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Why Do Non-Resident Citizens Get Elected? Candidates' Electoral Success in Ecuadorian Extraterritorial Districts

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Abstract

To the growing literature on non-resident citizens' special representation, we contribute with a systematic examination of the role of descriptive representation of citizens living abroad in elections for extraterritorial districts. Using data for the 308 candidacy observations in three two-seat extraterritorial districts in five legislative elections held between 2007 and 2021 in Ecuador, for a total of 30 seats, we test four hypotheses related to the electoral rules, party-level, and socio-demographic factors of non-resident candidates. Ecuadorian non-resident candidates benefit from their incumbency position and party affiliation, along with left-wing ideological ascription and belonging to party organizations that pushed for voting rights abroad and that manifest an interest in emigrant issues. This article contributes to showing what gets emigrants elected in extraterritorial seats and offers a within-country comparison connecting elections with legislative politics across national borders.

Keywords

candidate selection; Ecuador; electoral rules; incumbency advantage; non-resident citizens; political party; political representation; special representation

1. Introduction

Reflecting the trend in favor of emigrant enfranchisement, 16 countries reserve seats in their national legislatures for non-resident citizens—that is, for nationals living abroad (Umpierrez de Reguero et al., 2023;

Wellman et al., 2023). Despite this provision being symbolic in most country cases, a growing number of studies have suggested its saliency in electoral results and partisan politics. Previous efforts have descriptively explored this type of special representation and its impacts on spatial authority and national-level substantive representation, often as a containment strategy of origin-country authorities who fear non-resident voters may swing election results against them (Bauböck, 2007; Lafleur, 2013; Palop-García, 2018). Still, there is no systematic assessment of the role of descriptive representation with regards to citizens living abroad, when they compete for extraterritorial seats. As descriptive representation refers to the extent to which the composition of a legislative body provides "an accurate resemblance" of the citizenry and not just of the preferences of citizens (Pitkin, 1969, p. 11), it paves a relevant path to gather information on the causes and effects of emigrant enfranchisement and political practices affecting homeland politics. Correspondingly, we ask: What explains electoral success for non-resident legislative candidates? Namely, would the same institutional factors that account for electoral success in domestic political competition explain why non-resident citizens get elected? What is the role of political party affiliation in accounting for electoral success?

Our main argument is that institutional and partisan variables affect the electoral success of non-resident candidates in legislative districts created to represent citizens residing abroad, not replicating the domestic arena of competition but adapting to the extent to which migration, geographical distance, and transnational policies influence individuals and institutions. As Ecuador is an influential case for the over-representation in the unicameral legislative body of nationals living abroad (Collyer, 2014), we test hypotheses related to the competition rules imposed by the country's political institutions to organize electoral contests abroad, and those associated with party-level and socio-demographic factors of non-resident candidates. Considering 308 candidacy observations from incumbents and challengers who have competed for extraterritorial seats in the five legislative elections held since 2007, we report evidence in favor of incumbency position, party affiliation, and ideological ascription to account for success in the 30 seats that have been elected in extraterritorial districts.

In this article, we first conceptualize non-resident citizens' special representation and posit our hypotheses. Second, we justify the case selection. Third, we outline the data and method. Fourth, we present and discuss our results. Lastly, we conclude by summarizing the main results, discussing theoretical implications, and a future research agenda on the political representation of citizens living abroad.

2. Non-Resident Citizens' Special Representation in a Nutshell

Non-resident citizens can get elected in many forms, at different levels of elections, in both the origin and residence countries (Wegschaider et al., 2022). Here we conceptualize non-resident citizens' special representation only at the national level or when a given country reserves seats to include its population living abroad in the decision-making process in the national legislature. This leaves aside other options of identity-based political representation that relate to international migration, such as when migrants run for presidential and municipal offices. We also refrain from discussing a restrictive set of electoral rights associated with the nature and dynamics of emigrant enfranchisement. Overall, non-resident citizens' special representation can be seen as one of the multiple channels (e.g., consultation councils, ministries, and secretariats; see Lafleur, 2013; Palop-García & Pedroza, 2021) available to political authorities to incorporate emigrants and/or their descendants into the decision-making process.

When conceptualizing non-resident citizens' special representation, its multi-dimensionality oftentimes allows for cross and within-country variation. This type of "discrete" representation has been adopted either simultaneously with external voting rights or afterward. Concurring with the beginning of the third wave of democratization, Portugal took the lead in enacting it in the mid-1970s (Lisi et al., 2019). Since then, this practice has been gradually expanding through all continents, except Asia, albeit while specifying eligibility-based conditions for voting and standing as candidates. First, this transnational political practice usually encompasses first-generation emigrants and, often, their descendants (Collyer, 2014). Second, non-resident citizens' special representation is limited to nationals living abroad, or to those with dual residence, as in the case of Romania (see Gherghina & Basarabă; 2024; Vintila & Soare, 2018). Still, when seeking reelection, special representatives might no longer be required to reside abroad (as in the case of Ecuador; see Ramírez Gallegos & Umpierrez de Reguero, 2019). Third, this type of representation can be materialized in the establishment of one (e.g., Croatia) or multiple extraterritorial districts (e.g., France; see Hutcheson & Arrighi, 2015).

There is a growing number of empirical and normative contributions that address non-resident citizens' special representation. On the one hand, empirical research has examined the enactment, regulation, and/or application of this policy, either by employing small-N (e.g., Laguerre, 2013; Østergaard-Nielsen & Ciornei, 2019; Palop-García, 2018; Sampugnaro, 2017) or large-N analyses (Collyer, 2014). In most external voting rights studies, this type of discrete representation has been operationalized as an explanatory variable or as an element of the research design (e.g., Burgess & Tyburski, 2020; Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020; Gherghina et al., 2022). On the other hand, normative research has intensively debated whether non-resident citizens' special representation is suitable, according to democratic values, and has addressed theoretical links with, for example, the "stakeholder" and "all-affected" principles (e.g., Bauböck, 2007; Häggrot, 2022; Owen, 2010; Rubio-Marin, 2006; Spiro, 2006). More recently, such normative literature has been connected to empirical research on special representation (Umpierrez de Reguero et al., 2022). Considering this burgeoning state-of-the-art literature, scholars and practitioners have developed no systematic analysis of the role of descriptive representation on non-resident citizens' electoral success, specifically when they compete for extraterritorial seats. To fill this gap, below we test four hypotheses that associate electoral success for candidates in extraterritorial districts with the incumbent position, electoral rules, party affiliation, and ideology.

3. Factors in Candidates' Electoral Success: Incumbency, Electoral Rules, Party Affiliation, and Ideology

The first factor to traditionally explain why some candidates get elected stems from political experience—knowing the rules of the game in a more comprehensive way. Aligned with the theory of political ambition (cf. Schlesinger, 1966), the assumption lies on the amount of added knowledge and political leverage acquired by a given candidate who previously occupied the same or similar seats, as opposed to a candidate who is an amateur due to age, prior experience in politics, and/or feeling prepared with the expected tasks if elected.

Incumbents, in contrast to challengers, have an expected advantage for several reasons. Political experience and public-wide visibility increase the chances of victory (Fowler & Hall, 2014). Voters can reward or punish incumbents for their performance (Ferejohn, 1986), whereas they lack clear evidence to judge challengers who have not occupied that position before. Incumbents, more than challengers, have better access to

knowledge about legislative tasks and their legislative roles (Alesina & Rosenthal, 1995). Incumbents have extensive knowledge of the system where they have previously worked, possibly having better access to strategic electoral data (Cox & Katz, 1996) and public financial resources, especially in political regimes that are not consolidated democracies. In addition, incumbents have psychological and communicational effects in their favor, like greater name recognition (Cain et al., 1987) and media coverage (Sheafer & Tzionit, 2006). Considering this long-standing evidence, we expect the incumbency advantage to also apply to candidates in extraterritorial districts. Accordingly, we expect:

> H1: Incumbency position is positively associated with non-resident candidates' electoral success.

The electoral design also affects the (re-)election chances of candidates. Electoral studies have long pointed out how specific electoral system elements can trigger or disincentivize the probabilities of winning or retaining seats. Mayhew (1974) attributes to electoral systems a meaningful influence on the decision of representatives to gain electoral rewards.

Bowler and Farrell (1993) tested a selected set of hypotheses regarding the patterns of representative–represented nexus under a variety of electoral systems. Not surprisingly, they found that electoral systems can produce variation in legislative behavior, even when compared to other competing factors. Similarly, several scholars (e.g., Carey & Shugart, 1995; Grofman, 2016; Shugart & Taagepera, 2017) have demonstrated that electoral rules, including district magnitude, affect the electoral connection with voters, inducing legislators to be personal vote seekers or party reputation seekers. Electoral systems can balance the "power" and "influence" that a candidate and/or political party may display during and after the election. Nationwide parties have more power in closed-list plurality–majority systems than in open-list proportional representation systems. Conversely, in countries with open-list proportional representation systems, candidates have relatively more power than parties, as they can develop a personal vote (Gallagher & Mitchell, 2005).

District magnitude and ballot structure relate directly to electoral performance (André & Depauw, 2013; Shugart & Taagepera, 2017). Electoral systems trigger the legislators' goal-seeking by two mechanisms (Fujimura, 2016). First, electoral systems might provide legislators with incentives to cultivate a personal vote; and second, electoral systems shape legislators' geographical connections with constituencies. District-based representatives need to build a reputation to cultivate a personal vote (Fujimura, 2016), whereas nationwide legislators are typically free from these concerns, although they need to create a national reputation.

In addition, there is a positive correlation between ballot position and electoral advantage (e.g., Ho & Imai, 2008; Meredith & Salant, 2013). If the candidate's name is at the top of the ballot list, they are expected to obtain further votes by their position (Chen et al., 2014). This effect varies under different ballot structures, depending on whether they use open, free, or closed lists, and if voters select one or multiple candidates (Blom-Hansen et al., 2016). In nominal or ordinal ballots (party-oriented), the first-ranked advantage is explained by the fact that, as voters cast ballots for parties and votes are tallied by parties, those candidates atop the party list are more likely to get elected (Koppell & Steen, 2004). In individual ballot structures (candidate-oriented), the ballot-order effect is contingent upon the number of votes each voter has, as well as their power to arrange the party lists. When voters only cast votes for one candidate, the ballot order

effect is obvious, as candidates atop their party lists are more prone to be elected. Yet, when voters can pick more than one candidate and can select from different parties, the effect of the free-list proportional system may be potentially stronger, as voters who split their tickets might be inclined to select among top-of-list candidates from different parties (Marcinkiewicz & Stegmaier, 2015). Considering that electoral rules for organizing elections abroad may be not so different across space and time, particularly when referring to non-resident citizens' special representation, we focus on the ballot position assuring a candidate-level significant variation, leaving aside other electoral system elements. Namely, we expect:

> H2: Being listed first on the ballot is positively related to non-resident candidates' electoral success.

The role of political parties in preparing the roster for elections, supporting their representatives in electoral campaigning, or providing the structure for legislative coalitions once their candidates have succeeded, might also influence non-resident candidates' electoral success. Political parties, like individual candidates, have constant goals to pursue. Frech (2015) identifies three criteria that national parties employ when nominating candidates: leverage, loyalty, and attractiveness to voters. According to that rationale, party leaders aspire to engage candidates with a negotiating power capacity to encourage policymaking within the legislature. They prefer loyal candidates and expect that those candidates will mobilize or catch new free voters, largely by constituency service and by their substantive representation.

As special representation is often rather symbolic, non-resident candidates need to make use of party-related shortcuts to increase their probabilities of getting (re-)elected. Candidates from the outgoing ruling party have higher chances of winning a (re-)election than other incumbents and challengers (Fujimura, 2016). In turn, when legislative and presidential elections are concurrent, candidates benefit from the coattail effect of popular presidential candidates. In many cases, the winning executive party tends to be the outgoing ruling party. With a similar rationale, we expected:

> H3a: Party affiliation in the same party as the winning presidential candidate is positively correlated with non-resident candidates' electoral success.

Recent contributions to migration studies concentrate on the role of parties supporting emigrant enfranchisement (e.g., Østergaard-Nielsen et al., 2019; Wellman, 2021). If a party supported the adoption and/or implementation of external voting rights, then there is a clear-cut reason for non-resident citizens to reward them. This reason is coined by the migration studies literature as the "gratitude model" (cf. Turcu & Urbatsch, 2020). As underscored earlier, voters can punish or reward candidates and/or parties. Thus, we also expect:

> H3b: Party affiliation in a pro-enfranchisement party is positively correlated with non-resident candidates' electoral success.

The gratitude model does not stop with the enfranchisement process. Part of the strategic entry of parties in electoral niches, such as across national borders, requires special attention to non-residents' needs. Indeed, political parties or coalitions interested in enticing non-resident citizens' votes are more likely to include emigrant issues in their party manifestos (Østergaard-Nielsen & Ciornei, 2019) and verbalize their support for emigration policies in their political campaigns (see, e.g., Jakobson et al., 2021). Furthermore, political

parties frequently have clear ideological positions, and ideologies shape politics. In particular, liberal and left-wing party legislators pay close attention to constituency services in contrast to right-wing parties (e.g., André & Depauw, 2013; Cain et al., 1987). Correspondingly, we expect that:

> H4: Affiliation to parties ideologically more likely to support non-resident citizens, either via their party manifestos incorporating emigrant issues or their liberal left-leaning standing, is positively associated with non-resident candidates' electoral success.

4. Case Selection: Ecuador (2007–2021)

We selected the case of Ecuador (2007–2021) to test our hypotheses. Ecuador adopted emigrant enfranchisement in 1998 and implemented it in 2006. Former president Rafael Correa (2007–2017) and his then-party organization Movimiento Alianza Patria Altiva I Soberana (MPAIS) expanded it by granting non-resident population electoral rights in legislative elections at the national level (Boccagni & Ramírez, 2013). Although the reform to reserve six seats for non-resident Ecuadorians was only discussed in the Plenary of the Supreme Electoral Court pre-implementation in the 2007 elections (Machado-Puertas, 2008), non-resident citizens' special representation was officially established in the Constitution and Electoral Law in 2008–2009. This legal framework created three two-seat extraterritorial districts for Ecuadorians residing abroad: Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa (LACA); Europe, Asia, and Oceania (EAO), and the United States and Canada (USC) districts (National Electoral Council, 2009, arts. 4 and 150).

In Ecuador, legislators in the unicameral assembly serve for four-year terms with term limits in the same type of seat. Legislators are elected using proportional representation. Over time, the ballot structure has changed from a free list, where non-resident voters could select two candidates from any party, to a closed list, where parties provide a list of two candidates and voters choose party lists (Abad et al., 2022; Castellanos Santamaría et al., 2021). Analogous to domestic districts within the national-level elections, either in free or closed lists, independent candidates are not allowed and parties can only have as many candidates as seats elected in the district.

In the literature, the Ecuadorian case is somewhat influential not only specifically in discussing non-resident citizens' special representation (Collyer, 2014; Palop-García, 2018; Umpierrez de Reguero & Dandoy, 2023) but also in addressing other (e)migration policies more generally (see, e.g., Boccagni, 2011; Boccagni & Ramírez, 2013; Finn, 2021; Margheritis, 2011; Sánchez Bautista, 2020). While the most common trend is that non-resident citizens' special representation leads to under-representation (Umpierrez de Reguero et al., 2022), Ecuador has had over-representation in extraterritorial seats, but malapportionment across extraterritorial districts. Domestic districts with a low number of registered voters, like Las Galápagos and Zamora Chinchipe, are also over-represented, as the 2009 Electoral Law establishes a minimum allocation of two seats per district. Accordingly, Ecuadorians in the extraterritorial EAO district obtain the same number of seats as those who reside in the extraterritorial LACA district, regardless of their substantively different demographic sizes.

As a case of electoral reforms' hyperactivity, with more than 10 electoral processes abroad from 2006 to 2023, Ecuador is an ideal case study to test our hypotheses. As an influential case, it can work as a double-check, or confirmatory analysis (see Seawright & Gerring, 2008). Also, Ecuadorian electoral

authorities release sufficient official data to test all our hypotheses. To the best of our knowledge, official longitudinal information (i.e., election by election) on non-resident candidates is quite easy to retrieve from any electoral body website or upon request, when it comes to incumbency position and party affiliation. However, obtaining information on the ballot position of candidates is more difficult. We focus on individual candidates and their traits to assess the extent to which descriptive representation is a factor in electing legislators in extraterritorial districts. Examining the Ecuadorian case, we seek to learn both if the electoral success of non-resident candidates replicates what normally happens in the domestic arena, and also how institutional, party-level, and candidates' socio-demographic variables influence one out of 16 systems of special representation worldwide.

5. Data and Method

To answer why non-resident candidates get elected, we built a dataset with all candidates competing in the Ecuadorian extraterritorial districts. Our dataset comprises information from five legislative elections at the national level, from the first electoral contest in which a non-resident candidate could run for a given extraterritorial seat in 2007 to the latest in 2021. Since some non-resident candidates seek reelection and some challengers run in more than one election, we enlisted 308 candidacy observations, corresponding to 268 different persons. As the election of non-resident candidates has been based on a fixed number of two seats per extraterritorial district, the number of elected candidates adds up to 30 from 2007 to 2021. Most candidates only ran once, with 4.7% electoral success (i.e., 11 winners); those who competed twice (i.e., 28 out of 268 candidates competed) have a higher success rate, 28.6%. Only five candidates ran three times or more, with a success rate of more than 60% for those who competed three times and 0% for those who ran four times.

Our dataset relies mainly on electoral archives and results from the Ecuadorian National Electoral Council (CNE). We supplemented that information with data from previous contributions that addressed transnational party competition (e.g., González-Paredes et al., 2022; Umpierrez de Reguero & Dandoy, 2023) and political representation in Ecuadorian extraterritorial districts (e.g., Palop-García, 2018). We extracted all the institutional variables related to our first three hypotheses from the CNE and the remaining information on party ideology and migration saliency from prior scholarly works that classify parties competing abroad by whether they are interested in emigrant issues by looking at the party's and candidates' manifestos. We opted for the academic production on transnational party competition in Ecuador, instead of enriching our dataset from cross-national surveys or aggregate datasets (e.g., the MARPOR-CMP-MRG project, the Chapel Hill expert Survey, and the Global Party Survey; see Norris, 2020) given the former set of evidence is to date more reliable, in-depth, and complete, considering Ecuador's unique institutional features.

Our dependent variable, electoral success, is measured using two indicators: first, a dichotomous indicator for whether the candidate won the seat; second, by the vote share received by each candidate. We use a binary logistic model with odd ratios for the first indicator and a log-linear regression for the second.

Table 1 shows the variation across extraterritorial districts by registered voters, election turnout rates, and average share for seat winners. While the extraterritorial EAO district is the most populated, the LACA district has the highest turnout rates over time, despite having significantly fewer registered voters than the other districts. Overall, the average vote share for seat winners fluctuates from 14.2% to 34.1%, suggesting

medium-high fragmentation, which is typical in the Ecuadorian context within and across national borders (Basabe-Serrano, 2018).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of non-resident candidates' electoral success in Ecuador.

Legislative election	EAO district	LACA district	USC district	Average
Registered voters				
2007	121,662	10,211	20,307	152,180
2009	137,189	13,813	33,582	184,584
2013	191,964	21,935	71,854	285,753
2017	236,637	31,096	126,084	393,817
2021	253,035	30,355	125,849	409,239
Election turnout (percentage)				
2007	29.7	70.7	49.0	35.0
2009	47.4	95.9	57.6	52.9
2013	57.8	86.5	57.1	59.8
2017	50.3	67.7	38.9	48.0
2021	54.5	54.9	34.7	48.5
Average vote share for seat winners (percentage)				
2007	16.8	20.5	21.6	19.7
2009	22.4	22.1	24.0	22.8
2013	34.1	29.3	28.4	30.6
2017	23.9	16.8	16.8	19.2
2021	23.5	15.3	14.2	17.7

Note: Election turnout in each extraterritorial district was obtained by estimating the total number of votes, multiplied by 100, and divided by the total number of registered voters.

The independent variable of interest for H1 is the incumbency condition. We measure incumbency using two interconnected measures (see Supplementary File, Table A1): first, if the candidate is the legislator occupying the seat for election (hereinafter, incumbency advantage); second, if the candidate has prior legislative experience representing any seat in the legislature in any previous term.

As the number of seats has configured the maximum number of candidates per party list since 2007, for H2, the independent variable ballot position is ordinal comprising two values: "1" if a given candidate is ranked first in the party list or "2" if the candidate appears in second place (see Supplementary File, Table A2).

For H3a and H3b, in turn, the independent variable is party affiliation. To assess party affiliation, we employ two indicators: first, if the candidate is affiliated with the party that won in the concurrent presidential election; second, if the candidate is affiliated with the party that has most strongly advocated for the right to vote for Ecuadorians living abroad (see Supplementary File, Table A3). While the former measure relates to coattail effects, especially pertinent in current hyper-presidential systems with closed electoral lists like Ecuador (Abad et al., 2022; Basabe-Serrano, 2018; Castellanos Santamaría et al., 2021), the latter is associated with migration studies literature that points to an advantage for parties that lead the emigrant enfranchisement process (e.g., Østergaard-Nielsen et al., 2019; Turcu & Urbatsch, 2020).

Following Umpierrez de Reguero and Dandoy (2023), we also incorporated party ideology and issue saliency to test H4 (see Supplementary File, Table A4). Accordingly, we include parties' ideological positioning on the

left–right scale and on emigrant issues. Our database contains some missing values for party positions on emigrant issues and ideological adscription, especially for smaller parties, coding if a given party or electoral coalition is left-, center-, or right-leaning, as well as a binary measure to code if the candidates belong to one or multiples party organizations that positively mention emigration policies in their manifestos.

We also added control variables, avoiding model saturation and multicollinearity with the above-mentioned independent variables. We incorporated a dummy variable for full emigrant parties (FEPs), which are party organizations mostly created by non-resident citizens to compete abroad. Those special parties have existed in Ecuador and elsewhere, such as in France and Italy (van Haute & Kernalegenn, 2020). Only 28 observations in our database correspond to an FEP candidate. Since the literature on the electoral success of candidates normally uses variables associated with sociodemographic traits as controls, we included candidate-level controls for self-registered age and sex. Likewise, we added their registered education by consulting the official website of tertiary education in Ecuador (on the Higher Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation Secretariat). We finally control our models with categorical variables accounting for each electoral process and extraterritorial district, respectively.

6. Results

Assuming that the extraterritorial arena of political competition differs from what happens domestically within Ecuador, given the nature and dynamics of non-resident citizens' electoral rights, we ran two sets of statistical models using two interconnected measures for our dependent variable. First, we executed six models with a dichotomous indicator for whether the candidate won the seat (see Table 2); second, we created eight models assessing the vote share received by each candidate (see Table 3). To better interpret the first six binary logistic models here, we computed odds ratios.

By the weight of the odds ratios (in M1–M6) and coefficients in the log-linear models (M7–M14 in Table 3), incumbency position and party affiliation are the most relevant independent variables to explain why non-resident candidates get elected.

Table 2. Odds ratios, non-resident candidates' electoral success.

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
Incumbency advantage	34.32*** (26.46)					
Prior legislative experience		44.05*** (33.93)				
Ballot position (second-ranked)			0.47 (0.23)			
Winning executive party (coattail effects)				53.35*** (28.81)		
Enfranchisement party					55.75*** (31.21)	
Ideology (left-leaning)						—
Ideology (center-leaning)						0.23 (0.29)
Ideology (right-leaning)						0.27* (0.16)
Emigration issue						3.30* (1.74)
FEP	1.75 (1.28)	1.82 (1.34)	1.40 (1.01)			1.79 (1.90)
Age	0.99 (0.02)	0.99 (0.02)	1.00 (0.02)	1.01 (0.03)	1.01 (0.03)	1.01 (0.02)
Sex (male)	1.70 (0.77)	1.67 (0.77)	1.05 (0.49)	2.01 (1.08)	1.98 (1.04)	1.40 (0.59)
Graduate education	—	—	—	—	—	—
Undergraduate education	0.70 (0.44)	0.70 (0.45)	0.55 (0.32)	0.56 (0.43)	1.20 (0.93)	0.83 (0.51)
Unregistered or non-tertiary education	0.33† (0.19)	0.30* (0.18)	0.30* (0.15)	0.44 (0.30)	0.61 (0.43)	0.45 (0.25)
Election 2007	—	—	—	—	—	—
Election 2009	1.35 (0.92)	1.30 (0.89)	2.18 (1.37)	1.58 (1.26)	1.73 (1.42)	1.53 (1.00)
Election 2013	1.23 (0.85)	1.20 (0.83)	1.78 (1.15)	1.30 (1.02)	1.42 (1.12)	1.08 (0.74)
Election 2017	1.44 (1.00)	1.21 (0.87)	1.79 (1.17)	1.25 (0.99)	1.36 (1.09)	1.32 (0.91)
Election 2021	0.97 (0.68)	0.95 (0.67)	1.40 (0.91)	1.08 (0.84)	1.74 (1.37)	0.96 (0.68)
EAO district	—	—	—	—	—	—
LACA district	1.21 (0.68)	1.06 (0.62)	1.65 (0.82)	1.35 (0.85)	2.01 (1.26)	1.28 (0.67)
USC district	1.12 (0.60)	1.14 (0.62)	1.08 (0.55)	0.98 (0.60)	1.09 (0.68)	0.99 (0.52)
(Intercept)	0.14† (0.15)	0.17† (0.18)	0.21 (0.21)	0.02** (0.02)	0.01*** (0.02)	0.07* (0.07)
Observations	308	308	308	308	308	294
R^2 Tjur	0.191	0.221	0.047	0.411	0.390	0.087

Notes: † < 0.01; * < 0.05; ** < 0.001; *** < 0.0001.

Table 3. Log-linear coefficients, non-resident candidates' vote share.

	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12	M13	M14
Incumbency advantage	0.84*** (0.13)						0.37** (0.13)	
Prior legislative experience		0.83*** (0.13)						0.48*** (0.12)
Ballot position (second-ranked)			−0.09 (0.06)				−0.08 (0.05)	−0.08 (0.05)
Winning executive party (coattail effects)				0.83*** (0.08)			0.67*** (0.09)	
Enfranchisement party					0.77*** (0.08)			0.62*** (0.09)
Ideology (left-leaning)						—	—	—
Ideology (center-leaning)						−0.14 (0.12)	−0.13 (0.10)	−0.08 (0.10)
Ideology (right-leaning)						0.06 (0.06)	0.08† (0.05)	0.14** (0.05)
Emigration issue						0.30*** (0.06)	0.11* (0.05)	0.15** (0.06)
FEP	−0.01 (0.09)	−0.01 (0.09)	−0.03 (0.10)			−0.13 (0.13)	0.09 (0.12)	0.04 (0.12)
Age	−0.00 (0.00)	−0.00 (0.00)	−0.00 (0.00)	−0.00 (0.00)	−0.00 (0.00)	−0.00 (0.00)	−0.00 (0.00)	−0.00 (0.00)
Sex (male)	0.04 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)	−0.01 (0.06)	0.04 (0.04)	0.04 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)	−−0.01 (0.05)	−0.00 (0.05)
Graduate education	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Undergraduate education	−0.01 (0.09)	−0.01 (0.09)	−0.05 (0.10)	0.01 (0.08)	0.07 (0.08)	−0.04 (0.09)	−0.00 (0.08)	0.04 (0.08)
Unregistered or non-tertiary education	−0.07 (0.08)	−0.08 (0.08)	−0.11 (0.08)	−0.00 (0.07)	0.02 (0.08)	−0.08 (0.08)	−0.00 (0.07)	0.00 (0.07)
Election 2007	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Election 2009	0.24** (0.08)	0.24** (0.08)	0.29*** (0.08)	0.24*** (0.07)	0.25*** (0.07)	0.25** (0.08)	0.21* (0.07)	0.21** (0.07)
Election 2013	0.01 (0.08)	0.01 (0.08)	0.05 (0.08)	0.03 (0.07)	0.03 (0.07)	−0.09 (0.08)	−0.03 (0.07)	−0.05 (0.07)
Election 2017	0.09 (0.08)	0.07 (0.08)	0.11 (0.08)	0.08 (0.07)	0.08 (0.07)	0.04 (0.08)	0.07 (0.07)	0.05 (0.07)
Election 2021	−0.02 (0.07)	−0.02 (0.07)	0.01 (0.08)	−0.01 (0.06)	0.02 (0.07)	0.01 (0.08)	0.06 (0.07)	0.07 (0.07)
EAO district	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
LACA district	0.30*** (0.07)	0.29*** (0.07)	0.34*** (0.07)	0.29*** (0.06)	0.32*** (0.06)	0.24*** (0.07)	0.22*** (0.06)	0.23*** (0.06)

Table 3. (Cont.) Log-linear coefficients, non-resident candidates' vote share.

	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12	M13	M14
USC district	0.06 (0.06)	0.06 (0.06)	0.06 (0.06)	0.04 (0.05)	0.05 (0.05)	0.01 (0.06)	0.00 (0.05)	0.01 (0.05)
(Intercept)	0.38** (0.12)	0.40*** (0.12)	0.46*** (0.14)	0.19† (0.11)	0.18 (0.12)	0.28* (0.13)	0.25* (0.12)	0.22† (0.12)
Observations	308	308	308	308	308	294	294	294
R^2	0.24	0.24	0.14	0.39	0.34	0.21	0.43	0.41
R^2 adjusted	0.20	0.21	0.10	0.36	0.31	0.17	0.40	0.38

Notes: † < 0.01; * < 0.05; ** < 0.001; *** < 0.0001.

Figure 1 illustrates a positive correlation in terms of incumbency advantage and prior legislative experience, meaning a clear-cut benefit when competing in extraterritorial districts if a given candidate is an incumbent and/or has previously occupied a similar seat. Prior legislative experience displays a vaguely stronger result than incumbency advantage.

As compared to the domestic districts, this result concerning incumbency position is not surprising or unintended. Despite Ecuador being a proportional-representation and highly fragmented system, seasoned politicians, as opposed to challengers, usually possess more public visibility, leverage, and knowledge of the political game, especially after the latest set of electoral reforms in the post-Rafael Correa's administration (Navia & Umpierrez de Reguero, 2018).
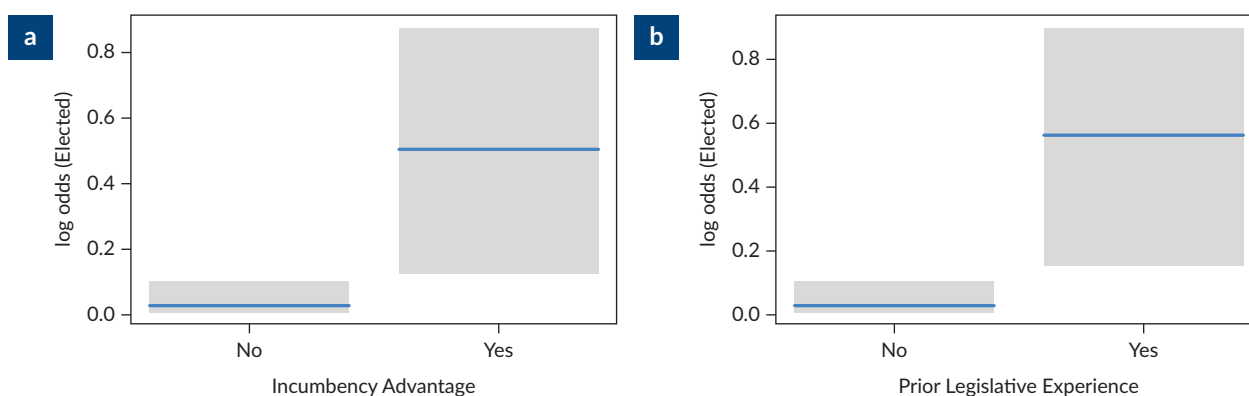

Figure 1. Probabilities of incumbency position on non-resident candidates' electoral success. Note: These probabilities came from M1 and M2 (see Supplementary File, Table A1).

Party affiliation is heavily mediated over time by the presence of MPAIS and the figure of Rafael Correa. Since Correa and his then-party organization expanded emigrant enfranchisement in 2007, including non-resident citizens' special representation, along with a set of emigration policies that cemented the electoral niche (see, e.g., Boccagni, 2011; Boccagni & Ramírez, 2013), being affiliated to MPAIS bolstered the probabilities of electoral success in extraterritorial districts. Indeed, scholars provided us with insights into this effect when referring to political transnational competition and substantive representation of

non-residents' special representatives in the Ecuadorian National Assembly (Palop-García, 2018; Umpierrez de Reguero & Dandoy, 2023).

Both the winning party executive and enfranchisement party indicators highly correlate with incumbency position. That is the main reason why we ran different regressions to avoid multicollinearity and model saturation, especially when the dependent variable was coded as a binary category. Only M13 and M14 combine incumbency position, party affiliation, and ideology, since the dependent variable, vote share (in log), assures a wide-ranging variation.

Furthermore, when parties demonstrate a manifested interest in emigrant issues, non-resident candidates affiliated with those parties have a higher probability of winning an extraterritorial seat (see Figure 2A). Belonging to a left-leaning party seems to somewhat increase the probability of non-resident candidates' electoral success, in contrast to other categories of ideological ascriptions (Figure 2B and Supplementary File; Table 3, M12–M14). Overall, left-wing party organizations seem to be more inclusionary than right-wing or center parties and electoral coalitions, at least since democracy was restored in Ecuador in 1979 (Basabe-Serrano, 2018; González-Paredes et al., 2022).
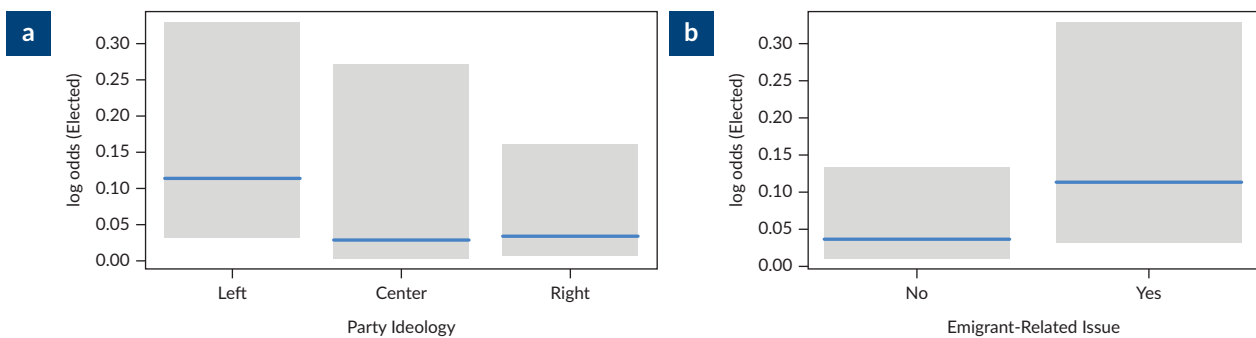

Figure 2. Probabilities of party ideology on non-resident candidates' electoral success. Note: These probabilities came from M6 (see Supplementary File, Table A1).

Somewhat surprisingly, we find that ballot position does not have a significant effect on electoral success in the case of non-resident citizens. This is the first institutional difference with preceding accounts on the effect of electoral rules on electoral success in Ecuadorian domestic districts (e.g., Navia & Umpierrez de Reguero, 2018). Overall, this result can be one of the most significant relevant differences when it comes to extraterritorial competition since ballot position normally has a positive significant effect on the mainstream political science contribution at the national level. When electoral success is coded as a binary variable, or when it is measured by the non-resident candidates' vote share, being first or second in the ballot does not appear to be meaningful, statistically speaking. There is only a slight difference in the average vote share between first-ranked and second-ranked seat winners.

Sociodemographic variables seem to not affect the electoral success of non-resident candidates (except in M1–M3), even when there are candidate gender quotas and restrictive eligibility criteria, such as a minimum threshold in education levels, two issues that are continuously debated (see, e.g., Carrión-Yaguana et al., 2023).

Moreover, FEPs are more likely to explain transnational political competition. However, this variable is not significant to explain why non-resident candidates get elected. As suggested by the descriptive statistics (e.g., Table 1), variation across extraterritorial districts explains why non-resident candidates' vote share inversely correlates with the LACA districts, as compared to the other extraterritorial districts, or why in certain elections (2007 and 2009) the log-linear coefficients indicate statistical significance (see M7–M14 in Table 3).

7. Conclusion

In this article, we discussed why non-resident candidates get elected from an institutional partisan perspective. Employing a dataset with 308 candidacy observations from all incumbents and challengers who have competed in Ecuadorian extraterritorial districts in legislative elections between 2007 and 2021, we tested four hypotheses related to the competition rules imposed by the electoral rules for elections abroad, and those associated with party-level and socio-demographic factors of non-resident candidates.

We found evidence to support our four hypotheses, except regarding ballot position. The factors that most explain why non-resident candidates get elected in Ecuadorian extraterritorial districts stem from incumbency position and party affiliation. Most of the 30 elected candidacy observations have been affiliated with the political organization led by former president Rafael Correa. During Lenin Moreno's administration (2017–2021), MPAIS split into two opposing forces: those who stayed in the party and those who realigned with Correa in a new political movement, Citizen Revolution (RC; see Wolff, 2018); being associated with MPAIS/RC has had a positive effect on the electoral success of non-resident candidates in the period in analysis. Indeed, all candidates elected twice or three times have belonged to MPAIS/RC; Eduardo Alfonso Isidro Zambrano Cabanilla is the only person so far to have been reelected twice in the extraterritorial Ecuadorian arena.

Simply put, our models show that six indicators have a significant effect: (a) incumbency advantage; (b) prior legislative experience; (c) winning executive party; (d) enfranchisement party; (e) ideological ascription; and (f) if parties manifest a stronger interest in emigrant issues. This means, first, that there is an unambiguous advantage in extraterritorial districts if a candidate is an incumbent and/or has previously occupied a similar seat. Second, as the legislative election is held concurrently with the presidential election, the coattails of a popular presidential candidate help non-resident candidates get elected. Being affiliated with the party of the winning presidential candidate helps candidates abroad, just as it helps legislative candidates within the country. Third, the gratitude model of external voting rights—whereby voters abroad reward the party that advocated for voting rights for nationals living abroad—also works in the Ecuadorian context. Lastly, non-resident voters use their rationality to voice their selective incentives by rewarding candidates from parties that express an interest in emigrant issues in the current election.

To continue addressing non-resident citizens' political representation, not only considering the mechanisms of reserving seats for emigrants and/or their descendants as in this article but also other modes of descriptive and substantive representation, our findings encourage future research to explore the role of migrants' civil associations in promoting political rights extraterritorially. Contributions in Andean countries, including Ecuador, already highlight the importance of civil associations in promoting these rights (Fliess, 2021). Second, future studies should continue to bridge the existing literature on transnational political

competition and non-resident citizens' political representation. For instance, studying the role of party branches abroad can supplement our explanation of why non-resident candidates get elected. Finally, we encourage studies of non-resident citizens' electoral success to incorporate the impact of the electoral geography features of the candidates. As they are embedded in a multi-territorial terrain of overlapping political loyalties, future research should look into the place of origin of the candidate (either a city or a town in the country of her/his citizenship) and the place where they run their candidacy (the country of residence in an extraterritorial district that includes several countries) and the distribution of voters abroad by country of residence.

Supplementary Material
Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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