A Feedback Model for the Financialization of Commodity Markets

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Abstract

Recent empirical studies find evidence of commodity prices moving more in sync with financial markets throughout the 2000s, and in contrast to previously. This increased correlation is called the financialization of commodity markets and is conjectured to be due to the influx of external (portfolio optimizing) traders through commodity index funds, for instance. We build a feedback model to try and capture some of these effects, in which traditional economic demand for a commodity, oil say, is perturbed by the influence of portfolio optimizers. We approach the full problem of utility maximizing with a risky asset whose dynamics are impacted by trading through a sequence of problems that can be reduced to linear PDEs, and we find correlation effects proportional to the long or short positions of the investors, along with a lowering of volatility.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and motivation

Recent empirical studies, for example [38, 7], have documented the “financialization” of commodity and energy futures markets due to an influx of external traders through investment vehicles such as commodity index funds or ETFs. They report that price movements of goods such as oil which, prior to the last decade, were mainly governed by supply and demand of users of the commodity, now exhibit much greater correlation with the movements of equity markets.

In the wake of the recent financial crisis, increased attention is being paid by politicians and regulators to the consequences of securitizing and trading derivatives on nontraditional investment assets. One result of the active trading of a securitized asset may be a fundamental shift in the economics that drives the price of the underlying. This change could be explained by professional investors beginning to trade actively in commodities for the purposes of portfolio diversification and speculation. At the beginning of the last decade, such trading activity in commodities increased dramatically, for example by hedge funds, and coincided with an increase in their correlation with the stock market. Causation between the change in trading activity and the change in the nature of commodity prices is still a subject of debate, as there are various global economic factors that may have played a role. While a purely mathematical model will not be able to separate out these possible effects, a possible explanation can be offered by analyzing the price impact of portfolio optimizers in a simple and idealized framework.

We build a model in which the demand of utility maximizing traders is introduced into an environment of a fundamentals-driven commodity price. We find the explicit form of the perturbed commodity price in the absence of investor feedback effects, and we develop observations on the changes in volatility, and correlation with stocks, that the demand of the portfolio optimizers creates.

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1.2 Literature review

Commodity modeling  The modeling of commodity prices is discussed extensively in various sources. The books [12, 16, 30] give a primarily economic background on factors that drive prices for commodities and their derivatives. Benth et al. [4] details different models driven by time-inhomogeneous jump processes for electricity spot price dynamics, and the recent book of Swindle [37] provides a comprehensive overview of energy, commodities, and their derivatives. In a well known paper, Schwartz [32] fits parameters to a geometric Ornstein-Uhlenbeck model for the price of various commodities based on empirical data. The classic portfolio optimization analysis of Merton [26], while not dealing with mean-reverting processes, provides a basis of comparison for the optimal stock/commodity allocation in our more complicated model.

Evidence of financialization  Study of the financialization of commodity markets is somewhat new. In a recent paper, Tang and Xiong [38] discuss the history and development of the financialization of commodities as a result of increased index investing activity in the past decade. They find evidence of increased exposure of commodities prices to shocks in other asset classes via regression analysis on empirical data. A report published by FTI UK Holdings Limited [24] on the impact of speculation in commodity markets weighs the merits of speculative trading as providing liquidity for parties that need to hedge against the potential instability that speculation can create in a market. Brunetti and Büyükşahin [6] find, in a forecasting sense, that speculators are not causing any price movement, and moreover, speculative trading activity reduces volatility levels. In a subsequent paper, Büyükşahin and Robe [8] show that increased participation by hedge funds that trade in both equity and commodity markets could strengthen the correlation between the rates of return on commodities and equities rises. More recently, Silvennoinen and Thorp [33] and Henderson, Pearson, and Wang [18] provide further evidence for the financialization of commodity prices. There is a fast-growing literature of financialization of commodity markets, and we refer to Gilbert [17], Irwin and Sanders [19], Kaufmann [22], Mayer [25] and Singleton [34].

Portfolio optimization  Portfolio optimization problems are often complicated when mean-reverting assets are involved. Benth and Karlsen [5] solve the two-asset Merton problem for a risk-free asset and a risky asset with a geometric Ornstein-Uhlenbeck price process, which provides the basis for the expanded three-asset problem we must solve when introducing a stock governed by a geometric Brownian Motion to the market. Jurek and Yang [21] solve an optimal portfolio allocation and consumption problem for a portfolio optimizer seeking to profit from a mean-reverting pairs trade which follows an arithmetic Ornstein-Uhlenbeck process, and they derive explicit solutions to the associated Merton problem.

Price impact and feedback  The problem of large agents having price impact in small or illiquid markets is one that will be at play in our model, as the introduction of speculators will have an impact on the commodity price. Çetin, Jarrow and Protter [9] build a model of liquidity risk in which a stochastic supply curve affects participants in a market that have large trade sizes. Bank and Kramkov [2] develop a game-theoretic large trader liquidity model. Jonsson and Keppo [20] treat a model where the portfolio position of a large agent has a particular impact on the price of call options. Bank and Baum [1] derive a general framework for dynamic liquidity effects of large traders, where assumptions about imperfect liquidity of an asset cause large purchases of the asset to affect its price.

The feedback effect of option hedging strategies in continuous time models was considered in a number of papers in the 1990s. Specifically, Frey and Stremme [14], Schönbucher and Wilmott [39], Sircar and Fapanicolaou [35], and Platen and Schweizer [31] all studied the impact of option hedging strategies on stock prices. These models typically begin with reference traders who produce reference price dynamics such as geometric Brownian motion, but the equilibrium prices are then perturbed by the presence of noise traders who are hedging derivatives. These have the effect of increasing market volatility because, for example, hedging a short call option position entails selling stock when the stock price goes down, and therefore the presence of a significant number of hedgers has destabilizing price impact. This analysis explains to some extent the finding of the Brady Report into the 1987 crash, which attributed some cause to the presence of program trading for hedging option positions.
Nayak and Papanicolaou [28] also analyze feedback effects, but from portfolio optimizers, and in a geometric Brownian Motion framework, when the optimizers have power utility functions. They explicitly analyze the feedback effects on the price process when the relative influence of portfolio optimizers is small, and they analyze the system numerically under more general assumptions. Their main conclusion is that rational trading from solving a Merton portfolio optimization problem is stabilizing, and therefore lowers volatility, in contrast to what was found for option hedging strategies.

In a different but related problem, Christensen et al. [10] employ an equilibrium approach where the asset price is determined endogenously using a market clearing condition. With exponential utility, they solve for each investor’s optimal investment strategy and find the equilibrium dynamics.

Models for financialization Sockin and Xiong [36] build a one-period feedback model for the financialization of commodities emphasizing the consequence of information frictions and production complementarity. They find that an increase in commodity futures prices may drive up producers’ commodity demand and thus the spot price. In their model, the futures price is used as a proxy for global economic strength and other producers’ production decisions, and in certain circumstances this information effect can dominate the cost effect and result in a positive demand elasticity.

Basak and Pavlova [3] explore the effects of financialization in a model that features institutional investors alongside traditional futures markets participants, but they focus on the case where the institutional investors are evaluated relative to a benchmark index.

In a different context, Cont and Wagalath [11] illustrated how feedback effects due to distressed selling of mutual funds lead to endogenous correlations between asset classes. However, price impacts due to distressed selling are exogenously given by a block-shaped order book model and the funds follows a passive buy-and-hold strategy unless the fund value drops below certain threshold.

In a static setting, Leclercq and Praz [23] consider an equilibrium based model that emphasizes the role of information aggregation of the commodity futures market. They demonstrate that speculation in futures markets facilitates hedging by suppliers, and hence decreases expected spot prices and increases the correlation between the financial and commodity markets.

1.3 Organization

In Section 2 we introduce a feedback model and derive an iterative sequence of problems that increasingly incorporate the feedback effect and capture the impact of financialization. In Section 3 we derive the HJB equation from dynamic programming principle for the stage-\(k\) problem and show that the HJB equation can be linearized with a power transformation. In Section 4 we present the numerical solutions to the first couple of stages and quantify the induced correlation between the equity and commodity markets. In Appendix B we return to the feedback model of Nayak and Papanicolaou [28] and present an explicit solution to the first stage in the feedback sequence which greatly facilitates the model analysis. We conclude in Section 6.

2 Feedback Model with Market Users and Portfolio Optimizers

We build a model leading to the price of a commodity in which there are two main distinct groups creating demand: market users and portfolio optimizers. The price is determined from a supply-demand market clearing condition.

2.1 Reference model with market users

Market users trade in the commodity market for direct industrial use or for hedging their operational exposures. We assume their demand for commodity is driven by a stochastic incomes process \(I_t\) which, roughly speaking, captures economic growth, and can be thought of as determining the amount of capital available to the market users for purchasing the commodity.
For simplicity of exposition and explicit calculations, we will take \( (I_t) \) to be a geometric Ornstein-Uhlenbeck process described by

\[
\frac{dI_t}{I_t} = a(m - \log I_t) \, dt + b dW^c_t,
\]

where \( a, b > 0 \) and \( W^c_t \) is a standard Brownian motion. This captures in a simple way periods of geometric growth along with mean-reversion or stochastic cyclicality.

Given a commodity price \( Y_t \), the demand \( D(Y_t, I_t) \) from market users is increasing in \( I_t \) and decreasing in \( Y_t \). Again for simplicity and explicitness, we use the isoelastic demand function

\[
D(Y_t, I_t) = \frac{I_t^\lambda}{Y_t}, \quad (1)
\]

where \( \lambda > 0 \). The kind of demand structure in a continuous-time model is used for instance in [14, 35, 28]. We also assume a fixed constant supply \( A \) of the commodity available for trading at each time period. That is, we ignore growth or decline of supply over the short-run.

In the reference model in which there are only market users (or reference traders), we label the price process \( Y_t = Y_t^{(0)} \). The market clearing condition \( D(Y_t, I_t) = A \) gives

\[
Y_t^{(0)} = \frac{I_t^\lambda}{A},
\]

showing that the reference commodity price \( Y^{(0)} \) dynamics is also a geometric Ornstein-Uhlenbeck process, which is the commonly-employed Schwartz [32] one-factor model of mean-reverting commodities prices:

\[
\frac{dY_t^{(0)}}{Y_t^{(0)}} = a \left( \tilde{m} - \log Y_t^{(0)} \right) \, dt + \lambda b \, dW^c_t, \quad (2)
\]

where

\[
\tilde{m} = \lambda m - \log A + \frac{1}{2a} \lambda (\lambda - 1)b^2. \quad (3)
\]

### 2.2 Incorporating portfolio optimizers

The portfolio optimizers, on the other hand, have no direct operational or hedging interest in the commodity, but seek to invest in the commodity market so as to maximize their expected utility at a fixed terminal horizon \( T \). We assume for tractability the constant relative risk-aversion (CRRA) utility function with risk aversion \( \gamma > 0 \):

\[
U(z) = \frac{z^{1-\gamma}}{1-\gamma}, \quad \gamma \neq 1. \quad (4)
\]

In addition to the commodity market, the portfolio optimizers can invest in the risk-free money-market account with constant interest rate \( r \), and a single representative stock index which follows the geometric Brownian motion

\[
dS_t = \mu S_t \, dt + \sigma S_t \, dW^S_t, \quad (5)
\]

where \( W^c_t \) is a standard Brownian motion independent of \( W^c_t \). By this choice, we have assumed that the pre-financialized commodity price \( Y^{(0)} \) in (2) is independent of the equity market, so later feedback correlation is in comparison to this case.

Denoting by \( \theta_t \) the investment in the commodity market by the portfolio optimizers, the aggregate demand for commodity is given by \( D(Y_t, I_t) + \varepsilon \theta_t / Y_t \), where \( \varepsilon > 0 \) parametrizes the relative size of the portfolio optimizers compared to the market users. The market-clearing condition is

\[
D(Y_t, I_t) + \varepsilon \frac{\theta_t}{Y_t} = A,
\]
which leads to
\[ Y_t = \frac{I_t}{A} + \epsilon \theta_t, \]
where \( \epsilon = \tilde{\epsilon} / A. \) This causes the equilibrium price process for \( Y_t \) to deviate from the geometric Ornstein-Uhlenbeck process \( Y^{(0)}. \)

The portfolio optimizers' position \( \theta_t \) is modeled as coming from an expected utility maximizing criterion. However, unlike in the classical Merton problem, their actions impact the commodity they trade through (6), and we describe the extent of this feedback as related to the degree to which they are aware of their own price influence. Because they impact the commodity price \( Y \) and their trades are governed by portfolio diversification concerns, \( \theta_t \) is affected by the stock index price \( S_t \) and this induces correlation between commodity and equity returns, that is, financialization of the commodity price. The goal is to try and quantify this effect.

In our model we do not get into the details of how commodities are traded, for instance through commodity index funds or ETFs, but instead think of all these investments as linked to futures contracts which are themselves linked to the physical delivery of the commodity which is necessarily finite. The grouping of the traders into two large groups means that each group has a significant price impact due to the finiteness at each time of the supply \( A \) available for trading.

### 2.3 Fixed point characterization of problem

We say that a pair \((\hat{\pi}^*, \hat{\theta}^*)\), respectively denoting the fractions of wealth invested in the stock and commodity markets, is an equilibrium solution to our utility maximization problem with feedback if the following are satisfied:

1. The stock price \( S_t \) is given by (5) and the commodity price \( Y_t \) is determined by the market clearing condition
   \[ D(Y_t, I_t) + \frac{\tilde{\epsilon} \theta_t X_t}{Y_t} = A, \]
   where \( X_t \) is the controlled wealth process with strategies \((\hat{\pi}^*, \hat{\theta}^*)\) such that
   \[
   \frac{dX_t}{X_t} = \frac{\hat{\pi}^*_t}{S_t} dS_t + \frac{\hat{\theta}^*_t}{Y_t} dY_t + r \left( 1 - \hat{\pi}^*_t - \hat{\theta}^*_t \right) dt.
   \]
2. The pair \((\hat{\pi}^*, \hat{\theta}^*)\) maximizes the expected utility of terminal wealth \( Z_T \)
   \[
   \sup_{\hat{\pi}, \hat{\theta}} \mathbb{E} \left[ U(Z_T) \mid \mathcal{F}_t \right],
   \]
   under the budget constraint
   \[
   \frac{dZ_t}{Z_t} = \frac{\hat{\pi}^*_t}{S_t} dS_t + \frac{\hat{\theta}^*_t}{Y_t} dY_t + r \left( 1 - \hat{\pi}^*_t - \hat{\theta}^*_t \right) dt.
   \]

### 2.4 Feedback iteration

We propose a feedback iteration to capture the successive improvement of trading strategies due to the increasing awareness of self-impact by the commodity traders. This approach follows an iterative chain of reasoning which is best illustrated in the simple setting of the famous “guessing 2/3 of the average” game.
Interlude - guessing 2/3 of the average

In this game, a number of players are asked to pick a number between 0 and 100, with the winner of the game being the one that is closest to 2/3 times the average number picked of all players.

We can solve this game iteratively as follows:

Stage-0 A typical player ignores the other players and choose a random number between 0 and 100.

Stage-1 He realizes that if the other players are following the stage-0 strategy, the average is about 50; he can take advantage of this and update his guess to be 100/3.

Stage-2 He refines on the stage-1 strategy and notice that if the other players are following the stage-1 strategy, then the average is 100/3 and he should update his guess to be 200/9.

This chain of reasoning goes on: at stage-k, any individual player anticipates that the other players are following the stage-(k - 1) strategy, and take into account their aggregate effect (the sample average in this setting) when determining the stage-k strategy. As k → ∞, the only rational guess is zero and this is called the Nash equilibrium.

Empirical studies show that, however, people do not behave as this simple model predicts. For instance, Nagel [27] conducted an experiment in which students were asked to guess what 2/3 of the average of their guesses will be, within limits of 0 and 100. She found that the average guess for the groups was around 35 and very few students chose 0. Moreover, it was observed that many students chose 33 and 22, which are respectively 2/3 of the midpoint 50 and 2/3 of 2/3 of the midpoint. The number of steps of iterated reasoning most students seemed to be doing were between 0 and 3 rounds.

2.5 Stage-k portfolio optimization problem

In light of the guessing game, we model the aggregate portfolio optimizers as comprising a large number of commodity traders. Each individual trader is too small to affect the market price, but their aggregate demand does have an impact, which is enforced by the market-clearing constraint. We first analyze the stage-k problem and return to the explicit solution for stage-0 in Section 3.3.

In general, the stage-k commodity price process Y(k) for k ≥ 1 no longer follows a geometric Ornstein-Uhlenbeck process, as was the case in the reference model k = 0 in (2). We suppose the dynamics of Y(k) can be written as

$$\frac{dY(k)}{Y(k)} = p(k) \, dt + Q(k) \, dW^c_t + R(k) \, dW^s_t,$$  \hspace{1cm} (7)

for some coefficients p(k), Q(k), and R(k). The aggregate wealth process for the bulk of the portfolio optimizers is denoted X_t, and they employ the stage-(k - 1) strategy \((\pi^{(k-1)}_t, \theta^{(k-1)}_t)\), where \(\pi^{(k-1)}_t\) is the dollar amount held in the stock index S at time t, and \(\theta^{(k-1)}_t\) is the dollar amount held in the commodity Y(k) at time t. Their self-financing aggregate wealth process X follows

$$dX_t = \frac{\pi^{(k-1)}_t}{S_t} \, dS_t + \frac{\theta^{(k-1)}_t}{Y^{(k)}_t} \, dY^{(k)}_t + r(X_t - \pi^{(k-1)}_t - \theta^{(k-1)}_t) \, dt$$

$$= \left( rX_t + \pi^{(k-1)}_t(\mu - r) + \theta^{(k-1)}_t \left( p^{(k)} - r \right) \right) \, dt$$

$$+ \theta^{(k-1)}_t Q^{(k)} \, dW^c_t + \left( \pi^{(k-1)}_t \sigma + \theta^{(k-1)}_t R^{(k)} \right) \, dW^s_t. $$  \hspace{1cm} (8)

For our inductive hypothesis, we suppose that \(p^{(k)} = p^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k)}_t)\) and similarly for \(Q^{(k)}\) and \(R^{(k)}\), which come from the solution of the stage-(k - 1) problem; and that \(\pi^{(k-1)}_t\) and \(\theta^{(k-1)}_t\) are Markovian controls of the form \(\pi^{(k-1)}_t = \pi^{(k-1)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k)}_t)\) and \(\theta^{(k-1)}_t = \theta^{(k-1)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k)}_t)\). We have suppressed the argument \((t, X_t, Y^{(k)}_t)\) in (8). Under these hypotheses, \((X_t, Y^{(k)}_t)\) is a Markov process with respect to the filtration generated by \((W^c, W^s)\).
In stage-0 the portfolio optimizers do not trade the commodity so we have that \( \theta^{(-1)} = 0 \) and \( Y^{(0)} \) is given by the reference model (2) from which we see that

\[
P^{(0)}(t, x, y) = a (\hat{m} - \log y), \quad Q^{(0)}(t, x, y) = \lambda b, \quad R^{(0)} = 0,
\]

and in particular they do not depend on \( X_t \).

At stage-\( k \), all but one of the commodity traders follow the stage-\((k - 1)\) strategy. We imagine that a single “smart” trader seeks to outperform the others by taking into consideration the price impact of their stage-\((k - 1)\) strategy. We denote his stage-\( k \) portfolio by \((\pi^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k)}), \theta^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k)})\) and the self-financing condition determines the following wealth process \( Z_t \) for the “smart” trader:

\[
dZ_t = \frac{\pi^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k)})}{S_t} dS_t + \frac{\theta^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k)})}{Y^{(k)}_t} dY^{(k)}_t + r(Z_t - \pi^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k)}) - \theta^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k)}) ) dt
\]

\[
= \left( rZ_t + \pi^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k)})(\mu - r) + \theta^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k)}) \left( P^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k)}(t)) - r \right) \right) dt
\]

\[
+ \theta^{(k)}_t Q^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k)}_t) dW^c_t + \left( \pi^{(k)}_t \sigma + \theta^{(k)}_t R^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k)}_t) \right) dW^s_t.
\]

His goal is to maximize expected utility at the terminal time \( T \). This leads to a Merton problem we must solve to determine the stage-\( k \) optimal portfolio.

### 2.6 Deriving the stage-\((k + 1)\) dynamics from stage-\( k \) strategies

Given the stage-\( k \) optimal portfolio \( \pi^{(k)} \) and \( \theta^{(k)} \) of the “smart” trader, we determine its effect on the stage-\((k + 1)\) commodity price process. As is well known and we will confirm in the next section, because of power utility, the optimal Merton strategies are of the form \( \pi^{(k)}_t = \hat{\pi}^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k)}_t)Z_t \) and \( \theta^{(k)}_t = \hat{\theta}^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k)}_t)Z_t \). That is to say, they are given as fractions of the current wealth \( Z_t \) where the fractions are determined by the current levels of \( X_t \) and \( Y^{(k)}_t \).

After having solved for the stage-\( k \) optimal portfolio, the “smart” trader realizes that the other traders will follow the same reasoning and trade according to the stage-\( k \) strategy. The aggregate position on the commodity is then \( \hat{\theta}^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k+1)}_t)X_t \), and the stage-\((k + 1)\) market clearing constraint reads

\[
Y^{(k+1)}_t = \frac{I_A}{\hat{A}} + e\hat{\theta}^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k+1)}_t)X_t.
\]

We can determine the dynamics of the stage-\((k + 1)\) commodity price process \( Y^{(k+1)}_t \) by applying Itô’s formula to (10) and matching coefficients of the \( dt \), \( dW^c_t \), and \( dW^s_t \) terms. We can then solve for \( P^{(k+1)} \), \( Q^{(k+1)} \), and \( R^{(k+1)} \) in terms of \( \pi^{(k)} \) and \( \theta^{(k)} \).

**Proposition 1.** The dynamics of the stage-\((k + 1)\) commodity price process \( Y^{(k+1)}_t \) is

\[
\frac{dY^{(k+1)}_t}{Y^{(k+1)}_t} = P^{(k+1)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k+1)}_t) \, dt + Q^{(k+1)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k+1)}_t) \, dW^c_t + R^{(k+1)}(t, X_t, Y^{(k+1)}_t) \, dW^s_t,
\]

where

\[
P^{(k+1)}(t, x, y) = \frac{\lambda b (y - e\hat{\theta}^{(k)})}{y - e(x\partial_y \hat{\theta}^{(k)} + \hat{\theta}^{(k)}x\partial_x \hat{\theta}^{(k)} + (\hat{\theta}^{(k)})^2)},
\]

\[
Q^{(k+1)}(t, x, y) = \frac{e\sigma \hat{\pi}^{(k)}(x\partial_x \hat{\theta}^{(k)} + \hat{\theta}^{(k)})}{y - e(x\partial_y \hat{\theta}^{(k)} + \hat{\theta}^{(k)}x\partial_x \hat{\theta}^{(k)} + (\hat{\theta}^{(k)})^2)},
\]

\[
R^{(k+1)}(t, x, y) = \frac{e\pi^{(k)}(y\partial_y \hat{\theta}^{(k)} + \hat{\theta}^{(k)}y\partial_y \hat{\theta}^{(k)} + (\hat{\theta}^{(k)})^2)}{y - e(x\partial_y \hat{\theta}^{(k)} + \hat{\theta}^{(k)}x\partial_x \hat{\theta}^{(k)} + (\hat{\theta}^{(k)})^2)},
\]

(11)
with
\[
P_1^{(k+1)}(t, x, y) = \partial_t \tilde{\theta}(t) + \frac{1}{2}((Q^{(k+1)})^2 + (R^{(k+1)})^2)y^2\partial_{yy} \tilde{\theta}(t) + \mu \tilde{\theta}(t) \tilde{\pi}(t) + r \tilde{\theta}(t)(1 - \tilde{\pi}(t) - \tilde{\theta}(t)) \\
+ \left((Q^{(k+1)})^2 + (R^{(k+1)})^2\tilde{\theta}(t) + \sigma R^{(k+1)} \tilde{\pi}(t)\right)y \partial_y \tilde{\theta}(t) \]
\[
P_2^{(k+1)}(t, x, y) = \left(\tilde{\theta}(t)Q^{(k+1)} + (\tilde{\pi}(t)\sigma + \tilde{\theta}(t)R^{(k+1)})^2 + \mu \tilde{\pi}(t) + r(1 - \tilde{\pi}(t) - \tilde{\theta}(t))\right)x \partial_x \tilde{\theta}(t) \\
+ \frac{1}{2}\left((\tilde{\theta}(t)Q^{(k+1)})^2 + (\tilde{\pi}(t)\sigma + \tilde{\theta}(t)R^{(k+1)})^2\right)x^2 \partial_{xx} \tilde{\theta}(t) \\
+ \left(\tilde{\theta}(t)(Q^{(k+1)})^2 + (\tilde{\pi}(t)\sigma + \tilde{\theta}(t)R^{(k+1)})R^{(k+1)}\right)xy \partial_{xy} \tilde{\theta}(t)
\]
and \(m\) is given by (3).

Proof. Apply Itô formula to the market clearing constraint (10) and substitute the dynamics of \(X_t\) using (8) with \(k\) replaced by \(k + 1\). Finally substitute \(I_t\) in terms of \(X_t\) and \(Y_t^{(k+1)}\) using (10).

Therefore, given \(\theta^{(k)}\) and \(\pi^{(k)}\), we can determine the stage-(\(k+1\)) commodity price dynamics \(P^{(k+1)}\), \(Q^{(k+1)}\), and \(R^{(k+1)}\). Roughly speaking, the coefficient \(R^{(k+1)}\) determines the stock-commodity correlation. Notice that the expressions for \(P, Q,\) and \(R\) are valid only for small \(\epsilon\) as their denominators may become zero. However, we will see in Section 4 that the solution to the stage-k problem is well-behaved since the underlying price processes never get to the problematic region due to a repulsive potential. We focus here on the isoelastic demand function to illustrate the main features of financialization in a specific setting, but remark that the same techniques can be applied to more general demand functions, provided that they are invertible.

3 HJB analysis

In this section, we use dynamic programming to derive an HJB PDE that determines the optimal strategies the “smart” trader follows in each stage of the feedback iteration. We show that it can be reduced to a linear PDE and give the explicit solution in stage-0.

3.1 Value function and HJB equation

The value function for the “smart” trader in stage-k described in Section 2.5 is defined by
\[
V(t, x, y, z) = \sup_{(\pi^{(k)}, \theta^{(k)}) \in \mathcal{A}} \mathbb{E} \left[ U(Z_T) | X_t = x, Y_t^{(k)} = y, Z_t = z \right],
\]
where \(X_t\) follows (8), \(Y_t\) follows (7), and \(Z_t\) follows (9), and we have defined the set of admissible strategies \(\mathcal{A}\) to contain adapted processes \((\pi_t, \theta_t)\) such that \(\mathbb{E} \int_T^t |\pi_t|^2 + |\theta_t|^2 \, dt < \infty\) . See for instance [29, chapter 3]. Following the usual Bellman’s principle, we obtain the stage-k HJB equation
\[
V_t + \mathcal{L}_x V + rz V_z + \sup_{v \in \mathbb{R}^2} \left[ \frac{1}{2} v^T C_1 v V_{zz} + v^T (\mu_1 - r) V_z + v^T \sigma_1 \sigma_1^T \nabla_x V \right] = 0,
\]
for \(t < T\) and \(x, y, z > 0\). Here we have denoted the trading strategy by \(v = (\pi^{(k)}, \theta^{(k)})^T, x = (x, y)^T, \nabla_x = (\partial_x, \partial_y)^T,\) and the drift vector and volatility matrix of the pair of tradeable assets \((S, Y^{(k)})\) by
\[
\mu_1 = \left( \begin{array}{c} \mu \\ p^{(k)} \end{array} \right), \quad \sigma_1 = \left( \begin{array}{cc} 0 & \sigma \\ Q^{(k)} & R^{(k)} \end{array} \right), \quad C_1 = \sigma_1 \sigma_1^T.
\]
Also defined are
\[
\sigma_2 = \left( \begin{array}{cc} \theta^{(k-1)} Q^{(k)} & \theta^{(k-1)} R^{(k)} + \pi^{(k-1)} \sigma \\ Q^{(k)} & R^{(k)} \end{array} \right), \quad \mu_2 = \left( \begin{array}{cc} \theta^{(k-1)} p^{(k)} + \pi^{(k-1)} \mu + r(x - \theta^{(k-1)} - \pi^{(k-1)}) \\ p^{(k)} y \end{array} \right),
\]
as well as
\[ \mathcal{L}_x = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i,j=1}^{2} (C_2)_{ij} \frac{\partial^2}{\partial x_i \partial x_j} + \mu_2^T \nabla_x, \quad C_2 = \sigma_2 \sigma_2^T, \]
where we identify \((x_1, x_2) = (x, y)\). The terminal condition is \(V(T, x, y, z) = U(z)\).

### 3.2 Analysis of the HJB equation

From the point of view of the “smart” trader, he is facing a complete market Merton problem, being able to trade two assets, the commodity and the stock, driven by two Brownian motions \(W^\sigma\) and \(W^\nu\). Therefore we expect that the HJB equation can be reduced to a linear equation via a Cole-Hopf type transformation. We show that it is indeed the case in the following.

**Proposition 2.** The value function is given by
\[ V(t, x, z) = \frac{z^{1-\gamma}}{1 - \gamma} (G(t, x))^\gamma, \quad (12) \]
where \(G(t, x)\) solves the linear PDE problem
\[ G_t + \mathcal{L}_x G + \left( \frac{1-\gamma}{\gamma} \right) \left( \sigma_2 \sigma_1^{-1} (\mu_1 - r) \right)^T \nabla_x G + \frac{\xi}{\gamma} G = 0, \quad (13) \]
with terminal condition \(G(T, x) = 1\), where
\[ \xi = \left( r(1 - \gamma) + \frac{1-\gamma}{2\gamma} M \right), \quad M = (\mu_1 - r)^T C_1^{-1} (\mu_1 - r). \quad (14) \]
The optimal portfolio \(v^*_t = (\pi^k, \theta^k)^T\) is given by
\[ v_t^* = \left( \frac{1}{\gamma} C_1^{-1} (\mu_1 - r) + (\sigma_2 \sigma_1^{-1})^T \frac{\nabla_x G}{G} \right) Z_t. \quad (15) \]

**Proof.**

**Optimization** Assuming for now that \(V_{zz}\) is negative (that is, it inherits the concavity from the terminal condition), the supremum in the HJB equation is given by
\[ v^* = -\frac{1}{V_{zz}} C_1^{-1} \left( (\mu_1 - r) + \sigma_1 \sigma_2^T \nabla_x \right) V_z. \quad (16) \]
The HJB equation can then be written as
\[ V_t + \mathcal{L}_x V + rz V_z - \frac{1}{2V_{zz}} \left( MV_z^2 + 2(\mu_1 - r)^T C_1^{-1} \sigma_1 \sigma_2^T (\nabla_x V_z) + (\sigma_1 \sigma_2^T \nabla_x V_z)^T C_1^{-1} \sigma_1 \sigma_2^T \nabla_x V_z \right) = 0 \]
with terminal condition \(V(T, x, z) = U(z)\), where \(M\) is defined in (14).

**Separation of variables** Making the transformation
\[ V(t, x, z) = \frac{z^{1-\gamma}}{1 - \gamma} g(t, x) \]
results in
\[ g_t + \mathcal{L}_x g + \left( \frac{1-\gamma}{\gamma} \right) (\mu_1 - r)^T C_1^{-1} \sigma_1 \sigma_2^T \nabla_x g + \frac{1-\gamma}{2\gamma} (\sigma_1 \sigma_2^T \nabla_x g)^T C_1^{-1} (\sigma_1 \sigma_2^T \nabla_x g) = 0, \quad (17) \]
with terminal condition \(g(T, x) = 1\), where \(\xi\) is defined in (14).
Cole-Hopf transformation  We make the power transformation $g = G^\delta$, previously introduced by Zariphopoulou [40], and observe that the nonlinear term in (17) becomes

$$
\delta G^{\delta-1} \left[ \frac{1 - \gamma}{2\gamma G} (\sigma_1 \sigma_2^T \nabla_x G)^T C^{-1}_1 (\sigma_1 \sigma_2^T \nabla_x G) \right].
$$

Using the definition of $C_1$ and $C_2$, we note that

$$(\sigma_1 \sigma_2^T \nabla_x G)^T C^{-1}_1 (\sigma_1 \sigma_2^T \nabla_x G) = (\nabla_x G)^T C_2 (\nabla_x G)$$

so the nonlinear term is

$$
\delta G^{\delta-1} \left[ \frac{1 - \gamma}{2\gamma G} (\nabla_x G)^T C_2 (\nabla_x G) \right].
$$

Meanwhile,

$$
L_x G^\delta = \delta G^{\delta-1} \left[ \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i,j=1}^2 (C_2)_{ij} \frac{\partial^2 G}{\partial x_i \partial x_j} + \frac{1}{2} (\delta - 1) \frac{(\nabla_x G)^T C_2 (\nabla_x G)}{G} \right],
$$

so the nonlinear terms cancel provided we choose

$$
\frac{1}{2} (\delta - 1) + \frac{1 - \gamma}{2\gamma} = 0 \quad \implies \quad \delta = \gamma.
$$

With this choice, we obtain the linear PDE for $G(t,x)$ given in (13). Inserting transformations (12) for $V$ into (16) gives the optimal portfolio (15) in terms of $G$. \hfill \Box

Notice in particular that the optimal holdings in commodity and stock index are proportional to wealth, as we expect for power utility, and we write:

$$
\pi^{(k)}_t = \hat{\pi}^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y_t) Z_t, \quad \theta^{(k)}_t = \hat{\theta}^{(k)}(t, X_t, Y_t) Z_t,
$$

where the functions $\hat{\pi}^{(k)}(t, x, y)$ and $\hat{\theta}^{(k)}(t, x, y)$ can be read from the components of $\nu^*$ in (15).

Remark 1. In Appendix B we study an application of our feedback model to the equity market where the stage-1 HJB equation can be solved analytically.

### 3.3 Stage-0 PDE and explicit solution

As it turns out, the stage-0 PDE problem has an explicit solution. This is the Merton problem with geometric OU dynamics as studied in [5] and [21], for instance. From the market-clearing constraint (without any influence of portfolio optimizers), we see that the stage-0 commodity price dynamics (2) is simply a geometric Ornstein-Uhlenbeck process. That is, we have $P^{(0)} = a(\bar{m} - \log y)$, $Q^{(0)} = \lambda b$, and $R^{(0)} = 0$.

**Proposition 3.** The stage-0 value function is given by

$$
V(t, y, z) = \frac{z^{1 - \gamma}}{1 - \gamma} \exp \left( f_0(t) + f_1(t) \log y + f_2(t) (\log y)^2 \right),
$$

where

$$
f_2(t) = a \left( 1 - \gamma \right) \frac{\sinh \left( \frac{\sqrt{\gamma}}{\sqrt{r}} (T - t) \right)}{2 \lambda^2 b^2 \sinh \left( \frac{\sqrt{\gamma}}{\sqrt{r}} (T - t) \right) + \sqrt{\gamma} \cosh \left( \frac{\sqrt{\gamma}}{\sqrt{r}} (T - t) \right)},
$$

$$
f_1(t) = (1 - \gamma) \frac{\frac{r - \alpha h}{\lambda^2 b^2} \sinh \left( \frac{\sqrt{\gamma}}{\sqrt{r}} (T - t) \right) + \sqrt{\gamma} \left( \frac{r}{\lambda^2 b^2} - \frac{1}{2} \right) \cosh \left( \frac{\sqrt{\gamma}}{\sqrt{r}} (T - t) \right) - 1)}{\sinh \left( \frac{\sqrt{\gamma}}{\sqrt{r}} (T - t) \right) + \sqrt{\gamma} \cosh \left( \frac{\sqrt{\gamma}}{\sqrt{r}} (T - t) \right)},
$$

$$
f_0(t) = k(T - t) + \int_t^T \left\{ \left( \frac{a \bar{m} - (1 - \gamma) r}{\gamma} - \frac{\lambda^2 b^2}{2} \right) f_1(s) + \lambda^2 b^2 f_2(s) + \frac{\lambda^2 b^2}{2\gamma} f_1^2(s) \right\} ds,
$$

and

$$
\sigma_1 = \frac{\sqrt{\gamma}}{\sqrt{r}} \sinh \left( \frac{\sqrt{\gamma}}{\sqrt{r}} (T - t) \right) + \sqrt{\gamma} \cosh \left( \frac{\sqrt{\gamma}}{\sqrt{r}} (T - t) \right),
$$

$$
\sigma_2 = \frac{\sqrt{\gamma}}{\sqrt{r}} \cosh \left( \frac{\sqrt{\gamma}}{\sqrt{r}} (T - t) \right) + \sqrt{\gamma} \sinh \left( \frac{\sqrt{\gamma}}{\sqrt{r}} (T - t) \right).
$$
and
\[ k = \frac{1 - \gamma}{2} \left( \frac{(a \hat{m} - r)^2}{\lambda^2 b^2 \gamma} + 2r + \frac{(\mu - r)^2}{\sigma^2 \gamma} \right). \]

Proof. After separating out the wealth variable \( z \) and making the linearizing transformation, the stage-0 equation (13) for \( G \) is
\[ G_t + \frac{1}{2} \lambda^2 b^2 y^2 G_{yy} + rx G_x + \frac{1}{\gamma} \left( a (\hat{m} - \log y) - (1 - \gamma) r \right) y G_y + \frac{\zeta}{\gamma} G = 0 \]
with terminal condition \( G(T, x, y) = 1 \). Observe that the terminal condition does not depend on \( x \), and that the term \( rx G_x \) drops out from the PDE if we look for a solution \( G(t, y) \) as a function of \( t \) and \( y \) only. Intuitively it is clear that the stage-0 value function should not depend on the aggregate wealth of the speculative traders as they have no influence on the commodity price.

Next, we make the transformation \( H_t + \frac{1}{2} \lambda^2 b^2 (H_{uu} - H_u) + \frac{1}{\gamma} \left( a (\hat{m} - u) - (1 - \gamma) r \right) H_u + \frac{\zeta}{\gamma} H = 0. \)

Recall that \( M \) is defined by
\[ M = (\mu_1 - r)^2 C_1^{-1} (\mu_1 - r) = \frac{(a (\hat{m} - u) - r)^2}{\lambda^2 b^2} + \frac{(\mu - r)^2}{\sigma^2}. \]

We have a PDE of the form
\[ H_t + (c_0 + c_1 u) H_u + \frac{1}{2} \lambda^2 b^2 H_{uu} + \frac{1}{\gamma} (c_2 + c_3 u + c_4 u^2) H = 0, \quad (20) \]
with terminal condition \( H(T, u) = 1 \), where \( c_0 \) through \( c_4 \) are constants given in Appendix A. As shown there, the solution is of the form
\[ H(t, u) = \exp \left( \frac{1}{\gamma} \left( f_0(t) + f_1(t) u + f_2(t) u^2 \right) \right), \quad (21) \]
where \( f_0, f_1, \) and \( f_2 \) satisfies a system of ordinary differential equations, whose solutions lead to (18).

The optimal portfolio can be recovered from the value function using (15):
\[ \hat{\pi}^{(0)}(t, y) = \frac{\mu - r}{\sigma^2 \gamma} \quad \text{and} \quad \hat{\theta}^{(0)}(t, y) = \left( F_1(t) + F_2(t) \log y \right) \quad (22) \]
where
\[ F_1(t) = \frac{1}{\gamma} \left( f_1(t) + \frac{1}{\lambda^2 b^2} (a \hat{m} - r) \right) \quad \text{and} \quad F_2(t) = \frac{1}{\gamma} \left( 2f_2(t) - \frac{a}{\lambda^2 b^2} \right). \]

We observe that the investment in stock \( \hat{\pi}^{(0)} \) follows the fixed-mix strategy as in the Merton problem [26]. The fraction of wealth \( \hat{\theta}^{(0)} \) invested in the commodity, however, depends on both the remaining time to the investment horizon \( T - t \) and the commodity price \( Y_t \).

4 Numerical Results

For stage-1 and onwards, we have to resort to numerical methods to solve the PDE problems. As an illustration, we consider the following set of parameter values detailed in Table 1.
4.1 Solution via finite difference

The stage-$k$ PDE (13) can be written in expanded form (where we suppress the $k$ superscripts)

\[
0 = G_t + \frac{1}{2}(Q^2 + R^2)y^2G_{yy} + \frac{1}{2}\left(\hat{\theta}R + \hat{\pi}\sigma\right)^2 + \left(\hat{\theta}Q\right)^2x^2G_{xx} + \left((Q^2 + R^2)\hat{\theta} + \sigma R\hat{\pi}\right)xyG_{xy}
\]

\[
+ \frac{1}{\gamma}\left((P - (1 - \gamma)r)yG_y + \frac{1}{\gamma}\left(\hat{\theta}(P - r) + \hat{\pi}(\mu - r) + \gamma r\right)xG_x
\]

\[
+ \frac{1}{\gamma}\left(r(1 - \gamma) + \frac{1 - \gamma}{2\gamma}r^2\sigma^2 - 2\sigma R\hat{\pi}(\mu - r)(P - r) + (Q^2 + R^2)(\mu - r)^2\right)G
\].

After using the log transformation $u = \log x$ and $v = \log y$, we may write the discretized equation as

\[
0 = \frac{G_{i,j+1}^{n+1} - G_{i,j}^{n}}{\Delta t} + \frac{1}{2}\left((Q_{i,j}^{n})^2 + (R_{i,j}^{n})^2\right)\left(\frac{G_{i,j+1}^{n+1} - 2G_{i,j}^{n+1} + G_{i,j-1}^{n+1}}{2\Delta v}\right)
\]

\[
+ \frac{1}{2}\left((\hat{\theta}_{i,j}^{n}R_{i,j}^{n} + \hat{\pi}_{i,j}^{n}\sigma)^2 + (\hat{\theta}_{i,j}^{n}Q_{i,j}^{n})^2\right)\left(\frac{G_{i,j+1}^{n+1} - 2G_{i,j}^{n+1} + G_{i,j-1}^{n+1}}{2\Delta u}\right)
\]

\[
+ \left((Q_{i,j}^{n})^2 + (R_{i,j}^{n})^2\right)\hat{\theta}_{i,j}^{n} + \sigma R_{i,j}^{n}\hat{\pi}_{i,j}^{n}
\]

\[
\left(\frac{G_{i,j+1}^{n+1} - G_{i,j-1}^{n+1}}{4\Delta u\Delta v}\right)
\]

\[
+ \frac{1}{\gamma}\left((P_{i,j}^{n})^2 - (1 - \gamma)r\right)\left(\frac{G_{i,j+1}^{n+1} - G_{i,j-1}^{n+1}}{2\Delta v}\right) + \frac{1}{\gamma}\left(\hat{\theta}_{i,j}^{n}(P_{i,j}^{n} - r) + \hat{\pi}_{i,j}^{n}(\mu - r) + \gamma r\right)\left(\frac{G_{i,j+1}^{n+1} - G_{i,j-1}^{n+1}}{2\Delta u}\right)
\]

\[
+ \frac{1}{\gamma}\left(r(1 - \gamma) + \frac{1 - \gamma}{2\gamma}r^2\sigma^2 - 2\sigma R\hat{\pi}(\mu - r)(P_{i,j}^{n} - r) + (Q_{i,j}^{n})^2 + (R_{i,j}^{n})^2(\mu - r)^2\right)G_{i,j}^{n+1}.
\]

In the scheme, the first subscript denotes the $u$ coordinate in the uniform $(u,v)$-grid, while the second corresponds to the $v$ coordinate. The superscript represents the time step. We note that we are solving a terminal value problem: we start with $G_{i,j}^N = 1$ for all $i,j$ and step backward in time using (23) which is the explicit Euler scheme.

**Truncation of domain** We approximate the Cauchy problem (13) with one on a bounded domain $[0, T] \times [u_{min}, u_{max}] \times [v_{min}, v_{max}]$. We choose a uniform mesh

\[
\mathcal{G} = \{(t^n, u_i, v_j) : n = 0, 1, \ldots, N, i = 0, 1, \ldots, I, j = 0, 1, \ldots, J\}
\]

where $t^n = n\Delta t$, $u_i = u_{min} + i\Delta u$, and $v_j = v_{min} + j\Delta v$. 

| $\lambda$ | demand from market users | 1.0 |
| $a$ | mean-reversion rate | 0.3 |
| $r$ | risk-free rate | 0.02 |
| $m$ | mean of commodity log-price | 3.0 |
| $b$ | volatility of commodity price | 0.3 |
| $\mu$ | drift of stock price | 0.08 |
| $c$ | volatility of stock price | 0.2 |
| $\gamma$ | coefficient of risk aversion | 1.5 |
| $A$ | market supply | 1.0 |
| $\epsilon$ | relative size of portfolio optimizers | 0.5 |
| $T$ | Investment horizon | 2.0 |

**Table 1: Parameter values for numerical illustration.**
Boundary conditions In the limit $x \to 0$, the price impact of portfolio optimizers vanishes because they have no capital to invest, and we should recover the stage-0 solution. We therefore use the analytic solution (18) for the stage-0 problem to impose a Dirichlet boundary condition at $x = 0$ (or equivalently $u \to -\infty$).

As for the other three boundaries, we derive approximate boundary conditions by the PDE itself, which are discretized by one-sided finite differences without requiring any additional information concerning the behavior of the solution for large $x$ and for large/small $y$.

Notice that in (11), the denominators in the definitions of $P$, $Q$, and $R$ can be zero for $y$ sufficiently small or $x$ sufficiently large. Therefore our model can breakdown when the commodity price is sufficiently low and the portfolio optimizers take over a sufficiently large share of market. However, we check that the truncation of domain does not result in significant error by solving the linear PDE (13) using Monte-Carlo simulations.

4.1.1 Stage-0 benchmark

Since we have an explicit solution to the stage-0 problem, it serves as a benchmark for testing our numerical scheme.

In Figure 1b we plot the optimal fraction of wealth invested in the commodity market, computed using (15) by differentiating the numerical solution to the linear equation (13). Also shown is the optimal portfolio $\hat{\theta}^{(0)}$ from formula (22). Notice that the two curves are almost indistinguishable, and we check that the numerical solution has relative error less than 1.5% throughout the domain of interest. This validates the use of the numerical scheme in the following sections.

4.1.2 Stage-1 numerical solution

We now solve the stage-1 HJB equation numerically. The commodity price dynamics $P^{(1)}$, $Q^{(1)}$, and $R^{(1)}$ can be computed from the analytic solution to the stage-0 problem. Indeed, using that the stage-0 optimal
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(22) does not depend on $x$, equation (11) can be simplified considerably:

$$Q^{(1)}(t, x, y) = \frac{\lambda b (y - \epsilon x \tilde{\theta}^{(0)})}{y - \epsilon x (y \partial_y \tilde{\theta}^{(0)} + (\tilde{\theta}^{(0)})^2)}$$

$$R^{(1)}(t, x, y) = \frac{\epsilon x \sigma \tilde{\pi}^{(0)} \tilde{\theta}^{(0)}}{y - \epsilon x (y \partial_y \tilde{\theta}^{(0)} + (\tilde{\theta}^{(0)})^2)}$$

$$P^{(1)}(t, x, y) = \frac{a (y - \epsilon x \tilde{\theta}^{(0)}) (\tilde{m} - \log(y - \epsilon x \tilde{\theta}^{(0)})) + \epsilon x F(t, x, y)}{y - \epsilon x (y \partial_y \tilde{\theta}^{(0)} + (\tilde{\theta}^{(0)})^2)},$$

where

$$F(t, x, y) = \partial_t \tilde{\theta}^{(0)} + \frac{1}{2} \left((Q^{(1)})^2 + (R^{(1)})^2\right) y^2 \partial_{yy} \tilde{\theta}^{(0)} + \mu \tilde{\theta}^{(0)} \tilde{\pi}^{(0)} + \sigma R^{(1)} \tilde{\pi}^{(0)} y \partial_y \tilde{\theta}^{(0)} - \tilde{\theta}^{(0)}.$$  

Using the explicit finite difference scheme (23), we can solve for the value function $G$. The optimal portfolio $(\pi^{(1)}, \theta^{(1)})$ is then recovered from (15), see Figure 2 for the result. We observe that the stock holding $\pi^{(1)}$ now varies with the level of the commodity price $y$, where in the pre-financialization stage-0, it was independent.

### 4.1.3 Volatility and correlation

Ultimately, we are interested in studying how price impact effects the volatility of the commodity price and its correlation with the stock price. To this end, we note that the stage-$k$ volatility $\eta^{(k)}$ of the commodity price and the stage-$k$ correlation $\rho^{(k)}$ with the stock price are given by

$$\eta^{(k)} = \sqrt{(Q^{(k)})^2 + (R^{(k)})^2}, \quad \rho^{(k)} = \frac{R^{(k)}}{\sqrt{(Q^{(k)})^2 + (R^{(k)})^2}}.$$ 

In Figures 3a and 3b, we plot the stage-0, stage-1, and stage-2 volatilities and correlations as functions of $Y_0 = y$ with $X_0 = 1, T = 2$.

**Stage-0** We simply have

$$\eta^{(0)} = \lambda b \quad \text{and} \quad \rho^{(k)} = 0.$$
Stage-1 The stage-1 volatility and correlation can be computed explicitly using the explicit solution to the stage-0 problem. From (24), we see that

\[
\eta^{(1)} = \lambda b \left( 1 + \frac{\varepsilon X_t}{Y_t} \left( Y_t \hat{\theta} + \hat{\theta}^2 - \hat{\theta} \right) + O(\varepsilon^2) \right)
\]

\[
\rho^{(1)} = \frac{\varepsilon \sigma X_t \hat{\pi} \hat{\theta}}{\lambda b Y_t} \left( Y_t - \varepsilon X_t \hat{\theta} \right)^2 + \left( \varepsilon \sigma X_t \hat{\pi} \hat{\theta} \right)^2 = \frac{\varepsilon \sigma X_t \hat{\pi} \hat{\theta}}{\lambda b Y_t} + O(\varepsilon^2)
\]

to leading order in \(\varepsilon\), where \(\hat{\pi}\) and \(\hat{\theta}\) are the stage-0 optimal portfolio. Notice in particular that the sign of \(\rho_t\) is given by the sign of \(\hat{\theta}(0)(t,Y_t^{(1)})\), as long as the Merton ratio \(\hat{\pi}(0)\) is positive, or equivalently \(\mu > r\). Therefore, when the commodity price is low (resp. high), portfolio optimizers are long (resp. short) the commodity and feedback correlation is positive (resp. negative).

Stage-2 From the (numerical) solution to the stage-1 portfolio optimization problem, we can determine the stage-2 commodity price dynamics using (11). This gives the stage-2 volatility of the commodity price as well as its correlation with the stock. We notice that the volatility of the commodity price reduces further in stage-2 (compared to stage-1) when the commodity is near its long-term mean; while the stage-2 correlation is greater when the commodity price is below its mean level, and approximately the same as in stage-1 when above.

4.2 Comparative Statics

We observe how \(\rho^{(1)}(t,X_t,Y_t^{(1)})\) varies in the other model parameters, by modifying each of \(\gamma, \varepsilon, a,\) and \(b\) independently while holding the other parameters constant, see Figure 4. Since the instantaneous correlation depends on the commodity price \(Y_t^{(1)}\), we consider a fixed low commodity price (50% of its mean, in blue) and a fixed high commodity price (150% of its mean, in red).

As we observed analytically earlier in this section, we see that when the commodity price is below (resp. above) its mean and the portfolio optimizers long (resp. short) the commodity, the correlation is positive (resp. negative). As the risk aversion \(\gamma\) increases, the correlation induced by the perturbation of the risk-averse portfolio optimizers tends to zero. A sufficiently risk-averse trader will invest in neither the stock nor the commodity and thus will have no market impact. We also see that increasing \(\varepsilon\) increases the magnitude of the induced correlation. If the aggregate wealth of the portfolio optimizers is large enough, they overtake the market and the model breaks down. Interestingly, increasing the speed of mean-reversion \(a\) also increases the magnitude of the induced correlation. In the extreme case with a
Figure 4: Comparative statics.
very large $a$, the portfolio optimizers will be able to achieve large and reliable gains in either a short or long position in the commodity whenever it deviates from its mean, and they choose a highly leveraged position in the commodity and it caused a high induced correlation.

### 4.3 Simulation

We can compute the empirical volatility and correlation arising from our feedback model. See Figures 5 and 6 for the daily sampled volatility and correlation over a 2-year horizon using 5,000 paths in two scenarios: low commodity volatility ($b = 0.3$) and high commodity volatility ($b = 1$). We see that financialization causes a decrease in commodity volatility in both scenarios. This is expected because the portfolio optimizers are buying low and selling high, and their trading has a stabilizing effect on the commodity price. Moreover, we see that the stage-0 correlation is sharply peaked at zero; while at stage-1, a relatively low (resp. high) commodity volatility $b$ can induce a mostly negative (resp. positive) correlation between the commodity and stock.

### 5 Empirical Analysis

#### 5.1 Cross-correlations Between Commodities

We gathered daily prices of ten of the most heavily-traded commodity futures prices (see Table 2) over the period from 1990-2011. In line with the hypotheses of Tang and Xiong [38], we choose 2004 as the dividing time-point between the unperturbed commodity price movement and the perturbed price movement due to the influx of index investors.

We find that the correlation between each commodity and the S&P 500 in the “non-indexed period” (1990-2004) is, averaging over the ten commodities, -0.0078435. In the “indexed period” (2004-2011), the average commodity-to-stock correlation is 0.1883. This dramatic increase supports the idea that commodities became more correlated with stocks after 2004.

In comparing all possible pairs of cross-correlations between these commodities, we find that the average value of the correlation over all commodity pairs is 0.05988 in the non-indexed period and 0.1860 in the indexed period, which supports the idea of increased commodity cross-correlation as discussed in [38].
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Figure 6: Empirical correlations between commodity and stock at stage-0 and stage-1. Monte-Carlo simulation uses 5,000 sample paths and starting points $S_0 = 1, X_0 = 50, \text{ and } Y_0 = e^3$.

Table 2: Ten most heavily-traded commodity futures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity Futures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBOT Corn Futures Prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSCE Cocoa Futures Prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYMEX Crude Oil Futures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYCE Cotton Futures Prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSCE Coffee Futures Prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYMEX Natural Gas Futures Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSCE Sugar No. 11 Futures Prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBOT Soybean Futures Prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMEX Silver Futures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBOT Wheat Futures Price</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 Parameter Estimation

For each of the ten commodities, using the historical data, we can estimate the parameters of the stage-0 price process through the use of maximum likelihood estimation. The continuous form of the price process is, by (2),

$$dY_t^{(0)} = a \left( \left( m - \log(Y_t^{(0)}) \right) - \log(Y_t^{(0)}) \right) dt + \lambda y_t^{(0)} dW_t.$$  \hspace{1cm} (26)

By the non-closed-form approach detailed by Franco [13], we show, in Table 3, the maximum likelihood estimators for the parameters of this geometric Ornstein-Uhlenbeck process for each commodity, where $a_{1990}$ denotes the best-fit value for the parameter $a$ over the period beginning at 1990, and so on. We notice that most commodities experience a reduction in their best-fit value of $a$ from the non-indexed period to the indexed period, though it increases for the two energy commodities. For each commodity, the best-fit value of the long-term mean log-price $m$ increases, though not inconsistent with what would be expected due to inflation between the two periods. There is no clear trend in the best-fit values of $b$ for the commodities over the two time periods.
Table 3: Parameter estimates for the geometric Ornstein-Uhlenbeck process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>$a_{1990}$</th>
<th>$a_{2004}$</th>
<th>$m_{1990}$</th>
<th>$m_{2004}$</th>
<th>$b_{1990}$</th>
<th>$b_{2004}$</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBOT Corn Futures Prices</td>
<td>0.0023</td>
<td>0.0008</td>
<td>5.5204</td>
<td>6.4574</td>
<td>0.0116</td>
<td>0.0119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSCE Cocoa Futures Prices</td>
<td>0.0024</td>
<td>0.0020</td>
<td>7.1868</td>
<td>7.8142</td>
<td>0.0169</td>
<td>0.0140</td>
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<tr>
<td>NYMEX Crude Oil Futures</td>
<td>0.0026</td>
<td>0.0028</td>
<td>3.1673</td>
<td>4.3636</td>
<td>0.0181</td>
<td>0.0142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYCE Cotton Futures Prices</td>
<td>0.0018</td>
<td>0.0014</td>
<td>4.2041</td>
<td>4.3273</td>
<td>0.0141</td>
<td>0.0138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSCE Coffee Futures Prices</td>
<td>0.0015</td>
<td>0.0013</td>
<td>4.6238</td>
<td>5.2728</td>
<td>0.0217</td>
<td>0.0118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYMEX Natural Gas Futures Contract</td>
<td>0.0019</td>
<td>0.0031</td>
<td>1.2436</td>
<td>1.8133</td>
<td>0.0274</td>
<td>0.0197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSCE Sugar No. 11 Futures Prices</td>
<td>0.0023</td>
<td>0.0013</td>
<td>2.1763</td>
<td>3.1398</td>
<td>0.0170</td>
<td>0.0142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBOT Soybean Futures Prices</td>
<td>0.0018</td>
<td>0.0011</td>
<td>6.4326</td>
<td>7.0138</td>
<td>0.0102</td>
<td>0.0110</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMEX Silver Futures</td>
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<td>0.0005</td>
<td>6.1989</td>
<td>8.8362</td>
<td>0.0111</td>
<td>0.0133</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBOT Wheat Futures Price</td>
<td>0.0023</td>
<td>0.0015</td>
<td>5.8315</td>
<td>6.4402</td>
<td>0.0131</td>
<td>0.0134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3 Correlations In Extreme Price Cases

Table 4 shows the correlations between the commodities and the S&P 500. This illustrates the significant increase in correlation between commodities and stocks that we have tried to model.

Table 4: Correlations between the commodities and the S&P 500.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity, correlated to S&amp;P</th>
<th>non-indexed period</th>
<th>indexed period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBOT Corn Futures Prices</td>
<td>0.0099</td>
<td>0.2231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSCE Cocoa Futures Prices</td>
<td>-0.0182</td>
<td>0.1473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYMEX Crude Oil Futures</td>
<td>-0.0546</td>
<td>0.3287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYCE Cotton Futures Prices</td>
<td>0.0116</td>
<td>0.1511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSCE Coffee Futures Prices</td>
<td>0.0290</td>
<td>0.1928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYMEX Natural Gas Futures Contract</td>
<td>-0.0092</td>
<td>0.1035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSCE Sugar No. 11 Futures Prices</td>
<td>-0.0082</td>
<td>0.1499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBOT Soybean Futures Prices</td>
<td>0.0124</td>
<td>0.2074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMEX Silver Futures</td>
<td>-0.0516</td>
<td>0.1848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBOT Wheat Futures Price</td>
<td>0.0005</td>
<td>0.1943</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6 Conclusion

Despite the speculative nature of the portfolio optimizers in this model, they will frequently act to stabilize commodity prices through their trading. As in the simple economic argument of Friedman [15], the portfolio optimizers generally buy the commodity when the commodity price is below its mean and sell the commodity when the commodity price is above its mean, creating a demand effect which keeps the price nearer to its mean. We have shown that this volatility reduction occurs when the amount invested is somewhat near an unleveraged long position.

Correlation between commodities and the stock market is also of significant practical interest, and we have shown that the sign of the stage-1 induced correlation in our model will be the same as the sign of the fraction of wealth invested. This leads to a high positive correlation when the commodity price is unusually low, which is undesirable, but it also leads to a high negative correlation when the price is unusually high, which is desirable for investors as it will, in some sense, cause the commodity price to move in the opposite direction as the overall economy during the times when the commodity price is high.
A Feedback Model for the Financialization of Commodity Markets

Overall, through numerical simulations, for a few different batches of reasonable market parameters, the net effect of the introduction of the portfolio optimizers seems to be a significant reduction in commodity price volatility and induced correlation with the stock market.

A Solution to stage-0 PDE

The stage-0 equation (20) is

$$H_t + (c_0 + c_1 u) H_u + \frac{1}{2} \lambda^2 b^2 H_{uu} + (c_2 + c_3 u + c_4 u^2) H = 0$$

with terminal condition $H(T, u) = 1$, where $c_0$ through $c_4$ are given by

$$c_0 = \frac{1}{\gamma} \left( \bar{a} \bar{m} - (1 - \gamma) r \right) - \frac{1}{2} \lambda^2 b^2, \quad c_1 = -\frac{a}{\gamma}, \quad c_2 = k, \quad c_3 = -\frac{1 - \gamma}{\gamma} \frac{1}{\lambda^2 b^2} \bar{a} \left( \bar{a} \bar{m} - r \right), \quad c_4 = \frac{1 - \gamma}{\gamma} \frac{a^2}{2 \lambda^2 b^2}.$$

Substituting the ansatz (21) into the above yields

$$f_0' + f_1' u + f_2' u^2 + (c_0 + c_1 u)(f_1 + 2 f_2 u) + \frac{1}{2} \lambda^2 b^2 \left( 2 f_2 + \frac{1}{\gamma} (f_1 + 2 f_2 u)^2 \right) + (c_2 + c_3 u + c_4 u^2) = 0.$$

This yields three ordinary differential equations we have to solve to determine $H$:

$$f_0' + c_0 f_1 + \frac{1}{2} \lambda^2 b^2 (2 f_2 + f_1) + c_2 = 0 \quad (27a)$$
$$f_1' + c_1 f_1 + 2 c_0 f_2 + \frac{2}{\gamma} \lambda^2 b^2 f_1 f_2 + c_3 = 0 \quad (27b)$$
$$f_2' + \frac{2}{\gamma} \lambda^2 b^2 f_2^2 + 2 c_1 f_2 + c_4 = 0 \quad (27c)$$

with terminal conditions $g_i(T) = 0$ for $i = 0, 1, 2$. These equations can be solved in closed form leading to (19).

B Application to Equity Market

In a related but simpler setting, Nayak and Papanicolaou [28] studied a feedback model for the equity market in which a single stock $Y$ is traded by reference traders (who play the role of the commodity users in Section 2 of our analysis). The reference traders have a stochastic income process $I_t$. However, in the equity model, this is taken to be a geometric Brownian motion. Similar to the demand-supply analysis of Section 2.1, with an isoelastic demand function (1), when there are only reference traders, the stage-0 dynamics of the stock price $Y(t)$ is also a geometric Brownian motion

$$\frac{dY(t)}{Y(t)} = \alpha_0 dt + \sigma_0 dW_t, \quad (28)$$

for some parameters $\alpha_0$ and $\sigma_0$ and Brownian motion $W$, in contrast to (2) where this is an expOU in the commodity model. In addition, there are portfolio optimizers, who seek to maximize their expected CRRA utility (4) in a fixed horizon $T$. They will trade in the equity market and their demand will cause the stock price dynamics to deviate from (28).
B.1 Stage-0 portfolio optimization

Since the unperturbed stock price process (28) is the geometric Brownian motion, the stage-0 portfolio optimization is simply the Merton problem \([26]\). The optimal portfolio is given by a fixed-mix strategy

\[
\theta_1^{(0)} = \hat{\theta}_0 Z_t := \frac{a_0 - r}{\sigma_0^2},
\]

where \(Z_t\) is the wealth process of the portfolio optimizers.

B.2 Stage-1 portfolio optimization

As in Section 2.2, the stage-1 stock price dynamics is derived from the market clearing constraint, where we measure the relative size of the portfolio optimizers and reference traders by \(\epsilon\). The stage-1 drift \(\alpha_1\) and volatility \(\sigma_1\) (analogous of \(P^{(1)}\) and \(Q^{(1)}\) in Section 2.5) are given by

\[
\alpha_1(X_t,Y_t) = \frac{a_0 - \epsilon X_t \tilde{\theta}_0}{Y_t - \epsilon X_t \tilde{\theta}_0}, \quad \sigma_1(X_t,Y_t) = \frac{a_0 (Y_t - \epsilon X_t \tilde{\theta}_0)}{Y_t - \epsilon X_t \tilde{\theta}_0}.
\]

(29)

where \(X_t\) is the aggregate wealth of the portfolio optimizers who follows the stage-0 strategy.

We denote the stage-1 strategy by \(\theta^{(1)} = \hat{\theta}^{(1)} Z_t\), where \(Z_t\) is the wealth process of the “smart” traders. Analogous to Section 3.1, his value function \(V\) is determined by the HJB PDE problem

\[
0 = V_t + rzV_z + \left(\tilde{\theta}_0 (a_1 - r) + r \right) xV_x + \frac{1}{2} \tilde{\theta}_0^2 \sigma_1^2 z^2 V_{zz} + \alpha_1 y V_y + \frac{1}{2} \sigma_1^2 x^2 y^2 V_{yy} + \frac{1}{2} \sigma_1^2 \tilde{\theta}_0 xz V_{xz} + yz V_{yz} \right)

(30)

with terminal condition \(V(T,x,y,z) = U(z)\).

We observe that \(\alpha_1 = \alpha_1(x,y)\) and \(\sigma_1 = \sigma_1(x,y)\) are in fact functions only of the ratio \(\xi = x/y\). We look for a similarity solution in the variable \(\xi = x/y\). After separation of variables \(V(t,x,y,z) = z^{1-\gamma} G(t,\xi)^{\gamma}\), \(G\) solves

\[
0 = G_t + \frac{1}{2} \sigma_1^2 (1 - \tilde{\theta}_0)^2 \xi^2 G_{\xi \xi} - \frac{1}{\gamma} \left( \alpha_1 - r - \gamma \sigma_1^2 \right) G + \frac{1}{\gamma} \frac{(a_1 - r)^2}{2 \gamma \sigma_1^2} + r) G
\]

(31)

with terminal condition \(G(T,\xi) = 1\). The key observation to solving (31) is that the stage-1 Sharpe ratio \((a_1 - r)/\sigma_1\) is equal to its stage-0 counterpart \((a_0 - r)/\sigma_0\) and, in particular, is independent of \(\xi\). This allows us to deduce the analytic solution to (30) and give the following proposition.

**Proposition 4.** The stage-1 value function \(V\) does not depend on the current stock price \(Y_t\) or the aggregate wealth process \(X_t\):

\[
V(t,x,y,z) = \frac{z^{1-\gamma}}{1 - \gamma} \exp \left( (1 - \gamma) \left( \frac{(a_0 - r)^2}{2 \gamma \sigma_0^2} + r \right) (T-t) \right).
\]

The stage-1 optimal portfolio is given by the Merton ratio, evaluated at the stage-1 drift \(\alpha_1\) and volatility \(\sigma_1\):

\[
\tilde{\theta}^{(1)}(x,y) = \frac{(a_1 - r)}{\gamma \sigma_1^2} = \frac{(a_0 - r)}{\gamma \sigma_0^2} \frac{1}{\sigma_1} = \hat{\theta}_0 \left( \frac{y - \epsilon x \tilde{\theta}_0}{y - \epsilon x \tilde{\theta}_0} \right).
\]

(32)

We have checked that (32) has excellent agreement with the order \(\epsilon\) asymptotic expansion derived by Nayak and Papanicolaou \([28]\) in the small feedback regime.

**Remark 2.** It is also possible to show, by similar calculations and similarity solutions, that the stage-\(k\) optimal strategy \(\hat{\theta}^{(k)}\) depends only on the ratio \(\xi_t = X_t/Y_t\).
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References


