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Endogenous Politics and the Design of Trade Institutions

Kristy Buzard

Syracuse University

kbuzard@syr.edu

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Preview

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

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Preview

Political Economy of Trade Institutions

With a few exceptions, TA design 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
  - tariff caps with escape clause
- examine escape clause design when both exogenous and endogenous forces are present

Preview

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

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Economic and Political Structure

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

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Economic and Political Structure

Policy and Politics

Home levies τ on X, Foreign levies τ^* on Y

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

Non-tradable specific factors motivate political activity

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Economic and Political Structure

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

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The Players

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 γ, γ^* is private info of each government

The Players

Domestic Political Pressure

Two potential sources

1. Exogenous shocks
   - Shock directly to γ as in Bagwell & Staiger (2005): γ, γ^* with CDF $H(\gamma)$ on support $[\underline{\gamma}, \overline{\gamma}]$; or
   - Can take γ 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

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

The Players

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
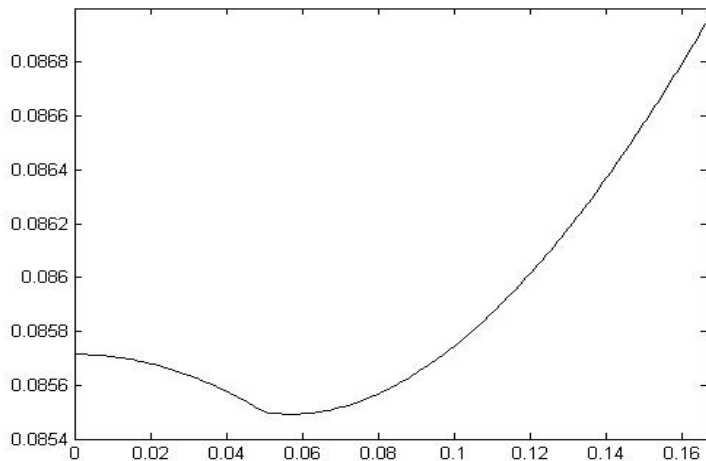
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Objective Function

Restraining Political Pressure through TAs

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

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

  - ▶ Isomorphic to 'Protection for Sale' objective function
- ▶ If weights must sum to 1, welfare no longer monotonic in γ

Objective Function

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Escape Clause

Escape Clause with Exogenous Politics

When γ 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 γ 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 γ is high

- γ 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 γ
  even when γ is low
  - Only way to prevent this is with some cost of using escape
    clause

Escape Clause with Endogenous Politics

When γ 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 $\geqslant$ escape clause binding, gov't experiences high γ, no need to lie)

If γ is only endogenous, escape clause causes problems, provides no benefits

Escape Clause

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.

When the world is more complicated... (con't)

- ▶ To make escape clause work, can't use γ
  - ▶ Need signal of shock that is not influenced by endogenous pressure
- ▶ Can condition directly on s
  - ▶ This seems to be what the WTO actually *does*

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Escape Clause

An Escape Clause for Endogenous Politics

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

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

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

- 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

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

► helps explain the structure and enforcement of the WTO Safeguards measure

► can help us think about optimal design of trading insitutions

► demonstrates that TAs can be used to discourage lobbing activity in general

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Future Work

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