

ISABEL MAHMOUD

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EDUCATION

Universidad Carlos III de Madrid

September 2020 - present

PhD in Social Sciences (September 2022 - present)

Master in Social Sciences (September 2020 - September 2022)

Excellent (Grade: 9.0)

Centro de Estudios Monetarios y Financieros

September 2018 - June 2020

Master in Economics and Finance

University of London International Program (academic direction of: London School of Economics and Political Sciences)

September 2015 - July 2018

Bachelor in Economics

First Class Honours, Highest Achiever

WORK IN PROGRESS

Far-right supply shock, beliefs on social consensus, and revealed preferences: Evidence from the Spanish Elections

This paper builds upon sociological theory on social norms, social consensus, networks, and attempts to contribute to the political economy literature on the supply side-induced demand mechanisms of the far-right uprising in Europe. The paper argues that a far-right supply shock lowers the cost of the social stigma associated with the revelation of preferences on social issues that were ex-ante believed to go against the elite-driven social consensus by updating the beliefs of extremists with regards to the potential size of their group within the society. This, in turn, is argued to potentially lower the cost of voting for far-right parties. To construct the argument, the paper utilizes the exogenous far-right shock in Spain that took place in a regional election to argue that it shook the public debate on contemporary consensus regarding social issues, proportional to the salience of the different issues, and causally induced revelation of preferences aligned with the social views adopted by the far-right. The paper argues that this had led to adjusting perceptions regarding the group size of extremists, inducing further support for the far-right on the national level. On the other hand, individuals who are to the left of the ex-ante perceived social consensus are argued to express further radical views to pull the status quo back towards their actual preferences. This is expected to fuel a higher level of polarization. On the theoretical side, the paper builds its main mechanism in the light of the sociological and psychological literature, taken forward to develop a game-theoretic framework to establish the mechanism by which the causal chain operates. On the empirical side, Difference-in-Differences (DiD), Instrumentation (IV), Triple Difference (DDD), and Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD) are used to establish for the causal effect of an exogenous regional-level supply shock on revealed preferences, and the subsequent national-level voting behaviour. The paper intends to rule out the role the populist rhetoric adopted plays within this particular mechanism by ruling out similar effects resulting from exogenous supply shocks induced by populist parties with a different positing along the left-right political spectrum. By doing so, it speaks to arguments relating to the generality of the effect irrespective of the party ideology position on the left-right scale, and sheds the light on the importance of studying the interplay between the demand for and supply of populist far-right parties to explain the unprecedented wave of their uprising in Europe.

On colonialism, democratization, and secularism: Evidence from postcolonial Muslim-majority countries

The aim of this paper is to revisit modernization theory and contest the strong cross-country correlation between income and democracy within the scope of post-colonial Muslim-majority countries. I find that for this subgroup of 37 countries, such correlation does not hold. Moreover, I present an alternative hypothesis for why modernization theory fails to explain transitions to democracy in these countries. I argue that secularism towards Islam is a main explanatory variable for why some countries democratized post-independence while others failed to do so. I present instrumental variables estimates that establish a causal effect of secularism on democracy, using the colonial investment concentration as an instrument for freedom of religion at the time of independence, which is the proxy we use for secularism. Colonial investment concentration satisfies both the exogeneity and exclusion assumptions due to the inclusion of colonial transformation variables which control for the political, economic, cultural and colonial effects of colonization on democratization. Therefore, colonial investment concentration in itself has no direct effect in such model on democratization, and only affects it through the inclusiveness vs extractiveness effect on secularism, since an extractive colonizer is unlikely to induce secularism whilst an inclusive one viewing the colony as part of the kingdom is likely to induce secularism so that the culture in the colony approaches the culture of the colonizer. The 2SLS results, also, provide evidence that goes against a second strand of the literature, which claims that colonization causes no systematic differences in variables affecting democratization. Furthermore, I provide evidence that refutes an argument made in the literature on colonization and democratization, attributing the effect of the earlier on the latter to the identity of the colonizer. By controlling for the colonizers identity in the paper, I find that the degree of extractiveness of a colonizer -which is inversely proportional to the colonial investment- determines postcolonial prospects of democratization, rather than its colonial identity. By doing so, not only do I provide evidence that refutes three major strands of the literature on the matter, but I provide a prominent, novel argument supported with quantitative data analysis.

Perceived social class and political behaviour: Evidence from the United States

The paper studies the effect of individualistic perceptions of social inequalities on political behaviour. The latter discloses two dimensions; political participation via voting, and the political action in terms of which party the individual votes for. The repeated cross-sectional United States General Social Survey (GSS) dataset (1972-2018) enables studying both dimensions. One advantage of the GSS is that individuals report their subjective rather than objective social class, which is more likely to shape their political behaviour, since it's one's perception of the reality that shapes their expectations, and hence, drives their behavioural outcomes. First, in the light of a fixed-effects probit model studying the effect of the subjective social class on voting behaviour. Second, a fixed-effects two-step Heckman multinomial probit model is used to analyze the effect of the subjective social class on the presidential candidate voted for in the elections, conditional on voting in the first place, and social class is found to have a partial explanatory power over political action. Moreover, for robustness checks, the same empirical strategy is adopted; however, on a subsample comprising the individuals identifying as independent and affiliated with neither the Democratic nor Republican party. The results are found to be consistent with those obtained from the full sample. In all regressions, income, occupational prestige and its inter-generational mobility are controlled for. The existence of social class effects in all regressions highlights the importance of the sociological view of social class as only partially dependent on income and occupational prestige but not a proxy for neither, as economists and psychologists respectively claim. Because if the latter was the case, we would have expected the social class effects to be mediated through either or both and no significant effect would have been found.

Perceived Discrimination: Economic Correlates and Political Consequences

Using nine rounds of the European Social Survey (ESS) between 2002 and 2018, This paper builds upon the existent literature in political psychology studying the relationship between perceived discrimination and political choice, attempting to provide a hypothesis for the mechanism via which such a relationship operates. The mechanism put forth explains why there exists contradictory evidence in the literature regarding the sign of the correlation between perceived discrimination and political participation, by introducing the element of heterogeneity to the relationship and exploiting the theoretical literature suggesting the existence of a clear cut distinction between societal and political discrimination, to suggest they operate in opposite directions and attribute the weight of the two effects to the base of discrimination. The data enables disentangling both effects for each group. A multivariate probit model is used to estimate marginal effects, which allow estimating the weights associated with each effect, conditional on the base of perceived discrimination. I find that heterogeneity introduced through the base of perceived discrimination is what drives the sign of the discriminations net impact on the different aspects of political participation -voting, demonstrating and contacting politicians-. Also, the paper checks whether the impact of heterogeneity goes beyond participation and impacts the positioning along the left-right political spectrum heterogeneously, and finds that the source does impact the magnitude of the marginal effect of perceived discrimination on the political positioning, but never the sign.

Effect of historical amenities on Sephardic Jews' within city location choices in Spain

The paper is trying to answer the following question: Conditional on a Sephardic Jews relocation in Spain (ex-post the exogenous shock induced by the 2014 announcement that the descendants of Sephardic Jews who were expelled from Spain by the Alhambra Decree of 1492 would be offered Spanish citizenship, without being required to move to Spain and/or renounce any other citizenship they may have) and their choice of city, do historical amenities affect ones within-city location choice, controlling for the political and network effects?

WORK EXPERIENCE

Universidad de Carlos III de Madrid

January 2021 - Present

Teaching Assistant

- Teaching Cooperation, Collective Action and Formal Models of Strategy to both second and fourth year undergraduate students, with Prof. Luis Fernando Medina.
- Teaching Security, Peace and Conflicts Resolution to fourth year undergraduate students, with Prof. Ignacio Sanchez-Cuenca.

Centro de Estudios Monetarios y Financieros

July 2019 - October 2019

Research Assistant

- Research Assistant for Prof. Josep Pijoan-Mas, conducting panel data analysis using STATA.

Arab Academy of Science, Technology and Maritime Transport September 2016 - July 2018

Teaching Assistant

- Junior Teaching Assistant of Introduction to Economics to first year undergrads and Macroeconomics to second year undergrads of University of London International Programmes' BSc in Economics, under the direction of London School of Economics.

Mo4 Network

June 2016 - September 2016

Social Media Executive

- Writer and Social Media content creator for CairoScene; an online magazine, under the umbrella of Mo4 Network.

AHC (Member of DFK International)

June 2016 - August 2018

Part-time Auditor

- Contributing in auditing financial statements, preparation of feasibility studies, and the assessment of many industrial and service companies.

AHC (Member of DFK International)

December 2014 - June 2016

Auditor under training

- Under training in the accounting, auditing and consultancy sector.

Academy for International Development-Middle East

June 2014 - December 2015

Volunteer in Women Policy Center Project financed from the SIDA

- Volunteering in women empowerment to actively participate in public spheres in the MENA region for sustainable and gender equitable changes in policies and practices.

Port Said British School

September 2014 - May 2015

IGCSE Teaching Assistant

- Teaching Assistant for English Literature with Dr. Ramsey El-Shimi.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND AWARDS

Full academic-based scholarship for the pursuit of the Master in Social Sciences.

Full academic-based scholarship for the pursuit of the Master in Economics and Finance.

Top achiever in the Bachelor in Economics, and chosen by University of London as one of the best performers throughout the 3 years of the Bachelor in Economics.

Second place at the Egyptian Annual Economic Policymaking competition 2016 - awarded by the American University in Cairo.

Academic-based scholarship for the pursuit of the BSc in Economics.

Highest achiever in IGCSE Mathematics on the international level -awarded by the British Council.

TECHNICAL STRENGTHS

Software & Tools

STATA, Matlab, R, Python, Latex, QGIS, MS Office

LANGUAGES

Languages

English (Fluent), Arabic (Fluent), Spanish (Intermediate), French (Basic), Galician (Basic).