

Credibility Dynamics and Disinflation Plans

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September 2019

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MOTIVATION

- Macro models: **expectations** of future policy determine current outcomes
- Policy is typically set assuming commitment or discretion
- Governments actively attempt to influence beliefs about future policy
 - Forward guidance, inflation targets, fiscal rules
- This paper: rational-expectations theory of government credibility
 - Insights from **reputation** models [▶ Kreps-Wilson](#)
- Application in a (modern) Barro-Gordon setup

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OUTLINE

- What is **reputation**?
 - Private sector *posterior belief* that the government is committed to a *particular* plan
- Given a plan — [Continuation equilibrium]
 - Larger departures are **easier** to detect
 - Crucial feature: noise partially masks government's current choice
 - 'More time-inconsistent' plans have a more negative average drift of reputation
- Planner anticipates credibility dynamics of plans — [Equilibrium]

Main result

Planner chooses a
back-loaded plan

- In application, gradual disinflation
- No real inertia, but good for incentives

- Consider the limit when initial reputation **vanishes** to zero

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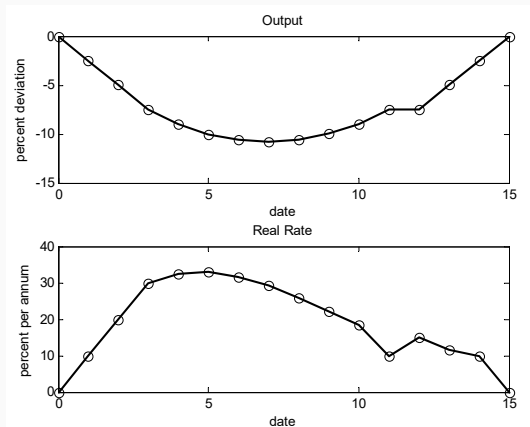
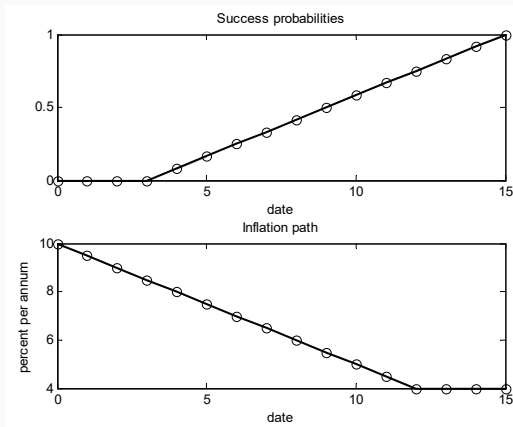
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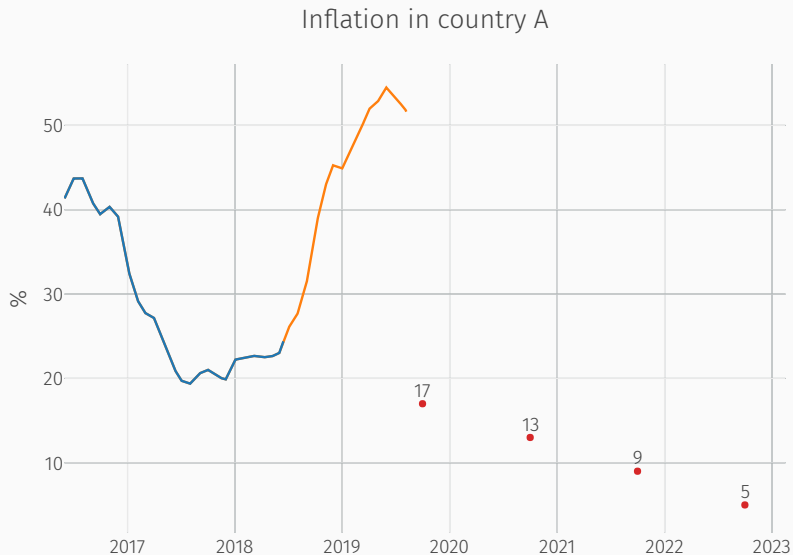
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OUR WANT OPERATOR

- Goodfriend and King (2005) describe the **Volcker** disinflation



OUR WANT OPERATOR



- **Sustainable plans** – anything goes
from Kydland and Prescott (1977), Chari and Kehoe (1990), Phelan and Stacchetti (2001)
- **Reputation without noise** – zero inflation at onset
Milgrom and Roberts (1982), Kreps and Wilson (1982), Barro (1986), Backus and Driffill (1985), Barro and Gordon (1986), Sleet and Yeltekin (2007)
- **Preference uncertainty with noise** – announcements irrelevant
Cukierman and Meltzer (1986), Faust and Svensson (2001), Phelan (2006), etc
- **Reputation with noise**
Commitment: Lu (2013), Lu, King, and Pastén (2008, 2016)
Static plans: Faingold and Sannikov (2011)

- Model
- Continuation equilibria conditional on a plan
- Plans
- Conclusion

MODEL

- A government dislikes inflation and output away from a target $y^* > 0$

$$L_t = \mathbb{E}_t \left[\sum_{s=0}^{\infty} \beta^s ((y^* - y_{t+s})^2 + \gamma \pi_{t+s}^2) \right]$$

- A Phillips curve relates output to current and expected future inflation

$$\pi_t = \kappa y_t + \beta \mathbb{E}_t [\pi_{t+1}]$$

- The government controls inflation only imperfectly (through g_t)

$$\pi_t = g_t + \epsilon_t$$

with $\epsilon_t \stackrel{iid}{\sim} F_\epsilon$

- The government can be **rational** or one of many ‘behavioral’ types
 - Behavioral types $c \in \mathcal{C}$
 - Type c is **committed** to an inflation plan $\{a_t\}_{t=0}^{\infty}$
 - For simplicity let all plans have $a_{t+1} = \phi_c(a_t)$ [Finding the state is an art]
- Behavioral types have (total) probability z
 - Conditional on behavioral, probability ν over \mathcal{C}
- Private sector knows z and ν
 - Does **inference** over the government’s type
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- What is the set \mathcal{C} ?
 - ... and associated possible ϕ_c functions
- Consider $\{a_t\}_t$ paths characterized by
 - Starting point a_0
 - Decay rate ω
 - Asymptote χ

$$a_t = \chi + (a_0 - \chi)e^{-\omega t}$$

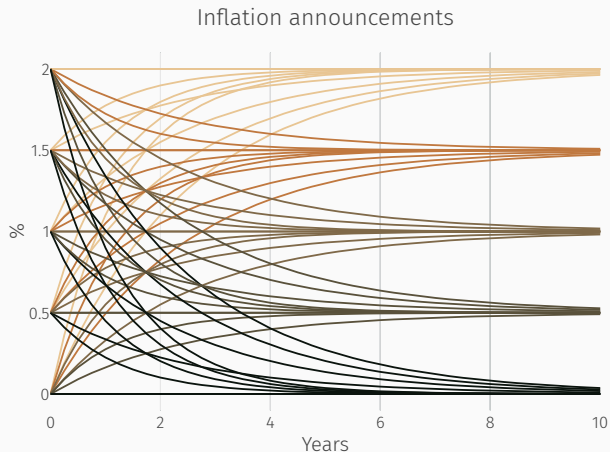
$$\phi(a) = \chi + e^{-\omega}(a - \chi)$$

BEHAVIORAL TYPES

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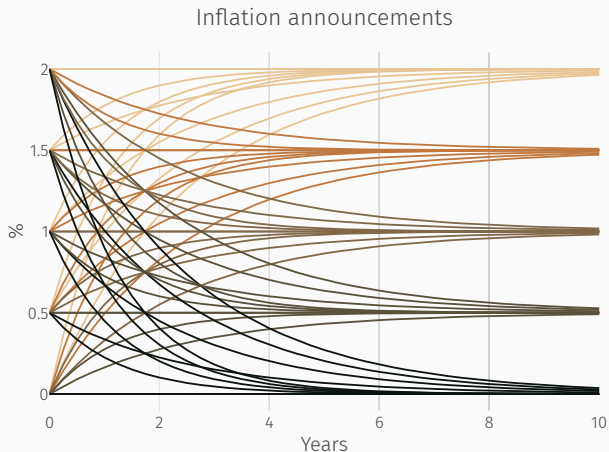
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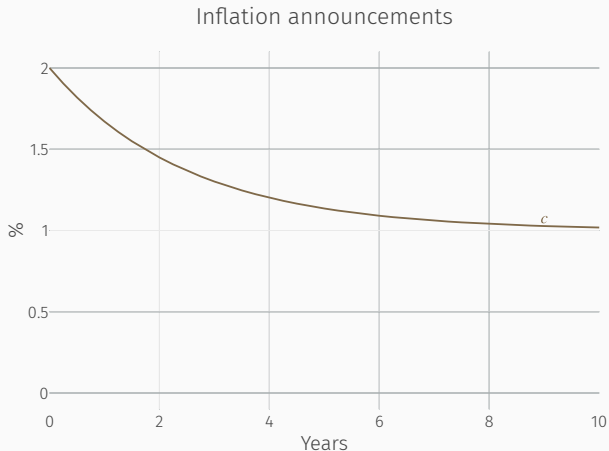
GAMEPLAY

- At $t = 0$, inflation **targets** are announced
 - Type $c \in \mathcal{C}$ says c
 - Rational type **strategizes** announces r possibly $\in \mathcal{C}$
- At time $t \geq 0$, the government sets inflation
 - Behavioral type $c \in \mathcal{C}$ implements $g_t = a_t^c$
 - Rational type acts **strategically** chooses $g_t \leq a_t^c$



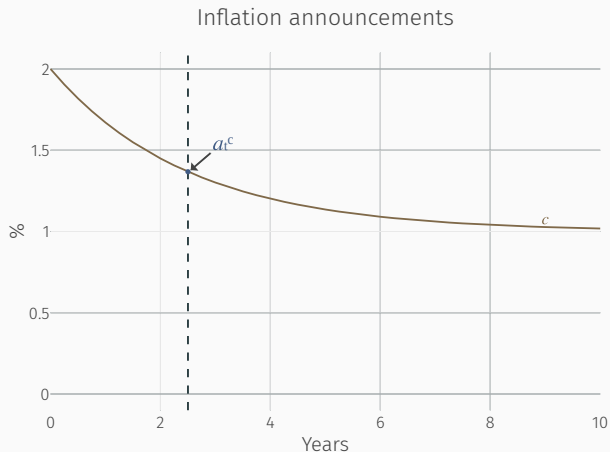
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CONTINUATION EQUILIBRIA CONDITIONAL ON A PLAN

- Output is determined by **beliefs** $\mathbb{E}_t[\pi_{t+1}]$ and **actual inflation** $\pi_t = g_t + \epsilon_t$

$$\pi_t = \kappa y_t + \beta \mathbb{E}_t[\pi_{t+1}] = \kappa y_t + \beta \mathbb{E}_t[\mathbb{1}_c a_{t+1}^c + (1 - \mathbb{1}_c) g_{t+1}^*]$$

- Private sector solves a **signal extraction** problem to update beliefs

$$\mathbb{P}(c \mid \pi_t, \mathcal{F}_{t-1}) = \frac{\mathbb{P}(c \mid \mathcal{F}_{t-1}) \cdot f_\epsilon(\epsilon_t | c)}{\mathbb{P}(c \mid \mathcal{F}_{t-1}) \cdot f_\epsilon(\epsilon_t | c) + (1 - \mathbb{P}(c \mid \mathcal{F}_{t-1})) \cdot f_\epsilon(\epsilon_t | r)}$$

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Given an announcement c ,

- The problem of the rational type is, given expectations g_c^*

$$\mathcal{L}^c(p, a) = \min_g \mathbb{E} [(y^* - y)^2 + \gamma\pi^2 + \beta\mathcal{L}^c(p', \phi_c(a))]$$

subject to $\pi = g + \epsilon$

$$\pi = \kappa y + \beta[p'\phi_c(a) + (1 - p')g_c^*(p', \phi_c(a))]$$

$$p' = p + p(1 - p) \frac{f_\epsilon(a - \pi) - f_\epsilon(g_c^*(p, a) - \pi)}{pf_\epsilon(a - \pi) + (1 - p)f_\epsilon(g_c^*(p, a) - \pi)}$$

- Rational expectations requires g_c^* to be the policy associated with \mathcal{L}^c

Definition

Given an announcement c , a *continuation equilibrium* is a pair (\mathcal{L}^c, g_c^*) such that

- \mathcal{L}^c is the rational type's value function at expectations g_c^*
- g_c^* is the policy function associated with \mathcal{L}^c

A FIRST LOOK AT DIFFERENT PLANS

Observation

- Plans $c \in \mathcal{C}$ are

$$c = (a_0, \chi, \omega)$$

- For $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$

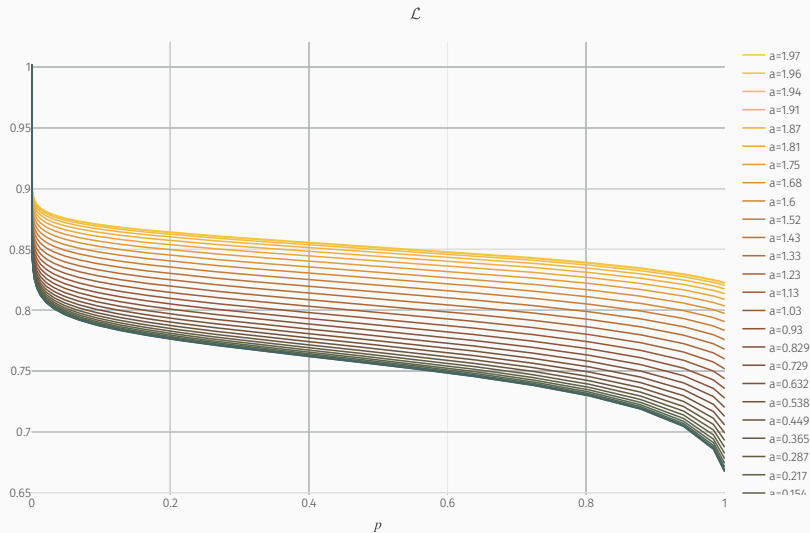
(\mathcal{L}, g^*) is a continuation
equilibrium for (a, χ, ω)



(\mathcal{L}, g^*) is a continuation
equilibrium for (b, χ, ω)

- Means $a \mapsto \mathcal{L}^c(p, a)$ compares the same plan at **different** times and **different plans**

RESULTS



- \mathcal{L} decreasing in p
- \mathcal{L} convex-concave in p
- \mathcal{L} increasing in a for large p only

Lemma 1

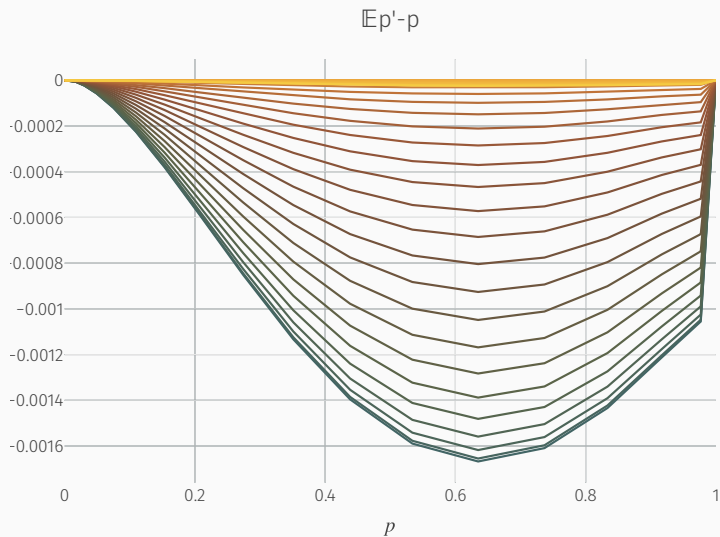
► Idea

In any continuation equilibrium,

$$\mathbb{E}_t [p_{t+1} \mid \text{rational}] \leq p_t$$

So $\{p_t\}_t$ is a supermartingale

RESULTS



From the Phillips curve

$$\frac{\partial y}{\partial \pi} = \frac{1}{\kappa} \left[1 - \beta \frac{\partial p'}{\partial \pi} \left(\phi_c(a) - g^*(p', \phi_c(a)) + (1 - p') \frac{\partial g^*(p', \phi_c(a))}{\partial p'} \right) \right]$$

- More inflation
 1. Increases output by $\frac{1}{\kappa}$
 2. Shifts inflation expectations from $\phi_c(a)$ towards $g^*(p', \phi_c(a))$
... p' decreases with higher π when $g^*(p, a) > a$
 3. Shifts expectations of the rational type's future choice

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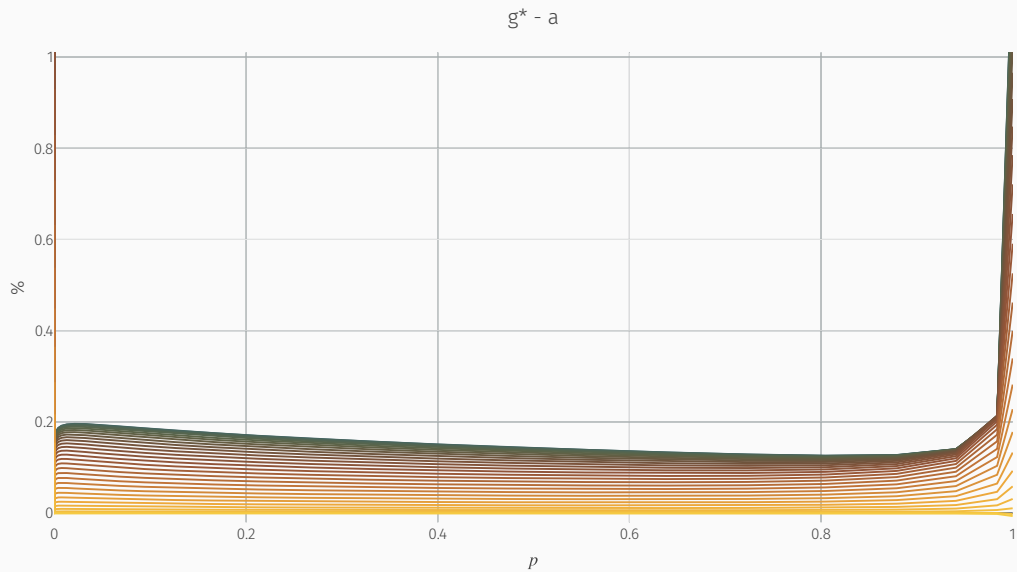
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RESULTS



- Let π^N be the Nash equilibrium inflation of the stage game. Then

$$\forall c \in \mathcal{C} : \quad g_c^*(p, a) \leq \pi^N$$

- This makes us define the *remaining credibility* of a plan as

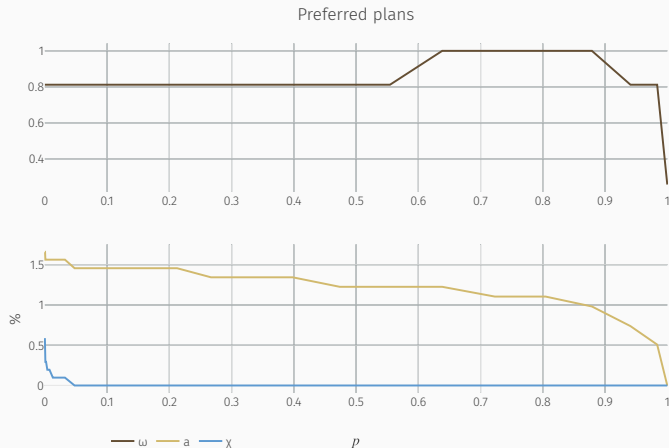
$$C(p, a; c) = \mathbb{E} \left[(1 - \beta) \frac{\pi^N - \pi_t}{\pi^N - a} + \beta C(p'_c(p, a), \phi_c(a)) \right]$$

PLANS

- For each $c \in \mathcal{C}$, find $\mathcal{L}^c(p, a), g_c^*(p, a)$.
- Generates big matrix $\mathcal{L}(p, a; \omega, \chi)$
- First pass: preferred plan at each p

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WHAT PLAN TO CHOOSE?

- Back to the initial announcement
- Ideally, if in equilibrium gov't announces type c with density $\mu(c)$,

$$p_o(c; z, \mu) = \frac{z\nu(c)}{z\nu(c) + (1-z)\mu(c)}$$

- So study

$$\lim_{z \rightarrow 0} \min_{\mu} \int \mathcal{L}(p_o(a_o, \omega, \chi; z, \mu), a_o, \omega, \chi) d\mu$$

WHAT PLAN TO CHOOSE?

- Back to the initial announcement
- Today, Kambe (1999): gov't announces type c and 'becomes' committed to c with exogenous p_0 probability
 - Tractable: p_0 independent of c
- So the limit we consider is

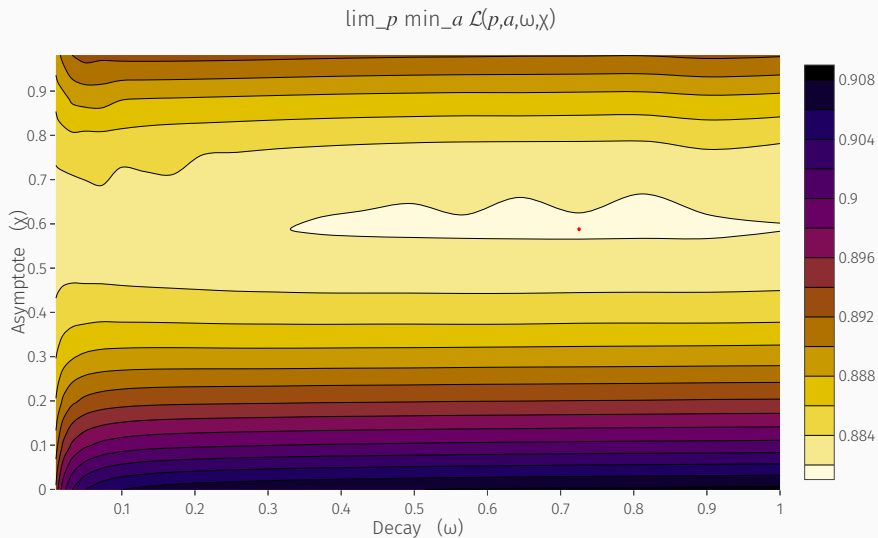
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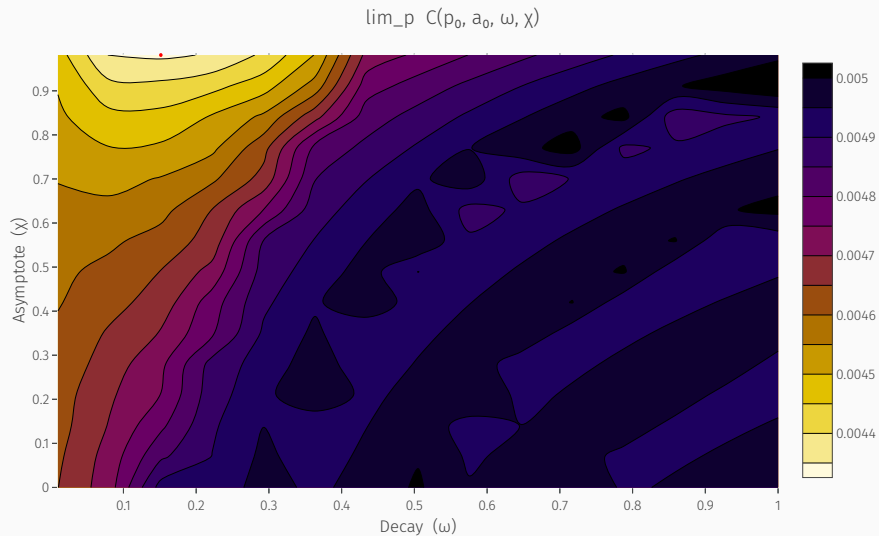
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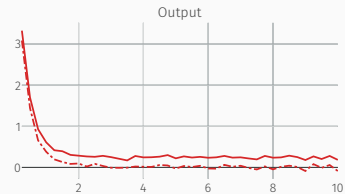
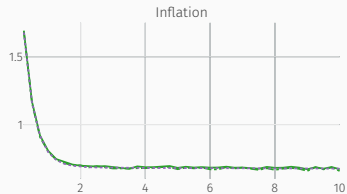
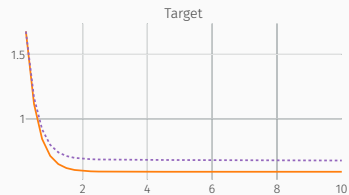
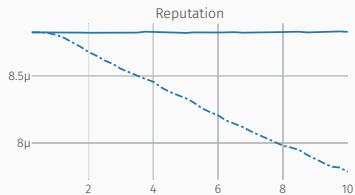
$$\lim_{p_0 \rightarrow 0} \min_{a_0, \omega, \chi} \mathcal{L}(p_0, a_0, \omega, \chi)$$

- Not entirely arbitrary
 - For given p_0 , plans that minimize \mathcal{L} should be played often

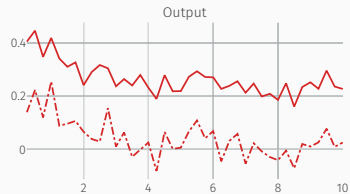
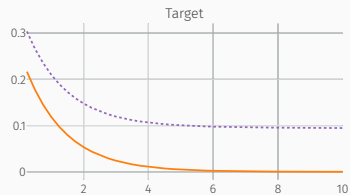
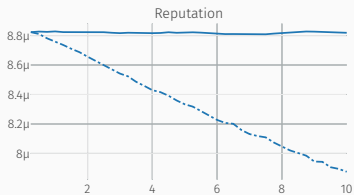




SIMULATIONS



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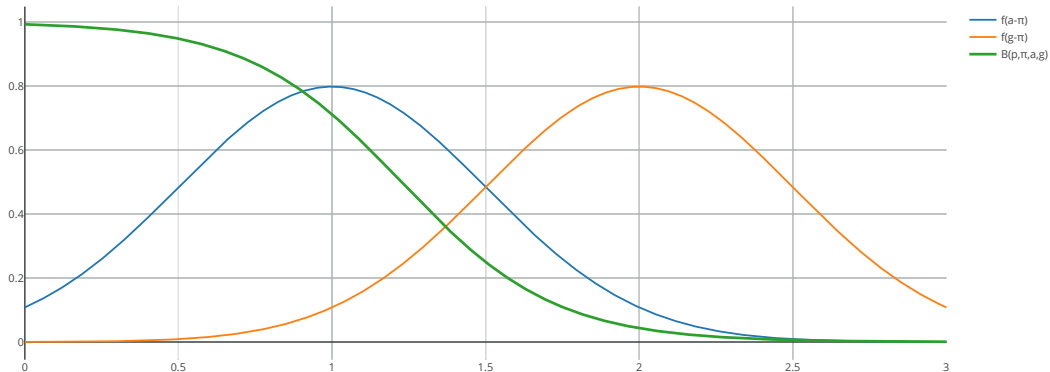


CONCLUSION

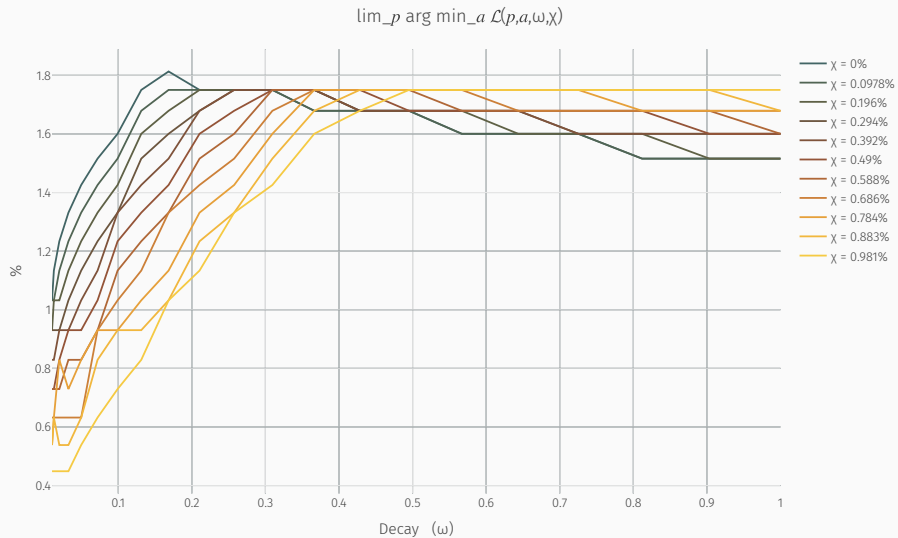
CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Model of reputational dynamics and policy
 - Simple environment
 - Focus on low reputation limit
- Credibility-dynamics concerns influence choice of policy
 - Tradeoff between literal **promises** and **incentives**
 - Gradual plans boost reputation-building incentives for **future** decision-makers
- To do:
 - Solve for complete distribution of mimicked types + take limit
 - Thousand extensions

$$\mathcal{B}(p, \pi, a, g) = p + p(1 - p) \frac{f_{\epsilon}(\pi - a) - f_{\epsilon}(\pi - g)}{pf_{\epsilon}(\pi - a) + (1 - p)f_{\epsilon}(\pi - g)}$$



◀ BACK



Imagine an incumbent facing a sequence of potential entrants

- Each period, entrant decides entry, incumbents **fight**s or **accommodates**
 - Incumbent prefers entrant to stay out but prefers to accommodate if entry
- Fighting the first entrant doesn't affect the decision of following entrants
- **Reputation** as incomplete information
 - What if the incumbent could be behavioral and always produce q upon entry?
- Incentive for the rational incumbent to **pretend** to be behavioral
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