

EE432 Monetary Theory and Policy



Lecture 9 Monetary Policy: Stabilizing the Domestic Economy

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Outline

- The Federal Reserve's Conventional Policy Toolbox
- Linking Tools to Objectives: Making Choices
- Unconventional Policy Tools

Chapter 18



Monetary Policy: Stabilizing the Domestic Economy

The Federal Reserve's Conventional Policy Toolbox

Introduction

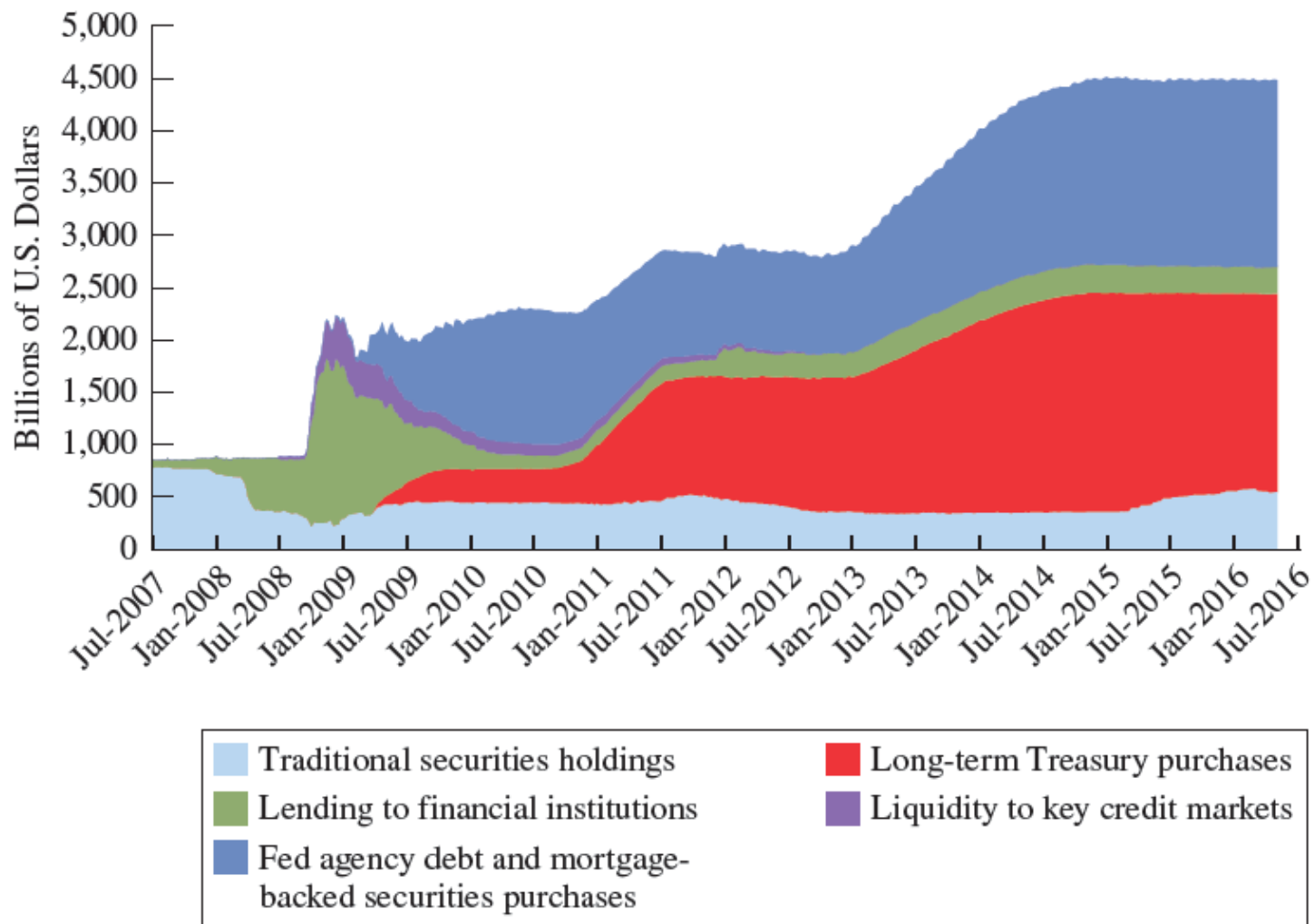
- Between September 2007 and December 2008, the **FOMC lowered its target for the federal funds rate 10 times**.
- This was the first time since the 1930s that the **nominal federal funds rate hit zero**.
 - **Zero lower bound**: the idea that a *nominal interest rate cannot fall below zero*
 - **Effective lower bound**: the *nominal interest rate level below which intermediaries and their customers **will switch from bank deposits to holding cash***.

Introduction

- To steady the financial system and the economy *after the crisis*, the **Fed** *utilized* its three of its **conventional policy tools**:
 - The ***target range*** for the **federal funds rate**
 - The **interest rate on excess reserves (IOER rate)**
 - The ***rate*** for **discount window lending**
- Policymakers then proceeded to develop and use a variety of **unconventional policy tools** including:
 - **Massive purchases of risky assets** in fragile markets
 - **Communicating its intent to keep interest rates low *over an extended period***

Figure 18.1

U.S. Federal Reserve Assets (billions of U.S. dollars), July 2007–March 2016



The Federal Reserve's Conventional Policy Toolbox

The Fed has **four** leading *conventional monetary policy tools*, also known as *policy instruments*:

1. The **target federal funds rate range**
2. The **interest rate on excess reserves (IOER rate)**
3. The **discount rate**
4. The **reserve requirement**

The Federal Reserve's Conventional Policy Toolbox

- An important **supplementary tool** for monetary policy used by the Fed: ***overnight reverse repo (ON RRP) rate***.
 - Serves to *keep the market federal funds rate close to the IOER rate*
 - Can be **used to set a floor** *under the market federal funds rate*

The Target Federal Fund Rate

- Prior to the financial crisis, the **target federal fund rate** was the *FOMC's primary policy instrument*.
- The **federal funds rate** is the *rate at which banks lend reserves to each other overnight*.
 - It is *determined in the market* and not controlled by the Fed.
- The target federal funds rate are set by the **FOMC**, and the **market federal funds rate**, at which transactions between banks take place.

The Interest on Excess Reserves

- *Discrepancies between **actual** and **desired reserves** gave rise to a market for reserves.*
 - Some banks can ***lend out excess reserves***.
 - Some banks will ***borrow to cover a shortfall***.
- *Without this market, banks would need to **hold substantial** quantities of **excess reserves** as insurance against shortfalls.*

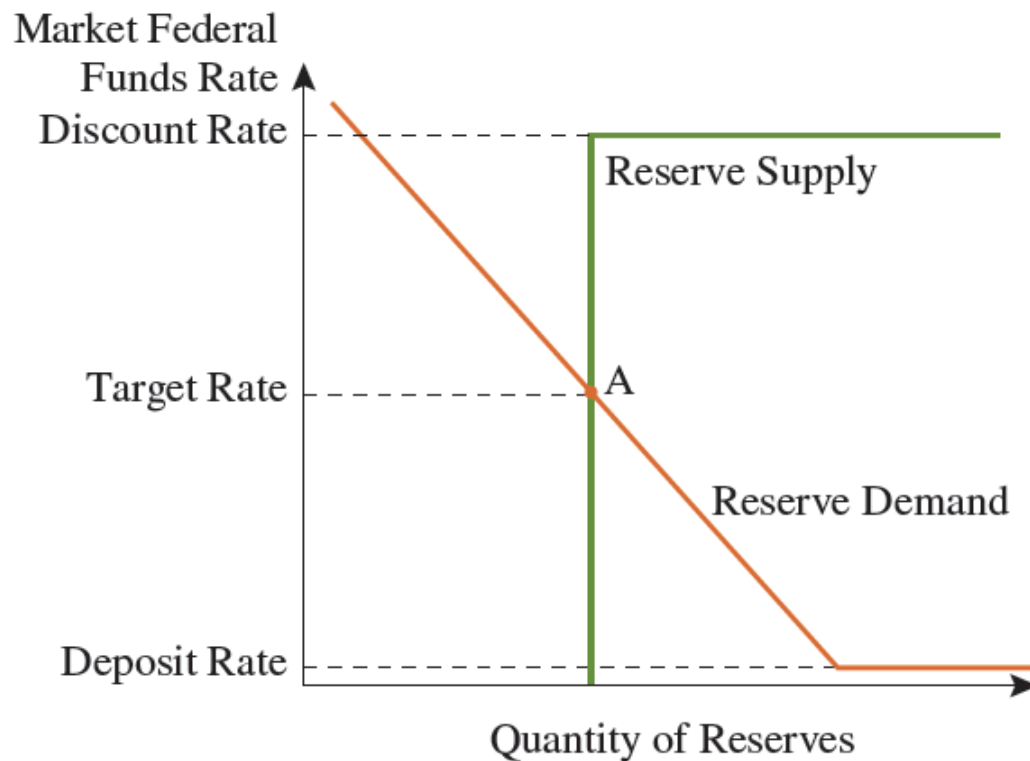
The Target Federal Fund Rate and the Interest on Excess Reserves

- As the market *federal funds rate rises*, banks demand *fewer reserves*
- The **Fed** continues to be the *monopoly supplier of aggregate bank reserves*.
- By **buying or selling securities** in the market through an *open market operation (OMO)*, the **Fed** could *increase or decrease the supply of reserves* in order to *lower or raise the market federal funds rate*.

The Target Federal Fund Rate and the Interest on Excess Reserves

Figure 18.2

The Market for Bank Reserves prior to September 2008



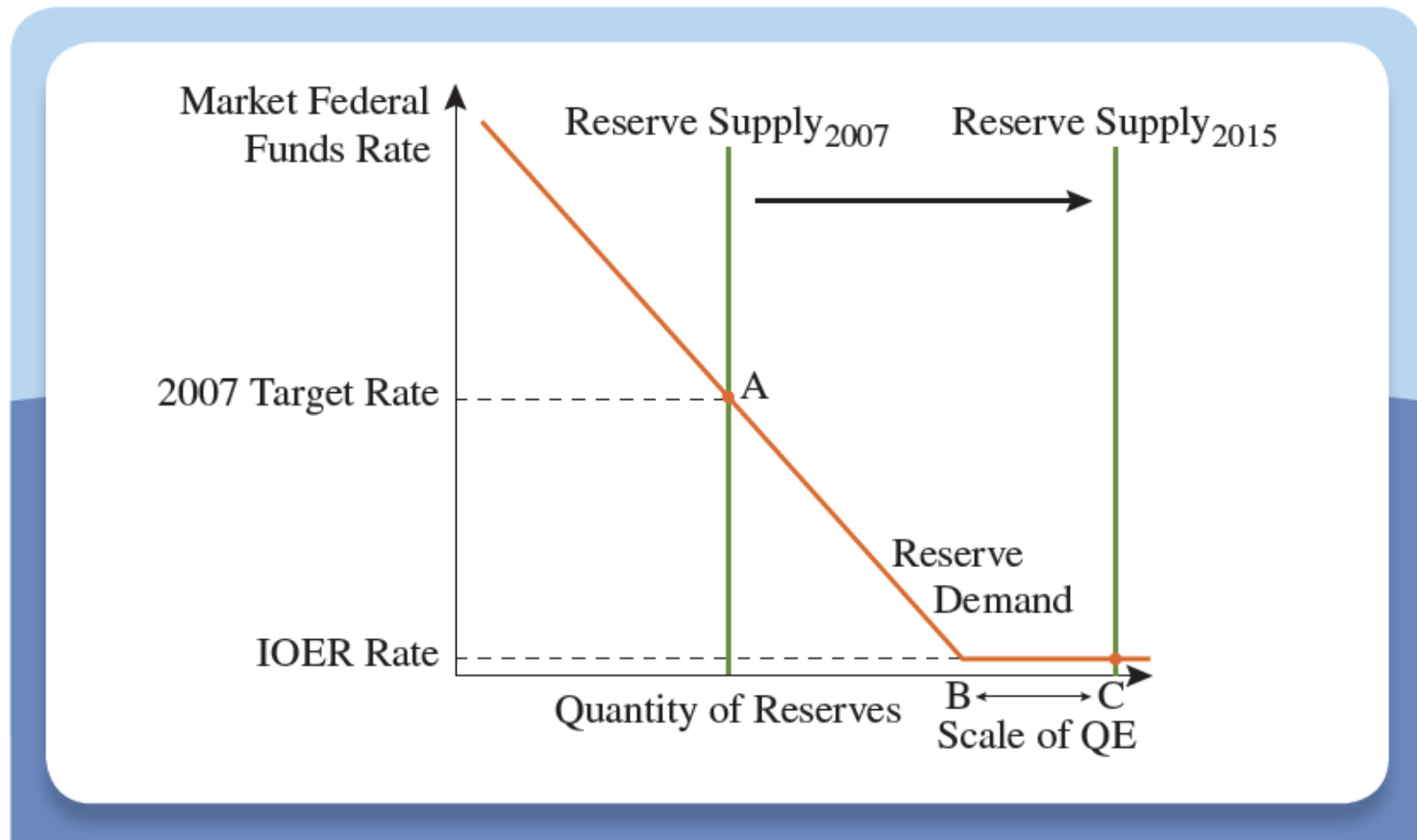
The Target Federal Fund Rate and the Interest on Excess Reserves

- During the financial crisis, the **Fed** lowered its policy target close to zero, and engaged in **quantitative easing** making large-scale asset purchases to increase the supply of reserves far beyond the level needed to **keep the federal funds rate near zero**.
 - Policymakers began specifying a target range, instead, of a target level for the federal funds rate
 - The **IOER rate** forms the upper limit of the target of the target range

The Target Federal Fund Rate and the Interest on Excess Reserves

Figure 18.3

The Market for Reserves with Quantitative Easing (QE) after September 2008



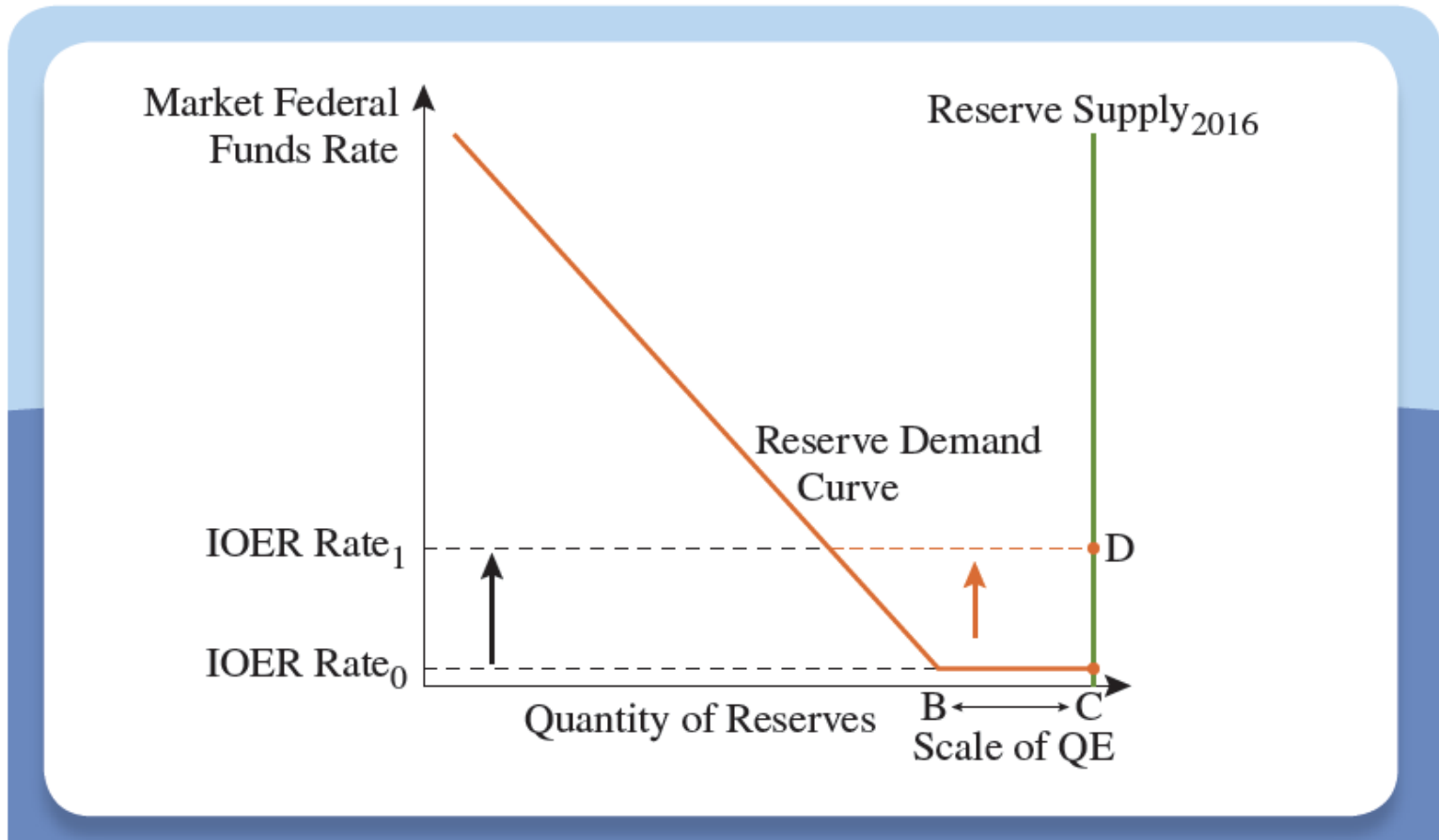
The Target Federal Fund Rate and the Interest on Excess Reserves

- **Tightening monetary policy** through the **IOER rate**
 - If there is an **increase** in the target range for the *federal funds rate*, the Fed will **raise the IOER rate**; **raising the minimum rate** at which *banks are willing to lend*
 - Allows the FOMC to **raise interest rates**, tightening financial conditions, without altering the supply of reserves

The Target Federal Funds Rate and the Interest on Excess Reserves

Figure 18.4

Tightening Monetary Policy by Increasing the IOER Rate



Discount Lending, the Lender of Last Resort, and Crisis Management

- By ***controlling*** the **quantity of loans** it makes, a *central bank can control*:
 - The **size of reserves**
 - The **size of the monetary base**
 - **Interest rates**
- *Today, lending* by the Federal Reserve Banks **to commercial banks**, called **discount lending**, is *usually small* aside from crisis periods.

Discount Lending, the Lender of Last Resort, and Crisis Management

- **Discount lending** is the Fed's primary tool for:
 - Ensuring **short-term financial stability**
 - **Eliminating bank panics**
 - **Preventing the sudden collapse** of institutions that are experiencing financial difficulties
- The central bank is the **lender of last resort**:
 - *Making loans to banks when no one else will or can.*

Discount Lending, the Lender of Last Resort, and Crisis Management

The **Fed** makes *three types of loans*:

1. **Primary credit**
 2. **Secondary credit**
 3. **Seasonal credit**
- The **Fed** controls the **interest rate** on these loans, *not the quantity of credit extended*.
 - The **banks** decide how much to borrow.

Primary Credit

- **Primary credit** is *extended on a very short-term basis*, usually overnight, to institutions that the Fed's bank supervisors deem to be sound.
- *Banks seeking to borrow much post acceptable collateral.*
- The interest rate on primary credit is set at a spread above the IOER rate called the **primary discount rate**.
 - The term **discount rate** *usually refers to this primary discount rate*

Primary Credit

- ***Primary credit adds to the Fed's supply of reserves to the banks***
- When reserves were scarce, providing a facility through which **banks could borrow** at a ***penalty rate above the target kept the market federal funds rate from rising above the discount rate.***

Secondary Credit

- **Secondary credit** is available to institutions that are not sufficiently *sound to qualify for primary credit*.
- The **secondary discount rate** is set above the *primary discount rate*.
- There are **two reason** a bank might seek **secondary credit**:
 - A *temporary shortfall of reserves*.
 - They cannot borrow from anyone else.

Secondary Credit

- By *borrowing* in the secondary credit market, a bank **signals** that **it is in trouble**.
- Secondary credit is for banks that are *experiencing longer-term problems* that they need some time to work out.
- *Before the Fed makes the loan*, it has to believe that *there is a good chance the bank will be able to survive*.

Seasonal Credit

- **Seasonal credit** is used primarily by *small agricultural banks* in the Midwest *to help in managing the cyclical nature of farmers' loans and deposits.*
- Historically, these banks had *poor access to national money markets.*
- They **now** have *easy access to longer-term loans* from *large commercial banks.*

Reserve Requirements

- The Federal Reserve Board has had the authority to set the ***reserve requirements***.
 - These are the **minimum level of reserves** **banks must hold** either as *vault cash* or on *deposit at the Fed*.
- *Changes in the reserve requirement* affect the ***money multiplier*** and the ***quantity of money and credit circulating*** in the economy.
- In the U.S., the *reserve requirement turns out not to be very useful*.

The Federal Reserve's Conventional Policy Toolbox

Table 18.1

The Conventional Tools of the Federal Reserve

	What Is It?	How Is It Controlled?	What Is Its Impact?
Target Federal Funds Rate Range	Range for the interest rate charged by financial intermediaries on overnight, uncollateralized loans to banks	Announced by the FOMC as the target range for the market federal funds rate	Influences interest rates throughout the economy
Interest Rate on Excess Reserves (IOER Rate)	Interest rate paid by the Federal Reserve on excess reserves held by banks	Announced by the FOMC as a rate to be paid on all excess reserves	Changes interest rates at which banks will lend and borrow
Discount Rate	Interest rate charged by the Federal Reserve on its loans to banks	Set by Reserve Banks, subject to approval by the Federal Reserve Board, at a premium over the interest rate on excess reserves (IOER rate)	Provides liquidity to banks in times of crisis; not used to alter day-to-day monetary policy
Reserve Requirement	Fraction of deposits that banks must keep either on deposit at the Federal Reserve or as cash in their vaults	Set by the Federal Reserve Board within a legally imposed range	Influences the demand for reserves; not used to alter monetary policy

Linking Tools to Objectives: Making Choices

Linking Tools to Objectives: Making Choices

- Monetary policymakers' goals are:
 - *Low and stable inflation*
 - *High and stable growth*
 - *A stable financial system*
 - *Stable interest and exchange rates*

Linking Tools to Objectives: Making Choices

A consensus has developed among monetary policy experts that:

1. The **reserve requirement** is *not useful* as an *operational instrument*,
2. **Central bank lending** is *necessary* to ensure **financial stability**, and
3. **Short-term interest rates** are the *conventional tool* to use to *stabilize short-term fluctuations in prices and output*.

Desirable Features of a Policy Instrument

A good monetary policy instrument has *three features*:

1. It is easily observable by everyone.
 - Ensures *transparency* in policymaking, which enhances *accountability*.
2. It is controllable and quickly changed.
 - An instrument that can be *adjusted quickly* in the face of a *sudden change* in economic conditions is clearly more useful
3. It is **tightly linked to the policymakers' objectives**.
 - The *more predictable* the impact of an instrument, the *easier* it will be for policymakers *to meet their objectives*

Inflation Targeting

- **Inflation targeting** focuses on the objective of *low and stable inflation*
- It is a monetary policy strategy that involves *public announcement* of a numerical inflation target and underscores the central bank's commitment to price stability.
- When the *target is credible, inflation will be low*

Inflation Targeting

- Long-term expectations of *low inflation* act to anchor low long-term *interest rates* and *promote economic growth*.
- **Hierarchical mandate** in which **price stability comes first** and everything else comes second
 - The ECB, Australia, Chile, South Africa, United Kingdom, and dozens of other countries
- **Dual mandate** in which the **goal of price stability and maximum employment are equal**
 - The Fed

Inflation Targeting

- *Increases policymakers **accountability** and helps establish their **credibility***
- *The result is not just lower and **more stable inflation**, but usually **higher and more stable economic growth***

A Guide to Central Bank Interest Rates: The Taylor Rule

- The FOMC sets a **target range** for the federal funds rate and the **day** on which to make the changes.
- The **Taylor Rule** *tracks the actual behavior of the target federal funds rate and relates it to the real interest rate, inflation, and output.*

Target fed funds rate =

**Natural rate of interest + Current inflation + $\frac{1}{2}$
(Inflation gap) + $\frac{1}{2}$ (Output gap)**

A Guide to Central Bank Interest Rates: The Taylor Rule

- The **natural rate of interest** is the *real short-term interest rate that prevails when the economy is using resources normally*.
 - Taylor **originally used 2 percent**, which is *close to the average real short-term rate*

A Guide to Central Bank Interest Rates: The Taylor Rule

- The **inflation gap** is *current inflation* minus an *inflation target* (both measured as percentages)
 - When *inflation* exceeds the target level, the **inflation gap** is *positive*
- The **output gap** is the percentage deviation of *current output (real GDP)* from *potential output*
 - When *current output* is above potential output, the **output gap** is *positive*

A Guide to Central Bank Interest Rates: The Taylor Rule

- When **inflation** rises above its target level,
 - The response is to *raise interest rates*.
- When **output** falls below the target level,
 - The response is to *lower interest rates*.
- If *inflation is currently on target* and there is *no output gap*,
 - The *target federal funds rate* should be set at the **natural rate of interest plus target inflation**.

A Guide to Central Bank Interest Rates: The Taylor Rule

- The Taylor rule has some interesting properties.
 - The increase in current inflation feeds *one for one* into the ***target federal funds rate***; however,
 - The increase in the inflation gap is halved.
- A 1 percentage point increase in the inflation rate raises the target federal funds rate 1½ percentage points.

A Guide to Central Bank Interest Rates: The Taylor Rule

- The *implementation* of the **Taylor rule** requires four inputs:
 - The **natural rate of interest**
 - A measure of **inflation**
 - A measure of the **inflation gap**
 - A measure of the **output gap**

Unconventional Policy Tools

Unconventional Policy Tools

- There are two circumstances when **unconventional policy** tools can *play a useful stabilization role*:
 1. When **lowering the target interest-rate to zero** is **not sufficient** to *stimulate the economy*
 2. When an **impaired financial system** *prevents* *conventional interest-rate policy* from supporting economic growth

Unconventional Policy Tools

There are *three categories of unconventional policy* approaches:

1. **Forward guidance**

- This is when the *central bank communicates intentions* regarding the *future path of monetary policy*.

2. **Quantitative easing (QE)**

- When the *central bank supplies aggregate reserves beyond the quantity needed to lower the policy rate to its target*, usually zero or lower.

Unconventional Policy Tools

3. Targeted asset purchases (TAP)

- When the central bank alters the ***mix of assets it holds on its balance sheet*** in order to change their relative prices in a way that ***stimulates economic activity***.

Forward Guidance

- The *simplest unconventional approach* is for the *central bank to provide forward guidance - guidance today about policy target rates in the future*
- They might express the *intent to keep the policy target low for an extended period of time*.
 - This could have a *specific termination date*, or *duration* could be dependent on some future change in economic conditions.

Forward Guidance

- To **stimulate economic activity**, *forward guidance* aims at **lowering the long-term interest rates** that affect private spending.
- To be effective, forward guidance *needs to be credible and time consistent*

Forward Guidance

- *Although forward guidance can be effective, it is **difficult to anticipate** and difficult to **reach consensus on the desirable policy path** and to communicate these policy intentions simply*
- The potential for disturbing side effects, including **asset price bubbles**

Quantitative Easing

- QE occurs when the central bank ***expands the supply of aggregate reserves beyond*** the level that would be *needed to maintain its policy rate target*.
 - The central bank **buys assets**, thereby **expanding its overall balance sheet**.
- At a market federal funds rate equal to the ***interest on excess reserves***, an **addition to aggregate reserves** no longer reduces the funds rate
 - The Fed can **add limitlessly to reserves** without affecting the market federal funds rate.

Quantitative Easing

- It is difficult to predict the effects of QE.
- Fed policymakers argue their *balance sheet expansion helped to lower long-term interest rates*, but there is *disagreement on the impacts*.
- An *increase in the supply of reserves (QE)* may simply lead banks to **hold more** of them *rather than provide additional loans*.

Quantitative Easing

- One mechanism is that QE can add credibility to a policymaker's promise to keep interest rates low.
- Announcements of an expansion of aggregate reserves (QE) could **lower bond yields** by *extending the time horizon* over which **bondholders expect a zero policy rate**.
 - QE may reinforce the impact of **forward guidance**

Quantitative Easing

- A problem with QE is that *central banks do not know how much is needed to be effective*.
- QE can be *powerful tool for central bankers to prevent a sustained deflation, especially when conventional policy tools have been exhausted*.

Targeted Asset Purchases

- ***Targeted asset purchases (TAP)*** shift the *composition of the balance sheet* **toward selected assets** in order to **boost their relative price and stimulate economic activity**.
- In the absence of private demand for the risky asset, the **central bank's purchase** makes credit available where none existed.

Making an Effective Exit

- What happens **when QE and TAP have vastly expanded the amount of reserves and assets** on the central bank's balance sheet?
 - The central bank *may need to sell a large volume of assets* to *reduce reserve supply* sufficiently *to raise the policy rate target.*
- ***But, QE and TAP assets are typically more difficult to sell.***
- A central bank *may be unable to sell assets and withdraw reserves from the banking system rapidly enough to hike the policy interest rate* when it desires.

End of lecture