

Why Nonlinear/Non-Gaussian DSGE Models?

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Motivation

- These lectures review recent advances in nonlinear and non-gaussian macro model-building.
- First, we will justify why we are interested in this class of models.
- Then, we will study both the solution and estimation of those models.
- We will work with discrete time models.
- We will focus on DSGE models.

Nonlinearities

- Most DSGE models are nonlinear.
- Common practice (you saw it yesterday): solve and estimate a linearized version with Gaussian shocks.
- Why? Stochastic neoclassical growth model is nearly linear for the benchmark calibration ([Aruoba, Fernández-Villaverde, Rubio-Ramírez, 2005](#)).
- However, we want to depart from this basic framework.
- I will present three examples.

Example I: Epstein-Zin Preferences

- Recursive preferences (**Kreps-Porteus-Epstein-Zin-Weil**) have become a popular way to account for asset pricing observations.
- Natural separation between IES and risk aversion.
- Example of a more general set of preferences in macroeconomics.
- Consequences for business cycles, welfare, and optimal policy design. Link with robust control.
- I study a version of the RBC with inflation and adjustment costs in **The Term Structure of Interest Rates in a DSGE Model with Recursive Preferences.**

Household

- Preferences:

$$U_t = \left[\left(c_t^v (1 - l_t)^{1-v} \right)^{\frac{1-\gamma}{\theta}} + \beta \underbrace{\left(\mathbb{E}_t U_{t+1}^{1-\gamma} \right)^{\frac{1}{\theta}}}_{\text{Risk-adjustment operator}} \right]^{\frac{\theta}{1-\gamma}}$$

where:

$$\theta = \frac{1-\gamma}{1-\frac{1}{\psi}}$$

- Budget constraint:

$$c_t + i_t + \frac{b_{t+1}}{p_t} \frac{1}{R_t} = r_t k_t + w_t l_t + \frac{b_t}{p_t}$$

- Asset markets.

Technology

- Production function:

$$y_t = k_t^\zeta (z_t l_t)^{1-\zeta}$$

- Law of motion:

$$\log z_{t+1} = \lambda \log z_t + \chi \sigma_\varepsilon \varepsilon_{zt+1} \text{ where } \varepsilon_{zt} \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1)$$

- Aggregate constraints:

$$c_t + i_t = k_t^\zeta (z_t l_t)^{1-\zeta}$$

$$k_{t+1} = (1 - \delta) k_t + i_t$$

Approximating the Solution of the Model

- Define $s_t = (\hat{k}_t, \log z_t; 1)$ where $\hat{k}_t = k_t - k_{ss}$.
- Under differentiability conditions, third-order Taylor approximation of the value function around the steady state:

$$V(\hat{k}_t, \log z_t; 1) \simeq V_{ss} + V_{i,ss} s_t^i + \frac{1}{2} V_{ij,ss} s_t^i s_t^j + \frac{1}{6} V_{ijl,ss} s_t^i s_t^j s_t^l,$$

- Approximations to the policy functions:

$$\text{var}(\hat{k}_t, \log z_t; 1) \simeq \text{var}_{ss} + \text{var}_{i,ss} s_t^i + \frac{1}{2} \text{var}_{ij,ss} s_t^i s_t^j + \frac{1}{6} \text{var}_{ijl,ss} s_t^i s_t^j s_t^l$$

- and yields:

$$R_m(\hat{k}_t, \log z_t, \log \pi_t, \omega_t; 1) \simeq R_{m,ss} + R_{m,i,ss} s_t^i + \frac{1}{2} R_{m,ij,ss} s_t^i s_t^j + \frac{1}{6} R_{m,ijl,ss} s_t^i s_t^j s_t^l$$

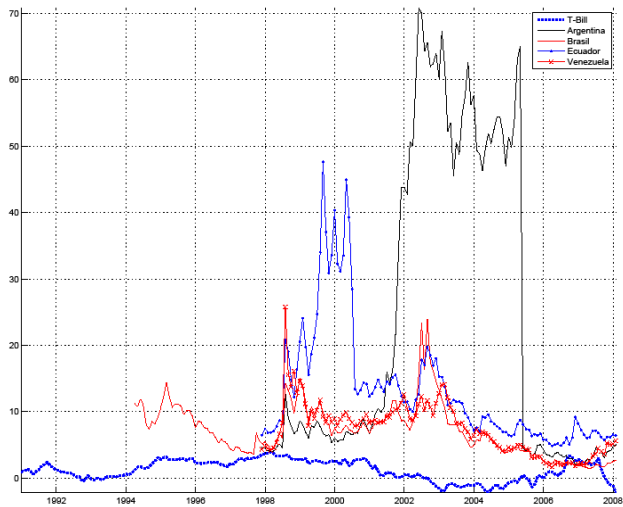
Structure of Approximation

- ① The constant terms V_{ss} , var_{ss} , or $R_{m,ss}$ do **not** depend on γ , the parameter that controls risk aversion.
- ② **None** of the terms in the first-order approximation, $V_{\cdot,ss}$, $var_{\cdot,ss}$, or $R_{m,\cdot,ss}$ (for all m) depend on γ .
- ③ **None** of the terms in the second-order approximation, $V_{\cdot,\cdot,ss}$, $var_{\cdot,\cdot,ss}$, or $R_{m,\cdot,\cdot,ss}$ depend on γ , except $V_{33,ss}$, $var_{33,ss}$, and $R_{m,33,ss}$ (for all m). This last term is a constant that captures precautionary behavior.
- ④ In the third-order approximation **only** the terms of the form $V_{33\cdot,ss}$, $V_{3\cdot 3,ss}$, $V_{\cdot 33,ss}$ and $var_{33\cdot,ss}$, $var_{3\cdot 3,ss}$, $var_{\cdot 33,ss}$ and $R_{m,33\cdot,ss}$, $R_{m,3\cdot 3,ss}$, $R_{m,\cdot 33,ss}$ (for all m) that is, terms on functions of χ^2 , depend on γ .

Example II: Volatility Shocks

- Data from four emerging economies: Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, and Venezuela. Why?
- Monthly data. Why?
- Interest rate r_t : international risk free real rate+country spread.
- International risk free real rate: Monthly T-Bill rate. Transformed into real rate using past year U.S. CPI inflation.
- Country spreads: Emerging Markets Bond Index+ (EMBI+) reported by J.P. Morgan.
EMBI data coverage: Argentina 1997.12 - 2008.02; Ecuador 1997.12 - 2008.02; Brazil 1994.04 - 2008.02; and Venezuela 1997.12 - 2008.02.

Data



The Law of Motion for Interest Rates

- Decomposition of interest rates:

$$r_t = \underbrace{r}_{\text{mean}} + \underbrace{\varepsilon_{tb,t}}_{\text{T-Bill shocks}} + \underbrace{\varepsilon_{r,t}}_{\text{Spread shocks}}$$

- $\varepsilon_{tb,t}$ and $\varepsilon_{r,t}$ follow:

$$\varepsilon_{tb,t} = \rho_{tb}\varepsilon_{tb,t-1} + e^{\sigma_{tb,t}} u_{tb,t}, \quad u_{tb,t} \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1)$$

$$\varepsilon_{r,t} = \rho_r\varepsilon_{r,t-1} + e^{\sigma_{r,t}} u_{r,t}, \quad u_{r,t} \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1)$$

- $\sigma_{tb,t}$ and $\sigma_{r,t}$ follow:

$$\sigma_{tb,t} = (1 - \rho_{\sigma_{tb}}) \sigma_{tb} + \rho_{\sigma_{tb}} \sigma_{tb,t-1} + \eta_{tb} u_{\sigma_{tb,t}}, \quad u_{\sigma_{tb,t}} \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1)$$

$$\sigma_{r,t} = (1 - \rho_{\sigma_r}) \sigma_r + \rho_{\sigma_r} \sigma_{r,t-1} + \eta_r u_{\sigma_{r,t}}, \quad u_{\sigma_{r,t}} \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1)$$

- I could also allow for correlations of shocks.

A Small Open Economy Model I

- Risk Matters: The Real Effects of Volatility Shocks.
- Prototypical small open economy model: Mendoza (1991), Correia *et al.* (1995), Neumeyer and Perri (2005), Uribe and Yue (2006).
- Representative household with preferences:

$$\mathbb{E}_0 \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t \frac{[C_t - \omega^{-1} H_t^\omega]^{1-\nu} - 1}{1-\nu}.$$

- Why Greenwood-Hercowitz-Huffman (GHH) preferences? Absence of wealth effects.

A Small Open Economy Model II

- Interest rates:

$$r_t = r + \varepsilon_{tb,t} + \varepsilon_{r,t}$$

$$\varepsilon_{tb,t} = \rho_{tb}\varepsilon_{tb,t-1} + e^{\sigma_{tb,t}} u_{tb,t}, \quad u_{tb,t} \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1)$$

$$\varepsilon_{r,t} = \rho_r\varepsilon_{r,t-1} + e^{\sigma_{r,t}} u_{r,t}, \quad u_{r,t} \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1)$$

$$\sigma_{tb,t} = (1 - \rho_{\sigma_{tb}}) \sigma_{tb} + \rho_{\sigma_{tb}} \sigma_{tb,t-1} + \eta_{tb} u_{\sigma_{tb,t}}, \quad u_{\sigma_{tb,t}} \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1)$$

$$\sigma_{r,t} = (1 - \rho_{\sigma_r}) \sigma_r + \rho_{\sigma_r} \sigma_{r,t-1} + \eta_r u_{\sigma_{r,t}}, \quad u_{\sigma_{r,t}} \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1)$$

- Household's budget constraint:

$$\frac{D_{t+1}}{1 + r_t} = D_t - W_t H_t - R_t K_t + C_t + I_t + \frac{\Phi_d}{2} (D_{t+1} - D)^2$$

- Role of $\Phi_d > 0$ (Schmitt-Grohé and Uribe, 2003).

A Small Open Economy Model III

- The stock of capital evolves according to the following law of motion:

$$K_{t+1} = (1 - \delta)K_t + \left(1 - \frac{\phi}{2} \left(\frac{I_t}{I_{t-1}} - 1\right)^2\right) I_t$$

- Typical no-Ponzi condition.
- Production function:

$$Y_t = K_t^\alpha \left(e^{X_t} H_t\right)^{1-\alpha}$$

where:

$$X_t = \rho_x X_{t-1} + e^{\sigma_x} u_{x,t}, \quad u_{x,t} \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1).$$

- Competitive equilibrium defined in a standard way.

Solving the Model

- Perturbation methods.
- We are interested on the effects of a volatility increase, i.e., a positive shock to either $u_{\sigma_r,t}$ or $u_{\sigma_{tb},t}$, while $u_{r,t} = 0$ and $u_{tb,t} = 0$.
- We need to obtain a *third* approximation of the policy functions:
 - ① A first order approximation satisfies a certainty equivalence principle. Only level shocks $u_{tb,t}$, $u_{r,t}$, and $u_{\chi,t}$ appear.
 - ② A second order approximation only captures volatility indirectly via cross products $u_{r,t}u_{\sigma_r,t}$ and $u_{tb,t}u_{\sigma_{tb},t}$. Thus, volatility only has an effect if the real interest rate changes.
 - ③ In the third order, volatility shocks, $u_{\sigma,t}$ and $u_{\sigma_{tb},t}$, enter as independent arguments.
- Moreover:
 - ① Cubic terms are quantitatively important.
 - ② The mean of the ergodic distributions of the endogenous variables and the deterministic steady state values are quite different. Key for calibration.

Example III: Fortune or Virtue

- Strong evidence of time-varying volatility of U.S. aggregate variables.
- Most famous example: the **Great Moderation** between 1984 and 2007.
- Two explanations:
 - ① Stochastic volatility: **fortune**.
 - ② Parameter drifting: **virtue**.
- How can we measure the impact of each of these two mechanisms?
- We build and estimate a medium-scale DSGE model with:
 - ① Stochastic volatility in the shocks that drive the economy.
 - ② Parameter drifting in the monetary policy rule.

The Discussion

- Starting point in empirical work by [Kim and Nelson \(1999\)](#) and [McConnell and Pérez-Quirós \(2000\)](#).
- **Virtue**: [Clarida, Galí, and Gertler \(2000\)](#) and [Lubik and Schorfheide \(2004\)](#).
- [Sims and Zha \(2006\)](#): once time-varying volatility is allowed in a SVAR model, data prefer **fortune**.
- Follow-up papers: [Canova and Gambetti \(2004\)](#), [Cogley and Sargent \(2005\)](#), [Primiceri \(2005\)](#).
- **Fortune** papers are SVARs models: [Benati and Surico \(2009\)](#).
- A DSGE model with both features is a natural measurement tool.

The Goals

- ① How do we write a medium-scale DSGE with stochastic volatility and parameter drifting?
- ② How do we evaluate the likelihood of the model and how to characterize the decision rules of the equilibrium?
- ③ How do we estimate the model using U.S. data and assess model fit?
- ④ How do we build counterfactual histories?

Model I: Preferences

- Household maximizes:

$$\mathbb{E}_0 \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t d_t \left\{ \log(c_{jt} - hc_{jt-1}) + v \log\left(\frac{m_{jt}}{p_t}\right) - \varphi_t \psi \frac{l_{jt}^{1+\vartheta}}{1+\vartheta} \right\}$$

- Shocks:

$$\log d_t = \rho_d \log d_{t-1} + \sigma_{d,t} \varepsilon_{d,t}$$

$$\log \varphi_t = \rho_\varphi \log \varphi_{t-1} + \sigma_{\varphi,t} \varepsilon_{\varphi,t}$$

- Stochastic Volatility:

$$\log \sigma_{d,t} = (1 - \rho_{\sigma_d}) \log \sigma_d + \rho_{\sigma_d} \log \sigma_{d,t-1} + \eta_d u_{d,t}$$

$$\log \sigma_{\varphi,t} = (1 - \rho_{\sigma_\varphi}) \log \sigma_\varphi + \rho_{\sigma_\varphi} \log \sigma_{\varphi,t-1} + \eta_\varphi u_{\varphi,t}$$

Model II: Constraints

- Budget constraint:

$$c_{jt} + x_{jt} + \frac{m_{jt}}{p_t} + \frac{b_{jt+1}}{p_t} + \int q_{jt+1,t} a_{jt+1} d\omega_{j,t+1,t} =$$

$$w_{jt} l_{jt} + (r_t u_{jt} - \mu_t^{-1} \Phi[u_{jt}]) k_{jt-1} + \frac{m_{jt-1}}{p_t} + R_{t-1} \frac{b_{jt}}{p_t} + a_{jt} + T_t + F_t$$

- The capital evolves:

$$k_{jt} = (1 - \delta) k_{jt-1} + \mu_t \left(1 - V \left[\frac{x_{jt}}{x_{jt-1}} \right] \right) x_{jt}$$

- Investment-specific productivity μ_t follows a random walk in logs:

$$\log \mu_t = \Lambda_\mu + \log \mu_{t-1} + \sigma_{\mu,t} \varepsilon_{\mu,t}$$

- Stochastic Volatility:

$$\log \sigma_{\mu,t} = (1 - \rho_{\sigma_\mu}) \log \sigma_\mu + \rho_{\sigma_\mu} \log \sigma_{\mu,t-1} + \eta_\mu u_{\mu,t}$$

Model III: Nominal Rigidities

- Monopolistic competition on labor markets with sticky wages (Calvo pricing with indexation).
- Monopolistic intermediate good producer with sticky prices (Calvo pricing with indexation):

$$y_{it} = A_t k_{it-1}^\alpha \left(l_{it}^d \right)^{1-\alpha} - \phi z_t$$

$$\log A_t = \Lambda_A + \log A_{t-1} + \sigma_{A,t} \varepsilon_{A,t}$$

- Stochastic Volatility:

$$\log \sigma_{A,t} = \left(1 - \rho_{\sigma_A} \right) \log \sigma_A + \rho_{\sigma_A} \log \sigma_{A,t-1} + \eta_A u_{A,t}$$

Model IV: Monetary Authority

- Modified Taylor rule:

$$\frac{R_t}{R} = \left(\frac{R_{t-1}}{R} \right)^{\gamma_R} \left(\left(\frac{\Pi_t}{\bar{\Pi}} \right)^{\gamma_{\Pi,t}} \left(\frac{\frac{y_t^d}{y_{t-1}^d}}{\exp(\Lambda_{y^d})} \right)^{\gamma_{y,t}} \right)^{1-\gamma_R} \exp(\sigma_{m,t} \varepsilon_{mt})$$

- Stochastic Volatility:

$$\log \sigma_{m,t} = (1 - \rho_{\sigma_m}) \log \sigma_m + \rho_{\sigma_m} \log \sigma_{m,t-1} + \eta_m u_{m,t}$$

- Parameter drifting:

$$\log \gamma_{\Pi,t} = (1 - \rho_{\gamma_{\Pi}}) \log \gamma_{\Pi} + \rho_{\gamma_{\Pi}} \log \gamma_{\Pi,t-1} + \eta_{\Pi} \varepsilon_{\pi,t}$$

$$\log \gamma_{y,t} = (1 - \rho_{\gamma_y}) \log \gamma_y + \rho_{\gamma_y} \log \gamma_{y,t-1} + \eta_y \varepsilon_{y,t}$$

More About Nonlinearities I

- The previous examples are not exhaustive.
- Unfortunately, linearization eliminates phenomena of interest:
 - ① Asymmetries.
 - ② Threshold effects.
 - ③ Precautionary behavior.
 - ④ Big shocks.
 - ⑤ Convergence away from the steady state.
 - ⑥ And many others....

More About Nonlinearities II

Linearization limits our study of dynamics:

- ① Zero bound on the nominal interest rate.
- ② Finite escape time.
- ③ Multiple steady states.
- ④ Limit cycles.
- ⑤ Subharmonic, harmonic, or almost-periodic oscillations.
- ⑥ Chaos.

More About Nonlinearities III

- Moreover, linearization induces an approximation error.
- This is worse than you may think.
 - ① Theoretical arguments:
 - ① Second-order errors in the approximated policy function imply first-order errors in the loglikelihood function.
 - ② As the sample size grows, the error in the likelihood function also grows and we may have inconsistent point estimates.
 - ③ Linearization complicates the identification of parameters.
 - ② Computational evidence.

Arguments Against Nonlinearities

- ① Theoretical reasons: we know way less about nonlinear and non-gaussian systems.
- ② Computational limitations.
- ③ Bias.

Mark Twain

To a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail.

Teller's Law

A state-of-the-art computation requires 100 hours of CPU time on the state-of-the art computer, independent of the decade.

Solving DSGE Models

- We want to have a general formalism to think about solving DSGE models.
- We need to move beyond value function iteration.
- Theory of functional equations.
- We can cast numerous problems in macroeconomics involve functional equations.
- Examples: Value Function, Euler Equations.

Functional Equation

- Let J^1 and J^2 be two functional spaces, $\Omega \subseteq \mathbb{R}^l$ and let $\mathcal{H} : J^1 \rightarrow J^2$ be an operator between these two spaces.
- A *functional equation problem* is to find a function $d : \Omega \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^m$ such that

$$\mathcal{H}(d) = \mathbf{0}$$

Regular equations are particular examples of functional equations.

- Note that $\mathbf{0}$ is the space zero, different in general that the zero in the reals.

Example: Euler Equation I

- Take the basic RBC:

$$\max \mathbb{E}_0 \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t u(c_t)$$

$$c_t + k_{t+1} = e^{z_t} k_t^\alpha + (1 - \delta) k_t, \quad \forall t > 0$$

$$z_t = \rho z_{t-1} + \sigma \varepsilon_t, \quad \varepsilon_t \sim \mathcal{N}(0, 1)$$

- The first order condition:

$$u'(c_t) = \beta \mathbb{E}_t \{ u'(c_{t+1}) (1 + \alpha e^{z_{t+1}} k_{t+1}^{\alpha-1} - \delta) \}$$

- There is a policy function $g : \mathfrak{R}_+ \times \mathfrak{R} \rightarrow \mathfrak{R}_+^2$ that gives the optimal choice of consumption and capital tomorrow given capital and productivity today.

Example: Euler Equation II

- Then:

$$u'(g^1(k_t, z_t)) = \beta \mathbb{E}_t \{ u'(g^1(k_{t+1}, z_{t+1})) (1 + f(g^2(k_t, z_t), z_{t+1}) - \delta) \}$$

or, alternatively:

$$u'(g^1(k_t, z_t)) - \beta \mathbb{E}_t \{ u'(g^1(g^2(k_t, z_t), z_{t+1})) (1 + f(g^2(k_t, z_t), z_{t+1}) - \delta) \} = 0$$

- We have functional equation where the unknown object is the policy function $g(\cdot)$.
- More precisely, an integral equation (expectation operator). This can lead to some measure theoretic issues that we will ignore.

Example: Euler Equation III

- Mapping into an operator is straightforward:

$$\mathcal{H} = u'(\cdot) - \beta \mathbb{E}_t \{ u'(\cdot) (1 + f(\cdot, z_{t+1}) - \delta) \}$$
$$d = g$$

- If we find g , and a transversality condition is satisfied, we are done!

Example: Euler Equation IV

- Slightly different definitions of \mathcal{H} and d can be used.
- For instance if we take again the Euler equation:

$$u'(c_t) - \beta \mathbb{E}_t \{ u'(c_{t+1}) (1 + \alpha e^{z_{t+1}} k_{t+1}^{\alpha-1} - \delta) \} = 0$$

we may be interested in finding the unknown conditional expectation $\mathbb{E}_t \{ u'(c_{t+1}) (1 + \alpha e^{z_{t+1}} k_{t+1}^{\alpha-1} - \delta) \}$.

- Since \mathbb{E}_t is itself another function, we write

$$\mathcal{H}(d) = u'(\cdot) - \beta d = \mathbf{0}$$

where $d = E_t \{ \vartheta \}$ and $\vartheta = u'(\cdot) (1 + f(\cdot, z_{t+1}) - \delta)$.

How Do We Solve Functional Equations?

Two Main Approaches

① Perturbation Methods:

$$d^n(x, \theta) = \sum_{i=0}^n \theta_i (x - x_0)^i$$

We use implicit-function theorems to find coefficients θ_i .

② Projection Methods:

$$d^n(x, \theta) = \sum_{i=0}^n \theta_i \Psi_i(x)$$

We pick a basis $\{\Psi_i(x)\}_{i=0}^{\infty}$ and “project” $\mathcal{H}(\cdot)$ against that basis.

Relation with Value Function Iteration

- There is a third main approach: the dynamic programming algorithm.
- Advantages:
 - ① Strong theoretical properties.
 - ② Intuitive interpretation.
- Problems:
 - ① Difficult to use with non-pareto efficient economies.
 - ② Curse of dimensionality.

Evaluating the Likelihood Function

- How do we take the model to the data?
- Usually we cannot write the likelihood of a DSGE model.
- Once the model is nonlinear and/or non-gaussian we cannot use the **Kalman filter** to *evaluate* the likelihood function of the model.
- How do we evaluate then such likelihood? Using **Sequential Monte Carlo**.

Basic Estimation Algorithm 1: Evaluating Likelihood

Input: observables Y^T , DSGE model M with parameters $\gamma \in \Upsilon$.

Output: likelihood $p(y^T; \gamma)$.

- ① Given γ , solve for policy functions of M .
- ② With the policy functions, write the state-space form:

$$S_t = f(S_{t-1}, W_t; \gamma_i)$$

$$Y_t = g(S_t, V_t; \gamma_i)$$

- ③ With state space form, evaluate likelihood:

$$p(y^T; \gamma_i) = \prod_{t=1}^T p(y_t | y^{t-1}; \gamma_i)$$

Basic Estimation Algorithm 2: MLE

Input: observables Y^T , DSGE model M parameterized by $\gamma \in \mathcal{Y}$.

Estimates: $\hat{\gamma}$

- ① Set $i = 0$. Fix initial parameter values γ_i .
- ② Compute $p(y^T; \gamma_i)$ using algorithm 1.
- ③ Is $\gamma_i = \arg \max p(y^T; \gamma)$?
 - ① Yes: Make $\hat{\gamma} = \gamma_i$. Stop.
 - ② No: Make $\gamma_i \rightsquigarrow \gamma_{i+1}$. Go to step 2.

Basic Estimation Algorithm 3: Bayesian

Input: observables Y^T , DSGE model M parameterized by $\gamma \in Y$ with priors $\pi(\gamma)$.

Posterior distribution: $\pi(\gamma | Y^T)$

- ① Fix l . Set $i = 0$ and chose initial parameter values γ_i .
- ② Compute $p(y^T; \gamma_i)$ using algorithm 1.
- ③ Propose $\gamma^* = \gamma_i + \varepsilon$ where $\varepsilon \sim N(0, \Sigma)$.
- ④ Compute $\alpha = \min \left\{ \frac{p(y^T; \gamma^*)\pi(\gamma^*)}{p(y^T; \gamma_i)\pi(\gamma_i)}, 1 \right\}$.
- ⑤ With probability α , make $\gamma_{i+1} = \gamma^*$. Otherwise $\gamma_{i+1} = \gamma_i$.
- ⑥ If $i < M$, $i \rightsquigarrow i + 1$. Go to step 3. Otherwise Stop.