Rally 'round the barrack: Far-right support and the military*

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Abstract

Despite the importance of authoritarian and nationalist values in military culture, we know little about the link between the military and the far right. In this article we argue that there is an ideological affinity between the military and far-right parties, strengthened by occupational socialization. Moreover, the presence of military institutions also helps mobilizing far-right support among the surrounding population. We test this argument using data from Spain. We show both that military personnel are substantially more likely than civilians to support the far right and that the location of military facilities in Spain is linked to higher far-right support. We also discuss the generalizability of the results and provide tentative evidence that a similar link is likely to be observed in countries where the armed forces have been historically focused on controlling internal dissent and where national sovereignty has been threatened, by either internal or external challengers.

Keywords: military, far-right parties, VOX, Spain
Short title: Rally 'round the barrack

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Introduction

The increasing electoral success of the far right has become a topic of intense public and academic discussion (Kitschelt, 1995; Mudde, 2019; Abou-Chadi & Kurer, 2021; Carella & Ford, 2020; Kurer, 2020). We know that support for far-right parties is higher among individuals who harbor more socially conservative values, are more authoritarian (Donovan, 2019), place a premium of norms around masculinity and gender (Ralph-Morrow, 2022), or exhibit anti-immigrant preferences (Rooduijn, 2018). This is not surprising, since far-right parties have long been defined by their core principles of nativism and authoritarianism (Mudde, 2007).

Nationalism, principles of authority, and social order are also a core tenet of military institutions (Burk, 1984; Cafario & Martínez, 2005; Nicol, Charbonneau & Boies, 2007). Classic studies in military sociology show that there is a civil-military gap in ideology, noting that members of the military tend to be more conservative, more patriotic, more likely to value social hierarchies and dominance, and hold more hawkish attitudes on foreign affairs (Huntington, 1957; Janowitz, 1960; Moskos, 1970). Given these shared values, it is striking that there is no research exploring the link between the armed forces and the far-right.

Indeed, there are recent reports that point to the threat of far-right presence within military ranks in Western democracies. In 2017, for instance, the German *Bundeswehr* was involved in a scandal involving a plot by far-right soldiers to attack asylum seekers and left-wing politicians (Eddy, 2017). In the US, around one fifth of the individuals charged in relation to the attack on the US Capitol in January 2021 were active in the US armed forces (Horton, 2021). The risk that this threat represents is not limited to high-profile, if rare, cases of political violence and terrorism (Simi, Bubolz & Hardman, 2013). In Austria, the veterans' organizations that play an important role in several Austrian villages and towns have historically been carriers of a "soft right-wing extremism" (Art, 2011, 117). In France, a group of military servicemen recently published a letter in a right-wing magazine denouncing what they saw as concessions to Islamism by the Macron government and warned of the risk of a 'racial war' (BBC,

2021). The publication date of the letter was symbolic, marking the 60th anniversary of the *Algiers putsch*, a failed *coup d'état* by retired army generals in 1961. In Spain, in late November 2020, a group of retired generals addressed a letter to Spain's Head of State–King Felipe VI—denouncing the current "social-communist" government, followed by a longer manifesto in which military officers endorsed the far-right party VOX. Shortly afterwards, a WhatsApp group chat was discovered in which some ex-officers talked of 'executing 26 million Spaniards', alluding to left-wing voters and non-Spanish nationalists (González & Santaeulalia, 2020).

Despite these numerous incidents, there is, to the best of our knowledge, no quantitative empirical evidence on the link between the military and the far-right. This gap is striking for two main reasons. First, theoretically, there is an ideological affinity between the two groups, as both underscore the principles of authoritarianism and nationalism, together with a preference for more stringent internal security policies. Second, this question has policy relevance. The risk of extremism among a group of individuals with military training and access to firearms is higher. Moreover, a strong gap in support for the far-right can complicate civil-military relationships in any democracy. Recent research shows the importance of ideology within military ranks. For instance, Scharpf (2018) shows how officer ideology explains geographical variation in state repression during the Dirty War in Argentina (1975–1981).

Our argument is two-fold. First, we argue that members of the military are more likely to support the far-right. Regardless of whether the civil-military gap in political ideology is the product of military socialization (Nicol, Charbonneau & Boies, 2007) or self-selection (Jost, Meshkin & Schub, 2022), the values shared by both groups suggest there is a "organizational and cultural overlap" between the military and the far-right (Simi, Bubolz & Hardman, 2013, 656). Even if members of the military are more likely to be more conservative than the overall population in the first place, we argue that the occupation-based processes of socialization within the military—which emphasize patriotism, award behavior congruent with dominant masculinity, and entrench admiration for nationalism and authoritarianism (Dorman, 1976; Burk, 1984; Nicol,

Charbonneau & Boies, 2007)—make this conservatism more likely to be translated into support for the far-right.

Second, we argue that the presence of military facilities also has a diffusion effect increasing local far-right support through everyday contact with military personnel (Huckfeldt, Plutzer & Sprague, 1993) and exposure to nationalist symbolism in military facilities, which helps destigmatize far-right preferences (Dinas, Martínez & Valentim, 2022).

We test these arguments using data from Spain. First, using around 140,000 responses over several waves of a monthly opinion poll, we compare voting and ideological preferences between individuals in the armed forces and civilians. Second, we geocode the location of military facilities from the Spanish Armed Forces and match them with electoral results at the census-tract level. We analyze whether census sections with military facilities show higher electoral support for the far-right and whether there is evidence of spatial diffusion. The results support our argument. We find that members of the armed forces are more likely to vote for VOX than average, even when accounting for left-right ideology, and that support for VOX is higher in census sections which host military facilities. We also find evidence of spatial diffusion to neighboring census sections, and show that diffusion is stronger in high-income areas, in order words, where individuals are more likely to be sympathetic to conservative ideologies (Rama et al., 2021).

Spain is arguably a most likely case. The Francoist regime (1939–1975) was a military dictatorship that sponsored a hard version of Spanish nationalism. Moreover, Spain has witnessed nationalist conflict during the last decades, notably the Basque violent conflict and the more recent non-violent Catalan crisis, which have played a key importance in right-wing Spanish nationalism (Muro & Quiroga, 2005). We discuss below to what extent the findings from Spain generalize to other countries, and show initial evidence that we are likely to observe similar patterns in countries where the armed forces have been historically focused on controlling internal dissent and where national sovereignty has been threatened, by either internal or external challengers.

We contribute to previous research in three ways. First, we speak to the growing literature that explains support for the far-right, and particularly to debates on the role of occupations in the formation of political preferences. Second, our findings are coherent with previous research on the normalization of far-right preferences and the diffusion processes that help their ascending success. And finally, we contribute to previous research on the military, which has focused predominantly on the US.

Understanding the rise of the far-right

In recent years, a burgeoning literature has emerged, providing a thick description of the sociological and attitudinal profile of the far-right supporter across different party systems (Rydgren, 2007). Several comparative studies in both European and non-European states show empirically that authoritarian values, nativist tendencies and anti-immigrant preferences play a significant and substantive role when it comes to understanding the political preferences of the far-right voter (Betz, 1994; Kitschelt, 1995; Art, 2011). These attitudinal determinants explain, in part, why there is a sizeable gender gap in far-right support (Ralph-Morrow, 2022). Men, particularly white heterosexual men, are consistently observed to be significantly more prone to vote for far-right parties vis-à-vis comparable women or sexual minorities, who tend to be less supportive than men of the nativist anti-immigrant policy agenda (Spierings & Zaslove, 2015).

Another significant factor that explains electoral far-right support is socio-economic and occupational status. We know, for example, that increased labor market risk increases far-right support, both at the level of individuals (Kurer, 2020) and households (Abou-Chadi & Kurer, 2021). Individuals who belong to 'blue-collar' professions (Zhirkov, 2014) and the working class (Oesch, 2008) are argued to be an attractive constituency for the far-right given potential fears regarding increased labour-market competition that may result from the availability of cheaper migrant labour, as well as the *perceived* increase in pressure on distributional spending. Building on some of the foundational work in political sociology that highlights the role of occupation-

based socialization (Lipset, 1983; Lipsitz, 1964; Kitschelt & Rehm, 2014), Carella & Ford (2020) shows that occupation-based symbols of prestige also serve, over and above the independent effects of social class, as an important determinant of radical right-wing parties' electoral support.

Another strand of research also explores how the success of far-right parties have downstream consequences for political preferences. In particular, the success of far-right parties changes the attitudes and behavior of voters, including overall levels of political polarization (Abou-Chadi & Krause, 2018; Bischof & Wagner, 2019). Relatedly, the presence of far-right parties in positions of power or changes in the perception of how much support they have can also change political behavior. Valentim (2021) shows how parliamentary representation of far-right parties make individuals more likely to display their preferences for these parties in public, and Dinas, Martínez & Valentim (2022) show how public displays of stigmatized far-right preferences destigmatizes support for these ideologies.

All in all, there is no research on the military as a separate occupational group. We develop below a theoretical argument on the ideological affinities between the military and the far-right and how the presence of military symbols and personnel can also increase far-right support among the surrounding population.

The military and far-right support

Direct support within the armed forces

We argue that there is an 'elective affinity' between the armed forces and far-right parties that makes members of the former more likely to vote for these parties (Simi, Bubolz & Hardman, 2013). The core of this argument is that both far-right parties and the military have strong preferences for an authoritarian approach to public security and both hold strongly nationalist attitudes.[1]

[1] The salience of nationalism within the armed forces is likely to vary across countries, due to the particular history of each country. We discuss this issue in a separate section below.

Far-right parties are characterized by nativism and authoritarianism. Nativism is the idea that "states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ('the nation') and that nonnative elements [...] are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state" (Mudde, 2007, 19). This ideology is closely linked to ideas of social dominance, namely, a belief in the legitimate and inherent superiority of certain groups over others and the maintenance of social hierarchies (Prato et al., 1994). Authoritarianism is defined as "the belief in a strictly ordered society, in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely" (Mudde, 2007, 19). Authoritarian values are usually linked to preferences for stricter internal security policies, such as larger law enforcement bodies with greater competencies and less judicial oversight.

Previous work in military sociology shows that members of the armed forces are, on average, more conservative (Nicol, Charbonneau & Boies, 2007; Bachman et al., 2000; Kurpius & Lucart, 2000), show stronger patriotic and nationalist attitudes (Burk, 1984; Cafario, 1998), and have more hawkish attitudes on foreign policy than the rest of the population (Huntington, 1957; Moskos, 1970; Janowitz, 1960).

Although the literature has reached a consensus on the existence of this civil-military gap in political preferences, the question of *why* there is such gap is less settled. Two main mechanisms have been proposed: self-selection and occupational socialization. First, individuals entering the military could be more conservative in the first place. Burk (1984) and Cafario (1998) show that patriotic attitudes predict self-selection into the military. Evidence from the US context also suggests a similar relationship for attitudes on the use of force. In particular, those who have hawkish views on the use of force are systematically more inclined to opt-in to the armed forces than those with more dovish views (Jost, Meshkin & Schub, 2022; Dorman, 1976; Rohall, Ender & Matthews, 2006).

A second mechanism builds on the role that occupations play in defining political preferences (Lipsitz, 1964), and suggests that socialization experiences within the military can create the ideological gap *after* individuals enlist. As Kitschelt & Rehm

(2014) argue, occupations are performative. Norms and expectations learned as part of workplace socialization are likely to be applied outside the professional context. As a result, occupations can define individuals' political preferences, particularly when these occupations have strong systems of value that overlap with already defined political ideologies. In this case, membership in the military can socialize recruits into support for the far-right in two ways. First, purely material incentives make military personnel more likely to support political parties that argue for an increase in the presence and budget of security forces. In the context of most Western countries, the far-right usually supports these increases. Second, socialization into the values of nationalism, patriotism, and respect for authority can also make members of the military more likely to support the far-right, because of the elective affinity between the two. Supporting this, Guimond (1999) compares military students' attitudinal values in a longitudinal study and finds a significant turn towards conservatism after three years of training. Analyzing the civil-military gap over the course of military cadets' training, Nicol, Charbonneau & Boies (2007) find similar evidence for the effect of military socialization over self-selection.

We do not make any claims with regards to these two different mechanisms. As previous research suggests, both probably help to explain the civil-military gap in political preferences. Beyond that, we argue that being in the military is related to a greater likelihood of supporting far-right preferences. Socialization into authoritarian and nationalist values helps to form this preference, even if military recruits were more likely to harbor them before enlisting. Indeed, even if self-selection is driven by *ex ante* conservative preferences in general, we believe military socialization helps in channelling those preferences into support for far-right specifically. Our first hypothesis thus tests these expectations:

H1 Members of the military forces will be more likely to support far-right parties.

Diffusion effects

Beyond the direct link between membership in the military and far-right support, we argue that civilians living close to military facilities will also be more likely to support the far-right. In other words, we argue that the physical presence of the military helps to mobilize far-right support among the surrounding population.

Two reasons support this argument. First, the existence of close military facilities means a higher likelihood of personal contact with members of the military in everyday interactions. According to contextual theories of political preferences, individuals' ideological beliefs and partisan attachments are strongly shaped by quotidian social interaction in interpersonal and spatially close networks (Huckfeldt, Plutzer & Sprague, 1993; Baybeck & Huckfeldt, 2002). The local population distribution thus has a significant role in shaping electoral preferences, as everyday interactions in the community shape how we think, what we support, and how we vote (Enos, 2017).

Empirical evidence on voting behavior supports this idea. We know, for example, that individuals factor in their neighbour's opinion of them when deciding to vote (Rolfe, 2002), and that voter mobilization efforts can have spillover effects in neighbouring households with similar partisan attachments (Foos et al., 2021). The influence of military presence on support for far-right parties should be a function of spatial proximity. Being close to military facilities results in more frequent interactions between civilians and military personnel living in those areas. This inter-group exposure has the potential to influence political preferences (Latané, 1981), which we argue increases far-right support.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the presence of military personnel and institutional symbols acts as an indirect far-right mobilization device. Military facilities have a strong symbolic component, heavily influenced by nationalist and patriotic values. Recent research shows how the public display of stigmatized preferences can have a spillover effect which makes other individuals more likely to reveal their preferences in public (Dinas, Martínez & Valentim, 2022). Even if the political connotations of nationalist symbols are not necessarily the same across different countries, we ex-

pect that these displays should make individuals more receptive of far-right parties' nationalist discourse. Moreover, as more individuals display right-wing preferences in public, and particularly if its symbolism is associated with its presence in official institutions, support for the far-right may become destigmatized.

We argue that the presence of nearby military facilities makes individuals more likely to support far-right parties, because of both the effect of everyday interactions with military personnel and the contagious influence of the military's nationalist symbolism. Our next two hypotheses follow this expectation:

H2 Census sections that are home to military facilities will report higher levels of electoral support for far-right parties.

H3 Electoral support for far-right parties will be higher in census sections spatially close to military facilities.

Finally, the diffusion effect triggered by the presence of the military should not be homogenous across all areas. As we argue above, it is not only a function of political preference formation but also of mobilization. By normalizing the display of certain political views or symbols, they trigger a process by which individuals are mobilized into support for the far-right. Indeed, Dinas, Martínez & Valentim (2022) show how changes in the public display of political preferences are due to a change in norms and not in underlying preferences. Moreover, we would expect that it is easier to convince individuals who are relatively conservative to vote for far-right parties than those who are on the other end of the ideological spectrum. Contact theory states that inter-group contact is not universally positive, but rather is often conditioned by threat perception and competition (Stephan, Ybarra & Morrison, 2009). We thus expect that the mobilizing effect of military presence should take place mostly among individuals who are relatively predisposed to support far-right parties. In the context of Spain, where we test our argument, traditional conservatism has been identified as one of the strongest determinants of conservative and far-right support (Turnbull-Dugarte, Rama & Santana, 2020; Rama et al., 2021). Following this, we expect the diffusion

effect to be stronger in wealthier areas, which are more likely to be more conservative to begin with. Our final hypotheses reads as follows:

H4 The diffusion effect of military presence will be stronger in wealthier areas.

This last expectation runs contrary to one alternative mechanism explaining the diffusion effect, namely, that the presence of the military increases far-right support for purely material reasons. Individuals in areas with a high presence of military personnel could be economically dependent on this institution, and thus more likely to vote for parties who support the enlargement of the military, even if their ideologies do not match. According to this mechanism, we should observe higher diffusion effects in poorer areas, where the opportunity cost of a potential closure of military facilities would be higher. Yet, we argue that the effect is mainly driven by ideological affinities and political mobilization.

Evidence from Spain

We use a two-level empirical strategy to test the argument developed above, using data from Spain. First, we use survey data to test whether members of the armed forces are more likely to vote for the far-right party VOX. Second, we exploit census section-level data to test whether electoral support for VOX is higher in census sections that host military facilities and whether there is evidence of spatial diffusion.

The Spanish Armed Forces is a prominent military force, part of NATO and the European Union. It has around 130,000 active personnel, or around 2.5 per 1,000 inhabitants. Along with other European countries, it became a fully professional army in the early 2000s when conscription was eliminated. However, the current Spanish Armed Forces are the result of profound reforms undertaken since the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the country transitioned from the military-led Francoist dictatorship (1939–1975) to a democracy. The Armed Forces, particularly the Army, had a prominent role in the dictatorship, and were meant to be the main safeguard against political liberalization after the death of Franco. Although the ideological founda-

tions of Francoism shifted throughout the years, the regime consistently sponsored a strong version of Spanish nationalism linked to conservative values and Catholicism. These cultural and political values were deeply entrenched in the Army (Muñoz Bolaños, 2016). Reforming the Spanish military and transforming it into a more outward looking institution was actually one of the main challenges of the transitional period (Ramos, 2004).

During the democratic period, the Basque separatist conflict, spearheaded by the armed group ETA (*Euskadi ta Askatasuna*), and the more recent non-violent Catalan secessionist movement have strongly impacted Spanish nationalism and are likely to have influenced military socialization. Already in the early 2000s, a more reactionary version of Spanish nationalist was adopted by the right-wing government, which "accused socialists, communists and peripheral nationalists of being 'anti-Spanish"' (Muro & Quiroga, 2005, 24). More recently, the escalation of the Catalan conflict after 2017 played a key role in the rise of VOX (Rama et al., 2021).

These characteristics make Spain an interesting case to study the relationship between the military and far-right support, even if they call into question its generalizability. We discuss the issue of external validity in a separate section below, where we show data from several other countries and point to a series of factors that can explain this variation across countries.

Individual-level analyses

In order to test H1 on far-right support within the military, we pool together and harmonize twenty-eight different waves of Spain's monthly sociological survey,[2] creating a dataset that includes 142,703 respondents in a representative sample of the Spanish population from September 2018 to March 2021.[3]

[2] Spain's monthly barometer and the national election studies are fielded by the Spanish Centre for Sociological Research (CIS).

[3] VOX only became a relevant political party in the fall of 2018, after they celebrated a rally in Madrid in October and later won around 10% of the votes in a regional election in December, which was above all polling estimates (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019).

Variables

We use as our dependent variable a binary indicator of far-right support, which we draw from self-reported voting intention for VOX or, in the case of post-electoral survey waves, individuals' retrospective vote choice.

Our main independent variable is a binary indicator of whether an individual belongs to the military, which we code from self-reported occupation. Around 1% ($n = 1329$) of the sample identify as members of the armed forces. Although this proportion is very small relative to the total population, the stratified sample facilitates a sufficient number of observations to provide enough statistical power to identify differences in voting preferences between the two groups.

We also include a vector of control variables, namely: gender, age, education level, employment status and whether someone reports being religious, all of which have been found to have important effects on support for VOX (Rama et al., 2021; Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019). In some of the models we also include a 10-point measure of ideological placement between the left (1) and right (10). In Spain, both voters and parties coalesce around a single left-liberal vs right-authoritarian axis (Sánchez-Cuenca & Dinas, 2012), and thus the ideology variable is capturing individuals' placement in both these dimensions. We show descriptive statistics in Appendix A.

We run logistic models on support for VOX, including survey wave and municipal fixed effects.[4] Including municipal fixed effects controls for any unobserved municipality-specific heterogeneity that might exhibit a deterministic effect on far-right support such as local economic factors, ethnic diversity, or other potential confounders. In addition, we also cluster standard errors by each barometer wave.[5]

[4] One concern of relying on cumulative iterations of cross-sectional surveys is that temporal variation across the different waves may bias estimates. We show in Appendix A that the gap in support for VOX between civilians and the military is present across time.

[5] We do not include these variables in the main analyses as there is likely no variation in the time period we study (late 2018 to early 2021).

Support for VOX among military personnel

Table 1 shows the share of individuals in the sample who report voting intentions for VOX depending on whether they are members of the armed forces or not, distinguishing by their self-reported ideology. Descriptive results show striking asymmetries in support for VOX. While close to one in twenty (4.4%) civilian individuals identify as VOX supporters, this proportion is dwarfed by the close to one in four (22.3%) among members of the armed forces. Comparing only individuals within the same ideological block, the share of VOX support among the military is consistently higher than among civilians who report symmetrical ideological positions. Within the subsample of right-leaning voters, we find that half (48.4%) of military personnel support VOX—a 2.5-fold increase over comparably right-wing civilians.

Table 1: Support for VOX depending on being on the military and ideology

	All	Leftist	Center	Rightist	DK/NA
Military	22.3%	1.4%	12.3%	48.4%	8.3%
	(1,329)	(144)	(636)	(428)	(121)
Non-military	4.4%	0.2%	2.8%	19.2%	2.3%
	(141,374)	(37,915)	(63,414)	(20,576)	(19,469)
n	142,703	38,059	64,050	21,004	19,590

Note: Percentages refer to the share of individuals who report voting for VOX, respective to the whole sample. Self-reported ideology (1-10 scale): 1-3 = left, 4-6 = center, 7-10 = right. DK/NA = Don't know / Non response.

Table 2 shows results for the logistic models.[6] Model 1 estimates the difference between citizens and military personnel in a baseline model that only includes barometer and municipality fixed effects. Model 2 includes the socio-demographic control variables and Model 3 also includes a measure of left-right placement. Finally, Model 4 includes an interaction between the military indicator and the left-right measure, testing if the presence of a military gap is conditioned by where individuals fall on the ideological distribution.[7]

[6] Full tables in Appendix B.

[7] We present models with and without ideological position given that ideological preferences are likely causally posterior (i.e., *post-treatment*) to military employment and, as a result, may bias the point-

Table 2: Individual-level analyses on VOX support

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(Intercept)	-2.282***	-2.189***	-5.835***	-5.837***
	(0.028)	(0.089)	(0.102)	(0.102)
Military	1.620***	1.282***	0.939***	1.004**
	(0.104)	(0.094)	(0.098)	(0.363)
Ideology (left-right)			0.722***	0.722***
			(0.018)	(0.018)
Military × Ideology				-0.010
				(0.055)
n	142703	142233	122776	122776
AIC	50303.1	47704.5	33926.3	33928.2
Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Survey FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Municipality FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note: $+ \, p < 0.1, * \, p < 0.05, ** \, p < 0.01, *** \, p < 0.001$. All models include survey-clustered SE. Controls: gender, age, education level, religion, employment status. Full table in Appendix.

All models in Table 2 provide robust empirical support for H1. Across all models, we observe a substantive and significant effect of being in the military on the probability of voting for the far-right. In the case of Model 1, where we do not consider individual demographics but only municipal and survey-wave fixed effects, individuals in the military are almost five times as likely to vote for VOX than the civilians. When including individual-level covariates (Model 2), we find that individuals in the military are still more than three times more likely to vote for VOX. When considering the role of ideological preferences (Model 3), the effect of being in the military is slightly smaller, but still substantive and significant: military personnel are more than twice as likely to vote for VOX even after we consider left-right ideology. While the average marginal effect of being in the military is 0.089 in Model 2, it is 0.046 when controlling for ideology in Model 3, which suggests that although ideology does play a role in explaining membership in the military and far-right support, there is still an independent effect of being in the military. This is coherent with previous research on

estimate of the military coefficient. We show in Appendix A that individuals associated with the military are significantly more right-leaning than the average citizen. In our sample, military personnel have an average ideological position of 5.84 , while civilians' average is 4.62 .

the socialization effect of military institutions that we discuss above, and points to either the process of political socialization or with occupation-specific incentives related to, for example, the support of far-right parties to increased defense spending.

Finally, in Model 4 we include an interaction between the military variable and ideology to assess whether being in the military has an effect across different ideological positions. Figure 1 shows the results of this interaction graphically. The results show that, independently of the ideological position of the individual, those in the military are always significantly more likely to vote for VOX. Even if this difference is small among respondents who identify on the far-left—mostly because overall levels of support for VOX are much smaller—the effect holds across the whole ideological spectrum.

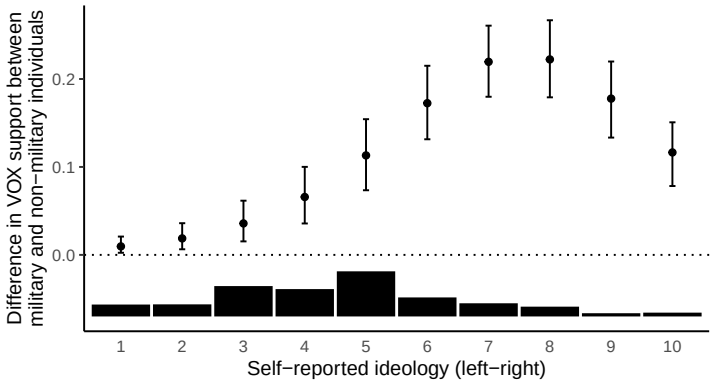


Figure 1: Effect of being in the military, conditioned by ideological placement. Calculated by simulation from Model 4 in Table 2, for an individual who is employed, male, religious, of average age, and with university studies.

We explore how the electoral gap between the military and civilians evolved over time in Appendix D, where we also show trends for the gap between military personnel and civilians in support for the mainstream right.

Local-level analyses

In this section, we complement the previous findings by focusing on local-level analyses. We leverage data on the location of military facilities in Spain to test whether census sections that host military facilities have higher electoral support for VOX (H2) and whether there is evidence of spatial diffusion (H3 and H4).

Data and models

We use data at the level of census sections.[8] Our dependent variable is the electoral support for VOX in the April 2019 general elections,[9] measured between 0 and 1, using data from the Spanish Ministry of Interior. We downloaded data at the level of polling stations and aggregate them to match census sections.

Military facilities in Spain

We code the location of military facilities in all Spanish provinces except Ceuta and Melilla[10] using information publicly available on the websites of the Spanish Armed Forces.[11] We only include military bases or HQs, including military academies, but exclude cultural facilities (e.g. museums). Figure 2 shows the location of military facilities in Spain.

Our main independent variable is whether a given census section is home to a military facility. In the analyses testing the diffusion hypothesis, we code different measures of section-level distance to military facilities. First, we measure whether a given census section has any contiguous section with military facilities (using queen contiguity). Second, we define neighbours as those sections whose centroids are within 2 kilometers and indicate whether there is any neighboring section with military facilities. Finally, we include a measure of inverse logged distance, calculated as $1/ln(mindist)$, where *mindist* is the distance in meters to the closest military facility. In the models

[8] In Spain, census sections or tracts (*secciones censales*) are sub-local geographical areas covering between 1,000 and 2,500 residents, except in smaller municipalities where they comprise the whole municipal area. Our dataset includes a total of 36,232 census sections in 8,129 municipalities.

[9] We also include results using the November 2019 elections in Appendix G. Results do not change. As we show in Appendix A using survey data, if anything, the civil-military gap in far-right suppong increased during this period.

[10] We exclude the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla because of they particular characteristics: they have a much smaller size than any other province, they have a historical military tradition as major *plazas de soberanía*—strongholds of Spanish sovereignty in North Africa—and still host a disproportionately high number of military facilities to this day.

[11] Army (*Ejército de Tierra*): ejercito.defensa.gob.es/unidades/index.html; Navy (*Armada*): armada.defensa.gob.es/ArmadaPortal/page/Portal/ArmadaEspannola/conocenosdespliegue; Air Force (*Ejército del Aire*): ejercitodelaire.defensa.gob.es/EA/ejercitodelaire/es/organizacion/unidades/ (all accessed 24/05/2023). We do not include locations exclusive to the other branches (e.g., the Common Corps, the Royal Guard, and the Emergencies Unit), even though they usually share space with units of the main branches.

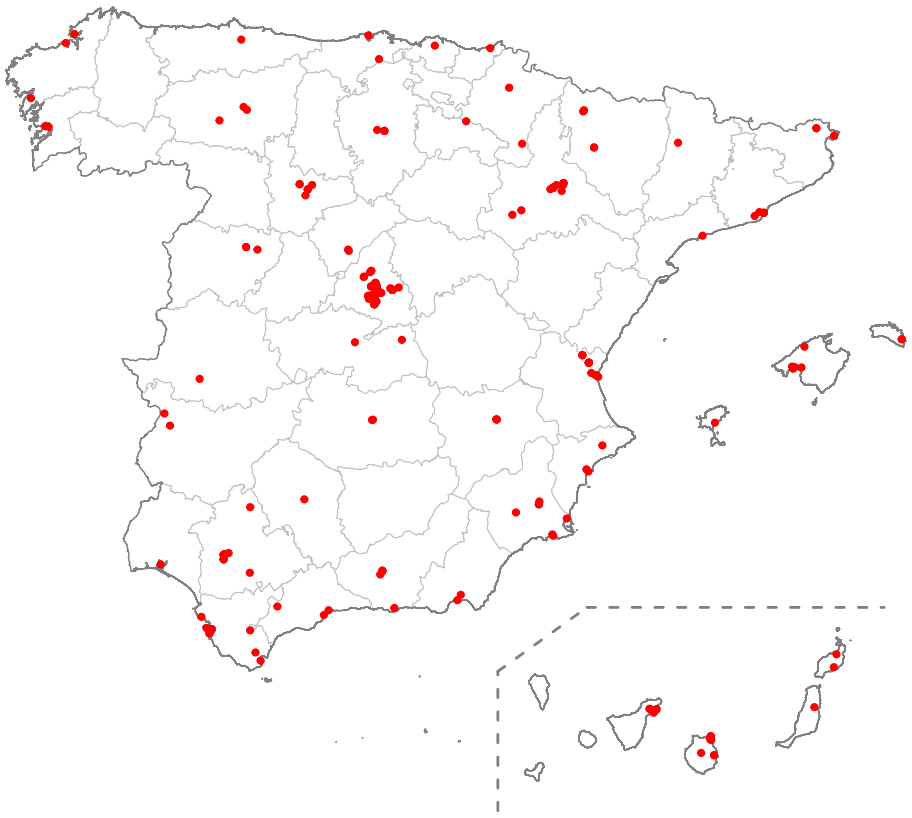


Figure 2: Location of military facilities

focused on diffusion, we exclude census sections that are home to a military facility from the sample.

The location of contemporary military facilities is the product of several changes that have taken place during the last decades. During the nineteenth century, most military barracks were old constructions, usually in the center of major cities and in some cases part of early-modern defensive buildings. As part of a process of modernization that also took place in other European countries, Spain built new military facilities, particularly during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, accompanying organizational and territorial reforms to the military institutions. These new facilities were often placed close to but outside the limits of the cities at the time (Mas Hernández, 2003). Military presence in Spain was relatively high, particularly in the cities, following the role of the Spanish Army as an instrument of internal control, rather than defense against external threats (Muñoz Bolaños, 2016). Another round of major changes to the location of military facilities came after the end of the Francoist regime. The new military reforms carried out by the democratic governments were

primarily meant to put an end to the political role of the military and transform it into an international-looking army. In some cases, barracks that were inside of cities and towns were closed, and soldiers moved to new or enlarged military bases outside of cities. Eventually, the professionalization of the Armed Forces after 2000 reduced markedly the amount of active personnel in the military and thus its housing needs (Brandis et al., 2005).

One concern is that the current location of military facilities could be endogenous to the geographical distribution of political preferences. First, changes in the location of these facilities could be linked to voting patterns, in other words, different governments could have closed or built military bases following local political preferences. To account for this problem, we have collected data from historical archives on the location of all military barracks in 1920 and analysed changes in their location since that time. In Appendix I, we demonstrate empirically that the location of military facilities in 1920 is not able to predict far-right support in 2019, and that neither the disappearance nor the creation of military facilities since 1920 are correlated with right-leaning support at different points in time during the twentieth century.

Second, both current and old military facilities could be located in similar areas due to common causes that also affect voting patterns. In the case of Spain, we observe that in the overall sample military facilities are slightly more likely to be located in wealthier areas, although this geographical clustering is mainly due to the rural areas having, on average, lower income levels and being much less likely to host military facilities (see Figure A4 in Appendix E). We account for a potential confounding on far-right support by limiting the sample in some of the models, namely, in sub-samples that only include a specific area around military facilities, large cities, or the wealthiest census sections. Within each of these sub-samples, any confounding effect should be largely minimized.

Finally, our fourth hypothesis (H4) states that the diffusion effect will be stronger in wealthier areas, given that these areas should be more sympathetic to conservative ideologies to being with, amplifying the mobilization effect of military presence. To

test this expectation, we estimate models that include an interaction term between the existence of a nearby military facility and the section-level mean household income. Thus, we also control for any potential confounding effect of wealth.

Control variables

We control for a series of additional variables. At the level of census sections, we include electoral turnout, (logged) census section population, and (logged) mean household income. Data on household income, which is included as an interaction in some models, and the census section population come from Spain's National Statistical Institute (INE).[12] We use the mean disposable household income and population in 2017, the latest year for which data is available at the level of census sections.

In addition, we also control for the (logged) population of the municipality the census section belongs to, and include a binary indicator in all sections of municipalities that hosted the HQ of a military region during the Francoist regime (Barcelona, Burgos, A Coruña, Granada, Madrid, Sevilla, Valencia, Valladolid, and Zaragoza).

Models

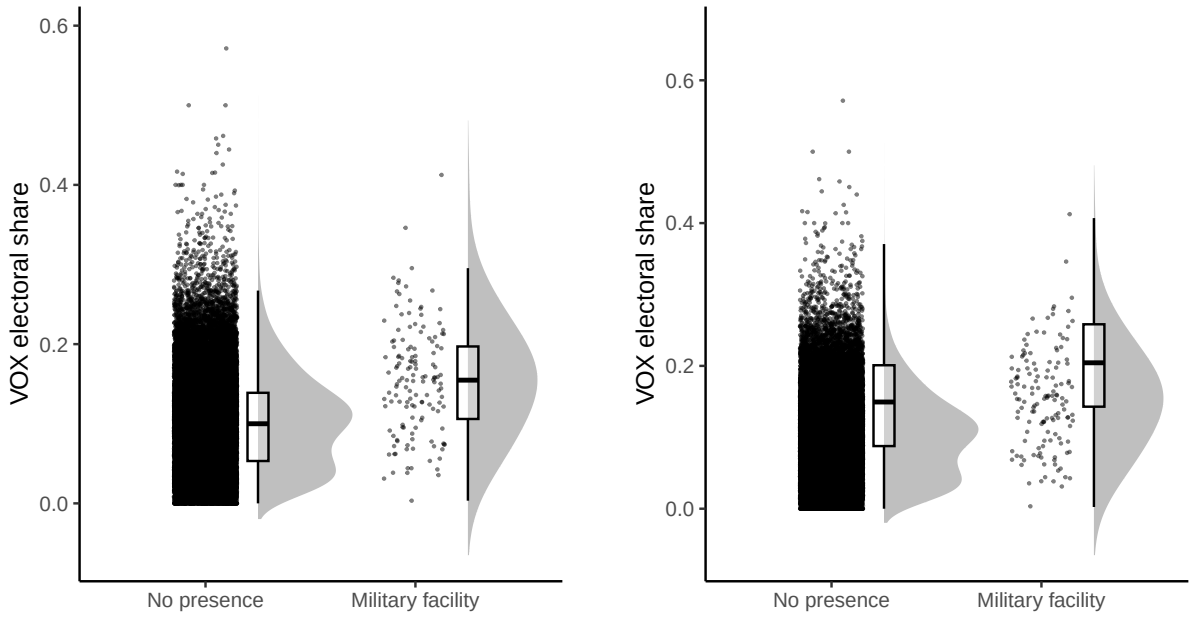
For the first analyses, we use regular OLS models which include province fixed effects. Some models restrict the sample, namely, limiting the analysis to census sections within 20km of a military facility, in large cities (over 50,000 inhabitants), in cities that housed the HQ of a military region in the past, or in the top quartile by average household income.

Another set of analyses rely on spatial models. In particular, we include results using spatial error models (SEM) and spatial Durbin error models (SDEM), to account for non-local effects of the predictors. In all these three cases, we use the three measures of contiguity described above (queen-type contiguity, neighbours within 2km, and inverse logged distance) as spatial weights matrices for the SEM and SDEM.

[12] Available at ine.es/uc/qxFrSJI2 (accessed 24/05/2023).

Military facilities and local support for VOX

Our second hypothesis posits that support for VOX should be higher in census sections that are home to a military facility. Descriptive results suggest that far-right support is substantially larger in these areas. Figure 3 shows the distribution of VOX vote share in census sections with and without military facilities in both April and November 2019 elections. While average vote share in April 2019 was 10.2% in census sections without military facilitates, it was 15.5% in sections that did have such facilities. For November 2019, the numbers are 14.9% and 20.6%, respectively.



(a) April 2019 **(b)** November 2019

Figure 3: Sections with military facilities and VOX electoral support

A closer look at a particular city suggests a similar pattern. Figure 4 shows the location of military facilities (red dots) and census section-level support for VOX in April 2019 elections in the city of Madrid. Most of the military locations are in census sections with an above-average level of support for VOX. Moreover, there are reasons to believe that the relationship between the location of military facilities and far-right support goes beyond the immediate local level, suggesting a spatial diffusion effect which we explore in the next section.

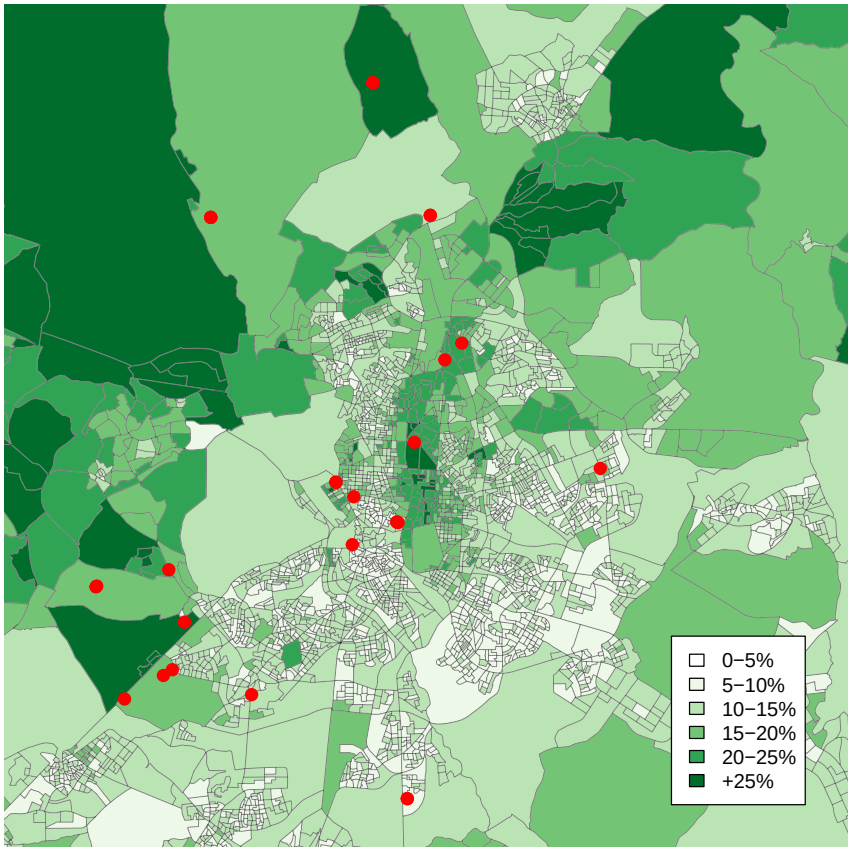


Figure 4: Military facilities and VOX support in Madrid city

Turning towards the statistical evidence, Table 3 shows the results of our baseline models, including a binary indicator of presence of military facilities in a given census section.[13] The coefficient is positive and significant across all specifications, which include the full sample (Model 1), only sections within 20km of military facilities (Model 2), only sections in municipalities with at least 50,000 inhabitants (Model 3), only sections in municipalities that were the heads of military regions (Model 4), and only the wealthiest sections (Model 5). In all these models, census sections with military facilities report around 3.5-4 percentage-points higher support for VOX, controlling for the other covariates and including province fixed effects. Given that the median (and mean) level of census-section support for VOX is around 10%, this means a 40% increase in VOX support.

We find robust evidence that census sections that host military facilities show higher electoral support for VOX, supporting H2. One open question here is whether there

[13] Full tables in Appendix F.

Table 3: Support for VOX and military presence

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(Intercept)	-0.227^{***}	-0.291^{***}	-0.781^{***}	-0.348^{***}	-0.738^{***}
	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.021)	(0.032)	(0.017)
Military facility	0.040^{***}	0.037^{***}	0.034^{***}	0.038^{***}	0.040^{***}
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Province FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	33,905	20,181	10,064	5,893	8,477
R^2	0.614	0.667	0.694	0.731	0.816
Adjusted R^2	0.613	0.666	0.693	0.730	0.815

Note: $+p < 0.1; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001$. Models 1 includes full sample. Model 2 includes only sections within 20km of military facilities. Model 3 includes only municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants in 2017. Model 4 only includes municipalities that were HQ of main military regions. Model 5 restricts the sample to the wealthiest sections ($> q3$). Controls: turnout, logged section population, logged mean household income, logged municipality population, dummy for military region capital. Full table in Appendix.

is something unique about the far-right compared to the mainstream right, which also relates to the question about what these individuals voted for before the emergence of VOX. In Appendix H we show models looking at electoral support for the main right-wing party in Spain since the early 1980s. We find that there has been an association between military facilities and support for the mainstream right, particularly during the years when the recent territorial conflict with Catalonia was more salient, which is coherent with the idea that nationalism is one of the main mechanisms explaining the link between the military and the far-right. Yet, once VOX appeared, the relationship with the mainstream right almost disappeared. These results are coherent with our findings in Appendix D, where we find that, after VOX emerged as a relevant party at the end of 2018, individuals in the military became less likely to support PP than civilians, which suggests that support for VOX among the military was found among individuals who previously voted for the mainstream right.

Overall, the results point to the effect of both the military personnel living in these sections and the diffusion effect on civilians in the same areas. In the next section, we test the diffusion effect directly, excluding from the sample census sections with mili-

tary facilities and looking at their surroundings. Although military personnel also live outside military facilities, we assume that their presence is lower as distance decreases.

Spatial diffusion

Beyond the local effect of military facilities, we argue that they also have a diffusion effect (H3), particularly in wealthier areas (H4). We assume that these expectations reflect better the mobilizing effect of military facilities due to everyday contact and nationalist symbolism, rather than the preferences of military personnel themselves. We test those expectation here, removing all census sections with military presence from the sample, and including different measures of distance to military facilities. Table 4 shows results of linear models using the three different measures of distance: military facilities in contiguous sections, in sections within 2km, or the inverse logged distance to the closest facility. Across all three specifications, results are consistent with out expectations, namely, census sections that are closer to military facilities display higher support for VOX.

Table 4: Support for VOX and nearby military presence

	(1)	(2)	(3)
(Intercept)	-0.221^{***}	-0.224^{***}	-0.241^{***}
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Military in contiguous section	0.016^{***}		
	(0.001)		
Military within 2km		0.007^{***}	
		(0.001)	
Inverse logged distance (m)			0.196^{***}
			(0.017)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Province FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	33,769	33,769	33,769
R^2	0.616	0.615	0.615
Adjusted R^2	0.615	0.614	0.615

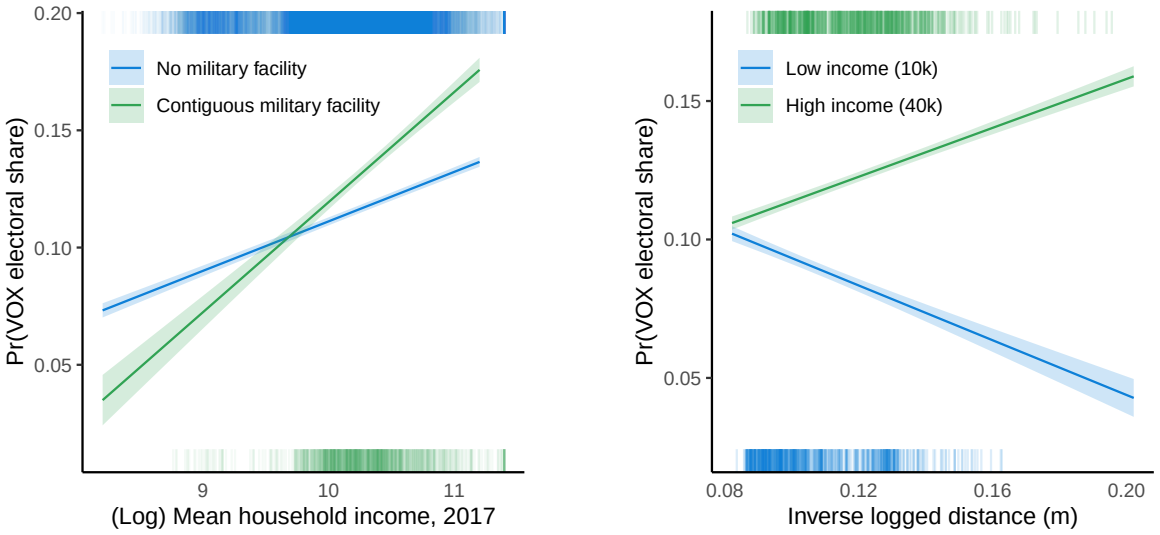
Note: $+p < 0.1; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001$. All models exclude census sections with army facilities from the sample. Controls: turnout, logged section population, logged municipality population, dummy for military region capital. Full table in Appendix.

Table 5 replicates these models but including an interaction between distance to military facilities and mean household income, and Figure 5 shows some of the results graphically. Our expectation on heterogenous diffusion is that the influence of spatial proximity will be greater in wealthier census sections. These findings are consistent with our argument that military contact might trigger asymmetric responses among those who view the military as (ideologically) threatening: in richer areas which are more likely to hold conservative preferences, proximity to the military appears to consolidate far-right support, whereas proximity to the military has the opposite effect in poorer areas. In Appendix G, we show these results are robust to different samples, including only sections within 20km of any military facility, only large municipalities, and only municipalities that were HQs of military regions.

Table 5: Support for VOX and nearby military presence

	(1)	(2)	(3)
(Intercept)	-0.211^{***}	-0.180^{***}	0.533^{***}
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.034)
Military in contiguous section	-0.250^{***}		
	(0.026)		
Military within 2km		-0.309^{***}	
		(0.015)	
Inverse logged distance (m)			-6.712^{***}
			(0.301)
(Log) Household income	0.021^{***}	0.018^{***}	-0.053^{***}
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.003)
Contiguous $\times$ Income	0.026^{***}		
	(0.003)		
Within 2km $\times$ Income		0.031^{***}	
		(0.001)	
Inv. dist. $\times$ Income			0.675^{***}
			(0.029)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Province FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	33,769	33,769	33,769
R^2	0.617	0.620	0.621
Adjusted R^2	0.617	0.619	0.620

Note: $+p < 0.1; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001$. All models exclude census sections with army facilities from the sample. Controls: turnout, logged section population, logged municipality population, dummy for military region capital. Full table in Appendix.



(a) Contiguity

(b) Inverse logged distance

Figure 5: Nearby military facilities, mean income, and VOX support. Left panel calculates predictions following Model 1 in Table 5 for a census tract in Madrid region, keeping all other variables at their sample mean. Right panel shows the same calculation but using Model 3 in Table 5.

These conditional effects are important and support H4. In addition, they rule out an alternative, economic, explanation for the diffusion effects. One could expect that local support for the far-right is a function of the material benefits from military facilities nearby, that is, areas where a large presence of military personnel provides economic opportunities might be more sympathetic towards the far-right because of the support these parties give for increased defense spending (Betz, 1994). However, if diffusion were a function of these material incentives, we would expect it to be more pronounced in those areas where the opportunity cost of a decrease in military presence is higher, namely, in poorer areas. This is not what we observe. Instead, diffusion effects are only observed in high-wealth areas where individuals are likely to be less dependent on the second-order economic effects of military presence.

A potential concern of these analyses is that normal linear models do not correctly account for spatial autocorrelation, and may also fail to consider spatial dependence. In order to account for this, we use spatial modelling. In particular, we show results for spatial error models (SEM), which account for spatial autocorrelation in the error term, and spatial Durbin error models (SDEM), which explicitly model non-local ef-

fects of predictors. Table 6 shows the results for the SEM, while table 7 shows the results for the SDEM. In both cases, we still see evidence of spatial diffusion. The SEM demonstrate that the results of the linear models are not sensitive to the presence of spatial autocorrelation. More interestingly, the SDEM show that the spatial lag of military facilities has a significantly positive effect in all cases with the sole exception of the model using sections within 2km as the definition of proximity. Moreover, model selection also supports the diffusion hypothesis, as including spatial lags improves the fit of the model.[14]

Table 6: Spatial Error Models on support for VOX

	(1)	(2)	(3)
(Intercept)	-0.250^{***}	-0.327^{***}	5.305^{**}
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(1.839)
Military facility	0.017^{***}	0.027^{***}	0.037^{***}
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lambda	0.89^{***}	0.91^{***}	1.00^{***}
Observations	20,181	20,181	20,181
Akaike Inf. Crit.	-89,567.300	-81,501.060	-78,956.110

Note: $+p < 0.1; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001$. Models 1 includes spatial weights based on queen-type contiguity. Model 2 does so identifying neighbors as sections within 2km. Model 3 uses spatial weights based on the inverse logged distance (m). Controls: turnout, logged section population, logged household income, logged municipality population, dummy for military region capital. Full table in Appendix.

External validity

To what extent do these findings travel beyond Spain? We discussed above how the Francoist period in Spain defined its military culture and the importance of nationalist conflict during the last decades. Yet, the relationship between militaries and right-wing ideologies is not unique to Spain. Indeed, militaries in Europe have historically

[14] Likelihood-ratio tests between the SDEM and SEM show a statistically significant difference (LR test = 18.00, p-value = 0.006 for the model with the contiguity matrix, LR test = 139.37, p-value = 0.000 for the model with the 2km neighbour matrix, and LR test = 868.27, p-value = 0.000 for the model with the inverse distance matrix).

Table 7: Spatial Durbin Error Models on support for VOX

	(1)	(2)	(3)
(Intercept)	-0.260^{***}	-0.332^{***}	11.088^{***}
	(0.012)	(0.010)	(1.860)
Military facility	0.022^{***}	0.027^{***}	0.038^{***}
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Military (spatial lag)	0.017^{**}	0.019	2.441^{***}
	(0.005)	(0.013)	(0.121)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lambda	0.89^{***}	0.90^{***}	1.00^{***}
Observations	20,181	20,181	20,181
Akaike Inf. Crit.	-89,573.300	-81,628.430	-79,812.380

Note: $+p < 0.1; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001$. Models 1 includes spatial weights based on queen-type contiguity. Model 2 does so identifying neighbors as sections within 2km. Model 3 uses spatial weights based on the inverse logged distance (m). Controls: turnout, logged section population, logged household income, logged municipality population, dummy for military region capital. Full table in Appendix.

been institutions focused on internal security and with an important role in domestic politics as guardians of national interests. For instance, Hull (2013, 103) tracks the distinctiveness of the Prussian army in the late-nineteenth century and its subsequent trajectory to its constitutional role in the "defense of the monarchy against its internal political enemies." More generally, Hull (2013, 101) argues that "[t]he marriage of convenience between the military and the conservative or right-wing spectrum of politics was a general European phenomenon" in the late-nineteenth century. Although reforms, particularly after World War II, have changed this relationship in many countries, there is likely to be an ideological remnant in many military cultures. While we do not expect to see the same patterns across militaries around the world, Spain is hardly the only case where there is a link between the military and far-right ideologies.

In order to empirically consider this issue, we use data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) to compare the self-reported ideology of individuals in the military with the rest of individuals in several countries included in the data. We show the results in Table 8, including results from a t-test and coefficient

estimates from linear models controlling for gender, education level, and age.[15] Perhaps not surprisingly, military personnel are significantly more right-wing than the rest of respondents in both Spain and other countries in Europe that experienced military regimes in the twentieth century, such as Portugal or Greece.[16] However, we observe similar patterns in other European countries, namely, France, Netherlands, Switzerland, and all Scandinavian countries.[17] The right in France has traditionally preferred a professional army that could maintain domestic social order, and the role of the French armed forces in policing internal dissent was shaped by both revolutionary episodes in the nineteenth century and the colonial struggle in Algeria (Kier, 1995). In addition, conservatism could also be linked to a previous role of the military in safeguarding national unity and sovereignty, either in the context of colonial conflict or against external threats of conquest, which can explain the results in Switzerland, Finland, or the Netherlands. Spain witnessed a combination of all these factors—a right-wing authoritarian past, the role of the army in controlling internal dissent in revolutionary episodes, and threats to national sovereignty, in this case, from peripheral nationalisms—which likely explains why the gap is comparatively large. However, the data suggests that the results can also travel to other countries, particularly those that historically experienced one or more of these factors.

Finally, in Appendix K, we substantiate our claim to external validity by focusing on Germany, a least-likely case following the CSES data. Even if there were some episodes of right-wing extremism in the military, the German *Bundeswehr* has one of the few examples of internal units focused on combating political extremism (Koehler, 2019). Yet, using survey data from the Politbarometer[18], we find that military per-

[15] Data available at cses.org (accessed 24/05/2023). We exclude countries where there were less than 10 individuals in the military in the sample, and code military occupations from ISCO codes. We include full results for the linear models in Appendix J. Although we are mainly intesrested in cross-country differences in the naive estimate of the effect of being in the military, one concern regarding these analyses is that variables driving self-selection into the military could vary from country to country. We leave that question to future research.

[16] Interestingly, we observe the opposite in many countries that had a Communist regime in the past (especially the Czech Republic and Poland), namely, that individuals in the military report being more leftist than the rest of the population.

[17] The different in Sweden is even larger (2.12 points) and statistically significant, but the sample only includes 7 individuals who report military occupations.

[18] Data available at www.forschungsgruppe.de/Umfragen/Politbarometer/ (accessed 24/05/2023).

Table 8: Differences in ideology between military and civilians across several countries

Country	Years	Ideology (civilians)	Ideology (military)	Diff	β
Spain	1996-2008	4.3 (n = 3,659)	6.2 (n = 26)	1.87***	1.80***
France	2002-2012	5.1 (n = 3,515)	6.8 (n = 33)	1.69**	1.65***
Greece	2009-2015	4.7 (n = 2,089)	6.4 (n = 28)	1.68***	1.71***
Switzerland	1999-2011	5.2 (n = 8,811)	6.7 (n = 12)	1.56*	1.32
Finland	2003-2015	5.5 (n = 4,412)	6.8 (n = 24)	1.30*	1.03*
Netherlands	1998-2010	5.2 (n = 5,569)	6.5 (n = 25)	1.30***	1.02*
Norway	1997-2013	5.5 (n = 6,891)	6.8 (n = 21)	1.28**	1.16*
Latvia	2010-2014	6.2 (n = 1,636)	7.4 (n = 12)	1.24	1.22
Peru	2000-2016	6.2 (n = 1,845)	7.4 (n = 15)	1.19	1.32
Portugal	2002-2015	5.1 (n = 4,698)	6.1 (n = 62)	0.98**	1.15**
Belgium	1999-2003	5.0 (n = 4,446)	5.7 (n = 23)	0.64	0.59
Israel	1996-2013	5.7 (n = 3,419)	6.3 (n = 105)	0.57	0.46
Australia	1996-2013	5.2 (n = 8,082)	5.8 (n = 28)	0.54	0.39
Uruguay	2009-2009	4.5 (n = 582)	5.0 (n = 10)	0.50	0.50
Brazil	2002-2014	5.0 (n = 1,354)	5.5 (n = 15)	0.48	0.67
Germany	1998-2013	4.3 (n = 8,901)	4.6 (n = 37)	0.33	0.36
New Zealand	1996-2014	5.5 (n = 8,798)	5.8 (n = 23)	0.30	0.30
Hungary	1998-2002	4.8 (n = 2,471)	5.0 (n = 21)	0.20	0.31
Ireland	2002-2011	5.9 (n = 4,592)	5.9 (n = 28)	0.00	0.01
Thailand	2001-2011	5.8 (n = 3,017)	5.8 (n = 20)	-0.01	0.04
USA	1996-2012	5.8 (n = 3,322)	5.8 (n = 16)	-0.03	0.06
South Africa	2009-2014	6.6 (n = 752)	6.5 (n = 29)	-0.10	-0.15
Belarus	2001-2008	5.7 (n = 1,502)	5.6 (n = 20)	-0.11	0.10
Taiwan	1996-2012	5.6 (n = 6,392)	5.5 (n = 60)	-0.11	0.01
Bulgaria	2001-2014	5.3 (n = 901)	4.8 (n = 24)	-0.45	-0.08
Romania	1996-2014	5.8 (n = 5,677)	5.2 (n = 63)	-0.55	-0.67
Russia	1999-2004	5.3 (n = 1,742)	4.8 (n = 77)	-0.57	-0.74*
Poland	1997-2011	5.7 (n = 8,903)	4.6 (n = 63)	-1.17**	-1.18***
Ukraine	1998-1998	4.8 (n = 521)	3.5 (n = 18)	-1.30	-1.45
Czech Republic	1996-2013	5.3 (n = 6,351)	2.9 (n = 10)	-2.43**	-2.12**

Note: 'Diff' shows the difference in means and the significance level in a two-sided t-test. 'β' shows the coefficient for being in the military in a linear model controlling for gender, education level, and age. * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001. Data from CSES (www.cses.org).

sonnel have been more likely to support the far-right party *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) at some points during the last few years, especially when support for AfD first emerged in 2013 and during the height of the so-called 'refugee crisis'.

Conclusion

In this article, we present the first empirical analyses drawing a link between the armed forces and far-right support. First, we argue that members of the military are

more likely to support far-right parties because of the affinity between military culture and the main characteristics of the far-right. Second, we also argue that the presence of military facilities helps mobilize support for the far-right among the surrounding population, because of everyday contact with military personnel and the strong nationalist symbolism present in military facilities, which helps normalize the nationalist agenda support by the far-right.

We test this argument using both individual-level survey data and local-level data from Spain. First, we show that military personnel are more likely to support the Spanish far-right party VOX than civilians, even after controlling for socio-demographics and ideological preferences. Second, we show that areas that host military facilities display higher electoral support for VOX and that surrounding areas are also more likely to support VOX. Diffusion is stronger in wealthier areas, which we interpret as evidence in favor of the effect of nationalist symbolism mobilizing far-right support in areas that were already more sympathetic to conservative ideologies.

While Spain can be a unique case because of its recent past, we also provide evidence that our results are generalizable. In particular, one factor that is likely to determine the link between the military and the far-right is whether the military has been historically more focused on internal security and where there is a history of nationalist conflict. This is usually the case in countries that experienced right-wing authoritarianism or where central powers have faced secessionist conflicts. Future works could shed more light on this question from a comparative perspective.

These findings contribute to the broader literature on far-right support, political geography, and, more generally, civil-military relations. They also suggest fruitful avenues for future research. Both the occupation-based link between an important state institution and political behavior and the influence of official symbolism is likely not to be unique to the military. Future works should explore whether this relationships applies to other security forces, the specific causal mechanisms that explain it and, perhaps more importantly, whether there is any link to political extremism.

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