The Perils of Bilateral Sovereign Debt

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DebtCon 8
Washington DC, October 2025

Official Sovereign Debt

- A large share of sovereign borrowing takes the form of official debt
  - … Multilaterals, development banks, other governments

- Emergence of new bilateral creditors **outside** the Paris Club IDS data
  - … with claims to seniority and sometimes **opaque** terms

Questions

- How does the presence of a large senior lender affect sovereign debt markets?
- What are its welfare implications for borrowing governments?

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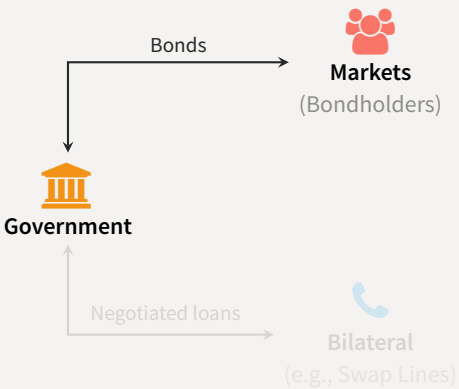
Evaluating Senior Official Creditors

Quantitative sovereign debt model with

- Competitive creditors in private markets
- Large bilateral lender
  1. Superior enforcement [de-facto seniority]
  2. Bargained terms [price and quantity]
  3. Short-maturity loans
- Prime example: Central Bank swap lines (Horn et al., 2021)
- Focus on the interaction between both funding sources



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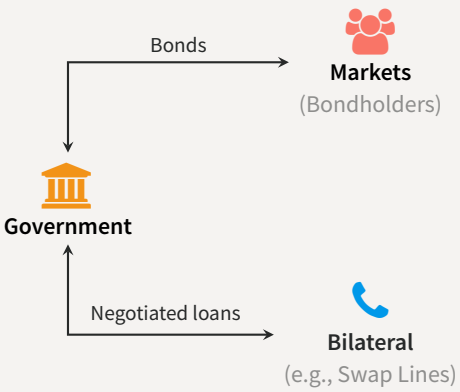

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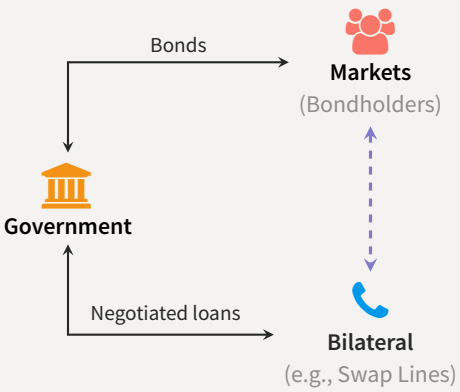

- Focus on the **interaction** between both funding sources

Relational Overborrowing

Main findings

- Bilateral loans have significant effects on equilibrium outcomes
  - … provide funding when other sources dry up (e.g. because of default risk) ▲
  - … can also incentivize more **risk-taking** ▼

- If the rate on bilateral loans is decreasing in *market* debt [cross-elasticity]
  - … government issues debt more quickly, delevers more slowly
  - … spends longer in the risky region
  - … defaults more frequently

- Cross-elasticity can emerge endogenously from bargaining
  - … at plausible values for bargaining weights
  - … increased frequency of defaults dominates extra liquidity
  - … welfare losses for the government

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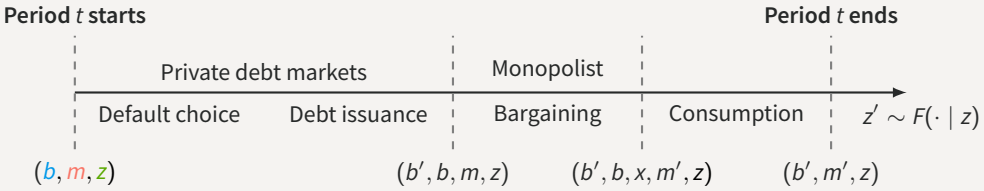
Model

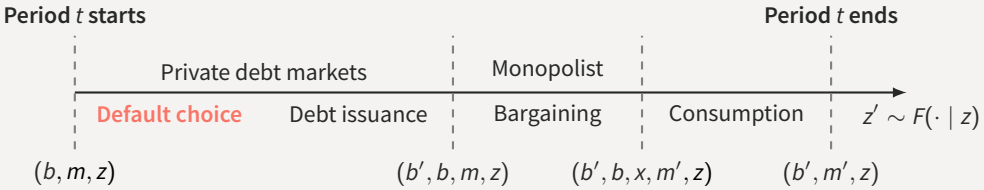
Timeline of Events

- Enter period t owing b to bondholders, m to monopolist, income $y(z)$



Timeline of Events

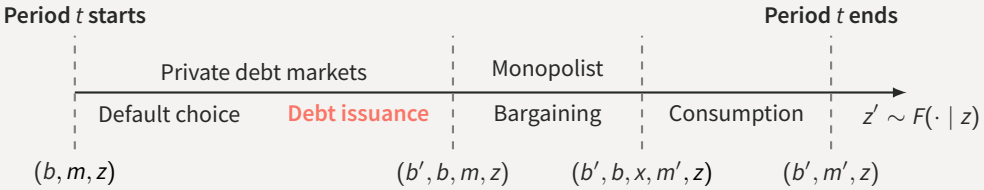
- Choose to repay or default the *market* debt subject to convex output costs



$$v(b, m, z) = \max \left\{ v_R(b, m, z) + \epsilon_R, v_D(m, z) + \epsilon_D \right\}$$

Timeline of Events

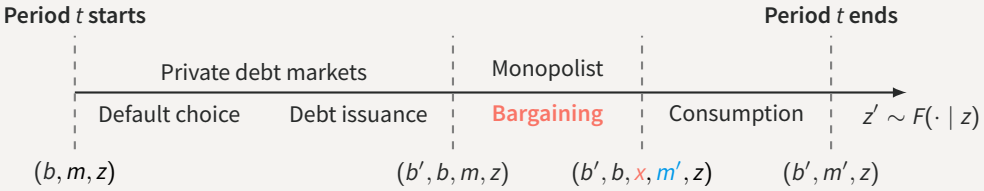
- If repaid, issue new debt b' in markets at price q



$$q(b', b, m, z) = \beta_L \mathbb{E}\left[\left(1 - 1_{\mathcal{D}}(b', m', z')\right)\left(\kappa + (1-\delta) q(b'', b', m', z')\right) \mid z\right]$$

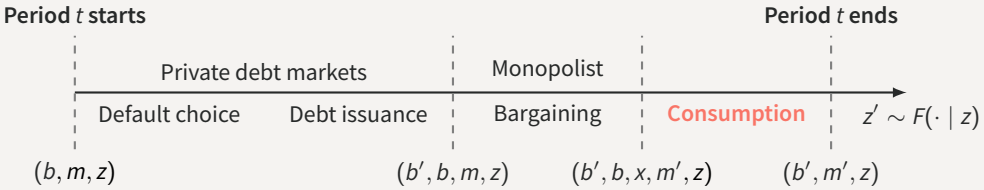
Timeline of Events

- Meet with senior lender, decide any transfers x and new/remaining balance m'



Timeline of Events

- Consume output plus revenues from debt issuance plus transfers minus debt service



$$c_R = y(z) + q(b', b, m, z)(b' - (1 - \delta)b) + x_R(b', b, m, z) - \kappa b$$

Exogenous Bilateral Terms

Programming the Large Lender: Possible Rules

- Explore interest rate rules of the form

$$r(b', m') = \max\{r^\star, \alpha_0 + \alpha_b b' + \alpha_m m'\}$$

- Two versions

Size-dependent

$\alpha_0 > 0, \alpha_b = 0, \alpha_m > 0$

Risk-inducing

$\alpha_0 > 0, \alpha_b < 0, \alpha_m = 0$

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Equilibrium with Exogenous Rules

- 'Only market' standard calibration to Argentina 1993-2001

	Only market	Size dependent r	Risk inducing r
Avg spread (bps)	714	623	921
Std spread (bps)	399	315	552
$\sigma(c)/\sigma(y)$ (%)	113	115	115
Debt to GDP (%)	22.5	23.5	22.8
Loan to GDP (%)	0	0.71	0.972
Loan spread (bps)	–	682	1,264
Corr. loan & spreads (%)	–	62.5	48.1
Default frequency (%)	5.72	5.13	6.92
Welfare gains (rep)	–	0.21%	-0.079%

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- Default rates: ↓ with size dependent ↑ with risk-inducing

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- Welfare: ↑ with size dependent ↓ with risk-inducing

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Endogenous Bargaining

Bargaining Stage with Monopolist

- At state z, owing debt b bonds and m on the loan and having issued b'

$$\max_{x,m} \mathcal{L}_R(b', x, m, m', z)^{\theta} \times \mathcal{B}_R(b', b, x, m, m', z)^{1-\theta}$$

Government surplus

Lender surplus

- Lender's surplus

$$\mathcal{L}_R(b', x, m, m', z) = \underbrace{(a - x + \beta_L \mathbb{E}\left[h(b', m', z') \mid z\right])}_{\text{agreement}} - \underbrace{(a + m + \beta_L \mathbb{E}\left[h(b', 0, z') \mid z\right])}_{\text{threat point}}$$

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same sdf as markets

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- Revenues from debt issuance $B(b', b, m, z)$ modulate the value of the threat point
  - After large revenues (high q, high b'), gov't flush with cash, **strong** in bargaining
  - After bad issuance (low q *or* low b'), gov't **weak** in bargaining

- Strongly negative cross-elasticity of bilateral terms to market debt
  $\longrightarrow$ goes against market discipline of spreads

$$u'(c)\left(q + \frac{\partial q}{\partial b'} i + \frac{1}{1 + r_b}\frac{\partial m'}{\partial b'} + \frac{\partial \frac{1}{1+r_b}}{\partial b'} m'\right) = \beta\mathbb{E}\left[u'(c)(1 - \mathbb{1}_{\mathcal{D}})\left(\kappa + (1-\delta)q' + \dots\right)\right]$$

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Risk-taking Incentives

Drawings

Surplus on loan requires spreads: relationship provides incentives for risk taking

Concluding remarks

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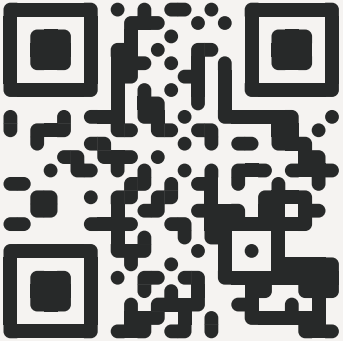
- Simple model of borrowing from markets and a senior bilateral lender
  - … strong interaction between two markets for sovereign debt
  - … even if bilateral loans are **not** used intensely on the equilibrium path

- **Dangerous** when bilateral interest rate responds negatively to *market* debt
  - … cross-elasticity induces risk-taking, more defaults, welfare losses
  - … Bargaining as an example of situation where cross-elasticity emerges

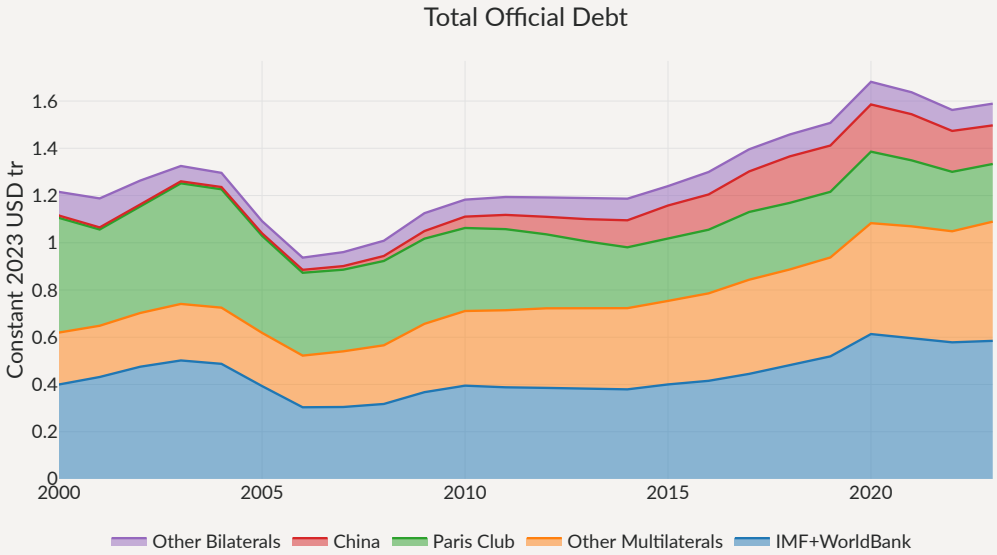
- Cross-elasticity constitutes a simple test to assess welfare gains of **new** instruments
  - … or a boost to the gains of fiscal rules, state-contingent debt…



Scan to find the paper

A New Landscape for Official Sovereign Debt

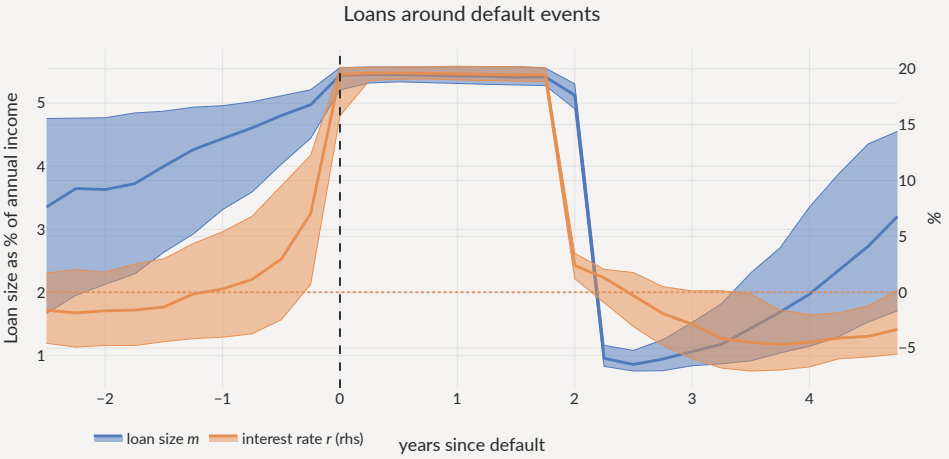
Back



When is the Loan Used?

Back

- Further conditioning on default events lasting exactly two years



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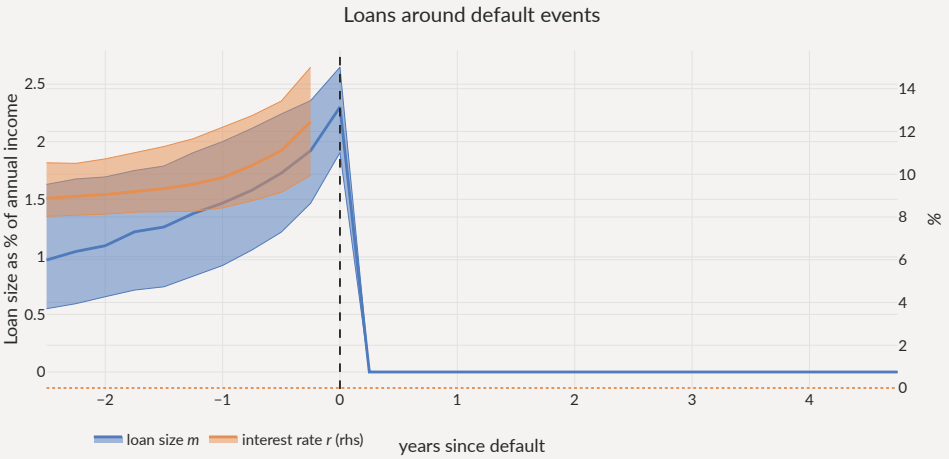
- With Limited: $\Gamma(m) = m$



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