

EE312 Chapter 4

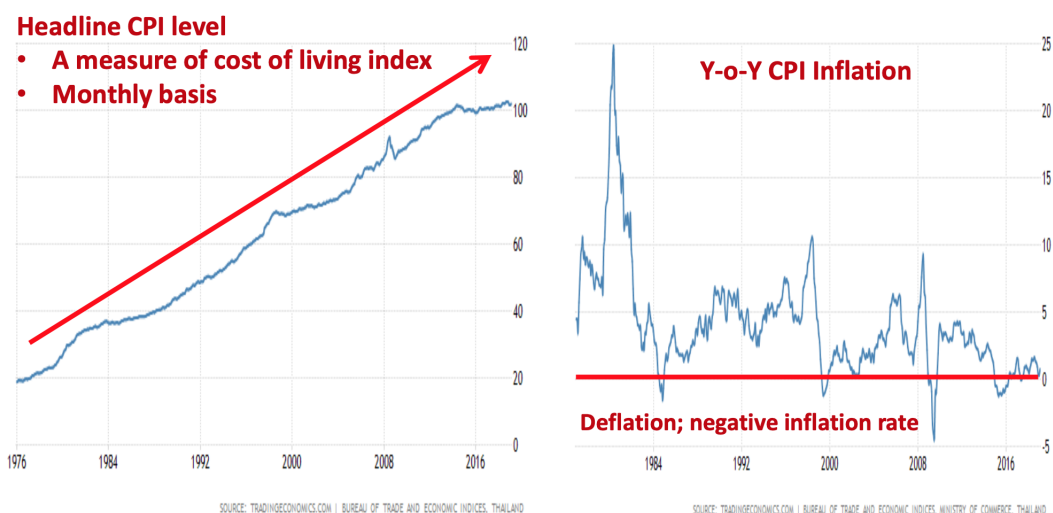
Inflation and Business Cycles

Panit Wattanakoon
Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University

1 Some stylized facts of inflation

1.1 What are stylized facts (of inflation)?

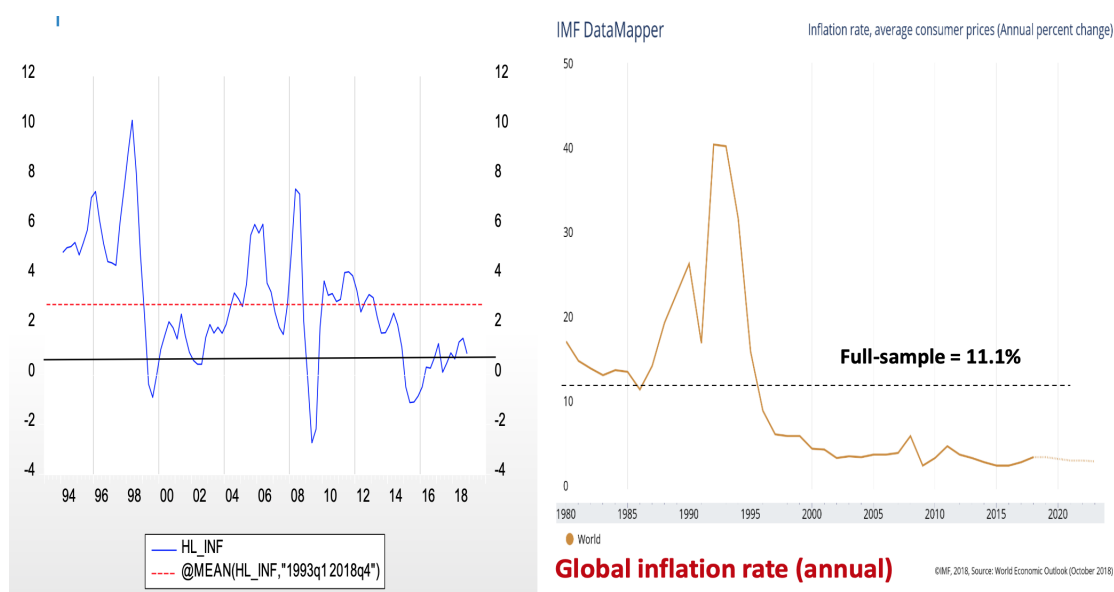
- Stylized fact is a simplified presentation of an empirical finding. (Wikipedia)
- Inflation is a rise in general price level (normally measured by Consumer Price Index: CPI, and sometimes by Producer Price index: PPI). For example, if price level is increasing at a constant rate, inflation rate is constant.



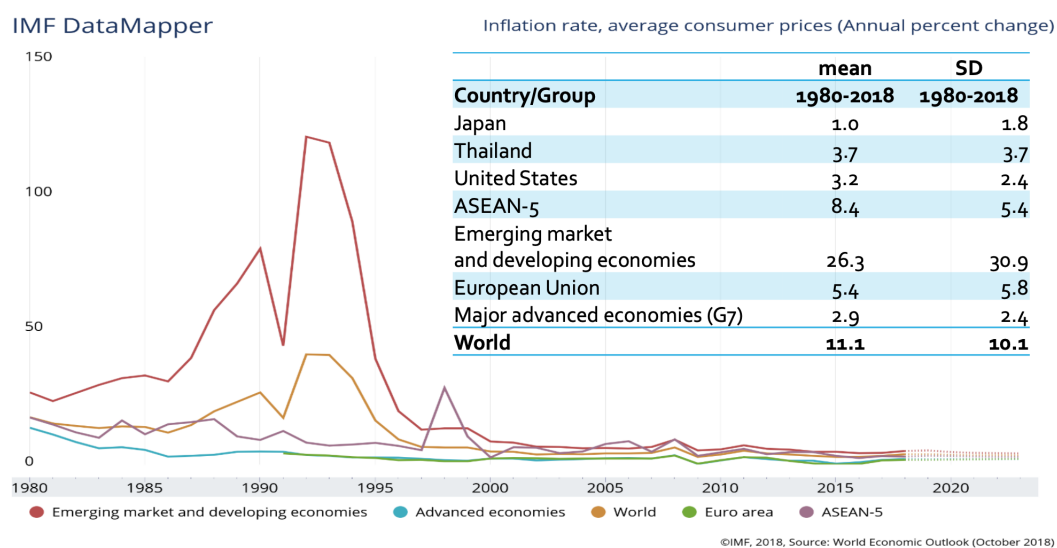
- S1: Positive (average) inflation is a global phenomena

Chapter 4

- Average inflation rate is positive; overtime, cost of living has increased.

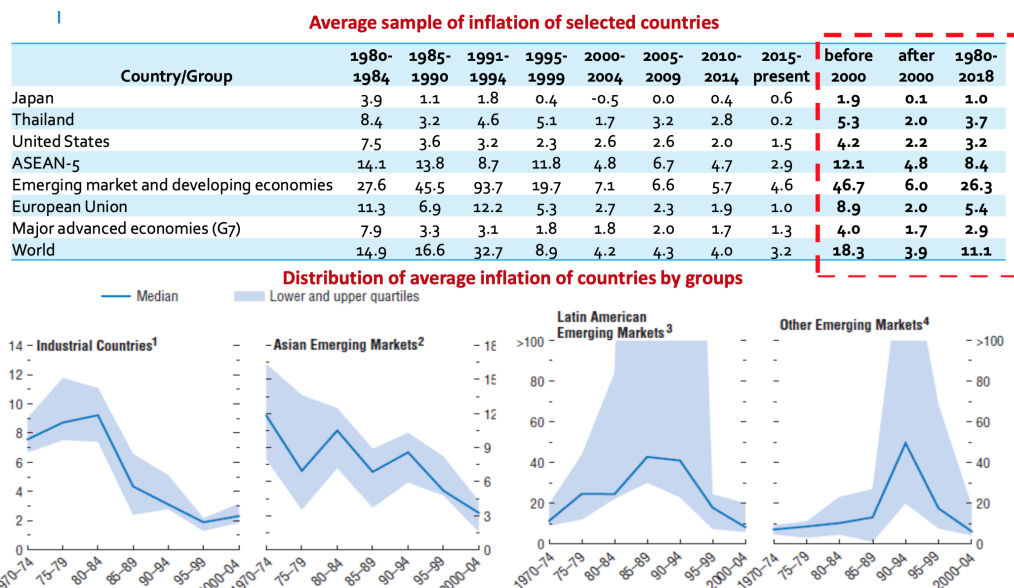


- S2: Inflation outcome has varied across countries
 - Inflation rates among the advanced economies have been lower than those in emerging markets
 - Lower average inflation rate tends to be associated with lower inflation volatility

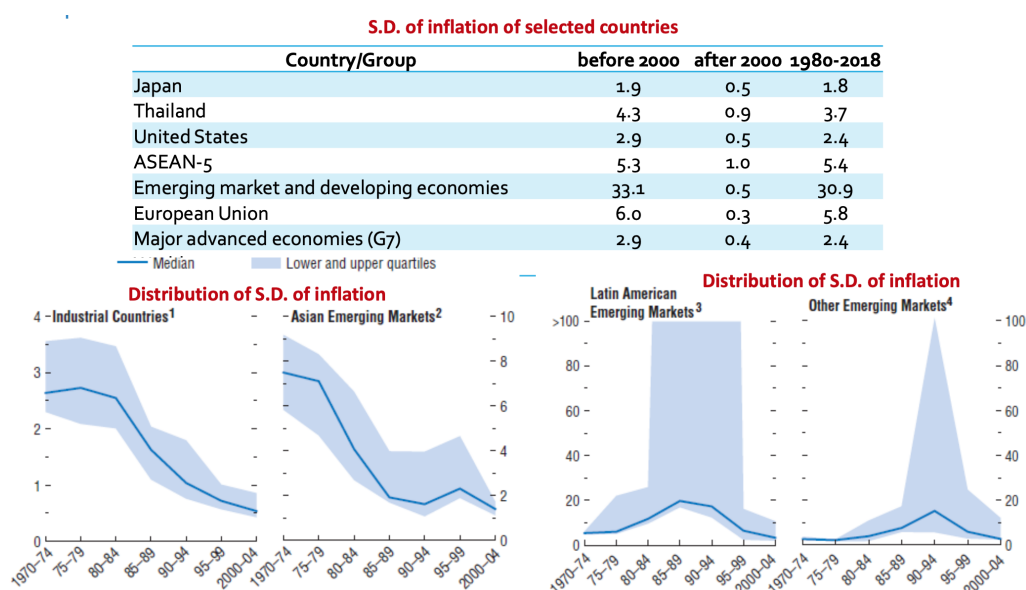


Chapter 4

- S3: Declining trend of inflation rate has been a global phenomena
 - Inflation rate has slowly declined among different countries; average inflation during the 2000s has been much lower than that of before 2000s

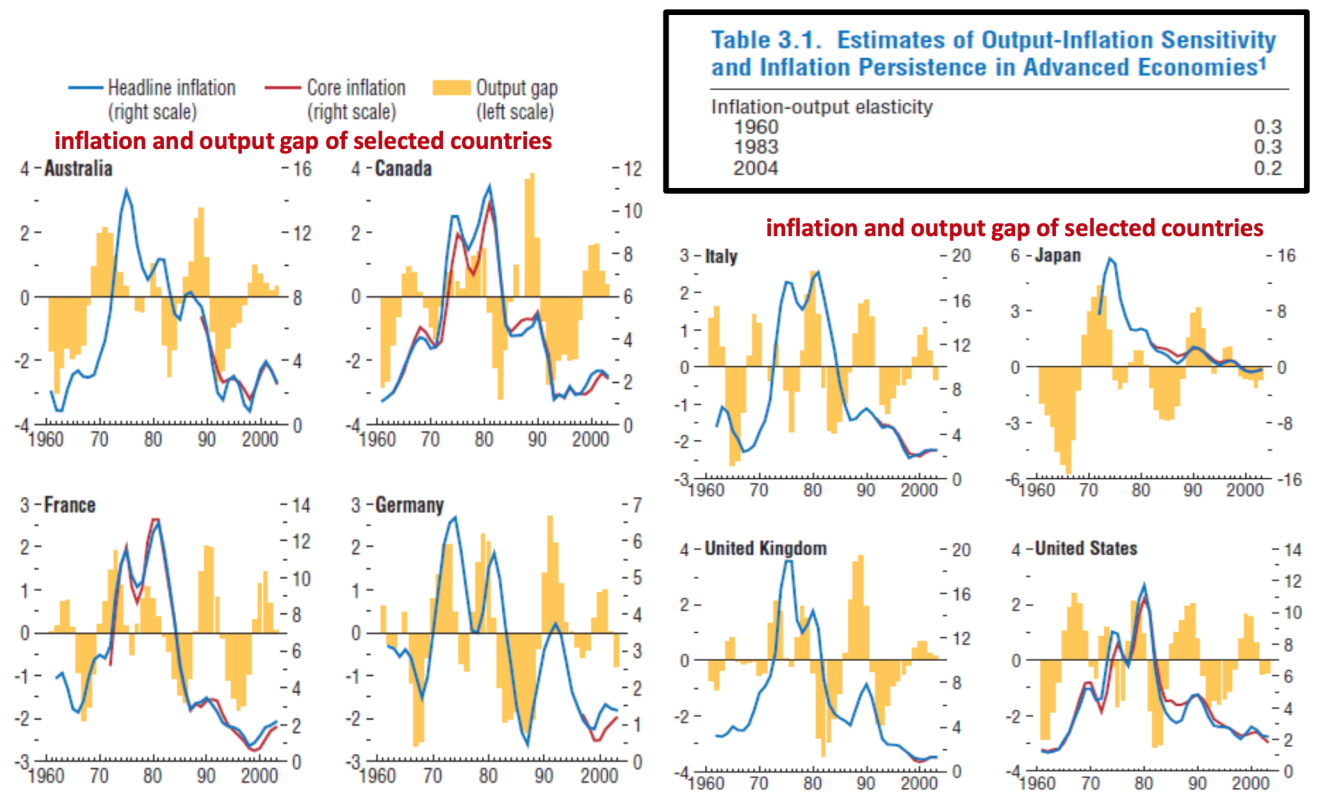


- S4: Along with declining trend, inflation volatility has reduced too
 - Since 2000, most countries have been successful in maintaining the price stability, i.e. achieving low and stable inflation rate.

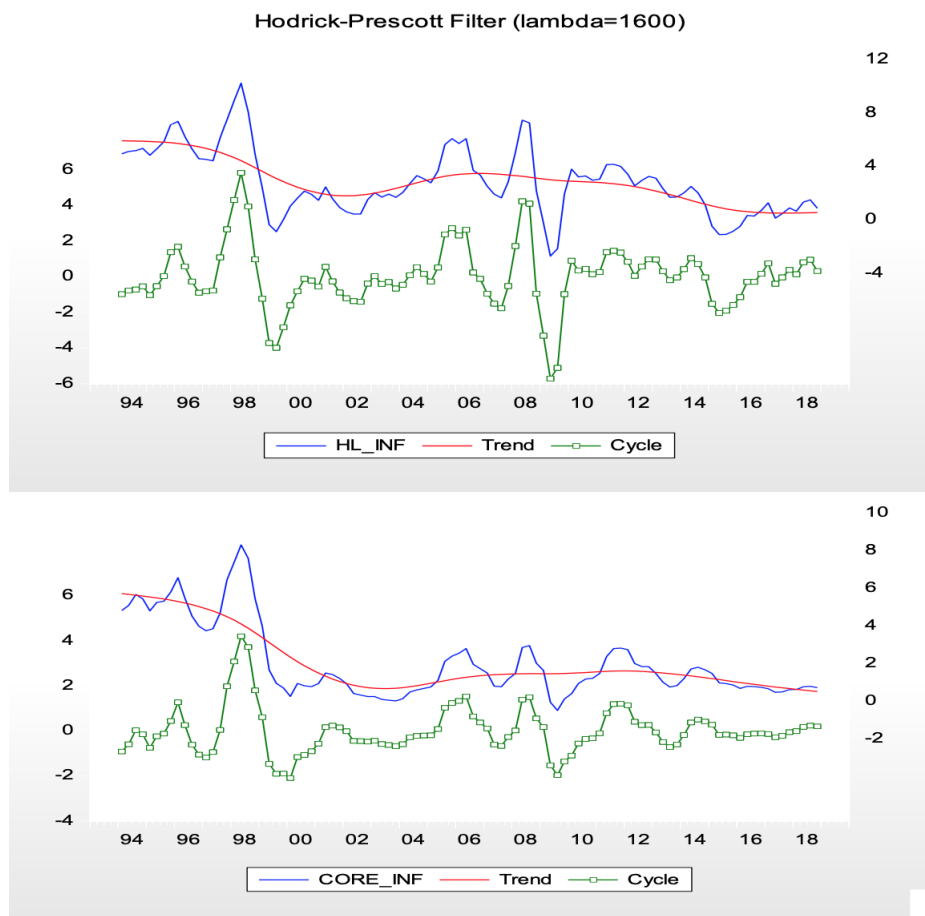


- S5: CPI inflation exhibits some cyclical patterns
 - From business cycle perspectives, actual inflation rate moves around (downward) trend and positively related to output gap

$$P = sP^e + \frac{1-s}{s} \left[a(Y - \bar{Y}) \right]$$



- Core inflation is less volatile than headline inflation



- Both core and headline inflation are positively related.

Covariance Analysis: Ordinary
Date: 03/12/19 Time: 22:54
Sample: 2000Q1 2018Q4
Included observations: 76
Balanced sample (listwise missing value deletion)

Correlation Probability	CORE_INF_...	HL_INF_CYC	LRGDP_SA...
CORE_INF_CYC	1.000000 ----		
HL_INF_CYC	0.699870 0.0000	1.000000 ----	
LRGDP_SA_CYC	0.044387 0.7034	0.390608 0.0005	1.000000 ----

1.2 Stylized fact: Key Questions?

- Based on the facts, economists aim to explain the cause and process of inflation from two perspectives.
 1. Long-run perspective:
 - What drive the average inflation? (Quantity theory of money)
 2. Business cycle perspective :
 - How to explain the cyclical relationship of inflation? (Phillip relation)
 - What explain the moderation in the inflation rate and inflation volatility? (Good luck/ Good policy/ Secular factors)

2 Long-run theory of inflation

2.1 The quantity theory of money

How do economists explain the long-run (sustained) inflation?

- In the long-run, economists “strongly” believe that money growth drives the “sustained” inflation rate.
- The famous theorem used to explain the average inflation is the quantity theory of money

$$\begin{aligned}M \cdot V &= P \cdot Q \\ \% \Delta M + \% \Delta V &= \% \Delta P + \% \Delta Q \\ \% \Delta M - \% \Delta Q &= \% \Delta P\end{aligned}$$

- “Inflation is always a monetary phenomena. This usually occurs when money growth is higher than output growth.”

2.2 AD-AS model and Long-Run Inflation

- Constant money growth; constant inflation rate
 - Over the long-run, technological progress shifts LRAS to the right and growth in the money supply shifts AD to the right.
 - Result: ongoing inflation and growth in output.

- Higher money growth; higher inflation rate
 - With higher money growth, AD grows more over time.
 - Result: “Higher” long-term inflation

2.3 How well does the theory explain facts?

- The answer depends on time horizon; how long is the long-run?
- Adjusted money growth is defined as money growth minus real GDP growth.
- For long horizon data, many studies with cross-country comparison confirm the validity of the quantity theory.

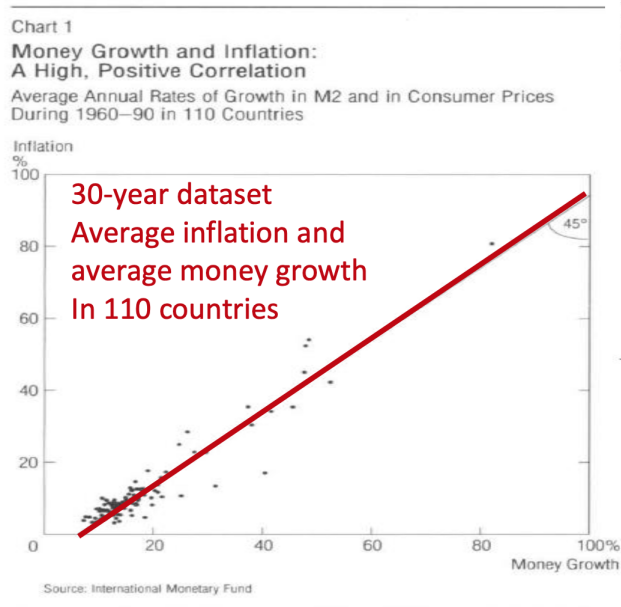


Table 1
Correlation Coefficients for Money Growth and Inflation*
Based on Data From 1960 to 1990

Sample	Coefficient for Each Definition of Money		
	M0	M1	M2
All 110 Countries	.925	.958	.950
Subsamples			
21 OECD Countries	.894	.940	.958
14 Latin American Countries	.973	.992	.993

*Inflation is defined as changes in a measure of consumer prices.
Source of basic data: International Monetary Fund

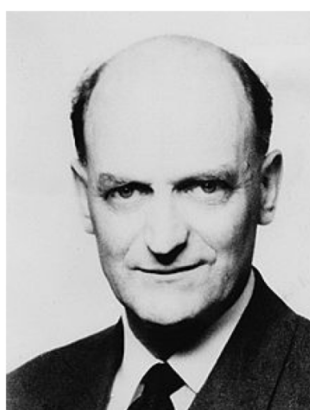
- Money growth positively correlates with inflation rates.

3 Business cycles perspectives of inflation

- Inflation dynamics are about the movement of inflation rate over the course of business cycles
- The famous theorem widely cited to explain the inflation dynamics is the Phillips relation.
 - Negative relation between inflation and unemployment
- The relation was one of the most controversial issues in economics
 - Is the negative relation (between inflation and unemployment) stable? Policy implications?
- Nowadays, old debates seem to be settled, but now being replaced by other newer debates.
 - Puzzle after the Global Financial Crisis: why has the negative relation between inflation and unemployment been weaker?

3.1 A brief history of theory of inflation dynamics

- Phillips relation : comovement between inflation and “real economic activities”. The relation was first mentioned in 1958 by A.W. Phillips



Alban William Phillips (1914-1975),
the London School of Economics.

Chapter 4

- He discovered the inverse relationship between the rate of unemployment and the rate of increase in money wages.
 - wage inflation decreases with unemployment rate
- Studies based on the UK data for 1861- 1958 ? the relation has been highly stable
- What do we mean by the highly stable relation? Answer: highly predictive (forecasting) performance

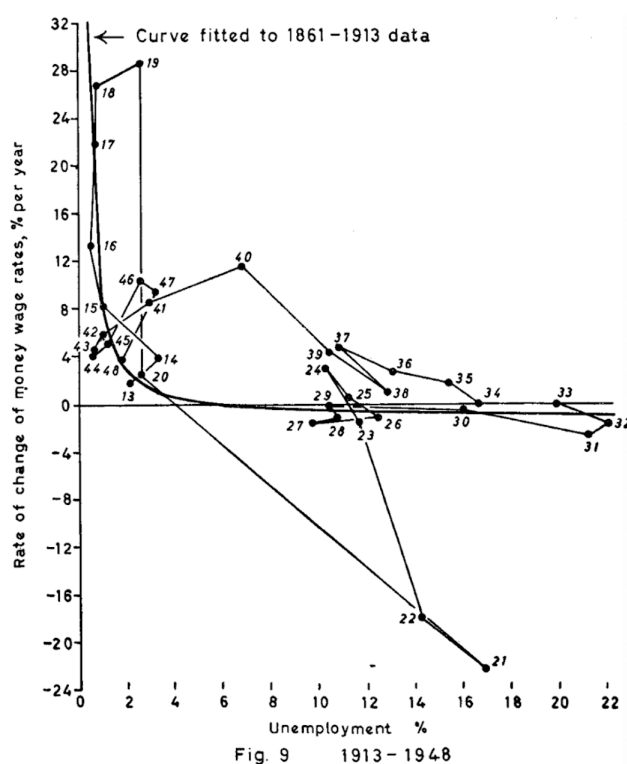


Fig. 9 1913 - 1948

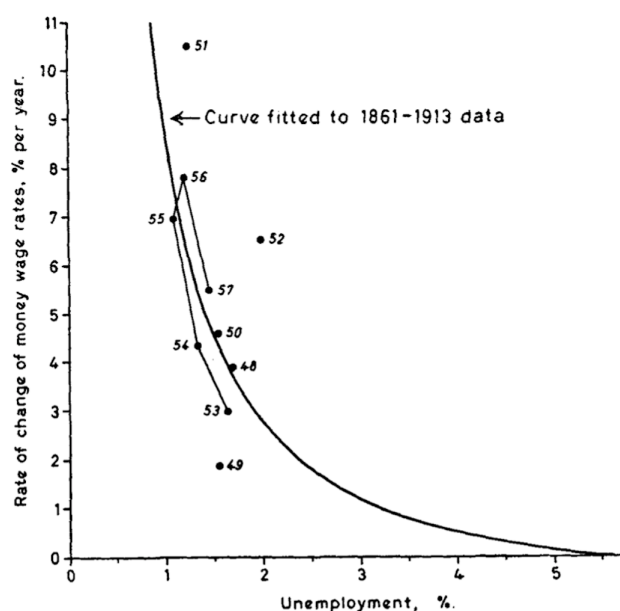


Fig. 10. 1948-1957

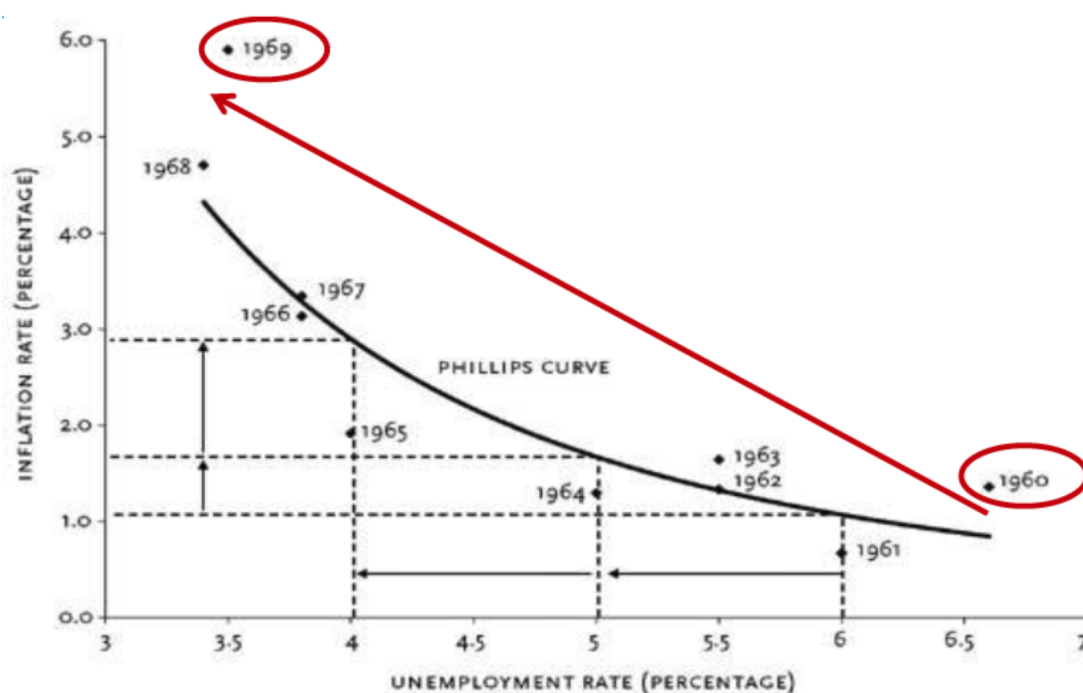
- The name “Phillips curve”
 - 1960 Paul Samuelson and Robert Solow found a similar relation in the US data for 1900 - 1960.
 - To give the credit to Phillips the relation is dubbed “the Phillips curve”

3.2 Keynesian Interpretation: Phillips Curve

- Keynesian economist interpreted the Phillips relation using the nominal rigidities concept; demand-pulled effect

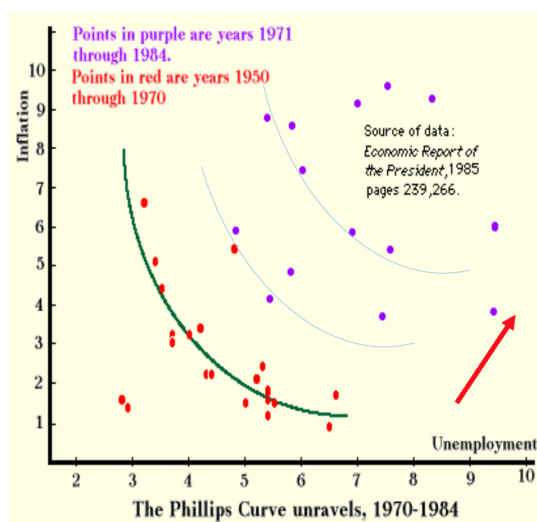
3.3 How important was the discovery of Phillips relation?

- The discovery greatly influenced the thinking paradigm of many policy makers; they became more interventionist.
- Because of the negative relationship, economists, as well as policy makers, believed in the trade-off between inflation and unemployment
 - Higher unemployment $\Rightarrow$ Lower inflation
 - Lower unemployment $\Rightarrow$ Higher inflation
- The trade-off is permanent and can be exploited
- Policymakers can choose between different combinations of inflation and unemployment, based on preferences.
 - (observed) Outcomes determined by preference.
 - During the 1960s, policymakers exploited the trade-off, and pursued aggressive expansionary policy, i.e. pro-growth policy

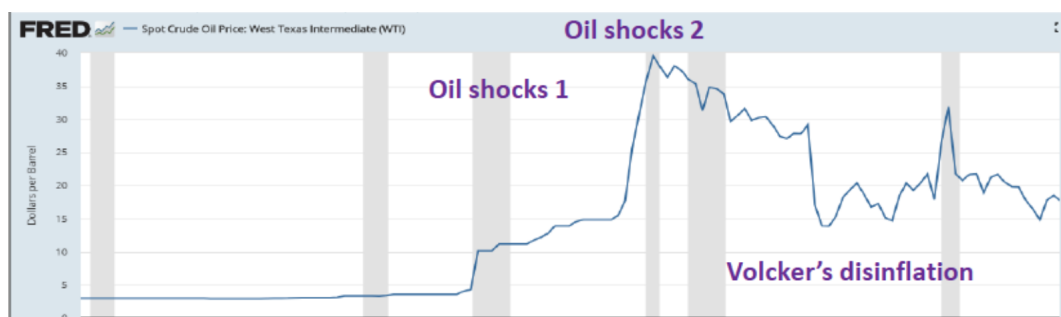


3.4 The Breakdown of Phillips curve : Oil shocks

- 1970s was a good test for the Phillips curve; unfortunately Phillips relation had seemed to have a wreck- age at the first place

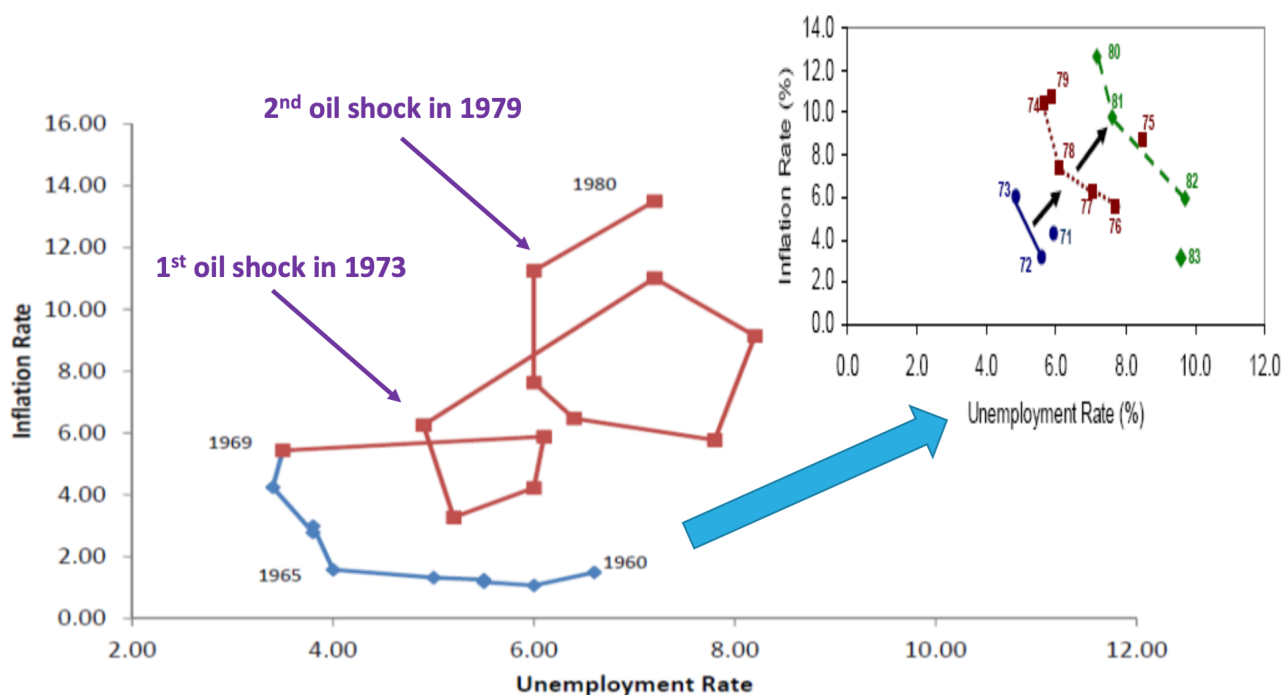


- High inflation and high unemployment: Stagflation
 - oil price hikes by the OPEC
 - inflation rises and high unemployment
 - Why break down?
- Even the oil price had reached its new stable high with no further rise, and the recession had been over, inflation rate did not come down.



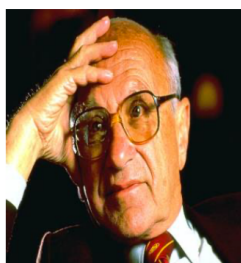
Chapter 4

- There seemed to be an inflation spiral during the 1970s; this suggested that the concept of inflation might be more complicated than economists thought they had known.



3.5 The Expectation-Augmented Phillips curve

3.5.1 The Rise of expectation-augmented Phillips curve.



Milton Friedman (1912-2006),
University of Chicago

Nobel Prize 1976.



Edmund S. Phelps, Jr. (b1933),
Columbia University

Nobel Prize 2006.

- Some economist had earlier warned that the Keynesian-based Phillips relation, and the conception on permanent tradeoff may be superficial.
- The accelerating inflation during 1970s was the result of the misconception on the knowledge of inflation dynamics.
- Friedman and Phelps argued that there had been No such thing as a permanent trade-off; the tradeoff exists in the short-run, but cannot be exploited.
- Friedman and Phelps argued for the role of the natural rate of unemployment and inflation expectation as additional factors that importantly explain the inflation dynamics.

3.5.2 The expectation-aumented Phillips curve: Equation

- The Phillips Curve states that π depends on
 1. Expectation π^e
 2. Cyclical unemployment : the deviation of the actual rate of unemployment from the natural rate

$$\pi = \pi^e - \beta(u - u^n)$$

π = the inflation rate at period t

π^e = the expected inflation rate for period t.

u = the unemployment rate at period t

u^n = the natural rate of unemployment at period t

where $\beta > 0$ is an exogenous constant

- If the $\pi = \pi^e$ then $u = u^n$
- if the $\pi > \pi^e$ then $u < u^n$
- if the $\pi < \pi^e$ then $u > u^n$
- Note : Comparing SRAS and the Phillips curve

SRAS	$Y = \bar{Y} + \alpha(P - P^e)$
	$P = P^e + \frac{1}{\alpha}(Y - \bar{Y})$
Phillips Curve	$\pi = \pi^e + \beta(u - u^n)$

- SRAS curve: output is related to **unexpected movement in the price level**.
- Phillips curve: Unemployment is related to **unexpected movements in the inflation rate**.

3.5.3 The expectation-augmented Phillips curve: Derivation

- When actual inflation is equal to expected inflation:
 1. Suppose we started from the natural level (N^*, Y^*)
 2. Assume that workers expected a 2% inflation rate, and incorporated the expectation into the wage-setting and labor supply decision.
 3. Suppose money growth ensure that the actual level of inflation is 2%
 4. 2% increase in price will increase demand for labor; real wage is kept the same, and hence the level of employment and output. Show the effect on the graph.

- Economic Intuition
 - For simplicity, suppose the original real wage is equal to “1” and the economy was operating at the natural rate of unemployment.
 - With 2% expected inflation, workers should require for more pay, at least equal to 2%.
 - Recall that higher price will result in higher demand for labor; if the actual inflation is also 2%, demand for labor will increase to sufficiently result in a proportionate increase in nominal wage.
 - Economy will continue to produce at the original N^* , i.e. natural rate of unemployment
- When actual inflation (3%) is greater than expected inflation (2%):
 - Workers were led to believe that inflation will be 2%; They should have asked for an even more higher pay if they had known about this.
 - Real wage is lower than expected.
 - Overemployment: $u < u^n$ when $\pi_t > \pi_t^e$

- When actual inflation (1%) is less than expected inflation (2%):
 - If aggregate demand grows less than expected, causing actual inflation to be 1%, what would happen then?
 - Workers were lead to believe that inflation will be 2%; asking too high nominal wage increase
 - Real wage is higher than expected (expect price to be higher and thus lower expected real wage)
 - Underemployment: $u > u^n$ when $\pi_t < \pi_t^e$

- We can draw a Phillips curve with 2% expected inflation and different level of inflation as follows

3.6 The expectation-aumented Phillips curve: Demand-pull and Cost-push inflation

- Two (common) causes of inflation
 1. Demand-pull inflation: inflation resulting from demand shocks.

Positive shocks to aggregate demand cause unemployment to fall below its natural rate, which “pulls” the inflation rate up.
 2. Cost-push inflation: inflation resulting from supply shocks

Adverse supply shocks typically raise production costs and induce firms to raise prices, “pushing” inflation up.
- Demand-pull inflation: Fixing everything else, rising aggregate demand leads to higher demand for labor, and hence lowering unemployment rate; together this brings about a rise of inflation. $\Rightarrow$ Movement along the curve

3.6.1 The expectation-aumented Phillips curve: Long-run

- Given correct expectation, higher expected inflation will lead to higher inflation; however, the unemployment rate remains the same.

3.7 The Modified Phillips Curve and Adaptive Expectations Hypothesis

3.7.1 Adaptive Expectation and the Modified Phillip Curve Equation

- The traditional Phillips curve

$$\pi_t = \pi_t^e - \beta(u_t - u^n)$$

- Adaptive Expectation: (Friedman and Phelps) The agent gradually learns from the past and predicts current inflation based on past inflation – a behavioral-based expectation

$$\pi_t^e = \theta \pi_{t-1}$$

where $0 \leq \theta \leq 1$

Substitute into the traditional Phillips curve equation and obtain

- The Modified Phillips curve equation:

$$\pi_t = \theta \pi_{t-1} - \beta(u_t - u^n)$$

$\theta = 0$: stable relation between inflation and unemployment – traditional Phillips curve.

$\theta > 0$: current inflation depends on past inflation and unemployment.

$\theta = 1$: the unemployment rate affects the rate of change in the inflation rate, given u .

3.7.2 The Modified Phillips Curve: inflation is near zero, θ is near zero

- The UK and US economies before 1970 had very low inflation, very close to zero.
- Agents are sometimes inattentive.
- So when inflation rate is closed to zero, they do not bother, θ is near zero

$$\begin{aligned}\pi_t &= \theta\pi_{t-1} - \beta(u_t - u^n) \\ \theta &= 0 \\ \pi_t &= -\beta(u_t - u^n) = \beta u^n - \beta u_t\end{aligned}$$

- This made the inflation dynamics look very much like a simple downward-sloping relationship between inflation and unemployment rate
- The traditional Phillips curve is valid

3.7.3 The Modified Phillips Curve: $\theta = 1$

- High persistent inflation from 1970
- The case for augmented-expected inflation began to receive the support in 1970s.
- People change the way they form inflation expectations.
- The value of θ was rising quickly and finally close to 1.
- This-year inflation is expected to be the same as last-year inflation.
- The original Phillips curve (and trade-off) broke down.

$$\begin{aligned}\pi_t &= \theta\pi_{t-1} - \beta(u_t - u^n) \\ \theta &= 1 \\ \pi_t - \pi_{t-1} &= \beta u^n - \beta u_t\end{aligned}$$

When $u > u^n$, decelerating (decreasing) inflation

When $u < u^n$, accelerating (increasing) inflation

When $u = u^n$, inflation is constant

- Example: $u^n = 0.25, \beta = 0.5, \pi_{t-1} = 0.2$

	$u_t = 0.25$	$u_t = 0.5$
π_t		
π_{t+1}		
π_{t+2}		
π_{t+3}		

3.8 Rational Expectation and New Classical Economics.

- Lessons learnt from the Phillips curve
 1. Do not trust any claim without theoretical consideration!
 - The original claim on Phillips relation is a good example of the problem generated by the reduced-form approach used in economic study.
 - Data-driven method might work, but can be dangerous!
 - Subsequently, most economics framework have emphasized at the micro-founded approach since 1970s.
 2. Tradeoff may exist, BUT cannot be exploited!
 - Friedman (1968) argued for this statement; however, it had received little response
 - This was until mid of 1970s when Friedman's concept was further formalized by team of economists i.e. Sargent, Lucas, Wallace and Barro.



Thomas Sargent



Robert Lucas



Neil Wallace



Robert Barro

- Later, they are called a group of “New Classical economists”

- They believed and advocated in the concept of rational expectation (forward looking expectation) in economic analysis, and seek for behavioral implication of rational expectation on policy effects.

3.8.1 Anticipated Shock/Policy

- An anticipated demand management policy will not matter to the real output.
 - Consider for example an anticipated change in the level of money growth from 2% to 3%
 - * Given the new high money growth, workers expected the inflation to change from 2% to 3%
 - * With rational expectation, they already incorporated this information into the wage-setting.
 - * Once the policy is implemented, it will not generate any real effect
- Anticipated policy is neutral; workers fully incorporate the information into their wage setting decision.

3.8.2 Surprised Shock/Policy

- Surprised policy matters
 - Suppose workers expected a 2% money growth policy, and hence expected 2% inflation.
 - * Central bank surprisingly increases the money growth to 3%
 - * Workers then underpredict the inflation, and hence setting their nominal wage for too low.
 - * Firms benefit from this and can choose to hire more labor.
 - * The final outcome is the increase in equilibrium output.

- But it does not last long
 - Workers will soon realize the error, they will revise their inflation expectation upward
 - Cost of production will rise, and hence discourage firms from choosing to overly produce its output beyond the natural level
 - The self-correction mechanism revisits.

3.8.3 Implication

- Neither anticipated nor surprised policy are good for long-term; the damage lasts long.
- Anticipated policy $\Rightarrow$ inflation pushed up suddenly.
- Surprised policy will result in lower unemployment rate (short-term gain) and higher inflation (short-term loss)
 - the tradeoff should not be exploited. (Phillips curve is vertical in the long-run)
 - Inflation expectation will play role, and do the initial real effect.
 - What only left behind is the higher sustained (or trend) inflation rate.
 - At the end, we only have long-term loss, without any gain.
 - Opportunistic policy will result in the “accelerating” inflation spiral.

4 Macroeconomic policy design

- Practical policy design should be less ambitious, and aim at achieving price stability, i.e. having low and stable inflation.
 - As we have no real output gain in the long-term, policy should be a rule-based – avoiding be another source of shock/do not surprise markets!
 - Rule-based central bank should aim at having low and stable inflation as its primary objective – inflation targeting!
 - * A number of studies have found a huge benefit from anchoring the inflation expectation – keeping inflation in check or controlled
 - * To successfully anchoring inflation, central bank should act tough to build the reputation
 - * This will be rewarding as it helps mitigate the impact of negative supply shock
- Is low inflation good for the economy?
 - Inflation affects consumers' welfare.

Price stability is preferred by consumers and firms.
 - Stable price (and low inflation) is favorable to the private sector's smooth growth.

High inflation is typically associated with high volatility in inflation rate, followed by costly management to avoid the inflation risk.
 - If negative shocks hit inflation, credible commitment of low inflation would mitigate the impact of negative shocks.

Agents believe that it will be temporary. They will not drastically revise their inflation expectation.
- Policy Implication:
 1. Maintaining low inflation is good for the long-term $\Rightarrow$ anchoring low expected inflation.

- Inflation is driven by expected inflation (in the long run, $u = u^n$).

$$\pi_t = \theta\pi_{t-1} - \beta(u_t - u^n)$$

$$\pi_t = \theta\pi_{t-1}$$

- Committing to a low inflation rate will bring about a low inflation rate then.

2. Rule v.s. discretion

- To anchor low stable inflation, monetary policy rules are recommended.
- Two competing approaches: Rule V.S. Discretion
 - * Discretionary monetary policy is difficult and costly; targets are missed most of the time.
 - * Persistent high inflation in the 1970s discredited such policy.
- Rule-based approach to monetary policy make the inflation expectation get anchored much more easier than under the discretion approach.