

Malik Altaf Hussain

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Appointments

Postdoctoral Fellow, John Chambers College of Business and Economics,
West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV

Aug 2025 – Present

Education

George Mason University, Fairfax, VA

2020 – 2025

Ph.D. in Economics

Defended July 2025

Dissertation: *Essays in Economic History and Public Health*

George Mason University, Fairfax, VA

2023

M.A. in Economics

Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

2014 – 2017

M.Phil in Economics

South Asian University, New Delhi, India

2010 – 2012

M.A. in Development Economics

Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India

2007 – 2010

B.A. in Economics

Research Interests

Applied Microeconomics, Applied Econometrics, Development Economics, Historical Political Economy, Institutional Economics

Job Market Paper

• Pox, Piety, and Paradox: The Economics of Vaccination in British India [\[Link\]](#)

This paper presents new historical evidence on the cultural roots of vaccine hesitancy and its medium-term effects. Using a newly compiled district-level dataset with religion-specific vaccination rates across colonial India (1868-1878), I examine how Hindu religious beliefs affected smallpox vaccination uptake. An instrumental variables approach using historical Hindu temple desecration sites shows that a one standard deviation increase in Hindu population share leads to a 0.89 to 1.98 percentage points decrease in Hindu vaccination rate at the district level. These effects are specific to Hindu populations and operate through religious and cultural practices. By 1891, a one standard deviation increase in Hindu share is associated with 17.7 and 12.6 percentage point increases in unmarried and widow ratios among young adults aged 10-25. The findings highlight the societal impact of culturally-driven vaccine hesitancy and guide culturally sensitive health policies.

Publications

Research on political economy, firms, and development outcomes in India

- **Hussain, M.A.** and M. Azharuddin Akhtar (2025). "Addressing the Challenges of Death Registration in India: A Path Forward." *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 60, Issue No. 4, 25 Jan 2025. [\[Link\]](#)
- **Hussain, M.A.** and M. Tyagi (2024). "Political Connections and Credit Access: Evidence from Small Businesses and Microenterprises in India." *Small Business Economics*. [\[Link\]](#)
- **Hussain, M.A.** and M. Tyagi (2024). "Politically Connected Firms and Access to Credit: Evidence from India." *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics*. [\[Link\]](#)
- **Hussain, M.A.** and M. Tyagi (2020). "Role of Political Connections in Land Investment: Evidence from Rural India." *Constitutional Political Economy*. [\[Link\]](#)

Working Papers

- **The Great Revolt and its Legacy: Understanding Vaccine Hesitancy in Colonial India** (with Noel D. Johnson)
Draft available
Part of PhD Dissertation
- **Transport and Transmission: The Role of Railways in Shaping Mortality Patterns in British India** [*under review*]
Part of PhD Dissertation
- **Informed Choice under Risks: Prevention–Treatment Trade-off in Context of Cancer** (with Md. Azharuddin Akhtar)
Draft available: submitted
- **Religion and Consumption of Drugs in Colonial India** (with Noel D. Johnson and Shruti Rajagopalan)
- **Colonization in a Network of Allies** (with Benhur Ruqsana)
- **Railways and Malarial Deaths in India** (with Maanik Nath, Daniel Albarran and Jordi Julio)

Fellowships and Awards

- **Emergent Ventures India Fellowship** 2024 – 2025
- **Public Choice Fellowship** 2023 – 2025
- **Bradley Fellowship** 2021 – 2024
- **Mercatus Center Ph.D. Fellowship** 2020 – 2023

Conferences and Presentations

- **Economic History Society Annual Conference**, London School of Economics, UK
Paper accepted; presented by co-author 2026
- **Cultural Evolution Society (CES) Conference**, UM6P, Rabat
Paper accepted; unable to attend 2026
- **ASREC Conference**, Chapman University, CA 2026
- **TexMeth Conference (Texas Methods)**, Poster presentation, Texas A&M 2026
- **GREATLEAP COST Action Workshop**, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), Barcelona
Paper accepted; unable to attend 2026
- **Invited Seminar (Economics Department Seminar Series)**, West Virginia University 2026
- **Southern Economic Association Meeting**, Tampa, FL — *Session chair and presenter* 2025
- **British Society for Population Studies (BSPS) Conference**, Swansea University, UK
Paper accepted; unable to attend 2025
- **Applied Young Economist Webinar (AYEW) – Cultural/Economic History Workshop**, (online) 2025
- **DMV-WEPS Workshop**, George Washington University
Paper accepted; unable to attend 2025
- **Virtual Economic History Workshop**, Cornell University (online) 2025
- **IRES Graduate Workshop**, Chapman University, CA 2025
- **ASREC Conference on Economics of Religion**, GMU 2025
- **ASREC Graduate Workshop on Economics of Religion**, GMU 2025
- **Stellenbosch University Economic History Seminar** (online) 2025
- **Markets and Society Conference**, Mercatus Center 2024
- **International Conference on Indian Business and Economic History**, IIM Ahmedabad 2023
- **ACES Political Economy Summer School**, UC Berkeley 2023
- **PPE Summer School**, Chapman University, CA 2023

Skills

R (Intermediate), Stata (Proficient), QGIS (Geospatial Analysis); LaTeX (Document Preparation)

Referee

Constitutional Political Economy, International Tax and Public Finance, Review of Development Economics, Small Business Economics, European Financial Management, Asian Journal of Political Science

References

Prof. Noel D. Johnson – Dissertation Chair

Professor of Economics, George Mason University

Email: njohnsol@gmu.edu

Prof. Mark Koyama

Professor of Economics, George Mason University

Email: Mark.Koyama@gmail.com

Prof. Alex T. Tabarrok

Bartley J. Madden Chair in Economics, George Mason University

Email: atabarro@gmu.edu

Prof. Vincent Geloso

Asst. Professor of Economics, George Mason University

Email: vincentgeloso@hotmail.com