t - s$, get law of motion:

$$d \log P_t = \pi(\bar{x}) \sum_{s \geq 0} E^s(\bar{x}) \cdot (d\underline{x}_{t-s} + d\bar{x}_{t-s})$$

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The *same* “virtual survival rate” matters as for l.o.m., just with extra β

- Use to rewrite law of motion as

$$d \log P_t = \underbrace{2\pi(\bar{x}) \sum_{s \geq 0} E^s(\bar{x})}_{\alpha} \frac{\sum_{s \geq 0} E^s(\bar{x}) \cdot d\bar{x}_t}{\sum_{s \geq 0} E^s(\bar{x})}$$

- Extensive margin acts like a TD model, scaled by α , with $\Phi_t^e \equiv E^t(\bar{x})/\bar{x}$.

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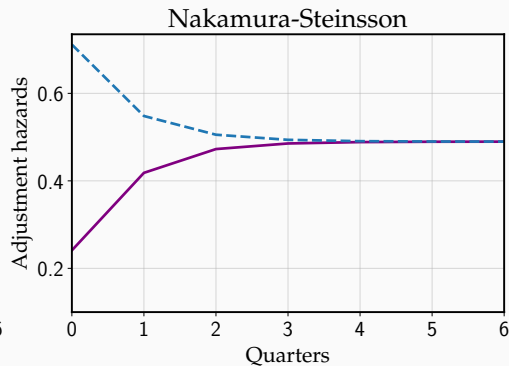
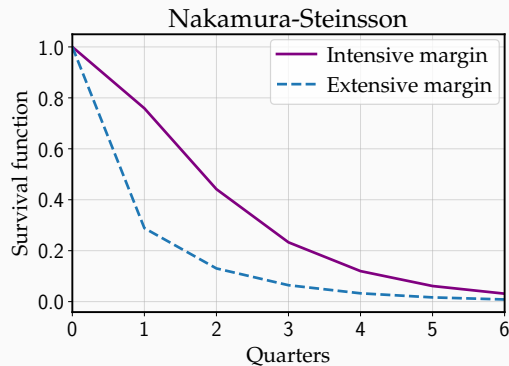
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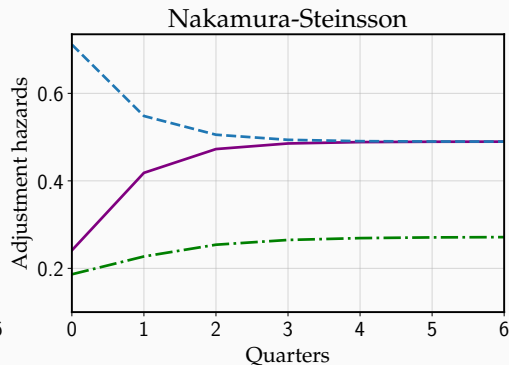
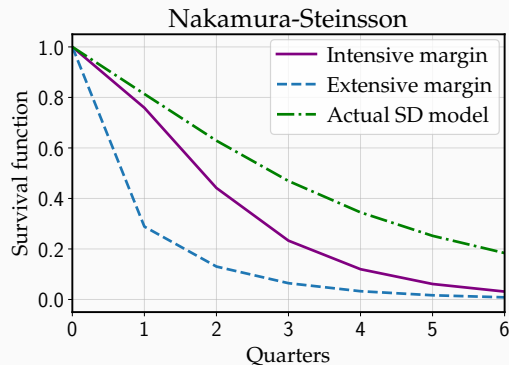
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Meanwhile, envelope theorem shows policy is

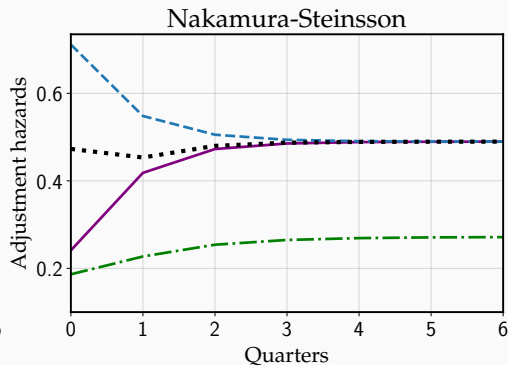
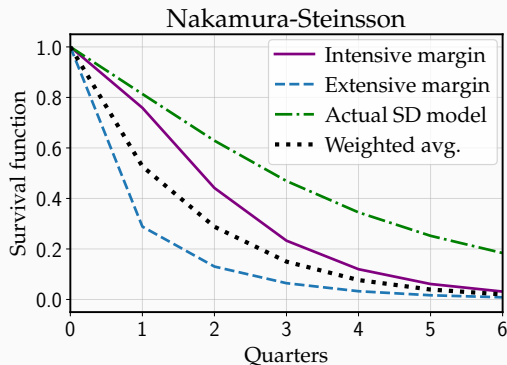
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- Intensive margin acts like a TD model, scaled down by $(1 - \alpha)$, $\Phi_t^i \equiv (E^t)'(0)$.





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The difference is the **"selection effect"**



- "virtual" survival functions ϕ_t^e, ϕ_t^i + implied hazards \neq *actual* ones!
The difference is the **"selection effect"**
- **Average survival function** $\alpha \phi_t^e + (1 - \alpha) \phi_t^i$ is close to exponential in practice

Numerical equivalence: Menu cost model \approx Calvo

- Ultimately interested in the menu cost GPC $\mathbf{K} = (\mathbf{I} - \mathbf{L})(\mathbf{I} - \Psi)^{-1} \Psi$

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- To compare, consider Calvo NK-PC:

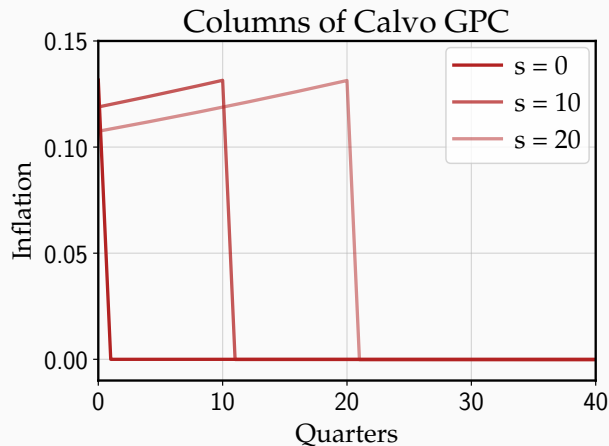
$$\pi_t = \kappa \widehat{mc}_t + \beta \mathbb{E}_t \pi_{t+1} = \sum_{s=0}^{\infty} \kappa \beta^s \mathbb{E}_t \widehat{mc}_{t+s}$$

which gives the GPC

$$\mathbf{K}^{\text{Calvo}}(\kappa) = \left(\frac{\partial \pi_t}{\partial \widehat{mc}_{t+s}} \right)_{t,s} = \begin{pmatrix} \kappa & \kappa\beta & \kappa\beta^2 & \cdots \\ 0 & \kappa & \kappa\beta & \cdots \\ 0 & 0 & \kappa & \cdots \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots \end{pmatrix}$$

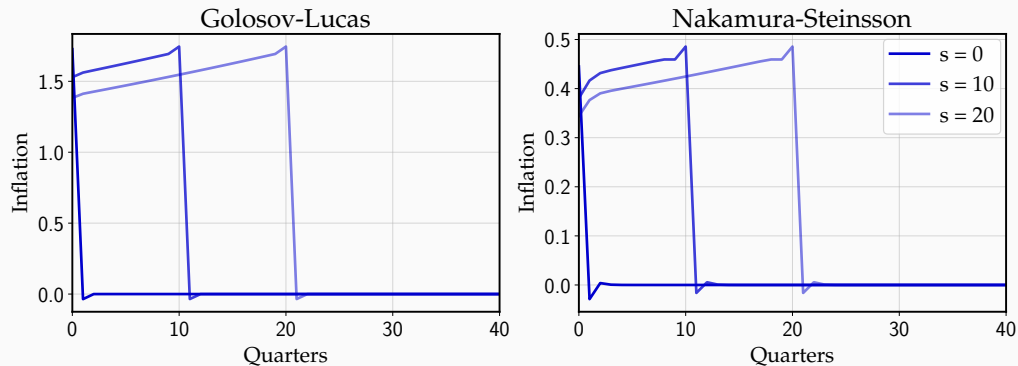
→ inflation is purely & strongly forward looking, no “intrinsic” persistence

Visualizing GPC for Calvo model



- **Q:** how “far” are our menu cost models from a simple Calvo in practice?

GPC in our two calibrated menu cost models



- Menu cost GPCs “look” very similar to Calvo with different slope parameters!

Finding closest-distance Calvo model

- Let's look for κ that minimizes

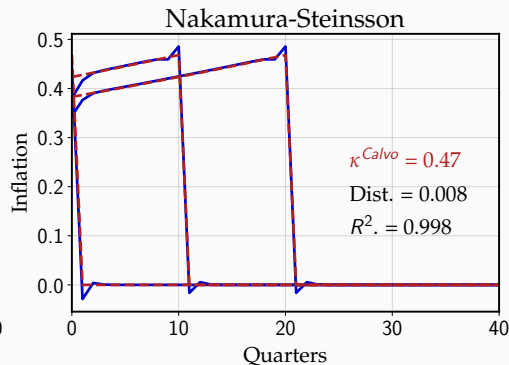
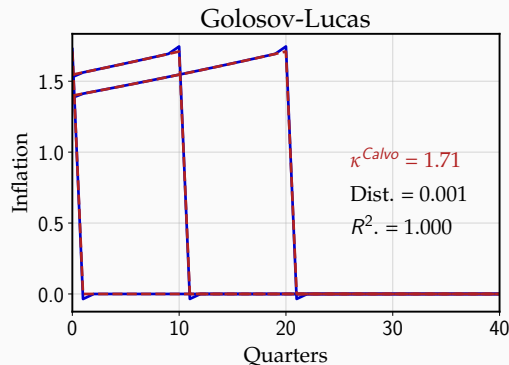
$$\text{dist} = \min_{\kappa} ||| \mathbf{K} - \mathbf{K}^{\text{Calvo}}(\kappa) |||_2 / ||| \mathbf{K} |||_2$$

- if $\mathbf{K} = \mathbf{K}^{\text{Calvo}}(\tilde{\kappa})$, then $\text{dist} = (\tilde{\kappa} - \kappa) / \tilde{\kappa}$
- Recall that two models that share the exact same \mathbf{K} also share the same:
 - pass-through matrix Ψ
 - IRF to any shock to MC or mc
 - IRF to any fundamental shock once integrated in a broader macro model(so, they are also indistinguishable in estimation based on macro data)

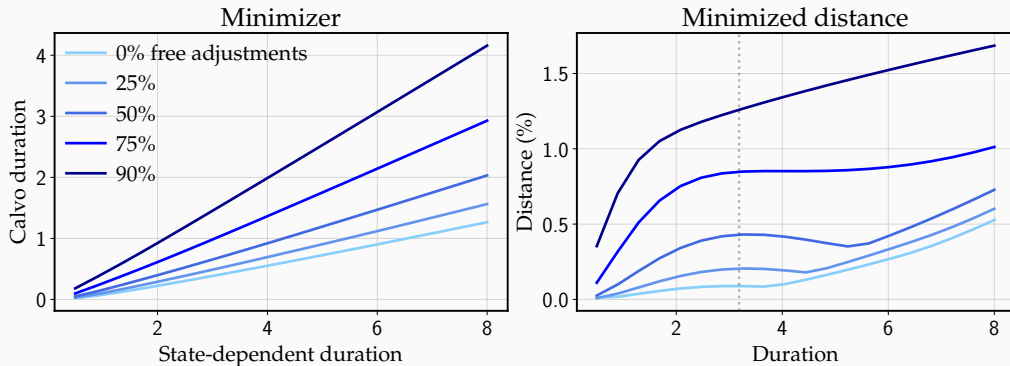
GPC vs best fitting Calvo for our two menu cost models




► AR shocks

► Smets-Wouters



[Reported R^2 from predicting π_t with $\kappa \widehat{mc}_t + \beta \mathbb{E}_t \pi_{t+1}$ on **K** simulated data]



- Strategic complementarities → 
- Steady state inflation → 
- Infrequent shocks → 
- Multi-product models → 
- Multi-sector models → 
- Large shocks → 

Measuring the GPC directly

Measuring the GPC exactly using $E^t(x)$

- For \mathbf{K} , we can measure $E^t(x)$ in the data.
- One option: use data on price changes alone + model law of motion
- To do this, first enrich model to allow for general cdf $\xi_{it} \sim G(\cdot)$
→ leads to a generalized state-dependent adjustment hazard $\Lambda(x)$

[Caballero-Engel, Alvarez-Lippi-Oskolkov, Karadi-Schoenle-Wursten]

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- $\Lambda(x)$, $\pi(x)$, σ_ϵ can all be backed out from data on price changes
- recover expected price gaps $E^t(x)$ from this

- Plug into generalized decomposition

$$\psi = \alpha \int \frac{\Lambda'(x)\pi(x)G(x)}{\int \Lambda'(\tilde{x})\pi(\tilde{x})G(\tilde{x})d\tilde{x}} \cdot \psi^{\Phi^e(x)} dx + (1 - \alpha) \cdot \psi^{\Phi^i}$$

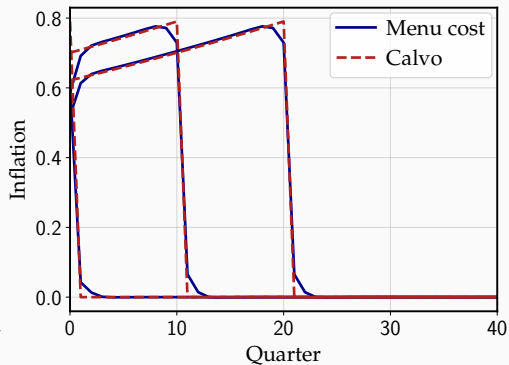
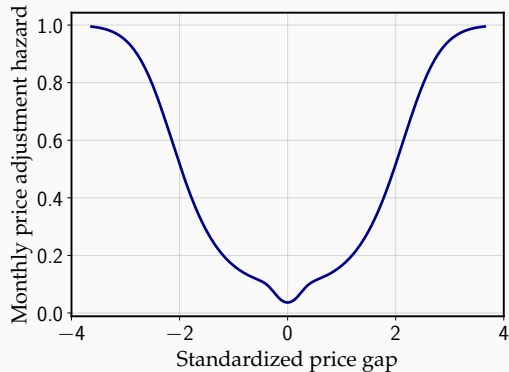
where $\Phi_t^e(x) = E^t(x)/x$ and $\Phi_t^i = (E^t)'(0)$ similar to before

$G(x) \equiv \sum_t E^t(x)$ 26

Fitted hazard function $\Lambda(x)$ and (GPC)

- Apply this to Israeli price change distribution

[Bonomo-Carvalho-Kryvtsov-Ribon-Rigato]



Conclusion

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- **Calvo:**

$$\pi_t = \kappa^{\text{Calvo}} \widehat{mc}_t + \beta \mathbb{E}_t \pi_{t+1}$$

- **Menu cost:**

$$\pi_t = \sum_{s \geq 0} \mathbf{K}_{t,s} \cdot \widehat{mc}_s \approx \kappa \widehat{mc}_t + \beta \mathbb{E}_t \pi_{t+1}, \quad \kappa > \kappa^{\text{Calvo}}$$

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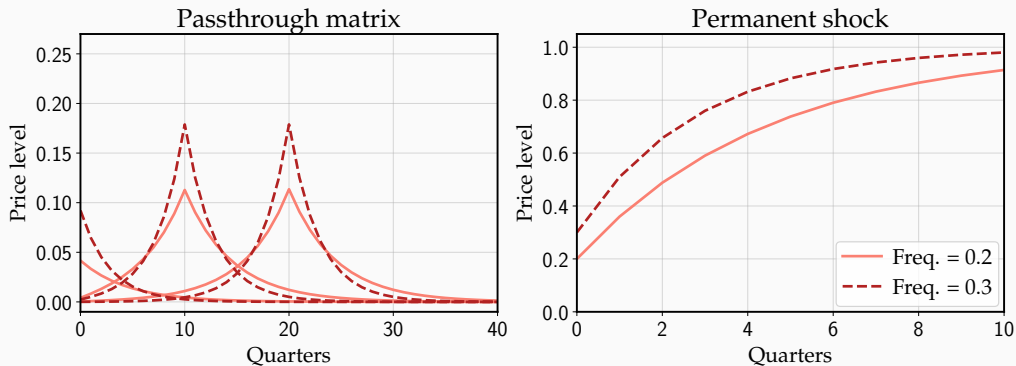
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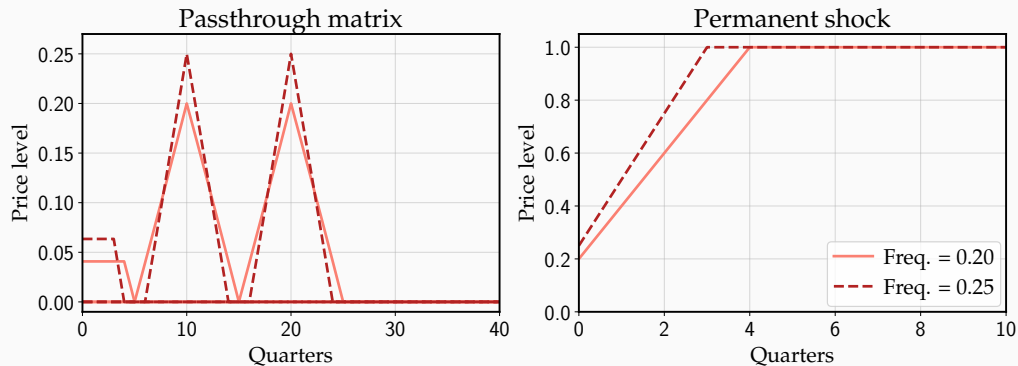
→ Menu cost models suffer from similar shortcomings as Calvo....

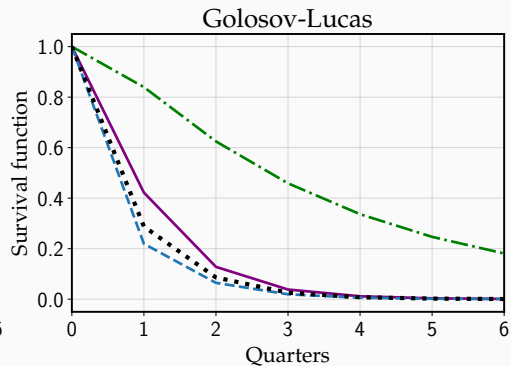
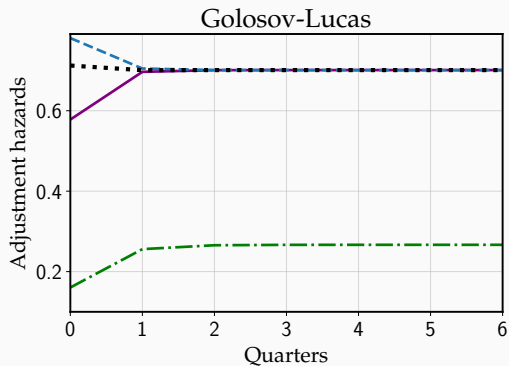
... more work needed to get model that matches micro prices **and** macro inflation

Extra slides

- For calibration, assume idiosyncratic shock distribution is $\phi \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma)$
- Given λ ; calibrate ξ, σ to match:
- Average frequency of price change of 23.9% quarterly (“freq”)
 - Median price adjustment of 8.5%
[regular price changes for median sector in US CPI, see Nakamura-Steinsson]
- Two benchmarks: $\lambda = 0$ (GL) and $\lambda = 0.75 \cdot \text{freq}$ (NS)
- Notes:
 - only two effective parameters are λ/freq and ξ/σ^2 , ξ then determines scale
 - for convenience, we reparameterize by λ/freq and freq (or duration=1/freq)







- Another use of ψ : permanent cost shock but strategic complementarities
- As in Alvarez-Lippi-Souganidis (2022): parameterize by θ
 - from either Kimball demand or I-O with common input
- Get \hat{P}_t via fixed point equation

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$$\hat{\mathbf{P}} = \left(\sum_{k=0}^{\infty} (\theta \psi)^k \right) \cdot \psi \mathbf{1} = (\mathbf{I} - \theta \psi)^{-1} \cdot \hat{\mathbf{P}}_0$$

where $\hat{\mathbf{P}}_0$ is response without strategic complementarities

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- ALS use self-adjointness of Ψ to write with eigenvalues-eigenfunctions
- When $\theta = 1$, we get the GPC \mathbf{K}

- Gertler and Leahy (2008 JPE) assume the mixture distribution

$$\phi = (1 - \eta) \cdot \bullet + \eta \cdot \mathcal{U}[-M, M]$$

where M is large

- This implies

$$E^t(x) = (1 - \eta)^t x$$

so

$$\Phi_t^e = \frac{E^t(\bar{x})}{\bar{x}} = (1 - \eta)^t \quad \Phi_t^i = (E^t)'(0) = (1 - \eta)^t$$

so pass-through matrix Ψ is a Calvo with reset frequency $1 - \eta$

- Reason for shock at s affecting date o , then sum across s and shift
- Start with upper Ss band. Value matching implies

$$V_o(\bar{x}_o) = V_o(x_o^*) + \xi$$

Differentiate and use $V'(o) = dV_o(o) = 0$

$$dV_o(\bar{x}) + V'(\bar{x}) d\bar{x}_t = 0$$

- Next, envelope theorem implies

$$V'(x) = \sum_t \beta^t E^t(x)$$

$$dV_o(x) = -\beta^s E^s(x) d\hat{M}\hat{C}_s$$

- Conclude that

$$d\bar{x}_o = \frac{\beta^s E^s(\bar{x})}{\sum_u \beta^u E^u(\bar{x})} d\hat{M}\hat{C}_s$$

- For reset point, FOC is

$$V'_0(x_0^*) = 0$$

Differentiate

$$dV'_0(0) + V''(0) dx_0^* = 0$$

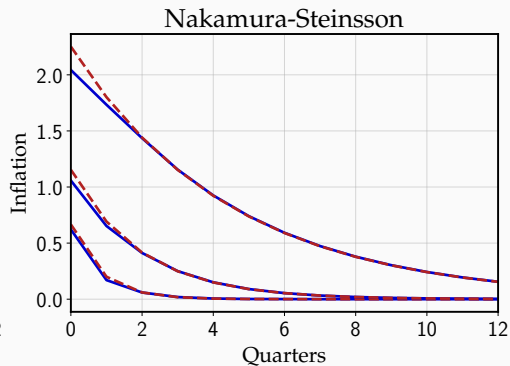
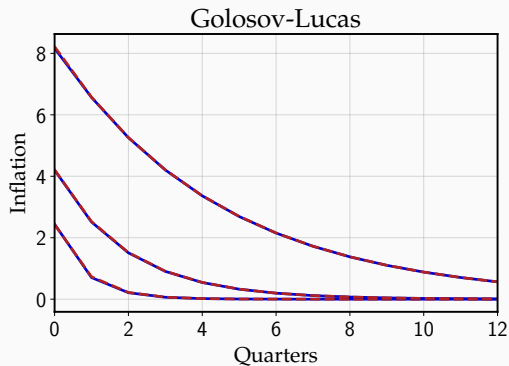
- Envelope theorem again

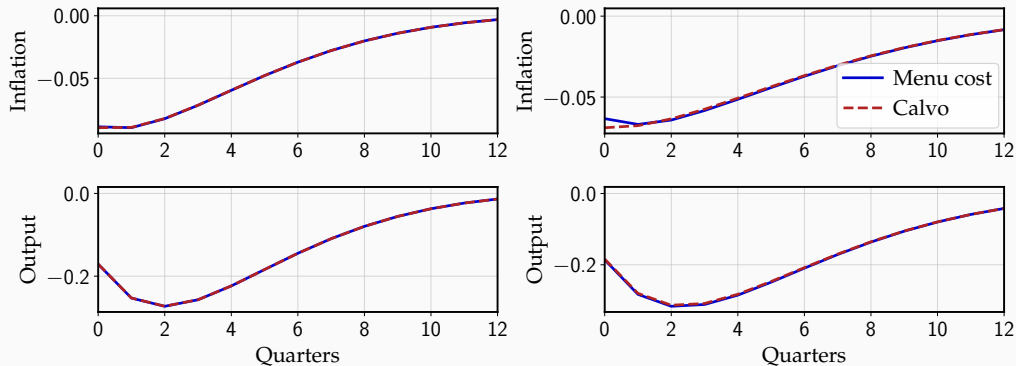
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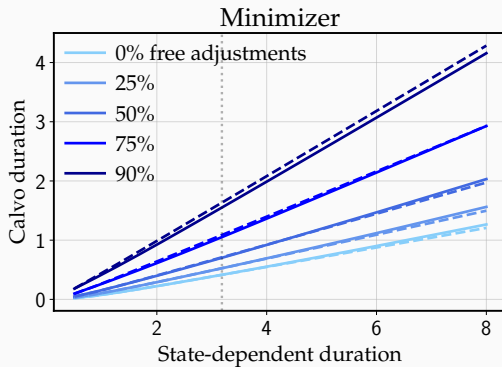
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- Conclude that

$$dx_0^* = \frac{\beta^s (E^s)'(0)}{\sum_u \beta^u (E^u)'(0)} d\hat{M}\hat{C}_s$$







- Implementing with $\beta = 0.99$, find κ to be: [▶ performance vs model](#)

		$Kur(\Delta p)$		
		2	3	4
$Freq(\Delta p)$	0.2	0.40	0.17	0.09
	0.3	1.02	0.40	0.22
	0.4	2.26	0.77	0.40

- For reference:
 - In data, quarterly $Freq(\Delta p) \simeq 0.2$ to 0.3 (model = 0.24)
 - In data: $Kur(\Delta p)$ between 3 and 4

[Alvarez-Le Bihan-Lippi, Bonomo-Carvalho-Kryvtsov-Ribon-Rigato]

 - In models: $Kur(\Delta p)$ is 1.3 for GL, 2.3 for NS, 2 for Midrigan

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 - In models: $Kur(\Delta p)$ is 1.3 for GL, 2.3 for NS, 2 for Midrigan
- Contrast to recent macro full-sample IV estimate of $\kappa = 0.0031$!
[Hazell-Herreño-Nakamura-Steinsson, using $\kappa = \frac{\kappa^U}{\sigma + \phi}$ with $\sigma = \phi = 1$]

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Proposition

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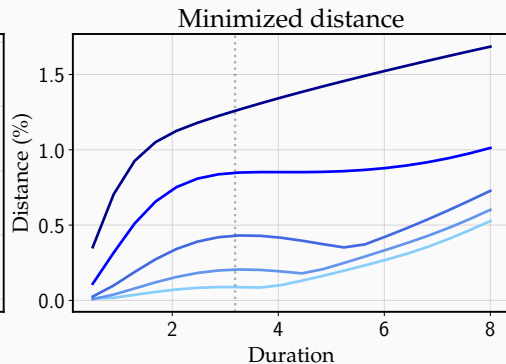
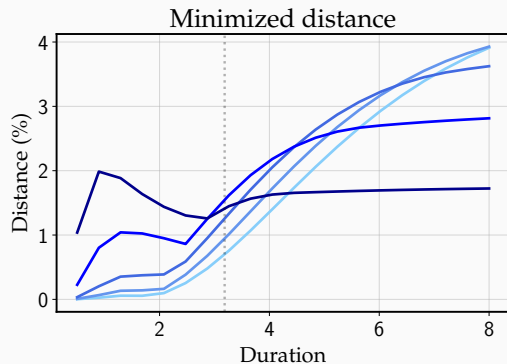
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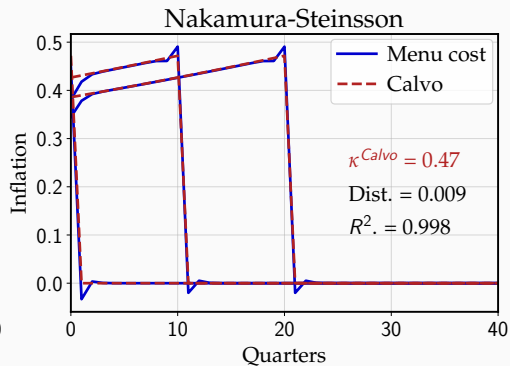
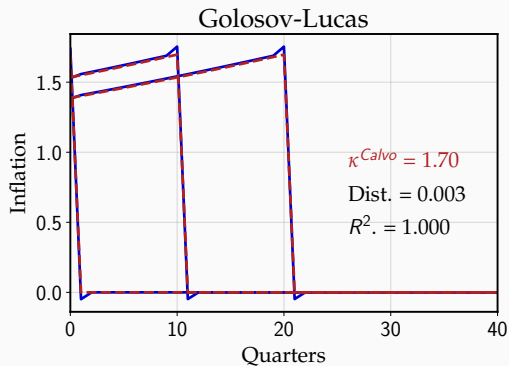
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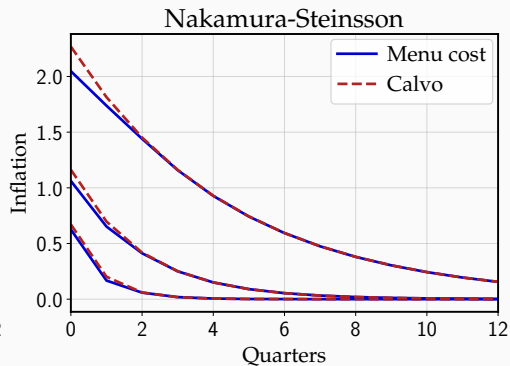
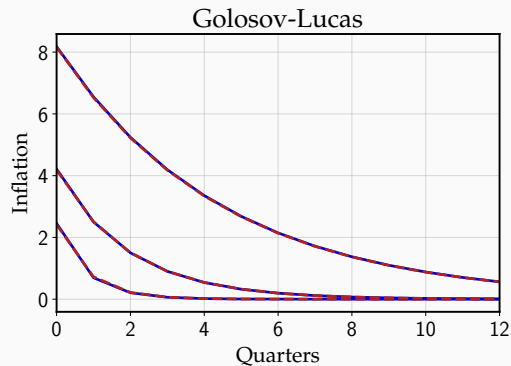
$$\mathbf{K}^{\text{compl}} = \zeta \mathbf{K}$$

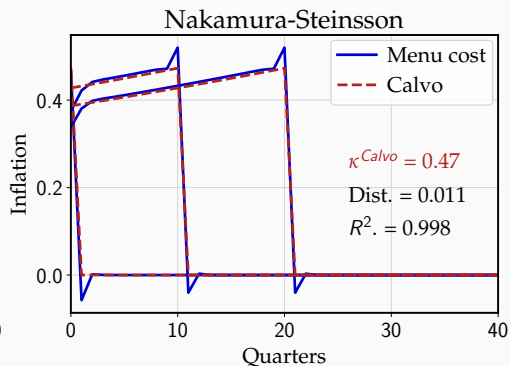
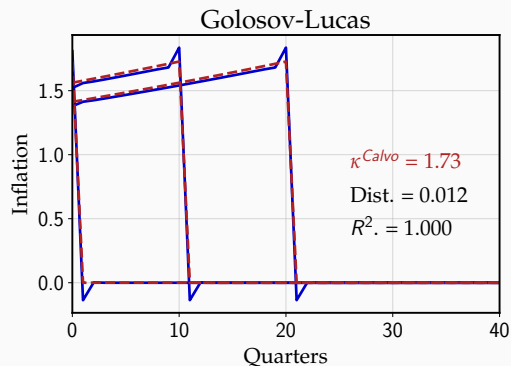
- Note **shape** of Phillips curve is unchanged by ζ , e.g. no more persistence



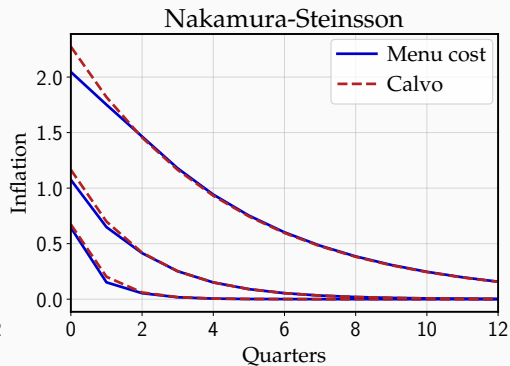
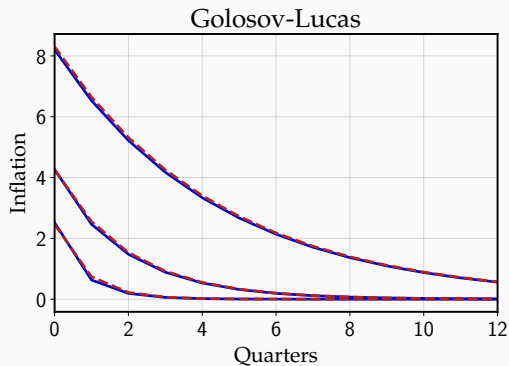


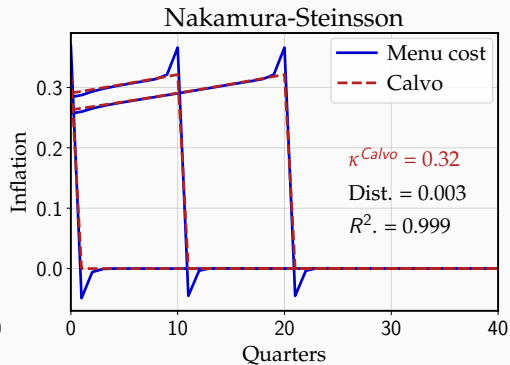
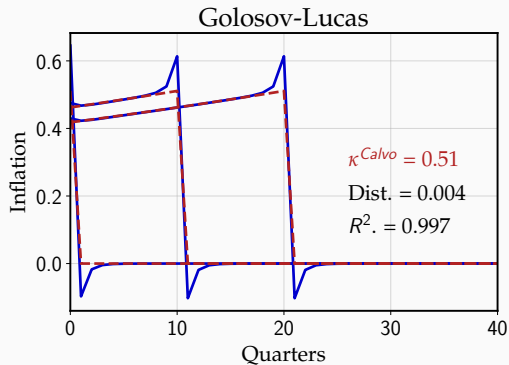
Steady state inflation of 2% - Impulse responses

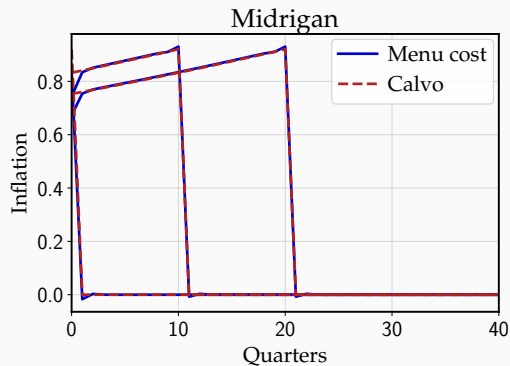




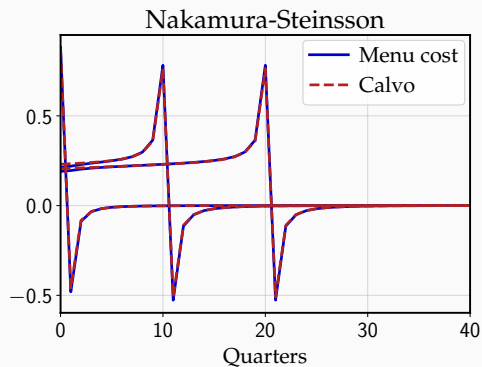
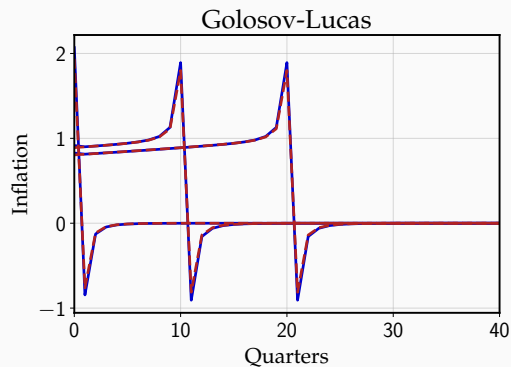
Steady state inflation of 5% - Impulse responses





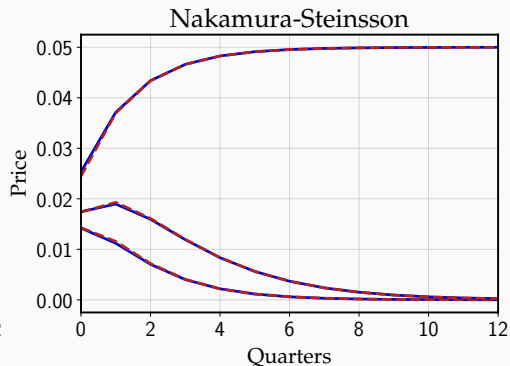
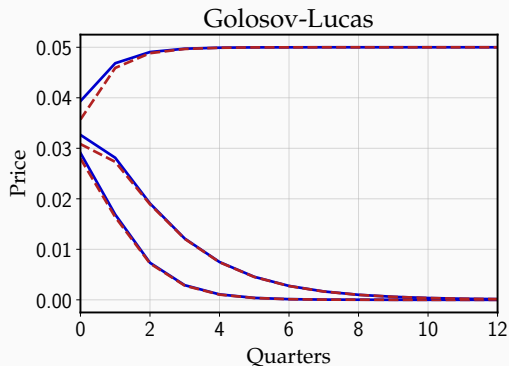


- Midrigan model: 2 products.



Sectors	Golosov-Lucas		Nakamura-Steinsson	
	Real Norm	κ^{Calvo}	Real Norm	κ^{Calvo}
Vehicle fuel, used cars	-	-	-	-
Utilities	0.212	618.8	0.003	98.82
Travel	0.071	294.6	0.001	44.13
Unprocessed food	0.002	23.24	0.003	5.19
Transp. goods	0.001	13.31	0.004	3.27
Services (1)	0.001	14.07	0.004	3.42
Processed food, other	0.001	3.23	0.009	0.90

Sectors	Golosov-Lucas		Nakamura-Steinsson	
	Real Norm	κ^{Calvo}	Real Norm	κ^{Calvo}
Services (2)	0.001	1.60	0.010	0.44
Hh. furnishings	0.002	0.97	0.010	0.26
Services (3)	0.002	0.89	0.010	0.23
Recreation goods	0.002	0.86	0.010	0.23
Services (4)	0.003	0.56	0.010	0.15
Apparel	0.007	0.31	0.012	0.08
Services (5)	0.011	0.20	0.015	0.05



- 5% shock size with persistence $\in \{0.3, 0.6, 1\}$.