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Center for Research in Economics, Management and the Arts

Military careers of politicians matter for national security policy

Working Paper No. 2014-18

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Military careers of politicians matter for national security policy*

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Abstract: Do politicians with a military background decide differently on military affairs? We investigate the informative institutional setting of the Swiss conscription army. Politicians who served in the military have a higher probability of accepting pro-military legislative proposals, even when controlling for party affiliations and revealed preferences of constituents that politicians are supposed to represent. While conscription requires all able-bodied man to serve at least as soldiers, we can exploit variation in exposure to enforced and voluntary service. This allows us to provide indicative evidence that motivation for the military, instead of compulsory service, plays a substantial role for explaining legislative decisions on military affairs.

Keywords: Military, Legislative voting, Constituents' preferences

JEL Classification: J16, D72

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War is too serious a matter to entrust to military men.
(Georges Clemenceau, translated from French,
“Soixante Années d’Histoire Française”, 1932 by Georges Suarez)

I. INTRODUCTION

Political decisions on military and defense issues affect national security and welfare. Even in democratic countries, politicians are not totally neutral towards, and independent of, the military. Politicians often have a personal background in the military as they have served in the military in their youth or held a higher army post before being elected. For instance, 32 of the so far 44 US-Presidents served in the military. The French President François Hollande and his Prime Minister Manuel Valls both served as sub-lieutenants. Vladimir Putin’s domestic and foreign policy is commonly said to be shaped by his military and secret service training. Innumerable representatives in parliaments around the world have served in the military. They decide on military and army issues today.

The literature is astonishingly mute on how members of parliament with a military background vote on issues related to the military. Given that their decisions have an important effect on government budgets as well as national and international security issues, it is time to explore whether members of parliament with a military background decide differently on military affairs, i.e. whether they vote more often in favor of pro-military affairs than representatives without such a background.

Any endeavor to analyze this question is confronted with two major challenges: (1) Members of parliament are elected by constituents and are supposed to represent them. Constituents may elect representatives with or without a military background because they themselves feel that voting “correctly” on military affairs is important. Unfortunately, preferences of constituents regarding military aspects are usually unobservable which makes it difficult to distinguish whether decisions of members of parliament are influenced by their personal background or by their duty to represent their constituents. (2) While it is fairly easy to identify parliamentary decisions affecting the military, it is not always obvious which of them are pro- or anti-military. Thus, an external classification of issues by military experts is required which is independent of the parliamentary decision itself. In this article we deal with both challenges by analyzing differences in legislative voting on pro- and anti-military issues by parliamentary representatives with different military backgrounds.

In Switzerland, constituents reveal their preferences for parliamentary proposals by voting in referenda (see Schneider et al. 1981; Portmann et al. 2012). The wording of the

referenda is identical to the legislative proposals dealt with in parliament. Thus, we *observe* constituents' preferences and, at the same time, decisions of members of parliament in final roll call votes. We use official voting recommendations for referenda issued by expert specialists to identify military affairs and military preferences. These expert specialists are two official military organizations, i.e. the Swiss Officers Society and the Non-commissioned Officers Society. Finally, we collected personal data on the military service and ranks for all Swiss legislators in office from 2000 to 2011. With this setting we investigate whether military background of a member of parliament explains personal voting behavior in parliament related to military affairs, always taking into account revealed constituents' preferences for the same legislative issues.

Our empirical results unequivocally show that members of parliament with a military background have a significantly higher probability of voting pro-military. The quantitative influence of a military background on legislative voting is not affected by other personal characteristics such as party affiliations or by controlling for constituents' preferences. This is a relevant result and no other study so far was able to account for constituents' preferences in such natural way. However, it is challenging to interpret the finding: While it suggests that bringing more politicians with a military background to parliament increases the likelihood that pro-military proposals will be accepted, it remains unclear whether the military service makes politicians more pro-military or whether members of parliament who served tended to be more pro-military in the first place before even serving in the military.

Our setting provides indicative evidence that the military service does not make individuals more pro-military but rather that motivation to advance in the military explains pro-military voting. Conscription is compulsory in Switzerland but conscription requirements were relaxed over time. We observe politicians who just served as soldiers or non-commissioned officers and others who have chosen to become officers or non-commissioned officers. Exploiting differences between age groups and military ranks allows us to distinguish a potential selection effect of advancing in the military from the treatment effect of serving in the military. Results tend to indicate that any differential voting pattern occurs most likely due to selection, i.e. pro-military motivated individuals tend to be promoted to higher army ranks and vote more pro-military when in parliament later on. Simply serving compulsory time in the military, in contrast, does not induce future politicians to vote more pro-military.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: Section II relates our contribution to the existing literature. Section III presents the institutional setting, our data and the identification strategy. Empirical baseline results for the influence of the military service on

the probability to represent military interests are presented in Section IV. Section V elaborates on whether differences in voting emerge from individual selection into higher military ranks or whether compulsory service in the military affects attitudes towards the military. Finally, Section VI offers some concluding remarks and discusses policy consequences.

II. RELATED LITERATURE

This paper is related to at least three different strands of research.

First, it relates to the literature on military spending and conflict which theoretically and empirically explores most diverse factors (see Collier and Hoeffler 2004, 2006; Dunne et al. 2008; Gadea et al. 2004; Yildirim and Sezgin 2005; Nikolaidou 2008ab; Dunning 2011). Democratic institutions may help to regulate the allocation of power and prevent conflicts (see Acemoglu and Robinson 2006, 2008) but commitment problems may even exist in democratic societies (see Fearon 2004; Powell 2004; Frey and Luechinger 2008; Dort et al. 2014). We analyze military background as an individual characteristic of politicians which may help explain differential commitment of politicians in a democratic society and behavior in parliament.

Second, it contributes to the expanding literature on explaining legislative behavior and choices of politicians. Articles studying the influence of candidate's personal valence indicate that if voters consider such aspects, politicians have a potential leeway in their decisions (see Groseclose 2001; Zakharov 2009; Adams et al. 2010; Padovano 2013). Apart from pure electoral competition (see Downs 1957ab), other factors may explain legislative choices such as gender (see Gagliarducci and Paserman 2012; Stadelmann et al. 2014), having daughters (see Washington 2008), links to civil service (see Braendle and Stutzer 2010), or other personal socio-economic characteristics and preferences (see Ågren et al. 2007; Padovano and Ricciutti 2009; Freier and Thomasius 2012, Okulicz-Kozaryn 2014). This strand of literature highlights the importance of politicians' individual characteristics and personal backgrounds. We analyze how serving in the military influences legislative voting on security affairs.

Third, the paper is also connected to the literature on the effect of personal motivation on political choices as opposed to the literature which highlights ideology as an important factor for explaining politicians' behavior (see Garfinkel 1994; Levitt 1996; Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Brunner et al. 2013). For voting on military issues ideology has been highlighted as a major factor (see Lindsay 1990; Carsey and Rundquist 1999) but economic interests play a role too (see Fordham 2008). Other related literature analyzes the influences of conscription on

societal variables and choices (see Teigen 2006; Sasson-Levy 2007; Vasquez III 2005). We distinguish the influence of conscription as well as differences in attitudes and motivation for serving in the military when analyzing legislative decisions, and we show that personal motivation plays a significant role for explaining legislative choices in military affairs independent of party ideology, constituents' preferences, and district (economic) interests.

III. DATA AND IDENTIFICATION

Institutional setting and data

We analyze the individual voting behavior in military affairs of 350 individual members of the Swiss National Council (lower house of parliament) from 2000 to 2011 (included). The members of the National Council are elected in 26 constituencies, i.e., the Swiss cantons. As common in the literature on legislative voting behavior, we examine final votes (roll calls) of politicians during their time in office. Final roll call votes are most proximate to the adoption of governmental policies (see Krehbiel 1993). They are registered for all members of National Council by an electronic voting system.

The Swiss parliament crafts constitutional and legislative proposals for military affairs such as general army reforms. It also deals with particular defense procurement, national security issues, etc. Legislative proposals accepted by parliament do not directly turn effective. Citizens may challenge proposed laws with a referendum by collecting signatures of approximately 1% of the national electorate. Amendments to the constitution are automatically subject to a mandatory referendum. By advancing a so called initiative and collecting the signatures of approximately 2% of the national electorate, citizens can demand a popular vote on their own proposals for a constitutional amendment (see Frey 1994). Referenda reflect revealed preferences for policies as they permit constituents to rank them against the status quo (see Schneider et al. 1981; Portmann et al. 2012; Carey and Hix 2013) and they entail real policy outcomes and consequences. This is a first distinctive feature of our data. The empirical strategy is to match referendum results for each constituency with its representatives' final roll call vote in parliament on the identical military issues with the same wording. We obtain external validity for our setting as politicians cannot simply follow the revealed choices of their constituents. Similar to countries without referenda, Swiss representatives do not perfectly know what their constituency wants when deciding in parliament but they have to revert to standard means to predict constituents' preferences (see Garrett 1999; Brunner et al. 2013).

While referenda and parliamentary decisions allow to identify constituents' preferences and politicians' decisions on precisely the same legislative proposals, we also need to identify military issues as well as pro- and anti-military positions. We resort to referendum voting recommendations of the two major military organizations which are generally recognized as expert specialists in military matters (and, of course, they also have some vested interests with respect to military affairs). More precisely, we collect all "accept" and "reject" voting recommendations issued by the Swiss Officer's Society ("Schweizerische Offiziersgesellschaft")¹ and the Swiss Non-commissioned Officers Association ("Schweizerischer Unteroffiziersverband")². The Swiss Officer's Society and the Swiss Non-commissioned Officers Association regularly cast voting recommendations for referenda on military and security affairs. Our identification strategy gains credibility as both groups never diverge in their recommendations, they have detail knowledge on military matters, and have direct pro-military interests. While specific generals and officers are likely to be considered as expert specialists in the elaboration of legislation, the recommendations of military organizations and referenda are not selected with the aim to produce outside pressure on politicians. The two organizations disseminate voting recommendations for referenda *after* politicians decided in parliament and do not engage in ranking politicians. Thus, the recommendations employed are *not* part of a strategically chosen, highly polarized set, intended to put pressure on politicians.³ Table A1 in the Appendix presents the list of referenda with a short description of the topics and the voting recommendations (the original text of each referendum in three official languages can be found on the parliamentary homepage and we provide the number of the referendum). Importantly, many referenda are not unequivocally related to military budgets (e.g. the referendum on "Protecting the population against the noise of jets in tourism areas"). Moreover, even reforms which reduce military budgets (e.g. "Changes regarding the organization of the federal army and increasing its flexibility (XXI army reform act)") may be recommended for acceptance if they strengthen the military via reorganization as argued by the expert specialists.

Switzerland's national army originates from the cantonal troops of the earlier Confederation. Since its formal establishment, it constitutes a militia army of all able-bodied

¹ The Swiss Officer's Society was established in 1833 and represents the interest of Swiss Officers regarding security and military issues.

² The Swiss Non-Commissioned Officers Association is an umbrella association established at the national level in 1864 and represents political interests of Swiss non-commissioned officers and their associations.

³ Thereby, we avoid interpretive difficulties which often afflict such rankings by interest groups (Snyder 1992).

male conscripts between the ages of 19 up to 50 years for particular cases. For woman, military service is possible but voluntary. In recent years, approximately two-thirds of young Swiss men were judged to be able-bodied for service by the military authorities in charge. In the 1950s almost all young men without physical disability served in the armed forces. Alternative services, such as civil protection, exist for those not considered capable for military service but still capable for such an alternative service instead. Individuals in an alternative service with a lower burden in terms of hours than the regular military service are required to pay a military exemption tax as a compensation for the hours not served. Men not serving at all, either due to physical or mental reasons, need to pay the full military exemption tax on their income.⁴ Professional soldiers represent about 5% of military personnel. The military is engaged in peacekeeping missions but the Swiss neutrality prohibits any Swiss military personnel to participate in other countries' conflicts. Due to the general conscription requirements dating back to the revised constitution of 1874 and reforms after World War II, the militia army size rose to 880'000 men at around 1968 and then ranged amongst the World's largest military forces (compared to population size of then about 6 millions). After the Cold War, the army reform of 1995 reduced the number of soldiers to approximately 400'000 active militia troops for a population of around 7.2 million. Subsequent reforms lead again to a reduction in troops and reserves to 220'000 men by 2004 while the number of weeks for basic military training for the approximately 20'000 annual recruits was increased from 15 weeks to between 18 to 21 weeks. Swiss soldiers are required to keep their own military equipment including assault rifles at their private homes. The reforms described here, the fact whether military equipment should be stocked at home, or whether the army should be abolished at all were at some point in time subject to a referendum. Detailed information on the Swiss military system is provided by the Federal Department of Defense, Civil Protection and Sport.

We collected for all members of parliament information on whether they served in the military and on their military ranks plus additional personal and district characteristics. Due to the data structure and the institutional setting, all variables are actually observed, i.e. we did not impute any values.⁵ The average probability of an individual member of parliament to accept a military proposal in parliament is 51.2%; it is 32.7% if the proposal is against the military while it is 75.7% if the proposal is pro-military. 44.9% of decisions in our sample are

⁴ Foreigners living in Switzerland have neither to serve nor to pay any exemption taxes but do not vote for politicians or in referenda.

⁵ We stress this point because any researcher in this field will know that often certain values (in particular regarding preferences) have to be approximated or imputed.

made by members of parliament who served in the army. On average, constituents accept referenda against the military with 29.6% and pro-military proposals with 59.2%. Table A2 in the Appendix presents descriptive statistics and the data sources for all variables employed.

Empirical strategy

The empirical strategy to analyze whether members of parliament with a military background vote differently on military affairs than members without such a background follows directly from the institutional setting: We *observe* final roll call votes by members of parliament and we know whether they either did or did not serve in the military. We also *observe* pro-military and anti-military proposals by employing official referendum recommendations of army expert specialists with respect to security affairs. Preferences of constituents for the identical legislative proposals are given and *observed*. This allows us to estimate the following linear regression with an interaction term between *Served in military* and *Proposal pro-military*:

$$(1) \quad MPY_{esir} = \alpha + \beta_1(Served\ in\ military)_i + \beta_2(Served\ in\ military)_i * (Proposal\ pro-military)_r + \beta_3(Proposal\ pro-military)_r + \beta_4(Constituency\ preferences\ yes)_{ir} \mathbf{X}_{ir}\boldsymbol{\gamma} + \varepsilon_{ir}$$

where MPY_{esir} is a dummy for whether a representative i accepts (dummy is 1) or rejects (dummy is 0) in parliament a roll call vote on a referendum r . $(Served\ in\ military)_i$ is a dummy for whether a representative i served in the army or not and $(Proposal\ pro-military)_r$ stands for pro-military proposals identified by army organizations in referendum r .

The influence of the interaction of a pro-military proposal and having served in the military is captured by β_2 and represents the main variable of interest in our analysis. It reflects the effect of a military background on parliamentary voting when a proposal benefits the military. As having served and the interests of the military are both exogenous to accepting a specific proposal, the interaction effect itself is exogenous to the voting decisions and the setting serves as a quasi-experiment.

When interpreting β_2 , however, conditioning on observed preferences of a constituency is necessary to disentangle the effect of having served in the military from the military preferences of the constituency a politician is supposed to represent. The effect of the preferences of the constituency is reflected by β_4 . Not controlling for $(Constituency$

preferences $yes)_{ir}$ introduce an omitted variable bias the coefficient of the interaction term β_2 .⁶ While the literature recognizes the need to control for constituency preferences when analyzing any type of voting on legislative issues, there is no other study which uses a direct measure for revealed preferences on the identical policy proposals that politicians voted on and where preferences of the military are observed. According to the previous literature, we may speculate that other controls such as personal characteristics, party affiliations, and constituency fixed effects may be associated with legislative voting. The influence of these additional factors is reflected by the vector $\boldsymbol{\gamma}$. ε_{ir} stands for the error term.

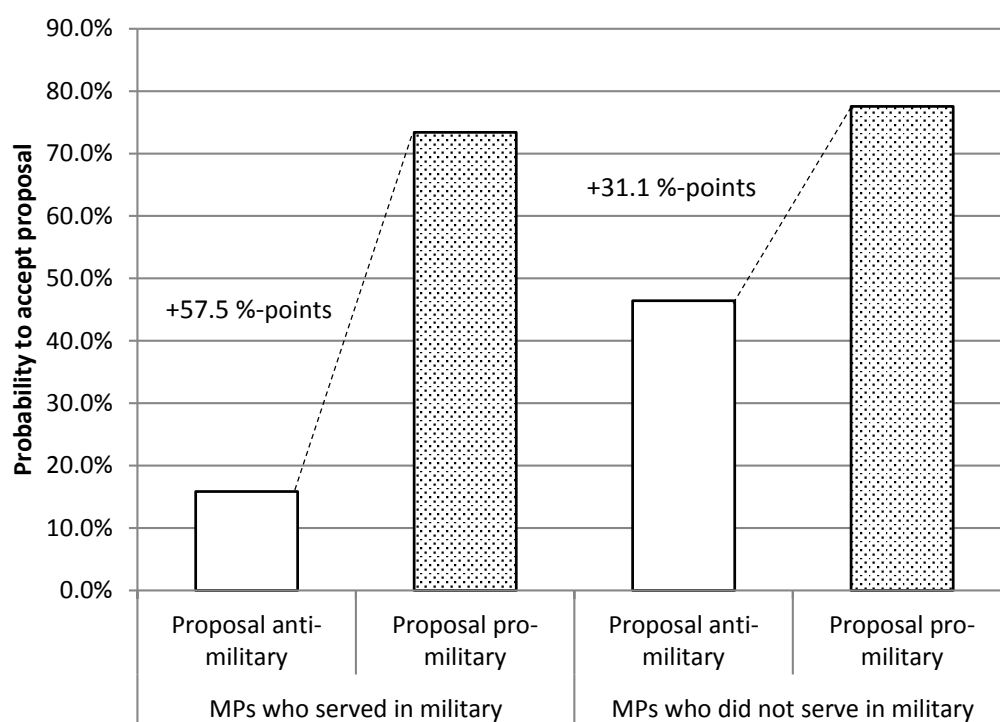
IV. EMPIRICAL RESULTS OF THE QUASI-EXPERIMENT

Descriptive evidence

Figure 1 and the accompanying table illustrate the central motivation and baseline results of this paper. The figure depicts the probability that a member of parliament, who has either served in the army or not, votes yes on proposals which are either anti- or pro-military. We observe that the probability to accept a proposition against the military is 15.9% if the member of parliament served in the military. If the proposition is pro-military and the member of parliament also served in the military the probability to vote yes is 73.4% and thus 57.5%-points higher. The picture is different for a member of parliament who did not serve in the military. The probability to accept a proposition which is against the military is 46.4% and, thus, already 30.5%-points higher than for a member of parliament who served. If the proposition is pro-army the probability to vote yes increases by approximately 31.1%-points to 77.6%. While the probability to accept increases for both groups of members of parliament, i.e. those who served in the military and those who did not, the increase is higher for members of parliament who actually served in the military. The difference-in-difference is 26.4%-points and statistically significant. In simple words, the difference in the probability to accept an anti-army proposals vs. a pro-army proposal is significantly higher for members of parliament who served in the military themselves than for members of parliament who did not serve. Consequently, first descriptive evidence shows that members of parliament who served in the military tend to be more aligned with pro-military positions than members who did not serve.

⁶ In particular, it is conceivable that if constituents are pro-military, they will rather accept pro-military proposals and are more likely to elect a politician with military background. Not controlling for constituents preferences will, in such a case, bias the coefficient of the interaction term upwards as serving in the military captures pro-military preferences of the constituency.

Figure 1: The effect of serving in the military on legislative voting



| | <i>Proposal anti-military</i> | <i>Proposal pro-military</i> | <i>Difference</i> |
|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Probability to vote YES of MPs who served in military | 0.159*** (0.016) | 0.734*** (0.023) | 0.575*** (0.028) |
| Probability to vote YES of MPs who did not serve in military | 0.464*** (0.02) | 0.776*** (0.019) | 0.311*** (0.028) |
| | | | 0.264*** (0.040) |

Notes: ***, **, and * indicate a mean significance level of <1%, 1-5%, and 5-10%, respectively.

The effect of serving in the military when controlling for constituents' preferences

Table 1 reports econometric results which focus on the behavior of members who served in the military in comparison to members of parliament who did not serve. For each of the specifications, we report robust standard error estimates clustered by constituencies.⁷

In column (1) we reproduce the results of Figure 1 in an OLS setting. We observe that the interaction term between the identifier for whether a member of parliament served in the military and whether the proposal is pro-military is positive and significant. Members of parliament who served, tend to accept pro-military propositions more often compared to members of parliament who did not serve.

⁷ Standard errors are clustered by constituency in recognition of the likelihood that observations in the same constituency are not independent.

Table 1: Baseline results - The effect of serving in the military on legislative voting and constituents' preferences

| | OLS | | | | Logit | |
|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Served in military | -0.306*** (0.042) | -0.290*** (0.042) | -0.097*** (0.027) | -0.114*** (0.026) | -1.476*** (0.243) | -0.979*** (0.248) |
| (Served in military) * (Proposal pro-military) | 0.264*** (0.052) | 0.252*** (0.052) | 0.221*** (0.060) | 0.216*** (0.061) | 1.263*** (0.290) | 1.722*** (0.561) |
| Proposal pro-military | 0.311*** (0.043) | 0.130** (0.052) | 0.168*** (0.054) | 0.120** (0.053) | 0.465** (0.237) | 0.856** (0.417) |
| Constituency preferences yes | | 0.624*** (0.063) | 0.566*** (0.064) | 0.728*** (0.079) | 3.387*** (0.352) | 6.030*** (0.760) |
| Female | | | 0.032 (0.021) | 0.016 (0.021) | | 0.060 (0.164) |
| Age | | | -9.1e-03 (7.8e-03) | -0.012 (8.4e-03) | | -0.114* (0.065) |
| Age squared | | | 8.9e-05 (8.2e-05) | 1.2e-04 (8.9e-05) | | 1.2e-03* (6.8e-04) |
| Time in parliament | | | -9.2e-03** (4.5e-03) | -0.014*** (4.7e-03) | | -0.120*** (0.044) |
| Time in parliament squared | | | 5.5e-04** (2.3e-04) | 7.7e-04*** (2.4e-04) | | 6.4e-03*** (2.4e-03) |
| Has children | | | 0.035** (0.017) | 0.036** (0.018) | | 0.347** (0.139) |
| Is married | | | 4.2e-03 (0.020) | 3.5e-04 (0.018) | | -1.2e-03 (0.167) |
| Has master or doctoral degree | | | 0.015 (0.017) | 0.011 (0.017) | | 0.119 (0.164) |
| Left party affiliation | | | 0.406*** (0.020) | 0.422*** (0.019) | | 2.986*** (0.334) |
| Right party affiliation | | | -0.267*** (0.036) | -0.279*** (0.037) | | -2.538*** (0.387) |
| Intercept | 0.464*** (0.032) | 0.258*** (0.032) | 0.341* (0.194) | 0.404* (0.209) | -1.263*** (0.154) | -0.307 (1.629) |
| District fixed effects | NO | NO | NO | YES | NO | YES |
| R2 | 0.234 | 0.258 | 0.501 | 0.513 | 0.328 | 0.658 |
| Log-Likelihood | - | - | - | - | 550.271 | 1324.826 |
| Brier score | - | - | - | - | 0.186 | 0.092 |
| n. Obs. | 1947 | 1947 | 1947 | 1947 | 1947 | 1947 |
| DE of interaction term | - | - | - | - | 0.302*** (0.063) | 0.399*** (0.118) |

Notes: The dependent variable for all estimations is "MP votes YES". Robust clustered standard error estimates for constituencies are reported throughout the table. DE stands for discrete effect of the interaction term in logit models, i.e., the change in the probability to vote yes if "(Served in military) * (Proposal pro-military)" is equal to 1 when all other variables are evaluated at their median values (see Ai and Norton 2003; Puhani 2012). ***, **, and * indicate a mean significance level of <1%, 1-5%, and 5-10%, respectively.

In specification (2) we control for preferences of a representative's constituency. While other studies may approximate preferences for the military by, for example, economic interests due to military bases in a constituency, we directly observe constituents preferences. If the preferences of a constituency are to accept a policy proposal, its representatives are, in general, expected to tend to accept it too. The coefficient for representing constituents' preferences, β_4 , is indeed positive and significant. Important for our case is the fact that the interaction term between the identifier of whether a member of parliament served or not and whether the proposition is pro-army remains highly significant, positive and of similar magnitude compared

to specification (1).⁸ Thus, members of parliament who served in the army are less likely to accept anti-army propositions and react stronger to whether a proposition is pro-army instead of anti-army, independent of constituents' preferences.

As is common in the literature on legislative voting, we also include a large number of additional control variables in specification (3) and district fixed effects in specification (4). Again, independent of constituents preferences, members of parliament who served in the army are less likely to accept anti-army propositions and more likely to accept pro-army propositions than parliamentarians who did not serve. As conscription is limited to men it is important to control for the legislator's gender. Women can voluntarily serve in the army but, no female representative in our sample has chosen to do so. We take account of age, service length, whether a member of parliament has children, marriage, and education. Importantly, we also control for party affiliation as members of left parties may be more prone to express themselves against the military which may affect our interaction term. Finally, fixed district characteristics such as military bases may also have an influence on the behavior of representatives when voting in parliament. The interaction term between having served in the army and whether a proposition is pro-army is positive, statistically significant and its quantitative magnitude is with approximately 22%-points only slightly smaller compared to earlier specifications. In specifications (5) and (6) we run logit versions of specifications (2) and (4). Results remain similar to earlier estimates, i.e. the interaction term is positive and highly significant. The discrete effect of the interaction term points to a large effect of serving in the army.⁹

Table 2 presents a number of robustness tests for different subsamples. Members of parliament with a military background tend to vote more pro-military than members of parliament without such a background even when constituents accept the referendum with a majority (columns 1 and 2) and when referendum decisions are tight and preferences of constituents may be hard to predict (columns 3 and 4). Moreover, excluding female politicians from the dataset does not affect the interaction term which remains positive, significant, and similar in size (columns 5 and 6). These specifications indicate that men who served in the military act more pro-military than men who did not serve. Thus, our results are not driven by differences between men and women regarding voting behavior on military issues.

⁸ Interestingly, this suggest that results of other studies on the effect of individual background on legislative voting on security issues which do not directly control for constituents' preferences can be interpreted as showing divergence from the will of voters.

⁹ The large and highly significant coefficient for constituency preferences underlines that it is important to control for constituency preferences to explain the behavior of representatives.

Table 2: Robustness tests for the effect of serving in the military

| Subset | <i>Constituencies accepting proposal</i> | | <i>Tight referendum decisions</i> | | <i>Without female MPs</i> | |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| | YES > 50% | YES > 50% | tight decisions | tight decisions | men only | men only |
| Served in military | -0.336*** (0.060) | -0.219*** (0.058) | -0.357*** (0.048) | -0.222*** (0.046) | -0.184*** (0.045) | -0.073** (0.031) |
| (Served in military) * (Proposal pro-military) | 0.297*** (0.097) | 0.250*** (0.078) | 0.332*** (0.096) | 0.305*** (0.075) | 0.175*** (0.063) | 0.148** (0.070) |
| Proposal pro-military | 0.068 (0.050) | 0.017 (0.033) | 0.047 (0.045) | -0.089* (0.049) | 0.185*** (0.066) | 0.160*** (0.059) |
| Constituency preferences yes | 0.832*** (0.119) | 0.841*** (0.100) | -0.706 (0.983) | 1.072 (0.908) | 0.696*** (0.082) | 0.821*** (0.100) |
| Other controls | NO | YES | NO | YES | NO | YES |
| District fixed effects | NO | YES | NO | YES | NO | YES |
| R2 | 0.107 | 0.364 | 0.059 | 0.400 | 0.300 | 0.564 |
| n. Obs. | 758 | 758 | 435 | 435 | 1475 | 1475 |

Notes: The dependent variable for all estimations is "MP votes YES". Robust clustered standard error estimates for constituencies are reported throughout the table. Other controls include all additional variables used in Table 1(4). Tight referendum decisions represent a sample of referenda where the constituent yes-share was between 45 and 55%. When the subset includes only men, the control "Female" is not included. ***, **, and * indicate a mean significance level of <1%, 1-5%, and 5-10%, respectively.

Members of parliament who served in the army are less likely to accept anti-army propositions and more likely to accept pro-army propositions than parliamentarians who did not serve but otherwise have the same characteristics. This effect is independent of constituents' preferences, party affiliations, and district specific effects. Thus, our contribution shows that personal military background matters for legislative decisions on military issues. So far we do not show anything more, nor anything less. Most importantly, this does not necessarily imply that putting potential members of parliament before their parliamentary career into the military will subsequently change their behavior.

V. EXPLORING THE CHANNELS OF MILITARY BACKGROUND ON PARLIAMENTARY VOTING

Exploiting differences in military ranks

Conscription is compulsory in Switzerland. However, the selection into *higher* military ranks may depend on motivation for the military, which may also explain future legislative decisions. We can investigate whether the stronger pro-military voting behavior by representatives with military background is due to pre-existing differences in attitudes and motivations for the military or whether the compulsory military service shapes future voting decisions. Our data allows us to distinguish politicians who *chose* to advance in the military from those who only served as soldiers due to conscription requirements. Officers and non-

commissioned officers have chosen to try to become promoted. In contrast, simple soldiers did not chose to serve but were forced by conscription. Their voting behavior can be compared to individuals who did not have to serve.

Results in Table 3 suggest that it is *motivation for the military* rather than *having served in the military* which shapes legislative voting.

Table 3: Motivation for the military and voting pro-military - Exploiting military ranks and differences in age

| | <i>Different army ranks</i> | | <i>In 1968 already 18 years old</i> | | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Subset | | | 18 in 1968 | not 18 in 1968 | 18 in 1968 | not 18 in 1968 |
| Served in military | | | -0.114*** (0.032) | -0.085** (0.033) | | |
| (Served in military) * (Proposal pro-military) | | | 0.144* (0.074) | 0.313*** (0.105) | | |
| Served as officer | -0.378*** (0.038) | -0.176*** (0.040) | | | -0.162*** (0.043) | -0.169*** (0.037) |
| (Served as officer) * (Proposal pro-military) | 0.359*** (0.074) | 0.322*** (0.076) | | | 0.203** (0.083) | 0.465*** (0.119) |
| Served in as NCO | -0.412*** (0.043) | -0.156*** (0.033) | | | -0.053 (0.039) | -0.134*** (0.047) |
| (Served in as NCO) * (Proposal pro-military) | 0.346*** (0.084) | 0.290*** (0.084) | | | 0.104 (0.073) | 0.469*** (0.131) |
| Served in soldier ranks | -0.145** (0.064) | -0.032 (0.037) | | | -0.042 (0.054) | -9.5e-03 (0.045) |
| (Served in soldier ranks) * (Proposal pro-military) | 0.091 (0.083) | 0.047 (0.106) | | | 0.037 (0.146) | 0.087 (0.134) |
| Proposal pro-military | 0.144*** (0.053) | 0.130** (0.054) | 0.243*** (0.053) | -0.012 (0.097) | 0.247*** (0.054) | 1.3e-03 (0.099) |
| Constituency preferences yes | 0.576*** (0.067) | 0.693*** (0.078) | 0.753*** (0.109) | 0.638*** (0.126) | 0.740*** (0.104) | 0.588*** (0.132) |
| Other controls | 0.274*** (0.031) | 0.388* (0.213) | 0.188*** (0.038) | 0.025 (0.055) | 0.198*** (0.036) | 0.027 (0.053) |
| District fixed effects | NO | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES |
| R2 | 0.272 | 0.520 | 0.567 | 0.516 | 0.570 | 0.530 |
| n. Obs. | 1947 | 1947 | 938 | 1009 | 938 | 1009 |
| Joint significance of all interaction terms (p-value) | 0.000 | 0.000 | - | - | 0.013 | 0.000 |
| IE "Served as officer" = IE "Served as NCO" | 0.013 (0.113) | 0.0315 (0.1087) | | | 0.099 (0.118) | -0.004 (0.139) |
| IE "Served as officer" = IE "Served in soldier ranks" | 0.268*** (0.101) | 0.275*** (0.109) | | | 0.166 (0.143) | 0.378*** (0.138) |
| IE "Served as NCO" = IE "Served in soldier ranks" | 0.255*** (0.089) | 0.244*** (0.099) | | | 0.067 (0.140) | 0.382*** (0.111) |
| Differences "(Served in military) * (Proposal pro-military)" | | | (3) - (4) = -0.168* p-value = 0.095 | | | |
| Differences "(Served as officer) * (Proposal pro-military)" | | | | | (5) - (6) = -0.262** p-value = 0.036 | |
| Differences "(Served in as NCO) * (Proposal pro-military)" | | | | | (5) - (6) = -0.365*** p-value = 0.008 | |
| Differences "(Served in soldier ranks) * (Proposal pro-military)" | | | | | (5) - (6) = -0.050 p-value = 0.400 | |

Notes: The dependent variable for all estimations is "MP votes YES". Robust clustered standard error estimates for constituencies are reported throughout the table. Other controls include all additional variables used in Table 1(4). For the subsets in (3) to (6) the controls "Age" and "Age squared" are not included. "IE" stands for the interaction term of "Proposal pro-military" with the respective identifier for military ranks. ***, **, and * indicate a mean significance level of <1%, 1-5%, and 5-10%, respectively.

In specifications (1) and (2) we analyze three different interaction terms. Results point to a large, positive and highly significant interaction term for politicians who served as officers, a slightly smaller but still important and significant positive interaction term for politicians who served as non-commissioned officers (NCO), and an insignificant and small interaction term for politicians in the soldier ranks, always compared a to politicians who did not (have to) serve. These findings suggest that politicians who chose a military career in the militia as officers or non-commissioned officers tend to be particularly pro-military. However, individuals who had to serve in the military (in the soldier ranks) due to conscription requirements are not more inclined to vote pro-military than politicians who did not have to serve. We also test whether the interaction terms are different from each other. There is no difference for the interaction term with serving as an officer and the interaction term with serving as a non-commissioned officer. However, there is always a significant difference between these two interaction terms and the interaction term for simple soldiers. Actively choosing a military career in the militia leads to a voting behavior which is more pro-military controlling for constituents preferences as well as a large array of other characteristics and district fixed effects.

Consequently, results are consistent with the view that individuals who already have had a positive attitude towards the military *chose* their military career (perhaps even to “boost” their political career¹⁰) and tend to vote more pro-military. Pure exposure to the military as a soldier due to conscription does not affect voting behavior differently in the future compared to individuals who did not have to serve.

Refinements for age and socialization

It could be argued, though, that having to serve in the military positively motivates some individuals to choose to achieve higher ranks. In such a situation the initial conscription influences motivation which then leads to more pro-military legislative voting. Although, such an effect would be required to work through personal characteristics which we cannot observe or control for, it is not possible to fully exclude such a channel of influence. Analyzing differences in age and conscription requirements allows us, however, to provide further indicative evidence on the role of this channel. Exploiting differences in age will also alleviate

¹⁰ The French President François Hollande, for example, told weekly magazine Marianne (Mai 6, 2012) that when young, he knew, he would become a politician and, thus, his duty was to do military service.

concerns that some individuals with strong preferences against the military may have tried to appear as not being able-bodied in medical tests and, if successful, they had not to serve.

After the World War II, conscription was more comprehensive than in later periods. Medical tests were strict and social pressure to serve in the military was high. In the 1950ies and 60ies large numbers of soldiers were even forced to serve as non-commissioned officers and to pass the respective training which took about half a year. But soldiers only very rarely were forced to become officers. We identify a dummy variable which indicates whether politicians were already 18 years of age in 1968 around the time when the Swiss militia army had its highest number of conscripts.¹¹ 1968 was also seen in many countries as the high of liberal student and citizen movements. Thus, the dummy variable captures whether politicians currently in parliament served during the time where many men *had to serve* as soldiers and even as non-commissioned officers.

In specifications (3) and (4) we interact the identifier of whether a member of parliament served in the military with the identifier whether the proposition was pro-military. We focus on the subsample of politicians who were 18 in 1968 in specification (3) and on politicians who were not 18 in 1968 in specification (4). In both cases we observe a significant and positive interaction term. However, the interaction term in specification (4) is by 17 percentage points significantly larger than in specification (3).¹² Thus, members of parliament who served but were not yet 18 in 1968 have a higher probability to accept a pro-military proposal than those who served and were already 18 in 1968. As it was more difficult to avoid conscription prior to 1968, these results highlight the importance of initial motivation for the military.

Exploring the data in greater detail, motivational effects seem to be the central factor why politicians with a military background tend to vote rather pro-military. Specifications (5) and (6) distinguish between different army ranks and age groups. Officers and non-commissioned officers tend to have a higher probability to vote pro-army than members of parliament who did not serve. The interaction effects for officers who (always) chose to become officers in both time periods are positive and statistically significant in both specifications.

¹¹ Qualitative results do not depend on the precise year where the break is made but 1968, indeed, corresponds to an important break in social as well as military respects.

¹² We perform a simple t-test when comparing the two coefficient using their standard errors and assume that two samples are independent.

Table 4: Robustness tests for motivation for the military and voting pro-military

| | <i>Different army ranks & without female MPs</i> | | <i>In 1968 already 18 years old & without female MPs</i> | | | |
|---|--|---------------------|--|---------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) |
| Subset | men only | men only | 18 in 1968 & men only | not 18 in 1968 & men only | 18 in 1968 & men only | not 18 in 1968 & men only |
| (Served in military) * (Proposal pro-military) | | | 0.124* (0.071) | 0.264* (0.163) | | |
| (Served as officer) * (Proposal pro-military) | 0.281*** (0.085) | 0.252*** (0.087) | | | 0.184** (0.082) | 0.387** (0.164) |
| (Served in as NCO) * (Proposal pro-military) | 0.269*** (0.084) | 0.218*** (0.083) | | | 0.082 (0.090) | 0.392** (0.167) |
| (Served in soldier ranks) * (Proposal pro-military) | 0.016 (0.094) | -0.018 (0.111) | | | 0.016 (0.128) | 0.026 (0.188) |
| Base effects + Constituency preferences yes | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES |
| Other controls | NO | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES |
| District fixed effects | NO | YES | YES | YES | YES | YES |
| R2 | 0.318 | 0.574 | 0.632 | 0.507 | 0.635 | 0.552 |
| n. Obs. | 1475 | 1475 | 782 | 693 | 782 | 693 |
| Joint significance of all interaction terms (p-value) | 0.000 | 0.000 | | | 0.114 | |
| IE "Served as officer" = IE "Served as NCO" | 0.012 (0.113) | 0.033 (0.109) | | | 0.103 (0.120) | -0.005 (0.137) |
| IE "Served as officer" = IE "Served in soldier ranks" | 0.264*** (0.100) | 0.269*** (0.107) | | | 0.168 (0.140) | 0.361*** (0.133) |
| IE "Served as NCO" = IE "Served in soldier ranks" | 0.252*** (0.088) | 0.236*** (0.098) | | | 0.066 (0.140) | 0.366*** (0.111) |
| Differences "(Served in military) * (Proposal pro-military)" | | | (3) - (4) = -0.140 p-value = 0.786 | | | |
| Differences "(Served as officer) * (Proposal pro-military)" | | | | | (5) - (6) = -0.202 p-value = 0.134 | |
| Differences "(Served in as NCO) * (Proposal pro-military)" | | | | | (5) - (6) = -0.310* p-value = 0.051 | |
| Differences "(Served in soldier ranks) * (Proposal pro-military)" | | | | | (5) - (6) = -0.010 p-value = 0.482 | |

Notes: The dependent variable for all estimations is "MP votes YES". Robust clustered standard error estimates for constituencies are reported throughout the table. Other controls include all additional variables used in Table 1(4). For the subsets in (3) to (6) the controls "Age" and "Age squared" are not included. "IE" stands for the interaction term of "Proposal pro-military" with the respective identifier for military ranks. ***, **, and * indicate a mean significance level of <1%, 1-5%, and 5-10%, respectively.

The interaction effects for soldiers are never statistically significant such that soldiers cannot be statistically distinguished from other members of parliament who did not (have to) serve in the military.¹³ In the sample of individuals who were already 18 in 1968 the interaction term between serving as non-commissioned officer and proposition pro-military is not significant. This suggests that in the past a certain number of non-commissioned officers had to serve and did not choose to become non-commissioned officers. The situation changes when looking at the sample of individuals who became 18 only after 1968. There we observe that officers and non-commissioned officers exhibit a much higher probability to vote pro-military

¹³ When comparing the interaction terms among each other and testing the differences with the delta-method, we do not find significant differences due to the high standard errors of the of the non-significant interaction terms.

than soldiers and the rest of representatives who did not serve. After 1968 non-commissioned officers rather *chose* to become non-commissioned officers: They are a selection of more pro-military men than their older counterparts and vote accordingly in parliament.

Table 4 performs the same regressions but excludes female politicians from the sample. Gender might be an important dimension for legislative voting on military affairs and women never had to serve. The results of this robustness tests are essentially equivalent to the results in Table 3 regarding the significance and the size of the effect of serving in the military. We note that logit estimates would yield similar results, too. *Choosing* to serve in the military as officers and as non-commissioned officers in more recent time periods is positively related to voting pro-military in legislative decisions while simply having to serve due to conscription is not related to voting more pro-military.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

We exploit an informative institutional setting to analyze whether the military background of politicians is related to voting rather pro-military in parliament. We find that independently of constituents' preferences, party affiliations and other factors, politicians who served in the army tend to vote more pro-army in legislative decisions. Indicative evidence suggests that this effect is not due to exposure to the military service but rather selection into higher military ranks, i.e. motivation for the military. Politicians who were motivated to advance in the military also tend to vote rather pro-military. Politicians who were conscripted and had to serve mandatory service cannot be distinguished from politicians who did not serve regarding their voting behavior on military affairs. Thus, serving the compulsory time as soldiers in the army does not lead politicians to vote more pro- or against the army. Politicians who *chose* to become non-commissioned officers or officers, however, have a higher probability to vote pro army than the rest of politicians in parliament.

Observed pro-military behavior of politicians with a military background is independent of constituents' preferences but can be explained with their personal motivation for the military. There is no evidence that people change their voting behavior and become more pro-military only because they have served in the army. Thus, bringing the generals to parliament, may change the voting outcome on military issues while having simple soldiers as politicians and forcing future politicians to do a military service will not have any differential effects on legislative decisions.

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Table A1: List of referenda, classification and national results

| <i>Topic</i> | <i>% yes in population</i> | <i>Proposal pro-military</i> |
|--|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Reducing defense and the military to foster alternative future employment [Ref #471] | 0.376 | no |
| Federal law regarding weapons for the army [Ref #477] | 0.510 | yes |
| Federal law regarding education in the army [Ref #478] | 0.511 | yes |
| For a truthful defense policy and a nation without an army [Ref #482] | 0.219 | no |
| For a voluntary peace service [Ref #483] | 0.232 | no |
| Changes regarding the organization of the federal army and increasing its flexibility (XXI army reform act) [Ref #495] | 0.760 | yes |
| Federal law regarding the protection of the population in the case of catastrophes [Ref #496] | 0.806 | yes |
| Implementation of the bilateral treaty between the EU and Switzerland (Schengen/Dublin) [Ref #517] | 0.546 | yes |
| Protecting the population against the noise of jets in tourism areas [Ref #530] | 0.319 | no |
| Ban on the export of weapons [Ref #546] | 0.318 | no |
| Additional protection from gun violence by putting army weapons in the arsenal [Ref #554] | 0.437 | no |

Notes: The original text all referenda can be found in *Année politique Suisse* (2012).

Table A2: Data description and sources

| <i>Variable</i> | <i>Description and sources</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|-------------------------------|--|-------------|-----------|
| Representative votes YES | Indicator variable: If member of parliament voted "yes" in roll call value is 1. Swiss Parliamentary Services. | 0.512 | 0.500 |
| Proposal pro-military | Indicator variable: If the organisation of officers or of NOC issued "yes" recommendation value is 1. Swiss Parliamentary Services. | 0.429 | 0.495 |
| Served in military | Indicator variable: If member of parliament is Served in military value is 1. Swiss Parliamentary Services. | 0.449 | 0.498 |
| Served as officer | Indicator variable: If member of parliament served as officer value is 1. Swiss Parliamentary Services. | 0.224 | 0.417 |
| Served in as NOC | Indicator variable: If member of parliament served as NOC value is 1. Swiss Parliamentary Services. | 0.059 | 0.236 |
| Served in soldier ranks | Indicator variable: If member of parliament served only in soldier ranks female value is 1. Swiss Parliamentary Services. | 0.165 | 0.372 |
| Constituency preferences yes | District majority voted "yes" in referendum. Annee politique suisse. | 0.447 | 0.192 |
| Female | Indicator variable: If member of parliament is female value is 1. Swiss Parliamentary Services. | 0.242 | 0.429 |
| Age | Member of parliament's age in years. Swiss Parliamentary Services. | 52.720 | 8.053 |
| Time in parliament | Member of parliament's years in service. Swiss Parliamentary Services. | 5.856 | 4.681 |
| Is married | Indicator variable: If member of parliament is married value is 1. Swiss Parliamentary Services. | 0.719 | 0.450 |
| Has children | Indicator variable: If member of parliament is has children value is 1. Swiss Parliamentary Services. | 0.729 | 0.444 |
| Has master or doctoral degree | Indicator variable: If member of parliament has master or doctoral degree value is 1. Swiss Parliamentary Services. | 0.548 | 0.498 |
| Left party affiliation | Indicator variable: If member of parliament belongs to the SP, PdAS, GPS, FGA, Sol value is 1. Swiss Parliamentary Services. | 0.301 | 0.459 |
| Right party affiliation | Indicator variable: If member of parliament belongs to the CVP, GLP, LPS, FDP, CSP, BDP, EVP value is 1. Swiss Parliamentary Services. | 0.272 | 0.445 |

Notes: Unweighted descriptive statistics. Data sources indicated next to variable descriptions.

Table S1 (not intended for publication): Logit estimates - Robustness of the effects of serving in the army on parliamentary voting decisions

| | <i>Without female MPs</i> | | <i>Different army ranks</i> | | <i>Different army ranks & Without female MPs</i> | |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|--|----------------------|
| | <i>(1)</i> | <i>(2)</i> | <i>(3)</i> | <i>(4)</i> | <i>(5)</i> | <i>(6)</i> |
| Served in military | -1.022*** (0.246) | -0.614** (0.295) | | | | |
| (Served in military) * (Proposal pro-military) | 0.971*** (0.342) | 1.323** (0.658) | | | | |
| Served as officer | | | -2.516*** (0.389) | -2.055*** (0.400) | -2.058*** (0.432) | -1.655*** (0.402) |
| (Served as officer) * (Proposal pro-military) | | | 2.400*** (0.532) | 2.996*** (0.702) | 2.101*** (0.570) | 2.722*** (0.733) |
| Served in as NOC | | | -3.221*** (0.991) | -2.030** (0.912) | -2.771*** (1.075) | -1.745* (1.054) |
| (Served in as NOC) * (Proposal pro-military) | | | 2.860*** (0.907) | 2.770** (1.089) | 2.567*** (0.973) | 2.268* (1.301) |
| Served in soldier ranks | | | -0.632** (0.292) | -0.236 (0.321) | -0.190 (0.325) | 0.095 (0.396) |
| (Served in soldier ranks) * (Proposal pro-military) | | | 0.336 (0.401) | 0.617 (0.871) | 0.056 (0.462) | 0.115 (0.999) |
| Proposal pro-military | 0.633** (0.303) | 1.251** (0.567) | 0.529** (0.246) | 0.877** (0.423) | 0.712** (0.312) | 1.276** (0.587) |
| Constituency preferences yes | 3.881*** (0.416) | 7.954*** (1.202) | 3.135*** (0.378) | 5.826*** (0.788) | 3.555*** (0.424) | 7.712*** (1.236) |
| Other controls | -1.879*** (0.224) | -1.543 (2.482) | -1.180*** (0.149) | -0.754 (1.663) | -1.767*** (0.234) | -2.299 (2.424) |
| District fixed effects | NO | YES | NO | YES | NO | YES |
| R2 | 0.374 | 0.727 | 0.357 | 0.668 | 0.410 | 0.738 |
| Log-Likelihood | 484.412 | 1158.454 | 607.060 | 1352.947 | 540.085 | 1185.266 |
| Brier score | 0.174 | 0.077 | 0.182 | 0.092 | 0.169 | 0.077 |
| n. Obs. | 1475 | 1475 | 1947 | 1947 | 1475 | 1475 |

Notes: The dependent variable for all estimations is "MP votes YES". Robust clustered standard error estimates for constituencies are reported throughout the table. ***, **, and * indicate a mean significance level of below 1 %, between 1 and 5 %, and between 5 and 10 %, respectively.