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IZA DP No. 16996

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ABSTRACT

Sailing Through History: The Legacy of Medieval Sea Trade On Migrant Perception and Extreme Right Voting*

In this study we evaluate the role that Mediterranean Medieval trade with Africa and the Middle-East still plays today in Italian politics by shaping the attitudes towards migrants of individuals that live close to Medieval ports. Trade connections between Medieval ports and Muslim Africa and Middle East might have indeed favoured the emergence of cultural traits that helped the interaction with foreigners from different cultures, ethnicity and religion a few centuries before with respect to other areas of the country. We use a representative survey of young individuals (aged 20-35) to show that, conditionally on a rich set of geographic, historic, economic and individual controls, people living close to a Medieval port are less likely to think that migrants make Italy an unsafe place as well as to report right-wing voting attitudes. Moreover, we also find, in those areas, a lower probability of xenophobic attacks during the spike of refugees from Siria of 2015. Interestingly, right-wing parties started to attract less votes near Medieval ports only when immigration had become a very salient issue. Similarly, we find a lower probability of Jewish deportations close to Medieval ports during the Nazi occupation, the only period in Italian contemporary history when a minority group was explicitly targeted by the government. This in turn suggests that some deep-rooted cultural traits, although not observed and not clearly at work in society, can become visible when the right historical and political circumstances take place.

JEL Classification: D72, N70, N90, O10, O12, P48

Keywords: political ideology, immigration, cultural transmission, medieval trade sea routes, Roman road network

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1 Introduction

The rise of far-right and right-wing populist parties in many western countries in the last decade has spurred the interest of many social scientists, who have sought to explain the structural reasons underlying such electoral successes (Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022). Although it is not straightforward to identify a shared ideology, a strong anti-immigration position -together with a clear anti-elitist view of society and a strong skepticism about the globalization process- features predominantly in the political platforms of all right-wing populist parties. This, together with the increasing migration rates and the large spike of refugees associated to the Syrian crisis, has made migration one of the most likely candidates to explain the increasing support received by these political movements, at the least in the European Union (see among others Harmon, 2018; Dustmann, Vasiljeva and Damm, 2019; Steinmayr, 2020). In recent years some political scientists and economists have specifically linked the success of populist right-wing parties to a cultural backlash (Norris and Inglehart, 2019) and to an increasing use of cultural elements in the populist rhetoric. The opposition towards migrants would therefore be part of a wider trend towards an increasing polarization of the electorate over cultural issues, with economic cleavages -namely class conflict over redistribution- that have lost ground, even in the face of increasing income and wealth inequality, in favor of cultural cleavages (e.g., universalists versus particularists, using the classification of Enke (2023)), as shown in Bonomi et al. (2021) and Gennaioli and Tabellini (2023).

However, if cultural cleavages and in particular the degree of universal morality shape the political process, it is important to start understanding their historical roots. In this paper we therefore use various data sources (from survey data on individual attitudes of young Italians[1] to "hard" data on voting behaviour and xenophobic attacks at municipal level) to shed some fresh light on long run roots of cultural attitudes towards migrants by exploiting differential exposure of certain local areas to Medieval sea-trade. In particular, we explore the role that Medieval trade between a group of Italian seaports[2] and Muslim North Africa and Middle East still plays today in Italian politics.

The Italian case is of great interest for several reasons. First, because immigration is a relatively new phenomenon in Italy. Indeed, it was virtually non existent in the 1980s, to then rapidly increase since the late 1990s.[3] Second, the geographic

[1]This survey, unlike other similar political surveys available for the same period in Italy, contains several questions related to political positioning, voting intentions and perception of migrants besides, crucially, the municipality of residence of respondents. See, for a discussion of this survey and a comparison with other competing ones, Section 3.

[2]We refer to several sources to retrieve the most important sea routes (among others Shepard, 1926; Lampman, 2018; Musarra, 2020). For further details see Section 3.2.

[3]At the end of the 1980s, the estimated number of migrants was about 0.5 million; the number rapidly increased to 1.3 million at the end of the 1990s (Pugliese, 2006) and to about 4.2 million at the beginning of the 2010s.

position of Italy entailed, in the period 2014-2017, a very large influx of about 0.6 million refugees, mainly from Syria but also from the Maghreb and sub-Saharian Africa that reached the Italian coast from Lybia, as shown in Figure B5 in Appendix B.3. Given the scale of this phenomenon, the issue of immigration became central to the Italian political debate. One can have a snapshot of this from the Figures reported in Appendix B.3, which display Google Trends data for the words "refugees", "migration" and "migration smuggling" in Italy over the period 2010-2019. It is not surprising that far right-wing parties used an inflammatory anti-migrant rhetoric to create strong political opposition and to gain consensus. Indeed, the *Lega* party grew from 4% of votes in the 2013 general election to 17.3% in the 2018 election, with the other main Italian far-right party, *Fratelli d'Italia*, which experienced non-negligible growth, from less than 2% in 2013 to more than 4% in 2018.[4] Third, Italy is one of the countries in the European Union (EU) with the largest discrepancy between the perceived and the real number of migrants in the country, as reported by a recent IPSOS report. Possibly even more important, Italy is one of the western countries with the strongest anti-Muslim prejudices. It is unlikely that these anti-Muslim feelings in Italy are completely unrelated to the large influx of migrants from Syria, the Maghreb and Sub-Saharian Africa that occurred over the period 2014-2017 and that have been emphasized and amplified by far right-wing parties.[5]

Moving to the role played by Medieval sea-trade in shaping cultural attitudes and in general a more universalist morality, it is important to recognize that, in the Middle Ages, the Mediterranean was a melting pot of different cultures that, despite the religious divide between Christians and Muslims, managed to entertain close commercial links and enable the circulation of goods, ideas, technology and people (Abulafia, 2011; Braudel, 1995). As a consequence, port cities had large communities of sailors, who usually met Muslims in the main Islamic ports, as well as "fondaci" (warehouses) in the main Islamic cities, which often served as lodgings for Italian merchants, enabling them to visit those cities and report back home their feelings and impressions. Moreover, recent historical research has highlighted that it was not so uncommon to see Muslims using Italian ships to travel all around the Mediterranean. On top of that, tight commercial routes to Africa also implied the existence in the port cities of slave communities that could represent up to 10% of the population, with a non-negligible share being Muslims, either from Africa or Asia: indeed, it was not uncommon to find a Mosque in most ancient Italian port cities.[6] Therefore, as argued by several historians (see, for instance, Tagliaferri, 2018), port cities were the

[4]Moreover, in the European elections of 2019, the two parties scored a total of about 41% and in the last national elections (September 2022) about 35%.

[5]See Appendix A for a more in depth description of current attitude towards (Islamic) migrants in Italy.

[6]For a more in depth-discussion of why we believe that Medieval slavery might be associated today with a more benign attitude towards migrants and not with social stigma, see Section 4.2.

places in the late Middle Age, but also in the following two centuries (Piccinno and Zanini, 2019), where people coming from different countries, with different origins, cultures and religions, had a larger chance to meet.

As a result, in the spirit of Allport et al. (1954)'s contact theory, one might argue that individuals living near a Medieval port had the chance of being exposed to people with different cultures, religions but also skin colour, many generations earlier than those who lived elsewhere, in a historical period when society was much more closed and unaccustomed to differences. Tazzara (2017), moving from the example of the free port of Livorno in the early Modern Era, even argues that the seeds of Liberalism emerged from the interplay between free trade, politics and identity in the early modern Mediterranean.

In addition to this, and following the intuitions developed in a series of paper's by Jha (2013, 2014, 2018), we argue that the development of a more universalist morality evolved out of the norms and informal institutions that governed sea-trade relations between the Italian Christian port cities and the Muslims traders living in Africa and the Middle East. Indeed, Italian merchants during the late Medieval Period had to rely on Muslims merchants in Africa and the Middle East to buy goods that originated from Central and Far East Asia and that were to be shipped to continental Europe. In other words, as in the theoretical framework of Jha (2013), the activity of Muslim traders was complementary to that of Italian merchants, non-replicable (at least until the 16^{th} century when Portuguese and Spanish sailors started the circumnavigation of Africa) and non-expropriable (for military reasons). These are indeed the conditions that are necessary, according to Jha (2013), for peaceful relationships to develop across different cultural groups.

All in all, the intricate web of trade relations between the Italian Medieval ports with the Southern Mediterranean, favored the emergence of cultural traits that fostered tolerance or, at least, a mutual understanding and shared norms (Kaiser and Calafat, 2014; Trivellato, 2009), towards individuals from different and often opposing cultures and religions, and, in particular, towards Muslims.[7]

We argue that these cultural traits have been transmitted across generations following the intuition developed in Tabellini (2008*b*), with parents living in Medieval ports that transmitted to their children more universalist values: this is because sea traders knew that enforcement of rules was likely to be more widespread both spatially, but also across cultural borders. Therefore, as noted by Tabellini (2008*b*), cooperation is likely to be encouraged when individuals expect a relatively strong enforcement even of more distant transactions: "well-functioning legal institutions breed good values, since legal enforcement is particularly relevant between unrelated individuals". This is clearly the case in our setting: for instance, in Genoa, one of the

[7]Indeed, this is important in the light of the large number of Italians sharing an Islamophobic view: if fear of migrants in Italy reflects at least some Islamophobia, then distance from a Medieval port might be a source of exogenous variation.

most important Medieval ports in the Mediterranean, all individuals were considered as equal in the Courts of Law, independently from their religion, as noted by Moore (2001). As a result, this trait was more likely to be passed on to future generations close to Medieval ports. The trait then survived in future generations because, in most Medieval ports, commercial activity and, in particular, port activity continued to be an important source of income in the local area, at least until the industrial revolution, also in the light of the persistence of port activity over time (Bosker et al., 2008). For this reason, a more benign attitude towards people with a different culture may have been for centuries an advantage for individuals living in the proximity of the Medieval ports, which in turn might explain its persistence over time.[8]

In our regression analysis we first use survey data and we regress different variables -that capture individuals' right-wing political positioning and views about the role played by migrants- on a dummy equal to one for those individuals living in municipalities close to the Medieval ports. In our models, we control for a full set of province level (i.e., NUTS-3) fixed effects as well as for a rich set of individual, geographic, historic and other municipality level modern characteristics. In particular, we control for proxies of economic development of the municipalities in the Middle Ages, for distance from the nearest Medieval market place, and for the distance from Tunis, the main harbour of departure of Muslim pirates in the 15^{th} and 16^{th} century (Accetturo et al., 2019) that might have triggered feelings of hostility towards Muslims. Moreover, in some specifications we also control for the contemporaneous stock of both migrants and migrants from Africa in order to ensure that it is the contact with individuals from North Africa in the Middle Age-early Modern Era that we use in the identification and not the contact with current migrants.

We defend the exogeneity of the distance of individuals from the Medieval ports because it is not based on current distances computed along the modern road network, which may spuriously capture other determinants of attitudes towards migrants. Indeed, it is calculated on the basis of the ancient Roman road networks dating back to 117 A.D.[9] Roman roads are strongly predetermined (Dalgaard et al., 2022), and the literature has identified military reasons as the main purposes of their construction (e.g. Garcia-López et al., 2015). We therefore argue that the distance from a Medieval port, calculated on the ancient Roman road network, conditionally on a set of controls, can be reasonably considered as exogenous. More specifically, the existence of a Medieval port in a specific location is derived from one map of

[8]It is also important to acknowledge that the trade between the Medieval ports and North Africa was a form of what historians define cross-cultural trade, i.e., trade between partners with different values, beliefs and culture (Trivellato et al., 2014). Therefore, it is qualitatively different from the Middle Ages trade links between a northern Italy city and, say, a town in northern Europe. However, since recent literature has highlighted that trade is associated to lower persistence in negative traits such as antisemitism (Voigtländer and Voth, 2012), we control in some regressions for distance from the nearest Medieval market place.

[9]In the Middle Ages the road network was still largely based on the ancient Roman one.

maritime trade routes between Italy and North Africa that broadly refers to the 14-15^{th} century.[10] Moreover, we use two different distance thresholds to define whether or not an individual lives near one of the aforementioned ports, notably 10 and 15 kilometers. We select these relatively low distances as thresholds because during the Middle Ages the vast majority of people used to cover both shorter and longer distances by foot (Fonseca, 2000) and 15 km is clearly quite a long distance, for the standards of the period.

We find that individuals living close to Medieval ports are less likely to self-report extreme right-wing views, but also to express voting intentions for right-wing parties. Consistently with this result, we also find that closer to the Medieval ports people are less likely to believe that migrants are a threat for Italian society; interestingly, in those areas it is more likely that individuals have a positive valuation of religious pluralism. We also check that our main results do not depend on our preferred definition of a far-right political position; similarly, we also consider the propensity to vote for a far right-wing political party and for parties belonging to the Italian right coalition, as in Barone et al. (2016).

More importantly, following Jha (2013), we perform a placebo exercise by testing whether distance from the Italian largest ten contemporary ports matters in driving individuals perceptions and voting patterns, but reassuringly we do not find evidence that this is the case, which in turn suggests that our results are not due to some unobservable related to port-city status per se. Similarly, we create a "placebo" indicator of proximity to a Medieval port by means of a simulation exercise in order to check whether the latter can be spuriously correlated with the perception of migrants, and results confirm that the relation is not mechanical and automatic. Finally, we also show that results are robust to the progressive inclusion of additional contemporaneous controls, which in turn suggests that post-treatment bias is unlikely to be a major problem in our empirical setting. Consistently with this, we use the test by Oster (2019) and we conclude that selection on unobservables is unlikely to play a prominent role in our findings.

If one accepts the exclusion restriction that living close to a Medieval port influences the propensity to vote for right-wing parties only by shaping the beliefs that migrants are a threat to Italian society, then instrumental variable techniques could be used to evaluate the effect that beliefs on migrants have on the propensity to vote for right-wing parties. In this case we find evidence of a strong positive effect that a negative view on migrants has on the propensity to vote for right-wing parties.[11]

We then move to data at municipality level with a similar empirical setting and we find that, over the years 2014-2018, approximately the period when the spike

[10] We have found also two other maps that broadly refer to an earlier period and that do not match perfectly with the one we consider. Reassuringly, most results are broadly stable across maps.

[11] We also find that IV results are reasonably robust to mild violations of the exclusion restriction, using the tests proposed by Nevo and Rosen (2012) and Conley et al. (2012).

of refugees from Syria occurred, municipalities closer to the Medieval ports experienced, conditional on controls, a lower probability that a xenophobic attack occurred. Moreover, in the 2018 National elections, which were fought by right-wing parties on the basis of a strong anti-migrant platform, we find evidence that, conditional on controls, in municipalities closer to the Medieval ports the right coalition scored about 3 percentage points less than in the remaining municipalities. Interestingly, when migration was not a salient issue in Italian politics (or, at least, not as salient as after 2015) we do not find clear evidence that the right-wing parties attracted fewer votes in the 1996, 2006 and 2013 elections. In addition to this, in the sample of national elections that occurred before the 1990s, there is even evidence that the Right scored relatively well in municipalities near Medieval ports. Finally, our results also show that these municipalities have never been, on average, a stronghold of left-wing parties. All in all, this voting pattern over time suggests that our empirical results are unlikely to reflect some unobservables near Medieval ports (like less religiosity or more progressive values), but rather the existence of a cultural trait (more tolerance towards foreigners with very different cultures) that was somewhat dormant but was reactivated when political propaganda by right-wing parties generated fear towards migrants.

In order to further validate this intuition, we exploit the fact that there was a period in recent Italian history when the Italian government targeted a minority group, namely Jews after the approval of the Racial Laws in 1938 by the Fascist regime. During the occupation of 1943-45, the Nazis, often in collaboration with the Italian fascist authorities, managed to deport thousands of Jews to extermination camps: consistently, we find a lower probability that Jews were arrested in municipalities closer to the Medieval ports.

In this sense, the result of this paper echoes that in Cantoni et al. (2019) who showed that the underlying propensity to vote for extreme right-wing parties in German local areas (proxied by votes for the Nazi Party) was dormant and re-emerged only when a far-right political platform became again available.[12]

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 we briefly discuss the relevant literature and we highlight this papers' contribution. Data and the identification strategy are presented in Section 3 and 4 respectively, while in Section 5 we discuss at length why we believe that Medieval ports have been associated to more tolerance towards immigrants. Empirical evidence on survey level data is instead reported in Section 6, while municipality level analysis is undertaken in Section 7. Finally Section 8 concludes the paper.

[12]Albeit apparently similar, our results are different from those discussed by Ochsner and Roesel (2017) who find that Austrian cities that had been affected by the Turkish invasion in the 16^{th} century became more right-wing oriented only after 2005, when the far-right FPÖ party explicitly reactivated a long-forgotten memory. In our case, there was no political party or any movement in civil society that insisted on a more open-minded mentality towards Muslims in local areas near Medieval ports.

2 Related Literature

This study fits well into different strands of literature. First and foremost, our paper is directly related to the literature on persistence studies[13] and, more specifically, to those works that have investigated the deep-roots of (in)tolerant behaviours towards minorities. Within this strand of literature, our paper is closely related to a series of papers by Jha[14] that emphasize the role that trade can play in favoring peaceful coexistence between ethnic groups. In particular, Jha (2013) finds that Indian cities that used to be active shipping centers in the Indian Ocean during the Medieval period were characterized by a lower level of Indo-Muslim conflicts in the 20^{th} century, possibly because of the institutions that emerged in the past to sustain the inter-ethnic Medieval trade. Indeed, Jha (2013) argues that a division of labour emerged within those port cities, with Muslims specializing in trade with coreligionists on the other side of the Indian Ocean: the fact that their activity was complementary with that of the majority Hindu population and that the trade network the Muslim minority was managing was both costly to replicate and expropriate led to a long-run peaceful coexistence between the two religious groups. That peaceful coexistence also survived the later collapse of the trade network because of the emergence of formal and informal institutions (e.g., moral norms) that favored cooperation across religious lines.

The role that the complementary-competition nexus in economic activity may sometimes have in shaping the coexistence between religious or ethnic groups is also emphasized by Becker and Pascali (2019) in their study on the roots of historical antisemitism in Germany. They indeed argue that antisemitism became mainly a protestant phenomenon in the aftermath of the Reformation since in Catholic cities the population still needed Jews in banking and financial activities, while that was no longer true in protestant cities where, because of the end of the ban on usury for Christians, the services offered by Jews became substitutes and no longer complementary to those offered by non-Jews.

Another relevant paper within the persistence literature is that by Voigtländer and Voth (2012) who find a stronger support for the Nazi Party, as well as more attacks on synagogues and deportations after 1933, in those German cities which experienced Medieval anti-Jews pogroms. The paper is of particular interest because the persistence of antisemitism over time was attenuated in those cities that had been involved in overseas trading (i.e., the members of the Hanseatic League) and in those that were later characterized by strong immigration from other German areas. Similarly, Fielding (2018) finds that regions with a Jewish settlement in the Middle Ages tend to display more tolerance towards immigrants (and a lower propensity to

[13] See among others Acemoglu et al. (2001); Tabellini (2008*a*); Durante (2009); Algan and Cahuc (2010); Nunn (2012); Guiso et al. (2016); Giuliano and Nunn (2021); Bisin and Federico (2021).

[14] See (Jha, 2013, 2014, 2018).

vote for far-right parties) in contemporary England.[15]

Finally, our paper is also related to Schindler and Westcott (2020) who, building on Allport et al. (1954)'s contact theory, find that the UK local areas that had been exposed to black US soldiers over the second World War tend to have fewer members of the UK's leading far-right party as well as fewer individuals with racial prejudices.

In this study we add to this literature by showing that individuals living near an Italian Medieval port with trade connections with Africa or the Middle East are today more likely to report positive attitudes towards migrants, to have less extreme right-wing political positions, to carry out fewer xenophobic attacks as well as less likely to vote for right-wing parties. Unlike Jha (2013), who considers the case of religious groups in India that have coexisted for centuries, we instead focus on the emergence of a cultural trait -associated with the "cross-cultural" trade of the Middle-Ages- that entailed a more benign view of new minority groups (e.g., immigrants) with different cultural and religious backgrounds. A novel contribution of our paper is to provide empirical evidence suggesting that this deep-rooted cultural trait, although not observed and not clearly at work in society, can occasionally resurface and become visible when the right historical and political circumstances occur, as in Cantoni et al. (2019): this more tolerant behaviour towards minorities indeed explains why, closer to Medieval ports, arrests of Jews during the Nazis occupation were less likely but also the fact that in those areas the performance of right-wing parties has been relatively poor only when the salience of the migration issue assumed a central role in the political platform of right-wing parties.

Second, our paper is also related to the recent literature that has investigated the determinants of the electoral success of far-right and populist parties (Guriev and Papaioannou, 2022; Guiso et al., 2017; Algan et al., 2017) and, in particular, to those studies that have focused on the impact of the presence of migrants and refugees on voting behaviour, often reporting mixed results. For example, Dustmann, Vasiljeva and Damm (2019) exploit quasi-random variation in the allocation of refugees in Denmark and find that a larger presence of migrants causes an increase in the vote share of right-wing parties; however, they also find that in urban areas more refugees are associated to fewer votes for anti migrant parties.[16] A similar result is reported, for the Italian case, by Barone et al. (2016) who find a positive effect of the presence of migrants on the votes for the centre-right coalition, but also that this effect is driven by municipalities ranging between the 10^{th} and 50^{th} percentile of the population

[15] Another important study in this strand of the literature is that of Nunn and Wantchekon (2011) who find that individuals whose ancestors were heavily raided during the African slave trade are less trusting today.

[16] See, among others, Harmon (2018); Dustmann, Vasiljeva and Piil Damm (2019) (Denmark), Vasilakis (2018); Dinas et al. (2019); Hangartner et al. (2019); Roupakias and Chletsos (2020) (Greece),Edo et al. (2019) (France), Otto and Steinhardt (2014); Bredtmann (2022) (Germany), and Halla et al. (2017) as well as Rudolph and Wagner (2022) (Austria) who report positive effects of migrants and refugees on votes for anti-migrant parties in various countries.

distribution.[17] By way of contrast, there are also studies that report either zero or even negative effects of the presence of migrants or refugees on votes for far right-wing parties. For instance, Steinmayr (2020) find that fewer refugees reduce the votes to the far-right FPÖ party, but the author also suggests that the mere exposure to refugees is associated to more votes to the anti-migrants party, while sustained interactions with natives tends to reduce its support, as also argued by Bursztyn et al. (2024).[18]

In this paper we add to this literature by showing the importance of local deep-rooted cultural traits in influencing the attitudes of the indigenous population towards migrants (in terms of both beliefs and actual behaviours) as well as the relative success of right-wing parties.[19]

Finally, our paper is related to the very small economics literature on the determinants of the Holocaust. While cross-country differences in Jewish death rates in the Holocaust largely depended on whether the Nazis directly occupied the country or had to cooperate with a collaborationist government (Becker et al., 2022), the role of culture and institutions are so far largely unexplored.[20] We contribute to this small literature by showing the importance of long run cultural differences associated to Medieval sea-trade in explaining local differences in Jewish arrests during the Nazi occupation within a religiously homogeneous country like Italy.[21]

[17]Other recent studies on the Italian case are Bratti et al. (2020), who find a positive effect of refugees centers on voting for right-wing and populist parties, and Bellucci et al. (2019), who show that, in municipalities where refugees are more expected to arrive, far-right and populist parties increase their support. Still concerning the Italian case, it is interesting to mention a recent work by Cerqua and Zampollo (2022) that fits into a different but related strand of literature, that is the relation between foreigners' location choices and anti-immigrant parties. The authors find that the election of a mayor supported by an anti-immigrant coalition impacts on immigrants' location choices, due to an "inhospitality effect", which has become very strong in recent years due to political propaganda.

[18]See also, among others, Gehrsitz and Ungerer (2016); Fisunoğlu and Sert (2019); Altındağ and Kaushal (2021) for studies reporting zero or negative effects of migrants and refugees on votes for anti-migrant parties. In turn, among the studies that report important heterogeneous treatment effects, it is worth mentioning also some earlier contributions (Shvets, 2004; Coffé et al., 2007; Mendez and Cutillas, 2014) which show that the success of extreme right-wing parties was not due to migrants per se, but rather to specific groups of migrants and in particular to the presence of migrants from Africa.

[19]The role of selective memory in political behaviour is highlighted, for the Italian case, by Bellodi et al. (2024) who find fewer votes to populist parties in municipalities that registered more Nazi-fascist massacres during World-War II.

[20]An exception is Tammes (2019) who used municipality level data to study the determinants of Jewish death rates for the case of the Netherlands and finds a role for the segregation mentality (measured by the importance of non-homogeneous marriage between non-Jews) and the share of agriculture in production.

[21]In this respect, we start closing the gap identified by Becker et al. (2022) on the absence in the economic history literature of a comparison of the Holocaust experience in two fascist countries like Italy and Germany.

3 Data and Descriptive Statistics

This analysis mainly relies on data from the survey "Osservatorio Giovani", carried out by IPSOS for the "Giuseppe Toniolo Institute of Higher Education", a compilation of Italian individual-level surveys on a wide variety of topics. For the purposes of our research, we make use of the survey for the year 2017, which contains questions about trust, perceptions of migrants and voting intentions, besides standard demographic information such as education, gender, age and marital status. In 2017, 3,034 young people, representative of the universe of reference (individuals between 20 and 35 years), participated in the survey.[22]

The choice of this database is motivated by the uniqueness of the individual-level information it contains. To the best of our knowledge, there is no other data source for the Italian case that provides information on both perception of migrants, a rich set of questions on political positioning and voting intentions as well as information on the municipality of residence of respondents.[23] As far as the issue of external validity is concerned, we think that the validity of the results can also be extended to the entire population. In fact, young people are the segment of the population that is more social network addicted. By definition, social networks represent a channel to enter into contact with cultural contexts that are contrasting from those of their territory of origin. Over and above, the historical context and the opportunities for mobility peculiar to this generation also contribute to this process. In light of these considerations, we believe that if the relation put under scrutiny in this analysis does exist in the target sample, it is reasonable to think that it exists throughout the population and that our estimates might be, if anything, downwards biased.

Together with the individual data provided by IPSOS, we also use a rich set of information on geographical, socio-economic and historical characteristics of the municipality of residence of the individuals in our sample. Finally, we use several cartographic sources to define the ports that had trade routes with Africa during the Middle Ages. The distance of each individual's municipality of residence from one of these ports is calculated using the ancient Roman road network.

3.1 Dependent Variables

The survey "Osservatorio Giovani" is used to build several dummy variables aimed at capturing political positioning and voting intention of individuals. Our main de-

[22] Considering individuals who answered to questions of our interest, the sample counts 1,859 observations.

[23] An useful survey that has been used in the past (e.g. Barone et al., 2016) is that provided by ITANES. However, for the period considered in this study, i.e., during or shortly after the peak of the refugees crisis, the ITANES survey has several shortcomings. First, there are no sample weights; second, the question on migrants is not very specific (e.g., unlike that used in this study, it does not deal with the unsafety that right-wing parties often associate with crime); third, for about 10% of the sample the information on municipality of residence is missing.

pendent variable (*FarRightPositioning*) is based on the question "In politics, we often talk about "left" and "right". Considering your political beliefs, where would you place yourself?". The respondents are asked to choose on a scale ranging from 1 (left) to 10 (right). We omit observations for which the respondents answered "I don't place myself anywhere, I don't care", and we code answers from 1 to 7 as 0, and from 8 to 10 as 1.[24] We also consider a measure of the centre-right voting intention, relying on a specific question asking individuals how much they are likely to vote each party in the next parliamentary election on a scale from 1 ("I would definitively NOT VOTE for it") to 10 ("I would definitively VOTE for it"). We build the variable *CentreRightVotingIntention* taking value 1 if the individual answered at least 8 to one party among *Lega*, *Fratelli d'Italia*, *Forza Italia* and zero for answers from 1 to 7 or "I don't know". These three parties in 2018 were the most important ones in the centre-right coalition. We also construct an additional measure, *Anti-migrantsParty*, accounting for *Lega*, *Fratelli d'Italia*, *Forza Nuova*, the most extreme-right parties in the Italian political scenario in 2017.[25]

Turning to the perception on migrants, we consider the question "Immigrants make Italy an unsafe place. How much do you agree, in reference to this statement?" whose answers, on a scale from 1 to 4, ranges from "Not at all agree" to "Very much agree". We build the variable *MigrantPerception* taking value 1 if the answer is "Very much agree", and 0 otherwise, so that we isolate only those who have a strongly negative migrant perception.

Furthermore, we exploit information on individual beliefs on religious pluralism and we construct the dummy variable *ReligiousPluralism* that takes value 1 if individuals "Very much agree" with the statement "religious pluralism is a normal phenomenon in today's society", and 0 otherwise

In this work we also conduct a municipality level analysis on several hard outcome dependent variables. First, we construct a variable, *RightVotesShare*, which represents the % of votes obtained by the right-wing parties (or coalitions) at the Chamber of Deputies in the Italian national elections from the '80s to the last 2018 general elections, in each municipality. In particular, for general elections in 1958, 1968, 1976, and 1987 we consider votes obtained by the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (*MSI* Party). Then, we consider votes obtained by *Polo per le Libertà* in 1996 and *Casa delle Libertà* in 2006. Finally, as the centre-right and right-wing parties ran separately in 2013 and 2018 general elections, we consider both the votes obtained by the centre-right coalition and the (extreme) right-wing parties.[26]

[24] We also construct an alternative dummy variable that takes value 1 when the respondents answered 9 or 10, and 0 otherwise. This variable is called *FarRightPositioning2*.

[25] Other parties involved in the political scenario (and whose preference were requested by the survey) are the following: *Movimento 5 Stelle*, as an expression of a populist party with no collocation in the traditional right-left ideology; *Partito Democratico*, progressive centre-left party; *Sinistra Italiana* and *Articolo 1*, expression of the far left.

[26] Data are retrieved from the Ministry of the Interior Open Data and are available at `https://`

In the same vein, we also construct a variable that considers the % of votes obtained by the left-wing parties (or coalitions) at the Chamber of Deputies in the Italian national elections. In this case for elections in 1958, 1968, 1976, and 1987 we consider the votes obtained by the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (*PCI* Party); then we consider *L'Unione* and *Partito della Rifondazione Comunista* in 1996, *L'Unione* in 2006, and *Italia. Bene Comune* in 2013.[27] Finally, in 2018 we account for votes obtained by the centre-left coalition.

Furthermore, we retrieve information on racist and xenophobic attacks provided by the Lunaria association on its website "Cronache di ordinario razzismo".[28] In particular, we construct the dummy variable *RacistEpisodesDummy* that takes value 1 whether there occurred at least one racist episode in the period between 2013 and 2018 in each municipality, and 0 otherwise.

Finally, we exploit information on Jewish arrests during the Holocaust to construct a dummy equal to 1 if, in a municipality, an arrest of at least a Jewish individual occurred during the period 1943-1945, and 0 otherwise.[29] This variable is called *JewishArrestsDummy*.

3.2 Ports and Routes in the Medieval Era

The location of the Medieval ports that had a route to Africa draws heavily on information collected from various history books (Shepard, 1926; Lampman, 2018; Musarra, 2020) that allowed us to identify different configurations of ports and sea routes in the Mediterranean between the 11^{th} and 15^{th}.

Figure 1 shows the port configuration provided by Musarra (2020) as a re-elaboration of a map already appeared in Beneš (2018) and refers to the 13^{th} and 14^{th} centuries. In particular, this map considers the ports of Venice, Messina, Palermo, Reggio Calabria, Naples, Genoa, Gaeta, Livorno, Syracuse, Otranto and Porto Torres as ports with a trade route with Africa.

As already mentioned, we also collected information on alternative port configurations in a different historical period. According to the *WorldMap* archive provided by Harvard in the period between the 11^{th} and 12^{th} centuries the following ports had trade routes to Africa: Genoa, Venice, Messina, Reggio Calabria, Naples and Amalfi.[30] Alternatively, also another port configuration can be considered with re-

elezioni.interno.gov.it/opendata.

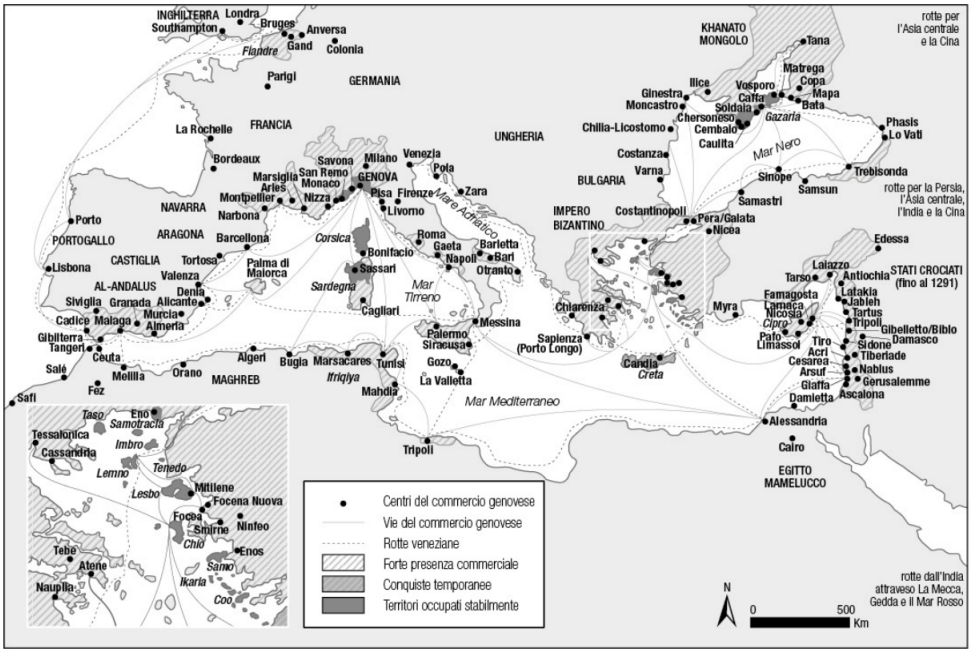
[27] In 2006 we exclude *UDEUR* from *L'Unione* coalition since at that time, at the European level, it was affiliated with *European People's Party* and, furthermore, at the national level, from 2009 to 2014 it ran with centre-right coalitions.

[28] The choice of this data source hinges on the fact that the Italian official institutions on racist discrimination and violence (Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali e l'Osservatorio per la Sicurezza contro gli Atti Discriminatori) collect data only on an aggregate level (typically region or country levels), while Lunaria association provides data at the municipal level.

[29] The data were made available by the Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea (CDEC) foundation.

[30] This map is available at https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?url=https:

Figure 1: Medieval Ports Configuration 13^{th} and 14^{th} centuries (*Map 1*)



Notes: The source of the map is Musarra (2020), re-elaboration of a map already appeared in Beneš (2018). The map provides a comprehensive summary of the commercial expansion of Genoa and Venice between the 13^{th} and 14^{th} centuries. The black lines indicate the Genoese sea trade routes, while the black dotted lines indicate the Venetians sea trade routes. The black dots indicate the Genoese trade centers.

spect to the same period: Venice, Messina, Reggio Calabria, Amalfi, Naples, Palermo, Genoa, Pisa, Cagliari and Syracuse.[31] According to these historical sources, there are five ports that appear in all the configurations, namely Genoa, Venice, Messina, Reggio Calabria and Naples, where Venice is the only major commercial port in the Adriatic Sea, while the other cities all face the western Mediterranean Sea.
In our main analysis we always refer to the port configuration as shown in Figure 1, that we will call *Map 1*. However, we replicate the main analysis also considering the other two port configurations (*Map 2* and *Map 3*) and by pooling all Medieval ports that we find in any of the three maps (*Map 4*).

3.3 Distances in the Medieval Era

In our identification strategy we consider the distance of each individual's place of residence to the nearest Medieval port that had routes to Africa as an instrument explaining individual's perception of migrants. Each individual is considered close to (far from) an ancient port if the distance from the centroid of his or her municipality of residence to the centroid of the nearest port location is below (above) a given threshold. In particular, we construct the matrix of such distances on the basis of the Roman road network dating back to 117 A.D., given that the Medieval road

//services7.arcgis.com/iEMmryaM5E3wkdnU/ArcGIS/rest/services/Sea_Trade_Routes_of_Medieval_Europe/FeatureServer/0&source=sd and is shown in Figure B3 in Appendix B.2.

[31]The author of the map is Martin Jan Mansson, and the map can be found at: https://kottke.org/tag/Martin\%20Jan\%20Mansson and is reported in Figure B4 in Appendix B.2.

network still largely relied on it. Data on the Roman road network are provided by McCormick et al. (2013) and available in the Digital Atlas of Roman and Medieval Civilization (DARMC), i.e., the digitized version of the Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman world (Talbert, 2000).

Information on the Roman roads network have been integrated with municipal administrative limits provided by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) and combined with the location of the Medieval ports, as shown in Figure B1 in Appendix B.1 where the configuration of ports contained in *Map 1* has been considered. In particular, only one Medieval port was associated with each municipality, i.e., the closest one considering the network of Roman roads. In the left panel of Figure B2 we show the example of the Medieval port of Genoa and the neighbouring municipalities. Although for the sake of graphical clarity in the left panel of Figure B2 the lines connecting the centroid of each municipality to the centroid of the port of Genoa are rectilinear, in the model the distance is always measured along the Roman network. This is illustrated in the right panel of Figure B2 where we show the example of the path between the port of Genoa and an inland municipality. Following Flückiger et al. (2022), when the centroid of a municipality is out of the Roman roads network, we create an artificial straight-line road segment between the centroid and the closest point on the network in order to connect it.

Once the nearest port is derived, we construct a dummy variable that takes value 1 if the individual lives close to a Medieval port and 0 if the individual is far away, according to distinct distance thresholds, i.e., 10, 15 and 20 km. The rationale behind this choice is in line with the fact that during the Middle Ages the vast majority of people was used to cover both shorter and longer distances by foot (Fonseca, 2000). This procedure is then repeated for the remaining two configurations of Medieval ports, discussed in Section 3.2.

3.4 Control Variables

In our analysis, we consider a rich set of control variables.
First, our set of personal controls include information recovered from the aforementioned survey on individuals age, educational qualifications, marital status, gender, occupational status, student status, and occupation of parents, as a proxy for family income.
Second, we consider geographic controls to take into account the possibility that geography influenced the location of ports in the Middle Ages, but also the possibility that political ideologies at local level might be shaped by the very same geographic characteristics. First, we construct a measure of geodetic distance from the sea and one of distance from Tunis. Indeed, following Accetturo et al. (2019), it was the main port of departure for the pirates raids so that the distance from Tunis can proxy the

probability of being attacked by pirates and this, in turn, might negatively affect attitudes towards migrants. Second, we also use the geodetic distance from the sea.
Moreover, we take into account other characteristics of the territory. Specifically, we construct an index of terrain ruggedness[32] as well as an index of accessibility based on data by Beria et al. (2017) who provide detailed maps of accessibility for 371 Italian local areas. In turn, data on the urban or rural nature of each municipality is taken from Schaub and Morisi (2020). Finally, data on both resident population in 2017 and population density in 2001 are retrieved from "Atlante Statistico dei Comuni" provided by ISTAT.
Third, we also entail some variables related to the socioeconomic context of the municipality of residence of individuals. Chiefly, from the "Atlante Statistico dei Comuni" provided by ISTAT we make use of data on the average municipal income in 2017.[33] From the same source, we also collect municipal data on the number of local units of manufacturing firms operating in the year 2017 and on the average firms size, as proxied by the ratio of the number of employees in the local units of active enterprises to the number of local units of active enterprises in 2017. In turn, to take into account the distance from large urban centres, we calculated the (geodetic) distance between each municipality of residence from the nearest NUTS-3 and NUTS-2 capital city. As a proxy of medium-run changes in economic growth at the municipal level, which in turn can affect protest votes (Algan et al., 2017), we control for the population growth rate between 2001 and 2017. Finally, from Schaub and Morisi (2020), we recover municipal data regarding the number of people without internet connection (i.e., broadband) in 2015 and we also include the amount of expenditures on police protection, as provided by Bove et al. (2019), that accounts for police presence and surveillance.
Then, as a measure of social capital, we use data on the number of non-profit associations at the municipal level (2001), weighted by resident population.[34]
As far as controls related to immigrants is concerned, we consider the percentage of foreign residents on the total population for the year 2017 at the municipal level and the share of immigrants from Africa at the municipal level (ISTAT data).
Finally, we account for a set of historical controls that are mainly based on Guiso et al. (2016) (Online Appendix). Specifically, we collect information on the size of cities in the 1300s and we build the dummy variable *Large*, taking value 1 if the population in 1300 exceeded 10,000 people, as well as the dummy *Medium*, which is equal to 1 if the population was between 1,000 and 10,000. From the same source we also consider a dummy that identifies the cities that were a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E.. Finally, we use data on cities involved in trade in the late Medieval period

[32]Authors' elaboration from Nunn and Puga (2012).
[33]This variable is constructed on the base of tax declarations.
[34]See Tommaso Nannicini's personal website: `https://www.tommasonannicini.eu/it/works/measures-social-capital-italian-provinces-and-muni/`.

(around 1500 C.E.) as provided by Wahl (2016) to compute the geodetic distance from the nearest Medieval trade city for each individual belonging to our database.[35]

3.5 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 below shows the main descriptive statistics for both individual and municipality level data for all variables included in the analysis. For readers convenience, we report separate information for individuals (and their respective municipalities) who reside near or far from a Medieval port according to a 15 km threshold and considering *Map 1*. Together with standard descriptive statistics we provide a t-test (T-Stat) of the difference of means (Delta). Data reported in Table 1 suggests that individuals are very similar according to individual characteristics, while, as expected, cities close to a Medieval port compared to those further away have peculiarities mainly related to urban dimension, e.g., they show higher resident population, population density, income and manufacturing firms. Furthermore, the same applies with reference to the geographical and historical dimensions. Finally, in Table B1 in Appendix B.3, we show, for our preferred port configuration (*Map 1*) - and for each distance cut-off - both the number of treated individuals and their municipality of residence.

[35]According to Wahl (2016), the full list of Medieval trade cities in Italy includes: Genova, Como, Milano, Mantova, Bolzano, Trento, Verona, Treviso, Venezia, Padova, Udine, Parma, Bologna, Lucca, Firenze, Prato, Pisa, Siena, Ancona, Roma, Napoli, Bari, Taranto, Brindisi, and Lecce.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

VARIABLES	Proximity to Medieval Port=0					Proximity to Medieval Port=1						
	Mean	**Sd.**	**Min**	**Max**	**Obs.**	**Mean**	**Sd.**	**Min**	**Max**	**Obs.**	**Delta**	**T-Stat**
Individual Level Variables												
Far-Right Political Positioning	0.26	0.44	0	1	1,728	0.17	0.37	0	1	131	0.09	1.95
Centre-Right Voting Intention	0.22	0.41	0	1	1,728	0.10	0.31	0	1	131	0.11	2.84
Migrant Perception	0.20	0.40	0	1	1,728	0.11	0.31	0	1	131	0.10	2.24
Age	27.56	4.65	20	35	1,728	27.44	4.05	20	35	131	0.12	0.24
Mother Occupational Status	0.80	0.92	0	2	1,728	0.55	0.88	0	2	131	0.24	2.36
Father Occupational Status	1.24	0.84	0	2	1,728	1.29	0.79	0	2	131	-0.05	-0.51
Educational Attainment	2.13	0.66	1	4	1,728	2.10	0.73	1	4	131	0.04	0.35
Marital Status	1.22	0.46	1	5	1,728	1.15	0.39	1	4	131	0.07	1.60
Gender (Male=1 Female=2)	1.46	0.50	1	2	1,728	1.42	0.50	1	2	131	0.04	0.68
Student Status (Yes=1 No=2)	1.66	0.47	1	2	1,728	1.65	0.48	1	2	131	0.02	0.25
Occupational Status (Employed=1 Unemployed=2)	1.46	0.50	1	2	1,728	1.59	0.49	1	2	131	-0.13	-2.04
Municipal Level Variables												
Distance from Tunis (km)	777.57	204.01	252.40	1,083.94	863	601.49	132.82	330.20	980.63	20	176.08	5.91
Ruggedness	1.29	1.57	0.00	8.67	863	1.24	1.24	0.02	4.09	20	0.06	0.20
Distance from the Sea (km)	56.09	53.21	0.25	229.65	863	5.02	3.07	0.49	10.51	20	51.07	26.44
Accessibility	106.53	41.50	16.09	180.74	863	107.45	29.33	46.46	131.98	20	-0.93	-0.14
Urban Area (Rural=0 Urban=1)	0.73	0.45	0	1	863	1	0	1	1	20	-0.27	-18.07
Population Density (2001)	701.44	966.00	6.78	6,914.69	863	4,843.62	4,206.65	470.96	13157.14	20	-4,142.18	-4.51
Population (Inhabitants)	31,906.69	117,299.90	320.00	2873,494.00	863	179,234.60	262,412.20	14,286.00	970,185.00	20	-147,327.91	-2.57
Population Growth (lnPop2017-lnPop2001)	0.07	0.12	-0.51	0.70	863	-0.02	0.07	-0.14	0.16	20	0.09	5.54
Income (Thousand Euros)	13323.42	3745.99	4570.41	25572.13	863	10804.10	3477.15	6317.29	18425.83	20	2519.32	3.28
Manufacturing Firms	0.75	0.48	0.06	5.22	863	0.53	0.33	0.25	1.47	20	0.22	3.02
Pop. without Broadband (% on Total Pop.)	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.13	863	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.03	20	0.01	3.82
Police Spending (per capita)	36.84	22.04	0.00	206.38	863	54.68	24.19	20.66	122.59	20	-17.84	-3.35
Distance from today's Ports (km)	184.35	108.45	0.00	537.50	863	54.70	44.85	0.00	157.84	20	129.65	12.40
Foreigners (% on Total Pop.)	7.05	4.21	0.32	24.32	863	4.52	3.36	0.79	13.16	20	2.52	3.38
Africans (% on Total Foreigners)	21.39	12.73	0.00	82.96	863	15.63	9.12	4.00	37.90	20	5.76	2.83
Non Profit Associations (per capita)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	863	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	20	0.00	3.49
Medieval Large City (Yes=1 No=0)	0.04	0.20	0	1	863	0.25	0.44	0	1	20	-0.21	-2.14
Bishop Site (Yes=1 No=0)	0.19	0.39	0	1	863	0.45	0.51	0	1	20	-0.26	-2.30
Medieval Medium City (Yes=1 No=0)	0.03	0.18	0	1	863	0.10	0.31	0	1	20	-0.07	-1.00
Distance from Medieval Trade City (km)	88.69	112.69	1.05	466.99	863	88.07	130.26	7.69	421.92	20	0.62	0.02
Average Manufacturing Firm Size (n. employees)	3.46	1.51	1.32	16.50	863	3.22	0.80	1.95	5.33	20	0.23	1.28
Distance from nearest NUTS-3 Capital City	18.52	12.42	0.00	77.15	863	8.85	13.66	0.00	47.70	20	9.67	3.21
Distance from nearest NUTS-2 Capital City	54.37	40.23	0.00	221.10	863	37.37	56.07	0.00	205.69	20	17.00	1.38

Notes: Individual Level Variables source: Osservatorio Giovani 2017, IPSOS, Giuseppe Toniolo Institute of Higher Education. The database refers to young adults with at least 20 years of age. Municipal Level Variables sources: see Section 3.
In the computation of the descriptive statistics, sample weights are applied for individual level variables. The sample is split according to the variable $ProximityMedPort$. The descriptive statistics on the distance from a Medieval port refers to *Map 1*.

4 Identification strategy

Our empirical analysis examines the impact that living close to a Medieval port has on a series of individual attitudes, such as a negative perception of migrants (i.e., that migrants make Italy an unsafe place) as well as the propensity to have an extreme right-wing political position or to vote for a right-wing party. In order to do that, we estimate various version of the following linear probability model:[36]

$$y_{i,m,r} = \alpha_r + \beta ProximityMedPort_{i,m,r} + X_m\pi + W_i\varphi + \epsilon_{i,m,r}, \quad (1)$$

where i denotes an individual, m a municipality, and r a NUTS-3 region. The dependent variable, $y_{i,m,r}$ measures each individuals' far-right political positioning, voting propensity for a right-wing party and a negative perception of migrants, alternatively. In turn, our main variable of interest is $ProximityMedPort_{i,m,r}$, which is a dummy variable equal to one if individual i lives within 10 (15) Km from a Medieval port, and zero otherwise. In the main analysis we consider Medieval ports shown in *Map 1*.[37] W_i is a vector of individual-level controls like age, educational attainment, marital status, gender, and parental employment status, while the vector X_m includes geographic, economic, social and historical characteristics of the municipality m where each individual resides. The geographic controls include terrain asperity, the geodetic distance from both Tunis and the sea, an accessibility index, the resident population in 2017, population density in 2001 and a rural or urban area dummy. As socioeconomic controls we consider the average income per capita of the municipality of residence, the number of manufacturing firms (per capita) in 2017, the average firm size, the distance to the nearest regional and provincial capital city (another proxy for the degree of rurality), the broadband internet coverage, the per capita police spending, the (log) population growth rate between 2001 and 2017 as a proxy for economic growth over the previous 15 years. Migrant related controls include the percentage of foreigners in the total population and the share of Africans over total immigrants. Finally, social capital is proxied by the number of non-profit associations per capita, while historical controls are the presence of a Bishop as of 1000 C.E., the Medieval city size (as a proxy for income during Middle Ages) and the distance from the nearest Medieval trade center. Province level (i.e., NUTS-3 region) fixed effects are denoted with α_r and control for unobserved heterogeneity at a quite high level of spatial disaggregation[38], while $\epsilon_{i,m,r}$ is the error term. Standard errors are clustered-robust, where the cluster dimension is at the province level.

We also estimate alternative specifications of Equation (1), where the dependent variables are defined at municipality level m and capture, alternatively, the voting

[36] In Appendix C.4 we also shows results from the estimation of a probit model.

[37] However, main results are broadly stable when we run regressions using *Map 2*, *Map 3*, and *Map 4*.

[38] In particular, they should take into account possible local unobserved effects associated to past institutions and dominations (Di Liberto and Sideri, 2015).

share of right-wing as well as left-wing parties in various national elections after World War II and dummy variables equal to one if either at least a xenophobic attack during the 2013-2017 period occurred or at least one arrest of a Jew during the nazi occcupation was registered. In those regressions the control variables X_m are similar to those mentioned above (when available) and the main regressor of interest is $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$, which is a dummy equal to one if the centroid of municipality m in region r is within 15 km from a Medieval port, and zero otherwise.

The estimation of Equation (1) with OLS assumes that, conditional on controls as well as on a full set of province dummies, the variable $ProximityMedPort_{i,m,r}$ is good as randomly assigned. We have already mentioned that distance from a Medieval port has been measured along the ancient Roman road network, which is predetermined with respect to the establishment of Medieval port. Of course, geographical and historical controls -together with the spatial fixed effects at NUTS-3 level- are key to ensure a correct identification of the impact of Medieval ports on individual as well as municipality level outcomes. Among the historic controls, population in 1300 is a proxy for the level of economic activity during the same historical period, while the presence of a Bishop should take into account the status of the town and in particular its religious and political importance at the time; in turn, distance from the nearest Medieval trade center should take into account the possibility that the impact of Medieval port spuriously capture the role played by trade. Indeed, as it has been made clear in the Historical Background Section, we argue that what is important is not trade per se (e.g., trade with other Italian or European regions), but sea-trade with individuals with different religions and cultures. We also control for distance from Tunis as a proxy for the threat coming from Muslim pirates which had became very significant especially since the XVI century and which had Tunis as one of their main harbours of departure: clearly, the raids from the pirates -who also used to capture prisoners- might have altered the way individuals living close to areas most subject to raids may have thought about Muslims. Finally, we also take into account geographic characteristics, that may proxy for the (very) long term patterns of growth at local level, as well as for a set of contemporaneous socio-economic controls. Moreover, we also control for the actual stock of migrants, as well as for the share of migrants from Africa that has been found to explain propensity to vote for right-wing parties. Hence, it is important to rule out that it is current contacts with African migrants that drive our results.[39]

We are careful to show that our main results are reasonably stable across specifications when we alternately add different sets of controls in order to exlude bad

[39]However, if the stock of (African) migrants in a municipality is affected by the local population's underlying opposition towards migrants and to opposition of local politicians, then controlling for the stock of migrants might create a bad control problem (Bracco et al., 2018). Reassuringly, we do not see important changes in the coefficients of interest when the stocks of migrants are included as controls. See Section 6.

control problems. Along this line, we perform the Oster (2019) test to verify that the role played by selection on unobservable variables does not pose a major threat to identification in our empirical context.

5 Historical background

In the historical research on the Mediterranean between the 11^{th} and the 15^{th} centuries, there is a clear separation between those scholars (e.g. Pirenne, 1939) supporting on the fragmentation of the Mediterranean alongside the Christianity-Islamic divide and those (e.g. Braudel, 1995) who believe in the conceptual unity of the Mediterranean. More recent research in the Braudelian tradition (e.g. Horden and Purcell, 2000) highlights that the Mediterranean of those centuries was characterized by the ceaseless circulation of ideas, technologies, styles, merchants, pilgrims, ambassadors and slaves which in turn created an intricate network of connections (O'Connell, 2010). This was possible because of the relatively easy seaborne communications across the Mediterranean, so that the edges of the Mediterranean should not be seen as insuperable barriers, but as "places of intense interaction and exchange" (Dursteler, 2011), where people with seemingly opposing cultures could interact with one another.

On the European side of the Mediterranean, Italian merchants played by far the lion's share (Abulafia, 2011), with the port cities of Amalfi, Pisa, Genoa and Venice that acted as intermediaries between the two-shores of the Mediterranean.[40] Over time these cities established different routes with other Italian ports and with the most important ports of North Africa and the Middle East.[41] There is evidence that, at least by the end of the 12^{th} century, the merchants' ships, especially the Genoese ones, where used also by Christians and Muslims travellers and pilgrims, as highlighted in a famous travel report of his pilgrimage to Mecca by Ibn Jubayr reported by Abulafia (2011). This clearly enabled sailors to have exchanges with Muslims and to report their experiences during their journeys, once they returned home; moreover, it could occur that Muslim pilgrims could see (and be seen in) Italian port towns, as it happened to Ibn Jubayr himself, who had to stop in the Sicilian town of Messina and on the Sardinian cost. More importantly, sailors and merchants spent time on African shores and repeatedly interacted with their Muslim counterparts. Indeed, whereas in the 11^{th} century during voyages to the East the merchants stopped only the bare minimum to conclude business and then return home, after the first crusade and the conquest of the Syrian-Palestinian coast, Genoese and Venetians (and later also Pisans) had obtained privileges and even neighborhoods, called *fondaci*, where

[40] In the later part of the period, other Italian cities played an increasing role, such as Livorno starting with the 15^{th}-16^{th} century.

[41] By way of example, Genoese used to deliver olive oil to the eastern Mediterranean from Seville, Gaeta, Naples and Gerba.

they settled in a more stable manner and created small communities. In every port on the southern side of the Mediterranean that had commercial ties with the Genoese and Venetian powers, there was a public building, the seat of civil and judicial administration, where consuls and *podestà* resided; furthermore, there were at least one church and a *loggia* where notaries carried out their services. In these communities there was a gradual development of a network of, among others, artisans, bankers, peasants, greengrocers.[42] While during night-time hours these *fondaci* were often closed by Islamic authorities, this did not prevent the Italian population to visit the town during the day and to have exchanges with the local communities.

These close contacts between individuals living in the Medieval ports and Muslims living in North Africa and the Middle East might have created an humus relatively more favorable to non-christian foreigners.[43] This does not mean that there was no conflict and that one can freely talk about tolerance in the modern sense of the term; actually, some historians argue that the inter-Mediterranean trade between Christians and Muslims was not sustained by trust, but by means of cooperation that was made possible by some form of mutual understanding and shared norms (often referred to in this literature as "diffused reciprocity") arisen out of the repeated interactions between individuals (Trivellato et al., 2014) and governments.[44] Nevertheless, it seems fair to say that it is "hard to believe that the experience of contact with foreigners left no traces on the trader's pattern of thinking", as highlighted by Moore (2001).

Another important issue that might have made people living in Medieval ports more open to foreigners and in particular to Muslims, is the presence of Muslim captives and slaves in many Italian port towns of that period. In particular, the role played by Genoa as probably the most important slave market in the Mediterranean is widely recognized in the historical literature,[45] but it is also accepted that virtually any important port town hosted a non-negligible numbers of slaves.[46] The ethnic and religious composition of those slaves communities did change over time and across cities (among others, McKee, 2008; Bono, 2021), depending also on political and military evolution in the Mediterranean. Figures for Genoa and Venice, for instance,

[42]These neighborhoods did exist even before the Crusades. By way of example, Amalfi used to have one *fondaco* near modern Cairo already during the 10^{th} century.

[43]Trivellato (2009) contrasts the more open atmosphere characterizing the rapidly developing Tuscan port town of Livorno (included in our *Map 3*) with the religion obscurantism that used to characterize Tuscany as well as Italy towards the end of the 16^{th} - beginning of the 17^{th} century.

[44]In Genoese law, merchants of different countries and religions where considered fully equal, as noted by Moore (2001).

[45]See Pistarino (1964) and Olgiati and Zappia (2018) for a reconstruction of the development of the slave trade in Genoa between the 11^{th} century and the 14^{th} century.

[46]See, for example, the discussion on Venice (Hocquet, 1997), Naples (Varriale, 2013), Cagliari (Loi, 2014), Messina (Pispisa and Tramontana, 1987; Campagna, 2019), but also, since the 16^{th} century, Livorno (Trivellato, 2009). See also Bono (1999) for a comprehensive history of slavery in the Mediterranean since the 15^{th} century and in particular for those cities with an established presence of slaves in Italy.

report, for the 14^{th} and 15^{th} centuries, that a large share of slaves were Muslims, mainly Tatars, Caucasian, Circassians and Mongols, but with a non-negligible share of North Africans and Turks (McKee, 2008).[47] Starting with the end of 15^{th} century an increasingly number of black slaves started to appear in Italy (at least in the official data from Venice and Genoa), although in the next century there was a tendency to replace them with North-Africans (McKee, 2008). The slaves in Italy were mainly employed as domestic servants[48] and, since the 15^{th} century, on galleys ships, while they never accounted for an important role in agriculture, with perhaps the exception of Sicily (McKee, 2008). Despite some notable exceptions (e.g., Genoa in certain periods, with estimates that arrive at almost 10 per cent of the total population), slaves were always a small minority of the population in Italian cities. Nevertheless, they were very visible in their local communities, as vividly illustrated in Bono (1999) who reports evidence of slaves that could manage some petty trade activities.

Moreover, in many Medieval ports freedom of religion was warranted to slaves, so that it was not uncommon to find a Mosque in those port cities. In the light of this, we argue, in the spirit of Allport et al. (1954)'s contact theory, that the presence of slaves in the Medieval ports might have favored, through interpersonal contact, the reduction of prejudices towards foreigners and, in particular, those from a different religion an different skin color.

Indeed, it might be argued that the presence of a slave community might have created social stigma against, say, Muslims or black individuals, but we believe that this is not warranted. As a matter of fact, as argued by McKee (2008), the economies of the Italian towns hosting slaves were not based on slave labor; moreover, there was not a racial or ethnic rationalization for enslavement in Italy, unlike in Spain and Portugal (McKee, 2008), since the precondition for enslavement was that the individuals should not originally be a Catholic Christian.[49]

All in all, we argue that the cultural humus in the Italian Medieval port cities -more geared towards a more universalist kind of morality because of the sea trade that occurred across cultural boundaries- might have favored the development of cultural traits characterized by a relatively higher openness to a mutual understanding towards foreign individuals and especially those characterized by different culture, religion and ethnicity. This cultural trait might have been transmitted across generations (Boyd and Richerson (2005); Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (1981); Benhabib et al. (2010); Tabellini (2008*b*)) because the maritime economy had continued to play

[47] However, data suggest that slaves could also be Orthodox Christians.

[48] Slaves were not only property of wealthy aristocrats, but they were quite common even in households of merchants, artisans, notaries and sailors (see among others Pistarino, 1964; Loi, 2014; Olgiati and Zappia, 2018; Campagna, 2019).

[49] Moreover, there is no indication that black slaves were freed less often than other slaves, so that it is not unlikely they that could live as free individuals in their local communities. However, for a more negative view on slavery and racism towards black people in the early Modern Italy, see Epstein (2001).

a central role in most Medieval port cities for the following centuries. An indirect support for this hypothesis can be found in Bosker et al. (2008), who show that the growth of cities between 1300 and 1861 in Italy was, conditionally on a rich set of controls, positively and strongly correlated to the port city status. Interestingly, the authors argue that Italian coasts are not that suitable for the localization of many ports, so that it is very likely that most maritime activity in the following centuries tended to occur in the very same old Medieval ports.

6 Empirical Results

6.1 Individual Level Analysis

In Table 2 we present OLS estimates of the linear probability model shown in Equation (1), where the dependent variable is a dummy equal to one for individuals who report to have a far right political position. In the upper part of the Table we report the results when we consider as close to a Medieval port all individuals living within 10 km from it, while in the middle and lower part of the Table we consider individuals living within 15 and 20 km from the Medieval port, respectively. In column (1) we report results for the baseline specification where we include only province fixed effects as well as personal and geographic controls. Estimated models shown in columns (2) to (5) include various municipality level controls. In particular, we add socio-economic controls (column (2)), a measure of social capital (column (3)), the share of immigrants over total population and the share of Africans over total immigrants (column (4)) and a set of historical controls (column (5)). Finally, column (6) includes all controls.

The coefficient of *ProximityMedPort* is always negative, very precisely estimated and stable across all different specifications, at least as far as it concerns individuals living within 10 or 15 km from a Medieval port. In Panel A, the magnitude of the coefficients suggests that in areas close to Medieval ports individuals have an approximately 20% lower probability to have far right political positions, which is a large effect, if we consider that the average probability of a far-right political positioning in our sample is about 20%. This result is only slightly stronger when we consider as close to a Medieval ports also individuals living within 15 km from it (Panel B). By way of contrast, the effect is halved and becomes non statistically significant if we expand the treatment area to individuals living within 20 km from Medieval port (Panel C). This result can be explained by observing that during the Middle Ages (and up to the 19^{th} century when the advent of the railroad revolutionized transportation) the vast majority of people used to cover both shorter and longer distances by foot (Fonseca, 2000). Covering a distance of 20 kilometers corresponds to an average time of 5 hours of uninterrupted walking. This probably implies that

people living more than 15 kilometers far from the port had much less chance to have frequent contacts with slave communities and sailors.

It is important to note that the above results do not depend on the estimation of a linear probability model. Indeed, estimates reported in Table C4 in Appendix C.4 exhibit very similar results if we estimate a probit model, suggesting that it is not the linearity assumption driving results reported in Table 2.

In Table 3 we report the empirical results when the dependent variable in Equation (1) is a dummy equal to one for those individuals that report a voting intention for the right coalition.[50] The pattern of results is quite consistent to that in Table 2, especially when we look at individuals living within 15 km from a Medieval port: indeed, individuals living close to a Medieval port are less likely to report a voting intention for the parties belonging to the right-wing coalition, with a magnitude that is larger in the case of individuals living within 15 km from the Medieval port.[51].

[50]For consistency, we run this regression and the following ones on the same sample of individuals who answered to the question on their political positioning.

[51]Also in this case, the probit marginal effects, reported in Table C5 in Appendix C.4 broadly confirm the OLS estimates.

Table 2: Far-Right Political Positioning and Proximity to Medieval Port: OLS

Dependent Variable: $FarRightPositioning_{i,m,r}$						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: 10 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.201***	-0.233***	-0.201***	-0.195***	-0.202***	-0.214**
	(0.065)	(0.076)	(0.065)	(0.066)	(0.062)	(0.084)
R-squared	0.177	0.189	0.177	0.178	0.182	0.196
Panel B: 15 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.232***	-0.259***	-0.232***	-0.227***	-0.236***	-0.248***
	(0.059)	(0.071)	(0.059)	(0.060)	(0.062)	(0.078)
R-squared	0.179	0.191	0.179	0.180	0.184	0.198
Panel C: 20 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.123	-0.150	-0.123	-0.111	-0.125	-0.139
	(0.089)	(0.096)	(0.088)	(0.095)	(0.080)	(0.098)
R-squared	0.175	0.186	0.175	0.176	0.180	0.194
NUTS-3 Region FE	√	√	√	√	√	√
Personal	√	√	√	√	√	√
Geography	√	√	√	√	√	√
Socio-Eco		√				√
Social Capital			√			√
Migrants				√		√
History					√	√
Observations	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859

Notes: All specifications are estimated by Ordinary Least Squares. The dependent variable is $FarRightPositioning_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to far right political positioning, and it remains unchanged in all the different specifications shown in the Table. The main independent variable is $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$, the dummy variable indicating the (historical) proximity to a Medieval port according to port configuration as reported in *Map 1* (for further details see Section 3.2). In Panel A, individuals whose municipality of residence is within (or beyond) the 10 km distance calculated in Roman roads are considered close (or distant) from one of the Medieval ports. In Panel B we use a distance of 15 km, while in Panel C we use a distance of 20 km. Personal controls involve: age, occupational status (either studying or working), educational attainment, marital status, gender, and parental (mother and father) incomes, as proxied by a measure of the employment status. Geography controls (at the municipal level) include: an index of terrain asperity, the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea, an index of accessibility, resident population in 2017, population density in 2001 and a variable related to whether a city is in a rural or urban area. Socio-economic controls (at the municipal level) entail: average income per capita of the municipality of residence, the number of manufacturing firms in 2017 (per capita), the average firm size, the distance to the nearest regional and provincial capital city, the broadband internet coverage, police spending per capita, and the (log) population growth rate between 2001 and 2017. The Migrants measure refers to the % of foreigners in the total population in 2017 in each municipality and the share of Africans over total immigrants. Social Capital is measured by number of non-profit associations per capita in each municipality in 2001. Historical controls (at the municipal level) encompass: an indicator whether the city was a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E., two dummy variables accounting for the size of city in year 1300 C.E (medium or large), and the distance (km) from the nearest Medieval trade center. The sample weights are applied. All specifications include regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. The statistical significance of the test that the underlying coefficient is equal to zero is denoted by: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Finally, in Table 4 we model individuals' perceptions of migrants and, in particular, whether or not they perceive migrants as likely to make Italy an unsafe country. Empirical estimates are broadly stable across specifications, with individuals living close to Medieval ports that are 15-18% less likely to think that migrants are a threat to security. This is a very large effect, if we think that, in our sample, about 16% of individuals think that migrants are likely to make Italy less safe. [52]

[52] Also in this case, probit marginal effects are very consistent with the estimate of the linear probability model. See Appendix C.4.

Table 3: Centre-Right Voting Intention and Proximity to Medieval Port: OLS

Dependent Variable: $CentreRightVotingIntention_{i,m,r}$						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: 10 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.117*	-0.119	-0.117*	-0.123*	-0.098	-0.074
	(0.066)	(0.078)	(0.066)	(0.066)	(0.070)	(0.093)
R-squared	0.197	0.216	0.197	0.198	0.200	0.225
Panel B: 15 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.180***	-0.174***	-0.180***	-0.192***	-0.169**	-0.152*
	(0.065)	(0.066)	(0.065)	(0.067)	(0.072)	(0.077)
R-squared	0.199	0.218	0.199	0.200	0.202	0.227
Panel C: 20 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.040	-0.054	-0.040	-0.051	-0.030	-0.050
	(0.097)	(0.104)	(0.097)	(0.098)	(0.093)	(0.098)
R-squared	0.196	0.215	0.196	0.196	0.199	0.225
NUTS-3 Region FE	√	√	√	√	√	√
Personal	√	√	√	√	√	√
Geography	√	√	√	√	√	√
Socio-Eco		√				√
Social Capital			√			√
Migrants				√		√
History					√	√
Observations	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859

Notes: All specifications are estimated by Ordinary Least Squares. The dependent variable is $CentreRightVotingIntention_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to the intention to vote for at least one party among *Forza Italia, Fratelli d'Italia, Lega Nord*, and it remains unchanged in all the different specifications shown in the Table. The main independent variable is $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$, the dummy variable indicating the (historical) proximity to a Medieval port according to port configuration as reported in *Map 1* (for further details see Section 3.2). In Panel A, individuals whose municipality of residence is within (or beyond) the 10 km distance calculated in Roman roads are considered close (or distant) from one of the Medieval ports. In Panel B we use a distance of 15 km, while in Panel C we use a distance of 20 km. Personal controls involve: age, occupational status (either studying or working), educational attainment, marital status, gender, and parental (mother and father) incomes, as proxied by a measure of the employment status. Geography controls (at the municipal level) include: an index of terrain asperity, the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea, an index of accessibility, resident population in 2017, population density in 2001 and a variable related to whether a city is in a rural or urban area. Socio-economic controls (at the municipal level) entail: average income per capita of the municipality of residence, the number of manufacturing firms in 2017 (per capita), the average firm size, the distance to the nearest regional and provincial capital city, the broadband internet coverage, police spending per capita, and the (log) population growth rate between 2001 and 2017. The Migrants measure refers to the % of foreigners in the total population in 2017 in each municipality and the share of Africans over total immigrants. Social Capital is measured by number of non-profit associations per capita in each municipality in 2001. Historical controls (at the municipal level) encompass: an indicator whether the city was a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E., two dummy variables accounting for the size of city in year 1300 C.E (medium or large), and the distance (km) from the nearest Medieval trade center. The sample weights are applied. All specifications include regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. The statistical significance of the test that the underlying coefficient is equal to zero is denoted by: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 4: Migrant Perception and Proximity to Medieval Port: OLS

Dependent Variable: $MigrantPerception_{i,m,r}$						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: 10 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.145***	-0.200***	-0.145***	-0.135***	-0.157***	-0.190***
	(0.030)	(0.044)	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.041)	(0.054)
R-squared	0.210	0.221	0.211	0.213	0.218	0.235
Panel B: 15 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.108***	-0.171***	-0.109***	-0.091**	-0.132***	-0.164***
	(0.030)	(0.043)	(0.030)	(0.036)	(0.033)	(0.049)
R-squared	0.210	0.220	0.210	0.212	0.218	0.234
Panel C: 20 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.041	-0.080	-0.041	-0.026	-0.050	-0.065
	(0.043)	(0.054)	(0.043)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.063)
R-squared	0.208	0.217	0.209	0.211	0.216	0.232
NUTS-3 Region FE	√	√	√	√	√	√
Personal	√	√	√	√	√	√
Geography	√	√	√	√	√	√
Socio-Eco		√				√
Social Capital			√			√
Migrants				√		√
History					√	√
Observations	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859

Notes: All specifications are estimated by Ordinary Least Squares. The dependent variable is $MigrantPerception_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to the perception that migrants make Italy an unsafe place, and it remains unchanged in all the different specifications shown in the Table. The main independent variable is $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$, the dummy variable indicating the (historical) proximity to a Medieval port according to port configuration as reported in *Map 1* (for further details see Section 3.2). In Panel A, individuals whose municipality of residence is within (or beyond) the 10 km distance calculated in Roman roads are considered close (or distant) from one of the Medieval ports. In Panel B we use a distance of 15 km, while in Panel C we use a distance of 20 km. Personal controls involve: age, occupational status (either studying or working), educational attainment, marital status, gender, and parental (mother and father) incomes, as proxied by a measure of the employment status. Geography controls (at the municipal level) include: an index of terrain asperity, the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea, an index of accessibility, resident population in 2017, population density in 2001 and a variable related to whether a city is in a rural or urban area. Socio-economic controls (at the municipal level) entail: average income per capita of the municipality of residence, the number of manufacturing firms in 2017 (per capita), the average firm size, the distance to the nearest regional and provincial capital city, the broadband internet coverage, police spending per capita, and the (log) population growth rate between 2001 and 2017. The Migrants measure refers to the % of foreigners in the total population in 2017 in each municipality and the share of Africans over total immigrants. Social Capital is measured by number of non-profit associations per capita in each municipality in 2001. Historical controls (at the municipal level) encompass: an indicator whether the city was a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E., two dummy variables accounting for the size of city in year 1300 C.E (medium or large), and the distance (km) from the nearest Medieval trade center. The sample weights are applied. All specifications include regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. The statistical significance of the test that the underlying coefficient is equal to zero is denoted by: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

6.2 Robustness

In this Section we undertake a series of robustness checks. First, we provide evidence that our main result is unlikely to be driven by local unobservables that may explain individuals perception toward migrants as well as their political views. Indeed, the pattern of R^2 across specifications suggests that, as the number of controls increases, its value slightly increases as well, thereby suggesting that the additional regressors have some explanatory power, while estimates of the coefficient of interest are rather stable. Following Altonji et al. (2005), we interpret this result as evidence that unobservables might not be driving our findings; moreover, the Oster (2019) test confirms the stability of our coefficient of interest.[53] Always in the same spirit, if we estimate the various versions of Equation (1) with regional NUTS-2 instead of NUTS-3 fixed effects estimates are unaltered both statistically and economically.[54]

Similarly, in Table 5 we show the results of regressing each of the three above outcome variables on a dummy equal to one for individuals that live close to one of the ten most important contemporary ports in Italy, and zero otherwise.[55] Indeed, while the intersection with the Medieval ports set is not void, in the last fifty years new cities emerged in the Italian port landscape so that some important seaports in today Italy were not Medieval ports. Following Jha (2013), the aim of this placebo exercise is therefore to verify whether it is some unobservable characteristics associated to port city status that matters (such as wealth or human capital accumulation) in driving current perceptions towards migrants (with the associated propensity to self positioning on the right-wing of the political spectrum) and not the sea trading experience of Medieval times. Reassuringly, the coefficients reported in Table 5 are often very close to zero and in any case largely insignificant.

Moreover, in the same vein, we re-estimate our model specification, for each of the three dependent variables, but using a fake indicator of proximity to a Medieval port, created by randomly assigning such distance to each individual's municipality of residence. The results (reported and discussed in Appendix C.1) show that the average of estimated coefficients is centered at zero, thus suggesting that the results we find are not mechanical and automatic.

[53] Under the assumption that the maximum R^2 obtainable, when the coefficient of interest β is equal to zero, is 30% greater than the R^2 reported in column (6) panel B of Tables 2, 3, 4, i.e., $R^2_{max} = min(1, 1.3 * R^2)$ we always find a δ value (i.e., the ratio of selection on unobservables with respect to selection on observables) greater than 1. Results are available upon request.

[54] Results are available upon request.

[55] We use data from the 2017 Assoporti ranking of Italian most important commercial ports and we compute the geodetic distance of each municipality from the 10 most important today's ports: Trieste, Genova, Cagliari, Livorno, Gioia Tauro, Augusta, Messina, Ravenna, Venezia, Napoli. Source: `http://www.assoporti.it/media/3854/movimenti\_portuali\_2017\_17gen19.pdf`

Table 5: Far-Right Political Positioning, Centre-Right Voting Intention, Migrant Perception and Proximity to Today 10 Most Important Commercial Ports

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Dependent Variable $FarRightPositioning_{i,m,r}$						
$ProximityTodayPort_{m,r}$	-0.024	-0.075	-0.024	-0.022	-0.028	-0.074
	(0.072)	(0.076)	(0.073)	(0.073)	(0.068)	(0.073)
R-squared	0.173	0.185	0.173	0.175	0.178	0.193
Panel B: Dependent Variable $CentreRightVotingIntention_{i,m,r}$						
$ProximityTodayPort_{m,r}$	0.017	-0.001	0.017	0.011	0.028	0.006
	(0.060)	(0.065)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.064)	(0.065)
R-squared	0.196	0.215	0.196	0.196	0.199	0.224
Panel C: Dependent Variable $MigrantPerception_{i,m,r}$						
$ProximityTodayPort_{m,r}$	0.082	0.038	0.082	0.101	0.066	0.048
	(0.089)	(0.094)	(0.088)	(0.089)	(0.087)	(0.092)
R-squared	0.209	0.217	0.209	0.213	0.216	0.232
NUTS-3 Region FE	√	√	√	√	√	√
Personal	√	√	√	√	√	√
Geography	√	√	√	√	√	√
Socio-Eco		√				√
Social Capital			√			√
Migrants				√		√
History					√	√
Observations	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859

Notes: All specifications are estimated by Ordinary Least Squares. The dependent variables are: in Panel A $FarRightPositioning_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to far right political positioning; in Panel B $CentreRightVotingIntention_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to the intention to vote for at least one party among *Forza Italia, Fratelli d'Italia, Lega Nord*; in Panel C $MigrantPerception_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to the perception that migrants make Italy an unsafe place. The main independent variable is $ProximityTodayPort_{m,r}$, the dummy variable indicating the proximity to at least one among the 10 most important today's ports. In particular, individuals whose municipality of residence is within (or beyond) the 15 km (geodetic) distance are considered close (or distant) from one of the most important commercial ports. Personal controls involve: age, occupational status (either studying or working), educational attainment, marital status, gender, and parental (mother and father) incomes, as proxied by a measure of the employment status. Geography controls (at the municipal level) include: an index of terrain asperity, the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea, an index of accessibility, resident population in 2017, population density in 2001 and a variable related to whether a city is in a rural or urban area. Socio-economic controls (at the municipal level) entail: average income per capita of the municipality of residence, the number of manufacturing firms in 2017 (per capita), the average firm size, the distance to the nearest regional and provincial capital city, the broadband internet coverage, police spending per capita, and the (log) population growth rate between 2001 and 2017. The Migrants measure refers to the % of foreigners in the total population in 2017 in each municipality and the share of Africans over total immigrants. Social Capital is measured by number of non-profit associations per capita in each municipality in 2001. Historical controls (at the municipal level) encompass: an indicator whether the city was a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E., two dummy variables accounting for the size of city in year 1300 C.E (medium or large), and the distance (km) from the nearest Medieval trade center. The sample weights are applied. All specifications include regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. The statistical significance of the test that the underlying coefficient is equal to zero is denoted by: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Finally, we re-estimate our model specification for a subset of individuals, i.e., those more likely to have left-wing political positions, who in turn can also have a more universalist morality. We do this by exploiting information about the toponymy of municipalities. Indeed, according to Augustins (2004); Conedera et al. (2007); Weaver and Holtkamp (2016); Oto-Peralías (2018), street names can be used as proxies for the social and cultural characteristics of local areas. In order to perform our analysis we use toponymy data contained in the 2011 ISTAT population and housing census, which provides information on 22 million names of streets, roads and squares related to all Italian municipalities. Following Oto-Peralías (2018), the process of determining street names must adhere to specific criteria in order for the resulting nomenclature to be deemed valid for the purposes of studying social and cultural phenomena. In our opinion, Italy fulfils these conditions since the streets are labelled with names and are the result of decisions that correspond to the commemorative priorities of the local community, reflecting people's social and cultural values.[56] Naming streets is a way of commemorating martyrs, heroes and glorious events to promote particular notions of national identity and history; hence, we select streets dedicated to the phenomenon of the Resistance against the Nazi-fascists, to politicians who opposed the fascist regime, to prominent post-war left-wing politicians, but also to artists who inspired tolerance and inclusion.[57] We look at the average number of such streets, standardized for the population, in order to observe their average value in the municipalities contained in our sample and we create a sub-sample containing only individuals residing in municipalities with a higher than average number of streets with the above-mentioned toponymy characteristics. We expect these municipalities to have a cultural "humus" more favorable to cultural openness. In particular, we want to test whether individuals' perception of migrants as well as their right-wing political positioning continues to be different close to Medieval ports when regressions are estimated over the sample of municipalities with the aforementioned cultural traits.[58] Results reported in Table C3 in Appendix C.3 suggest that -even when we compare the individuals living close to Medieval ports to individuals that do live in a municipality characterized by more left-wing and progressives cultural values- people close to Medieval ports are broadly still less likely

[56] In Italy, the body delegated to decide on the naming of streets, roads and squares is the municipal council.

[57] More specifically, we have considered the following politicians, philosophers, and leaders: Giacomo Matteotti, Antonio Gramsci, Palmiro Togliatti, Nilde Iotti, Pietro Nenni, Enrico Berlinguer, Sandro Pertini, Carl Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Ho Chi Min, Martin Luther King, Salvador Allende, J. F. Kennedy. With regard to the phenomenon of Resistance to Nazis during the II World War, we have included among others: streets containing the word 25 April (Italian day of Liberation from Nazism) and Partisans. Moreover, we include streets that are dedicated to the Soviet Union. With regard to artists, we have selected: Fabrizio De Andrè and Giorgio Gaber.

[58] It is important to note that the criterion for inclusion in the sub-sample applies only to the municipalities of residence of individuals living far from a Medieval port. In fact, the sub-sample contains all individuals living near a Medieval port, regardless of whether their municipality of residence meets the above-mentioned requirements.

to have a negative perception of migrants and to have right wing political positions. In other words, Medieval sea-trade seems to have been the real "game changer".

In what follows we discuss additional robustness checks. First, we explore the sensitivity of our main results with respect to alternative definitions of the dependent variable. In particular, we use two alternative measures that capture individuals' far-right ideology and voting intention. The first dummy variable, *FarRight-Positioning2*, is based on the same question considered for our main analysis, but it is built using a different metric. Answers to the question "In politics, we often talk about "left" and "right". Considering your political beliefs, where would you place yourself?" are coded 1 when individuals answered 9 or 10 and 0 otherwise. To build the second alternative dependent variable that measures individuals' voting intention, *Anti-migrantsParty*, we instead follow Barone et al. (2016) and we focus on the question relative to the probability of voting each party in the next parliamentary election, on a scale from 1 ("I would definitively NOT VOTE for it") to 10 ("I would definitively VOTE for it"). The dummy variable takes value 1 if the individual answered at least 8 with respect to one of the following explicitely anti-migrant political parties: *Lega*, *Fratelli d'Italia*, *Forza Nuova*. We code as 0 the answers from 1 to 7 or "I don't know". Empirical estimates reported in Table 6 confirm our previous results. All in all, these robustness checks suggest that it is not the way we have defined an individual's right-wing political positioning or the voting intentions for specific right-wing parties or coalition that matters in driving our main findings.

Finally, in column (3) we undertake a different robustness check where we explore whether close to Medieval ports individuals are more likely to have a positive view of religious pluralism. Regression results confirm that this is indeed the case, which is consistent with the existence of a more universalist morality in municipalities close to Medieval ports.

So far, we have used information from only one Map to define Medieval port status; however, as explained in the Data section, we have been able to find other Maps, whose differences can be partly explained with the different century they refer to. However, they might also be due to historical uncertainties. Therefore, it is important to check whether our results are at least broadly stable across Maps. For this reason, we estimate Equation (1) separately for the other two Maps (*Maps 2* and *3*) and for the combined Map (*Map 4*), which considered as hosting a Medieval port any municipality that is mentioned in one of the three maps.[59] Empirical estimates re-

[59]More specifically, *Map 2* includes 69 treated individuals using the 10 km threshold (city of residence: Genova, Messina, Napoli, Reggio Calabria, Venezia) and 88 using the 15 km threshold (city of residence: Genova, Messina, Casandrino, Casavatore, Casoria, Castellammare di Stabia, Cercola, Frattamaggiore, Grumo Nevano, Mugnano di Napoli, Napoli, Portici,San Giorgio a Cremano, Volla, Reggio Calabria, Venezia). *Map 3* includes 132 treated individuals using the 10 km threshold (city of residence: Cagliari, Capoterra, Elmas, Quartu Sant'Elena, Genova, Messina, Napoli, Palermo, Pisa, Reggio Calabria, Siracusa, Venezia) and 155 using the 15 km threshold (city of residence: Cagliari, Capoterra, Elmas, Quartu Sant'Elena, Selargius, Sestu, Genova, Messina, Casandrino, Casavatore,

ported in Table 7 suggest that results are broadly stable across Maps configurations and very similar to those reported in Tables 2, 3 and 4.

Finally, as a further robustness analysis we restrict the sample to those individuals who reside in municipalities which do not exhibit a very high percentage of migrants from Africa (we exclude from the sample the 4^{th} quartile). The empirical estimates, available from the authors upon request, are very similar to those reported in the main tables, suggesting that the impact of Medieval ports is not spuriously capturing the actual presence of African migrants.

Casoria, Castellammare di Stabia, Cercola, Frattamaggiore, Grumo Nevano, Mugnano di Napoli, Napoli, Portici, San Giorgio a Cremano, Volla, Palermo, Pisa, Reggio Calabria, Siracusa, Venezia). *Map 4* contains all treated individuals (cities) included in *Map 1*, *2*, and *3*.

Table 6: Relation between Proximity to Medieval Port and Alternative Dependent Variables

Dependent Variable:						
	$FarRight$ $Positioning2_{i,m,r}$		$Anti-migrants$ $Party_{i,m,r}$		$Religious$ $Pluralism_{i,m,r}$	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: 10 km						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.190***	-0.208**	-0.117*	-0.065	0.180**	0.235***
	(0.069)	(0.080)	(0.070)	(0.097)	(0.087)	(0.085)
R-squared	0.202	0.234	0.210	0.237	0.160	0.174
Panel B: 15 km						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.208***	-0.216***	-0.196***	-0.163**	0.156**	0.224***
	(0.066)	(0.074)	(0.067)	(0.076)	(0.074)	(0.074)
R-squared	0.204	0.235	0.213	0.239	0.159	0.174
NUTS-3 Region FE	√	√	√	√	√	√
Personal	√	√	√	√	√	√
Geography	√	√	√	√	√	√
Socio-Eco		√		√		√
Social Capital		√		√		√
Migrants		√		√		√
History		√		√		√
Observations	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859

Notes: All specifications are estimated by Ordinary Squares. The dependent variables are: $FarRightPositioning2_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to far-right political positioning constructed with the same variable used in our main specification, but with a different metric (columns (1) and (2)), $Anti-migrantsParty_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to the intention to vote for one party among *Fratelli d'Italia, Lega Nord, Forza Nuova* (columns (3) and (4)), and $ReligiousPluralism_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to personal beliefs on religious pluralism. The main independent variable is $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$, the dummy variable indicating the (historical) proximity to a Medieval port according to port configuration as reported in *Map 1* (for further details see Section 3.2). In Panel A, individuals whose municipality of residence is within (or beyond) the 10 km distance calculated in Roman roads are considered close (or distant) from one of the Medieval ports. In Panel B we use a distance of 15 km. Personal controls involve: age, occupational status (either studying or working), educational attainment, marital status, gender, and parental (mother and father) incomes, as proxied by a measure of the employment status. Geography controls (at the municipal level) include: an index of terrain asperity, the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea, an index of accessibility, resident population in 2017, population density in 2001 and a variable related to whether a city is in a rural or urban area. Socio-economic controls (at the municipal level) entail: average income per capita of the municipality of residence, the number of manufacturing firms in 2017 (per capita), the average firm size, the distance to the nearest regional and provincial capital city, the broadband internet coverage, police spending per capita, and the (log) population growth rate between 2001 and 2017. The Migrants measure refers to the % of foreigners in the total population in 2017 in each municipality and the share of Africans over total immigrants. Social Capital is measured by number of non-profit associations per capita in each municipality in 2001. Historical controls (at the municipal level) encompass: an indicator whether the city was a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E., two dummy variables accounting for the size of city in year 1300 C.E (medium or large), and the distance (km) from the nearest Medieval trade center. The sample weights are applied. All specifications include regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. The statistical significance of the test that the underlying coefficient is equal to zero is denoted by: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 7: Relation between Proximity to Medieval Ports and Far-Right Political Positioning, Centre-Right Voting Intention and Migrant Perception: alternative Ports Configurations

Dependent Variable:						
	$FarRight$ $Positioning_{i,m,r}$		$CentreRightVoting$ $Intention_{i,m,r}$		$Migrant$ $Perception_{i,m,r}$	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	10km	15km	10km	15km	10km	15km
Panel A: *Map 2*						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.237***	-0.282***	-0.095	-0.196**	-0.238***	-0.202***
	(0.077)	(0.064)	(0.117)	(0.086)	(0.056)	(0.057)
R-squared	0.196	0.198	0.225	0.228	0.236	0.235
Panel B: *Map 3*						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.154**	-0.175**	-0.087	-0.122	-0.204***	-0.185***
	(0.062)	(0.074)	(0.076)	(0.077)	(0.050)	(0.048)
R-squared	0.194	0.195	0.225	0.226	0.236	0.235
Panel C: *Map 4*						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.188***	-0.201***	-0.089	-0.118*	-0.184***	-0.166***
	(0.068)	(0.074)	(0.071)	(0.070)	(0.049)	(0.045)
R-squared	0.196	0.197	0.225	0.226	0.236	0.235
NUTS-3 Region FE	√	√	√	√	√	√
Personal	√	√	√	√	√	√
Geography	√	√	√	√	√	√
Socio-Eco	√	√	√	√	√	√
Social Capital	√	√	√	√	√	√
Migrants	√	√	√	√	√	√
History	√	√	√	√	√	√
Observations	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859

Notes: All specifications are estimated by Ordinary Least Squares. The dependent variables are: $FarRightPositioning_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to far right political positioning (columns (1) and (2)); $CentreRightVotingIntention_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to the intention to vote for at least one party among *Forza Italia, Fratelli d'Italia, Lega Nord* (columns (3) and (4)); $MigrantPerception_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to the perception that migrants make Italy an unsafe place (columns (5) and (6)). The main independent variable is $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$, the dummy variable indicating the (historical) proximity to a Medieval port according to *Map 2* (Panel A), *3* (Panel B) and *4* (Panel C) (for further details see Section 3.2). In odd columns, individuals whose municipality of residence is within (or beyond) the 10 km distance calculated in Roman roads are considered close (or distant) from one of the Medieval ports. In even columns we use a distance of 15 km. Personal controls involve: age, occupational status (either studying or working), educational attainment, marital status, gender, and parental (mother and father) incomes, as proxied by a measure of the employment status. Geography controls (at the municipal level) include: an index of terrain asperity, the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea, an index of accessibility, resident population in 2017, population density in 2001 and a variable related to whether a city is in a rural or urban area. Socio-economic controls (at the municipal level) entail: average income per capita of the municipality of residence, the number of manufacturing firms in 2017 (per capita), the average firm size, the distance to the nearest regional and provincial capital city, the broadband internet coverage, police spending per capita, and the (log) population growth rate between 2001 and 2017. The Migrants measure refers to the % of foreigners in the total population in 2017 in each municipality and the share of Africans over total immigrants. Social Capital is measured by number of non-profit associations per capita in each municipality in 2001. Historical controls (at the municipal level) encompass: an indicator whether the city was a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E., two dummy variables accounting for the size of city in year 1300 C.E (medium or large), and the distance (km) from the nearest Medieval trade center. The sample weights are applied. All specifications include regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. The statistical significance of the test that the underlying coefficient is equal to zero is denoted by: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

6.3 Transmission Mechanism: IV Estimates

The empirical results discussed so far show that, close to Medieval ports, individuals share a cultural trait that might be indicative of a more universalist morality, and in particular a lower propensity to have negative beliefs towards migrants induced by the trade experience of the Middle Ages. Moreover, they also have a lower propensity to self-position on the far-right of the political spectrum and to express voting intentions for right-wing and anti migrant parties.

If one believes that, conditional on controls, living close to Medieval ports provides an exogenous source of variation in the aversion towards migrants, then we could use instrumental variable techniques to estimate the impact that a cultural trait (i.e., a belief that migrants make Italy an insecure place) has on the propensity to have right-wing views and voting intentions in a period when right-wing parties adopted a strong anti-migrant rhetoric. Clearly, the exclusion restriction is that, conditional on controls, living close to a Medieval port influences voting intentions only by shaping that specific cultural trait.

A source of exogenous variation is necessary because there could be omitted variables at local level that drive both migrant perceptions and right-wing political positioning and voting intentions. For example, deeply religious people might be more likely to be more tolerant towards humble individuals, like migrants; however, there is plenty of evidence in political science and economics that they are also more likely to vote for right-wing parties, as discussed in Gethin et al. (2022) for the case of Italy, which would lead to a downwards bias to OLS estimates. Second, reverse causality might be an issue; indeed, it might well be the case that it is the individual political positioning that shapes the individual fears towards migrants. This might occur if aggressive political campaigning against migrants tend to instill fear of migrants relatively more on right-wing leaning persons. In other words, and borrowing the theoretical framework of Guiso et al. (2017), one might argue that there is both a demand and a supply of protection against migrants and if one tries to estimate the demand for protection with OLS, she might get biased and inconsistent estimates, given that the demand for protection might be explained by the activity of right-wing political parties (De Vries, 2018).

In Table 8 we report the IV estimates which suggest that a negative feeling towards migrants is associated to a much larger probability that individuals take on a far right political positioning.[60] In particular, the IV estimates suggest that the probability of having far right-wing views roughly doubles[61] when an individual has

[60]For each specification, we report the first-stage robust F-statistic ("Kleibergen Paap Wald F statistic") that satisfies the rule of thumb of ten in all regressions, suggesting that we do not have a weak instrument problem. The only exception is the F-statistic reported in column (4) (Panel B) for which we perform weak-instrument robust inference that allows us to reject the null hypothesis with a Wald test at the 5% level.

[61]This strong effect could be due to the linearity assumption embedded in the linear probabil-

a negative perception of migrants and such effect is higher with respect to OLS results reported in Table C1 in Appendix C.2.[62] This in turn might suggest that OLS estimates are downwards biased.[63]

Table 8: Far-Right Political Positioning and Migrant Perception (IV)

Dependent Variable: $FarRightPositioning_{i,m,r}$						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: 10 km Distance						
$MigrantPerception_{i,m,r}$	1.389**	1.166***	1.389**	1.451**	1.281***	1.124**
	(0.582)	(0.432)	(0.584)	(0.638)	(0.482)	(0.478)
F-statistic	23.27	20.60	22.21	19.81	14.44	12.60
Panel B: 15 km Distance						
$MigrantPerception_{i,m,r}$	2.135**	1.516***	2.133**	2.483**	1.794***	1.511***
	(0.869)	(0.477)	(0.866)	(1.239)	(0.609)	(0.535)
F-statistic	12.95	15.93	13.30	6.453	16.24	11.04
NUTS-3 Region FE	√	√	√	√	√	√
Personal	√	√	√	√	√	√
Geography	√	√	√	√	√	√
Socio-Eco		√				√
Social Capital			√			√
Migrants				√		√
History					√	√
Observations	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859

Notes: All specifications are estimated by Two Stage Least Squares. The dependent variable is $FarRightPositioning_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to far-right political positioning, and it remains unchanged in all the different specifications shown in the Table. The main independent variable is $MigrantPerception_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to the perception that migrants make Italy an unsafe place. We instrument the endogenous independent variable with $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$, the dummy variable indicating the (historical) proximity to a Medieval port according to port configuration as reported in *Map 1* (for further details see Section 3.2). In Panel A, individuals whose municipality of residence is within (or beyond) the 10 km distance calculated in Roman roads are considered close (or distant) from one of the Medieval ports. In Panel B we use a distance of 15 km. Personal controls involve: age, occupational status (either studying or working), educational attainment, marital status, gender, and parental (mother and father) incomes, as proxied by a measure of the employment status. Geography controls (at the municipal level) include: an index of terrain asperity, the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea, an index of accessibility, resident population in 2017, population density in 2001 and a variable related to whether a city is in a rural or urban area. Socio-economic controls (at the municipal level) entail: average income per capita of the municipality of residence, the number of manufacturing firms in 2017 (per capita), the average firm size, the distance to the nearest regional and provincial capital city, the broadband internet coverage, police spending per capita, and the (log) population growth rate between 2001 and 2017. The Migrants measure refers to the % of foreigners in the total population in 2017 in each municipality and the share of Africans over total immigrants. Social Capital is measured by number of non-profit associations per capita in each municipality in 2001. Historical controls (at the municipal level) encompass: an indicator whether the city was a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E., two dummy variables accounting for the size of city in year 1300 C.E (medium or large), and the distance (km) from the nearest Medieval trade center. The sample weights are applied. All specifications include regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. F is the First stage Kleinbergen-Paap Statistic. The statistical significance of the test that the underlying coefficient is equal to zero is denoted by: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

ity model. However, if we estimate a probit model with the control function approach proposed by Wooldridge (2015), we find that a negative perception of migrants tends to increase the probability of a right-wing political position by about 43%. Estimates are available from the authors upon request.

[62]Similarly, a negative perception of migrants tend to increase the probability to vote for the right-wing coalition, especially in the case of individuals located within 15 km from a Medieval port, as estimates reported in Table C2 in Appendix C.2 show.

[63]However, in the case of heterogeneous treatment effects, the IV estimator identifies a very specific local average treatment effect, i.e., the effect for those individuals that do not have a negative view of migrants just because they live in a Medieval port. This in turn suggests that the identified results might be very specific to this particular subgroup of the Italian young population.

We are aware that the exclusion restriction might fail for a variety of reasons. Therefore, in Appendix C.2 we discuss possible reasons of that failure, and we explore the sensitivity of the IV estimates to possible violations of the exclusion restriction using the methodologies proposed by Nevo and Rosen (2012) and Conley et al. (2012).[64] Reassuringly, empirical results in Appendix C.2 show that our IV estimates are rather robust to moderate violations of the exclusion restriction.

All in all, we think that our IV results provide at least suggestive evidence that a "demand" explanation might have at a minimum a role to play in understanding the surge of right-wing parties. In other words, differences in cultural traits create a differential demand for anti-migrant policies or, at least, they can make some individuals less exposed to right-wing parties' policies and rhetoric.

7 Municipality Level Analysis.

In this Section we move from survey data to "hard outcomes" observed at municipality level.[65] The empirical analysis is based on the estimation of the following Equation by either assuming a linear probability or a probit specification:

$$y_{m,r} = \alpha_r + \beta ProximityMedPort_{m,r} + X_m\pi + \epsilon_{m,r}, \tag{2}$$

where $y_{m,r}$ represents various outcomes defined at the level of municipality m in NUTS-3 region r, while the variable *ProximityMedPort* is our usual measure of distance from a Medieval port.[66] In turn, X_m includes a set of controls at the municipal level, while α_r accounts for NUTS-3 province level fixed effects. In particular, with the aim of maintaining a single set of controls for all years analyzed,[67] we include time-invariant geographic controls (i.e., index of terrain asperity and the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea) as well as our standard set of historical variables. We also consider socioeconomic controls for which data are available for the entire time interval (population and the distance from the nearest NUTS-2 capital city).[68]

In Table 9, columns (1) and (2), we report the results of two regressions where $y_{m,r}$ is a dummy equal to 1 if, in municipality m of region r over the period 2013-2018, at least a racist and xenophobic attack occurred, and zero otherwise. Both regressions show that, conditionally on controls, in municipalities located within 15 km from a

[64] For the Nevo and Rosen (2012) (Conley et al. (2012)) approach we use the imperfectiv (plausexog) command for STATA described in detail by Clarke and Matta (2018).

[65] A similar approach is also followed by Panza et al. (2022) in a recent paper where the authors study the impact of the Italian resistance on votes for right-wing parties (with a direct lineage to the National Fascist Party) in elections between 1948 and 2018.

[66] For the full list of treated municipalities see Table B2 in Appendix.

[67] This is because in the regression specifications we consider outcomes that refer to different historical periods.

[68] See Table 9.

Medieval port, there has been a lower probability that a racist attack occurred. In particular, the OLS coefficient of the linear probability model (column (1)) suggests that the probability that a racists episode occurs is reduced by 11%; even if it is slightly noisily estimated. By way of contrast, the marginal effect from the probit regression is larger in absolute value and statistically significant at the 1% level.

Table 9: Racist Episodes/Jewish Arrests and Proximity to Medieval Port

Dependent Variable:				
	$RacistEpisodesDummy_{m,r}$		$JewishArrestsDummy_{m,r}$	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Proximity to Medieval Port	-0.106*	-0.179***	-0.050*	-0.377***
	(0.057)	(0.046)	(0.029)	(0.114)
R-squared	0.183		0.146	
Observations	7,450	7,450	7,450	5,282
NUTS-3 Region FE	√	√	√	√
Geography	√	√	√	√
History	√	√	√	√
Population	√	√	√	√
Distance from NUTS-2 Capital City	√	√	√	√

Notes: Specifications in columns (1) and (3) are estimated by Ordinary Least Squares, specifications in column (2) and (4) are estimated by probit and report marginal effects. The dependent variable in columns (1) and (2) is $RacistEpisodesDummy_{m,r}$ and refers to racist/xenophobic attacks occurred in each municipality m between 2013 and 2018. The dependent variable in columns (3) and (4) is $JewishArrestsDummy_{m,r}$ and refers to deportations occurred in each municipality m between 1943 and 1945. The main independent variable is $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$, the dummy variable indicating the (historical) proximity to a Medieval port according to *Map 1* (for further details see Section 3.2). Geography controls (at the municipal level) include: an index of terrain asperity and the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea. We also account for the distance from the nearest NUTS-2 capital city as well as population in 1951 (columns (1) and (2)) and in 2011 (columns (3) and (4)). Models in column (3) and (4) include the population growth rate between 2001 and 2011. Historical controls (at the municipal level) take into account: an indicator whether the city was a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E., two dummy variables accounting for the size of city in year 1300 C.E (medium or large), and the distance (km) from the nearest Medieval trade center. The sample weights are applied. All specifications include regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. The statistical significance of the test that the underlying coefficient is equal to zero is denoted by: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

We now turn to analyse whether "real" votes in National elections confirm previous results that the proximity to a Medieval port does affect the percentage of right-wing votes in national elections in municipality m, conditionally on controls.[69] As already noted, we focus on the 2018 national elections since during the 2014-2017 period there has been a spike in refugees arrival in Italy[70] and we expect to find fewer votes for right-wing parties in municipalities that are close to a Medieval port, consistently with our results on voting intentions that have been extensively discussed above. Moreover, we perform the same analysis for some past national elections since the 1950s, one for each decade. In these elections we do not expect to find a negative

[69]The Italian Parliament is composed of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate of the Republic. The national elections for the renewal of members of the Senate of the Republic and Chamber of Deputies are held on the same day, with two separate votes. Until the 2022 elections, the Senate members were elected by universal suffrage and by citizens aged 25 years or over (to date, by citizens aged at least 18 years old). The Chamber comprises members elected by universal suffrage and by citizens who are 18 or older. Given the age target of our respondents (18 - 35 years old), in this analysis we consider the votes share obtained by the coalition at the Chamber of Deputies.

[70]See Figure B5.

correlation before the 1990s, when migration was not an issue in Italian society and politics; in turn, we are more agnostic as far as it concerns the elections after the 1990s, when migration was not as salient as in the 2014-2017 period, but opposition to migration was in the agenda of the right-wing parties, although other issues scored higher in the political platforms of the right-wing coalition, namely taxes, fiscal federalism and opposition to the European Union. In Table 10 we report the OLS estimates of the above Equation, where $y_{m,r}$ is the share of votes accruing to the right coalition. In Appendix C.4 we instead report estimates of the same Equation but assuming a fractional regression modelling strategy.[71] In 2018 we find that the right-wing parties[72] received about 3 percentage fewer votes in municipalities close to a Medieval port; by way of contrast, we do not find evidence that this was the case in previous national elections. Interestingly, in the 1976 National Elections (but also in the 1958 ones according to fractional regression estimates), the right-wing party even received more votes close to Medieval ports than in the remaining Italian municipalities. This suggests that municipalities close to Medieval ports were not strongholds of left-wing parties, as they even had, in certain periods, a respectable right-wing tradition. This reading of the evidence is also reinforced by empirical results in Table 11, where we report results for the above Equation but where $y_{m,r}$ is defined as either the voting share of the Centre-Left Coalition in National elections (since the 1990s), or the aggregate votes of the Communist and Socialist parties before the 1990s. As we can see, all coefficients are zero, both statistically and economically.

[71]This is because the dependent variable is by definition a number between 0 and 1. We estimate the Equation with quasi-maximum likelihood methods; moreover, we assume a probit model for the conditional mean. Estimation has been carried out with the fracreg command in Stata.

[72]Since the 1996 elections, when the electoral system had an important majoritarian component favoring coalitions, we consider the votes to the right coalition, with its different denominations (for further details, see Section 3). By way of contrast, before the 1990s, when the system was purely proportional, we consider the votes of the only explicitly right wing party, the MSI-DN (Movimento Sociale Italiano-Destra Nazionale) party.

Table 10: Right-wing votes in National elections and Proximity to Medieval Ports: OLS

Dependent Variable: $RightVotesShare_{m,r}$								
	1958 *MSI* Party	1968 *MSI* Party	1976 *MSI* Party	1987 *MSI* Party	1996 *Polo per le Libertà*	2006 *Casa delle Libertà*	2013 *Centre-Right and Right Wing Parties*	2018 *Centre-Right and Right Wing Parties*
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	0.014	0.006	0.016***	0.000	0.005	-0.010	-0.000	-0.031**
	(0.010)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.033)	(0.030)	(0.021)	(0.016)
R-squared	0.289	0.286	0.452	0.322	0.578	0.603	0.556	0.703
Observations	7,450	7,323	7,450	7,450	7,016	7,450	7,442	7,355
NUTS-3 Region FE	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Geography	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
History	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Population	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Distance from NUTS-2 Capital city	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Notes: All specifications are estimated by Ordinary Least Squares.The dependent variable is $RightVotesShare_{m,r}$, the variable related to the % of votes received by the right-wing parties in the National Election. Each Panel refers to a different year: 1958, 1968, 1976, 1987, 1996, 2006, 2013, and 2018. The main independent variable is $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$, the dummy variable indicating the (historical) proximity to a Medieval port according to *Map 1* (for further details see Section 3.2). Geography controls (at the municipal level) include: an index of terrain asperity and the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea. We also account for the distance from the nearest NUTS-2 capital city and the population in 1951 in column (1), in 1961 in column (2), 1971 in column (3), 1981 in column (4), 1991 in column (5), 2001 in column (6), 2011 in column (7), and 2017 in column (8). Furthermore, from column (2) to column (7) in each model the population growth rate compared to the population 10 years earlier is included, while in column (8) the model includes the population growth rate between 2011 and 2017. Historical controls (at the municipal level) take into account: an indicator whether the city was a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E., two dummy variables accounting for the size of city in year 1300 C.E (medium or large), and the distance (km) from the nearest Medieval trade center. The sample weights are applied. All specifications include regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. The statistical significance of the test that the underlying coefficient is equal to zero is denoted by: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table 11: Left-wing votes in National elections and Proximity to Medieval Ports: OLS

Dependent Variable: $LeftVotesShare_{m,r}$								
	1958	1968	1976	1987	1996	2006	2013	2018
	PCI Party	*PCI* Party	*PCI* Party	*PCI* Party	*L'Ulivo*+PRC	*L'unione*	*Italia. Bene Comune*	*Centro-Sinistra*
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	0.010	0.024	0.015	0.003	-0.014	0.013	-0.004	-0.006
	(0.019)	(0.028)	(0.032)	(0.023)	(0.031)	(0.035)	(0.018)	(0.006)
R-squared	0.470	0.524	0.520	0.534	0.844	0.567	0.568	0.606
Observations	7,450	7,323	7,450	7,450	7,016	7,450	7,442	7,355
NUTS-3 Region FE	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Geography	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
History	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Population	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Distance from NUTS-2 Capital city	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Notes: All specifications are estimated by Ordinary Least Squares. The dependent variable is $LeftVotesShare_{m,r}$, the variable related to the % of votes received by the right-wing parties in the National Election. Each Panel refers to a different year: 1958, 1968, 1976, 1987, 1996, 2006, 2013, and 2018. The main independent variable is $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$, the dummy variable indicating the (historical) proximity to a Medieval port according to *Map 1* (for further details see Section 3.2). Geography controls (at the municipal level) include: an index of terrain asperity and the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea. We also account for the distance from the nearest NUTS-2 capital city and the population in 1951 in column (1), in 1961 in colum (2), 1971 in column (3), 1981 in column (4), 1991 in column (5), 2001 in column (6), 2011 in column (7), and 2017 in column (8). Furthermore, from column (2) to column (7) in each model the population growth rate compared to the population 10 years earlier is included, while in column (8) the model includes the population growth rate between 2011 and 2017. Historical controls (at the municipal level) take into account: an indicator whether the city was a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E., two dummy variables accounting for the size of city in year 1300 C.E (medium or large), and the distance (km) from the nearest Medieval trade center. The sample weights are applied. All specifications include regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. The statistical significance of the test that the underlying coefficient is equal to zero is denoted by: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

We believe that the voting pattern for right parties might be seen as consistent with the importance of the salience of migration, so that when the latter was not an important issue in Italian politics, the fact to have been exposed to the cultural humus of Medieval ports did not lead to fewer votes for right-wing parties. This in turn might suggest that, once the presence of a minority, namely immigrants from different backgrounds, assumed a central stage in the Italian political arena, a more universalist cultural trait near Medieval ports emerged, leading to a less negative view of migrants as well as to fewer votes for right-wing parties.

This interpretation can be further validated by exploiting the fact that the fascist regime passed, in 1938, the so-called Racial Laws, which contained a series of rules against Jews and other individuals of non-Italian origin (mainly Africans). In particular, weddings between Italian and Italian-Jews were forbidden, Jews were expelled from important positions in certain industries and from certain professions and Jewish children were generally not allowed to attend public schools. The fascist regime also conducted a specific census to identify and register the Jews living in Italy, which clearly simplified things when the Nazi and the fascist collaborationist government decided to deport Jews to the extermination camps over the period 1943-45. Although data reported in Becker et al. (2022) show that Italy was the country with the lowest death rate of Jews in the Holocaust, nevertheless 17% of Italian Jews (about 8,000 individuals) were estimated to have been killed during that period.

By exploiting information on Jewish arrests during the Holocaust, we estimate the linear probability model in Equation (2) with OLS and, as a robustness, by ML assuming a probit specification. In this case, $y_{m,r}$ is a dummy equal to 1 if, in municipality m of region r, an arrest of at least a Jewish individual occurred during the Holocaust, and zero otherwise. Empirical results are reported in columns (3) and (4) of Table 9. We find that, conditionally on controls, in municipalities close to Medieval ports the probability that a Jews was arrested was about 5% lower than elsewhere in the linear probability model (column (3)), while in the probit specification (column (4)) the reduction in the probability was even stronger.

These results provide suggestive evidence that municipalities close to Medieval ports - that, on average, were not more left-wing than the remaining ones in the 1950s and, probably, they might have even been slightly more right-wing in that period, as shown in Tables 10 and 11 - were less likely to have registered arrests of Jewish living in their territory during World War II. Clearly, we do not know the exact reasons for this difference, but the history literature is rich of anecdotal evidence of the role played in Italy by the local population to help Jewish people either by actively helping them (e.g., by providing shelter) and/or simply by not denouncing them to the Nazi-fascists. These correlations are however consistent with the idea that when a minority group was targeted by the government, in locations near Medieval ports a more universalist cultural trait might have been reactivated, which in turn

might have led to fewer arrests of the Jewish population thanks to a non-cooperative behaviour of the local population with the authorities. That trait remained silent thereafter, to reemerge again when migration arose at the forefront of the political debate.

8 Conclusions

In this study we analyze the impact that a cultural trait involving a more universalist morality -that developed out of the North-South Mediterranean Medieval sea-trade- still has on how individuals living close to those Medieval ports perceive migrants, as well as on their political positioning and propensity to vote for right-wing parties. We do this by means of a survey conducted on a representative sample of youngsters (aged 20-35), interviewed just at the end of the large spike of migrant flows from Africa that took place in 2018 in Italy. We believe that Italy represents an interesting case study, given the strong anti-migrant and Islamophobic feelings that most surveys have been registering at least since the 1990s, when the influx of migrants started to rapidly increase in a relatively homogeneous country, from both a religious and a cultural point of view, at least at the time.

On the basis of historical evidence we argue that individuals that used to live near the Medieval ports during the late Middle Age-Early Modern Period experienced an earlier and greater exposure to foreigners, in particular to people with radically different cultures and religions, with respect to other communities. Such exposure has been generated by the intensive trade across the Mediterranean and by the existence of slave communities hosted in most Italian port towns of that period. The intensive trade activity with non-Europeans, according to the framework of Jha (2013), might have indeed helped the development of a set of shared norms and mutual understanding with foreigners, pretty much as the presence of large slave communities in most Medieval ports might have worked in the same direction, according in this case to the framework provided by Allport's contact theory. Taken together, the cultural humus prevailing near Medieval ports might have favored some degree of tolerance or at least a more ingrained ability to interact with people with very different cultures, religions or ethnicity.

Our main result is that, conditionally on a rich set of personal, geographic, historic and contemporaneous controls at the municipality level, as well as the actual stock of migrants, individuals living close to a Medieval port now report less negative feelings about migrants, as well as a lower propensity to take on extreme right-wing views and to vote for right-wing parties.

Using municipal level data we also show that, close to Medieval ports, there is a lower probability that a racist and xenophobic attack has been registered over the period 2013-2018, i.e., during the spike in the arrival of refugees from Africa. In-

terestingly, we also find that at the first National elections after the large influx of migrants that were held in 2018, right-wing parties got fewer votes in municipalities close to Medieval ports. Remarkably, this is not true in a sample of previous elections that were held between the 1950s and the 2010s, when immigration was either not salient at all or, in any case, it did not have such a central stage in right-wing parties' political platforms that were indeed more focused on excessive taxation, anti-European Union sentiment and fiscal autonomy of Northern regions. This suggests that the "Medieval ports effect" may not be simply picking up non-observable characteristics at local level possibly correlated with attitudes towards migrants or propensity to vote for right-wing parties (e.g., religious beliefs or conservative/progressive cultural values), but probably some deep cultural trait that involve either more tolerance or at least some ingrained ability to deal with foreigners, that in turn lead to experience less intense negative feelings for immigrants with a different religious or cultural background.

These traits might have been somewhat latent in those local areas, but might have been reactivated when migration increased and some voters started feeling an identity threat (demand-side) and/or right-wing parties had started to selectively use migration in their political platforms and rhetoric (supply side). This interpretation is indirectly confirmed by our finding that the probability that at least one Jew was arrested during the Holocaust was significantly lower in municipalities close to the Medieval ports. It is important to note that those municipalities were not on average less right-wing, given that in some 1950s elections the far right MSI party even got a larger share of votes than elsewhere in Italy.

More generally, the results in this study also suggest that prejudices towards migrants might be associated to persistent cultural traits that could be very specific to certain local areas which had experienced in the past certain political, institutional and economic events. Therefore, when a new shock occurs, like migration or trade (Gennaioli and Tabellini, 2023), not only does this polarize the electorate along cultural or social lines, but it may also spatially divide the country, thus increasing even more the layers of fragmentation of society at large.

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Appendix A Perception of Migrants in Italy

Immigration has been a key topic in Italy's electoral campaign, and several candidates claimed that the flow of people into the country during that period had increased the risk of crime. In particular, the 2018 Eurobarometer on immigration depicts Italy as one of the European countries with the most negative opinions towards non-European immigrants, i.e., mainly those who immigrate from the coasts of North Africa.[73] In addition, according to data from the Pew Research Center, Italy is the second European country most hostile towards Muslims after Hungary.[74] Similarly, Italy is the country with the lowest share of individuals willing to accept a Muslim as either a neighbour or a family member, out of 15 western countries included in a PEW Research Center survey. Equally important, the negative attitude towards migrants in the years 2017-2018 is clearly described by the association Lunaria, which on its website "Cronache di ordinario razzismo" holds a dataset that is fed by the reports of racist and xenophobic attacks that appeared in the press. The number of aggressions reported in 2017 was 557, while in 2018 grew again to 628. These numbers are much higher than in previous years.[75]

All the same, both the crime rate across Italian regions and the number of crimes committed by foreigners has dramatically decreased over the past decade (Di Carlo et al., 2018). In addition, if it is true that in the years between 2014 and 2017 more than 600,000 individuals crossed the Mediterranean to land in Italy, the year 2017 ended with the lowest number of migrants arriving by sea on the Italian coasts since the beginning of the massive flow of entries to Europe (119,000 landings in 2017 against 181,000 in the previous year). Moreover, Bove et al. (2019) find that immigration has led to an increase in public spending on security, but this is not due to an increase in crime rates but to the deterioration of social capital and an unjustified fear of crime. In the context of migration, reality and perception are often far apart. The 17^{th} annual National Institute of Social Security report[76] highlights how Italians overestimate the population of immigrants: in fact, Italy is the country with the greatest deviation between perception and reality on this issue.

[73] For further details, see https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/.

[74] For further details, see `https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/12/10/many-worldwide-oppose-more-migration-both-into-and-out-of-their-countries/`.

[75] In 2011, for example, racist and xenophobic attacks reported by the website were 'only' 156. For more details, see `http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/il-razzismo-quotidiano/`. A further set of data is collected by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the OSCE, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The data processed by ODIHR comes from OSCAD and the Ministry of Interior. These data also show an increasing trend of violent episodes against immigrants in Italy in 2016-2017-2018. For more information, see https://hatecrime.osce.org/italy?year=2018.

[76] For further details, see `https://www.inps.it/nuovoportaleinps/default.aspx?itemdir=51978`.

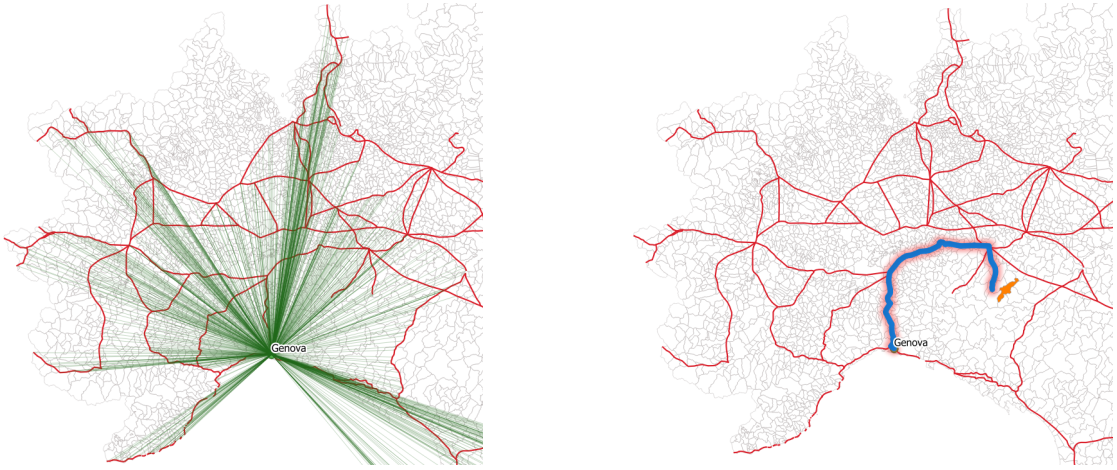
Appendix B Additional Information on Data and Maps

B.1 Distance to Medieval ports

Figure B1: Medieval Ports Configuration

Source: Authors' elaboration based on McCormick et al. (2013) and ISTAT Administrative Limits at the Municipal Level.

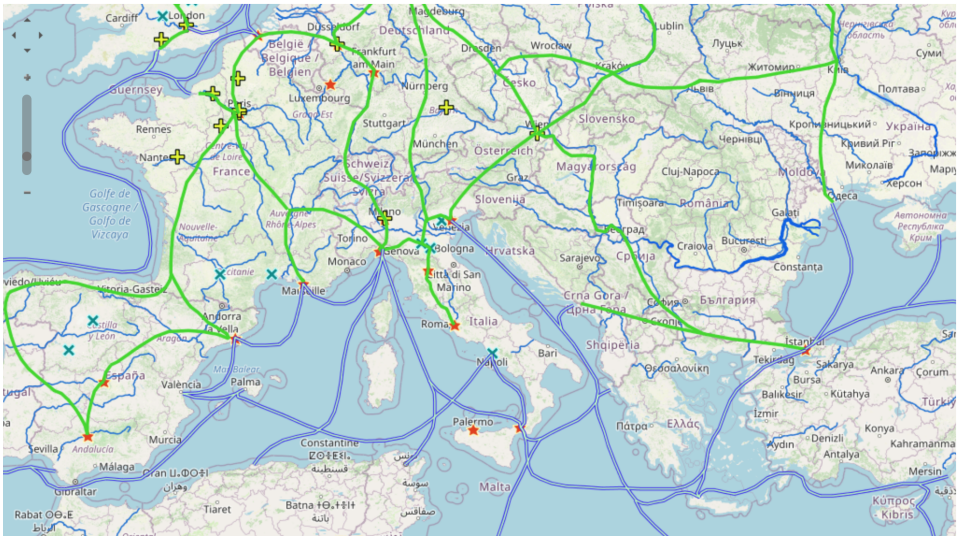
Figure B2: Nearest Medieval Port and the Actual Path on Roman road Network



Source: Authors' elaboration based on McCormick et al. (2013) and ISTAT Administrative Limits.

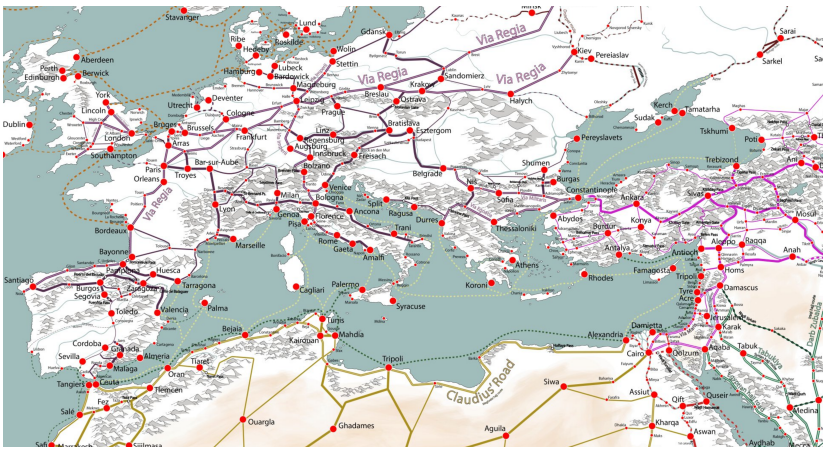
B.2 Alternative Maps

Figure B3: Medieval Ports Configuration *Map 2*



Notes: The source of the map is the Harvard WorldMap, available at `https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?url=https://services7.arcgis.com/iEMmryaM5E3wkdnU/ArcGIS/rest/services/Sea_Trade_Routes_of_Medieval_Europe/FeatureServer/0&source=sd`. The map provides a comprehensive summary of the Europe's trade networks through the Medieval Europe in the 11^{th} and 12^{th} centuries. The blue lines indicate the sea trade routes, while the green lines indicate the major land trade routes (both of the Medieval Europe). The red stars indicate the notable locations.

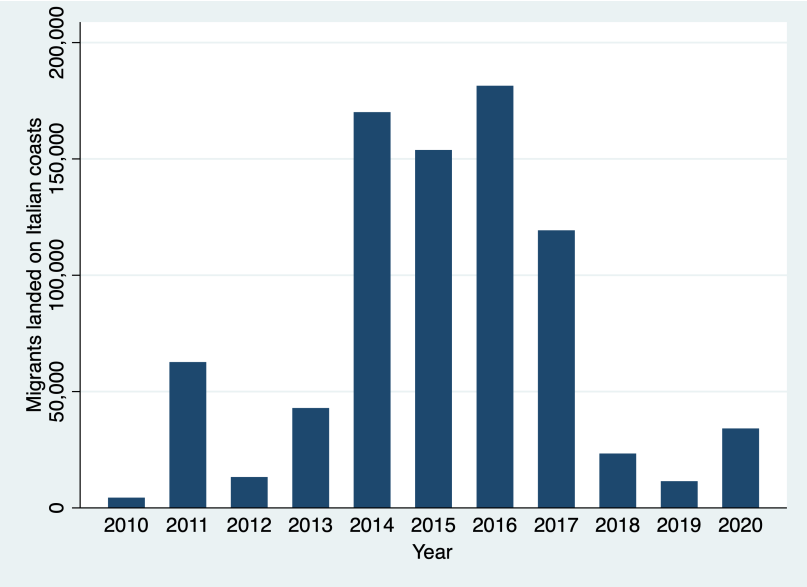
Figure B4: Medieval Ports Configuration *Map 3*



Notes: The author of the map is Martin Jan Mansson, and the map can be found at: `https://kottke.org/tag/Martin\%20Jan\%20Mansson`. The map provides a comprehensive summary of the world's trade networks through the 11^{th} and 12^{th} centuries indicating routes that helped connect kingdoms and traders in Asia, Africa and Europe. The dot lines indicate the sea routes, the red dots indicate the notable locations while the density of the lines indicate the status and volume of traffic.

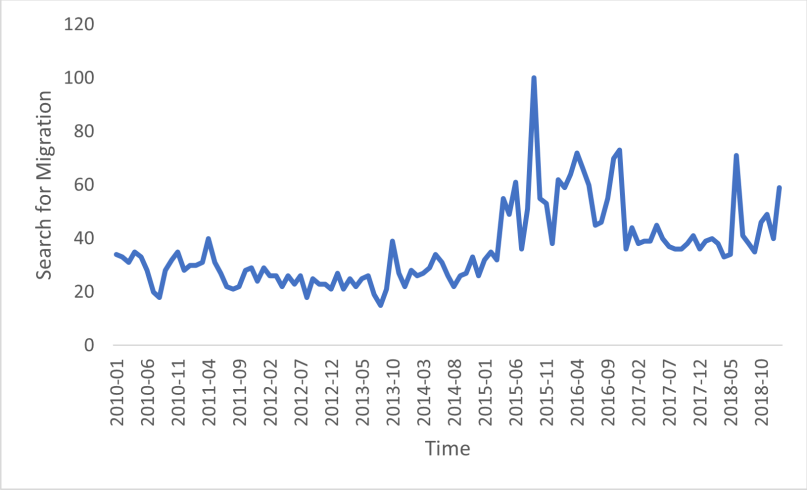
B.3 Additional Descriptive Statistics

Figure B5: Migrants landed on Italian coasts, 2010-2020



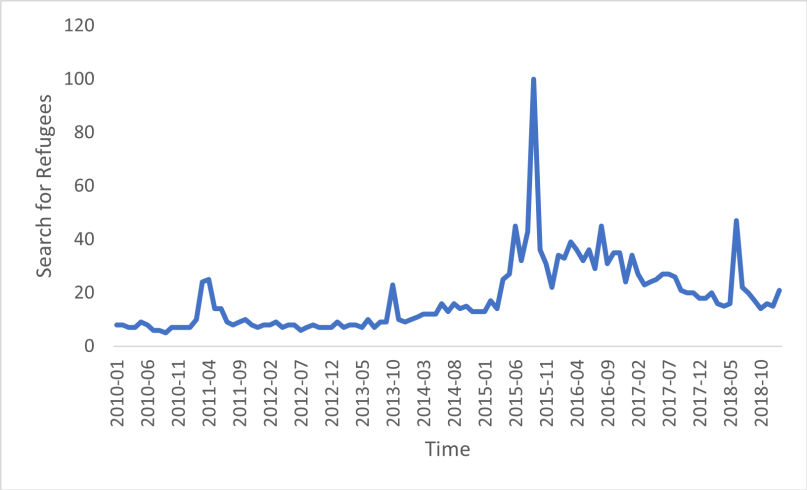
Source: Authors' elaboration based on data contained in reports drawn up by the Department of Public Safety and published on the website of the Ministry of the Interior.

Figure B6: Search For Migration



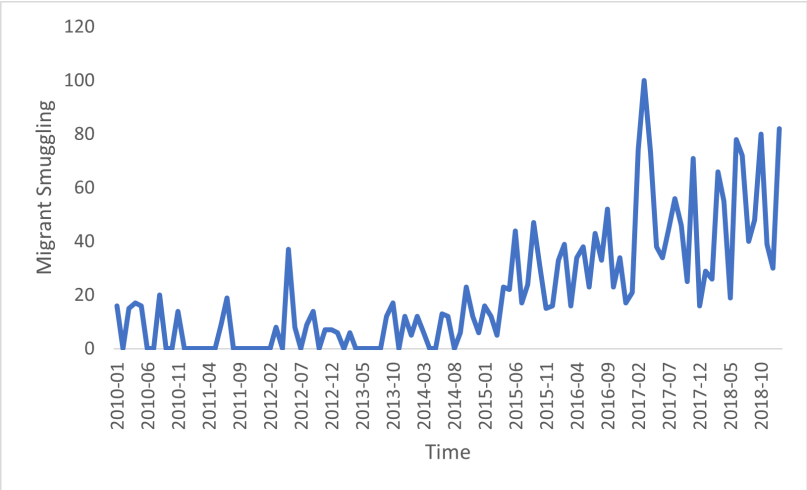
Source: Authors' elaboration based on Google Trends data.

Figure B7: Search For Refugees



Source: Authors' elaboration based on Google Trends data.

Figure B8: Migrant Smuggling



Source: Authors' elaboration based on Google Trends data.

Table B1: Treated Observations - Individual Level Analysis

	10 km		15 km	
	Municipality of Residence (by port)	**N° of Treated Individuals**	**Municipality of Residence (by port)**	**N° of Treated Individuals**
Map 1	**Gaeta**: Gaeta; **Genova**: Genova; **Livorno**: Livorno; **Messina**: Messina; **Napoli**: Napoli; **Palermo**: Palermo; **Reggio Calabria**: Reggio Calabria; **Siracusa**: Siracusa; **Venezia**: Venezia.	113	**Gaeta**: Gaeta, Formia; **Genova**: Genova; **Livorno**: Livorno; **Messina**: Messina; **Napoli**: Casandrino, Casavatore, Casoria, Castellammare di Stabia, Cercola, Frattamaggiore, Grumo Nevano, Mugnano di Napoli, Napoli, Portici, San Giorgio a Cremano, Volla; **Palermo**: Palermo; **Reggio Calabria**: Reggio Calabria; **Siracusa**: Siracusa; **Venezia**: Venezia.	131

Notes: The table shows the number of individuals treated in the main analysis of this work (*Map 1*), according to the different distance cut-offs. For each model, the municipalities that are close to a Medieval port considering the distance in Roman roads are indicated (for further details see Section 3.3). In the configuration of ports in *Map 1* the ports of Otranto and Porto Torres are also considered. However, no individual in our sample lives in these municipalities or in the neighbouring ones (10 or 15 km according to the Roman roads network).

Table B2: Treated Observations - Municipality Level Analysis

	Municipality (by port)	N° of Treated Municipalities
Map 1	**Gaeta**: Gaeta, Formia, Itri, Sperlonga; **Genova**: Genova; **Livorno**: Livorno; **Messina**: Messina; **Napoli**: Arzano, Cardito, Casandrino, Casavatore, Casoria, Castellammare di Stabia, Cercola, Frattamaggiore, Grumo Nevano, Melito di Napoli, Napoli, Portici, San Giorgio a Cremano, San Sebastiano al Vesuvio, Sant'Antimo, Volla; **Otranto**: Bagnolo del Salento, Giurdignano, Otranto, Palmariggi, Uggiano la Chiesa; **Palermo**: Altofonte, Ficarazzi, Isola delle Femmine, Palermo, Torretta, Villa Abate; **Reggio Calabria**: Reggio Calabria; **Porto Torres**: Porto Torres; **Siracusa**: Siracusa; **Venezia**: Venezia.	38

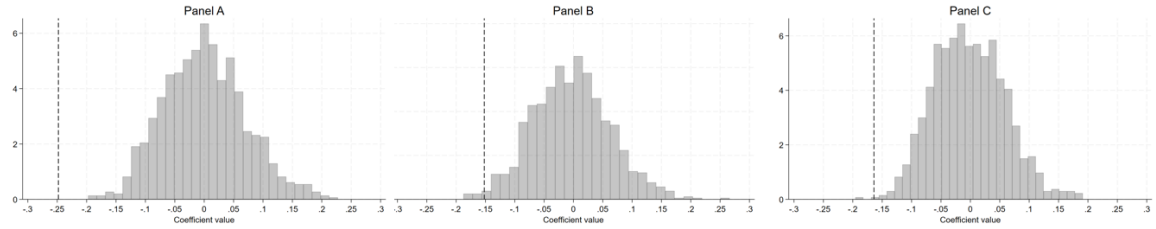
Notes: The table shows the number of municipalities treated in the analysis presented in Section 7, according to *Map 1* (for further details see Section 3.3).

Appendix C Additional Robustness Analysis

C.1 Random Allocation of Proximity to a Medieval port

In this Section we replicate estimates after creating a fake indicator of proximity to a Medieval port by randomly assigning such distance to individuals.[77] By iterating such procedure 1,000 times we obtain results shown in Figure C1, where we estimate Equation (1) using as dependent variables *FarRightPositioning*, *CentreRightVoting-Intention*, and *MigrantPerception* (Panel A, B, and C, respectively). For all models, we estimate a specification that includes the full set of control variables (see Tables 2, 3, 4, Panel B, column (6)). The graphs show that the average of estimated coefficients is centered at zero, thus suggesting the investigated relation is not mechanical and automatic. Indeed, since the municipalities that are randomly allocated to be near a Medieval port are only a few, in the various simulations it can happen that, by chance, some allocations provide estimates similar to those obtained in our main analysis. The dashed lines in Panel A, B, and C refer to the coefficients of *Proximity to Medieval Port* reported in Panel B of Tables 2, 3, and 4, respectively.

Figure C1: Relation between Far-Right Political Positioning, Centre-Right Voting Intention, Migrant Perception and Fake distances from Medieval Ports



Notes: The graphs show the distribution for the coefficient of $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$ based on the various fake random allocations of individuals' distance from Medieval ports. In particular, we estimate Equation (1), and the dependent variables are: $FarRightPositioning_{i,m,r}$ in Panel A; $CentreRightVotingIntention_{i,m,r}$, in Panel B; $MigrantPerception_{i,m,r}$ in Panel C. The estimated models include the full set of control variables (see Tables 2, 3, 4), i.e., personal controls and municipal level controls (geography, socio-economic, migrants, social capital and historical controls). The sample weights are applied. All specifications take into consideration regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. Fake distances have been obtained by shuffling and randomly assigning true distances across individuals one thousand times. The y-axis shows the probability density function of the estimated coefficients. The dot lines refer to the coefficients of $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$ reported in Panel B column (6) of Tables 2, 3, and 4, respectively.

C.2 Additional analysis on Transmission Mechanisms

OLS results and alternative dependent variable

In Table C1 we present estimates of the linear probability model where we regress *Far-RightPolitical Positioning* on *MigrantPerception* and our usual set of controls. In column (1) we report results for the baseline specification where we include only

[77] We consider the percentage of individuals near a fake Medieval port equal to 7%, i.e., 93% of the municipalities takes the value 0. This percentage reflects the actual ratio of municipalities treated in our sample considering the 15 km threshold.

province fixed effects as well as personal and geographic controls. Estimated models shown in columns (2) to (5) include various municipality level controls. In particular, we add socio-economic controls (column (2)), a measure of social capital (column (3)), the share of immigrants over total population and the share of Africans over total immigrants (column (4)) and a set of historical controls (column (5)). Finally, column (6) includes all controls. The coefficient of *MigrantPerception* is always positive, precisely estimated and stable across all different specifications. The magnitude of the coefficient suggests that a negative perception of migrants is associated to an increase in the probability of a far-right political positioning of about 32%.

Table C1: Far-Right Political Positioning and Migrant Perception (OLS)

Dependent Variable: *Far-Right Political Positioning*						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Migrant Perception	0.321***	0.321***	0.321***	0.322***	0.320***	0.322***
	(0.043)	(0.042)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.041)
NUTS-3 Region FE	√	√	√	√	√	√
Personal	√	√	√	√	√	√
Geography	√	√	√	√	√	√
Socio-Economic		√				√
Social Capital			√			√
Migrants				√		√
History					√	√
R-squared	0.242	0.252	0.242	0.244	0.246	0.259
Observations	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859

Notes: All specifications are estimated by Ordinary Least Squares. The dependent variable is the dummy related to far-right political positioning, $FarRightPositioning_{i,m,r}$, and it remains unchanged in all the different specifications shown in the Table. The main independent variable is the variable $MigrantPerception_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to the perception that migrants make Italy an unsafe place. Personal controls involve: age, occupational status (either studying or working), educational attainment, marital status, gender, and parental (mother and father) incomes, as proxied by a measure of the employment status. Geography controls (at the municipal level) include: an index of terrain asperity, the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea, an index of accessibility, resident population in 2017, population density in 2001 and a variable related to whether a city is in a rural or urban area. Socio-economic controls (at the municipal level) entail: average income per capita of the municipality of residence, the number of manufacturing firms in 2017 (per capita), the average firm size, the distance to the nearest regional and provincial capital city, the broadband internet coverage, police spending per capita, and the (log) population growth rate between 2001 and 2017. The Migrants measure refers to the % of foreigners in the total population in 2017 in each municipality and the share of Africans over total immigrants. Social Capital is measured by number of non-profit associations per capita in each municipality in 2001. Historical controls (at the municipal level) encompass: an indicator whether the city was a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E., two dummy variables accounting for the size of city in year 1300 C.E (medium or large), and the distance (km) from the nearest Medieval trade center. The sample weights are applied. All specifications include regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. The statistical significance of the test that the underlying coefficient is equal to zero is denoted by: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

In Table C2 we replicate the models reported in Table 8 by using as dependent variable $CentreRightVotingIntention$. The results show that, especially for individuals living within 15 km of a Medieval port (Panel B), the likelihood of voting for the centre-right coalition increases when individuals have negative perceptions of migrants. Again, the Kleibergen Paap Wald F-statistic satisfies the rule of thumb of ten in all regressions, suggesting that we do not have a weak instrument problem. The only exception is the F-statistic reported in column (4) (Panel B), for which we

perform weak-instrument robust inference, allowing us to reject the null hypothesis with a 10% Wald test.

Table C2: Centre-Right Voting Intention and Migrant Perception (IV)

Dependent Variable: $CentreRightVotingIntention_{i,m,r}$						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: 10 km Distance						
$MigrantPerception_{i,m,r}$	0.807*	0.596	0.808	0.916*	0.621	0.391
	(0.487)	(0.421)	(0.493)	(0.519)	(0.455)	(0.496)
F-statistic	23.27	20.60	22.21	19.81	14.44	12.60
Panel B: 15 km Distance						
$MigrantPerception_{i,m,r}$	1.660**	1.020**	1.657**	2.100*	1.280**	0.923*
	(0.759)	(0.452)	(0.756)	(1.126)	(0.585)	(0.535)
F-statistic	12.95	15.93	13.30	6.453	16.24	11.04
NUTS-3 Region FE	√	√	√	√	√	√
Personal	√	√	√	√	√	√
Geography	√	√	√	√	√	√
Socio-Eco		√				√
Social Capital			√			√
Migrants				√		√
History					√	√
Observations	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859	1,859

Notes: All specifications are estimated by Two Stage Least Squares. The dependent variable is $CentreRightVotingIntention_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to the intention to vote for at least one party among *Forza Italia, Fratelli d'Italia, Lega Nord*, and it remains unchanged in all the different specifications shown in the Table. The main independent variable is $MigrantPerception_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to the perception that migrants make Italy an unsafe place. We instrument the endogenous independent variable with $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$, the dummy variable indicating the (historical) proximity to a Medieval port according to port configuration as reported in *Map 1* (for further details see Section 3.2). In Panel A, individuals whose municipality of residence is within (or beyond) the 10 km distance calculated in Roman roads are considered close (or distant) from one of the Medieval ports. In Panel B we use a distance of 15 km. Personal controls involve: age, occupational status (either studying or working), educational attainment, marital status, gender, and parental (mother and father) incomes, as proxied by a measure of the employment status. Geography controls (at the municipal level) include: an index of terrain asperity, the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea, an index of accessibility, resident population in 2017, population density in 2001 and a variable related to whether a city is in a rural or urban area. Socio-economic controls (at the municipal level) entail: average income per capita of the municipality of residence, the number of manufacturing firms in 2017 (per capita), the average firm size, the distance to the nearest regional and provincial capital city, the broadband internet coverage, police spending per capita, and the (log) population growth rate between 2001 and 2017. The Migrants measure refers to the % of foreigners in the total population in 2017 in each municipality and the share of Africans over total immigrants. Social Capital is measured by number of non-profit associations per capita in each municipality in 2001. Historical controls (at the municipal level) encompass: an indicator whether the city was a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E., two dummy variables accounting for the size of city in year 1300 C.E (medium or large), and the distance (km) from the nearest Medieval trade center. The sample weights are applied. All specifications include regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. F is the First stage Kleinbergen-Paap Statistic. The statistical significance of the test that the underlying coefficient is equal to zero is denoted by: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Violations of the Exclusion Restrictions

Here we explore the sensitivity of the IV estimates to possible violations of the exclusion restriction using the methodologies proposed by Nevo and Rosen (2012) and Conley et al. (2012). Nevo and Rosen (2012) relax the hypothesis of no correlation between the error term in the structural equation and the instrument, that underpins the validity of IV estimates. They however make a set of additional assumptions, two of which are key. First, they assume that the correlations of the instrument Z

and of the endogenous variable X with the error term have the same sign (assumption III in Nevo and Rosen (2012)); secondly, they assume that the instrument is "less endogenous" than the endogenous X (assumption IV in Nevo and Rosen (2012)), i.e., that "the instrument is less correlated with the error term than is the endogenous regressor". In particular, the latter assumption allows for the construction of a valid compound instrument that purges the endogenous components of the endogenous variable and of the instrument. This approach does not allow for the derivation of point estimates, but it does allow the derivation of a set of bounds; in particular, assuming that the endogenous variable and the instrument are both negatively correlated with the error term, as well as using assumption IV of Nevo and Rosen (2012), one can derive lower and upper bounds (with their 95% confidence intervals) for the true parameter value, where the conventional IV one represents the upper bound.

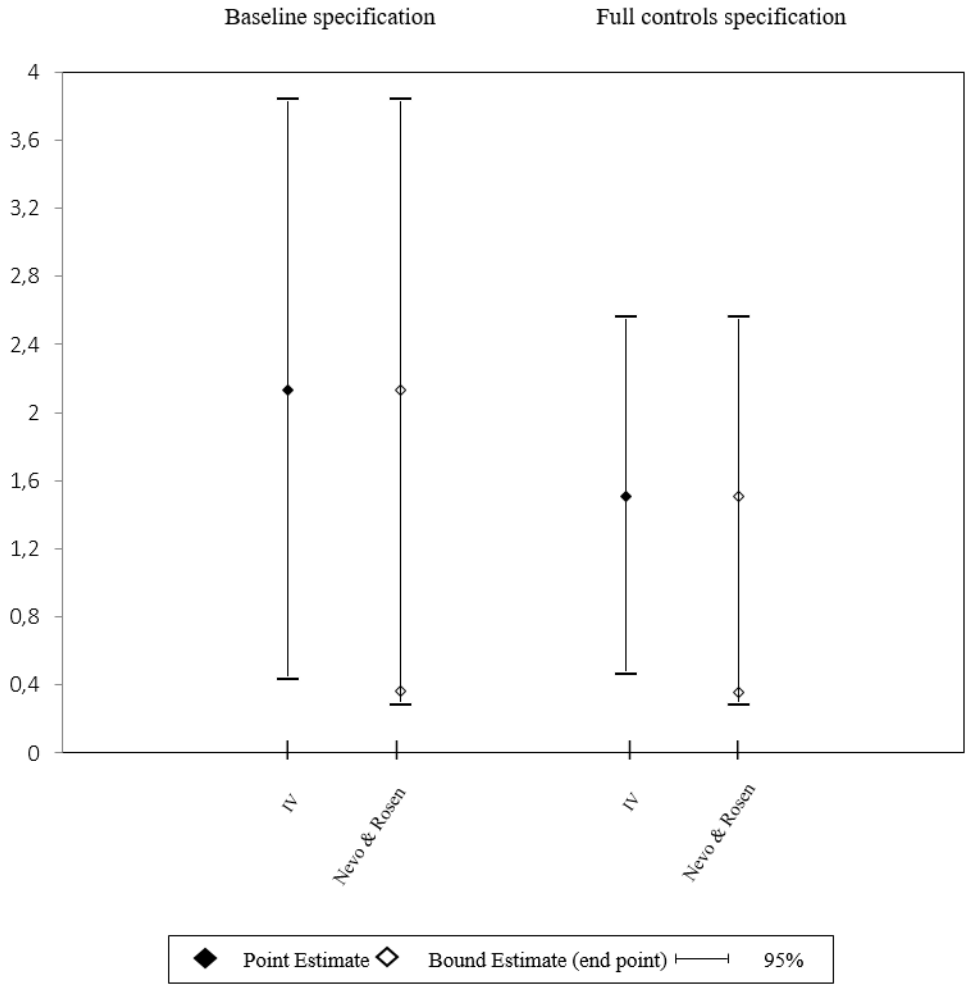
In our case, the negative correlation between fear of migrants (the endogenous X) and the error term can be motivated, for instance, by the failure to control for underlying religiosity of individuals: indeed, as noted above, religious individuals might feel more empathy towards people that face extreme hardships like migrants but also, in the Italian political landscape, they might also be more likely to vote for conservative right-wing parties (Gethin et al., 2022). In turn, our instrument might be negatively correlated with the error term because individuals that are more likely to live near a Medieval port are also more likely to live in large urban centers and there is empirical evidence that the presence of migrants at local level does not favor electoral support for far right parties in large urban areas, unlike in smaller cities (Barone et al. (2016) for Italy; Dustmann, Vasiljeva and Damm (2019) for Austria). Despite we control for proxies for urbanization (e.g., distance from provincial and urban capitals, share of manufacturing firms, etc.) we may have done so imperfectly, hence we apply the Nevo and Rosen (2012) approach. Results of the imperfect IV can be seen in Figures C2 where we report, for individuals living in municipalities whose centroid is within 15 km from the port, the IV-point estimates and confidence intervals, as well as the imperfect IV bounds and their confidence intervals. Results suggest that the lower bound of the true effect is always positive, with its 95% confidence interval never overlapping with zero.

We further extend the discussion by observing that the Nevo and Rosen (2012) approach requires an assumption about the (common) sign of the correlation of both the endogenous variable and the instrument with the error term in the structural equation, while the plausibly exogenous approach of Conley et al. (2012) in turn relaxes the exclusion restriction.

In our case, the structural equation is:

$$\begin{aligned} FarRightPositioning_{i,m,r} = \alpha_r + \beta MigrantPerception_{i,m,r} + \\ + \eta ProximityMedPort_{m,r} + X_m\pi + W_i\varphi + \epsilon_{i,m,r}, \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

Figure C2: IV-point estimates and imperfect IV bounds - 15 km threshold

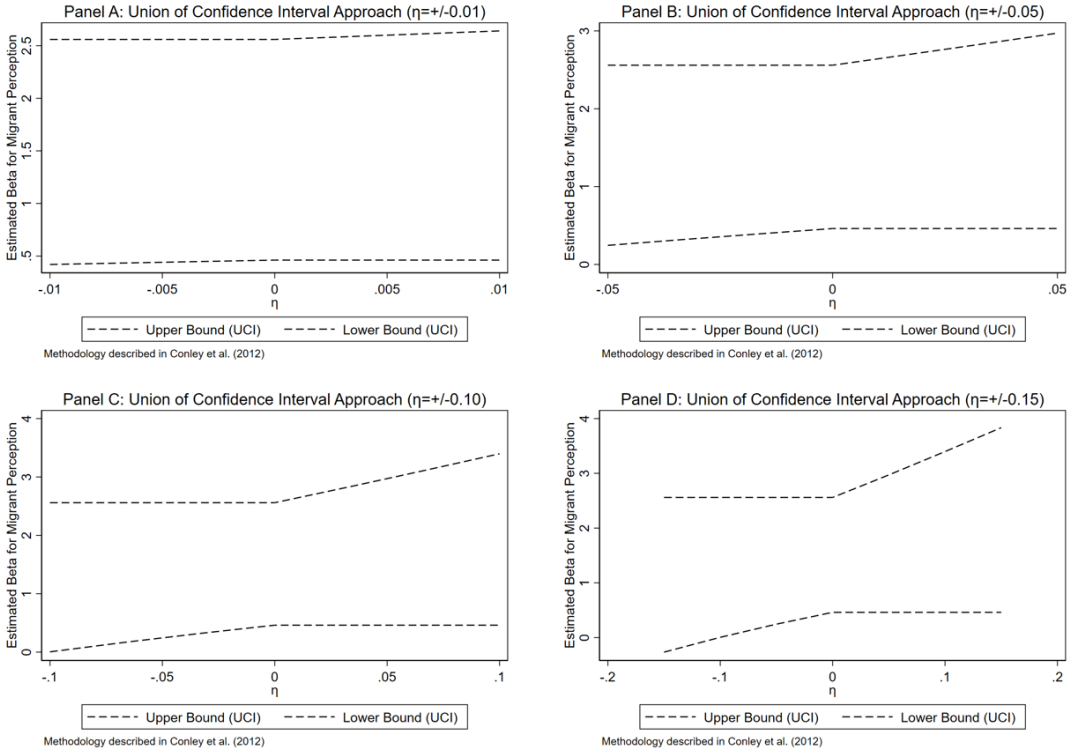


Notes: Each set of estimates refer to the 95% confidence intervals on parameter bounds of the impact of $MigrantsPerception$ on $FarrightPositioning$. IV coefficients and confidence intervals refer to both the baseline and the most complete specification estimated in columns (1) and (6) Panel B of Table **??**, respectively; while the other bounds are estimated following Nevo & Rosen (2012).

For an instrument to be valid, one must assume that $\eta = 0$ (the exclusion restriction). In other words, the instrument cannot have any additional effect on the dependent variable, once one controls for the endogenous variable. Conley et al. (2012) replace the exclusion restrictions $\eta = 0$ in Equation (3) with an assumption about the maximum and minimum values that η can take in Equation (3). The advantage of the Conley et al. (2012) approach over of the imperfect IV of Nevo and Rosen (2012) is that it does not require an assumption about the direction of correlation with the error term, but only plausible values for the η coefficient. This is particularly helpful in this case, since we cannot completely rule out the possibility that $\eta > 0$ in Equation (3) above. In our empirical application, $FarRightPositioning_{i,m,r}$ is a dummy for individuals declaring to vote for a right-wing party: in Equation (3) the coefficient η indicates the impact that living near a Medieval port has on the probability to vote for an extreme right-wing party after controlling for fear of migrants. For instance, $\eta = \pm 0.05$ would mean that living closer to a Medieval port would increase (reduce)

the probability to vote for a right-wing party by ±5% after having controlled for migrants perception and the other controls. Results obtained by applying the Conley et al. (2012) approach are shown in Figure C3 (which refers to 15 km threshold); these estimates imply that only when $\eta = -0.15$ (Panel D) the 95% confidence interval overlaps with zero, meaning that we need a relatively large degree of violation of the exclusion restriction for the true effect of fear of migrants to be non-significantly different from zero.

Figure C3: Plausibly Exogenous Bounds - 15 km threshold



Notes: Confidence intervals and point estimates are calculated by following Conley et al (2012). The Figure shows confidence intervals at 95% level by estimating Equation (3) with the complete set of controls.

All in all, we think that these results are rather consistent with the view that our IV estimates are likely to be reasonably robust to moderate violations of the exclusion restriction.

C.3 Toponymy

Table C3 show OLS estimates of the models in our main analysis (Table 2, 3, 4) with the full set of controls for the sub-sample including only individuals residing in municipalities with a higher than median value of streets with the toponymy characteristics discussed in Section 6.2.[78] The coefficient of proximity to Medieval port is always significant using the 15 km threshold in Panel B, and it is significant in column (1) of Panel A. Overall results confirm the existence of a positive relationship between the perception on migrants and the right political orientation.

[78]It is important to note that the ISTAT database, which contains the housing census, is missing some observations (municipalities), including 72 that belong to our sample. Of these 72 municipalities, only one (Reggio Calabria) is located within a radius of 10 km of a Medieval port, while the other 71 are not. Individuals who reside in these municipalities are excluded from this analysis.

Table C3: Far-Right Political Positioning, Centre-Right Voting Intention, Migrant Perception and Proximity to Medieval Port: Toponymy

Dependent Variable:	$FarRight\ Positioning_{i,m,r}$	$CentreRightVoting\ Intention_{i,m,r}$	$Migrant\ Perception_{i,m,r}$
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Panel A: 10 km			
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.428**	-0.169	-0.123
	(0.194)	(0.131)	(0.107)
R-squared	0.292	0.277	0.325
Observations	931	931	931
Panel B: 15 km			
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.408***	-0.159*	-0.175**
	(0.124)	(0.094)	(0.068)
R-squared	0.291	0.277	0.319
Observations	939	939	939
NUTS-3 Region FE	√	√	√
Personal	√	√	√
Geography	√	√	√
Socio-Economic	√	√	√
Social Capital	√	√	√
Migrants	√	√	√
History	√	√	√

Notes: All specifications are estimated by Ordinary Least Squares. The dependent variables are: in column (1) $FarRightPositioning_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to far right political positioning; in column (2) $CentreRightVotingIntention_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to the intention to vote for at least one party among *Forza Italia, Fratelli d'Italia, Lega Nord*; in column (3) $MigrantPerception_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to the perception that migrants make Italy an unsafe place. The main independent variable is $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$, the dummy variable indicating the (historical) proximity to a Medieval port according to port configuration as reported in *Map 1* (for further details see Section 3.2). The sample include only individuals who reside in municipalities with number of streets named after left-wing political and popular culture figures, and dedicated to the resistance against Nazi-fascism above the median value in the full sample. In Panel A, individuals whose municipality of residence is within (or beyond) the 10 km distance calculated in Roman roads are considered close (or distant) from one of the Medieval ports. In Panel B we use a distance of 15 km. Personal controls involve: age, occupational status (either studying or working), educational attainment, marital status, gender, and parental (mother and father) incomes, as proxied by a measure of the employment status. Geography controls (at the municipal level) include: an index of terrain asperity, the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea, an index of accessibility, resident population in 2017, population density in 2001 and a variable related to whether a city is in a rural or urban area. Socio-economic controls (at the municipal level) entail: average income per capita of the municipality of residence, the number of manufacturing firms in 2017 (per capita), the average firm size, the distance to the nearest regional and provincial capital city, the broadband internet coverage, police spending per capita, and the (log) population growth rate between 2001 and 2017. The Migrants measure refers to the % of foreigners in the total population in 2017 in each municipality and the share of Africans over total immigrants. Social Capital is measured by number of non-profit associations per capita in each municipality in 2001. Historical controls (at the municipal level) encompass: an indicator whether the city was a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E., two dummy variables accounting for the size of city in year 1300 C.E (medium or large), and the distance (km) from the nearest Medieval trade center. The sample weights are applied. All specifications include regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. The statistical significance of the test that the underlying coefficient is equal to zero is denoted by: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

C.4 Alternative Modelling Strategies

In this Section we present results from a robustness analysis with respect to the modelling strategies adopted in Section 6 and Section 7. In particular, we replicate the analysis reported in Tables 2, 3 and 4 using a probit model strategy instead of a linear probability model. Results from this analysis are reported in Table C4, C5,and C6.

Table C4: Far-Right Political Positioning and Proximity to Medieval Port: Probit

Dependent Variable: $FarRightPositioning_{i,m,r}$						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: 10 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.223***	-0.268***	-0.223***	-0.216***	-0.224***	-0.252***
	(0.067)	(0.080)	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.064)	(0.0823)
Panel B: 15 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.263***	-0.307***	-0.264***	-0.257***	-0.270***	-0.300***
	(0.060)	(0.071)	(0.060)	(0.061)	(0.063)	(0.072)
Panel C: 20 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.117	-0.150	-0.117	-0.103	-0.117	-0.139
	(0.090)	(0.100)	(0.089)	(0.096)	(0.081)	(0.010)
NUTS-3 Region FE	√	√	√	√	√	√
Personal	√	√	√	√	√	√
Geography	√	√	√	√	√	√
Socio-Eco		√				√
Social Capital			√			√
Migrants				√		√
History					√	√
Observations	1,740	1,740	1,740	1,740	1,740	1,740

Notes: All specifications are estimated using probit model and coefficients refer to marginal effects. The dependent variable is $FarRightPositioning_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to far right political positioning, and it remains unchanged in all the different specifications shown in the Table. The main independent variable is $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$, the dummy variable indicating the (historical) proximity to a Medieval port according to port configuration as reported in *Map 1* (for further details see Section 3.2). In Panel A, individuals whose municipality of residence is within (or beyond) the 10 km distance calculated in Roman roads are considered close (or distant) from one of the Medieval ports. In Panel B we use a distance of 15 km, while in Panel C we use a distance of 20 km. Personal controls involve: age, occupational status (either studying or working), educational attainment, marital status, gender, and parental (mother and father) incomes, as proxied by a measure of the employment status. Geography controls (at the municipal level) include: an index of terrain asperity, the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea, an index of accessibility, resident population in 2017, population density in 2001 and a variable related to whether a city is in a rural or urban area. Socio-economic controls (at the municipal level) entail: average income per capita of the municipality of residence, the number of manufacturing firms in 2017 (per capita), the average firm size, the distance to the nearest regional and provincial capital city, the broadband internet coverage, police spending per capita, and the (log) population growth rate between 2001 and 2017. The Migrants measure refers to the % of foreigners in the total population in 2017 in each municipality and the share of Africans over total immigrants. Social Capital is measured by number of non-profit associations per capita in each municipality in 2001. Historical controls (at the municipal level) encompass: an indicator whether the city was a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E., two dummy variables accounting for the size of city in year 1300 C.E (medium or large), and the distance (km) from the nearest Medieval trade center. The sample weights are applied. All specifications include regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. The statistical significance of the test that the underlying coefficient is equal to zero is denoted by: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table C5: Centre-Right Voting Intention and Proximity to Medieval Port: Probit

Dependent Variable: $CentreRightVotingIntention_{i,m,r}$						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: 10 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.137*	-0.082	-0.137*	-0.144**	-0.138*	-0.064
	(0.075)	(0.081)	(0.075)	(0.073)	(0.079)	(0.099)
Panel B: 15 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.219***	-0.172**	-0.219***	-0.237***	-0.228***	-0.179**
	(0.069)	(0.067)	(0.069)	(0.072)	(0.072)	(0.076)
Panel C: 20 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.019	-0.005	-0.019	-0.031	-0.025	-0.022
	(0.101)	(0.095)	(0.101)	(0.101)	(0.098)	(0.092)
NUTS-3 Region FE	√	√	√	√	√	√
Personal	√	√	√	√	√	√
Geography	√	√	√	√	√	√
Socio-Eco		√				√
Social Capital			√			√
Migrants				√		√
History					√	√
Observations	1,691	1,691	1,691	1,691	1,691	1,691

Notes: All specification using probit model and coefficients refer to marginal effects. The dependent variable is $CentreRightVotingIntention_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to the intention to vote for at least one party among *Forza Italia, Fratelli d'Italia, Lega Nord*, and it remains unchanged in all the different specifications shown in the Table. The main independent variable is $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$, the dummy variable indicating the (historical) proximity to a Medieval port according to port configuration as reported in *Map 1* (for further details see Section 3.2). In Panel A, individuals whose municipality of residence is within (or beyond) the 10 km distance calculated in Roman roads are considered close (or distant) from one of the Medieval ports. In Panel B we use a distance of 15 km, while in Panel C we use a distance of 20 km. Personal controls involve: age, occupational status (either studying or working), educational attainment, marital status, gender, and parental (mother and father) incomes, as proxied by a measure of the employment status. Geography controls (at the municipal level) include: an index of terrain asperity, the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea, an index of accessibility, resident population in 2017, population density in 2001 and a variable related to whether a city is in a rural or urban area. Socio-economic controls (at the municipal level) entail: average income per capita of the municipality of residence, the number of manufacturing firms in 2017 (per capita), the average firm size, the distance to the nearest regional and provincial capital city, the broadband internet coverage, police spending per capita, and the (log) population growth rate between 2001 and 2017. The Migrants measure refers to the % of foreigners in the total population in 2017 in each municipality and the share of Africans over total immigrants. Social Capital is measured by number of non-profit associations per capita in each municipality in 2001. Historical controls (at the municipal level) encompass: an indicator whether the city was a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E., two dummy variables accounting for the size of city in year 1300 C.E (medium or large), and the distance (km) from the nearest Medieval trade center. The sample weights are applied. All specifications include regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. The statistical significance of the test that the underlying coefficient is equal to zero is denoted by: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table C6: Migrant Perception and Proximity to Medieval Port: probit

Dependent Variable: $MigrantPerception_{i,m,r}$						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: 10 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.194***	-0.270***	-0.197***	-0.182***	-0.209***	-0.267***
	(0.031)	(0.039)	(0.031)	(0.033)	(0.036)	(0.050)
Panel B: 15 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.140***	-0.228***	-0.144***	-0.116**	-0.170***	-0.219***
	(0.041)	(0.050)	(0.040)	(0.048)	(0.038)	(0.058)
Panel C: 20 km Distance						
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	-0.045	-0.095	-0.047	-0.025	-0.051	-0.075
	(0.044)	(0.060)	(0.044)	(0.050)	(0.047)	(0.071)
NUTS-3 Region FE	√	√	√	√	√	√
Personal	√	√	√	√	√	√
Geography	√	√	√	√	√	√
Socio-Eco		√				√
Social Capital			√			√
Migrants				√		√
History					√	√
Observations	1,745	1,745	1,745	1,745	1,745	1,745

Notes: All specifications are estimated using probit model and coefficients refer to marginal effects. The dependent variable is $MigrantPerception_{i,m,r}$, the dummy related to the perception that migrants make Italy an unsafe place, and it remains unchanged in all the different specifications shown in the Table. The main independent variable is $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$, the dummy variable indicating the (historical) proximity to a Medieval port according to port configuration as reported in *Map 1* (for further details see Section 3.2). In Panel A, individuals whose municipality of residence is within (or beyond) the 10 km distance calculated in Roman roads are considered close (or distant) from one of the Medieval ports. In Panel B we use a distance of 15 km, while in Panel C we use a distance of 20 km. Personal controls involve: age, occupational status (either studying or working), educational attainment, marital status, gender, and parental (mother and father) incomes, as proxied by a measure of the employment status. Geography controls (at the municipal level) include: an index of terrain asperity, the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea, an index of accessibility, resident population in 2017, population density in 2001 and a variable related to whether a city is in a rural or urban area. Socio-economic controls (at the municipal level) entail: average income per capita of the municipality of residence, the number of manufacturing firms in 2017 (per capita), the average firm size, the distance to the nearest regional and provincial capital city, the broadband internet coverage, police spending per capita, and the (log) population growth rate between 2001 and 2017. The Migrants measure refers to the % of foreigners in the total population in 2017 in each municipality and the share of Africans over total immigrants. Social Capital is measured by number of non-profit associations per capita in each municipality in 2001. Historical controls (at the municipal level) encompass: an indicator whether the city was a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E., two dummy variables accounting for the size of city in year 1300 C.E (medium or large), and the distance (km) from the nearest Medieval trade center. The sample weights are applied. All specifications include regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. The statistical significance of the test that the underlying coefficient is equal to zero is denoted by: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Finally, we replicate models reported in Panel E of Table 10 in the main text, by using a fractional response probit estimators. Results reported in Table C7 confirm a negative and significant relation between the share of votes to the right-wing parties coalition in 2018 and the proximity to Medieval ports.

Table C7: Right-wing votes in National elections and Proximity to Medieval Ports: Fractional Response Probit Model

Dependent Variable: $RightVotesShare_{m,r}$								
	1958 *MSI* Party	1968 *MSI* Party	1976 *MSI* Party	1987 *MSI* Party	1996 *Polo per le Libertà*	2006 *Casa delle Libertà*	2013 *Centre-Right and Right Wing Parties*	2018 *Centre-Right and Right Wing Parties*
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
$ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$	0.008*	0.004	0.008***	0.000	0.004	-0.010	0.000	-0.035*
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.031)	(0.029)	(0.020)	(0.018)
Observations	7450	7323	7450	7450	7016	7450	7442	7355
NUTS-3 Region FE	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Geography	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
History	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Population	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Distance from NUTS-2 Capital city	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Notes: All specifications are estimated using a fractional response probit model and reported coefficients refer to marginal effects. The dependent variable is $RightVotesShare_{m,r}$, the variable related to the % of votes received by the right-wing parties in the National Election. Each Panel refers to a different year: 1958, 1968, 1976, 1987, 1996, 2006, 2013, and 2018. The main independent variable is $ProximityMedPort_{m,r}$, the dummy variable indicating the (historical) proximity to a Medieval port according to *Map 1* (for further details see Section 3.2). Geography controls (at the municipal level) include: an index of terrain asperity and the geodetic distance both from Tunis and from the sea. We also account for the distance from the nearest NUTS-2 capital city and the population in 1951 in column (1), in 1961 in column (2), 1971 in column (3), 1981 in column (4), 1991 in column (5), 2001 in column (6), 2011 in column (7), and 2017 in column (8). Furthermore, from column (2) to column (7) in each model the population growth rate compared to the population 10 years earlier is included, while in column (8) the model includes the population growth rate between 2011 and 2017. Historical controls (at the municipal level) take into account: an indicator whether the city was a seat of a Bishop before 1000 C.E., two dummy variables accounting for the size of city in year 1300 C.E (medium or large), and the distance (km) from the nearest Medieval trade center. The sample weights are applied. All specifications include regional Fixed Effects at NUTS-3 level. Standard errors are clustered at NUTS-3 level. The statistical significance of the test that the underlying coefficient is equal to zero is denoted by: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.