

AVNER SEROR

Curriculum Vitae, October 23, 2018

CONTACT INFORMATION

Chapman University, California
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POSITION

2018 Research Associate, Smith Institute for Political Economy and Philosophy, Chapman University

EDUCATION

March 2018 **PhD in Economics**. Paris School of Economics

Dissertation: "Essays on Political Economy and Cultural Evolution"

References:

Advisor: Prof. Thierry Verdier

Paris School of Economics

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Prof. Alberto Bisin

New York University

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Prof. Jared Rubin

Chapman University

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Prof. Gani Aldashev

Université Libre de Bruxelles

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2015 **M. Eng.** Master of Engineering. Ecole des Ponts ParisTech

2014 **MS APE** (Analysis & Policy in Economics). Paris School of Economics (with honors)

2010 Preparatory classes: physics, mathematics, chemistry (*PC**)

Citizenship: French **Gender:** Male **Languages:** French (native), English (fluent)

FIELDS OF INTEREST

Primary fields: Political Economy, Economics of Socialization and Cultural Transmission

Secondary field: Development Economics

PUBLICATIONS:

2018 A Theory on the Evolution of Religious Norms and Economic Prohibition, **Journal of Development Economics**, Volume 134, Sept 2018, pages 416-427.

The existence of a religious prohibition against usury or innovative activities is explored from a theoretical standpoint. As a religious prohibition weights less on religious minorities, it creates an occupational specialization where only religious minorities choose activities that transgress the prohibition. The religious occupational specialization then generates a resentment in the majority religion against the minorities that makes the former more resilient. An economic prohibition is then instigated by the clerics in the majority religion, because it allows them to consolidate their norms and to increase the scope of their control over popular masses. This work also demonstrates that an economic prohibition lasts longer when religious clerics can legitimize secular rulers and when the competition on the religious market is weaker.

CHAPTERS:

2017 **Religious legitimacy and the joint evolution of culture and institutions**, *with Alberto Bisin and Thierry Verdier, forthcoming, Advances in the Economics of Religion (Palgrave)*

Religious legitimacy is becoming a central concept in historical economics, in comparative studies of the political economy of preindustrial societies in particular. In this short essay we provide some preliminary insights on the emergence of religious legitimacy in the context of the general theory of the evolution of institutions and culture. We show that it is the interaction of institutions and culture that is responsible for the most relevant implications of religious legitimacy in terms of economic growth and prosperity. JEL: D02, Z10, P16, P48

WORKING PAPERS:

2018 **Parental Rearing Practices, Cultural Transmission and Cognitive Development**, *major revision, Journal of Political Economy*

This paper presents a theory of child development and parental rearing practices. In the model, a benevolent parent seeks to transmit cultural norms to her child, who acquires cognitive skills and develops a capital of appreciation for adopting behaviors that accord with

these norms. Our cultural perspective on the issue of cognitive development provides an interpretation grid for various results established in the empirical literature. It also permits to identify the parental characteristics that are conducive to various parenting styles, to child neglect and to child maltreatment.

2018 **Multi-candidate Elections and the Industrial Organization of Politics**, *CEPR working paper*, with *Thierry Verdier*, submitted

In this paper, we present and micro-found a theory of multi-candidate elections that allows to study various issues related to the industrial organization of politics. The flexibility of our analytical framework is demonstrated through several applications on the topics of special interest politics, redistribution under alternative electoral rules, coalition formation in the legislature in proportional elections and franchise extension.

2018 **A Theory of Conservative Revivals**, with *Murat Iyigun* and *Jared Rubin*

Why do some societies fail to adopt more efficient political and economic institutions in response to changing economic conditions? And why do such conditions sometimes generate conservative ideological backlashes and, at other times, progressive social and political movements? We propose an explanation that highlights the interplay—or lack thereof—between productivity, cultural beliefs and institutions. In our model, production shocks that benefit one sector of the economy may induce forward-looking elites to provision public goods associated with a *different*, more traditional sector that benefits their interests. This investment results in more agents generating cultural beliefs complementary to the provision of the traditional good, which in turn increases the political power of the traditional elite. Hence, productivity shocks in a more advanced sector of the economy can increase investment, political power, and cultural capital associated with the more traditional sector of the economy, in the process generating a revival of beliefs associated with an outdated economic environment. In essence, our framework highlights that formal political institutions are malleable, with the softer—and harder to measure—institutional determinants bearing on the formal rules of the game.

WORK IN PROGRESS:

2018 **Religious Legitimacy and the Long Divergence. Culture and Institutions in the West and the Muslim World**, with *Alberto Bisin*, *Jared Rubin* and *Thierry Verdier*.

2018 **The Evolution of Judicial Independence in Pakistan**, with *Sultan Mehmood*

2017 **Political Parties and Ideologies**

We provide in this paper a rationale for political parties' ideological positioning. We build a simple model with an open-seat election where three channels of information affect political strategies: party labels, an electoral campaign where candidates speak simultaneously to

the voters and media. We establish that the median voter faces a trade-off between electing a candidate from a party with a median ideology and increasing an adverse selection issue. This trade-off exists for the smallest set of parameters whenever cheap-talk from candidates is uninformative and our results in that case are fully consistent with Snyder and Ting (2002). Once policy motives or media are introduced, non-median party positioning becomes significantly more likely. We also suggest that media campaigns aiming at informing the citizenry on the ideological positions of the candidates can worsen the adverse selection issue when the media are biased relative to the citizenry.

2017 **Social Distinction: a Necessary Evil on the Path of Development?**, with *Thierry Verdier*.

We argue in this project that social distinctions and restrictions can act as catalysts for the transmission of norms that are central in the process of development such as trust and higher time preferences.

GRANTS

2018 25,000 GBP for the project “The Evolution of Judicial Independence in Pakistan”, from the Economic, Development and Institutions (EDI) program, on behalf of Oxford Policy management (OPM)

2018 3,000 EUROS for the project “The Evolution of Judicial Independence in Pakistan”, from the LABEX OSE (Paris School of Economics)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Fall 2018 International Trade, undergraduate class, Chapman University, 35 hours.

Fall 2017 Teacher Assistant "International Economics", M1, 27 hours, taught by Prof. T. Verdier at PSE.

Fall 2016 Teacher Assistant "International Economics", M1, 27 hours, taught by Prof. T. Verdier at PSE.

Fall 2016 Teacher Assistant "Economics and Globalisation", M1, 24 hours, taught by Prof. G. Barba Navaretti at Sciences Po.

Fall 2015 Teacher Assistant "General Equilibrium & International Trade Theory", M2, 42 hours, taught by Prof. T. Verdier at PSE.

Fall 2014 Teacher Assistant "General Equilibrium & International Trade Theory", M2, 42 hours, taught by Prof. T. Verdier at PSE.

Conferences and Seminars

ASSA Annual Meeting (paper session), Atlanta, January 2019 (expected), Center for the Economics of Human Development, **Chicago University** October 2018, Brown Bag, Chapman University October 2018, Stockholm School of Economics May 2018, AFSE (Association Française de Science Economique) 2018, ECARES internal seminar, Université Libre de Bruxelles, 2017, TOM Seminar, Paris School of Economics 2016; Ph.D Internal Seminar, Paris School of Economics 2016; Ph.D Workshop on Endogenous Preferences, PSE and Paris 1 2015 and 2016.s

REFEREE ACTIVITY

Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, Journal of Economic Dynamics and Control, Journal of Comparative Economics, Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics,