

---

First annual IAST-Sciences Po conference in political science/ economy

The conference will be held at the CEVIPOF, 98 rue de l'Université, 75007 Paris.

May 22nd:

10:50 to 11:00: Short Introduction to the conference

11:00 to 11:45: **Mohamed Saleh** (IAST-TSE): "Taxing Unwanted Populations: Fiscal Policy and Conversions in Early Islam" (co-authored with Jean Tirole) - discussant: **Roberto Galbiati** (Sciences Po)

11:45 to 12:30: **Romain Lachat** (Sciences Po): "The effects of party–issue associations on the voting decision process" - discussant: **Lucas Novaes** (IAST)

12:30 to 13:30 lunch break

13:30 to 14:15: **Vittorio Merola** (IAST): "Economic Inequality, Authoritarianism, and Hostility toward Immigrants" - discussant: **Jan Rovny** (Sciences Po)

14:15 to 15:00: **Yann Algan** (Sciences Po): "The European Trust Crisis" - discussant: **Carlos Velasco** (IAST)

15:00-15:30 coffee break

15:30 to 16:15: **Carlos Velasco** (IAST): "The Impact of Partisan Politics on Bureaucratic Performance: Evidence from India" - discussant: **Daniel Rubenson** (Ryerson University/ Sciences Po)

16:15 to 17:00: **Sylvain Brouard** (Sciences Po): "Strategic Voting in the second round: Evidence from a 3 party election two round system experiment in France" (co-authored with Martial Foucault) - discussant: **Michael Becher** (IAST)

20:00 conference dinner at *Restaurant Le Square*, 31 rue Saint Dominique, 75007 PARIS

May 23d:

9:00 to 9:45 : **Lucas Novaes** (IAST): "Commodity Shocks, Misattribution, and Incumbency Effects: Evidence from Brazil" - discussant: **Clémence Tricaud** (Polytechnique)

9:45 to 10:30: **Pavlos Vasilopoulos** (Sciences Po): "Personality Substrates of Populist Attitudes", discussant: **Vittorio Merola** (IAST)

10:30 to 11:00 coffee break

11:00 to 11:45: **Michael Becher** (IAST): “Electoral Institutions and Democratic Representation: Evidence from Electoral Reform” (co-authored with Irene Menendez Gonzalez) - discussant: **Nicolas Sauger** (Sciences Po)

11:45 to 12:30: **Patrick Le Bihan** (Sciences Po): “Who Gets the Credit? News-Gathering Competition and Political Accountability” (co-authored with Catherine Hafer and Dimitri Landa) - discussant: **Karine van der Straeten** (IAST-TSE)

12:30 to 14:00 lunch and séminaire général of the CEVIPOF

## **Paper Abstracts:**

**Mohamed Saleh** (IAST-TSE): “Taxing Unwanted Populations: Fiscal Policy and Conversions in Early Islam” (co-authored with Jean Tirole)

Hostility towards a population, whether on religious, ethnic, cultural or socioeconomic grounds, confronts rulers with a trade-off between taking advantage of population members' eagerness to keep their status and inducing them to “comply” (conversion, quit, exodus or any other way of pleasing the hostile rulers). This paper first analyzes the rulers' optimal mix of discriminatory and non-discriminatory taxation, both in a static and an evolving environment. It thereby derives a set of unconventional predictions. The paper then tests the theory in the context of Egypt's conversion to Islam after 641 using novel data sources. The evidence is broadly consistent with the theoretical predictions.

**Romain Lachat** (Sciences Po): “The effects of party–issue associations on the voting decision process”

Parties often are associated with specific issues. They can “own” an issue when they develop a reputation of competence and attention in that domain and they can strategically emphasize specific issues in their campaign. This paper suggests that these associations lead voters to weight issues differently when evaluating different political parties. An issue associated with a given party should have a stronger impact on citizens' evaluations of that party than on the evaluation of its competitors. This goes against a central assumption of spatial models of voting choice, according to which a given citizen should evaluate and compare all parties in competition on the basis of the same set of criteria. These hypotheses are tested with data from national election studies in several West European democracies (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Netherlands, Switzerland). The results show a very large degree of variation between parties in the impact of issues on party evaluations. This means that voters do not use the exact same vote function to evaluate the electoral attractiveness of various parties, contrary to a widely shared assumption. Furthermore, the results offer strong support for the hypothesis that this variation is related to issue ownership.

**Vittorio Merola** (IAST): “Economic Inequality, Authoritarianism, and Hostility toward Immigrants”

What explains growing anti-immigration sentiments in the West? Scholars have recently emphasized the main role of cultural and social threats, often at the expense of economic explanations. Yet, this disregards the possibility that economic conditions shape the demand for cultural and social order and stability, implying that tests comparing these factors suffer from post-treatment bias. By incorporating recent insights from psychology, this article argues that economic inequality, a mostly omitted variable in the study of immigration attitudes, increases authoritarianism among the population. With greater inequality, status differences become more salient, which undermines most people's sense of personal control, such that their need for order and structure increases, which translates into greater authoritarian tendencies. The more authoritarian people are, the more likely they are to perceive immigrants as threats to the social or cultural order. This is demonstrated using the ESS and WVS cross-national surveys, based on various measures and models, and a two-wave survey experiment in Sweden at the height of the migration wave in 2015, where respondents are treated with different information about inequality. The results indicate that higher inequality produces greater levels of authoritarianism and increases opposition to immigration, in particular for lower status individuals, as measured through income, occupation or education. In addition, the experimental results show that stronger information about inequality lowers low status respondents' feelings of personal control and increases their perceptions that immigrants pose a threat, even though the treatment contains no mention of immigrants. These results imply that economic inequality, perhaps most saliently visible through labor market segmentation or differing prospects of economic mobility, might play a prominent role in recent gains by far-right parties and the growing appeal of ethnocentric politicians.

**Yann Algan** (Sciences Po): “The European Trust Crisis”

**Carlos Velasco** (IAST): “The Impact of Partisan Politics on Bureaucratic Performance: Evidence from India”

Existing studies show party alignment impacts positively the distribution of government resources, implicitly assuming this improves policy outcomes. The opposite could be true, however, if alignment reduces the incentives for good bureaucratic performance. To illustrate this alternative, I introduce a theory where only co-partisan legislators credibly threaten to punish bureaucrats. The theory yields two predictions. First, co-partisan legislators are more likely to sponsor, and bureaucrats to approve projects associated with higher rents. Second, legislators anticipating a favorable disposition from bureaucrats, use more resources during periods of partisan alignment. I test these predictions focusing on India's Member of Parliament Local Development Scheme. As evidence of the political pressure exerted on bureaucrats, the paper shows co-partisans experience shorter project approval times, and anticipating favorable treatment, co-partisans use more resources. Finally, I show that co-partisans oversee the implementation of low quality projects more frequently, suggesting they are better positioned to extract rents.

**Sylvain Brouard** (Sciences Po): “Strategic Voting in the second round: Evidence from a 3 party election two round system experiment in France”

The paper investigates the conditions under which strategic voting may occur into a three-party competition within a runoff system. Based on an online survey experiment, we evaluate the partisan preferences of the electorate in the second round according to the 1<sup>st</sup> round preferred candidates and the relative strength of political parties competing in the second round. The randomly assigned score to the party in the first round reveals the existence of strategic voting in the second round in a 3-party competition context. Both ideological distance and party positional distance do matter for explaining the occurrence of strategic voting.

**Lucas Novaes** (IAST): “Commodity Shocks, Misattribution, and Incumbency Effects: Evidence from Brazil”

We investigate the impact of commodity shocks on the electoral fortunes of Brazilian mayors. Using a “close election” regression discontinuity design, we show that the price of locally produced commodities systematically shapes the returns to incumbency in Brazilian municipalities. While positive commodity shocks greatly enhance the probability of reelection of incumbent mayors, negative commodity shocks place them at an incumbency disadvantage vis-à-vis challengers. We also show that commodity inflation is particularly consequential in rural municipalities, and that the electoral success of incumbents only responds to inflation during the last year of an incumbent's term. By showing that Brazilian voters cannot adequately distinguish external forces from incumbents action nor evaluate performance during a full incumbent term, we contribute to the growing evidence on the limitations of retrospective voting. We also underscore that exposure to adverse economic shocks may represent a heretofore unrecognized source of incumbency disadvantage.

**Pavlos Vasilopoulos** (Sciences Po): “Personality Substrates of Populist Attitudes”

The powerful emergence of populist parties and leaders on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean has brought intense scholarly and scientific interest. Previous research has focused on definitions and taxonomies of populism, platforms of populist parties, and the demographic characteristics of those who support populist leaders and parties. Yet little is known about the psychological characteristics of populist supporters. This article closes the gap by directly investigating the personality attributes of left-wing and right-wing populists. Using an instrument designed to measure individual differences in populist attitudes, we investigate the role of authoritarianism and Big Five personality traits in a large, nationally representative sample of over 24,000 French respondents. Results reveal that authoritarianism, conscientiousness, and openness to new experiences are positively associated with populism, even after adjusting for political ideology and demographic variables. At the same time, there are important differences between left-wing and right-wing populists.

Authoritarianism and conscientiousness were more strongly associated with right-wing (vs. left-wing) populism, whereas openness was more strongly associated with left-wing (vs. right-wing) populism. Agreeableness was negatively associated with right-wing (but not left-wing) populism. Overall, the effects of personality characteristics on support for populism are comparable in terms of magnitude to the effects of income and education.

**Michael Becher** (IAST): “Electoral Institutions and Democratic Representation: Evidence from Electoral Reform” (co-authored with Irene Menendez Gonzalez)

How do electoral institutions influence the representation of voter preferences in parliament? Extant research on this fundamental question of democratic governance has been hampered by two major problems: measuring the congruence between voters and elected policymakers and accounting for the endogeneity of electoral systems. We propose and implement a research design that addresses both concerns by studying electoral reform in the context of active direct democracy. We collect and analyze an original data set on the voting behavior of legislators and voters on the same issues before and after electoral reform in Switzerland during the first half of the twentieth century. To address endogeneity concerns, we measure voter support for electoral reform at the municipality level and control for other potential confounders based on census data and district fixed effects. A unique feature of the design is that varying reform intensity allows for a difference-in-difference analysis. Initial results suggest that increasing district magnitude improves the representation of voter preferences. We examine two sets of causal mechanisms, incentives and selection, that may account for this finding. We also consider whether electoral reform entails a trade-off between congruence and accountability.

**Patrick Le Bihan** (Sciences Po): “Who Gets the Credit? News-Gathering Competition and Political Accountability” (co-authored with Catherine Hafer and Dimitri Landa)

We study the effects of media competition on political accountability in a setting with imperfect ability of the media to secure credit for breaking the news. Media outlets with pro-incumbent and pro-challenger biases can invest into costly efforts to acquire the news but each media can also copy the news stories of competitors. Citizens consume news as a private consumption good and use the information provided to hold elected officials accountable. We show that information is more abundant when it is easier for media outlets to secure credit for breaking the news. Surprisingly, concentrated, rather than competitive, media markets provide more information, and hence better accountability, when it is difficult to secure such credit. Moreover, media competition responds to increases in the ability to secure credit in a way that decreases the asymmetry of media market shares. Finally, depending on the difficulty of securing credit for breaking the news story, an increase in media bias may increase or decrease accountability and the asymmetry of media market shares.