

Can Trade Policy Mitigate Climate Change?

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Background

Existing Climate Agreements Have Failed to Deliver!



Cause of Failure: *The Free-Riding Problem*



Nordhaus (2015, *AER*)

*“The fundamental reason is the strong incentives for **free-riding** in current international climate agreements [...] Many countries have an incentive to rely on the emissions reductions of others without taking proportionate domestic abatement.”*

Two Remedies for the *Free-Riding* Problem

Proposal #1: Carbon Border Taxes

- governments can use *carbon border taxes* as a *2nd-best* policy to curb (untaxed) CO₂ emissions beyond their jurisdiction
- the idea is to mimic 1st-best carbon pricing via border taxes

Proposal #2: Climate Club

- climate-conscious governments can forge a club and use *collective* and *contingent* trade penalties to deter free-riding.
- has the potential to achieve *1st-best* carbon-pricing

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- has the potential to achieve *1st-best* carbon-pricing & **free trade!**

Existing Assessments of Climate-Oriented Trade Policy

- We have a limited understanding of the efficacy of **Proposals #1 & #2**
- Computing the *maximal* efficacy of these proposals is challenging:
 - infeasible with numerical optimization given high-dimensionality
 - theoretical representations of optimal policy can help, but existing theories are too stylized to guide quantitative analysis

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 - theoretical representations of optimal policy can help, but existing theories are too stylized to guide quantitative analysis
 - past literature analyzes simplified variants of these proposals that can be easily quantified but are suboptimal → unable to determine maximal efficacy

This Paper

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 - general equilibrium + multi-industry + multi-country
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1. Develop a rich model of trade with climate externalities
 - general equilibrium + multi-industry + multi-country
 - global energy markets → carbon supply chains
2. Derive analytical formulas for optimal *carbon border taxes* & *climate club penalties* under rich GE considerations
3. Map model & theoretical formulas to data to uncover the maximal efficacy of two canonical climate policy proposals:
 - (Proposal 1) carbon border taxes
 - (Proposal 2) climate club

Theoretical Framework

Economic Environment

- Multiple countries: $i, n = 1, \dots, N$
 - country i is endowed with \bar{L}_i units of labor and \bar{R}_i carbon reserves.
- Multiple industries:
 - energy: $k = 0$
 - final goods: $k = 1, \dots, K$.
- All industries are perfectly competitive and tradable (s.t. trade costs)

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- All industries are perfectly competitive and tradable (s.t. trade costs)
- CO₂ emissions are determined by energy usage

Consumption

- Non-parametric utility aggregator across international varieties

variety $ni, k \sim$ origin n –destination i –industry k

- Demand for each variety is a function of

1. expendable income: E_i

2. after tax prices: $\tilde{\mathbf{P}}_i = \left\{ \tilde{P}_{1i,k}, \dots, \tilde{P}_{Ni,k} \right\}_{k=1, \dots, K}$

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demand function $\sim C_{ni,k} = \mathcal{D}_{ni,k} \left(E_i, \tilde{\mathbf{P}}_i \right)$

indirect utility $\sim V_i \left(E_i, \tilde{\mathbf{P}}_i \right)$

Special Case: Cobb-Douglas-CES

$$U_i = \prod_{k=1}^K \left(\frac{C_{i,k}}{\beta_{i,k}} \right)^{\beta_{i,k}} \quad C_{i,k} = \left[\sum_{n=1}^N C_{ni,k}^{\frac{\sigma_k-1}{\sigma_k}} \right]^{\frac{\sigma_k}{\sigma_k-1}}$$

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- Marshallian emand function

$$\mathcal{D}_{ni,k} \left(E_i, \tilde{\mathbf{P}}_i \right) = \left(\frac{\tilde{P}_{ni,k}}{\tilde{P}_{i,k}} \right)^{1-\sigma_k} \beta_{i,k} E_i \quad \tilde{P}_{i,k} = \left(\sum_{j=1}^N \tilde{P}_{ji,k}^{1-\sigma_k} \right)^{\frac{1}{1-\sigma_k}}$$

- Indirect utility function

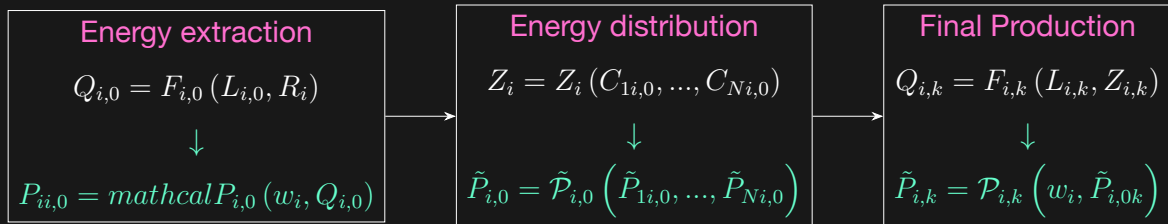
$$V_i \left(E_i, \tilde{\mathbf{P}}_i \right) = E_i / \tilde{P}_i \quad \tilde{P}_i = \prod_{k=1}^K \tilde{P}_{i,k}^{\beta_{i,k}}$$

Production: Energy + Final Goods

- Energy extraction ($k = 0$) uses labor ($L_{i,0}$) and energy reserves (\bar{R}_i)
- A distributor aggregates energy varieties from various locations, $Z_i(C_{1i,0}, \dots, C_{Ni,0})$, and sells them to downstream producers
- Production in industry $k = 1, \dots, K$ combines labor ($L_{i,k}$) and composite energy inputs ($Z_{i,k}$)

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Energy Extraction ($k = 0$)

- Energy extraction uses labor and fixed supply of energy reserves \bar{R}_i :

$$Q_{i,0} = \bar{\varphi}_{i,0} L_{i,0}^{1-\phi} \bar{R}_i^\phi$$

- Optimal input choices imply an upward-sloping supply curve:

$$P_{ii,0} = \bar{p}_{i,0} Q_{i,0}^{\frac{\phi}{1-\phi}} w_i \qquad P_{ni,0} = d_{ni,0} P_{ii,0}$$

- The energy extracted by country i is sold internationally, with $C_{in,0}$ denoting the quantity sold to country n : $Q_{i,0} = \sum_n d_{in,0} C_{in,0}$

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Energy Bundling & Distribution

- An national energy distributor aggregates international energy varieties $(C_{1i,0}, \dots, C_{Ni,0})$ into a composite energy input (Z_i) and sells it to downstream producers

$$Z_i = Z_i(C_{1i,0}, \dots, C_{Ni,0})$$

- The price of carbon inputs paid by industry k is the price of the composite energy bundle and the carbon tax

$$\tilde{P}_{i,0k} = \underbrace{\tilde{P}_{i,0} \left(\tilde{P}_{1i,0}, \dots, \tilde{P}_{Ni,0} \right)}_{\text{price of energy bundle}} + \underbrace{\tau_{i,k}}_{\text{carbon tax}}$$

Final Good Production

- Production in Industries $k = 1, \dots, K$ uses labor & energy inputs:

$$Q_{i,k} = F_{i,k} (L_{i,k}, Z_{i,k})$$

- The output price is a homogeneous of degree one function $\mathcal{P}_{i,k} (\cdot)$ of wage and energy input price:

$$P_{in,k} = d_{in,k} \mathcal{P}_{i,k} \left(w_i, \tilde{P}_{i,0k} \right)$$

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- CO₂ emissions depend on input prices & total output:

$$Z_{i,k} = z_{i,k} (w_i, \tilde{P}_{i,0k}) Q_{i,k} \quad \text{with} \quad \frac{\partial z'_{i,k}(\cdot)}{\partial \tilde{P}_{i,0k}} < 0$$

- a higher carbon tax raise energy price $\tilde{P}_{i,0k} \rightarrow$ lower emissions $Z_{i,k}$

Final Good Production (CES case)

- Production in Industries $k = 1, \dots, K$ uses labor & energy inputs:

$$Q_{i,k} = \bar{\varphi}_{i,k} \left[(1 - \bar{\kappa}_{i,k})^{\frac{1}{\varsigma}} L_{i,k}^{\frac{\varsigma-1}{\varsigma}} + \bar{\kappa}_{i,k}^{\frac{1}{\varsigma}} Z_{i,k}^{\frac{\varsigma-1}{\varsigma}} \right]^{\frac{\varsigma}{\varsigma-1}}$$

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$$P_{in,k} = \frac{d_{in,k}}{\bar{\varphi}_{n,k}} \left[(1 - \bar{\kappa}_{i,k}) w_i^{1-\varsigma} + \bar{\kappa}_{i,k} \tilde{P}_{i,0k}^{1-\varsigma} \right]^{\frac{1}{1-\varsigma}} \quad \tilde{P}_{i,0k} = \left(\sum_j \tilde{P}_{ji,0}^{1-\sigma_0} \right)^{\frac{1}{1-\sigma_0}} + \tau_{i,k}$$

- CO₂ emissions depend on the carbon intensity ($z_{i,k}$) & total output:

$$Z_{i,k} = \underbrace{z_{i,k}}_{\text{technique}} \times \underbrace{Q_{i,k}}_{\text{scale}} \quad z_{i,k} = \bar{z}_{i,k} \times \left(\frac{\bar{\kappa}_{i,k} \tilde{P}_{i,0k}^{1-\varsigma}}{(1 - \bar{\kappa}_{i,k}) w_i^{1-\varsigma} + \bar{\kappa}_{i,k} \tilde{P}_{i,0k}^{1-\varsigma}} \right)^{\frac{\varsigma}{\varsigma-1}}$$

Social Welfare: Rationales for Policy Intervention

Welfare in country i is the sum of indirect utility from consumption and disutility from global CO₂ emissions:


$$W_i \equiv \underbrace{V_i(E_i, \tilde{\mathbf{P}}_i)}_{\text{consumption utility}} - \overbrace{\delta_i \sum_{n=1}^N \sum_{k=1}^K Z_{n,k}}^{\text{disutility from CO}_2}$$

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CO₂ emissions from origin n -industry k

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- $E_i = Y_i$ = factor reward + tax revenues
- $\tilde{\mathbf{P}}_i$ represents after-tax prices in the local economy

Sources of Inefficiencies & Tax Instruments

From the **unilateral** perspective of country i

- firms do not internalize their CO₂ externality on residents of country i .
- unilateral trade restrictions can improve the terms-of-trade

From the **global** perspective

- firms do not internalize their global CO₂ externality
- free trade is efficient (+ lump sum international transfers)

Country i 's unilaterally optimal outcome can be obtained via

- carbon taxes: τ
- border taxes: Import tariffs (t) + Export subsidy (x)

Optimal Policy

The **unilaterally optimal policy** of country i maximizes its national welfare taking policies in other countries as given:

$$\mathbb{I}_i^* = (\mathbf{t}_i^*, \mathbf{x}_i^*, \tau_i^*) = \arg \max W_i(\mathbb{I}_i, \bar{\mathbb{I}}_{-i}), \quad \text{subject to GE constraints.}$$

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The **efficient policy from a global standpoint**, maximizes global welfare by choosing all tax rates and transfers,

$$\mathbb{I}^* = \left\{ \mathbb{I}_i^*, \Delta_i^* \right\}_i = \arg \max \sum_i \omega_i W_i(\mathbb{I}), \quad \text{subject to GE constraints.}$$

Dual Decomposition Method

Dual Approach: reformulate the optimal policy problem by having the government directly select prices \rightarrow recover optimal taxes from optimal price wedges

Decomposition of the GE optimal policy problem into sub-problems:

- solving for optimal policy requires solving an interdependent system of F.O.C.s containing complex GE derivative (e.g., $\partial E / \partial \tilde{P}$, $\partial Z / \partial \tilde{P}$)
- We decompose this system into independent sub-problems that do not involve GE derivatives.
- this method allows us to relax the strong simplifying assumptions of earlier studies without sacrificing the richness of GE.

Overview of Optimal Policy Formulas

Unilaterally Optimal Policy

- carbon tax: $\tau_{i,k}^* \equiv \tilde{P}_{i,k0} - \tilde{P}_{i,0} = \tilde{\delta}_i$
- border taxes: manipulate ToT + tax foreign CO₂ emissions formulas

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Efficient policy from a global standpoint

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- zero border taxes
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The Free-Riding Problem

- Free-riding occurs because the *unilaterally* optimal carbon tax is lower than the *globally* optimal rate

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- Two remedies for the free-riding problem:
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- Two remedies for the free-riding problem:
 - use **carbon border taxes** as a 2nd-best policy to mimic τ^*
 - forge a **climate club** and use contingent trade penalties to deter free-riding

We use our analytic formulas for optimal **carbon border taxes** & **climate club** penalties to determine the *maximal* efficacy of each policy.

Mapping Theory to Data

Quantitative Strategy

- Compute the counterfactual equilibrium under optimal policy:
 - (1) equilibrium allocation depends on optimal policy
 - (2) optimal policy depends on equilibrium allocation
 - jointly solve the systems of equations implied by (1) and (2).

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- Sufficient statistics
 - **data**: trade, production, & CO₂ emissions + applied taxes **data**
 - **parameters**: trade elasticities + energy input demand elasticity + $\left\{ \tilde{\delta}_i \right\}_i$
parameters

Quantitative Assessment of Proposals 1 and 2

Summary of Proposal 1

- **Proposal 1:** Governments incorporate **carbon border taxes** in their trade policy to reduce transboundary carbon emissions.
- We simulate a non-cooperative equilibrium in which governments simultaneously choose their unilaterally optimal policy, which includes
 - unilaterally optimal carbon taxes
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 - carbon border taxes
- Governments with little care for climate damage, apply little-to-no carbon border taxes

Results: The Efficacy of Proposal 1

Country	Non-Cooperative						Global Cooperation		
	Carbon + Border Tax			Carbon Tax			(first-best)		
	ΔCO_2	ΔV	ΔW	ΔCO_2	ΔV	ΔW	ΔCO_2	ΔV	ΔW
EU	-22.2%	-0.3%	-0.0%	-21.2%	-0.0%	0.2%	-38.5%	-0.4%	1.7%
Canada	8.3%	-1.6%	-1.5%	3.5%	-0.1%	0.0%	-42.6%	-1.2%	-0.6%
China	-9.7%	-0.1%	0.1%	-8.3%	0.0%	0.1%	-39.0%	-1.7%	-0.6%
Indonesia	1.7%	-0.2%	-0.1%	2.4%	-0.0%	0.1%	-42.9%	-3.1%	-2.7%
Japan	-2.2%	-0.3%	-0.1%	-0.6%	0.0%	0.1%	-39.1%	-1.5%	-0.5%
Russia	7.3%	-1.3%	-1.3%	3.5%	-0.2%	-0.2%	-43.8%	-0.0%	0.1%
Saudi Arabia	12.2%	-3.9%	-3.9%	4.8%	-0.6%	-0.6%	-45.8%	-0.6%	-0.5%
USA	-3.8%	-0.3%	-0.3%	-1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	-43.0%	-1.7%	-1.3%
Global	-6.5%	-0.5%	-0.2%	-5.4%	-0.0%	0.2%	-41.0%	-0.6%	1.1%

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- Non-cooperative carbon and border taxes

$$\Delta\text{CO}_2 = \underbrace{5.4\%}_{\text{domestic tax}} + \underbrace{1.1\%}_{\text{border tax}} = 6.5\%$$

- Global climate cooperation (1st-best)

$$\Delta\text{CO}_2 = 5.4\% + 35.6\% = 41\%$$

Results: The Efficacy of Proposal 1

- Non-cooperative carbon and border taxes

$$\Delta\text{CO}_2 = \underbrace{5.4\%}_{\text{domestic tax}} + \underbrace{1.1\%}_{\text{border tax}} = 6.5\%$$

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Headline Result: non-cooperative border taxes replicate 3.1% ($\frac{1.1\%}{35.6\%}$) of the CO₂ reduction attainable under global cooperation.

Discussion: Inefficacy of Carbon Border Taxes

Three factors limit the efficacy of carbon border taxes:

1. border taxes have difficulty targeting non-traded CO₂ emissions, which constitute a large fraction of global emissions
2. carbon border taxes are not sufficiently granular to target individual firms with high carbon intensity
3. carbon leakage through GE channels
e.g., leakage from the EU to Russia & Saudi Arabia

Summary of Proposal 2

- **Proposal 2:** a set of *core* members forge a **Climate Club**
 - *core* members move first, all other countries play simultaneously afterwards.
- Carbon pricing requirements:
 - all members must raise their carbon price to the **carbon price target**
 $(\tau^{\text{target}} \leq \tau^*)$
- Accession to the Climate Club is incentivized by trade penalties:
 - free trade among club members + optimal trade penalties on non-members
 - non-members can retaliate **computational challenges**

The Climate Club's Carbon Price Target

- Ideally, the carbon price target is the maximal price that yields universal participation
 - In this case the climate club will not disrupt global free trade
- The maximal carbon price target depends on the makeup of the climate club's core members
 - a larger block of core members → more effective trade penalties
→ more participation to escape penalties

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 - a larger block of core members → more effective trade penalties
→ more participation to escape penalties
- We measure the efficacy of the climate club for several combinations of core member

Results: EU-US Climate Club

Core members: {EU, US}

- maximal carbon price target = \$53 (per tCO₂)
- Iterative rounds whereby countries join the club:
 - Round 1: Brazil, Canada, Korea, Turkey, RO Eurasia
 - Round 2: Russia, RO Americas
 - Round 3: Africa, Mexico, Saudi, Arabia, Japan
 - Round 4: China, Indonesia, RO Asia, RO Middle East
 - Round 5: Australia, India

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- Reduction in global CO₂ emissions = 18.3%
 - compared to 6.5% (non-cooperative policies) and 41% (globally first best)

Results: Alternative Climate Club Scenarios

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- Core members: {EU}
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 - reduction in global CO₂ emissions = 13.7%
- Core members: {EU, US, China}
 - maximal carbon price target = \$90 (per tCO₂)
 - reduction in global CO₂ emissions = 28.2%

Summary of Findings

- Carbon border taxes are a poor 2nd-best policy for curbing CO₂ emissions, because
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Summary of Findings

- Carbon border taxes are a poor 2nd-best policy for curbing CO₂ emissions, because
 - they cannot target less-traded but high-carbon industries
 - they are not granular enough to target individual firms
- The climate club can be highly effective at curbing CO₂ emissions...
 - but its efficacy hinges critically on (i) the make-up of core members and (ii) selecting the right target to avoid decoupling
 - China is a crucial player: a club without China is less effective and may trigger East-West decoupling

Thank You.



Related Literature

- Theories of environmental policy in an international setting
 - Unilateral policy: Markusen (1975), Copeland (1996), Hoel (1996), Kortum-Wiesbach (2022)
 - Issue linkage in international cooperation: Barrett (1997), Maggi (2016), Nordhaus (2015)
- Quantitative assessment of environmental/energy policies
 - Babiker (2005), Elliot et al (2010), Bohringer et al (2016), Larch and Wanner (2017), Farrokhi (2020), Shapiro (2020) among many others
- Optimal trade policy in general equilibrium
 - Costinot et al (2015), Bartelme et al (2022), Lashkaripour-Lugovskyy (2023)

Data on Observable Statistics

- Trade, production, and CO₂ emissions
 - Source: GTAP Database (2014)
 - 19 countries (13 largest countries + the EU + 5 aggregate regions) [Countries](#)
 - energy industry + 17 non-energy industries [Industries](#)
 - link energy to downstream industries via input-output tables [Carbon Accounting](#)
- Baseline taxes:
 - Import tariffs: GTAP
 - Environmentally-related Taxes: OECD-PINE

Estimated Parameters

- Trade Elasticity
 - Caliendo and Parro's (2015) methodology applied to trade and tariff data
- Energy input demand elasticity
 - IV estimation of energy demand equation
- Disutility from carbon emissions, $(\tilde{\delta}_i)$
 - $\sum_i \tilde{\delta}_i \sim \text{SCC} = \99 per tCO₂ for 2014 (latest EPA report)
 - Recover $\tilde{\delta}_i$, by revealed preferences of governments, from environmentally-related taxes

	Industry	Emissions (as % of sum)	Trade/GDP Ratio	Carbon Intensity	Carbon Cost Share	Trade Elasticity
1	Agriculture	4.2%	8.8%	100.0	0.031	2.13
2	Other Mining	1.9%	27.3%	181.4	0.057	2.13
3	Food	3.3%	8.0%	45.9	0.016	3.54
4	Textile	1.9%	22.6%	59.7	0.021	5.69
5	Wood	0.5%	8.4%	61.0	0.027	5.94
6	Paper	2.1%	8.8%	125.9	0.062	5.94
7	Chemicals	9.5%	21.9%	179.6	0.064	9.05
8	Plastics	1.8%	13.5%	89.0	0.056	9.05
9	Nonmetallic Minerals	8.6%	5.8%	458.0	0.125	14.5
10	Metals	14.7%	14.9%	205.0	0.068	14.5
11	Electronics and Machinery	3.0%	30.0%	42.1	0.023	4.57
12	Motor Vehicles	1.2%	23.4%	34.0	0.014	1.93
13	Other Manufacturing	0.6%	21.8%	41.7	0.032	1.93
14	Construction	1.5%	0.6%	59.2	0.026	5.69
15	Wholesale and Retail	3.6%	2.4%	34.7	0.017	5.69
16	Transportation	27.3%	10.5%	498.0	0.176	5.69
17	Other Services	14.5%	3.1%	26.6	0.012	5.69

	Share of World Output	Share of World	Emission per capita	Emission Intensity	Disutility (% of the sum)
1 Australia (AUS)	1.8%	1.2%	239.9	146.8	1.0%
2 EU	25.9%	11.7%	100.0	100.0	34.0%
3 Brazil (BRA)	2.8%	1.7%	38.8	135.3	3.9%
4 Canada (CAN)	1.9%	1.5%	199.1	175.6	0.8%
5 China (CHN)	17.7%	30.3%	102.9	377.9	13.4%
6 Indonesia (IDN)	1.0%	1.4%	25.9	302.2	0.3%
7 India (IND)	2.4%	6.8%	24.4	618.8	8.0%
8 Japan (JPN)	6.2%	3.6%	129.5	127.7	3.8%
9 Korea (KOR)	2.2%	1.9%	169.5	189.2	2.0%
10 Mexico (MEX)	1.4%	1.4%	52.0	218.7	0.2%
11 Russia (RUS)	1.9%	3.8%	121.8	436.1	0.1%
12 Saudi Arabia (SAU)	0.4%	1.3%	195.1	750.0	0.0%
13 Turkey (TUR)	1.0%	1.1%	67.3	245.5	3.1%
14 USA	20.4%	15.0%	217.7	161.7	4.3%
15 Africa	2.6%	3.4%	13.7	286.0	14.2%
16 RO Americas	3.0%	2.6%	41.5	194.8	6.3%
17 RO Asia and Oceania	5.1%	5.9%	31.7	253.2	4.2%
18 RO Eurasia	0.7%	2.0%	68.3	674.5	0.1%
19 RO Middle East	1.6%	3.5%	78.5	493.4	0.2%

Proposal 2: Computational Challenges

Characterizing all Nash equilibria faces two major challenges:

1. Computing optimal trade penalties is strenuous with numerical optimization
 - Our **analytical formulas** for optimal trade penalties help overcome this challenge.
2. Nash outcomes must be identified over 2^N possible outcomes.¹
 - To overcome the *curse of dimensionality*, we note that net benefits from joining the climate club rise with the number of existing members.
 - We use **iterative elimination of dominated strategies** to shrink the outcome space

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¹ N denotes the number of countries that are not core members.

Unilaterally-Optimal Policy Formulas

Notation: $\sigma - 1$ (trade elasticity) v (CO₂ per dollar)
 ζ (energy input demand elasticity)

$$\tau_i^* = \tilde{\delta}_i \sim \delta_i \tilde{P}_i \quad [\text{carbon price}]$$

$$t_{ni,k}^* = \bar{t}_i + \tau_i^* v_{n,k} \quad t_{ni,0}^* = \bar{t}_i \quad [\text{import tax}]$$

$$1 + x_{in,k}^* = (1 + \bar{t}_i) \frac{\sigma_k - 1}{\sigma_k} + \tau_i^* \sum_{j \neq i} [\lambda_{jn,k} v_{j,k}] \frac{\sigma_k - 1}{\sigma_k} \quad [\text{export subsidy } k \neq 0]$$

$$1 + x_{in,0}^* = (1 + \bar{t}_i) \frac{\sigma_0 - 1}{\sigma_0} + \tau_i^* \frac{1}{\sigma_0} \frac{\zeta_n}{\tilde{P}_{n,0}} \quad [\text{export subsidy } k = 0]$$

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