

Stanford Economics 266: International Trade

— Lecture 19: Trade Policy (Theory II)—

1. Political-Economy Approach

Economic Environment

Endowment economy

- We consider a simplified version of Grossman and Helpman (1994)
 - Endowment rather than specific-factor model
- To abstract from TOT considerations, GH consider a small open economy
 - If governments were welfare-maximizing, trade taxes would be zero
- There are $n + 1$ goods, $i = 0, 1, \dots, n$, produced under perfect competition
 - good 0 is the numeraire with domestic and world price equal to 1
 - p_i^w and p_i denote the world and domestic price of good i , respectively
- Individuals are endowed with 1 unit of good 0 and 1 unit of another good $i \neq 0$
 - we refer to an individual endowed with good i as an i -individual
 - α_i denote the share of i -individuals in the population
 - total number of individuals is normalized to 1

Economic Environment (Cont.)

Quasi-linear preferences

- All individuals have the same quasi-linear preferences

$$U = x_0 + \sum_{i=1}^n u_i(x_i)$$

- Indirect utility function of i -individual is therefore given by

$$V_i(\mathbf{p}) = 1 + p_i + t(\mathbf{p}) + s(\mathbf{p})$$

where:

$$t(\mathbf{p}) \equiv \text{government's transfer [to be specified]}$$

$$s(\mathbf{p}) \equiv \sum_{i=1}^n u_i(d_i(p_i)) - \sum_{i=1}^n p_i d_i(p_i)$$

- **Comment:**

- Given quasi-linear preferences, this is *de facto* a partial equilibrium model

Political Environment

Policy instruments

- For all goods $i = 1, \dots, n$, the government can impose an ad-valorem import tariff/export subsidy t_i

$$p_i = (1 + t_i) p_i^W$$

- We treat $\mathbf{p} \equiv (p_i)_{i=1, \dots, n}$ as the policy variables of our government
- The associated government revenues are given by

$$t(\mathbf{p}) = \sum_{i=1}^n (p_i - p_i^W) m_i(p_i) = \sum_{i=1}^n (p_i - p_i^W) [d_i(p_i) - \alpha_i]$$

- Revenues are uniformly distributed to the population so that $t(\mathbf{p})$ is also equal to the government's transfer, as assumed before

Political Environment

Lobbies

- An *exogenous* set L of sectors/individuals is politically organized
 - we refer to a group of agents that is politically organized as a *lobby*
- Each lobby i chooses a schedule of contribution $C_i(\cdot) : (\mathbb{R}^+)^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$ in order to maximize the total welfare of its members net of the contribution

$$\max_{C_i(\cdot)} \alpha_i V_i(\mathbf{p}^0) - C_i(\mathbf{p}^0)$$

subject to: $\mathbf{p}^0 = \arg \max_{\mathbf{p}} G(\mathbf{p})$

where $G(\cdot)$ is the objective function of the government [to be specified]

- Conditional on the contribution schedules announced by the lobbies, government chooses the vector of domestic prices in order to maximize a weighted sum of contributions and social welfare

$$\max_{\mathbf{p}} G(\mathbf{p}) \equiv \sum_{i \in L} C_i(\mathbf{p}) + aW(\mathbf{p})$$

where

$$W(\mathbf{p}) = \sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_i V_i(\mathbf{p}) \text{ and } a \geq 0$$

- **Comments:**

- GH (1994) model has the structure of *common agency problem*
- Multiple principals \equiv lobbies; one agent \equiv government
- We can use Bernheim and Whinston's (1986) results on *menu auctions*

Equilibrium Contributions

- We denote by $\left\{ (C_i^0)_{i \in L}, \mathbf{p}^0 \right\}$ the SPNE of the previous game
 - we restrict ourselves to interior equilibria with differentiable equilibrium contribution schedules
 - whenever we say “in any SPNE”, we really mean “in any interior SPNE where C^0 is differentiable”
- **Lemma 1** *In any SPNE, contribution schedules are locally truthful*

$$\nabla C_i^0(\mathbf{p}^0) = \alpha_i \nabla V_i(\mathbf{p}^0)$$

- **Proof:**

- 1 \mathbf{p}^0 optimal for the government $\Rightarrow \sum_{i \in L} \nabla C_i^0(\mathbf{p}^0) + a \nabla W(\mathbf{p}^0) = 0$
- 2 $C_i^0(\cdot)$ optimal for lobby $i \Rightarrow \alpha_i \nabla V_i(\mathbf{p}^0) - \nabla C_i(\mathbf{p}^0) + \sum_{i' \in L} \nabla C_{i'}^0(\mathbf{p}^0) + a \nabla W(\mathbf{p}^0) = 0$
- 3 1+2 $\Rightarrow \nabla C_i^0(\mathbf{p}^0) = \alpha_i \nabla V_i(\mathbf{p}^0)$

- **Lemma 2** *In any SPNE, domestic prices satisfy*

$$\sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_i (l_i + a) \nabla V_i (\mathbf{p}^0) = 0,$$

where $l_i = 1$ if i is politically organized and $l_i = 0$ otherwise

- **Proof:**

- ① \mathbf{p}^0 optimal for the government $\Rightarrow \sum_{i \in L} \nabla C_i^0 (\mathbf{p}^0) + a \nabla W (\mathbf{p}^0) = 0$
- ② 1 + Lemma 1 $\Rightarrow \sum_{i \in L} \alpha_i \nabla V_i (\mathbf{p}^0) + a \nabla W (\mathbf{p}^0) = 0$
- ③ Lemma 2 directly derives from this observation and the definition of $W (\mathbf{p}^0)$

- **Comment:**

- In GH (1994), everything is *as if* governments were maximizing a social welfare function that weighs different members of society differently

Equilibrium Trade Policies (Cont.)

- **Proposition 2** In any SPNE, trade policies satisfy

$$\frac{t_i^0}{1 + t_i^0} = \frac{l_i - \alpha_L}{a + \alpha_L} \left(\frac{z_i^0}{e_i^0} \right) \text{ for } i = 1, \dots, n, \quad (1)$$

where $\alpha_L \equiv \sum_{i' \in L} \alpha_{i'}$, $z_i^0 \equiv \alpha_i / m_i$, and $e_i^0 \equiv d \ln m_i(p_i^0) / d \ln p_i^0$

- **Proof:**

- 1 Roy's identity + definition of $V_i(\mathbf{p}^0) \Rightarrow$

$$\frac{\partial V_{i'}(\mathbf{p}^0)}{\partial p_i} = (\delta_{i'i} - \alpha_i) + (p_i^0 - p_i^w) m_i'(p_i^0)$$

where $\delta_{i'i} = 1$ if $i = i'$ and $\delta_{i'i} = 0$ otherwise

- 2 1 + Lemma 2 \Rightarrow for all $i' = 1, \dots, n$,

$$\sum_{i'=1}^n \alpha_{i'} (l_{i'} + a) \left[\delta_{i'i} - \alpha_i + (p_i^0 - p_i^w) m_i'(p_i^0) \right] = 0$$

- 3 2 + definition of $\alpha_L \equiv \sum_{i' \in L} \alpha_{i'} \Rightarrow$

$$(l_i - \alpha_L) \alpha_i + (p_i^0 - p_i^w) m_i'(p_i^0) (\alpha_L + a) = 0$$

Equilibrium Trade Policies (Cont.)

- **Proof (Cont.):**

4. $3 + t_i^0 = (p_i^0 - p_i^w) / p_i^w \Rightarrow$

$$t_i^0 = \frac{l_i - \alpha_L}{a + \alpha_L} \left(-\frac{\alpha_i}{p_i^w m'_i(p_i^0)} \right) = \frac{l_i - \alpha_L}{a + \alpha_L} \left(-\frac{z_i m_i(p_i^0)}{p_i^w m'_i(p_i^0)} \right)$$

5. Equation (1) directly derives from 4 and the definition of z_i^0 and e_i^0

How Should Tariffs Vary Across Industries (and Countries)?

GH's (1994) basic insights

- According to Proposition 2:
 - 1 Protection only arises if some sectors lobby, but others don't: if $\alpha_L = 0$ or 1, then $t_i^0 = 0$ for all $i = 1, \dots, n$
 - 2 Only organized sectors receive protection (they manage to increase price of the good they produce and decrease the price of the good they consume)
 - 3 Protection decreases with the import demand elasticity e_0 (which increases the deadweight loss)
 - 4 Protection increases with the ratio of domestic output to imports (which increases the benefit to the lobby and reduces the cost to society)

Are Unilateral Tariffs Efficient?

- In the case of a small open economy, which is the case considered by GH (1994), the answer is trivially yes
- GH (1995) extend the previous analysis to the case of two large countries
 - in this situation, unilateral tariffs are not Pareto-efficient
 - terms-of-trade changes may affect other countries, and so, provide rationale for trade agreements
- As we mention before, the interesting question, however, is:
Do political-economy motives provide a rationale for trade agreements above and beyond correcting the terms-of-trade externality?
- Bagwell and Staiger's (1999) answer is no

Terms-of-Trade Externality Revisited

Bagwell and Staiger (1999)

- Political-economy motives affect preferences, $W^c(p^c, p^w)$, over domestic and world prices
 - for example, in GH (1994), a small open economy may not choose free trade
- However, at a theoretical level, if we can still write government's objective function as $W^c(p^c, p^w)$, then the *only* source of the inefficiency has to be the terms-of-trade externality:
 - Nothing in previous lecture relied on $W^c(p^c, p^w) \equiv V^c[p^c, R^c(p^c) + T^c(p^c, p^w)]!$
- Intuitively, starting from a situation where $W_{p^c}^c(p^c, p^w) = 0$ all c , the only first-order effect of a tariff change has to be the change in p^w
 - Since this is a pure income effect, it cannot affect world welfare

Reciprocity in the WTO

Bagwell and Staiger (1999)

- Using the previous insight, one can rationalize the principle of “reciprocity” within the WTO
- **Reciprocity** \equiv *Mutual changes in trade policy such that changes in the value of each country's imports are equal to changes in the value of its exports*
- Formally, a change in tariffs $\Delta t^1 \equiv t^{1'} - t^1$ and $\Delta t^2 \equiv t^{2'} - t^2$ is reciprocal if

$$p^w \left[m_1^1(p^{1'}, p^{w'}) - m_1^1(p^1, p^w) \right] = \left[x_2^1(p^{1'}, p^{w'}) - x_2^1(p^1, p^w) \right]$$

- Using trade balance, this can be rearranged as

$$(p^{w'} - p^w) m_1^1(p^{1'}, p^{w'}) = 0 \Rightarrow p^{w'} = p^w$$

- Hence mutual changes in trade policy that satisfy the principle of reciprocity leave the world price unchanged, which eliminates source of inefficiency

2. Other Issues

- Strategic trade policy was an active area of research in the 80s
- **Objective:**
Normative analysis of trade policy under imperfect competition
- **Classics:**
 - 1 Brander and Spencer (1985): export subsidies may be optimal way to shift profits away from foreigners and towards domestic firms (in a Cournot duopoly)
 - 2 Grossman and Eaton (1986): optimal policy crucially depends on details of the model (e.g. Cournot vs. Bertrand)

Strategic Trade Policy (Cont.)

- Recently, a few papers have revisited the implication of imperfect competition for trade agreements. In particular, does imperfect competition provide a new rationale for trade agreements?
 - Ossa (2011) says yes
 - Bagwell and Staiger (2009) say no
- From an empirical standpoint:
 - Can we figure out which assumptions about market structure fit best a given industry? If so, why would Grossman and Eaton (1986) be a problem?

Why Do Governments Use Trade Policy Instruments?

- Most papers analyzing trade policy start from ad-hoc restriction on the set of instruments (e.g. tariffs, quotas, export subsidies, no production subsidies)
- Conditional on this ad-hoc restriction, paper then explains why trade policy may look the way it does and what its consequences may be
- But why would governments use inefficient instruments in the first place?
 - In developing countries, this may be the “best feasible” way to raise revenues (Gordon and Li 2009)
 - Inefficient methods may reduce the *size of the pie*, yet increase the *share of the pie* going to those choosing the instruments (Dixit, Grossman and Helpman 1997, Acemoglu and Robinson 2001)

Understanding the WTO

- What are the implications of the self-enforcing nature of trade agreements?
 - Bagwell and Staiger (1990), Maggi (1996)
- What is the rationale for trade agreements in the presence of NTBs?
 - Bagwell and Staiger (2001) consider the case of product standards (and conclude that only terms-of-trade externality matters)
- How can we rationalize simple rigid rules (e.g. an upper bound on tariffs) within the WTO?
 - Amador and Bagwell (2010), Horn, Maggi, and Staiger (2010)
- Quantitatively, how large are the gains from the WTO?
 - Ossa (2012)