We construct a dynamic theory of sovereign debt and structural reforms with limited enforcement and moral hazard. A sovereign country in recession wishes to smooth consumption. It can also undertake costly reforms to speed up recovery. The sovereign can renege on contracts by suffering a stochastic cost. The constrained optimal allocation (COA) prescribes imperfect insurance with non-monotonic dynamics for consumption and effort. The COA is decentralized by a competitive equilibrium with markets for renegotiable GDP-linked one-period debt. The equilibrium features debt overhang: reform effort decreases in a high debt range. We also consider environments with less complete markets. (JEL D82, E21, E23, E32, F34, H63)

This paper proposes a normative and positive dynamic theory of sovereign debt in an environment characterized by two informational frictions. First, sovereign debt is subject to limited enforcement since countries can renege on their obligations subject to real costs as in, e.g., Aguiar and Gopinath (2006), Arellano (2008), and Yue (2010). Second, countries can undertake structural policy reforms to speed up recovery from an existing recession. The reform effort is assumed to be unobservable. This creates a moral hazard problem.

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1 Examples of such reforms include labor and product market deregulation, and the establishment of fiscal capacity that allows the government to raise tax revenue efficiently (see, e.g., Ilzkovitz and Dierx 2011). While beneficial in the long run, these reforms entail short-run costs for citizens at large, governments, or special-interest groups (see, e.g., Blanchard and Giavazzi 2003).
The theory is motivated by the recent debt crisis in Europe, where sovereign debt and economic reforms have been deeply intertwined. Greece, for instance, saw its debt-GDP ratio soar from 103 percent in 2007 to 172 percent in 2011 (despite a 53 percent haircut in 2011) while the risk premium on its government debt boomed during the same period. Creditors and international organizations pushed the Greek government to introduce structural reforms that would help the country recover but internally these reforms were resisted forcefully. Opponents argued that the reforms would hurt domestic residents mainly to the benefit of the foreign creditors. Eventually, international organizations stepped in to provide financial assistance and new loans, asking in exchange fiscal restraint and a commitment to reforms. Our theory rationalizes these dynamics.

The model economy is a dynamic endowment economy subject to income shocks which follow a two-state Markov process. The economy (henceforth, the sovereign) starts in a recession whose duration is uncertain. Costly structural reforms increase the probability that the recession ends. Preferences induce a desire for consumption and reform effort smoothing.

We start by characterizing the solution of two planning problems: the first best and the constrained optimal allocation (COA). In the first best, the planner provides full insurance by transferring resources to the sovereign as long as the recession lingers and reversing the transfer as soon as the recession ends. The sovereign exerts the efficient effort level during recession. The first best is not implementable due to two informational frictions. First, there is limited enforcement: the sovereign has access to a stochastic outside option which makes it attractive for her to deviate from the first best in some states. The profitable deviation entails cashing in transfers for some time, and then unilaterally quitting (i.e., defaulting on) the contract as soon as the realization of the outside option is sufficiently favorable. Second, there is moral hazard: the sovereign has an incentive to shirk and rely on transfers rather than exerting the efficient level of reform effort.

We characterize the COA by a promised utility approach in the vein of Spear and Srivastava (1987), Thomas and Worrall (1988, 1990), and Kocherlakota (1996). The optimal contract is subject to an incentive compatibility constraint (IC) that pins down the effort choice and a participation constraint (PC) that captures the limited enforcement. The COA has the following dynamics: throughout recession, as long as the PC is slack (i.e., when the realized default cost is high), the planner provides dynamic incentives for the reform effort by front-loading the sovereign’s consumption and decreasing over time the promised utility (similar to Hopenhayn and Nicolini 1997). In this case, the solution is history-dependent and dictated by the IC: consumption and promised utility fall over time, while effort follows non-monotone dynamics. Whenever the PC binds (i.e., when the realized default cost is low), the planner increases discretely consumption and promised utility in order to keep the sovereign in the contract.

2 Italy is another example of a country with high government debt and troubled politico-economic dynamics. In March 2018, the incumbent pro-reform Italian government suffered an electoral defeat. As a new populist government took office announcing a reversal of the reform process and tax cuts financed through public debt, the Italy-Germany 10-year bond spread increased from 1.3 percent to 3.2 percent between March and October 2018.
Next, we study the decentralization of the COA. We show that the COA can be implemented by a Markov equilibrium in which the sovereign issues two one-period securities paying returns contingent on the aggregate state (GDP-linked bonds). The bonds, which are defaultable and renegotiable, are sold to profit-maximizing international creditors who hold well-diversified portfolios. When the sovereign faces a favorable realization of the outside option, she could in principle default, pay a cost, and restart afresh with zero debt. However, costly default can be averted by renegotiation: when a credible default threat is on the table, a syndicate of creditors offers a take-it-or-leave-it debt haircut. As in Bulow and Rogoff (1989), there is no outright default in equilibrium, but rather recurrent stochastic debt renegotiations. For this market arrangement to attain constrained efficiency, it is critical that the creditors have all the bargaining power ex post.

Under this renegotiation protocol, two one-period securities are sufficient to decentralize the COA. This result rests on two features of the equilibrium. First, renegotiation effectively turns the two securities into a continuum of state-contingent securities. Second, the equilibrium debt dynamics and the equilibrium prices provide efficient dynamic incentives for the sovereign to exert the second-best reform effort. We prove that the two-security equilibrium yields the same allocation as would an equilibrium with a full set of Arrow-Debreu securities and endogenous borrowing constraints in the spirit of Alvarez and Jermann (2000). Our decentralization is parsimonious and simple, in the sense that it requires only two assets and does not rely on a set of endogenous borrowing constraints.

In the market equilibrium, debt accumulates and consumption falls over time as long as the recession lingers and debt is fully honored. Interestingly, the reform effort is a nonmonotone function of debt. This result stems from the interaction between limited enforcement and moral hazard. If enforcement were perfect, effort would increase monotonically throughout the recession as debt accumulates. Conversely, if there were no moral hazard, effort would be constant when the PC is slack and decrease upon each debt renegotiation episode. When both informational frictions are present, reform effort is a hump-shaped function of debt. A larger debt strengthens the incentive to exert reform effort in a region of low debt levels. However, when the outstanding debt is sufficiently high the relationship is flipped: there, issuing more debt deters reforms. The reason is that in the high-debt region the ex ante probability of renegotiation is high, and thus a large share of the benefits from economic recovery accrue to the creditors in the form of a capital gain on the outstanding debt. As a result, the incentive-compatible reform effort falls over time as debt further accumulates. This debt overhang curtails consumption smoothing: when sovereign debt is high, investors expect low reform effort, are pessimistic about the economic outlook, and request an even higher risk premium. Interestingly, in our theory this form of debt overhang is constrained efficient under the postulated informational constraints.

3 Constrained efficiency is defined relative to a planning problem in which the planner has access to the same punishment strategy as the market, i.e., the planner can punish deviations by imposing the stochastic default cost and then letting the agent resume in the market equilibrium with zero debt.

4 Empirically, unordered defaults are indeed rare events. Tomz and Wright (2007) and Sturzenegger and Zettelmeyer (2008) document a substantial heterogeneity in the terms at which debt is renegotiated, which is consistent with our assumption of a stochastic outside option (see also Panizza, Sturzenegger, and Zettelmeyer 2009 and Reinhart and Trebesch 2016).
We extend the analysis to environments with more incomplete markets. In particular, we consider an economy in which the sovereign can issue only one asset, a noncontingent bond. This economy fails to attain the COA: the sovereign attains less consumption smoothing and provides an inefficient effort level. We also study a case where renegotiation is ruled out as in Eaton and Gersovitz (1981). The absence of renegotiation further curtails consumption smoothing and welfare. These extensions are interesting because in reality markets for GDP-linked bonds are often missing. In this one-asset environment, there is scope for policy intervention. In particular, an international institution such as the IMF can improve welfare by offering an assistance program such that, as long as the recession continues, the institution provides a persistent budget support through extending loans on favorable terms. When the recession ends, the sovereign is settled with a (possibly large) debt on market terms.

Our analysis is related to a large international and public finance literature. In a seminal contribution, Atkeson (1991) studies the optimal contract in an environment in which an infinitely-lived sovereign borrower faces a sequence of two-period lived lenders subject to repeated moral hazard. The focus of our paper differs from Atkeson’s in two regards. First, we emphasize the nonmonotone effort dynamics and the role of periodic renegotiations along the equilibrium path. Second, we provide a novel decentralization result through renegotiable bonds.

A number of recent papers study the dynamics of sovereign debt under a variety of informational and contractual frictions. Dovis (2019) studies the efficient risk-sharing arrangement between international lenders and a sovereign borrower with limited commitment and private information about domestic productivity. In his model the COA can be implemented as a market equilibrium with noncontingent defaultable bonds of short and long maturity. Aguiar et al. (2019) studies a model à la Eaton and Gersovitz (1981) with limited commitment. They assume, as we do, that the borrower has a stochastic default cost. Their research is complementary to ours insofar as it focuses on debt maturity in rollover crises, from which we abstract. Rollover crises are also the focus of Jeanne (2009), though in a different environment where the government can take a policy action that affects the return to foreign investors (e.g., the enforcement of creditors’ rights) but this can be reversed within a time horizon that is shorter than that at which investors must commit their resources.

Our work is also related to the literature on debt overhang initiated by Krugman (1988). He constructs a static model with exogenous debt showing that a large debt can deter the borrower from undertaking productive investments. In this situation, it may be optimal for the creditor to forgive debt. In our paper, debt overhang is a feature of the dynamic equilibrium, i.e., the economy enters this region without any irrational behavior from lenders. Moreover, forgiving debt is never optimal for creditors, although high debt distorts the investment in reform effort. Several papers consider distortions associated with high indebtedness in the presence of informational imperfections. Aguiar and Amador (2014) shows that high debt increases the volatility of consumption by reducing risk sharing. Aguiar, Amador, and Gopinath (2009) considers the effect of debt on investment volatility. When an economy is indebted, productivity shocks give rise to larger dispersion in investment rates. Aguiar and Amador (2011) considers a politico-economic model where capital income can be expropriated ex post and the government can default on external debt. A country with a large sovereign debt position has a greater temptation to
default, and therefore investments are low. Conesa and Kehoe (2017) constructs a theory where governments of highly indebted countries may choose to gamble for redemption.

Our research is also related to the literature on endogenous incomplete markets due to limited enforcement or limited commitment. This includes Alvarez and Jermann (2000) and Kehoe and Perri (2002). Our result that efficiency can be attained by a sequence of one-period debt contracts echoes Fudenberg, Holmström, and Milgrom (1990), which provides conditions under which dynamic commitment problems can be resolved through a sequence of one-period contracts. Our theory also builds on the insight of Grossman and Van Huyck (1988) that renegotiation can be used to complete markets. Our focus on a unique Markov equilibrium is related to Ábraham et al. (2018) which studies an Arellano (2008) economy, extended to allow shocks to government expenditures, and compare quantitative outcomes of the market allocation to the optimal design of a Financial Stability Fund. Broner, Martin, and Ventura (2010) studies the incentives to default when part of the government debt is held by domestic residents. Bocola (2016) analyzes the macroeconomic consequences of sovereign default risk through its effect on banks and on their ability to lend to the productive sector. Song, Storesletten, and Zilibotti (2012) and Müller, Storesletten, and Zilibotti (2016) study the politico-economic determinants of debt in open economies where governments are committed to honor their debt.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section I describes the model environment. Section II characterizes the first best and the COA. Section III provides the main decentralization result. Section IV extends the analysis to one-asset economies and discusses policy interventions to restore efficiency. Section V concludes. The Appendix contains the proofs of the main lemmas and propositions. The online Appendix contains additional proofs and technical material referred to in the text.

I. The Model Environment

Consider a small open endowment economy populated by an infinitely-lived representative agent. A benevolent sovereign makes decisions on behalf of the representative agent. The endowment is stochastic and follows a two-state Markov switching process, with realizations \( w \) (recession) and \( \bar{w} \) (normal time), where \( 0 < w < \bar{w} \). The economy is assumed to start in recession and to switch to normal time with endogenous probability \( p \) (otherwise, the recession lingers). For simplicity, we assume normal time to be an absorbing state. During recession, the sovereign can

5 Other papers studying restructuring of sovereign debt include Bolton and Jeanne (2007); Yue (2010); Mendoza and Yue (2012); Hatchondo, Martinez, and Padilla (2014); and Asonuma and Trebesch (2016).
implement a costly reform policy to increase $p$. In our notation, $p \in [\bar{p}, \tilde{p}] \subset [0, 1]$ denotes both the reform effort and the probability that the recession ends. The sovereign can smooth consumption by contracting with a financial intermediary that has access to an international market offering a gross return $R$.

The sovereign’s preferences are given by

$$E_0 \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t [u(c_t) - \phi_{I_{\text{default in } t}} - X(p_t)],$$

where $\beta = 1/R$. The function $u$ is twice continuously differentiable and satisfies $\lim_{c \to 0} u(c) = -\infty$, $u'(c) > 0$, and $u''(c) < 0$. The variable $I \in \{0, 1\}$ is an indicator switching on when the economy is in a default state and $\phi$ is the associated utility loss. In the planning allocation, the cost $\phi$ accrues when the sovereign opts out of the contract offered by the planner. In the market allocation, it accrues when sovereign unilaterally reneges on a debt contract with international lenders. The cost $\phi$ is exogenous and publicly observed. In recession, $\phi$ follows an i.i.d. process drawn from the PDF $f(\phi)$ with an associated CDF $F(\phi)$. We assume that $F(\phi)$ is continuously differentiable everywhere, and denote its support by $\phi \in [\phi_{\text{min}}, \phi_{\text{max}}] \subseteq \mathbb{R}^+ 

\phi_{\text{min}} < \phi_{\text{max}} < \infty$. The assumption that shocks are independent is for simplicity. In order to focus on debt dynamics in recessions we assume that there is full enforcement in normal time (i.e., in normal time $\phi$ is arbitrarily large). In Müller, Storesletten, and Zilibotti (2019a), we extend the analysis to an environment in which normal time is not an absorbing state and there is default risk in both normal time and recession.

The time line of events is as follows: at the beginning of each period, the endowment state $w$ is observed; then, the default cost $\phi$ is realized; finally, effort $p$ is exerted.

II. Planning Allocation

We characterize the constrained efficient allocation as the solution to a (dual) social planner problem which maximizes the principal’s (i.e., creditor’s) discounted value of expected future profits subject to a sequence of incentive and limited enforcement constraints. The problem can be written recursively using the agent’s (i.e., sovereign’s) continuation utility as the state variable and letting the planner maximize profits subject to a promise-keeping constraint.\(^{[7]}\)

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\(^{[6]}\) The cost $\phi$ captures both taste shocks (e.g., the sentiments of the public opinion about defaulting on foreign debt) and institutional shocks (e.g., the election of a new prime minister, a new central bank governor taking office, the attitude of foreign governments, etc.). Alternatively, $\phi$ could be given a politico-economic interpretation, as reflecting special interests of lobbies.

\(^{[7]}\) We formulate the planning problem as a one-sided commitment program. The problem would be identical under two-sided lack of commitment under some mild restrictions on the state space. In particular, one should impose an upper bound on the sovereign’s initial promised utility to ensure that the principal does not find it optimal to ever exit the contract.
Let \( \nu \) denote the expected utility the sovereign is promised in the beginning of the period, before the realized \( \phi \) is observed. The promised utility \( \nu \) is the key state variable of the problem. We denote by \( \omega_\phi \) and \( \bar{\omega}_\phi \) the promised continuation utilities conditional on the realization \( \phi \) and on the economy staying in recession or switching to normal time, respectively. We denote by \( P(\nu) \) the expected present value of profits accruing to the planner conditional on delivering the promised utility \( \nu \) efficiently. This \( P(\nu) \) satisfies the following functional equation:

\[
(1) \quad P(\nu) = \max_{\{c_\phi, p_\phi, \omega_\phi, \bar{\omega}_\phi\}_\phi} \int_{\mathcal{N}} \left[ w - c_\phi + \beta (p_\phi \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}_\phi) + (1 - p_\phi) P(\omega_\phi)) \right] dF(\phi),
\]

where the maximization is subject to a promise-keeping constraint (PK),

\[
(2) \quad \int_{\mathcal{N}} \left[ u(c_\phi) - X(p_\phi) + \beta(p_\phi \bar{\omega}_\phi + (1 - p_\phi) \omega_\phi) \right] dF(\phi) = \nu,
\]

the planner’s profit function in normal time,

\[
(3) \quad \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}_\phi) = \max_{\bar{\omega} \in [\omega, \bar{\omega}]} \bar{w} - \bar{c} + \beta \bar{P}\left( \beta^{-1} [\bar{\omega}_\phi - u(\bar{c})] \right),
\]

and the boundary conditions \( c_\phi \in [0, \bar{c}], p_\phi \in [p, \bar{p}], \nu, \omega_\phi \in [\omega, \tilde{\omega}], \) and \( \bar{\omega}_\phi \in [\tilde{\omega}, \tilde{\bar{\omega}}] \), where \( \bar{c}, \tilde{\omega}, \tilde{\bar{\omega}}, \) and \( \omega \) are generous bounds that will never bind in equilibrium.

We introduce two informational frictions. The first is limited enforcement captured by a set of state-contingent PCs: the sovereign can quit the contract when the realization of \( \phi \) makes it attractive ex post. The second is moral hazard captured by an IC: the reform effort is chosen by the sovereign and is not observed by the planner.

Under limited enforcement, the planner must provide the sovereign with a utility level that is at least as high as the outside option \( \alpha - \phi \), where \( \phi \) is the shock discussed above and \( \alpha \) is the value for the sovereign of not being in the contract. Thus, the allocation is subject to the following set of PCs:

\[
(4) \quad u(c_\phi) - X(p_\phi) + \beta [p_\phi \bar{\omega}_\phi + (1 - p_\phi) \omega_\phi] \geq \alpha - \phi, \quad \phi \in \mathcal{N}.
\]

Moreover, there is an endogenous lower bound on (initial and future) promised utility. In particular, \( \nu \geq \nu \equiv \alpha - E[\phi] \) and

\[
(5) \quad \omega_\phi \geq \nu.
\]

Note that \( \nu \) is the expected utility that the sovereign could attain by quitting the contract in the next period after the realization of \( \phi \). Clearly, it is not feasible for the planner to promise a utility \( \omega_\phi < \nu \). In addition, we assume that \( \alpha \) is sufficiently low to ensure that it is never efficient to terminate the program (even under
the realization $\phi = \phi_{\min}$). In the first part of the paper we treat $\alpha$ as an exogenous parameter; later we endogenize it.\(^8\)

When there is moral hazard, the planning problem is also subject to the following IC:

(6) $$p_\phi = \arg\max_{p \in [\bar{p}, p - \bar{p}]} -X(p) + \beta[p \bar{\omega}_\phi + (1 - p) \omega_\phi],$$

reflecting the assumption that the sovereign chooses effort after the planner has set the future promised utilities.

### A. First-Best Allocation

We start by characterizing the first-best allocation given by the program (1)–(3). The proof, which follows standard methods in dynamic principal-agent models, can be found in the online Appendix.

**Proposition 1:** Given a promised utility $\nu$, the first-best allocation satisfies the following properties. The sequences for consumption and promised utilities are constant at the levels $c_{FB}(\nu)$, $\omega_{FB}(\nu) = \nu$, and $\bar{\omega}_{FB}(\nu) = \nu + X(p_{FB}(\nu))/(1 - \beta(1 - p_{FB}(\nu)))$, implying full consumption insurance, $c_{FB}(\nu) = \bar{c}_{FB}(\bar{\omega}_{FB}(\nu))$. Moreover, effort $p_{FB}(\nu)$ is constant over time throughout recession. Functions $c_{FB}(\nu)$ and $p_{FB}(\nu)$ are strictly increasing and strictly decreasing, respectively, satisfying

(7) \[ \frac{\beta}{1 - \beta(1 - p_{FB}(\nu))} \left( \frac{\bar{w} - w}{\text{output increase if recovery}} + \frac{X(p_{FB}(\nu))}{\text{saved effort cost if recovery}} \right) = X'(p_{FB}(\nu)), \]

(8) \[ \frac{u(c_{FB}(\nu))}{1 - \beta} - \frac{X(p_{FB}(\nu))}{1 - \beta(1 - p_{FB}(\nu))} = \nu. \]

The solution to the functional equation (3) in normal time is given by

(9) \[ \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}_\phi) = \frac{\bar{w} - \bar{c}_{FB}(\bar{\omega}_\phi)}{1 - \beta}, \quad \bar{c}_{FB}(\bar{\omega}_\phi) = u^{-1}\left(\frac{1 - 1}{1 - \beta} \bar{w}_\phi\right). \]

The first-best allocation yields full insurance: the sovereign enjoys a constant consumption irrespective of the endowment state and exerts a constant reform effort during recession. Moreover, consumption $c_{FB}$ is strictly increasing in $\nu$ while effort $p_{FB}$ is strictly decreasing in $\nu$: a higher promised utility is associated with higher consumption and lower effort. The function $\bar{P}$ is strictly decreasing and strictly concave.

\(^8\)The constraint (5) is implied by next period’s PK (2) and the set of PCs (4). It is convenient to specify it as a separate constraint since this allows us to attach a Lagrange multiplier to (5) instead of (2). The condition on $\alpha$ will always hold true when we endogenize $\alpha$ below.
B. Constrained Optimal Allocation (COA)

Next, we characterize the COA. The planning problem (1)–(3) is subject to the PCs (4), the lower bound on $\omega_\phi$ (5), and the IC (6). Note that the value function $P(\nu)$ is evaluated after the uncertainty about the endowment state has resolved, but before the realization of $\phi$. For didactic reasons, we study first a problem with only limited enforcement and then we introduce moral hazard. We start by establishing a threshold property of the COA that holds true in both environments.9

**LEMMA 1:** Assume that the profit function $P$ is strictly concave. Define the sovereign’s discounted utility conditional on the promised utility $\nu$ and the realization $\phi$ as $\mu_\phi(\nu) \equiv u(c_\phi(\nu)) - X(p_\phi(\nu)) + \beta[p_\phi(\nu)\omega_\phi(\nu) + (1 - p_\phi(\nu))\omega_\phi(\nu)]$. Then, the COA features a unique threshold function $\tilde{\phi}(\nu)$ such that the PC binds if $\phi < \tilde{\phi}(\nu)$ and is slack if $\phi \geq \tilde{\phi}(\nu)$. Moreover,

$$
\mu_\phi(\nu) = \begin{cases} 
\alpha - \phi & \text{if } \phi < \tilde{\phi}(\nu), \\
\alpha - \tilde{\phi}(\nu) & \text{if } \phi \geq \tilde{\phi}(\nu). 
\end{cases}
$$

The lemma, proved in the Appendix, formalizes two intuitive properties. First, if the planner provides the agent with higher expected utility than her reservation utility in a state $\phi_a$, then it must be optimal to do so for all $\phi > \phi_a$. Moreover, promised utility is equalized across all such states. Second, if the planner provides the agent an expected utility equal to the reservation utility in a state $\phi_b$, then it must be optimal to also do it for all $\phi < \phi_b$. Thus, $\mu_\phi(\nu)$ is linearly decreasing in $\phi$ for $\phi < \tilde{\phi}(\nu)$, and constant thereafter.

**Limited Enforcement without Moral Hazard:** In this environment, there is no IC and the planner controls the effort level directly. We prove in the online Appendix that the planner’s profit function $P(\nu)$ is strictly decreasing, strictly concave and differentiable for all interior $\nu$, i.e., $\nu > \nu$. Moreover, the first-order conditions (FOCs) of the program are necessary and sufficient. The proof follows the strategy in Thomas and Worrall (1990).

Combining the envelope condition with the FOCs with respect to $c_\phi$, $\omega_\phi$, and $\tilde{\omega}_\phi$ yields10

$$
(10) \quad \frac{1}{u'(\tilde{c}(\omega_\phi))} - \frac{1}{u'(c_\phi)} = 0,
$$

$$
(11) \quad \forall \omega_\phi > \nu: \quad u'(c_\phi) = -\frac{1}{P'(\omega_\phi)}.
$$

9 Proving that $P$ in equation (9) is strictly concave is straightforward. The strict concavity of $P$ is more difficult to establish analytically. We prove in online Appendix B.3 that $P$ is strictly concave in the case without moral hazard, while in the case with moral hazard we assume concavity and verify it numerically.

10 Note that since there is full enforcement during normal time, $c(\tilde{\omega}_\phi)$ and $P(\tilde{\omega}_\phi)$ are as in the first best (cf. equation (9)). Thus, $P'(\tilde{\omega}_\phi) = -1/u'(c(\tilde{\omega}_\phi))$. Also, equations (10)–(11) imply that the marginal cost of providing promised utility is equalized across the two endowment states, i.e., $P'(\tilde{\omega}_\phi) = P'(\omega_\phi)$. 
Combining these with the FOC with respect to $p_\phi$ yields

$$X'(p_\phi) = \beta\left((\bar{\omega}_\phi - \omega_\phi) + u'(c_\phi)(P(\bar{\omega}_\phi) - P(\omega_\phi))\right).$$

Equation (10) establishes that the planner provides the sovereign with full insurance against the endowment shock, i.e., she sets $c_\phi = c_\phi$ and equates the marginal profit loss associated with promised utilities in the two states. Equation (12) establishes that effort is set at the constrained efficient level: the marginal cost of effort equals the sum of the marginal benefits accruing to the sovereign and to the planner, respectively. Proposition 2 provides a formal characterization of the COA.

**PROPOSITION 2:** The COA subject to limited enforcement (and no moral hazard) is characterized as follows. The threshold function $\tilde{\phi}(\nu)$ is decreasing and implicitly defined by the condition

$$\nu = \alpha - \left[\int_{\tilde{\phi}(\nu)}^{\phi_{\min}} \phi dF(\phi) + \tilde{\phi}(\nu)\left[1 - F(\tilde{\phi}(\nu))\right]\right].$$

Moreover:

(i) If $\phi < \tilde{\phi}(\nu)$, the PC is binding, and the allocation $(c_\phi, p_\phi, \omega_\phi, \bar{\omega}_\phi)$ is determined by (10), (11), (12), and by (4) holding with equality. Moreover, $\omega_\phi = \nu' > \nu$.

(ii) If $\phi \geq \tilde{\phi}(\nu)$, the PC is slack, and the allocation $(c_\phi, p_\phi, \omega_\phi, \bar{\omega}_\phi)$ is given by $\omega_\phi = \nu' = \nu$, $c_\phi = c(\nu)$, $\bar{\omega}_\phi = \bar{\omega}(\nu)$, and $p_\phi = p(\nu)$, where the functions $c(\nu)$, $\bar{\omega}(\nu)$, and $p(\nu)$ are jointly determined by equations (10), (12), and

$$u(c(\nu)) - X(p(\nu)) + \beta[p(\nu)\bar{\omega}(\nu) + (1 - p(\nu))\nu] = \alpha - \tilde{\phi}(\nu).$$

The solution is history-dependent. The reform effort is strictly decreasing, and consumption and future promised utility are strictly increasing in $\nu$.

The COA under limited enforcement has standard consumption back-loading properties. Whenever the PC is slack, consumption, effort, and promised utility stay constant over time. Consumption stays constant even in the period in which the recession ends. Thus, the COA yields full consumption insurance across all states in which the PC is slack. Whenever the PC binds, the planner increases the sovereign’s consumption and promised utilities while reducing her effort in order to meet her PC. In this case, $\nu' > \nu$.

The upper panels of Figure 1 describe the dynamics of consumption and effort (panel A), and promised utilities (panel B) under a particular sequence of realizations of $\phi$. In this numerical example, the recession lasts for 13 periods.

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11 The proof of Proposition 3 (see the Appendix) encompasses the proof of Proposition 2 as a special case. For the reader’s convenience, we also provide a separate proof of Proposition 2 in the online Appendix.

12 All figures are generated by a choice of parameters discussed in online Appendix B.4. The code for the numerical solutions is available in Müller, Storesletten, and Zilibotti (2019b).
Consumption is back-loaded and effort is front-loaded. In periods 9 and 11, the PC binds and the planner must increase consumption and promised utility, and reduce effort. Consumption and effort remain constant each period in which the PC is slack.

Limited Enforcement with Moral Hazard: Next, we consider the more interesting case in which the planner cannot observe effort and is also subject to an IC. The COA is now qualitatively different: within each spell in which the PC is slack, the planner front-loads consumption and promised utility to incentivize the sovereign to provide effort. Therefore, moral hazard prevents full insurance even across the states in which the PC is slack.

Consider the IC (6). The FOC yields $X' (p_\phi) = \beta (\bar{\omega}_\phi - \omega_\phi)$, or equivalently

$$p_\phi = \Upsilon (\bar{\omega}_\phi - \omega_\phi),$$

where $\Upsilon (x) \equiv (X')^{-1}(\beta x)$. The properties of $X$ imply that $p_\phi$ is increasing in the promised utility gap $\bar{\omega}_\phi - \omega_\phi$. Equation (15) is related to (12). However, effort is now distorted because the sovereign does not internalize the benefits accruing to the planner.
The envelope condition together with the FOCs with respect to $\omega_\phi$ and $\bar{\omega}_\phi$ yield (see proof of Proposition 3 in the Appendix):

\begin{align}
(16) \quad & \frac{1}{u'(\bar{c}(\bar{\omega}_\phi))} - \frac{1}{u'(c_\phi)} = \frac{\Upsilon'(\bar{\omega}_\phi - \omega_\phi)}{\Upsilon(\bar{\omega}_\phi - \omega_\phi)} \left[ P(\bar{\omega}_\phi) - P(\omega_\phi) \right], \\
(17) \quad & \forall \omega_\phi > \nu: \quad \frac{1}{u'(c_\phi)} = -P'(\omega_\phi) + \frac{\Upsilon'(\bar{\omega}_\phi - \omega_\phi)}{1 - \Upsilon(\bar{\omega}_\phi - \omega_\phi)} \left[ P(\bar{\omega}_\phi) - P(\omega_\phi) \right], \\
(18) \quad & 0 = \theta_\phi [\omega_\phi - \nu],
\end{align}

where $\theta_\phi \geq 0$ is the Lagrange multiplier on the constraint $\omega_\phi \geq \nu$. This constraint binds in a range of low $\nu$s in which the planner would like to (but cannot) reduce promised utility below $\nu$, curtailing her ability to provide dynamic incentives. Equation (17) is then replaced by the conditions $\omega_\phi = \nu$ and $\theta_\phi > 0$.

The FOC (16) is the analogue of (10). With moral hazard, the sovereign is not fully insured against the realization of the endowment shock. By promising a higher continuation utility if the economy recovers, the planner provides dynamic incentives for effort provision. Note that the effort wedge is proportional to the elasticity $\Upsilon'/\Upsilon$.

The FOC (17) is the analogue of (11). There, the marginal utility of consumption equals the profit loss associated with an increase in promised utility. Here, the planner finds it optimal to open a wedge that is proportional to the elasticity of effort: she front-loads consumption in order to increase the sovereign’s eagerness to leave the recession.

We now proceed to a full characterization of the COA with moral hazard. As is common in this class of problems, it is difficult to prove that the program is globally concave and to establish analytically the curvature of the profit function. We therefore assume that $P(\nu)$ is strictly concave in $\nu$, and verify this property numerically.\(^{13}\)

**PROPOSITION 3:** Assume that $P$ is strictly concave. The COA subject to limited enforcement and moral hazard is characterized as follows: (i) $p_\phi = \Upsilon(\bar{\omega}_\phi - \omega_\phi)$ as in equation (15); (ii) the threshold function $\tilde{\phi}(\nu)$ is decreasing and implicitly defined by equation (13). Moreover:

(i) If $\phi < \tilde{\phi}(\nu)$, the PC is binding and the allocation $(c_\phi, \omega_\phi, \bar{\omega}_\phi, \theta_\phi)$ is determined by (16), (17), (18), and by (4) holding with equality.

(ii) If $\phi \geq \tilde{\phi}(\nu)$, the PC is slack and the allocation $(c_\phi, \omega_\phi, \bar{\omega}_\phi, \theta_\phi)$ is determined by (16), (17), (18), and

\begin{equation}
(19) \quad u(c_\phi) - X(p_\phi) + \beta [p_\phi \bar{\omega}_\phi + (1 - p_\phi) \omega_\phi] = \alpha - \tilde{\phi}(\nu).
\end{equation}

The solution is history-dependent, i.e., $c_\phi = c(\nu)$, $\omega_\phi = \omega(\nu)$, and $\bar{\omega}_\phi = \bar{\omega}(\nu)$. Promised utility falls over time, i.e., $\omega_\phi = \omega(\nu) = \nu' \leq \nu$

---

\(^{13}\)Lemma B3 in the online Appendix establishes that if $P$ is strictly concave, it must be differentiable for all interior $\nu$s and that the FOCs are necessary. Although we cannot establish in general that the FOCs are also sufficient, this turns out to be the case in all parametric examples we considered.
with \( \theta = 0 \) when \( \nu \) is sufficiently large. The function \( c(\nu) \) is strictly increasing. The effort function \( p(\nu) = \Upsilon (\bar{\omega}(\nu) - \omega(\nu)) \) is strictly increasing in a range of low \( \nu \). In this range effort declines over time when the PC is slack.

(iii) \( P(\nu) \) is strictly decreasing, and differentiable for all \( \nu > \nu \). In particular, \( P'(\nu) = -1/u'(c(\nu)) < 0 \). Moreover, \( \bar{P}(\omega) > P(\omega) \) for all \( \phi \) and \( \nu \).

Figure 2 illustrates the results of Proposition 3. All panels show policy functions for an economy in recession, conditional on a slack PC. Promised utilities \( \omega(\nu) \) and \( \bar{\omega}(\nu) \) and consumption \( c(\nu) \) are nondecreasing in \( \nu \). Panel A shows the law of motion of \( \nu \) when the recession lingers and the PC remains slack. The fact that \( \omega(\nu) \) is below the 45-degree line indicates that promised utility falls over time and converges to the lower bound \( \nu \). In the range \( [\nu, \nu^-] \) the planner is constrained by the inability to abase promised utility below \( \nu \). Panels A and C imply that, if the recession lingers and the PC is slack, consumption declines over time. Instead, the dynamics of effort are nonmonotone.

We now establish some additional dynamic properties of the COA. We start with the consumption dynamics. Combining (17) with the envelope condition \( P'(\omega) = -1/u'(c(\omega)) \) for \( \omega > \nu \) and denoting \( \nu' = \omega \) and \( \bar{\nu'} = \bar{\omega} \), yields

\[
\frac{1}{u'(c(\omega))} - \frac{1}{u'(c(\nu))} = \frac{\Upsilon (\bar{\nu'} - \nu')}{1 - \Upsilon (\bar{\nu'} - \nu')} \left( \bar{P}(\bar{\nu'}) - P(\nu') \right).
\]

We label equation (20) a Conditional Euler Equation (CEE). The CEE describes the optimal consumption dynamics for states such that the PC does not bind next period. The right-hand side of (20) is positive. Thus, consumption decreases over time as long as the economy remains in recession and the PC is slack, echoing the optimal consumption dynamics in Hopenhayn and Nicolini (1997).\textsuperscript{15}

Combining the CEE (20) with the Euler equation describing the consumption dynamics upon recovery (16), yields a conditional version of the so-called inverse Euler equation (CIEE):

\[
\frac{1}{u'(c(\omega))} = \Upsilon (\bar{\nu'} - \nu') \frac{1}{u'(c(\bar{\nu}'))} + (1 - \Upsilon (\bar{\nu'} - \nu')) \frac{1}{u'(c(\nu'))}.
\]

The CIEE equates the inverse marginal utility in the current period with the next period’s expected inverse marginal utility conditional on the PC being slack. The key difference relative to the standard inverse Euler equation in the dynamic contract literature (cf. Rogerson 1985) is that our CIEE holds true only in states where the PC is slack. If there were no enforcement problems, then our CIEE would boil down to a standard inverse Euler equation.

\textsuperscript{14} Note that, as \( \nu \) falls, the probability that the PC binds increases. At \( \nu \) the PC binds almost surely in the next period, and the sovereign receives the realized reservation utility \( (\alpha - \phi) \) if the economy remains in recession.

\textsuperscript{15} The right-hand side of (20) is positive since \( \Upsilon > 0 \) and \( \bar{P}(\bar{\nu'}) > P(\nu') \) (see part (iii) of Proposition 3). This implies that the marginal utility of consumption must be rising over time as \( \nu \) falls. This property differs from some other papers in the repeated moral hazard literature (e.g., Phelan and Townsend 1991) where the profit function can be nonmonotone in promised utility. In our model, the planner would never be better off by delivering more than the promised utility \( \nu \) (as long as \( \nu \) is in the feasible set \( \nu \geq \bar{\nu} \)), since she can reduce current consumption without affecting the effort choice.
Next, we turn to the effort dynamics. One might expect, in analogy with the consumption dynamics, that the planner would back-load effort as long as the PC is slack. However, such conjecture would be incorrect. Effort is indeed decreasing in promised utility (hence, is back-loaded) when \( \nu \) is high. \(^{16}\) However, effort turns out to be increasing in promised utility (hence, is front-loaded) in a region of low \( \nu \). In such a region, as \( \nu \) declines along the equilibrium path (panel A of Figure 2) so does effort (panel D of Figure 2). The crux of this result is the endogenous lower bound to promised utility. When \( \nu \leq \nu^- \), the constraint \( \omega_{\phi} \geq \nu \) becomes binding, forcing the planner to set \( \omega_{\phi} = \nu \). In contrast, \( \omega_{\phi} \) continues to decrease as \( \nu \) falls because there is perfect enforcement in normal time. Therefore, in this region of low promised utility, \( p_{\phi}(\nu) = \Upsilon(\omega_{\phi}(\nu) - \nu) \), which in turn implies that \( p_{\phi} \) is increasing in \( \nu \). \(^{17}\) Thus, effort declines with \( \nu \) as long as the recession lingers and the PC does not bind. Note that, by continuity, effort also declines as \( \nu \) falls in a contiguous range of \( \nu \) above \( \nu^- \).

Panels C and D of Figure 2 illustrate simulated dynamics of consumption, promised utilities, and effort conditional on the maximum cost realization \( \phi_{\max} \). The model parameterization is consistent with the simulation in Figure 1 (see footnote 12).

\(^{16}\) Lemma B2 in the online Appendix shows that effort is decreasing in promised utility when \( \nu \) is large. This result is subject to a sufficient condition, namely that \( \lim_{p \to p^-} X'(\nu) > 0 \). However, numerical analysis suggests that this is true more generally.

\(^{17}\) More formally, since both \( \omega_{\phi}(\nu) \) and \( \Upsilon \) are increasing functions, \( p_{\phi}(\nu) \) is increasing in \( \nu \).
When \( \nu \) becomes sufficiently low (i.e., in periods 7, 8, and 9), the reform effort starts falling. Note that consumption increases when the recession ends, implying that the endowment risk is not fully insured.

In conclusion, the combination of limited enforcement and moral hazard yields effort dynamics that are qualitatively different from models with only one friction. In our model, effort is hump-shaped over time, even when the PC remains slack. In contrast, effort is monotone increasing in many pure moral hazard models and weakly decreasing in pure limited enforcement models.

The dynamics of consumption echo the typical properties of models with dynamic moral hazard as long as the PC is slack, namely the planner curtails consumption in order to extract higher effort over time. However, the planner periodically increases consumption and promised utility whenever the PC is binding. This averts the immiseration that would arise in a world of perfect enforcement.

C. Primal Formulation

We have characterized the COA by solving a dual planning problem, i.e., maximizing profits subject to a promised-utility constraint. We can alternatively solve a primal problem where the planner maximizes discounted utility subject to a promised-expected-profit constraint. In this section, we characterize the primal program because it is directly comparable with the market equilibrium studied below. Readers who are not interested in the details of the technical analysis can skip this section.

Let \( \mu_{pl}^\phi(\pi) \) and \( \mu_{pl}^{\pi}(\pi) \) denote the sovereign’s discounted utility before and after the realization of \( \phi \), respectively. We can write the primal problem as

\[
\mu_{pl}^\phi(\pi) = \int_N \mu_{pl}^{\pi}(\pi) \, dF(\phi)
\]

\[
= \int_N \max_{c(\phi), p(\phi), \pi(\phi), \bar{\pi}(\phi)} \left\{ u(c(\phi)) - X(p(\phi)) + \beta \left[ p(\phi) \bar{\mu}_{pl}(\bar{\pi}(\phi)) + (1 - p(\phi)) \mu_{pl}(\pi(\phi)) \right] \right\} dF(\phi),
\]

where \( \bar{\mu}_{pl}(\bar{\pi}) = u(\bar{w} - (1 - \beta)\bar{\pi})/(1 - \beta) \), subject to the promised-profit constraint

\[
\pi = \int_N b(\phi) \, dF(\phi),
\]

having defined \( b(\phi) = \bar{w} - c(\phi) + \beta \left[ p(\phi) \bar{\pi}(\phi) + (1 - p(\phi)) \bar{\pi}(\phi) \right] \) as the planner’s discounted profit after the realization of \( \phi \). The problem is subject to a set of PCs and ICs

\[
u(\phi) - X(p) + \beta \left[ p(\phi) \bar{\mu}_{pl}(\bar{\pi}(\phi)) + (1 - p(\phi)) \mu_{pl}(\pi(\phi)) \right] \geq \alpha - \phi, \quad \phi \in N,
\]

\[
p(\phi) = \arg \max_{p \in [0, 1]} -X(p) + \beta \left[ p \bar{\mu}_{pl}(\bar{\pi}(\phi)) + (1 - p) \mu_{pl}(\pi(\phi)) \right],
\]
and to the boundary conditions $c_\phi \in [0, \hat{c}]$, $\pi_\phi' \in [\bar{\pi}, \bar{\pi}]$, and $\pi, \pi_\phi' \in [\bar{\pi}, \pi_{\max}]$, where $\pi = (\hat{c} - \hat{w})/(1 - \beta)$ and $\bar{\pi} = \hat{w}/(1 - \beta)$ are generous bounds that will never bind in equilibrium and $\pi_{\max}$ satisfies $\mu_{pl}(\pi_{\max}) = \alpha - E[\phi]$.

The program (21) may in general admit multiple fixed points for $\mu_{pl}$. However, we can characterize the unique fixed point associated with the COA by exploiting duality properties. First, for the primal and the dual to be equivalent, $\pi = P(\nu)$ and $\nu = \mu_{pl}(\pi)$. Thus, $\mu_{pl} = P^{-1}$. Since $P$ is strictly decreasing and strictly concave, so must be $\mu_{pl}$. Second, the two solutions must feature the same threshold function, i.e., $\Phi_{pl}(\pi) = \tilde{\phi}(P^{-1}(\pi))$.

A complete characterization of the primal COA is deferred to Proposition A1 in the Appendix. Here, we highlight the key properties that will be useful to study the decentralization of the COA. First, the value function of the primal COA satisfies

$$\mu_{pl}(\pi) = \left[1 - F(\Phi_{pl}(\pi))\right](\alpha - \Phi_{pl}(\pi)) + \int_{\phi_{\max}}^{\Phi_{pl}(\pi)}(\alpha - \phi) dF(\phi),$$

where $\pi \in [\underline{\pi}, P(\alpha - E[\phi])]$ and $\Phi_{pl}(\pi) \equiv \tilde{\phi}(P^{-1}(\pi))$. As in the dual, the agent perceives the utility $\alpha - \phi$ if the PC binds and $\alpha - \tilde{\phi}(\nu)$ if the PC is slack, where $\nu = P^{-1}(\pi)$. Second, effort must be the same as in the dual, implying that $p = \Psi_{pl}(\pi', \bar{\pi}') \equiv \gamma(\tilde{\mu}_{pl}(\bar{\pi}') - \mu_{pl}(\pi'))$. Third, let $b_{\phi}(\pi)$ denote that optimal choice of $b_{\phi}$ in the COA. In Proposition A1, we prove that in the primal representation of the COA,

$$b_{\phi}(\pi) = \begin{cases} b_{pl}(\pi) = (W_{pl})^{-1}(\alpha - \Phi_{pl}(\pi)) & \text{if } \phi \geq \Phi_{pl}(\pi) \\ \hat{b}_{pl}(\phi) = (W_{pl})^{-1}(\alpha - \phi) & \text{if } \phi < \Phi_{pl}(\pi), \end{cases}$$

where

$$W_{pl}(x) \equiv \max_{\pi \in [\bar{\pi}, P(\alpha - E[\phi])]} \left\{ u\left(\hat{w} - x + \beta\left[\Psi_{pl}(\pi', \bar{\pi}')\bar{\pi}' + (1 - \Psi_{pl}(\pi', \bar{\pi}'))\pi'\right]\right) \\ - X(\Psi_{pl}(\pi', \bar{\pi}')) \\ + \beta\left[\Psi_{pl}(\pi', \bar{\pi}')\tilde{\mu}_{pl}(\bar{\pi}') + (1 - \Psi_{pl}(\pi', \bar{\pi}'))\mu_{pl}(\bar{\pi}')\right]\right\}$$

is the agent’s discounted utility. In particular, $W_{pl}(b_{\phi}(\pi))$ yields the continuation utility after the realization of $\phi$, conditional on the optimal choice of $b_{\phi}(\pi)$ given by (25). If the PC is slack, the principal sets $b_{\phi} = b_{pl}(\pi)$ independently of $\phi$. In this case, consumption and continuation utility are also independent of $\phi$, and $W_{pl}(b_{pl}(\pi)) = \alpha - \Phi_{pl}(\pi)$. If, instead, the PC binds, then the principal sets $b_{\phi} = \hat{b}_{pl}(\phi)$, which ensures that the agent’s PC holds with equality. In this case, the agent’s continuation utility is $W_{pl}(\hat{b}_{pl}(\phi)) = \alpha - \phi$.

---

Note that the optimal choice of consumption and future promised utility are also identical across the primal and the dual problem. We defer their characterization to the formal statement of the proposition in the Appendix.
Note that \( \pi = \left[ 1 - F\left( \Phi^{pl}(\pi) \right) \right] b^{pl}(\pi) + \int_{\phi_{\text{min}}}^{\Phi^{pl}(\pi)} b^{pl}(\phi) dF(\phi) \). Namely, the promised expected profit \( \pi \) equals the expected transfer she receives from the agent. Note also that inverting this expression allows us to define \( b^{pl}(\pi) \) recursively:

\[
(27) \\
\quad b^{pl}(\pi) = \frac{\pi - \int_{\phi_{\text{min}}}^{\Phi^{pl}(\pi)} b^{pl}\left( \left( \Phi^{pl} \right)^{-1}(\phi) \right) dF(\phi)}{1 - F\left( \Phi^{pl}(\pi) \right)}.
\]

It is easy to show that (27) defines a unique function \( b^{pl}(\pi) \) and that \( b^{pl} \) is increasing.

The primal COA admits the following interpretation. In the initial period, before the state \( \phi \) is realized, the risk-neutral principal is endowed with a claim \( b = b^{pl}(\pi) \) on the sovereign whose expected repayment is \( \pi \).\(^{19}\) Think of \( b \) as the face value of a “defaultable debt.” After \( \phi \) is realized, the principal receives the face value \( b \) in all states \( \phi \) in which the PC is slack. If the PC binds, she takes a haircut, i.e., she receives a lower payment \( \hat{b}^{pl}(\phi) < b \). The planner then adjusts optimally the issuance of new claims. The case without moral hazard is especially intuitive. If the PC is slack, the planner keeps the debt constant at its initial level \( (b = b') \). If the PC binds, she reduces the future obligation so as to keep the sovereign in the contract. Under moral hazard, \( b \) (and, hence, the promised profit) changes over time even when the PC is slack in order to provide the optimal dynamic incentives for effort provision. This interpretation is useful to understand the market decentralization to which we now turn.

### III. Decentralization

In this section, we show that the COA can be decentralized by a market allocation where the sovereign issues one-period defaultable bonds held by risk-neutral international creditors. In the market economy, the planner is replaced by a syndicate of international investors (the *creditors*) who can borrow and lend at the gross risk-free interest rate \( R \).

**State-Contingent Securities:** We assume that the sovereign can issue two one-period securities. The first is a noncontingent bond, like in Eaton and Gersovitz (1981), which returns one unit of good in all states. However, different from Eaton and Gersovitz (1981), the bond is defaultable and renegotiable according to the protocol discussed below. The second security is a state-contingent bond that yields a return only in the normal state, i.e., a GDP-linked bond. The GDP-linked bond is not subject to any risk of renegotiation, because there is no default in the normal state. In this environment, markets are incomplete for two reasons. First, there exists no market for securities offering a return contingent on the effort level. Second, there is no market to insure explicitly against the realization of \( \phi \).

The market structure with a noncontingent bond and a GDP-linked bond is equivalent to one in which there exist two state-contingent securities, which we label *recession-contingent debt* (denoted by \( b \)) and *recovery-contingent debt* (denoted

\(^{19}\)Note that, since \( b^{pl}(\pi) \) is a continuous and monotone increasing function, we can write the inverse function \( \pi = \pi^{pl}(b^{pl}) \) and define the problem for an initial level of \( b^{pl} \) instead of an initial promised profit.
by \( \tilde{b} \) with prices \( Q(b, \tilde{b}) \) and \( \tilde{Q}(b, \tilde{b}) \), respectively.\(^{20}\) We carry out the formal discussion with this latter notation because it is more standard and convenient. At the beginning of each recession period, the sovereign observes the realization of the default cost \( \phi \) and decides whether to honor the recession-contingent debt that reaches maturity, or to announce the intention to default. This announcement triggers a renegotiation process.

Since debt is honored in normal time, no arbitrage implies that \( \tilde{Q} = pR^{-1} \). If the country could commit to repay its debt also in recession, the bond price would be \( Q = (1 - p)R^{-1} \). However, due to the risk of renegotiation, recession-contingent debt sells at a discount, \( Q \leq (1 - p)R^{-1} \).

**Renegotiation:** We now describe the renegotiation protocol. If the sovereign announces default, the syndicate of creditors can offer a take-it-or-leave-it haircut that we assume to be binding for all creditors.\(^ {21}\) By accepting this offer, the sovereign averts the default cost. In equilibrium, a haircut is offered only if the default threat is credible, i.e., if the realization of \( \phi \) is sufficiently low to make the sovereign prefer default to full repayment.\(^ {22}\) Note that the creditors have, ex post, all the bargaining power, and their offer makes the sovereign indifferent between an outright default and the proposed haircut.

**Timing:** The timing of a debt crisis can be summarized as follows. The sovereign enters the period with the pledged debt \( b \), observes the realization \( \phi \), and then decides whether to threaten default on all its debt. If the threat is credible, the creditors offer a haircut \( \hat{b} \leq b \). Next, the sovereign decides whether to accept or decline this offer. Finally, the sovereign issues new debt subject to the period budget constraint \( c = \tilde{Q}(b', \tilde{b}')b' + Q(b', \tilde{b}')b' + w - \hat{b} \).

To facilitate comparison with the COA we start by setting the postdefault outside option exogenously equal to \( \alpha \). Thus, in the out-of-equilibrium event that the sovereign declines the offered haircut, the default cost \( \phi \) is triggered, debt is canceled, and realized utility is \( \alpha - \phi \). We will later endogenize \( \alpha \) by assuming that the sovereign can subsequently resume access to financial markets.

### A. Market Equilibrium

We focus on market equilibria where agents condition their strategies on payoff-relevant state variables, ruling out reputational mechanisms. We view this assumption as realistic in the context of sovereign debt since it is generally difficult for creditors to commit to punishment strategies, especially when new lenders can enter and make separate deals with the sovereign. In our environment, the payoff-relevant state variables are \( b \), \( w \), and \( \phi \). For technical reasons, we impose that debt is

\(^{20}\) Denote by \( b_n \) and \( b_s \) the noncontingent and state-contingent security, respectively. Then, \( b_n = b \) and \( b_s = \tilde{b} - b \). Moreover, the prices of these bonds are given by \( Q_n(b_n, b_s) = Q(b, \tilde{b}) + \tilde{Q}(b, \tilde{b}) \), and \( Q_s(b_n, b_s) = Q(b, \tilde{b}) \).

\(^{21}\) In our environment there would be no reason for a subset of creditors to deviate and seek a better deal. In Section IV, we show that ruling out renegotiation altogether reduces welfare, ex ante. Therefore, our theory emphasizes the value of making haircut agreements binding for all creditors.

\(^{22}\) By assumption, the sovereign always has the option to simply honor the debt contract. Thus, the creditors’ take-it-or-leave-it offer cannot demand a repayment larger than the face value of outstanding debt.
bounded, \( b \in [\hat{b}, \bar{b}] \) where \( \bar{b} = \hat{w} / (1 - R^{-1}) \) is the natural borrowing constraint in normal time and \( \bar{b} > -\infty \) is such that for \( b = \bar{b} \) it is never optimal to default. In equilibrium, these bounds never bind.

It is natural to focus on Markov-perfect equilibria. For didactical reasons, we first define a market equilibrium under the assumption that, in case of outright default, the game ends and the sovereign receives the exogenous utility \( \alpha - \phi \). Strictly speaking, this is not a Markov-perfect equilibrium, as different strategies apply on and off the equilibrium path. We will later endogenize \( \alpha \) by setting it equal to the value of the reversion to the market equilibrium without debt. In that case, we will refer to the equilibrium as a Markov-perfect equilibrium.

**DEFINITION 1:** A market equilibrium is a set of value functions \( \{V, W\} \), a threshold renegotiation function \( \Phi \), a set of equilibrium debt price functions \( \{Q, \bar{Q}\} \), and a set of optimal decision rules \( \{B, B', \bar{B}, C, \Psi\} \) such that, given an outside option \( \alpha \) and conditional on the state vector \( (b, \phi) \in [\hat{b}, \bar{b}] \times [\phi_{\min}, \phi_{\max}] \), the sovereign maximizes utility, the creditors maximize profits, and markets clear. More formally:

- **The value function** \( V \) satisfies
  \[
  V(b, \phi) = \max \{W(b), \alpha - \phi\},
  \]
  where \( W(b) \) is the value function conditional on the debt level \( b \) being honored,

- **The recovery- and recession-contingent debt price functions** satisfy the arbitrage conditions:
  \[
  \bar{Q}(b', \bar{b}')\bar{b}' = \Psi(b', \bar{b}')R^{-1}\bar{b}',
  \]
  \[
  Q(b', \bar{b}')b' = \left[1 - \Psi(b', \bar{b}')\right]R^{-1}\Pi(b'),
  \]
  where \( \Pi(b') \) is the expected repayment of the recession-contingent bond conditional on next period being a recession,

- **The threshold renegotiation function** \( \Phi \) satisfies
  \[
  \Phi(b) = \alpha - W(b).
  \]
and where \( \hat{b}(\phi) = \Phi^{-1}(\phi) \) is the new post-renegotiation debt after a realization \( \phi \).

- The set of optimal decision rules comprises

  (i) a take-it-or-leave-it debt renegotiation offer:

  \[
  \mathcal{B}(b, \phi) = \begin{cases} 
  \hat{b}(\phi) & \text{if } \phi \leq \Phi(b) \\
  b & \text{if } \phi > \Phi(b) 
  \end{cases}
  \]

  (ii) an optimal debt accumulation and an associated consumption decision rule:

  \[
  \begin{align*}
  (34) & \quad \langle B(\mathcal{B}(b, \phi)), B(B(b, \phi)) \rangle \\
  & = \arg \max_{(b', b') \in [b, \bar{b}]^2} u(\hat{Q}(b', \bar{b'})b' + Q(b', \bar{b'})b' + w - B(b, \phi)) + Z(b', \bar{b'}) \\
  (35) & \quad C(\mathcal{B}(b, \phi)) = \hat{Q}(B(\mathcal{B}(b, \phi)), B(B(b, \phi)))B(B(b, \phi)) \\
  & \quad + Q(B(\mathcal{B}(b, \phi)), B(B(b, \phi)))B(B(b, \phi)) + w - B(b, \phi);
  \end{align*}
  \]

  and

  (iii) an optimal effort decision rule:

  \[
  \begin{align*}
  (36) & \quad \Psi(b', \bar{b'}) = \arg \max_{p \in [p, \bar{p}]} -X(p) + \beta(p \tilde{\mu}(\bar{b'}) + (1 - p)\mu(b')) \\
  \end{align*}
  \]

  - The equilibrium law of motion of debt is \( \langle b', \bar{b'} \rangle = \langle B(\mathcal{B}(b, \phi)), B(B(b, \phi)) \rangle \).
  
  - The probability that the recession ends is \( p = \Psi(b', \bar{b'}) \).

Equation (28) implies that there is renegotiation if and only if \( \phi < \Phi(b) \). Since, ex post, creditors have all the bargaining power, the discounted utility accruing to the sovereign equals the value that she would get under outright default. Thus,

\[
V(b, \phi) = W(\mathcal{B}(b, \phi)) = \begin{cases} 
  W(b) & \text{if } b \leq \hat{b}(\phi) \\
  \alpha - \phi & \text{if } b > \hat{b}(\phi) 
  \end{cases}
\]

Consider, next, the equilibrium price functions. Since creditors are risk neutral, the expected rate of return on each security must equal the risk-free rate of return. Then, the arbitrage conditions (31) and (32) ensure market clearing in the security markets and pin down the equilibrium price of both securities. The function \( \Pi(b) \) defined in equation (33) yields the expected value of the outstanding debt \( b \) conditional on the endowment state being a recession but before the realization of \( \phi \). The obligation \( b \) is honored with probability \( 1 - F(\Phi(b)) \), where \( \Phi(b) \) denotes the largest realization of \( \phi \) such that the sovereign can credibly threaten to default. With probability \( F(\Phi(b)) \), debt is renegotiated to a level that depends on \( \phi \) denoted by
$\hat{b}(\phi)$. The haircut $\hat{b}(\phi)$ keeps the sovereign indifferent between accepting the creditors’ offer and defaulting. This implies the following indifference condition,

$W(\hat{b}(\phi)) = \alpha - \phi.$

Consider, finally, the set of decision rules. Equations (34)–(35) yield the optimal consumption-saving decisions while equation (36) yields the optimal reform effort. The effort depends on $b'$ and $\bar{b}'$, since it is chosen after the new securities are issued. Note also that since $F'(\Phi(\bar{b}')) = 1$ for $b' \geq (\Phi)^{-1}(\phi_{\max})$, the bond price function (33) implies that debt exceeding this level will not raise any additional debt revenue. Thus, it is optimal to choose $b' \leq (\Phi)^{-1}(\phi_{\max})$.

B. Decentralization through Renegotiable One-Period Debt

We now establish a key result of the paper, namely, that there exists a unique market equilibrium with one-period renegotiable bonds satisfying Definition 1 and that this equilibrium decentralizes the COA.

We start by noting the analogy between $\pi$ in the primal program and the equilibrium function $\Pi(b)$ in equation (33). Both define the expected profit accruing to the principal or to the creditors. In particular, one can invert the equilibrium function $\Pi$ and define $b(\pi)$ like $b_{pl}(\pi)$ in equation (27), up to replacing $\Phi_{pl}$ by the equilibrium function $\Phi$. The decentralization result will be stated under the condition that $\pi = \Pi(b)$ (or, identically, that $b = b(\pi)$), namely, the sovereign has the same initial obligation in the COA and in the market equilibrium.

For technical reasons, we impose the following additional constraint to (29):

(LSS) \hspace{1cm} \Pi(b') \leq \bar{b}.'

This constraint allows us to prove formally (as a sufficient condition) that the program describing the market equilibrium is a contraction mapping. We label this constraint limited short selling (LSS) because it is equivalent to a limit on the ability of the sovereign to short sell the GDP-linked bond.\textsuperscript{23} The LSS constraint has an intuitive interpretation: debt issuance must be such that the expected debt repayment is larger if the economy recovers than if it remains in recession, a natural feature of the allocation given the sovereign’s desire to smooth consumption. The LSS constraint is never binding in equilibrium. Under this condition, we can prove that the market equilibrium is unique and decentralizes the COA.

PROPOSITION 4: (A) The market equilibrium subject to the LSS constraint exists and is unique. (B) This equilibrium decentralizes the COA of Proposition A1 conditional on the same outside option $\alpha$.

\textsuperscript{23}To see this, recall that in the market structure with a noncontingent bond and a GDP-linked bond, $b_{s}' = b'$ and $b_{n}' = b' - b$. It follows that the LSS constraint $\Pi(b') \leq b'$ is equivalent to a limit on short selling of the state-contingent claim, namely $b_{s} \geq \Pi(b_{s}) - b_{n}$. Note that the LSS constraint is weaker than a no-short-selling constraint ($b_{s} \geq 0$) because $\Pi(b_{s}) - b_{n} \leq 0$. 

We sketch here the strategy of the proof of existence and uniqueness. The complete proof is in the Appendix. We establish that there exists a unique value function $W$ and an associated equilibrium debt threshold function $\hat{b}$ satisfying the maximization

\[(29)\]

and the market clearing conditions. In particular, $\hat{b}$ and $W$ must satisfy the indifference condition

\[(37)\]

for all $\phi \in \mathcal{N}$.

We proceed in two steps. First, we define an arbitrary debt threshold function $\delta(\phi)$. We replace the equilibrium debt repayment function $\Pi(b)$ in $(33)$ with the exogenous debt repayment function $\Pi_\delta(b) = \int_{\mathcal{N}} \min\{b, \delta(\phi)\} dF(\phi)$. Then, we show by way of a contraction mapping argument that for any $\delta$ and associated $\Pi_\delta$ there exists a unique value function $W_\delta$ (with associated debt price functions) consistent with the agents’ optimizing behavior and market clearing. Note that equation $(37)$ is not necessarily satisfied for an arbitrary $\delta$, and in general, $\delta(\phi) \neq W_\delta^{-1}(\alpha - \phi)$.

Second, we prove that the mapping from, say, $\delta_n(\phi)$ to an “updated” debt limit function $\delta_{n+1}(\phi) \equiv W_\delta^{-1}(\alpha - \phi)$ is a contraction mapping. Therefore, the iteration converges to a unique fixed point $\hat{b}(\phi) = \lim_{n \to \infty} \delta_n(\phi)$ satisfying equation $(37)$, i.e., $W_\delta(\hat{b}(\phi)) = \alpha - \phi$. This is the equilibrium value function, namely, $W = W_\delta$.

The two contraction mapping arguments together imply that the equilibrium functions $\hat{b}$ and $W$ exist and are unique.24 This proof strategy may also be of independent interest as a general approach for proving uniqueness of equilibrium in infinite-horizon sovereign debt models.25

Once we have established the existence and uniqueness of the market equilibrium, we show that it decentralizes the COA (Part B of Proposition 4). To this end, we show that the market equilibrium satisfies the conditions of the primal representation of the COA, in particular $W = W^p$ and $\Phi(b) = \Phi^p(\pi)$ for $\pi = \Pi(b)$ (see Proposition A1 in the Appendix). The strategy for establishing equivalence between the two programs is similar to Aguiar et al. (2019).

The decentralization hinges on the equilibrium price functions $Q$ and $\bar{Q}$. The key features are that (i) there exist two GDP-linked bonds; (ii) the recession-contingent debt is renegotiable; (iii) renegotiation entails no cost; and (iv) the renegotiation protocol involves full ex post bargaining power for the creditors. When selling one-period bonds at the prices $Q$ and $\bar{Q}$, the sovereign implicitly offers creditors an expected future profit that takes into account the probability of renegotiation. This is equivalent to the profit promised by the social planner in the primal problem. There are two noteworthy features. First, although there is a continuum of states of nature, two securities are sufficient to decentralize the COA. This is due to the state-contingency embedded in the renegotiable bonds. Second, the market equilibrium provides efficient dynamic incentives.

Finally, we briefly return to the discussion about one- versus two-sided lack of commitment in the planning problem of Section IIB. In footnote 7 we argued that commitment on behalf of the principal is not an issue as long as $\nu$ is sufficiently low. In the market equilibrium, this amounts to assuming that $b \geq 0$. In this case, recession debt will always remain positive along the equilibrium path. Since this claim

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24 We show that the mapping maps arbitrary debt limits into debt limits that are bounded, continuous, and non-decreasing. The contraction mapping theorem guarantees that there is a unique debt limit and that this debt limit is also bounded, continuous, and non-decreasing.

25 We thank an anonymous referee for suggesting this proof strategy.
has a nonnegative value, the creditors would never unilaterally walk away of existing contracts, nor would the principal have a commitment problem if she promised the corresponding utility in the planning program.

C. Endogenous Outside Option

Proposition 4 is stated conditional on an exogenous outside option $\alpha$. In this section, we endogenize $\alpha$. In a sovereign debt setting, it is natural to focus on an environment in which the sovereign can resume participation in financial markets after defaulting. For simplicity, we assume that access to new borrowing is immediate. This has a natural counterpart in the planning problem, namely, if the sovereign leaves the optimal contract, she reverts to the market equilibrium with zero debt after suffering the punishment $\phi$.

With some abuse of notation, let $W(b; \alpha)$ denote the value function conditional on honoring debt $b$ in an economy with outside option $\alpha$. Similarly, let $W_{pl}(b; \alpha)$ denote the analogue concept in the primal planning allocation. Because $W$ is monotone decreasing in $\alpha$, there exists a unique $\alpha_{W}$ satisfying the fixed point $\alpha_{W} = W(0; \alpha_{W})$. Intuitively, $W(b; \alpha_{W})$ is the market (Markov-perfect) equilibrium when (out of equilibrium) outright default triggers the payment of the cost $\phi$ and the reversion to a market equilibrium with zero debt. The next proposition establishes that if the planner and the market can inflict the same punishment, namely, $\phi$ and the reversion to a market equilibrium with zero debt, then the planner cannot improve upon the Markov-perfect equilibrium.

**Proposition 5:** Consider a planning allocation and a market equilibrium such that, if the sovereign defaults, her continuation utility equals (in both cases) $\alpha_{W} - \phi$, where $\alpha_{W}$ is the solution to the fixed point $\alpha_{W} = W(0; \alpha_{W})$. Then, $W(b; \alpha_{W}) = W_{pl}(b; \alpha_{W})$ and $\mu(b; \alpha_{W}) = \mu_{pl}(\Pi(b); \alpha_{W})$. Namely, the Markov-perfect market equilibrium decentralizes the COA conditional on the threat of reversion to a market equilibrium with zero debt.

Proposition 5 is established under the assumption that neither the planner nor the market can inflict more severe punishments than the reversion to the Markov-perfect equilibrium. One could sustain more efficient subgame perfect equilibria if one could discipline behavior with threats that are subgame perfect but not necessarily Markov perfect (e.g., some forms of temporary market exclusions). Interestingly, such allocations could still be decentralized by a market equilibrium with one-period renegotiable bonds, similar to the equilibrium in Definition 1. Non-Markov equilibria require that the market can coordinate expectations on a sequence of default and effort policies associated with a worse equilibrium. In reality, it may be difficult to achieve such coordination when there exists a multiplicity of anonymous market institutions to which the sovereign can turn after default.

D. Debt Overhang and Debt Dynamics

The market equilibrium inherits the same properties as the COA with moral hazard. A binding PC in the planning problem corresponds to an episode of sovereign
debt renegotiation in the equilibrium. Thus, as long as the recession continues and debt is not renegotiated, consumption falls. When debt is renegotiated down, consumption increases discretely. The debt dynamics mirror the dynamics of promised utility in the dual representation of the COA. A fall in promised utility corresponds to an increase of sovereign debt. In the COA with moral hazard in Section IIB, $\nu$ decreases over time during a recession unless the PC binds and the promised utilities $\omega(\nu)$ and $\overline{\omega}(\nu)$ are nondecreasing functions (where, recall, $\nu' = \omega(\nu)$ if the recession continues and the PC is slack). Correspondingly, as long as debt is honored and the recession continues, both recession- and recovery-contingent debt are increasing over time.

Panel A of Figure 3 shows the equilibrium policy functions for recession- and recovery-contingent debt $B(b)$ and $\overline{B}(b)$ (solid lines) conditional on no renegotiation and on the recession lingering. Recession-contingent debt converges to $b_{\text{max}}$, which corresponds to the lower bound on promised utility $\nu$ discussed in Section IIB and displayed in Figure 2. At this level, debt is renegotiated with certainty if the recession continues, and issuing more debt would not increase the expected repayment in recession. The figure also shows the level of debt $b^*$ corresponding to $\nu^*$ in Figure 2. In the range $b > b^*$ the sovereign would like to issue recession-contingent debt above $b_{\text{max}}$ but is constrained to issue $b' = b_{\text{max}}$. However, she is not subject to any constraints when issuing recovery-contingent debt, so $\overline{b}'$ increases in $b$ in this range.

Panel B of Figure 3 shows the equilibrium effort as a function of $b$ (solid line). This corresponds to panel D in Figure 2: it is increasing at low debt levels and falling at high debt levels. Intuitively, when debt is low, a larger debt strengthens the desire for the sovereign to escape recession (this force is also present in the first-best allocation of Proposition 1 where effort is decreasing in promised utility). However, as debt increases, the probability that debt is fully honored in recession falls. At very high debt levels, the lion’s share of the returns to the effort investment accrues to creditors making moral hazard rampant. In this region, a debt overhang problem arises, reminiscent of Krugman (1988). In our model debt overhang is not a symptom of market irrationality. To the opposite, it is an equilibrium outcome: a long recession may lead the sovereign to rationally choose to issue debt in the overhang region and creditors to rationally buy it. Creditors are willing to buy recession-contingent debt from a highly indebted country in the hope of obtaining favorable terms in the renegotiation process.

E. Alternative Decentralizations

An alternative decentralization of the COA follows Alvarez and Jermann (2000)—henceforth, AJ—which shows that the COA of a dynamic principal-agent model with enforcement constraints can be attained through a full set of Arrow-Debreu securities subject to appropriate borrowing constraints. In our economy, this requires markets for a continuum of securities paying off in recession, one asset for each $\phi \in \mathcal{N}$, plus one recovery-contingent bond. In this section, we show that the

26 In the absence of moral hazard (e.g., if effort were contractible), consumption and both types of debt would remain constant over time unless there is renegotiation.
AJ decentralization attains the same allocation as our decentralization through two renegotiable securities.

The proof of Proposition 4 hints at this equivalence. There, the idea is to propose an exogenous repayment schedule conditional on $\phi$, denoted by $\hat{b}(\phi)$, and then to show that there exists a unique schedule that satisfies the equilibrium conditions. Such a repayment schedule can be interpreted as the set of borrowing constraints that are necessary for the AJ equilibrium to attain efficiency. While AJ requires explicit trade in a large set of markets, our model achieves the same allocation with two defaultable assets without imposing any explicit borrowing constraint.

To illustrate the result, consider an economy without moral hazard, which is the environment in the original AJ model. Suppose that the sovereign can issue securities $b_{AJ,\phi}$ that are claims to output in the following period if the recession lingers and state $\phi$ is realized. These securities are nonrenegotiable, and ex post the sovereign can either deliver the payment $b_{AJ,\phi}$ or default and pay the penalty $\phi$. Under perfect enforcement, the security $b_{AJ,\phi}$ sells at a price $Q_{AJ,\phi} = (1 - p) f(\phi) R^{-1}$. To ensure that the sovereign has an incentive to repay in all states, AJ imposes some borrowing constraints. In our model, these constraints are, for all $\phi$, $b_{AJ,\phi} \leq \hat{b}(\phi)$ where $\hat{b}(\phi) = \Phi^{-1}(\phi)$. In the online Appendix we prove that the AJ equilibrium yields an allocation that is equivalent to our decentralized equilibrium under the assumption that $b_{AJ,\phi} = \hat{b}(\phi)$ for all $\phi \leq \Phi(B(b))$ and $b_{AJ,\phi} = B(b)$ for all $\phi > \Phi(B(b))$, where $B$ is the equilibrium debt function and $b$ is the payment owed in the current period. The crux of the proof is to establish that the revenue obtained from issuing recession-contingent debt in our market equilibrium is identical to that raised by issuing the full set of Arrow-Debreu securities in the AJ economy.

Proposition B1 in the online Appendix establishes more formally that an AJ equilibrium with borrowing constraints $b_{AJ,\phi} \leq \hat{b}(\phi)$ sustains the COA even when the effort choice is subject to an IC. Our decentralization with two renegotiable securities is parsimonious relative to the AJ equilibrium that requires as many securities as there are states (in our environment, this means a continuum of securities). Parsimony is important in realistic extensions in which it is costly for creditors to verify the overall exposure of the sovereign. In our model, creditors must only verify

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**Figure 3. Equilibrium Debt Issuance (Panel A) and Effort (Panel B)**

*Notes:* The figure shows the equilibrium policy functions for new debt issuance (panel A) and effort (panel B) conditional on repayment. The solid lines correspond to the (constrained efficient) Markov equilibrium with two securities. The dashed lines show the policy functions of the one-asset economy.
the issued quantities for two assets, while in the AJ framework they must verify that a large number of borrowing constraints are not violated.

We conclude this section by mentioning that, in an earlier draft of this paper, we discussed decentralization with an even richer market structure and stronger informational assumptions. In particular, we showed that if reform effort is observable and verifiable the market equilibrium decentralizes the COA without moral hazard of Proposition 2 as long as there exist markets for effort-deviation securities whose return is contingent on the reform effort. In reality, we do not see debt contracts conditional on reform effort, arguably because the extent to which a country passes and, especially, enforces reforms is opaque.

IV. Less Complete Markets

In this section, we consider a market subject to more severe frictions in which the sovereign can issue only a one-period noncontingent bond. This environment is interesting because in the real world government bonds typically promise repayments that are independent of the aggregate state. We take this market incompleteness as exogenous and study its effect on the allocation. We first maintain the same renegotiation protocol as in the earlier sections; then, as an extension, we rule out renegotiation as in Eaton and Gersovitz (1981). We use superscripts $R$ and $NR$ for policy functions in the one-asset economy with and without renegotiation, respectively.

The one-asset market equilibrium does not attain the COA conditional on $\alpha$. In the COA, the planner trades off the gains from risk sharing against the cost of moral hazard in an optimal way. In Section III, we proved that two securities are sufficient to replicate the COA. However, when only one asset is available, the shortage of instruments forces a particular correlation structure between future consumption in normal time and recession that is generally suboptimal, resulting in less risk sharing in equilibrium.

A formal definition and characterization of equilibrium is deferred to the online Appendix, where we also prove the existence and uniqueness of the equilibrium in the special case with an exogenous recovery probability (Proposition B2). Here, we emphasize the salient features of the equilibrium.

Consider, first, the equilibrium policy function for effort $\Psi^R(b)$, where $b$ now denotes a claim to one unit of output next period, irrespective of the endowment state. The FOC for the effort choice yields $X'(\Psi^R(b')) = \beta[\mu^R(b') - \mu^R(b')]$. The equilibrium features debt overhang, namely, the effort function $\Psi^R$ is decreasing in $b$ in a range of high $b^R_{\max}$. Conversely, $\Psi^R(b)$ is increasing in a range of low $b$. Thus, effort is nonmonotone in debt and shares the qualitative properties of the benchmark allocation with two securities.

Consider, next, consumption dynamics. Even in the one-asset economy the risk of renegotiation introduces some state contingency, since debt is repaid with different probabilities under recession and normal time. This provides a partial substitute for

\[ b^R_{\max} = (\Phi^R)^{-1}(\phi_{\max}) \]
state-contingent contracts, although now this is not sufficient to decentralize the COA. Recall that in the benchmark economy consumption was determined by two CEEs, (16) and (20). Issuing optimally two types of debt allowed the sovereign to mimic the planner’s ability to control promised utility in each of the two states. This is not feasible in the one-asset economy: there is only one CEE, which pins down the expected marginal rate of substitution in consumption conditional on debt being honored. In the online Appendix (Proposition B3), we show that the CEE with non-contingent debt takes the form

$$E \left\{ \frac{u'(c')}{u'(c)} \mid \text{debt is honored at } t+1 \right\} = 1 + \frac{d}{db'} \Psi_R(b') \times \left[ b' - \Pi_R(b') \right] \frac{b' - \Pi_R(b')}{Pr(\text{debt is honored at } t+1)},$$

where $b' - \Pi_R(b')$ is the difference between the expected debt repayment if the economy recovers or remains in recession, and $c'$ denotes future consumption.

Consider, first, the case without moral hazard, i.e., $d \Psi_R/db' = 0$. In the equilibrium with GDP-linked bonds, the sovereign could obtain full insurance against the realization of the endowment shock. In the one-asset economy, this is no longer true: the CEE (38) requires that the expected marginal utility in the CEE be equal to the current marginal utility. For this to be true, consumption growth must be positive if the recession ends and negative if it lingers.

In the general case, the market incompleteness interacts with the moral hazard friction introducing a strategic motive for debt. When the outstanding debt is low, then $d \Psi_R/db' > 0$ and the right-hand side of (38) is larger than unity. In this case, issuing more debt strengthens the ex post incentive to exert reform effort. The CEE implies then higher debt accumulation and lower future consumption growth than when moral hazard is absent. In contrast, in the region of debt overhang ($d \Psi_R/db' < 0$) more debt weakens the ex post incentive to exert reform effort. To remedy this, the sovereign issues less debt than in the absence of moral hazard. Thus, when debt is large the moral hazard friction magnifies the reduction in consumption insurance.

Figure 3 shows the policy functions for debt and effort in the one-asset economy (dashed lines) and in the two-security economy, with outside options $\alpha_R$ and $\alpha_W$ corresponding, respectively, to the fixed points $\alpha_R = W^R(0; \alpha_R)$ and $\alpha_W = W(0; \alpha_W)$. Debt is always higher (lower) than recession-contingent debt (recovery-contingent debt) in the two-security economy. Therefore, there is less consumption smoothing in the one-asset economy. Effort is hump-shaped in both economies. Conditional on debt, effort is higher in the one-asset economy than in the COA, reflecting the fact that there is less insurance against the continuation of a recession. This increases the sovereign’s incentives to leave the recession.

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28 The results are very similar if we use the same outside option in the two cases. Note that the policy rules for debt accumulation and effort feature discontinuities. Online Appendix Figure B1 illustrates that also consumption has discontinuities. Proposition B3 in the online Appendix proves that such discontinuities arise only in correspondence of debt levels that are never chosen in equilibrium (unless there is renegotiation). Moreover, the generalized Envelope Theorem in Clausen and Strub (2016) ensures that the FOCs are necessary for interior optima in spite of the discontinuity of the decision rules.
A. No Renegotiation

Next, we consider a version of an Eaton-Gersovitz economy where we shut down renegotiation. Namely, we assume that the sovereign can either default or fully honor the outstanding debt. This alternative environment has three implications. First and foremost, there is costly default in equilibrium. The real costs suffered by the sovereign yield no benefit to creditors, in contrast with the equilibrium with renegotiation, where no real costs accrue and creditors recover a share of the face value of debt. Second, renegotiation affects the price function of debt, and thus the incentive for the sovereign to accumulate debt. In particular, the bond price now becomes

\[ Q^{NR}(b') = R^{-1}\left[\Psi^{NR}(b') + \left(1 - \Psi^{NR}(b')\right)\left(1 - F\left(\Phi^{NR}(b')\right)\right)\right]. \]

When renegotiation is ruled out the lender expects a lower repayment. Thus, the risk premium associated with each debt level is higher, making it more costly for the sovereign to roll over debt. Therefore, the sovereign will be warier of debt accumulation. This limits consumption smoothing and lowers welfare. Third, conditional on the debt level, the range of \( \phi \) for which debt is honored is different.

Online Appendix Figure B1 compares the policy functions in a one-asset economy without renegotiation (solid lines) with a one-asset economy with renegotiation (dashed lines). We use the outside options \( \alpha_R \) (defined above) for the economy with renegotiation and \( \alpha_{NR} \) such that \( \alpha_{NR} = W^{NR}(0; \alpha_{NR}) \) for the no-renegotiation economy. Ruling out renegotiation implies lower consumption for each debt level. The sovereign exerts more effort when it cannot renegotiate (but can default on) its debt, reflecting the fact that the debt price is lower in recession and that there is less insurance. Finally, the probability of honoring debt is lower without than with renegotiation.

B. Assistance Program

The possibility of market failures provides scope for policy intervention. Consider an assistance program conducted by an international agency like the IMF. The assistance program mimics the COA through a sequence of transfers to the sovereign during recession in exchange for the promise of a repayment once the recession is over. The IMF can commit but has, as the planner, limited enforcement: it can inflict the same stochastic punishment (\( \phi \)) as can markets.

The program has two key features. First, the terms of the program are renegotiable: whenever the sovereign credibly threatens to abandon it, the IMF sweetens the deal by increasing the transfers and reducing the payment the sovereign owes when the recession ends. When there is no credible default threat, the transfer falls over time, implying the constrained efficient sequence of declining consumption.

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29 Our environment here differs from the standard Eaton-Gersovitz economy insofar as the high endowment state is an absorbing state and we have shocks to both the aggregate state and the outside option.

30 More formally, in the equilibrium with renegotiation the sovereign renegotiates if \( \phi < W^R(0) - W^R(b) \) whereas in the no-renegotiation equilibrium she defaults if \( \phi < W^{NR}(0) - W^{NR}(b) \), where \( W^{NR} \) is the value function under no renegotiation and recession. As long as \( W^{NR} \) is falling more steeply in \( b \) than \( W^R \), then, conditional on the debt level, the sovereign is more likely to fully honor the debt in the benchmark equilibrium than in the no-renegotiation equilibrium.
and time-varying reform effort prescribed by the COA. Second, when the recession ends, the IMF receives a payment from the sovereign, financed by issuing debt in the market. The size of the payment is determined by the length of the recession and the history of renegotiations. The difference between the final payment once the recession has ended and the transfers during recession provides the sovereign with the right incentives for reform effort.

More formally, let \( \nu^o \) denote the discounted utility guaranteed to the sovereign when the program is first agreed upon. At the beginning of that period, the IMF buys the debt \( b_0 \) with an expenditure \( \Pi(b_0) \). Then, the IMF transfers to the sovereign \( T(\nu^o) = c(\nu^o) - \bar{w} \) where \( c(\nu^o) \) is as in the COA of Proposition 3 unless the realization of \( \phi \) makes the sovereign prefer to terminate the program, in which case the country receives \( T_\phi = c_\phi - \bar{w} \), where, again, \( c_\phi \) is as in Proposition 3. In the subsequent periods, consumption and promised utility evolve in accordance with the law of motion of the COA. In other words, the IMF commits to a sequence of state-contingent transfers that mimics the planning allocation, while the sovereign exerts the incentive-compatible reform effort level. As soon as the recession ends, the sovereign owes a debt \( b - N \) to the international institution, where \( b - N \) is pinned down by the equation \( R - 1 b - N = c(\omega - N) - \bar{w} + b - N \), and where the discounted utility \( \omega - N \) depends on the duration of the recession and on the history of realizations of \( \phi \). Note that \( c \) is first-best consumption, exactly as in the COA, and that in normal time the country resumes market access to refinance its debt at the constant level \( b - N \).

The initial promised utility \( \nu^o \) is determined by how much the IMF is willing to commit to the assistance program. A natural benchmark is the \( \nu^o \) that makes the IMF break even in expectation. Whether, ex post, the IMF makes net gains or losses depends on the duration of the recession and on the realized sequence of \( \phi \).

Can such a program improve upon the market allocations? The answer hinges on the extent of market and contract incompleteness. If there exists a market for GDP-linked bonds, if the renegotiation process is frictionless and efficient, and if the sovereign can access markets after leaving the contract, the assistance program cannot improve upon the market allocation (since the latter is constrained efficient). More formally, \( \nu^o = P - 1(\Pi(b_0)) \). However, in one-asset economies the assistance program improves efficiency upon the market equilibrium. Interestingly, the assistance program would in this case yield higher utility than the Markov equilibrium with GDP-linked debt. Since market incompleteness makes deviations less attractive, the IMF has access to a more powerful threat to discipline the sovereign. The more incomplete markets are, the lower the sovereign’s outside option will be and the closer to the first best an assistance program can get.

The assistance program would be even more powerful if the IMF could take direct control over the reform process. In this case, the program could implement the COA without moral hazard in Section IIB. Clearly, such a policy would run into severe politico-economic constraints whose discussion is beyond the scope of our paper.

31 \( \Pi \) depends on the market structure. If there are two securities, then \( \Pi \) is given by equation (33). If there is only one asset, the corresponding definition given in online Appendix B.2 applies.
V. Concluding Remarks

This paper proposes a novel theory of sovereign debt dynamics under limited enforcement and moral hazard. A sovereign country issues debt to smooth consumption during a recession whose duration is uncertain and endogenous. The duration of the recession depends on the intensity of (costly) structural reforms. Both elements, the risk of repudiation and the need for structural reforms, have been salient features of the European debt crisis during the last decade.

We show that a market equilibrium with renegotiable one-period GDP-linked securities implements the COA. The crux of this result is that, if creditors have full bargaining power ex post, the renegotiable securities stand in for missing markets for state-contingent debt. In addition, these markets provide the optimal trade-off between insurance and incentives. Namely, a planner who is subject to the same informational constraints and the same disciplining instruments as those available to the market cannot achieve a better outcome than the market allocation.

We also study the effect of additional exogenous restrictions on market arrangements, such as ruling out renegotiation and assuming that the sovereign can issue only noncontingent debt. In this case, the market equilibrium is not constrained efficient. We discuss an assistance program that can restore efficiency.

To retain tractability, we make important assumptions that we plan to relax in future research. First, in our theory the default cost follows an exogenous stochastic process. In a richer model, this would be part of the equilibrium dynamics. Strategic delegation is a potentially important extension. Voters may have an incentive to elect a government that undervalues the cost of default. In our current model, however, the stochastic process governing the creditor’s outside option is exogenous, and is outside of the control of the sovereign and creditors.

Second, again for simplicity, we assume that renegotiation is costless and that creditors have full bargaining power in the renegotiation game. Each of these assumptions could be relaxed. For instance, in reality the process of negotiation may entail costs. Moreover, as in the recent contention between Argentina and the so-called vulture funds, some creditors may hold out and refuse to accept a restructuring plan signed by a syndicate of lenders. Finally, the country may retain some bargaining power in the renegotiation. All these extensions would introduce interesting additional dimensions, and invalidate some of the strong efficiency results. However, we are confident that the gist of the results is robust to these extensions.

Third, we make the convenient assumption that reform effort and consumption are separable in the utility function. If reforms are especially costly during recession, our results would be weakened. Finally, by focusing on a representative agent, we abstract from conflicts of interest across groups within the country. We leave the exploration of these avenues to future work.

While the current paper has a theoretical focus, in Müller, Storesletten, and Zilibotti (2019a) we study a generalized version of the model where we relax some of the assumptions made here to retain analytical tractability. That paper quantifies the effects of policy intervention under different informational assumptions. We find that a calibrated model can successfully replicate salient empirical moments not targeted in the calibration, including the bond spread, the frequency of renegotiations, the average haircut of the debt’s face value, and its variance across renegotiation episodes.
APPENDIX

PROOF OF LEMMA 1:
To prove this result, we ignore technicalities related to the continuum of states. Namely, we assume that there exist $N$ states with associated positive probabilities, and view the continuum as an approximation of the discrete state space for $N \to \infty$. This is without loss of generality. The proof involves two steps:

(i) We start by proving that, if $\phi_2 > \phi_1$, then, $\mu_{\phi_1} > \alpha - \phi_1 \Rightarrow \mu_{\phi_2} = \mu_{\phi_1} > \alpha - \phi_2$. To see why, recall that the planner’s objective is to deliver the promised utility $\nu$ given by (2) in a profit-maximizing way. Since $u$, $P$, and $\bar{P}$ are strictly concave, and $X$ is strictly increasing, then, profit maximization is attained by setting $c_{\phi_2} = c_{\phi_1}$, $p_{\phi_2} = p_{\phi_1}$, $\omega_{\phi_2} = \omega_{\phi_1}$, and $\bar{\omega}_{\phi_2} = \bar{\omega}_{\phi_1}$. This planning choice implies that $\mu_{\phi_2}(\nu) = \mu_{\phi_1}(\nu)$. This is feasible since the assumption that the PC is slack in state $\phi_1$ implies that a fortiori the PC is slack in state $\phi_2$. Two cases are then possible: either $\exists \tilde{\phi}(\nu)$ such that $\mu_{\phi}(\nu) = \alpha - \tilde{\phi}(\nu)$ for all $\phi \geq \tilde{\phi}(\nu)$; or $\mu_{\phi}(\nu) = \mu(\nu) > \alpha - \phi_{\min} \forall \phi \in [\phi_{\min}, \phi_{\max}]$. The latter case would imply that no PC ever binds and can be ignored.

(ii) Next, we prove that, if $\hat{\phi}_2 > \hat{\phi}_1$, then, $\mu_{\phi_1} = \alpha - \hat{\phi}_1 \Rightarrow \mu_{\phi_2} = \mu_{\phi_1} = \alpha - \hat{\phi}_2$. To derive a contradiction, suppose that this is not the case, and that $\mu_{\phi_1} > \alpha - \hat{\phi}_1 > \mu_{\phi_2}$ (the opposite inequality would violate the PC and is not feasible). Then, the planner could deliver to the agent the promised utility $\nu$ by uniformly increasing $\omega_2$, and $\bar{\omega}_2$ and reducing $\omega_1$, and $\bar{\omega}_1$ also uniformly, so as to keep $\nu$ unchanged, while leaving consumption and effort constant (it is easy to check that this is feasible). The strict concavity of $P$ and $\bar{P}$ guarantees that this change increases profits. Let $\tilde{\phi}(\nu)$ denote the largest $\phi$ such that $\mu_{\tilde{\phi}(\nu)}(\nu) = \alpha - \tilde{\phi}(\nu)$. Then, $\mu_{\phi}(\nu) = \alpha - \phi$ for all $\phi \leq \tilde{\phi}(\nu)$.

Parts (i) and (ii) jointly establish that the threshold $\tilde{\phi}(\nu)$ is unique. $

PROOF OF PROPOSITION 3:
This proof builds on Lemma B3 in the online Appendix establishing that $P$ is strictly decreasing and differentiable with $P'(\nu) = -1/u(c(\nu)) < 0$ for all $\nu > \nu_i$.

The planner solves (1) subject to (2)–(5), and (15). The Lagrangian yields

$$\mathcal{L} = \int_N \left[ w - c_{\phi} + \beta(p_{\phi}\bar{P}(\bar{\omega}_{\phi}) + (1 - p_{\phi})P(\omega_{\phi})) \right] f(\phi) \, d\phi$$

$$+ \phi \left( \int_N \left[ u(c_{\phi}) - X(p_{\phi}) + \beta(p_{\phi}\bar{\omega}_{\phi} + (1 - p_{\phi})\omega_{\phi}) \right] f(\phi) \, d\phi - \nu \right)$$

$$+ \int_N \lambda_{\phi}(u(c_{\phi}) - X(p_{\phi}) + \beta(p_{\phi}\bar{\omega}_{\phi} + (1 - p_{\phi})\omega_{\phi}) - [\alpha - \phi]) \, d\phi$$

$$+ \int_N \lambda_{\phi}(X'(p_{\phi}) + \beta(\bar{\omega}_{\phi} - \omega_{\phi})) \, d\phi + \int_N \theta_{\phi}(\omega_{\phi} - \nu) \, d\phi,$$
where \( \lambda_\phi \geq 0, \theta_\phi \geq 0, \vartheta, \) and \( \chi_\phi \) denote the multipliers. The FOCs with respect to \( c_\phi, \tilde{\omega}_\phi, \omega_\phi, p_\phi, \) and \( \chi_\phi \) yield

\[
0 = -f(\phi) + \left[ \vartheta f(\phi) + \lambda_\phi \right] u'(c_\phi),
\]

\[
0 = \beta p_\phi \tilde{P}'(\tilde{\omega}_\phi) f(\phi) + \left[ \vartheta f(\phi) + \lambda_\phi \right] \beta p_\phi + \chi_\phi \beta,
\]

\[
0 = \beta(1 - p_\phi)P'(\omega_\phi) f(\phi) + \left[ \vartheta f(\phi) + \lambda_\phi \right] \beta(1 - p_\phi) - \chi_\phi \beta, \quad \forall \omega_\phi > \nu,
\]

\[
0 = \beta \left[ \tilde{P}(\tilde{\omega}_\phi) - P(\omega_\phi) \right] f(\phi) + \left[ \vartheta f(\phi) + \lambda_\phi \right] (\beta(\tilde{\omega}_\phi - \omega_\phi) - X'(p_\phi)) - \chi_\phi X''(p_\phi),
\]

\[
0 = -X'(p_\phi) + \beta(\tilde{\omega}_\phi - \omega_\phi).
\]

Lemma B4 in the online Appendix rules out corner solutions establishing that the FOCs are necessary optimality conditions. The envelope condition yields \(-P'(\nu) = \vartheta\) for all \( \nu > \nu \) (note that \( P \) is only differentiable at the interior support of \( \nu \)), while the slackness condition for \( \theta_\phi \) implies \( 0 = \theta_\phi(\omega_\phi - \nu). \) Combining the FOCs and the envelope condition, and noting that \(-\tilde{P}'(\tilde{\omega}_\phi) = 1/u'(\tilde{c}(\tilde{\omega}_\phi))\), yields

(A2) \[
\frac{1}{u'(c_\phi)} = -P'(\nu) + \frac{\lambda_\phi}{f(\phi)}, \quad \forall \nu > \nu,
\]

and equations (16) and (17) in the text. Note that we have also used the facts that \( p_\phi = \tilde{P}(\tilde{\omega}_\phi - \omega_\phi) \) (established in the text, see equation (15)) and \( \tilde{P}(\tilde{\omega}_\phi - \omega_\phi) = \beta/X''(\tilde{\omega}_\phi - \omega_\phi) \). When \( \lambda_\phi = 0 \), then (A2) implies \(-P'(\nu) = 1/u'(\tilde{c}(\nu)) = \vartheta > 0\) for all \( \nu > \nu \) (cf. part (iii) of the proposition).

To prove that \( \phi(\nu) \) is strictly decreasing, recall that, by Lemma 1, all PCs associated with \( \phi < \tilde{\phi}(\nu) \) are binding, while all those with \( \phi \geq \tilde{\phi}(\nu) \) are slack. Hence, the PK can be written as equation (13). Standard differentiation establishes that \( \tilde{\phi}(\nu) \) is strictly decreasing.

Consider part (i) of the proposition. For all \( \phi < \tilde{\phi}(\nu) \), the PC is binding and holds with equality. Then, the optimal choice is independent of \( \nu \) and \( c_\phi, \omega_\phi, \tilde{\omega}_\phi, \) and \( \theta_\phi \) are pinned down by the PC (4) holding with equality, and by the FOCs (16)–(18).

Consider, next, part (ii). For all \( \phi \geq \tilde{\phi}(\nu) \) the PC is slack, and Lemma 1 implies equation (19). The solution is history dependent: \( c_\phi = c(\nu), \omega_\phi = \omega(\nu), \tilde{\omega}_\phi = \tilde{\omega}(\nu), \theta_\phi = \theta(\nu) \), where \( c(\nu), \omega(\nu), \tilde{\omega}(\nu), \) and \( \theta(\nu) \) are determined by equations (16)–(19). To prove that \( c(\nu) \) is a strictly increasing function, note that, since \( P \) and \( u \) are strictly concave, then (A2) implies that \( c(\nu) \) is strictly increasing for \( \nu > \nu \). Consumption is also strictly increasing in \( \nu \) at the lower bound, \( c(\nu) < c(\nu) \) \( \forall \nu > \nu \), as the following argument proves by contradiction. Suppose \( \exists \nu > \nu \) such that \( c(\nu) \geq c(\nu) \). The optimal allocation associated with \( c(\nu) \) then yields utility \( \nu > \nu \). But then \( c(\nu) \geq c(\nu) \) would violate the PK; this is a contradiction.

Next, we prove that when the PC is slack and the recession lingers, promised utility falls over time, i.e., \( \omega_\phi = \omega(\nu) = \nu' \leq \nu \) if \( \theta_\phi = 0 \) (i.e., as long as \( \nu \) is sufficiently large). To this aim, we establish, first, that \( \tilde{P}(\tilde{\omega}(\nu)) - P(\omega(\nu)) > 0 \) in the range \( \nu > \nu \) and, second, that this implies that \( \tilde{c}(\tilde{\omega}(\nu)) > c(\nu) \)

\[
\geq c(\nu) > c(\omega(\nu)) \text{ and } \omega(\nu) = \nu' \leq \nu. \text{ Suppose, to derive a contradiction, that}
\]
\( \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}) - P(\omega) \leq 0 \) for \( \theta = 0 \). Then (16), (17), and (18) imply the following consumption ordering:

\[
\tag{A3} \bar{c}(\bar{\omega}) \leq c(\omega) \leq \bar{c}(\omega).
\]

We show that this is impossible. To see why, suppose first that \( \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}) - P(\omega) \leq 0 \) and \( \omega \geq \nu \). Since in normal state consumption, promised utility and profits are constant, we can write

\[
c(\omega) = \bar{w} - \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}) + \beta \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}) = \bar{w} - \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}) + \frac{p_\phi}{R} \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}) + \frac{1 - p_\phi}{R} \bar{P}(\bar{\omega})
\]

\[
> \bar{w} - \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}) + \frac{p_\phi}{R} \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}) + \frac{1 - p_\phi}{R} \bar{P}(\bar{\omega})
\]

\[
\geq \bar{w} - P(\omega) + \frac{p_\phi}{R} P(\omega) + \frac{1 - p_\phi}{R} P(\omega)
\]

\[
\geq \bar{w} - \bar{P}(\omega) - P(\omega) + \frac{p_\phi}{R} \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}) + \frac{1 - p_\phi}{R} \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}) = c(\omega).
\]

The second inequality follows from \([(1 - p_\phi)/R - 1] \times 0 \geq [(1 - p_\phi)/R - 1] \times 0 \) and, per hypothesis, \( \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}) \leq P(\omega) \). The last inequality follows from \( \omega \geq \nu \) (again, per hypothesis) and \( P(\nu) < 0 \). The conclusion that \( \bar{c}(\bar{\omega}) > c(\omega) \) again contradicts the ordering in (A3). Thus, we can rule out that \( \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}) - P(\omega) \leq 0 \) and \( \omega \geq \nu \) for \( \nu > \nu^\prime \). Nor can \( \omega < \nu \), because consumption is strictly increasing in promised utility, hence, \( \omega < \nu \Rightarrow c(\omega) < c(\nu) \leq c_\phi(\nu) \), again contradicting the ordering in (A3). We conclude that

\[
\bar{P}(\bar{\omega}) - P(\omega) > 0 \text{ for } \nu > \nu^\prime.
\]

Next, combining \( \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}) - P(\omega) > 0 \), \( \theta = 0 \), (16), (17), and (18) yields

\[
\bar{c}(\bar{\omega}(\nu)) > c(\nu) \geq c(\nu) > c(\omega(\nu)).
\]

Since \( c(\nu) \) is strictly increasing in \( \nu \), the last inequality also implies that \( \omega(\nu) < \nu \). As soon as \( \omega(\nu) = \nu \), promised utility and consumption remain constant.

Finally, we prove that the effort function \( p(\nu) = \bar{Y}(\bar{\omega}(\nu) - \omega(\nu)) \) is strictly increasing in a range of low \( \nu \) that includes \( \nu \leq \nu^\prime \). We do so by establishing that \( \bar{\omega}(\nu) \) is strictly increasing and \( \omega(\nu) \) constant on the interval \([\nu, \nu^\prime]\). We invoke Topkis’ theorem to show that \( \bar{\omega}(\nu) \) is strictly increasing in \( \nu \) when \( \omega(\nu) = \nu \), and also that \( \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}(\nu)) - P(\omega(\nu)) > 0 \) for \( \nu \leq \nu^\prime \). For all \( \phi \geq \tilde{\phi}(\nu) \), the planner solves the following maximization problem

\[
\langle \omega(\nu), \bar{\omega}(\nu) \rangle = \arg \max_{\omega \in [\nu, \tilde{\omega}], \bar{\omega} \in [\bar{\omega}, \bar{\omega}]} \left\{ w - u^{-1}(x(\nu, \omega, \bar{\omega})) \right. 
\]

\[
+ \beta \left[ \bar{Y}(\bar{\omega} - \omega) \bar{P}(\bar{\omega}) + (1 - \bar{Y}(\bar{\omega} - \omega)) P(\omega) \right]\},
\]

where \( x(\nu, \omega, \bar{\omega}) = \alpha - \tilde{\phi}(\nu) + X(\bar{Y}(\bar{\omega} - \omega)) - \beta[\bar{Y}(\bar{\omega} - \omega) \bar{\omega} + (1 - \bar{Y}(\bar{\omega} - \omega)) \omega]. \) Since \( [u'(x(\nu, \omega, \bar{\omega})) \tilde{\phi}(\nu) / u'(x(\nu, \omega, \bar{\omega}))]^2 \beta \bar{Y}(\bar{\omega} - \omega) > 0 \), then, for given \( \omega \), the objective function is supermodular in \( (\nu, \bar{\omega}) \). Topkis’ theorem implies then that \( \bar{\omega}(\nu) \) is strictly increasing in \( \nu \) when \( \omega(\nu) = \nu \). This also implies that
PROPOSITION A1: The value function of the primal COA satisfies equation (24). Given \( \pi \) and \( \phi \), the optimal choice of consumption is \( c_\phi = C^{pl}(b_\phi(\pi)) \), where

\[
C^{pl}(b_\phi(\pi)) = w - b_\phi(\pi) + \beta \Psi^{pl}[\Pi^{pl}(b_\phi(\pi)), \Pi^{pl}(b_\phi(\pi))] \tilde{\Pi}^{pl}(b_\phi(\pi)) \nonumber
\]

\[
+ \beta \left[ - \Psi^{pl} \Pi^{pl}(b_\phi(\pi)) \tilde{\Pi}^{pl}(b_\phi(\pi)) \right] \Pi^{pl}(b_\phi(\pi)),
\]

\[
\Psi^{pl}(\pi', \tilde{\pi}') = Y(\tilde{\mu}^{pl}(\tilde{\pi}') - \mu^{pl}(\pi')), b_\phi(\pi) \text{ is as in (25)–(26), and}
\]

\[
\langle \tilde{\Pi}^{pl}(b_\phi(\pi)), \Pi^{pl}(b_\phi(\pi)) \rangle
\]

\[= \arg \max_{\pi' \in \Pi^{pl}(\alpha - E[\phi])} \left\{ u \left( w - b_\phi + \beta \left[ \Psi^{pl}(\pi', \tilde{\pi}') \tilde{\pi}' + \left( 1 - \Psi^{pl}(\pi', \tilde{\pi}') \right) \pi' \right] \right\}
\]

\[- X \left( \Psi^{pl}(\pi', \tilde{\pi}') \right) + \beta \left[ \Psi^{pl}(\pi', \tilde{\pi}') \tilde{\mu}^{pl}(\tilde{\pi}') + \left( 1 - \Psi^{pl}(\pi', \tilde{\pi}') \right) \mu^{pl}(\pi') \right] \}.
\]

Moreover,

\[
\langle \tilde{\Pi}^{pl}(b_\phi(\pi)), \Pi^{pl}(b_\phi(\pi)) \rangle = \langle \tilde{P}(\tilde{\omega}(\nu)), P(\omega(\nu)) \rangle.
\]

**PROOF:**

We start by proving that the proposed allocation is feasible, i.e., satisfies the set of constraints of the primal problem. Since \( c_\phi = w - b_\phi + \beta \left[ p_\phi \tilde{\pi}' + (1 - p_\phi) \pi' \right] \), we can rewrite (21) as \( \mu^{pl}(\pi) = \max_{b_\phi \in C, \phi = \phi}\int_{\mathcal{X}} W^{pl}(b_\phi) dF(\phi) \), where

\[
W^{pl}(b_\phi) = \max_{\pi' \in \Pi^{pl}(\alpha - E[\phi])} \left\{ u \left( w - b_\phi + \beta \left[ \Psi^{pl}(\pi', \tilde{\pi}') \tilde{\pi}' + \left( 1 - \Psi^{pl}(\pi', \tilde{\pi}') \right) \pi' \right] \right\}
\]

\[- X \left( \Psi^{pl}(\pi', \tilde{\pi}') \right)
\]

\[
+ \beta \left[ \Psi^{pl}(\pi', \tilde{\pi}') \tilde{\mu}^{pl}(\tilde{\pi}') + \left( 1 - \Psi^{pl}(\pi', \tilde{\pi}') \right) \mu^{pl}(\pi') \right] \}.
\]

Here, \( \Psi^{pl}(\pi', \tilde{\pi}') = Y(\tilde{\mu}^{pl}(\tilde{\pi}') - \mu^{pl}(\pi')) \) is the incentive compatible effort. Note that the duality property \( \mu^{pl}(\pi_{\text{max}}) = P^{-1}(\pi_{\text{max}}) = \alpha - E[\phi] \) allows us to write the upper bound for \( \pi' \) in (26) explicitly as \( \pi_{\text{max}} = P(\alpha - E[\phi]) \). The problem is also subject to the constraints (22) and (23). It is immediate to verify that the pro-
posed solution satisfies both constraints. The fact that (22) is satisfied is proved in the text. That (23) is satisfied follows from the observation that (25) implies that \( W_{\rho} (b, \hat{\phi} (\pi)) \geq \alpha - \phi, \forall \phi \in \mathcal{N}, \) thus the set of PCs are satisfied.

Next, we verify that the proposed primal solution yields the same utility as the dual COA, i.e., \( \mu^{pl} (\pi) = \nu. \) The expression of \( \mu^{pl} (\pi) \) in (24) yields
\[
\mu^{pl} (\pi) = \left[ 1 - F(\Phi^{pl}(\pi)) \right] (\alpha - \Phi^{pl}(\pi)) + \int_{\alpha_{\text{min}}}^{\Phi^{pl}(\pi)} (\alpha - \phi) \, dF(\phi)
\]
\[
= \left[ 1 - F(\hat{\phi} (\nu)) \right] (\alpha - \hat{\phi} (\nu)) + \int_{\alpha_{\text{min}}}^{\hat{\phi} (\nu)} (\alpha - \phi) \, dF(\phi) = \nu.
\]

Finally, we prove that (25) implies the optimal solution for consumption. The fact that the optimal choices of future promised profits are such that \( \pi' = \Pi^{pl} (b, \hat{\phi} (\pi)) = P (\omega, \hat{\phi} (\nu)) \) follows, respectively, from full commitment in normal time and from the duality property that \( \pi = P (\nu) \) for all feasible \( \nu. \) Moreover, we have already established that setting \( b_{\phi} = b, \hat{\phi} (\pi) \) as in (25) yields the expected utility \( \nu \) of the COA. Since the utility function is concave, the consumption plan maximizing expected utility must be unique. Given the definition of \( c_{\phi}, \) it must therefore be optimal to set \( c_{\phi} = C^{pl} (b, \hat{\phi} (\pi)) \) as in (A4), and consumption must be the same as in the dual COA allocation in Proposition 3.

\[\text{PROOF OF PROPOSITION 4:}\]

**Part (A):** The proof establishes that \( \langle W, b \rangle \) is the unique fixed point of two contracting operators satisfying the functional equations (29) and (37).

**Road Map:** We proceed in two steps. **Step 1:** We define an inner operator \( T_{\delta} \) that maps value functions into value functions conditional on an arbitrary debt threshold function \( \delta (\phi). \) We show that this operator has a unique fixed point \( W_{\delta} = \lim_{n \to \infty} T_{\delta}^{n} \) that satisfies (29). **Step 2:** We define an outer operator \( S \) that maps debt threshold functions into debt threshold functions. We show that this operator has a unique fixed point \( \hat{b} (\phi) = \lim_{n \to \infty} S^{n} (\delta) \) that satisfies (37) when \( W_{\delta} \) is evaluated at \( \delta (\phi) = \hat{b} (\phi), \) i.e., \( W_{\delta}' (\hat{b} (\phi)) = \alpha - \phi. \) Let \( W = W_{\hat{b}}. \) Then, the fixed point \( \langle W, \hat{b} \rangle \) must be unique. The uniqueness of \( V \) follows then from (28).

**Step 1:** Let \( \Gamma \) be the space of bounded, continuous, and nonincreasing functions \( \gamma : [b, \hat{b}] \to [\alpha - \phi_{\text{max}}, u (\bar{w} + (1 - \beta) b) / (1 - \beta)] \) with \( \gamma (\hat{b}) = \alpha - \phi_{\text{max}}. \) Moreover, let \( \Lambda \) be the space of bounded and continuous functions \( \delta : \mathcal{N} \to [b, \hat{b}]. \) Define \( d_{\infty} (y, z) \equiv \sup_{x \in [\gamma]} |y (x) - z (x)| \) such that \( (\Gamma, d_{\infty}) \) and \( (\Lambda, d_{\infty}) \) are complete metric spaces. Let \( \gamma \in \Gamma \) and \( \delta \in \Lambda \) and define the mapping \( \bar{T}, \)
\[
(A5) \quad \bar{T}_{\delta} (\gamma) (b) = \max_{b, b' \in [b, \hat{b}], \Pi_{\delta} (b') \leq b'} \left\{ u \left( \bar{w} - b + \beta \Psi^{\ast} (\gamma (b'), b') b' \right)
\right.
\]
\[
+ \beta \left( 1 - \Psi^{\ast} (\gamma (b'), b') \right) \Pi_{\delta} (b')) + Z^{\ast} (\gamma (b'), b')) \left\}
\]
\[
\equiv \max_{b, b' \in [b, \hat{b}], \Pi_{\delta} (b') \leq b'} O (b, \hat{b}, b', \gamma (b'); \delta),
\]
where \( \Pi_\delta(b') = \{\max\{b', \delta(\phi)\}\}dF(\phi) \), and \( Z^* \) and \( \Psi^* \) are defined as \( Z \) and \( \Psi \) in equations (30) and (36), respectively, after replacing \( b' \) by \( \gamma(b') \) and \( \mu(b') \) by \( \mu^*(\gamma(b')) \). In turn, \( \mu^*(\gamma(b')) \) is defined in analogy with \( \mu(b') \) in Definition 1, i.e., \( \mu^*(\gamma(b')) = \left(1 - F(\Phi^*(\gamma(b')))\right)\gamma(b') + \int_{\phi_{min}}^{\Phi^*(\gamma(b'))} [\alpha - \phi]dF(\phi) \), where \( \Phi^*(\gamma(b')) = \alpha - \gamma(b') \). Replacing \( 1/R \) with \( \beta \) in (A5) will be convenient throughout the proof. Note that \( \tilde{T}_\delta(\gamma) \) maps \( \gamma \) for a given debt threshold function \( \delta(\phi) \).

Define next,

\[
A_6 \quad T_\delta(\gamma)(b) = \begin{cases} \max\{\tilde{T}_\delta(\gamma)(b), \alpha - \phi_{max}\} & \text{if } b \in [b, b_0(\delta)] \\ \alpha - \phi_{max} & \text{if } b \in (b_0(\delta), b']^*, \end{cases}
\]

where

\[
b_0(\delta) = \max_{b', \delta: [b, b], \Pi_\delta(b') \leq b'} w + \beta\left(\Psi^*\left(\gamma(b'), \tilde{b}'\right)\tilde{b}' + \left(1 - \Psi^*\left(\gamma(b'), \tilde{b}'\right)\right)\Pi_\delta(b')\right) \]
\[
< \tilde{b} = \frac{w}{1 - \beta}
\]

denotes the largest \( b \) for which nonnegative consumption is feasible. Note that \( b_0 \) is independent of \( \gamma \) because the maximum debt revenue always involves setting \( b' = \tilde{b} \) and since \( \gamma(\tilde{b}) = \alpha - \phi_{max} \) for all \( \gamma \in \Gamma \). The definition of \( T_\delta \) extends the mapping to a possible range in which \( \tilde{T}_\delta \) is not well defined and ensures that \( T_\delta(\gamma)(\tilde{b}) = \alpha - \phi_{max} \).

**Lemma A1**: Suppose the LSS constraint \( \Pi_\delta(b') \leq \tilde{b}' \) holds. Then for any \( \delta \in \Lambda \), \( T_\delta(\gamma) \) is a contraction mapping with a unique fixed point \( W_\delta = \lim_{n \to \infty} T^n_\delta(\gamma) \in \Gamma \).

The detailed proof of Lemma A1 is deferred to the online Appendix. Here, we sketch its argument. The proof establishes that \( T_\delta \) maps \( \Gamma \) into \( \Gamma \) and is strictly decreasing in \( b \) for all \( b \) such that \( T_\delta(\gamma)(b) > \alpha - \phi_{max} \), otherwise \( T_\delta = \alpha - \phi_{max} \). Moreover, \( T_\delta \) satisfies Blackwell's sufficient conditions (monotonicity and discounting) on the complete metric space \( (\Gamma, d_{\infty}) \), thereby being a contraction mapping. Therefore, \( W_\delta = \lim_{n \to \infty} T^n_\delta(\gamma) \) exists and is unique (see Stokey, Lucas, and Prescott 1989, Theorem 3.3).

**Step 2**: We establish that there exists a unique threshold function \( \hat{b} \in \Lambda \) such that \( \langle W_{\hat{b}}, \hat{b} \rangle \) satisfies equation (37). Let \( \delta \in \Lambda \). Define the mapping:

\[
S(\delta)(\phi) = \begin{cases} \min\{b \in [b, \hat{b}]: W_\delta(b) = \alpha - \phi\} & \text{if } W_\delta(b) \geq \alpha - \phi \\ \hat{b} & \text{if } W_\delta(b) < \alpha - \phi, \quad \forall \phi \in \mathcal{N}. \end{cases}
\]

The following lemma establishes that \( S \) has a unique fixed point in \( \Lambda \).

**Lemma A2**: \( S(\delta) \) has a unique fixed point \( \hat{b} \equiv \lim_{n \to \infty} S^n(\delta) \in \Lambda \) and \( W_{\hat{b}}(\hat{b}(\phi)) = \alpha - \phi, \forall \phi \in \mathcal{N} \).
The detailed proof of Lemma A2 is deferred to the online Appendix. Here, we sketch the argument. Note that $S(\delta)$ is bounded by $[b, \hat{b}]$, continuous and nondecreasing in $\phi$ since $W_\delta(b)$ is continuous and nonincreasing in $b$. Thus, $S$ is an operator on the complete metric space $(d_{\infty}, \Lambda)$. The proof establishes that the operator satisfies Blackwell’s sufficient conditions (monotonicity and discounting), implying that $S$ is a contraction mapping.

**Taking Stock:** Since the fixed point $\hat{b}$ meets the indifference condition (37) and $W_{\delta}$ satisfies the Bellman equation of the market equilibrium, Lemmas A1 and A2 imply that $(W_{\delta}, \hat{b})$ is the unique pair of value and threshold functions satisfying the market equilibrium conditions. This concludes the proof of Proposition 4 (A).

**Part (B):** The strategy of the proof is to show that, given the initial condition $\pi = \Pi(b)$, the primal COA in Proposition A1 solves the same problem as the market equilibrium. Then, it follows from Part (A) that the unique market equilibrium decentralizes the COA.

The primal COA is characterized by the value functions $\mu^{pl}$ and $W^{pl}$, where $W^{pl}$ is a fixed point to the following functional equation:

\[
W^{pl}(b^{pl}(\Pi)) = \max_{\pi \in [\underline{\pi}, \bar{\pi}]} \left\{ u\left(W - b^{pl}(\pi) + \beta\left[\Psi^{pl}(\pi', \bar{\pi}') + (1 - \Psi^{pl}(\pi', \bar{\pi}'))\pi'\right]\right) - X(\Psi^{pl}(\pi', \bar{\pi}')) + \beta\left[\Psi^{pl}(\pi', \bar{\pi}')\mu^{pl}(\bar{\pi}') + (1 - \Psi^{pl}(\pi', \bar{\pi}'))\mu^{pl}(\pi')\right]\},
\]

and $\mu^{pl}$ and $b^{pl}$ are defined as follows:

\[
\mu^{pl}(\pi) = \int_{\mathcal{N}} \max_{\pi' \geq \pi} \left\{ W^{pl}(b^{pl}(\pi)), \alpha - \phi \right\} dF(\phi),
\]

\[
\pi = \int_{\mathcal{N}} \min_{\pi' \geq \pi} \left\{ b^{pl}(\pi), \hat{b}^{pl}(\phi) \right\} dF(\phi) \equiv \hat{\Pi}(b^{pl}(\pi)),
\]

\[
\hat{b}^{pl}(\phi) = (W^{pl})^{-1}(\alpha - \phi) \quad \forall \phi \in \mathcal{N}.
\]

Note also that $\hat{\Pi}$ is increasing in $b^{pl}$ for $b^{pl} \in [\underline{b}, \hat{b}^{pl}(\phi_{\max})]$ and constant at $\hat{\Pi}(b^{pl}) = P(\alpha - E[\phi])$ for $b^{pl} \geq \hat{b}^{pl}(\phi_{\max})$. The definition of $\hat{\Pi}$ implies that $\hat{\Pi}(b^{pl}(\pi')) = \pi'$, since $\pi' \leq P(\alpha - E[\phi])$.

To establish equivalence, we must impose the LSS constraint to the primal planning problem: recall that LSS guarantees the uniqueness of the equilibrium. Namely, $\bar{\pi}' \geq \pi'$. This condition is always satisfied in the COA (cf. Proposition 3, which shows that in the dual COA $\hat{P}(\bar{\omega}_o) > P(\bar{\omega}_o)$).

We can then redefine the program (A7) in terms of the state variable $b$ and of the choice variables $b'$ and $\hat{b}'$, after setting $b = b^{pl}(\pi), b' = b^{pl}(\pi'), \hat{b}' = \bar{\pi}'$,
$\bar{b} = \pi$, and $\hat{b} \equiv \hat{\pi}$. Furthermore, $\hat{\Pi}(\hat{b}) = P(\alpha - E[\phi])$. More formally, we rewrite (A7) as

$$W^{pl}(b) = \max_{(\hat{b}', b') \in [\bar{b}, \hat{b}]^2} \left\{ u(\bar{w} - b + \beta \left[ \Psi^{pl}(\hat{\Pi}(b'), \hat{b}') \hat{b}' + \left(1 - \Psi^{pl}(\hat{\Pi}(b'), \hat{b}')\right)\hat{b}'] \right) - X(\Psi^{pl}(\hat{\Pi}(b'), \hat{b}')) - \beta \left[ \Psi^{pl}(\hat{\Pi}(b'), \hat{b}') \hat{\mu}^{pl}(\hat{b}') \right] + \left(1 - \Psi^{pl}(\hat{\Pi}(b'), \hat{b}')\right)\mu^{pl}(\hat{\Pi}(b')) \right\},$$

where $\mu^{pl}(\hat{\Pi}(b)) = \int_{\mathcal{N}} \max\{W^{pl}(b), \alpha - \phi\} dF(\phi)$, $\pi = \hat{\Pi}(b)$, and $\hat{\mu}^{pl}$ is defined as in (A8). In addition, the program must satisfy the LSS constraint $\hat{b}' \geq \hat{\Pi}(b')$. This program is identical to the market equilibrium and must share the same properties.

**Taking Stock:** We conclude that, if $\pi = \hat{\Pi}(b) = \Pi(b)$, the primal COA and the unique market equilibrium subject to the LSS constraint are a fixed point of the same functional equation with a unique solution. In particular, $\mu^{pl}(\pi) = \mu(b)$, $\hat{\mu}^{pl}(\hat{b}') = \hat{\mu}(\hat{b}')$, $W^{pl}(b_0(\pi)) = W(B(b, \phi))$, $\Psi^{pl}(\pi', \hat{\pi}) = \Psi(b', \hat{b}')$, $\Phi^{pl}(\pi) = \Phi(b)$, and $b_0(\hat{\pi}) = B(b, \phi)$. This concludes the proof of Part (B) of Proposition 4.  

**PROOF OF PROPOSITION 5:**

With slight abuse of notation we write $x(0; \alpha)$ instead of just $x(0)$ to make explicit the dependence of (a function) $x(0)$ on $\alpha$. We show first that $\Phi(0; \alpha)$ is strictly increasing in $\alpha$. Suppose to the opposite that $\partial \Phi(0; \alpha)/\partial \alpha \leq 0$. Then, the indifference condition implies that $\partial W(0; \alpha)/\partial \alpha > 0$ since $\partial \Phi(0; \alpha)/\partial \alpha = 1 - \partial W(0; \alpha)/\partial \alpha$. This also implies that $\partial \mu(0; \alpha)/\partial \alpha > 0$ since $\mu(0; \alpha) = \int_{\mathcal{N}} \max\{W(0; \alpha), \alpha - \phi\} dF(\phi)$. At the same time, $\Pi(0; \alpha) = 0 \forall \alpha$ due to the assumption that the sovereign can always honor the contract and that $\alpha$ is sufficiently low to ensure that defaul is never efficient. However, we know from Proposition 4 that $P(\nu; \alpha) = \Pi(0; \alpha)$ implies that $\nu = \mu(0; \alpha)$. Thus, for any $\alpha' > \alpha$ there exists an allocation that yields the same profits $\Pi(0; \alpha') = \Pi(0; \alpha')$ but higher promised-utility $\mu(0; \alpha') > \mu(0; \alpha)$ than the COA for $\alpha$. This must be a contradiction, since, for a given $\alpha$, it is always feasible for the planner to replicate the allocation with outside option $\alpha'$ by relaxing all the PCs by $\alpha' - \alpha$. However, the planner chooses not to do so because it is not optimal. Thus, $\partial \Phi(0; \alpha)/\partial \alpha > 0$.

Next, by the Theorem of the Maximum $W(0; \alpha)$ (and therefore $\Phi(0; \alpha)$) is continuous in $\alpha$. Moreover, at the fixed point $W(0) = W(0; W(0)) = W(0) - \Phi(0; W(0))$ the threshold must be zero. Then, since $\Phi(0; \alpha)$ is continuous and strictly increasing in $\alpha$ on the interval $[u(\bar{w})/(1 - \beta), \hat{\mu}(0)]$ and $u(\bar{w})/(1 - \beta) < W(0) < \hat{\mu}(0)$, it is sufficient to state that $\Phi(0; u(\bar{w})/(1 - \beta)) < \Phi(0; W(0)) = 0$ and $\Phi(0; \hat{\mu}(0)) > \Phi(0; W(0)) = 0$ to establish that the fixed point $W(0)$ exists in the interior of this interval and is unique.  

$\blacksquare$
REFERENCES


