Bocconi

24 NOVEMBER 2026

2:45 – 4:00pm

3-E4-SR03(floor 3rd)

Via Röntgen 1

Pilgrims and Crusaders: How Religion Shapes Political Divides in Europe

Tommaso Colussi, Dominic Rohner, Andrea Tesei, and Felipe Valencia

Dominic Rohner
University of Lausanne

A same religion can sustain contrasting political interpretations of the same events. Using election results from more than 84,000 municipalities in 21 European countries, 2001–2021, we proxy historically rooted local opposing Christian legacies with proximity to crusade and pilgrimage routes. We examine Islamist terrorist attacks and migrant child deaths, two treatments with opposite moral content. Nationally, the former are associated with higher exclusionary voting and the latter with lower exclusionary voting. Within the same national election, however, both yield a more exclusionary response near crusade than pilgrimage routes: support rises especially near crusade routes after attacks and falls especially near pilgrimage routes after migrant deaths. The resulting differentials range from 0.7 to 1.2 percentage points, or 9–15 percent of mean vote shares. Event studies based on the Integrated Values Surveys show corresponding short-run changes in perceived immigrant threat, but not religiosity. Religion's political consequences thus depend not only on whether religion becomes salient, but on the local interpretation through which events are understood.

BAFFI
CENTRE ON ECONOMICS, FINANCE AND REGULATION

ORGANIZED BY
Research Unit PERICLES

FOR INFORMATION
BAFFI baffi@unibocconi.it