

Selected Chapter:

Chapter I - Migrant Perception and Extreme Right Voting. The Role of Historic Sea Trade.

Summary:

This study examines the connection between political ideologies and migrant perception. We test the hypothesis that a negative perception of migrants influences individuals' far-right political positioning. To conduct our analysis, we use an individual-level survey. In order to address likely endogeneity issues, we use an Instrumental Variable (IV) approach relying on historical Genoese and Venetian trade routes to Africa between XI and XIV century. Having routes to Africa in the Middle Ages implied hosting slave communities, as well as communities of sailors who met Muslims in Islamic ports. Thus, it meant somehow being in contact with unlike people many years earlier than those who lived elsewhere. On this basis, we construct a set of measures related to the proximity of each individual's municipality of residence to the nearest Medieval port, calculated on the ancient Roman road network. Our models account for personal controls as well as historical, geographical and socio-economic municipal characteristics. Results suggest that historical ports play a significant role by shaping migrant perception affecting political positioning. To validate our findings, we perform a comprehensive set of robustness checks. We also test the persistence of history on electoral outcomes at the municipality level, using data from the 2018 Italian national elections. The outcome supports the main individual-level findings.