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ABSTRACT BOOKLET



Michael Becher (IE University), With Nicolas Longuet Marx (Columbia University) and Vincent Pons (Harvard Business School)

Title: COVID-19, Political Accountability, and Democracy: Survey Experimental Evidence from 12 Countries

Abstract: Beyond its immediate impact on public health and the economy, the COVID-19 pandemic has put democracy under stress. We use a pre-registered survey and experiment covering 12 countries and 22,500 respondents to examine the impact of the pandemic on public beliefs about policy leaders and the functioning of democratic politics and institutions. In a first step, we show that information treatments shape people's beliefs about the severity of the crisis and their evaluation of the government's response. In a second step, we leverage the experimental treatments to causally identify the effects of evaluations of the government on satisfaction with democracy and support for alternative institutions. Instrumental variable estimates suggest that the evaluation of the government's response on the sanitary and economic dimensions have equal weight on the overall satisfaction with the government. This dissatisfaction with the government decreases satisfaction with how democracy works and perceived political efficacy, but it does not translate into an embrace of non-democratic regime types.

Daniel Chen (IAST/TSE), with Sultan Mehmood (New Economic School) and Shaheen Naseer (Lahore School of Economics)

Title: Training Effective Altruism

Abstract: Randomizing different schools of thought on cultivating prosociality among high-stakes decision makers in Pakistan suggests that training the utilitarian value of empathy—rather than malleability of the self—elevates prosociality. Treated civil servants display 0.4-0.6 sigma greater altruism, double orphanage visits and blood donations, and increased language of social cohesion in social media. Field and lab results show improved theory of mind in strategic dilemmas: blood donations only increased when treated individuals were requested their exact blood type, and training improved cooperation, coordination and guessing the decisions of others. We interpret these results through the lens of self-image models.

Margot Dazey (IAST), with Victor Gay (IAST)

Title: The Mosque Nearby: Visible Minorities and Far-Right Support in France

Abstract: The relationship between support for far-right parties and immigration varies according to the scale of analysis: at the municipality level, large immigrant populations are associated with lower far-right vote, while at larger geographical units the association is reversed. This article takes a fresh look at this puzzle and examines relationship between mosque presence and voter polarization at the level of polling stations in France in the late 2000s. Building on an original database on French mosques, it makes three contributions to the literature. By centering on religious markers of cultural difference rather than racial or nationality-of-origin dynamics, our study investigates the anti-Muslim dimension of nativist backlash. By focusing on places of worship of migrant-origin groups rather than the relative size of these groups, it examines how exposure to the visibility of minority groups impacts voting behavior, in line with salience of change theory. By looking at the granular level of polling stations rather than larger geographical units (such as municipalities, départements, or regions), our analysis also offers a fine-grained approach to the contextual determinants of far-right vote. Our preliminary results suggest that the propensity to vote for far-right parties increases in neighborhoods at certain distance to mosques rather than within mosque neighborhoods themselves, pointing to a spatial mechanism known as a halo effect.

Roberto Galbiati (Economics Department, SciencesPo), with Marianna Belloc, Francesco Drago, Mattia Fochesato

Title: Wealth Accumulation and Institutional Capture: the Rise of the Medici and the Fall of the Florentine Republic

Abstract: We study mechanisms and consequences of institutional capture using novel hand-collected data from the Florentine Republic. In the 14th-15th centuries, political offices were assigned in Florence by a system combining elections and lottery, which ensured for several decades a substantial alternation of power. During the 1420s, after a fiscal crisis, the Medici family became the first lender of the Republic, acquired a leading position in the city, and de facto captured the office allocation mechanism, while leaving the political institutions formally unchanged. Employing individual level information on wealth, political participation, and party affiliation, we document how the Medici manipulated office assignment and show that, under their regime, participation into politics predicted individual wealth. By comparing results for the periods before and after the institutional capture and using complementary data sources on voluntary loans to the Republic, we provide several pieces of evidence that explain our findings in terms of patronage and rent-extraction.

Gilles Ivaldi (CEVIPOF, Sciences Po Paris), with Oscar Mazzoleni, University of Lausanne

Title: Economic Populism, Sovereignism and Globalization in Europe and the United States

Abstract: Sovereignism is at the crux of the current wave of radical right-wing populism (RRP). Populist parties advocate 'taking back control' from the political establishment, supranational institutions and global forces and they typically do so in the name of the 'people'. While sovereignism may concern different dimensions, claims by RRP to regain sovereignty are often associated with socio-economic issues such as welfare, redistribution and international trade. The article aims to investigate the intersection between populism and sovereignism, and how voter demands for popular and national sovereignties may be articulated with one another to express the idea of regaining control of the country as a means of recovering economic prosperity. Based on an original cross-national survey conducted in four West European countries – France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland – and the United States, this contribution proposes to examine populist sovereignist attitudes among citizens across different socioeconomic contexts and polities.

Patrick Le Bihan (Cevipof, SciencesPo), with Catherine Hafer and Dimitri Landa, New York University

Title: Breaking News: Media Competition and Political Polarization

Abstract: We develop a model to analyze the political economy of media market competition in the face of imperfect mechanisms for capturing the return on breaking news. Media outlets face a trade-off between commanding greater attention from consumers and promoting the outlet's preferred ideological bias by suppressing unfavorable news stories. Media's incentives to break news and to copy news stories from other outlets fundamentally diverge, leading to differences in the informational environments for their loyal readers that track the determinants of the outlets' effective property rights over news stories. We show that the increase in loyal readership promotes media coverage bias and reader polarization, and that media outlets create vicious and virtuous circles in the effects of their own coverage biases on the coverage biases of their ideologically opposite competitors. Weaker property rights over breaking news can increase or decrease polarization, creating fundamentally contingent expectations for the political effects of the technological transformation of the media market landscape.

Benjamin Marx (Economics Department, SciencesPo), with Cédric Chambru and Emeric Henry

Title: The Winners and Losers of State-Building: Evidence from the French Revolution

Abstract: State-building can potentially reallocate economic activity across space. In 1790, the French Constituent Assembly overhauled the administration of the kingdom in favor of a modern, pyramidal structure that persisted to this day. Many cities lost their old administrative status while others gained new functions. In a subset of French districts, new administrative centers were chosen quasi-randomly as initial plans to establish rotating district capitals were not pursued. We study how exogenous changes in local state capacity affect public goods provision and economic development. In the short run, proximity to new administrative centers leads to higher taxation. In the long run, the new administrative centers and their neighboring localities experience faster population growth and industrial development. We also explore effects on military conscription and public goods provision. Our results shed new light on the intertemporal and distributive impacts of state-building in the context of one of the most ambitious administrative reforms ever implemented.

Imil Nurutdinov (IAST), with Eugenia Nazrullaeva (University of Glasgow)

Title: Discrimination, Market Entry Barriers, and Corporations in Imperial Russia

Abstract: We study discrimination against Jewish entrepreneurs in the Russian Empire. Although the Russian Jewish community as a whole faced various legal restrictions throughout the 19th century, specific exemptions allowed members of the Jewish commercial elite to engage in business activities on par with their non-Jewish counterparts. This started to change in 1890, when some newly issued corporate charters excluded Jews from participating as managers and/or investors. Russian law required all corporate charters to be approved by the central government, which, as we argue, created an opportunity to target corporations in specific industries and/or locations. We explore the possible political economy mechanisms behind this type of discrimination using corporation- and factory-level data and discuss their implications for Russia's economic development prior to World War I.

Jan Rovny (Centre d'études européennes, SciencesPo)

Title: Antidote to Backsliding: Ethnic Politics and Democratic Resilience

Abstract: Recent years have witnessed the rise of political forces questioning and undermining various aspects of democratic governance, particularly in eastern Europe. Explanations center largely on historical and post-communist experiences of the societies in this region, but fail to note the striking, and counterintuitive influence of ethnic politics. This article demonstrates that democratic practices have deteriorated significantly more in ethnically homogeneous countries, and argues for the central role of ethnic politics in buttressing democracy. In ethnically heterogeneous countries, where significant and politically organized ethnic minorities play a role in the domestic political process, democratic institutions and practices remain more resilient than in ethnically more homogeneous countries. This is because ethnic minorities provide socially rooted electorates with almost an existential need for political rights and liberties. Active minority engagement in politics reinforces a liberal pole of political competition, and provides a counterbalance to the primary carriers of democratic regression – populist nationalist parties.

Mirna Safi (OSC, SciencesPo), with Louise Caron (Ined) et Haley McAvey (York University)

Title: Moving Up the Civic Stratification Ladder: Explaining Inconsistency in Citizenship Declarations in French Longitudinal Data

Abstract: This article investigates the subjective dimensions of citizenship in France. Drawing on longitudinal data, we track individual changes in self-reported citizenship over 30 years. Census respondents mark one of three categories: “French by birth,” “Became French,” or “foreigner.” The “French by birth” category should be stable over the life course: one is born, but cannot become, French by birth. Yet, our findings show that a considerable share of foreign-origin respondents switch to French by birth declarations. These atypical changes vary by socioeconomic status, key events in the life course, and ethnoracial status. Individuals born in France, those who acquired citizenship and spouses of citizens are more likely to switch their declaration to the “French by birth” category, as are migrants and their descendants from former colonies. Respondents with higher education and occupational status are less likely to change their declaration. These findings convey how civic stratification overlaps with socioeconomic and ethnoracial hierarchies, and call into question the supposed objectivity and exteriority of legal classification systems.

Mohamed Saleh (IAST/TSE), with Cihan Artunc (Middlebury College)

Title: Political Connections and Corporation Performance in Egypt, 1890–1952

Abstract: A growing body of literature documents that political connections influence firm outcomes. We contribute to this literature by assembling two novel fine-grained datasets on corporations and Members of Parliament (MPs) in colonial and monarchical Egypt from 1890 to 1952. We define political connections of corporations as having at least one MP among its founders, and we examine the effect of connections on monthly Egyptian stock market returns of publicly traded firms in 1907–1930 and on monthly entry and exit dynamics in 1890–1952. We use a range of empirical methods to disentangle the cause effect on firm value. Our preliminary findings reveal that political connections had a positive effect on firm performance. Politically connected corporations had higher firm value, and were less likely to exit. But costly corporations negatively selected into adding MPs as founders. Politically connected industries have fewer entries, but conditional on entry, entrants are more politically connected than less connected industries. The evidence suggest that having political connections made incorporation easier for companies and the presence of political connections distorted competitive forces of creative destruction.

Jan Stuckatz (IAST), with In Song Kim (MIT) and Lukas Wolters (MIT)

Title: Strategic and Sequential Linkages between Campaign Donations and Lobbying

Abstract: We offer the first large-scale analysis of the direct link between campaign donations and lobbying — two distinct political activities that have been mostly studied separately. Using over 75 million U.S. federal lobbying reports and campaign contribution filings since 1999, we show that interest group donations are directly related to their subsequent lobbying efforts and the legislative activities of the targeted politicians. To analyze this sequential link, we use difference-in-differences estimation combined with matching, comparing firms that donate to a politician against a set of comparable firms with no donation history to the same politician. We find that donations result in an 8.5 percentage point increase in the probability that the targeted politician engages in legislative activities related to the bills lobbied by the donating firm. The estimated effects are large, short-term, and particularly pronounced for committee-related activities. Our findings question the common perception of donations as driven either by ideology or long-term investment strategy of interest groups.

Augustin Tapsoba (TSE)

Title: Polygyny, Timing of Marriage and Economic Shocks in Sub-Saharan Africa

Abstract: We study how local polygyny norms affect the equilibrium response of marriage markets to short-term changes in aggregate economic conditions. Revisiting the impact of rain fall shocks on early marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa, we find that droughts have a much smaller effect on the annual hazard of early marriage in areas where polygyny is more commonly practiced. The same shock leads to a large increase in early marriage in monogamous areas but has no effect on child marriage in areas with high polygyny levels. In these areas, droughts increase however the likelihood of getting married as a first spouse as opposed to being a second spouse. We show in an equilibrium model of marriage market with overlapping generations that this is because the demand for a second spouse is more elastic to income shocks compared to the demand for a first/unique spouse. The differences in equilibrium outcomes on the marriage markets translate into differences in long term fertility levels. This suggests that local norms regarding polygyny play an important role in the equilibrium effect of policies that aim at fighting child marriage or promoting investment in female human capital.

Karine Van der Straeten (IAST/TSE), with Kostanca Dhima (Texas A&M), Sona N. Golder (Penn State), and Laura B. Stephenson (Univ. of Western Ontario)

Title: Permissive Electoral Systems and Descriptive Representation

Abstract: Existing research about the effects of electoral systems on descriptive representation is mixed. In this paper, we test implications of theoretical arguments about the impact of electoral rules on voters' propensity to vote for women candidates. We conducted a survey experiment during the 2017 provincial election in British Columbia, Canada, using actual candidates in both real and hypothetical electoral districts. We find that more permissive, or candidate-centered, forms of proportional representation do not improve descriptive representation of women; if anything, they diminish it. We interpret these results as being driven by the supply of candidates – voters tend to vote for incumbent, well-known candidates who happen to be predominantly men.