

Cathrin Mohr

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Academic Positions

since 09/2025	Associate Professor for International Political Economy and Geoeconomics, Kiel Institute and University of Hamburg
09/2020 – 08/2025	Post-Doc, University of Bonn
10/2024–03/2025	Substitute Professor of Macroeconomics, University of Bonn
08/2019–08/2020	Post-Doc, LMU Munich
10/2014–07/2019	Ph.D. in Economics, LMU Munich Thesis Title: <i>The Power of the State in German History – Development and Political Economy</i> (summa cum laude)
09/2017–01/2018	Visiting Doctoral Researcher, hosted by Prof Daniel Ziblatt Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University

Research Interests

Political Economy, Geoeconomics, Economic History

Publications

The Rise of Fiscal Capacity (w/ Davide Cantoni & Matthias Weigand), Econometrica 2024

This paper studies the role of fiscal capacity in European state consolidation. Our analysis is organized around novel data on the territories and cities of the Holy Roman Empire in the early modern era. Territories implementing an early fiscal reform were more likely to survive, increased in size, and achieved a more compact extent. We provide evidence for the causal interpretation of these results and show key mechanisms: revenues, military investments, and marriage success. The imposition of Imperial taxes, which increased the benefits of an efficient tax administration, exogenously drove the implementation of fiscal centralization, tilting the consolidating states toward absolutism.

Geoeconomics (w/ Christoph Trebesch), Annual Review of Economics 2025

We review the literature on geoeconomics, defined as the field of study that links economics and geopolitics (power rivalry). We describe what geoeconomics is and which questions it addresses, focusing on five main subfields. First, the use of geoeconomic policy tools such as sanctions and embargoes. Second, the geopolitics of international trade, especially work on coercion and fragmentation. Third, research on the geopolitics of international finance, which focuses on currency dominance and state-directed capital flows. Fourth, the literature on geopolitical risk and its spillovers to the domestic economy, e.g. on investments, credit, and inflation. Fifth, the economics of war, in particular research on trade and war and on military production. As geopolitical tensions grow, we expect the field to grow substantially in the coming years.

Working Papers

Inflation Surprises and Election Outcomes (w/ Jonathan Federle and Moritz Schularick)

We study the political consequences of inflation surprises, focusing on votes for extremist and populist parties in 365 elections in 18 advanced economies since 1948. Inflation surprises are regularly followed by a substantial increase in vote shares of extremist, anti-system, and populist parties. An inflation surprise of 10 percentage points leads to a 15

Carrots and Sticks: Targeting the Opposition in an Autocratic Regime

Autocratic regimes can use carrots and/or sticks to prevent being overthrown by protests. Carrots, i.e. resource allocation, reduce the probability of protests, but cannot help to end them. Sticks, i.e. repression, reduce the probability that protests overthrow the regime, but also decrease its popularity. Using a difference-in-differences approach, I show that residential construction and military presence increase in protest municipalities after an uprising in 1953 in former East Germany. This cannot be explained by pre-existing differences, demand for housing, or external warfare considerations. Carrots were furthermore used to counteract sticks' negative effect on popularity. More construction is associated with more regime support.

Elite Selection in an Autocracy: Career Costs of Political Ties (w/ Leonie Bielefeld)

We study the selection of the political elite in an autocratic state. Using detailed CV data on potential politicians in the German Democratic Republic, we track and quantify the position of individuals in the state hierarchy over time and exploit exogenous connections between individuals that were formed through imprisonment during the Nazi Era. We find asymmetric effects of being connected to the political elite: While being linked to the state's centre of power harms high-profile careers, they have positive effects on low-profile careers. An analysis of potential mechanisms shows that the negative effect of being linked to the party leadership on individuals' probability to be part of the ruling elite is in line with anti-factionalism, whereas the positive effect on low-profile careers is in line with patronage.

Identity and Institutional Change: Evidence from First Names in Germany, 1700–1850 (w/ Matthias Weigand and Davide Cantoni)

How does culture change in response to major institutional shifts? What is the role of culture in selecting and stabilizing new institutional equilibria in critical junctures? We study the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire (1789–1815), when half of the Central European population changed rulers. Our annual data on 44 million geolocated birth records between 1700 and 1850 provide a real-time measure of identity choices. In cities that changed rulers, the name distribution changed, becoming more dispersed and polarized. Examining mechanisms, we provide evidence suggesting that the transition increased uncertainty and eroded the supply of loyalist identity, creating an identity vacuum that competing stakeholders — religious and nationalist groups — actively filled. These cultural shifts became institutionalized, fostering tensions with the new regimes.

Teaching Experience

Winter 2025	Lecture <i>Macroeconomics A</i> (German, Bachelor)
Summer 2021, 2023, 2024, 2025	Lecture & Tutorial <i>Economic History</i> (German, Bachelor)
Summer 2020	Seminar <i>Political Effects of Media in Democracies and Autocracies</i> (English, Bachelor)
Summer 2017, 2018, 2019	Tutorial <i>Public and Political Economics</i> (German, Bachelor)
Winter 2016, 2017	Short Lecture <i>How to work with & write empirical papers</i> (German, Bachelor)
Summer 2016	Seminar <i>Natural Experiments in German History</i> (English, Bachelor)
Winter 2015, Summer 2016	Tutorial <i>Econometrics I</i> (German, Bachelor)
Summer 2015	Seminar <i>Country Studies in Historical Development</i> (German & English, Bachelor)

Employment

01/2014–09/2014	Research Assistant, Prof. Hans-Joachim Voth, University of Zurich
04/2010–12/2011	Research Assistant, Prof. Davide Cantoni, LMU Munich

Grants, Scholarships, and Awards:

2025	Teaching Award of the Department of Economics, University of Bonn
2024	Volkswagen Foundation Scoping Workshop (EUR 28,300) Equal Opportunity Grants, ECONtribute Cluster (EUR 3,615 + 1,498.50)
2023	Selten Seeding Grant, ECONtribute Cluster (EUR 3,815) Equal Opportunity Grant, ECONtribute Cluster (EUR 636)
2021	Selten Seeding Grant, ECONtribute Cluster (EUR 4,500)
2020	VAC Dissertation Award for the best thesis in economics at LMU Munich
2019	UniCredit Foundation Econ JM Best Paper Award
2017–2019	Add-On Fellowship Joachim Herz Foundation (EUR 12,500)
2017	Mobility Grant, CRC Rationality & Competition (EUR 4,000)
2016	EHA Cambridge University Press Pre-Dissertation Exploratory Grant (USD 2,500)
2014–2016	Full Scholarship, Egon Sohmen Graduate Center, LMU Munich
2012	Full Tuition Waiver, Barcelona Graduate School of Economics
2012–2013	Scholarship, German National Academic Foundation

Seminar, Workshop & Conference Presentations

2025	Annual Meeting of the Society for Social and Economic History (GSWG) Berlin, NBER Economics of Culture and Institutions, University of Dortmund, Yale-UB Historical Political Economy Workshop, Freie Universität Berlin, World Economic History Congress Lund
2024	Economic History Seminar Carlos III University, Institutions and Prosperity Conference Utrecht, Virtual Workshop in Historical Political Economy, University of Potsdam, Annual VfS Meeting Berlin, Research Seminar Economic History Mannheim University FRESH Cologne, SIOE Frankfurt, EHES Vienna, Verein für Socialpolitik – Annual Meeting
2023	Regensburg, Hong Kong University Business School, Workshop Economics & Politics Brussels
2022	ZEW Political Economy Workshop; Paris School of Economics (Economic History Seminar); University of York
2021	WEast Workshop Berlin (online); PolEcon Workshop Ruhr-University Bochum (online); Humboldt-University Berlin (Colloquium in Economic History, online); Bonn & Cologne Workshop Markets and Policy in History; University of Bologna (online)
2020	University Bayreuth; University of Oxford; Tilburg University; University of Basel; University of Bonn
2019	Paris School of Economics (Economic History Seminar); Brussels Spring Meeting of Young Economists; EDGE Jamboree Cambridge; Verein für Socialpolitik – Annual Meeting Leipzig; University of Cologne
2018	Political Economy Workshop Harvard; Economic History Research Seminar WU Vienna WEast Workshop London; FRESH Workshop Belfast; Ohlstadt Workshop (Poster);
2017	Economic History Association Annual Meeting (Poster); Stanford (Economic History Workshop); Caltech (Social Science History Seminar); Harvard (Political Economy & Culture Lunch); Berkeley (Political Economy Research Lunch); University of Michigan (Political Economy Workshop)

Departmental and Professional Service

Refereeing	American Journal of Political Science, American Political Science Review, Economica, Economic Journal, European Economic Review, Explorations in Economic History, Games and Economic Behavior, Journal of Comparative Economics, Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization, Journal of Law, Economics & Organization, Journal of Politics, Quarterly Journal of Economics
Co-Organizer	Volkswagen Scoping Workshop on Historical Political Economy in Europe 2025, Bonn & Cologne Workshop Markets and Policy in History 2021 and 2023, Women in Macroeconomics, Law and Economics, and Economic History Workshop 2023
Other	Member of Taskforce Ethics Code ECONtribute, Girls Day 2025 Bonn University, Jury for Add-on-Fellowships at the Joachim Herz Stiftung

Personal Information

2 children (born 2018 & 2022)