

Problem Set 3

May 29, 2012

Due: **Fri, June 8, before 5:00p**
Location: **Dropbox A** (in alcove behind Econ 100)
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1 Balance-of-Payments Crisis

A small open economy pegs its exchange rate to a foreign currency at the level \bar{E} . The government expands its debt steadily and forces its monetary authorities to buy (monetize) the new debt at a rate μ . The government also requires the monetary authorities to maintain the exchange rate peg as long as they have foreign reserves. Once foreign reserves are depleted, monetary authorities float the exchange rate freely.

- In this scenario, government debt and therefore the monetary base expand at a rate μ . Depict the time path of foreign reserves of the monetary authorities. Is the peg sustainable indefinitely?
- Define the *shadow exchange rate*. Use Uncovered Interest Parity and Purchasing Power Parity to express the shadow exchange rate as a function of the monetary base. Depict the time path of the shadow exchange rate.
- Explain why an attack on the currency will occur when the shadow exchange rate hits the exchange rate peg \bar{E} . Depict the immediate response of the domestic interest rate and the domestic price level to the attack.
- Suppose the government forces its monetary authorities to monetize new debt at an even faster rate μ' . How is the timing of attack affected? Infer the new *shadow exchange rate* and position it, given anticipated money supply growth after foreign reserve depletion or after the attack.

2 Self-fulfilling Currency Attack

Consider the following attack game (with foreign and domestic asset holdings such that $W^{\text{CB}} < B^{\text{CB}}$). There is a number J of small investors who all own one unit of currency, and one big investor who owns K units of currency. In the case of a defense, the central bank incurs losses of R per unit of foreign reserves that it has to use for the intervention.

		Central Bank	
		<i>Defend</i> ($\Delta E = 0$)	<i>Devalue</i> ($\Delta E > 0$)
Investor i	<i>Attack</i>	$-c$ $-R(J + K)$	$\Delta E - c$ $\Delta E(W^{CB} - B^{CB})$
	<i>Hold</i>	0 0	$-\Delta E$ $\Delta E(W^{CB} - B^{CB})$

- State the condition for a self-fulfilling attack to be an equilibrium.
- Explain under what condition a successful attack becomes a best response for any small investor (among the J investors) when he or she observes the big investor in a fire sale of K units of the currency but the $J - 1$ other small investors holding on to the currency.
- Suppose $K = 0$. Investor i and the central bank anticipate that $J - 1$ other investors will attempt to attack. Show that a successful attack is an equilibrium for every investor i if there is a large number J of other attacking investors. Also show that a no-attack-no-devaluation equilibrium exists.
- Why is a discrete foreseeable devaluation $\Delta E > 0$ possible in a self-fulfilling crisis but not in a fundamentals-driven crisis?
- Evaluate the following statement.

One way to reduce the chance of a self-fulfilling attack is to raise the transaction cost c so that investors are more reluctant to run.

Is this statement correct in the strategic framework above? Why or why not?

3 Speculation against the European Monetary System

Short before the British government gave in to speculative pressure on the British Pound against the German Deutschmark and abandoned the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) in September 1992, *The Economist* magazine wrote (“Crisis? What Crisis?”, in *The Economist*, August 29, 1992):

The [British] government’s critics want lower interest rates, and think this would be possible if Britain devalued Sterling, leaving the ERM if necessary. They are wrong. Quitting the ERM would

soon lead to higher, not lower, interest rates, as British economic management lost the degree of credibility already won through ERM membership. Two years ago British government bonds yielded three percentage points more than German ones. Today the gap is half a point, reflecting investors' belief that British inflation is on its way down—permanently.

Evaluate this statement.

- Why might “the British government’s critics” have thought it possible to lower interest rates after taking Sterling out of the ERM? Britain’s economy was in a recession in fall 1992.
- Why did *The Economist* think the opposite would occur soon after Britain exited the ERM? In what way might ERM membership have lent credibility to British economic policy makers? Britain entered the ERM in 1990.
- Why would elevated British nominal interest rates relative to German rates have suggested an expectation of high future British inflation? Can you think of alternative explanations? Suggest two reasons why British interest rates might have exceeded German rates at the time of the writing of the article, despite the alleged “belief that British inflation is on its way down—permanently.”

4 Bank Run

There are 3 investors who live for two periods and have one unit of savings each. A storage technology returns the investment without interest after one period; a long-term project returns gross interest $r^* > 1$ after two periods (or just the principal 1 if cancelled after one period).

One investor will be needy (impatient) and withdraw in period 1, two investors will be greedy (patient) and hold deposits until period 2; but investors do not know whether they will be needy or greedy at the time of investment in period 0.

Banks offer deposit contracts that pay a gross interest of $\underline{r} > 1$ for withdrawals in period 1 and $\bar{r} < r^*$ for withdrawals in period 2. Risk-averse investors prefer bank deposits over direct investments and lend their units of savings to the bank. The single needy investor will withdraw $\underline{r} > 1$ in period 1, whereas the two greedy investors may withdraw early or hold. The strategic framework for the two greedy investors A and B can be summarized as in the bank run game below (the lower-right payoffs are for investor B).

- Determine each investor’s best responses to the other investor’s possible choice.
- Show that there are two equilibria if $(3 - \underline{r})r^*/2 > (3 - 2\underline{r})r^*$: a bank run and no bank run.

Now suppose that, in the case of withdrawals by all investors, the central bank serves as a lender of last resort, prints money and pays \underline{r} in cash to every investor. Of course, rational investors know that these $3\underline{r}$ money units only buy 3 units of real goods under the storage technology so that the real payoffs in this crisis case are 1 to each investor.

- For this scenario, show which payoffs in the game below need to be replaced with 1.
- Under the scenario, state a condition on the relevant payoff when exactly one greedy investor holds on so that the only equilibrium is no bank run.

		Investor B							
		<i>Withdraw</i>	<i>Hold</i>						
Investor A		<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><i>Withdraw</i></td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> $(3 - \underline{r})r^*/2$ $(3 - \underline{r})r^*/2$ </td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> \underline{r} $(3 - 2\underline{r})r^*$ </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"><i>Hold</i></td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> $(3 - 2\underline{r})r^*$ \underline{r} </td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> \bar{r} \bar{r} </td> </tr> </table>		<i>Withdraw</i>	$(3 - \underline{r})r^*/2$ $(3 - \underline{r})r^*/2$	\underline{r} $(3 - 2\underline{r})r^*$	<i>Hold</i>	$(3 - 2\underline{r})r^*$ \underline{r}	\bar{r} \bar{r}
<i>Withdraw</i>	$(3 - \underline{r})r^*/2$ $(3 - \underline{r})r^*/2$	\underline{r} $(3 - 2\underline{r})r^*$							
<i>Hold</i>	$(3 - 2\underline{r})r^*$ \underline{r}	\bar{r} \bar{r}							

Note. The rationale for the payoffs is as follows. If one greedy investor withdraws \underline{r} early, the bank cancels \underline{r} long-term investments to honor its contract and pays out \underline{r} as a second withdrawal so that the remaining greedy investor receives $(3 - 2\underline{r})r^*$. If both greedy investors try to withdraw \underline{r} each early, the bank goes bankrupt and each greedy investor gets $(3 - \underline{r})r^*/2$.

5 Foundations of International Capital Flows

Consider a small open economy and its intertemporal production possibilities frontier (PPF) that transforms resources today into output tomorrow. Restrict your analysis to two periods, today and tomorrow.

Depict the country's optimal production and consumption choices if the economy were still closed.

Assume that, in the closed economy, the returns to intertemporal investment are *lower* than the returns in the rest of the world. Will the global interest rate exceed the one in the small open economy or be smaller?

Under this assumption on relative returns to investment, what amount of resources will the small open economy invest after opening to international capital flows? Show investment today and output tomorrow in the diagram. Show a consistent choice of consumption today and tomorrow in the diagram. Would it be possible for the small open economy to consume more than its income today and more than its autarky income tomorrow? Is the economy saving more or less than it invests today?

Show the current account balance today in the diagram, and show the current account balance tomorrow. Is the current account in surplus or deficit today and tomorrow?

6 Debt Sustainability

We speak of a Ponzi scheme when an agent's debt grows at a rate α such that interest payments on existing debt fall short of new borrowing relative to existing debt. What does a Ponzi scheme imply for the relationship between α and the real interest rate r^* ? Explain why a Ponzi scheme would leave the borrower with unlimited resources as time passes. Will lenders be willing to tolerate this?

Now suppose that, at some date T in the future, the interest on the debt contracts is anticipated to *permanently* increase to some $r^{*'}$ so that $\alpha < r^{*'}$ from T on forever. Can the borrower start to accumulate new debt at a rate α from today on? Would your answer change if the interest rate were anticipated to fall back to r^* at some time $T' > T$?