

Policy Rules and Large Crises in Emerging Countries

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Policy Rules and Large Crises in Emerging Countries

Emerging economies are adopting **policy rules** to strengthen macroeconomic stability:

- ▶ **Fiscal rules**: debt ceilings, balanced budgets.
- ▶ **Monetary rules**: inflation targeting, money supply limits.

Large crises: debate over suspending or invoking escape clauses to allow flexibility.

What We Do

Examines the benefits of adopting **rules** and the potential advantages of **flexibility** during **crises** using a sovereign default model with fiscal and monetary policies.

Key elements of the analysis:

- ▶ **Steady-state analysis**: We demonstrate that rules improve welfare.
- ▶ **Crisis**: Model COVID-19 and evaluate gains from introducing **flexibility**.

Related Literature

- ▶ Sovereign Default

Eaton and Gersovitz (1981); Aguiar and Gopinath (2006); Arellano (2008); **Hatchondo and Martinez (2009)**; Chatterjee and Eyigungor (2012).

- ▶ Sovereign Default + Fiscal Policy

Cuadra, Sánchez, and Sapriza (2010); Bianchi, Ottonello, and Presno (2023).

- ▶ Sovereign Default + Monetary Policy

Na, Schmitt-Grohé, Uribe, and Yue (2018); Arellano, Bai, and Mihalache (2020); **Espino, Kozlowski, Martin, and Sánchez (2024)**.

- ▶ Sovereign Default + Policy Rules

Bianchi and Mondragon (2021); Hatchondo, Roch, and Martinez (2022).

Outline

Model

Calibration

Policy Rules

Large Crises

Model

Framework: Tradable-Nontradable Model

Small open economy model with tradable and non-tradable goods.

Incorporate: production, fiscal policy, monetary policy and sovereign default.

Three private goods and one public good:

1. Non-tradable good: consumed (c^N) and produced domestically (y^N).
2. Imported good: consumed domestically (c^T), but not produced locally.
3. Exported good: produced domestically (y^T), but not consumed locally.
4. Public good: produced from non-tradable output (g), on a one-to-one basis.

Money and Prices: Nominal Variables

Nominal variables are expressed in domestic currency (pesos) and normalized by the aggregate money stock to ensure stationarity.

Endogenous prices:

- ▶ **Non-tradable goods price** (p^N): the price of non-tradable goods.
- ▶ **Wages** (w): the nominal wage rate.
- ▶ **Nominal exchange rate** (e): price of foreign currency, defined as pesos per dollar.

Exogenous prices:

- ▶ The dollar price of exports, p^T , is exogenous and it captures the terms of trade.
- ▶ The dollar price of imports is fixed at 1.

Money and Prices: Cash-in-Advance Constraint

A **cash-in-advance (CIA) constraint** applies to the consumption of non-tradable goods:

$$p^N c^N \leq \theta m$$

- ▶ (normalized) individual money holdings m
- ▶ velocity of money θ

The Firm's Problem: Profit Maximization

A representative firm maximizes profits:

$$\begin{aligned} \max_{y^N, y^T, h} \quad & p^N y^N + e p^T (1 - \phi) y^T - w h \\ \text{subject to} \quad & A(I) F(y^N, y^T) - h \leq 0 \end{aligned}$$

- ▶ Productivity $A(I)$:
 - ▶ $I = \{P, D\}$ indicates the government's credit standing (pay or default).
 - ▶ $A(I) F(y^N, y^T)$ determines the hours required to produce (y^N, y^T) ,
- ▶ Trade frictions ϕ

From the Firm's Problem

Obtain the **wage** and **exchange rate** as functions of (y^N, y^T, p^N, p^T) :

$$w = \frac{p^N}{A(I)F_N},$$

$$e = \frac{p^N F_T}{(1 - \phi)p^T F_N}.$$

The Problem of the Household

$$V(m, B, I) = \max_{c^N, c^T, m', h} \left[u(c^N, c^T) + v(1 - h) + \vartheta(g) + \beta \mathbb{E} [V(m', B', I') \mid B, I] \right]$$

subject to

$$p^N c^N + e(1 + \phi)c^T + m'(1 + \mu) \leq (1 - \tau)wh + m + p^N \gamma$$

$$p^N c^N \leq \theta m$$

Government:

- ▶ g : government spending
- ▶ μ : money growth rates distorts saving decisions m'
- ▶ τ : Labor income tax rate
- ▶ γ : Lump-sum transfers, received in units of non-tradable goods.

From the Household's Problem

Obtain p^N and policies τ, μ as functions of $(y^N, y^T, c_N, c_T, p^T)$:

$$p^N = \frac{\theta}{c_N},$$

$$\tau = 1 - \frac{(1 + \phi)}{(1 - \phi)} \frac{v_\ell A(I) F_T}{u_T p^T},$$

$$1 + \mu = \frac{(1 + \phi)}{(1 - \phi)} \frac{F_T}{u_T p^T F_N} \frac{\theta \beta \mathbb{E} [\Omega(c^{N'}, c^{T'}, y^{T'}, g') | B, I]}{c^N},$$

where:

$$\Omega(c^N, c^T, y^T, g) \equiv \frac{c^N}{\theta} \left[\theta u_N + (1 - \theta) \frac{(1 + \phi)}{(1 - \phi)} \frac{u_T p^T F_N}{F_T} \right]$$

Government

- ▶ **Government Debt:** Long-term, defaultable, and denominated in foreign currency.
- ▶ **Debt Pricing:** International, risk-neutral lenders price the debt.
- ▶ **Expenditure:** Public goods g , and exogenous transfers γ .
- ▶ **Revenue Sources:** τ taxes on labor, μ seigniorage, and B' borrowing.
- ▶ **Government Budget Constraint (GBC):**

$$\underbrace{p^N(g + \gamma)}_{\text{Expenditure}} + \underbrace{e\delta B}_{\text{Debt repayments}} = \underbrace{\tau wh}_{\text{Tax revenue}} + \underbrace{\mu}_{\text{Seigniorage}} + \underbrace{eQ(B')[B' - (1 - \delta)B]}_{\text{Net borrowing}}$$

Balance of Payments

- **Balance of Payments (BoP):** Expressed in foreign currency.

$$\underbrace{(1 - \phi)p^T y^T}_{\text{Net exports}} - \underbrace{(1 + \phi)c^T}_{\text{Import consumption}} = \underbrace{\delta B}_{\text{Debt repayments}} - \underbrace{Q(B')[B' - (1 - \delta)B]}_{\text{Net borrowing}}$$

This equation balances exports and import consumption against debt repayments and net borrowing, showing how trade and debt interact in determining the country's external financial position.

Repayment vs Default

Default Consequences: Temporary **exclusion** from credit markets and **lower productivity**.

Government chooses between repayment (P) and default (D):

$$\hat{V}(B, \varepsilon) = \max\{V^P(B) + \varepsilon, V^D\}$$

where ε is an i.i.d. shock drawn from a logistic distribution with mean zero and variance ζ .

Probability of Repayment and Debt Price

Repayment Probability:

$$\mathcal{P}(B) = \Pr[V^P(B) - V^D \geq -\varepsilon] = \frac{\exp\left(\frac{V^P(B)}{\zeta}\right)}{\exp\left(\frac{V^P(B)}{\zeta}\right) + \exp\left(\frac{V^D}{\zeta}\right)}$$

Continuation Value:

$$\mathcal{V}(B) = \zeta \log \left[\exp\left(\frac{V^P(B)}{\zeta}\right) + \exp\left(\frac{V^D}{\zeta}\right) \right]$$

Debt Price:

$$Q(B') = \frac{1}{1+r} [\mathcal{P}(B') (\delta + (1-\delta)Q(\mathcal{B}(B')))]$$

Government optimization: Repayment

$$V^P(B) \equiv \max_{B', c^N, c^T, y^T, \mu, \tau, g} u(c^N, c^T) + v(1 - h) + \vartheta(g) + \beta V(B')$$

subject to

1. government budget constraint
2. balance of payment constraint
3. households and firms making optimal decisions
4. equilibrium conditions: $c^N + g = y^N$, $A(I)F(y^N, y^T) = h$
5. constraints imposed by rules (if they apply):
 - ▶ Monetary policy: $\mu = \mu^*$
 - ▶ Fiscal policy: $B' < B^*$

Government optimization: Default

$$V^D \equiv \max_{c^N, c^T, y^T, \mu, \tau, g} u(c^N, c^T) + v(1 - h) + \vartheta(g) + \beta \mathbb{E}[\underbrace{\pi}_{\text{re-entry prob}} \mathcal{V}(0) + (1 - \pi)V^D]$$

subject to

1. government budget constraint
2. balance of payment constraint
3. households and firms making optimal decisions
4. equilibrium conditions: $c^N + g = y^N$, $A^D(I)F(y^N, y^T) = h$
5. Rules do not apply in default

Calibration

Quantitative analysis

Calibration matches long-run averages for seven Latin American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay) from 1980 to 2018. ▸ [Calibration](#)

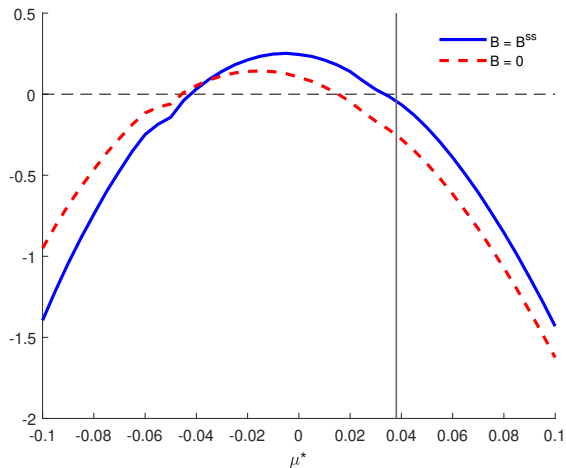
EKMS (2024) studies the case with stochastic term-of-trade and TFP.

Roadmap:

1. Derive optimal monetary and fiscal rules in normal times.
2. Use COVID-19 to simulate a large, unexpected crisis: $\{TFP, \gamma, \phi, \theta, \omega_2\}$.
3. Run counterfactuals to study rules vs flexibility.

Policy Rules

Monetary policy rule: $\mu = \mu^* = -0.5\%$

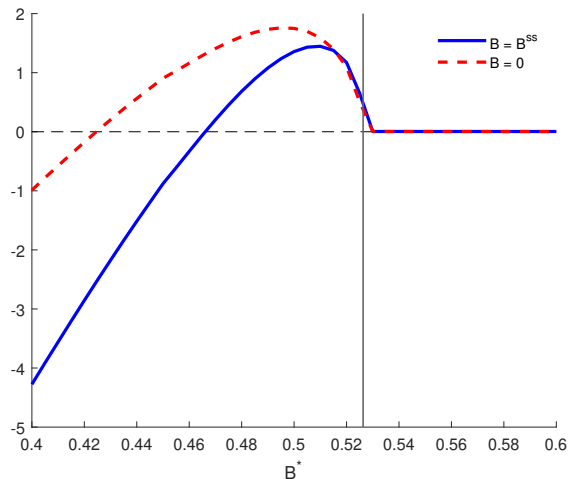


Welfare gains (% of nontradable consumption) as a function of money target. Vertical lines represent the policy outcome in a no-rules case.

Gains because of
time-consistency
problem in μ

No gains
when $\sigma = 1$

Fiscal policy rule: $B' \leq B^* = 0.51$

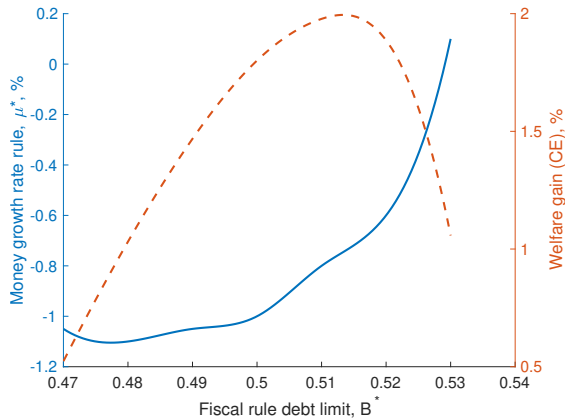


Welfare gains (% of nontradable consumption) as a function of money target. Vertical lines represent the policy outcome in a no-rules case.

Gains because of over-borrowing due to debt dilution

No gains with short-term debt

Fiscal and Monetary Rules: $\mu = \mu^* = -0.81\%$, $B \leq B^* = 0.51$



Complementarity
between fiscal
and monetary rules

Optimal money
growth target
increases as the
debt limit increases

Optimal money growth rate target μ^* as a function of debt limit B^* .

Long-run implications of policy rules

	Discretion	Money growth $\mu^* = -0.50\%$	Debt ceiling $B^* = 0.51$	Both $\mu^* = -0.80\%$ $B^* = 0.51$
Debt / GDP	0.365	0.363	0.351	0.347
Inflation	0.038	-0.005	0.036	-0.008
Tax rate	0.240	0.269	0.238	0.268
Expenditure / GDP	0.250	0.251	0.250	0.251
Real GDP	1.000	0.993	1.000	0.992
Employment	0.587	0.586	0.587	0.586
Exports / GDP	0.209	0.200	0.207	0.197
Default probability	0.020	0.021	0.010	0.010
Welfare gains, %	—	0.250	1.450	1.978

Substitution
between policy
instruments

Rules more
useful when
combined

Large Crises

Large Crises: Modeling a COVID-19 shock

Optimal monetary and fiscal rules:

1. Imposed prior to shock
2. **Suspended** during crisis
3. Reimposed afterwards

Unexpected shocks

Shock	Target
Productivity, ω_0	Δ Real GDP -9.5 %
Transfers γ	Δ Expenditure / GDP 4.1 pp
Trade costs ϕ	Δ Imports -15.4 %
Liquidity θ	Δ Inflation -0.2 pp
Cost of default ω_2	Δ Credit spreads 96.2 bps

COVID-19 shock: Good fit for most non-targeted moments

	Data	Model
Δ GDP USD, %	-18.6	-21.9
Δ Employment, pp	-7.3	-2.9
Δ Exports, %	-13.2	-13.9
Δ Debt / GDP, pp	5.2	12.7
Δ Tax rate, pp	-0.8	-9.9
Δ Money growth rate, pp	28.9	15.8
Δ Depreciation, pp	8.2	13.0
Δ Inflation in 2021, pp	6.3	18.0
Welfare gain of shock, %		-13.1

High cost, equivalent to a one-period drop in non-tradable consumption of 13.1%.

Gains from flexibility during large crises

- ▶ Fiscal and monetary rules are in place before the crisis.
- ▶ What happens when the shock hits? Three cases:
 - ▶ Rules are **maintained**
 - ▶ Rules are **suspended for the duration of the crisis** (benchmark)
 - ▶ Rules are **abandoned**
- ▶ Why consider abandoning the rules?
 - ▶ Country may lack commitment to reinstate rules suspended during a crisis.

Maintaining, suspending, or abandoning both rules

	Both rules Maintained	Both rules Suspended	Both rules Abandoned
Δ Real GDP, %	-12.13	-9.49	-9.54
Δ Debt / GDP, %	26.95	36.64	36.88
Δ Money growth rate, pp	0.00	15.81	16.31
Δ Tax rate, pp	4.73	-9.87	-9.60
Δ Primary deficit / GDP, pp	-0.41	13.92	13.59
Δ Credit spreads, bps	94.58	96.28	218.57
Δ Inflation, pp	-1.21	-0.19	0.52
Δ Inflation 2021, pp	1.23	18.01	18.24
Welfare gains of shocks, %	-13.85	-13.13	-15.10
Welfare gains of flexibility, %	—	0.83	-1.42

Larger fiscal adjustment
if maintaining rules

Abandoning rules
generates
welfare losses

Maintaining, suspending, or abandoning monetary rule

	Both rules Maintained	Monetary Suspended	Monetary Abandoned
Δ Real GDP, %	-12.13	-9.30	-9.41
Δ Debt / GDP, %	26.95	30.90	31.26
Δ Money growth rate, pp	0.00	17.94	17.90
Δ Tax rate, pp	4.73	-9.16	-9.06
Δ Primary deficit / GDP, pp	-0.41	12.94	12.85
Δ Credit spreads, bps	94.58	74.80	95.66
Δ Inflation, pp	-1.21	1.72	1.99
Δ Inflation 2021, pp	1.23	15.95	16.99
Welfare gains of shocks, %	-13.85	-13.35	-13.87
Welfare gains of flexibility, %	—	0.57	-0.02

Rule forces
substitution
between μ and τ

Similar to
inflation targeting

Maintaining, suspending, or abandoning fiscal rule

	Both rules Maintained	Fiscal Suspended	Fiscal Abandoned
Δ Real GDP, %	-12.13	-11.91	-11.92
Δ Debt / GDP, %	26.95	33.28	33.42
Δ Money growth rate, pp	0.00	0.00	0.00
Δ Tax rate, pp	4.73	2.40	2.90
Δ Primary deficit / GDP, pp	-0.41	2.18	1.61
Δ Credit spreads, bps	94.58	117.94	242.09
Δ Inflation, pp	-1.21	-2.99	-2.70
Δ Inflation 2021, pp	1.23	5.14	3.78
Welfare gains of shocks, %	-13.85	-13.51	-15.20
Welfare gains of flexibility, %	—	0.39	-1.54

Rule reduces
borrowing and
increases μ

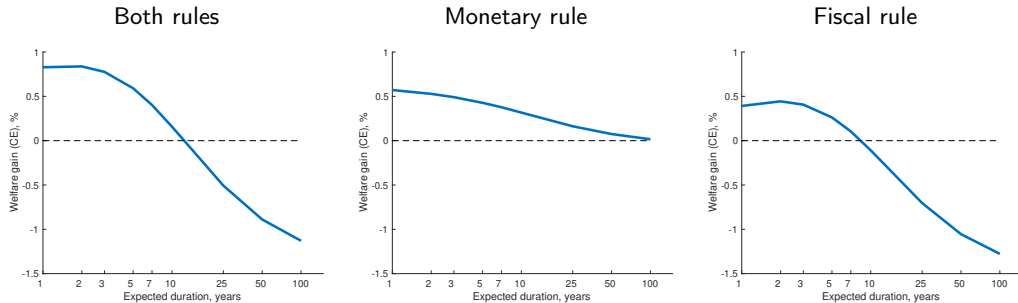
Suspending and
abandoning rule
implies \uparrow spreads

Unpacking the gains from flexibility during large crises

TFP	Shocks				Both rules are		Monetary rule is		Fiscal rule is	
	γ	ϕ	θ		Suspended	Abandoned	Suspended	Abandoned	Suspended	Abandoned
✓	✓	✓	✓		0.83	-1.42	0.57	-0.02	0.39	-1.54
✓	✓	✓	×		0.39	-1.72	0.19	-0.35	0.25	-1.58
✓	✓	×	✓		0.49	-1.74	0.40	-0.20	0.17	-1.75
✓	×	✓	✓		0.56	-1.67	0.32	-0.26	0.33	-1.59
×	✓	✓	✓		0.66	-1.54	0.46	-0.12	0.31	-1.58

- ▶ Suspending a rule is always beneficial (unanticipated crisis and lasts one period)
- ▶ Benefits of suspension diminish when the shock to money demand, θ , is absent
- ▶ The value of abandoning is always detrimental for welfare

What if rules remain suspended after crisis ends?



- ▶ Positive gains when both rules are expected to be suspended for up to 14 years
- ▶ Flat for a number of years after the crisis ends
- ▶ Reimposing rules can be safely delayed

Rules vs. flexibility when the crisis is expected to last for two years

	Both rules are			Monetary rule is		Fiscal rule is	
	Suspended	Maintained	Abandoned	Suspended	Abandoned	Suspended	Abandoned
Δ Real GDP, %	-8.57	-11.35	-8.61	-8.57	-8.62	-11.35	-11.44
Δ Debt / GDP, %	27.01	21.90	26.30	27.01	26.79	21.90	21.35
Δ Tax rate, pp	-9.15	6.12	-8.87	-9.15	-9.04	6.12	6.63
Δ Primary deficit / GDP, pp	12.64	-2.12	12.29	12.64	12.51	-2.12	-2.68
Δ Money growth rate, pp	19.84	0.00	20.44	19.84	20.01	0.00	0.00
Δ Credit spreads, bps	497.58	647.62	752.54	497.57	562.59	647.48	916.19
Δ Default probability, pp	13.62	17.20	18.78	13.61	15.21	17.19	22.09
Δ Inflation, pp	1.80	-1.94	2.63	1.80	2.13	-1.94	-1.42
Δ Inflation 2021, pp	16.80	1.11	17.33	16.80	17.65	1.11	0.33
Welfare gains of shocks, %	-22.53	-23.08	-24.29	-22.53	-23.00	-23.08	-24.60
Welfare gains of flexibility, %	0.66	—	-1.46	0.66	0.10	0.00	-1.84

- ▶ Suspending only the fiscal rule does not yield any welfare gains
- ▶ Large surge in credit spreads \rightarrow fiscal rule not binding

Monetary and fiscal rules in emerging countries

In normal times:

- ▶ rules mitigate time-consistency problems in debt choice
- ▶ debt limit particularly beneficial as the debt-dilution problem is severe
- ▶ monetary and fiscal rules are complementary

During times of crisis:

- ▶ flexibility might be warranted to implement a better policy response
- ▶ prolonged suspension of debt limits beyond crisis may lead to large welfare losses
- ▶ persistence of crisis interacts with the value of flexibility

Appendix

Functional forms

Preferences:

$$u(c^N, c^T) = \alpha^N \frac{(c^N)^{1-\sigma}}{1-\sigma} + \alpha^T \frac{(c^T)^{1-\sigma}}{1-\sigma}, \quad v(\ell) = \alpha^H \frac{\ell^{1-\varphi}}{1-\varphi}.$$

Labor requirement for production:

$$F(y^N, y^T) = \left[(y^N)^\rho + (y^T)^\rho \right]^{1/\rho}$$

Cost of default:

$$A(P) = \omega_0^{-1}, \quad A(D) = (\omega_0 - \omega_1)^{-1}$$

Cost of default in crisis:

$$A(D) = (\omega_0 - \max\{\omega_1 + \omega_2 \times \text{gap}(\omega_0, \gamma, \theta, \phi), 0\})^{-1}$$

where *gap* is the deviation from the steady state of the GDP in dollars.

Exogenous Parameters

Parameter	Description	Value	Basis
r	risk-free rate	0.03	Long-run average
φ	curvature of leisure	1.50	Frisch elasticity
α^T	preference share for c^T	1.00	Normalization
θ	velocity of circulation	1.00	Normalization
ϕ	trade cost	0.00	Normalization
p^T	price of exports	1.00	Normalization
π	re-entry probability	0.17	Exclusion duration
δ	fraction of maturing coupons	0.20	Debt maturity
σ	curvature of $u(c^N, c^T)$	0.50	EKMS
ρ	elasticity of substitution in $F(y^N, y^T)$	1.50	EKMS

Parameters calibrated internally and matched statistics

Parameter	Value	Statistic	Target
β	0.8563	Inflation, %	3.800
γ	0.1082	Transfers/GDP	0.117
α^H	0.9366	Employment/Population	0.587
α^G	0.4397	Gov. Consumption/GDP	0.133
α^N	2.7880	Exports/GDP	0.209
ω_0	1.4575	Real GDP	1.000
ω_1	0.1034	Debt/GDP	0.365
ζ	0.0663	Default, %	2.000

COVID-19 Impact on Real GDP Growth in 2020

To calibrate the shock, we target the impact of COVID-19 on some macro variables.
The impact of COVID-19 is the difference between the data for 2020 and the WEO forecast for 2020 made in October on 2019.

Country	Actual GDP (%)	WEO Forecast (%)	Impact (%)
Argentina	-9.9	-1.3	-8.6
Brazil	-4.1	2.0	-6.1
Chile	-5.8	3.0	-8.9
Colombia	-6.8	3.6	-10.4
Mexico	-8.3	1.3	-9.6
Peru	-11.0	3.6	-14.6
Uruguay	-5.9	2.3	-8.2
Average	-7.4	2.1	-9.5

Welfare gains

Value in the repayment and default states, given compensation Δ :

$$V^P(B, \Delta) = u\left((1 + \Delta) c^N, c^T\right) + v(1 - h) + \vartheta(g) + \beta \mathcal{V}(B')$$

$$V^D(\Delta) = u\left((1 + \Delta) c^N, c^T\right) + v(1 - h) + \vartheta(g) + \beta \delta \mathcal{V}(0) + \beta (1 - \delta) V^D$$

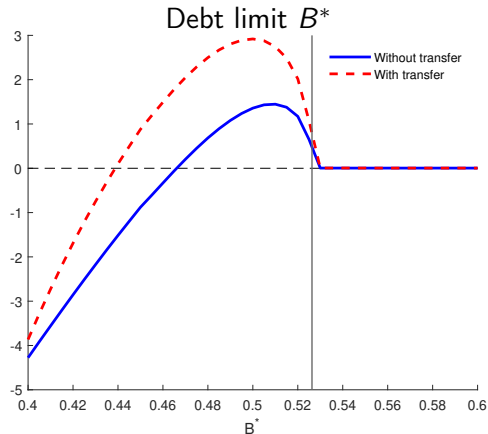
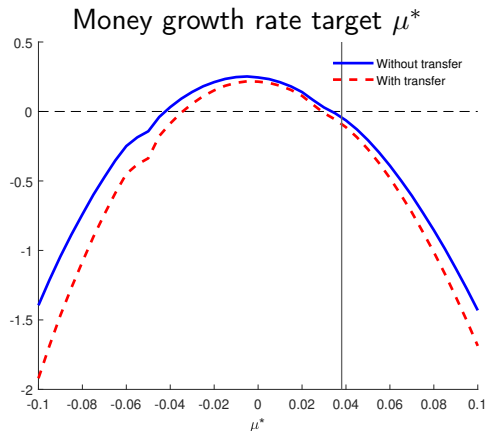
Ex ante value (before the extreme value shock is realized) is given by

$$\mathcal{V}(B, \Delta) = \zeta \log \left[\exp \left(\frac{V^P(B, \Delta)}{\zeta} \right) + \exp \left(\frac{V^D(\Delta)}{\zeta} \right) \right]$$

Let $\mathcal{V}^R(B)$ be the corresponding value function under policy rule $R = \{\mu^*, B^*\}$. For a given debt level B , the welfare measure Δ solves:

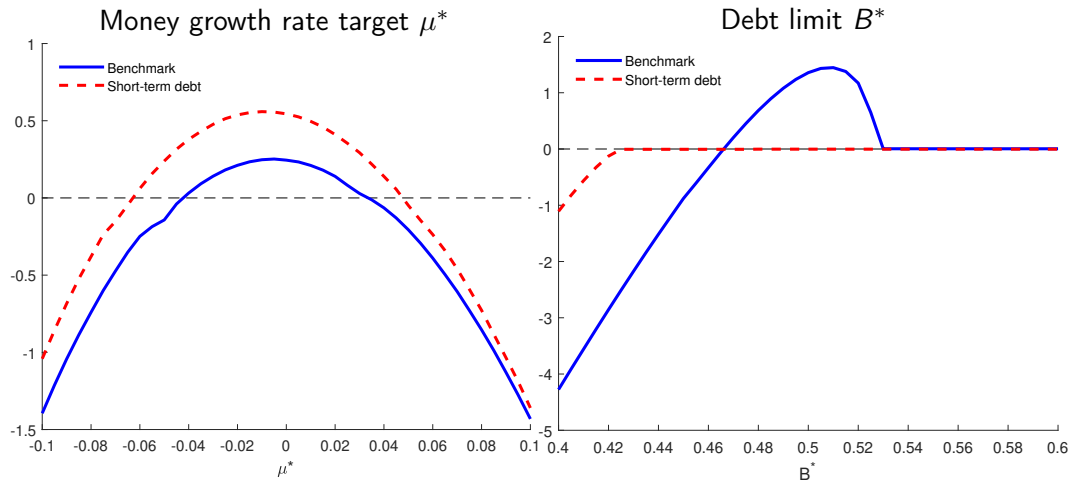
$$\mathcal{V}(B, \Delta) = \mathcal{V}^R(B)$$

Welfare implications with indifferent lenders



Note: Debt is at the steady state value, $B = B^{ss}$.

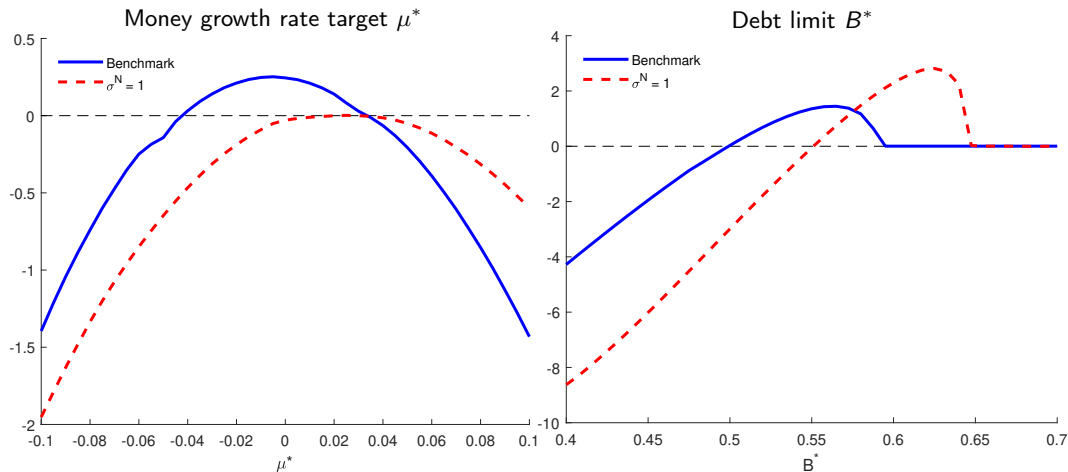
Short-term debt



Note: Debt is at the steady state value, $B = B^{ss}$.

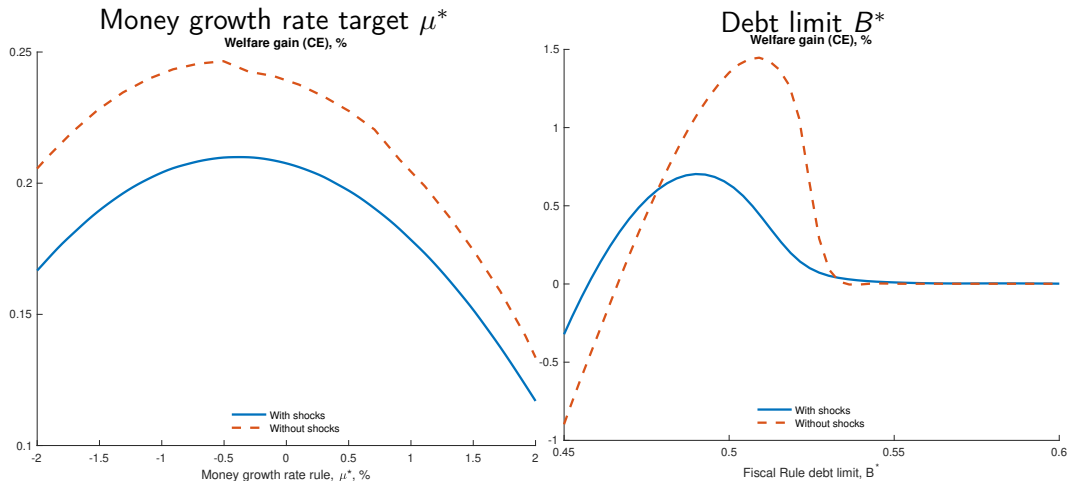
Money demand

With $\sigma^N = 1$, the intertemporal distortion in debt choice, which stems from a time-consistency problem due to the demand for money, disappears.



Note: Debt is at the steady state value, $B = B^{ss}$.

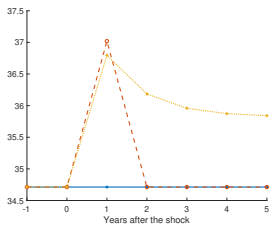
Expected terms of trade shocks



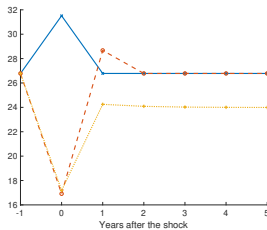
Note: Debt is at the steady-state value, $B = B^{ss}$.

Dynamics of a large crisis

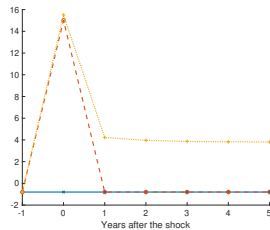
Debt/GDP₋₁, %



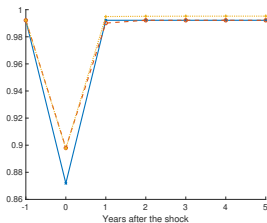
Tax rate, %



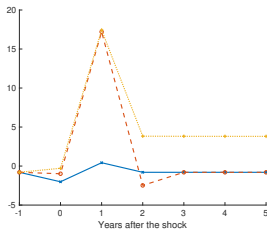
Money growth rate, %



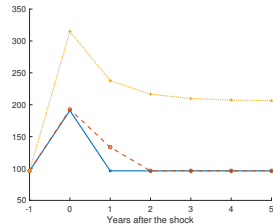
Real GDP



Inflation, %



Credit spreads, bps



--- Suspended — Maintained -.- Abandoned

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