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Interwar Fascism: Evidence from Sweden*

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POST-WWI MILITARY DISARMAMENT AND INTERWAR  
FASCISM: EVIDENCE FROM SWEDEN

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# Post-WWI Military Disarmament and Interwar Fascism: Evidence from Sweden\*

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## Abstract

The emergence of anti-democratic movements is a central puzzle to social science. We study a novel and rich dataset covering Swedish municipalities during the interwar years and find a strong link between the presence of a military garrison and the emergence of fascist parties. We interpret these results as suggesting that fascist mobilization in Sweden was driven by discontent with the process of disarmament brought about by democratization. By contrast, economic hard times, as captured by local poverty and the size of the tax base, seem to have little connection with such parties. We relate these results to influential theories of democratization.

**Keywords:** Democracy; Interwar fascism; Disarmament

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# 1 Introduction

Learning why anti-democratic groups emerge and become mobilized is an important task if we wish to understand past and contemporary struggles over democracy. Much of our thinking on this issue is informed by the events that took place in Europe during the interwar years where, in some countries, fascism grew from being a small extremist subculture to a mass movement. We contribute to this literature by studying fascist mobilization in Sweden during the 1920s and 1930s. To this end, we utilize novel and detailed historical data that have previously not been digitized, and which covers Swedish municipalities during the interwar years.

The rise of fascism after WWI is frequently linked to the economic hardships of the time (Frey and Weck 1983, King et al. 2008, Bromhead et al. 2013). The idea that there, in general, exists a link between economic hardship and anti-democratic mobilization goes back to the modernization school, which sees support for democracy as a more or less automatic consequence of economic development (Lipset 1959, Ingelhart and Welzel 2009). On this view, development reduces “the proportion of the population that is susceptible to anti-democratic parties and ideologies” (Muller 1995, 967).

More recent contributors have challenged the modernization school, and instead theorized pro-democratic support using a rational actor framework (Boix 2003, Acemoglu and Robinson 2005). According to this newer perspective, actors have “induced preferences over institutions, depending on how institutions map into policies” as Acemoglu (2006, 376) puts it. And to study this, we need to ask “(i) what type of equilibrium policies and allocations emerge within different institutional frameworks; (ii) the preferences of different individuals and groups over these policies and allocations” (342). Consequently, the decision of whether to support or oppose different institutional arrangements depends on the policies caused by these institutions. Translated to the issue of explaining fascism, this perspective urges us to look for groups who believed that their interests were better served by the policies that would obtain under fascist, rather than democratic, institutions.

These two perspectives are very generally formulated, and we will therefore not be able to provide any clear-cut test of them. However, we will argue that the mobilization of fascism in Sweden can be better understood using the latter of the two. Organized fascism in Sweden never became a mass movement. Rather,

it consisted of a relatively small strongly anti-democratic subculture, dominated by military officers.<sup>1</sup> Work on the Swedish interwar years has argued that, within the military establishment, the major disarmament that took place was seen by many as a consequence of the democratization of Sweden, and, by the same group, as proof that the masses were not ready for this type of government (Nilsson 2000, 49). In fact, as we explain below, the issue of disarmament was intrinsically linked to the process of democratization. Previous historical work also argues that the fascist parties in the 1930s had their roots among military officers who expressed discontent with the disarmament enacted in the 1920s (Wärenstam 1972, Hagtvet 1980).

Based on the aforementioned historical evidence, the hypothesis we take to our data is the following: Fascist parties' mobilization on the electoral arena is largely explained by the military being threatened by the democratically induced disarmament. Our baseline results suggest that a municipality's military past had important consequences for the emergence of a local branch of the main fascist party. Put simply, most municipalities (69.4%) that had a military garrison prior to the disarmament in the 1920s also had a local branch of the fascist party Swedish Socialist Unity in the 1930s, whereas the corresponding figure was extremely low (3.7%) for the municipalities that lacked such a military past. The relationship remains strong when we control for local demographic, socio-economic and political conditions. And economic development, as measured by the local poverty rate and tax base, has little effect on the presence of fascist parties.

A more detailed analysis shows that: (i) the effect of having a military garrison prior to disarmament is not mediated by subsequent economic development; (ii) whether or not the garrison actually was shut down does not matter for the existence of a local branch of the fascist party; (iii) that the effect is stronger for municipalities with a longer history of military presence. Finally, we show that our results are similar when re-specifying the dependent variable using an alternative outcome, the local presence of the right-wing extremist and anti-democratic offshoot of the Conservatives: the Swedish National League.

The paper is divided into six parts. In the first, we provide the historical background to the hypothesis that we will take to the empirical data, and which is presented in the second part. Thirdly, we describe our empirical strategy

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<sup>1</sup>Why fascism never became a major mass movement in Sweden is discussed in, e.g., Hagtvet (1980).

whereas the data are described in the fourth part. In the fifth, we present our empirical results. In the sixth, finally, we set out our conclusions.

## **2 Historical background**

We begin this section with a brief description of the political situation in Sweden during the 1910s to 1930s. Because our main hypothesis is that the emergence of fascist parties is largely explained by military factors and, in particular, by disarmament, we then devote a section to the highly controversial Defense Act of 1925. Finally to close the section, we provide a background to the Nazi and fascist oriented parties that emerged at the time, which we argued were spurred by discontent with the 1925 Defense Act.

### **2.1 The democratization process and the political landscape around and after WWI**

During the 1910s, Sweden democratized. It was a period characterized by constitutional conflict over the expansion of suffrage and the king's power over government formation. The main policy issue of the day was national defense, an issue that was inextricably linked to the ongoing constitutional conflicts. After the introduction of universal male suffrage in 1909, which was accompanied by a transition from a majoritarian to a proportional electoral system to the lower house, the parliamentary strength of the Social Democrats doubled. As a consequence, the Liberals were able to form a minority government supported by the Social Democrats, even if the latter party decided not to participate. Upon entering government, the Liberals immediately started investigating the possibilities for cutbacks in national defense, and quickly made a number of symbolic decisions to make good on their electoral promises, such as halting the construction of a new type of large armored ship.

The king and his advisors, in conjunction with Conservative leaders, were strongly opposed to defense cutbacks, and were deeply dissatisfied with the Liberals' sidestepping of the king in the matter of national defense. The king propagated against defense cutbacks, in direct opposition with the democratically elected government, and managed to win considerable public support for this position. While the government attempted to appease the king, he and his followers radicalized their position, insisting that certain constitutional powers

should be returned to the king, thus challenging parliamentary government and, in the end, democracy. The conflict culminated in 1913, when the king spoke on the issue of defense to 30 000 farmers that had marched to Stockholm in support of the king; a speech that was held against the wishes of the government. This led to the Liberals resigning from government in early 1914, after which the king appointed an ‘apolitical’ government consisting of men with connections with right-wing groups and enterprise. This ‘king’s government’ lasted until 1917, and managed to accomplish a rearmament due to the outbreak of WWI.

In 1917, the Liberals and Social Democrats again started urging for defense cutbacks, which resulted in a government crisis. The king declared that he was still supportive of the ‘apolitical’ government that he had put together, but despite this, it resigned. After the parliamentary elections the same year, the Liberals and Social Democrats agreed to form a government. The king maneuvered at length to avoid such an outcome, attempting to form various other types of governments. But when these attempts failed, the king finally handed the task of forming a government to the leader of the Liberals, Nils Edén. Edén took the opportunity to demand assurances from the king that he now accepted parliamentary democracy. Since then, parliamentary democracy was no longer questioned by the king, nor by the Conservative Party.<sup>2</sup>

At the end of WWI, Sweden thus had a coalition government made up of Liberals and Social Democrats. In 1918, the government managed to pass female suffrage, and to abolish the income-weighted vote in municipal elections. Since the upper house was indirectly selected by the municipalities, the abolishment of the income-weighted vote led the Social Democrats to become the largest party not only in the lower house, but now also in the upper house. Nevertheless, the 1920s was a decade characterized by weak minority governments (8 different governments were formed during 10 years). The Liberals were generally pivotal in the parliament, and even if they were not in government, Conservative and Social Democratic governments had to tailor their policies accordingly.

In mid-20s, the issue of national defense once again became the most important bone of contention. The Conservative government could not muster parliamentary support for their Defense Act in 1924, and after the elections the same year a Social Democratic government was formed. The king had considered handing the task of forming the government to the Social Democratic

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<sup>2</sup>See, e.g., Lewin (1988, Ch. 4) for a full description of the constitutional conflicts and the issue of national defense in the 1910s.

leader with the provision that the latter had to promise no defense cutbacks, but was talked out of this by his advisors. In government, the Social Democratic party passed the controversial Defense Act of 1925 with support from the Liberals, a reform that entailed major disarmament and the shutdown of many military garrisons and which we discuss at length below. When the contents of the Defense Act had become official in early 1925, the king had discussed drastic measures with his advisors: among which were dissolution of parliament and even a coup d'état, but, in the end, the king was talked out of interfering.<sup>3</sup>

In sum, the historical evidence suggests that the defense issue was intimately connected to that of democratization. Indeed, the evidence suggests that the shift in the balance of power between the king and the parliament, and between the parties in parliament, that occurred in conjunction with Sweden's democratization played a vital part in bringing about disarmament. Next, we turn to a more detailed description of 1925 Defense Act.

## 2.2 The 1925 Defense Act

As was clear from the former section, downsizing of the military sector had been on the political agenda ever since the democratization process started in Sweden, but the process really took off after the ending of WWI. The result of the process, the 1925 Defense Act, implied one of the largest changes, in terms of re-organization and dismantling of the military sector in Sweden in modern times.<sup>4</sup>

When the 1925 Defense Act was published in February 1925, it stood clear that a large downsizing of the military sector was planned. According to the proposition, defense expenditures were to be decreased from an annual 181.5 million SEK (an amount decided on in the 1914 Defense Act) to 96 million SEK.<sup>5</sup> The corresponding figure for the infantry, the artillery and the cavalry, taken together, was a suggested decrease from 122 million SEK to 57.5 million SEK.<sup>6</sup>

In terms of personnel, the 1925 Defense Act also suggested drastic decreases in the number of different types of employed officers, ranging from 30-57% within

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<sup>3</sup>See, e.g., Von Sydow (1997, 127-132) for a description of the political situation during the 1920s. See Ohlsson (2010, 53) on the king's reaction to the Defense Act of 1925.

<sup>4</sup>The defense acts of 1925 and of 1999/2000 were the two most dramatic in Sweden in the 20th century.

<sup>5</sup>See the table on p. 382 in the 1925 Defense Act.

<sup>6</sup>See the table on p. 382 in the 1925 Defense Act.



the infantry<sup>7</sup>, 50-76% within the cavalry<sup>8</sup>, and 36-83% within the artillery<sup>9</sup> in the years following 1925.

In relative terms, it hence seems like the cavalry could expect the largest cuts in personnel, followed by the infantry and, finally, the artillery. In absolute terms, the infantry could expect to experience the largest cuts.

The 1925 Defense Act hence proposed very dramatic changes. From the statements from some of the heads of the military sectors on the proposition, attached to the 1925 Defense Act (see *Bilagor A-I* to proposition 50), it is clear that the Act elicited strong and unsympathetic feelings among military personnel. From the statement of the head of the general staff ("chefen för generalstaben"), it reads, among other things (see *Bilaga A*, p. 547; our translation): "It is obvious that the forced changes will severely hurt those that will be affected. They will surely experience a feeling of being recklessly separated from their career. In addition, ... in most cases there will be severe economic problems."<sup>10</sup>

The proposition, taken by the Swedish Riksdag on May 26, 1925, were to be effective from January 1, 1928 and should be in effect for the coming decade.<sup>11</sup> And it is indeed clear from our data that the 1925 Defense Act had dramatic consequences for the military sector. To visualize this, we have, first, used the information in Herlitz (1967) to extract the years of establishment and closing of all military garrisons since 1628 (naturally, with more uncertainty the earlier the year of establishment), and constructed country-aggregate time series of the number of garrisons active and the number of garrison shutdowns in a given year. These series are displayed in Figure 1 for years 1880–1960. The figure quite clearly illustrates the unprecedented disarmament experienced by the Swedish

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<sup>7</sup>See table on p. 516-517 in the 1925 Defense Act. The specific suggestion was a decrease with 9 colones ("överstar"), amounting to a 30% reduction of colones, 55 lieutenant-colonels and majors ("överstelöjtnanter" and "majorer"), a 50% reduction, 182 captains ("kaptener"), a 46,5% reduction, 286 subalterns ("underofficerare"), a 54% reduction, and 73 musical subalterns ("musikunderofficerare"), a 57% reduction.

<sup>8</sup>See table on p. 516-517 in the 1925 Defense Act. The specific suggestion was a decrease with 3 colones (50% decrease), 9 lieutenant-colonels and majors (69% decrease), 36 captains (56% decrease), 44 subalterns (62% decrease), and 17 musical subalterns (76,5% decrease).

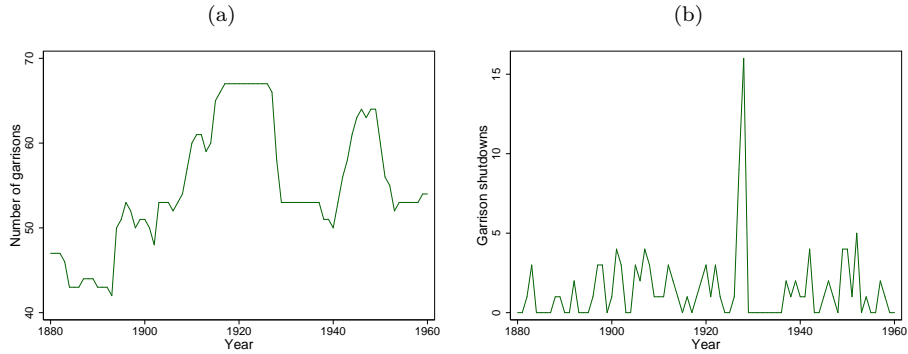
<sup>9</sup>See table on p. 516-517 in the 1925 Defense Act. The specific suggestion was a decrease with 18 lieutenant-colonels and majors (39% decrease), 46 captains (36.6% decrease), 104 subalterns (51% decrease), and 23 musical subalterns (83% decrease).

<sup>10</sup>In Swedish: "Det är uppenbart att det tvångsvisa överförandet kommer att synnerligen hårt drabba dem, vilka därav träffas. De kommer säkerligen att erfara en känsla av, att de blivit på ett hänsynslöst sätt skilda från sin levnadsbana. Därtill komma ... att i flertalet fall sälla sig svåra ekonomiska bekymmer."

<sup>11</sup>See the Wikipedia page [https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/F%C3%B6rsvarsbeslutet\\_1925](https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/F%C3%B6rsvarsbeslutet_1925). A popular text, in Swedish, about the 1925 Defense Act is "Försvarsbeslutet 1925: Sveriges stora nedrustning" by Olle Larsson, published in *Militär Historia*, issue 9, 2011.

army following the 1925 Defense Act: starting from a relatively small number of garrisons before the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century—with a low record of 42 in 1893—there was a (discontinuous) increase until 1925 where the number peaked at 67 in 1925, when it dropped sharply (see left panel) as a consequence of the numerous shutdowns (see right panel) in the wake of the 1925 Defense Act.

Figure 1: Number of garrisons and garrison shutdowns in Sweden 1880–1960



Data source: Herlitz (1967).

By digitizing the number of military personnel at each regiment from 1915 to 1938, we have also been able to look at what happened at each and every garrison in the years following 1925 (and in particular around 1928, the year in which the proposition was to be effective). From the figures, presented in Appendix A, it becomes very clear that the Act had serious consequences for several of the regiments. Of the 28 infantry regiments that existed in 1925, eight (almost 29%) were completely shut down as a consequence of the 1925 Defense Act. All of them (*Kungliga Första livgrenadjärregementet*, *Kungliga Andra livgrenadjärregementet*, *Kungliga Västgöta regemente*, *Kungliga Jönköpings regemente*, *Kungliga Karlskrona grenadjärregemente*, *Kungliga Västmanlands regemente*, *Kungliga Kalmar regemente*, and *Kungliga Vaxholms grenadjärregemente*) were closed down in 1928.<sup>12</sup> Of the eight cavalry regiments that existed in 1925, 6 (75%) were shutdown in 1928 (*Kungliga Livgardet till häst*, *Kungliga Livregementets dragoner*, *Kungliga Skånska dragonregementet*, *Kungliga Skånska husarregementet*, *Kungliga Smålands husarregementet*, and

<sup>12</sup>The newly formed, in 1928, *Kungliga Livgrenadjärregementet*, was a merging of *Kungliga Första livgrenadjärregementet* and *Kungliga Andra livgrenadjärregementet* (all of these three regiments were stationed in Linköping). Likewise, the newly formed *Kungliga Jönköpings-Kalmar regemente* (stationed in Eksjö) was a merging of *Kungliga Jönköpings regemente* (stationed in Jönköping) and *Kungliga Kalmar regemente* (stationed in Eksjö).

*Kronprinsens husarregemente*).<sup>13</sup> Of the ten artillery regiments that existed in 1925, two (20%) were closed down in 1928. Of the service regiments, two out of six were shut down in 1928 and two more were shutdown in 1937. That is, four out of six service regiments (67%) were shutdown before the 1938 election as a consequence of the 1925 Defense Act.

## 2.3 The military and Swedish fascism 1924–1945

### 2.3.1 Disarmament and the emergence of Swedish fascism

As described above, reactions to the Defense Act of 1925 were strong among conservatives and the king. But the most widespread discontent was within the military (Argenziano 1995, 212, Nilsson 2000, 48, Lewin 2010, 83). Indeed, some higher military officers made an explicit connection between the process of democratization that Sweden had just gone through and the disarmament outcome (Nilsson 2000, 49). In response to the Defense Act of 1925, the Association for the Defense of Sweden (Riksförbundet för Sveriges försvar)(RSF) was formed by military officers to propagate for rearmament, and the association also established local organizations at garrisons threatened by closure (Argenziano 1995, 212, Lewin 2010, 83). At the time, and in view of recent rise of fascism in Italy, these organizations are viewed by the Social Democratic leaders and the Social Democratic press as a highly worrisome development, fearing that these organizations will be used to ‘ferment fascism’ and become ‘hotbeds of fascism’ (Argenziano 1995, 212-213). As we shall see below, the 1925 Defense Act and the issue of disarmament appear to have been very important to the small Swedish fascist movement that mobilized, largely around military officers, during the second half of the 1920s.

In 1926, three military officers (one of which was a veteran of the WWI German army) formed the Swedish Fascist People’s Party; this is the first incarnation of what would become the fascist party that we focus most of our attention on in the quantitative analysis below. The party quickly changed its name to the Swedish Fascist Combat Organization (*Sveriges Fascistiska Kamporganisation*) (SFKO). The first fascist party, the Swedish National Socialist Freedom League (*Svenska nationalsocialistiska frihetsförbundet*), which a few years later

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<sup>13</sup>The newly formed, in 1928, *Kungliga Livregementet till häst* was a merging of *Kungliga Livgardet till häst* and *Kungliga Livregementets dragoner* (these three regiments were all stationed in Stockholm). Likewise, the newly formed *Kungliga Skånska kavalleriregementet* (stationed in Helsingborg) was a merging of *Kungliga Skånska dragonregementet* (stationed in Ystad) and *Kungliga Skånska husarregementet* (stationed in Helsingborg).

changed names to the Swedish National Socialist Farmers' and Workers' Association (*Svenska nationalsocialistiska bonde- och arbetarföreningen*)(SNBA), had been formed two years earlier. However, while the main impetus behind the first fascist party had been anti-semitism, an issue that had not attracted supporters to the party, the SFKO gravitated more towards Italian fascism, and focused on anti-democratic and anti-communist rhetoric, and the issue of national defense (Wärenstam 1972, Hagtvét 1980). According to Wärenstam (1972, 70), SFKO's journal constantly wrote about the issue of national defense, and especially the cutbacks and garrison closures that resulted from the Defense Act of 1925. This issue was also connected to the issue of democracy and parliamentarism, as is exemplified by the following 'call to soldiers' published in the journal:

You have sworn allegiance to the Crown. But the king has been disabled by the party leaders. He who wishes to remain loyal to his oath must overthrow the system of government (...) Throw parliamentarism from the saddle! Long live Sweden! Long live the King! Long live fascism! (Wärenstam 1972, 75).

Hagtvét (1980, 726) summarizes historical evidence concerning the recruitment to SFKO as follows: "If there is any pattern in the recruitment to this organization, it must be that of the *declassé military*". The explanation for this, Hagtvét says, is the 1925 Defense Act.

This was probably due to the reform of the armed forces completed by the Social Democratic Minister of Defense Per Albin Hansson. The military regarded this reform with suspicion. Some officers lost their commission, in itself a rather grave problem in view of the unemployment at the time. Fears, particularly among the lower ranks, that there would be further lay-offs made some susceptible to the nationalist propaganda in fascist weeklies (Hagtvét 1980, 726).

Wärenstam (1972, 89) concludes along the same lines, saying that the government had not considered the "social consequences of the Defense Act of 1925", most notably unemployment among military personnel, and that numerous lower-rank military personnel were drawn to SFKO for this reason. According to Nilsson (2000, 68), Per Engdahl, an early member of SFKO who later went on to establish his own fascist organization and became highly influential

in the post-WWII fascist sub-culture, has also testified that the Defense Act of 1925 was an important impetus behind the formation of SFKO.

Apart from the fact that many positions within the movement were occupied by military officers, several anecdotes illustrate that SFKO's early mobilization appears to have been driven by discontent with disarmament. It is documented that the Defense Act of 1925 was instrumental in converting at least one of the early leaders, Sven Hedengren, of the SFKO to fascism. Hedengren had been part of the above-mentioned anti-disarmament association RSF, and had participated in the establishment of the controversial local organizations at garrisons threatened by closure (Wärenstam 1972, 68). Another activist in SFKO, a military officer who lost his job due to the defense cutbacks, assaulted the Social Democratic Minister of Defense, Per Albin Hansson, in the street. When he was arrested, he blamed the attack on Hansson's key role in the disarmament decision. SFKO's newspaper also blamed Hansson, and commented that the activist had paved the way for a new type of politics; violent protest directed at traitors to the country, as personified by Hansson (Wärenstam 1972, 79).

Summing up, the above suggests that fascist mobilization was driven by discontent with disarmament, and that the latter was perceived as consequence of democratization. These historical evidence are thus consistent with the theory that opposition to democracy is driven by dissatisfaction with the policies that are induced by democratic institutions.

### **2.3.2 Fascist parties and their electoral activities during the 1930s and 1940s**

Towards the end of the 1920s, Sweden had two principal fascist parties, the above-mentioned SNBA and SFKO. They were small, and in 1930, after representatives of both branches had visited with Hitler, they merged and formed what would become the Swedish National Socialist Party (*Sveriges Nationalsocialistiska Parti*) (SNP). The leadership was shared between one of the leaders of SNBA, Birger Furugård, who was elected party leader, and one of the officers that had founded SFKO, Sven-Olov Lindholm, who was second-in-command. This party ran in 11 out of 28 districts in the 1932 general elections and received 15,170 votes, or a modest 0.6% of the total votes. The Nazi's degree of electoral success did, however, vary substantially across regions, the peaks being vote shares of 5.7% in the electoral districts of Gothenburg city and 2.9%

in Värmland (Statistics Sweden 1932).

Tensions between Furugård and Lindholm, who favored a more explicitly anti-capitalist stance, quickly surfaced. As a result, Lindholm was excluded from SNP in 1933 and instead formed the National Socialist Labor Party (*Nationalsocialistiska Arbetarepartiet*) (NSAP). Both the NSAP and the SNP ran in the 1934 municipal and county elections. Counting only votes in the cities,<sup>14</sup> together these parties received 15,645 votes in municipal elections, corresponding to a vote share of 1.8%. The NSAP appears to have had the greatest success, since most of the elected municipal councilors were from the Lindholm fraction. Again, the regional variation was large, with fascists polling over 2% in 15 of the 117 municipalities with city status, while not even running in 69 of them (Statistics Sweden 1934).

The 1936 general elections provided further evidence that the Furugård fraction was floundering. His SNP ran in 11 out of 28 electoral districts in an alliance with the smaller National Socialist Bloc (*Nationalsocialistiska Blocket*) (NSB) led by colonel Martin Ekström, and only received 3,025 votes. The Lindholm-led NSAP, on the other hand, ran in 26 districts and received 17,843 votes. Together the parties won a modest 0.7% of the total votes cast. Again the regional variation was large, with the Nazis being the most successful in the district of Gothenburg city (Statistics Sweden 1936). Soon after the election, Furugård disbanded the SNP and urged his supporters to join Lindholm's NSAP.

The performance of the fascist parties in the 1936 elections can perhaps be partly explained by the emergence of a new competitor. The Swedish National League (*Sveriges Nationella Förbund*) (SNF) originated from the youth organization of the Conservative Party (*Allmänna Valmansförbundet*) (AV). The youth organization had, however, gradually oriented itself towards fascism, and positioned itself strongly against disarmament.<sup>15</sup> During the late 1920s, the organization had seen a remarkable influx of members, which historians have argued was a result of popular disapproval of the Defense Act of 1925. As one leader in the organization put it, referring to the 1925 Defense Act: "The parliamentary outcome concerning the issue of defense served as a wake-up call" (Wärenstam, 1965, 22-23). In 1934, the youth organization broke away from

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<sup>14</sup>Election statistics for the 1934 election for the multitude of municipalities that lacked city status are unavailable.

<sup>15</sup>There is some doubt over whether it should be characterized as *wholeheartedly* embracing fascism or nazism in the mid-30s. Anti-semitism does not appear to have been a prominent issue for the SNF, but it is clear that their platform had become strongly influenced by fascism and nazism by the mid-30s (Wärenstam, 1965, 285).

the traditional conservatives. The following year, three members of parliament broke with AV and sat as representatives for SNF for their remaining terms. In the 1936 elections, SNF ran in 22 of the 28 districts and received 26,750 votes, or 0.9% of the total votes cast (Statistics Sweden 1936).

After the SNP had disbanded, Lindholm's NSAP was the main remaining explicitly Nazified party. With the growing reports of the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany and Hitler's aggressive foreign policy stance, Lindholm felt the need to distance his party from the German NSDAP. In 1938, he therefore changed the name of the party to Swedish Socialist Unity (*Svensk Socialistisk Samling*) (SSS) (Wärenstam 1972, 127-128). However, as Hagtvet (1980, p. 730) writes, "this shift was cosmetic in nature". In the 1938 municipal elections, Lindholm's SSS ran in 108 of the around 1,500 municipalities where single parties could run independently. In the municipalities with city status, they received 12,321 votes, or 1.2% in the 51 municipalities of this type where they ran. As earlier, the geographical variation in votes was large with the party winning close to or over 2% of the votes in e.g. the municipalities of Gothenburg and Stockholm (Statistics Sweden 1938). The slightly smaller SNF also ran in the elections, presenting lists in 53 municipalities and receiving 7936 votes in the municipalities with city status (Statistics Sweden 1938).

The fact that these parties participated in elections during the 1930s does not mean that they were pro-democracy. Their ideology was strongly influenced by the German NSDAP, and to some extent also the Italian fascists, and even when they started to distance themselves from them, they remained strongly anti-democratic. According to the NSAP party program, the preferred form of government was one where the government was unaccountable to the parliament. The parliament, in turn, should consist of representatives from various sectors of society, and was only to have a consultative role. Parties would be banned. When one of the main ideologues of NSAP/SSS discussed what should be the main themes of the party's propagande he wrote: "democracy is a class struggle, democracy is the rule of money, democracy is moral dissolution, democracy is the death of the Swedish tribe" (Löw 2004, 233). They were also perceived as a potential threat by the Swedish government. For instance, in 1935 a classified report by the Swedish Security Service, which compiled intelligence about these parties, described the members as "fanatic", and spoke of their "many plans to use excessive violence". They exemplified this by describing aborted plans to assassinate leading Social Democrats, as well as bombing public buildings and

rival parties' headquarters (SÄPO 1935, 65).

Following the outbreak of WWII, Nazi parties, although still being active, largely shunned electoral participation. There is evidence that they calculated that the outbreak of the war had diminished their prospects of electoral success even further, especially after the German invasion of Norway in 1940. They did not participate in the 1940 general elections, and only the SNF participated in the 1942 municipal elections, where they ran in 21 municipalities and received 3,878 votes in those municipalities with city status (Statistics Sweden 1940, Statistics Sweden 1942). Both the SSS and the SNF did, however, participate in 1944 general elections. The SSS, which ran in eight out of 28 districts, made a poor showing, and only managed to win 4202 of the votes. The SNF only ran in one district—Stockholm city—and managed to win 3,819, or 1.1% of the votes there. Finally, the Socialist Party (*Socialistiska Partiet*) (SP), a party which had emerged following a split in the Communist Party, which had gradually drifted towards a pro-German and pro-Nazi position ran in eight districts and received 5,279 votes, of which about half were from the district of Stockholm city (Statistics Sweden 1944).<sup>16</sup> With the end of WWII, parties associated with Nazism and fascism almost disappeared from the electoral scene.

### 3 Hypothesis to be examined

As the former section makes clear, the roots of the SSS, which was the main fascist party that ran in the 1938 municipal elections, were military officers who expressed a clear discontent with the dismantling of the military sector in Sweden that followed the end of WWI. And accordingly, as is also discussed above, the Defense Act of 1925 was high on the party's agenda. Also the former youth organization of the Conservatives which gradually became oriented towards fascism, SNF, positioned themselves as anti-disarmament and had in the late 1920s experienced a surge in mobilization that was attributed to defense cutbacks. Does this imply that the emergence of fascist parties in the 1930s is largely explained by the military feeling threatened by democracy, as manifested in the proposed defense cuts? Particularly, can the varying degree of the fascists' local electoral activities across the country be explained by the local military presence?

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<sup>16</sup>Indicative of this paradoxical transformation of the SP is the fact that they ran on a joint list together with SNF in the district of Stockholm city (Statistics Sweden 1944).



Table 1: Geographical dispersion across municipalities of fascist parties in 1938 and garrisons in 1925

|     | Garrison in 1925? |      | Pearson's $r$ |
|-----|-------------------|------|---------------|
|     | Yes               | No   |               |
| SSS | 69.4%             | 3.7% | 0.46          |
| SNF | 36.1%             | 2.9% | 0.28          |

Table 1 gives a first, rough quantitative answer to this question by displaying the correlation between the presence of a military garrison in the municipality in 1925—the year when the Defense Act was made public—and the fascists' participation in the municipal election in 1938—sufficiently long after the first establishment of the party for the members to mobilize, yet before the outbreak of WWII.<sup>17</sup> As shown in the table, the SSS ran in almost 70% of the municipalities which had a garrison, whereas the corresponding figure for municipalities without a garrison is below 4%. There is, in other words, a relatively large correlation between the presence of a garrison in 1925 and whether or not the SSS ran in 1938 (Pearson's  $r=0.46$ ). And there is a similar, albeit not as stark pattern for the SNF; in 1938, the SNF ran in 36% of the municipalities which had a garrison prior to the 1925 Defense Act, whereas the corresponding figure for municipalities without a garrison was below 3% (Pearson's  $r=0.28$ ).

Motivated by these suggestive correlations, along with the historical accounts from previous sections, the main hypothesis we aim at testing is the following:

- **H1**: The probability that fascist parties entered the Swedish electoral arena in the 1930s was higher in those municipalities that had a regiment prior to the 1925 Defense Act.

If we find support for **H1**, there are two main possible channels through which the relationship between the local presence of a military garrison in 1925 and subsequent local electoral fascist activities may operate, and we will examine which of these seems more likely:

1. It is the *actual shutdown* of a garrison that matters for the formation of fascist/Nazi parties.
2. It is the *mere presence* of a garrison that matters for the formation of fascist/Nazi parties, either;

<sup>17</sup>The analysis in Table 1 includes 1435 municipalities. While there were close to 2,500 municipalities in the 1930s, about 40% had to be excluded from our analysis, either because they were direct democracies or non-partisan systems. See more on this in section 5.

- (a) because of a *general connection between the military culture and fascism*, or
- (b) because of a *sense of threat* from the democracy-induced military downsizing.

Our hypothesis **H1** relates to the view that whether or not a group supports democracy depends on how they are affected by the democratically induced policies. But our approach to test this hypothesis (laid out in the next section) indirectly also allows us to test a hypothesis related to the alternative modernization school of thought regarding support for democracy, namely: Fascist parties entered the Swedish electoral arena in the 1930s in municipalities that were poor around the time the 1925 Defense Act was approved. And related, when looking into the two potential channels stated above, as a way of accounting for potential economic consequences of the defense cuts, we will also examine the importance of the economic situation at the time of the 1938 election.

## 4 Empirical strategy

To test our main hypothesis we will estimate the following equation:

$$Fascist_i^{1938} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Garrison_i^{1925} + \gamma'X + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

The dependent variable  $Fascist_i^{1938}$  is an indicator variable taking the value 1 if the SSS ran in the 1938 election in municipality  $i$ , and 0 otherwise.<sup>18</sup> The right-hand side variable of interest is  $Garrison_i^{1925}$ , which is an indicator variable taking the value 1 if there was a regiment in the municipality in 1925, and 0 otherwise.

A priori we cannot rule out alternative factors behind the success of the fascist parties. If the non-military factors are correlated with  $Garrison_i^{1925}$ , we need to control for these variables in order to be able to interpret  $\beta_1$  as a test of our military hypothesis **H1**. These control variables are included in the  $X$ -vector. Along the lines of the modernization school, traditional explanations for this type of anti-establishment parties are general social distress and unfavorable

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<sup>18</sup>In a sensitivity analysis we will instead let the dependent variable be an indicator for whether the slightly smaller SNF ran in municipality  $i$  in the 1938 election.

economic conditions. The local tax base and local poverty measures are therefore one set of control variables in the  $X$ -vector.

Another possible factor behind the local electoral activities of the fascists that we need to control for is that of electoral competition from other political parties. Here we are particularly interested in the Communist Party and in the Agrarian Party. The reason for including the former builds on what is sometimes referred to as the ‘red menace’ hypothesis (Linz 1976), which views fascism as a response to leftist revolutionary threats. In the Swedish case, the Social Democrats had clearly chosen the reformist route, leaving the Communists as the only ones on the left side of the political spectrum advocating revolution. The Agrarian Party, on the other hand, are considered to have had some “fascistoid elements in their ideology” (Wärenstam 1972, 54-55, Hagtvet 1980, 718) at the time. In their party program from 1933, for instance, they claim that an important task for the party is to “protect the Swedish race against mixing with inferior foreign racial elements, as well as to counteract immigration to Sweden by undesirable foreigners.”<sup>19</sup> We therefore include a control for the presence of the Agrarian Party to account for the possibility that they may have crowded out the more pronounced fascist parties.

Finally, the  $X$ -vector also includes a set of dummies for population size as well as a dummy for whether the municipality had city status. These variables are included since they might have a close to mechanical effect on the probability that a fascist party ran in the election that we need to control for—the more people, the higher the probability that someone/some group will mobilize.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps not surprisingly given the large raw correlations in Table 1, we find below that  $\beta_1$ , the coefficient for our variable of main interest, is indeed positive and statistically significant. Consequently, we go on to examine which of the two channels laid out in Section 3 that seems more likely.

To examine whether *actual garrison-shutdowns* can explain fascist electoral activities, we augment equation (1) with an indicator variable (*Garrison-shutdown* <sub>$i$</sub> <sup>1926–38</sup>) which takes the value 1 if a garrison was shut down in municipality  $i$  during the period 1926–38, and 0 otherwise:

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<sup>19</sup>Translation from Swedish. The party program is available in digital form here: <http://snd.gu.se/sv/vivill/party/c/program/1933>.

<sup>20</sup>The correlation between a municipality in our main sample having an active military garrison in 1925 and its population size (measured in 1938) is around 35%. We therefore think that it is important to control for size in this rather flexible way.

$$Fascist_i^{1938} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Garrison_i^{1925} + \lambda_1 Garrison-shutdown_i^{1926-38} + \gamma'X + \varepsilon_i \quad (2)$$

If  $\lambda_1 > 0$ , a garrison being shut down impacted the fascists' mobilization above and beyond any potential influence of a garrison being located in the municipality. In other words,  $\lambda_1 > 0$  is interpreted as support for mechanism 1. In contrast, if there is no statistically significant positive effect of  $Garrison-shutdown_i^{1926-38}$ , but  $\beta_1 > 0$ , our results are consistent with mechanism 2. That is, it is the mere presence of a garrison that matter for the fascists' mobilization, either because of a general connection between the military culture and fascism (mechanism 2a), or because of a sense of threat from the democracy-induced military downsizing (mechanism 2b).

Given that the evidence suggests that garrison presence per se matters at least to some degree, our strategy to examine the importance of mechanisms 2a and 2b is to augment equation (1) with an indicator variable for whether a military garrison was present in the municipality already in 1893,  $Garrison_i^{1893}$ , as well as an interaction between  $Garrison_i^{1893}$  and  $Garrison_i^{1925}$ ,  $Garrison_i^{1893 \times 1925}$ . The dummy defined in 1893 is thought to capture the influence of a deep-seated military culture, and the chosen year is when the number of garrisons started to increase around the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (see Figure 1). Conditional on these influences, the dummy defined in 1925 is then thought to capture the threat effect following the 1925 Defense Act, while the interaction term indicates whether such a threat effect is amplified by a long military history in the municipality. The model to be estimated is then given by:

$$Fascist_i^{1938} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Garrison_i^{1925} + \phi_1 Garrison_i^{1893} + \phi_2 Garrison_i^{1893 \times 1925} + \gamma'X + \varepsilon_i \quad (3)$$

We interpret  $\phi_1 > 0$ , as evidence that a deep-seated “military culture” is positively associated with fascist mobilization—conditional on having a garrison in 1925. Such an effect is in line with the idea in Soesters et al. (2006) that “there is a heavy emphasis in military and other uniformed organizations on

hierarchy which may even lead to a certain authoritarian ideology” (Soeters et al. 2006). And if  $\beta_1 > 0$ , there is an effect of garrison-presence conditional on a deep-seated military culture, implying that a likely mechanism is that the fascists in municipalities where the garrison was still standing felt threatened by democracy and the resulting 1925 Defense Act. If  $\phi_2 > 0$ , this threat effect is estimated to be stronger the longer the history of military presence.

Before turning to the data that we use to estimate equations (1) to (3), a more general comment on the interpretation of the parameters in these equations is in order. It is important to distinguish between an estimate as representing a causal effect of a particular variable from one that captures an estimated statistical correlation/association which stems from omitted, correlated factors. Since the location of military garrisons was not random, to some extent this pertains to all of the explanations that we consider. However, since the initial placement as well as the closing of military garrisons were made for geopolitical reasons, with the specific purpose of defending the country against outside military threats, we do think that the military factors we have included in our models are quite likely to have mainly military interpretations. The reasoning behind the geographic placement of garrisons are arguably unlikely to have been driven by factors related to the mobilization of the fascist (factors which are not accounted for in our empirical model), but instead determined by the geopolitical situation at the time.

## 5 Data

To estimate the models set up above and thereby to test the hypothesis that fascist parties entered the Swedish electoral arena in municipalities with local military presence, we have compiled a data set covering Swedish municipalities in the 1920s and 1930s. As described in Section 2.2, we extract information from Herlitz (1967) to construct our military variables. The election data originates from Statistics Sweden, while the main sources for our socio-economic variables are the 1925 and 1938 Yearbook for Swedish Municipalities and the 1930 Census of the Population. Naturally, much of the data were only available in paper form—for example, data on the mobilization of fascist parties in the interwar years were coded from the list of parties running in each municipality in the 1938 elections published by Statistics Sweden (1939).

For being historical, our data is rather rich in the sense that we have quite

detailed information on economic and social conditions in the municipality. Yet, as is inevitable when conducting quantitative studies of history, data availability partly limits our analysis. In particular, since different variables are available for different years, what we end up with is a cross section of municipalities covering only parts of the 1920s and 1930s.

Of the around 2,500 Swedish municipalities in the 1930s, around 30% still had direct democracy and thereby had no active political parties. And among the remaining 70% that did have representative democracy, in some it was only possible to cast a coalition ballot paper rather than a separate party ballot paper; they were, effectively, one-party systems. Our analysis will consequently focus on the remaining municipalities, where it was indeed possible for a fascist party to run. This sample amounts to 1,435 municipalities, and column 1 of Table 2 provides the mean and standard deviation of key variables among these municipalities. Due to data availability, the part of our analysis that uses vote shares as the dependent variable can only be conducted on municipalities that had city status in 1938.<sup>21</sup> Column 2 of Table 2 therefore separates this subsample from the main sample. For comparison, columns 3 and 4 contain municipalities without individual party lists and without representative democracy, respectively, that will not be in our estimation sample.

Table 2 reveals several noteworthy aspects: The first four variables in Table 2 are indicator variables for whether the respective parties ran in the 1938 election, and not surprisingly we see that the “extreme” parties did so more frequently in cities, and the Agrarian Party less so. Looking at the military variables measuring garrison-presence in 1893 and 1925 as well as garrison-shutdowns during the period 1926–38, we find a higher share of cities that both had a garrison present as well as had one closed down.<sup>22</sup> In fact, only three non-cities had a garrison in 1925, out of which two were shut down in the wake of the 1925 Defense Act.<sup>23</sup> As for population, all municipalities with direct democracy in 1938 had less than 2,000 inhabitants, and the population size is largest in the city sub-sample. There are some but not large differences in poverty rates

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<sup>21</sup>In the baseline regressions on the full sample we control for city status in 1925—that is, the year when we measure the socio-demographic characteristics of the municipality. Three municipalities acquired city status between 1925 and 1938; Nybro in 1932 and Högånäs and Ljungby in 1936.

<sup>22</sup>Note that there are more than one garrison in some municipalities, which is why the total number of garrisons and garrison-shutdowns implied by the statistics in Table 2 do not entirely add up to the numbers in Figure 1.

<sup>23</sup>Thus effectively, the identifying variation is mostly between cities. In the result section we therefore also present on the cities-only subsample.

Table 2: Summary statistics

|                                      | Main sample<br>mean/sd | Cities in 1938<br>mean/sd | Non-partisan<br>mean/sd | Direct democracy<br>mean/sd |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| SSS <sup>1938</sup>                  | 0.0537<br>(0.225)      | 0.345<br>(0.477)          |                         |                             |
| SNF <sup>1938</sup>                  | 0.0369<br>(0.189)      | 0.233<br>(0.424)          |                         |                             |
| Communists <sup>1938</sup>           | 0.280<br>(0.449)       | 0.664<br>(0.474)          |                         |                             |
| Agrarian <sup>1938</sup>             | 0.678<br>(0.467)       | 0.172<br>(0.379)          |                         |                             |
| SSS vote share <sup>1938</sup>       |                        | 0.00466<br>(0.00954)      |                         |                             |
| SNF vote share <sup>1938</sup>       |                        | 0.00891<br>(0.0219)       |                         |                             |
| Garrison <sup>1893</sup>             | 0.0181<br>(0.133)      | 0.0776<br>(0.269)         | 0<br>(0)                | 0.00406<br>(0.0636)         |
| Garrison <sup>1925</sup>             | 0.0251<br>(0.156)      | 0.284<br>(0.453)          | 0<br>(0)                | 0<br>(0)                    |
| Garrison-shutdown <sup>1926-38</sup> | 0.0146<br>(0.120)      | 0.164<br>(0.372)          | 0<br>(0)                | 0<br>(0)                    |
| <i>1925 socio-demographics:</i>      |                        |                           |                         |                             |
| City                                 | 0.0787<br>(0.269)      | 0.974<br>(0.159)          | 0<br>(0)                | 0<br>(0)                    |
| Population                           | 3676.1<br>(13991.1)    | 16522.1<br>(47286.0)      | 1191.8<br>(503.7)       | 484.3<br>(176.6)            |
| Pop < 2k                             | 0.518<br>(0.500)       | 0.103<br>(0.306)          | 0.919<br>(0.273)        | 1<br>(0)                    |
| 2k ≤ Pop < 7k                        | 0.390<br>(0.488)       | 0.431<br>(0.497)          | 0.0751<br>(0.264)       | 0<br>(0)                    |
| 7k ≤ Pop < 20k                       | 0.0690<br>(0.254)      | 0.310<br>(0.465)          | 0<br>(0)                | 0<br>(0)                    |
| 20k ≤ Pop < 100k                     | 0.0105<br>(0.102)      | 0.103<br>(0.306)          | 0<br>(0)                | 0<br>(0)                    |
| Pop ≥ 100k                           | 0.00209<br>(0.0457)    | 0.0259<br>(0.159)         | 0<br>(0)                | 0<br>(0)                    |
| Poverty rate                         | 0.0245<br>(0.0106)     | 0.0327<br>(0.0132)        | 0.0226<br>(0.0106)      | 0.0192<br>(0.0114)          |
| Tax base <sup>labor</sup>            | 4.587<br>(2.661)       | 9.777<br>(2.646)          | 3.379<br>(1.417)        | 3.211<br>(1.583)            |
| Tax base <sup>corp.</sup>            | 0.0604<br>(0.266)      | 0.758<br>(0.601)          | 0<br>(0)                | 0<br>(0)                    |
| <i>1938 socio-demographics:</i>      |                        |                           |                         |                             |
| Population                           | 3924.3<br>(17385.0)    | 19749.7<br>(58522.6)      | 1083.6<br>(459.3)       | 430.6<br>(157.7)            |
| Pop < 2k                             | 0.534<br>(0.499)       | 0.0862<br>(0.282)         | 0.951<br>(0.216)        | 1<br>(0)                    |
| 2k ≤ Pop < 7k                        | 0.377<br>(0.485)       | 0.405<br>(0.493)          | 0.0491<br>(0.216)       | 0<br>(0)                    |
| 7k ≤ Pop < 20k                       | 0.0732<br>(0.261)      | 0.345<br>(0.477)          | 0<br>(0)                | 0<br>(0)                    |
| 20k ≤ Pop < 100k                     | 0.0139<br>(0.117)      | 0.138<br>(0.346)          | 0<br>(0)                | 0<br>(0)                    |
| Pop ≥ 100k                           | 0.00209<br>(0.0457)    | 0.0259<br>(0.159)         | 0<br>(0)                | 0<br>(0)                    |
| Poverty <sup>temp.</sup>             | 0.0296<br>(0.355)      | 0.0231<br>(0.0152)        | 0.0140<br>(0.0102)      | 0.0132<br>(0.0106)          |
| Poverty <sup>perm.</sup>             | 0.0313<br>(0.0142)     | 0.0351<br>(0.0116)        | 0.0297<br>(0.0190)      | 0.0248<br>(0.0160)          |
| Tax base <sup>labor</sup>            | 5.639<br>(3.339)       | 11.25<br>(3.169)          | 4.492<br>(4.121)        | 4.143<br>(1.896)            |
| Tax base <sup>corp.</sup>            | 0.287<br>(0.676)       | 0.906<br>(0.952)          | 0.0761<br>(0.240)       | 0.0404<br>(0.185)           |
| <i>N</i>                             | 1435                   | 116                       | 346                     | 739                         |

Note:  $SSS^{1938}$ ,  $SNF^{1938}$ ,  $Communists^{1938}$  and  $Agrarian^{1938}$  are indicators for whether these parties ran in the municipality in the 1938 election,  $Garrison^{1893}$ ,  $Garrison^{1925}$  and  $Garrison-shutdown_{1926-38}$  are indicators for whether there was a garrison in 1893 and in 1925 and whether a garrison was shut down in 1926-38, respectively, and  $Pop < 2k$ - $Pop \geq 100k$  and  $City$  are indicators for population size within the specified intervals and for having city status, respectively. Population, poverty and tax base are measured in 1923-25 as well as in 1938.  $N$  refers to the maximum number of observations; some variables contain missing values.

Data sources: 1938 Yearbook for Swedish Municipalities, 1930 Census of the Population, Statistics Sweden, Herlitz (1967).

across the subsamples, and taxable income is much larger among the cities than elsewhere.

## 6 Results

Did having a garrison in the municipality in 1925, the year in which the dramatic cutbacks in the Defense Act were made public, affect the probability that the main fascist party SSS was running in the 1938 municipal election? In section 6.1, we examine this question by estimating equation (1). In section 6.2, we examine different channels through which this might have happened. This is done by estimating equations (2) and (3). Rather than analyzing whether or not the fascist ran, section 6.3 shows if they were successful in attracting votes. And finally in section 6.4, probing the robustness of the results, we examine if effects are similar if we instead of the main fascist party, the SSS, study the less outright fascist but yet anti-disarmament party the Swedish National League, the SNF.

### 6.1 Baseline results

The results from estimating equation (1) with the dependent binary variable  $Fascist_i^{1938}$  measuring participation in the 1938 local elections of the SSS only are provided in Table 3. In line with the correlations displayed above in Table 1, it is clear that there is a strong, positive and significant relationship between having a garrison in 1925 and the probability that a fascist/Nazi party participated in the 1938 municipal election also after conditioning on a set of control variables. Specifically, from columns 2–5 in the first row in the table, we learn that the probability that the SSS was running in the 1938 municipal election was approximately 40%-points higher in those municipalities that had a garrison in 1925 than in those that did not. The results also seem robust to the inclusion of demographic, socio-economic and political control variables; when we add population controls to the most parsimonious model, the point estimate drops from 0.66 to 0.41 (c.f. columns 1 and 2). Once the population controls are in place, however, adding socio-economic and/or political variables to the model has little effect on the point estimate for the garrison variable (c.f. columns 2-5).

Column 6 shows results analogue to column 3 that controls for 1925 charac-



teristics,<sup>24</sup> but only for the subsample of municipalities that were classified as cities in 1938. Again, the estimate of the military influence is hardly affected. Even though the sample size is now much smaller, this is not surprising given that only three non-cities had a military garrison in 1925.

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<sup>24</sup>Adding the 1938 political controls has no influence on the results.

Table 3: Explaining the fascists' participation in the 1938 municipal elections

|  | Full sample         |                     |                     |                     |                     | Cities only         |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|  | (1)                 | (2)                 | (3)                 | (4)                 | (5)                 | (6)                 |
| Garrison <sup>1925</sup>                   | 0.657***<br>(0.077) | 0.405***<br>(0.104) | 0.409***<br>(0.102) | 0.406***<br>(0.104) | 0.413***<br>(0.102) | 0.387***<br>(0.121) |
| City                                       |                     | 0.159***<br>(0.045) | 0.062<br>(0.060)    | 0.149***<br>(0.047) | 0.058<br>(0.061)    |                     |
| $2k \leq \text{Pop} < 7k$                  |                     | 0.022**<br>(0.010)  | 0.025**<br>(0.011)  | 0.021*<br>(0.011)   | 0.024**<br>(0.011)  | 0.040<br>(0.099)    |
| $7k \leq \text{Pop} < 20k$                 |                     | 0.051<br>(0.031)    | 0.042<br>(0.031)    | 0.046<br>(0.031)    | 0.037<br>(0.031)    | 0.101<br>(0.114)    |
| $20k \leq \text{Pop} < 100k$               |                     | 0.227*<br>(0.121)   | 0.206*<br>(0.117)   | 0.221*<br>(0.121)   | 0.200*<br>(0.117)   | 0.360**<br>(0.171)  |
| $\text{Pop} \geq 100k$                     |                     | 0.421***<br>(0.098) | 0.192<br>(0.157)    | 0.411***<br>(0.098) | 0.187<br>(0.156)    | 0.273<br>(0.211)    |
| Poverty rate                               |                     |                     | -0.587<br>(0.505)   |                     | -0.637<br>(0.516)   | -1.148<br>(3.076)   |
| Tax base <sup>corp.</sup>                  |                     |                     | 0.148**<br>(0.074)  |                     | 0.146*<br>(0.074)   | 0.136*<br>(0.076)   |
| Tax base <sup>labor</sup> ( $\times 100$ ) |                     |                     | 0.009<br>(2.780)    |                     | -0.070<br>(2.910)   | 0.030<br>(1.070)    |
| Communists <sup>1938</sup>                 |                     |                     |                     | 0.012<br>(0.014)    | 0.013<br>(0.015)    |                     |
| Agrarian <sup>1938</sup>                   |                     |                     |                     | -0.013<br>(0.012)   | -0.010<br>(0.012)   |                     |
| Constant                                   | 0.037***<br>(0.005) | 0.015***<br>(0.005) | 0.028<br>(0.017)    | 0.023**<br>(0.010)  | 0.037*<br>(0.021)   | 0.074<br>(0.172)    |
| Observations                               | 1435                | 1435                | 1416                | 1434                | 1415                | 116                 |

*Note:* The dependent variable is a dummy that equals one if the SSS ran in the municipality in the 1938 elections. For other variable definitions, see Table 2. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. \*\*\*, \*\* and \* denote significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% level, respectively.

Although the other variables in the model mainly serve as controls for other things that, if not accounted for, could invalidate the interpretation of the military variable, their coefficients do also bear some interest. In particular, according to the modernization school, worse economic development should work against democratic support and thus in favor of fascist parties. However, the results in Table 3 do not suggest any clear impact of the poverty and income measures on the electoral participation of the fascists. If anything, in the full sample as well as in the much smaller city sample, the results go in the opposite direction of what we would expect from the modernization school; conditional on municipality size and garrison presence, fascist electoral participation is higher in municipalities with a *lower* poverty rate, and a *higher* corporate and income tax base (except for in column 5). Note, however, that only the estimate for the corporate tax base reaches conventional levels of statistical significance.

With regards to the political control variables we do not find that fascist parties were established in response to the Communist Party. The estimate is positive but very small, substantively, and does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance. Neither do the results in Table 3 suggest that the Agrarian Party crowded out the fascists. The estimate has the sign suggested by the ‘crowding out’ hypothesis, but is small in magnitude and not statistically significant at conventional levels.

Military presence hence seems to be important for a fascist party to emerge in the 1930s. But what might the mechanism be behind this relationship? The next section digs into this.

## **6.2 Disentangling different channels through which military factors might matter**

In this section, we attempt to get a deeper understanding of the large and robust association between garrison shutdowns and electoral activity by Nazi and fascist parties as found above. In particular, we will examine which of the alternative mechanisms discussed in Section 3 that seem the most plausible.

Results from these estimations are presented in Table 4. In the first column we show an extension of the estimation presented in column 5 of Table 3. More specifically, we have added the same demographic and socio-economic controls that were included in Table 3, but now measured both around 1925 as well

as 1938.<sup>25</sup> The purpose is to examine whether there is any evidence that the presence of a military garrison in 1925 had an impact on the demographic or socio-economic characteristics of the municipality in the 1930s, and whether this can account for the large military effect that was present in the baseline results. As can be seen in column 1 of Table 4, the point estimate for *Garrison*<sup>1925</sup> hardly changes at all when including these controls.

In column 2 of Table 4, we study whether it is the actual shutdown, rather than the mere existence, of a garrison in the municipality that matters for the formation of a fascist party. As can be seen, the event of a shutdown between 1926 and 1938, as measured by *Garrison – shutdown*<sup>1926–38</sup>, only marginally increases the probability of the fascist party running and the estimate is far from significant at any conventional level. Furthermore, the estimate for *Garrison*<sup>1925</sup> remains more or less unchanged upon the inclusion of *Garrison – shutdown*<sup>1926–38</sup> (as compared to column 5 in Table 3). When we add the vector of demographic and socio-economic controls for 1938 to the equation, as shown in column 3, we reach a similar conclusion. Our results thus indicate that it was not actual shutdowns that led to fascist mobilization.

In columns 4 and 5 of Table 4, we include an indicator for *Garrison*<sup>1893</sup> along with its interaction with *Garrison*<sup>1925</sup>. The size of main effect of *Garrison*<sup>1925</sup> drops somewhat (compare columns 5 and 2) but remains statistically significant. However, the results also show that the impact of *Garrison*<sup>1925</sup> is larger in municipalities that also had a garrison at the end of the 19th century. On the other hand, the mere history of military presence per se is not related to fascist mobilization. In other words, those municipalities that had a garrison in 1893 but not in 1925—there are 15 of them, all non-cities—did not attract the fascists in the 1938 elections. If the military culture is persistent to the extent that it remains in the municipality even though the garrison has been shut down, this shows the specific culture as such cannot explain the fascists’ mobilization. Rather, this set of results can be interpreted as showing a ‘threat’-effect, and that such threat of disarmament is considered more acute in municipalities with a longer military history.

Columns 6–7 provide the mechanism analysis for the city subsample. With the caveat that all of the cities that had a garrison in 1893 also had one in 1925, implying that one cannot disentangle the reinforced threat effect from an

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<sup>25</sup>We have excluded the indicator variables  $\text{Pop} \geq 100k$  and *City* for 1938, since they are perfectly collinear with the same variables for 1925.

effect of historical military presence per se, the results are the same as in the full sample.

### 6.3 Effects on vote shares

So far we have looked at the importance of military presence for the likelihood that the fascists mobilized and ran in the local election. In that sense, we have considered the supply of fascist parties. But the supply is not likely to operate in complete isolation from the demand. Therefore, in this subsection we briefly consider the party's success by estimating the model on vote shares in the 1938 elections rather than the probability of running. Unfortunately, there is only data on vote shares for the subsample of municipalities classified as cities. However, as we have shown above that the main conclusions hold also for this much smaller sample, this should not be of major concern.

Table 5 presents the results from running equations (1)–(3), with vote shares of the SSS in the 1938 local elections as dependent variable, and with controls for population size and socio-economic characteristics at the time of the approval of the 1925 Defense Act.<sup>26,27</sup> First, it is clear that the military presence increased the vote shares of the fascists; as seen from column 1, they received around 0.6 percentage points more votes in cities that had a military garrison in 1925. Relative to the overall mean of 0.5% in this subsample, this is a large effect. Turning then to columns 2–3 which attempt to disentangle the possible mechanisms, the results are less clear than in the main analysis above, but still reveal some interesting patterns; in column 2, although none of the estimates are statistically significant, they are both relatively large, and in column 3, while only the estimate for garrison-presence in 1925 is (weakly) significant, its interaction with historical presence is also positive and relatively large.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, we can conclude—with some uncertainty—that the actual event of a garrison-shutdown made voters even more inclined to vote for the fascists than the mere existence of a garrison per se. This result differs from above where we saw that the threat of disarmament in municipalities with a garrison present was

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<sup>26</sup>Note, again, that the variable  $Garrison_i^{1893}$  in equation (3) is not identified in this subsample where no municipality/city had a garrison in 1893 but not in 1925.

<sup>27</sup>The regressions in Table 5 are estimated with OLS. In this setting with many observations containing zeros because the SSS did not run, an alternative is the tobit estimator, the disadvantage being that it requires rather strong assumptions (Cameron and Trivedi, 2005). Tobit results, which are qualitatively similar the OLS ones, are available upon request.

<sup>28</sup>Note also that none of the control variables are statistically significant, again, failing to give support to the ideas of the modernization school that worse economic development is likely to spur anti-democratic movements.

Table 4: Mechanism analysis

|                                      | Full sample            |                        |                        |                         |                        | Cities only          |                     |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
|                                      | (1)                    | (2)                    | (3)                    | (4)                     | (5)                    | (6)                  | (7)                 |
| Garrison <sup>1925</sup>             | 0.376***<br>(0.103)    | 0.398***<br>(0.127)    | 0.341***<br>(0.129)    | 0.326***<br>(0.114)     | 0.281**<br>(0.114)     | 0.417***<br>(0.140)  | 0.317**<br>(0.128)  |
| Garrison-shutdown <sup>1926-38</sup> |                        | 0.0191<br>(0.148)      | 0.0646<br>(0.147)      |                         |                        | -0.0600<br>(0.156)   |                     |
| Garrison <sup>1893</sup>             |                        |                        |                        | 0.0209<br>(0.0719)      | 0.0481<br>(0.0732)     |                      |                     |
| Garrison <sup>1893 × 1925</sup>      |                        |                        |                        | 0.281*<br>(0.156)       | 0.290*<br>(0.157)      |                      | 0.334***<br>(0.120) |
| <i>1925 controls:</i>                |                        |                        |                        |                         |                        |                      |                     |
| City                                 | 0.0458<br>(0.0624)     | 0.0618<br>(0.0603)     | 0.0458<br>(0.0624)     | 0.0762<br>(0.0597)      | 0.0636<br>(0.0619)     |                      |                     |
| 2k ≤ Pop < 7k                        | 0.00792<br>(0.0259)    | 0.0253**<br>(0.0108)   | 0.00784<br>(0.0259)    | 0.0248**<br>(0.0106)    | 0.00866<br>(0.0261)    | 0.0406<br>(0.0994)   | 0.0434<br>(0.0992)  |
| 7k ≤ Pop < 20k                       | -0.0383<br>(0.0713)    | 0.0421<br>(0.0306)     | -0.0359<br>(0.0711)    | 0.0435<br>(0.0304)      | -0.0209<br>(0.0701)    | 0.0965<br>(0.114)    | 0.0999<br>(0.113)   |
| 20k ≤ Pop < 100k                     | -0.237<br>(0.176)      | 0.203*<br>(0.121)      | -0.254<br>(0.186)      | 0.223*<br>(0.118)       | -0.239<br>(0.177)      | 0.373**<br>(0.178)   | 0.357**<br>(0.171)  |
| Pop ≥ 100k                           | 0.253<br>(0.159)       | 0.189<br>(0.160)       | 0.246<br>(0.163)       | -0.00986<br>(0.158)     | 0.0290<br>(0.161)      | 0.281<br>(0.214)     | 0.0273<br>(0.193)   |
| Poverty rate                         | -1.290*<br>(0.674)     | -0.588<br>(0.505)      | -1.303*<br>(0.667)     | -0.503<br>(0.502)       | -1.165*<br>(0.673)     | -1.102<br>(3.062)    | -0.431<br>(3.099)   |
| Tax base <sup>labor</sup>            | 0.00291<br>(0.00632)   | 0.0000757<br>(0.00278) | 0.00276<br>(0.00633)   | -0.0000570<br>(0.00274) | 0.00307<br>(0.00629)   | 0.000632<br>(0.0107) | 0.00114<br>(0.0105) |
| Tax base <sup>corp.</sup>            | 0.154**<br>(0.0744)    | 0.148**<br>(0.0741)    | 0.154**<br>(0.0746)    | 0.133*<br>(0.0732)      | 0.137*<br>(0.0738)     | 0.135*<br>(0.0763)   | 0.119<br>(0.0757)   |
| <i>1938 controls:</i>                |                        |                        |                        |                         |                        |                      |                     |
| 2k ≤ Pop < 7k                        | 0.0189<br>(0.0261)     |                        | 0.0188<br>(0.0261)     |                         | 0.0174<br>(0.0263)     |                      |                     |
| 7k ≤ Pop < 20k                       | 0.0798<br>(0.0780)     |                        | 0.0787<br>(0.0778)     |                         | 0.0607<br>(0.0772)     |                      |                     |
| 20k ≤ Pop < 100k                     | 0.521***<br>(0.186)    |                        | 0.530***<br>(0.188)    |                         | 0.544***<br>(0.187)    |                      |                     |
| Poverty <sup>temp.</sup>             | 0.00602<br>(0.0263)    |                        | 0.00527<br>(0.0263)    |                         | 0.00836<br>(0.0265)    |                      |                     |
| Poverty <sup>perm.</sup>             | 0.861<br>(0.561)       |                        | 0.873<br>(0.556)       |                         | 0.827<br>(0.559)       |                      |                     |
| Tax base <sup>corp.</sup>            | -0.0173**<br>(0.00813) |                        | -0.0174**<br>(0.00813) |                         | -0.0161**<br>(0.00786) |                      |                     |
| Tax base <sup>labor</sup>            | -0.00318<br>(0.00533)  |                        | -0.00304<br>(0.00534)  |                         | -0.00361<br>(0.00537)  |                      |                     |
| Communists <sup>1938</sup>           | 0.0106<br>(0.0150)     |                        | 0.0106<br>(0.0150)     |                         | 0.0107<br>(0.0149)     |                      |                     |
| Agrarian <sup>1938</sup>             | -0.00881<br>(0.0120)   |                        | -0.00845<br>(0.0120)   |                         | -0.00958<br>(0.0119)   |                      |                     |
| Constant                             | 0.0290<br>(0.0205)     | 0.0279<br>(0.0173)     | 0.0287<br>(0.0206)     | 0.0260<br>(0.0172)      | 0.0283<br>(0.0207)     | 0.0708<br>(0.172)    | 0.0551<br>(0.172)   |
| Observations                         | 1398                   | 1416                   | 1398                   | 1416                    | 1398                   | 116                  | 116                 |

*Note:* The dependent variable is a dummy that equals one if the SSS ran in the municipality in the 1938 elections. For other variable definitions, see Table 2. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. \*\*\*, \*\* and \* denote significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% level, respectively.

the likely main driver of fascist mobilization. But similarly as for the probability of the fascist running, we see that also the effect on fascist votes seems to be larger the longer the history of military presence there is.

Table 5: Effects on the fascists' vote shares in the 1938 city elections

|                                      | (1)                      | (2)                      | (3)                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Garrison <sup>1925</sup>             | 0.00616**<br>(0.00294)   | 0.00393<br>(0.00262)     | 0.00539*<br>(0.00306)    |
| Garrison-shutdown <sup>1926-38</sup> |                          | 0.00445<br>(0.00388)     |                          |
| Garrison <sup>1893×1925</sup>        |                          |                          | 0.00365<br>(0.00494)     |
| $2k \leq \text{Pop} < 7k$            | -0.00155<br>(0.00399)    | -0.00159<br>(0.00399)    | -0.00152<br>(0.00402)    |
| $7k \leq \text{Pop} < 20k$           | -0.00200<br>(0.00361)    | -0.00168<br>(0.00361)    | -0.00200<br>(0.00362)    |
| $20k \leq \text{Pop} < 100k$         | -0.00283<br>(0.00409)    | -0.00382<br>(0.00443)    | -0.00286<br>(0.00410)    |
| $\text{Pop} \geq 100k$               | 0.00392<br>(0.00677)     | 0.00334<br>(0.00743)     | 0.00124<br>(0.00752)     |
| Poverty rate                         | -0.0541<br>(0.0836)      | -0.0574<br>(0.0844)      | -0.0462<br>(0.0851)      |
| Tax base <sup>corp.</sup>            | 0.00157<br>(0.00139)     | 0.00160<br>(0.00140)     | 0.00139<br>(0.00141)     |
| Tax base <sup>labor</sup>            | -0.0000510<br>(0.000229) | -0.0000753<br>(0.000230) | -0.0000419<br>(0.000226) |
| Constant                             | 0.00552<br>(0.00689)     | 0.00578<br>(0.00692)     | 0.00531<br>(0.00693)     |
| Observations                         | 116                      | 116                      | 116                      |

*Note:* The dependent variable is vote shares for the SSS in the 1938 city elections. For other variable definitions, see Table 2. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. \*\*\*, \*\* and \* denote significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% level, respectively.

## 6.4 Effects on an alternative anti-democratic party

As laid out in the historical background in Section 2, the SSS was not the only political party with fascist elements. Disarmament had been an important catalyst for the mobilization of members to the former youth organization of the Conservatives, the Swedish National Youth League (Sveriges Nationella Förbund; SNF), which positioned themselves as anti-disarmament and gravitated towards a right-wing extremist and anti-democratic stance (Wärenstam

1965). In this section, we probe the robustness of the main results by examining if the effects are similar if we instead of the main fascist party, the SSS, study the mobilization and the success of this alternative anti-democratic party.

Table 6 shows results for estimating equations (1)–(3) on the probability of the SNF running in all of the 1938 local elections (columns 1–3) as well as in municipalities with city status (columns 4–6). In Table 7, the outcome is instead the vote shares of the SNF (only in cities). Considering first the results in Table 6, it is harder to see an equally strong connection with military presence and the probability of the SNF running as we saw for the SSS; the point estimates are generally smaller and statistically weaker. This is not very surprising, given that the SNF was overall smaller, and that their policy platform covered a broader set of issues. Still, the overall pattern is largely consistent with the main analysis. For example, the point estimate for garrison-presence is positive throughout the columns, and the effect seems larger in municipalities with a longer military history. In fact, the linear combination of the main effect ( $Garrison^{1925}$ ) and the interaction effect ( $Garrison^{1893 \times 1925}$ ) in column 3 is 0.35 and is statistically significant at the 5% level. The corresponding figure for column 6 is 0.43, an estimate which is significant at the 10% level. A slight difference, however, is that the actual garrison-shutdowns seem to matter relatively more than the mere presence—a result in line with the analysis of the SSS vote shares from above.



Table 6: Explaining the participation of the SNF in the 1938 municipal elections

|                                      | Full sample          |                      |                        | Cities only          |                      |                      |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|                                      | (1)                  | (2)                  | (3)                    | (4)                  | (5)                  | (6)                  |
| Garrison <sup>1925</sup>             | 0.166*<br>(0.0936)   | 0.0666<br>(0.118)    | 0.108<br>(0.103)       | 0.197*<br>(0.117)    | 0.0992<br>(0.138)    | 0.134<br>(0.119)     |
| Garrison-shutdown <sup>1926-38</sup> |                      | 0.184<br>(0.158)     |                        |                      | 0.197<br>(0.188)     |                      |
| Garrison <sup>1893</sup>             |                      |                      | -0.0354***<br>(0.0137) |                      |                      |                      |
| Garrison <sup>1893×1925</sup>        |                      |                      | 0.238<br>(0.191)       |                      |                      | 0.301<br>(0.233)     |
| City                                 | 0.0590<br>(0.0570)   | 0.0590<br>(0.0569)   | 0.0678<br>(0.0570)     |                      |                      |                      |
| 2k ≤ Pop < 7k                        | 0.00660<br>(0.00865) | 0.00641<br>(0.00862) | 0.00688<br>(0.00866)   | 0.178**<br>(0.0754)  | 0.177**<br>(0.0750)  | 0.181**<br>(0.0746)  |
| 7k ≤ Pop < 20k                       | 0.0674*<br>(0.0356)  | 0.0724**<br>(0.0357) | 0.0702**<br>(0.0356)   | 0.188*<br>(0.0983)   | 0.202**<br>(0.101)   | 0.188*<br>(0.0981)   |
| 20k ≤ Pop < 100k                     | 0.0729<br>(0.120)    | 0.0480<br>(0.125)    | 0.0901<br>(0.121)      | 0.266<br>(0.185)     | 0.223<br>(0.198)     | 0.264<br>(0.186)     |
| Pop ≥ 100k                           | -0.133<br>(0.343)    | -0.157<br>(0.318)    | -0.265<br>(0.363)      | 0.0409<br>(0.387)    | 0.0155<br>(0.355)    | -0.180<br>(0.420)    |
| Poverty rate                         | -0.0129<br>(0.455)   | -0.0212<br>(0.454)   | 0.0285<br>(0.453)      | -2.784<br>(3.049)    | -2.933<br>(3.069)    | -2.138<br>(3.081)    |
| Tax base <sup>corp.</sup>            | 0.0934<br>(0.0712)   | 0.0943<br>(0.0709)   | 0.0834<br>(0.0704)     | 0.0806<br>(0.0780)   | 0.0817<br>(0.0783)   | 0.0651<br>(0.0769)   |
| Tax base <sup>labor</sup>            | 0.00174<br>(0.00245) | 0.00162<br>(0.00245) | 0.00170<br>(0.00246)   | -0.00388<br>(0.0112) | -0.00496<br>(0.0113) | -0.00313<br>(0.0115) |
| Constant                             | 0.00670<br>(0.0145)  | 0.00724<br>(0.0145)  | 0.00579<br>(0.0145)    | 0.0764<br>(0.132)    | 0.0881<br>(0.133)    | 0.0590<br>(0.135)    |
| Observations                         | 1416                 | 1416                 | 1416                   | 116                  | 116                  | 116                  |

*Note:* The dependent variable is a dummy that equals one if the SNF ran in the municipality in the 1938 elections. For other variable definitions, see Table 2. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. \*\*\*, \*\* and \* denote significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% level, respectively.

Looking instead at Table 7 and the vote shares of SNF, the picture is again generally consistent with that for SSS; although there is a lack of statistical significance also here, the overall conclusion from Table 5 is confirmed. In addition, a noteworthy result is that, conditional on garrison-presence, the effect of a shutdown is indeed statistically significant and as large as 1.4 percentage points (which is to be compared to the overall mean of 0.9).

Finally, just as in the main analysis of SSS, the coefficients for the socio-economic control variables do not support the alternative explanation to the mobilization of anti-democratic parties implied by the modernization school. In contrast, the results throughout the paper are consistent with the view that support for (or alternatively, the resistance against) democracy depends on the policies that come out.

Table 7: Effects on the vote shares of the SNF in the 1938 city elections

|                                      | (1)                    | (2)                    | (3)                    |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Garrison <sup>1925</sup>             | 0.00558<br>(0.00646)   | -0.00125<br>(0.00479)  | 0.00264<br>(0.00691)   |
| Garrison-shutdown <sup>1926–38</sup> |                        | 0.0137*<br>(0.00729)   |                        |
| Garrison <sup>1893×1925</sup>        |                        |                        | 0.0140<br>(0.0151)     |
| $2k \leq \text{Pop} < 7k$            | 0.00704**<br>(0.00351) | 0.00691**<br>(0.00347) | 0.00718**<br>(0.00342) |
| $7k \leq \text{Pop} < 20k$           | 0.00401<br>(0.00508)   | 0.00498<br>(0.00504)   | 0.00398<br>(0.00501)   |
| $20k \leq \text{Pop} < 100k$         | 0.0107<br>(0.00873)    | 0.00771<br>(0.00890)   | 0.0106<br>(0.00847)    |
| $\text{Pop} \geq 100k$               | -0.0149<br>(0.0135)    | -0.0167<br>(0.0135)    | -0.0252<br>(0.0189)    |
| Poverty rate                         | -0.225*<br>(0.128)     | -0.235*<br>(0.130)     | -0.195<br>(0.122)      |
| Tax base <sup>corp.</sup>            | 0.00628<br>(0.00506)   | 0.00636<br>(0.00503)   | 0.00556<br>(0.00468)   |
| Tax base <sup>labor</sup>            | 0.000563<br>(0.000840) | 0.000488<br>(0.000814) | 0.000598<br>(0.000865) |
| Constant                             | -0.000672<br>(0.00734) | 0.000141<br>(0.00720)  | -0.00148<br>(0.00746)  |
| Observations                         | 116                    | 116                    | 116                    |

*Note:* The dependent variable is vote shares for the SNF in the 1938 city elections. For other variable definitions, see Table 2. Robust standard errors are in parentheses. \*\*\*, \*\* and \* denote significance at the 1%, 5% and 10% level, respectively.

## 7 Concluding remarks

This paper has examined which role the dismantling of the military sector in the interwar years played in the creation of the fascist movement in the 1930s in Sweden. Specifically, we tested the hypothesis that the fascist parties entered the Swedish electoral arena in the 1930s in those municipalities that had a regiment prior to the dramatic 1925 Defense Act.

The regression results, based on historical data digitized for this project, supports the hypothesis. We find that military presence, measured through the existence of a regiment in the municipality in the year before the 1925 Defense Act, is an important factor for the emergence of fascist parties in the 1930s. The effect is strengthened by a long military history in the municipality, as measured through the existence of a regiment since at least 1893. We do not find any significant effects from the *actual shutdowns* of regiments in the years following the Defense Act, suggesting that it was the *mere presence* of a regiment that mattered for the fascists' political mobilization (although we do see that in places where they did run, they gained additional votes if a garrison was indeed shut down). Nor does the evidence suggest that the sole features of a deep-seated military culture, such as a heavy emphasis on hierarchy, lead to fascist mobilization. Thus, a likely interpretation of the results is that the military, or parts thereof, felt threatened by democracy, as manifested in the 1925 Defense Act—an interpretation of our quantitative analysis in line with qualitative, historical accounts emphasizing the important role of this Act for disarmament.

Our results carry implications for the broader literature on democratization. Our robust findings of a positive relationship between military presence and the emergence of fascist parties resonate with theoretical work on democratization that emphasizes the importance of induced institutional preferences for the emergence of pro- and anti-democratic groups. This work argues that, if agents expect that different political institutions will generate very different policies and outcomes, these expectations will guide agents' preferences over the actual institutions themselves (Boix 2003, Acemoglu and Robinson 2006). In this paper, we argue that actors within the military establishment saw interwar disarmament as a consequence of Sweden's democratization, and that an alternative and less democratic regime would not have led to the same outcome. Because of this, we hypothesize that military officers were especially suscepti-

ble to anti-democratic attitudes, making the military fertile ground for fascism. Our finding, that the presence of a military garrison in a municipality prior to the major defense cutbacks that occurred in the interwar years has a strong relationship with the emergence of fascist groups, is consistent with this hypothesis, and the more general theory stressing the importance of induced institutional preferences for the emergence of opposition to democracy.

By contrast, we do not find that neither income nor poverty had any consistent impact on the emergence of the fascist parties. In demonstrating that neither income, nor poverty, appears to have had an important impact on the emergence of fascist groups, our work joins recent influential time-series cross-section work by Acemoglu et al. (2009) that challenges the modernization school on empirical grounds. However, our research is also complementary to this work. First, instead of focusing on actual regime shifts, we focus on the emergence of anti-democratic groups. Second, we study the correlation between income and anti-democratic groups using detailed historical data on a set of relatively homogenous sub-national units, thus avoiding some of the pitfalls inherent in cross-country research. Third, Acemoglu et al. (2009) have been criticized for failing to separate between transitions to and from democracy (see, e.g., Teorell 2010). In particular, some scholars have claimed that whereas economic modernization does not lead to democracy, it does reduce the probability that newly established democracies backslide into autocracy (Przeworski et al. 2000, Teorell 2010). The absence of a relationship between income and the emergence of anti-democratic groups in newly democratized Sweden is however not consistent with this criticism.

Although our main contribution lies in providing an explanation for the spatial dispersion of fascism within Sweden, we believe that our results can contribute to understanding why fascism never became a mass movement in Sweden. In particular, the transition to democracy was carefully designed so as to ensure that those who had initially opposed democratization, especially the Conservatives, were guaranteed some power after the transition. In particular, the adoption of proportional representation is typically seen as an important concession to the right, since this guaranteed the Conservatives representation even in the face of large scale Social Democratic mobilization. Sweden was in this sense similar to many other Western European countries where, in the words of Rokkan (1970, 157), “the most threatened of the old-established parties demanded PR to protect their position against the new waves of mobilized voters

created by universal suffrage.” The indirectly elected first chamber, with its staggered election cycle, also served the same purpose, by limiting the direct impact of large shifts in voter support. As we have shown, the military was the group that was most threatened by Sweden’s democratization, but given the design of the democratic transition, they stood without allies from the other groups that had initially been against democracy.

Even though organized fascism never became a mass movement in Sweden in the 1930s, it might have had wider consequences for the future. There is a growing literature on the persistence of cultural traits over time. Voigtländer and Voth (2012) do for example find a strong correlation between local anti-semitic traits in the mid 14th century (during the Black Death 1348-1350) and local anti-semitic traits in Germany during the early years of the nazi-period (late 1920s and early 1930s). An important implication of the existence of fascist parties in Sweden in the 1930s might hence be that fascist or extreme-right preferences have survived over time in the areas where they grew relatively strong. It would therefore be interesting to examine to what extent such local preferences in the 1930s survive for more than half a century and are able to explain the local creation and growth of the extreme-right party *Sverigedemokraterna* from 1988 and onwards (in the 2014 national election, *Sverigedemokraterna* received 12.8% of the votes). This is next on our research agenda.

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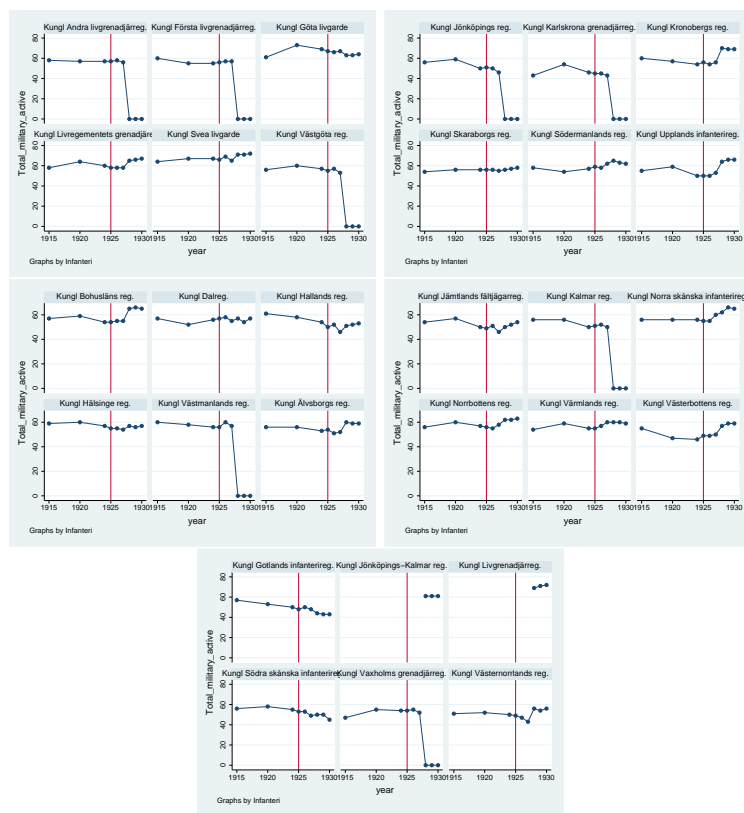


## A Regiments in Sweden 1915-1930

The figures in this Appendix show the total number of military personnel (active officers) at each of the regiments that existed in the period 1915-1930. The vertical line in each figure indicates 1925, the year in which the far-reaching Defense Act was presented. The suggested changes were expected to be effective in 1928.

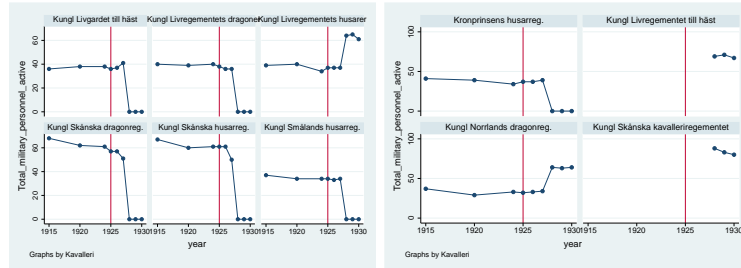
### A.1 Infantry

Figure 2: Number of active officers at infantry regiments, 1915-1930



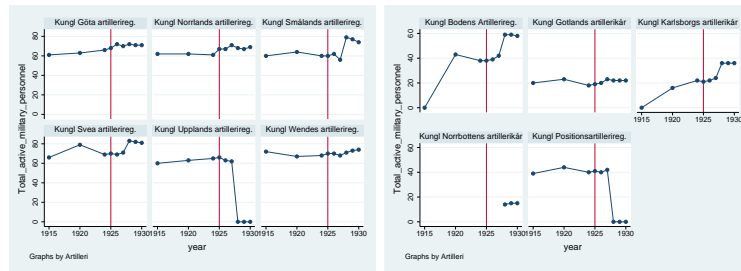
## A.2 Cavalry

Figure 3: Number of active officers at cavalry regiments, 1915-1930



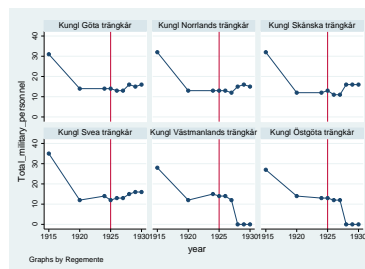
## A.3 Artillery

Figure 4: Number of active officers at artillery regiments, 1915-1930



## A.4 Service regiment

Figure 5: Number of active officers at service regiments, 1915-1930



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