

Should Central Banks Worry about Nonlinearities of Their Large-Scale Macroeconomic Models?*

Vadym Lepetyuk, Lilia Maliar and Serguei Maliar

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Abstract

How wrong could policymakers be when using linearized solutions to their macroeconomic models instead of nonlinear global solutions? This question became of much practical interest during the Great Recession and the recent zero lower bound crisis. We assess the importance of nonlinearities in a scaled-down version of the Terms of Trade Economic Model (ToTEM), the main projection and policy analysis model of the Bank of Canada. In a meticulously calibrated “baby” ToTEM model with 21 state variables, we find that local and global solutions have similar qualitative implications in the context of the recent episode of the effective lower bound on nominal interest rates in Canada. We conclude that Bank of Canada’s analysis would not improve significantly by using global nonlinear methods instead of a simple linearization method augmented to include occasionally binding constraints. However, we also find that even minor modifications in the model’s assumptions, such as a variation in the closing condition, can make nonlinearities quantitatively important.

JEL classification: C61, C63, C68, E31, E52

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*Corresponding author: Lilia Maliar, Department of Economics, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-6072, USA. Email: maliarl@stanford.edu. The authors acknowledge the support from the Bank of Canada and useful comments from Stefano Gnocchi, the senior research director in the Canadian economic analysis department. The authors are especially grateful for help, encouragement and constructive comments of the former head of Bank of Canada’s model development division Oleksiy Kryvtsov, who initiated this project, and the current head of the division José Dorich, who led this project and brought it to its completion. The authors are also thankful to HanJing Xie for excellent assistance. The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the authors and may differ from official Bank of Canada views. No responsibility for them should be attributed to the Bank of Canada.

1 Introduction

Nowadays, central banks, as well as leading international organizations and government agencies, use large-scale macroeconomic models in practical policymaking. Notable examples are the International Monetary Fund’s Global Economy Model, GEM (Bayoumi et al., 2001), the U.S. Federal Reserve Board’s SIGMA model (Erceg et al., 2006), the Bank of Canada Terms of Trade Economic Model, ToTEM (Dorich et al., 2013), the European Central Bank’s New Area-Wide Model, NAWM (Coenen et al., 2008), the Bank of England’s COMPASS Model (Burgess et al., 2013) and the Swedish Riksbank’s Ramses II Model (Adolfson et al., 2013). These are general equilibrium models that typically include several types of utility-maximizing consumers, several profit-maximizing production sectors, fiscal and monetary authorities, as well as a foreign sector.¹ Central banks’ models must be rich and flexible enough to realistically describe the interactions between numerous variables that are of interest to policymakers, including different types of foreign and domestic inputs, outputs, consumption, investment, capital, labor, prices, exchange rate, as well as monetary variables and financial assets. Some central banking models contain hundreds of equations and unknowns! The goal of these models is to mimic as closely as possible the actual economies in every possible dimension of interest. Using such rich models, policymakers can produce realistic macroeconomic projections and promptly analyze the consequences of alternative policies.

Estimation, calibration, solution and simulation of these large and complex macroeconomic models are highly nontrivial tasks. Currently, policymakers analyze their large-scale models by using local perturbation solution methods, primarily, linearization. Perturbation methods are computationally inexpensive, simple to use and can be applied to very large problems. Until the Great Recession, policymakers were not concerned with nonlinearities in their large-scale macroeconomic models. As Bullard (2013) pointed out, “... the idea that U.S. policymakers should worry about the nonlinearity of the Taylor-type rule and its implications is sometimes viewed as an amusing bit of theory without real ramifications. Linear models tell you everything you need to know. And so, from the denial point of view, we can stick with our linear models...” Also, Leahy (2013) argues: “Prior to the crisis, it was easier to defend the proposition that non-linearities were unimportant than it was to defend the proposition that non-linearities were essential for understanding macroeconomic dynamics.”

The question “How wrong could linearized solutions be?” became of interest to policymakers in light of the Great Recession and the recent zero lower bound (ZLB) crisis. Why could nonlinearities matter for policy analysis? We distinguish three potential effects of nonlinearities on the properties of the solution compared with a plain linearization method: First, linearization methods neglect higher-order effects of price and wage dispersion, as well as the effect of the degree of uncertainty on the solution. Second, perturbation solutions are local; they are constructed to be accurate in a close proximity to the deterministic steady state and their accuracy can deteriorate rapidly when we deviate from the steady state. Since economic crises are normally characterized by large deviations from the steady state, perturbation methods and especially linearization can fail dramatically during these periods.² Finally, a ZLB crisis is a potentially important source of nonlinearities by itself: the kink in the Taylor rule can induce kinks and strong nonlinearities in the other model’s variables. There are a number of papers that emphasize the importance of nonlinearities associated with the ZLB constraint for the implications of new Keynesian models.³ However, conventional perturbation methods are not designed for dealing with occasionally binding constraints and they do not provide adequate framework for policy analysis during ZLB episodes. Hence, there is a possibility that economists failed to foresee and prevent the Great Recession and the ZLB

¹ There are also less structural large-scale microeconomic models of central banking, e.g., FRB of the U.S. Federal Reserve (Brayton, 1997) and LENS of the Bank of Canada (Gervais and Gosselin, 2014).

² In particular, Judd et al. (2017), report that approximation errors in linearized solutions can reach hundreds percent under empirically relevant calibration of new Keynesian models, even in the absence of an active ZLB.

³ The literature on the role of ZLB in nonlinear models includes Judd, Maliar and Maliar (2012), Gust, López-Salido and Smith (2012), Mertens and Ravn (2014), Fernández-Villaverde, Gordon, Guerrón-Quintana and Rubio-Ramírez (2015), Maliar and Maliar (2015), Aruoba, Cuba-Borda and Schorfheide (2017), Eggertsson and Singh (2016), Christiano, Eichenbaum and Johannsen (2016), and Boneva, Braun and Waki (2016), among others.

crisis simply because they use unreliable solution methods for the analysis of their nonlinear models.⁴

The concerns about reliability of the conventional perturbation methods stimulated their further development. An important shortcoming of such methods – their inability to deal with the ZLB restriction – was addressed in recent literature, namely, several papers developed linearization-based solution methods that are capable of dealing with occasionally binding inequality constraints; see Laséen and Svensson (2011), Beneš (2015), Guerrieri and Iacoviello (2015) and Holden (2016). Such new methods had been readily adopted by policymakers for the analysis of their large-scale new Keynesian models. For example, the Bank of Canada recently switched to an IRIS toolbox that makes it possible to deal with the ZLB constraint; see Beneš et al. (2015) for IRIS documentation. Another toolbox that can deliver linearization-based solutions with inequality constraints is OccBin toolbox of Guerrieri and Iacoviello (2015). However, these new perturbation-based methods are limited to linearized models; as of now, there are no second-order and higher-order perturbation-based methods that can deal with inequality constraints.

Although these new linearization-based methods can deal with the ZLB constraint, they neglect other potentially important effects of nonlinearities on solutions, including a higher-order effect and uncertainty effect. Therefore, the following questions remain open: Are these new linearization-based methods sufficiently accurate in the context of large-scale central banking models? Do these methods remain accurate during the periods of the economic crisis characterized by large deviations from the steady state? Are the approximation errors in the perturbation solution economically significant, and in particular, can such errors lead to incorrect policy recommendations, etc? These are the questions we address in the paper.

We assess the role of nonlinearities in a realistically calibrated large-scale central banking model by comparing local perturbation and global nonlinear solutions. Our analysis is carried out in the context of the main projection and policy analysis model of the Bank of Canada, called the Terms of Trade Economic Model (ToTEM). This is a huge model: currently, it includes 356 equations and unknowns; see a technical report of Dorich et al. (2013). While we would like to construct a global nonlinear solution to the full-scale ToTEM model, this model is still too large for the existing global solution methods. We focus on a scaled-down version of ToTEM, which we call a “baby” ToTEM (bToTEM) model. The bToTEM model includes 49 equations and 21 state variables and it is intractable under conventional value function iteration or projection methods because of the curse of dimensionality. It is a challenging model even for the state-of-the-art global solution methods that are designed to deal with large-scale applications!

We calibrate the bToTEM model by following the ToTEM analysis as closely as possible. We find that our scaled-down bToTEM model replicates remarkably well the impulse response functions of the full-scale ToTEM model. For the sake of comparison, we also include the impulse response functions produced by LENS, another model of the Bank of Canada; see Gervais and Gosselin (2014) for a technical report about the LENS model. In most cases, the impulse responses of the ToTEM and bToTEM models were closer to one another than those produced by ToTEM and LENS. We conclude that bToTEM provides an adequate framework for projection and policy analysis of the Canadian economy.

To construct a global nonlinear solution of the bToTEM model, we use a cluster grid algorithm (CGA), introduced in Maliar et al. (2011) and further developed in Maliar and Maliar (2015). To deal with high dimensionality, CGA covers a high probability area of the state space with a set of clusters and uses the centers of the clusters as a grid for constructing a nonlinear solution; also CGA uses other numerical techniques that are designed to deal with large-scale applications, such as non-product monomial integration methods and derivative-free fixed-point iteration. Importantly, CGA can adequately impose a ZLB on nominal interest rates. To the best of our knowledge, our paper is the first one that applies global nonlinear methods to solve a large-scale macroeconomic model, which is actually used by policymakers.

We subsequently use the bToTEM model to run two empirically relevant policy experiments. In the first experiment, we demonstrate a new plausible mechanism of generating the ZLB in an open-economy model, namely, a large negative foreign demand shock. Unlike the U.S. and Europe, the Canadian economy did not experience a subprime crisis and was not initially hit by the 2008 Great Recession; see a speech of Boivin

⁴ A link between a model’s nonlinearity and economic crisis is advocated, for example, in Leahy (2013): “...we need a non-linear model in order to capture the possibility of crises and in order to model the forces that trigger crises...”

(2011). However, Canada experienced a significant reduction in foreign demand (in particular, in the U.S. demand), and this turned out to be sufficient to produce a prolonged episode of an effective lower bound, ELB, on nominal interest rates in the bToTEM model.⁵ Our findings are robust: both local and global solution methods predict very similar timing and duration of the ELB episodes. Approximation errors can reach 4 percent in the local solutions, while they are less than 1 percent in the global solution, however, this difference in accuracy does not translate into economically significant differences in the properties of solutions even under large deviations from the steady state. Moreover, the ELB dynamics of linearization-based IRIS (or OccBin) solutions are very similar to those of our global nonlinear solution in the presence of an active ELB. Thus, our experiment does not reveal the importance of nonlinear effects in the bToTEM model during the 2009-2010 ELB crisis in Canada; in this respect, we are similar to Christiano et al. (2016) and Eggertsson and Singh (2016).

In our second experiment, we explore the role of the inflation target in the 2009-2010 ELB crisis in Canada. Since 1995, the Bank of Canada has aimed at keeping the inflation rate of 2 percent, however, every five years the inflation-target framework is reassessed; see a speech by Côté (2014). In 2016, the Bank of Canada considered the possibility of increasing the inflation target but eventually decided to keep it at a 2 percent level.⁶ We use simulation of bToTEM to assess the impact of a hypothetical transition from a 2 to 3 percent inflation target on the Canadian economy. At first glance, we spot economically significant differences between linear and nonlinear solutions. Namely, the linear solution behaves in a way that is typical for new Keynesian models: initially, the interest rate is below the new steady states, and the Taylor rule provides monetary stimulus leading to higher investment, output, capital and consumption. In contrast, starting from the same state, we obtain nonlinear dynamics that are irregular and puzzling. We demonstrate that the puzzle is explained by a noticeable difference in steady states across the solutions: in the absence of realized shocks, the linear solution path converges to the deterministic steady state, while the nonlinear solution path converges to a stochastic steady state, which depends on the degree of uncertainty. If the initial condition for simulation is taken to be the deterministic steady state, then first- and second-order solutions look different. However, if each solution starts the transition from its own steady state (which we view as a coherent approach), then the solutions look similar. This leads us to the conclusion that the role of nonlinearities is quite limited.

From our two policy experiments, we conclude that the Bank of Canada is not losing much by focusing on IRIS linear solutions when using the ToTEM model, but we show that a relatively minor change in the model's assumptions can change this conclusion. To induce the stationarity in the bToTEM model, we use a simple linear closing condition implying that the risk premium on foreign bonds increases with the quantity of the bonds purchased. We find that to make nonlinearities important, it is sufficient to change our linear closing condition to a similar condition in an exponential form, used in Schmitt-Grohé and Uribe (2003). Interestingly, Schmitt-Grohé and Uribe (2003) find that a particular form of the closing condition does not affect much the quantitative predictions of open-economy models. However, their analysis is carried out with linearized solutions, and our example shows that their results do not necessarily apply to nonlinear solutions. In fact, since linearized versions of linear and exponential conditions are exactly the same, the analysis of Schmitt-Grohé and Uribe (2003) treats them as identical. In contrast, our nonlinear analysis reveals the quantitative importance of high-order terms, neglected by the linearization method. Our analysis suggests that the Bank of Canada and other users of large-scale macroeconomic models need to develop numerical tools that make it possible to test the robustness of their linear solutions to potentially important effects of nonlinearities. One of such tools is the bToTEM developed in the present paper.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: In Section 2, we construct the bToTEM model. In Section 3, we outline the calibration of the bToTEM model and compare its impulse response functions with the ToTEM and LENS models. In Section 4, we describe the implementation of nonlinear solution

⁵ An ELB is similar to a ZLB on (net) nominal interest rates but it is set at a level other than zero. What important in both cases is that there is a lower bound that becomes binding.

⁶ For further details about the inflation-control analysis of the Bank of Canada, see Renewal of the Inflation-Control Target. Background Information (2016).

methods for the bToTEM model, and we discuss the properties of the nonlinear solutions. In Section 5, we use the bToTEM model to perform two policy experiments. Finally, in Section 6, we conclude.

2 The bToTEM model

ToTEM is the main projection and policy analysis model of the Bank of Canada.⁷ This is a large-scale general equilibrium macroeconomic model that currently contains 356 equations and unknowns. We construct and calibrate bToTEM – a scaled down version of ToTEM that has 49 equations and unknowns, including 21 state variables.

2.1 bToTEM versus ToTEM

In the construction of bToTEM, we follow ToTEM as closely as possible. Like the full-scale ToTEM model, the bToTEM is a small open-economy model that features the new-Keynesian Phillips curves for consumption, labor and imports. As in ToTEM, we assume the rule-of-thumb price settlers in line with Galí and Gertler (1999). We use a quadratic adjustment cost of investment and a convex cost of capital utilization. We maintain the ToTEM’s terms of trade assumption; namely, we allow for bidirectional trade consisting of exporting domestic consumption goods and commodities, and importing foreign goods for domestic production.

There are three aspects in which bToTEM is simplified relatively to ToTEM. First, the full-scale ToTEM model consists of five distinct production sectors, namely, those for producing consumption goods and services, investment goods, government goods, noncommodity export goods, commodities, and it also has a separate economic model of the rest of the world (ROW). The first four of ToTEM’s production sectors have identical production technology and constraints, and only differ in the values of parameters. In the bToTEM model, in place of the four sectors we assume just one production sector, which is identical in structure to the consumption goods and services sector of the ToTEM model, and we introduce linear technologies for transforming the output of this sector into other types of output corresponding to the remaining ToTEM’s sectors.

Second, there are three types of households in ToTEM that differ in their saving opportunities. In turn, in bToTEM we assume just one type of household. Like in ToTEM, the bToTEM’s households supply differentiated labor services in exchange for sticky wages. Under our assumptions, Phillips curves in bToTEM are identical to those in ToTEM; the difference is that bToTEM has three Phillips curves, while ToTEM has eight Phillips curves.

Finally, in ToTEM, the ROW sector is represented as a separate new Keynesian model with its own production sector, while in bToTEM the ROW sector is modeled by using appropriately calibrated exogenous processes for foreign variables.

In the main text, we describe the optimization problems of economic agents and the key model’s equations in bToTEM; the derivation of equilibrium conditions and a list of the model’s equations are provided in Appendices ?? and ??, respectively.

2.2 Production of final goods

The production sector of the economy consists of two stages. In the first stage, intermediate goods are produced by identical perfectly competitive firms from labor, capital, commodities, and imports. In the second stage, a variety of final goods are produced by monopolistically competitive firms from the intermediate goods. The final goods are then aggregated into the final consumption good.

⁷See Dorich et al. (2013) for a detailed technical report on the ToTEM model. This model – known also as TOTEM II – builds on the original ToTEM model developed by Murchison and Renisson (2006); see also Murchison and Renisson (2005) for a simplified version of the original ToTEM model.

First stage of production. In the first stage of production, the representative, perfectly competitive firm produces an intermediate good using the following constant elasticity of substitution (CES) technology:

$$Z_t^g = \left[\delta_l (A_t L_t)^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} + \delta_k (u_t K_t)^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} + \delta_{com} \left(COM_t^d \right)^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} + \delta_m (M_t)^{\frac{\sigma-1}{\sigma}} \right]^{\frac{\sigma}{\sigma-1}}, \quad (1)$$

where L_t , K_t , and COM_t^d are labor, capital and commodity inputs, respectively, M_t is imports, u_t is capital utilization, and A_t is the level of labor-augmenting technology that follows a stochastic process given by

$$\log A_t = \varphi_a \log A_{t-1} + (1 - \varphi_a) \log \bar{A} + \xi_t^a, \quad (2)$$

with ξ_t^a being a normally distributed variable, and φ_a being an autocorrelation coefficient.

Capital depreciates according to the following law of motion:

$$K_{t+1} = (1 - d_t) K_t + I_t, \quad (3)$$

where d_t is the depreciation rate, and I_t is investment. The depreciation rate increases with capital utilization as follows:

$$d_t = d_0 + \bar{d} e^{\rho(u_t - 1)}. \quad (4)$$

The firm incurs a quadratic adjustment cost when adjusting the level of investment. The net output is given by

$$Z_t^n = Z_t^g - \frac{\chi_i}{2} \left(\frac{I_t}{I_{t-1}} - 1 \right)^2 I_t. \quad (5)$$

The objective of the firm is to choose L_t , K_{t+1} , I_t , COM_t , M_t , u_t in order to maximize profits

$$E_0 \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \mathcal{R}_{0,t} \left(P_t^z Z_t^n - W_t L_t - P_t^i I_t - P_t^{com} COM_t^d - P_t^m M_t \right)$$

subject to (1)–(5). The firm discounts nominal payoffs according to household's stochastic discount factor $\mathcal{R}_{t,t+j} = \beta^j (\lambda_{t+j}/\lambda_t) (P_t/P_{t+j})$, where λ_t is household's marginal utility of consumption and P_t is the final good price.

Second stage of production. In the second stage of production, a continuum of monopolistically competitive firms indexed by i produce differentiated goods from the intermediate goods and manufactured inputs. The production technology features perfect complementarity

$$Z_{it} = \min \left(\frac{Z_{it}^n}{1 - s_m}, \frac{Z_{it}^{mi}}{s_m} \right),$$

where Z_{it}^n is an intermediate good and Z_{it}^{mi} is a manufactured input, and s_m is a Leontief parameter. The differentiated goods Z_{it} are aggregated into the final good Z_t according to the following CES technology:

$$Z_t = \left(\int_0^1 Z_{it}^{\frac{\varepsilon-1}{\varepsilon}} di \right)^{\frac{\varepsilon}{\varepsilon-1}}.$$

Cost minimization implies the following demand function for a differentiated good i :

$$Z_{it} = \left(\frac{P_{it}}{P_t} \right)^{-\varepsilon} Z_t, \quad (6)$$

where

$$P_t = \left(\int_0^1 P_{it}^{1-\varepsilon} di \right)^{\frac{1}{1-\varepsilon}}. \quad (7)$$

The final good is used as the manufactured inputs by each of the monopolistically competitive firms.

There are monopolistically competitive firms of two types: rule-of-thumb firms of measure ω and forward-looking firms of measure $1 - \omega$. Within each type with probability θ the firms index their price to the inflation target $\bar{\pi}_t$ as follows: $P_{it} = \bar{\pi}_t P_{i,t-1}$. With probability $1 - \theta$, the rule-of-thumb firms partially index their price to lagged inflation and target inflation according to the following rule:

$$P_{it} = (\pi_{t-1})^\gamma (\bar{\pi}_t)^{1-\gamma} P_{i,t-1}. \quad (8)$$

The forward-looking firms with probability $1 - \theta$ choose their price P_t^* in order to maximize profits generated when the price remains effective

$$\max_{P_t^*} E_t \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \theta^j \mathcal{R}_{t,t+j} \left(\prod_{k=1}^j \bar{\pi}_{t+k} P_t^* Z_{i,t+j} - (1 - s_m) P_{t+j}^z Z_{i,t+j} - s_m P_{t+j} Z_{i,t+j} \right) \quad (9)$$

subject to demand constraints

$$Z_{i,t+j} = \left(\frac{\prod_{k=1}^j \bar{\pi}_{t+k} P_t^*}{P_{t+j}} \right)^{-\varepsilon} Z_{t+j}. \quad (10)$$

Relation between the first and second stages of production. The production in the first and second stages are related as follows:

$$Z_t^n = \int_0^1 Z_{it}^n di = (1 - s_m) \int_0^1 Z_{it} di = (1 - s_m) \int_0^1 \left(\frac{P_{it}}{P_t} \right)^{-\varepsilon} Z_t di = (1 - s_m) \Delta_t Z_t, \quad (11)$$

where $\Delta_t = \int_0^1 \left(\frac{P_{it}}{P_t} \right)^{-\varepsilon} di$ is known as *price dispersion*.

Finally, in order to maintain the relative prices of the investment goods and noncommodity exports in accordance to the national accounts, these goods are assumed to be produced from the final goods according to linear technology that implies $P_t^i = \iota_i P_t$ and $P_t^{nc} = \iota_x P_t$, where P_t^i and P_t^{nc} are the price of investment goods and noncommodity exports goods, respectively.

2.3 Commodities

The representative, perfectly competitive domestic firm produces commodities using final goods according to the following CES technology:

$$COM_t = (Z_t^{com})^{s_z} (A_t F)^{1-s_z} - \frac{\chi_{com}}{2} \left(\frac{Z_t^{com}}{Z_{t-1}^{com}} - 1 \right)^2 Z_t^{com}, \quad (12)$$

where Z_t^{com} is the final good input, and F is a fixed production factor, which may be considered as land. Similarly to production of final goods, the commodity producers incur quadratic adjustment costs when they adjust the level of final good input.

The commodities are sold domestically (COM_t^d) or exported to the rest of the world (X_t^{com})

$$COM_t = COM_t^d + X_t^{com}.$$

They are sold at the world price adjusted by the nominal exchange rate as follows:

$$P_t^{com} = e_t P_t^{comf},$$

where e_t is the nominal exchange rate (i.e., domestic price of a unit of foreign currency), and P_t^{comf} is the world commodity price. In real terms, the latter price is given by

$$p_t^{com} = s_t p_t^{comf}, \quad (13)$$

where $p_t^{com} \equiv P_t^{com}/P_t$ and $p_t^{comf} \equiv P_t^{comf}/P_t^f$ are domestic and foreign relative prices of commodities, respectively, P_t^f is the foreign consumption price level, and $s_t = e_t P_t^f/P_t$ is the real exchange rate.

2.4 Imports

The final imported good M_t is bonded from intermediate imported goods according to the following technology:

$$M_t = \left(\int_0^1 M_{it}^{\frac{\varepsilon_m - 1}{\varepsilon_m}} di \right)^{\frac{\varepsilon_m}{\varepsilon_m - 1}},$$

where M_{it} is an intermediate imported good i . The demand for an intermediate imported good i is given by

$$M_{it} = \left(\frac{P_{it}^m}{P_t^m} \right)^{-\varepsilon_m} M_t,$$

where

$$P_t^m = \left(\int_0^1 (P_{it}^m)^{1-\varepsilon_m} di \right)^{\frac{1}{1-\varepsilon_m}}.$$

We assume the prices of the intermediate imported goods to be sticky in a similar way as the prices of the differentiated final goods. A measure ω_m of the importers follows the rule-of-thumb pricing, and the others are forward looking. The optimizing forward-looking importers choose the price P_t^{m*} in order to maximize profits generated when the price remains effective

$$\max_{P_t^{m*}} E_t \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} (\theta_m)^j \mathcal{R}_{t,t+j} \left(\prod_{k=1}^j \bar{\pi}_{t+k} P_t^{m*} M_{i,t+j} - e_{t+j} P_{t+j}^{mf} M_{i,t+j} \right)$$

subject to demand constraints

$$M_{i,t+j} = \left(\frac{\prod_{k=1}^j \bar{\pi}_{t+k} P_t^{m*}}{P_{t+j}^m} \right)^{-\varepsilon_m} M_{t+j},$$

where P_t^{mf} is the price of imports in the foreign currency. All importers face the same marginal cost given by the foreign price of imports.

2.5 Households

The representative household in the economy has the period utility function over consumption of finished goods and a variety of differentiated labor service

$$U_t = \frac{\mu}{\mu - 1} (C_t - \xi \bar{C}_{t-1})^{\frac{\mu-1}{\mu}} \exp \left(\frac{\eta(1-\mu)}{\mu(1+\eta)} \int_0^1 (L_{ht})^{\frac{\eta+1}{\eta}} dh \right) \eta_t^c, \quad (14)$$

where C_t is the household consumption of finished goods; \bar{C}_t is the aggregate consumption, which the representative household takes as given; L_{ht} is labor service of type h ; η_t^c is a consumption demand shock that follows a process

$$\log \eta_t^c = \varphi_c \log \eta_{t-1}^c + \xi_t^c, \quad (15)$$

with ξ_t^c being a normally distributed variable, and φ_c being an autocorrelation coefficient.

The representative household of type h maximizes the lifetime utility

$$E_0 \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t U_t \quad (16)$$

subject to the following budget constraints:

$$P_t C_t + \frac{B_t}{R_t} + \frac{e_t B_t^f}{R_t^f (1 + \kappa_t^f)} = B_{t-1} + e_t B_{t-1}^f + \int_0^1 W_{ht} L_{ht} dh + \Pi_t, \quad (17)$$

where B_t and B_t^f are holdings of domestic and foreign-currency denominated bonds, respectively; R_t and R_t^f are domestic and foreign nominal interest rate, respectively; κ_t^f is the risk premium on the foreign interest rate; W_{ht} is the nominal wage of labor of type h ; Π_t is profits paid by the firms.

2.6 Wage setting

The representative household supplies a variety of differentiated labor service to the labor market, which is monopolistically competitive. The differentiated labor service is aggregated according to the following aggregation function:

$$L_t = \left(\int_0^1 L_{ht}^{\frac{\varepsilon_w - 1}{\varepsilon_w}} dh \right)^{\frac{\varepsilon_w}{\varepsilon_w - 1}}.$$

Aggregated labor L_t is demanded by firms in the first stage of production. A cost minimization of the aggregating firm implies the following demand for individual labor:

$$L_{ht} = \left(\frac{W_{ht}}{W_t} \right)^{-\varepsilon_w} L_t, \quad (18)$$

where W_{ht} is wage for labor service of type h , and W_t is defined by the following:

$$W_t \equiv \left(\int_0^1 W_{ht}^{1-\varepsilon_w} dh \right)^{\frac{1}{1-\varepsilon_w}}. \quad (19)$$

Wages are set by labor unions that are of two types: rule-of-thumb unions of measure ω_w and forward-looking unions of measure $1 - \omega_w$. Within each type, with probability θ_w the labor unions index their wage to the inflation target $\bar{\pi}_t$ as follows $W_{it} = \bar{\pi}_t W_{i,t-1}$. The rule-of-thumb unions that do not index their wage in the current period follow the rule

$$W_{it} = (\pi_{t-1}^w)^{\gamma_w} (\bar{\pi}_t)^{1-\gamma_w} W_{i,t-1}. \quad (20)$$

The forward-looking unions that do not index their wage choose the wage W_t^* optimally in order to maximize the household utility function when the wage is effective

$$E_t \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} (\beta \theta_w)^j U_{t+j} \quad (21)$$

subject to labor demand (18) written as

$$L_{h,t+j} = \left(\frac{\prod_{k=1}^j \bar{\pi}_{t+k} W_t^*}{W_{t+j}} \right)^{-\varepsilon_w} L_{t+j}, \quad (22)$$

and budget constraints (17) which can be written as

$$P_{t+j} C_{t+j} = \prod_{k=1}^j \bar{\pi}_{t+k} W_t^* L_{h,t+j} dh + \Psi_{t+j},$$

where Ψ_{t+j} includes terms other than C_{t+j} and $L_{h,t+j}$.

2.7 Monetary policy

The monetary authority sets the short-term nominal interest rate in response to a deviation of the actual inflation rate from the target and a deviation of the actual output from potential output,

$$\Phi_t = \rho_r R_{t-1} + (1 - \rho_r) [\bar{R} + \rho_\pi (\pi_t - \bar{\pi}_t) + \rho_Y (\log Y_t - \log \bar{Y}_t)] + \eta_t^r, \quad (23)$$

where ρ_r measures the degree of smoothing of the interest rate; \bar{R} is the long-run nominal interest rate; ρ_π measures a long-run response to the inflation gap; $\bar{\pi}_t$ is the inflation target; ρ_Y measures a long-run response to the output gap; \bar{Y}_t is the potential level of output; η_t^r is an interest rate shock that is assumed to follow the following process:

$$\eta_t^r = \varphi_r \eta_{t-1}^r + \xi_t^r,$$

where ξ_t^r is a normally distributed variable, and φ_r is an autocorrelation coefficient. Potential output changes with productivity in the following stylized way:

$$\log \bar{Y}_t = \varphi_z \log \bar{Y}_{t-1} + (1 - \varphi_z) \log \left(\frac{A_t \bar{Y}}{A} \right).$$

If an effective lower bound R_t^{elb} is imposed on the nominal interest rate, the interest rate is determined as a maximum of (23) and R_t^{elb} :

$$R_t = \max \left\{ R_t^{elb}, \Phi_t \right\}.$$

2.8 Foreign demand for noncommodity exports

We assume that the foreign demand for noncommodity exports is given by the following demand function:

$$X_t^{nc} = \gamma^f \left(\frac{P_t^{nc}}{e_t P_t^f} \right)^{-\phi} Z_t^f, \quad (24)$$

where P_t^{nc} is a domestic price of noncommodity exports. In real terms, we have

$$X_t^{nc} = \gamma^f \left(\frac{s_t}{p_t^{nc}} \right)^\phi Z_t^f. \quad (25)$$

2.9 Balance of payments

The balance of payments is

$$\frac{e_t B_t^f}{R_t^f (1 + \kappa_t^f)} - e_t B_{t-1}^f = P_t^{nc} X_t^{nc} + P_t^{com} X_t^{com} - P_t^m M_t, \quad (26)$$

where B_t^f is domestic holdings of foreign-currency denominated bonds, and R_t^f is the nominal interest rate on the bonds. In real terms, it becomes

$$\frac{b_t^f}{r_t^f (1 + \kappa_t^f)} - b_{t-1}^f \frac{s_t}{s_{t-1}} = \frac{1}{\bar{Y}} (p_t^{nc} X_t^{nc} + p_t^{com} X_t^{com} - p_t^m M_t), \quad (27)$$

where the bond holdings are normalized as $b_t^f = \frac{e_t B_t^f}{\pi_{t+1}^f P_t \bar{Y}}$, and r_t^f is the real interest rate on the foreign-currency denominated bonds.

2.10 Rest-of-the-world economy

The rest of the world is specified by three exogenous processes that describe the evolution of foreign variables. First, the foreign output Z_t^f is given by

$$\log Z_t^f = \varphi_{zf} \log Z_{t-1}^f + (1 - \varphi_{zf}) \log \bar{Z}^f + \xi_t^{zf}; \quad (28)$$

second, the foreign real interest rate r_t^f follows

$$\log r_t^f = \varphi_{rf} \log r_{t-1}^f + (1 - \varphi_{rf}) \log \bar{r} + \xi_t^{rf}; \quad (29)$$

finally, a foreign commodity price p_t^{comf} is

$$\log p_t^{comf} = \varphi_{comf} \log p_{t-1}^{comf} + (1 - \varphi_{comf}) \log \bar{p}^{comf} + \xi_t^{comf}, \quad (30)$$

where ξ_t^{zf} , ξ_t^{rf} and ξ_t^{comf} are normally distributed random variables, and φ_{Zf} , φ_{rf} and φ_{comf} are the autocorrelation coefficients.

2.11 Uncovered interest rate parity

We impose an augmented uncovered interest rate parity condition

$$e_t = E_t \left[(e_{t-1})^\varkappa \left(e_{t+1} \frac{R_t^f (1 + \kappa_t^f)}{R_t} \right)^{1-\varkappa} \right], \quad (31)$$

where the term $(e_{t-1})^\varkappa$ under the brackets is added to mimic the relationship assumed in ToTEM; see Appendix A.4 for some more details. Without the augmented term the difference in interest rates between two countries would be equal to the expected change in exchange rates between the countries' currencies.

2.12 Market clearing conditions

We close the model by the following resource feasibility condition:

$$Z_t = C_t + \iota_i I_t + \iota_x X_t^{nc} + Z_t^{com} + v_z Z_t. \quad (32)$$

We define GDP and GDP deflator as follows:

$$Y_t = C_t + I_t + X_t^{nc} + X_t^{com} - M_t + v_y Y_t, \quad (33)$$

$$P_t^y Y_t = P_t C_t + P_t^i I_t + P_t^{nc} X_t^{nc} + P_t^{com} X_t^{com} - P_t^m M_t + v_y P_t^y Y_t;$$

in real terms, the latter becomes

$$p_t^y Y_t = C_t + p_t^i I_t + p_t^{nc} X_t^{nc} + p_t^{com} X_t^{com} - p_t^m M_t + v_y p_t^y Y_t. \quad (34)$$

2.13 Stationarity condition for the open-economy model

The budget constraint (17) of the domestic economy contains $R_t^f (1 + \kappa_t^f)$ where R_t^f is the rate of return to foreign assets and κ_t^f is the risk premium. If the rate of return to foreign assets does not depend on quantity purchased, then the domestic economy can maintain nonvanishing long-run growth by investing in foreign assets. Schmitt-Grohé and Uribe (2003) explore several alternative assumptions that make it possible to prevent this undesirable implication and to attain stationarity in open-economy models. We

adopt one of their assumptions, namely, we assume that the risk premium κ_t^f is an increasing function of foreign assets

$$\kappa_t^f = \varsigma \left(\bar{b}^f - b_t^f \right), \quad (35)$$

where \bar{b}^f is the steady state level of the normalized bond holdings, and $\varsigma < 0$ is a parameter. This assumption ensures a decreasing rate of return to foreign assets. As we will see, a specific functional form assumed for modeling risk premium can play an important role in the model's predictions.

3 A comparison of bToTEM to ToTEM and LENS

We describe the calibration procedure for the bToTEM model, and we compare impulse response functions produced by the bToTEM model to those produced by ToTEM and LENS, the two models of the Bank of Canada.

3.1 Calibration of bToTEM

The bToTEM model contains 61 parameters that need to be calibrated. Whenever possible, we use the same values of parameters in bToTEM as those in ToTEM, and we choose the remaining parameters to reproduce a selected set of observations from the Canadian time series data. In particular, our calibration procedure targets the ratios of six nominal variables to nominal GDP $P_t^y Y_t$, namely, consumption $P_t C_t$, investment $P_t^i I_t$, noncommodity export $P_t^{nc} X_t^{nc}$, commodity export $P_t^{com} X_t^{com}$, import $P_t^m M_t$, total commodities $P_t^{com} COM_t$, and labor input $W_t L_t$. Furthermore, we calibrate the persistence of shocks so that the standard deviations of the selected bToTEM variables coincide with those of the corresponding ToTEM variables, namely, those of domestic nominal interest rate R_t , productivity A_t , foreign demand Z_t^f , foreign commodity price p_t^{comf} , and foreign interest rate r_t^f . The parameters choice is summarized in Tables D1 and D2 provided in Appendix ??.

3.2 Impulse response functions of bToTEM, ToTEM and LENS

The ToTEM model is analyzed by the Bank of Canada with the help of a first-order perturbation method that is implemented by using IRIS software.⁸ To compare our bToTEM with ToTEM, we construct a similar first-order perturbation solution to bToTEM by using both IRIS and Dynare software (we verified that the IRIS and Dynare packages produce indistinguishable numerical solutions to bToTEM).⁹ In the comparison analysis, we also include the impulse response functions for the LENS model, which is another model of the Bank of Canada.

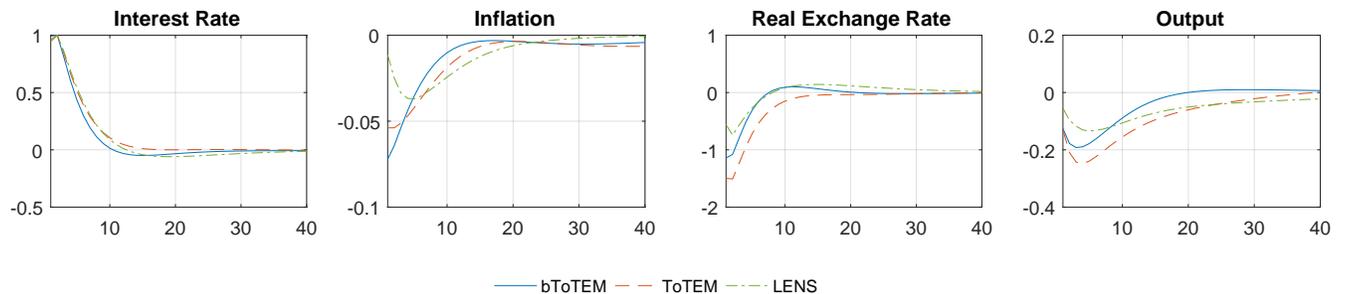


Figure 1: Impulse response functions: interest rate shock

⁸ This software is available at <http://www.iris-toolbox.com>; see Beneš, Johnston and Plotnikov (2015) for its description.

⁹ Dynare software is available at <http://www.dynare.org>; see Adjemian et al. (2011) for the documentation.

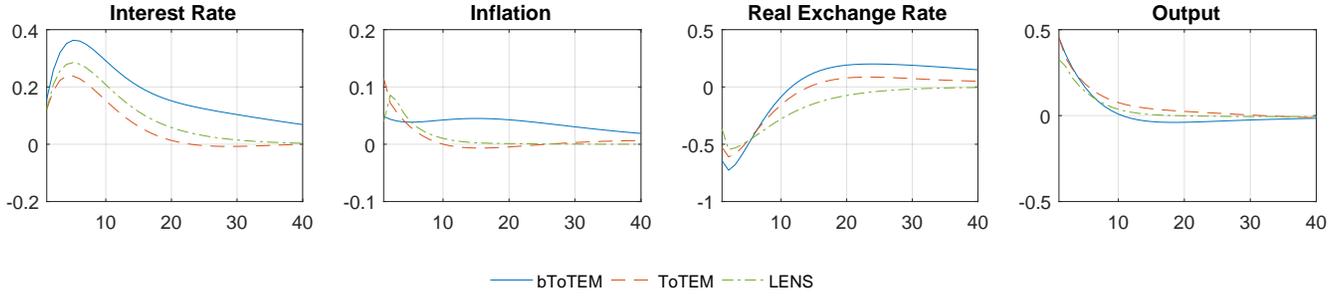


Figure 2: Impulse response functions: consumption demand shock

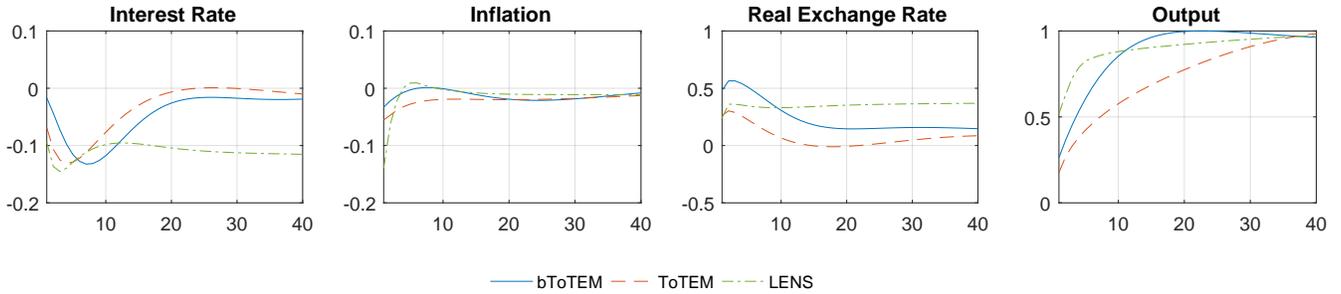


Figure 3: Impulse response functions: permanent productivity shock

In Figures 1–3, we plot impulse responses to three shocks in the bToTEM model, namely, an interest rate shock, a consumption demand shock, and a permanent productivity shock, respectively.¹⁰ In Appendix ??, we also plot impulse responses to foreign shocks, namely, ROW commodity price, demand, and interest rate shocks. In the figures, we report the response functions of four key model’s variables: the nominal short-term interest rate, the rate of inflation for consumption goods and services, the real effective exchange rate, and the output gap. The responses are shown in percentage deviations from the steady state, except for the interest rate and the inflation rate, which are both shown in deviations from the steady state and expressed in annualized terms.

The responses we observe are typical for new Keynesian models. In Figure 1, a contractionary monetary policy shock leads to a decline in output through a decline in consumption. The uncovered interest rate parity results in appreciation of the domestic currency. A reduction in the real marginal costs implies a lower price of consumption goods, and hence, lower inflation. In Figure 2, a negative shock to the discount factor increases consumption and decreases output. The interest rate that is determined by the Taylor rule increases, and the real exchange rate appreciates. In Figure 3, a permanent increase in productivity gives room for a higher potential output. The actual output gradually increases. Facing a negative output gap, the central bank lowers the interest rate according to the Taylor rule. As actual output reaches the new steady state level, the output gap closes, and the interest rate is back to the neutral rate. A lower interest rate leads to depreciation of the domestic currency because of the interest rate parity. Permanently higher productivity reduces input prices, leading to lower real marginal costs that are reflected in temporary lower inflation.

Our main finding is that our bToTEM model replicates the key properties of the full-scale ToTEM model remarkably well. Since ToTEM allows for multiple interest rates, different good prices, fiscal policies, etc., it has a richer structure than bToTEM. However, the variables that are the same in both models are described by essentially the same equations and therefore, have similar dynamics. One noticeable exception is the

¹⁰ Both, the ToTEM and LENS models, include more sources of uncertainty than the bToTEM model does, namely, 52 shocks in ToTEM and 98 shocks in LENS.

dynamics of inflation in response to a consumption demand shock; see Figure 2. In bToTEM, inflation reacts less on the impact, but decreases more slowly than in the other two models. To understand this difference between the two models, let us consider a linearized version of the Phillips curve, which is the same in bToTEM and ToTEM,

$$\hat{\pi}_t = (1 - \theta) \gamma \omega \tilde{\phi}^{-1} \hat{\pi}_{t-1} + \beta \theta \tilde{\phi}^{-1} E[\hat{\pi}_{t+1}] + \tilde{\lambda} r \hat{m}c_t + \varepsilon_t^p, \quad (36)$$

where $r\hat{m}c_t$ is the real marginal cost; ε_t^p is a weighted average of the inflation target and the deviation of markup from the steady state; θ , γ , ω are the price stickiness parameters defined in Section 2.1; and $\tilde{\phi}$ and $\tilde{\lambda}$ are the parameters determined by equations $\tilde{\phi} = \theta + \omega(1 - \theta)(1 + \gamma\beta\theta)$ and $\tilde{\lambda} = (1 - \omega)(1 - \theta)(1 - \beta\theta)\tilde{\phi}^{-1}$ (see equations (1.20)–(1.22) in Dorich et al., 2013). We observe that the difference in inflation dynamics is entirely attributed to the difference in the real marginal cost. In ToTEM, a consumption demand shock triggers a reallocation of inputs into the consumption production sector from the other four sectors. In the presence of adjustment costs, the reallocation raises the real marginal cost. In contrast, in bToTEM, there is one production sector and there are no input adjustment costs. Therefore, the responses and decays of the real marginal cost are less pronounced.

We also observe that the impulse responses of the ToTEM and bToTEM models are generally closer to one another than those produced by the ToTEM and LENS models, the two models of the Bank of Canada. This result is not surprising given that the bToTEM model is a scaled-down version of the ToTEM model, while LENS is a macroeconometric model constructed in a different way.¹¹ Consequently, our comparison results indicate that bToTEM provides an adequate framework for projection and policy analysis of the Canadian economy and that it can be used as a complement to the two models of the Bank of Canada.

4 Understanding the role of nonlinearities in the solution

We distinguish three potential effects of nonlinearities on the properties of the solution compared with a plain linearization method:

- i). (ELB). The ELB kink in the Taylor rule can induce kinks and nonlinearities in other variables of the model.*
- ii). (Higher order terms). Higher order terms, neglected by linearization, can be quantitatively important for the properties of the solution.*
- iii). (Solution domain). The quality of local (perturbation) solutions, constructed to be accurate in the steady state, can deteriorate when deviating from the steady state.*

To assess the quantitative importance of the above effects, we construct three numerical solutions to bToTEM, specifically: i) a first-order perturbation solution with occasionally binding constraints; ii) a second-order plain perturbation solution; iii) a nonlinear global solution.

4.1 First-order perturbation-based solution with occasionally binding constraint

A plain first-order perturbation method is not suitable for approximating occasionally binding constraints like ZLB or ELB, however, there are perturbation-based methods that can approximate such constraints. In particular, IRIS software can handle occasionally binding constraints although it is limited to first-order approximation. This method allows us to construct policy projections conditional on alternative anticipated

¹¹LENS is not a general-equilibrium model that is derived from microfoundations and that is calibrated to the data, like ToTEM and bToTEM. It is a large-scale macroeconometric model composed of a set of equations whose coefficients are estimated from the data and are fixed for some period of time; see Gervais and Gosselin (2014) for a technical report about the LENS model.

policy rate paths in linearized DSGE models; see Laséen and Svensson (2011) and Beneš (2015) on how this method deals with the inequality constraints; see also Holden (2016) for a related method. Dynare software cannot impose occasionally binding constraints itself, but there is an OccBin toolbox of Guerrieri and Iacoviello (2015) that allows imposing such constraints for first-order approximation. The method of Guerrieri and Iacoviello (2015) applies a first-order perturbation approach in a piecewise fashion to solve dynamic models with occasionally binding constraints. Thus, the first solution we report is a linear perturbation solution with occasionally binding constraints produced by IRIS (we also checked that the IRIS and OccBin toolboxes deliver identical results as pointed out in Guerrieri and Iacoviello, 2015).

4.2 Second-order perturbation solution

A generic second-order perturbation solution in a given class of economic models is given by

$$g(x, \sigma) \approx \underbrace{g(\bar{x}, 0) + g_x(\bar{x}, 0)(x - \bar{x})}_{\text{1st-order perturbation solution}} + \underbrace{\frac{1}{2}g_{xx}(\bar{x}, 0)(x - \bar{x})^2 + \frac{1}{2}g_{\sigma\sigma}(\bar{x}, 0)\sigma^2}_{\text{2nd-order terms}}, \quad (37)$$

where $g(x, \sigma)$ is a decision function to be approximates; x is a vector of endogenous and exogenous state variables; σ is a perturbation parameter that scales volatility; $(\bar{x}, 0)$ is a deterministic steady state; $g(\bar{x}, 0)$, $g_x(\bar{x}, 0)$ and $g_{xx}(\bar{x}, 0)$ are, respectively, steady state values, Jacobian and Hessian matrices of g ; $(x - \bar{x})$ is a deviation from a steady state; and $(x - \bar{x})^2 \equiv (x - \bar{x}) \otimes (x - \bar{x})$ is a tensor product of the deviations. The first-order perturbation solution does not depend on the degree of volatility σ , i.e., $g_\sigma(\bar{x}, 0) = 0$; the term $g_{\sigma\sigma}(\bar{x}, 0)$ is omitted as well because it is equal to zero; see Schmitt-Grohé and Uribe (2004).

Formula (37) shows the following: A second-order perturbation solution differs from a first-order solution by two terms: a constant term $\frac{1}{2}g_{\sigma\sigma}^2(\bar{x}, 0)\sigma^2$ (which we call an *uncertainty effect*), and a second-order term $\frac{1}{2}g_{xx}(\bar{x}, 0)(x - \bar{x})^2$ (which we call the *second-order effect*). To assess these effects, we report a plain second-order perturbation solution. We ignore ELB since there is no perturbation software that can impose occasionally binding constraints for second and higher order approximations.

4.3 Global nonlinear solution

Perturbation solutions are local; they are constructed to be accurate in just one point – a deterministic steady state – and their quality can deteriorate when we deviate from the steady state. To assess the importance of the “solution domain” effect, we need to construct a global solution that approximates decision rules in a larger area of the state space. To make our local and global solutions comparable, we use the same families of approximating functions, namely, ordinary polynomial functions,

$$g(x, \sigma) \approx b + b_x(x - \bar{x}) + \frac{1}{2}b_{xx}(x - \bar{x})^2 + \dots, \quad (38)$$

where b , b_x and b_{xx} are the polynomial coefficients on a constant, first, second, and higher order terms.

With this assumption, local perturbation solution (37) are given by the same polynomial functions as global solutions (38) but they differ in the values of the coefficients (constructed locally in one point versus constructed globally in a large area of the steady state, including the ELB area). By comparing the local and global solutions, we can appreciate how the quality of local solutions deteriorates when we deviate from the steady state.

An important practical question is how to construct a global solution to a model like bToTEM.¹² First of all, the bToTEM model has much larger dimensionality than new Keynesian models studied with global solution methods in the literature; see Judd et al. (2012), Boneva et al. (2016), Fernández-Villaverde et al. (2012, 2015), Gust et al. (2012), Maliar and Maliar (2015), Aruoba et al. (2017), Christiano et al.

¹²See Aruoba et al. (2006), Lim and McNelis (2008), Maliar et al. (2013), Maliar and Maliar (2014) for a comparison analysis of numerical solution methods.

(2016), among others. The largest of such models, analyzed in Maliar and Maliar (2015), contains 8 state variables (6 exogenous and 2 endogenous ones). In turn, bToTEM contains 21 state variables (6 exogenous and 15 endogenous ones). The difference between 8 and 21 state variables is immense: for example, if we discretize each state variable into just 10 grid points to construct a tensor product grid, we would have 10^8 and 10^{21} grid points in the former and latter grids, respectively, which implies a huge 10^{13} -times difference in evaluation costs! Clearly, conventional solution methods based on tensor product grids, such as conventional value function iteration, would be intractable in the context of the bToTEM model!

But high dimensionality is not the only challenge that bToTEM represents. The new Keynesian models studied by using global methods lead to relatively simple systems of few equations that can be solved in a closed form, given future variables; e.g., Maliar and Maliar (2015). In turn, the open-economy bToTEM model produces a far more complex system of more than 30 equations that include both domestic and foreign variables. This system must be treated with a numerical solver in all grid points, as well as in all future states, inside the main iterative loop.

To construct a global nonlinear solution to bToTEM, we use CGA, a numerical solution method designed for dealing with high-dimensional applications. CGA merges simulation and projection approaches, namely, it uses simulation techniques to identify a high probability area of the state space and it uses projection techniques to accurately solve the model in that area; see Maliar et al. (2011), Judd et al. (2011a, 2012) and Maliar and Maliar (2015) for a discussion of this and other ergodic set methods and their applications. In the remainder of this section, we outline the key ideas of CGA; a detailed implementation of this method in the context of the bToTEM model is described in Appendix ??.

The CGA analysis can be understood by looking at the following two-dimensional example:

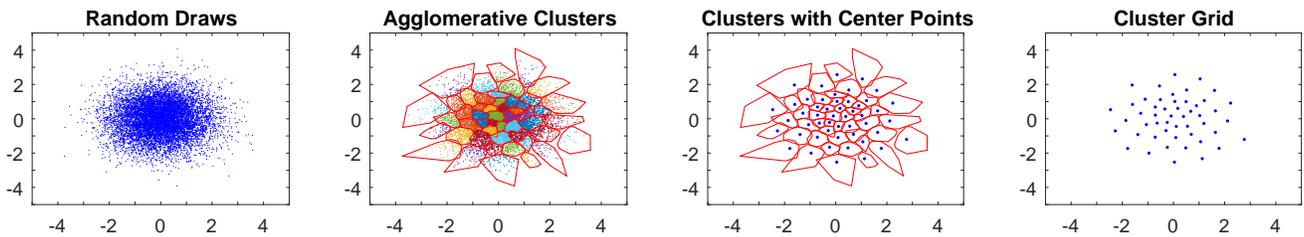


Figure 4: Construction of a cluster grid from simulated points

In the first panel of Figure 4, we see a cloud of points that is obtained by stochastic simulation of an economic model: this cloud covers a high probability area of the state space. We typically want the solution to be accurate in that area; however, the existing solution methods do not necessarily guarantee that. As argued above, perturbation methods construct numerical solutions in just one central point – a deterministic steady state – and they do not guarantee sufficient accuracy in an entire high-probability area. In turn, projection methods operate on the whole rectangular set that encloses the simulated cloud, and as a result, they construct solutions in a much larger area than we actually need. Finally, stochastic simulation methods focus on the relevant area of the state space, but the simulated cloud contains many redundant points that are located close to one another.

The CGA method improves on pure stochastic simulation methods by eliminating the redundant points; specifically, it uses clustering analysis to replace a large cloud of simulated points with a smaller set of evenly spaced “representative” points. The remaining panels of Figure 4 show how CGA constructs the representative points: it first combines simulated points into a set of clusters; it then distinguishes the centers of the clusters; and it finally uses the clusters’ centers as a grid for constructing nonlinear solution. CGA complements the efficient grid construction with other computational techniques that are suitable for high-dimensional problems, namely, low-cost non-product monomial integration rules and a fixed-point iteration method for finding parameters of equilibrium rules. Taken together, these techniques make CGA tractable in problems with high dimensionality – dozens of state variables!

5 Assessing the effects of nonlinearities in the bToTEM model

We assess the effects of nonlinearities on the properties of solutions to the bToTEM model by conducting two policy experiments related to the ELB episode in Canada during the Great Recession. We choose to focus on the ELB crisis for three reasons: first, the ELB crisis is characterized by large deviations from a steady state, which accentuates the effects of nonlinearities on the solution; second, an ELB kink is a potentially important source of nonlinearities by itself; and finally, a possibility of a new ELB episode remains an important practical issue for the Bank of Canada.

Our policy experiments are not limited to conventional impulse response functions but represent simulation of more complex and empirically relevant scenarios: In the first experiment, we introduce into bToTEM a historical sequence of ROW variables estimated from actual time series data using ToTEM; and in the second experiment, we analyze a change in the inflation target compensated by the real interest rate adjustment, in accordance with the Bank of Canada practices.

5.1 Experiment 1: The ELB crisis in Canada: imported from abroad?

In the U.S. and European countries, the Great Recession and ZLB episodes were caused by the 2008 financial crisis. In contrast, Canada did not experience any significant financial crisis or economic slowdown at the beginning of the Great Recession. Nonetheless, Canada also ended up reaching an ELB on nominal interest rates and remained there during the 2009–2010 period. To be specific, the Bank of Canada targeted the overnight interest rate at 0.25 percent annually, which at that time was viewed by the Bank to be a lower bound on the nominal interest rate.

What factors led the Canadian economy to the ELB crisis? In the first experiment, we argue that the recession spread to Canada via the rest of the world, primarily from the U.S., which is the main Canadian trade partner (around 75 percent of Canadian exports go to the U.S.). The Canadian economy experienced a huge (16 percent) drop in exports in the beginning of the Great Recession; see a speech by Boivin (2011), a former Deputy Governor of the Bank of Canada. Using bToTEM, we find that a negative ROW shock of such magnitude is sufficient to originate a prolonged ELB episode in the Canadian economy.

5.1.1 Calibrating the ROW dynamics by combining the analysis of bToTEM and ToTEM

An important question is how to realistically calibrate the behavior of the ROW sector in the bToTEM model since a foreign financial crisis affects not just foreign demand but also foreign prices and foreign interest rates. Our methodology combines the analysis of bToTEM and ToTEM. Namely, we use ToTEM to produce impulse responses for three foreign variables: a ROW interest rate, ROW commodity price and ROW output, and we use these three ToTEM variables as exogenous shocks in the bToTEM model; these shocks are shown in Figure 5. In ToTEM, a negative shock in the ROW sector has three effects: the world

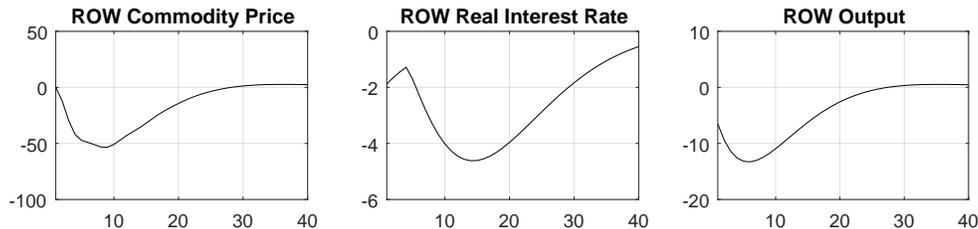


Figure 5: Exogenous ROW shocks

demand goes down, output falls, and the ROW commodity price reduces. Since the monetary authority in the ROW model is assumed to follow a Taylor rule, the ROW nominal interest rate goes down as well. The size of the considered ROW shock in ToTEM is such that its output declines by 7 percent on the impact

of shock, and it declines by 12 percent at the peak – these numbers are consistent with the magnitudes of foreign shocks experienced by the Canadian economy during the Great Recession.

5.1.2 A comparison of three alternative numerical solutions

Figure 6 displays the simulated time series for the key model variables under the given behavior of the ROW sector that we imported from ToTEM. Here, the ELB on the nominal interest rate is set at 2 percentage points below the deterministic steady state of the nominal interest rate. All the variables are reported in percentage deviations from the deterministic steady state, except of inflation and the interest rates that are shown in annualized deviations from the deterministic steady state. We assume that initially, the domestic interest rate in bToTEM is slightly below the deterministic steady state, namely, by 1 percent, which makes it is easier to reach the ELB on the nominal interest rate.¹³

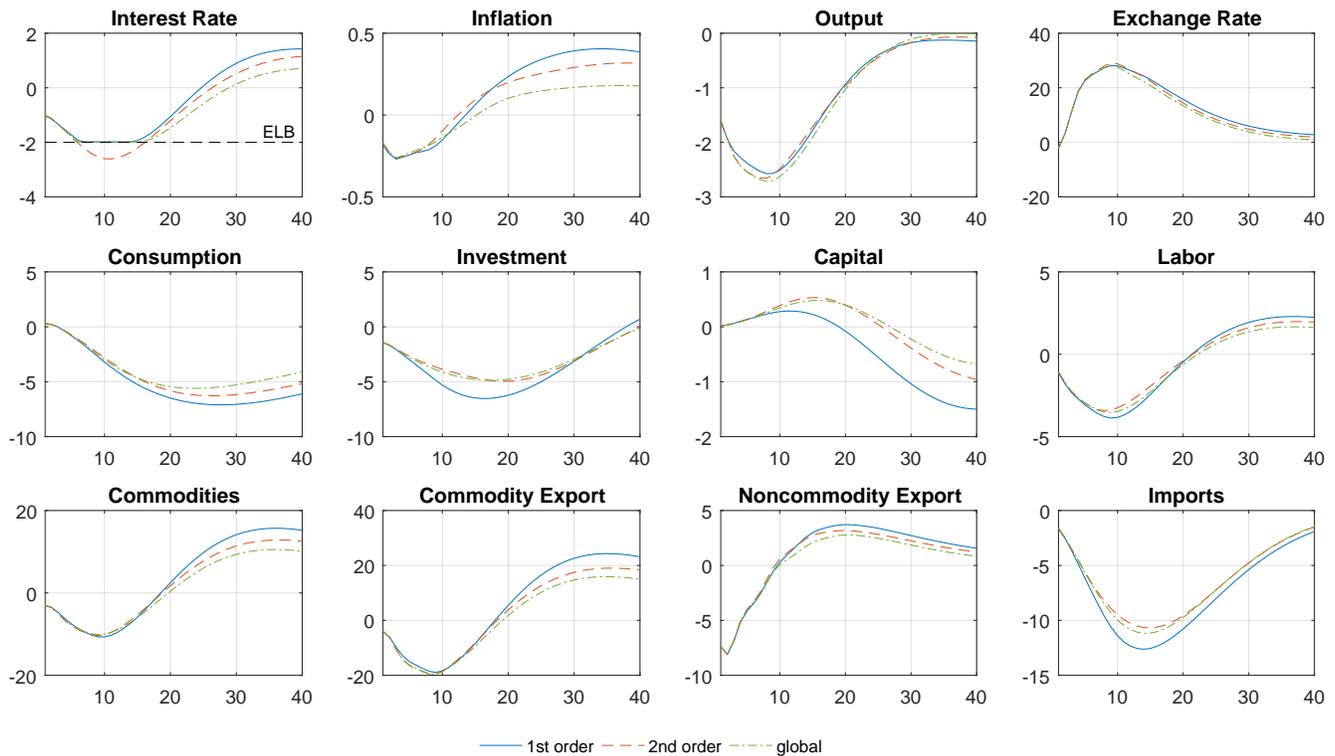


Figure 6: Experiment 1. Linear perturbation, quadratic perturbation, and quadratic global solutions

We plot three different solutions, namely, a first-order perturbation solution produced by IRIS (OccBin) with the ELB imposed; a plain second-order perturbation solution produced by Dynare; and a second-order global solution produced by CGA with the ELB imposed.¹⁴ As we see, the three solutions look very similar in the figure.

To check the accuracy of numerical solutions, we compute unit-free residuals in the model’s equation along the simulation path; see Appendix ?? for details of our accuracy assessment. As expected, the global solution method is the most accurate. The least accurate first-order perturbation methods can produce residuals of order $10^{-1.43} \approx 3.7$ percent, while the CGA method produces residuals lower than $10^{-2.09} \approx 0.8$ percent. (The accuracy results are similar on a stochastic simulation). Given that all three

¹³ The natural yearly rate of interest in bToTEM is calibrated to 3 percent as in ToTEM. This value is chosen to represent the long-run historical average of the natural rate of interest in the Canadian economy. However, the current natural rate of interest in Canada is considerably lower. Setting the initial interest rate below the steady state is a way to account for the current low interest rate.

¹⁴ We use pruning to simulate the second-order perturbation solution; see Andreasen et al. (2013).

numerical solutions look similar, we conclude that numerical errors of these magnitudes do not affect the qualitative implications of the model in this experiment.

5.1.3 Understanding the ELB episode in Canada

In our experiment in Figure 6, the nominal interest rate reaches the ELB and remains there during eight quarters, which corresponds to what actually happened in the Canadian economy during the 2009–2010 period. Our analysis suggests that a contamination-style mechanism accounts for this ELB episode in the Canadian economy. Under the considered scenario of negative ROW shocks, there are three foreign variables that decline during the crisis, namely, foreign output, the foreign interest rate, and the world commodity price; see Figure 5. The immediate consequence of these shocks for the domestic economy is a sharp decline in commodity and noncommodity exports in the Canadian economy. There are significantly fewer commodities extracted due to a huge decline in commodity prices and as a consequence, domestic output starts declining. The central bank responds by lowering the interest rate to stimulate the economy but the magnitude of shocks is so large that the bank reaches the lower bound on the nominal interest rate by six quarters. Without unconventional monetary tools, the interest rate stays at the lowest value for more than two years until the foreign economy sufficiently recovers. All three numerical methods considered deliver the same qualitative predictions about the ELB episode.

Surprisingly, we find that it is fairly easy to generate prolonged ELB episodes in an open-economy setting, while it is quite difficult to produce such episodes in closed-economy models. In particular, Chung, Laforte, Reifschneider and Williams (2012) find that standard structural models (FRB/US, EDO, Smets and Wouter (2007)) deliver very low probability of hitting the ZLB. Maliar and Maliar (2015) generate the ZLB episodes by assuming large preference shocks affecting the marginal rate of substitution between consumption and leisure. Aruoba et al. (2017) augment the simulated series from the model to include historical data from the U.S. economy in order to obtain realistic spells at the ZLB. Fernández-Villaverde, Gordon, Guerrón-Quintana and Rubio-Ramírez (2012, 2015) argue that within a standard new Keynesian model, it is impossible to generate long ZLB spells with modest drops in consumption, which were observed during the recent crises; they suggest that the only way to get around this result is to introduce wedges into the Euler equation. Also, Christiano et al. (2015) emphasize the importance of such shocks as a consumption wedge (a perturbation governing the accumulation of the risk-free asset), a financial wedge (a perturbation for optimal capital accumulation), a TFP shock, and a government consumption shock. Thus, our contamination-style motive for the ELB crisis in the open-economy model of the Canadian economy differs from those proposed in the literature for closed-economy models.

There is related recent literature on the transmission of liquidity trap from one country to another.¹⁵ Fujiwara (2010) considers a small open economy, calibrated to the Japanese economy, and shows analytically that the multiplier of an export demand shock is small if an economy is not hit by ZLB but increases by a factor of 100 if such an economy is at the binding ZLB constraint. Jeanne (2010) uses a two-country model to show that a negative demand shock in one country may push the other country to zero nominal interest rates. Bodenstein, Erceg and Guerrieri (2016) find that if a domestic economy (U.S.) is not at ZLB, negative foreign shocks have negligible effects on the U.S., but if the U.S. is previously hit by ZLB, the effects of such shocks are substantially amplified. Other papers that share similar themes include Cook and Devereux (2011, 2013, 2016), and Corsetti, Kuester and Müller (2016) among others. Finally, Devereux (2014), Caballero, Farhi and Gourinchas (2016), and Eggertsson, Mehrotra, Singh and Summers (2016) analyze how liquidity traps spread across the world by emphasizing the role of capital flows.

¹⁵ There is also earlier literature that analyzes the effects of foreign shocks on a domestic economy over the business cycle; see e.g., Backus et al. (1992). Schmitt-Grohé (1998) finds that variations in export demand are more important for explaining the business cycle behavior of Canadian aggregate variables than variations in financial markets. Lubik and Schorfheide (2005) build a new Keynesian model with two countries – United States and Euro area – and find asymmetric transmissions of monetary, supply and demand shocks. See also Fernández, Schmitt-Grohé, Uribe (2017) for recent evidence on the importance of terms of trade shocks over the business cycle.

5.1.4 Nonlinearities are not important

The role of nonlinearities is modest in our first experiment: all three solutions predict nearly the same magnitude and duration of the ELB crisis. This result suggests that all three kinds of nonlinearities described in Section 4 are quantitatively unimportant: First, the presence of an active ELB does not significantly affect the behavior of other variables, to put it simply, if the Bank of Canada just used a plain first-order perturbation method for analyzing ToTEM, either ignoring ELB entirely or chopping interest rate at ELB in simulation, it would not be terribly wrong. Furthermore, a comparison of the first- and second-order perturbation solutions suggests that the role of second-order terms is also relatively minor. Finally, given that our global CGA solution is relatively close to perturbation solutions, we conclude that the quality of perturbation solutions does not dramatically deteriorate away from the steady state.

The related literature focuses almost exclusively on nonlinearities in the new Keynesian models resulting from ZLB or ELB.¹⁶ The findings of this literature are mixed. Several papers find that ZLB is quantitatively important in the context of stylized new Keynesian models with Calvo pricing, in particular, Maliar and Maliar (2015) argue that first- and second-order perturbation solutions understate the severity and duration of the ZLB crisis; Fernández-Villaverde et al. (2015) show that the nonlinearities start playing an important role when ZLB is binding, affecting the expected duration of spells, fiscal multipliers, as well as the trade-off between spells and drops in consumption; and Aruoba et al. (2017) show that nonlinearities in their new Keynesian model can explain the differential experience of the U.S. and Japan by allowing for nonfundamental shocks (sunspots). Furthermore, in the model with Rotemberg pricing, Boneva et al. (2016) find that linearization considerably distorts the interaction between the ZLB and the agents' decision rules, in particular, those for labor supply.¹⁷

The papers that find that ZLB is quantitatively unimportant include Christiano et al. (2016) and Eggertsson and Singh (2016). Christiano et al. (2016) study a stable-under-learning rational expectation equilibrium in a simple nonlinear model with Calvo pricing; they find that a linearized model inherits the key properties of the nonlinear model for fiscal policy at the ZLB, predicting similar government spending multipliers and output drops. Eggertsson and Singh (2016) derive a closed-form nonlinear solution to a simple, two-equation new Keynesian model. They report negligible differences between the exact and linearized solutions when they look at the effects of fiscal policy at the ZLB.

Thus, our findings are closer to the literature that did not find important effects of nonlinearities. Clearly, a modest role of nonlinearity in our first experiment is not generic but a numerical result that is valid just for our specific set of assumptions and calibration procedure. It happens because the probability of ELB is relatively low as well as its cost, so the possibility of hitting ELB does not considerably affect the decisions of the agents. We can increase the importance of ELB by increasing the volatility of shocks (still within a reasonable range) or by modifying some model's assumptions (one such modification is shown in Section 5.3). However, demonstrating the importance of nonlinearities and ELB was not the goal of our analysis. We meticulously calibrate the bToTEM model to reproduce the Canadian data, trying to make it as close as possible to the full-scale ToTEM model; and under our calibration, nonlinearities proved to be quantitatively unimportant, including ELB.

5.2 Experiment 2: Preventing the ELB crisis

For the last 25 years, the Bank of Canada has adhered to the inflation targeting, but every three to five years it revises its inflation-control target level. The last revision happened in 2016: the Bank of Canada considered the possibility of increasing the inflation target, but eventually it reached the decision to keep it at a 2 percent level for the next five years. A higher inflation target reduces the probability of reaching

¹⁶One exception is Judd et al. (2017), who demonstrate that approximation errors in linear and quadratic perturbation solutions can reach hundreds percent under empirically relevant calibrations of new Keynesian models, even if the economy is not at the ZLB.

¹⁷See also Gust et al. (2012) for related evidence from estimation of a nonlinear new Keynesian model using a maximum-likelihood approach.

ELB, but it also has certain costs for the Canadian economy; see Kryvtsov and Mendes (2015) for some considerations that may have influenced the decision of the Bank of Canada. In our second experiment, we use a simulation of bToTEM to assess the impact of a hypothetical transition from a 2 to 3 percent inflation target on the Canadian economy.

5.2.1 A 3 percent inflation target would have prevented the 2009-2010 ELB crisis in the Canadian economy

In the new Keynesian models like ToTEM and bToTEM, the ELB or ZLB episodes can be prevented by choosing a sufficiently large inflation target. For example, in Figure 7 we show that if the Bank of Canada had the inflation target of 3 percent instead of 2 percent, the ELB would never be reached in bToTEM under any solution method in our first experiment.

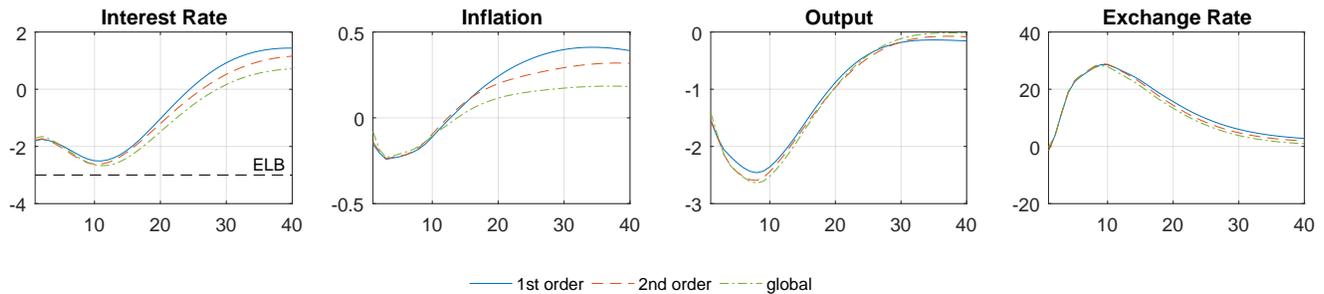


Figure 7: Experiment 1. Linear perturbation, quadratic perturbation, and quadratic global solutions under the inflation target of 3 percent (in deviations from the deterministic 3%-inflation-target steady state)

The idea of using an inflation target as a policy instrument for dealing with ZLB episodes dates back at least to Summers (1991) and Fischer (1996), who suggest to use an inflation target in the range of 1 to 3 percent if the economy hits the ZLB. Krugman (1998) proposes to use a 4 percent inflation target in the Japanese economy to deal with persisting deflation. In light of the Great Recession, Blanchard, Dell’Arriccia and Mauro (2010) argue that adopting a 4 percent inflation target in the U.S. can help avoid the ZLB crisis; see also Williams (2009) and Ball (2013) for related proposals. For the Canadian economy, Dorich, Labelle, Lepetyuk and Mendes (forthcoming) estimate the effects of the increases in the inflation target to 3 percent (or 4 percent) and they find that it decreases the probability of hitting the ELB from 6 percent to 3 percent (or 1 percent).

However, a higher inflation target has also certain costs, in particular, it tends to decrease average output, to increase costs of price dispersion, to raise the economy’s volatility and to produce unstable expectations dynamics; see Ascari and Sbordone (2014) for a discussion. Coibion, Gorodnichenko and Wieland (2012) perform a careful assessment of the costs and benefits of higher inflation: they find that for plausible calibrations of the model and realistic frequencies of the ZLB episodes (of eight quarters), the optimal inflation rate in the U.S. economy must be less than 2 percent: the cost of ZLB in their analysis is relatively low because the probability of hitting ZLB is relatively low.

5.2.2 Modeling a transition from a 2 percent to a 3 percent inflation target

We use the bToTEM model to study a transition of the Canadian economy after a hypothetical increase in the inflation target from 2 percent to 3 percent, a possibility that was recently evaluated by the Bank of Canada. We implement a change in the inflation target by maintaining the real neutral interest at the same level of 3 percent. We thus simultaneously adjust the nominal interest rate target level from about 5 to 6 percent.

In our baseline experiment, the initial condition corresponds to the deterministic steady state of the Canadian economy with an old inflation target of 2 percent. We then recompute the solution under the

new inflation target of 3 percent, and we simulate the transition path from the old to the new steady states. In all cases, we assume no shocks over the transition path.

5.2.3 Are nonlinearities important?

In Figure 8, we plot the simulation for the first- and second-order perturbation solutions as well as global quadratic CGA solutions. Here, the level “0” corresponds to the initial deterministic steady state of 2 percent and all the variables are given in deviations from that initial steady state; the level “1” in the figure for inflation means 3 percent and “1” in the figure for interest rate means a new nominal interest rate target of 6 percent.

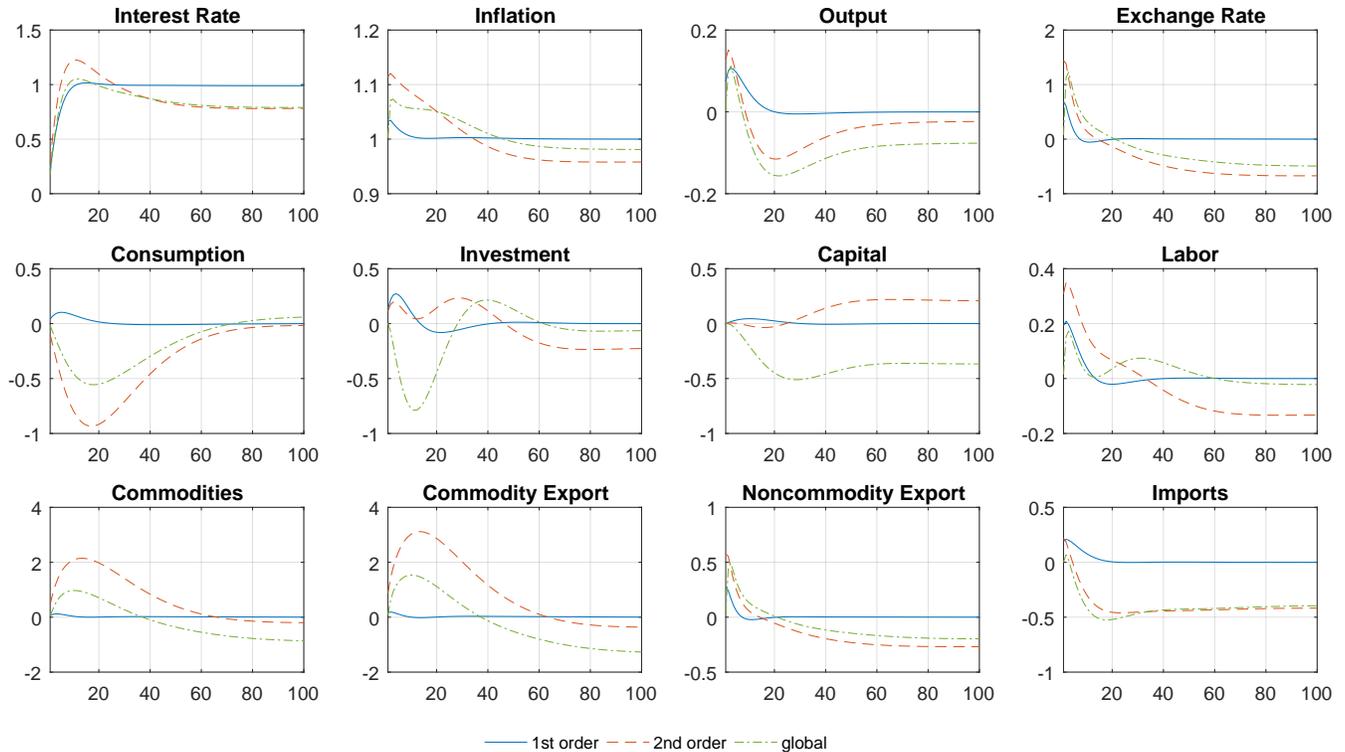


Figure 8: Experiment 2. Linear, quadratic, and global solutions (in deviations from the deterministic 2%-inflation-target steady state)

In this experiment, the three solutions look very different. The first-order perturbation solution behaves in a way that is typical for new Keynesian models and that agrees with our intuition and common sense. The change in the inflation target almost instantaneously translates into an increase in the inflation rate. Inflation reacts so rapidly because in our sticky-price economy, the non-optimizing firms set their price according to the inflation target, which is instantaneously changed from 2 percent to 3 percent. Following the Taylor rule with persistence, the interest rate reaches the new steady state within a couple of years. During the transition to this new steady state, the interest rate is below the new steady states and therefore provides a monetary stimulus. The stimulus is reflected in higher investment, output, consumption and capital under all solutions.

In contrast, the simulation of second-order and global nonlinear solutions looks odd, in particular, consumption, investment and capital produce wiggles and even go down. These implications of the second-order perturbation and global solutions are puzzling and seem to point to the importance of some nonlinear effects, but we will be able to resolve this puzzle below and to show that the role of nonlinearities is still quite limited.

5.2.4 Are nonlinearities important? Not really for a second-order perturbation solution

Let us recall the three effects of nonlinearities discussed in Section 4. Since ELB is not binding in this experiment, the first- and second-order perturbation solutions in (37) can differ either because of the uncertainty effect represented by a constant term $\frac{1}{2}g_{\sigma\sigma}^2(\bar{x}, 0)\sigma^2$ or because of the second-order effects represented by a quadratic term $\frac{1}{2}g_{xx}(\bar{x}, 0)(x - \bar{x})^2$. Global solutions can also differ from perturbation solutions because their coefficients are constructed on a larger solution domain.

The uncertainty effect means that linear and nonlinear models have different steady states: In absence of shocks, a linear model converges to the deterministic steady state, while a nonlinear model converges to the so-called stochastic steady state that depends on a degree of volatility σ .

The uncertainty effect is well appreciated from Figure 8: both second-order perturbation and global CGA solutions converge not to the deterministic steady state but to some other levels. In particular, in the nonlinear case, the interest rate does not increase by exactly 1 as in the linear case, but somewhat less. This means that the central bank does not get the same inflation rate as it targets by the Taylor rule in the nonlinear case (if the initial condition is a deterministic steady state); see Hills et al. (2016) for an estimation of such deflationary bias in the U.S.

In turn, the term $\frac{1}{2}g_{xx}(\bar{x}, 0)(x - \bar{x})^2$ captures second-order effects that are ignored by linear solutions, in particular, those associated with wage and price dispersions (in linear solutions, such dispersions are equal to zero). To assess the relative importance of these and other similar second-order effects, in Figure 9 we simulate a second-order perturbation solution by using a stochastic steady state as an initial condition instead of the deterministic one.

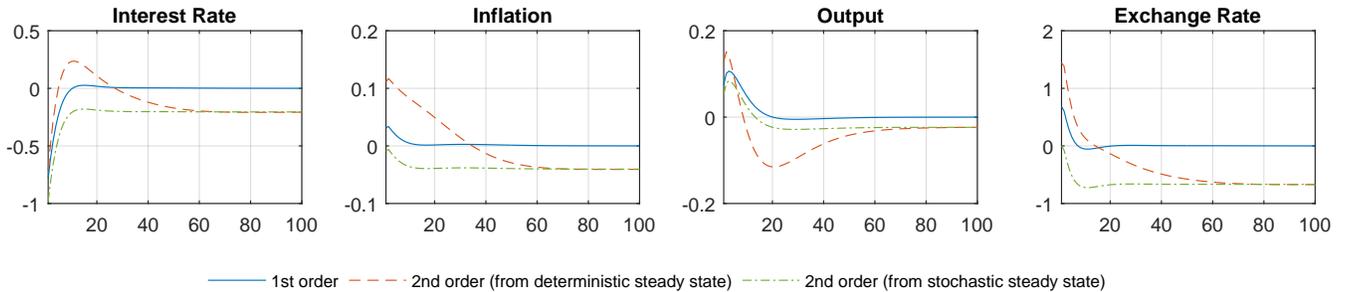


Figure 9: Modified experiment 2. Linear perturbation and two quadratic solutions, one of which starts from the deterministic steady state and the other starts from the stochastic steady state (in deviations from the deterministic 3%-inflation-target steady state)

Once the initial condition is adjusted, the second-order effects disappear! In Figure 9, the first-order and alternative second-order perturbation solutions are visually indistinguishable, up to a constant term that shifts the second-order solution relative to the first-order solutions. Now, we realize that the puzzling behavior of nonlinear solutions in Figure 8 such as wiggly consumption, investment and capital along the transition happens simply because nonlinear solutions are effectively confronted with two transitions: one is a transition to a new inflation target and the other is a transition from the deterministic to their own stochastic steady state. Adjusting the initial condition removes the second transition and makes the nonlinear solutions meaningful.

Our analysis suggests that a coherent simulation of perturbation solutions would require to start each solution from its own steady state (or from the same relative distance from the steady state). If we do so, the first- and second-order solutions are nearly identical for practical effects in our experiment. This means that second-order effects associated with the wage and price dispersion play a minor role in second-order solutions. Again, in the context of the ToTEM model, the Bank of Canada will not be too wrong by focusing on first- instead of second-order perturbation solutions.

5.2.5 Are nonlinearities important? Somewhat more for a global solution

We next perform a similar experiment with the global CGA solution by constructing an alternative simulation that starts from the stochastic steady state of the CGA global solution; see Figure 10.

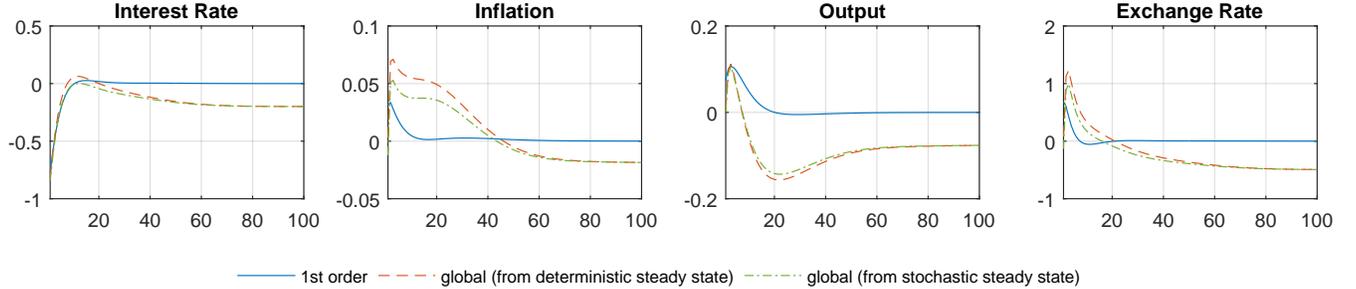


Figure 10: Modified experiment 2. Linear perturbation and two global solutions, one of which starts from the deterministic steady state and the other starts from the stochastic steady state (variables are shown in deviations from the 3% deterministic steady state)

For the CGA solution, the adjustment of the initial condition is far less quantitatively important: the simulations with two different initial conditions are situated fairly close to one another. This is because the CGA solution that is constructed globally places less weight on what happens near the steady state than the perturbation solution constructed locally. Making some adjustments in a relatively small area near the steady state does not have much impact on a global solution. As a result, the transition path for the CGA solution remains visibly different from the first-order perturbation path even after the adjustment of the initial conditions.

To understand this result, let us note that the global solution is not the most accurate solution in this experiment. Here, we are relatively close to the steady state (the output deviation is less than 0.2 percent) and perturbation solutions are the most accurate solutions in a close proximity of the steady state by construction. In contrast, global solutions are fitted on a large domain and they face a trade-off between the fit near and away from steady state, including the fit in the ELB area. Given the same second-order polynomial functions, the only way for a global solution to get higher accuracy away from steady state is to sacrifice some accuracy near the steady state, which is what we observe in the figure. If the “solution domain” effect was quantitatively important and the accuracy deterioration away from the steady state was a critical issue for the perturbation solutions, we would probably observe a large difference between perturbation and global solutions in the first experiment, in which the output deviation is about 3 percent, (i.e., more than 10 times larger), but this was not the case. Still, we can loosely interpret a visible inaccuracy of global solutions near the steady state as an indication of the importance of nonlinearities away from the steady state. Most importantly, the Bank of Canada will not be doing better by focusing on global solutions instead of perturbation solutions in this experiment.

5.3 Nonlinearities are important, finally! Revisiting the stationarity condition of Schmitt-Grohé and Uribe (2003)

Our previous analysis seems to suggest that nonlinearities, including ELB, play a very minor role in the bToTEM model (provided that we account for differing steady states). However, let us show that a relatively small change in the model’s assumptions can change this conclusion. Specifically, let us replace the linear closing condition (35) that ensures the model’s stationarity with a similar closing condition in an exponential form, used in Schmitt-Grohé and Uribe (2003):

$$\kappa_t^f = \varsigma \left[\exp \left(\bar{b}^f - b_t^f \right) - 1 \right]. \quad (39)$$

Let us re-visit our first experiment, in which the Canadian economy experiences three shocks to the ROW variables. Recall that under our benchmark linear closing condition in Figure 6, all three solutions looked very similar. However, Figure 11 provided below shows that a second-order perturbation solution looks very different after we change the closing condition to the exponential one in (39):

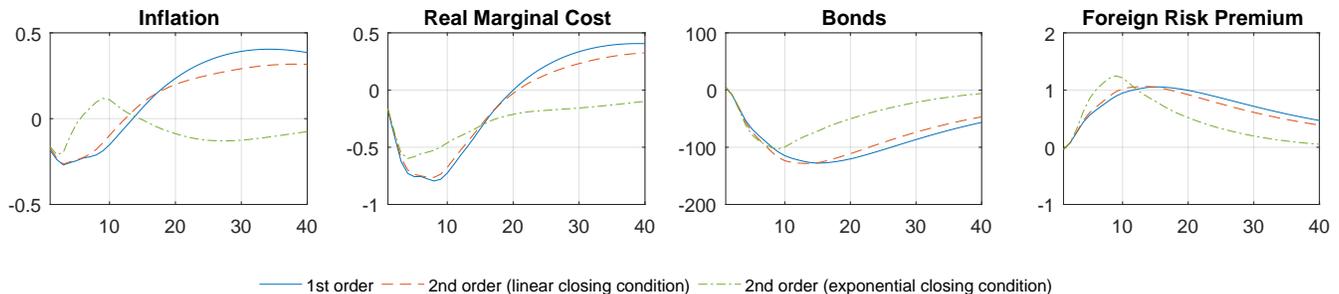


Figure 11: Modified experiment 1. Linear, quadratic, and alternative quadratic solutions

Now, the risk premium has a faster and sharper increase and declines because of the changes in the foreign bonds. The change in risk premium dynamics affects the exchange rate via the uncovered interest rate parity condition (it premultiplies the foreign interest rate). In turn, the exchange rate affects the prices of two out of four inputs in the production function, which eventually affects the real marginal cost and inflation.

The importance of stationarity condition in our analysis seems to be surprising, given that Schmitt-Grohé and Uribe (2003) compare several different stationary conditions and they find that the implications of open-economy models do not significantly depend on the specific condition used. However, we shall recall that the analysis of Schmitt-Grohé and Uribe (2003) focuses exclusively on first-order solutions. In a linearized form, the exponential stationarity condition (39) is given by $\kappa_t^f \approx \varsigma (\bar{b}^f - b_t^f)$, which exactly coincides with our linear closing condition (35). Thus, the analysis of Schmitt-Grohé and Uribe (2003) would treat our two alternative closing conditions as exactly identical.

However, second- and higher-order expansions of linear and exponential closing conditions are different. A linear closing condition (35) does not have second-order terms and it is equal to itself $\kappa_t^f = \varsigma (\bar{b}^f - b_t^f)$, while the exponential closing condition (39) does have such terms and it is given by $\kappa_t^f \approx \varsigma (\bar{b}^f - b_t^f) + \frac{1}{2}\varsigma (\bar{b}^f - b_t^f)^2$. Precisely, the second-order term $\frac{1}{2}\varsigma (\bar{b}^f - b_t^f)^2$ accounts for a visibly large difference between the first- and second-order perturbation solutions in our Figure 11. Thus, even those “innocent” assumptions that we do not expect to play a significant role in the properties of the solution can lead to important nonlinearities in the central banking models. Central banks must be systematically checking the robustness of their linear solutions to potentially important effects of nonlinearities.

6 Conclusion

ToTEM is the main macroeconomic model of the Bank of Canada for projection and policy analysis. The full-scale ToTEM is not yet feasible for global nonlinear methods, so it is currently analyzed by a linearization-based method. Thus, it is not yet known whether or not neglecting nonlinearity can significantly distort the policy implications of the ToTEM model.

We construct, calibrate, solve and simulate the bToTEM model – a scaled down version of the ToTEM model. We show that the bToTEM model generates impulse response functions that are very close to those produced by the ToTEM model and thus, it can be used as a complement to the existing models of the Bank of Canada. Importantly, bToTEM is tractable under global nonlinear solution methods and its accuracy can be assessed. This allows us to study the quantitative importance of nonlinear effects and to

gain insights into the limitations of local perturbation methods in the context of large-scale central bank models. In simple words, the bToTEM model allows us to say how much the ToTEM linear analysis can go wrong because of insufficiently accurate solutions.

Our overall finding is that the role of nonlinearities including ELB is modest in a realistically calibrated bToTEM model. We show that in the context of that model, the Bank of Canada will not make a big mistake if it uses a simple linearization-based solution adapted to ELB instead of more accurate global nonlinear solutions. Therefore, our findings do not support the idea that inadequate solution methods could be the reason for the failure of macroeconomists to foresee and prevent the Great Recession.

Our negative result must be taken with caution, and it should not be extrapolated to other models. We show that apparently innocent changes in the model's assumptions can make nonlinearity important, for example, a change in the stationarity closing condition. This means that central banks cannot automatically neglect nonlinearities but need to perform accuracy checks and sensitivity analysis similar to ones implemented in the present paper.

Neither does our negative result imply that nonlinearities are unimportant in explaining the Great Recession and the ELB crisis. It simply happened that under a realistic calibration of the bToTEM, the nonlinear effects are not quantitatively important. The reason why such effects are unimportant is that the probability of ELB and its cost is relatively small in the bToTEM model; the possibility of hitting the ELB does not affect the decisions of the agent too much; in this sense, our results are in line with those in Coibion et al. (2012). Possibly, the ToTEM and the derived bToTEM models are not good models for explaining the Great Recession, and other models are needed in which nonlinearities are more important.

Finally, our methodology could be useful not only for the Bank of Canada but also for other central banks and government agencies that use large-scale macroeconomic models for projection and policy analysis. An important contribution of the present paper is to provide methodology for analyzing, solving, and testing the accuracy of central banking models, as well as for designing nontrivial policy experiments within such models. Our results suggest that more powerful hardware and software, in particular, high performance computing tools, will make it possible to produce global nonlinear solutions to full-scale central banking models in the near future.

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