

# 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**  
*Draft available*  
*Part of PhD Dissertation*
- **Informed Choice under Risks: Prevention–Treatment Trade-off in Context of Cancer** (with Md. Azharuddin Akhtar)  
*Under review at the American Journal of Health Economics*
- **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

- **IRES Graduate Workshop**, Chapman University 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 2023
- **ASREC Graduate Workshop on Economics of Religion**, Chapman University 2022

## 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*

## References

**Prof. Noel D. Johnson – Dissertation Chair**

Professor of Economics, George Mason University

Email: [njohnsol@gmu.edu](mailto:njohnsol@gmu.edu)

**Prof. Alex T. Tabarrok**

Bartley J. Madden Chair in Economics, George Mason University

Email: [atabarro@gmu.edu](mailto:atabarro@gmu.edu)

**Prof. Mark Koyama**

Professor of Economics, George Mason University

Email: [Mark.Koyama@gmail.com](mailto:Mark.Koyama@gmail.com)

**Prof. Vincent Geloso**

Asst. Professor of Economics, George Mason University

Email: [vincentgeloso@hotmail.com](mailto:vincentgeloso@hotmail.com)