

Not fond of democracy and politically discontent individuals: Assessing regime-related determinants of the vote for VOX

Individuos políticamente descontentos
con la democracia: evaluación de
los determinantes del voto por VOX
relacionados con el régimen

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyze the relationship between the populist radical right and support for democracy examining the case of VOX in Spain. The case of VOX is particularly puzzling since it does fit in the definition of PRRPs but in its discourse, radicalism is much stronger than populism. Moreover, the party presents idiosyncratic features that affect the determinants of its vote. Nationalism is often expressed through allusion to the pre-democratic period in Spain without explicitly adhering to Francoism. The main results of this study are two. First, evalua-

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ting VOX discourse, especially its electoral manifesto, we found that its leaders recurrently allude to pre-democratic Spain both in terms of issues and symbols. Second, we show that those who display less support for the democratic regime are more likely to vote for VOX instead of other political forces in the last election. We also found that authoritarian values, political discontent and the romantic idea of a glorious past, interact with regime support and help explain the vote for VOX. Even if a comparative study is necessary to further assess this relationship, this article can give a first clue that building on their country's authoritarian past, some PRRPs are more successful in mobilizing those who are less committed to democracy.

Keywords: VOX – Democracy – Past – Authoritarianism – Franco.

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza la relación existente entre derecha radical populista y apoyo a la democracia. Para ello, estudia el caso de VOX. En este sentido, la formación de Santiago Abascal, resulta particularmente interesante ya que encaja en la definición de derecha radical populista pero en su discurso, el radicalismo es mucho más fuerte que el populismo. Además, el partido presenta rasgos idiosincrásicos únicos y que juegan un papel fundamental a la hora de entender su voto. Así, por ejemplo, el nacionalismo se expresa a menudo mediante alusiones al período predemocrático en España sin adherirse explícitamente al franquismo. Dos son los principales resultados de este estudio. Por un lado, evaluando el discurso de VOX, especialmente su programa electoral, encontramos que sus líderes aluden recurrentemente a la España predemocrática tanto en temas concretos como en símbolos. En segundo lugar, mostramos que aquellos que expresan un menor apoyo al régimen democrático fueron más proclives a votar a VOX que a otras fuerzas políticas, al menos en las últimas elecciones generales de noviembre de 2019. Además, encontramos que los valores autoritarios, el descontento político y la idea romántica de un pasado glorioso, interactúan con el apoyo al régimen y ayudan a explicar el voto a VOX. Aunque sea necesario un estudio comparativo para evaluar más a fondo esta relación, este artículo puede dar una primera pista de que, haciendo hincapié en el pasado autoritario de su país, algunos partidos de la derecha

radical populista consiguen éxito político movilizand o a aquellos electores que están menos comprometidos con la democracia.

Palabras clave: Vox – Democracia – Pasado – Autoritarismo – Franco.

INTRODUCTION

Both the decline of democracy and the emergence of populist and/or anti-establishment parties are on the rise in different regions of the world (Foa and Mounk 2016; Inglehart and Norris 2016; Oliver and Rahn 2016; Gamboa 2017; Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018). Although there seems to be at least of correlation between these two phenomena the relationship between democracy and populism is far from being settled. On the one hand, this is due to the fact that few studies have empirically addressed the effect of populist parties on the levels of democracy in a given country (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012; Donovan 2019; Rama and Casal Bértoa 2020).

On the other hand, the findings regarding the attitudes towards democracy of those individuals with high populist attitudes are still inconclusive (Meijers and Zaslove 2020; Rovira Kaltwasser and van Hauwaert 2020; Zanotti and Rama 2020).

This theoretical and empirical issue is even more complicated by the fact that the most numerous and electorally relevant populist family is the populist radical right. The populist radical right is

characterized by at least three ideological features: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Mudde 2007). In short, nativism is an ideology that maintains that the state should be inhabited only by those who belong to the nation, while authoritarianism is the belief in a strictly ordered society and that the infringements to this order should be harshly punished (Adorno 1950). Last, populism is a thin-centered ideology that maintains that society is divided into two opposing and homogeneous groups the “pure people” and the “corrupt elite”, and that politics should be the expression of the general will of the people. In general terms we know that, at least in Europe, nativism, not populism is the core ideology of the populist radical right (Mudde 2007).

At this point is worth underlining that with the aim of differentiate between radical and extreme parties Mudde (2007; 2010) maintains that while the former do not reject democratic as a political regime the latter openly opposed to it. Even if the PRR does not oppose to democracy it does not mean that they do not represent a threat to the regime If it is true that PRR parties should not be

thought of as bluntly authoritarian forces it is also true that these actors who play by the democratic rules of the game to gradually subvert the liberal democratic regime from within. By promoting illiberal ideas, the PRR can set in motion a process of democratic erosion that in some cases might even lead to democratic breakdown (Meléndez and Rovira Kaltwasser (2021: 949). Furthermore, even if radical parties are different from extremist ones in the sense that the former do not reject democracy as a political regime, both nativism—a combination of nationalism and xenophobia—and authoritarianism—intended as the belief in a strictly ordered society—can attract those who are less loyal to the democratic regime. In this sense it looks like radicalism could be a more pernicious trait for democracy than populism.

In regard to the relationship between the PRR and democracy the case of VOX in Spain is particularly relevant. Spain is a relatively young democracy in which the PRR had not taken root until 2018 (Alonso and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015). Together with Portugal, Spain was defined an European exceptionalism since they were the only two countries in western Europe without a populist radical right party. Things changed in 2018 when VOX entered the system first at the regional level in Andalusia (Turnbull-Dugarte 2019) and then in 2019 becoming the third party at the national level. After the return to democracy the Spanish party system at the national level functioned as a two-party

system with alternation between the social democratic Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) and the (conservative) right-wing Partido Popular (PP). The latter acted as a catch all party also attracting citizens that were previously loyal to the pre-democratic regime. However, in 2019 mainly as a result of the Catalan crisis the PRR VOX—that was formed in 2013 but until then had obtained irrelevant electoral fortunes—gained more than 10 percent and almost 16 percent in the snap election of April and November (Turnbull-Dugarte, Rama and Santana 2020; Rama et al. 2019). It is worth mentioning that most of the votes cast for VOX in 2019 came from the Partido Popular (Santana, Zanotti and Rama 2022).

Besides nativism and authoritarianism and populism VOX displays a high level of nationalism (Heyne and Manucci 2021), which is an idiosyncratic feature and not a core feature of PRRs. This is relevant for at least two reasons. First nationalism was one of the ideological cornerstones of the pre-democratic regime (Aguilar, 2001). Second, nationalism is discursively expressed by the party through discursive shortcuts that remind of those used by the Francoist regime.

This study tries to assess the relationship between support for democracy and the vote in a country with a relatively recent authoritarian past. In more detail we are interested in assessing the determinants of the vote for a populist radical right that exploits some of the discursive

repertoires of pre-democratic regimes in a young democracy.

VOX AS A POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT PARTY

In general terms we can state that there is a consensus that VOX belongs to the populist radical right (see Norris, 2020; Vampa, 2020; Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019; Turnbull-Dugarte et al., 2020; Rama et al., 2021; Mudde, 2020; Rooduijn et al., 2019; Olivas-Osuna, 2021; Olivas-Osuna and Rama, 2021). As the literature on the populist radical right has pointed out, within this party family, the radical component is much stronger than the populist one (see Mudde 2007; Zaslove and Meijers 2021).

As mentioned before, PRRPs share at least three ideological features: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Mudde 2007). At least concerning the populist radical right in Western Europe, nativism appears as the core ideology. Nativism, as a combination of xenophobia and nationalism, is an ideology that maintains that the state should be inhabited only by natives (Mudde 2007). This usually results in a constant anti-immigration rhetoric as well as in policy proposals that seek stricter immigration rules (Ivarsflaten 2008). In this sense, VOX is not an exception (Vampa 2020). In fact, the party claims for the “deportation of illegal immigrants to their countries of origin”, new requirements and barriers for nationality and establishing quotas based on linguistic and cultural criteria (VOX, 2019: 5–6).

Authoritarian features are also evident in VOX discourse. It is worth noting that with the term authoritarianism we do not refer to a preference for any political regime instead to the as the belief in a strictly ordered society and to that any infraction to this order should be sanctioned (Mudde 2007).

Authoritarianism tends to translate in preference for stricter law and order policies (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2017). Both VOX electoral manifesto and public discourse reflect the party favorable attitude towards strict law enforcement and tougher actions against domestic crime (see Rama et al. 2021). While in the party manifesto of 2019 the percentage of the document dedicated to positive assessments of law and order policies is 9.5, which is in line with other PRR in Europe and outside (see Rama et al. 2021: 61).

It is relevant to point out that as other PRR parties, VOX leaders discursively link immigration with an (alleged rise) in crime rates¹. Furthermore, VOX’s ideological authoritarianism besides being expressed through preference for harsher public security measures, also calls for a

1 https://www.eldiario.es/desalambre/supuesto-vinculo-inmigracion-delinuencia-vox_1_1270566.html

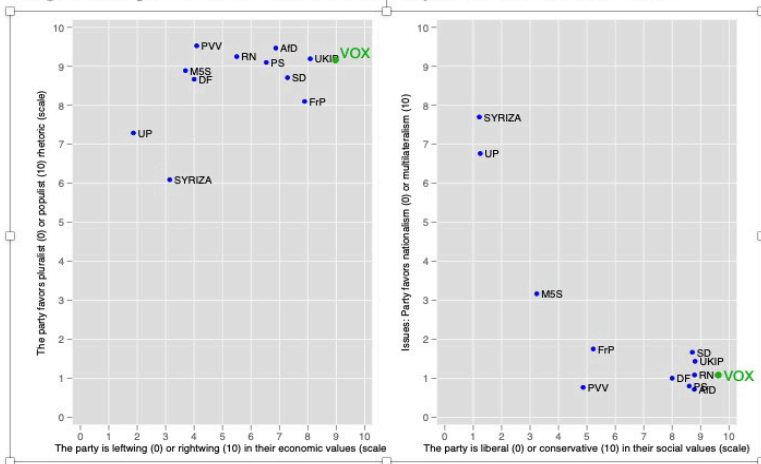
strictly order society by defending traditional moral values such as gender roles or heteronormative family. This point is quite interesting since the defence of traditional moral values is not a core ideological feature of the PRR at least in Europe. However, some PRRPs that have gained electoral relevance in the last years have showed this ideological trait, such as the Brothers of Italy, (Zanotti and Meléndez, 2022a). Moreover, other PRR parties and leaders outside of Europe heavily rely on these issues such as the Republican party in the United States and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil (Rennó 2020; Zanotti et al. forthcoming) and José Antonio Kast in Chile (Zanotti and Roberts 2021).

Finally, VOX leaders display a populist discourse (Rama et al. 2021; Norris 2020). Even though as for other PRR in general radical (nativist and authoritarian) features are much stronger than

the the populist ones (see Mudde 2007; Marcos-Marne et al. 2021), it is also true that VOX does display a populist element. As we show in Figure 1, based on experts' surveys, VOX level of populism is the same of other well-known populist parties both on the left and the right such as the Sweden Democrats (SD), the Progress Party (FrP) in Norway, or the Danish People's Party (DF) but below the Party for Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands, Alternative for Germany (AfD), DF, the Finns (PS) and the Five Star Movement (Norris 2020).

All in all, VOX fits well in the populist radical right party family featuring all three core ideological elements: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism. However, as various scholars pointed out, the party has at least one decisive idiosyncratic ideological feature: its nationalism (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017). As we

Figure 1. Populist rhetoric and nationalism, by economic and social values



Source: Own elaboration based on the Global Party Survey (2020)

show in the following sections, this is a feature that VOX shared with the Spanish pre-democratic regime (see Rama et al. 2021). Moreover, some of the rhetoric shortcuts employed by the party's leaders reminds of the discourse of pre-democratic elites.

Context-related elements in VOX discourse

As mentioned before, PRRPs share, at least, three ideological traits: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism. However, different PRR also displays other ideologies. This for example, holds true for the economic positions of PRR: while some of them adopted welfare chauvinism (Enneser-Jedenastick 2018; Greve 2019 Rovira Kaltwasser and Zanotti 2021; Stefanoni 2021) others' stances are neoliberal. With respect to VOX previous studies have pointed out that the party leaders' discourse strongly relies on nationalism. If we look at the party manifesto of 2019 we observe that positive references to the national way of life occupies more than 10 per cent of VOX manifesto² picking up all the "favourable mentions of the manifesto country's nation, history and general appeals for established national ideas, general appeals to the pride of citizens appeal to patriotism, nationalism, and support to some freedoms to protect the state against subversion" (MARPOR, Handbook; Rama et al. 2021 pp. 44-45).

Additionally, VOX expresses its ideological nationalism also relying on a strong centralism that contraposes a "Spanish identity" to regional especially Basque, Catalanian, and Galician. With respect to policy proposals, VOX advocates for the dissolution of Spain's Communities and the establishment of a centralized state government. This policy position is strongly connected with the authoritarian regime and to its strong centralism. In fact, "one of the main aims of Francoism was to annihilate the signs of national identity especially in Catalonia and the Basque country" (Pérez Navedo 1997 p.79) through a simultaneous exaltation of the "Spanishness". Thus, at the beginning of the 1936 Civil War, the so-called Hispanidad ideology became a political weapon against the secular, secularising and liberal Republic, against Freemasonry, the Marxist threat and foreign heterodoxy. The Francoist band presented the military uprising and the rebel cause as the defence of a supposedly true national base, threatened by the Republic. With Hispanidad converted into an instrument of combat, the appeal to Santiago, patron saint of Spain and a prominent figure in the Hispanic pantheon, signified the need to fight against the new heretics: communists, Masons, secularists, liberals, republicans... all branded as "anti-Spanish" (Marcilhacy 2014, p. 73-102).

2 Per 601.1.

Nationalism and authoritarian legacies

These nationalist elements and this division of Spain in two opposite groups by pre-democratic elites, remind to the categorization of VOX in two antagonistic and opposed groups, the Spain alive and the Anti-Spain (Casals, 2020). Another element that VOX emphasizes is the defence of traditional moral values. In more detail, VOX leaders often refer the current “Social-Communist” Government, which allegedly has boosted the separatism and the feminist ideology, against the traditional Spanish values. In this sense, this aspect of VOX ideology also reminds of the Francoist regimen which was characterized by the fusion of revolutionary fascism with conservative, traditional, and monarchist parties that supported the Nationalist side in the 1936 Civil War. In this sense, VOX somehow re-interprets its ideological authoritarianism (intended as the belief in a strictly ordered society), through claims to protect the belief in the protection of the “natural and traditional family”. In order to do so VOX proposed to reform abortion laws, trying to make it more difficult. In 2019 Santiago Abascal, in an interview, expressed his view on abortion, maintaining that “there are women who claim that they own their bodies but what is inside [i.e., the fetus] is not theirs”. Also, on several occasions VOX manifested the desire to reform the gender violence protection laws. In particular

it is anti-feminism that VOX seem to have inherited from the authoritarian regime. As Ortega López and Felez Castañé (2019: 4) pointed out “during the Franco dictatorship, these openly antifeminist ideas were transmitted across Spain through the Sección Femenina, the women’s branch of the Falange political movement, and the Patronato de Protección a la Mujer, a public foundation established to ensure moral order, as a control mechanism”. The rejection of feminism as a legit ideology is clearly expressed in the manifesto that VOX wrote and presented on the occasion of International Women's Day in March 2020 (see Rama et al. 2021).

Lastly, although VOX has defended the Spanish Crown on some occasions, mainly as a symbol of the traditional Spain, it is also true its leaders displayed an ambivalent position regarding the state model. Thus, Abascal publicly claimed, “I am Spanish. Neither monarchical nor republican. [...] Spain, its sovereignty and its unity are above the monarchy, the republic, the Constitution and democracy” (Casals 2020, p. 28). In this sense, it can be inferred from this that VOX is potentially disruptive, as it considers itself legitimated to explore non-democratic political forms that preserve Spain as a nation if it judges that it is in danger.

Although we maintain that PRPPs are not per se against democracy and, as a consequence, we do not expect

an explicit anti-democratic discourse from VOX leaders, as we mentioned before, the party repurposes some of the ideological strongholds of the Francoist regime. Also, it presents a romanticized image of pre-democratic times, with constant allusions to a better past as well as to a nostalgia of other allegedly glorious times.[iii] In this regard, since voters are assumed to vote for parties with ideological platforms close to their views, for Spaniards with low attachment to democracy, a populist radical right party is probably the best option in the system (see Zanotti and Meléndez 2022b).

In this sense, it is essential to note that the authoritarian Spanish regime was characterized by a strong nationalistic rhetoric as well as an organic anti-liberal conception of democracy (Ribera Payá and Díaz Martínez 2020). Also, the pre-democratic corporate government sought to assemble the 'living forces' of the nation around a common goal: restoring Spain's grandeur (Ribera Payá and Díaz Martínez 2020). All these elements are present in the discourse of VOX. Especially the references to the "Living Spain" (España Viva) in opposition to the "Anti Spain" (Anti España) are present both in the electoral manifesto and in the public speeches of the party's leaders (Calsals 2020). In this sense, it is essential to note that the opposition between "the real Spain" and "the Anti-Spain" became especially frequent on the occasion of the general elections of 1936,

so that it was a clear indication of the political division of the country and as a prelude to the upcoming war (García-Santos 1980). In respect to this, it is worth noting that VOX manifesto for the November 2019 election is called "100 Medidas para la España Viva" ("100 measures for the Living Spain"). Even during the electoral campaign for the April 2019 general election, the slogan of the party was "it is time for the Living Spain" ("Es la hora de la España Viva"). Moreover, during the rally in Madrid's Colón Square that closed the electoral campaign for the April elections of 2019, the party leader Santiago Abascal claimed:

"On April 28th, we will not see usual elections. On the 28th, we decide what matters the most: a patriotic alternative or an agreement of betrayal. Either the disaggregation or the historical continuity of our homeland. Either socialist misery or the prosperity of our children and grandchildren. Either the progressive dictatorship or freedom for the Spaniards. Furthermore, more clearly, on the [election of April 2019] 28th, we choose, either the anti-Spain or the living Spain" (Colón 2019).

Nowadays, according to VOX, those who oppose to the Living Spain allying with the anti-Spain, are, in general terms, the "leftist" media [El País, la SER, La Sexta], radical left formations, Catalan independentists, LGBTQ+ and

feminist movements (among others). Mainstream media are characterized as a 'lying machine' that 'craft fake news from bureaus of radios and televisions which uphold the 'progressive dictatorship' (Ribera Payá and Díaz Martínez 2020: 15). Another example of this recurrent use of the Living Spain discourse was just one day before the Andalusian regional elections, on the occasion of the rally for the "Unity of Spain" organized by DENAES (Fundación para la Defensa de Nación Española), Santiago Abascal claimed:

"Spain is alive and claims the inheritance that our parents have given us. Spain is alive and is fighting for the future and the freedom we have to give our children. Spain is alive and is much stronger than its enemies. Spain is alive and is much stronger than what its enemies thought Spain was"

In sum, discursively, VOX leaders do not express themselves against the democratic regime, at least coherently and explicitly. However, they adopted many of the positions of the Francoist regime in terms of the defense of traditional moral values and the exaltation of the alleged past grandeur of Spain. Indeed, although VOX does not explicitly assume an ideological affiliation with the dictatorship, it is also true that the recurrent hints to the authoritarian Spanish legacy might attract former voters of far-right parties or those with

low levels of attachment to democracy who previously had the only option of voting for the mainstream right.

With respect to the attitudes towards democracy and the vote for the PRR, the comparative literature poses that "people who are more dissatisfied with democracy are more likely to vote for extreme right-wing parties" (Lubbers, Gijsberts, and Scheepers 2002, p.353). In this sense, Donovan (2019) posits that dissatisfaction with democracy may also capture authoritarian attitudes, which have been documented to foster the vote for the far right. However, we know less about the relationship between the individual level of support for democracy and the vote for PRRPs in young democracies. In the case of Spain it can be plausible that a relevant portion of those individuals with low attachment to democracy had voted for the PP before the emergence of VOX. In fact, many studies found that the center-right and right voters are more prone to support non-democratic regimes alternatives (Torcal and Medina 2002; Torcal 2008). In addition to this, it may also be the case that VOX discourse and its references to the pre-democratic period mainly functioned as cognitive shortcuts activating authoritarian attitudes in those who have presented only authoritarian predispositions (Stenner 2005). Assuming this, we expect:

Hypothesis 1: The stronger the preferences for a political system alternative to democracy (even authoritarian), the higher the probability to vote for VOX instead of other political forces in the 2019 November general elections.

DATA AND METHODS

To test our hypothesis, we employed a dataset by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS), the Spanish national public institution responsible for survey data collection at the national level. The dataset is based on a nationally representative sample. The sample consisted of 4,804 individuals (5,000 planned interviews) among the people with the right to vote in the 2019 November general elections and who were residing in Spain (seventeen Autonomous Communities plus the two autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla in Africa) at the time.

We modeled the electoral support for VOX using a binary logistic regression in which the dependent variable is vote recall (1 = voted for VOX, 0 = voted for any other party). We recorded abstainers, null, and blank votes as missing³. Regarding the control variables, we selected indicators that commonly capture the main drivers of support for PRRPs, as well as other social and demographic factors usually employed to explain electoral

behavior. Thus, we include indicators of age (continuous); a dichotomous indicator of sex (1 = female); a categorical measure of income (1 = 900€ or less, 2 = from 901€ to 1,800€, and 3 = more than 1,800€); a measure of the education level (1 = low, 2 = medium, and 3 = high); the size of place of residence (1 = rural, 0 = urban); given the relevance of religious cleavage among left and right voters, the variable Catholic churchgoer (1 = catholic who attends religious services once a week or more, 0 = not religious, not catholic or less frequent attendant), political interest (1 = high political involvement, 0 = low), a binary indicator of political apathy, political discontent (1 = political situation bad, 0 = political situation neutral/good) and the respondent's ideological positions on the left-right dimension (1 = left to 10 = right, scale).

Additionally, as specific controls for the case of VOX, we include in the statistical model a variable that acts as a proxy of nationalism: the self-reported identification with the national identity of Spain (1 = identifies mainly or exclusively as Spanish, 0 = plurinational identity). In the same vein, and to assess the

3 Additionally, we test the effect of the same variables upon the likelihood to vote for VOX (codified as 1) and other parties, not vote, vote null or black (codified as 0). See Model 2 Figure 2.

impact of the Catalan secessionist crisis⁴ on the vote for VOX, we employ a variable that measures the extent to which voters went to the polls due to the Catalan conflict (1= yes, the Catalan conflict pushed me to go to the polls; 0= No, the Catalan conflict did not influence my vote), and a variable that measures the nativist nature on VOX, immigration as a most important problem (MIP) of the country (1= immigration is the most important problem in Spain; 0= immigration is not the most important problem in Spain). Trying to measure the relevance of Francoist nostalgia we include a variable that accounts for the relevance of the measure adopted by the socialist government and implemented on October the 24th, 2019, which exhumated the rests of the Dictator Francisco Franco (1= the exhumation of Francisco Franco's rests matters in my decision to vote; 0= the exhumation of Francisco Franco's rests does not matter in my decision of voted). This variable allows us to account for the relevance of the past in the VOX voting.

Finally, and in order to test our hypothesis, we analyze the impact of political system preferences (1= democracy is always preferable; 0 = the political system is indifferent/ sometimes an authoritarian option is preferable) upon the probability to cast a vote for VOX instead of other

political parties in the last November 2019 Spanish elections. Table A1 in the Online Appendix displays the descriptive of the main variables⁵. In the last column, the VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) confirms that we can introduce all these variables simultaneously, as the highest VIF is 1.71 (Education), a value considerably lower than the levels regarded as problematic.

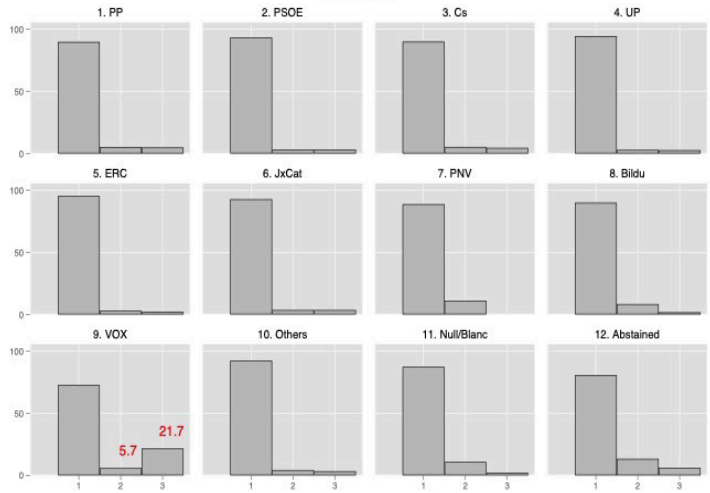
Results

Concerning VOX voters, before moving to multivariate analysis, we first provide a descriptive overview of the electors that cast a vote for VOX in the general elections of November 2019 and those who voted for other parties, regarding their distribution in three categories of the variable regime preference: 1) "A democratic system is always preferable"; 2) "the political system is indifferent"; 3) "sometimes an authoritarian regime is necessary." Figure 2 displays the average levels of support for each one of these categories. The results indicate that the third category (sometimes an authoritarian regime is necessary) is more common among VOX voters than among those who voted for other political forces. Notably, looking at VOX

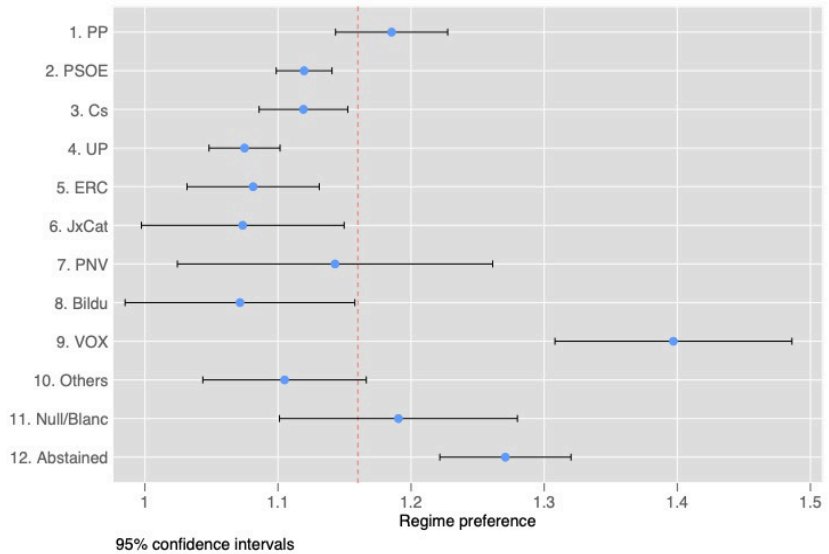
4 In October 2017, a coalition of the Catalan separatist parties in government in Catalonia called for an Independence Referendum without the authorization of the Spanish Government (Barrio and Field 2018).

5 Additionally, Figures A1, A2 and A3 follow the same idea of Figure 1 showing, by political party, the description of three main independent variables: the impact of Franco's exhumation on my decision to vote, immigration as a most important problem in the country, and the Catalan conflict without the authorization of the Spanish Government (Barrio and Field 2018).

Figure 2. Percentage of VOX and the four main parties' supporters on the regime preferences



Panel B



Source: Elaboration of the authors based on the November 2019 CIS post-electoral survey

Note: 1) "A democratic system is always preferable"; 2) "the political system is indifferent"; 3) "sometimes an authoritarian regime is necessary."

voters in the last general election, for 5.7 percent of respondents the type of regime is irrelevant while 21.7 percent considers that an authoritarian regime is sometimes preferable. This means that a proportion of 1 over four (27.35 percent) has preferences that do not explicitly endorse democracy as a necessarily desirable regime type. If we compare the graph of VOX displayed in Figure 2 with the one representing the whole electorate (labeled "Total"), the distribution clearly illustrates that, whereas the third category is residual for the Spanish electorate as a whole, for VOX is quite the contrary.

Figure 3 shows the AMEs carried out after logistic regressions to test our main hypothesis. With the AMEs we can isolate the effect of each one of the independent variables (controlling by all the rest) upon the likelihood to vote for VOX. Results could be directly interpretable as are expressed in percentages. Table A2 in the Online Appendix displays the logistic regressions, allowing us to consult the coefficient, standard errors (in brackets) and levels of statistical significance for each one of the included variables. Figure 3 only displays the results for the political variables, avoiding showing results for the social and demographic controls. The three panels of Figure 3 represent three alternative dependent variables. Additionally, Model 4 in Table A2, show that, with an alternative main independent variable, regime preferences in three categories, the results are the same that with an independent

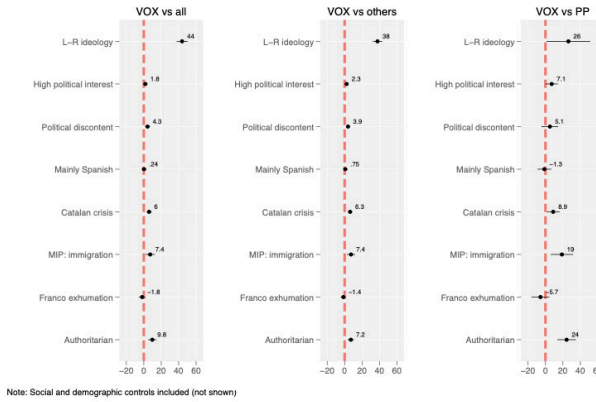
variable of two categories. Model 3 in both Table A2 and Figure 3 allows us to test the effect of regime preferences upon the probability to vote for VOX (1) instead of the PP (0) – as we assume that rightist critical voters with the political system were previously mobilized by the PP (see Torcal and Medina 2002). The results keep statistically significant and with the expected sign.

In general terms, Models 1 and 2, show that VOX voters tend to be men, from the younger cohorts, with a medium level of education, from the urban areas, with a high income, rightist, to a certain extent, politically interested, with a negative perception of politics, and affected by the Catalan crisis.

Concerning our expectations, all the models confirm our hypothesis, to the point that those who support democracy exhibit a higher probability to vote for other parties instead of VOX. More importantly, AMEs show that the most relevant variable to understand VOX support, apart from ideology (the variables was divided by 10, in order to move from 0.1 to 1), is political regime preference, to the point that the likelihood to vote for VOX instead of not vote, vote blank or null or abstain, increase in a 9.8 percent among those electors who consider that the political regime is indifferent or, sometimes, an authoritarian regime is necessary. The percentage decrease in 2.6 points when the dependent variable is VOX vs other parties (from 9.8 to 7.6). As expected, the Catalan crisis and

considering immigration as the most important problem of the country (MIP: immigration) stand out as two main factors to explain VOX support.

Figure 3. Average marginal effects on the probabilities to vote for VOX, general elections November 2019

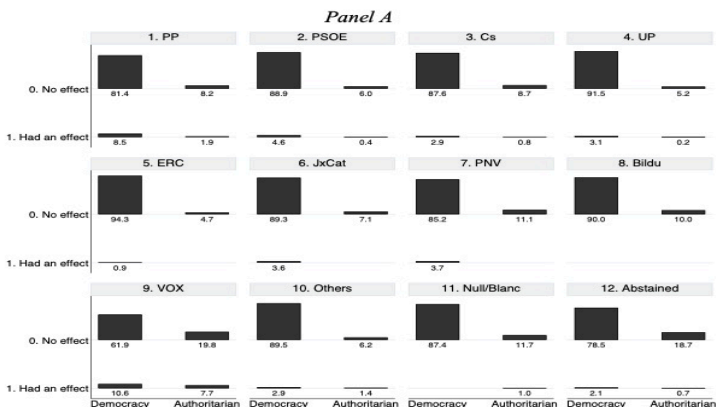


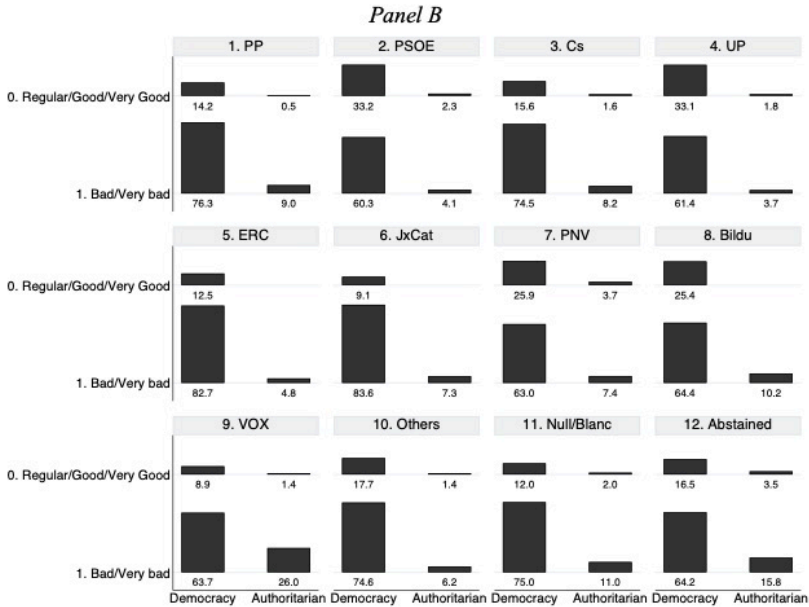
Source: Elaboration of the authors based on the November 2019 CIS post-electoral survey

WHO ARE THOSE UNDEMOCRATIC VOTERS? THE ROLE OF NOSTALGIA AND POLITICAL DISCONTENT

Trying to understand these findings, Figure 4, displays a cross-tabulate in which we can see if the authoritarian regime preferences are higher among VOX voters, compared with the electorates of the rest of the political parties,

Figure 4. Relationship between Franco exhumation variable and regime support a,b





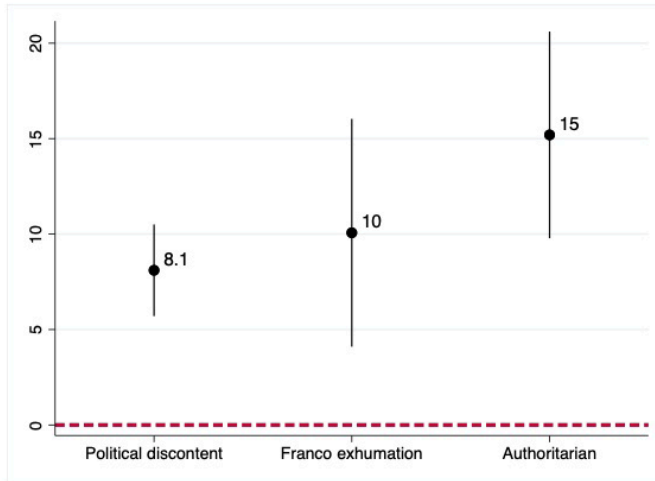
Source: Own elaboration based on post electoral survey data, CIS, November 2019.

a VOX stands out for being the party, whose voters are the ones with a greater percentage of preferences for a non-democratic (even authoritarian) regime and having been affected on their voting decision by the measure of the Spanish socialist government to exhume Dictator Franco.

b VOX stands out for being the party, whose voters are the ones with a greater percentage of preferences for a non-democratic (even authoritarian) regime and for being politically discontent.

among those which vote was affected by the Dictator Franco's (panel A) exhumation and the ones more politically discontent (panel B). Results reveal that both variables display a more significant role for VOX voters than for the rest of the electorate.

Additionally, based on Model 5 Table A2, Figure 5 shows that, when we try to understand the vote for VOX just controlling by social and demographic factors, we find that the likelihood to vote for the party of Santiago Abascal is, respectively, 8.1, 10 and

Figure 5. Average marginal effects, specific variables (Model 4, Table A2)

Source: Own elaboration based on post electoral survey data, CIS, November 2019.

15 percent higher among those voters politically discontent, those who have been affected by the exhumation of the rests of the Dictator Francisco

Franco and those who consider that, in some occasions, an authoritarian regime is necessary.

CONCLUSION

Analyzing the case of VOX in Spain, this study is one of the first attempts to assess the relationship between support for democracy and the vote for a populist radical right party in a country with a recent authoritarian past. The case of VOX is particularly relevant since it displays a discursive rhetoric that engage with pre-democratic times both repositing ideological tenets and some metaphors discursively employed by non-democratic

elites. With respect to the ideological tenets VOX was able to politicize both the defense of the traditional moral values and the centrality of the state against regional autonomies and as an exaltation of the Spanish identity. We believe that both these ideological commonalities and the figures of speech—such as “the Living Spain vs. the Anti Spain”—play a role in attracting those who are less loyal to democracy. In fact, our results show

that those individuals who exhibit less support for democracy were more prone to vote for VOX instead of other parties in the last November 2019 general elections. Confirming findings of previous research, we also found that among those who are politically discontent and less supportive of democracy the probability to vote for VOX increases in a significant manner.

These findings are of note for various reasons. On the one hand, previous studies have not found a positive and statistically significant relationship between support for the democratic regime and the vote, at least for the main Western European PRRPs. This goes in line with the conceptualization and distinction between extreme

and radical right parties: supporters of the radical right are not necessarily anti-democratic. However, VOX flirtation with a romanticized image of pre-transition Spain, consciously or not, attracts the support of those voters who do not fully endorse democracy. All in all, this study enriches the debate on the relationship between the populist radical right and democracy at the empirical level, for a new party like VOX, that discursively refers often to the past authoritarian regime even without endorsing it explicitly. The next step is analyzing whether this study's results are supported in a more comparative analysis that focuses on other PRRPs in Europe and beyond.

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APPENDIX

Table A1. Description of variables

	Obs	Mean	Std. dev.	Min	Max	VIF
<i>Independent variables</i>						
Sex	4.804	0.52	0.50	0	1	1.15
Age	4.804	50.93	17.84	18	98	1.43
Education	4.785	2.03	0.65	1	3	1.71
Income	3.349	0.65	0.70	0	2	1.51
Rural	4.804	0.49	0.50	0	1	1.14
Church attendance	4.797	0.09	0.29	0	1	1.16
Ideology	4.041	4.76	2.00	1	10	1.34
Political interest	4.800	0.39	0.49	0	1	1.14
Political evaluation	4.676	0.76	0.42	0	1	1.07
National sentiment	4.446	0.23	0.42	0	1	1.21
Catalan conflict	4.782	0.23	0.42	0	1	1.26
MIP: immigration	4.804	0.06	0.23	0	1	1.05
Franco exhumation	4.783	0.06	0.23	0	1	1.14
Regime preference	4.620	0.11	0.32	0	1	1.08
Regime preference	4.620	1.17	0.50	1	3	1.08
<i>Dependent variable</i>						
VOX vs other parties	3.377	0.11	0.31	0	1	
VOX vs all	4.804	0.08	0.26	0	1	
VOX vs PP	1.026	0.35	0.48	0	1	

Source: Elaboration of the authors based on the November 2019 CIS post electoral survey

Table A2. Probability to vote for Vox instead other political parties, instead other political parties vote blank, null or abstain and Vox versus PP, November 2019

	Model 1 VOX vs all	Model 2 VOX vs others	Model 3 VOX vs PP	Model 4 VOX vs other	Model 5 VOX vs others
Gender (Woman)	-0.46** (0.20)	-0.50** (0.21)	-0.66*** (0.24)	-0.44** (0.20)	-0.42** (0.17)
Age (continuous)	-0.03*** (0.01)	-0.03*** (0.01)	-0.04*** (0.01)	-0.03*** (0.01)	-0.02*** (0.01)
<i>Education (baseline: Medium)</i>					
Low	-0.79* (0.43)	-0.81* (0.44)	-0.60 (0.43)	-0.80* (0.42)	-1.02*** (0.35)
High	-1.46*** (0.31)	-1.45*** (0.33)	-1.33*** (0.32)	-1.49*** (0.31)	-1.12*** (0.25)
<i>Income (baseline: 0-900€)</i>					
901€-1800€	0.30 (0.22)	0.20 (0.23)	0.26 (0.26)	0.29 (0.22)	0.25 (0.19)
>1801€	0.79** (0.33)	0.68* (0.35)	0.53 (0.36)	0.82** (0.33)	0.94*** (0.29)
Rural	-0.21 (0.20)	-0.17 (0.21)	-0.05 (0.24)	-0.17 (0.20)	-0.15 (0.17)
Church attendance	0.15 (0.33)	-0.02 (0.35)	-0.03 (0.31)	0.11 (0.33)	
Ideology	0.65*** (0.05)	0.67*** (0.05)	0.16** (0.08)	0.64*** (0.05)	
Political interest (high)	0.40** (0.19)	0.27 (0.20)	0.43* (0.23)	0.33* (0.19)	
Political discontent	0.74*** (0.26)	0.71*** (0.27)	0.32 (0.31)	0.79*** (0.27)	1.20*** (0.23)
National sentiment (mainly Spanish)	0.13 (0.22)	0.04 (0.23)	-0.08 (0.25)	0.12 (0.22)	
Catalan crisis	1.01*** (0.19)	0.86*** (0.20)	0.54** (0.22)	1.03*** (0.20)	
MIP: immigration	1.04*** (0.29)	0.95*** (0.31)	1.09*** (0.38)	0.97*** (0.30)	
Franco exhumation	-0.26 (0.32)	-0.30 (0.33)	-0.36 (0.34)	-0.27 (0.32)	0.96*** (0.24)
Support for democracy	1.04*** (0.23)	1.22*** (0.25)	1.38*** (0.32)		1.35*** (0.20)
<i>Regime preference (baseline: democracy best)</i>					
Indifferent				0.04 (0.42)	
Authoritarian				1.54*** (0.28)	
Constant	-5.71*** (0.51)	-5.25*** (0.52)	-0.06 (0.77)	-5.67*** (0.52)	-2.11*** (0.37)
Observations	2.481	2.016	662	2.481	2.306

Robust standard errors in parentheses: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Source: Elaboration of the authors based on the November 2019 CIS post electoral survey

Figure A1. Bar chart of Franco exhumation matters on my vote decision

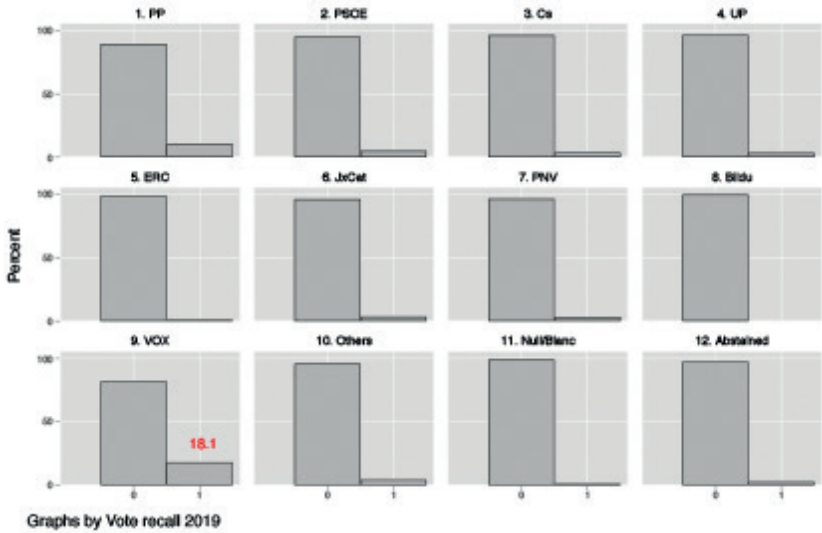


Figure A2. Bar chart of immigration as the main important problem in the country

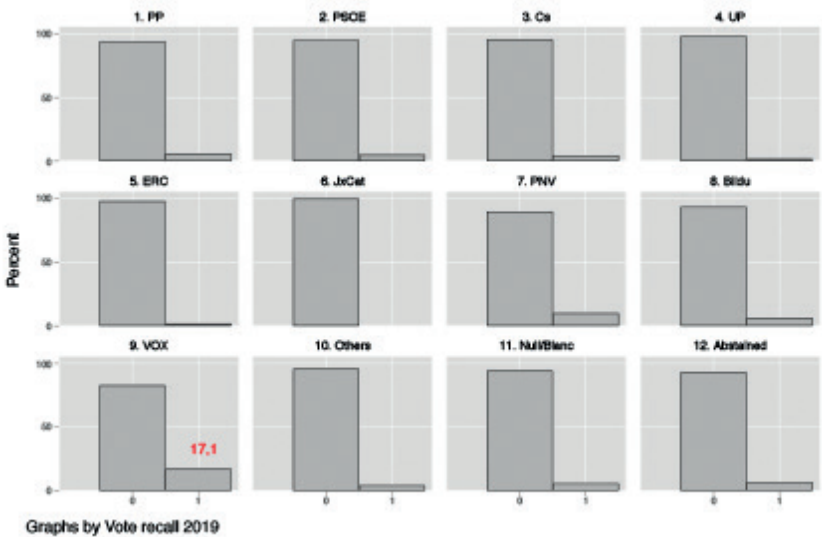
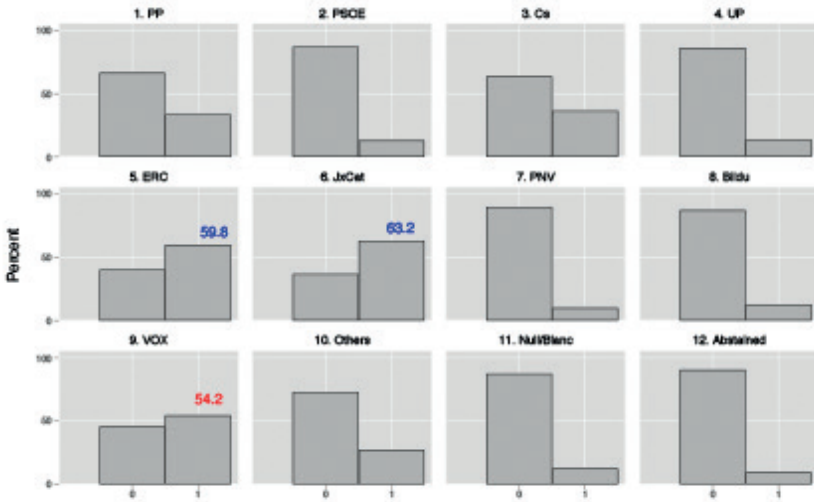


Figure A3 Bar charts of the variable “the Catalan conflict” mobilize me to vote



Graphs by Vote recall 2019