

**open
economy
macroeconomics**

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slides

chapter 2

an open endowment economy

Motivation

The purpose of this chapter is to build a canonical dynamic general equilibrium model of the open economy and contrast its predictions with some of the empirical regularities documented in chapter 1.

The model economy developed in this chapter is simple enough to allow for a full characterization of its equilibrium dynamics using pen and paper. The economy is inhabited by households that receive an exogenous but stochastic endowment of perishable goods each period. In addition, households have access to an internationally traded bond, which they use to smooth consumption in response to random income disturbances. In turn, consumption smoothing gives rise to equilibrium movements in the trade balance and the current account.

This theoretical framework is called the *intertemporal approach to the current account*.

The Model

The problem of the representative household is to choose processes for consumption, c_t , and debt, d_t , in periods $t \geq 0$, to maximize the utility function

$$E_0 \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t U(c_t) \quad (2.1)$$

subject to the sequential budget constraint

$$c_t + (1 + r)d_{t-1} = y_t + d_t, \quad (2.2)$$

and to the no-Ponzi-game constraint

$$\lim_{j \rightarrow \infty} E_t \frac{d_{t+j}}{(1 + r)^j} \leq 0, \quad (2.3)$$

given d_{-1} , where y_t is an exogenous endowment and r is the world interest rate, assumed to be constant. It is optimal for the household to satisfy the no-Ponzi-game constraint with equality (otherwise, it would be leaving money on the table). The no-Ponzi-game constraint holding with equality is known as the *transversality condition*.

Comment: The closed-economy version of this model is known as the *permanent income model*.

Optimality Conditions

The Lagrangian associated with the household's problem is

$$\mathcal{L}_0 = E_0 \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t \{U(c_t) + \lambda_t [d_t + y_t - (1+r)d_{t-1} - c_t]\},$$

where λ_t is a Lagrange multiplier. The optimality conditions with respect to c_t and d_t are, respectively

$$U'(c_t) = \lambda_t,$$

and

$$\lambda_t = \beta(1+r)E_t\lambda_{t+1}.$$

Combining these two expressions, yields the Euler Equation

$$U'(c_t) = \beta(1+r)E_tU'(c_{t+1}). \quad (2.4)$$

Interpretation: at the margin, the household is indifferent between consuming a unit of good today or saving it and consuming it the next period along with the interest.

The Intertemporal Resource Constraint

Writing the sequential budget constraint (2.2) for period $t+j$, dividing by $(1+r)^j$, and taking expected values conditional on information available in period t yields:

$$\frac{E_t c_{t+j}}{(1+r)^j} + \frac{E_t d_{t-1+j}}{(1+r)^{j-1}} = \frac{E_t y_{t+j}}{(1+r)^j} + \frac{E_t d_{t+j}}{(1+r)^j}.$$

Then sum for $j = 0$ to $j = J$:

$$\sum_{j=0}^J \frac{E_t c_{t+j}}{(1+r)^j} + (1+r)d_{t-1} = \sum_{j=0}^J \frac{E_t y_{t+j}}{(1+r)^j} + \frac{E_t d_{t+J}}{(1+r)^J}.$$

Taking limit for $J \rightarrow \infty$ and using the transversality condition (equation (2.3) holding with equality) yields the intertemporal resource constraint

$$(1+r)d_{t-1} = \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \frac{E_t (y_{t+j} - c_{t+j})}{(1+r)^j}. \quad (2.5)$$

Interpretation: at every point in time, the economy must be expected to put aside a stream of resources, $\{E_t y_{t+j} - E_t c_{t+j}\}_{j=0}^{\infty}$, large enough in present discounted value to cover the outstanding external debt.

Can An Economy Run A Perpetual Trade Deficit?

The trade balance, denoted tb_t , is defined as the difference between exports and imports. In this one-good economy, the trade balance is given by the difference between output and consumption, that is,

$$tb_t = y_t - c_t. \quad (2.6)$$

Using this definition, we can rewrite the intertemporal resource constraint (2.5) as

$$(1 + r)d_{t-1} = \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \frac{E_t tb_{t+j}}{(1 + r)^j}.$$

The answer to the above question depends on the country's initial debt position:

If the country is a net debtor ($d_{t-1} > 0$), then it must generate an expected trade surplus in at least one period, $E_t tb_{t+j} > 0$ for some j . That is, if the country starts out as a net debtor, then it cannot run perpetual trade deficits.

Two Simplifying Assumptions

The following two assumptions are handy because they allow for a closed-form solution of the model.

(1) The subjective and market discount rates are equal

$$\beta = \frac{1}{1+r}.$$

(2) The period utility function is quadratic

$$U(c) = -\frac{1}{2}(c - \bar{c})^2, \quad (2.7)$$

where \bar{c} is a large enough number (known as satiation point or bliss point) so that $c < \bar{c}$ in equilibrium. Under these assumptions, the Euler equation (2.4) becomes

$$c_t = E_t c_{t+1}, \quad (2.8)$$

that is, consumption follows a **random walk**: Every period t , the household expects to maintain its current level of consumption forever

$$E_t c_{t+j} = c_t$$

for all $j > 0$.

Nonfinancial Permanent Income

Define nonfinancial permanent income as the constant level of income that, if received in all periods $t + j$ for $j \geq 0$, is equal to the expected present discounted value of the stochastic income process. That is, denoting nonfinancial permanent income by y_t^p , we have that

$$\sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \frac{y_t^p}{(1+r)^j} = \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \frac{E_t y_{t+j}}{(1+r)^j}$$

Solving for y_t^p we obtain

$$y_t^p = \frac{r}{1+r} \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \frac{E_t y_{t+j}}{(1+r)^j}. \quad (2.10)$$

This equation says that y_t^p is a weighted average of current and future expected income levels (note that the weights add up to one).

The Closed-Form Equilibrium Solution

Use the fact that $E_t c_{t+j} = c_t$ to eliminate $E_t c_{t+j}$ and the definition of y_t^p given in (2.10) to eliminate y_{t+j} from the intertemporal resource constraint (2.5) to write

$$(1 + r)d_{t-1} = \frac{1 + r}{r}y_t^p - \frac{1 + r}{r}c_t$$

Solving for c_t yields

$$c_t = y_t^p - rd_{t-1}, \quad (2.11)$$

Because d_{t-1} is predetermined in t and y_t^p is exogenous, equation (2.11) represents the closed-form solution for c_t .

Interpretation: in equilibrium consumption is equal to nonfinancial permanent income minus the interest due on the outstanding debt.

The Equilibrium Behavior of the Trade Balance

Using the equilibrium level of consumption given in (2.11), we obtain the closed-form solution for the trade balance, $tb_t = y_t - c_t$, as

$$tb_t = y_t - y_t^p + rd_{t-1} \quad (2.16)$$

In chapter 1, we documented that the trade balance is countercyclical. Equation (2.16) says that in order to explain this empirical regularity in the context of the present model, permanent income, y_t^p , must increase more than one for one with current income, y_t . What type of endowment process satisfies this requirement? We will address this question soon.

The Equilibrium Behavior of External Debt

Use (2.11) again to eliminate c_t from the sequential budget constraint (2.2) to get

$$d_t = d_{t-1} + y_t^p - y_t. \quad (2.12)$$

which says that the economy borrows to cover deviations of current income from permanent income. Like consumption, external debt has a unit root.

The Equilibrium Behavior of the Current Account

The current account is defined as the trade balance minus interest payments on the external debt

$$ca_t \equiv tb_t - rd_{t-1}. \quad (2.13)$$

Using the closed-form solution for tb_t given in (2.16), we get

$$ca_t = y_t - y_t^p. \quad (2.15)$$

In chapter 1, we documented that the current account is countercyclical. According to equilibrium condition (2.15), in order to explain this empirical regularity through the lens of this model, as in the case of the trade balance, permanent income must increase more than one for one with current income.

Comparing the above expression with (2.12), we have that

$$ca_t = -(d_t - d_{t-1}). \quad (2.14)$$

This is known as the **fundamental balance of payments identity**: the current account equals the change in the country's net asset position.

Taking Stock

Let's collect the results obtained thus far: If $\beta(1+r) = 1$ and $U(c) = -1/2(c - \bar{c})^2$, then the model has the following closed-form solution:

$$c_t = y_t^p - rd_{t-1} \quad (2.11)$$

$$d_t = d_{t-1} + y_t^p - y_t \quad (2.12)$$

$$ca_t = y_t - y_t^p \quad (2.15)$$

$$tb_t = y_t - y_t^p + rd_{t-1} \quad (2.16)$$

where

$$y_t^p \equiv \frac{r}{1+r} \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \frac{E_t y_{t+j}}{(1+r)^j} \quad (2.10)$$

with the initial debt position d_{-1} and the stochastic endowment process y_t exogenously given.

A General Principle

Take another look at the expression $ca_t = y_t - y_t^p$. It says that the current account is used whenever the economy experiences temporary deviations of output from permanent income ($y_t - y_t^p \neq 0$). By contrast, permanent output shocks, that is movements in y_t that leave $y_t - y_t^p$ unchanged, do not produce movements in the current account. Thus, the following principle emerges:

Finance temporary shocks (by running current account surpluses or deficits with little change in consumption) and adjust to permanent shocks (by changing consumption but not the current account).

The Income Process

We have established that in order for the present model to account for the observed countercyclicality of the current account and the trade balance, it is required that $y_t - y_t^p$ be countercyclical. The cyclicity of $y_t - y_t^p$ depends on the particular process assumed for the endowment y_t . For this reason, we now characterize the equilibrium under three representative income processes:

- Two Stationary Processes
 - y_t follows an AR(1) process
 - y_t follows an AR(2) process
- A nonstationary process, Δy_t follows an AR(1) process.

2.2 An AR(1) Income Process

Suppose y_t follows the law of motion

$$y_t - \bar{y} = \rho(y_{t-1} - \bar{y}) + \epsilon_t,$$

where ϵ_t is a white noise with mean zero and variance σ_ϵ^2 and \bar{y} is a positive constant. The parameter $\rho \in (-1, 1)$ measures persistence. The j -step-ahead forecast of y_t as of period t is

$$E_t y_{t+j} = \bar{y} + \rho^j (y_t - \bar{y}).$$

Thus, if $\rho > 0$, which is the case of greatest empirical interest, the forecast converges monotonically to the unconditional mean of the process, namely \bar{y} . The more persistent the process (the higher ρ) is, the slower the speed of convergence of the forecast to the unconditional mean will be.

Permanent Income with AR(1) Endowment

Use the j -step ahead output forecast $E_t y_{t+j} - \bar{y} = \rho^j (y_t - \bar{y})$ to eliminate $E_t y_{t+j}$ from (2.10) to obtain

$$y_t^p = \frac{r}{1+r} \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \frac{\bar{y} + \rho^j (y_t - \bar{y})}{(1+r)^j} = \bar{y} + (y_t - \bar{y}) \frac{r}{1+r} \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \left(\frac{\rho}{1+r} \right)^j$$

or

$$y_t^p = \bar{y} + \frac{r}{1+r-\rho} (y_t - \bar{y}). \quad (2.17)$$

This expression is quite intuitive:

- if the endowment process is highly temporary ($\rho \rightarrow 0$), then only a small fraction, $r/(1+r)$, of movements in the endowment are incorporated into permanent income.
- if the endowment process is highly persistent ($\rho \rightarrow 1$), most of movements in the current endowment are reflected in movements in permanent income, $\frac{r}{1+r-\rho} \rightarrow 1$.

Procyclicality of $y_t - y_t^p$ with AR(1) Endowment

Under the AR(1) specification for y_t , the deviation of current income from permanent income, $y_t - y_t^p$, is given by

$$y_t - y_t^p = \frac{1 - \rho}{1 + r - \rho} (y_t - \bar{y}). \quad (*)$$

The coefficient

$$\frac{1 - \rho}{1 + r - \rho}$$

is positive for all values of $\rho \in [0, 1)$, implying that $y_t - y_t^p$ is procyclical. Therefore the trade balance and the current account are predicted to be procyclical — which according to the evidence shown in chapter 1 is counterfactual.

Consumption Adjustment with AR(1) Shocks

By (2.11) and (2.17)

$$c_t = y_t^p - rd_{t-1} = \bar{y} + \frac{r}{1+r-\rho}(y_t - \bar{y}) - rd_{t-1} \quad (2.18)$$

- if $\rho = 0$ the propensity to consume out of an innovation in the endowment is small. Why? Because consumption-smoothing households know the increase in the endowment will not last, so they save most of it for future consumption.
- if $\rho \approx 1$, the propensity to consume out of an innovation in the endowment is almost one, because households know that the endowment will continue to be high in the future, so they don't need to save a large part of it for consumption smoothing.

External Debt Adjustment with AR(1) Shocks

By (2.12) and (*)

$$d_t = d_{t-1} + (y_t^p - y_t) = d_{t-1} - \frac{1 - \rho}{1 + r - \rho} (y_t - \bar{y}) \quad (2.21)$$

- if $\rho \approx 0$, debt decreases almost one-for-one with income. Why? Knowing that changes in income are highly temporary, in response to a change in y_t , households save almost everything to ensure a smooth future path of consumption.
- if $\rho \approx 1$, debt is unchanged. Why? Because knowing that if current income (y_t) is higher than future income (y_{t+j} , for $j > 0$) will be almost equally higher, there is no need to save today. Most of the income shock goes to consumption and debt is little changed.

Current Account Adjustment with AR(1) Shocks

By (2.15) and (*)

$$ca_t = y_t - y_t^p = \frac{1 - \rho}{1 + r - \rho} (y_t - \bar{y}) \quad (2.20)$$

- if $\rho \approx 0$ the change in the current account is close to the change in current income. Why? The country saves most of the temporary income increase to be able to consume not only more in the current period but also in all future periods.
- if $\rho \approx 1$, the current account is unchanged (and equal to zero). Why? Because if income is high today, households know that it will be almost equally high in the future and hence there is no need to save.

Trade Balance Adjustment with AR(1) Shocks

By (2.16) and (*)

$$tb_t = y_t - y_t^p + rd_{t-1} = \frac{1 - \rho}{1 + r - \rho} (y_t - \bar{y}) + rd_{t-1} \quad (1)$$

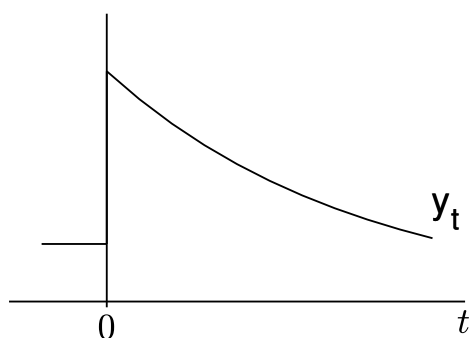
The intuition goes along the same lines as the one given for the current account.

Impulse Responses

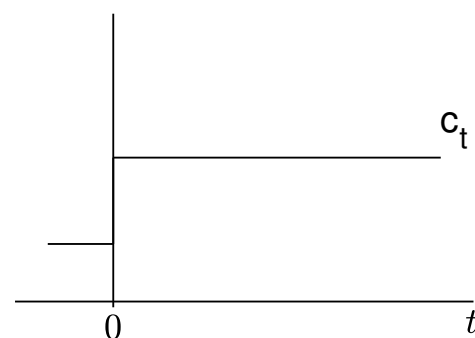
The next graph displays the impulse response of y_t , c_t , d_t , tb_t , and ca_t to a unit increase in y_t assuming zero initial debt, $d_{t-1} = 0$, for a value of $\rho \in (0, 1)$.

Response to a positive and persistent endowment shock: AR(1) process

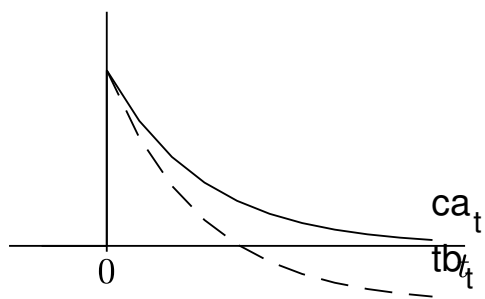
Endowment



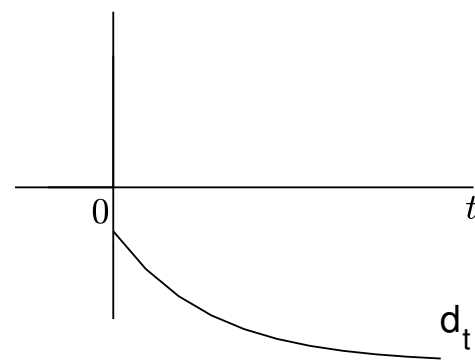
Consumption



**Trade Balance and
Current Account**

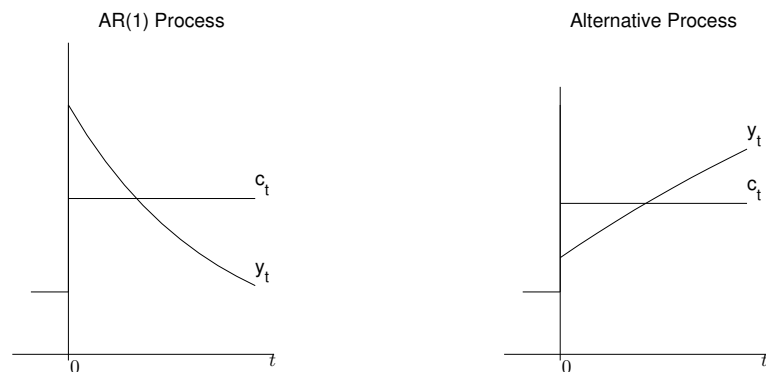


External Debt



Counterfactual Predictions with AR(1) Endowment

The figure on the previous slide illustrates that a positive endowment shock causes an improvement in the trade balance and the current account. This is counterfactual. In chapter 1, we documented that both of these variables are countercyclical. The intuition behind the model's prediction is provided by the left panel of the following figure



Takeaway from the Graph

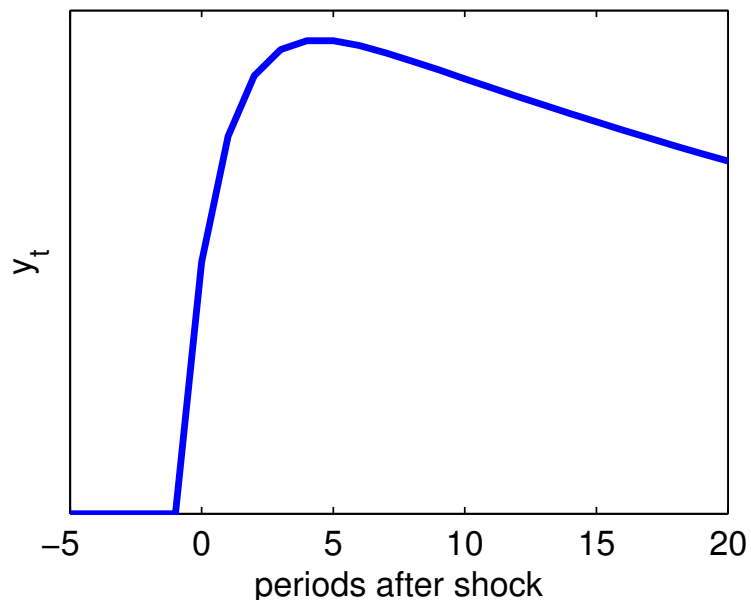
- Under the assumed AR(1) process, an increase in output in the current period is expected to die out over time. So future output is expected to be lower than current output. As a result, consumption smoothing households save part of the current increase in output for future consumption.
- Now suppose we could come up with an output process like the one shown on the right panel of the figure. There, an increase in output today creates expectations of even higher output in the future. As a result, consumption today increases by more than output, as consumption-smoothing households borrow against future income.
- In this environment, an output shock would tend to worsen the trade balance and the current account, which is more in line with the data.
- What type of endowment processes can give rise to an upward sloping impulse response for output? We turn to this issue next.

2.3 An AR(2) Income Process

$$y_t = \bar{y} + \rho_1(y_{t-1} - \bar{y}) + \rho_2(y_{t-2} - \bar{y}) + \epsilon_t \quad (2.22)$$

Impulse Response of Endowment

AR(2) with $\rho_1 = 1.5$ and $\rho_2 = -0.51$.



- impulse response is hump-shaped, that is, the peak output response occurs several periods after the shock occurs.
- current level of output **may** rise by less than permanent income, that is, the change in y_t may be less than the change in y_t^p .
- If so, the trade balance and the current account will deteriorate in response to an increase in output, bringing the model closer to the data.

Restrictions on ρ_1 and ρ_2 to ensure stationarity

- income process should be mean reverting (stationary), i.e., $E_t y_{t+j}$ exists for all $j \geq 0$ and

$$\lim_{j \rightarrow \infty} E_t y_{t+j} = \bar{y} \quad \forall t \geq 0$$

Let $Y_t = \begin{bmatrix} y_t - \bar{y} \\ y_{t-1} - \bar{y} \end{bmatrix}$ Then write (2.22) as:

$$Y_t = R Y_{t-1} + \begin{bmatrix} \epsilon_t \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \quad \text{with } R = \begin{bmatrix} \rho_1 & \rho_2 \\ 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

This implies that

$$E_t Y_{t+j} = R^j Y_t \quad (2.23)$$

Thus $\lim_{j \rightarrow \infty} E_t y_{t+j} = \bar{y}$ holds for any initial conditions y_t, y_{t-1} , if and only if both eigenvalues of \mathbf{R} lie inside the unit circle.

The eigenvalues of any 2x2 matrix M lie inside the unit circle if and only if

$$\begin{aligned} |\det(M)| &< 1 \\ |\operatorname{tr}(M)| &< 1 + \det(M) \end{aligned}$$

In our application we have,

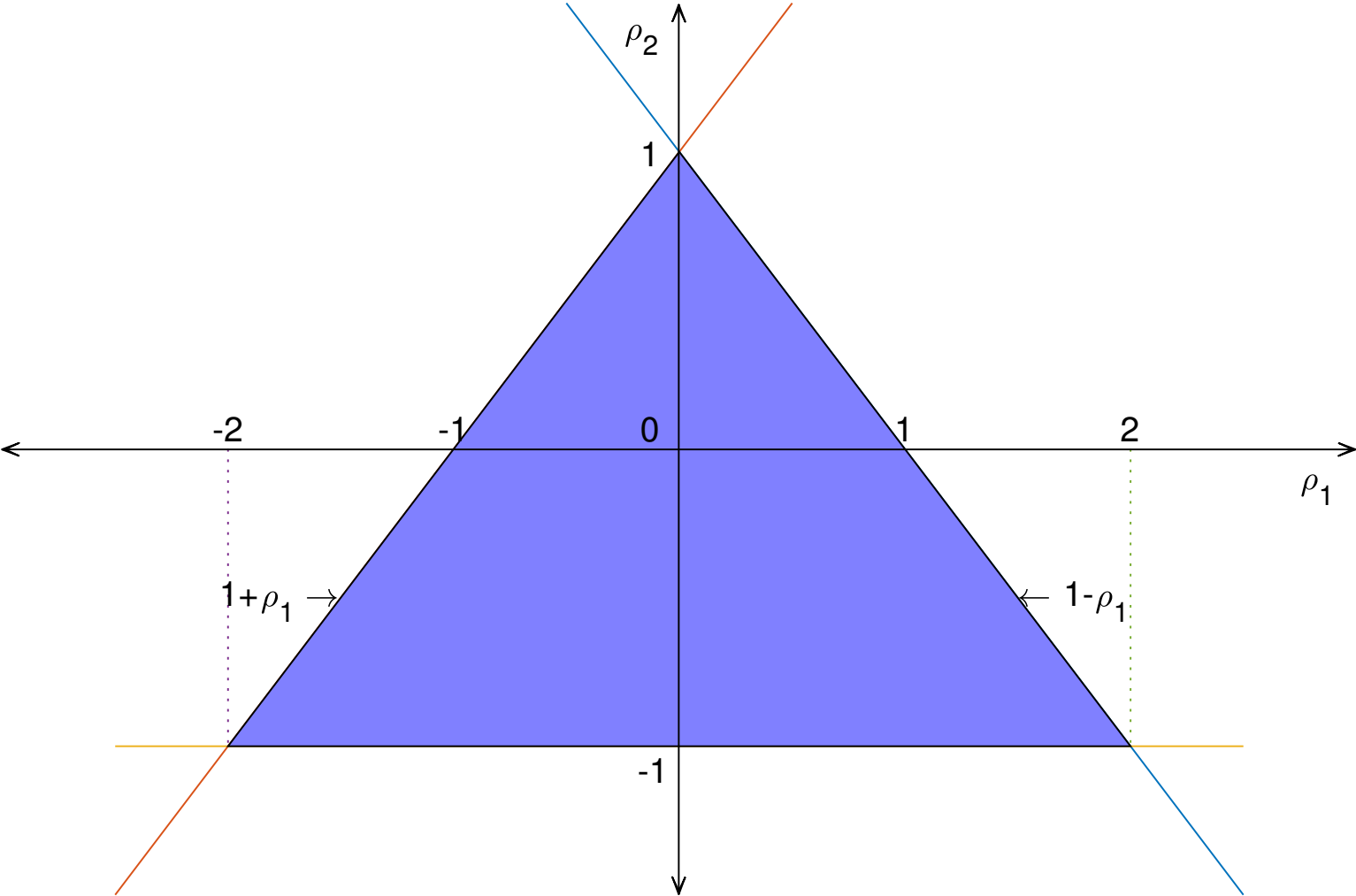
$$\det(R) = -\rho_2 \quad \text{and} \quad \operatorname{tr}(M) = \rho_1$$

It follows that the AR(2) process is mean reverting iff

$$\begin{aligned} \rho_2 &< 1 - \rho_1 \\ \rho_2 &< 1 + \rho_1 \\ \rho_2 &> -1 \end{aligned}$$

Take a look at the graph on the next slide. The set of allowable pairs (ρ_1, ρ_2) are those inside the triangle.

Rε



Restrictions on ρ_1 and ρ_2 to ensure countercyclical impact response of trade balance

Recall that the key variable determining the response of the trade balance and the current account is: $y_t - y_t^p$, the difference between current income and permanent income.

In particular, we want to know for which pairs (ρ_1, ρ_2) current income increases by less than permanent income in response to a positive income shock in the AR(2) case.

Permanent Income with AR(2) Endowment

Recall the definition of permanent income, y_t^p , given in (2.10):

$$y_t^p - \bar{y} = \frac{r}{1+r} \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} (1+r)^{-j} E_t(y_{t+j} - \bar{y})$$

Use (2.23)

$$\begin{aligned} E_t Y_{t+j} &= \mathbf{R}^j Y_t \\ (1+r)^{-j} E_t Y_{t+j} &= (\mathbf{R}/(1+r))^j Y_t \\ \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} (1+r)^{-j} E_t Y_{t+j} &= \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} (\mathbf{R}/(1+r))^j Y_t \\ \frac{r}{1+r} \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} (1+r)^{-j} E_t Y_{t+j} &= \frac{r}{1+r} [\mathbf{I} - \mathbf{R}/(1+r)]^{-1} Y_t \\ &= \frac{r}{(1+r)(1+r-\rho_1) - \rho_2} \begin{bmatrix} 1+r & \rho_2 \\ 1 & 1+r-\rho_1 \end{bmatrix} Y_t \end{aligned}$$

From here we obtain

$$y_t^p - \bar{y} = \frac{r}{(1+r)(1+r-\rho_1) - \rho_2} [(1+r)(y_t - \bar{y}) + \rho_2(y_{t-1} - \bar{y})] \quad (2.24)$$

\Rightarrow The impact response of permanent income, y_t^p , to an increase in y_t is always positive. (Can you show this?)

The key variable $y_t - y_t^p$ with AR(2) Endowment

From (2.24) it follows that

$$y_t - y_t^p = \gamma_0(y_t - \bar{y}) + \gamma_1(y_{t-1} - \bar{y})$$

with

$$\gamma_0 = \frac{(1 - \rho_1 - \rho_2) + r(1 - \rho_1)}{(1 - \rho_1 - \rho_2) + r(1 - \rho_1) + r(1 + r)} \quad \text{and} \quad \gamma_1 = \dots$$

The model therefore predicts a countercyclical response on impact of $y_t - y_t^p$ iff

$$\gamma_0 < 0.$$

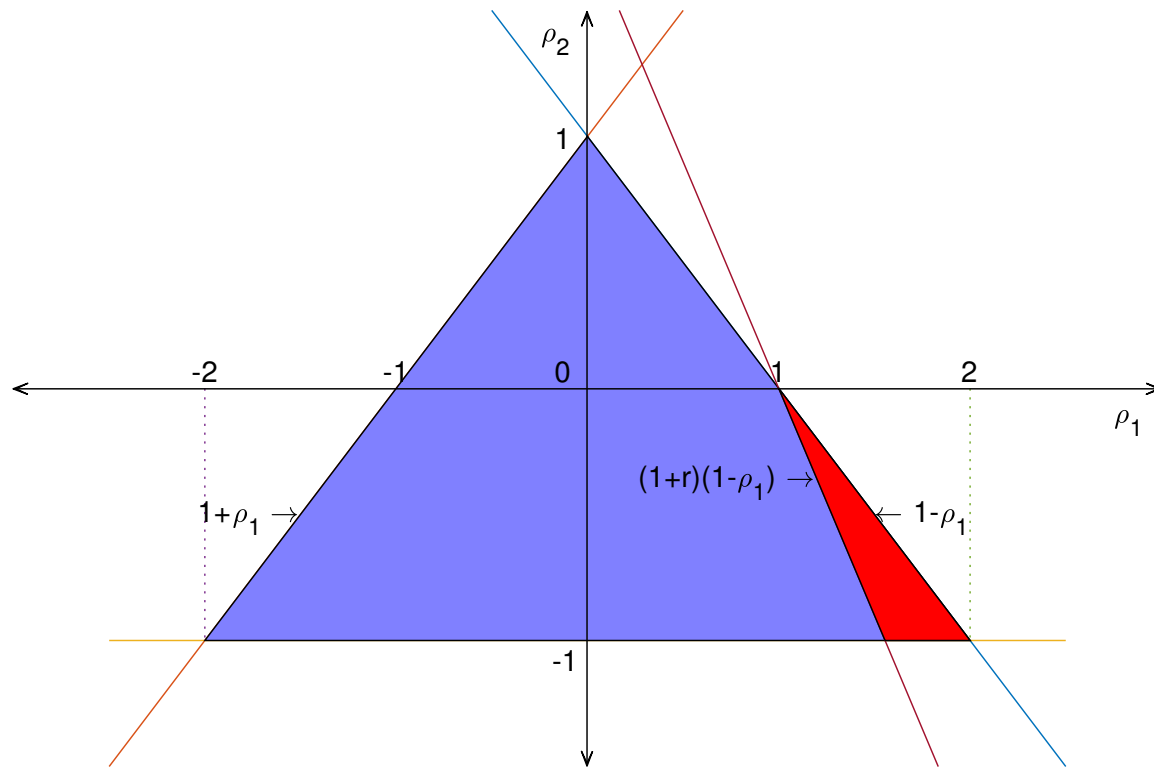
This requires that the numerator and the denominator of γ_0 have different signs, which we can ensure by adding the requirement

$$\rho_2 > (1 + r)(1 - \rho_1) \quad (**)$$

to the requirements of stationarity.

The graph on the next slide shows that there exist combinations of (ρ_1, ρ_2) that satisfy this criterion and the stationarity requirements. Thus in principle the model with an AR(2) endowment process can predict a countercyclical response of the trade balance and the current account. It is then an empirical question whether output conforms to those restrictions. (See Exercise 2.8)

Restrictions on ρ_1 and ρ_2 to ensure countercyclical impact response



We need $\rho_1 > 1$. Why? To have future income to be higher than current income. And we need $\rho_2 < 0$ for stationarity, but not too negative to avoid that the initial increase in output is followed by a future decline.

Summary of adjustment with AR(2) income

In response to a positive income shock in period t :

- y_t^p increases
- By (2.11): $c_t = y_t^p - rd_{t-1}$, hence c_t procyclical on impact.

and provided $\rho_2 > (1 + r)(1 - \rho_1)$

- $y_t^p - y_t$ increases,
- By (2.12): $d_t = d_{t-1} + y_t^p - y_t$, hence d_t increases.
- By (2.15): $ca_t = y_t - y_t^p$, hence ca_t countercyclical
- By (2.16): $tb_t = y_t - y_t^p + rd_{t-1}$, hence tb_t countercyclical

We have shown that it is possible for the model to predict a countercyclical trade balance adjustment even under a stationary income process. Thus non-stationarity is not a necessary assumption for a countercyclical adjustment. Next we show that a non-stationary income process can give rise to a countercyclical trade balance adjustment as well.

2.4 A Nonstationary Income Process

$$\Delta y_t \equiv y_t - y_{t-1} \quad (2.25)$$

$$\Delta y_t = \rho \Delta y_{t-1} + \epsilon_t \quad (2.26)$$

The Relationship between Permanent Income, Current Income, and Income Growth

Using the expression for y_t^p given in equation (2.10), we can write

$$\begin{aligned}
 y_t - y_t^p &= y_t + \frac{1}{r} y_t^p - \left(\frac{1+r}{r} \right) y_t^p \\
 &= y_t + \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \frac{E_t y_{t+j}}{(1+r)^{j+1}} - \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \frac{E_t y_{t+j}}{(1+r)^j} \\
 &= \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \frac{E_t y_{t+j-1}}{(1+r)^j} - \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \frac{E_t y_{t+j}}{(1+r)^j} \\
 &= - \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \frac{E_t y_{t+j} - E_t y_{t+j-1}}{(1+r)^j}
 \end{aligned}$$

Finally, defining $\Delta y_t = y_t - y_{t-1}$, we can write

$$y_t - y_t^p = - \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \frac{E_t \Delta y_{t+j}}{(1+r)^j} \quad (2.27)$$

Interpretation: Permanent income exceeds current income when income is expected to grow in the future. **NOTE:** This result is independent of whether y_t is stationary or nonstationary.

$y_t - y_t^p$ with Nonstationary Income

Recalling that $y_t^p \equiv \frac{r}{1+r} \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \frac{E_t y_{t+j}}{(1+r)^j}$, one can show that in general (i.e., not using any specific stochastic process for income), $y_t - y_t^p$ can be written as

$$y_t - y_t^p = - \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \frac{E_t \Delta y_{t+j}}{(1+r)^j} \quad (2.27)$$

When income follows (2.26), then

$$E_t \Delta y_{t+j} = \rho^j \Delta y_t$$

and hence (2.27) can be expressed as

$$y_t - y_t^p = - \frac{\rho}{1+r-\rho} \Delta y_t \quad (***)$$

This equation says that permanent income increases by more than current income if $\rho > 0$. In this case, in response to a positive income shock, $\epsilon_t > 0$, the level of output is expected to rise in the future. This is exactly the opposite to what happens when the *level* of y_t is AR(1).

Current Account Adjustment with Nonstationary Income

By (2.16) and (***)

$$tb_t = y_t - y_t^p + rd_{t-1} = -\frac{\rho}{1+r-\rho} \Delta y_t + rd_{t-1}$$

and by (2.15) and (***)

$$ca_t = y_t - y_t^p = -\frac{\rho}{1+r-\rho} \Delta y_t$$

Hence, as long as, $\rho > 0$, the economy with nonstationary income predicts a countercyclical impact response of the trade balance and of the current account.

Why? Agents increase consumption more than income in anticipation of future income increases.

Excess Consumption Volatility with Nonstationary Income

Can the model account for the empirical regularity that consumption changes are more volatile than output changes, as documented in Chapter 1.

Let

$$\Delta c_t \equiv c_t - c_{t-1}$$

and $\sigma_{\Delta c}$ and $\sigma_{\Delta y}$ denote the standard deviation of consumption and output changes, respectively.

Use

$$ca_t = y_t - c_t - rd_{t-1}$$

Take differences

$$ca_t - ca_{t-1} = \Delta y_t - \Delta c_t - r(d_{t-1} - d_{t-2}).$$

Noting that $d_{t-1} - d_{t-2} = -ca_{t-1}$ and solving for Δc_t , we obtain:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \Delta c_t &= \Delta y_t - ca_t + (1+r)ca_{t-1} \\
 &= \Delta y_t + \frac{\rho}{1+r-\rho} \Delta y_t - \frac{\rho(1+r)}{1+r-\rho} \Delta y_{t-1} \\
 &= \frac{1+r}{1+r-\rho} \Delta y_t - \frac{\rho(1+r)}{1+r-\rho} \Delta y_{t-1} \\
 &= \frac{1+r}{1+r-\rho} \epsilon_t.
 \end{aligned} \tag{2.29}$$

The change in consumption is a white noise. Why? By the Euler equation (2.8).

By (2.29)

$$\sigma_{\Delta c} = \frac{1+r}{1+r-\rho} \sigma_{\epsilon}.$$

and by equation (2.26)

$$\sigma_{\Delta y} \sqrt{1-\rho^2} = \sigma_{\epsilon}$$

so that

$$\frac{\sigma_{\Delta c}}{\sigma_{\Delta y}} = \left[\frac{1+r}{1+r-\rho} \right] \sqrt{1-\rho^2} \quad (2.30)$$

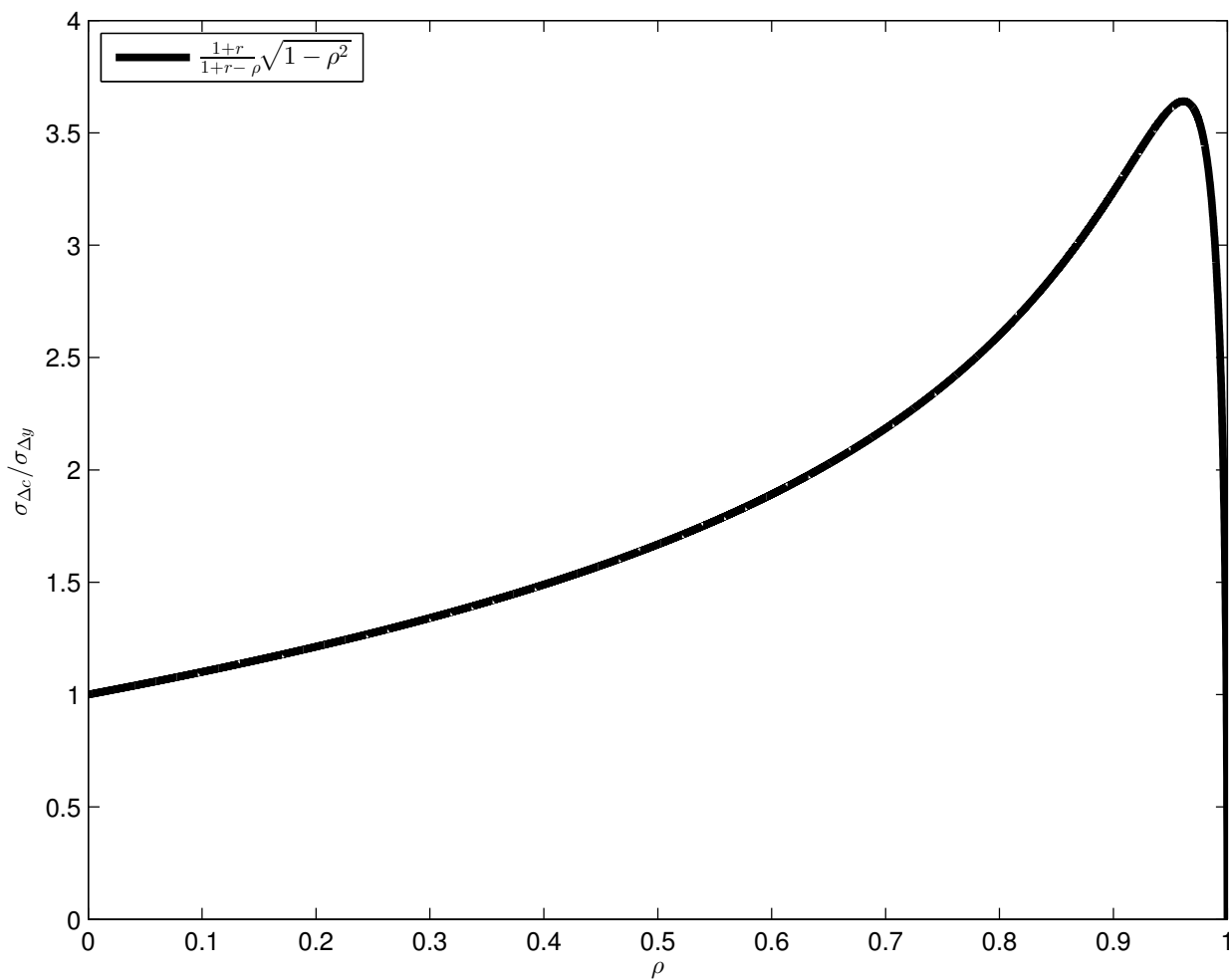
When $\rho = 0$, consumption and output changes are equally volatile.

When $\rho > 0$, consumption changes can become more volatile than output changes. To see this: RHS of (2.30) is increasing in ρ at $\rho = 0$. Since consumption and output changes are equally volatile at $\rho = 0$, it follows that there are values of ρ in the interval $(0, 1)$ for which the volatility of consumption changes is higher than that of output changes.

This property ceases to hold as Δy_t becomes highly persistent. This is because as $\rho \rightarrow 1$, the variance of Δy_t becomes infinitely large as changes in income become a random walk, whereas, as expression (2.29) shows, Δc_t follows an i.i.d. process with finite variance for all values of $\rho \in [0, 1]$.

Excess Volatility of Consumption Changes and the Persistence of Output Changes

Note. This figure plots equation (2.30) as a function of ρ for an interest rate of 4 percent ($r = 0.04$).



2.5 Testing the Intertemporal Approach to the Current Account

- Hall (1978) initiates a large empirical literature testing the random walk hypothesis for consumption implied by the permanent income hypothesis.
- Campbell (1987) tests the predictions of the permanent income model for savings.
- Nason and Rogers (2006) test the predictions regarding the current account.

In the present model savings and the current accounts are equal (because we are abstracting from investment).

Combining (2.15) and (2.27) yields

$$ca_t = y_t - y_t^p = - \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} (1+r)^{-j} E_t \Delta y_{t+j} \quad (2.28)$$

This equation says that a country runs a current account deficit (i.e., borrows from the rest of the world), when the present discounted value of future income changes is positive. And the country runs a current account surplus (i.e., lends to the rest of the world), when current income exceeds permanent income. It also says that current account data should forecast income changes.

Testable Restrictions of the Intertemporal Approach to the Current Account

The testable restriction we focus on is:

$$ca_t = - \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \frac{E_t \Delta y_{t+j}}{(1+r)^j} \quad (2.28 \text{ R})$$

We have observations on the LHS of this equality because we have current account data. But we do not have data on the RHS. How can we get an estimate of the RHS? The idea is to use a vector autoregression (VAR) model in output changes (Δy_t) and the current account (ca_t) to construct an estimate of the RHS given a calibrated value of r . Given the estimate of the RHS, we can test the hypothesis that the LHS is equal to the RHS.

To construct an estimate of the RHS, proceed as follows.

Estimate the VAR model:

$$x_t = Dx_{t-1} + \epsilon_t \quad (2.31)$$

where

$$x_t = \begin{bmatrix} \Delta y_t \\ ca_t \end{bmatrix}$$

and D is a 2x2 matrix of coefficients and ϵ_t is a 2x1 mean-zero i.i.d. process.

Note: The model may or may not imply that x_t has a VAR representation of this form. [An example in which such a representation exists is when Δy_t itself is a univariate AR(1) process like the one assumed in Section 2.4].

H_t = information contained in the vector x_t .

Forecast of x_{t+j} given H_t :

$$E_t[x_{t+j}|H_t] = D^j x_t$$

Sum the forecasts:

$$\sum_{j=1}^{\infty} (1+r)^{-j} E_t[x_{t+j}|H_t] = \left[I - \frac{D}{1+r} \right]^{-1} \frac{D}{1+r} \begin{bmatrix} \Delta y_t \\ ca_t \end{bmatrix}.$$

Pre-multiplying this expression by $\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$ we obtain:

$$\sum_{j=1}^{\infty} (1+r)^{-j} E_t[\Delta y_{t+j}|H_t] = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \left[I - \frac{D}{1+r} \right]^{-1} \frac{D}{1+r} \begin{bmatrix} \Delta y_t \\ ca_t \end{bmatrix}.$$

Let

$$F \equiv - \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \left[I - \frac{D}{1+r} \right]^{-1} \frac{D}{1+r}.$$

Use this expression as the estimate of the RHS of (2.28)

$$\widehat{RHS} = F \begin{bmatrix} \Delta y_t \\ ca_t \end{bmatrix}$$

The left-hand-side of (2.28) can be written as:

$$LHS = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \Delta y_t \\ ca_t \end{bmatrix}$$

The Null hypothesis we wish to test is:

$$H_0 : F = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

The null hypothesis thus consists of 2 restrictions imposed on (a function of) the coefficients of the matrix D.

Nason and Rogers (2006) estimate a VAR with 4 lags using Canadian data on the current account and GDP net of investment and government spending. (The above VAR assumes 1 lag; in the next slide we show how to modify the test to 4 lags.) The sample period is 1963:Q1-1997:Q4. They assume that $r = 0.037$ per year.

Their data strongly **reject the null hypothesis**. They find that the Wald statistic, which reflects the distance between F and $\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$, is 16.1 with an asymptotic p -value of 0.04. This p -value means that if H_0 were true, then the Wald statistic would take a value of 16.1 or higher only 4 out of 100 times.

The VAR of Nason and Rogers has 4 lags, but our example above assumed a VAR with one lag. Here we show how to perform the test for a VAR with 4 lags.

Estimate the following VAR(4):

$$\Delta y_t = \sum_{j=1}^4 a_j \Delta y_{t-j} + \sum_{j=1}^4 b_j \Delta ca_{t-j} + \epsilon_t^1$$

and

$$ca_t = \sum_{j=1}^4 c_j \Delta y_{t-j} + \sum_{j=1}^4 d_j \Delta ca_{t-j} + \epsilon_t^2$$

Then let:

$$x_t = \left[\Delta y_t \quad \Delta y_{t-1} \quad \Delta y_{t-2} \quad \Delta y_{t-3} \quad ca_t \quad ca_{t-1} \quad ca_{t-2} \quad ca_{t-3} \right]'$$

The vector x_t evolves over time as

$$x_t = Dx_{t-1} + u_t$$

where D is a 8x8 matrix of coefficients

$$D = \begin{bmatrix} a_1 & a_2 & a_3 & a_4 & b_1 & b_2 & b_3 & b_4 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ c_1 & c_2 & c_3 & c_4 & d_1 & d_2 & d_3 & d_4 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

and u_t is the 8x1 vector :

$$u_t = [\epsilon_t^1 \quad 0 \quad 0 \quad 0 \quad \epsilon_t^2 \quad 0 \quad 0 \quad 0]'$$

Following the same steps as in the AR(1) case, we obtain.

$$\sum_{j=1}^{\infty} (1+r)^{-j} E_t[\Delta y_{t+j} | H_t] = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \left[I - \frac{D}{1+r} \right]^{-1} \frac{D}{1+r} x_t$$

Let:

$$F \equiv - \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \left[I - \frac{D}{1+r} \right]^{-1} \frac{D}{1+r}.$$

Then the RHS of (2.28) can be expressed as

$$RHS = F x_t$$

The LHS of (2.28) can be written as:

$$LHS = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} x_t$$

For the VAR(4) the Null hypothesis becomes:

$$H_0 : F = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

A second testable restriction.

Start again with the following implication of the theoretical model

$$ca_t = - \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \frac{E_t \Delta y_{t+j}}{(1+r)^j} \quad (2.28 \text{ R})$$

and express it as

$$ca_t = \frac{-E_t \Delta y_{t+1}}{1+r} - \sum_{j=2}^{\infty} \frac{E_t \Delta y_{t+j}}{(1+r)^j} = \frac{-E_t \Delta y_{t+1}}{1+r} + \frac{1}{1+r} E_t ca_{t+1}$$

Rearranging yields:

$$E_t \Delta y_{t+1} - E_t ca_{t+1} + (1+r)ca_t = 0$$

Let

$$Z_{t+1} \equiv \Delta y_{t+1} - ca_{t+1} + (1+r)ca_t$$

Note that Z_{t+1} is observable. Regress Z_{t+1} on x_t (or past x_t , the information contained in H_t). If the theoretical model is true, all coefficients on x_t should be zero, that is, it should be true that

$$[[1 \quad -1] D + (1+r) [0 \quad 1]] = [0 \quad 0]$$

Nason and Rogers find that this hypothesis is rejected with a p -value of 0.06.

Conclusions

- propagation mechanism invoked by canonical intertemporal model of the current account does not provide a satisfactory account of the observed current account dynamics.
- for AR(1) output specifications that model predicts the current account to be procyclical, whereas it is countercyclical in the data.
- AR(2) or nonstationary specifications for the income process can in principle imply a countercyclical adjustment of the current account. Yet, empirical tests rejects the basic mechanism of the intertemporal model of the current account namely that current accounts are equal to future expected income changes.
- to bring observed and predicted behavior of the current account closer together, in the following chapters we will enrich both the model's sources of fluctuations and its propagation mechanism.