

Caterina E. Chiopris

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Education **Harvard University**, Cambridge, MA since 2018
Ph.D. student, Political Economy and Government

Duke University, Durham, NC 2018
Master in Analytical Political Economy

Yunnan University, Kunming, China 2016
Tsinghua University, Beijing, China
Certificate in advanced mandarin

Technische Universität Dresden, Dresden, Germany 2015
Bachelor in Internationale Beziehungen – international law, economics, and political science

Academic Positions **Bocconi University**, Milan, Italy 2022-2023
Visiting Lecturer in Comparative Politics

Berlin Social Science Center, Berlin, Germany 2022
Visiting Researcher, Transformations of Democracy Unit

Working Papers & Publications A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing: Citizen Uncertainty and Democratic Backsliding.
with Monika Nalepa and Georg Vanberg
R&R at the Journal of Politics

A prominent contemporary phenomenon is “backsliding” of democratic countries into (semi-) authoritarian practices. Such episodes often unfold gradually over time in contexts where the ultimate intentions of governments are not clear. We present a model that focuses on the role of such uncertainty in backsliding. In the model, a government engages in a reform that may allow for subsequent actions that are inconsistent with the rule of law. Citizens must decide whether to replace the incumbent following the reform. Consistent with existing work, the model suggests that polarization increases democratic backsliding. More importantly, the model demonstrates that in a dynamic setting, citizens may support incumbent governments even if citizens are fundamentally opposed to authoritarianism. The less concerned citizens are about facing a potential autocrat, as in relatively well-established democracies, the more likely it is that even moderate levels of polarization can set off the process of democratic backsliding. We illustrate the model’s implications using a survey experiment in contemporary Poland.

The Wealth of Knowledge: Spatial Networks and the Diffusion of Ideas.
Job Market Paper

New ideas can bring about social, institutional and technological change, if they diffuse successfully. How do increased connections affect the generation and diffusion of ideas?

Intuitively, a denser network should increase the number of novel ideas generated and augment their diffusion. I show that in the context of knowledge production in Germany in the 19th century, the railroad network increases the generation of ideas, but decreases their diffusion. This is a by-product of specialization: with the railroad, groups of scholars can focus on narrower topics, they learn more from similar groups, but become disconnected from dissimilar ones. Specialization also affects state institutions: public officials and legislators are trained with a narrower but deeper focus of expertise. The bureaucracy thus becomes more specialized, and legislation is more exhaustive. The patterns generated by spatial connections are those that define modernity and the knowledge economy: specialization, the co-location of experts, the explosion of innovation. The findings rely on the universe of bibliographic records and novel railway statistics, among other original data, as well as cutting-edge machine learning and topology to measure ideas.

Democratic Backsliding in Poland in Light of Rule of Law Accountability to the European Union

with Monika Nalepa

Forthcoming, Emory Law Journal

In 2015, Poland began to gradually dismantle institutions of the rule of law that had been carefully put in place after its transition. Moreover, this process has been underway largely with the electorate's support. This is puzzling because only several years earlier rule of law seemed to be all but guaranteed by the country's accession to the European Union. If Poland is still a member of the EU, the EU is noticing erosion of the rule of law, and sounding the alarm, why are the eroders still being elected? We propose an explanation based on the dynamic model from Chiopris, Nalepa and Vanberg (2021) which posits that voters are deeply uncertain as to whether the incumbent they are about to reelect is introducing policy change because of his genuine ideological commitments or because he is a closet autocrat, for whom policy change is instrumental to usurping power. What is more, the authors find that there is an interactive relationship between democratic commitments and uncertainty. We test this theory with an experiment around the 2019 nationwide Polish elections and find that citizens with less exposure to democratic rule are more likely to reelect incumbents making sweeping policy change when they are uncertain about the true intentions of the incumbent's policy.

The Politics of Region-Biased Technological Change.

with Torben Iversen and David Soskice

The transition to the knowledge economy has been associated with a strong urban bias and rising regional inequality, which is explained by the co-location decisions of knowledge-intensive businesses and highly educated workers. Yet, the geographical concentration of such businesses and skilled workers is far from uniform across countries. We explain this variation as a result of public policies responding to institutionally-mediated political coalitions. We show that the concentration of innovation, measured by geocoded patent applications, is closely linked to differences in political institutions. We propose a (quasi) diff-in-diff design to demonstrate that the effects of technological shocks on inequality are also linked to differences in expected coalitions.

Why Did Conservatives Fear Democracy?

with Brian Rathbun, Fabio Ellger, and Daniel Ziblatt

Canonical works in political science and economics explain the success or failure of democratic transitions and the stability of democracy with reference to the preferences of predemocratic elites. For example, classic works ranging from Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) and Boix (2003) to recent works such as Albertus and Menaldo (2018) make predictions about the relationship of economic inequality and democracy, presuming a logic that economic redistribution under conditions of high economic inequality drives elite opposition to democracy. But are political economy motives the factors that actually historically drove

conservative elite opposition to democracy? We examine this question by turning to the historical record of the predemocratic German Reichstag (1871-1933). We test the political economy assumption that fear of democracy was rooted in fear of redistribution vis-à-vis an alternative argument that conservatives in historical Germany resisted democratization out of a psychologically-rooted motivated-reasoning opposition to the leveling of social hierarchies and relative social status. We conduct a series of quantitative text analyses to unravel which narratives against democratization have been predominantly used by conservative parliamentarians and how their arguments changed over time. In addition, we present further historical evidence to substantiate our proposition of conservative social identity as a major motivation to maintain the status quo – and counteract democratic power sharing. Our findings contribute to the ongoing discussion about the role of conservative elites during the emergence of liberal democracy in Western societies.

Elites' Social Networks and the Origins of State Capacity.

with Yubua Wang

A key challenge for the early modern state was the integration of the periphery into the central state apparatus. Specifically, the central state faces a credible commitment problem when trying to extract resources from the periphery in exchange for protection and public good provision. In a simple model, we argue that marriage networks can make this commitment credible, by aligning the incentives of the elites in the periphery and the center. We find the process of social integration between center and periphery to be self-reinforcing. We evaluate our argument using the case of early modern Venice. We exploit an exogenous demographic shock that pushed the elites from the center to marry the elites from the periphery. Using a difference-in-differences design to compare families that were integrated into the nobility marriage networks earlier with those that were integrated later, we show that social integration is positively associated with investment in public debt. We also observe increased tax revenues from the provinces that had families integrated and more military spending and state institutions established in the integrated provinces. Our findings highlight the role of social networks in aligning the incentives of central and local elites in favor of a strong central state.

The Religious Origins of the Welfare State.

with Francesca Miserocchi

How did the modern welfare state originate, and how did its origin affect its long-term development and efficiency? The literature has mostly pointed to the strength of the labor movement or social cleavages as determinants of welfare provision. Within the Italian post-unitary context, we take a different approach by highlighting that, in its early stages, welfare was not created anew by the state, but had instead been provided for centuries - by institutions affiliated with the Catholic Church. We study the effect of the incorporation of these institutions into the state apparatus in 1890. We thus link historical welfare provision to the quality of welfare once it was under state control, by focusing on charities that were previously run by the clergy and that had to switch to private or public administration. We expect the effect of the change in administration to be positive in the regions where state institutions originated, and negative in the regions where state institutions were exported and ineffective at the local level. Using detailed historical records of Church-affiliated charities, their services and budgets, we use a difference-in-differences strategy to study the effect of state incorporation on welfare provision, health and literacy outcomes, institutional resource management and administrative change.

What We Get Wrong About Closing the Racial Wealth Gap.

with William Darity Jr., Darrick Hamilton, Mark Paul, Alan Aja, Anne Price, Antonio Moore. Insight Center for Community Economic Development, 2018
Covered by: [MSNBC](#), [Fortune](#), [Bloomberg](#).

We address ten commonly held myths about the racial wealth gap in the United States. We contend that a number of ideas frequently touted as “solutions” will not make headway in reducing black-white wealth disparities. These conventional ideas include greater educational

attainment, harder work, better financial decisions, and other changes in habits and practices on the part of blacks. While these steps are not necessarily undesirable, they are wholly inadequate to bridge the racial chasm in wealth.

Grants & Awards	2023	NSF, Grant for diversity in political methodology
	2023	Institute for Quantitative Social Science, Research Grant
	2023	Business and Government Research Cluster Grant
	2022	Stone Inequality Research Fellowship
	2022	Krupp Foundation Dissertation Research Fellowships
	2021	Excellence in Teaching Award
	2021	Weatherhead Center Graduate Student Associate Grant
	2021	Weatherhead Center Mid-Dissertation Grant
	2021	Harvard GSAS Student Council, Summer Research Grant
	2018	Master's Scholar Award, Duke University Economics Department
	2015	Scholarship, Confucius Institute
	2014	Full scholarship, German Academic Exchange Service Honorary title 'Alfiere del Lavoro' of the Italian Republic, awarded by the President of the Italian Republic, on behalf of Federazione Nazionale Cavalieri del Lavoro
Skills	Languages: Italian (native), German (fluent), Chinese (advanced), French and Spanish (basic)	
	Software: R, Python, Latex (proficient); STATA, Matlab (basic)	
Teaching Experience	Lecturer, <i>Comparative Political Institutions & Institutional Development (game theory)</i> Bocconi University, Milan, Graduate course, Fall 2022	
	Teaching Fellow, <i>Advanced Quantitative Methods II: Econometric Methods</i> Harvard Kennedy School, Prof. Will Dobbie, Graduate course, Spring 2021 & 2022	
	Teaching Fellow, <i>Politics of Europe</i> Harvard Government Department, Prof. Daniel Ziblatt, Undergraduate course, Fall 2021	
	Teaching Assistant, <i>Intermediate Microeconomics: Advanced</i> Harvard Economics Department, Prof. Edward Glaeser, Undergraduate course, Fall 2021	

Instructor, *Coding in R*
Harvard Kennedy School, Graduate course, January 2021

Teaching Fellow, *Political Economy of Non-Democracies*
Harvard Economics Department, Prof. David Yang, Graduate course, Fall 2020

Teaching Fellow, *Quantitative Analysis and Empirical Methods*
Harvard Kennedy School, Prof. David Deming, Graduate course, Fall 2020

Lecturer, *International Political Economy*
Technische Universität Dresden, Undergraduate course, Summer 2019

Teaching Assistant, *Macroeconomics*
Duke University Economics Department, Prof. Pietro Peretto, Graduate course, Spring 2018

Instructor, *Statistics and Research Writing*
Young Scholars Summer Research Institute at Duke University, 2017

Teaching Assistant, *Race and Higher Education*
Duke University Economics Department, Prof. William Darity Jr., Undergraduate course, Spring 2017

Research Experience

Research Assistant, Prof. Will Dobbie, Harvard Kennedy School, 2020-2022

Research Assistant, Prof. Torben Iversen, Harvard University, 2019-2020

Research Assistant, Prof. William Darity, Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity at Duke University, 2017-2018

Research Assistant, Prof. Ursula Stein, German-Italian Institute for Comparative Legal Culture at Law School of TU Dresden, 2012-2014

Research Assistant, China Rule of Law Research Institute and Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China, 2014

Academic Service and Engagement

Referee for: Journal of Political Economy, American Political Science Review, American Journal of Political Science, Political Research Quarterly, Journal of European Public Policy

Graduate Student Coordinator, Comparative Politics Research Workshop, Harvard Government Department, 2019-2020

Harvard GSAS Environmental Action Team – Chair of Policy

Co-founder and Chair, International Student Committee, Harvard Government Department, 2019-2020

Women in Political Science at Duke University, Durham, NC, 2017-2018

Affiliations

Institute for Quantitative Social Science
Weatherhead Center for International Affairs
Center for European Studies at Harvard University
Evidence for Policy Design, Harvard Kennedy School
Center for International Development at Harvard University

Presentations and Conferences

2023	Northeast Workshop in Empirical Political Science (NEWEPS), Cambridge, MA
2023	American Political Science Association Meeting, Los Angeles, CA
2023	Political Networks, Los Angeles, CA
2023	PolMeth (Political Methodology) Conference, Palo Alto, CA
2023	Council for European Studies Conference, Reykjavík, Iceland
2023	Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL
2023	Public Choice Society Meeting, Seattle, WA
2020	American Political Science Association (online)
2018	Formal Theory and Comparative Politics Conference, New Haven, CT
2017	The Hidden Rules of Race, Durham, NC
2017	Reflections on the Impact of the Reconstruction Amendments, Washington, DC