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Fields	Research primary: Economic History, Political Economy Research secondary: International Economics, Stratification Economics, Applied Theory Teaching: Economic History, Economic Theory, Macroeconomics
Education	Ph.D., Economics, Northwestern University (anticipated) 2022 Dissertation: Essays on Economic History and Political Economics Committee: Joel Mokyr (Chair), Sandeep Baliga, Georgy Egorov M.S., Economics, Bocconi University 2016 B.S., Economics, Bocconi University 2014
Fellowships & Awards	Dissertation Year University Fellowship, Northwestern University 2021 Distinguished TA Award, Northwestern University 2020
Teaching Experience	Teaching Assistant, Northwestern University 2018–2021 European Economic History (2), Introductory Macroeconomics, Money and Banking, Intermediate Microeconomics (4), Behavioral Economics (3), Introductory Microeconomics
Research Experience	Research Assistant, Ameet Morjaria, Northwestern University 2019
Conferences	North American winter meeting of the Econometric Society (2021)
Job Market Paper	<p>“International Power Rankings: Theory and Evidence from International Cooperation” with Matteo Camboni</p> <p><i>Abstract:</i> Throughout history, powerful countries have used their coercive resources to obtain favorable policies from other countries (geopolitical rents). This paper proposes and tests a theory of geopolitical competition, studying how geopolitical rents depend on the power of all competing countries. Our theory shows that the equilibrium geopolitical rent obtained by a country is not just determined by its power or relative power, but rather by its <i>Weaker Powers Index (WPI)</i>, i.e., the combined share of power held by all weaker competitors. Specifically, higher WPI implies higher rent. Specializing the theory, we show that when the WPI of a country increases, it should trade more, conclude more economic and military deals, have better diplomatic and political relations, and send more aid. In our empirical analysis, we confirm these predictions using bilateral data on international interactions and trade. Finally, we show that the theory can accurately predict the effect of the rise of China and the collapse of the Soviet Union on the United States and other major powers and shed light on various puzzles of international relations, including the Thucydides Trap.</p>

Working papers

“A Theory of Political Favoritism and Internal Conflicts”

with Matteo Camboni

Abstract: This paper shows how favoritism in government policy naturally arises and shapes conflicts in societies where tax extraction is only constrained by the violence potential of multiple social groups. In equilibrium, the government undermines the subjects' ability to coordinate against taxation by creating a ranking that grants higher status, thus lower taxes, to stronger groups. Such divide-and-conquer strategy (favoritism), which emerges in the shadow of violence, motivates a novel class of conflicts where resource appropriation/destruction is aimed at climbing the government's ranking. Moreover, since the strongest group gains the largest support for the rulership, groups fight to become the strongest. Expanding the analysis, we study how political institutions and cross-group identities affect the political equilibrium and internal stability. Finally, we discuss how our predictions shed light on the evidence from both contemporary and historical societies.

“Monitoring Team Members: Information Waste and the Self-Promotion Trap”

with Matteo Camboni

Abstract: We analyze a moral hazard problem where a firm incentivizes a team of complementary workers by designing a robust incentive scheme that relies on individual and team performance signals. While using both signals minimizes information rents, team performance bonuses expose workers to strategic uncertainty about how many colleagues would work. We show that the firm typically sacrifices statistically relevant information to curb strategic uncertainty, providing some workers with individual performance bonuses only. We provide a sharp characterization of the optimal incentive scheme, highlighting how the firm discriminates among (possibly homogeneous) workers in terms of total rents, type of contract offered, and even monitoring, choosing to monitor some workers more closely than others. Finally, we use such characterization to study the workers' incentives to facilitate or hinder such monitoring. We show that competition for better contracts incentivizes workers to be more transparent, triggering an unraveling result that only benefits the firms, delivering the same payoffs as the firm-preferred equilibrium (self-promotion trap).

Work in Progress

“Thucydides Trap: a Geographic Solution to a Historical Puzzle”

with Matteo Camboni

Abstract: Great powers with similar levels of power often fight each other (Thucydides Trap). This historical regularity is often used to argue that a war between the United States and China is likely to happen in the near future. We consider a model of geopolitical competition, where foreign powers compete to obtain rents from other countries, and we introduce geography by assuming that every foreign power's ability to project power in a particular region decays with their geographic distance. This extension enables us to define a foreign power's sphere of influence as the geographic region where it is the strongest foreign power. Such definition is crucial to understand the critical trade-off determining the incentive to fight. Attacking another foreign power (destroying its resources) affects payoffs via two conflicting channels: a relaxation channel and a status channel. By weakening its rival, we show that the foreign power reduces its own payoff by reducing the rent that it is able to extract from its own sphere of influence (relaxation channel). However, weakening the rival could increase the equilibrium payoff by increasing the foreign power's sphere of influence (status channel). We show that the probability of war increases when two great powers have similar levels of power (as in Thucydides Trap). But we also show that geographic distance mitigates this problem, as it hampers the status channel and accentuates the relaxation channel. This finding can explain why the Rise of Germany was disruptive, whereas the rise of the United States or the Soviet Union was not. Moreover, it suggests that the probability of an all-out war between China and the United States might have been exaggerated.

“Innovation, Coercion, and Guilds: Theory and Evidence from the Medieval University”

with Giampaolo Lecce

Abstract: We study how Schumpeterian innovation is discouraged in a setting where agents can use their political power (or violence) to block the adoption of innovations. Within this setting, we show that innovations can increase when a subset of agents creates an organization that commits to redistributing innovation gains away from innovating towards non-innovating members (e.g., a guild). We apply this ideas to shed light on the role of the Medieval University (the guild of teachers) in the intellectual rise of the West, i.e., the growth of the production of knowledge in Western Europe since the XII Century. By redistributing the gains of innovation among the university members, the most innovative teachers received the protection of their colleagues against the interference of competitors (e.g., other universities) or the intellectual authority (e.g., the church), increasing investments aimed at innovating the existing body of knowledge. We corroborate this theory with various case studies and an empirical analysis.

“The Political Determinants of Social Unrest: Theory and Evidence from Early Modern France”

with Matteo Camboni and Cédric Chambru

Languages

English (fluent), Italian (native), Spanish (basic)

References

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