

“Teachers of comparative politics, students of democratic processes, and researchers on extremist parties will find in this book a precious treasure of data, analysis, and comprehension. Through the case of VOX, its authors, a bright team of young scholars, offer a rigorous examination of Spanish democracy and an invaluable contribution to the literature on populist radical right parties”.

— **José Ramón Montero**, *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain*

“With its comprehensive coverage of VOX’s origin, growth, organization, manifestos and voters, this is a much-needed contribution to our understanding of the rise of the radical right. A must-read for those interested in party system change, Spanish and European politics”.

— **Eva Anduiza**, *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain*

“The first systematic analysis of the Spanish VOX in the English language ... a comprehensive account of the party’s origins, ideology, organizational structure and social base. This book is a valuable resource for scholars and students of the radical right in Spain and beyond”.

— **Daphne Halikiopoulou**, *University of Reading, UK*

“This very timely book offers intriguing analyses of VOX’s origins, positions and voters. It provides keen insights into the radical right party, helping readers understand why Spain is no longer an outlier in Europe. It is essential reading for anyone interested in contemporary Spanish and European politics”.

— **Bonnie N. Field**, *Bentley University, USA*

“In 2019 Spain was the next country to elect populist radical right party to parliament. Where many others had failed, VOX succeeded. This study of the Spanish populist radical right upstart explains how it has been able to impact Spanish politics within years of its founding ... essential reading for scholars of Spanish politics and of the far right”.

— **Cas Mudde**, *University of Georgia, and Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX), University of Oslo, Norway*

VOX

This book examines VOX, the first major and electorally successful populist radical right-wing party to emerge in Spain since the death of General Franco, and the restoration of parliamentary democracy in the late 1970s.

In December 2018, VOX, a new party on the populist radical right, entered the Andalusian regional parliament, and played the role of kingmaker in the ensuing government formation discussions. Since then, under the leadership of Santiago Abascal, VOX has earned political representation in numerous local, regional and national elections. The party attracted more than 3.6 million votes in the November 2019 general election, making VOX the third largest party in the Spanish Congress. In two years, the party has become a key political challenger and an important player in Spanish politics. This book explains the origins of the party, its ideology and relationship with democracy, its appeal with voters, and its similarities with (and differences from) other populist radical right parties in Europe. It draws upon a rich source of domestic as well as cross-national survey data and a systematic analysis of party manifestos which provide a detailed account of the rise of VOX and what its emergence means for Spanish politics.

This volume will be of interest to scholars of comparative politics, political parties, voters and elections, Spanish politics, the populist radical right and populism in general.

José Rama is a Lecturer in the Department of Political Science & International Relations at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM), Spain. He holds a PhD in Political Science at UAM. He has published in a number of leading journals including, amongst others, *Journal of Democracy*, *Government and Opposition*, and *European Political Science Review*.

Lisa Zanotti is an Associate Researcher at Instituto de Investigación en Ciencias Sociales – Universidad Diego Portales (UDP), Chile. She holds a joint PhD in Political Science from Diego Portales University and in Humanities from Leiden University, the Netherlands. She has recently published in *Political Studies Review*, and *Comparative European Politics*.

Stuart J. Turnbull-Dugarte is an Assistant Professor at the University of Southampton, UK. He holds a PhD in Political Science from King's College London, UK. He has published in a number of leading journals including, amongst others, the *European Journal of Political Research*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, *West European Politics*, and *Electoral Studies*.

Andrés Santana is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain. He researches in voting behaviour (populist parties, turnout and the decision to vote), women's political representation, and research methodology. He has recently published in the *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, *Social Politics*, *Politics & Gender*, and *East European Politics*.

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VOX

The Rise of the Spanish Populist Radical Right

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VOX

The Rise of the Spanish Populist Radical Right

*José Rama, Lisa Zanotti,
Stuart J. Turnbull-Dugarte and
Andrés Santana*

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*To the workers, volunteers and families, both native-born and foreign, whose everyday efforts,
be that at home in Spain or abroad, help to make Spain great.*

*Es preferible meterse las manos en los bolsillos y echar a andar por el mundo (...) aún
a sabiendas de que en esta época de estrechos y egoístas nacionalismos el exiliado, el sin
patria, es en todas partes un huésped indeseable que tiene que hacerse perdonar a fuerza de
humildad y servidumbre su existencia.*

Chaves Nogales, A Sangre y Fuego. Héroes, bestias y mártires de España

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FOREWORD

For a long period, Spanish politics appeared to have followed a different path from most Western European countries. While the fragmentation of the electoral space into different political forces and the emergence of populist radical right parties have become increasingly common across Western European societies, Spain appeared immune to these trends. After the transition to democracy in the late 1970s, Spain's two main parties – the socialist PSOE and the conservative PP – were able to become truly catch-all parties at the national level. Although it is true that regional parties have always played an important role, the PSOE and the PP were ideally conditioned to become hegemonic actors at a national level.

However, this comfortable situation ended abruptly with the onset of the Great Recession of 2008. One of the consequences of the latter was the emergence of the Indignados Movement, which paved the way for the rise of the populist radical left party Podemos. The latter aggressively confronted the PSOE and it took a long struggle and numerous electoral contests before both parties were prepared to form a national-level coalition government, which is presently headed by Pedro Sánchez from the PSOE. At the same time, the rise of the liberal party Ciudadanos contested the PP's historical supremacy on the right-wing block. On top of this, the more recent appearance of the populist radical right party VOX further complicated the PP situation, since the right-wing block is now divided into three different political parties. In summary, contemporary Spain has become far more similar to most Western European party systems, which are increasingly fragmented into different political formations and have at least one reasonably well-established populist radical right party.

By taking into account this transformation of the Spanish political system, the authors of this book not only offer a fascinating account of contemporary Spain, but also view the situation of the country in comparative perspective. In fact, those interested in Spanish politics and in the populist radical right will learn much from

this book. Without intending to provide a detailed list of the lessons one can draw from this book, there are at least three foci that are worth highlighting.

First, the book does a fine job in revealing the characteristics of VOX voters as well as the ideas espoused by the party. This analysis helps demonstrate that VOX is anything but a mainstream right party. Indeed, it should be classified as a populist radical right party. Interacting with academic literature on the topic, the book shows that the profile of VOX voters is not too different from most populist radical voters across Western Europe. The same can be said about VOX's policies, which are indeed similar to populist radical rights' across the continent, characterized, among other issues, by strong rejection of immigration, harsh rhetoric on law and order, as well as the defence of the traditional interpretation of the nation.

Second, the empirical analysis undertaken by the authors is careful enough to show that despite important similarities between VOX and the populist radical right, there are certain elements that make VOX a peculiar member of this party family within the Western European context. After all, the academic literature has pointed out that in order to adapt to the national context, populist radical right parties can end up giving more emphasis to certain issues that are relevant in some areas but not in others. In the case of VOX, this account reveals that their voters come mainly from the middle-upper class and that the party spares no effort in presenting a romanticized image of Francoist Spain. Moreover, the authors also indicate that in contrast to most populist radical right parties in Western Europe, VOX affords much attention to the defence of the integrity of the Spanish nation (i.e. radical condemnation of regionalist forces) and to the protection of traditional values (i.e. frontal attack against feminism). This means that in some aspects VOX is closer to exponents of the populist radical right beyond Western Europe, such as Donald Trump in the United States and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil.

Third, the book provides enough empirical evidence to argue that VOX is a new party whose origins are deeply related to the main conservative party of the country. Most of the key leaders of VOX have made a political career within the PP and not a few VOX voters are former PP supporters. In other words, despite its newness, VOX relies on well-trained personnel who have experience in elections and in government. Therefore, it is not far-fetched to suggest that VOX will not be an ephemeral phenomenon. Seen in this light, VOX represents a major challenge to the PP, which sooner or later will have to make the difficult decision: either adapt to segments of the Spanish electorate that express the liberal and progressive values of the so-called silent revolution, or give voice to those Spanish voters who sympathize with the authoritarian and nativist ideas associated with the so-called silent counter-revolution. As the experience of other countries in Western Europe and the world reveal, the future of liberal democracy and the success of the populist radical right hinges on the approach taken by the mainstream right. Therefore, academics and pundits alike should carefully analyse the behaviour of the PP in the coming years.

In summary, this book addresses an important research gap. By providing a detailed analysis of VOX and studying this political party in a comparative fashion,

the authors offer a much-needed contribution on the transformation of Spanish politics, its increasing similarities with the political landscape of Western Europe and the challenges that democracy faces in the country.

Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser

Santiago de Chile, November 2020

1

INTRODUCTION

From pariah to the institutions

If you feel gratitude and honour for those who wear a uniform and guard the wall;
If you remember those who have fallen so that they do not fall into nothing;
If you respect the history of your elders;
If you are willing to push yourself to protect your future and the wealth of your children;
If you love your country as you love your parents;
If you bless beauty, the good and truth;
If you are willing to fight in an eternal fight for freedom;
If you take part and get your hands dirty to fight injustice;
If you think that in risk, there is hope;
Then believe me, if you do all of this day and night;
During the storm and during peace times;
In the days of misery and in the days of abundance;
Then you will know that you are succeeding in helping to:
MAKE SPAIN GREAT AGAIN.

(Santiago Abascal, from VOX election campaign video, 2018)¹

More than 9,000 VOX sympathizers filled the Vistalegre Stadium in Madrid in October 2018. A former bullring was the selected venue for the first big demonstration of the depth and breadth of the support enjoyed by Spain's new populist radical right party. Born in 2013, without any notable electoral success, VOX [Latin: voice] looked set to join the graveyard full of failed radical and extreme right-wing parties that had fallen short of their goal of rupturing Spain's exceptional status as a country free of the radical or extreme right since the transition to

2 Introduction

democracy. Fast-forward to 2018 and, in the lead-up to the regional elections of Andalusia, all political pundits could talk about was whether or not VOX would win a seat in the regional parliament.

The party's rallying cry to "Make Spain Great Again!", which they announced alongside their 100-measure plan "for a living Spain" [*por la España viva*] at Vistalegre, took some commentators by surprise: supporters of the radical right were no longer disorganized and dispersed, but could be mobilized under one roof and behind one political party. In the lead-up, the polls, namely that administrated by Spain's national polling agency,² estimated that, at best, VOX would take one seat in the Andalusian regional parliament. The polls, however, failed to estimate the latent support for the ultra-nationalist party, whose electoral gains were bolstered by their dominance over the issue of national unity and the defence of the Spanish nation against internal and external threats in the form of (pro-Catalan independence) secessionists and immigrants, respectively. Just two months after the Vistalegre rally, VOX surpassed the polls and won 11 per cent of the popular vote and 12 out of 109 seats in the Andalusian parliament. Spanish exceptionalism (Alonso and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2015) had come to an end.

One year later, in October 2019, *Vistalegre II Plus Ultra*³ took place with VOX only a few short weeks away from consolidating its expanding position to become the third largest party in Spain. Greeted by shouts of "Long live Spain!" [*Viva España!*], the party's leader and president, Santiago Abascal, alongside his four henchmen – Iván Espinosa de Los Monteros, Rocío Monasterio, Javier Ortega Smith, and Jorge Buxadé Villalba – were introduced by Spanish songs interpreted by a collection of famous artists. The party conference attracted more than 12,000 people; the party promised to defend and love the nation. Before *Vistalegre I*, VOX, the party leader and his four henchmen were barely known to the wider population. Shortly after *Vistalegre II*, VOX would become Spain's third largest party and a key right-wing government-supporting partner across different layers of government in Spain's multilevel governance structure, and Santiago Abascal, alongside his inner circle, would all become household names.

What happened: explaining the rise of VOX

So how did we get here? The birth of VOX predates 2018 with the party establishing itself in 2013 as a result of an internal split from the mainstream right-wing party, the People's Party [*Partido Popular*] (PP). 2017, one year before VOX's virgin success in 2018, is, however, undeniably when political events in Spain lit the flame that would embolden VOX and bring it out of the electoral wilderness. One year before VOX's infamous mass rally in *Vistalegre I*, Spain entered uncharted constitutional territory when the regional government in Catalonia unilaterally declared independence from Spain following the results of an unauthorized plebiscite on Catalan self-determination. The territorial conflict between proponents and opponents of decentralized decision-making and governance is nothing new in Spanish politics (Dowling, 2018; Gray, 2020): political parties at the national

and subnational levels have long danced around the issue, leaning to leniency and opposition to sub(national) party agendas that best suit their own governing ambitions (Field, 2014).

What marks the events of 2017 apart, however, is that the actions of the regional government in pursuing its secessionist agenda, violating both the regional laws (*Estatuto de Autonomía*) and the Spanish Constitution, and the response of the government in seeking to i) squash participation in the unauthorized plebiscite by force, and ii) dismantle the regional government and impose direct rule from Madrid, aided to engender further polarization and heightened territorial tensions across the country (Simón, 2020; 2021).

VOX, much like one of Spain's earlier party entrepreneurs, Citizens [*Ciudadanos*] (Cs),⁴ leveraged popular concerns over the issue of regional statehood and the ambitions of independent statehood of the Catalan government to enter the political arena. VOX built upon its unapologetic Spanish nationalism and its reliance on national symbols to present itself as the sole political party disposed to advocate, with sufficient aggression, the unity of Spain.

The message of being “tough on Catalonia” played out well for the party. Their inaugural success in the Andalusian elections, which brought 36 years of socialist-led rule in the region to an end, was in large part attributed to the fact that the second-order elections became, to an important extent, a quasi-plebiscite on the national government's handling of the Catalan crisis. The data on this is clear: those who wanted devolution to be reduced or reversed were significantly more likely to support VOX (Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019). One of the main strategies adopted by mainstream parties to diminish electoral opportunities of emerging challengers is to lean into their “competency advantage” gained from their experience in government (De Vries and Hobolt, 2020). The competency advantage of government experience, however, requires demonstrated successes to signal competency and, in the case of Catalonia, the responses of successive governments have remained wanting. VOX's stance on the question of devolution and its treatment of secessionism was therefore a particularly effective wedge issue with which it was able to attack all of the established parties, as no left- or right-leaning government had been able to resolve the issue.

Shortly after VOX's maiden success in Andalusia, on 10 February – alongside the other right-wing parties – VOX called for the now infamous Demonstration for the Unity of Spain, which took place on Madrid's well-known Colón square.⁵ The rally, organized by the three right-wing parties in response to what they penned as the socialist-led government's “betrayal” of Spain, called for the resignation of Pedro Sánchez's government (Forrest, 2019). When Catalan regionalist parties refused to back the government's budget bill in February (they conditioned their support to the celebration of a legitimate independence referendum in Catalonia), the Prime Minister, of the Spanish Socialist Worker's Party [*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*] (PSOE), called for new elections. Only five days had elapsed since the Colón rally. The results of the 28 April polling day are well known: VOX achieved nearly 2.7 million votes or 10.26 per cent of the ballots cast and took home 24 of

the 350 seats in the Spanish Congress. VOX entered national level representative institutions for the first time.

From the initial success in December 2018 and its eruption into the national parliament in April the party has gone from strength to strength. The inability of the PSOE to gather enough support from other parties on either the left (*Unidas Podemos*), the right (Cs), or among the other minor parties needed in order to form a government led to a repetition of Spain's general elections in November. One year and one month since they first gained electoral representation (beyond the 22 testimonial councillors in the 2015 local elections), VOX overtook the support enjoyed by Spain's other two new parties and emerged as the third largest political force, only after the PP and the PSOE.

VOX has made it into the mainstream of Spanish politics. The party currently boasts 52 out of 350 MPs in Spain's national Congress and has supported the formation of several PP-led governments at the regional level, namely those in the Madrid, Murcia, and Andalusia regions, and at the local level, such as those in the cities of Madrid, Santander, and Córdoba, via a number of confidence and supply agreements. VOX's rise is clear, but what type of party is VOX?

VOX as a populist radical right party

The categorization of populist radical right parties is controversial. We maintain, like the vast body of empirical literature, that VOX belongs to the populist radical right (Mudde, 2019; Mendes and Dennison, 2021; Norris, 2020; Ribera Payá and Díaz Martínez, 2020; Rooduijn et al., 2020; Turnbull-Dugarte et al., 2020; Vampa, 2020; Rama and Zanotti, 2020).⁶ Also, in the words of Norris (2020), VOX is essentially a “classic example of a populist radical right party”.

Populist radical right actors share, at least, three ideological features: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Mudde, 2007). Nativism holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (the nation), whereas non-native (or alien) elements, whether persons or ideas, are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state (Mudde, 2007). Nativism is the core ideology of populist radical right parties. As Mudde (2016) pointed out, within the ideology of the populist radical right, populism comes second to nativism. This is particularly evident in the case of VOX. VOX's discourse focuses on the primacy of Spain as a nation, exalting and glorifying the alleged characteristics of the true Spaniards in opposition to the out-group, i.e. the non-native population. Nativism is a combination of xenophobia and nationalism (Mudde, 2019) and as far as VOX is concerned, the nationalist component is particularly relevant. Indeed, at least to the present day, the discourse of the party focuses more on the exaltation of the inner group (nationalism) than on the exclusion of the out-group (xenophobia).

Second, populist radical right actors are authoritarian. This understanding of authoritarianism is not inherent to their support of a specific political regime. Instead, authoritarianism, in this case, refers to the belief in a strictly ordered society in which infringements on authority are to be severely punished (Mudde

2019: 29). This translates into “stricter law and order policies which call for more police with greater competencies and less political involvement in the judiciary” (Mudde, 2015: 296). This defence of a more ordered society can be observed in the party’s approach to certain phenomena that allegedly aim at the disruption of this order. To give an example, in a video on the party’s official YouTube channel, Abascal defends the need of life imprisonment for certain criminal offences, like rape; the video is accompanied by the following description, elaborated by the party itself: “Santiago Abascal demands life imprisonment without any type of rehabilitation for certain crimes, to protect society, to punish the offender, and to compensate the victim”.⁷ Some months later, Rocío Monasterio defended the same ideas in another video entitled, as the first one, “Life imprisonment now”, and accompanied by the following description: “We won’t take a step back. In VOX we demand the Congress to be tough on criminals and murderers”.⁸

Finally, populist radical right parties share a populist ideology. Populism is one of the buzzwords of this century and, to some extent, is still a contested concept (Aslanidis, 2016; Laclau, 2005; Panizza, 2005; Mudde, 2004; Weyland, 2001). Scholars, however, seem to be converging towards the so-called ideational definition. The ideational definition focuses on one particular feature of populists: their ideas (Mudde, 2004). These ideas manifest themselves in a “shared way of seeing the political world as a Manichean struggle between the will of the people and the evil, conspiring elite” (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018: 2). Populism, then, is seen as “first and foremost a moral worldview that is used to both criticize the establishment and construct a romanticized view of the people” (Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014: 496). Even if, as mentioned before, populism is not the primary characteristic of the populist radical right, the appeal to the people characteristic of populism is bridged with the more traditional frames of the radical right, such as the nativist definition of us and them (Caiani and della Porta, 2011). This dualistic and moral vision of society is present in VOX’s discourse. For example, Ribera Payá and Díaz Martínez (2020), in an empirical assessment of VOX’s written and spoken communication, conclude that “[VOX] fits the populist radical right party scheme”, and evince this by showing how the party “builds a populist narrative of Manichean conflict between the virtuous Spanish people/nation (which are one and the same) and the evil globalist and progressive elites, surrounded by a myriad of threats to the Spanish nation”.

We observe this also in their rhetoric used in *Vistalegre I*, where Abascal claimed:

*Either them or us, either the same or something new, either the progressive consensus or VOX; either the regional division or the national unity; either the tyranny of the left or freedom; either regional privilege or equality; either the politicians’, the parties’, the trade unions’, and the NGOs’ welfare state or the one of the Spaniards, of the early risers; either the state of the autonomies or the pensions; either the Spaniards (first) or the illegal immigrants; either living wages for our policemen, for our guards or swimming pools and gyms for the criminals.*⁹

This extract highlights the understanding of society and politics as a moral contraposition which is typical of populism. Both “the people” and “the elite” are floating signifiers that can be filled with different content (Laclau, 2005). Together they form a chain of equivalence which represent a collective identity (Errejón and Mouffe, 2015).

Outline

We hope that this book will be of interest to scholars and students with a desire of understanding the populist radical right as well as the changes in the Spanish party system and electorate. Our primary goal is to offer an accessible and digestible contribution that provides individuals outside of academia with an enjoyable read. Political scientists (we included) have a strong penchant of relying on statistical modelling and advanced quantitative methods to present their arguments. Whilst the main body of our book relies on quantitative datasets of national and cross-national survey data, as well as on other data sources, we have aimed to keep any advanced modelling to the appendices. Where statistical tests are reported, these are presented with an accompanying description of how they may be interpreted without, we hope, too much effort.

Our journey to understand VOX’s rise begins in Chapter 2. Here we give an account of the evolution of the Spanish party system since the return to democracy in 1977 and we present the milestones, since 2012, necessary to understand the upsurge and the features of VOX. Moreover, this chapter furnishes an initial assessment of the organizational structure of VOX, examining its internal statutes and its rank and file.

In Chapter 3, we take a look at the supply side and ask, “What does VOX want?” Relying on longitudinal data on parties’ ideological positions from Spain’s transition to democracy up to the present day, as well as on comparative data from the manifestos of populist radical right-wing parties from across Europe, we provide a rich empirical discussion of which positions matter for the party and how these compare both across time and space.

Chapter 4 takes the opposite approach and focuses on the demand-side factors. Essentially this chapter asks, “Who votes for VOX?” Relying on both national and cross-national survey data, we assess the socio-demographic makeup of VOX’s supporters to appraise the extent to which they diverge from the average Spanish voter and from those of the established right-wing parties. Are VOX’s voters an electoral breed in their own right, or are they a Spanish iteration of an archetypical populist radical right-wing voter profile observed across the rest of Western Europe?

In Chapter 5, we take a closer look at the relationship between VOX and democracy. While it is true that populist radical right parties’ ideology is not at odds with democracy, it is also true that at the empirical level both populisms, left and right, put a strain on the internal contradictions of democracy with its liberal component, while nativism has inherently exclusionary features. Having said this, in

Chapter 5 we analyse the democratic profile of VOX's voters comparing them with the supporters of the other main Spanish parties. Here we also assess the relationship between attitudes towards democracy at the individual level and the vote for VOX from a comparative perspective, analysing populist radical right parties in different regions.

Finally, we tie the strings together in Chapter 6. Our concluding chapter recaps on our main research findings and lays out a vision of what VOX's rise means for Spanish politics in the turbulent political years to come.

Notes

- 1 See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=RaSIX4-RPAI&t=51s
- 2 *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (CIS).
- 3 *Plus ultra* is the Latin for further beyond. Additionally, the Plus Ultra appears in the coat of arms of Spain, written in the Hercules columns. It was first used in 1516 by King Carlos I of Spain, who employed it as his personal motto to symbolize the dynamism of the new Spanish Empire, in which the sun never set. This is one of the many examples (see Chapter 5) that illustrates the allusions of VOX to a "better" pre-democratic Spanish past.
- 4 Here we are referring to Ciudadanos's initial success at the regional level in Catalonia. Their later success on the national stage was also fuelled by their promise of democratic renewal and regeneration. See for example, Orriols and Cordero (2016).
- 5 Never one to lose the opportunity to take advantage of symbolic settings, Plaza Colón is a national monument to Christopher Columbus [*Cristóbal Colón*], who "discovered" the Americas. The square is host to a monumental 294m² Spanish flag which was installed by the PP's former prime minister, José María Aznar, as part of his attempt to rekindle a feeling of national pride that, in his eyes, was underdeveloped in Spain (Díez and González, 2002).
- 6 This categorization is not uniform. Ferreira (2019), for example, does not observe a populist component and defines the party as a radical right-wing party of the non-populist variety.
- 7 See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhPdci-3yJ0&ab_channel=VOXEspa%C3%B1a
- 8 The discourse of VOX as regards gender issues (clearly oriented toward the rejection of feminism and the understanding of society as male oriented) could also be understood in this light, insofar as party leaders perceive feminism – or, as they have called it, "the feminist jihad" – as a challenge to the supposed predetermined order in society which the party aims at counter arrest.
- 9 See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yjHe0h3UmY&ab_channel=VOXEspa%C3%B1a and www.youtube.com/watch?v=L95ilYuqrSU.
- 1 The coalition of Podemos with United Left [*Izquierda Unida*].
- 2 The PSOE obtained 38 seats more than its otherwise lowest mark of 85 in 2016. The PP lost 71 of the 137 seats it held in 2016, obtaining its worst electoral results so far. Cs grew from 32 to 57 seats, UP (now Unidas Podemos instead of Unidos Podemos) fell from 71 to 42, and VOX obtained 24 of the 350 seats.
- 3 Strictly speaking, in 1989, the PSOE obtained 175 of the 350 seats. In practical terms, this amounted to an absolute majority, as the MPs of Herri Batasuna (HB), a Basque independentist party which was later outlawed due to its connections with the Basque secessionist terrorist organization ETA, never went to the Congress.

8 Notes

- 4 We Can's main source of voters were former supporters of the PSOE and IU; while Cs came to occupy the centre position that UPyD had had since 2008, although, unlike Rosa Díez's party, it was somewhat more to the right and managed to enter several electoral districts, favoured by disgruntled PP and, to a lesser extent, PSOE former voters.
- 5 Due to several factors, including legal problems related to corruption scandals, personal frictions among leaders, and differences in the approach regarding the relationship between Catalonia and the rest of Spain, former CiU politicians concurred under several brands in the 2015–2019 period: still CiU in 2015, Democracy and Freedom [*Democràcia i Llibertat*] (DiL) in 2016, and Together for Catalonia [*Junts Per Catalunya*] (JxCAT-JUNTS) in the two 2019 elections. In 2015 and 2016, it obtained eight seats as compared to the nine of ERC; in April and November 2019, the figures are seven versus 15 and eight versus 13, respectively. This is at odds with the dominance that CiU had enjoyed in almost all the previous national elections (in 2011, for instance, it obtained 16 seats, while ERC gained only three).
- 6 ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna – Basque Country and Liberty) was a Basque nationalist terrorist organization that proclaimed itself independent, nationalist, socialist, and revolutionary. During its 60-year history, between 1958 and 2018, its main objective was the construction of a socialist state in Euskal Herria and its independence from Spain and France.
- 7 Abascal and his family were threatened by ETA on several occasions.
- 8 The Parot doctrine is a jurisprudence, following a Sentence of the Spanish Supreme Court, to apply (in cases of serious crimes) the reductions of sentences not to the maximum accumulative sentence of 30 years but to the total term of the Sentence.
- 9 Online access: <https://nacionespanola.org/>
- 10 Online access: <https://fundacionfaes.org/es>
- 11 See Vidal-Quadras declarations in one of the TV shows where he usually participated: / www.youtube.com/watch?v=LooOQsVph4o
- 12 See the report in *El País Semanal* with several interviews to VOX voters: https://elpais.com/elpais/2020/02/07/eps/1581073136_206237.html
- 13 An exception to the lack of specific regulation on candidate selection is the so-called Equality Law, which requires candidate lists to preserve a gender balance. Its proper name is Ley Orgánica 3/2007, and it was issued on 22 March 2007, during Zapatero's first cabinet. The regulation affecting electoral competition is developed in the Second Additional Provision. www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2007/BOE-A-2007-6115-consolidado.pdf
- 14 Four other candidates participated in the first round but lagged behind Santamaría and Casado and therefore did not make it to the next round.
- 15 See: www.voxespana.es/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ESTATUTOS-CAMBIOS-PROPUESTOS-CEN-02-03-2020-1.pdf
- 1 See: www.VOXespana.es/espana/programa-electoral-VOX.
- 2 See: www.manifesto-project.wzb.eu/.
- 3 The MARPOR project continues the work of the Manifesto Research Group (MRG) and the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP).
- 4 Per 601.1.
- 5 For instance, according to the Linguistic Policy Directorate [*Direcció General de Política Lingüística*] (DGPL) of the Catalan Government [*Generalitat de Catalunya*], in 2018, the most usual language of communication among the Catalan population was Spanish for 48.6 per cent, Catalan, for 36.1, and both Spanish and Catalan, for 7.4 per cent (the remaining 7.4 per cent corresponds to people indicating other languages or combinations

- of languages). See: <https://llengua.gencat.cat/web/.content/documents/dadesestudis/altres/arxius/presentacio-resultats-eulp-2018.pdf> (page 16).
- 6 España, Unidad y Soberanía.
 - 7 Per 605.1.
 - 8 The salience of the “law and order” index (605.1+605.2) and the “law and order” positive (per605.1) is the same because per 605.2 equals zero.
 - 9 We are aware that the argument of Meguid (2005) refers to position, not to salience. However, here we refer to “favourable mentions of strict law enforcement”, which can be interpreted as a position on the matter of security.
 - 10 See category 601.2.
 - 11 Per 607+per608+per705
 - 12 See: www.20minutos.es/noticia/42284/0/regularizacion/inmigrantes/inmigracion/.
 - 13 For further details of the evolution of the trend on the main problems for Spaniards, see: www.cis.es/cis/export/sites/default/-archivos/Indicadores/documentos_html/TresProblemas.html.
 - 14 Per603.
 - 15 See: www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-VOX-lanza-manifiesto-8m-dia-pensado-extrema-izquierda-no-hables-nombre-20200307211615.html.
 - 16 While the salience of the per603+per604 rose from 0.24 in 2016 to 2.25 in 2019, the salience of per603 is responsible just for the 0.75 of the total increment.
 - 17 Just the category “welfare state expansion” (504).
 - 18 This formula has been used by Dalton (2008) to measure polarization using CSES survey data.
 - 19 See: www.manifesto-project.wzb.eu.
 - 20 President Trump’s Twitter status features “LAW AND ORDER” many times in the last months.
 - 21 See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=1V46JPtj31s.
 - 22 See: www.nytimes.com/2016/07/13/us/politics/republican-convention-issues.html?_r=0
 - 23 Values: RP 2016 (1.413); JAK 2017 (0,875); JB (2018) 0; FPO 2017 (6.95); FN 2017 (4, 603)
 - 1 Details of how the authors operationalize support for populism as a latent concept are provided in Spierings and Zaslove (2017). Essentially, these authors create an index composed of different direct instruments that aim to capture feelings of political efficacy, political trust, and perceptions of democratic responsiveness.
 - 2 Available on YouTube at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=RaSIX4-RPAI&list=WL&index=7&t=0s
 - 3 Output from a logistic regression model, regressing support for VOX on age and age-squared using a sub-sample of right-wing voters only.
 - 4 We say “new” in comparison to the more established parties of PP and the PSOE but, given that both Cs and UP have been competing nationally in Spanish elections since 2014, they cannot be considered newcomers anymore.
 - 5 Data on the ideological position of the voters of We Can and Cs is available since the 2017 ESS wave.
 - 6 In the case of both the PP and Cs, the mean ideological position became larger (more right wing) but the confidence intervals in each year overlap substantially, so we cannot conclude that the distribution of ideological support for each party’s voter base is significantly different in 2019 compared with 2017.

- 7 To measure support for same-sex marriage and environmental measures, we rely on data from the European Election Study (2019) as opposed to the ESS, given that the former scales individuals' attitudes on these questions on the same 11-point scale as the CIS.
- 8 The party's leadership, particularly Rocío Monasterio, played a significant participatory role in the Make Yourself Heard (*HazteOír*) campaign that challenged LGBT+ rights. The campaign gained notoriety in 2017 after it launched a travelling bus campaign which was branded with the words "Boys have penises. Girls have vaginas. Don't let anybody fool you!" [*Los niños tienen pene. Las niñas tienen vulva. Que no te engañen!*]
- 9 Leaving aside the Catalan snap elections convoked by the Spanish government after having suspended the Catalan autonomy, and which took place only two months after the ephemeral declaration of independence by the Catalan parliament.
- 10 The CIS did not solicit information on the most important issue facing voters during the April 2019 pre- or post-electoral surveys.
- 11 "Have the recent events in Catalonia had any influence on your voting decision in the November 10th elections?" [*Lo que ha ocurrido últimamente en Cataluña ¿ha tenido alguna influencia en su decisión de voto en las elecciones del 10 de noviembre?*]
- 12 The lower levels of Euroscepticism of VOX's voters (as compared to the levels of other PRRP voters) may be related to the territorial problem. The presence of Spain in the EU, and the support of EU institutions to the central government facing the Catalan challenge, may be behind this difference.
- 13 Note that the comparative analysis here relies on data from the ESS, so the coefficients report different (yet similar) values to the measures used in our Spain-only analysis above, which relied on data from the Spanish post-electoral study of the CIS.
- 1 See: https://twitter.com/Ortega_Smith/status/1193802059021213697.
- 2 Following the PopuList (Rooduijn et al., 2019), in Europe there are 80 populist radical right parties out of 121 populist parties.
- 3 See the article: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/dec/07/cambridge-dictionary-nativism-populism-word-year.
- 4 Recently VOX's leader, Santiago Abascal, claimed that the Socialist government of Pedro Sánchez represents the worst government in the last 80 years, including in this time range the authoritarian government of Francisco Franco. See: www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-abascal-senala-gobierno-peor-ultimos-80-anos-sanchez-le-acusa-anorar-dictadura-franquista-20200909093217.html.
- 5 See: www.voxespana.es/noticias/es-la-hora-de-la-espana-viva-20190215.
- 6 See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mFnJ02zocM&feature=youtu.be&t=2128&fbclid=IwAR2Qg36BQSNZzkH8pFkPgnpVk1uMDSop405d0BBhqsk4EbISeTtXBPMSL.
- 7 See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=i6Fwxu8zSjk.
- 8 In Spanish: *España está viva y reivindica la herencia que nos han dado nuestros padres. España está viva y pelea por el futuro y la libertad que tenemos que entregar a nuestros hijos. España está viva y es mucho más fuerte que sus enemigos. España está viva y es mucho más fuerte de lo que sus enemigos pensaban que era España* (See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzYd4Hsh2qw&t=300s).
- 9 See also the declarations of VOX's secretary, Javier Ortega Smith, alluding to the Spanish Reconquista of Granada against the Islamic invasion: www.youtube.com/watch?v=_sO0zZXA3Oc.
- 10 See: www.lasexta.com/noticias/nacional/santiago-abascal-aborto-hay-mujeres-que-dicen-que-cuerpo-suyo-pero-que-llevan-dentro-cuerpo_201910115da037b10cf2cf2d3c2d55b0.html.
- 11 See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrTil80mMTg.
- 12 See: www.elconfidencial.com/elecciones-andalucia/2018-12-03/elecciones-andaluzas-vox-francisco-serrano_1682634/.

- 13 See: www.elconfidencial.com/elecciones-generales/2019-04-28/vox-tuit-bandera-lgtb-feminismo-medios-comunicacion_1968750/
- 14 They also refer to the mainstream Spanish conservative party, PP, as “the coward little right” [*la “derechita cobarde”*].
- 15 See: https://cadenaser.com/ser/2019/05/07/politica/1557219107_939430.html
- 16 See: <https://okdiario.com/andalucia/vox-andalucia-insta-junta-defender-corona-exige-que-no-haya-impunidad-golpistas-del-1-o-6207449>.
- 17 See: www.infoelectoral.mir.es/.
- 18 See: www.infoelectoral.mir.es/. At the local and regional level, Pardos-Prado and Molins (2009) find that the largest share of supporters of PxC comes from the Socialists’ Party of Catalonia [*Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya*] (PSC-PSOE) and from abstainers.
- 19 The datasets which are based on a nationally representative sample. For the April survey the sample consisted of 5,943 interviews (out of 6,000 designed interviews) among the Spanish voting age population with the right to vote in general elections (i.e., Spanish nationals aged 18 years or more) who were residing in Spain (including the two autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla in North Africa). The design was the same for the November elections, with just the exception of the number of cases: 4,804 interviews out of 5,000 designed.
- 20 Regarding the control variables, we have selected a series of indicators that commonly capture the main drivers of support for PRRPs (see Chapter 4), as well as other social and demographic factors usually employed to explain electoral behaviour. Thus, we include indicators of age (in years); a dichotomous indicator of sex (1 = female); a measure of education level (1 = primary, 2 = secondary, and 3 = university degree), and the size of the place of residence (1 = urban dweller, 0 = rural). In addition to the objective measure of socio-economic status, we also include a binary measure of individuals’ sociotropic perception of the economic situation (1 = negative evaluation of the economy, 0 = neutral or positive economic evaluation) and a binary indicator of political discontent (1 = political situation bad, 0 = political situation neutral/good); a scale of respondents’ ideological positions on the left–right dimension (1–10), and a binary indicator of political interest (1 = high political involvement, 0 = low).
- 1 Although immigration is usually one of the main drivers of support for populist radical right formations and could therefore be expected to constitute a necessary condition for the emergence of a populist radical right party in Spain (Alonso and Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2015), the available data suggest that it did not play an important role in VOX’s electoral success (at least in the first phase), whereas it was the territorial conflict that stood out as the main driver of support for Abascal’s party, given the weak position of conservative Mariano Rajoy’s PP on this issue.
- 2 *Caceroladas* are a traditional form of protest in Spain, in which protesters make their discontent known through accompanied noise, typically hitting pans, pots, or other household utensils. Protesters can go out into the streets and concentrate on a specific square or participate from their homes, thus being able to achieve a high degree of adherence and participation in the protest. Some of the most famous *caceroladas* in Spain were the ones against the Iraq War (government of PP’s José María Aznar, in 2003); the Movement of *indignados* during the government of PSOE’s Jose Luis Rodríguez Zapatero against the economic measures adopted by the Socialist government to stop the recession or, more recently, against the management of the COVID-19 pandemic by the Pedro Sánchez Socialist government.
- 3 See: https://elpais.com/politica/2019/06/13/actualidad/1560412854_648671.html.
- 4 See: https://elpais.com/ccaa/2019/11/20/madrid/1574254076_494028.html.

12 References

- 5 Thus, the proposal of agreement handed out by VOX to PP and Cs in exchange for its external support to a PP and Cs coalition government in Murcia included most of these measures: www.eldiario.es/murcia/politica/vox-murcia-igtbi-erradicacion-memoria_1_1464742.html. The same applies to VOX's proposal of agreement for its support to a similar government in the region of Madrid: https://www.eldiario.es/madrid/medidas-irrealizables-vox-comunidad-madrid_1_1483510.html.
- 6 See: https://elpais.com/politica/2019/12/03/actualidad/1575359820_193278.html.
- 7 For an excellent discussion of the role of government competence on electoral preferences and mass attitudes, see Green and Jennings (2017).
- 8 Of the total of seven extensions to the state of alarm that the government had to put to a vote in Congress, VOX only voted in favour on the first occasion; the other six times, it voted against (as did a large part of the regionalist/independentist parties, e.g. ERC, JxCat or Bildu). See: www.diariovasco.com/politica/seis-prorrogas-estado-alarma-20200602144255-ntrc.html

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