

Raghul S Venkatesh

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OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION:

Aix-Marseille School of Economics
Aix-Marseille University
Marseille 13001, France
raghul.venkatesh@univ-amu.fr

PERSONAL CONTACT INFORMATION:

32 Rue du Petit Puits
Marseille 13002, France
Mobile: +33 (0) 649268878
[Personal webpage](#)

PLACEMENT OFFICER:

Professor Dan Bernhardt
+44 24 765 23470, +1 217-244-5708
M.D.Bernhardt@warwick.ac.uk

PLACEMENT ADMINISTRATOR:

Natalie Deven
+44 (0)24 765 73452
N.S.Deven@warwick.ac.uk

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Citizenship: Indian Gender: Male
Languages: English (Fluent), Tamil (Native), Hindi (Intermediate), French (Beginner)

DOCTORAL STUDIES

University of Warwick
PhD, Economics, Completed June 2017
DISSERTATION : "Essays in Political Economics"

REFERENCES:

Professor Francesco Squintani
Department of Economics
University of Warwick, UK
+44 (0)24 765 23446
F.Squintani@warwick.ac.uk

Professor Dan Bernhardt
Department of Economics
University of Warwick, UK
+44 (0)24 765 23470
M.D.Bernhardt@warwick.ac.uk

Professor Antonio Cabrales
Department of Economics
University College London, UK
+44 (0)20 310 85229
A.Cabrales@ucl.ac.uk

Professor Yann Brammouille
CNRS Research Fellow, AMSE
Aix-Marseille University, France
+33 (0)4 13 55 25 34
Yann.Bramouille@univ-amu.fr

PRIOR EDUCATION

2010 MSc. in Economics, University of Warwick (Distinction)
2008 Diploma in Economics, University of London External Programme (Distinction)
2006 B.E. in Computer Science and Engineering, Anna University, Tamil Nadu, India

POSITION

Postdoctoral Researcher, Aix-Marseille School of Economics, 2017-2020

RESEARCH FIELDS

PRIMARY: Applied Microeconomic Theory, Political Economy
SECONDARY: Public Economics, International Relations

COMPLETED PAPERS	<p>“Political Activism and Polarization” (Under review, <i>Journal of Politics</i>)</p> <p>“Communication and Commitment with Constraints: An Application to Alliances” (Job Market Paper)</p> <p>“On Information Transmission in Alliances” (Under review, <i>Journal of Economic Theory</i>)</p>
WORKING PAPERS	<p>“Electoral Competition, Group Identity, and Conflict: Theory and Evidence” with Rohit Ticku</p> <p>“On Communication and Verification” with Sebastian Bervoets and Mathieu Faure</p>
FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS	<p>2011-14 Warwick Postgraduate Fellowship</p> <p>2014-17 Teaching Fellowship - University of Warwick</p> <p>2013-14 Warwick Award for Teaching Excellence for Postgraduate Research Students</p> <p>2017-18 Postdoctoral Researcher Grant - Aix-Marseille School of Economics</p> <p>2018 LAGV prize for the “Best Paper by a Young Researcher” at ASSET conference</p> <p>2019 Research Grant of 3500 Euros from AMSE</p>
TEACHING EXPERIENCE	<p>2013-16 Tutor, Advanced Microeconomic Theory (<i>Ph.D 1st year module</i>)</p> <p>2012-16 Tutor, Microeconomics II (<i>UG 2nd year module</i>)</p> <p>2011-12 Tutor, Introduction to Quantitative Economics (<i>UG 1st year module</i>)</p>
CONFERENCE PRESENTATION	<p>SAET (Paris, 2012); EPSA (Brussels, 2016); EEA-ESEM (Geneva, 2016); Econometric Society Winter Meeting (Edinburgh, 2016); Coalition Theory Network Conference - Maastricht University (2018); International Conference on Game Theory (Stony Brook University, 2018); ASSET Conference - Florence (2018); Econometric Society Winter Meetings - Naples (2018); 14th Annual Conference on Economic Growth and Development - ISI (2018); EEA-ESEM (Manchester, 2019)</p>
SEMINAR AND INVITED TALKS	<p>Warwick Internal Seminar (2013); Political Economy Work-in-Progress (Warwick, 2014); CRETA (Warwick, 2014); Max-Planck Institute for Tax Law and Public Finance (2016); LSE School of Government (2017); Aix-Marseille School of Economics (2017); Erasmus Accounting and Economics Workshop (2017); Delhi School of Economics (2018); Indian Statistical Institute (2018); Paris-Dauphine University (2018); Paris Game Theory Seminar at Institute Henri Poincare (2019); Erasmus School of Economics Micro Seminar (2019); Alfred-Weber Institute - University of Heidelberg (2019)</p>
DEPARTMENTAL AND OTHER WORK	<p>2006-07 Associate Software Engineer, Tata Consultancy Services (Chennai), India</p> <p>2010-11 Research Assistant, ICRIER (New Delhi), India</p> <p>2014-15 Research Assistant to Prof. Francesco Squintani</p> <p>2013-16 Co-organizer Reading Group and Work-in-progress - Micro Theory</p> <p>2019-20 Co-organizer Economics Lunchtime Seminar, AMSE</p>
PROGRAMMING	<p>Latex, Mathematica, Stata, Matlab</p>

ABSTRACTS

“*Communication and Commitment with Constraints: An Application to Alliances*”
 Winner, 2018 LAGV prize at ASSET Conference **(Job Market Paper)**

An informed and an uninformed agent both contribute to a joint coordination game such that their actions are substitutable and constrained. When agents are allowed to share information prior to the coordination stage, in the absence of commitment, there is full information revelation as long as constraints are not binding. The presence of binding constraints results in only partial revelation of information in equilibrium. The most informative equilibrium is strictly pareto dominant. Allowing for limited commitment strictly increases (ex ante) welfare of both agents. I completely characterize the optimal commitment mechanism for the uninformed agent. Finally, I apply the theoretical results to the problem of information sharing and binding agreements in international alliances.

“*On Information Transmission in Alliances*” (Under review: Journal of Economic Theory)

I develop a model of strategic communication to study information transmission in an alliance between multiple players. Within an alliance, i) players have private information; ii) actions exhibit substitutability; iii) action sets are constrained; and iv) preferences are heterogeneous. The *main result* derives conditions for full information aggregation within the alliance under a public communication protocol. Full information aggregation ensues as long as players’ biases are sufficiently *cohesive* with respect to the constraints on the action set. When players can (costlessly) choose an action set ex ante, I derive the precise conditions on the *minimal* action set such that there is full information aggregation. Differences in the size of the minimal action set are exacerbated by two variables: *i)* individual biases over outcomes, and *ii)* degree of interdependence between the actions of players. The results are discussed in the context of burden sharing in international alliances and platform setting by factions in political alliances.

“*Political Activism and Polarization*” (Under review: Journal of Politics)

I develop a model of activism and polarization in the context of electoral competition. Two candidates simultaneously announce policy platforms and seek the support of ideologically inclined activists. Activists compete to influence electoral outcomes by expending costly support for their respective candidates. The presence of activists always moderates the platform choice of candidates, compared to the case of no activism. The *central finding* of the paper is that the relationship between partisanship of activists and polarization is *ambiguous*. As activists become increasingly partisan, polarization of candidate platforms reduces or widens depending on the costs of activism. I present normative conditions under which the presence of activism and increased partisanship among activists are both welfare-improving for voters. Finally, introducing a public funding option for candidates increases polarization in the political process.

“*Electoral Competition, Group Identity, and Conflict: Theory and Evidence*” - with Rohit Ticku

The existence and role of group identities in societies is well established. In representative democracies with political competition, it is possible for parties to exploit social identities for electoral benefits. We ask, what happens when *i)* a group of voters with an underlying social identity unconditionally support one political party over the other, and *ii)* there is post-electoral conflict against the minority identity? We study political competition between two office motivated parties in which the citizenry comprises of three groups of voters. We allow parties to cultivate a vote bank – an identity group affiliated with each party that votes en masse for that party. Critically, there is a wedge in the exogenous probability of identity formation, and therefore, ex-post conflict between majority and minority identities. This generates an asymmetry in conflict payoff for the majority group that depends on the party in power. We show that this asymmetry in conflict payoff *i)* reduces bargaining power of both the vote bank groups; *ii)* increases political rents of the parties; and *iii)* decreases expected transfers to non-partisan voters. We test the theoretical predictions by constructing a novel dataset that combines data on Hindu-Muslim riots, household expenditures and state assembly elections in India for the period from 1983 to 2012.

“*On Communication and Verification*” - with Sebastian Bervoets and Mathieu Faure

In many economic settings, informational asymmetry distorts efficient decision-making. We analyze the possibility of information verification by uninformed parties. We consider a principal-agent model in which the agent holds private information about a state, and the principal is uninformed. The agent communicates private information via a cheap talk message, and crucially, the principal has access to a costly verification technology that verifies the agent’s message. The *central* finding is that when the cost of verification increases, the average verification by the principal increases in equilibrium. This increases welfare of the agent but decreases that of the principal. The effect of verification cost on joint welfare is therefore *ambiguous*. Further, we find that not revealing any information (pooling) is pareto efficient and may provide a higher joint welfare. The difference in joint welfare between full pooling and an informative equilibrium varies non-monotonically with the cost of verification. We discuss the implications of a costly verification technology in the context of organizational decision-making and political lobbying.