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POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

The Political Representation and Participation of Migrants

Volume 12

2024

Open Access Journal

ISSN: 2183-2463

Edited by Sergiu Gherghina and Sorina Soare

Politics and Governance, 2024, Volume 12
The Political Representation and Participation of Migrants

Published by Cogitatio Press
Rua Fialho de Almeida 14, 2º Esq.,
1070–129 Lisbon
Portugal

Design by Typografia®
http://www.typografia.pt/en/

Cover image: © Ponomariova_Maria from iStock

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Available online at: www.cogitatiopress.com/politicsandgovernance

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Politics and Governance
2024 • Volume 12 • Editorial 8089
https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.8089

EDITORIAL

Open Access Journal

The Political Participation and Representation of Migrants: An Overview

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Submitted: 22 January 2024 **Published:** 13 March 2024

Issue: This editorial is part of the issue "The Political Representation and Participation of Migrants" edited by Sergiu Gherghina (University of Glasgow) and Sorina Soare (University of Florence), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i354

Abstract

This thematic issue covers the participation and representation of migrants in contemporary politics. It focuses on two interconnected analytical dimensions: countries of residence and countries of origin, as arenas of political engagement and the supply and demand sides of political representation. The articles in the thematic issue advance the existing knowledge in migration studies and party politics both theoretically and empirically. They do so by proposing innovative analytical frameworks to assess the extent of participation and representation and by bringing evidence that fosters a better understanding of the intricate relationship between migration and politics.

Keywords

democracy; elections; migrants; political participation; representation

1. Introduction

The theory of democracy underscores the connection between liberal democracy, citizens' participation, and representation. At the core of this relationship lies the responsiveness of government to its citizens and the quality of democracy (Sartori, 2006). The variation in political participation has been frequently linked to citizens' support for democratic institutions, norms, values, and principles (Almond & Verba, 1963; Dalton, 2019). Central to this concept is the idea that political participation reduces the gap between citizens and institutions and contributes to reinforcing social cohesion and democratic quality (Norris, 2011; Putnam, 2000). Although migrants form a relevant share in contemporary societies (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2022), their demographic weight is not reflected in democratic institutions and policies. The identification of

a representation gap underlines a notable disparity in the political participation of migrants (Dancygier et al., 2021). Initially considered politically passive due to their limited electoral engagement, more recent evidence reveals that migrants' political engagement has gradually expanded and reached beyond conventional arenas (Finn, 2020; Mügge et al., 2021; Tsuda, 2012; Vintila & Martiniello, 2021). Examples include unconventional forms of political participation such as demonstrations, protests, boycotts, or sit-ins (Gherghina, 2016; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Pilati, 2016). This emphasizes the need to consider alternative avenues through which migrants actively contribute to the contemporary political landscape.

Previous research about the multifaceted aspects of migration (Römer, 2023; Yeung, 2021) covers the supranational, national, and local political dimensions, but often maintains an exclusive focus on the conventional state-centered hierarchy of power. The migration scholarship acknowledges that migrants maintain ties to their countries of origin while actively participating in their countries of residence (Gherghina & Tseng, 2016; Green et al., 2014; Lafleur & Sánchez-Domínguez, 2015; Peltoniemi, 2018; Umpierrez de Reguero & Finn, 2023). This perspective outlines the multi-dimensional processes of migration, generating diverse connections, contiguities, and identities across borders (Grzymala-Kazlowska & Ryan, 2022). The interaction between countries of origin, settlement, and transnational networks has an impact on the migrants' sense of (political) belonging and their political participation (Mișcoiu et al., 2024).

Political parties adjusted their discourse to address the widespread migration process. On the one hand, there is political conflict around migration, which is often used by radical right parties for mobilization purposes (Art, 2011; Grande et al., 2019; Hatton, 2016; Pirro, 2015; Shehaj et al., 2021). Some Eurosceptic messages make direct reference to the threats of migration to the formation of national identity (Marian, 2018; Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2018). On the other hand, political parties in both the country of residence and the country of origin tailor their messages to appeal to immigrants or emigrants (Burgess, 2018; Dancygier, 2014; Dancygier et al., 2021; Gherghina et al., 2022; Østergaard-Nielsen & Ciornei, 2019).

2. Content of the Thematic Issue

Building on these strands of literature, this thematic issue covers the participation and representation of migrants in contemporary politics. It focuses on two interconnected analytical dimensions: countries of residence and countries of origin, as arenas of political engagement and the supply (political parties and politicians) and demand (migrants) sides of political representation. The articles provide a nuanced understanding of the intricate relationship between migration and politics. They advance the existing knowledge in migration studies and party politics both theoretically and empirically. First, they propose innovative analytical frameworks to assess the extent of participation and representation. Second, they reflect empirically on the intertwined nature of migration and politics in contemporary societies. In doing so, the thematic issue proposes three main lines of inquiry that are discussed briefly in the following subsections.

2.1. External Voting

Finn and Ramaciotti (2024) offer fresh perspectives on the reluctance of certain countries to extend external voting rights. Their legal historical analysis of the Chilean case advocates for a nuanced understanding of external voting bill failures. The comparison of proposals dismisses simplistic reasoning and highlights a

deficiency in political consensus akin to Uruguay. Soare's (2024) study focuses on parties' operational behavior abroad and introduces a typology based on the party's origin and degree of formalization. This conceptual framework enhances comparability between organizational configurations abroad and the existing research on party structures.

2.2. Migrant Communities' and Their Countries of Origin

Yener-Roderburg and Yetiş (2024) delve into transnational political mobilization within the Turkey-originated diasporic community in Europe. Their study underscores the influence of diaspora groups on Turkish voters abroad, emphasizing the pivotal role of organizations' activities and mobilization capacities. Gherghina and Basarabă (2024) contribute to transnational political participation literature and explore the individual determinants based on migrants' experiences and ties. Their analysis challenges the idea that voter turnout is linked exclusively to poor integration in the country of residence and shows that ties to home country politics and engagement in host communities boost electoral participation.

Boldrini (2024) provides insights into home parties' interactions with overseas communities, examining how Italian political parties select candidates for reserved parliamentary seats. This analysis reveals distinct career trajectories and capacities among different types of politicians elected abroad. Umpierrez de Reguero and Navia (2024) adopt a similar approach by examining the descriptive representation of citizens residing abroad in elections for extraterritorial districts. Their case study on Ecuador reveals advantages for non-resident candidates, contributing to understanding factors influencing the election of emigrants in extraterritorial seats.

2.3. Challenges of Migrants' Representation

The article authored by Vintila et al. (2024) scrutinizes migrants' descriptive representation in Spain with a focus on the party characteristics' influence on minority representation. Their analysis underscores the underrepresentation of migrant groups in Spanish local politics and the pivotal role of party features. In a complementary effort, Lazarova et al. (2024) explore the role of political parties in the democratic representation and political integration of individuals with immigrant backgrounds. Their results indicate positive effects of exposure to a democratic regime and internal efficacy on immigrants' party membership.

Zogu and Schönthaler (2024) provide a distinct understanding of the topic and investigate how political parties serve as gatekeepers to immigrant political participation in Bolzano, Northern Italy. Despite the limited impact on party recruitment, a nuanced pattern emerges with a tendency toward selectively including certain immigrant groups. Pacześniak and Wincławska (2024) contribute substantively to the debate by examining opportunities and constraints surrounding migrant political participation and representation in Polish society. Their findings show how the Polish political parties instrumentalize the migrant issue during election campaigns. The article by Kelbel et al. (2024) analyzes the voting rights of EU citizens in European and local elections within the member state of residence. Their study emphasizes the pivotal role of contextual factors as predictors in understanding participation dynamics.

3. Conclusions

This thematic issue provides rich insight into the landscape of transnational political dynamics. It focuses on the interaction between the communities of migrants and countries of origin, with particular attention paid to the opportunities and challenges of participation and representation.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Politics and Governance
2024 • Volume 12 • Article 7527
https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.7527

ARTICLE

Open Access Journal

Investigating Party Abroad: Party Origins and Degrees of Formalization

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Submitted: 14 August 2023 **Accepted:** 5 January 2024 **Published:** 13 March 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue "The Political Representation and Participation of Migrants" edited by Sergiu Gherghina (University of Glasgow) and Sorina Soare (University of Florence), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i354

Abstract

This article contends that contemporary transnational dynamics have given rise to novel political subjects and territories for political engagement. By looking at how parties as organizational actors operate abroad, this study reworks extant classificatory attempts and proposes an amended typology in which the salient elements of variation are the origin of the party abroad and the degree of formalization. These two dimensions produce a matrix delineating four distinct types of party organization: branch-abroad, organization-abroad in franchising, committee-abroad, and semi-political structures. Conceptually, the typology elucidates the multifaceted nature of the structural approaches employed by home parties in their endeavors to establish connections with communities abroad. Empirically, this contribution enhances the comparability between organizational configurations abroad and extant research on party structures at the national level.

Keywords

communities abroad; party organization; political parties; transnational politics; typology

1. Introduction

The scholarly literature underscores the existence of various channels through which migrants engage with their countries of origin, subsequently remitting both material and immaterial resources that wield influence over economic, social, and political behaviors (De Haas, 2005; Krawatzek & Müller-Funk, 2020). The proliferation of these multifaceted relations and attachments across borders is intricately linked to the alteration of the traditional articulation between civil, political, and/or social rights and the national state (Bauböck & Faist, 2010). While the initial corpus of literature primarily documented migrants' agency within

a people-led process, subsequent scholarship has chronicled the intensification and diversification of forms and strategies employed by countries of origin in engaging with overseas communities (Gamlen et al., 2019; Koinova & Tsourapas, 2018). The global phenomenon of migrant enfranchisement (Collyer, 2014; Lafleur, 2013; Umpierrez de Reguero et al., 2023) has further compelled national institutions and, increasingly so, political actors at the national level to grapple with a novel spatiality and the potential reinvention of political paradigms.

In this context, the article asserts that the extensive and highly substantive research available has paved the way for a more refined understanding of how various transformations either maintain or diverge from established knowledge in national-level party politics. Turning to this thematic issue, this study supplements existing research on the adaptation of party strategies in recruiting and selecting candidates for public office. More precisely, it broadens the examination of how political parties in public office represent communities abroad, as elucidated by Boldrini (2024) and discussed by Umpierrez de Reguero and Navia (2024). The research expands upon the investigative approach outlined by Yener-Roderburg and Yetiş (2024), delving into how national parties mobilize extensive segments of communities abroad, ultimately incorporating them into more or less formal party structures. Finally, it complements the burgeoning body of literature, exemplified by Gherghina and Basarabă (2024), which explores how migrants shape their voting behavior under the influence of their transnational lifestyles.

This article delves into the nuanced dynamics of cross-border political interaction, particularly focusing on party organization as a crucial element of transnational interconnectedness outlined in existing literature (Vertovec, 2009). The central argument of this article is that extraterritorial party organizations play a pivotal role in enhancing the effectiveness of transnational democratic politics. The theoretical rationale for emphasizing party organizations abroad is rooted in the recognition that representative governance is inherently partisan, with party structures playing a pivotal role in reinforcing connections between citizens and political elites (Scarrow & Webb, 2017, pp. 1–2). Formal and informal party infrastructures abroad can be seen as activities and practices that, in various permutations, may generate positive externalities conducive to democratic governance. These extraterritorial infrastructures act as crucial transmission channels, ensuring that representation aligns with the dynamics of transnational interactions. Drawing on comprehensive empirical evidence from recent years (for an overview, see van Haute & Kernalegenn, 2021), these extraterritorial infrastructures empower overseas communities to influence national policymakers. Simultaneously, they compel home parties to navigate a delicate balance between short-term interests and the enduring concerns of an increasingly transnational political landscape.

Despite operating within the same country and addressing the same overseas community, national political parties may employ diverse infrastructures and procedures to engage, mobilize, and encapsulate their supporters. While some extraterritorial organizations invest in robust structures, others lack stable infrastructures. To better comprehend these differences, the research question guiding this study is: How can political parties' organizational structures abroad be conceptually apprehended? The analysis answers this question by proposing a conceptual framework that enhances the understanding of party organization abroad and promotes comparability with national party structures, such as the Political Party Database Project. It refines existing classifications, addressing two specific gaps: the ambiguous definition of a party abroad and the operational dimensions considered when assessing the row and column dimensions that form the matrix of reference. Building on Duverger (1965), this article defines a party as a collection of

communities linked by coordinating institutions, emphasizing political connectedness across borders. It breaks down the overarching concept into two dimensions—organizational origins and the degree of formalization—clarifying the operational aspects for a higher degree of specification. The resulting matrix refines Rashkova and van der Staak's (2020) groundbreaking work, identifying four distinct types: branch-abroad, organization-abroad in franchising, committee-abroad, and semi-political structures. These ideal types aid comprehension, though recognizing that reality cannot be fully captured in cross-tabulations (Collier et al., 2012; Stapley et al., 2022). The goal is to facilitate scholars' focus on two critical dimensions in parties' organizational connectedness across borders and to capture both formality/informality and the intensity of transnational party politics.

The next section delineates the theoretical underpinnings of the contemporary academic debates surrounding political parties operating abroad. The third section introduces the amended typology briefly discussed above and undertakes an extensive discussion of the four distinct types characterizing parties abroad. The article concludes with a succinct presentation of final remarks.

2. The Challenges of the Transnational Arena and How National Parties React to Them

Although different diasporic political parties (Laguerre, 2006; Sheffer, 2003) and cross-border party-connected infrastructures have long existed (Collard, 2013; Gherghina & Soare, 2020; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003), the 2000s witnessed a marked increase in the visibility and relevance of cross-border political activities. By the extant literature on party politics (Aldrich, 1995), scholars demonstrate that parties engage in electoral contests abroad based on a calculus where the benefits outweigh the costs and that not all parties exhibit an equivalent level of investment in overseas communities (Østergaard-Nielsen & Ciornei, 2019a). Substantiating this, research indicates that parties endorsing enfranchisement processes receive electoral support throughout several elections (Østergaard-Nielsen et al., 2019; Waterbury, 2020; Wellman, 2021). Notably, recent analyses reveal that migrants' political preferences can either catalyze or impede party involvement abroad (Turcu & Urbatsch, 2020). The accelerated proliferation of overseas party activities cannot be solely attributed to pragmatic electoral advantages. Friedman and Kenig (2021) illustrate this phenomenon in the Israeli context, where, despite the absence of vote-seeking motivations, an array of alternative incentives is identified. The recognition of the active role played by the Jewish diaspora in the struggle for independence has prompted established parties, such as the Likud and Labor parties, to maintain a robust presence in overseas communities, enhancing their legitimacy and fostering privileged symbolic relationships within relevant diasporic communities. Additionally, there is an interest in promoting Israel's domestic agenda on the international stage. In brief, the burgeoning body of academic research underscores considerable variation in how and to what extent home parties invest in interactions with overseas citizens and the development of party organizations abroad.

In seeking to understand the drivers of party organizations abroad, three specific inputs from the party politics literature can be identified.

First, there are inputs concerning the political system level and, more specifically, the institutional context within which political parties operate. The focus here complements the literature that shows that the regulation of political parties is important because it allows the creation of institutions of representation for migrants (Burgess, 2020; Gamlen et al., 2019). A more focused inquiry on the regulation of parties abroad

can clarify how the legitimacy of party politics in the extraterritorial arena is built. While debates have blossomed on the combination of variables that explain why parties invest in communities abroad rights, there is still a lack of systematic empirical knowledge of the scope and magnitude of regulations dealing with parties' activities abroad. By clarifying the features of the national regulatory framework, the literature can shed light on how these rules and procedures impact the organizational behavior of political actors abroad.

The second input centers on the party system, particularly electoral competition dynamics. The transnational aspect of party politics is rooted in the idea that parties, functioning as rational maximizers, strategically modify electoral institutions to align with their interests (Benoit, 2007). However, recent research challenges the notion that transnational party politics is solely governed by cost-benefit logic. Østergaard-Nielsen et al. (2019) demonstrate that in contexts with significant policy changes regarding emigrant voting rights, some party families (e.g., center-right parties) are more likely to support emigrant enfranchisement. Moving beyond considerations tied to various stages in migrant enfranchisement (Palop-García & Pedroza, 2019), the variation in the implementation of legal rights (Wellman et al., 2023), or aspects such as migrants' partisan attitudes and turnout (Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020; S. A. Umpierrez de Reguero & Dandoy, 2022), this level of analysis also delves into parties' activities in the electoral realm. This literature encompasses candidate selection, campaign management, and party financial management. This inquiry emphasizes the need to reevaluate classical political participation and representation theories within the context of international mobility (Boldrini, 2024; Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020; Østergaard-Nielsen & Camatarri, 2022; S. Umpierrez de Reguero & Navia, 2024). Focusing research on these intricate topics promises significant contributions to a deeper understanding of the technical and political dynamics of parties operating abroad.

Turning to the third aspect, the focus centers on party organization, which encompasses territorial structures, grassroots presence, personnel, and the spectrum of activities carried out between elections. The importance of this dimension is empirically grounded in a longstanding tradition of studies that explore how party organization channels input from voters, fosters distinct social identities, and ultimately enhances the party's electoral viability (Husted et al., 2022; Panebianco, 1988). Research on parties operating abroad sheds light on logistical challenges that constrain the expansion of structural networks beyond national borders (Caramani & Grotz, 2015). Scholars also document migrants' general disaffection with homeland politics and parties, thereby raising the costs associated with mobilization abroad (Turcu & Urbatsch, 2020).

It is unclear to what extent parties abroad benefit from national party income or rely on voluntary labor and private donations. Interactions with migrant associations offer alternative resources and enhance transnational organizational capacity (Fliess, 2021; Paarlberg, 2023). The literature also outlines pertinent legal challenges, such as the need for parties to adapt their statutes and the fact that structures abroad may not necessarily follow the same decision-making, candidate selection, or mobilization procedures as their national counterparts. Additionally, while recognized legally in the countries of origin, these infrastructures abroad may lack legal status in the countries of settlement, impacting organizational efficiency (e.g., party professionalization and continuity of activity between elections). In certain cases, explicit bans on foreign political parties campaigning or being registered exist (Lafleur, 2013). Examining the variation in party organization abroad proves particularly valuable for a nuanced understanding of how political parties grapple with the complexities of transnational democratic linkages with overseas communities.

While all three inputs hold equal relevance, this analysis concentrates exclusively on the level of party organization. Several reasons underpin this decision. Firstly, political parties function as pivotal organizations, wielding a crucial role in shaping democracy. Their impact extends not only to democratic governance, enabling legislators to manage the policymaking agenda and furnishing effective tools for voters to collectively hold policymakers accountable (Diamond & Gunther, 2001; Stokes, 1999). They foster loyalties, provide valuable information shortcuts aiding voters in decision-making, and offer arenas for political expression beyond voting (Aldrich, 1995; Gherghina, 2014; Scarrow, 2015; van Haute & Gauja, 2015). An understanding of how party organizations operate yields valuable insights into how political parties channel political participation, influence representation (Scarrow & Webb, 2017), and implicitly present opportunities to mitigate the likelihood of feeling disconnected and disaffected with (national) politics and democracy. Secondly, there exists evidence suggesting that the strength of political party organizations at home fosters interest in ensuring organizational interconnectedness between the country of origin and countries of settlement (Gherghina et al., 2022; Østergaard-Nielsen & Ciornei, 2019a, 2019b). Thirdly, the literature demonstrates that beyond electoral periods, these organizations enhance the party's visibility on the ground, offer opportunities for interactions with national representatives, and facilitate the internalization of the party's values (van Haute & Kernalegenn, 2020). Consequently, these organizations emerge as effective tools for reproducing political loyalty over time.

3. Understanding Party Organization Abroad

To systematically organize the rich theoretical and empirical insights outlined in the literature above, the first step is to clarify the central concept of the typology. By amending Duverger (1965), the typology refers to the party as a collection of communities linked by formal or informal coordinating institutions in a process of interactions aiming to provide political connectedness across borders. This definition of party abroad incorporates party politics within a transnational political landscape characterized by intricate interactions between the countries of residence and the home countries. This altered spatial context fosters a novel conception of political participation that transcends national boundaries, prompting home parties to focus on integrating significant numbers of non-resident citizens into the politics and democratic value structures of the home country. This shift necessitates modifications not only in formal regulations, such as party statutes on territorial coverage and power dynamics but also in everyday practices and routines, including the informal aspects of politics.

While the existing literature has provided valuable insights into how party organizations operate in the evolving transnational landscape, a significant limitation arises: the uneven focus on the structured interactions within these party organizations. This limitation can be attributed, in part, to the inherent difficulty in collecting comparable data on party organizations operating abroad. Many parties do not disclose information about their organizational structures in foreign territories, posing a considerable challenge in obtaining details about their formal recognition and interactions with party organs. This includes aspects such as representation in the national party executive, openness to candidates from overseas constituencies, the number and rules of basic organizational units abroad, and the origin and distribution of financial resources across extraterritorial levels, etc. Additionally, there is a notable challenge in acquiring information on the informal less-structured interactions that characterize the internal dynamics of these organizations. Consequently, there is a compelling need for a model that systematically delineates the variation in party organizations operating abroad.

Several analyses have previously examined how differences in organizational dynamics manifest abroad. One remarkable example is the typology developed by Østergaard-Nielsen and Ciornei (2019a), which focuses on transnational infrastructure, considering the degree of transnational infrastructure (*low*/*high*) and the degree of ideological linkages (*high*/*low*). While this typology is effective for comparing transnational campaign strategies across various electoral systems and addresses organizational structure to some extent, it falls short of fully capturing the variation in party organization. Similarly, in the conclusions of their influential edited volume on parties abroad, van Haute and Kernalegenn (2020) delineate a typology based on the location of the party headquarters (home country/outside the home country) and the relation with the home country (emigrant politics/diaspora politics). While their aims are descriptive and the typology successfully captures variance in the development of party branches abroad, the focus remains only partially connected to the party organization itself. A more focused approach to the organizational infrastructure is found in von Nostitz's (2021) analysis, which relies on Poguntke's classification of four types of collateral organizations. The comparative interest lies in "mapping the diverse and varying organizational types and relationships between national homeland parties and their transnational branches" (von Nostitz, 2021, p. 2). However, despite clear and insightful theoretical argumentation, the empirical application is weakened by a limited operationalization of the four criteria: the official role of international party branches, membership criteria and processes, their influence in intra-party decision-making, and the control of international party branches by the home party in both organizational and financial aspects. Finally, E. Rashkova (2020) employs a precursor version of the typology co-developed in collaboration with van der Staak (E. R. Rashkova & van der Staak, 2020) to encapsulate the multidimensionality inherent in political parties abroad. E. Rashkova (2020) scrutinizes three distinct criteria: (a) the level of organization; (b) the nexus to and influence on a national political party; and (c) the national regulatory framework, which conditions the extent of operations beyond national borders, assessed on a tripartite scale denoting *low*, *medium*, and *high* levels. Despite a resolute endorsement of the pertinence of these three criteria and her exceptionally innovative approach, Rashkova's typology (2020) remains connected to the empirical application only and does not produce a matrix able to identify conceptually distinctive theoretical types. This article deals with this gap by identifying four distinct types. Moreover, it increases the operational application by clarifying how the two criteria can be coded. This operational coding increases the opportunity for comparative research.

Taking this into consideration, Table 1 provides an amended typology built on two interconnected assumptions. The first assumption is that party organization is shaped by its origin (Panebianco, 1988). The question that supports the row dimension is: *Which organizational origins make up the party abroad?* In empirical terms, this dimension distinguishes between (a) home party-led organizations in which the infrastructure abroad starts from the home party's endeavor and (b) rooted-abroad organizations in which the infrastructure abroad builds on existing societal organizations with rudimentary organizational infrastructure. Rooted-abroad organizations refer to a wide repertoire of migrant associations: NGOs, faith-based organizations, voluntary associations, etc. These societal organizations formulate and communicate specific goals and expectations about community abroad. In line with consolidated research on national party politics (Bolleyer, 2013, p. 47), the typology assumes that the origin of the organizational infrastructure abroad impacts the inner dynamics (e.g., goals and temporal orientation). The mainstream literature points out that parties organize according to specific goals. According to Strøm (1990), parties have more than one goal, and, quite often, conflicting goals coexist within complex trade-offs that shape the parties' policies, electoral strategies, and/or coalitional behavior. In line with the rich evidence from migration studies and transnationalism, different goals coexist with different temporal orientations in

Table 1. Types of party organizations abroad.

		Degree of formalization	
		High	*Low*
Party origins	*Home party led*	Branch-abroad	Committee-abroad
	Rooted-abroad	Organization-abroad in franchising	Semi-political associations

extraterritorial politics; rooted infrastructures abroad are more likely to be oriented towards representing specific group interests in the medium/long term. Conversely, in cases where launching an extraterritorial organization is primarily a home party's initiative, the goals are more likely to be oriented toward immediate electoral rewards. This makes them more short-term oriented; top-down extraterritorial infrastructures are designed as strategic electoral vehicles meant to resonate the home party's interests in communities abroad.

The second assumption is that parties are not necessarily unitary actors. Consequently, it is important to delve into intra-party politics to identify the differences in organizational structures (Scarrow & Webb, 2017, p. 7). The question that guides the column dimension is: *To what extent do the party statutes provide for clearly identifiable diaspora party organs and define how power is distributed between the party at home and the party abroad?* In empirical terms, this implies the evaluation of the degree of formalization referred to patterns of interaction prescribed by statutory rules (Janda, 1980). More specifically, a party organization that ranks *high* in the degree of formalization is characterized by (a) a well-codified extraterritorial network in the party organs (e.g., explicit statutory recognition) and (b) clear functional relations between the home party and the extraterritorial units (e.g., the degree of involvement in candidate/leader selection procedures). A low level of formalization refers to cases where: (a) the extraterritorial organization is either absent or so vaguely mentioned that no explicitly designated party unit that officially (and predictably) caters to constituents abroad can be identified. In direct consequence, (b) the functional relationship between national parties and extraterritorial interlocutors remains for the most part informal. These informal and/or less-structured forms of interactions are compatible with alternative substantial linkages. While party statutes represent the main source of information for assessing the *high* level of formalization, relevant insights about these informal linkages can be unveiled by additional sources of information (e.g., secondary literature, interviews, surveys, etc.).

The result is a matrix with four cells that charter the transnational universe of party politics; it does so by considering parties as organizational actors that have to reconcile internal demands from the home party and external requests connected to the constituency abroad. Note that the four cells in Table 1 need to be read as ideal types designed with the intent to aid the understanding of the phenomenon under review; as such the reality cannot be fully identified in the different crosstabulations (Collier et al., 2012).

3.1. Exploring Extraterritorial Party Structures: The Branch-Abroad Type

Branch-abroad corresponds to a party organization whose origins can be traced prevalently to the home party and firmly knit to it. Two key characteristics specify the output of the home party-led outreach: (a) a prevalent focus on electoral mobilization and (b) limited interest in a stable rootedness through local activities between elections. Considering the direct involvement of the home party in the foundation of structural infrastructures abroad, party statutes rapidly identify the party organization abroad. This

formalization provides home parties with an effective tool to justify intra-organizational control. The expected outcome is the branch-abroad full alignment with the home party and the explicit creation of a functional hierarchy between national politics and politics abroad. Branches abroad tend to be statutorily controlled, disciplined, instructed, and supervised by the home party. In the long run, it is reasonable to expect that the trade-offs parties generally face when prioritizing specific goals (Strøm, 1990) fine-tune the initial short-term perspective and motivate the national central offices to invest in viable party infrastructures abroad. More specifically, considering the resources invested in this infrastructure abroad, the central offices become interested in stabilizing their electoral support and, hence, setting up functional structural channels that give the party abroad a say in the home party politics. In other words, electoral goals and group-interest representation become compatible goals in the medium/long run. In this vein, the literature shows that several home parties provide increased space for the inclusion of the communities abroad demands in the national programmatic offer (Østergaard-Nielsen & Ciornei, 2019a, 2019b) and, more generally, in the development of locally rooted organizational structures with regular grassroots following.

The American Democratic Party fits well in this cell. The national party acknowledged the Democrats Abroad (DA) as a 51st state well before the federal right to vote (Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2020, p. 47). Positive electoral outcomes opened a window of opportunity for non-resident activists to interact with the home party and to benefit from a stable organizational basis abroad, with increased opportunities to impact the party's goals (Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2020). The long-term performance increased the synergies between the DA and the home party and led to a functional connection with party supporters online and offline. Note that, in this specific case, the home party's traditional openness to a communitarian approach *ab origine* limited possible tensions between the group's abroad and the national goals (Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2020, p. 49). A similar trajectory can be identified in the case of the French Les Républicains (LR; von Nostitz, 2021). The current party is benefitting from the investments of its center-right predecessors in establishing a relatively wide network of transnational party branches. Statutorily, the LR's transnational branches aim to integrate the specific needs of communities abroad into the party programs. Special seats are guaranteed for their representatives in the home party's executive board and those territorial units with 50 members or more have been granted the right to elect a delegate for the national party congress (von Nostitz, 2021). The transnational branches of LR can influence and participate in the intra-party decision-making processes during the party congress and in the candidate selection process (von Nostitz, 2021). The LR case shows a strategic top-down investment in building locally rooted organizational structures able to recruit activist membership while preserving the collective identity by sharing bottom-up inputs. The extent to which the extraterritorial units can act autonomously from the home party remains limited. The available research testifies to a high degree of control exerted by the home party in important decisions, such as the weight of the national party office in the selection of the leaders of the extraterritorial branches (von Nostitz, 2021).

3.2. Exploring Extraterritorial Party Structures: The Committees Abroad Type

In the case of committees abroad, the home-led origin is not supported by an elaborated formal codification of the party organs abroad in the statutory documents. This leaves space for higher levels of informality in grassroots politics and the interactions between the home party and the extraterritorial arena. Committees abroad are managed by local agents, in personal liaise with the home party's organs. Weakly knit, these committees have a prevalent interest in vote maximization. For the most part, the network of contacts

abroad is seen as an informal setting for like-minded migrant people to socialize and discuss, and, most importantly, to electorally mobilize. Beyond the electoral activities, these flexible structures act as political lobbies for homeland politics, activated upon demand of the home party. All in all, the committees abroad can be seen as advisors for the party at home. During election years, they provide the migrant communities with information and opportunities to meet with candidates. In exchange, they benefit from the contacts with the national candidates while reinforcing their credibility among the communities abroad.

This formation process corresponds to the American Republicans' trajectory abroad (Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2020). Despite the increased awareness of the relevance of overseas votes, the Republican Party did not formalize the inclusion of the Republican overseas (RO) in the party organs. Within a context of transnationalism from above characterized by limited grassroots activity and individual entrepreneurship (Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2020, pp. 47–48), there is evidence that the membership of the infrastructure abroad and the home party partially overlap. Not only do key representatives of RO reside in the US, but also representatives of the home party regularly reach out to overseas voters in a person-to-person interaction (Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2020, p. 48).

The organizational structure of British Conservatives Abroad (CA), as detailed by Collard and Kernalegenn (2021), conforms to the characteristics of the ideal type under consideration. The origins of CA trace back to a department within the Conservative Party International Office, driven by a pragmatic goal of consolidating votes and financial resources. Following a traditional trajectory of organizational development through extraterritorial outreach, led by central leadership and a select group of elites, CA underwent rapid expansion. The organizational framework retained an informal nature, with CA members participating in the Conservative Policy Forum, attending party conferences, and holding the right to vote in party leadership elections (Collard & Kernalegenn, 2021). Despite its longstanding presence overseas, CA's impact on home party politics remains relatively limited, with the majority of its activities focused on fundraising and electoral registration endeavors (Collard & Kernalegenn, 2021; von Nostitz, 2021)

3.3. Exploring Extraterritorial Party Structures: Organization Abroad in Franchising Type

Organization abroad in franchising comes from putting together preexisting ties to organized societal groups and a high level of coordination. As in the model developed by Carty (2004), this type provides mutual autonomy to the home party and the abroad components in exchange for exhibiting a reliable and identifiable political "label" on which migrants can count. While in the previous two types, the goal of the vote-maximization goal was prevalent, in this case, there are complementary interests and goals. From a bottom-up perspective, cooperation and investment in building a functional party infrastructure are motivated by the strategic aim of making the needs, voices, and opinions of the community abroad "present" in public policy-making processes at a national level. In the interaction with homeland politics, the diffused societal linkages in communities abroad provide at least rudimentary organizational infrastructures that become relevant for national politics both in terms of material (e.g., votes, funds, and human resources) and immaterial resources (e.g., diffusion of a recognizable and legitimate political brand, networking with sister parties, and lobbying institutions in the country of residence). The franchise logic couples the pragmatic interests of the home parties with the representational aspirations of the extraterritorial infrastructures in interaction based on explicitly codified statutory rules and procedures (e.g., technical details on the extent of the party's common actions, the selection of candidates, etc.). Within the same party, the arrangements can

vary. Extraterritorial units with comparatively larger resources tend to have more leverage over home parties, mainly because they can make a bigger contribution to the home party's main aims.

The Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE) fits very well in this cell. The literature has documented relevant bottom-up inputs for a specific extraterritorial organization which eventually led the national party council to equate the extraterritorial units to a national district organization (Jakobson et al., 2021). With an active network of members, EKRE's Finnish organizational unit has obtained sufficient autonomy to conduct targeted activities on the ground, devoting itself mainly to online and offline events for the Estonian community abroad. In this way, the extraterritorial unit has primarily aimed to be responsive to the needs of the community of reference, while maintaining a strong connection with the national central offices in electoral matters.

Although in principle more flexible and adaptable than the branches abroad, the units in the franchise are potentially turbulent and prone to conflict. In line with Panebianco (1988), bottom-up formations are weakened by the need to find a compromise between various actors that perceive potentially distinct interests. The Save Romania Union (USR; Gherghina & Soare, 2020) corresponds to this profile. The origins of the extraterritorial organization can be traced back to the community of Romanians in Paris in the context of the 2016 Romanian legislative elections. As in the case of EKRE, the recognition from the central party came as a direct consequence of the intense mobilization on the ground for party-related interest (e.g., support for the collection of signatures in support of the USR candidates). However, tensions over the functional relationships between the national headquarters and the extraterritorial organizations have rapidly gained visibility, in particular concerning the selection of candidates and party leaders. These tensions went beyond the question of who should have been selected within the framework of the statutory procedures and raised questions of ideology and legitimacy while feeding antagonistic factions within the party.

3.4. Exploring Extraterritorial Party Structures: Semi-political Structures Abroad

Semi-political structures correspond to a variety of promoter organizations or groups with social roots that do not fully integrate the party community. There is sheer difficulty in assessing the direction of these informal interactions; indeed, this category is conceptually more fragile, with at least two main sub-types.

There is a sub-type that corresponds to a mutualistic symbiosis. There is extensive evidence that already organized migrant associations/networks abroad facilitate extraterritorial political mobilization by making (material and immaterial) resources easily available to home parties (for an excellent literature review see Fliess, 2021). Considering their societal roots, these organizations easily get involved in politics with a focus on voicing the diaspora-group interests (Lafleur, 2013; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003). The informality of the interactions with home parties delineates a wide space of negotiation (Paarlberg, 2023). Parties at home can more easily target specific social segments and obtain votes and access to relevant resources while ignoring the complex costs of party organization abroad. Interestingly, individual candidates can become an active part of this process; Japanese candidate-centered politics has expanded abroad in the form of candidates' contacts with associational networks (Uekami et al., 2020). There is also evidence that migrant associations can provide a relevant campaign advantage since the members of the community are much more likely to consider specific political candidacies if a local association or an individual they know asks them to do so

(Fliess, 2021; Paarlberg, 2023). The lack of institutionalized permanent party presence in the Mexican diaspora made the network of migrant associations increasingly appealing to home politics. There is evidence that representatives of these associations offered targeted campaign advice and assisted different parties with specific needs in and beyond elections (e.g., fund-raising, lobbying, etc.). All in all, these migrant associations act as political brokers able to define and redefine party politics abroad. The outcome of this cooperation is a semi-political extraterritorial structure, a functional substitute for traditional party linkages (Lawson, 1980) in the sense that it serves as an informal agency for ensuring that home parties will be responsive to the views and interests of communities abroad in exchange for votes and/or other relevant resources (e.g., fundraising and lobbying). These relationships generally develop within informal settings. However, home parties may also attempt to formalize alliances with migrant organizations and integrate them into the historical collateral organizations, similar to the approach national parties used to connect with specific societal interests that were not easily accessible (Poguntke, 2002). Gherghina and Soare (2020) provide evidence in this direction concerning the Romanian Social Democratic Party.

The second scenario includes a more intrusive role of party politics and, eventually, forms of commensalist symbiosis. In this extreme case, there is a one-sided relationship in which the societal association is not harmed, but the home party benefits more. The Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (Yener-Roderburg, 2020) fits in this description. Created two decades before the creation of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), the association has been intensively instrumentalized politically by the AKP, with implicit rewards (Yener-Roderburg, 2020, p. 226). Beyond this extreme relationship, in most cases, the bottom-up origins are diluted in different intensities of party invasion ranging from infiltration to co-optation, including the ad hoc creation of migrant associations (Fliess, 2021). The strategies of intrusion documented in the Bolivian case are less invasive than in the Turkish case. Migrants with a partisan background have joined associations with the prevalent intent to socialize with fellow compatriots abroad; in the context of electoral campaigns, their partisan background was activated and targeted people from their networks abroad. However, the migrant associations maintained an apolitical position. To wit, the MAS-IPSP campaign team took part in different events organized by migrant associations in which their party members were involved; the representatives of the home party shared photos of these events on Facebook, implying an implicit endorsement from the different associations (Fliess, 2021). Among Ecuadorian parties, strategies of co-optation led to a permanent transnational executive committee in which migrant leaders occupied official positions (Fliess, 2021). In parallel, presidents in migrant associations became local representatives of parties (e.g., Alianza País, CREO, and SUMA; Fliess, 2021). All in all, the strategies of infiltration and cooption provide home parties with functional collateral networks that support them in broadening the transnational reach of the parties they represent.

4. Conclusions

Within an increased dialogue with the literature on party politics, the literature shows that across different political settings, contemporary political parties have built temporary or stable organizations abroad where physical and virtual and formal and informal cross-border political activities and practices coexist. An important aspect emerging from this wide literature is that party organizations abroad have become part of a transnational democratic representation, in the sense that parties abroad integrate communities abroad into politics, motivate them to vote, and provide them with opportunities for socialization. The evidence also indicates that this transnational party politics has affected not only the migrants' sense of (political)

belonging but also the responsiveness of homeland politics with a focus on how much or little public policies include the demands and preferences of communities abroad through the political process. In this context, the analysis looked at the connections and activities held by party organizations across borders. The extraterritorial party organization has been interpreted as part of the interconnected experiences through which national political actors/institutions and migrants have been forging multifaceted links between the country of origin and the country of residence.

The analysis presented a typology that reworked previous classifications to clarify how parties are organized in the transnational arena. The typology was meant to allow a higher interaction with the mainstream literature on party politics, more specifically an increased comparability with data collected at the national level. The four types identified showed that the strength of the societal linkages abroad varies according to both internal and external factors and, most importantly, that the collection of national communities and communities abroad that make up contemporary party organizations does not necessarily share the same interests and goals. There are, however, relevant caveats to be mentioned. This analysis had a prevalently descriptive aim; hence, it did not clarify how or why some configurations are more frequent than others or why some types might perform better than others in the long run. At the same time, the configurations mapped dealt prevalently with (procedural) democratic contexts. The typology did not take into account how the nature of a non-democratic regime might impact the organizational features of parties' transnational engagement. Last but not least, the typology focused on one of the three main dimensions that characterized the organizational capacity of a party, namely the structural dimensions. It is necessary to include the other two dimensions in the research agenda aiming to provide a more fine-grained analysis of the variance in terms of party organization abroad. Similarly, the mainstream literature agrees that cross-national (and even subnational) differences in terms of party organization are explained by both internal and external characteristics (e.g., the political opportunity structure). In the current form, the typology does not assess the impact of the electoral rules, the dynamics and nature of party competition, the role of the media, and/or the political cleavage structure. All these caveats can be seen as guidelines for further zooming in on the organizational dynamics of transnational politics.

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to extend profound gratitude to the anonymous reviewers for their invaluable and insightful comments and suggestions on the preceding versions of this article. The contributions of the reviewers have played a pivotal role in markedly elevating the overall quality of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Politics and Governance
2024 • Volume 12 • Article 7440
https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.7440

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Open Access Journal

What Does It Take for Immigrants to Join Political Parties?

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Submitted: 27 July 2023 **Accepted:** 29 December 2023 **Published:** 13 March 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue "The Political Representation and Participation of Migrants" edited by Sergiu Gherghina (University of Glasgow) and Sorina Soare (University of Florence), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i354

Abstract

Political parties are crucial agents in democratic representation and political integration of persons of immigrant origin, a growing category of citizens in the European Union. Research demonstrates that citizens of immigrant origin are less likely to join political parties than persons without a migratory background. Nevertheless, party membership varies across countries and between immigrants. Accounting for such inter-individual and cross-national variations, this article uses secondary data from the European Social Survey, the Migrant Integration Policy Index, and the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project for 25 European democracies to uncover mechanisms that explain the party membership of immigrants. In our multilevel analysis, we test interactions between country-specific variations in legislation on migration policies on the one hand and individual differences in political socialisation and political efficacy on the other. Our models suggest significant positive effects of exposure to a democratic regime in the country of origin and of internal efficacy on party membership of citizens of immigrant origin. Additionally, our findings highlight the significance of an inclusive national framework for immigrant integration, serving as a moderator to diminish the impact of political socialisation in less democratic countries on the decision of citizens with immigrant backgrounds to participate in political parties within their country of residence.

Keywords

immigrants; integration policies; multilevel models; party membership

1. Introduction

Political parties are crucial agents of democratic representation and governance (Müller, 2000; Powell, 2004) and important gatekeepers in the process of elite recruitment. Party membership has been argued to be a central mechanism linking citizens to the state and a source of the democratic legitimacy political parties have in representative democracies (Gauja & van Haute, 2015; Scarrow, 2014; van Biezen et al., 2012). Despite

the decreasing number of party members and the challenges traditional party membership faces (van Biezen et al., 2012; van Biezen & Poguntke, 2014), party membership continues to play an essential role in political representation and democratic legitimacy.

Research has demonstrated that party members compose a rather homogenous group of citizens that does not mirror the diversity in the population (Achury et al., 2020; Angenendt, 2023). Focusing on citizens of immigrant origin (CIO), characterized by their diversity in terms of ethnicity, religion, race, and language, studies have identified barriers immigrants face while incorporating themselves into political parties and becoming elected representatives (Dancygier et al., 2015; Zapata-Barrero, 2017). Though party membership is only one of the many forms of political participation, it is one of the most important routes to high political office and direct policy influence (Gauja & van Haute, 2015; Scarrow, 2014). Thus, immigrants' shortfall of party membership in their countries of residence may hinder their substantive and descriptive representation (da Fonseca, 2011). Moreover, gaps in party activism between immigrants and natives indicate political inequalities between these groups and challenges for the political integration of immigrants.

Seminal studies of party membership have examined the general motivations for party activism (Seyd & Whiteley, 1992, 2002; Whiteley & Seyd, 2002). While these analyses have successfully uncovered motivations for party membership, they have generally not focused on socio-demographic sub-groups beyond gender and age. Although there is no reason to doubt that party members of immigrant origin are motivated by many of the same general incentives found for members from the autochthonous population, research suggests that the experience of belonging to an ethnic minority or immigrant group may affect a person's level and style of party activism (e.g., Arslan, 2011; Cyrus, 2008). Knowing that, in general, migration background reduces the likelihood of political action (Morales & Giugni, 2011; Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001; Soininen & Bäck, 1993), party membership that is already rare for the autochthonous population can be particularly discouraging for immigrants. Even though existing studies of immigrant experiences add considerable information on individual perceptions, experiences, and motivations of party activists with immigrant origin, they are usually based on limited observations specific to particular individuals or groups in time. Hence, neither the larger-scale general membership studies nor the small-n studies of immigrant-origin members provide any information on the factors affecting the transition from non-member to membership status among immigrants and their descendants. Not least, they tell us very little about the effect macro-level covariates have on immigrants' decision to join political parties.

Given the small number of party members of immigrant origin and the lack of documentation in membership registers, modelling the decision of CIO to become formal party members has been difficult. This article seeks to shed light on this question. Relying on secondary data from the European Social Survey (ESS), the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), and the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project for 25 European democracies, we break new ground in modelling the choices to join a political party in the country of residence or not, made by CIO. Employing multi-level regression models, we combine (a) macro-level structural information on the countries of ancestral origin as well as the countries CIO currently live in with (b) individual-level data capturing their political socialisation and psychological factors recognised in the literature on political participation. Hence, building on established models of political participation, we develop an innovative approach to understanding the mechanisms behind the party membership of immigrants.

This article complements Finn and Ramaciotti's (2024) article, which unpacks the factors shaping the legal frameworks defining the political opportunity structures for immigrants and adds a layer to how institutional frameworks can shape the political participation of CIO. Furthermore, it aligns with the work of Gherghina and Basarabă (2024) underlying the importance of the experience immigrants have in both their country of origin and their country of residence and further demonstrates how such experiences can shape the party membership of immigrants.

2. Party Membership of CIO: Interactions Between Macro and Micro Factors

Studies on ethnic minorities in political parties have provided great knowledge on the importance of incorporation of minority groups in political institutions, the complex multilevel factors associated with ethnic representation in electoral bodies (Saggar, 2000), as well as ethnic mobilisation in mainstream and ethnic political parties (Buta & Gherghina, 2023; Chandra, 2011). Research has demonstrated that descriptive representation of ethnic minorities mobilises citizens with similar demographic characteristics (Birnir, 2007). Despite the differences between CIO and ethnic minority citizens, these studies provide insight into the challenges minority groups face in political parties in ensuring political representation.

Political parties vary in the extent to which their values and policies support or oppose immigration and the interests of immigrants and their descendants (van der Brug et al., 2015), as well as the extent to which they encourage and foster the involvement of immigrants within their organisations (Alba & Foner, 2009, 2015). An essential factor in explaining the immigrant representation gap is political parties and party gatekeepers in particular (Dancygier et al., 2021; Höhne et al., 2023). The supply-demand factors used to explain the underrepresentation of minority groups underline the role demands of selectors and the characteristics of those aspiring to be representatives (Norris & Lovenduski, 1993). Extensive research has demonstrated the undermining effect individual factors have on immigrants' decision to take political action. The limited access to resources such as time, money, education, civic skills, or social capital for the majority of immigrants has been used to explain some of the inequalities in political participation between immigrants and native citizens (Leighley & Vedlitz, 1999; Ramakrishnan, 2005; Verba et al., 1993). There is little reason to assume that involvement in a political party, a particularly resource-intensive form of political participation, would not follow patterns of inequality. In addition to resources, experiences such as discrimination (e.g., Schildkraut, 2005), social networks (e.g., Jacobs & Tillie, 2004), national attachments, and ethnic identity (e.g., Rapp, 2020; Schildkraut, 2005) can affect immigrants' decision to become politically active. Furthermore, immigrants may have retained strong political ties with their ancestral countries of origin and can be mobilised by the political parties in the country of origin (Kernalegenn & van Haute, 2020). Hence, immigrants' decision to join a political party in their country of residence can be influenced by a complex set of micro-level factors.

The rights of immigrants according to a country's laws and other relevant elements of what might be called the 'structure of political opportunities' for political engagement are particularly important for immigrants (Kastoryano & Schader, 2014). There has been a long tradition of research examining the role of variations in political institutions and opportunity structures in explaining cross-national differences in aggregate patterns of immigrants' political participation (Bird et al., 2011; Freeman, 2004; Vogel, 2008). However, the micro-foundations in the political decisions immigrants make have generally remained understudied in research on political opportunity structures and political participation.

In this research, we test the influence opportunity structures may have on micro-foundations in explaining party membership of CIO. Though data demonstrate that CIO in Europe are less likely to join political parties in the countries they live in than persons without a migratory background (see Supplementary File, Appendix A2), some still decide to join political parties, whereas others do not. Moreover, party membership among CIO is far more widespread in some European democracies than in others (Appendix A2). These findings underscore the need for explanations to understand the micro-foundations of responses to contextual variables at the macro-level. Recognising the impact political parties as organisations at the meso level may have in explaining party activism among immigrants (Dancygier et al., 2021; Höhne et al., 2023). In this article, we disentangle the mechanisms explaining the decision of immigrants to join a political party, focusing on variation streaming from institutional frameworks and individual differences among immigrants. First, we estimate the effect that the level of democracy in the country of origin and political efficacy have on party membership while controlling for recognised predictors of political participation of immigrants, such as resources, citizenship, duration of residence, and the person's attachment to the country of residence, as well as a predictor to party membership such as age and gender. Secondly, we embed individual-level analysis in a multi-level design estimating the impact of the institutional context in the country of residence on the individual-level factors explaining the decision to join a political party. The most fundamental institutional variables relevant to our research are laws, policies, and practices that shape the rights and opportunities of immigrants in their countries of residence, including policies that deal with conditions of settlement (integration policies) and policies that regulate access to full democratic membership (citizenship policies; see Helbling et al., 2017). That being said, by applying multilevel analysis, we go beyond standard models of party membership and political participation to explain immigrants' party membership.

2.1. Institutional Context and the Effects of Political Socialisation on Party Membership of Immigrants

The process of political socialisation for first-generation immigrants starts in their countries of origin and continues in their countries of residence (Neundorf & Smets, 2017). Through intergenerational transmission, first-generation immigrants transfer their experiences to their descendants (Aggeborn & Nyman, 2021; Jennings et al., 2009). Thus, for both first- and second-generation immigrants, the political socialisation—or the process by which citizens develop their political information, values, and behaviour (Neundorf & Smets, 2017)—is associated with structures and agents of socialisation in the countries of residence and of ancestral origin.

From the perspective of resistance theory, the political socialisation of immigrants is conditioned by political learning in their formative life (White et al., 2008). Following this theory, "people tend to avoid or reject environmental messages that are inconsistent with orientations accumulated during the formative years" (White et al., 2008, pp. 269–270). Applying this theory to the case of party membership, immigrants who experienced political parties in their country of origin in a way that is inconsistent with the role of political parties in pluralist liberal democracies may reject joining political parties. Citizens from countries with less developed democracies may lack the civic skills and knowledge required for political involvement in liberal democracies (Aleksynska, 2011; Just & Anderson, 2012). Studies demonstrated that immigrants' experience with autocracy reduces their support for democracy (Bilodeau et al., 2010), lowers immigrants' trust in political institutions (Voicu & Tufiş, 2017), and can hamper their social trust (Xu & Jin, 2018). While the implications of the democratisation in the country of origin on the electoral behaviour in the country of residence are less conclusive (Bilodeau & Dumouchel, 2023; Bueker, 2005; Okundaye et al., 2022; Xu & Jin,

2018), immigrants' experience with autocratic regimes may hinder other forms of political participation in the country of residence; (Bilodeau, 2008; Bilodeau & Dumouchel, 2023). That said, party activism of immigrants, as one of the costliest forms of political participation, might be particularly affected by immigrants' experience with an autocratic regime in their country of origin.

Advocates of the theory of exposure argue that the more exposure immigrants have to new social influences, the more they will adapt their thinking and behaviour to these newly learned patterns (White et al., 2008). Some scholars used the duration of residence as a proxy for socialisation and exposure (e.g., Sumino, 2023). Following this argument, research has found duration of residence to be positively associated with political participation and voting (Leighley & Vedlitz, 1999; Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001) and can contribute to stronger partisan identities of immigrants (Cain et al., 1991; Wong, 2000). Nevertheless, cross-sectional research, which demonstrates differences across countries in immigrants' political behaviour (e.g., Bird et al., 2011) indicates that the duration of residence alone does not explain exposure to political learning sufficiently.

The effects of exposure and resistance on the willingness of CIO to join a political party in the countries of residence can be affected by factors in the wider institutional environment of these countries (Freeman, 2004; Wright & Bloemraad, 2012). The political rights immigrants enjoy in their countries of residence may facilitate political integration (Martiniello, 2006). For example, Pilati and Herman (2020) find that more inclusive citizenship and residence regimes tend to increase immigrants' political participation in their countries of residence. Despite the inconsistent results on the implication integration and citizenship policies have on integration outcomes (Ersanilli & Koopmans, 2010, 2011; Neureiter, 2019), the policies for integration and citizenship define the rights and opportunities of immigrants in the country of residence. For example, these policies define the conditions required for immigrants to enter the educational system and the labour market, the opportunities for political participation, opportunities for cultural and social integration, laws for protection against discrimination, and requirements for membership. Thus, more open policies provide more opportunities for immigrants to engage in diverse dimensions of society and enable immigrants to have stronger exposure and socialisation with agencies from their country of residence. From here, we hypothesise:

> H1: The higher the level of democracy in the country of origin, the more likely a CIO is to join a political party in the country of residence.

> H2: The more inclusive the institutional framework for integration in the country of residence, the less pronounced the effect of the level of democracy on the likelihood of party membership.

2.2. Institutional Context and the Effects of Efficacy on the Party Membership of Immigrants

Scholarship has provided robust evidence on the predictive value both internal and external efficacy have on the decision to take political action, including the decision to join a political party (Chang, 2023; Craig et al., 1990). Internal efficacy refers to "beliefs about one's competence to understand and to participate effectively in politics," while external political efficacy is capturing "beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizen demands" (Craig et al., 1990, pp. 290). In addition to the direct effect internal efficacy has on the intention to participate in conventional action, it also mediates the predictive

power political knowledge and personality traits have on citizens' decision to take political action (Reichert, 2016; Vecchione & Caprara, 2009). Furthermore, external efficacy is related to political trust (Bienstman et al., 2023; Craig et al., 1990) and perceptions of institutions' responsiveness (Abramson & Aldrich, 1982). CIO have often been described as less informed about the politics of the country of residence, with lower levels of civic skills or language skills and lower levels of political and social trust (Quintelier, 2009; Xu & Jin, 2018). A lack of skills and knowledge relevant to political participation can reduce immigrants' self-confidence in their ability to understand and participate in the politics of political parties in their country of residence, while a lack of political trust can hurt their external efficacy. With that, party activism, which is already rare for native citizens, can be particularly discouraging for immigrants.

Political efficacy is developed under the influence of macro-level factors. For example, direct democracy has been shown to have a positive effect on efficacy (Chang, 2023) and the predictive power efficacy has on political participation can be affected by the distinctiveness of the political party system (Ikeda et al., 2008). Moreover, individual perception of connectedness within the community increases both internal and external efficacy (Anderson, 2010). Hence, the institutional frameworks and social experience in the country of residence could shape immigrants' efficacious feelings.

Focusing on internal efficacy, research has demonstrated that it develops through political learning (Beaumont, 2011), civic education (Pasek et al., 2008), and gathering political information (Nie et al., 1969). Goodman and Wright (2015) reveal that immigrants are more confident in their political decisions in countries that implement civic integration policies with higher requirements of civic and language skills during the process of naturalisation. As Vecchione and Caprara (2009) suggest, political actions are embedded in broader social agencies that shape people's confidence in their abilities to contribute to the functioning of democracy. Building on that, policies that define access to diverse social agencies may have significant power over immigrants' sense of internal efficacy and, thus, their readiness to participate in democratic processes.

Studies on external efficacy have demonstrated that proportional electoral systems, by increasing external efficacy, have a positive effect on electoral turnout (Karp & Banducci, 2008). In general, external efficacy is directly affected by the political system and the performance of governments (Coleman & Davis, 1976). Following this argument, immigrants' external efficacy will depend on how satisfied and represented they feel with the government. That being said, we argue that more open integration and citizenship policies represent immigrants' interests better than rigorous integration and citizenship policies. Thus, we hypothesise that:

> H3: The higher the level of (internal and external) efficacy of CIO, the higher their probability of joining a political party in the country of residence.
>
> H4: Where integration policies are more inclusive, the effect of efficacy (internal and external) on party membership is weaker than in countries where integration policies are more exclusive.

3. Data and Methods

To identify the extent to which the party membership of immigrants is influenced by institutional factors and to understand whether, and if so, how CIO differ from citizens without immigrant origin when deciding

whether they wish to work in a political party, we need a sample of the total population. Despite some limitations (Aleksynska, 2008), data from large-scale comparative population surveys have been found to show general promise in the study of party members (Ponce & Scarrow, 2016). We base our empirical analysis on the second version of the ninth round of the ESS. Our sample is limited to member states of the European Union that took part in the ESS in 2018 (in 2018, the UK was still an EU member state). Also in the sample, we included Switzerland and Norway as countries with similar opportunity structures as EU states and a significant population of immigrant origin.

We operationalise a respondent's immigration status as a dichotomous variable registering a value of zero if a respondent did not indicate any migratory background themselves or in their parent's generation (reference category) and a value of 1 for persons who were born outside the country of residence ("first-generation CIO") and respondents who said they had at least one parent who was born abroad as a foreign national ("second-generation CIO"). We opted to amalgamate first-generation and second-generation immigrants in our estimations, largely because of the small number of first-generation immigrants amongst party members in some countries. This strategy makes better use of the heterogeneity among CIOs in terms of relevant personal characteristics and provides robust statistical results.

For our dependent variable, *worked in political party*, we use an item in the ESS asking respondents whether they had worked in a political party or similar organisation in the past twelve months before the interview. For the independent variable on the macro-level, *level of democracy in the country of origin*, we rely on the V-Dem project. From this data set, we use the liberal democracy index ranging from *low* (0) to *high* (1) to characterise democratisation in each country of origin the respondents in the sample reported. For the independent variable at the individual level—*political efficacy*—we constructed scales for internal and external efficacy. These scales were produced through a factor analysis of five ESS items, which refer to the individuals' assessments of the responsiveness of the political system and the government and their own expected ability and confidence to participate politically (see Supplementary File, Appendix A5). For the macro-level variable *integration policies*, we employed factor analysis to produce scales from the MIPEX designed to capture legislation on education, anti-discrimination, family reunion, political participation, permanent residence, and access to nationality. Thereby we generated an index on integration, which is strongly associated with the MIPEX variables *education*, *political participation*, *anti-discrimination*, and *access to citizenship* (Appendix A5). We used the factor scores for integration to estimate cross-level interactions in the model. More detailed information on our individual and contextual covariates can be found in the Supplementary File, Appendix A3.

Acknowledging the comprehensive range of influential factors affecting political engagement among CIO (Just & Anderson, 2012; Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001; Rapp, 2020; Verba et al., 1993), our model controls for individual covariates. These include citizenship, resources (education and occupation), duration of residence, and attachment to the country of residence. The variable *occupational status* is measured with the ESS item "occupation," using the 2012 International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO08). This covariate was recoded to create an ordinal variable with four ISCO-based categories. The variable *duration of residence*, capturing political socialisation in the country of residence, was created by calculating the difference between the year a respondent first came to live in the country of residence and the year the interview was conducted. The variable *national attachment* is measured in the ESS with a ten-point scale ranging from *not at all emotionally attached* (0) to *very emotionally attached* (10). Additionally, following the

findings on the relevance gender and age have on the likelihood of party membership (Achury et al., 2020; Angenendt, 2023), our model controls for gender and age.

Hierarchical models are a useful estimation method because they adjust parameter estimates in relation to the clustered nature of the data (Gelman & Hill, 2006; Snijders & Bosker, 2011). Because our dependent variables are dichotomous, we fit multi-level logistic regression models. To assess whether the application of multi-level logistic regressions is justified, we first estimate the proportion of the second-level variance compared to the total variance by calculating the intra-class correlation coefficient (ICC). The ICC always ranges between 0 and 1, where ICC = 1 indicates that the entire variance is due to differences between the groups. In contrast, ICC = 0 would indicate that the total variance is due solely to differences within the groups. If the latter were true, there would be no variation between upper-level contexts and, therefore, no need for a multi-level analysis. Although there is no predetermined reference value, a rule of thumb frequently found in the literature is that a multi-level analysis is statistically necessary from a value of ICC = 0.05 (Hox et al., 2018; Snijders & Bosker, 2011). With an ICC of 0.089, the null hypothesis stating that there is no variance between contexts can be rejected. Thus, the application of multi-level analyses is statistically recommended. Our multi-level logistic regressions account for the random effects of the dependent variables concerning contextual differences.

4. Results

In this section, we focus on the results of our multi-level logistic regression model of party membership. A descriptive overview of the used variables and more information on the descriptive statistics can be found in the Supplementary File, Appendixes A3 and A4.

Since the mean values of our factor scores (integration policy, internal and external efficacy) are zero and the mean value of the index of democracy in the country of origin is close to zero, coefficients in Table 1 can have a meaningful interpretation. The results in Table 1 demonstrate, for an integration factor of zero, that the higher the index of democracy in the country of origin the higher the chances that CIO will join a political party in the country of residence. Hence, this finding supports our first hypothesis. This result follows the line of research that argues that immigrant citizens with origin from an autocratic country face more challenges for political integration in the countries of residence than immigrants coming from established democracies (Bilodeau & Dumouchel, 2023; Bilodeau et al., 2010). Moreover, this result demonstrates that in addition to electoral participation and protests (Bilodeau, 2008; Bueker, 2005), the effect streaming from the political system in the country of origin can be extended to party membership in the country of residence. That said, this result provides empirical support for the "transferability argument" (Bilodeau et al., 2010; Voicu & Tufiş, 2017; Xu & Jin, 2018) and demonstrates that both political learning in the country of origin (first-generation) and political learning in the family (second-generation) can influence immigrants' party activism in the country of residence.

Furthermore, results in Table 1 show that, if the moderator variables (internal, external efficacy, and index of democracy in the country of origin) are zero, the inclusiveness of integration policies has a statistically significant positive effect on party membership for CIO, meaning that CIO are more likely to join political parties in countries with more open integration policies than in countries with more closed integration policies. For example, Sweden and Portugal, countries that report the highest scores in openness of integration policies, have among the highest rates of party members with immigrant origin. On the contrary, Bulgaria and Hungary,

countries that rank in the lowest ranks for integration policies, report the lowest rates for party members with immigrant origin (see Supplementary File, Appendixes A2 and A5). This result contributes to the literature on immigrant political participation and demonstrates that integration policies matter for the political integration of immigrants.

Table 1. Multi-level logistic regression model of party membership.

Party membership	Persons without immigrant origin	CIO (first and second generation combined)
Index of democracy in the country of origin		0.0860*
		(0.0412)
Integration Policy	−3.3883	0.7010*
	(2.013)	(0.3037)
Internal efficacy	1.3152**	1.1399**
	(0.0385)	(0.0871)
External efficacy	0.3011**	0.1267
	(0.0425)	(0.0950)
Cross-level interaction terms		
Index of democracy in the country of origin # integration		−0.1119**
		(0.0388)
Internal efficacy # integration	−0.0660	−0.0219
	(0.035)	(0.0803)
External efficacy # integration	−0.1254**	−0.1540
	(0.0406)	(0.0921)
Intercept	−10.8605**	−5.4355**
	(2.6795)	(0.5348)
Countries	25	25
N	29,210	5,961

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; Controls omitted from display; for the full model see Supplementary File, Appendix A.1, Table 1; # represents the interaction between items.

For a more vivid interpretation of the effect the institutional frameworks have on the outcomes of party membership across immigrants, we visualise our statistically significant multilevel analysis testing the moderation effect the integration policies in the country of residence have on the predictive value the "level of democracy in the country of origin" has on the party membership of immigrants. Results in Table 1 demonstrate that integration policies moderate the effect of "democratisation in the country of origin." This result supports the argument for political socialisation as lifelong learning (Neundorf & Smets, 2017), as well as theories on exposure underlying the importance of political learning and political resocialisation in the receiving country (White et al., 2008).

The plot of predictive margins in Figure 1 shows that supportive integration policies play a significant role in reducing the gap in party membership found for respondents from countries with relatively low values on the V-Dem index of liberal democracy. This result supports our second hypothesis. Moreover, this finding adds to the existing knowledge on political resocialisation and demonstrates, in addition to time spent in the country (Sumino, 2023), that policies governments implement influence the "exposure" immigrants experience in the country of residence and can shape the outcomes in the political participation of immigrants.

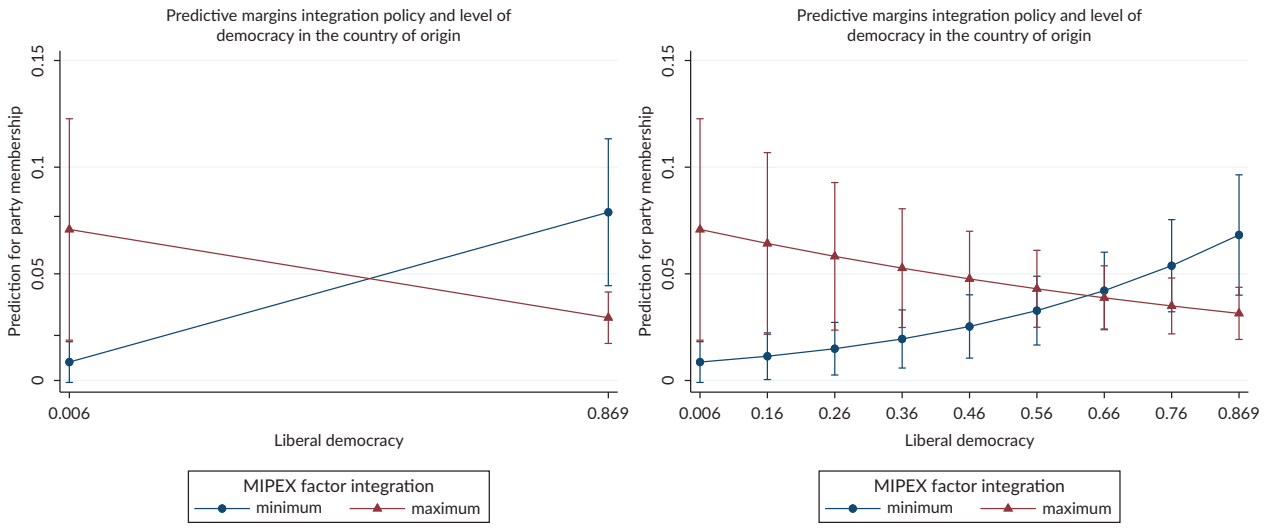

Figure 1. Cross-level interaction effect of inclusive integration policy and pre-migration exposure to liberal democracy among CIO.

Further, in our model, we test the predictive value internal and external efficacy have on party membership. Results, again under the respective condition that the integration factor is zero, demonstrate that internal efficacy has a strong predictive power. The effect of internal efficacy holds for CIO and the autochthonous population and confirms earlier findings in the literature on political participation (Chang, 2023; Craig et al., 1990). External efficacy, by contrast, is significantly associated with party membership for the autochthonous population, but not for CIO. These results demonstrate that although for autochthonous populations both internal and external efficacy are equally relevant in the decision to work in a political party, for immigrants, only their self-confidence in political actions matters, while their perception of institutions' responsiveness does not play a significant role. Hence, this finding partially supports our third hypothesis. Similarly to our findings, Michelson (2000) identified that external efficacy does not have the same power to vote for Latinos as it does for Anglos. Nevertheless, this finding leaves an open question of why external efficacy is not a relevant predictor for party membership of CIO as it is for native citizens.

Finally, our model tests whether integration policies will moderate the significant effect efficacy has over party membership. Our results demonstrate that the inclusiveness of integration policy does not moderate the effect of internal efficacy. Hence, our fourth hypothesis is not supported. This result follows findings identifying that immigrants' internal efficacy is not associated with the enforcement of immigration policies (Rocha et al., 2015) and contradicts studies arguing for significant effects of civic education and political learning on immigrants' internal efficacy (Beaumont, 2011; Pasek et al., 2008). Thus, though specific immigration policies may influence the internal efficacy of immigrants, the integration policies (operationalised as an overall score including various dimensions and segments of the integration process) do not have a significant impact on the internal efficacy of immigrants.

Reporting for our control variables (see Supplementary File, Appendix A1), results demonstrate that occupational status is a statistically insignificant factor for party membership for both CIO and autochthon citizens. Education, on the contrary, is a statistically significant factor for party membership of autochthon citizens while it is not for CIO. In line with existing research (Martiniello, 2006), naturalised immigrants are

more likely to join political parties than non-naturalised immigrants. Age is a statistically significant predictor for both CIO and autochthon citizens, while gender is statistically significant only for autochthon citizens. Finally, duration of residence and attachment to the country of residence are not significant predictors for party membership of immigrants.

5. Conclusion

This article provides a unique knowledge of factors explaining the decision of immigrants to join a political party in their country of residence, which is the initial step towards the incorporation of immigrants in political parties.

Presenting comparable models on the factors associated with the choice of party membership in the autochthonous population and immigrant population allowed us to see how factors shaping the decision to join a political party differ between the two groups. In our model, we find a significant positive effect of the level of democracy in the country of origin on the likelihood of immigrants joining a political party in the country of residence. This finding supports the literature arguing that political socialisation in the country of origin (Bilodeau & Dumouchel, 2023; Bilodeau et al., 2010) and political learning in the family (Jennings et al., 2009) matter for the political behaviour of immigrants. In addition to the effect integration policies have on the party membership of immigrants, we find that in multilevel interaction the inclusiveness of the integration policies reduces the negative effect of an autocratic country of origin on the party membership of immigrants. With that, this research supports the theories arguing that institutional frameworks influence political learning (Soss, 1999) and opposes the "resistance" theory of political learning (White et al., 2008). More importantly, this finding contributes with a new perspective on how macro factors can shape the exposure to political learning immigrants experience in their country of residence and influence the outcomes of immigrants' party activism.

Furthermore, this research shows that internal efficacy is a powerful psychological driver of party membership irrespective of the migration status. The effect of external efficacy is positive for both citizens with and without immigrant origin, but it is statistically significant for the latter only. Though this finding supports our assumption that factors shaping the likelihood of party membership might not be equal for immigrants and natives, it leaves us with the question of why external efficacy does not matter for party membership of immigrants as it does for natives. The insignificant moderation effect between integration policies and internal efficacy indicates that specific programmes for political learning (Beaumont, 2011; Pasek et al., 2008) and electoral contexts (Chang, 2023; Ikeda et al., 2008) might have a stronger impact on internal efficacy than the broader institutional framework for integration.

This article makes a unique contribution in explaining the party membership of immigrants and uncovers the impact the institutional frameworks, both in the country of origin and country of residence, can have on the party activism of immigrants in the country of residence. Our findings imply that institutional frameworks—in our case, inclusive integration policies in the country of residence—matter as moderators reducing some disadvantages of party activism for immigrants. Bearing in mind the high number of international migrants in Europe originating from underdeveloped or developing democracies, our findings increase the importance of the implemented policies for integration countries.

Though this research provides a good base for immigrant party membership, further research can extend the knowledge of how additional factors can shape the party activism of immigrants. Following the rising number of war refugees in Europe, as well as recent findings on the importance experience with political violence and political conflicts in the country of origin can have on the political orientation of immigrants (Okundaye et al., 2022; Soehl et al., 2023), further research will benefit from a more extended contextual framework in the country of origin and the implication it may have on the political behaviour of immigrants in their country of residence. Though the cross-sectional analysis has enabled us to provide generalisable knowledge on migrants' patterns of party membership in different countries in Europe, the low number of cases did not allow us to test further interactions with specific immigrant groups or ethnic groups within the countries.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers and Sabrina Mayer, David Beck, Stefano Camatarri, Karina Kosiara-Pedersen, Daniela Vintila, Teresa Freitas Monteiro, Silke Anger, and Jacopo Bassetto for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.

Funding

This work was supported by funding through the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action Global Mobility Of Employees (GLOMO). This project received funding from the European Union's H2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement no. 765355. Additionally, this work was supported by the Bamberg Graduate School of Social Sciences (BAGSS).

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Supplementary Material

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

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Politics and Governance
2024 • Volume 12 • Article 7453
https://doi.org/10.17645/7453

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ARTICLE

Open Access Journal

Selective Inclusion? Insights Into Political Parties' Recruitment of Immigrant Background Candidates in Bolzano

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Submitted: 30 July 2023 **Accepted:** 20 December 2023 **Published:** 13 March 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue "The Political Representation and Participation of Migrants" edited by Sergiu Gherghina (University of Glasgow) and Sorina Soare (University of Florence), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i354

Abstract

Political parties can be crucial gatekeepers to the political participation of immigrants. This article analyzes the political selection strategies of political parties at the local level. The case study focuses on the multi-ethnic city of Bolzano in Northern Italy, which is home to a significant migrant population as well as three autochthonous language groups: Italian, German, and Ladin. First, the article gives an overview of the political lists presented at the last local elections in 2020. Second, it discusses party strategies to recruit candidates with an immigration background. The presented insights are drawn from seven "elite" interviews (i.e., with high-ranking party representatives). Overall, the findings indicate that diversity stemming from migration does not have a significant impact on the recruitment strategies of the province's political parties': Despite electoral lists containing an increasing number of immigrants, who have migrated to South Tyrol since the 1990s, neither newer nor traditional parties adopt significant strategies to recruit candidates with an immigration background. Overall, the diversity on political lists mostly reflects the existing language cleavages of the autochthonous population, while diversity stemming from immigration is still largely overlooked. However, the results also show that while neither of the parties is fully inclusive or exclusive in their selection methods, we identify a tendency toward selective inclusiveness of certain immigrant groups.

Keywords

diversity; immigrants; immigrant background; local elections; political parties; political recruitment; selective inclusiveness

1. Introduction

The representation of people with an immigrant background is a decisive indicator of a society's fundamental inclusion capacity (Alba & Foner, 2015). According to Mansbridge (1999), descriptive representation offers symbolic importance to minority groups. Yet, while most research focuses on elections and their outcomes for the representation of candidates with an immigrant background, the critical choices are already made beforehand, namely during political parties' candidate selection processes. Hence, political parties are crucial actors, deciding who can become a candidate and who cannot—and the representation of immigrant candidates therefore largely depends on political parties' strategic choices.

Local political parties are viewed as easily approachable, particularly for historically marginalized groups (Bird et al., 2010) and act as "gatekeepers" (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995) through candidate selection. Nevertheless, with a few exceptions (Buta & Gherghina, 2023; Soininen & Qvist, 2021), more focus is needed on the inclusiveness of processes to select candidates with an immigrant background, as this is a critical moment for representation. Despite the increasing number of immigrants residing in Italy, and the importance of immigrant representation in all spheres of society—including politics—research on the selection process of political candidates with an immigrant background is lacking. This research aims to fill that gap and offer first insights into the selection process of immigrant candidates. The results can provide a starting point for further research on the political integration of immigrant candidates into local political parties in Europe.

The province of South Tyrol, located in the North of Italy, is characterized by ethnic diversity—stemming both from migration and from the historical co-habitation of three autochthonous ethnolinguistic groups: German, Italian, and Ladin. In South Tyrol, 69.4% of the population belongs to the German, 26% to the Italian, and 4.5% to the Ladin language group (Autonome Provinz Bozen, 2023). These ethnic cleavages also translate into the societal and political sphere, as political parties in South Tyrol are either German or Italian. The need to include immigrant candidates in political parties is, however, crucial for the representation of increasingly important segments of society. Descriptive representation is not only of symbolic value but can mobilize others to integrate immigrants into the societal and political system (Bird et al., 2010).

As part of the thematic issue *The Political Representation and Participation of Migrants*, this article adopts a distinct perspective on immigrant representation and political participation. While Gherghina and Basarabă (2024) concentrate on the transnational level by examining voter turnout in the home country, and Finn and Ramaciotti (2024) delve into external voting on the national scale, our focus lies on the selection process of immigrants as political candidates at the local level.

We concentrate on the 2020 municipal elections and the candidate selection process of political parties in the provincial capital, Bolzano. This research comprises people with an immigrant background who are EU citizens or who have obtained Italian citizenship. Bolzano's population reflects the pre-existing language cleavages as well as new diversity stemming from migration. In the 2020 elections, for the very first time in its history, four candidates with an immigrant background were elected to the Bolzano local council. This case therefore provides insights into the extent to which political parties might change their strategies in the face of an increasingly diverse society, and the need to represent new segments of the population. We expect the pre-existing cleavages to have an impact on the selection strategies as the political landscape mirrors the language divisions, and can therefore pose a barrier to the representation of candidates with an

immigrant background. To shed light on the parties' selection strategies, we build on the theoretical framework proposed by Rahat and Hazan (2001) and ask: How inclusive are political parties' selection strategies at the local level?

Section 2 of the article provides an overview of South Tyrol's unique context and immigration history, followed by the theoretical and methodological framework. Finally, we shed light on political parties' candidate selection process by first pinpointing the general selection process before focusing on immigrants. The data for the article is drawn from "elite" interviews with high-ranking representatives of the political parties that currently (as of 2023) have seats in the local council.

2. Historical Context

Prior to 1919, the region of South Tyrol was under the dominion of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, serving as an integral component of the historical County of Tyrol. During that period, 89% of the region's inhabitants spoke German (Autonome Provinz Bozen, 2017; Rautz, 1999). Subsequently, there have been notable alterations in the population dynamics, territorial boundaries, and legal standing of the region, particularly after its annexation by Italy in 1919. Measures to promote Italian cultural assimilation in South Tyrol were implemented prior to the enactment of the 1948 statute granting the region self-government, which had little positive impact on the German and Ladin minority groups. In 1972, a revised autonomy act was successfully negotiated, resulting in significant improvements, and the current autonomy legislation passed in 2001, conferred a comprehensive array of rights and liberties to the province of South Tyrol. This legal framework empowers the province to safeguard the interests and well-being of the German and Ladin minorities, making South Tyrol a prominent example of how to effectively accommodate different minority groups (Woelk et al., 2008). The fundamental tenets of the autonomy statute include the provision of cultural autonomy for individuals who speak German and Ladin, linguistic parity among the three languages in state institutions, the assurance of equal rights for all citizens regardless of their group affiliation, the implementation of proportionality through a quota system, and the granting of minority veto rights.

The diversity stemming from migration supplements that of the autochthonous groups. Hence, immigrants are confronted with a multi-ethnic and linguistically diverse society (Medda-Windischer & Carlà, 2015). At the same time, the German and Ladin minorities must cope with the challenge of maintaining their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness within the Italian state (Wisthaler, 2016). Despite this challenge, decision-making processes need to include the increasing number of people with an immigrant background residing in the province (Wisthaler, 2016). The 2020 municipal elections can be seen as a turning point in this respect, as there had never been as many candidates with an immigrant background on the candidate lists, nor had they ever been as successful (Wisthaler et al., 2021).

Since the early 1990s, immigration to South Tyrol has increased for various reasons, including the end of communism, wars in the Balkans, and the EU enlargement. In the early 1990s, South Tyrol had around 5,000 immigrants, mainly from Germany, Austria, and other Italian regions. Between 1991 and 2006, immigration was engendered by significant historical events, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and war in the former Yugoslavia. People fleeing wars and communist regimes in the Balkans, especially Albania, settled in South Tyrol up until 2002. Since 2000, immigration from all parts of the world has increased. European migration has mostly been due to the eastern enlargement of the EU, while many non-EU citizens, who had

illegally migrated to the region, were given amnesty/legal status by the declaration of validity (Sanatoria) that came into force on the entire Italian national territory in 2003. Starting around 2007, there has been an increase in the immigration rate from countries like Romania and Slovakia, and a decrease in immigration from German-speaking areas. In 2011, after long delays, the provincial government enacted a law for the integration of the immigrant population. Since then, and especially after the migration inflows in 2015, the number of immigrants residing in the province has increased (Medda-Windischer & Girardi, 2011).

We focus on the provincial capital, Bolzano, as it is home to the largest immigrant population in South Tyrol, making diversity in representation a more salient issue for parties. On the 31st of December 2021, 15,447 foreigners lived in the provincial capital—almost 30% of all foreigners in South Tyrol. About 11% of the immigrant population in South Tyrol comes from Albania, followed by Romania with 4,631, Germany (4,518), Pakistan (3,943), Morocco (3,644), and Slovakia (3,164). Hence, three of the top six source countries are EU member states (Landesinstitut für Statistik ASTAT, 2023). EU citizens have equal footing with Italian citizens in some areas, such as in freedom of movement and establishment, as well as employment. Immigrants from EU countries are also allowed to vote and stand as candidates for municipal elections.

3. Political Parties as Gatekeepers of Immigrants' Political Candidacy

Before going deeper into why minorities are underrepresented in politics, and how this connects to the candidate selection process and the role of local parties as gatekeepers (Black & Hicks, 2006), it is important to frame the (local) context of this research. The article focuses on the local level because it is the most accessible level of politics a person encounters when becoming politically active. In fact, people with immigrant backgrounds favor running in local elections, especially municipal ones, since the electoral role and the costs are lower, and the party structures are more adaptable than in national elections (Bird, 2004). The local level is therefore vital for the political integration of immigrants (Hepburn & Zapata-Barrero, 2014; Penninx & Martiniello, 2004) for two main reasons: First, standing as a candidate and voting in local elections are not strictly connected to citizenship, as EU citizens can stand as candidates and vote outside their home countries; and second, local parties are on the front lines of candidate selection and can either draw candidates into the political process or discourage them from entering (Bird, 2004). Local political parties are therefore considered essential gatekeepers (Soininen & Qvist, 2021) in the political integration of people with an immigrant background, as they are the vehicles through which new groups gain political entry and, to some extent, political power (Black & Hicks, 2006).

The selection of candidates to run for election is generally regarded as a process, rather than a single decision (Rahat & Hazan, 2010). Candidate selection, especially for immigrants, can therefore encounter several challenges and even barriers. South Tyrol's ethnolinguistic societal split is evident in the political, institutional, and educational domains, and influences the party system in ways that transcend other conventional divisions (Pallaver, 2008). For instance, the South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP)—which has held an absolute majority since 1948—represents first and foremost the German language group (Pallaver, 2016). Furthermore, the ideological position of parties influences candidate selection. Unsurprisingly, center-left parties offer more descriptive representation than center-right parties (Sobolewska, 2013). Bloemraad and Schönwälder (2013) hypothesize that newer and smaller political parties are more open to immigrant participation and representation. In contrast, right-wing parties very often hold anti-immigrant stances. While immigrant support may help to win elections in areas with high proportions of immigrants, it

may result in the loss of native support. This leads to a fundamental strategic dilemma that local parties must resolve, especially in South Tyrol, where local parties (with few exceptions) select either German or Italian-speaking candidates. Indeed, sometimes local leaders may be driven to exclude candidates with an immigrant background, excluding them, to maintain their hold on power and decrease competition for already existing and well-known candidates (Claro da Fonseca, 2011). This practice of backing entrusted candidates for re-election is cited as one of the main hurdles for minorities. This is particularly relevant for the South Tyrolean context, given that historic parties with prominent and monolingual (Italian or German) candidates might be less inclined to put candidates with a different background or linguistic group on the electoral lists. Conversely, some local parties may also promote candidates with an immigrant background because they see an electoral advantage in doing so—most often in districts with a sizable immigrant population, with the intention of demonstrating to voters the party's inclusivity. Therefore, including minorities in the electoral lists could be a mechanism by which the parties signal their concern for the processes of social change, thereby demonstrating to the electorate that they are inclusive and "modern" (Vintila & Morales, 2018). This strategy is primarily aimed at voters with an immigrant background.

Drawing on the work of Norris and Franklin (1997), the concept of candidate selection is conceptualized within the framework of market-based dynamics, specifically referring to the "supply" of aspirants and the "demands" of party selectors. The candidate market exhibits similarities to other markets since it is characterized by inequities that permeate the entire process, leading to an uneven playing field for all possible candidates (Norris & Franklin, 1997). To clarify the selection process, we chose to employ the foundational version proposed by Rahat and Hazan (2001). This theoretical decision is driven by the distinctive case of South Tyrol, characterized by the coexistence of local, regional, and national parties, along with prevalent ethnic cleavages. The intricacies of this scenario call for a basic model to serve as a foundational framework upon which a more detailed discussion can be built. This research draws on two elements of the analytical framework by Rahat and Hazan (2001, 2010): the "candidacy" and the "selectorate" at the local level.

The first dimension of candidate selection is the candidacy as such. Here, restrictions are classified along an inclusiveness–exclusiveness continuum according to whether candidates must already be members of the party or if they can be drawn from the electorate in general. Political parties provide varying levels of support to individual candidates, with which they can mitigate the impact of disadvantages at the group level during the selection process. People with an immigrant background are largely underrepresented in political parties, but as evidenced by the case study on women (Matland, 2005), there is a substantial contingent of partisan supporters who consistently pursue political positions. Figure 1 shows the inclusiveness–exclusiveness axis building on the model proposed by Rahat and Hazan (2001).

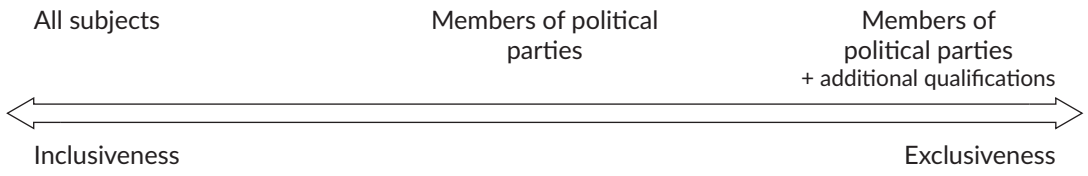

Figure 1. Candidacy. Source: Rahat and Hazan (2001).

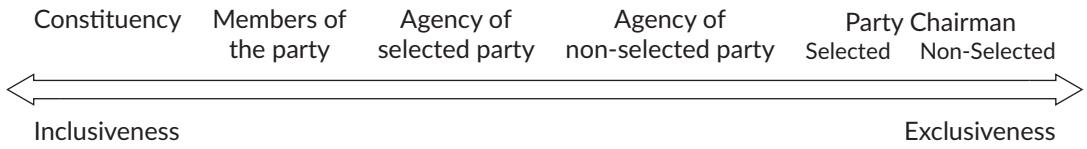

Figure 2. Party selectorate. Source: Rahat and Hazan (2001).

The second dimension of candidate selection is the selectorate. This is the in-party group that selects the candidates, and who are said to play the most influential role in shaping legislative recruitment (Field & Siavelis, 2008). Party selectors serve as intermediaries in the connection between the environmental setting and the process of legislative recruiting (Kunovich & Paxton, 2005). The selectorate can either be inclusive, consisting of the entire constituency or party membership, for instance, or exclusive, being limited to only a subsegment of party members, such as delegates, committees, executive branches, or individual party leaders (Rahat & Hazan, 2001). Figure 2 shows the inclusiveness–exclusiveness axis according to the model by Rahat and Hazan (2001).

Parties using multistage selection procedures may even include different selectorates at different stages of the selection process (Rahat & Hazan, 2001). This research focuses on local-level selection procedures. In the context of South Tyrol, political parties traditionally aim to represent specific segments of the local society, but party selectors are nevertheless inclined to prioritize electoral benefits over other considerations when a new target demographic shows potential for significant support (Claro da Fonseca, 2011).

4. Research Design and Methodology

In this article, we focus on selected political parties and the municipal elections of Bolzano in 2020. We focus on both traditional political parties and civic lists. Between them, they represent both the left and right wings, as well as all three autochthonous ethnolinguistic groups. Throughout the text, we will use the term "political party" also when speaking about civic lists, as for local elections there is no formal difference between political parties and civic lists. A civic list is a local political organization that aims to represent the interests of citizens at the municipal or local level. Civic lists are usually formed by citizens uniting around a specific political platform or common goal, rather than the ideological program or manifesto of a national party. The main objective of a civic list is to represent the interests of the local community, focusing on specific issues or local problems. Civic lists differ from traditional political parties as they tend to be less bound by specific ideologies or hierarchical structures (Zogu, 2021).

In the 2020 municipal elections, a total of 200 candidates across the province (4% of the 4,403 contestants) were born in a country other than Italy (Wisthaler et al., 2021). Most of the candidates with immigrant backgrounds stood for election in urban centers, mostly in Bolzano, where 39 out of 462 candidates were born in another EU or third country. Herein lies the relevance of the city of Bolzano, as it symbolizes the coexistence of the three autochthonous groups, as well as of immigrants. For this project, we focus on people with an immigrant background who are EU citizens or who have obtained Italian citizenship.

The municipal council is elected by eligible voters in the respective municipality, based on civic lists and nominations (lists) submitted by political parties for the electoral area. The principle of proportional representation applies: Parties or civic lists receive a number of council seats proportional to the percentage

of votes they receive. Which candidates are elected to the municipal council is not determined by their position on the list, but by the number of preferential votes they receive. The mayor is elected directly by the inhabitants of the municipality, by a simple majority. If no mayoral candidate achieves an absolute majority in the first ballot, a run-off election takes place. In total, 18 political parties stood for election, and 14 had candidates with an immigrant background. In the end, four candidates with an immigrant background were elected to the Bolzano city council—two as candidates of a civic list, one as a representative of Northern League (Lega), and another for the Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia [FdI]).

This highlights the importance of taking a closer look at the selection process and strategies of political parties and civic lists. We aim to mirror the linguistic and ethnic realities of the province by choosing ideologically contrasting parties and civic lists. We therefore identified the regional catch-all party, the South Tyrolean Peoples Party (Südtiroler Volkspartei [SVP]), the Greens (Verdi–Grüne–Vërc), and Team K, as well as the national parties, Lega, Democratic Party (Partito Democratico [PD]), and FdI. Second, we identified a relevant civic list: I Stand With Bolzano (Io sto con Bolzano). The latter was formed around the major candidate Angelo Gennaccaro a few months before the municipal elections. This civic list was formed in 2020 and four candidates were successfully elected, out of which two with an immigrant background. I'm With Bolzano is an interesting actor in the context of political recruitment in South Tyrol, as it had the highest share of candidates with an immigrant background in its list in the 2020 municipal elections. In addition, of all the candidates with an immigrant background, those of I Stand With Bolzano were among the most successful (Wisthaler et al., 2021). Table 1 shows an overview of the selected political parties and their characteristics.

In the first stage of the research, we analyzed the lists of candidates running for the 2020 municipal elections in Bolzano. The information on the candidates, lists, and municipalities was taken from the websites of the Autonome Region Trentino-Südtirol (2020) and the municipality of Bolzano (Stadt Bozen, 2020).

Second, we used a qualitative elite interviewing approach (Liu, 2018) and identified representatives holding positions of power in political parties. In the months of June, July, and August 2022, we conducted seven elite interviews with high-ranking representatives of the above-mentioned political parties. Interviews were conducted, following a semi-structured questionnaire, in the mother tongue of the party representative (Italian or German), audio-recorded and complemented with written notes. For this article, interview transcripts have been translated into English and pseudonymized. Finally, we used qualitative content analysis and analyzed the data with the assistance of the software Nvivo. For analytical purposes, Nvivo is a helpful application since it enables the following: (a) maintain project texts concurrently; (b) make each text easily accessible; (c) establish a system of categories; (d) designate categories by text-section markers; and (e) organize categories into networks and hierarchies (Mayring, 2015). The collected data is categorized in a coding frame, and codes are built deductive- and inductively. The first set of codes focused on the general selection strategies of the party, while the second set focused on how the party deals with the topic of migration and on the selection strategies of candidates with an immigrant background.

Table 1. Overview of the selected political parties.

Political party/political list	National/regional/local	Party characteristics
SVP	Regional	As an ethnic catch-all party, SVP wants to represent South Tyrol's German-speaking population as well as Ladin speakers. The party is mainly Christian-democratic, but nevertheless quite diverse, including conservatives, liberals, and social democrats. From 1948 to 2013 the party retained an absolute majority in the Provincial Council.
Team K	Regional	Team K was formed in 2018 by Paul Köllensberger who was elected to the provincial council as a candidate of the Five Star Movement (M5S) in 2013. It is a regionalist and liberal political movement active in South Tyrol, where it seeks to be an inter-ethnic centrist party.
The Greens	Regional	The Greens are a regionalist political party. Once the provincial section of the Federation of the Greens, the party is now autonomous and often forms different alliances at the national level.
FdI	National	FdI is a national-conservative and right-wing populist political party, the country's largest after the 2022 Italian general election. The party is led by Giorgia Meloni, the incumbent Prime Minister of Italy.
PD	National	PD is a social-democratic political party and was established in 2007 upon the merger of various center-left parties. The party's secretary is Elly Schlein, elected in the 2023 election.
Lega	National	Lega is a right-wing, federalist, populist, and conservative political party. In the run-up to the 2018 general election, the party was rebranded as Lega, without changing its official name. Its current elected leader is Matteo Salvini.
I Stand With Bolzano	Local	I Stand With Bolzano is a civic list which has been formed by Angelo Gennaccaro in 2020. In comparison to political parties, the civic list has no formalized structure nor a political program and is only active at the local level.

Sources: SVP (n.d.), Team K (n.d.), Verdi–Grüne–Vërc (n.d.), FdI (n.d.), PD (n.d.), Lega Nord (n.d.), IO STO CON Bolzano—Angelo Gennaccaro (n.d.).

5. Political Parties' Selective Inclusiveness

In this section, we delve into the findings from the interviews. It begins with an analysis of the incidence of candidates with immigrant backgrounds within political lists. We investigate the dynamics of inclusion and diversity in this context. Next, we examine the general selection strategies along the inclusive–exclusive dimensions adopted by political entities, revealing the complex web of factors that influence candidate selection. Finally, our investigation focuses on specialized recruitment strategies specifically designed to engage and empower candidates with an immigrant background. Through these distinct sections, the chapter sheds light on the nuanced strategies and challenges related to political representation.

5.1. Underrepresentation of Immigrant Candidates on Political Lists

For the municipal elections of 2020, there were a total of 28 candidates with an immigrant background on the selected parties' lists. While all political parties have at least one such candidate, the numbers remain low. In addition, candidates with an immigrant background are not listed among the first (more prominent) positions on the lists. Table 2 provides an overview of the total number of political candidates on the selected political parties and civic list. We selected seven political parties in the municipal council of Bolzano, including both the left and right wings, as well as all three autochthonous ethnolinguistic groups. The table also provides information about how many have an immigrant background, whether they are from countries within the EU or not, and how many candidates with an immigrant background are women.

The number of non-EU candidates (23) is almost four times higher than the number of EU candidates (six). In fact, the most represented countries were Peru (five candidates), Argentina (three candidates), and Albania (three candidates). These nations were followed by Germany, Austria, Pakistan, and Morocco with two candidates each. Poland, Hungary, North Macedonia, Switzerland, UK, Kosovo, Senegal, China, and Romania each had one candidate. Ten out of 28 candidates were women, and the party with the most foreign-born candidates was PD.

There are various reasons for the increased recruitment of the top three represented countries. First, the Peruvian community is very present in the area, accounting for nearly 3% of the Bolzano population. Language (Spanish–Italian) proximity is one of the factors that most facilitate the integration and subsequent participation of people with this background. In fact, some of the Peruvian candidates were very active in associations and trade unions (Zogu, 2021). Second, concerning the Argentinian community, both the linguistic affinity and the prominent Italian diaspora in Argentina play a role in their political participation. Third, the Albanian community is the largest immigrant contingent in Bolzano, constituting 15.5% of the population, and after Germany and Austria, it has been in the area the longest. Several studies reveal that it is easier to become politically active when one has been in the territory for a long time and has gained a certain status and trust (Claro da Fonseca, 2011; Mansbridge, 1999). Candidates from these backgrounds are usually already well-established personalities and are approached by the parties themselves (Zogu, 2021).

Table 2. Candidates with an immigrant background.

Political party	Total number of candidates	Candidates with an immigrant background	Candidates from the EU	Candidates from third countries	Female candidates with an immigrant background
FdI	59	1	0	1	0
Lega	29	4	2	2	2
I Stand With Bolzano	45	4	0	5	0
PD	30	7	0	7	3
SVP	45	5	2	3	4
Greens	37	4	1	3	0
Team K	27	3	1	2	1

Finally, four male candidates with an immigrant background were elected to the municipal council. Two of the candidates were from I Stand With Bolzano, meaning half of the candidates with an immigrant background on that list were successful. The other two elected candidates came from the right-wing parties of Lega and FdI, although the Lega's candidate left the party shortly after the election to join a civic list. This outcome highlights the fact that, although left-wing parties highlight migration as an important topic, their candidates were unsuccessful in the elections.

5.2. General "Inclusiveness/Exclusiveness of Local Political Parties"

In the following section, we focus on the general inclusiveness/exclusiveness of the candidacy and selectorate, before looking more closely at the recruitment process for candidates with an immigrant background.

Candidate recruitment in parties such as Lega and FdI takes place mainly among members of the parties themselves. However, they sometimes spontaneously recruit individuals for upcoming elections if the prospective candidate is aligned with their values and political goals. The Lega's recruitment of candidates follows a so-called "pyramid logic" which the representative describes as follows: "The pyramid system means that only militants can run for office unless we [party elite] make an exception. Prospective candidates have had a supporter's card for at least one and a half years and who do activities for the party who then become militants," outlines the Lega representative. The recruitment process of FdI and Lega illustrates the importance of party elites for the nomination of candidates and election processes (Lovenduski, 2016). The candidacy requirements of the right-wing parties can therefore be characterized as exclusive, as they follow a formal logic and candidates are recruited from existing members.

Nevertheless, depending on whether the election is municipal, provincial, or national, they consider which elements could enrich their list and sometimes have newer members run for office. The interviewees stress the importance of capacity and merit in their candidate choice. One party even conducts a background check on potential candidates to ensure they have a "clean slate." Both right-wing parties we interviewed repeatedly outlined that the meritocratic system is the basis for their nominations:

> There are definitely some ethical values such as fairness and respect for rules. We want decent people. This is one thing that sets us apart. And secondly, they must have certain skills. We really go for it [for a specific candidate] when we find that we [political party] lack maybe specific skills. (FdI representative)

This quote highlights that the right-wing parties sometimes shift between a generally exclusive approach and a more inclusive approach to candidacy, depending on the circumstances.

Candidate recruitment also works this way for the German catch-all SVP, in that prospective candidates should already be party members. It is important to note that the SVP focuses on attracting candidates from the German- and Ladin-speaking communities: "Our party…primarily tries to represent the German-speaking people of Bolzano" (SVP representative).

Candidate recruitment for the Greens and PD is more informal and inclusive. PD and Greens representatives reiterated that, for the most part, they actively look for candidates in local neighborhoods. Hence, both parties try to make themselves known at street level and recruit directly through neighborhood and direct contacts.

For PD, it is more important to have different "identikits" within the list and to "include everything" to reflect the diversity of the South Tyrolean society; for the Greens, sharing ideals with the party is central:

> There are people who revolve around the party. And if we're going to make a list of 40 people, there are specific ones that are attached. And then there are the ones that you go after—new candidacies—we try to have different profiles, different sketches. (PD representative)

Team K has a similar approach as left-wing parties and wants to reflect diverse segments of society, both genders, and candidates from all language groups. The Team K representative outlines that candidates on the political list of Team K are usually already members of the party, if they are not yet members, to run for office, they need to become members first. The last word in the selection process has the party elite: "This will then be decided by the board and the provincial committee of Team K" (Team K representative).

I Stand With Bolzano also wants to reflect diverse segments of society, both genders, and candidates from all language groups. The representative of the former stresses that, "Perhaps, in the South Tyrolean panorama, ours is the only list that in some way has grouped together everything that is today the photograph of our territory." For Team K, possible candidates approach the list themselves or are recruited by acquaintances who are already members. This shows the importance of immigrant networks, as they can influence the candidacy of people with an immigrant background.

5.3. Selective Inclusiveness as a Recruitment Strategy Toward Immigrant Background Candidates

Having discussed the general strategies of political parties, the article now addresses the specific selection of candidates with an immigrant background. The analysis shows common patterns along the left–right spectrum and a lack of clear recruitment strategies, while parties on both sides of the political spectrum have the tendency to use a strategy best described as "selective inclusiveness."

Regarding the recruitment of people with an immigrant background to the right-wing lists, we identify a standard line. Lega and FdI both stated that the candidate's ethnic background does not matter as long as they are "citizens who follow the rules, pay taxes, and behave with dignity." The FdI representative stresses that the party refuses to categorize people according to categories such as gender or immigrant background. Because candidates for the right-wing parties in this study are supposed to be militant members, the candidates themselves approached the party, as the party did not actively recruit or search for immigrant background candidates. They approached the parties with everyday life issues, received help, and later decided to stand as a candidate in the municipal elections:

> We don't go looking for the specificity of a provenance...These people I mentioned are the ones who approached us…for specific issues that concerned them [e.g., housing]. We dealt with them and so from there, a connection started, and they became an integral part of the group. (FdI representative)

Regarding the immigrant background candidates who ran for these parties, both representatives said they were "perfectly integrated people who are Italian citizens" (FdI representative; Lega representative). It is important that these people are very familiar with the Italian Constitution, that they make significant contributions within the party assemblies, but also that they are no longer perceived as "foreigners" by the

local population. Both representatives stress that the prospective candidate should be critical of immigrants who, in their opinion, are not integrated enough. Hence, while both right-wing parties do accept non-member candidates, and are therefore inclusive, they are very selective when it comes to the choice of which candidates with an immigrant background can then actually run for office.

The Greens' and PD's approach to recruiting candidates with immigrant backgrounds is more proactive and aims to enhance representation and dialogue with them at the political level. Both left-wing parties emphasized the importance of immigrant candidates' social networks. More specifically, PD and the Greens mentioned trying to have candidates with different backgrounds to attract more voters from immigrant communities. Hence, they aim to represent the South Tyrolean society in all its diversity: the three autochthonous language groups plus those with an immigrant background. This does not negate the requirement for the candidates to share the party's values.

The Greens stressed the need to empower specific groups by bringing them closer to politics, especially since many are citizens who have been residents for more than 25 years and are a significant part of the community. The Greens are also very passionate about the issue of women's political participation, and efforts have been made to include more women with immigrant backgrounds—so far with only limited success, however. They stress that it is difficult to motivate women with an immigrant background to run for election because of time constraints: "I understood that women are very often very busy because of family…the political engagement becomes then too much" (Greens representative).

The SVP representative had a different view. It is important to note here that the representatives' statements do not necessarily reflect the ideology of the entire party—SVP is a "catch-all" party with more conservative and liberal subgroups. The representative we interviewed speaks on behalf of the more conservative subgroup. According to this interviewee, candidates are selected according to specific characteristics. The representative emphasizes that German language proficiency is crucial for joining and running for office: "We just hope that it also helps them [the candidates with an immigrant background] to learn the second language [German] or the third language for them" (SVP representative).

The other factor considered relevant for the interviewee is religion. The emphasis is therefore on Christian and German-speaking immigrants, who, according to the interviewee, are easier to integrate into "our" society.

> They [Peruvians] have this advantage because they are easy to integrate. Also, they have a clear religious orientation, they are Catholics, and it is easier to get along with them. In Bolzano, this coexistence with the Italians works well despite fascism, because we share the same religion. (SVP representative)

For I Stand With Bolzano and Team K, no distinction is made between candidates with and without an immigrant background. However, in comparison to right-wing parties, they welcome candidates with immigrant backgrounds because of the diverse topics they cover. Hence, while they do not actively recruit such candidates, they are very open to including them to cover certain topics, such as housing:

> Recruiting specifically for migrants is something we have never done, also because we do not make this distinction between migrant, German, Italian. For us, there are only candidates who thematically

> fit in with Team K or not. In the municipal elections we had some candidates with a migrant background, who then approached us and were interested. Of course, there was a place for them on the list. (Team K representative)

Also, the representative of I Stand With Bolzano outlines that the list does not actively approach candidates with immigrant candidates but they themselves do approach the party: "In short, one of our members, a new citizen, approached us to run for office. We didn't go looking" (I'm With Bolzano representative).

Overall, all the interviewees outlined that there is no specific person who deals with the recruitment of candidates with an immigrant background. Hence, we identify a relatively flexible selectorate. The selectorate on the local level can be best described as rather informal and unstructured. The absence of focus on candidates with an immigrant background might be the lack of a strong internal network for immigrant candidates. Internal networks are in fact considered a resource to support the selection of candidates from immigrant backgrounds, because once the group is already politically mobilized, this encourages the participation of new members (Celis et al., 2014).

6. Conclusion

The objective of this article is to shed light on the recruitment of candidates with an immigrant background within a multi-ethnic locality, focusing on the local level. Within this context, we have identified two particularly noteworthy findings.

Firstly, this study reveals a notable absence of formal strategies within political parties and civic lists to deliberately include candidates with immigrant backgrounds on their electoral lists. This observation underscores the limited extent to which parties aspire to mirror society and its inherent diversity. Interviews conducted with representatives of left-wing parties underscore their commitment to promoting diversity, particularly in terms of gender and language representation. In contrast, right-wing parties place less emphasis on this aspect. In general, political parties and civic lists associate the concept of diversity with linguistic and gender-related considerations. Notably, there is a distinct absence of explicit focus on candidates with an immigrant background as a distinct category of interest. Instead, the recruitment of such individuals is contingent upon their perceived value to the party, often reflecting a selective approach rather than a structured strategy for broadening inclusivity. Despite the increased presence of immigrants within the population, the pre-existing language cleavages persist, resulting in political lists that respond to autochthonous language groups. Consequently, the discourse surrounding diversity in the candidate selection process remains centered on linguistic factors, with limited regard for diversity stemming from immigration.

In other words, historical events are still very present in the region, including at the political level. Despite the salience of migration to South Tyrol since the 1990s, respondents consistently tied the discourse on diversity to region-specific matters, prominently exemplified by the ethnic cleavages. Indeed, a subset of respondents, when asked about diversity within their respective political parties, drew parallels between gender diversity and linguistic diversity. Remarkably, the topic of migration and inclusion did not organically emerge as a primary focal point, but rather surfaced as a secondary consideration, primarily when pointed out by the interviewer.

The second significant finding of this study centers on recruitment practices within political parties, characterized by a distinct strategy we term "selective inclusiveness." While overall recruitment remains exclusive toward candidates without immigrant backgrounds, left-wing parties in particular tend to recruit individuals with immigrant backgrounds for specific issues aligned with their agendas. However, the actual representation of immigrants on these lists does not significantly surpass that of other parties. Notably, candidates from civic lists have achieved comparable electoral success to those from national-level parties. It is conceivable that this success is attributable to the strategy of selective inclusiveness, where parties intentionally choose candidates with specific qualities that resonate with voters.

This article calls for future research to focus on political parties' perspectives, as well as those of people with an immigrant background, to understand the recruitment process. Furthermore, the newly introduced strategy we termed "selective inclusiveness" needs further exploration in different contexts. Exploration could extend to regions characterized by ethnic diversity, as well as urban settings, thus providing a more comprehensive understanding of the strategy's applicability and efficacy across diverse political landscapes.

Funding

The authors thank the Department of Innovation, Research, and the University of the Autonomous Province of Bozen/Bolzano for covering the open access publication costs.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Politics and Governance
2024 • Volume 12 • Article 7470
https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.7470

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Open Access Journal

Political Professionalization Beyond National Borders: An Analysis of Italian MPs in Overseas Constituencies

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Submitted: 31 July 2023 **Accepted:** 5 December 2023 **Published:** 13 March 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue "The Political Representation and Participation of Migrants" edited by Sergiu Gherghina (University of Glasgow) and Sorina Soare (University of Florence), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i354

Abstract

Among European countries, Italy is one of the relatively few cases to provide a quota of reserved parliamentary seats for non-resident citizens. Despite an increased scientific interest in the topic, the group of MPs elected in Overseas Constituencies remains overlooked in the available literature. The gap relates to factors such as their socio-biographical profile, precedent careers, parliamentary activity, the role played in their recruitment by the party abroad or at a national level, and their style of representation. In this vein, the article investigates the career profiles of Italian MPs elected in Overseas Constituencies from 2006 (the first elections with the introduction of citizen representatives living abroad) to 2022. Based on an original data set and through an analysis of their biographical and political characteristics, the article builds a typology of elected MPs abroad by cross-referencing two dimensions derived from the literature: the linkage with the host country and the presence of previous political and associational experiences. The analysis shows that different types of MPs have different career lengths and a different capacity to collect preference votes.

Keywords

foreign constituency; Italy; MPs; party politics; political careers; representation

1. Introduction

Following the 2006 political elections, the Centre-Left (C-L) government led by Romano Prodi, who won by a margin of just 25,000 votes (D'Alimonte & Chiaramonte, 2007) and held a razor-thin majority in the Senate (158 to 156 seats), secured a vote of confidence thanks to crucial support from Senator Luigi Pallaro, elected in the Overseas Constituency. Similarly, in January 2008, the absence of Senator Pallaro was decisive in causing the downfall of the same government. Over two years later, in December 2010, during a motion of

no-confidence against the Berlusconi IV Government, Deputy Antonio Razzi, elected overseas for the Italy of Values party, decided—along with others—to vote against the motion, leaving his party and thus providing the government with the vote of confidence.

Since its introduction in 2001, the Overseas Constituency and its MPs have been a recurring theme in the imagination of Italians. Gradually, the issue of representing emigrant communities has gained increasing attention from social scientists (Caramani & Grotz, 2015; Caramani & Strijbis, 2012; Ellis, 2007; Lafleur, 2013, 2015). Numerous scholars have focused on this aspect of democratic representation in the Italian context as well. However, studies have predominantly concentrated on the electoral dimension, examining features such as electoral regulations (Gratteri, 2008), their compatibility with the constitutional framework (Grosso, 2002; Sica, 2008; Tarli Barbieri, 2007), and electoral outcomes (Battiston & Luconi, 2020; Battiston & Mascitelli, 2012).

Conversely, one of the less investigated aspects is related to overseas MPs and their careers. Most studies focused on the characteristics of MPs elected by Italians residing abroad within the broader group of national parliamentarians (e.g., De Lucia, 2013; Tronconi & Verzichelli, 2014, 2019). A few dedicated studies (Sampugnaro, 2017), however, provide clear insights into certain aspects related to the specific features, the selection process, and candidacies of MPs, as well as their representation styles without delving deeply into their career paths and without offering classifications that can be effectively applied to distinguish their trajectories. The reasons for this neglect can be attributed to the nature of the research object. Despite the significant growth in the recognition of external voting rights for emigrant citizens since the 1990s (Wellman et al., 2023), countries that provide direct representation through the election of MPs constitute a minority (Collyer & Vathi, 2007). Furthermore, even in those countries that guarantee this type of representation, they form a small minority compared to the overall set of parliamentarians, making it more challenging to conduct specifically dedicated research and, therefore, easier to assimilate them with national MPs.

However, understanding the evolution of the career profiles of these MPs is significant for two main reasons. Firstly, it allows a deeper exploration of how democratic representation is developed. The choice to establish a special constituency for emigrants, thereby segmenting their representation (Hutcheson & Arrighi, 2015), creates a distinct arena of representation (Caramani & Grotz, 2015) governed by its own set of rules, trajectories, and peculiarities. Indeed, political or social backgrounds may result in distinct forms of representation and interpretations of their roles. Consequently, delving into the career profiles of its MPs facilitates a deeper comprehension of how this representation manifests. Secondly, it enables a better grasp of the specificities and disparities among the MPs elected abroad, leading to a deeper comprehension of the factors that account for their political success or failure. This includes understanding how distinct features influence party strategies, electoral competitions, and consensus construction.

In this context, Italy could be considered a typical case study (Gerring, 2008) to explore. Among European countries, Italy was among the first to introduce a quota of MPs reserved for overseas voters. Also, it presented particularly robust emigration patterns, contributing to the presence of a large community of emigrants. Furthermore, Italy has generous legislation regarding the acquisition of Italian citizenship based on ancestry, significantly increasing the number, at least potentially, of those eligible to participate in the election of this specific category of MPs.

From the perspective of this thematic issue, this study aims to further expand the understanding of the representation of emigrant communities by exploring the career paths of its MPs, integrating perspectives offered by other research. The article by Finn and Ramaciotti (2024) explores the factors that led to the delayed adoption of voting rights for emigrants by examining the repeated rejections of legislative proposals on this issue in Chile until its implementation. On the other hand, Gherghina and Basarabă (2024) highlight how interest in politics and participation positively influence voter turnout in the home country. Specifically, this contribution focuses on the perspective of political supply, exploring the careers of Italian MPs considering their institutional trajectory and their integration in the two communities to which they belong.

The aim is to fill a gap in the literature, focusing on the career paths of Italian deputies and senators elected in the Overseas Constituency and providing a classification that can better differentiate the distinct features of this form of MPs and offer a clearer understanding of their careers. Specifically, the research question aims to investigate the profile of elected Italian MPs and how their socio-biographical characteristics shape their careers. The article develops a typology of MPs elected abroad by intersecting two dimensions: the relationship with the host country (operationalized as being born there or having emigrated later) and the relationship with Italian integration associations abroad (operationalized as having held positions in these organisations). The analysis shows, consistent with the literature, that positions in emigrant associations are widely diffused among the MPs. Furthermore, the explorative bivariate analysis suggests that MP types that are more rooted in their community tend to have longer careers and gather a higher percentage of preference votes.

The article is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the theoretical framework of the research, presenting the proposed classification of MPs. Section 3 focuses on data and methods. Section 4 illustrates the main descriptive statistics of the MPs and applies the classification to MPs, presenting its distribution and cross-referencing the results with their career paths and the percentage of preference votes received. Conclusions will then follow.

2. Theoretical Framework

The increasing size of migration flows between countries has drawn the attention of scholars, especially since the 1990s, to the political representation of emigrant communities (Collyer, 2013; Laguerre, 2013). However, until recent years, social sciences had not extensively addressed this topic, with the literature focused mostly on the different dimensions of emigration and diaspora and multi-level party politics (van Haute & Kernalegenn, 2021, p. 2).

In recent years, scholars have demonstrated a growing interest in the political representation of emigrant communities. A significant portion of the literature has primarily concentrated on the analysis of parties operating abroad (van Haute & Kernalegenn, 2021), their activities (Friedman & Kenig, 2021; Paarlberg, 2021), their membership (Burgess & Tyburski, 2020; Collard & Kernalegenn, 2021), and their organizational features (Kernalegenn & van Haute, 2020).

Furthermore, a second body of literature has directed its focus towards the representation of communities abroad. This aspect holds particular relevance, as the establishment of parliamentary representation can serve as a means of maintaining a link or connection (Proksch & Slapin, 2015) while also expressing the

home country's interest towards the community abroad (Gherghina et al., 2023). Broadly speaking, the literature has outlined diverse strategies to establish community representation in foreign locales. These approaches are linked to practical considerations based on the political or economic benefits that communities can bring to their home country (Gamlen, 2014), the necessity of preserving the national community (Gamlen, 2014; Koinova, 2018), and as a symbol of commitment to both democracy and international norms (Gamlen, 2014; Turcu & Urbatsch, 2015). Research on this subject has shown that it is primarily the MPs elected abroad who emphasize this connecting function (Sampugnaro, 2017).

In this framework, the analysis of the career path of MPs elected abroad still suffers from this excessive uniformity with national politics due to the lack of extensive studies and theoretical reflections.

The subject of political careers is one of the traditional topics in social sciences, and a great deal of research has shown which factors favour the establishment of one career over another (Best & Higley, 2018). Traditionally, studies on political careers can be distinguished into those focusing on *actors* and those focusing on "contextual" factors (Jahr & Edinger, 2015; Vercesi, 2018). Among "actor-oriented" analyses, different approaches can be observed. The "biographical" approach highlights how career paths are influenced by the primary socialization paths (Walter, 2014). The "personality" approach underlines how political careers are influenced by the individual personality of politicians (Caprara & Silvester, 2018). The "ambition" approach focuses on ambition as the key variable in defining a political career (Lawless, 2012). The "social background and socialization" approach states that social characteristics and individual background are fundamental in determining how politicians can achieve specific offices (Pilet et al., 2014). Finally, the "selection and deselection" approach uses the principal-agent theory to emphasize how politicians are chosen for office based on their previous institutional experience.

On the contrary, among "context-oriented" approaches, we can distinguish between an "opportunity structure" approach, which states that the definition of a political career is influenced more by the availability of political positions, their social desirability and accessibility than by personal characteristics (Grimaldi & Vercesi, 2018), the "intraorganizational" approach, which suggests that political careers are defined by the informal and formal incentives within organizations (Peters, 2010), and the "supply-demand" approach, which instead stresses how political careers are determined through a progressive matching of candidates' resources, representing certain social groups and the preferences of the selectors (Carnes, 2016).

This article aims to partially overcome this gap in the literature by exploring the career paths of MPs abroad and proposing a typology to help better interpret their stability and change over time.

Based on the literature, which advocates integrating various approaches (Boldrini & Grimaldi, 2023b; Vercesi, 2018), this article employs a blend of the socialization and opportunity structure approaches. Relying extensively on subjective elements, such as variable ambitions and expectations, may pose challenges in empirical data utilization. While this may entail a trade-off in terms of the depth and complexity of the analysis, employing a typology founded on less subjective criteria helps mitigate these issues.

The classification aims to enhance comprehension of the characteristics of the parliamentarians who are elected abroad. It serves both descriptive and interpretative purposes, classifying MPs and emphasizing how specific types of MPs, due to their traits, tend to have lengthier careers and can amass a higher percentage

of preference votes. It is intended to form a theoretical framework rooted in the Italian context. However, it can also find application in future research across diverse contexts with MPs elected directly by emigrant communities. Its value lies precisely in its relatively straightforward analytical nature and ease of replication, which facilitates its broad applicability in various institutional settings.

The typology encompasses two dimensions. The first pertains to the relationship with the community in the host country. It is recognized that emigration experiences vary widely. Emigrants exist in a state of "transnationality," establishing complex connections with both their country of origin and the host country (Basch et al., 1994, p. 7). However, these connections can manifest in diverse ways, involving various degrees of assimilation (Landolt, 2008). Some individuals may belong to the second or third generation, being born and raised in the host country and thus fully integrated into its society. Others might be immigrants for economic, educational, or employment reasons, still in the process of assimilating. This perspective suggests that migration patterns can influence political engagement (Gauja, 2020; Ortensi & Riniolo, 2020). As the literature emphasizes, varying levels of integration result in differing levels of political participation (Ortensi & Riniolo, 2020). This is a crucial factor, particularly concerning political engagement in both the host and home countries (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003). Recent immigrants, lacking strong ties to the host country or exhibiting a low degree of integration will offer a different perspective on the emigrant community. Conversely, individuals with robust connections to the host country, possibly second or third generations, embody an older, more deeply embedded migration, with stronger ties spanning both countries. They may represent not only the emigrant community but also individuals deeply connected to the country of origin, bound by a dual sense of belonging.

The second dimension revolves around the relationship with associations that promote integration with fellow nationals in the host country. In certain contexts, the literature emphasizes the role of these organizations in mobilization, as well as in mediating and bridging between the host country and the country of origin (Colucci, 2002). These structures serve as vital hubs for emigrants, offering services or simply providing a space for community gatherings. Membership in these entities signifies a robust and structured connection with the host country's realities, which, in turn, facilitates a link with the country of origin. Furthermore, studies have underscored the political significance of these organizations (Sampugnaro, 2017), for they are able to cultivate relationships within the immigrant community. This is particularly crucial for political parties operating abroad, and some parties may aim to recruit political personnel from these associations, leveraging this network of relationships for electoral purposes (Rashkova, 2020).

Although the two dimensions may appear related, they pertain to distinct aspects of the MP's career. The first concerns their socialization, background, and connections with the community, whereas the second pertains to their opportunities within emigrant associations. A weak connection with the host country does not automatically imply a robust involvement in emigrant associations. Conversely, it could signify frequent visits to the home country or recent or short-term emigration, which might not have extensive involvement in associations and may not directly result in relevant positions within them.

By combining the two dimensions, four distinct types of MPs elected overseas emerge (Table 1). The first, characterized by weak ties and no connections to migrant associations, is termed Outsider. These individuals often immigrate to the host country (typically in adulthood) but lack a close affiliation with migrant associations, indicating a degree of distance from their compatriot community. The second type (strong ties with the host

Table 1. Typology of MPs elected abroad.

		Associative experience	
		No	Yes
Linkage to the host country	Strong	Heritage Representative	Diaspora Representative
	Weak	Outsider	Expatriate Representative

country and no links to migrant associations) is termed Heritage Representative. These individuals are deeply assimilated and integrated into the host country's community, having been born and raised there, and have held no positions with their compatriot organizations. The third type (limited ties with the host country but strong associational connections) is termed Expatriate Representative. These individuals were not born in the host country, possibly immigrating in adulthood, yet maintain close ties with their community's associations. Lastly, the Diaspora Representative constitutes an individual who, despite having strong connections in the host country, also maintains a robust relationship with their community of origin.

As mentioned earlier, the typology serves not only a descriptive purpose but also an interpretative one. It highlights how different attributes of MPs can account for distinct career trajectories. Drawing on insights from the literature on political capital, it can be hypothesized that candidates who hold advantageous positions within their electoral context (and consequently possess more resources) may be more proficient in leveraging these advantages to secure a nomination (or party re-election), gain greater consensus, and ultimately secure more preference votes in elections. This could lead to longer, more stable careers. Therefore, it is conceivable that both Expatriate Representatives and Diaspora Representatives are more likely to have extended and well-established careers and tend to receive a higher percentage of votes compared to their counterparts, Heritage Representatives and Outsiders.

3. Data and Method

This analysis serves not only a descriptive purpose in examining a segment of the political class that has not been extensively studied in the literature but also adopts an exploratory (Yin, 2017) and heuristic (George & Bennett, 2005) perspective. This approach seeks to inductively probe into the characteristics of the research subject to formulate hypotheses and classifications that will be subsequently tested through comparative studies.

From this perspective, due to its distinctive characteristics, Italy can be considered a typical case study (Gerring, 2008) for investigating the career paths of MPs elected in the Overseas Constituency.

First, Italy presents strong historical migratory patterns. Italy has a rich history of emigration, notably during two key periods following the unification of Italy in 1861 and the conclusion of World War II (Pozzetta et al.,

1992). More recently, a substantial surge in emigration occurred, including segments of the highly skilled population, in response to the economic crisis that struck the country around 2008–2009 (Tintori & Romei, 2017). The National Registry of Italians Residing Abroad, which keeps track of Italians living abroad, reports that about six million Italians live abroad, making up about 10% of the country's total population. This number exceeds the comparable figures in other major European nations where residents living abroad can cast ballots for their representatives. Moreover, one further unique feature is the special rules for obtaining citizenship, which allow anyone who can prove they are of Italian descent to become a citizen (Zincone, 2006). This is particularly interesting given the expected growth of Italy's diaspora, which results in between 60 and 80 million Italian nationals living abroad (Di Salvo, 2017).

The analysis focused on the careers and socio-biographical characteristics of the overseas MPs, both in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, from the 2006 elections (the first implementation of the law introducing the Overseas Constituency) to the latest political elections in 2022. Thus, the analysis encompasses the entire population of MPs elected abroad, comprising a total of 84 positions (56 in the Chamber of Deputies and 28 in the Senate). These positions were distributed across the overseas district, with 34 in Europe, 25 in Southern America, 15 in Northern and Central America, and 10 in Oceania, Asia, Africa, and Antarctica, and were occupied by 52 different MPs.

The variables considered include age, gender (whether male or female), their linkage with the host country (operationalized as a dichotomous variable related to the place of birth, if in Italy or the host country), the share of preference votes obtained, the institutional career, party affiliation, and the previous involvement in associations of Italians abroad.

The choice of operationalising the country's link with the place of birth is necessarily a crude indicator that certainly fails to capture the complexity of the link between different countries. However, it was selected for its simplicity and immediacy because of the ease with which it can be applied to different contexts and biographical paths.

Career has been operationalized as the number of terms the MPs serve in either the Chamber of Deputies or the Senate (not necessarily in the Overseas Constituency). Two individuals, Guglielmo Picchi and Antonio Razzi, were initially elected in the Overseas Constituency and subsequently on a list within the national borders. None of the MPs have ever held ministerial positions; only two have served as undersecretaries at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The decision to exclusively focus on institutional careers at the national level was influenced by contextual factors and considerations of data reliability. Firstly, Italy prohibits residents abroad from holding municipal offices, thus limiting the availability of institutional roles at the subnational level. Secondly, including positions in the host country would have complicated and potentially compromised data collection. Gathering information about previous career paths at the local level in numerous countries would have been especially challenging due to the absence of dedicated databases. Additionally, it would have introduced data comparability issues, as accessibility to such data can vary between countries. Given these factors, and acknowledging the limitations involved, the decision was made to concentrate exclusively on careers at the national level.

For the sake of simplicity, party affiliation was operationalized in four distinct categories based on the coalition to which the party belongs. These are divided into C-L, encompassing the Democratic Party (Partito

Democratico—PD), Italy of Values (Italia dei Valori—IDV), and More Europe (Più Europa—+E); Centre-Right (C-R), which includes Forza Italia (FI), the League (Lega), Brothers of Italy (Fratelli d'Italia—FDI), and For Italy in the World with Tremaglia (Per l'Italia nel mondo con Tremaglia); the South American Emigrants Parties (SAEP), consisting of the South American Union of Italian Emigrants (Unione Sudamericana Italiani Emigrati—USEI), Associative Movement of Italians Abroad (Movimento Associativo Italiani all'Estero—MAIE), and Italian Associations in South America (Associazioni Italiane in Sud America—AISA); and other parties, encompassing With Mario Monti for Italy (Con Monti per l'Italia) and the Five Star Movement (Movimento Cinque Stelle—M5S).

The presence of prior associative experiences was operationalized as a dichotomous variable, taking a value of one if the candidate held positions in associations dedicated to organizing the lives of Italians abroad. This approach was chosen over a more general assessment of associative involvement, and the variable was constructed in a dichotomous manner without accounting for potential multiple associative affiliations. This decision was driven by the imperative of ensuring data reliability and the comparability of results. Including broader forms of participation would have added complexity to data collection and posed challenges when assessing the impact of various forms of activism. Similarly, to enhance comparability and data reliability, we opted not to consider the possibility of multiple positions, treating the variable in a dichotomous fashion. This aligns with insights from the literature emphasizing the significance of associations for integrating Italians abroad (Sampugnaro, 2017). Only organisations that held relevance from this perspective were considered, while involvement in groups solely related to the country of emigration was excluded. Theoretically, previous experience in associations can vary during the term of office as an MP. In fact, there may be the possibility of an MP who, without holding any office at the time of candidacy, later acquires one during any subsequent term. This is a particularly relevant scenario as, for the purposes of the theoretical classification presented here, it would imply the MP transitioning from one type to another. However, during the data collection process, no MPs were found to have taken on positions in emigrant associations during their parliamentary terms, rendering this possibility purely hypothetical.

Due to the limited number of total MPs in the dataset, the research used a variety of statistical techniques, such as univariate and bivariate analyses. Two phases of analysis were carried out: a first concentrated on using descriptive statistics to show the profile of MPs; and a second, more exploratory phase, which involved conducting two bivariate analyses to investigate the relationship between the various MP types and the percentage of preference votes and their career length.

4. The MPs' Profile

Before examining the MPs' profile, it is useful to briefly consider their re-election share. As shown in Figure 1, the percentage of re-elected MPs follows a decreasing trend, reaching its peak in the 2008 and 2013 elections (with almost 2/3 being re-elected) before decreasing significantly. This trend is consistent with the process of deinstitutionalization affecting the Italian political system (Chiaramonte, 2023), but compared to national MPs, the impact is attenuated. The 2013 elections represented an "earthquake" (Chiaramonte & De Sio, 2014), with turnover rates of the parliamentary class among the highest in Italian history (Tronconi & Verzichelli, 2014). However, this effect seems to manifest in the Overseas Constituency only from the 2018 elections. It reaches its peak in the 2022 elections, confirming the specificity of the competition in the Overseas Constituency compared to the national one (Battiston & Luconi, 2020). This distinctiveness becomes even more apparent

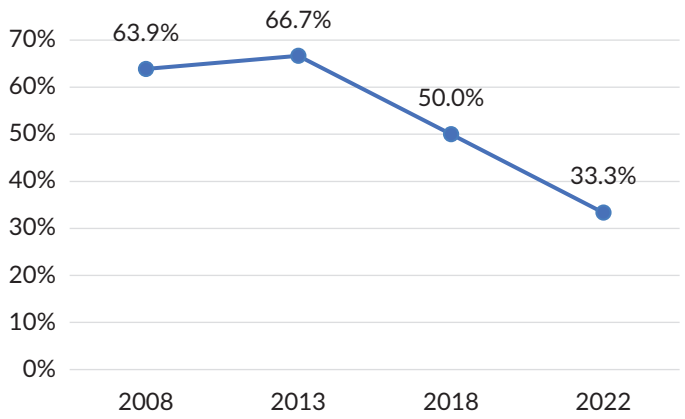

Figure 1. Re-election rates of MPs elected in the Overseas Constituency in Italy. Source: Author's own elaboration based on data of the Italian Central Directorate for Electoral Services (2023).

when examining the distribution of MPs' ages. The 2018 elections witnessed a noteworthy decrease in the age of elected representatives, both in the Chamber of Deputies (where the median age dropped from 48.5 to 42.5) and in the Senate (with the median age declining from 61 to 52). Although the median age experienced a slight uptick in the 2022 elections, it remains higher compared to the period before 2018. This indicates a substantial rejuvenation of the parliamentary class, even within the Overseas Constituency.

Regarding other socio-biographical characteristics, MPs elected abroad, while possessing their own specific traits, do not significantly deviate from the profile of the national parliamentary class. In terms of gender, there is a notable prevalence of men, accounting for just over 80% of the total, as opposed to women, who make up less than 20%. Only during the 2013 and 2018 elections, in line with the trend observed for national parliamentarians (Tronconi & Verzichelli, 2014, 2019), did the percentage of women increase, comprising almost 40% of the total. However, aligning once more with the pattern seen among national MPs (Boldrini & Grimaldi, 2023a), this percentage dipped once again in the 2022 elections.

Regarding party affiliation (Figure 2), a substantial prevalence of MPs linked to the C-L can be observed. Around 60% of MPs in the various elections appear to belong to this political area. On the contrary, the C-R is clearly underrepresented, reaching an all-time low in the 2013 elections with just two MPs elected. On the contrary, the presence of MPs from the lists of citizens of Italian origin in South America is relatively constant at approximately 10% of MPs in all electoral rounds, even with 22% in the 2013 elections. Finally, the 2013 elections mark the emergence of the tripolar scenario, with the appearance of MPs from new parties such as the M5S and the list of Mario Monti (which is, however, limited to the 2013 elections). Finally, regarding career duration (Table 2), a significant portion of MPs only served one term (59.6%). Around 19.2% were elected for two terms, 17.3% for three terms, while a small minority, comprising 3.8% of MPs, were re-elected for four terms.

Table 3 presents the distribution of MPs based on their prior involvement in associations and their birthplace. Examining the birthplace data, most MPs (76.9%) were born within Italy's borders, while a minority (23.1%) were born outside. This highlights that, despite Italy's extensive history of emigration and its inclusive citizenship legislation for those with Italian heritage, the selection of MPs elected abroad predominantly involves individuals who have emigrated relatively recently.

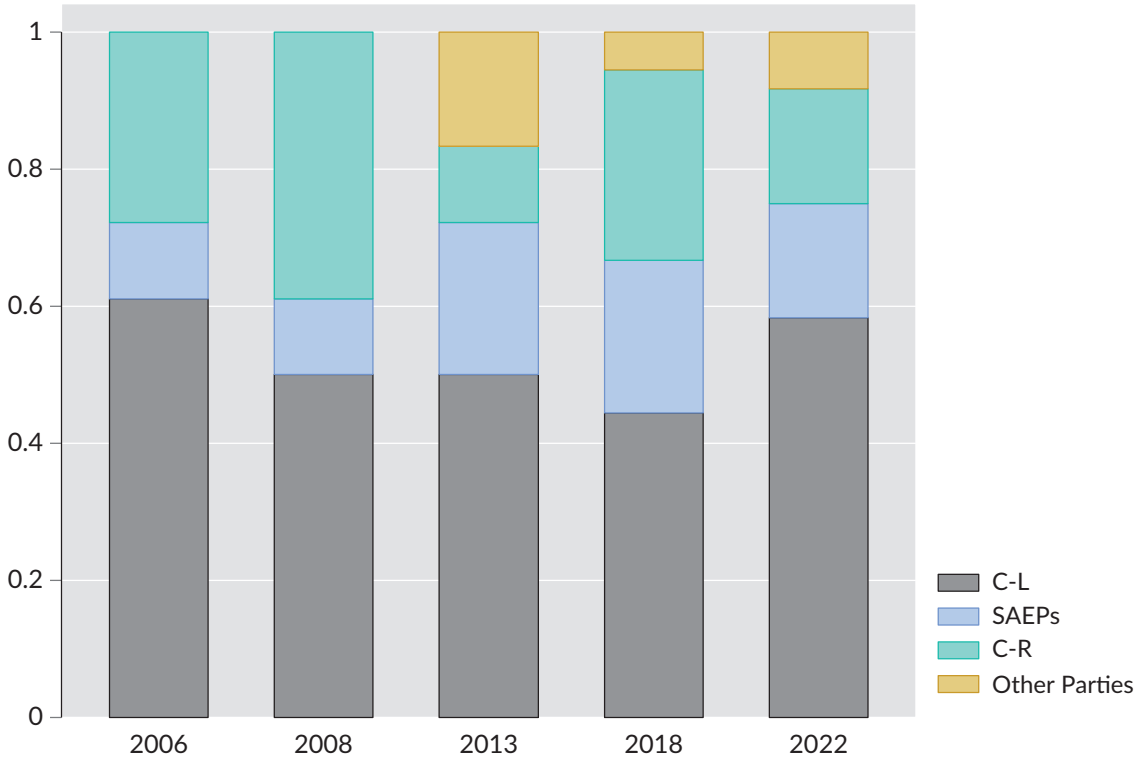

Figure 2. Distribution of Italian MPs elected overseas by party and year of elections.

Examining associative memberships, however, reveals a drastically different picture, with nearly half of the MPs (46.2%) holding posts in Italy-related organisations abroad. These findings underline the significance of these associations in the recruitment (and election) process of MPs. Notably, the most substantial experiences (26.1%) were reported within the COMITES (Committees of Italians Abroad—Comitati degli Italiani all'estero), followed by trade unions and patronages (21.7%), associations for economic exchange and integration between different countries (21.7%), political parties or movements (17.4%), and other aggregative associations representing Italians from specific regions of the country (17.4%). By integrating these two dimensions, we can categorize MPs according to the previously proposed typology.

The prevalent category is Outsiders (42.3%), individuals lacking strong ties to the host country and holding no association positions. The second category (34.6%) comprises Diaspora Representatives, MPs born in Italy who have held positions within emigrant associations. The Expatriate Representatives, characterized by

Table 2. Distribution of the number of terms among MPs elected abroad in Italy (2006–2022).

N° of tenures	Absolute frequencies	Relative frequencies
1	31	59.6%
2	10	19.2%
3	9	17.3%
4	2	3.8%
Total	52	100%

Table 3. Distribution of Italian MPs elected abroad in the proposed typology.

		Associative experience		
		No	Yes	Total
Linkage with the host country	Strong	Heritage Representative 9.6% (*N* = 5)	Diaspora Representative 34.7% (*N* = 18)	42.3% (*N* = 22)
	Weak	Outsider 42.3% (*N* = 22)	Expatriate Representative 13.5% (*N* = 7)	57.7% (*N* = 30)
	Total	53.8% (*N* = 28)	46.2% (*N* = 24)	100% (*N* = 52)

a weak link with the host country and prior positions in organizations, constitute the third largest category, accounting for 13.5% of all MPs. Lastly, the Heritage Representatives, MPs with a strong link to the host country but without any ties to associations, form the smallest category, comprising 9.6% of the total. These results align well with our expectations, illustrating a widespread presence of associative experiences. However, they ultimately represent a "limited" resource, not readily accessible to everyone, yet significant in the political landscape.

Analysing the distribution of different MP types among the coalitions (Table 4), a general prevalence of Diaspora Representatives is observed within the C-L (13%) and SAEP (33.3%), as opposed to the C-R (7.1%). Both the C-L and C-R (47.8% and 35.7%, respectively) also exhibit a higher proportion of expatriate candidates, underscoring the pivotal role of expat organizations in the recruitment process of MPs for the main coalitions. Conversely, the selection of Heritage Representatives appears to be more prevalent among SAEPs (22.2%), aligning with the presence of a historically significant community of Italian origin in that region. Lastly, the Outsiders are widely dispersed within the C-R and constitute the entirety of MPs recruited by the other parties, emphasizing the greater challenge faced by these lists in attracting individuals deeply rooted in emigrant communities.

It remains to be seen if these categories correspond conceptually to different characteristics and provide distinct competitive advantages related to available resources. To investigate this, two separate analyses were conducted to compare the average preference percentages obtained by each type of MP. The goal was to determine if distinct types were correlated with varying percentages of preferences and an extended duration

Table 4. Distribution of MP type among coalitions.

	Outsider	Heritage Representative	Expatriate Representative	Diaspora Representative	Total
C-L	30.4%	8.7%	47.8%	13%	100%
SAEPs	22.2%	22.2%	22.2%	33.3%	100%
C-R	50%	7.1%	35.7%	7.1%	100%
Other parties	100%	0%	0%	0%	100%

of institutional mandate. It is important to note that the results of this analysis have exploratory validity, align with the research's aims, and are influenced by the limited sample size and absence of controls.

Table 5 shows the average share of preference votes obtained at the elections by the different MP types. As can be seen from the table, compared to the average (25.4%), the percentage of preference votes is significantly lower for Outsiders (18.85%), only slightly lower for Heritage Representatives (23.1%), and slightly higher for Expatriate Representatives (26.4%). Conversely, it is considerably higher for Diaspora Representatives (36.4%). The analysis thus seems to suggest that MPs with closer ties to the host country and the community of origin migrants are able to achieve higher percentages of personal approval compared to others.

It still needs to be verified whether this greater ease in obtaining approval also translates into a longer political career. To this end, Table 6 illustrates the average career duration in terms of mandates for each type of MP. As can be seen, similarly to what happened with the preference vote, both Outsiders and Heritage Representatives show a lower average career duration (1.3 and 1, respectively) than the overall average (1.6). Again, therefore, the presence of these characteristics in MPs is associated with a longer career in terms of mandates. Unlike the previous case, however, Heritage Representatives have the shortest careers, with none being reconfirmed for a second term. This specificity can be explained partially by the specific nature of the Heritage Representatives, primarily concentrated within the lists of emigrants to South America. Over the years, these lists have experienced significant turbulence, including splits and the emergence of numerous distinct factions. Although, as previously mentioned, the analysis lacks control variables and is of an exploratory nature, it appears to suggest notable distinctions in the career trajectories of various MPs. Those who previously held positions in associations within the host country, and to a lesser extent, those born in the election constituency, seem to have longer careers and a greater capacity to gather consensus.

Table 5. Average share of preference votes by MPs type.

MPs type	Average share of preference
Outsider	18.8% (*N* = 29)
Heritage Representative	23.1% (*N* = 5)
Expatriate Representative	26.4% (*N* = 35)
Diaspora Representative	36.4% (*N* = 15)
Total MPs	25.4% (*N* = 84)

Table 6. Average numbers of terms by MPs type.

MPs type	Average number of terms
Outsider	1.3 (*N* = 22)
Heritage Representative	1 (*N* = 5)
Expatriate Representative	1.9 (*N* = 18)
Diaspora Representative	2 (*N* = 15)
Total MPs	1.6 (*N* = 52)

5. Conclusion

The research explores the profiles of Italian MPs elected abroad, scrutinizing their characteristics and career trajectories from the creation of the Overseas Constituency up to the latest elections in 2022. By employing an exploratory analysis, utilizing quantitative methods, and encompassing all elected candidates, the study seeks to augment the comprehension of the career paths of these MPs.

Descriptively, the analysis shows some differences between the Overseas Constituency and the national political sphere. Trends such as the national MPs' gradual rejuvenation and the significant turnover observed in the 2013 and 2018 elections applied to the overseas MPs in a more gradual and subdued manner over time. Also, MPs elected abroad exhibit distinct characteristics, particularly a notable overrepresentation of professional categories linked to entrepreneurship, surpassing the levels seen in national parliamentarians. The research also underscores the widespread presence of associative experiences among MPs, confirming the centrality of these pathways in the journeys of those elected abroad and the relatively low number of MPs born directly in the country of emigration. Despite the historically robust and well-established Italian communities abroad, the recruitment of MPs in these constituencies appears to lean towards more recent emigrants rather than individuals of Italian descent seeking to maintain a link with their country of origin.

From a theoretical standpoint, the research introduces a typological classification of MPs elected abroad, offering a finer delineation of their distinctions. Given the specific context, not all MPs elected abroad fit the same model. The typology distinguishes between: those individuals who belong to one of the historical Italian communities abroad but are outsiders to their social integration circuits (Heritage Representative); those who, while part of the host country's community, are integrated into associations of Italians abroad (Diaspora Representative); those who are outsiders to the host community but integrated into associations (Expatriate Representative); and finally, those who are outsiders to both the host community and associations (defined as Outsider).

The research evidence that this classification not only holds conceptual merit by differentiating MPs with diverse socio-biographical backgrounds but also holds interpretative value. It suggests that MPs deeply ingrained in emigrant organizations (such as Diaspora Representatives and Expatriate Representatives) tend to have more enduring careers and secure higher percentages of preferential votes. Consequently, career paths appear to be more solid and extended for MPs who are firmly rooted in their community compared to those who are entirely external to it.

Given the exploratory nature of the research, further investigations are necessary to validate its findings. Longitudinal studies will be essential in determining whether the trends observed here will be corroborated in subsequent elections. Furthermore, comparative studies can ascertain the applicability of this classification (and its explanatory capacity) in contexts beyond Italy.

Additionally, the research opens further paths of inquiry. This encompasses exploring whether different representation styles are correlated with distinct types of MPs elected abroad, investigating diverse forms of political and institutional engagement (both prior and subsequent) in both the country of origin and the host country, and scrutinizing whether they are tied to specific communities within such extensive constituencies. Lastly, an additional perspective could be dedicated to applying the same interpretative framework to

national parliamentarians. As noted initially, the scientific literature has paid limited attention to investigating prior associative experiences in the recruitment pathways of the parliamentary class and their significance in structuring careers and as a competitive resource. Unpacking this aspect for national parliamentarians and comparing their similarities and differences with MPs elected abroad could represent a vital line of inquiry in comprehending the career trajectories of Italian parliamentarians and the evolution of representation in contemporary Western democracies.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Supplementary Material

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

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Politics and Governance
2024 • Volume 12 • Article 7331
https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.7331

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Open Access Journal

Reject, Reject, Reject...Passed! Explaining a Latecomer of Emigrant Enfranchisement

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Submitted: 22 June 2023 **Accepted:** 19 September 2023 **Published:** 13 March 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue "The Political Representation and Participation of Migrants" edited by Sergiu Gherghina (University of Glasgow) and Sorina Soare (University of Florence), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i354

Abstract

Despite the extensive spread of external voting across the world, exceptions remain as some countries have not passed such regulations (e.g., Uruguay) or have passed them but lag implementation (e.g., Nicaragua). Others still took a long time to join the trend, possibly presenting a pushback to the commonly accepted notion of norm diffusion to explain migrant enfranchisement. We examine a latecomer by asking why Chile took so long to enfranchise emigrants. Classified as a liberal democracy with a century of legal history of foreign-resident voting, it repeatedly rejected proposed bills on external voting since 1971. Chile enacted external voting only in 2014, regulated it in 2016, and applied it in 2017. Through legal historical content analysis, we identify which political actors proposed the bills, when, and why each failed. Left and right-leaning actors gave normative, legal, and procedural reasons that resulted in rejection and stagnation at various institutional stages. This latecomer's constitutional tradition, strongly focused on territory and territorial links, potentially sheds light on dozens of other country cases of late adoption of the external franchise.

Keywords

Chile; democratic norms; emigrant enfranchisement; external voting; political regimes

1. Introduction

States across the world have debated external voting, providing reasons for and against granting immigrant and emigrant voting rights (for reviews, see Caramani & Grotz, 2015; Fliess & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2021; Umpierrez de Reguero et al., 2023). Some countries, such as Uruguay (Margheritis, 2022) and Ireland (Reidy, 2021), do not grant voting rights, despite holding democratic ideals and other reasons typical of joining the

global trend. For decades, Chile was similar and then became a latecomer to external voting when it passed legislation in 2014 (law 20,748), regulated it in 2016 (law 20,960), and implemented it in the 2017 presidential election, marking the first time certain Chileans voted from abroad (Finn, 2021). Why the country passed such regulation seems straightforward since it was an established democracy with strong institutions, decades of free and fair elections since the dictatorship, and a relatively open and globalized perspective. On approval, the incumbent government praised this inclusive democratic step. Yet the typical factors of why countries enfranchise emigrants had already been present, at least, since the return to democracy in the early 1990s. While political science and migration studies literature usually explains why enfranchisement occurs, we explain why previous proposals failed.

Why was overseas voting rejected time and again before it passed? Motions from the parliament and presidents initiated similar bills a dozen times from 1971 before approving it in 2014. Chile was a pioneer adopter of immigrant suffrage and still ranks among one of the most inclusive countries worldwide for immigrant voting (Altman et al., 2023; Finn, 2023). We explain why Chile was a latecomer to emigrant suffrage. Reviewing the digital minutes and bills within Chile's Senate and National Congress Library, we identify who proposed each bill, when, and why it failed. Conducting content analysis of legal documents and discussions of each initiative, we analyze each relevant dialog in the Chamber of Deputies, Senate, and by the executive. Rejection revolved around legal, normative, and procedural reasons, as well as stagnation as the bill moved through institutional stages. Examining failure has the potential to nuance factors often used to explain success. Our analysis questions the democratic aspect of the prolific norm and the left–right ideological divide over external voting.

External voting is a worldwide phenomenon, shown in the Extraterritorial Voting Rights and Restrictions Dataset (EVRR; Wellman et al., 2022), visualized in Figure A1 in the Supplementary File. Of 170 surveyed countries, Umpierrez de Reguero (2023) classifies 51 as lacking emigrant enfranchisement and 24 as deviant cases that may have passed such rights but failed to implement them. The result is that at least 75 countries have legally disenfranchised nationals abroad, while other countries have enacted such rights but limit or manipulate them in practice (see, e.g., Gherghina, 2015; Turcu, 2018; Wellman, 2021). While Chile is now part of the enfranchisement trend, it took over 40 years of attempts; its repetitive rejections may be useful for scholars interested in non-adopters and non-implementers. Our findings—of a latecomer's constitutional tradition with a strong focus on territory and territorial links, which created political disagreement along ideological lines—are relevant for comparison to other findings in Latin America and across the globe on why states accept or reject external voting.

2. Definitions, Concepts, and Theory

Granting migrant voting rights requires a country to enshrine rights (i.e., pass a law), regulate them through a legal framework (making it possible to exercise the right), and implement rights (the first time new voters participate); Palop-García and Pedroza's (2019) study outlining these three steps is one of the foundational texts identified in Fliess and Østergaard-Nielsen's (2021) thorough review of emigrant enfranchisement studies. Enfranchisement is the legal process of granting voting rights. It targets a certain group, such as immigrants (also referred to as non-citizens, co-nationals, and denizens) or emigrants. Emigrant voting refers to when nationals who have moved from an origin country and reside abroad can cast ballots from abroad in origin-country elections. This phenomenon is more specific than the practice of external voting

(i.e., overseas or diaspora voting), referring to a larger group of nationals that includes, for example, the emigrants' offspring who may have never lived in their parents' origin country but hold that nationality. This is an important conceptual distinction for two separate groups of voters and these two terms should not be taken as synonyms.

The immigrant and emigrant enfranchisement literature comprises four main strands, categorized by Umpierrez de Reguero et al. (2023). The first is normative, encompassing mostly political theory debates about which migrants should (not) be in the demos (e.g., Bauböck, 2015). The second is legal, analyzing constitutional and electoral laws defining who can register and vote and the procedural steps of how to access suffrage rights (e.g., Pedroza & Palop-García, 2017). The third strand involves the political activities and mobilization around migrant voting, for instance, movements or campaigning led by organizations, political parties, or states (e.g., Kernalegenn & van Haute, 2020). The fourth topic relates to post-enfranchisement, with prolific research on migrant voter turnout and vote choice at the individual or aggregate level. Our analysis lies within the second strand of legislation and processes.

Within the process are the decision-makers' normative views on who should be in the political community based on, e.g., nationality and territorial presence, paralleling the phrase "no taxation without representation." Nationals abroad share commonalities and can return to the origin country, but only some think this entitles them and future generations to vote from abroad (Bauböck, 2005, 2015), paralleling the complementary logic of "no representation without taxation." Others in Ireland (Reidy, 2021) and Romania (Gherghina et al., 2022), for example, view economic contributions as meriting external voting. Hesitation to enfranchise can also come from fear of the unknown, such as "foreign" influence in elections, as Mexico long suspected from their nationals in the US (Smith & Bakker, 2008). Parties and incumbents estimate potential voter support, evident across sub-Saharan African laws on paper and in practice (Wellman, 2021). Votes from nationals abroad could swing elections (Gamlen, 2015) and when diasporas are large, the absence of emigrants' votes can also change domestic results, such as in the Polish elections (Giesing & Schikora, 2023). Legislators also consider the financial costs of enfranchisement and implementation logistics, given that investing in anonymous voting procedures and implementation abroad is expensive (Finn & Besserer Rayas, 2022). Governments tweak procedures and modalities to facilitate voting, such as French e-voting (Dandoy & Kernalegenn, 2021), or to deter registration and voting, such as Romania installing few voting stations with very long waiting lines (Gherghina, 2015; Szulecki et al., 2023) and Venezuela requiring difficult-to-obtain documents (Umpierrez de Reguero et al., 2020).

Building from prior studies, our theoretical framework concentrates on four aspects: state actors, ideology, lack of agreement, and domestic versus international politics. *State actors* support or oppose external voting for many of the abovementioned reasons. Approval works most smoothly with cross-party support, bringing in *ideology*. Specific to Chile, we consider Courtis' (2017, p. 166) argument that after 1991 (and presumably through 2010), the main reason external voting had not passed was rooted in strong right-wing resistance. This scholar outlines three reasons opponents gave in debates: suspicions that Chileans abroad do not pay taxes in Chile, technical difficulties in implementing voting procedures abroad, and external voting could "bias" election results. The bias conveys a fear of massive participation of those who live abroad; given that many are previous exiles from a right-wing dictatorship, the assumption is that they would support the left. As mentioned, all these reasons also occur in other countries, but we suspected that there is more to the story in Chile. Erlingsson and Tuman (2017) stress that the Chilean status-quo law gave an electoral edge to conservatives (so the right

would oppose and the left would support enfranchisement), however, this was proposed in 2014 and approved in 2015, once approval was possible despite rejection from two rightwing parties (RN and UDI; Gamboa & Morales, 2016). These ideological arguments do not explain why right governments also proposed external voting bills at various times.

At the core of these ideological debates is a *lack of agreement*. Considering a longer period within and between countries, support and opposition exist from both left and right. Examining political party contestation of external voting in 13 countries, Østergaard-Nielsen et al. (2019) find that (besides radical right parties) the more to the right a party is, the higher the tendency to support external voting rights. Escobar (2015) reports that across Latin America, right-leaning governments initially granted migrant voting rights up until the 1990s, whereafter it was the left who granted them. Rather than a clean right–left split consistent over time, it is a lack of agreement that blocks approval of external voting, as scholars have identified also for Portugal (Lisi et al., 2015) and Uruguay (Margheritis, 2022).

Internal debate leads to the highlight of the third piece of the theoretical framework: When deciding whether to legalize overseas voting, there are trade-offs between *domestic and international politics*. Studying suffrage laws must be contextualized not only regarding political regime and transition period but also alongside the development of citizenship and nationality laws since, together, these laws legally define who has a political voice in which elections (Bauböck, 2005; Earnest, 2008). Perceiving links to the territory—rather than to national ideals or identity, for instance—has a long history in Chilean constitutions, specifically in their citizenship laws since 1822 (Courtis, 2017). Prioritizing territorial connection seems to intuitively explain the within-case variation of Chile as a pioneer versus latecomer to migrant enfranchisement since they politically incorporated (non-naturalized) immigrants about 90 years before enfranchising certain emigrants (Finn, 2023).

International politics and perceptions also affect enfranchisement, captured in the norm-internationalization and global norm hypotheses, in which liberal norms and standards of accepting external voting diffuse across countries, especially to neighbors (see Jaulin, 2016; Lafleur, 2015; Rhodes & Harutyunyan, 2010; Turcu & Urbatsch, 2015). Most South American countries grant external voting rights, including Chile's border countries: Argentina has allowed it since 1991 (Law 24007), Bolivia since 2010 (through Art. 45 of the Electoral Regime Law), and Peru in the Constitution of 1979 (Chapter VII, with mandatory voting for all nationals, including those abroad). Analyzing 24 Latin American and Caribbean countries, Erlingsson and Tuman (2017) find policy diffusion and political globalization were not significant variables for explaining external voting rights; rather, remittances and left-leaning governments were significant—which, again, conflicts in cases with right government proposals. To answer why states enfranchise citizens abroad, Lafleur (2011) finds a variety of factors in Belgium, Italy, and Mexico but emphasizes the evolution of domestic politics. Similarly, we suspected that domestic politics had overshadowed international politics—meaning Lafleur's (2011) finding may serve to explain not only why states accept but also why they reject external voting.

Finally, democratic principles are at play in domestic and international politics. The level of democracy matters since diffusion is based on the idea of accepting global liberal standards to accept external voting. Yet while withholding migrant suffrage rights is not undemocratic, granting them is more democratic (Pedroza, 2015). Indeed, the "democratic" part of the norm is unclear since some countries with high levels

of democracy do not allow nationals to vote from abroad (e.g., Ireland and Uruguay; Margheritis, 2022; Reidy, 2021; Stuhldreher, 2012), while other countries enact and apply external voting while classified as non-democracies (e.g., South Africa, before 1994; Wellman, 2015, 2021). We questioned the role of democracy and international perceptions in a country experiencing great domestic shifts, such as Chile, since the proposed bills came prior to a dictatorship, during re-democratization, and liberal democracy. A window-of-opportunity sub-hypothesis posits that regime transitions offer a prime chance to grant external voting rights (Rhodes & Harutyunyan, 2010). Chile does not fit into this trend or else would have passed the proposed bills in the 1990s. Chile continued to reject bills after neighboring countries had enacted external voting and as the global trend was spreading, hence, our research question emerged.

3. Data and Method of Analysis

For enfranchisement, the typical outcome of interest is the enactment or application of voting rights (i.e., the presence of the phenomenon). Instead, our case selection allows us to examine cases of rejection (i.e., the absence of the phenomenon; see Goertz, 2017) since the reasons put forth in the literature seem to have low explanatory power for this second scenario of lacking the external franchise. We examine a single country that encompasses typical reasons from the literature that had puzzlingly existed throughout, thus failing to explain any difference of rejection versus adoption of emigrant voting rights.

Our data collection started with a key document from 2015 outlining the country's legal chronology of external voting, published by a designated section in Chile's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Division for the Community of Chileans Abroad. We then searched for each bill listed in the chronology, finding these data as digitized legal texts publicly available online from Chile's Senate and National Congress Library. These include reports, or bulletins (*boletines*), that outline each bill's content and transcribed minutes from discussions as it passed through the Senate and Chamber of Deputies, including from their corresponding Constitution Commissions and executive branch. On Congress-approved laws, corresponding online reports called *History of the Law* contain detailed transcriptions of all related documents and discussions of the legislative process; these typically number approximately 200 pages. There is less information on the Congress platforms for bills that did not complete legislative processing, as only reports and documents are available as the bill is dispatched, rejected, or archived at specific stages. A limitation of these digital data sources is that two bills were archived (in 1994 and 2018), preventing us from determining their failure.

We complemented these with all legal, institutional, and academic information available in English and Spanish on Chilean external voting, e.g., commissioned reports, think-tank publications, book chapters, and research articles. The theoretical framework and empirical foundation consider the most recent state-of-the-art of 84 journal publications on this topic (Umpierrez de Reguero et al., 2023) and the EVRR dataset, which depicts the trend of external voting in all world regions, which covers almost 200 countries from 1950 to 2020 (Wellman et al., 2022; www.evrrdataset.com). From these, we observed that many aspects key to explaining enfranchisement had been present in the selected cases, thus our research question focuses on failure rather than success.

From these sources, we compiled the inductive Table 1 to outline the details of each bill, whether the president or parliament started the initiative, the result, and why it failed. Applying our extensive knowledge of the Chilean political system and political party constellations through the last decades, we focused on

who proposed each bill and how it proceeded through the legislative process. When necessary, we analyzed the debate minutes in the relevant institutional-legal stage, to understand the arguments for and against the bill, considering the political party coalitions, regime changes, democratization, and left–right shifts in power. Through this content analysis, we concluded the reasons for rejection.

Our case selection and method of analysis face at least three limitations. Since our legal analysis stems from digital records of bills and official discussions in various government branches, it fails to capture unofficial debates of internal and informal party politics. The first limitation is that Table 1 perhaps misses key actors in the external enfranchisement process. What role did emigrants and emigrant organizations abroad play? Echeverría (2015) hints at increased claims-making in the 2000s, whereas Umpierrez de Reguero (2022) lists organizations (e.g., Chile Despertó Internacional Network, Chile Decide Extranjero, Chile Somos Todos) active in such claims-making. Were other veto players playing internal party politics behind the scenes to block bill approval? Second, we could not dive into possible explanations for rejection that involved the consequential legacies of the post-dictatorship era that likely incited fear of the unknown, specifically regarding the composition of the diaspora. Who is abroad? Who would they vote for? Third, we noticed that proposed motions aimed to change different laws (e.g., Article 13 or 18, or combining the bill with other suffrage law changes). Did these actors think such an approach would have a better chance of passing? Why? Our data and method restrict us from addressing such questions.

4. Results: Rejected Time and Again in Democracy

Chile enacted external voting in 2014 (law 20,748), which outlined voting from abroad in presidential primaries, presidential elections, and national-level plebiscites (see Table A2 in the Supplementary File). It was regulated in 2016 (law 20,960), requiring Chileans to change their address to abroad and to prove a past residence of at least one year in Chile, presumably any time within the individual's life. The laws outlining the political rights of Chileans abroad do not include candidacy rights, special representation, or suffrage in legislative or municipal elections. Emigrant enfranchisement was first applied in July 2017 for the primaries, followed by the two rounds of the presidential election in November and December of the same year.

Voter registration requires Chileans to report their address abroad to the Chilean government, complete a form, show Chilean identification, and prove prior residence in Chile for at least a year, presumably anytime within one's lifetime (ChileAtiende, 2023). Voter registration is automatic after Chile's Electoral Service has the residence certificate (*el certificado de avecindamiento de extranjería*; law 18,566). Such residence excludes those born abroad who are Chilean through *ius sanguinis* laws, until they live in Chile for a year, return abroad, and then enroll. This limits the voting population abroad not to Chileans at least 18 years old but only to those who have resided in Chile. Nationals living abroad cannot skip the requirement and go to Chile to vote in person, i.e., "travel voting."

Based on its characteristics and the literature, Chile should have approved it much earlier. Why was overseas voting rejected time and again? Official records of external voting show that incumbent governments repeatedly proposed it, dating back to 1971 (see Navarrete Yáñez, 2006; Toro & Walker, 2007). The first proposal happened before Pinochet's regime, which is important because it undermines some contemporary rationalizations based on an ideological divide. Pinochet's 17-year dictatorship forced many Chileans into exile and spurred further voluntary emigration. This led to an ongoing belief that external

voting took so long to pass in Chile due to assuming that those abroad were overwhelmingly of left ideology (since the dictatorship was rightwing, less right supporters would have been exiled). This created a general notion that potential new voters would benefit only left-leaning candidates, thus right-leaning politicians blocked approval. Some emigrant organizations abroad also held this belief (Erlingsson & Tuman, 2017). However, over time many more Chileans presumably from across the ideological spectrum moved abroad, so the actual legal and historical processes paint a more nuanced ideological scene.

During the military dictatorship—and unlike contemporary regimes aiming for control and power over the diaspora and seeking international cooperation (see Tsourapas, 2021)—Pinochet kept a tight security-focused regime, largely under a state of emergency (Huneeus, 2000), without needing external voter support. Under this context, external voting was unsurprisingly not proposed. However, given the importance of territorial belonging and perhaps planning to gain a future potential or symbolic voter constituency, immigrant voting rights in national-level elections were debated, passed, and enshrined in the 1980 Constitution, a product of Pinochet's appointed constitutional review commission (Finn, 2020, 2023). After a return to democracy, external voting slowly reappeared but other priorities in the (re)democratization period overshadowed it, which gained momentum in only 2005 onwards.

Whereas Table A1 in the Supplementary File details our analysis, Table 1 summarizes our findings on each proposal in Chile. The first column lists each failed bill, with the first in 1971. The second presents who proposed it—in Chile, the president of the republic or a group of parliamentarians (senators or deputies) can present bills. To become law, both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate must approve it, during which a specific commission reviews it (in our case studies, Constitution Commissions), and it must be approved by the plenary session of the respective chamber. Once both approve it, the president promulgates the law, and it is published—unless the president exercises veto power and requests Congress to re-discuss certain parts. The third column explains what occurred along the legislative path: (a) withdrawal by the executive may correspond to the desire to present a new project on the topic, with significant modifications, or uninterest in the project continuing to be analyzed in Congress; (b) rejection shows the lack of support from parliamentarians, even despite legislative priority to analyze and vote on it; (c) archived bills often respond to long stagnation, possibly because of a lack of legislative priority in general or for another bill; and (d) abandoned bills similarly lack movement or advancement over an extended period.

These first three factual columns comprise our first contribution since none of this information on overseas voting in Chile has been presented comprehensively or cohesively by the government, lawyers, or scholars. The second contribution lies in the last column, which holds the results of our analysis. We categorize that failure comes in two forms: stagnation and rejection. Based on relevant literature, we condensed the reasons for failure into four overarching labels: normative, legal, procedural, and lack of agreement. This fourth and final column summarizes our interpretation of what happened, in response to our research question on the reasons for legislative failure. Table 1 offers an opportunity to look beyond political regime and ideology to instead compare these categories with at least 75 other countries worldwide currently with disenfranchised nationals abroad.

As outlined in the last column in Table 1, the bills failed largely because of normative, legal, and procedural reasons, as well as stagnation. A lack of agreement seemed to stall or stop the discussion, resulting in the bill being withdrawn, the debate fizzling out (i.e., rejected or stopped), or being archived. The outcomes seem to

be regardless of who proposed the bill, which ideology the current administration held, and if the executive or parliament started the initiative. Furthermore, rejection or acceptance do not reflect the country's quality of democracy or changes in nationality or citizenship laws. Chile had a relatively strong party system, institutions, free and fair elections, and a globalized perspective, which counters intuition and many of the reasons found in the literature that would have predicted earlier adoption.

Table 1. Summary of Chile's legislative process of failed emigrant enfranchisement bills (1971–2013).

Date of proposed bill	Via message or motion by	Legal outcome	Reasons for rejection
1971	President	No support in the Chamber of Deputies	Stagnation and procedural: • Presented as a secondary aspect of a project • Lacked political support
January 1991	Parliament	Stopped in the Senate	Normative, legal, and procedural: • Unconstitutional (compulsory for resident nationals) • Unjust, unequal treatment • Implementation difficulties
June 1993	Parliament	Archived in 1994	Legal and procedural: • Archived after the previous 1991 report was approved (albeit then stopped)
July 2005	Parliament	Rejected in the Chamber of Deputies	Normative and procedural: • All-subjected principle • Ties to Chile • Registration difficulties
October 2006	Parliament	Stopped in the Chamber of Deputies	Stagnation and lack of agreement
March 2009	President	Stopped in the Senate	Stagnation and procedural: • Presented alongside two other proposals on automatic registration and voluntary voting
May 2010	President	Stopped in the Chamber of Deputies	Stagnation and lack of agreement
December 2010	President	Stopped in the Chamber of Deputies	Normative: • Ties to Chile
December 2010	President	Withdrawn by the government	Legal: • Unconstitutional
June 2013	Parliament	Archived in 2018	Stagnation and strategic: • Lacked political support • Was strategic to open possible political consensus

Notes: For details on the legislative process of failed bills see Table A1 in the Supplementary File; for the approval process 2013–2016 see Table A2 in the Supplementary File; certain Chileans abroad voted for the first time in the presidential election 2017.

The normative reasons, and to some extent the legal reasons, included critically decisive discussions on having and proving a "tie" or "link" with the country. Requiring a link was interpreted as restrictive, creating controversy around the 2005 proposal and then again in 2010, resulting in the rejection (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2015; Vargas Cárdenas, 2016). Again, the idea of territorial links has a long history in Chilean constitutions. Rejection because of the link was quite legally irrelevant, since, when Congress finally approved suffrage, the resulting 2015 law mandates a one-year residence in Chile as a prerequisite to enrolling as a voter abroad. The residence of one year exceeds that which was proposed in 2010 under President Piñera, which was a residence of five months within the last eight years (also see Courtis, 2016).

Legal reasons in 1996 and 2011 considered external voting as "unconstitutional." A major concern was that voting was still mandatory for resident nationals (i.e., Chileans living in Chile). State actors considered it contrary to the Constitution to establish different voting conditions for nationals abroad and resident nationals. They considered it unconstitutional to limit voting abroad to presidential primaries, presidential elections, and national plebiscites and to establish voluntary voting abroad, while for those residing in Chile, it was still mandatory. This proposal was the second of four bills initiated during Piñera's two administrations (two in 2010 and two in 2013), signaling that it was somewhat of a priority and perhaps, indirectly, signaling recognition of the global trend of external voting and their delayed stance of enacting it.

Procedural reasons related not to enacting migrant enfranchisement but to regulating and implementing migrant voting. We label these as institutional reasons. Actors referred to seemingly overwhelming difficulties that Chile would have to overcome to implement voting from abroad. While financial investment would be an evident barrier, it went largely unmentioned. Instead, the debate focused on perceived logistics, such as implementation difficulties in 1991. Just after returning to democracy, after the 1989 plebiscite ending Pinochet's dictatorship, constitutional reform would have been needed to establish an electoral system abroad. There was a lack of priority and political will to create this in the early 1990s, thus it acted as a major reason for the bill's failure.

This means Chile passed by the "window-of-opportunity" during the transition and did not follow neighboring Argentina's 1991 approval of external voting. This was despite actors in the debate being aware of global diffusion, which was mentioned by the center-left actors who drafted the 1991 bill, and then repeated in a Chamber of Deputies report in 1992. A 1996 report by the Senate also states that the trend was mentioned by the director of the Electoral Service and by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the prior parliamentary debate. Despite recognizing diffusion, after Chile's failed 1993 proposal, external voting was notably not proposed again for 10 years, perhaps prioritizing other issues during re-democratization.

Procedural reasons appeared again around the 2005 proposal, that focused on registration difficulties. Concerns remained that Chile's Electoral Service would face the enormous task of opening electoral registers in consulates abroad since the law only outlined how registration occurs within the territory, which served as a main reason for rejection. This continued in 2009, as the proposal was presented alongside a project of automatic registration of voters and voluntary voting (to replace optional enrollment and mandatory voting used at the time). Despite approval of the overall project by the Constitution Commission and the Chamber of the Senate, it was not discussed again, resulting in stagnation. The last trend in Table 1 shows that four consecutive bills over 2009–2010 came from the president rather than parliament: the first from Bachelet, then three from Piñera, some with high priority for discussion, but each equally failed.

5. Discussion

Considering all of Chile's proposed bills of external voting shows no straightforward democratic or ideological reasoning to have been rejected or accepted. First, on approval, the left-wing administration was quick to praise external voting as an inclusive democratic step: Bachelet commented that "with this law, we are honoring democracy, by allowing each of our compatriots to effectively have the possibility of marking his or her preference in our national elections" (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, 2016; translation by the authors). While this is true, and of course the speech's target audience is society at large, democracy and democratic voices had little to do with the process of rejection and approval. Democracy had long reigned in Chile and similar bills failed time and again before approval, including under Bachelet's first administration.

Second, our compilation and analysis of Table 1 challenges Courtis' (2017, p. 166) reasoning for external voting rejection: "The main obstacle for implementing voting from abroad has been the resistance from strong right-wing Chilean politics" (translation by the authors). The reasons Courtis identifies overlap with our classifications of normative and procedural reasons, which were given by both left and right-leaning actors under both left and right governments. Most evidently, of the 12 bills—including the two that passed (9069–07/2013 and 10344–06/2015), see Table A2 in the Supplementary File—five were debated under the right-wing coalitions of Piñera's administrations, whereas six were under left-leaning executives (Allende, Aylwin twice, and Bachelet thrice; see Table A1 in the Supplementary File). We thus consider such reasons against the bills not as ideological reasons, belonging to one side or the other, but that the ideological divide manifested as differing perspectives on who has links to Chile as a territory. And that was the principal factor of "proving" who should be able to vote. The 2005 rejection by the right actors was because they wanted to ensure some links to the country. Contrarily, the 2010 rejection came from left actors because they disagreed with requiring such a link.

The divide therefore originated not in ideology but in the perspectives on territory and residence. The country's legal history emphasizes both of these concepts, reflecting actors' normative beliefs of who should (not) belong to the demos. This scenario of normative leanings focused on territorial ties, backed with long-standing legal precedence, also intuitively explains why Chile implemented immigrant voting very early (1925–1934; see Finn, 2023) while also blocking emigrant voting from 1971–2014. As Fliess and Østergaard-Nielsen (2021) point out, the notion of extending voting rights to people outside the territory—even though they hold nationality—challenges the traditional link between citizenship and territoriality. This can slow down the process of adopting new legislation. Whereas Pallister (2020) found that resource constraints and crowded electoral reform agendas slowed the external voting processes in El Salvador and Guatemala, here in Chile it seems that breaking long-standing traditional views of territory and residence resulted in rejection time and again. Despite the presence of liberal norms and democracy, this underlying status quo means that state actors and societies have long accepted this as the norm, and breaking it is difficult, both in normative views and in legislation.

What most explains the rejection is domestic politics and a lack of agreement, overpowering other significant factors found in the literature involving high levels of democracy, global norms, and ideology—all present during the rejection and acceptance of proposed bills in Chile. A lack of agreement is the main explanatory reason for the absence of external enfranchisement in other countries, such as Portugal (Lisi et al., 2015) and Uruguay (Margheritis, 2022). In Chile, it manifested for decades as a disagreement in proving territorial ties.

We interpret state actors' concerns over the logistical and institutional aspects of legalizing and implementing external voting (i.e., reasons vocalized in the debates) as secondary to their primary concerns of ensuring their normative stances over defining and "proving" national belongingness. Domestic politics—primarily external voting as a non-priority in the re-democratization period and right-left fluctuations in administrations—and a strong domestic territorial focus trumped concerns or debate about the international realm, specifically about how most other countries had adopted external voting.

Disagreement was finally overcome through cross-party efforts. While our main objective has been answering why bills failed, secondarily we also briefly address why it passed in 2014 (for details on the legislative steps, see Table A2 in the Supplementary File). The incumbent, President Bachelet, prioritized the discussion by putting *la suma urgencia*, the legal term for high urgency, on two different proposals. In 2014, she also added the right to vote in presidential primary elections and a one-off registration process (instead of requiring voters to register before every election), which Congress approved, then it moved through the Chamber of Deputies, successfully ending in 2016 (as law 20,960). Putting urgency on it does not explain approval since it had been unsuccessfully used on the bills from 2007 (Bulletin No. 3396–06/2005), 2008 (Bulletin No. 268–07/1991), 2009 (Bulletin No. 6418–07/2009), 2010 (Bulletin No. 6950–07/2010), and 2011 (Bulletin No. 7335–07/2010).

Through a brief analysis of the approval, the legal process of the 11th proposal was not inherently unique but two factors stand out: First, in June 2013, a motion strategically opened the road for possible political agreement, which seemed to work given the 2014 approval. This reflects Lafleur's (2011) finding on the Italian inter-partisan agreement of the constituency abroad as a crucial factor in approving external voting legislation. Second, the administration held a majority in parliament, resulting in the approval of various large reforms in 2015 targeting the tax, education, and electoral systems. Gamboa and Morales (2016) report that Chile's electoral reform, which changed its binomial system to a more proportional one, had previously not been a priority and the proposed reform had failed 26 times, always facing political disagreement, a primary reason we have also found for external voting failure. Bachelet (2013, p. 155) promised to "increase the permanent link" of Chileans abroad with Chile, which we interpret as a deliberate use of the specific term "link," given its prevalence in previous debates. However, Bachelet did not prioritize external voting, dedicating just one sentence to it in her 198-page presidential plan. It passed in 2014 seemingly because of having enough political agreement and a majority in parliament.

6. Conclusion

The boundary of the demos continues to be in flux in many countries, reflecting norms and divisions between who should be included and excluded. As of 2022, there are more than 130 countries that offer at least some voting rights to selected groups of nationals abroad (Wellman et al., 2022). Viewing voting as a practice of citizenship, voice has moved beyond territory and membership (Bauböck, 2005) and even beyond nationality (Pedroza, 2019). Laws and implementation set the political opportunity structures individuals face; both the final legislation on paper and the reasons and context under which it was crafted are vital for unpacking who can electorally participate and who has access to choosing a state's future leaders. Given its importance, the process of granting and withholding voting rights to growing numbers of transnational individuals continues to be a dynamic research topic at the intersections of political science and law, while its effects resonate throughout sociology, migration studies, and electoral studies.

While existing literature has explained why and where migrant enfranchisement occurs, our analysis tackled why proposals fail. We conducted a content analysis of the historical legal processes of a latecomer—Chile. Using classifications from Umpierrez de Reguero's (2023) overview of 170 countries, Chile was among 51 countries that lacked emigrant enfranchisement, compared to 24 deviant cases that have such rights on paper but not in practice, and 95 typical cases showing the global trend of external voting. Chile joined this trend and became what Umpierrez de Reguero (2023) would classify as a typical case with fast-track implementation, given its enfranchisement process started with enactment in 2014 and ended in implementation in 2017. Yet while approval was fast-tracked, the legal historical process behind it dragged on for decades. Our analysis of the long road to enfranchisement unpacks why the latecomer had rejected 10 similar proposals over 40 years before passing the 11th proposed bill.

Failure stemmed from either stagnation or rejection. Over the period of analysis, we identify no clear-cut veto players but find that opponents to external voting provided reasons based typically on normative, legal, and procedural arguments. The primary normative concerns in Chile reflect the literature from sociology and political theory on belonging and the all-subjected principle. The normative arguments stemmed from discussing what is (un)just or (un)fair for resident nationals compared to nationals abroad.

Our findings nuance arguments that portray a simple left–right ideological divide on the topic of external voting, by pinpointing a prominent factor in our within-country case studies: state actors' normative stances of who belongs to the demos, which here reflected views on whether proving territorial ties should be required to vote from abroad. The left–right ideological divide in Chile did not clearly separate the supporters from opponents of the external franchise but reflected disagreement on voters' connection to the country. About half of the bills in Chile were proposed under right-wing coalitions and half under left-wing coalitions; the normative, legal, and procedural reasons during debates were given by both left and right-leaning actors under both left and right-leaning governments. As such, in this analysis, ideology per se is not a significant influence over the rejection or approval of external voting. However, ideology determined who supported (right) and who opposed (left) a critical factor of debate—requiring a territorial "link"—which indeed created stagnation and rejection.

This latecomer demonstrates a country's case of constitutional tradition with a strong focus on territory and territorial links. Differing perspectives on who had, and could prove, such a link were ideologically split, resulting in different normative notions of who should be in the demos and decades of political disagreement. As Szulecki et al. (2023) conclude, while, in theory, having a stake in a country's future seems sensible to be included in the demos, it is extremely difficult to accomplish in practice. Presence in the territory, as a requirement for electoral participation, was a long-standing internalized norm that had been crystallized in law. It required repeated attempts to change such an ingrained normative and legal boundary of the demos. While emigrant enfranchisement legislation was passed in a democracy, it was not because of democracy or democratization. A similar research design and methodological approach can be applied to the debates and failures in dozens of other countries that do not offer external franchises. As such, the broader processes and findings presented here form a relevant point of comparison for external enfranchisement in Latin America and across the globe.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Maarten Vink for inviting us to present a draft of this work at the GLOBALCIT Annual Conference 2022 and Rainer Bauböck for comments. We also appreciate the helpful comments from the reviewers and the academic editors of this thematic issue, Sorina Soare and Sergiu Gherghina.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

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

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Politics and Governance
2024 • Volume 12 • Article 7396
https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.7396

ARTICLE

Open Access Journal

Migrants' Voter Turnout in the Home Country Elections: Non-Integration or Political Anchor?

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Submitted: 15 July 2023 **Accepted:** 11 September 2023 **Published:** 13 March 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue "The Political Representation and Participation of Migrants" edited by Sergiu Gherghina (University of Glasgow) and Sorina Soare (University of Florence), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i354

Abstract

The transnational political participation of migrants has been extensively analyzed in the literature. Previous explanations focus on individual determinants ranging from political interest or efficacy to social ties or socio-demographic characteristics. So far, little attention has been paid to the contrast between factors related to their lives in two different countries. The present article adds to this burgeoning literature by identifying and comparing the effects of several attitudes and behaviors of migrants in the host and home country on their voter turnout in home country elections. We use individual-level data from a survey conducted in 2022 on 1,058 Romanian migrants living around the world. The results indicate that migrants who remain anchored in the politics of their home country—without necessarily striving to return—and those who are engaged in their host communities are more likely to vote. Migrant voter turnout is not determined by poor integration in the host society.

Keywords

home country; integration; migrants; political participation; Romania; transnational electoral participation; voting

1. Introduction

Many countries around the world allow their citizens living abroad to vote in national elections. The procedures used to facilitate voting vary and include polls organized in the host country, postal ballots, or a requirement to return to the home country for election day. The basic principle behind the expansion of

voting and representation rights beyond borders remains the same: to allow non-resident citizens to have a voice in the decision-making process of their home country, especially in the context of large contemporary flows of migrants (International Organization for Migration, 2020). The voting patterns of migrants have produced sizeable effects on home election results across several countries (Gamlen, 2015; Gherghina, 2015) and there is an increasing discrepancy between how the diaspora and the electorate in their home countries vote over time (Szulecki et al., 2023). Under these circumstances, the turnout of migrants in home countries' national elections has attracted extensive scholarly interest over the past three decades. The usual explanations cover institutions that can facilitate access to voting or mobilize voters (Lafleur & Chelius, 2011), system-level variables such as the strength of electoral competition in a democracy (Ahmadov & Sasse, 2015; Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020), policies (Pedroza & Palop-García, 2017), and individual-level variables (Finn, 2020; Voicu & Comşa, 2014).

There is a consensus in the literature that migrants' political participation is shaped by the interaction between what they experience both in their home and host societies, reinforced by their political, economic, and cultural links (Chaudhary, 2018; Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020; Tsuda, 2012). However, we do not know which of these two types of determinants has a stronger influence. The present article seeks to address this gap in the literature by analyzing the effects of migrants' individual-level characteristics in the host and home country on their voter turnout in home country elections. It focuses on Romanian migrants abroad as the most likely case where voter turnout may occur. This case has four characteristics: (a) there are special seats for the diaspora in the Romanian Parliament; (b) there is relatively high access to voting through postal ballots (since 2016) and through the creation of polling stations in their host countries; (c) Romanian migrants have voted extensively in the past, especially in the presidential elections, and Romanian parliamentarians often directly address the diaspora's priority issues in their speeches; and (d) there is a history of transnational digital activism supporting protest causes in Romania.

We use individual data from a survey conducted in 2022 among 1,058 migrants living in 31 countries, with most respondents living in six European and North American countries that tend to be preferred destinations for Romanian migrants. Our analysis covers, in chronological order, the voting of Romanian migrants in home elections for the European elections (May 2019), the presidential elections (November 2019), and the national legislative elections (December 2020). The choice of these elections was for methodological reasons: Each election is different, thus we can gauge the general participatory behavior of migrants rather than their turnout in a specific type of election and as they were all organized relatively close to the timing of our survey, which increases the probability that respondents will accurately report their turnout.

This article brings three contributions to the existing literature. The first is that it moves beyond the discussion of the incentives generated by diaspora politicization and formal access to the political process in the home country (Burgess, 2014; Lafleur & Sánchez-Domínguez, 2015). By contrasting the motivations linked to the host and home country, our approach seeks to identify the degree to which migrants channel their voting behavior as a result of their transnational lives. Relatedly, the second contribution is the addition of individual characteristics to the existing knowledge that migrants' voting behavior in their home country is embedded in the political context of the two countries to which they are connected (Belchior et al., 2018; Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020). The analytical model suggested in this article complements earlier accounts, in that instead of looking at the host–home country linkages as favoring electoral turnout, we test the effects of several factors linked to each of the two countries. Without downplaying the importance of institutional or

system-level variables, our study explores the relevance of attitudes and behaviors in both the host and home country. Finally, we advance the empirical knowledge about the individual motivations of voting behavior beyond the often-studied demographic and socio-economic characteristics (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2009; Burgess, 2014; Escobar et al., 2015).

Section 2 reviews the literature on the motivations for transnational electoral participation and provides the theoretical underpinnings for several testable hypotheses. Section 3 includes details of the study's data and methodology. In Section 4, we present the main findings and interpret the results, before Section 5, with the conclusions, where we discuss the broader implications of this study and provide some directions for further research.

2. Host vs. Home Country Determinants

The individual-level determinants for migrants' turnout in home country elections have been often investigated from two different angles, which are reflected in the exposure, transferability, and resistance theories that have been developed in relation to migrants' attitudes towards their host and home country, respectively. The exposure theory posits that migrants abandon the values they possess before they arrive in the host society and change their behaviors when they come into contact with the values and institutions of their new place of residence. The transferability theory argues that migrants use their pre-migration values to adapt to their host society, while the resistance theory explains that migrants hold onto the values acquired during their socialization in their home country prior to migration and their actions reflect these values (Tsuda, 2012; van Londen et al., 2007; Voicu & Comşa, 2014; Wals, 2011; White et al., 2008). We build on these theories to test the explanatory power of several variables associated with the two main categories of explanations covered by these theories (host vs. home country). The analytical framework we deploy in our study is presented in Figure 1. The following lines formulate testable hypotheses for both main categories.

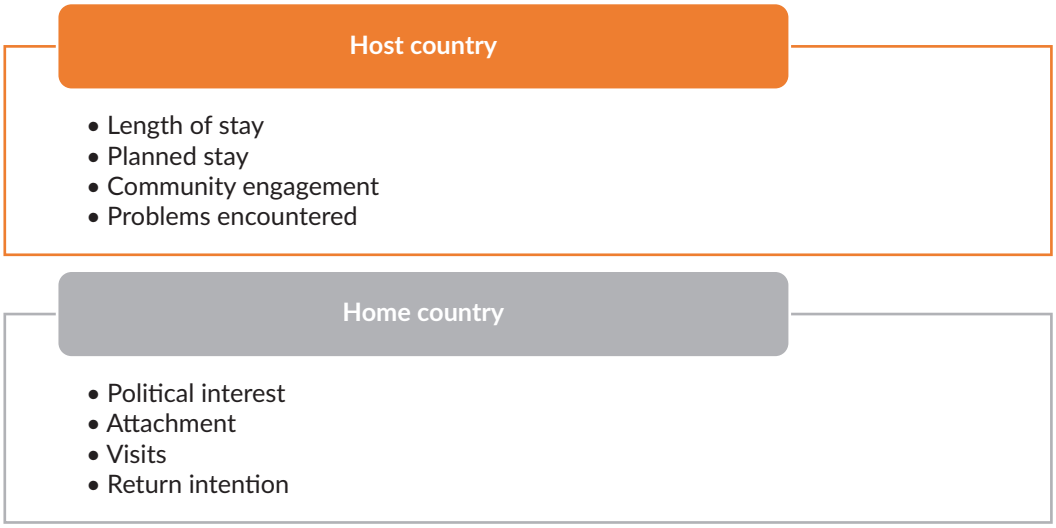

Figure 1. An overview of the analytical framework.

The theoretical arguments behind the four hypotheses related to the host country set out the idea of

migrants' limited exposure to new values and their poor integration in the new environment of residence. Extensive time spent by migrants in the host society allows them to become accustomed to it, to understand and develop an interest in its functioning, and to learn about possibilities to engage (Togeby, 2004). For example, the longer migrants live in host societies with higher political participation, the more they will vote (Mügge et al., 2021; Voicu & Comşa, 2014). A long period of stay is conducive to better adaptation and engagement in the host society and to alienation from their home society (Finn, 2020; Gherghina & Tseng, 2016). On the contrary, migrants who have only stayed for a short period in their host country maintain connections to their home country and are likely to express their voice in home elections. The same logic applies to the planned stay. The intention to spend more time in the host country enhances interest in the host society and boosts migrants' motivations to create connections because they will pay off in the long run (Umpierrez de Reguero & Finn, 2023). Migrants who plan for longer-term integration into the host society are expected to distance themselves from their home country, including its elections (Gherghina & Tseng, 2016). Short-planned stays often mean that the host society is seen as temporary, so the migrants may avoid investing resources in adapting to it and their main anchor may remain the home country.

Migrants' level of integration in the life of their host country is lower if they do not engage in their new local community. A high degree of civic engagement reflects both the efforts made by migrants and the opportunities that they have to learn about the social dynamics of the host country (Gherghina & Tseng, 2016; Lee et al., 2018). Low engagement can mean that migrants disregard the possibilities in the host country and continue to nurture ties with their home country. Finally, problems encountered in the host country with respect to their legal status, workplace arrangements, or language can lead to migrants feeling unwelcome and uncertain about their future. In these circumstances, they can maintain ties with the stable society at home and be more oriented towards expressing a voice in their home elections. Following all these arguments, we expect that relative to their experience in the host country:

H1: Migrants with a shorter stay are likely to vote in home elections;

H2: Migrants with a shorter planned stay are likely to vote in home elections;

H3: Migrants with lower community engagement are likely to vote in home elections;

H4: Migrants who have encountered problems are likely to vote in home elections.

The theoretical underpinnings of the four hypotheses presented relate to the home country ties combined with the society of origin and the migrants' desire to return to that society. Political interest is one of the most common drivers for voter turnout (Blais, 2006; Tsuda, 2012). The mechanism is straightforward: Individuals who are interested in the political process are more inclined to cast a vote because they believe there is something at stake for them and that the act of participation is important. This variable has also been considered relevant to the electoral behavior of migrants, with the general expectation that those with an interest in the political system of their home country may turn out to vote in elections there (Escobar et al., 2015; Lafleur & Chelius, 2011; Spies et al., 2020). Attachment to the home country is another variable that could influence voter turnout. This rests on the theory of social identity according to which people differentiate between in-groups and out-groups (Huddy, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When the national identity (of their home country) is salient for migrants, they will associate themselves with that

group. A high satisfaction in belonging to that group, i.e., a strong emotional attachment to the home country, can stimulate electoral participation in home country elections (Simon & Grabow, 2010; Spies et al., 2020).

Transnational home visits by migrants are another indicator of national identity practice. Earlier research shows that migrants often visit their home countries to visit family and, in some instances, these family-motivated visits are combined with business or educational journeys (Marschall, 2017). Other studies find that the main purposes of travel are the nurturing of kinship relations, cultural obligations, and maintaining family values (Feng & Page, 2000; Hung et al., 2013). In general, migrants' visits reflect the persistence of symbolic and social ties with the homeland (Waldinger, 2008), which can also push them to vote. Elections are means through which they can influence and to some extent control what happens in the society to which they continue to feel close. Migrants' return intentions, which are defined as their plans to move back one day to their home country, can also shape voter turnout. Migrants may decide to return if they encounter problems with work, family, and socio-cultural integration in the host country (Bettin et al., 2018; Bonifazi & Paparusso, 2019; Constant & Massey, 2002), or if they perceive or expect positive benefits in social, economic, or family life if they return to live again in their home country. Migrants planning to return in the near future may pay more attention to events in the home society and seek to influence its political development because that will affect their lives directly. Following these arguments, we expect that relative to the home country:

H5: Migrants with a high interest in their home country's politics are likely to vote in home elections;

H6: Migrants with high attachment to their home country are likely to vote in home elections;

H7: Migrants who often visit their home country are likely to vote in home elections;

H8: Migrants with short-term return intentions are likely to vote in home elections.

In addition to these main effects, we control for age, education, and gender since earlier research indicates that these can influence voter turnout among migrants (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2009; Leal et al., 2012; Mügge et al., 2021; Wass et al., 2015). Apart from these variables, we control for several immigrant-specific variables that may have had an effect on migrants' voter turnout, such as the existence of ethnic networks in the host country, the perception of discrimination in the host country, or the existence of homeland parties that actively campaign abroad (Burgess, 2014; Spies et al., 2020; Umpierrez de Reguero & Finn, 2023). In addition, we also control for general variables such as the perceived usefulness of political parties in the home country, trust in the home country's parliament, and social class (Mügge et al., 2021). However, none of these were observed to have either large or statistically significant effects on the level of knowledge so we do not report them in the article to keep the statistical models parsimonious.

3. Data and Methodology

We use individual-level data from a survey conducted in June–July 2022 among first-generation migrants from Romania. The Romanian migrants were selected as the subject of study for four reasons that make this the most likely case to identify voter turnout in home elections. First, the Romanian diaspora is one of the largest in the world relative to the country's population (International Organization for Migration, 2020) and,

since 2008, has had dedicated seats in the Romanian Parliament. Romanians abroad thereby form a separate constituency that is represented by two senators and four deputies in the national legislative elections. Second, since 2016, there has been relatively high access to voting through postal ballots and polling stations in host countries. Third, Romanian migrants have voted extensively in the past, especially in the presidential elections, and Romanian parliamentarians directly address the diaspora's priority issues in their speeches (Gherghina, 2015; Gherghina et al., 2022). Fourth, the Romanian diaspora has previously engaged in transnational digital activism in support of protests in Romania (Mercea, 2018), which reflects an interest in the state of affairs in the home country.

The dataset includes 1,058 respondents who provided complete answers to the survey. The dropout rate was around 25% of the total number of people who started the survey (1,372 potential respondents). No specific question triggered the abandonment of the survey. We used a purposive sampling technique in the form of maximum variation sampling to increase the variation in several key variables for research (Emmel, 2013). Only estimates are available on the number of Romanian migrants, as official statistics about their number or profile are lacking, thus the drawing of a probabilistic representative sample was not possible. Although the findings cannot be generalized to a broader population since the sample is not representative of a broader population (Schreier, 2018), they are nevertheless valuable for an internally diverse segment of the population that cannot otherwise be studied. The sample has high variation in terms of migrants' age, education, gender, the area in which they lived prior to migration, country of residence, and length of stay. The distribution of some variables closely matches the limited available information about the broader population of Romanian migrants. For example, the respondents to our survey are an average of 41 years old, close to the average age of Romanians gaining residence abroad, which is 38 years old ("Statistica românilor stabiliți," 2021). The respondents come from 31 countries and roughly 80% of those who filled in the online survey live in one of the six countries that have traditionally been the preferred destinations of Romanian migrants: France, Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK, and the US (Vintila & Soare, 2018). Most of the remaining 20% live in other European countries or Canada, but some reside in countries that are geographically far from Romania such as Australia, South Africa, Taiwan, or the United Arab Emirates.

The respondents were neither pre-selected nor part of a pool of available individuals. The survey was conducted online and was distributed through messages on Facebook groups, discussion forums for Romanians living abroad, and e-mails sent to representatives of Romanian associations and organizations. The questionnaire covered several main themes including challenges in the host country, ties with the home country, political attitudes and behaviors, and post-materialist values. The use of social media to collect responses has advantages such as cost-effectiveness, broad audience reach, the absence of observer bias, and the potential to explore (Lehdonvirta et al., 2021). However, two main disadvantages are the coverage bias rooted in unequal internet access (van Dijk, 2005) and self-selection bias due to topic saliency (Bethlehem, 2010). The latter is reflected in the distribution of the dependent variable (see Table 1 in the Supplementary File)—we have a higher percentage of voters in the sample than in reality. Moreover, there may also be an issue of over-reporting in this survey related to the social desirability of turnout, as is common in voting behavior surveys. In brief, people say that they have voted even when they have not. The over-reporting can happen when citizens tend to have a stronger sense of civic duty, are more educated, or have political knowledge (Górecki, 2011). In the case of migrants, this can be exacerbated by the fact that they face greater participation costs when living abroad than they would in their home country.

The dependent variable of this study is a cumulative index that measures the vote in the 2019 presidential elections, the 2019 European elections (for Romanian members of the European Parliament), and the 2020 legislative elections. While in other countries the turnout in European elections is substantially lower than in the national legislative elections, this was not the case in Romania for the most recent elections at these levels. The country-level turnout for the 2019 European elections was approximately 51%, while for the 2020 national legislative elections, it was approximately 33%. In the diaspora, the turnout for the 2019 European elections was higher (295,000 voters) than for the 2020 national legislative elections (265,000 voters; Rezultate Vot, 2022). The respondents were asked if they voted in each of these elections, with a positive answer coded 1 and a negative answer coded 0. The final index is measured on an ordinal scale that has values between 0 and 3.

The independent variables are measured in ordinal scales. The length of stay (H1) is measured with a question regarding the total period of time spent in the host country. The available answers are recorded on a five-point ordinal scale: *less than six months* (1), *half a year to one year* (2), *one to three years* (3), *three to six years* (4), and *more than six years* (5). The planned stay (H2) is also measured on a five-point scale through the answers to a question about the length of time for which the migrants planned to stay in the country. The values of the scale are the following, with the explanations in brackets made available to the respondents: *short-term* (undecided, wanted to check first how it is; 1), *temporary for one year* (2), *medium-term* (one to five years; 3), *long-term* (more than five years; 4), and *permanent* (5). The level of community engagement (H3) uses the self-reported degree of involvement in the problems of the locality in the host country. This degree ranges between very little and very large, coded ascendingly from 1 to 5. The problems in the host country (H4) are represented by a cumulative index that refers to eight problems personally encountered by the migrants relating to their legal status, access to the job market, education, housing, underemployment, environment adaptation, isolation, and language. Each identified problem is given a score of 1, otherwise a 0, and the final index ranges between 0 and 8.

Interest in the politics of the home country (H5) is measured through a standard survey question: "How interested are you in general in Romanian politics?" The available answers ranged from: *not at all* (1) to *very much* (6). Attachment to the home country (H6) is measured via a question about how emotionally attached the respondents feel to Romania. The available answers are coded ascendingly from 1 to 5, representing values between: *very little* (1) and *very much* (5). Home visits (H7) uses a four-point ordinal scale with *never* (1) and *twice per year or more* (4) as answers to the question about how often the respondents had visited Romania between 2017 and 2022. Return intention (H8) is measured through the answers to the question, "On a scale from 0 (not at all) and 10 (very high), how do you estimate your likelihood of returning to Romania and living there in the next two years?" The control variables are measured in a straightforward manner, similar to international surveys. Age was measured in the survey through the number of years at the time of the survey, which was then recorded in age categories ascendingly from 1 to 5 to create the following cohorts: 18–30 years old (1), 31–40 years old (2), 41–50 years old (3), 51–60 years old (4), and over 60 years old (5). Education is recorded as the highest degree completed, coded on an ordinal scale ranging from *primary or secondary school* (1) to *post-graduate studies* (5). Gender is a dichotomous variable: 1 for women and 2 for men.

The analysis uses ordered logistic regression. For all the variables, the "DK/NA" answers are treated as missing values and excluded from the analysis. We ran models with country-fixed effects to account for

variations in the degree of democracy in the host country which could impact voter turnout (Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020; Wass et al., 2015). The results of these models resemble those without country-fixed effects. For reasons of parsimony and ease of interpretation, this article presents the version without fixed effects. We tested for multicollinearity and the results indicated no highly correlated predictors: the highest value is 0.42 and the variance inflation factor values are lower than 1.31 for every estimate.

4. Analysis and Results

Romania uses a closed-list proportional representation system for its national legislative and European elections with an electoral threshold of 5% for political parties and 8–10% for electoral alliances and coalitions. This system was reintroduced in 2016 for the national legislative elections after problems with the mixed majoritarian system that was experimented with in the 2008 and 2012 elections (Gherghina & Jiglau, 2012). National legislative elections are organized every four years—usually in the fall—for a bicameral parliament (senate and chamber of deputies) in which the two chambers are elected in similar ways; the country has not had any early elections in its post-communist history. European elections are organized every five years, on a date decided at the European level. Romania has a multiparty system in which majority government has only been possible in isolated instances. Coalition governments usually include three or more parties, but there have been instances where only two parties governed together. The largest party in post-communist Romania is the Social Democratic Party (PSD), which receives an average of one-third of the votes, the party reached its electoral peak of 46% in the 2016 national legislative elections. The party or its predecessors (with different party names) has won all but one of the popular votes in national parliamentary elections since 1990 and has formed the government many times. The National Liberal Party (PNL) is the second-largest party in the country and receives an average of one-fifth of the votes. It has had a continuous presence in parliament since 1996 and has governed many times since then. The third-party with a continuous presence in the Romanian party system is the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, which gets 6–7% in every national election, a percentage proportional to the share of Hungarians in the country. The party is included in many coalition governments due to its pivotal role in parliament.

The other two parties that gained seats in the 2020 national legislative elections were Save Romania Union (USR) and Alliance for the Unity of Romanians (AUR), both relatively new—USR was formed in 2015 and AUR in 2019. USR has a strong pro-European stance and joined the coalition government for one year after the 2020 elections. In contrast, AUR is a radical right party with nationalist and anti-EU discourse, which gained 9% in the 2020 elections. In the diaspora, AUR was the third most voted-for party after USR and PNL. The latter two secured most of the diasporan electoral support in 2016. PSD has had very poor electoral results in the diaspora, e.g., in the 2019 European elections it received slightly more than 3% of the votes and, in the 2020 national legislative elections, it got less than 4% of the votes (Rezultate Vot, 2022). Apart from these five parties, the People's Movement Party gained seats in the 2019 European elections. It emerged in 2013 and gained national parliamentary seats in 2016 but failed to gain representation in 2020.

The Romanian presidential elections have been organized every five years since 2004. Until then, the presidential term in office was four years and coincided with the parliamentary term and a two-round majority system is used in which the second round is a runoff between the top two candidates if no candidate gets an absolute majority of votes (relative to the size of the electorate, not to turnout) in the first

round. The diaspora generally does not support PSD presidential candidates. For example, in 2019, the PSD candidate received less than 3% of the votes in the first round (out of roughly 675,000 votes) and 6% in the second round (out of almost 950,000 voters; Rezultate Vot, 2022).

Romanian migrants have been able to vote in home elections since 1992, the first year when elections were organized for complete terms in office of the parliament and country president after the regime change in 1989. The first term in office (1990–1992) was considered temporary and was half of the usual term. Since 2008, Romanian migrants have been represented in parliament by two senators and four deputies, while since 2016 the diaspora has been able to use postal voting for legislative and presidential elections. Romania is a semi-presidential regime in which the country's president is elected directly by the population for a five-year term. The voter turnout of Romanian migrants increased from roughly 45,000 in 1992 to 295,000 in the 2019 European elections, falling slightly to 265,000 in the 2020 legislative elections. A record turnout of 950,000 migrant voters was recorded in the second round of the 2019 presidential elections (Rezultate Vot, 2022). This increase took place in the context of high emigration from Romania over the past three decades. Estimates position the total number of Romanian migrants at somewhere between six and eight million (Pavaluca, 2022). Figure 2 presents the distribution of voter turnout among the survey respondents. Approximately half of the respondents had voted in one election or none, while roughly one-third declared that they had voted in all three elections. The sample is likely to be biased towards respondents who voted since this share can hardly match the numbers provided earlier in this paragraph.

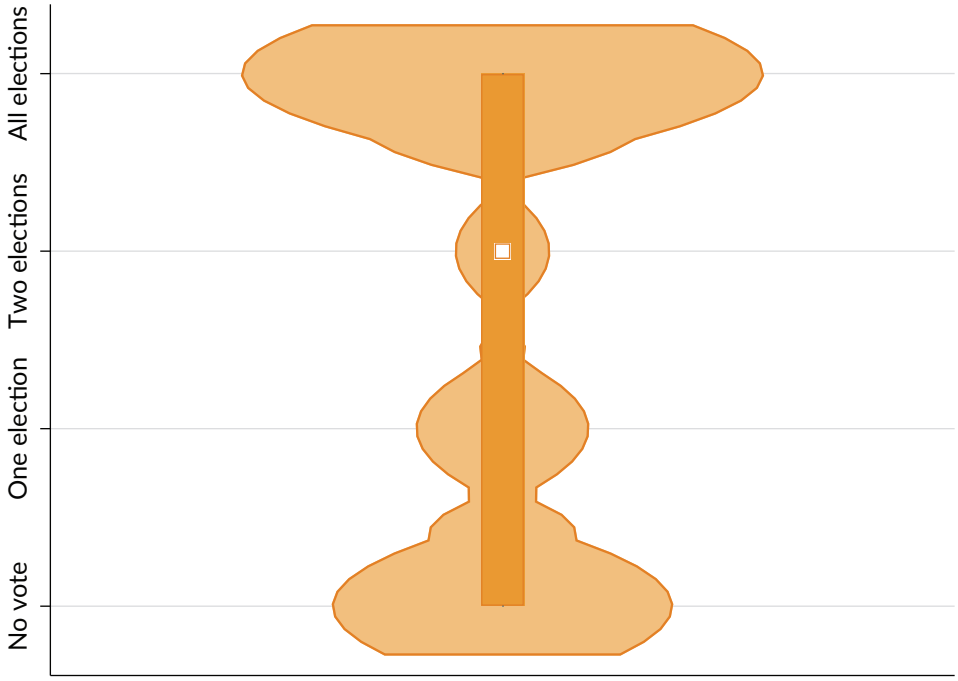

Figure 2. The voter turnout of respondents in the three elections organized in the home country.

We ran three ordinal logistic regression models: one for the variables related to the host country, the second for the variables related to the home country, and the third a full model including all the main effects plus the control variables. The following lines interpret the results for the full model only since the effects are consistent in terms of size and statistical significance across the three models (Supplementary File, Table 2). Among the

host country variables, we find empirical support for the first two hypothesized relationships. Romanians who have lived for a shorter period of time in the host country and who only plan to stay in the short-term vote more than those who have settled in a host country or plan a permanent stay (Figure 3). This finding is in line with the arguments from the literature (Gherghina & Tseng, 2016; Umpierrez de Reguero & Finn, 2023) and could mean that the surveyed migrants who see the host country as a temporary stop in their lives vote more in the home elections due to uncertainty about their future. They do not know where they may live in the future and their vote influences the politics in a potential destination.

The effect observed for community engagement (H3) goes against the theoretical expectation and indicates that the migrants who are highly involved in the local community in their host country vote more in home elections compared to migrants who are not. One possible explanation for this finding is the existence of a positive relationship between the two variables, which has long been established in the literature. High involvement in civic associations provides people with the skills and experiences that prepare them for future political activity, resulting in higher political participation (Brady et al., 1995; Olsen, 1972; Putnam, 1993). Romanian migrants appear to use the skills acquired through social engagement in their local communities in the host country to vote in their home country. This finding is consistent with earlier results on other groups of Romanians abroad (Gherghina & Tseng, 2016). We find no evidence for the effect of problems in the host country (H4), which means that the hurdles encountered by migrants in the host country do not make them vote in home elections as a way to safeguard their future or as a refuge from these problems.

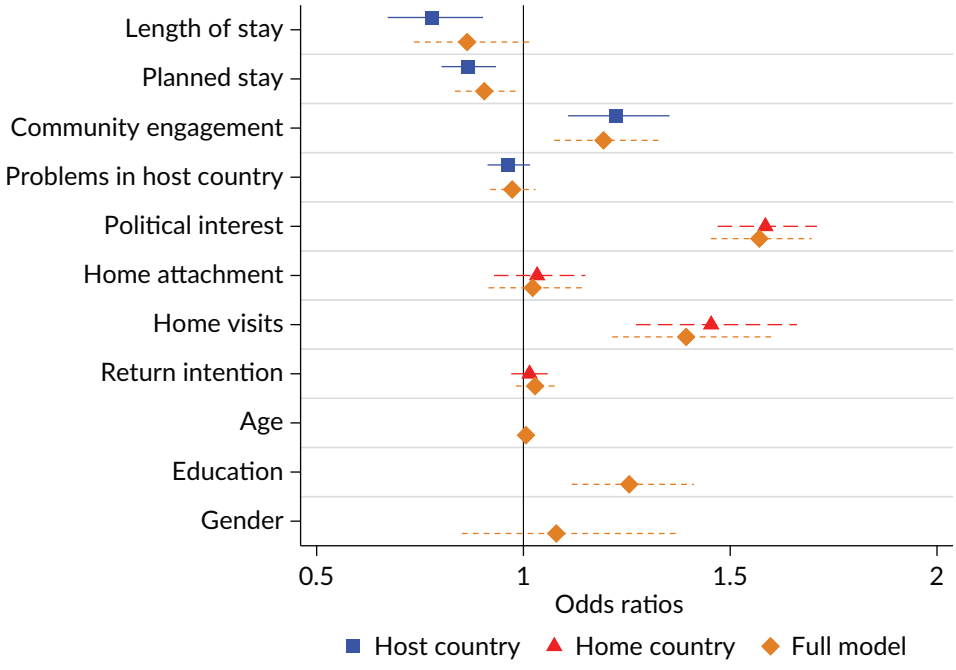

Figure 3. The effects on voter turnout.

Interest in home politics (H5) has a strong effect on voting in home elections. Apart from confirming the arguments for the positive relationship between these two variables, this result also indicates that living abroad is not equivalent to a drop in political attentiveness among Romanian migrants. This is in line with previous observations, according to which life abroad does not hinder attention to politics from a distance (McCann et al., 2019). There is also a strong effect of home visits (H7) on voter turnout, which may indicate that electoral

participation is driven by a sense of social belonging manifested through continued physical encounters with home society. However, the sense of belonging in the form of emotional attachment to the home country makes no difference in terms of voting. There is also no effect of the return intention, which implies that the surveyed migrants' electoral participation is not linked to a physical presence in the community in which they vote. Their turnout could be driven by considerations relating to their family or social network in the home country or by a broader sense of duty as citizens of the home polity, irrespective of their distance and living intentions in the future.

Among the controls, education is the only one that has strong and statistically significant results. Highly educated migrants are approximately 1.25 times more likely to vote than those with low levels of education. The absence of an effect for age shows that younger and older surveyed migrants are equally likely to vote, which contrasts with the usual picture from elections in Romania in which the older population turnout is considerably higher. One reason for this observation is the low share of young people in the sample: only 13% were between 18 and 30 years old.

5. Conclusions

This article has sought to understand the drivers of voter turnout in home elections among Romanian migrants. It contrasted the variables related to their host and home country and produced three main findings. First, the home country variables seem to have a stronger effect on turnout than experiences in the host countries. The model has a better fit (pseudo R^2) and the effect size for the variables is larger. This means that migrants engage in home elections because of the ties they maintain with their society of origin, rather than because they feel alienated from the host society. Second, domestic civic activity enhances political activity in a transnational context. Migrants who are more socially engaged in their host communities vote more in their home country compared to socially passive migrants. Third, turnout is driven by political interest and frequent contact with the home society rather than by distant assessments of the facts. This observation indicates that voting by diaspora members appears to be much more of an informed decision than an activity engaged in by migrants who are out of touch with the realities at home.

These results have implications for the broader study of migrants' transnational political participation. Although the sample used in this study is non-representative, the findings indicate the existence of several trends that are informative for the scientific community. For example, we show that migrants' voting behavior is not exclusively linked to their (non-) integration in their host country or to their ongoing ties with their home country. Instead, it is the result of their transnational lives. We find that specific attitudes and behaviors beyond socio-demographic characteristics in both the host and the home country foster their electoral participation. The turnout of Romanian migrants is driven by political interest, civic values, and strong ties to the community where the vote is cast. Such characteristics correspond to informed and responsible behavior, which could bring benefits in the medium and long run to political representation in the country and beyond its borders. While these findings are hardly generalizable due to the sample characteristics and the features of the Romanian diaspora, they invite future research that tests their relevance in other political settings and migrant populations. They also advance the existing knowledge about the electoral participation of migrants and could represent a useful starting point for comparative analyses. Further work may refine these conclusions with a focus on the relevance of knowledge, civic duty, and partisan attachments, factors that were not explored in this study.

Conflict of Interests

In this article, editorial decisions were undertaken by Sorina Soare (University of Florence).

Supplementary Material

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

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Politics and Governance
2024 • Volume 12 • Article 7422
https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.7422

ARTICLE

Open Access Journal

Diversity in Spanish Politics? Dynamics of Descriptive Representation of Immigrant-Origin Minorities in Local Elections

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Submitted: 24 July 2023 **Accepted:** 5 December 2023 **Published:** 13 March 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue "The Political Representation and Participation of Migrants" edited by Sergiu Gherghina (University of Glasgow) and Sorina Soare (University of Florence), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i354

Abstract

Research has identified an alarming gap in migrants' descriptive representation across Western European countries with long-standing immigration while showing that not all migrant groups are equally (un)successful in gaining elected office. However, little is known about migrants' political presence in Southern European countries, which have experienced increased immigration in recent decades. We address this research gap for Spain by focusing on the municipal level where minorities' inclusion remains of utmost importance. Conceptually, the article tackles the question of how the interplay between migrants' demographic concentration and specific party features shapes the outcomes of minority descriptive representation. Empirically, we bring novel evidence from an original survey with local party organizations across municipalities returning high shares of Romanian, Moroccan, Latin American, and EU14 migrants. We first demonstrate that, despite being particularly sizeable, all groups remain under-represented in Spanish local politics, although with important differences. At comparable levels of demographic concentration, EU14 and Latin American migrants are almost three times more likely than Romanian migrants and up to seven times more likely than Moroccan migrants to be fielded as candidates. EU14 candidates are also more successful in securing office. Second, our findings confirm that party features shape the contours of minority inclusion: Spanish left-wing and new parties present more diverse local candidacies and place minority office-seekers in safer electoral list positions than right-wing and established parties.

Keywords

candidates; councilors; descriptive political representation; immigration; local elections; minority inclusion; Spain

1. Introduction

Drawing on the concept of descriptive political representation (Mansbridge, 1999; Pitkin, 1967), numerous studies have sought to assess if the makeup of representative institutions reflects increased demographic diversity. Their findings document that parliamentary assemblies are far from mirroring the composition of societies (Bird et al., 2011; Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013; Dancygier et al., 2015). Despite (slow) progress over time, the numbers of migrants standing as candidates are usually below their demographic size, and, from this limited pool of aspiring politicians with an immigrant background, few win elected office, although with variations between groups.

This article seeks to enrich existing knowledge on migrants' presence in European legislatures by bringing novel evidence from Spain, where the topic has been insufficiently explored. It complements other facets of migrants' political engagement discussed in this thematic issue (e.g., Finn & Ramaciotti, 2024; Gherghina & Basarabă, 2024). Conceptually, we contribute to scholarship on migrants' access to elected office by investigating how the interplay between their demographic concentration and specific party features shapes the outcomes of minority descriptive representation. Our theoretical arguments therefore bridge the gap between these two interconnected analytical layers of residential visibility and party characteristics. First, we evaluate the effect of high demographic concentration on the prospects of different migrant communities to enter local politics. We examine municipalities because it is at this level where aspirants start their careers, the contact between residents and politics is closest, immigration has the most visibility, and integration governance becomes the most complex. The article therefore invites further scholarly reflection on whether municipal assemblies actually represent an accessible first arena for the entry of similarly sizeable minority groups into the elected office pipeline. Second, we complement this approach with a party-centric viewpoint, to verify the assumption that specific party features (left/right ideology and being a new/established party) can explain variations in minority inclusion rates on party lists (as candidates) and local councils (as elected officeholders). We further argue that parties' decisions to field minority candidates in specific list positions ultimately shape their election prospects, which testifies to parties' crucial role in balancing the political inclusion outcomes of different groups seeking representation.

Empirically, we test these arguments for the Spanish local context. Although accelerated inflows since the mid-2000s rapidly placed Spain among the European countries hosting the largest migrant populations, research into migrants' presence in Spanish municipal politics remains scarce, mainly due to data limitations. We address this gap by looking at the access to elected office of the four largest migrant groups in Spain: Romanian, Moroccan, Latin American, and EU14 migrants (this category refers to migrants originating from all EU countries before the 2004 enlargement, except for Spain). Our analysis draws on a unique dataset based on a survey conducted with local party organizations across all municipalities in which any of these groups accounted for $\geq$ 10% of the population (i.e., with a high demographic presence expected to increase their political presence) for the 2011 and 2015 elections. These years were critical in Spain, because whereas the 2011 elections provided new opportunities for migrants' political inclusion following the enfranchisement of several non-EU nationalities, the 2015 elections marked a turning point in Spanish politics, with new parties challenging the traditional two-party system.

The article is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines our theoretical framework, while Section 3 presents our expectations based on the contextualization of immigration and party dynamics in Spain. Section 4

explains the research design, while Section 5 highlights our findings. We show that despite demographic visibility, all four migrant groups are still under-represented on party lists and in local councils, although EU14 and Latin American migrants are more successful than Romanians and Moroccans in achieving representation. We further confirm that Spanish parties have differentiated stances towards the political inclusion of similarly-sized migrant groups, with left-wing and new parties being more supportive of minority candidates than right-wing and established parties. We conclude by briefly discussing the broader implications of these findings and their potential for incentivizing future research.

2. Demographic Concentration, Parties, and Migrants' Descriptive Representation: Theoretical Remarks

Migrants' limited presence in legislatures has been documented across several European countries with long-standing immigration, including France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK, among others (Donovan, 2007; Geese & Schacht, 2019; Schönwälder, 2013; Sobolewska, 2013). Recently, this pattern also started to be identified in Southern Europe, which has experienced a different immigration trajectory of rapid inflows since the mid-2000s. Although little is known about the access of distinct migrant communities to Spanish politics in particular, some recent contributions point towards their general under-representation in local councils (Ciornei, 2014; Pamies et al., 2021; Pérez-Nievas et al., 2014), national/regional parliaments (Vintila & Morales, 2018), and parties (Zapata-Barrero & Burchianti, 2014). However, the factors behind the recruitment and election of minority candidates in Spanish municipal assemblies remain understudied.

Undoubtedly, migrants' descriptive representation is a pivotal facet of contemporary democracies, with profound implications for political inclusion and (perceptions of) substantive representation among often disadvantaged communities. The fact that parliamentary assemblies do not adequately mirror demographic diversity raises questions about the quality of representation while testifying to the obstacles that migrants still face to be politically acknowledged in residence countries (Dancygier et al., 2020; Mansbridge, 1999). The lack of diversity in legislative bodies further raises concerns about political trust and the risk of political alienation among migrants who may feel that non-immigrant policymakers do not adequately promote their interests (Bird, 2011; Phillips, 1993; Pitkin, 1967; Ruedin, 2020).

Although these representational deficits affect all legislative arenas, they can be even more unsettling at the local level, especially in municipalities with sizeable migrant populations. Local politics should be the access point where ambitious office-seekers (of any origin) start their political careers (Dancygier et al., 2020; Dodeigne & Teuber, 2019; Donovan, 2007; Garbaye, 2005; Schönwälder, 2013; Sipinen, 2021). This is due to the greater ease of recruitment for local than regional/national elections, which also relates to the number of available seats and the prestige associated with these offices. For migrants in particular, their limited presence in local politics questions their chances of accessing the higher echelons of power, especially since experience at the municipal level is often a prerequisite for regional/national office (Dodeigne & Teuber, 2019). The importance of the municipality is further amplified by the fact that it is precisely at this level where immigration is most visible and where its effects are experienced the most. City councils are the primary level of interaction between minorities and political institutions (Buta & Gherghina, 2023; Garbaye, 2005). They are responsible for key policies that directly affect migrants' lives, especially given the so-called "local turn" in migrant integration and the room for manoeuvre that city administrations have for shaping local integration philosophies (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016).

Although representational deficits of any minority pose a challenge to democratic functioning, a closer look at migrants' numerical representation shows that not all groups are equally (un)successful in entering politics (Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013; Ruedin, 2020). This mixed evidence triggered scholars' interest in different factors related to these groups that could explain their varying presence in legislatures. Given the available data, this article focuses on two of these factors: the degree of migrants' demographic concentration and their electoral potential. First, migrants' residential concentration level has been considered a crucial predictor of inclusion on ballot lists and more favorable seat placement (Dancygier, 2014). Larger minority groups are less likely to run the risk of a supply shortage of minority candidates while being expected to attract more parties' attention by signaling potential voting gains. This is particularly the case when migrants reach a high concentration threshold in districts where their presence simply cannot be (completely) ignored (Dancygier et al., 2015; Farrer & Zingher, 2018; Geese & Schacht, 2019; Sipinen, 2021; Sobolewska, 2013). Second, demographic visibility alone may not guarantee access to politics if it is not accompanied by electoral potential. Parties may have few incentives to reach out to highly concentrated immigrant groups if their members lack electoral rights. Electoral potential is, in turn, conditioned by institutional rules that offer different political opportunities to different groups (Donovan, 2007). Applying selective requirements for different nationalities in the naturalization process or in the recognition of electoral rights may shift parties' attention towards specific groups, especially those highly concentrated in constituencies where they could act as a "voting block."

After having considered these group-related factors, let us now turn to political parties. Inspired by previous studies (Farrer & Zingher, 2018; van der Zwan et al., 2019), we argue that not all parties are expected to be equally attentive to migrants' political inclusion, even in districts where minorities have high demographic visibility and electoral potential. Parties can shape minority representation outcomes by deciding how many migrants (and of which origins) are fielded as candidates and by placing them in more/less secure positions on electoral lists (Mügge, 2016; van der Zwan et al., 2019). Whereas parties' decisions to present diverse candidacy lists remain an important facet affecting migrants' political presence, we argue that the nomination of minority aspirants higher up on electoral lists (with greater chances of getting elected) is an equally decisive aspect that reveals parties' genuine pledges for promoting minority representation (see Dancygier et al., 2020; Dodeigne & Teuber, 2019; Geese & Schacht, 2019). In both candidate nomination and list placement processes, parties may end up favoring certain migrant groups, due to ideological congruences with those communities or strategic plans to tap into migrant voters' support (Ciornei, 2014; Sipinen, 2021).

Reflecting on what drives parties to support migrants' political inclusion, scholars have highlighted that partisan views on immigration and on how "worthy" the promotion of minority representation is remain contingent upon party ideology and internal features, which act as selectivity filters in minority recruitment. Following ideological cleavages, left-wing parties are expected to be more committed than their right-wing counterparts to provide opportunities to migrant office-seekers (Bird et al., 2011; Dancygier et al., 2015; Donovan, 2007; Farrer & Zingher, 2018). Within the left-wing block, new left parties with a left-libertarian agenda are also expected to be more inclusive than established social democratic parties, but also when compared to radical left parties that evolved from communist organizations with more traditional ideological platforms (Ramiro & Gomez, 2017). This assumption is also linked with the "party–movement" organization model employed by some radical left parties, for which the combination of direct participation mechanisms, more horizontal structures, and increased interactions with social movements (Kitschelt, 2006) is expected to support the recruitment of candidates with new profiles.

Beyond ideology, scholars have also argued that newer parties may accommodate minority candidates more easily than established parties, as a strategy to maximize their entry into competitive electoral races (Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013; Scarrow, 2014). As newer parties have less established hierarchies, their decision to field immigrant candidates comes with a lower risk of potential internal conflicts due to displacement of other candidates than in established parties (Vintila et al., 2016). Moreover, the fact that challenger parties usually expand internal party democracy to adopt more inclusive candidate selection methods is also expected to favor more socially balanced lists (Kakepaki et al., 2018).

Drawing on these considerations, this article seeks to assess how demographic concentration and party features shape migrants' access to Spanish local politics. As further explained in Section 3, we first expect migrants' strong demographic presence to incentivize parties to support minority candidates, especially when the latter originate from communities with such strong electoral potential that simply cannot be ignored in the electoral race. Second, we also expect left-wing and newer parties to be more supportive of minority candidates' recruitment and seat placement than right-wing and established parties, with new radical left parties being expected to have higher inclusion rates than social democratic parties or traditional radical left parties.

While we focus on testing how migrants' demographic visibility and parties' responses to it shape descriptive representation outcomes, we acknowledge that minority recruitment may depend on other factors, including the supply of minority candidates or the anticipation of electoral loss due to voter prejudice. Although studies show that an insufficient supply of minority aspirants is less likely among sizeable migrant groups and does not necessarily translate into limited descriptive representation if parties have a strong will to diversify their ranks (Dancygier, 2014; Dancygier et al., 2020; Vintila et al., 2016), migrants' interest and willingness to enter politics, their familiarity with the residence country's political environment, or the socio-political capital they can mobilize electorally may still restrict the pool of viable minority aspirants that parties may approach (Ciornei, 2014; Dodeigne & Teuber, 2019; Norris & Lovenduski, 1995; Schönwälder, 2013). Moreover, the anticipation of electoral stereotyping might prevent parties from supporting minority candidates (Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013; Buta & Gherghina, 2023; Dancygier et al., 2015; Fieldhouse & Sobolewska, 2013). While we are aware that these factors help to understand the multi-faceted barriers behind migrants' entry into politics, the data at hand only allows us to assess the outcomes of minority representation. We compare these outcomes among different migrant groups and parties with different characteristics while encouraging further research into the practical constraints that parties may face in fielding minority candidates.

3. The Spanish Context: Increased Immigration, Varying Political Opportunities, and Shifting Party Dynamics

3.1. Contextualizing Immigration in Spain

Several reasons justify why Spain is a particularly relevant case study for analyzing migrants' political representation. To begin with, Spain can be considered typical among South European countries in its historical trajectory and key features of recent immigration. Like Italy, Portugal, and Greece (and in contrast with other Western European countries), Spain shifted from an emigration to an immigration model (Peixoto et al., 2012). This migratory turnaround began in the 1990s when Southern European countries started

receiving immigration inflows, and it intensified during the mid-2000s, with economic migrants joining sectors with a high demand for low-skilled labor (King & DeBono, 2013). Consequently, the immigrant population in Spain, Italy, and Greece multiplied over fivefold in just two decades (Vintila et al., 2016). In Spain, the share of foreign-born residents sharply increased from 3% of the population in the late 1990s to 14% in 2023, with over 6.7 million foreign-born currently residing in the country (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2023). This rapid demographic diversification became particularly visible locally, with migrants being highly concentrated in many municipalities.

Another feature of the so-called "Southern European migration model" is the diversity by origins of migrant populations (Peixoto et al., 2012). Since the 2000s, economic immigration from Africa (mostly Morocco) to Spain has intensified, whereas linguistic and postcolonial ties incentivized the arrival of Latin American workers (especially Ecuadorians, Colombians, Argentinians, Peruvians, and Bolivians). Intra-European mobility also increased rapidly, with two different profiles: inflows from EU14 countries (particularly lifestyle/retirement migration from Germany, the UK, and France) and Eastern Europe (especially labor migration from Romania).

Figure 1 shows the most sizeable foreign-born groups in 2011 and 2015 (i.e., the electoral years analyzed). By 2015, Latin Americans accounted for almost a third of all foreign-born in Spain, while EU14 migrants totaled 17% of the foreign-born population. Moroccans (13%) and Romanians (11%) were the most sizeable national groups in 2015. Given their distinctive residential character, EU14 migrants are usually highly concentrated in the smaller coastal towns of Andalusia, Valencia, and the Balearic or Canary Islands, in many of which they exceed 30–40% of the population. By contrast, settlements in large cities mostly respond to economic migration from Latin America, Romania, and Morocco.

However, these groups have unequal opportunities in accessing Spanish politics. EU citizenship status strongly favors EU migrants by granting them the right to vote and stand as candidates in Spanish local elections without the need to acquire Spanish citizenship (Vintila, 2015). In turn, non-EU migrants' electoral rights remain restricted, although with important variations between groups. Only nationals of non-EU countries that concluded reciprocity agreements with Spain can vote in Spanish local elections. Such agreements were signed with several Latin American countries (Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Chile, and Paraguay), whose citizens were enfranchised for the first time in the 2011 elections. However, unlike EU nationals, their voting rights are restricted to five years of residence and they can stand as candidates only after having acquired Spanish citizenship.

Naturalization rules are also uneven for different groups. Although 10 years of residence are usually required for Spanish citizenship, migrants sharing colonial ties with Spain benefit from fast-track access after two years. This clearly benefits Latin Americans: 73% of the 1,291,379 migrants who naturalized in Spain between 1996 and 2015 were Latin Americans, followed by Moroccans (15%), whereas less than 2% of all naturalized migrants originated from the EU14 or Romania (Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración, 1996–2015). Given this differentiated access to electoral rights and Spanish nationality, a rough estimate of the number of migrants with voting rights in Spain—based on naturalization stocks and voter registration numbers from Instituto Nacional de Estadística (1996–2015) and Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración (1996–2015)—indicate that around 88,000 Moroccan, 108,000 Romanian, 303,000 EU14, and 617,000 Latin American migrants were entitled to vote in the 2011 local elections. Their electoral potential

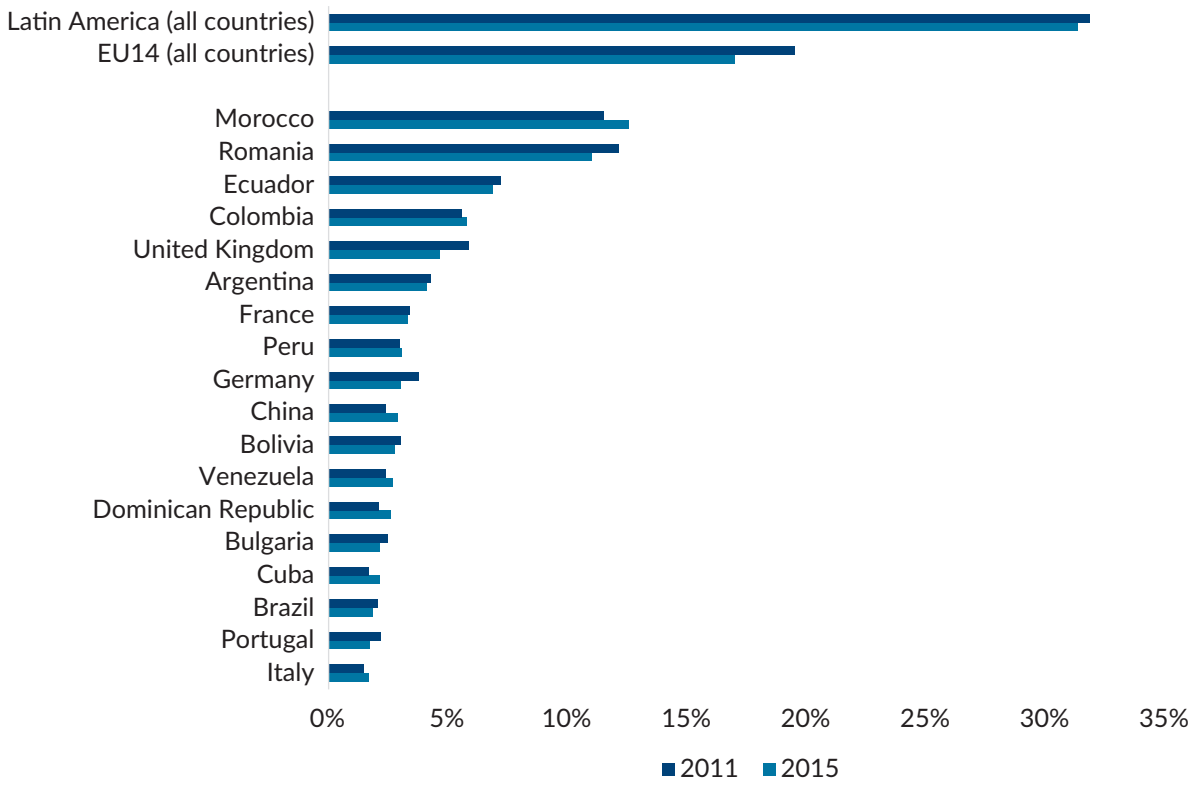

Figure 1. Most sizeable migrant groups in 2011 and 2015 (% of all foreign-born). Source: Authors' work based on data from the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2023).

increased by 2015, when around 190,000 Moroccan, 119,000 Romanian, 313,000 EU14, and 960,000 Latin American migrants were estimated as eligible to vote.

This combination of factors suggests that, although migrants' strong demographic presence should a priori incentivize their presence in elected institutions, some groups are still more (dis)advantaged in the electoral race. The legislation clearly favors EU migrants by granting them local electoral rights even without Spanish nationality. Within this group, EU14 migrants seem particularly favored (when compared to Romanians) by their peculiar residential patterns in municipalities where their electoral potential may be too strong to be completely ignored by parties. As for non-EU migrants, Latin Americans are clearly better placed than Moroccans to enter Spanish politics, since they benefit from fast-track access to Spanish citizenship and many Latin American nationalities enjoy local voting rights through bilateral agreements. We hence expect this constellation of factors to favor the political inclusion of EU14 and Latin American migrants, while being more restrictive for Romanians and, especially so, for Moroccans.

3.2. Contextualizing Spanish Local Politics

The Spanish local context reveals interesting electoral and partisan dynamics that contribute to establishing parameters for minority inclusion. Local elections follow a proportional representation system based on closed-party lists, with electoral arrangements being the same across all municipalities. Each party list includes a number of candidates equal to the number of seats (which depends on municipalities' population size). Seats are assigned following the D'Hondt formula and elected officeholders are taken from party lists

in the order in which they were fielded. In the absence of preferential voting, voters can only elect candidates that parties (pre)select (see also Buta & Gherghina, 2023). As parties determine candidates' list positions and, implicitly, their election prospects, the system reinforces their role as gatekeepers to the elected office (Dancygier et al., 2020; Geese & Schacht, 2019; Norris & Lovenduski, 1995).

Regarding party dynamics, the main Spanish parties competing in national elections are also key players locally, with national-level partisan competition being mirrored in municipal party systems. Until 2015, the Spanish political scene was characterized by stability and increased bipartisan competition between the Socialist Party (PSOE)—the traditional left-wing party)—and the People's Party (PP)—the traditional right-wing party—(Rodon & Hierro, 2016). The United Left (IU)—the traditional party to the left of the PSOE, within the radical left space)—and, for a short time, the Union Progress and Democracy (UPyD)—the new center-right party—also acted as minor state-wide parties by securing more limited parliamentary representation at all levels. These dynamics changed with the 2015 elections, which marked a turning point in Spanish politics due to the electoral boost given to two new challenger parties: the center-right Ciudadanos (Citizens) and the left-populist and anti-establishment party Podemos (We Can). Ciudadanos and Podemos increased the fragmentation of the traditional two-party system, challenged the traditional left and right in Spain, and became new leading actors in many local and regional governments. Despite ideological differences, both parties followed a regeneration rhetoric by featuring young party leaders and more democratic candidate selection processes than the PSOE and PP (Rodon & Hierro, 2016). From an organizational standpoint, it should be clarified that Podemos did not run its own candidates for the 2015 local elections, but instead promoted the convergence of its local branches into left-wing coalitions that forged locally with other groups and social movements. These coalitions also resembled most of the "party–movement" organizational model, which used open primaries for selecting all municipal list positions.

In sum, these electoral and partisan features observed in local politics indicate that Spanish parties play a crucial role in controlling migrants' political representation prospects. Left-wing and newer parties are expected to be more supportive of minority candidates than right-wing and established parties. Within the leftist space, we also expect the left-wing coalitions supported by Podemos to be more inclusive not only than the social democratic party, the PSOE, but also when compared to the radical left with a more traditional ideology, represented by the United Left (IU).

4. Research Design

Studying migrants' access to local politics is challenging due to the paucity of ready-to-use data when compared to national politics (Dancygier, 2014). To identify immigrant-origin candidates, we conducted an original survey with local party organizations across all Spanish municipalities of more than 1,000 inhabitants in which foreign-born from any of the four groups—Romanian, Moroccan, Latin American, and EU14 migrants—represented ≥10% of the population. The survey was conducted in the framework of the project Plural Councils? The Political Representation of Migrants in Spain (APREPINM). We merged different EU14 and Latin American nationalities into larger transnational groups for several reasons. First, municipalities with high concentrations of EU14 citizens are mainly located in coastal towns in which these nationalities share a similar profile (lifestyle residents of 55+ years old, homeowners with medium-high educational and income levels), are often perceived as a single group, and collaborate for collective action (Janoschka & Durán, 2014). Second, Latin Americans mostly concentrate in medium-large cities where no

nationality is predominant. Spaniards also tend to perceive them as a Latin American group based on shared traits (cultural/linguistic proximity and colonial ties) rather than by specific national origins (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2016).

We deliberately chose a non-random sample design. We examine if representation levels follow demographic patterns by using the strategy proposed in past studies (Maxwell, 2013; Sobolewska, 2013) of testing descriptive representation only in municipalities where immigrants form a sufficiently high population share to become very visible locally (which should increase their chances of entering politics). The resulting sample includes 572 municipalities (see Supplementary Material), of which 265 were selected for their high concentration of EU14 migrants, 145 for their high presence of Romanians, 98 for that of Latin Americans, and 64 for that of Moroccans. While this sample design prioritizes our results' internal validity for highly diverse municipalities over their external validity for all Spanish municipalities, it remains particularly relevant for the Spanish context, as it ensures sufficient variation by municipality size and distribution across different Spanish regions and provinces.

In each municipality, we contacted the local organizations of all parties that had gained at least one seat in the previous national or regional elections. Following the strategy proposed in other studies (see Buta & Gherghina, 2023), we included all nationwide mainstream parties across the ideological spectrum: PSOE, PP, IU, Ciudadanos, UPyD, and the left-wing coalitions running in 2015, supported by Podemos. We also included all regionalist parties with representation at the regional level. Overall, we contacted 1,811 local party organizations, out of which 25% belonged to the PSOE, 24% to the PP, 10% to IU, 9% to Ciudadanos, and 7% to the left-wing coalitions supported by Podemos.

The survey included individualized questionnaires with each party's lists (including candidates' names) for 2011 and 2015 (the results below refer to both electoral years, due to a methodological decision to increase the number of observations). Local organizations were asked to identify their candidates' origins (standardized questions). The respondents were party officers (usually presidents, vice presidents, and secretaries) with extensive knowledge of local organizations, which testifies to the reliability of the information obtained. When asked about candidates' origins, respondents also had the possibility of selecting the response category "Do not know," although very few made use of this option, since local candidates are usually known by municipal party officials. This identification strategy is also more reliable than the alternative one based on names, which would have been problematic for Latin American candidates in Spain. Drawing on categorizations used in previous studies (Pérez-Nievas et al., 2014), we identified as immigrant candidates/councilors those (a) born abroad of foreign parents (first generation) or (b) born in Spain of at least one foreign parent (descendants). The survey was conducted between March 2018 and February 2019. Up to three rounds of reminders were sent to local party organizations to ensure sufficient response. The overall response rate was 33%. By main parties, the response rate was 42% for the PSOE, 30% for the PP, 28% for IU, 40% for Ciudadanos, and 40% for the left-wing coalitions supported by Podemos. Overall, the use of this survey method for identifying minority candidates comes with the significant benefit of collecting original, rich, and reliable data that is not available elsewhere nor easily captured through other methods. However, it also comes with the limitation that the information gathered varies across municipalities and parties, which may or may not be related to how many migrant candidates were fielded (see Dancygier, 2014).

5. Results

As said, our first expectation is that all four migrant groups would have a presence in local politics given their high demographic concentration, with some inter-group differences. Figure 2 displays survey results regarding these groups' relative success (or failure) in achieving representation. The first two bars indicate each group's inclusion rates in party lists in relation to their demographic weight in municipalities where the group accounted for ≥10% of the population; whereas the third bar shows the shares of candidates from each group elected as councilors.

Our findings first corroborate the results of past studies that being a sizeable group does not guarantee political presence for any of the minorities considered, with few candidates fielded from each group. Second, they confirm our expectation of differences between groups in securing presence on ballot lists and in office. While EU14 migrants represented, on average, 19% of the population in the municipalities selected for their significant presence, the fact that only 3.7% of all candidates in these municipalities were from this group leads to a representation ratio of 0.19. This ratio is similar for Latin Americans (0.2), which represented 12% of the population in selected municipalities but only 2.4% of all candidates fielded there. However, the representation gap is much larger for Romanians (0.08 representation ratio) and especially for Moroccans (0.03 representation ratio). Therefore, although all four groups are severely underrepresented on local lists, our initial expectation that EU14 and Latin American migrants would be favored in the electoral race is confirmed: candidates from these groups were almost three times more likely than Romanians and almost

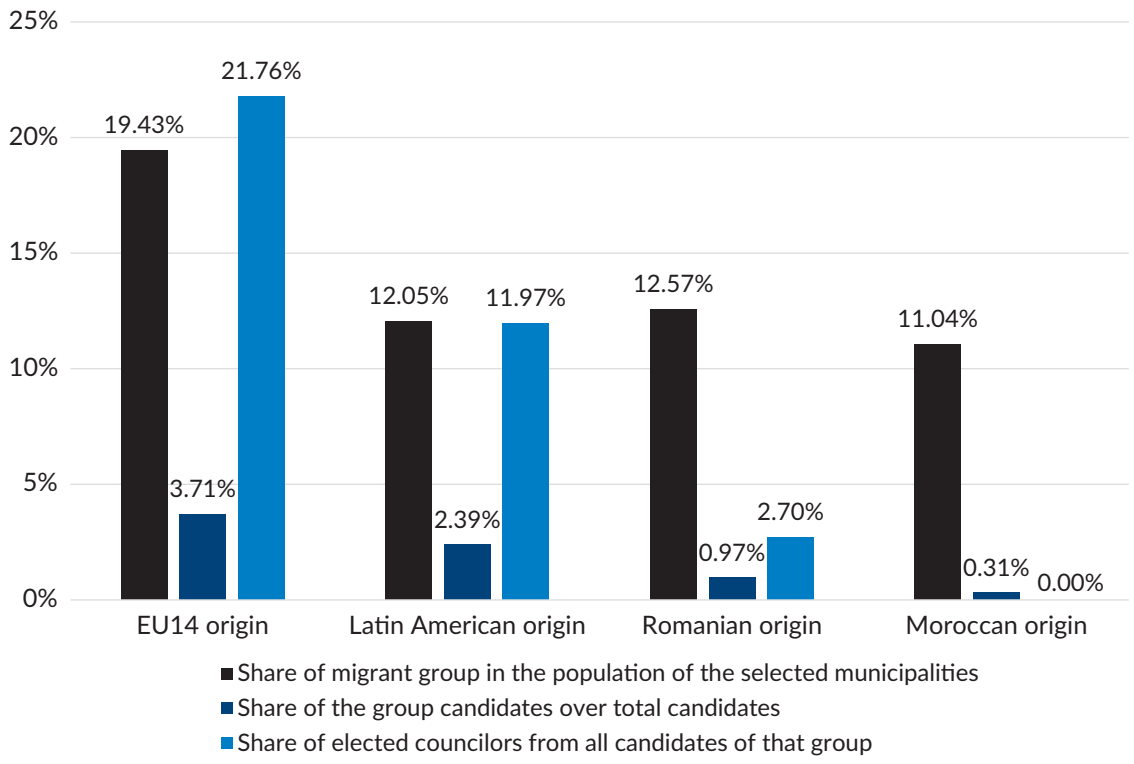

Figure 2. Share of the migrant group in the population, share of migrant group candidates over total candidates, and share of elected councilors from migrant group candidates in municipalities where each group represents ≥10% of the population. Source: Authors' work based on APREPINM data (Pérez-Nievas et al., 2024).

seven times more likely than Moroccans to be nominated in municipalities where they exceed 10% of the population. Third, although EU14 and Latin American migrants return similar list inclusion ratios, the former group clearly stands out over the latter when it comes to being elected (22% versus 12% respectively, for all group candidates). Such varying success rates in obtaining seats are explained by the safer list positions in which parties placed EU14 candidates, an aspect developed below. Moreover, both EU14 and Latin American aspirants had considerably higher chances of being elected than Romanian candidates (less than 3% elected) or Moroccans (no candidate elected).

Figure 3 complements these findings by illustrating the so-called "mirror effect" between minorities' residential concentration and their representation levels. It compares the demographic share of each group in municipalities where they counted for ≥10% of the population (horizontal axis) with the share of group candidates on party lists in those municipalities (vertical axis). The solid diagonal line represents perfect representation (the prescriptive idea of descriptive representation in which the share of a group on party lists should match its demographic weight in the population), whereas the dash line captures Pearson's correlation. The fact that most observations fall below the solid diagonal line visually highlights the clear under-representation of all groups, with very few instances of perfect/over-representation. The figure further pinpoints other aspects of how different concentration patterns of each group affect their presence on party lists. Starting with the EU14 migrants, given their distinctive residential concentration, they are the only group that exceeds 30% of the population in several municipalities along the Spanish coast, while even constituting a majority in a few of them. Although their electoral nomination does not follow perfect representation criteria, a majority of the lists presented in these municipalities do include at least one candidate from EU14 countries. This confirms the argument that when migrant communities pass a

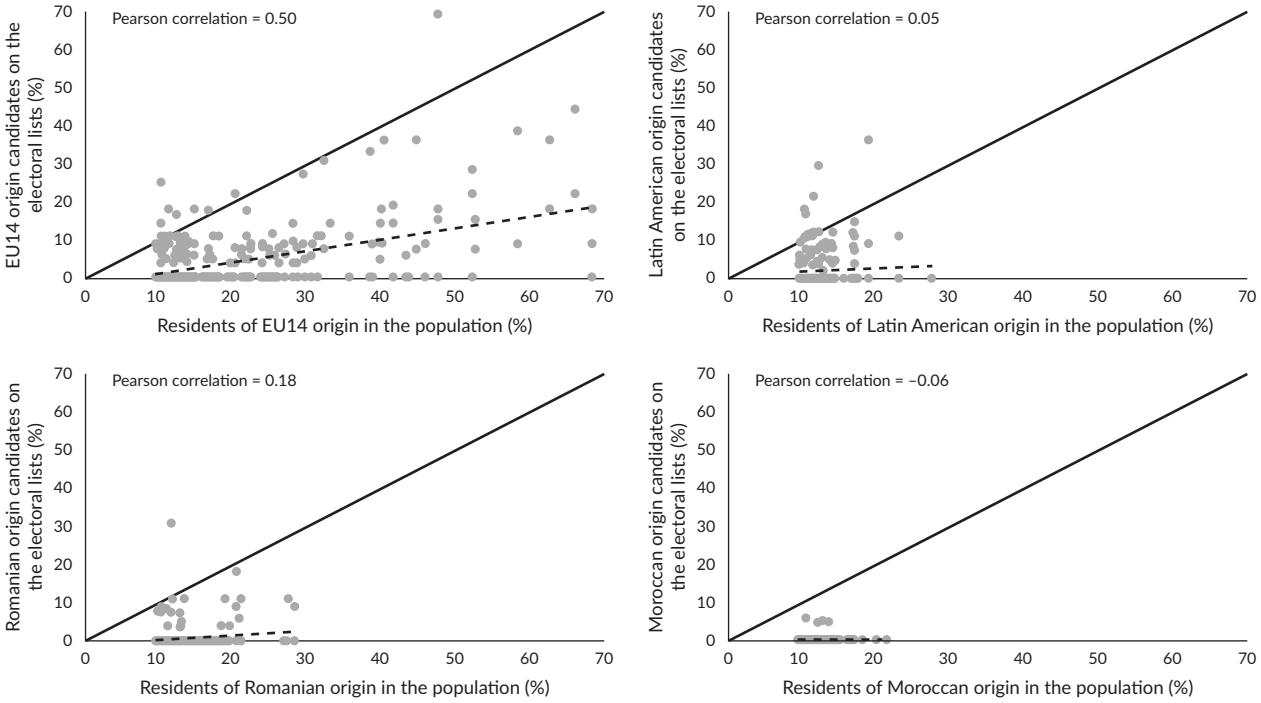

Figure 3. The mirror effect: Share of migrant group candidates on party lists (vertical axis) compared to the share of the migrant group in the municipal population (horizontal axis). Source: Authors' work based on APREPINM data (Pérez-Nievas et al., 2024).

threshold of very high demographic concentration and electoral potential in specific districts, they simply cannot be ignored in parties' recruitment decisions. The EU14 group also returns the highest correlation between its degree of demographic concentration and the nomination of group candidates (Pearson correlation of 0.5). The other three groups have more similar concentration patterns, with few municipalities where they represent between 20 and 30% of the population. While there is some correlation between demographic concentration and list inclusion for Romanians (Pearson index close to 0.2), this association is not apparent for non-EU migrants. The inclusion of Moroccan candidates is the most clearly dissociated from the group's concentration pattern (negative Pearson correlation).

Finally, Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of immigrant-origin candidates by parties. Whereas EU14 candidates were more frequently nominated by the two main traditional parties (40% by the left-wing PSOE and 31% by the right-wing PP), Latin American candidates and the few Moroccan candidates identified were more frequently fielded by left-wing (both established and newer) parties. In contrast, Romanian candidates were more frequently fielded on PP lists (43%) than in any other party.

The uneven distribution of the four minorities across parties underlines the important role that parties play both in the recruitment phase and in placing migrant candidates in secure list positions. The results shown in Table 1 and Figure 5 allow for a joint assessment of the parties' roles in both processes. Summing up our discussions from previous sections, we expect left-wing parties to be more inclusive of minority candidates, while newer parties are also expected to more easily accommodate minority candidates than traditional parties. Within the left-wing space, we also expect the left-wing coalitions supported by Podemos to be more inclusive not only than the social democratic party PSOE but also when compared to the more traditional radical left, represented by IU.

Table 1 examines our findings from the parties' perspective. Although minority candidates from all four groups represent a small share of all candidates fielded by these parties, taken together, left-wing parties did present more diverse candidacies than their right-wing counterparts. As observed, minority candidates accounted for 10.7% of all candidates fielded by the left-wing coalitions, 3.7% for PSOE, and 2.9% for IU, respectively. This returns an average share of minority inclusion in all these left-wing parties of 5.8%. In turn,

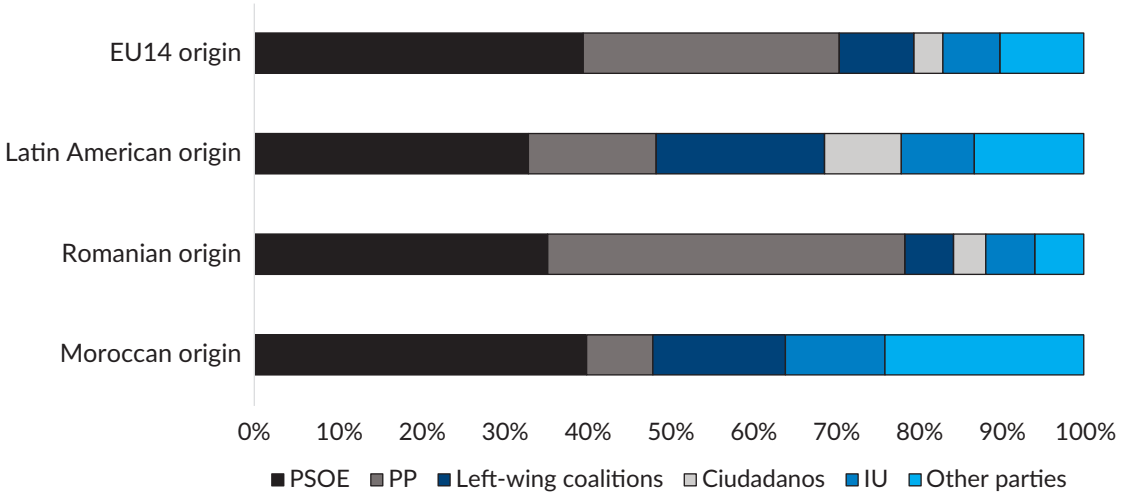

Figure 4. Distribution of candidates by migrant groups and parties. Source: Authors' work based on APREPINM data (Pérez-Nievas et al., 2024).

Table 1. Share of group candidates from all candidates fielded by each party.

	PSOE	PP	IU	Left-wing coalitions	Ciudadanos
All four migrant groups	3.7	3.6	2.9	10.7	3.2
EU14 origin	2.1	2.2	1.4	4.0	1.1
Latin American origin	1.1	0.7	1.1	5.6	1.9
Romanian origin	0.3	0.6	0.2	0.5	0.2
Moroccan origin	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.6	0.0

Source: Authors' work based on APREPINM data (Pérez-Nievas et al., 2024).

the average inclusion rate among right-wing parties was only 3.4%, with 3.6% of all PP candidates and 3.2% of all Ciudadanos's candidates having an immigrant background. What also becomes clear from these findings is that the left–right divide is conditioning minority recruitment much more among newer parties than among established ones. The electoral lists of the left-wing coalitions supported by the new left party Podemos were much more diverse than those presented by the new center-right party, Ciudadanos. Among established parties, the PSOE and PP returned similar inclusion rates, whereas the traditional radical left party IU returned a share of minority candidates even lower than the PP. Overall, it is the new Spanish radical left that clearly outperforms all other parties in minority recruitment: As expected, the inclusion ratio of the left-wing coalitions supported by Podemos was much higher than that of the established socio-democratic party, PSOE, and of the traditional radical left, IU.

Beyond candidacy, migrants' chances of getting elected are contingent on parties' decision on who is placed in "more winnable" electoral list positions. Figure 5 shows the average mean gap in safe positions of minority candidates in relation to the average safe position of all candidates (with or without a migrant background). The formula used for calculating the "safe positions" comprehensively accounts for different key elements highlighted in past studies (Geese & Schacht, 2019; Hennl & Kaiser, 2008; Mügge, 2016; Pérez-Nievas et al., 2014), including the total number of seats in the city council and a party's electoral results in the previous election and in the election analyzed. As such, we consider that a candidate's position on a given party list is safe when it is equal to or higher than the average number of seats won by that party in the current and previous elections. To maximize observations, candidates were grouped by the different types of parties (left/right and old/new) that fielded them. The graph does not include bars for Romanian candidates in new parties nor for Moroccans in new and right-wing parties, as these categories did not reach a minimum of 15 observations to make meaningful comparisons. Nonetheless, the graph is sufficiently illustrative of the differences between groups and parties.

The formula used in Figure 5 was:

$$\frac{\left(\left[\frac{N \text{ party councillors in previous } + \text{ analysed election}}{2} - \text{Candidate position in analysed election}\right] \times 100\right)}{\text{Total number of seats in the local council}}$$

The results show that migrant candidates were indeed disadvantaged when compared to non-migrant candidates (which represent an overwhelming majority of the "all candidates" benchmark category) in the "safeness" of list positions. This explains why few got elected, thus confirming the observations made in past studies that placement in electable list positions remains the crucial hurdle for migrants' descriptive

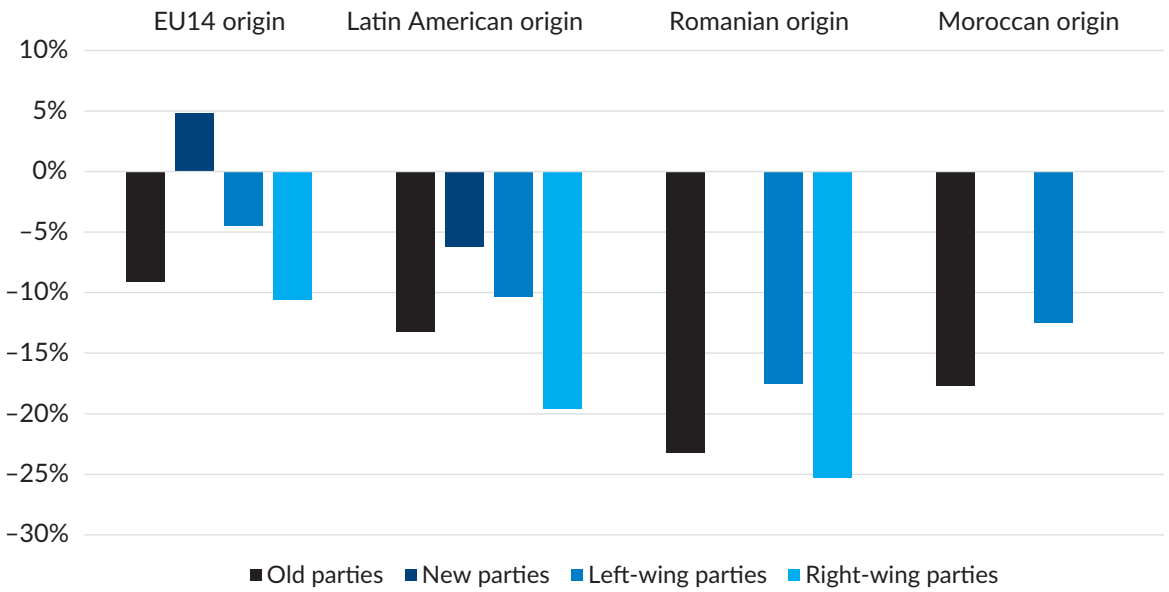

Figure 5. Mean gap in safe positions between EU14, Latin American, Romanian, and Moroccan origin candidates in relation to all candidates, by old/new parties and left/right parties. Note: Closer to zero indicates a smaller gap with the average safe position of all candidates. Source: Authors' work based on APREPINM data (Pérez-Nievas et al., 2024).

representation (Dancygier et al., 2020). Although minority candidates were consistently fielded by Spanish parties in less winnable positions than their non-immigrant counterparts, it is also true that left-wing and newer parties placed immigrant candidates in less "unsafe" positions than right-wing and established parties did, which further reiterates the differences between these blocks of parties in terms of support for minority political inclusion. Finally, Figure 5 also reproduces the previously discussed differentiation in minority groups' inclusion rates, with Romanian and Moroccan candidates being placed in more insecure positions than Latin Americans and, especially so, than EU14 migrants, which explains their varying success levels in entering city councils.

6. Discussion

This article aimed to contribute to the literature on migrants' descriptive political representation by providing new evidence on how the interplay between minorities' demographic concentration and specific party features shape migrants' inclusion on local party lists (as candidates) and municipal councils (as elected officeholders). This evidence is much needed since the topic of migrants' access to elected institutions in Spain—as in other Southern European countries with recent immigration—has been long neglected in existing research on diversity in European legislatures. Although our results are limited to specific groups, municipalities, parties, and time periods, they are nevertheless valuable for inspiring future research on this topic in Spain and beyond.

First, our findings indicate that the hurdles for migrants' descriptive representation begin at the political level that is closest to them and where their presence is more demographically visible. Our results question the frequent assumption that municipal politics represent a more accessible political arena for migrants' entry into the pipeline for elected office while calling for further research on the reasons behind (and

consequences of) the limited presence of minorities in local politics in Spain and elsewhere. We, therefore, encourage scholars to pay closer attention to representation dynamics in municipal arenas, across three interrelated facets: (a) supply factors related to migrants' ambitions and motivations to run for local office and their perceptions vis-à-vis inclusion/marginalization in city politics; (b) local party selectors' demands for minority representation and their views on when, why, and which minority candidates should be supported in candidate selection processes and in electable positions; and (c) how the political careers of migrant office-holders develop from municipal level to the higher echelons of power and which factors affect their promotion to regional or national legislatures.

Second, our findings regarding the varying representation levels of similarly sized groups raise questions on which types of specific profiles of local minority aspirants are considered suitable for recruitment and why. While investigating this aspect is beyond the scope of this article, we encourage future research to scrutinize how the personal attributes of minority candidates from different migrant communities, the social and political capital they can mobilize electorally, and the existence of partisan or voter biases (especially against racialized minorities) may interact to account for differences in the recruitment and representation outcomes of different migrant communities.

Third, it is important to acknowledge that our findings cannot be generalized to all Spanish municipalities and that they reflect a specific period characterized by particular partisan dynamics. Further research is needed to test the validity of these results across a larger sample of municipalities from different regions and provinces. Similarly, although the overall presence of migrants in Spanish politics does not seem to have substantially improved in recent times, it would still be worth exploring if, how, and where changes in the Spanish political landscape—especially Podemos's failure to maintain its initial impetus and the rise of the populist radical right party VOX—may have altered the outcomes of descriptive and substantive representation of migrant populations. Finally, one cannot but wonder if the minority representation patterns observed in Spain also hold for other Southern European countries with similar immigration patterns. Comparative research might shed light on this aspect and the extent to which different parties operating in the context of the so-called "Southern European immigration model" respond to the challenge of diversifying their ranks to better reflect growing societal diversity.

Acknowledgments

This article uses data from the APREPINM project Plural Local Councils? The Political Representation of Immigrants in Spain, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness in the framework of the National Research Program on Societal Challenges (Reference No. CSO-2016–79540-R). We are indebted to Laura Morales for her insightful comments on the questionnaire design, to Soledad Escobar for her assistance with the data collection, and to Andrés Santana for his support in building the dataset. We thank Mónica Mendez and Angeliki Konstantinidou for their feedback on previous drafts. We are grateful to the guest editors of this thematic issue, Sergiu Gherghina and Sorina Soare, and to the three anonymous reviewers for their useful comments.

Funding

The data used in this article is from the APREPINM project Plural Local Councils? The Political Representation of Immigrants in Spain, which was funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness in the framework of the National Research Program on Societal Challenges (Reference No. CSO-2016–79540-R).

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

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

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Politics and Governance
2024 • Volume 12 • Article 7495
https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.7495

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ARTICLE

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

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Submitted: 31 July 2023 **Accepted:** 10 October 2023 **Published:** 13 March 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue "The Political Representation and Participation of Migrants" edited by Sergiu Gherghina (University of Glasgow) and Sorina Soare (University of Florence), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i354

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	0.04	0.05	0.01	0.00	0.01
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.05)
(Intercept)	0.38**	0.40***	0.46***	0.19†	0.18	0.28*	0.25*	0.22†
	(0.12)	(0.12)	(0.14)	(0.11)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.12)	(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).

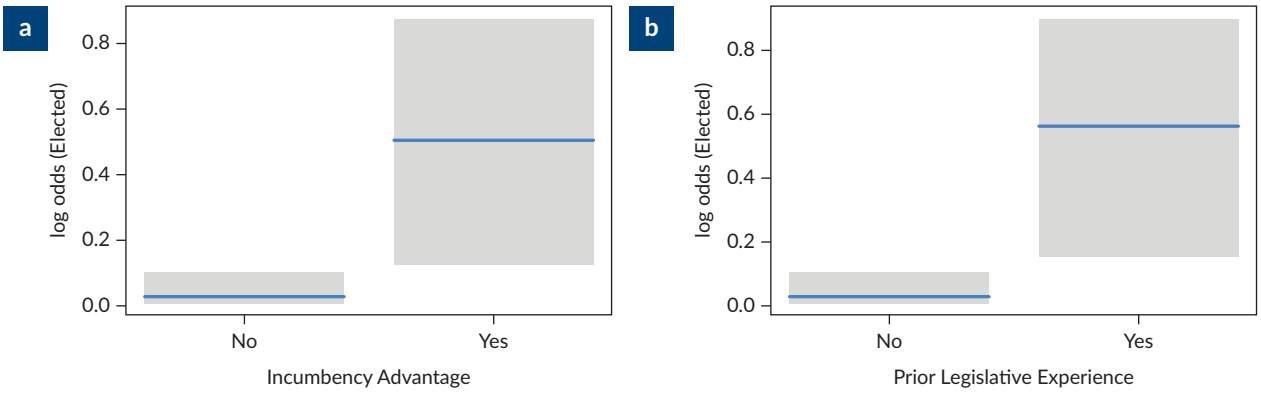

Figure 1. Probabilities of incumbency position on non-resident candidates' electoral success. Note: These probabilities came from M1 and M2 (see Supplementary File, Table A1).

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).

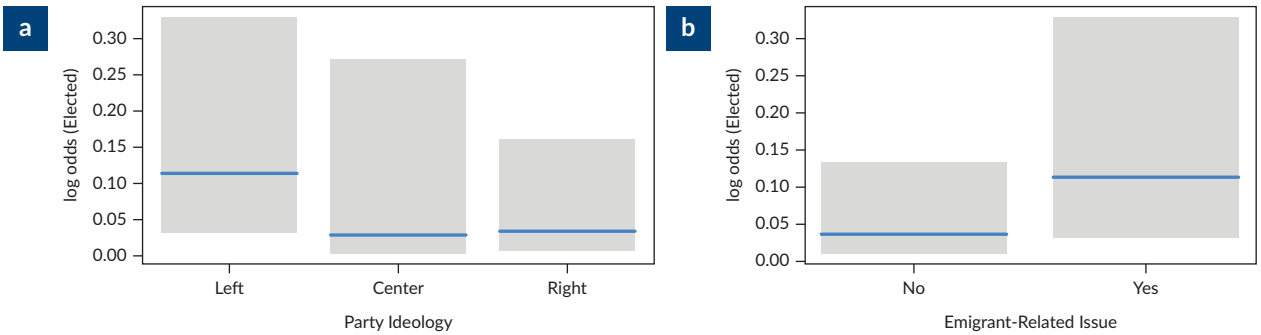

Figure 2. Probabilities of party ideology on non-resident candidates' electoral success. Note: These probabilities came from M6 (see Supplementary File, Table A1).

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.

Acknowledgments

We extend our gratitude to Victoria Finn, Pau Palop-García, Santiago Pérez-Nievas, Theresa Reidy, and Josefina Sipinen for their useful comments and suggestions in earlier versions of this article. We are also grateful to the academic editors of this thematic issue, Sergiu Gherghina and Sorina Soare.

Funding

Fondecyt Regular No. 1231627. Casa Grande University also provided a research grant to conduct fieldwork and support the publication process.

Supplementary Material

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

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Politics and Governance
2024 • Volume 12 • Article 7498
https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.7498

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ARTICLE

Open Access Journal

Migrants' Political Participation and Representation in Poland: What Do Political Parties Have to Offer?

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Submitted: 31 July 2023 **Accepted:** 15 November 2023 **Published:** 13 March 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue "The Political Representation and Participation of Migrants" edited by Sergiu Gherghina (University of Glasgow) and Sorina Soare (University of Florence), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i354

Abstract

Since 2018, Poland has been a net migration country, yet public debates on migrants and migration remain scarce and have been defined by a reactionary nature. This article, adopting a political opportunity structure perspective, focuses on political parties as the main actors shaping opportunities and constraints for migrant political participation and representation in Polish society. Based on a qualitative content analysis of party manifestos and parliamentary debates, and using the deductive thematic analysis framework, this study analysed three types of arguments parties have adopted regarding the admission of migrants. The findings revealed that Polish political parties, failing to see non-voting migrants as promising electoral targets, have weaponised the migrant issue and used it as an element of the partisan battle to attack opponents, especially during the election campaign period, instead of stimulating migrants' political participation and offering them channels for representation.

Keywords

migrant participation and representation; opportunity structure; Poland; political parties

1. Introduction

In terms of ethnicity, language, and religion, Poland is one of Europe's most homogeneous countries. After the extermination of the Jewish community by Nazi Germans, and following the westward shift of Poland's borders in 1945, the proportion of ethnic minorities in Poland's total population plummeted from 30–35% down to just a few percent (Olejnik, 2003, pp. 63–64; Szczepański, 2020, pp. 164–165). After World War II, Poland, a country behind the Iron Curtain, was also relatively closed off to international migration. It was no

sooner than the beginning of the 1990s when it opened to migration flows. However, over 20 years, it has become a country of much higher emigration than immigration (Fassmann & Münz, 2000). Many Poles have emigrated to Western countries looking for better job opportunities, with the process accelerating with the Polish accession to the EU in 2004 (Black et al., 2010). At the same time, the immigration policy in Poland has been restrictive and subordinated primarily to the labour market. To legally work, migrants must obtain a work permit before crossing the Polish border. This was not easy in the initial post-transition period (Iglicka & Gmaj, 2015, p. 16). Still, as time went on, the process became less complicated, which was the Polish government's response to a rising dependency ratio and a labour market facing worker shortages (Republic of Poland, 2021).

In 2018, Poland became a country of net migration (Fihel & Okólski, 2020). According to Statistics Poland (2020), the number of immigrants rose from around 100,000 in 2011 (approximately 0.26% of the Polish population) to more than 2 million in 2019 (approximately 5% of the population). The country has started to attract migrants, mainly from post-Soviet countries, such as Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Georgia, and from Asian countries such as India, China, and the Philippines (Fihel & Okólski, 2020; Republic of Poland, 2023). In the years between 2016 and 2022, it is estimated that Poland was the leading EU country in terms of the number of first residence permits issued to third-country nationals, outstripping all major European net immigration countries (Eurostat, 2023; Okólski, 2021, p. 162).

Poland's transformation from being a country of emigration to a country of immigration was further accelerated by two events that happened just across Poland's eastern border. First, the 2020 fraudulent presidential elections in Belarus caused an influx of Belarusians, including political oppositionists, against Lukashenko's government. According to Eurostat (2023), in 2020–2022, more than 467,000 first permits were issued to Belarussians. The second event was Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. In 2022–2023, an estimated 2.4–2.7 million Ukrainians were living in Poland (Pacewicz, 2023), which includes the estimated 1.3–1.5 million Ukrainian migrants who arrived immediately before the outbreak of the war (Duszczyk et al., 2023). During this period, Poland also faced the organised smuggling of migrants into the EU by the Belarusian regime. This procedure started in the late summer of 2021. On the initiative of Lukashenko, migrants, mainly from the Middle East and Africa, were transported to Belarus and then pushed towards the EU border to cross it and go to Western Europe. The Polish government reacted by closing most of the border crossings it shared with Belarus, establishing a state of emergency in the eastern part of the country and building a barrier on the Polish-Belarusian border (Sobczak, 2022).

When immigration to Poland was still relatively limited, political parties had a constrained interest in the issue. There was limited public debate and scant media attention. This fostered a restricted, technocratic, and non-politicized formulation of migration policies (Łodziński & Szonert, 2016, p. 22). Limited attention was devoted to integrating migrants into Polish society. The situation changed in 2015, not so much because of the increasing number of migrants but because Poland had to react to the European Commission's proposal for a relocation mechanism for migrants arriving in southern Europe en route to other EU member states. The coincidence in timing with the parliamentary election campaign in Poland resulted in the topic of migration being politicised, and it subsequently drew significant media attention. There has been a dramatic shift from practically no immigration-related debates to the proliferation of anti-immigrant rhetoric rooted in discrimination, particularly against asylum seekers arriving in Europe (Krzyżanowski, 2018). Thus, 2015 is considered a pivotal year for public discourse on migration in Poland (Klepański et al., 2023, p. 489). In the

following years, Poland was directly confronted with the Belarusian crisis of 2021 and the Ukrainian crisis of 2022. The attitudes of Polish political parties towards both crises were drastically different.

While other articles in this thematic issue analyse the factors influencing migrants' participation in the electoral process in the country of origin (Finn & Ramaciotti, 2024; Gherghina & Basarabă, 2024), we focus on opportunities for migrant participation and representation in the host country, precisely on the types of arguments adopted by Polish political parties towards the admission of immigrants. The aim was to answer the question: How do the parties' positions create favourable or unfavourable conditions for the representation and participation of immigrants in politics?

This article begins by discussing the rationale for adopting the political opportunity structure model as an analytical paradigm. Next, the research design is presented, emphasising the case selection, method for analysis, and data sources, and the analysed political parties are also briefly introduced. The four parliamentary parties' positions towards migrants are then analysed to determine to what extent they create opportunities for migrants and to what extent, by shaping and framing the discourse, they impose barriers to integration.

2. Political Parties as Actors Shaping the Political Opportunity Structure

Migrants' opportunities for political participation and representation depend on their characteristics (e.g., level of education, previous experiences from their country of origin, willingness to engage in the public sphere, degree of networking, and involvement in migrant associations) and the political system of the host country. Formal legal arrangements, mechanisms and available channels for participation, integration policies, and public discourse on migration constitute the political opportunity structure (i.e., the determinants of the social group's activities that can facilitate or block political engagement). As early as the 1970s, Eisinger (1973), in analysing political protests directed towards urban institutions, noted that the inclusiveness of a political system favours political activism. This concept has been developed by subsequent researchers (e.g., Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi et al., 1992; Meyer & Minkoff, 2004), and while it originally referred to the nation-state and the activism of its citizens, particularly those engaging in social and protest movements, over time it has also been applied to the context of immigrants' participation and representation.

The application of the political opportunity structure model when analysing migrant participation and representation focuses on the role of the political system and its actors, mainly political parties. Political parties not only potentiate migrants' collective engagement (Bloemraad, 2006); they also co-create the political-institutional system, shape and control the operation of state institutions, participate in decision-making processes, and influence the direction and content of the political narrative on migration (Koopmans, 2004; Koopmans & Statham, 2000). Therefore, it is not only the systemic environment but also the discursive opportunity structure that affects the representation and participation of migrants. For instance, the stronger the anti-immigrant sentiment and socio-political divisions in public discourse, the greater the reluctance of immigrants to become politically active (Leighley & Vedlitz, 1999).

Politicians project public perceptions of social problems, control debates on these issues, and offer solutions to legitimise their actions (van Dijk, 2000b, p. 17). Furthermore, political parties attempt to frame the agenda,

giving it the discursive character most appropriate from a party's point of view (Weinar, 2006, p. 51; Wodak & Meyer, 2001; Wodak & van Dijk, 2000). Thus, they not only seek to promote issues that are convenient for them, but they also highlight particular aspects of these issues to give them a certain value and meaning (Rafałowski, 2023, p. 23). For example, the party discourse on migrants may leverage arguments focusing on the economic benefits or hazards of migrants' presence, especially in relation to the welfare system, to promote certain values and norms (e.g., human rights, solidarity, and empathy). However, they may also rely on stereotypes and even evoke prejudice against strangers to promote their exclusion in the name of defending national identity.

Previous research, which concentrated primarily on Western Europe, has shown that political parties are the main actors responsible for politicising public debates on migration (e.g., Gattinara, 2016; van der Brug et al., 2015), regardless of the number of migrants in the hosting country. More often, following the issue-ownership theory (Stier et al., 2017), right-wing parties, and radical-right parties in particular, have made migration central to their political discourse to bring the topic into public debate more frequently, and they have done so more willingly than other parties (Davis & Deole, 2017; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Rydgren, 2008). In their discourse, they often securitise the topic both economically (Heidenreich et al., 2020) and physically (Gattinara, 2016) and use it to introduce a highly restrictive and monocultural approach to migration policies (van Heerden et al., 2014). Representatives of these parties also regard migrants as a threat to national identity, values, norms, and even the political cohesion of their countries (Burscher et al., 2015; Yerly, 2022).

Western European left-wing parties, except for those on the extreme left (Heidenreich et al., 2020; Kopyciok & Silver, 2021), have generally adopted a more moderate position on migration. They have looked for different narratives regarding migration, adopting a framework of social justice and (in)equality often underlying humanitarian aspects of migration. They have also exhibited a higher level of coherence when it comes to migration issues than their main political rivals (Carvalho & Ruedin, 2020). However, in the late 2010s and early 2020s, many of them, in response to the social expectations of the voters in their countries (Bröning, 2018), tightened their position on migration issues and introduced new policies based more on reducing the numbers of immigrants, especially asylum seekers, and posing limits to the social support they receive. Examples of such changes are the Danish Social Democrats' programme Just and Realist: An Immigration Policy that Unites Denmark (Malm & The Zetkin Collective, 2021, pp. 163–164), the Swedish Social Democrat policy A Safe Migration Policy for New Time (Cameron, 2018), or the policy stances of the German or Austrian social democratic parties (Bröning, 2018).

Drawing on the existing body of literature on political parties' discourses on migration, this work identified the gaps that need to be addressed. First, the existing analysis has mainly focused on Western countries, where the problem of migration has been present and relevant in politics for many years, mainly because they see a larger number of migrants. Analysis focused on Central and Eastern Europe is rarer (Krzyżanowski, 2020) as these countries have only recently become host countries. Second, extreme parties' discourse on migrants is more regularly addressed than mainstream political actors' discourse (Carvalho & Ruedin, 2020; Wodak & van Dijk, 2000). This is mainly because the extreme parties more often have a strong stance on immigration, and following salience theory (Budge et al., 1987), devote more space and attention to these issues than the parties with less restrictive positions. Third, parties' positions on immigration are a vital component of new political fractures that do not always overlap, with the left–right divide (Kriesi et al., 2006, 2012; Ruedin & Morales, 2019, p. 310). Furthermore, a continuum can be drawn, where political parties can be placed

closer either to a liberal and pro-immigration or to a restrictive and anti-immigration position, bearing in mind that immigration and integration policy can bring a diverse set of sometimes conflicting issues. They can be structured into the following approaches: utility-oriented, identity-oriented, and liberal universal (Gherghina et al., 2022, pp. 489–490). These approaches serve as the analytical framework of this article and will be used to examine political opportunity structures using the example of political parties from Poland.

3. Case Selection, Data, and Methods of Analysis

This research focused on the comparison of the four Polish political parties that together cover the entire ideological spectrum: Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice; PiS), the Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform; PO), Nowa Lewica (New Left; NL), and Konfederacja (Confederation). Although there are other parties in the Polish party system, these four have the most distinctive positions on migration issues. PiS and PO are the two parties that have dominated the political scene and, since 2005, have alternated in power. In the 2023 parliamentary election campaigns, the two smaller parliamentary parties, the far-right Konfederacja and NL, whose narratives on migrants are radically different from each other, were positioned as potential junior partners of a government coalition for the two largest parties: Konfederacja for PiS and the NL for PO.

This study chose to analyse Poland and Polish political parties for several reasons. First, Poland is a country in transition from an emigration state to an immigration state. As a representative case for Central Europe, Poland is appropriate for the analysis of the process of familiarising society with cultural diversity and integrating the topic of migrant policy into the public agenda and the practical actions of political parties. Second, due to external circumstances, such as pressure on the border from Belarus instigated by Lukashenka and the war in Ukraine, migrants in large groups were entering Poland, causing the issue of migration to become palpable and topical in the public sphere, exactly as in other countries in the region. Third, this study chose to concentrate on the positions of political parties because they are crucial actors in the parliamentary-cabinet system and are "the primary vehicles for integrating interests and formulating policy" (Tavits, 2013, p. 2).

To compare the parties' stances on migration issues, party discourse from 2019 to 2023, when migration issues became the most salient, was analysed. The primary sources for the thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017) were the parliamentary speeches from the plenary debates devoted to migration issues and the party manifestos from the 2023 general elections.

Parliamentary debates, which can be seen as "a formal gathering of a group of elected representatives, members of various political parties, engaging in a discussion about what collective action or policy to undertake concerning an issue of public concern" (van Dijk, 2000a, p. 53), are a forum for communication with citizens, enabling public articulation of social interests. Though the Polish Sejm may be categorised as a "working parliament," in which much of the parliamentary work is delegated to committees (Auel & Raunio, 2014, p. 13), the plenary debates, during which MPs present their parties' positions in a formalised manner, are designed to influence public opinion, especially as they can be watched in real-time and are also recorded and transcribed.

All four parliamentary debates devoted entirely to migration that took place in the period 2019–2023 were analysed. All debates were attended by representatives of the four parties but not on an equal basis. First,

this was because each debate was related to government proposals (Office of the Sejm, 2022), government information (Office of the Sejm, 2021, 2023b), or resolutions proposed by the ruling PiS party (Office of the Sejm, 2023a). This automatically gave PiS more time and space to present the party's position, as parliamentary debates involved not only MPs but also members of the government. Second, parliamentary clubs have different numbers of members (see Table 1). Those who have more seats have more time to deliver their positions. PiS and PO had the largest clubs and NL and Konfederacja had much smaller ones in the period analysed; this was reflected in the frequency with which their MPs spoke. A total of 229 speeches were analysed. Every time a member of the party was given voice by the Sejm's marshal and took part in the debate, it was considered a speech, regardless of how long it was. Some lasted a few minutes, while others, by the Sejm's rules, were limited to 30 seconds. Speeches were assessed for certain themes and attitudes towards migrants, so the length of the speech was not relevant.

The second source of data for the party thematic analysis was the electoral manifestos prepared for the 2023 parliamentary election. Party manifestos "are unique in being the only authoritative party policy statement approved by an official convention or congress" (Klingemann et al., 2006, p. xvi). They signal a party's position on issues the organisation has adopted to compete for votes (Ruedin & Morales, 2019, p. 304) and clarify which issues and policies are important to which parties. They may also be seen as declarations of "party identity and philosophy" (Ray, 2007, p. 17). Finally, what is also important from the research perspective is that the analysis of such manifestos sheds light on inter-party competition and inter-party relations (Odmalm, 2019), and they are a convenient and sufficiently valid source for analysis, since they are available in most cases and their context can be studied retrospectively (Ruedin & Morales, 2019, p. 304).

However, in Poland, it is becoming increasingly common for political parties to refrain from preparing comprehensive and wide-ranging manifestos on the assumption that in the age of the mediatisation of public debate, manifestos have lost much of their communication potential, especially concerning voters. Some do not prepare such documents at all, publishing before the election only programme theses (as PO did in 2023), while others await the move of political rivals (as in the hawk–dove game), to learn the agenda of their competitors first to be able to respond in kind. Such a situation occurred during the 2023 parliamentary campaign, where the two biggest rivals, PiS and PO, presented their election documents just over a month before election day, and they did so not only on the same day (9 September) but even at the same hour.

This article analyses two traditional party manifestos: a 302-page electoral manifesto by PiS and a 116-page one full of photographs, infographics, and bullet points by Konfederacja. Instead of a typical manifesto, NL produced a 110-page document (the *Raport o stanie państwa*) that offered a critical assessment of the PiS government and political recommendations for the future; this document was also studied. In the case of PO,

Table 1. Overview of the parties included in the analysis.

Party	Ideological profile	Status in the analysis period (2019–2023)	Size of parliamentary representation in 2023
PiS	National conservative	Governmental	227
PO	Liberal	Opposition	129
NL	Social democratic	Opposition	42
Konfederacja	Nationalist	Opposition	11

Source: Authors' elaboration based on data from the Sejm website (https://sejm.gov.pl/Sejm9.nsf/kluby.xsp).

a 32-page document published in the form of policy propositions—the *100 konkretów na pierwsze dni rządu* (in English: *100 Program Proposals for the First 100 Days of Government*)—was also analysed.

Sources were analysed qualitatively. First, the analysis reconstructed the definition of the situation (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1920/1922) on migrants and migration presented by parties. This study presumed that parties defined the situation through the prism of their ideology, the norms and values they advocated and the strategies they believed would bring them the greatest advantage in the forthcoming elections. The second step was to reconstruct the type of approach to migration and look for predefined dominant arguments in the parties' discourses. The approaches distinguished were inspired by Gherghina et al. (2022, pp. 489–490) and fall into three categories: (a) utility-oriented, which stems from rational choice theory and values the economic, political, and demographic needs of the immigration country; (b) identity-oriented, in which values are perceived as the basis for the functioning of the community of the immigration country; and (c) liberal-universal, which promotes norms and universal human rights. Utilitarian justification of immigration is often filtered by the dynamics of national politics, the foreign policy agenda, or the structure of opportunities at the domestic level. Identity-based explanations emphasise political, cultural, and religious issues, pointing in the context of immigrants, to the need to foster the spiritual, national, and cultural protection of the native community and to strengthen the constitutive identity of the state. Finally, the liberal-universal approach refers to democratic values, international norms, and cultural openness to universal rights to which all people are entitled, and the repertoire of arguments refers to general moral principles, including equality and non-discrimination. The adopted study perspective enabled the use of an adapted version of a checklist method of analysis (Ruedin & Morales, 2019, p. 306) within the deductive thematic analysis framework (Nowell et al., 2017), in which the manifestos and the debates were analysed according to the predefined categories. Then, they were coded and classified into the three above-mentioned sections.

4. Positions of Polish Political Parties on the Migrant Issue

Public debate on migration in Poland takes place rarely and ad hoc, as a response or consequence of specific, usually external processes, such as the refugee crisis in Europe in 2015, when the EU planned to introduce quotas for the relocation of migrants between member states (Dahl, 2019, pp. 214–215). This was followed closely by Lukashenko's smuggling of migrants into the EU across the borders of Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia (Slunkin, 2021) and millions of refugees seeking safety in neighbouring countries overnight as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The reactionary nature of the Polish debates on migration is primarily reflected in the content of parliamentary debates, which focused on current issues and in which political parties were forced by circumstances beyond their control to present their positions, regardless of whether they had developed a coherent approach and consistent argumentation. However, given that the party manifestos devoted little space to migration issues, even though this could be considered the optimal place to present arguments in a structured and comprehensive manner, parliamentary debates provide more insight into the stances of Polish political parties on migration and migrants.

The analysis of the parliamentary debates and electoral manifestos revealed differences and similarities between the Polish political parties in terms of the type of argument regarding migrants and migration, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The typology of parties' stances on migrants and migration.

Type of argument	Liberal-universal oriented	Utility-oriented	Identity-oriented
PiS	Yes, but limited to Ukrainian migrants	Yes	Yes
PO	Yes	Yes	Yes, but limited
NL	Yes	Yes	No
Konfederacja	No	No	Yes

First, all analysed parties except Konfederacja were sympathetic to the migrants from Ukraine. The liberal-universal approach was adopted, with the parties emphasising the moral principle of helping those in need. PiS MP Maciej Wąsik said during the debate:

> It is our duty to make the migrants, composed mainly of old people, women, and children, feel safe in Poland, to give them refuge in our country, just as we have so many times in our history found refuge when misfortune befell us. (Office of the Sejm, 2022)

The PO and NL thus adopted a similar position, also acknowledging the Poles, self-governments, and volunteers for their "openness, great heart, and heroism in helping Ukrainian women and children" (PO MP Marzena Okła-Drewnowicz as cited in Office of the Sejm, 2022) and "interpersonal solidarity" (NL MP Adrian Zandberg as cited in Office of the Sejm, 2022). Only Konfederacja took a different stance based on the "enormous costs" of the Ukrainian "settlement operation in Poland" (Konfederacja MP Robert Winnicki as cited in Office of the Sejm, 2022).

Second, the definition of the migration crisis on the Polish-Belarussian border and the EU relocation mechanism was much more nuanced. PiS adopted the attitude that migration policy should be subordinated only to Polish internal interests and decisions (PiS MP Grzegorz Lorek as cited in Office of the Sejm, 2023b; PiS, 2023, p. 165). PiS, on the one hand, does not support EU solidarity with countries that face migrant crises (PiS, 2023, p. 155), but on the other, it does not want direct EU support in protecting the border by, for example, a greater Frontex presence. Furthermore, the party divides migrants from outside the EU, mainly from Africa and Asia, into "legal migrants" who came to Poland to "work hard and earn legally for their families" (PiS MP Henryk Kowalczyk as cited in Office of the Sejm, 2023b) and the "illegal wave of migrants" (PiS PM Mateusz Morawiecki as cited in Office of the Sejm, 2023b), who are portrayed as young and aggressive men, mostly "Muslims, who we [PiS] do not want" (PiS MP Janusz Kowalski as cited in Office of the Sejm, 2023a). The first group came to Poland because of "the improved economic situation under PiS government, when [the country] has gone from being a labour pool for its richer neighbours to being an attractive destination for economic migration" (PiS, 2023, p. 156). This utility-oriented approach is limited to addressing the employment needs of the Polish market, as the migrants "are needed by entrepreneurs such as builders, farmers, food producers, and many others," but they are only "seasonal and contract workers who are given visas for contracts of limited duration and then leave" (PiS MP Maria Kurowska as cited in Office of the Sejm, 2023b).

The second group of immigrants identified by PiS as the "intruders" (PiS MP Joanna Borowiak as cited in Office of the Sejm, 2021) is either already imposed on Poland through "the Belarussian hybrid attack on the

Polish border" (PiS, 2023, p. 113) or could be imposed by the EU according to the relocation mechanism (PiS, 2023, p. 165). To describe these groups of migrants, PiS uses an identity-oriented narrative designed to induce insecurity. According to party representatives, the aim of these migrants "is to change Europe culturally…to destroy, to rape the existing European structures" (Morawiecki as cited in Office of the Sejm, 2023a). These migrants are also seen as posing a physical threat to the security of Polish citizens. As PiS MP Kurowska said, if Poland accepted such migrants, "there would be riots…robberies of normal Poles…piles of burning cars" (as cited in Office of the Sejm, 2023b) as "in Western Europe, where the open-door policy has led to acts of terror" (PiS MP Mariusz Błaszczak as cited in Office of the Sejm, 2021).

Several threads can be distinguished in situations defined by the PO. The party has adopted a utility-oriented approach in recognising the growing number of migrants from various countries and sees this process as natural on the one hand (people are looking for a better life and see Poland as a country that can provide that) and beneficial for the Polish economy and demographics on the other. However, at the same time, PO has stressed the importance of border controls. In its proposal for the 2023 parliamentary elections, the party declared, for example, that it "will close the migrant smugglers' route from the Middle East through Belarus to Poland and on to the EU" (Koalicja Obywatelska, 2023), but in contrast to PiS, the party underlined the indispensability of the cooperation on migration policies with the EU. For example, in its electoral document, the party declared that it "will provide EU funding for the defence of the Polish border with Belarus" (Koalicja Obywatelska, 2023).

A separate thread in the PO's narrative, which featured prominently in the campaign ahead of the 2023 parliamentary elections, is Muslim immigration and the PiS government's policy towards them. PO pointed out that PiS opened the door wide for Muslim immigrants by issuing them a significant number of work permits and visas. At the same time, PO pointed out that PiS harshly criticised the EU's compulsory solidarity mechanism, repressing migrants on the border with Belarus, claiming that they are potential terrorists acting against Poland's security and using the pictures from the Paris riots (2022–2023) or the Italian Lampedusa crisis (2023) as an illustration of what could happen in Poland in the future. PO argued that, instead, the duty of the government is to support "the migrants in learning the Polish language and getting to know Polish culture" (PO MP Mirosława Nykiel as cited in Office of the Sejm, 2023b) and "providing the migrants with integration policies and services like legal advice and health care for example" (PO MP Paweł Kowal as cited in Office of the Sejm, 2023b).

NL has consistently expressed solidarity with refugees, arguing that people fleeing war and political persecution should be helped, especially since Polish migrants have been welcomed by other countries many times in history. Therefore, Poland should reciprocate with the same approach. The party often portrays migrants as victims, especially those stuck on the border between Poland and Belarus (victims of Lukashenko's regime) and Ukrainian war refugees (victims of Putin's regime). NL MPs have also called for moving beyond the dispute between PiS and PO over who better defends Poland from illegal immigration and instead have highlighted the need for integration policies for people who come to Poland legally to help them find jobs, pay taxes, and offer social security contributions through access to housing, education, culture and the opportunity to gain professional credentials. NL MPs have pointed out that in the future, without these outsiders, it will be difficult to cope with the problems in the labour market (NL MP Waldemar Tomaszewski as cited in Office of the Sejm, 2023b). They also stressed:

> Recruitment agencies operating in South America, Africa, Asia bring workers here who are not protected in the Polish labour market, who are exploited, who often live in undignified conditions. Often, there are even pathologies and cases of human trafficking; they work several hours a day for less than the prevailing minimum wage. (NL MP Katarzyna Kretkowska, as cited in Office of the Sejm, 2023b)

NL has therefore reached for utilitarian and liberal-universal arguments rather than appealing to an identity-based approach. A similar approach is evident in the election manifestos of the NL. In the 2023 electoral manifesto (NL, 2023), there was no mention of the party's migration policy, as if the party felt that voters had already learned its position from the previous 2021 manifesto, where the party's priorities were defined using mainly utility-based argumentation. There, the party indicated that, due to the depopulation of the country, Poland should open up to newcomers, as this would ensure its security and prosperity (NL, 2021, p. 18). NL advocated the creation of a responsible and solidarity-based migration policy, the improvement of living conditions in refugee centres, the implementation of programmes to prepare migrants to start working in Poland, the provision of free access to health care for asylum seekers, support for entrepreneurs and institutions employing migrants and the introduction of programmes to help foreigners at the local government level, such as legal consultations and free Polish language classes.

Konfederacja has adopted a radically different perspective on migrants and migration. This party sees immigration as having only negative consequences for the nation and the state, whether immigrants are from a neighbouring war-torn country or more distant parts of the world. Konfederacja advocates a "responsible migration policy," understood as limiting the size of migration to "the numbers Poland can assimilate" and monitoring "migration flows" (Konfederacja, 2023). The party strongly opposes labour migration to Poland, the EU mechanism of refugee relocation, and the concept of multiculturalism. They claim that they represent the views of the Poles, who "seeing how societies in the West look like…how much crime is committed by immigrants, don't want that [to happen in Poland]" (Konfederacja MP Krystian Kamiński as cited in Office of the Sejm, 2023a).

Although Konfederacja recognises labour shortages in Poland, the party wants to solve them not by inviting immigrants but by supporting the return of Poles from emigration, repatriation programmes targeting Poles abroad, and internal migration. In their 2023 manifesto, there are only two mentions of migrants, both coloured by negative overtones. The first one appeared in the context of EU policy, which, according to the party, "forces the Poles to admit, against our will, thousands more immigrants or to pay multi-million penalties" (Konfederacja, 2023, p. 42). The second one called for a stop to illegal immigration, strengthening the borders' infrastructure, and the improvement of procedures for the detection and removal of illegal immigrants (p. 74).

The analysis of the parliamentary debates and party manifestos showed that despite existing similarities in attitudes towards war migrants from Ukraine and a somewhat similar narrative, especially between PiS and PO, on the migration crisis caused by the Lukashenko regime, each of the political parties has a different position towards migration. Arguments based on the utility-oriented approach were used by all parties except Konfederacja. Identity-oriented argumentation is distinctive to the political right (i.e., PiS and Konfederacja) to a lesser extent than the centre-right PO, while it is absent in the narrative of the NL. Finally, the liberal universal-oriented perspective is absent from the discourse of the nationalist Konfederacja. In the

case of PiS, it is limited only to refugees from Ukraine, while PO and NL have used this type of argumentation more often and more broadly, both in manifestos and parliamentary debates. The content analysis thus revealed a continuum of approaches towards migrants, from the most hostile—represented by the Konfederacja, which is against any type of immigration—to the acceptance of migrants as temporary workers but the refusal of further integration measures, as represented by PiS. Then there is PO, which has an ambivalent attitude towards migrants. On the one hand, the party has acknowledged that Poland needs them. It pays attention to their working rights and the human rights of refugees, but on the other hand, it does not hesitate to use the subject of migration as a political weapon to hit political opponents, mainly PiS. PO has taken steps to empower political refugees from Lukashenko's scheme and war refugees from Ukraine by offering them space to articulate their interests by inviting them to political events, such as the annual Campus Poland dedicated to youth actively participating in socio-political life that allows them to discuss politics for more than a week with politicians, academics and people of culture. However, it has also reached for populist arguments aimed at stoking fear of the cultural otherness of migrants from Muslim countries, as it did during the electoral campaign in 2023. At the opposite end of the continuum of approaches towards migrants is the NL, the most inclusive and welcoming party, which has been shown to reach for pro-migrant arguments.

Polish political parties have divided migrants into several groups, and only in relation to one such group would some parties consider (and in the future rather than now) introducing mechanisms to enhance migrants' representation and participation. There is cross-party agreement, except for Konfederacja, that the "good" migrants are war refugees from Ukraine and political refugees from Belarus. In the rhetoric of the PiS and Konfederacja, the "bad" and unacceptable migrants are those whom Poland will allegedly have to accept under the EU's 2015 relocation principle or compulsory EU solidarity, as well as migrants from Middle Eastern and African countries sent to the Polish-Belarusian border by Lukashenko, against whom the PiS government is erecting barbed wire entanglements. There is also a third group, the so-called "invisible" migrants (Szaniszló, 2021), whose rights have been claimed by NL and for whom the Polish government issues work permits but does not implement any integration policies, acknowledging that once the demand for their labour is satisfied, the migrants will return home.

5. Conclusion

The topic of migrant representation and participation has so far been discussed and analysed mainly in the context of Western democracies, which have been the destination of migration for at least several decades. The situation is different in Central and Eastern Europe, which opened up for migration quite recently. This article shows that political parties in Poland treat the problem of political participation and the representation of migrants as an issue of little importance. They primarily use the topic of migration (but not the topic of migrants' participation and representation) to fight their opponents. Even more important in the context of this study is that these parties treat migrants as an "object" of their policy, which is usually developed ad hoc in response to external circumstances, rather than as a "subject." They also perceive migrants as too small and diverse a group to solicit their support, stimulate their political participation, and offer them regular and structured channels of representation. Therefore, this study concludes that the parties' positions at this stage of the socio-political debate generate somewhat unfavourable conditions for the representation and participation of migrants in politics and do not create structures of opportunity.

Further research on this issue in Central Europe could focus on several issues. First, remaining on the subject of political parties' positions on migrants, the topic could be developed by examining internal party discussions on migration. Thus, the research could analyse different dynamics, arguments, and ways of addressing migration and migrants' participation and political representation within the parties. Second, Groenendijk (2008, pp. 5–8) suggested that political parties leave the topic out of their agenda, as they are driven by a fear of public perceptions of it. It is important to assess whether this assumption is still valid. Furthermore, how have changing norms of migrant political engagement in different parts of the world (Umpierrez de Reguero et al., 2023, p. 2485) affected public opinion in the Central and Eastern European region? Finally, a closer look could be devoted to the demand side (i.e., migrants and their organisations) in terms of migrants' current engagement in the public sphere and their needs and expectations towards the hosting states and political parties.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Magdalena Lesińska from the Centre of Migration Research Warsaw for her helpful comments in the conceptualisation stage of the article. We also appreciate the reviewers' comments and the friendly criticism of the scientific editors of this thematic issue, Sorina Soare and Sergiu Gherghina.

Funding

Research for this article was partially founded by the Excellence Initiative—Research University Programme of Nicolaus Copernicus University, within the research team Centre for Global & Multi-Level Governance.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Politics and Governance
2024 • Volume 12 • Article 7507
https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.7507

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Open Access Journal

Electoral Participation of Non-National EU Citizens in France: The Case of the Nord

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Submitted: 3 August 2023 **Accepted:** 15 December 2023 **Published:** 13 March 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue "The Political Representation and Participation of Migrants" edited by Sergiu Gherghina (University of Glasgow) and Sorina Soare (University of Florence), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i354

Abstract

Since the 1993 Maastricht Treaty, EU citizens have the right to vote in European and local elections in the member state they reside in. In France, only about a quarter do so. Our article considers what factors explain the registration and participation of non-national citizens for the French Department of the Nord where around 35,000 non-French European citizens of voting age are living. Among them, 11,638 are registered to vote in the French municipal elections. Following the 2020 municipal elections, we have consulted the electoral rolls in each of the 648 communes to know who actually cast a vote. Based on detailed census data on each EU nationality and on other information contained on the electoral lists and rolls (age, gender, place of birth, etc.) and also contextual variables, this article seeks to identify the main factors associated with registering in the first instance and turning out to vote in the second. Our results confirm wide variation in registration and voting rates according to nationality. They also show that beyond voters' nationality and the "usual suspects" of electoral participation, contextual factors are important predictors.

Keywords

citizenship; electoral participation; European Union; France; migration; municipal elections; non-national EU citizens

1. Introduction

The transnationalisation of electoral rights is a major challenge for contemporary electoral studies and migration studies alike (Bauböck, 2006; Lafleur, 2013). From this perspective, the European political space offers an excellent field of observation. Indeed, although the Maastricht Treaty granted EU citizens the right

to vote and run for office in both European and local elections in the member state where they reside (Shaw, 2007; Strudel, 2009), we know little about the ways in which citizens make use of such rights. With the expansion of intra-European migration, these political rights concern a growing number of individuals; there are now around 15 million EU citizens of voting age living in a member state other than the one(s) in which they hold the nationality. These mobile EU citizens form a highly disparate population in terms of both their social characteristics and their migratory trajectories, be they Erasmus students, low-cost manual workers, highly skilled and cosmopolitan employees of major metropolises, border residents, or heliotropic retirees (Recchi & Favell, 2019). Among the various member states, France is a major host of intra-European immigration, with around 1.2 million non-French European citizens of voting age, making it the second-largest host country in Europe.

Quantitatively, only a small proportion of non-national EU citizens (NNEUCs) make use of these political rights. It is estimated that, on average, a minority of NNEUCs are actually registered to vote in their host country (Hutcheson & Russo, 2019); 27.2% of NNEUCs living in France are registered to vote in municipal elections and 22.6% in European elections (Gouard & Lombard, 2023). This article examines which social and political factors contribute to NNEUC registration and turnout behaviour. To answer this question, we make use of census data on each EU nationality and information contained on the electoral rolls as well as contextual data. We conceptualise electoral participation as a two-step process (registration is a first signal of political engagement, but may not lead to an actual vote). While previous studies have addressed participation at the macro and meso levels, we are also able to examine individual-level data for the vote. To do so, we draw on a new and unique dataset that records the actual turnout behaviour of all NNEUCs registered to vote at the 2020 municipal elections in the French Department of the Nord (hereafter the Nord). We consulted the electoral lists and systematically compared them with the signatures on the electoral rolls. The Nord was selected because it is the largest in France in terms of its population and also shares a border with Belgium, allowing us to work with a population of around 35,000 non-French European citizens of voting age, a third of whom are Belgian nationals. Our study thus addresses a theoretical issue in the literature by explaining registration and voting by different EU nationalities within the same country. This approach mirrors and complements other studies in this thematic issue which by contrast look at the enfranchisement and vote of migrants of a single nationality in their home country (Finn & Ramaciotti, 2024; Gherghina & Basarabă, 2024). In addition, we address a major empirical gap as most individual-level studies use survey data (Koc Michalska & Strudel, 2012) which are declaration-based and involve a recall bias. Our empirical data, on the contrary, is based on an objective measure of voter registration and recorded voting through access to the post-election rolls.

2. Theory

There are three generally acknowledged opposing theoretical views explaining migrants' political (re)socialisation (M. Voicu & Rusu, 2012; White et al., 2008) that can be applied to their electoral participation. First, pre-migration attitudes and behaviours may be *resistant* to change, leading migrants to reproduce practices acquired via socialisation in their home country. Alternatively, they may adopt the standards of the host country following *exposure* to the new political system. Third and somewhat as a midway, their political resocialisation may be bound to the *transfer* of their beliefs and predispositions to the host social context and polity. We consider these three strands of inquiry and apply them to the electoral participation of NNEUCs: resistance is associated with the prevalence of the political culture of origin, exposure suggests that contextual elements in the host political system are likely to affect turnout, while

transfer applies to situations whereby resources allowing participation at home remain largely unchanged abroad. Thus, their probability to vote is explained by the political socialisation process of migrants not only in their country of origin (Eckstein, 1988) but also in that of residence (B. Voicu & Comsa, 2014) or in the interaction between the two (Ciornei & Østergaard-Nielsen, 2020).

The convergent literature finds that distinct political cultures of origin or diverse migration pathways (settlement vs. temporary/lifestyle vs. economic) explain differing outcomes and potential resistance to seizing voting rights (Blokland et al., 2023; de Rooij, 2012; Favell, 2008). Because preferences regarding politics may be specific to a given political community (Inglehart, 1988), we argue that specific characteristics of the country of origin are likely to influence the use of political rights post-migration. Building on this literature, and given that NNEUCs all come from democracies (with minor exceptions), we should not expect differences in participation to be based on the lack of a voting culture, nor that they are "less culturally developed than local workers and therefore also less politically active" (Martiniello, 2006, p. 86). Nevertheless, differences have been witnessed across countries—and in particular Central and Eastern European countries' vote is tendentially lower (Kostelka, 2017; Thomassen, 2005)—leading us to expect similar trends in the destination country. For example, those citizens coming from countries where compulsory voting is applied and those where trends in participation are higher may have developed a "habit of voting" (Gerber et al., 2003). In that regard, Collard's (2010, 2016) initial research into NNEUC registration in French municipal elections in 2001 and 2008 highlights significant national inequalities. Our first hypothesis, thus, posits that national origins condition electoral participation:

H1: National origin will have a relationship with electoral participation among NNEUCs.

Exposure theory predicts that the longer immigrants stay in a new country and the more they develop contacts with the institutions, people, and values of that country, the more they are likely to adapt their attitudes and behaviour to this new political environment. If such is the case, the political and electoral participation of foreigners could also be favoured or, on the contrary, disfavoured, by various contextual factors at the national or local level. In particular, the procedural and practical barriers to electoral participation as identified in the literature include the migrants' initial lack of knowledge of their political rights and interest in their host country's political life (Collard, 2016; Ostling, 2019; Shaw, 2010), but also language barriers and the reluctance or passiveness of local authorities. Targeted public policies have been evidenced to encourage the participation of foreigners, particularly those put in place by local authorities (Morales & Giugni, 2011). Political forces situated on the left of the political spectrum are usually seen as more supportive of migrants and thus inclined to grant them participation rights (Koopmans et al., 2005; Van Heelsum, 2001) and to put in place more initiatives in that regard (Nikolic, 2017). More generally, the political "climate" of the local environment can be more or less welcoming or, on the contrary, hostile to the electoral participation of foreigners. Earlier studies highlight a mobilisation of immigrant populations linked to the presence of the extreme right (Richard, 1998). Césari (1993), for example, points to a surge in participation by immigrant populations in Marseille in response to the perception of such a "political threat." Similarly and based on theories of descriptive and symbolic representation, the role of political parties, and more precisely, their choice to designate candidates of specific nationalities can boost participation. We, therefore, expect that participation will be higher in those communes where European candidates are running, following a type of "candidate effect" (Fiva & Smith, 2017):

H2a: The longer their stay in the host country, the higher the electoral participation of NNEUCs.

H2b: Left-led communes are linked to a higher electoral participation of NNEUCs.
H2c: More radical right-leaning communes lead to higher electoral participation of NNEUCs.
H2d: The presence of a co-national candidate(s) leads to higher electoral participation of NNEUCs.
H2e: More politically active communes are associated with higher electoral participation of NNEUCs.

Finally, civic resources and experiences developed in the home country may be transferred to the host one. As the link between individual resources and individual political participation is well established, there is in fact little reason to a priori dismiss the "usual suspects" of political and electoral participation in the case of NNEUCs. To be sure, when moving, migrants may change their socio-economic status (this may even be one of the reasons for migration) but this is unlikely to change the main tenets of electoral participation. Several factors explaining participation are often put forward in the literature to explain low turnout, including age, the level of education, and the socio-economic situation of individuals (Braconnier et al., 2017; Lazarsfeld et al., 2021; Mayer & Boy, 1997). In the migration literature too, the level of socio-economic resources is often given as a main explanatory factor of political participation (Blokland et al., 2023; de Rooij, 2012). Civic skills may further be transferred as part of social bonds. Some studies have found national population density to have a positive effect on the vote (Tam Cho et al., 2006), perhaps because the individual's social network in the host country may play a decisive role in raising awareness of their political rights (Rea et al., 2015). Qualitative outlooks have also underlined the role of local associative structuring in boosting participation (Raffini, 2012). Last, the effect of perduring social bonds may be particularly prevalent when the population can easily move back and forth between the country of origin and of residence as in the case of cross-border migrations. Our third hypothesis is therefore multipart, expecting traditional socio-economic factors to influence participation as well as an influence on the anchorage of the community of origin:

H3a: Older and more educated NNEUCs are associated with higher rates of participation.
H3b: The stronger anchorage of a given community in a given commune leads to higher participation for that community.

3. Data and Methods

3.1. Data Collection

We consider two facets of electoral participation: registration and turnout behaviour (voting). In France, as in most other countries, electoral participation requires individuals to be registered in advance. While French citizens are automatically registered upon the legal majority, NNEUCs must make the active choice to register, after which they remain registered for the next municipal elections. Once registered, however, there is no requirement that an individual exercise their right to vote. We can therefore consider both registration and voting as forms of participation.

One unique aspect of the French system is that the French Ministry of the Interior makes voter registration information available. This allows us to determine the nationality and commune of all registered voters. The Nord is particularly interesting to study for two main reasons: (a) it is one of the French departments with the highest number of NNEUCs, with a majority national group from a Northern European country (Belgians), whereas on average in France, the Portuguese, Italians, and Spaniards make up two-thirds of

NNEUCs (see Table 1); (b) this department has a very large number of communes (648), which makes it possible to carry out robust statistical analyses using the commune level.

3.1.1. Registration Data

Among the around 35,000 non-French European citizens of voting age in the the Nord, 11,638 are registered on the lists for the French municipal elections. Analyses of this file were coupled with analysis of census data from the French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) for the various European populations of voting age. Census data allowed us, for each commune of more than 5,000 inhabitants, to know the socio-demographic composition of the NNEUCs population in 2019 (sex, age group, length of residence in France, diploma, occupation) and commune-level data. Calculating registration rates at the communal level can offer one difficulty: A person who has changed residence may remain registered in her former commune because each voter is expected to update her situation following a change of residence. It is estimated that 15% of French voters are registered in a commune where they do not currently reside (Braconnier et al., 2016). Data was obtained via the network for research Quételet-Progedo.

Table 1 presents the main demographic and electoral data for the Nord, comparing them with national averages for each of the nine best-represented European nationalities. It reveals important inequalities in registration rates for local elections according to the country of origin. Schematically, both in France and in the Nord, we notice three blocks of countries. The first block corresponds to citizens from Northern Europe (Belgian, Dutch, German) who display high registration rates. The intermediate group is composed of citizens from Southern Europe (Italians, Portuguese, Spanish). The last group is composed of citizens from Central and Eastern European countries (Bulgarians, Polish, Romanians) for whom registration rates are the lowest. Inequalities in registration rates between the different groups of citizens according to their country of origin could be explained by other factors, notably social characteristics. Our research attempts to unveil the different profiles behind these inequalities in registration.

3.1.2. Voting Data

French law allows for the voter rolls to be examined for a very limited period following an election (usually for 10 days). Each voter is required to sign next to their name on the roll when they cast a vote; thus, we were able to determine voter turnout based on these rolls. We considered the rolls of 508 of the 648 communes in the Nord. 112 communes were excluded because there were no NNEUCs registered and for 28 communes the rolls were unavailable. In some communes, pages were missing which excluded a further 845 individuals. Nevertheless, we were able to determine voting behaviour for 9,999 of the 11,638 NNEUCs registered voters. This labour-intensive process involved photographing and examining each page of the voter rolls.

Municipal elections in France have the following basic characteristics which have consequences in terms of our analysis. In communes of over 1,000 inhabitants, there is a two-round propotional representation system with a bonus (which allows the candidate list with a relative majority of votes to gain a majority of seats overall). In smaller communes (less than 1,000 inhabitants), municipal councillors are elected following a two-round plurinominal majority vote where panachage is possible. Of the 648 communes, 279, or 43.1%, are smaller than 1,000 residents, while 94.2% of the department's population reside in communes greater than 1,000 residents.

Table 1. Electoral registration and main social characteristics of the nine largest EU nationalities: Comparison between the Nord and France.

Nationality	Belgian	Bulgarian	Dutch	German	Italian	Polish	Portuguese	Romanian	Spanish	Other EU
Population (Nord)	11,455	333	526	824	6,279	1,078	7,905	2,416	2,575	1,183
% among NNEUCs (Nord)	33.1%	1.0%	1.5%	2.4%	18.2%	3.1%	22.9%	7.0%	7.4%	3.4%
% among NNEUCs (France)	7.3%	1.5%	2.7%	6.3%	14.7%	3.7%	39.7%	7.7%	11.2%	5.0%
Local registration rate (Nord)	46.2%	5.1%	40.1%	40.6%	31.1%	9.4%	30.5%	5.1%	24.2%	14.2%
Local registration rate (France)	51.4%	5.6%	53.2%	41.8%	29.9%	9.8%	22.4%	6.5%	23.9%	28.4%
% of women (Nord)	50.5%	51.1%	46.1%	58.4%	39.8%	60.9%	46.2%	52.6%	45.2%	
% of women (France)	54.0%	52.0%	51.0%	56.0%	45.0%	57.0%	47.0%	50.0%	50.0%	
% aged 60+ (Nord)	27.2%	5.7%	21.0%	20.3%	58.3%	28.8%	47.2%	3.4%	35.1%	
% aged 60+ (France)	29.0%	7.0%	44.0%	32.0%	43.0%	13.0%	34.0%	5.0%	39.0%	
% of the working class (Nord)	47.6%	57.1%	36.8%	26.3%	55.6%	53.8%	74.3%	58.8%	43.9%	
% of the working class (France)	37.0%	63.0%	29.0%	33.0%	48.0%	60.0%	74.0%	64.0%	50.0%	
% two years of post-secondary education (Nord)	51.0%	30.0%	53.0%	51.0%	28.0%	37.0%	8.0%	28.0%	29.0%	
% two years of post-secondary education (France)	36.2%	30.2%	54.1%	60.7%	15.4%	36.2%	7.4%	24.8%	27.9%	
Resident for 20+ years (Nord)	38.2%	3.2%	45.8%	40.7%	72.4%	33.8%	84.2%	3.1%	52.8%	
Resident for 20+ years (France)	34.0%	4.0%	33.0%	40.0%	43.0%	19.0%	56.0%	4.0%	44.0%	
% in large towns (Nord)	41.7%	90.4%	73.2%	72.2%	68.4%	68.5%	76.0%	84.5%	80.5%	
% in large towns (France)	40.0%	81.0%	32.0%	44.0%	68.0%	69.0%	62.0%	77.0%	67.0%	

Source: Authors' own work based on the electoral registers of 2020.

3.2. Variables

3.2.1. Registration

Because there is not a central database of every NNEUC resident, there is no way to individually compare registered and non-registered citizens. For this reason, variables corresponding to voter registration are aggregated at the communal level. We use data from the 2019 census provided by INSEE to calculate the registration rate as well as population-level characteristics for the nine largest European nationalities in the Nord (see Table 1). For privacy reasons, data is only provided for communes of at least 5,000 residents, meaning that communes below this threshold are excluded. We further exclude from the analysis any nationality-commune dyads where there are fewer than 20 national residents of voting age. We make this choice to avoid a single registration having too large an impact on the overall registration rate within the commune. In total, there are 234 nationality-commune dyads that fulfil the study criteria. These represent 82 unique communes with 2.9 nationalities per commune on average. In sum, the dependent variable is the registration rate of a specific nationality in a specific commune. The number of cases per nationality is as follows: 59 for Belgian and Italian, 47 for Portuguese, 24 for Spanish, 15 for Romanian, 11 for Polish, 10 for German, five for Dutch, and four for Bulgarian.

The census data breaks down the population of each nationality by age, education, socio-professional category, gender, and length of residence. We use these data to determine the characteristics of the national population in each commune. We break down education as the percentage of having completed at least two years of post-secondary education. For the socio-professional category, we consider the share of the working class among the active population. For gender, we consider the percentage of women among the adult population. For age, we calculate the percentage aged 60 years or more.

At the municipal level, we also gather contextual information about the commune itself to account for local anchorage. We include a dichotomous variable for communes which are located on the Belgian border (coded 1, $n = 76$) with the aim of incorporating a territorial variable that would reflect the presence of a particularly participatory civic culture just across the border (i.e., compulsory voting in Belgium). We conducted an exhaustive search of the National Associations Register to identify associations targeting one or more of the relevant nationalities and generate a dichotomous variable indicating the presence of national group associations. In the Nord, we identified 245 national group associations from the National Associations Register. We also calculate the density of each nationality retained in each commune.

At the municipal level, we also include information on the political climate of the commune which could impact registration. Using the results of the 2017 presidential election, we include a variable measuring the percentage of votes in the first round for the far-right candidate Marine Le Pen. We include a variable for the political orientation of the municipal majority put in place after the last French municipal elections in 2014 for communes of over 1,000 inhabitants (using the labels provided by the Ministry of the Interior) since we expect left-wing majorities to be more proactive in encouraging participation. Finally, we consulted the candidate lists to detect if there is one or more conational candidates in the commune. On top of the above-described gender and socio-professional categories, we include a control variable for commune size regrouped into four modalities (5,000–7,499; 7500–9,999; 10,000–19,999; ≥20,000) since participation is generally higher in rural than in urban areas, leading us to expect a commune size effect (Nevers, 2008).

3.2.2. Voting

Voting is considered a dichotomous variable taking on the value of (1) when there was a signature (evidencing participation) of a given registered voter on the electoral rolls of her commune. We focused on the first round only, so each voter is accounted for only once. Only 92 communes held a second round and those are mainly large urban municipalities, not allowing us to test several of our hypotheses. In our dataset, among the registered voters, 3,750 voters voted and 6,249 abstained.

To explain (non-)participation at the individual level, we consider data included on the electoral lists and rolls, such as nationality, gender, and date and place of birth. Because we believe that the relationship between voting and age is represented by an inverse U, we also include the quadratic term for age. Neither the voter lists nor the electoral rolls allow us to know how long registered voters have lived in France. However, their country of birth is indicated, and this variable is therefore taken as an approximation of the length of residence in France. At the municipal level, we include—as for registration—the three transfer variables (border, associations, and density of the national group), but also the exposure ones (the percentage of Le Pen vote in 2017 in the commune, the municipal majority put in place after the last French municipal elections in 2014, and whether there was one or several candidates of the same nationality of the voter running in the municipal election). To this category, we add the turnout level in the election. Although the Covid-19 epidemic caused low turnout in the 2020 French municipal elections, the social logic of voting remained broadly the same (Audemard & Gouard, 2022), with only the effect of age being undermined (Haute et al., 2021). We also recode communes touching the Belgian border ($n = 76$). At the municipal level, commune size has been regrouped into six sizes (<1,000; 1,000–4,999; 5,000–9,999; 10,000–19,999; 20,000–49,999; ≥50,000). In the analyses at the individual level, we are able to include a more detailed examination of commune size due to the larger number of observations. A summary of the hypotheses, levels of analyses, and data used is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Hypotheses, levels, and data.

Hypotheses	Model inclusion	Data source
H1: National origin	Registration and voting	Registration: 2019 census data Voting: Nationality listed on electoral rolls
H2a: Length of stay	Registration and voting	Registration: 2019 census data Voting: Electoral lists, France-born vs. foreign-born
H2b: Left-led communes	Registration and voting	Registering and voting: Municipal-level majority post-French municipal elections 2014 (labels by Ministry of the Interior)
H2c: Radical right-leaning communes	Registration and voting	Registering and voting: Vote share of Marine Le Pen in the 2017 presidential election
H2d: Co-national candidates	Registration and voting	Candidate lists
H2e: Politically active communes	Voting	Participation rates in the 2020 municipal elections in each commune
H3a: Age and education	Registration and voting (age only)	Registration: 2019 census data Voting: Date of birth
H3b: Anchorage	Registering and voting	Registering and voting: National associations that are part of the National Association Registry (counted per nationality); list of communes bordering Belgium (dichotomous); population density of the nationality based on 2019 census data

3.3. Models

To assess the factors impacting electoral registration, we employ a generalised linear model with Gaussian distribution and identity link. To account for heteroscedasticity and the non-independence of variation among nationalities, we cluster standard errors by nationality. One challenge presented by this model is the relatively low number of observations ($n = 234$) which is linked to the data constraints described above. Overall, fewer observations are linked to higher standard errors, increasing the risk of type II errors but not type I which is reassuring for the reliability of results obtained. However, aggregating also raises the question of ecological fallacy. While we should be cautious not to assume that population characteristics are true of any particular registered voter, this does not prevent us from using this aggregated data in an attempt to falsify our hypothesis that socio-economic factors are linked to electoral registration among NNEUCs.

Second, voting is assessed on an individual basis using a generalised linear model with binomial distribution and logit link. Standard errors are again clustered by nationality. We considered a mixed-effects model with random effects for nationality, but the residual intraclass correlation for nationality was close to zero, and the likelihood-ratio test showed that the mixed-effects model did not perform better than the fixed-effects model.

Because INSEE does not share municipal-level census data for municipalities of less than 5,000 residents, we are not able to calculate the density of the nationality for individuals residing in communes less than 5,000. In order to not exclude these individuals, we run a set of analyses with and without the density variable. In total, 486 municipalities are represented among the 9,827 electors included in this analysis (172 voters were excluded due to missing data). When considering only communes with over 5,000 residents, there are 6,268 European electors in the analysis, representing 101 unique communes.

4. Discussion of Results

4.1. Registration

Table 3 presents the results of analyses of electoral registration of NNEUCs. Model 1 considers the border effect for all nationalities while Model 2 limits the border variable to Belgians only.

Table 3. Regression models: Analysis of registration rates, by nationality-commune dyad.

	Model 1	Model 2
% of working class	1.912 (2.487)	1.650 (2.374)
% of residents for more than 20 years	**15.59*** (6.233)	12.63+ (7.194)
% with two or more years of post-secondary education	**14.21*** (6.589)	**15.02*** (6.771)
% aged 60+ years	**14.48*** (6.941)	**16.14*** (7.144)
% of women	−1.686 (5.436)	−1.877 (5.520)

Table 3. (Cont.) Regression models: Analysis of registration rates, by nationality-commune dyad.

	Model 1	Model 2
Nationality (ref. Belgians)		
Germans	**−7.781****	**−8.658****
	(2.416)	(2.466)
Bulgarians	**−28.68****	**−30.13****
	(2.911)	(2.833)
Spanish	**−24.28****	**−24.97****
	(1.834)	(1.657)
Italians	**−18.76****	**−18.86****
	(2.981)	(3.149)
Dutch	**−27.84****	**−27.45****
	(2.494)	(2.357)
Polish	**−33.39****	**−34.30****
	(1.539)	(1.422)
Portuguese	**−20.82****	**−20.21****
	(2.901)	(3.356)
Romanian	**−27.14****	**−27.78****
	(2.687)	(2.703)
National group association	**4.549****	**4.218****
	(1.448)	(1.333)
Density of nationality	**−5.708****	**−7.145****
	(1.213)	(2.062)
Commune size, regrouped (ref. 5,000–7,499)		
7,500–9,999	**−8.294***	**−8.727***
	(3.416)	(3.451)
10,000–19,999	**−10.29***	**−10.18***
	(4.560)	(4.758)
≥20,000	−8.721	−9.723
	(5.600)	(6.283)
Belgian border	**2.896***	**5.622***
	(1.244)	(2.534)
Co-national candidate	−0.439	−0.00115
	(3.352)	(3.375)
Municipal majority (ref. left)		
Centre	2.429	4.531
	(4.420)	(4.417)
Right	0.235	−0.388
	(3.192)	(3.423)
Diverse/NA	**−5.204****	**−3.977****
	(1.303)	(1.294)
Le Pen vote share, 2017	**0.199***	0.150
	(0.0990)	(0.0932)
Constant	32.51**	35.30**
	(8.930)	(9.279)
Observations	234	234

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses; ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$.

The results provide support for H1 which expects nationality to impact participation. We see strong nationality effects on registration; all else being equal, Belgians have the highest registration rates and Polish have the lowest. Moreover, the variation in predicted registration rate by nationality is quite large, with a 33-point difference between the Belgians and Polish. Figure 1 displays the predicted registration rate for each nationality when all other covariates are at their means. It is also interesting to note that the geographic grouping observed in Table 1 largely holds, except for the Dutch, when controlling for other sociocultural factors.

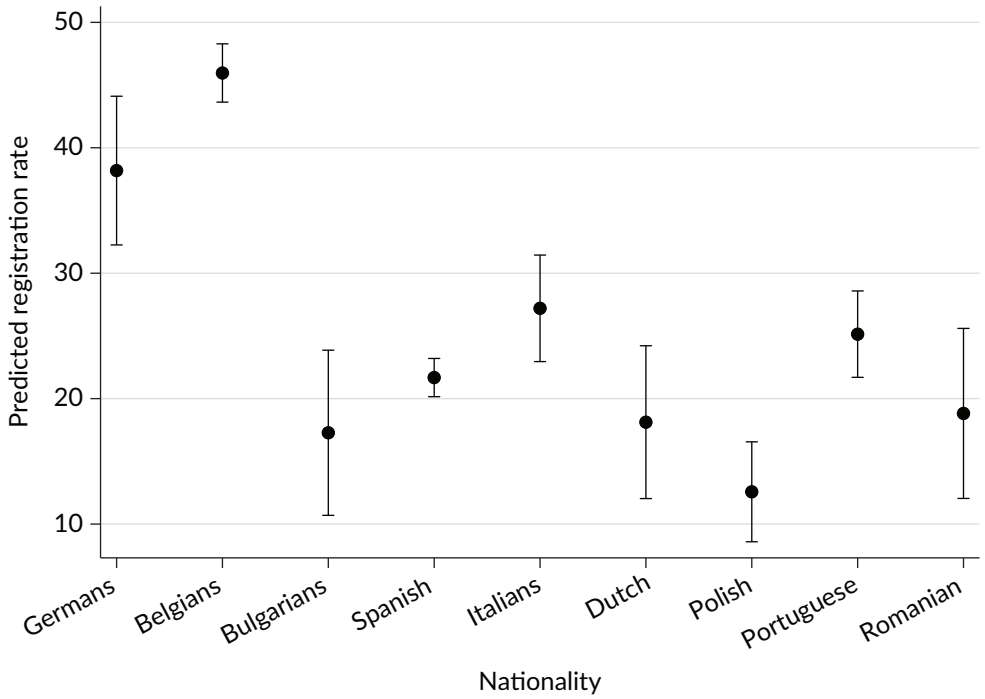

Figure 1. Predicted registration rate of NNEUCs in France by nationality with 95% confidence intervals.

As regards our exposure-related hypotheses, the coefficient on the length of residence variable is positive and significant, indicating that the higher the percentage of NNEUCs having resided for more than 20 years in France, the higher the registration rate for that nationality group in a given commune. As there are no automatic deregistration procedures, it is logical that the registration rate increases with the length of residence in France. For the political contextual factors, there is more limited evidence that they impact registration rates, possibly due to the cumulative nature of registration rates. There is no statistical difference between municipalities governed by centre, right, or left parties. Although there is lower registration when the municipal majority is non-classified, it is difficult to draw meaningful conclusions because this category is used for a wide range of candidate lists. Also, the presence of co-national candidate(s) and participation rates have no observable relationship to registration rates. The failure to observe an effect related to the presence of a co-national candidate may be linked to the fact that the increase in registration caused by the presence of a co-national candidate represents very few individuals compared to those who have already registered on the electoral lists prior to this election. Finally, the Le Pen vote share in 2017 is positive and significant in Model 1 but not Model 2, suggesting that the relationship is not robust to the specification of the border variable.

We find support for our third hypothesis concerning the variables for age and education which both have positive, significant coefficients. As the proportion of the population who is aged 60+ or has obtained at least two years of post-secondary education increases, the registration rate also increases. This is consistent with the current understanding of the determinants of electoral participation. In terms of our third hypothesis on contextual factors, we find mixed results. We find that as the size of the commune increases, the expected NNEUC registration rate decreases up to a point, falling from 38.1 for communes under 7,500 to 27.9 for communes between 10,000 and 20,000 inhabitants. However, the expected registration rate increases to 29.4% in communes larger than 20,000, though the relatively few communes of this size make the estimation less reliable.

As for transfer-related variables, the most surprising finding is perhaps the negative association between national group density and registration rate. That said, the presence of a national-group association is strongly associated with higher registration rates, suggesting that community-based socialisation is still important. Besides, registration rates are positively impacted in communes bordering Belgium and the magnitude of the predicted relationship increases when only considering the impact on Belgian nationality—perhaps because the compulsory nature of voting on the other side of the border has helped develop a habit of voting in communities who live on either side of the frontier. Other traditional determinants of political participation do not have an observable relationship with electoral registration. The proportion of women and the share of the working class among the population do not significantly affect registration rates in this model, as we had already noticed for the national level.

4.2. Explaining the Vote Versus Abstention of NNEUCs

Table 4 reports the results of analyses on determinants of voting. Models 3 and 5 include a variable for the density of the nationality group whereas Models 4 and 6 exclude this variable. Additionally, we employ two specifications of the border variable; in Models 3 and 4, we consider the border residence for all individuals regardless of nationality whereas in Models 5 and 6 we only consider border residence for Belgians. Strong nationality effects remain, providing further evidence in support of our first hypothesis. Interestingly, we do not observe the same hierarchy of participation in voting as we do in registration. While Belgians were the highest-registered national group, their probability of voting was the lowest. Conversely, the Dutch, whose expected predicted registration rate in the Nord was rather low, have a relatively higher rate of participation. Figure 2 shows the probability of voting by nationality and demonstrates that the geographical groupings observed in the results reported in Tables 1 and 3 largely do not hold. This suggests a different logic of voting versus registration, but we should also consider the potential role that the higher registration rate of Belgians may play. Because the Belgian registration rate is so high (46.2%), it may include voters who are not very politicised and, as a consequence, vote less. Conversely, it is possible that the small proportion of Bulgarians on the electoral lists (5.1%) form a particularly politicised segment who, once registered, vote widely.

Table 4. Regression models: Analysis of voting among registered European voters from nine principal nationalities.

	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Age (years)	**0.101**** (0.00349)	**0.0811**** (0.00378)	**0.100**** (0.00341)	**0.0810**** (0.00388)
Age squared	**−0.000903**** (3.80×10^{-5})	**−0.000735**** (6.00×10^{-5})	**−0.000900**** (3.84×10^{-5})	**−0.000734**** (6.09×10^{-5})
Gender	−0.109 (0.0735)	−0.0864 (0.0807)	−0.107 (0.0726)	−0.0861 (0.0801)
Born in France	−0.0346 (0.148)	0.0647 (0.104)	−0.0347 (0.149)	0.0641 (0.104)
Nationality (ref. Belgians)				
Germans	**0.704**** (0.0969)	**0.719**** (0.0394)	**0.673**** (0.0756)	**0.709**** (0.0289)
Bulgarians	**0.535**** (0.0686)	**0.180**** (0.0599)	**0.495**** (0.0507)	**0.169**** (0.0549)
Spanish	**0.210**** (0.0618)	**0.155**** (0.0266)	**0.169**** (0.0438)	**0.143**** (0.0226)
Italians	**0.450**** (0.0482)	**0.431**** (0.0423)	**0.399**** (0.0432)	**0.419**** (0.0452)
Dutch	**0.203**** (0.0685)	**0.261**** (0.0333)	**0.168**** (0.0480)	**0.251**** (0.0233)
Polish	**0.344**** (0.0233)	**0.248**** (0.0126)	**0.300**** (0.0200)	**0.238**** (0.0130)
Portuguese	0.0850 (0.0550)	**0.110*** (0.0468)	0.0234 (0.0447)	**0.0977*** (0.0490)
Romanian	**−0.100**** (0.0267)	**0.0922*** (0.0408)	**−0.149**** (0.0411)	**0.0810*** (0.0411)
National-group association	−0.185 (0.233)	−0.152 (0.190)	−0.174 (0.234)	−0.150 (0.195)
Density of nationality	0.0286 (0.0228)	—	0.0588 (0.0402)	—
Commune size, regrouped (ref. <1,000)				
1,000–4,999	—	−0.184 (0.161)	—	−0.184 (0.160)
5,000–9,999	—	−0.303+ (0.176)	—	−0.306+ (0.176)
10,000–19,999	**0.173*** (0.0740)	−0.0878 (0.128)	**0.178*** (0.0715)	−0.0885 (0.126)
20,000–49,999	0.0925 (0.134)	−0.159 (0.115)	0.0900 (0.129)	−0.163 (0.122)
≥50,000	**−0.502*** (0.205)	**−0.719**** (0.220)	**−0.495**** (0.192)	**−0.725**** (0.223)
Border commune	0.00896 (0.0712)	−0.0125 (0.0321)	−0.156+ (0.0800)	−0.0320 (0.0211)
Co-national candidate	**0.318**** (0.0605)	**0.356**** (0.0458)	**0.302**** (0.0669)	**0.358**** (0.0456)

Table 4. (Cont.) Regression models: Analysis of voting among registered European voters from nine principal nationalities.

	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Participation rate	**0.0369****	**0.0362****	**0.0356****	**0.0362****
	(0.00753)	(0.00166)	(0.00615)	(0.00159)
Municipal majority (ref. left)				
Centre	0.533	0.318	0.501	0.318
	(0.662)	(0.305)	(0.624)	(0.300)
Right	**−0.123***	**−0.114****	−0.114+	**−0.114****
	(0.0612)	(0.0382)	(0.0581)	(0.0398)
Diverse/NA	0.241+	−0.0992	0.221	−0.0980
	(0.129)	(0.135)	(0.151)	(0.134)
Le Pen vote share, 2017	**−0.0231****	**−0.0128****	**−0.0219****	**−0.0128****
	(0.00516)	(0.00352)	(0.00458)	(0.00334)
Constant	−4.002**	−3.504**	−3.939**	−3.493**
	(0.248)	(0.170)	(0.231)	(0.174)
Observations	6,268	9,827	6,268	9,827

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses; ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, + $p < 0.1$.

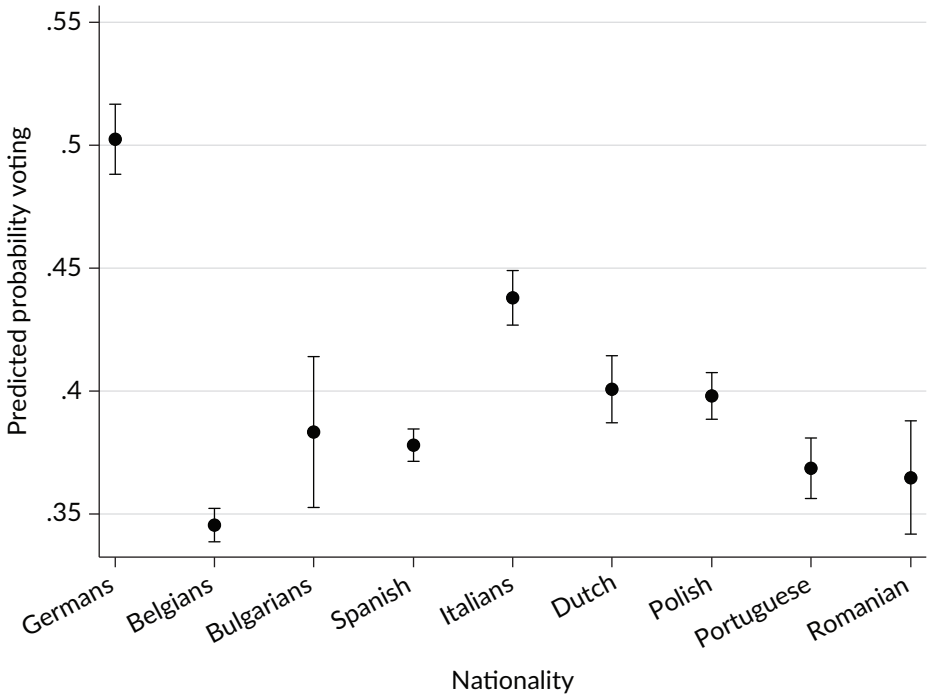

Figure 2. Probability of voting by nationality (based on Model 1, $N = 6,268$) with 95% confidence intervals.

When considering our second group of hypotheses pertaining to exposure factors, we find mixed results. Political factors perform better when predicting voting than registration. This is not surprising considering that voting occurs at a specific moment in time whereas registration may have occurred at any time. We observe that vote share for the extreme right and right-led local governments are both associated with a lower probability of voting. In other words, when right-wing politics are more prevalent, NNEUCs vote less.

One reason for this may be that left-led communes engage more in "get out the vote campaigns" including foreign voters. We also see a strong effect associated with the presence of co-national candidate(s); NNEUCs are more likely to vote when a compatriot is on the ballot. This provides further evidence for the importance of exposure factors.

Turning to our third block of hypotheses, unlike in the analysis of registration, neither national group associations nor population density have a statistically significant relationship with voting. Similarly, living in a border commune does not seem to have an effect on voting, even for Belgians. We do not have information on education at an individual level, so we are not able to test its impact on voting. However, we do find that significant relationship between age and voting. The probability of voting increases with age up until the age of about 56 after which it begins to decline. Naturally, the overall participation rate is positively associated with the probability of voting, suggesting that the factors that influence French nationals to vote or abstain also influence NNEUCs.

5. Conclusion

This article has considered what are sometimes presented as competing explanations of migrants' political socialisation in their host country to examine how this has translated into their actual electoral participation. Above all, the prevalence of nationality as a major explanatory factor of their differentiated participation undeniably points to the importance of resistance patterns among NNEUCs who tend to reproduce abroad their home practices. It confirms that it is still largely far-fetched to consider EU mobile citizens as a homogenous whole of "pioneers of European integration" (Recchi & Favell, 2009), but calls for a more fine-grained analysis to grasp their differentiated approaches to participation. Registration of NNEUCs—which may happen over a long period and is thus unsurprisingly less sensitive to contextual aspects—is further marked by a clear transfer of previously acquired civic skills. NNEUCs heavily rely in France on their imported personal resources, be they national-based (associations, density, proximity border) or more socio-economic (education and age). Voting, by contrast, is sensitive to contextual elements and implies that some local practices do matter in explaining migrant's participation. Hence, the participation trends, the political orientation of the commune, and the presence of co-national candidates that did not affect registration do impact voting. All in all, our results show that, when explaining migrant's political participation, various socialisation rationales (transfer, exposure, resistance) are not mutually exclusive but respond to different circumstances. The two-step participation process in use in many countries (where voters first have to register and then go to the polls) essentially means that different logics may prevail.

Empirically, our study brings to the forefront participation behaviours. To the best of our knowledge, few research pieces have ever had access to data on actual voting behaviours, most focusing either on recall questions or attitudes. Thus, gaining access to electoral rolls has provided invaluable insights. Our future research will compare the Nord with six other departments where similar data was collected. Including data for other departments will offer several advantages. First, it will allow us to further examine certain variables. In particular, proximity to the border could be tested for other nationalities (Germans, Italians, Spaniards). Second, it will make the results more robust thanks to a larger number of cases processed. But above all, a larger number of cases will enable us to consider how national origin may moderate the effects of other variables or be moderated by them. By considering not only civic culture but also the migration paths and

social configurations of residence in France of different European citizens, we can deepen our understanding of how European migrants participate in political life in their host countries.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to our colleague François Briatte and to the ESPOL students who helped us to collect the data in the six subprefectures, as well as to those who later recoded the data. This research would not have been possible without their contribution.

Funding

This research was made possible thanks to the funding of the Labex-SMS of the Toulouse Federal University (CNRS, Funding Convention No. 10_2019_REPERE_UFTMIP_CNRS_SMS_OP2_POP6). It is part of the REPERE (Recherche Empirique sur la Participation Electorale des Ressortissants Européens) research programme.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Politics and Governance
2024 • Volume 12 • Article 7546
https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.7546

ARTICLE

Open Access Journal

Building Party Support Abroad: Turkish Diaspora Organisations in Germany and the UK

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Submitted: 20 August 2023 **Accepted:** 15 December 2023 **Published:** 13 March 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue "The Political Representation and Participation of Migrants" edited by Sergiu Gherghina (University of Glasgow) and Sorina Soare (University of Florence), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i354

Abstract

This article covers a unique form of political mobilisation within the Turkey-originated diasporic community in Europe that formed after Turkey introduced external voting in 2012. Although existing literature has paid attention to the impact of homeland political parties on external voting rights and diaspora organisations' role in electoral campaigns, these organisations' impact on members' mobilisation capacities for certain homeland parties remains understudied. This article tackles this topic by first comparing Turkey-originated diaspora organisations in Germany and the UK. Secondly, it guides future empirical work on the impact of the diaspora organisations on remote partisans' political orientation by taking the dominant emigrant profile in a residence country dimension into the study of external voting. Focusing on eligible Turkish citizens, the findings of this article are based on participant observation and 60 in-depth interviews conducted with remote voters who participated in the mobilisation of Turkey-based political parties in Germany between 2018 and 2023 and in the UK between 2021 and 2023 through diaspora organisations.

Keywords

diaspora organisations; external voting; Germany; non-resident citizens; UK; Turkey

1. Introduction

In the first week following the Turkish presidential and parliamentary elections on May 14th, 2023, German media was mainly occupied with one question (see, among others, Lisovenko, 2023; Maier, 2023): Why did Turkish citizens residing in Germany, who participated in the Turkish elections, predominantly support the right-wing, pro-Islamist Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi [AKP]) and its

presidential candidate, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan? In the subsequent weeks of the same election, the German media's interest shifted to another query (see, among others, Schwanitz, 2023; Siggelkow, 2023): Why did some other countries with a substantial Turkish citizenry, like the UK, not show similar favour towards AKP and its presidential candidate? This question is not only pertinent to the recent 2023 election but has also been significant since the 2014 election, underpinning the primary question this article seeks to address: What is the relationship between diaspora organisations and the political orientation of non-resident Turkish citizens eligible to vote from abroad?

In parallel to the growing number of countries that allow their non-resident citizens to vote in the general elections of the origin country, over the past two decades, there has been an exponential increase in studies that examine the electoral rights of citizens living abroad. The legitimacy of external voting has been one well-studied aspect (Bauböck, 2009; Beckman, 2008; Collyer & Vathi, 2007; Ellis et al., 2007; Escobar, 2007; Smith, 2008). Yet many recent studies have also started to investigate the impact of non-resident voter turnout on national politics (Burean & Popp, 2015; Gamlen, 2018), political inclusion of the diasporic population based on having granted or withheld voting rights (Finn & Ramaciotti, 2024; Palop-García & Pedroza, 2017; Wellman, 2021), the sending country's institutional performance regarding electoral turnout in residence countries (Adamson, 2018; Burgess, 2018, 2020; Finn & Besserer Rayas, 2022; Østergaard-Nielsen & Ciornei, 2019), political parties' interest in emigrants' associations (Fliess, 2021; Paarlberg, 2023), political parties' reach abroad (Gherghina & Soare, 2020; Kernalegenn & van Haute, 2023; Rashkova, 2020; Umpierrez de Reguero & Dandoy, 2023), and relationship between the migrant voter turnout and integration in the host society (Gherghina & Basarabă, 2024). However, there are still significant theoretical, conceptual, and empirical gaps in the external voting literature (as also reviewed in Umpierrez de Reguero et al., 2023).

Previous studies have largely overlooked the role and mobilisation capacity of diaspora organisations in influencing the political attitudes and behaviours of non-resident voters. The article shows that diaspora groups can influence Turkish voters living abroad, but the extent of their impact on which parties people choose to vote for depends on the most dominant diaspora profile from the same country of origin in that foreign country. Dominant emigrant profile varies in each residence country in terms of their emigration background including ethnicity, denomination, and differences in political and socio-cultural orientations. We argue that the activities and mobilisation capacities of these organisations, along with the dominant emigrant profile, are key factors in explaining the variation in voter preferences across different residence countries. By doing so, the article sheds light on the nexus between diaspora organisations in terms of their proximity to or affiliation with Turkey-based parties and their political/ideological stance within the current polarised political atmosphere in Turkey and the similarities in their support levels, despite differences in voter profile. We conducted a comparative study of Turkish citizens who have voted from Germany and the UK, where we observed contrasting patterns of support for the Turkish ruling party and opposition parties, to better understand the role of diaspora organisations on external voters.

Turkey's political presence outside the country is a topic that has captured many scholars' attention for decades, whereas the overseas presence of Turkey-based political parties has only recently been studied. This new interest mostly relates to the implementation of external voting in Turkey in 2012. Still, less is known about to what extent diaspora organisations can influence the political orientation of non-resident voters. Limited studies on the topic have for the most part explored how Turkey-based parties have been

structured extraterritorially (Yener-Roderburg, 2020, 2022, in press), diaspora politics of Turkey-based parties/Turkish state (Aksel, 2019; Arkilic, 2022; Çobankara, 2023), and single elections, focusing on relatively narrow dimensions of diaspora electoral behaviour or Turkey's role in diaspora mobilisation (Abadan-Unat et al., 2014; Akgönül, 2017; Arkilic 2021; Şahin Mencütek & Akyol Yılmaz, 2016; Şahin-Mencütek & Erdoğan, 2016; Sevi et al., 2019). This article aims to contribute to the literature on external voting by developing an exploratory analysis of two residence countries, Germany and the UK, in which Turkish citizens have largely voted for ideologically different parties over the course of the four consecutive parliamentary elections of Turkey.

The Turkish citizens residing in Germany who turned out to vote have been known for their generous support for the AKP and Erdoğan, whereas the ones in the UK overwhelmingly support the opposition parties, the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party/Green-Left Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi [HDP]/Yeşil Sol Parti [YSP]) and the centre-left Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi [CHP]; see Figure 1). These political orientations of the Turkish citizens in each residence country have even been entrenched from 2015 to 2023.

Using a comparative approach, this article builds on the findings of fieldwork conducted in Germany and the UK. These countries represent interesting settings hosting Turkey-originating diasporas with a strong political tendency towards certain political parties. This helps us explore the activities and impact of Turkey-based parties via diaspora organisations. Germany mostly attracted unskilled immigrants under the name of guest workers who represented the Turkish society at large, whereas emigration to the UK consisted mostly of refugees and asylum seekers who were predominantly Alevis and Kurds (Sirkeci et al., 2015; Umpierrez de Reguero et al., 2021). The qualitative analysis includes semi-structured interviews, participant observations (e.g., elections, partisan gatherings, cultural events), and informal conversations. We recruited 35 Turkish citizens in Germany and 25 in the UK using purposive sampling. The participants were affiliated with different diaspora organisations and Turkey-based political parties and were involved in the electoral mobilisation of these political parties throughout the Turkish parliamentary electoral periods of

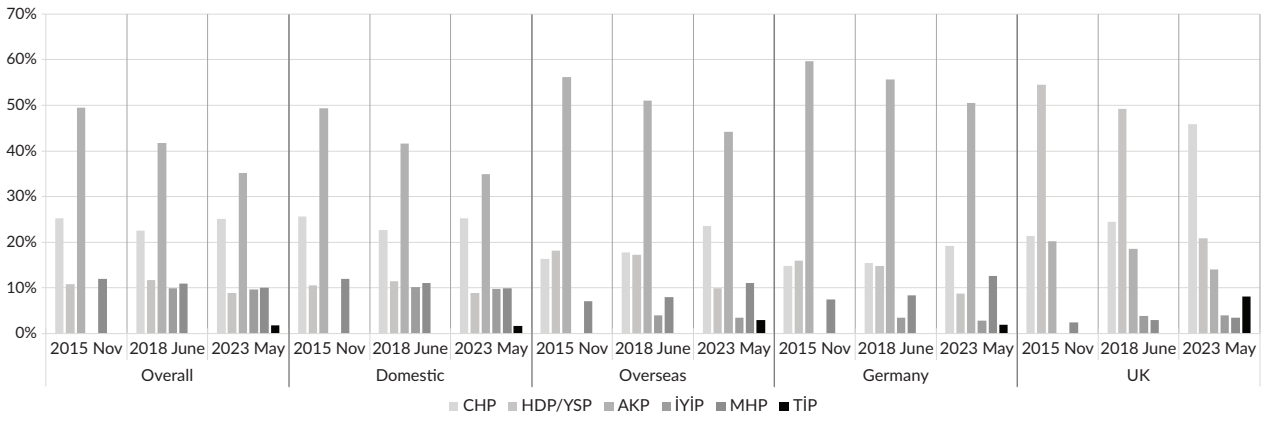

Figure 1. Results of the vote share for CHP, HDP/YSP, AKP, Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi [MHP]), Good Party (İyi Parti [İYİP]), and Workers' Party of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi Partisi [TİP]) in the November 2015, June 2018, and May 2023 elections, categorised according to overall, domestic, overseas, Germany, and UK results. Note: The Good Party was founded in 2017, and, as such, is not included in the graph for the November 2015 elections. Source: Authors' work based on data from the Supreme Election Council (2023).

2018 and 2023 in Germany, primarily in Hesse and North Rhine-Westphalia states, and in the UK, mainly in London and Manchester. We used narrative analysis to examine the data, focusing on how the participants constructed their identities, values, and loyalties through their stories. We also analysed the role of diaspora organisations in shaping the participants' political orientations and mobilisation. We approached potential participants at the different polling stations in Germany and the UK, as well as by visiting various cultural, religious, and political associations established by Turkey-originating people. In order to ensure the respondents' safety, for both country cases, the names and places of residence of the respondents are withheld.

In approaching this issue, this article first conceptualises diaspora organisations and their function in electoral mobilisation, highlighting the main theoretical and empirical gaps that our study aims to fill. Secondly, it provides a background on Turkey and non-resident voting, describing the historical, legal, and institutional context of Turkish emigration and external voting. Then the article presents our empirical findings on the role of diaspora organisations in building remote supporters in Germany and the UK, analysing the differences and similarities between the two countries. The final section concludes by summarising the main arguments and implications of our study, as well as by underscoring certain possible consequences of these findings for the wider body of literature.

2. Diaspora Organisations and Their Electoral Mobilisation

There are multiple ways to locate diaspora transnationalism. Finding or creating a plausible typology with which to categorise transnational migrants, as well as the degrees of mobility relating to transnational practice and orientation, is becoming a problematic task, especially because of transnationalism's lack of conceptual clarity (Lafleur, 2013, p. 3). Over the last couple of decades, a vast amount of scholarship has paid attention to the perspective of transnational social networks in relation to migration studies (see, among others, Kearney, 1986; Portes, 1998; Ryan, 2023; Ryan & Dahinden, 2021; Vertovec & Cohen, 1999). Migration is a highly complex process, so it is hard to create suitable typologies and categorisations that could come close to fitting all empirical cases. Tilly (1990) writes that "networks migrate; categories stay put; and networks create new categories" and adds that "the effective units of migration were (and are) neither individuals nor households but sets of people linked by an acquaintance, kinship, and work experience" (p. 84) who could be diaspora members and not necessarily immigrants. Therefore, since diaspora networks, *organisations* "provide the channels for the migration process itself" (Vertovec, 2009, p. 38), investigating the diaspora organisations in-depth is the necessary unit of analysis in this article. We acknowledge the reciprocal transformative influence between diaspora organisations and their members. Therefore, this study contends that diaspora organisations should not be perceived as autonomous entities separate from their members. Thus, it is a mistake to assume a unilateral relationship between them. Although these organisations have considerable influence on both the political preferences in elections and the mobilisation process, as this article demonstrates, the possibility that the members they mobilise within their own organisational structures may have different political preferences cannot be ruled out. Here, it may be meaningful to make a categorical distinction between these organisations, communities and involved individuals, to avoid reducing them to each other.

Several determinants make each diaspora group and their organisations unique. Two of the primary factors that have received scholarly attention are, first, the type of migration wave that each origin country causes and

how the residence country perceives these waves, and second, the impact of previous migration patterns and the networks that they created, which grow with continuing immigrant inflow from the same origin country. Besides these two factors, which determine forms of establishing an organisation and generate networks in transnational social spaces, other determinants interrupt the gradual evolution of the organisational structure of the migrant settings in the residence countries, altering or regenerating these settings in a relatively short amount of time. External voting is one of those critical determinants. A law provision that enables non-resident citizens to vote for the origin country from abroad (i.e., external voting) can interrupt the evolution of the transnational social spaces in diaspora mobilisation patterns and bring new dimensions into it and into diaspora organisations. In these spaces, the diasporic communities create or reshape their own political space. This space does not necessarily emerge as self-induced but can also be formed by external factors, including the origin country and diaspora communities in other residence countries, as linked to political transnationalism.

Political transnationalism established itself in studies in the early 2000s and, by and large, scholars agree on the definition of the concept, which focuses on the diaspora members' political connections and practices in relation to an origin country (Faist, 2004; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2001). These connections and methods include voting from abroad, being a remote partisan for a homeland political party, and protesting, lobbying, and participating in overseas rallies of origin-country political parties. However, as briefly mentioned, there are also cases showing that origin-country political bodies such as parties sometimes make the connection by establishing either party branches or satellite diaspora organisations to serve their purposes (Faist & Özveren, 2004; Yener-Roderburg, 2020).

We contribute to debates around relationalities between non-resident citizens' voting incentives and political transnationalisation through diaspora organisations during origin-country elections by highlighting the importance of political mobilisation. It is a known phenomenon that, as compared to resident citizens, non-resident citizens are less willing to go to the ballot box (Itzigsohn & Villacrés, 2008). This is because, although being eligible to cast a vote is a prerequisite for voting, it is not the most significant determinant. Further studies show that it is the interactions with electoral mobilisers that are essential in determining electoral participation (Bernstein & Packard, 1997). Research by Bernstein and Packard (1997) and Rosenstone and Hansen (2003) underlines the importance of social networks in generating interpersonal interactions that mobilise voters with a direct impact on political participation, by stressing less effort at mobilisation as the primary cause of the decline in election turnout in the US between the 1960s and 1980s (Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003). And, as a causal effect, "citizens who are contacted by political parties, exposed to intensely fought electoral campaigns, or inspired by the actions of social movements are more likely to vote, to persuade, to campaign, and to give" (Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003, pp. 209–210).

Rolfe (2012) claims that "virtually all turnout is mobilized, either directly or indirectly, by campaigns and related activity" (p. 15). Thus, in the transnational context, the absence of homeland parties and political elites (such as candidates, organisations, activists, and the media) would affect "the salience of the election" (Rolfe, 2012, p. 15). Freedman's (2000) work on the Chinese immigrant community in the US also evidences that, "when there are electoral incentives for political elites to mobilize the [Chinese] community, then Chinese do participate in greater number than when there are weaker electoral concerns at stake" (p. 193). However, a unique situation occurs when the elections occur extraterritorially, where the homeland political parties by and large face similar difficulties in reaching nationals, so the mobilisation phenomenon becomes significantly more important. In the transnational context, implementing external voting is linked to several

operational procedures and external voting methods that are primarily impractical (e.g., requiring geographical proximity), which increases the importance of mobilising non-resident voters to participate in elections and other voting events. Here the diaspora organisations step in and become more relevant in understanding why support levels differ among the diaspora organisations and countries, while other aspects are mirrored. Although the Turkish extraterritorial voter turnout rate is considerably lower than mainland Turkey, it is still high in comparison to other countries' extraterritorial voter turnout rates (Jakobson et al., 2023). Furthermore, the turnout rate is increasing with each election, which suggests increased engagement with homeland politics and highlights the relevance of the case of Turkey, particularly considering the absence of parliament seats dedicated to extraterritorial constituency, meaning direct representation.

3. Turkey and Non-Resident Voting: Background

Unlike the symbolic external voting rights granted under Turgut Özal's rule in the late 1980s, since 2012 Turkey has adopted provisions that reflect the increasingly influential role of non-resident voters as political actors in domestic and diaspora politics (Yener-Roderburg, 2020). Together with the most recent presidential and parliamentary elections of May 2023, non-resident Turkish citizens have cast votes in at least one constitutional referendum and eight elections (four presidential and four parliamentary). The proportion of Turkish non-resident voters participating in elections has steadily risen, from 18.9% in 2014 to 56.3% during the presidential runoff election in 2023 (see Table 1). The substantial turnout of Turkish citizens using overseas ballot boxes since the 2015 parliamentary election has demonstrated the potential for external votes to influence the electoral landscape when they are distributed across the national electoral districts. Consequently, the distribution of non-resident votes has led to changes in the allocation of parliamentary seats; however, the non-resident vote did not have a game-changer impact on presidential elections since it was insufficient to close the gap between two candidates running for the second round. All considered, despite the fruitfulness of the field, existing studies on Turkey's external voting experience are scarce. This situation calls for underlining the legislative and provisional changes to the political party system and representation system to grasp the non-resident voting phenomenon in Turkey.

Table 1. Turnout rates in the Turkish elections for all non-resident and border-crossing voters (2014–2023).

Elections	Total number of registered external voters	Total number of cast votes	Voter turnout (%)	
			Border crossings	External overall
August 2014 presidential	2,798,726	530,116	10.0	**18.9**
June 2015 general	2,899,072	1,056,078	4.3	**35.4**
November 2015 general	2,899,069	1,298,325	4.8	**43.5**
April 2017 referendum	2,972,676	1,424,279	3.3	**47.9**
June 2018 general and presidential	3,047,323	1,525,279	5.5	**50.2**
May 2023 parliamentary and presidential	3,423,759	1,841,846	4.3	**53.8**
May 2023 presidential (run-off)	3,426,218	1,930,226	4.3	**56.3**

Source: Authors' work based on data from the Supreme Election Council (2023).

The political system in Turkey has undergone several recent changes. These include the extensive constitutional amendments in 2017 and the supposed transition from a parliamentary to a presidential system of government. However, presidentialism *alla Turca* has nothing in common with a presidential system, as both powers can shorten each other's terms of office/legislatures. With the separation of parliamentary and presidential elections, the competitive logic of the parties among themselves also changed (Tokatlı, 2020). The presidential candidate has a great interest in a parliamentary majority, which is why larger parties try to attract many smaller parties to their alliances. This applies to both parliamentary and presidential elections, where the aim is to win 50% plus one vote. The new election law introduced in 2018 brought about the possibility of electoral alliances. Here, parties could come together before the election and form an alliance, but still act largely independently in the elections; on one hand, it helped pass the parliamentary threshold (lowered from 10% to 7% in April 2022; see Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, 2022) but on the other hand, it promised further support to the presidential candidate when elected. During the 2018 elections, the total votes of the alliance determined the number of alliance seats in parliament, but in the last election held in 2023, the law was tightened and has become more attractive for smaller parties within alliances to run under the name of the larger party in the same list (Yener-Roderburg, in press).

In the realm of external voting, neither the party system nor electoral alliance may make any difference, as compared to in-country voters. Nevertheless, the representation issue is more complicated when it comes to non-resident citizens (see, among others, Hutcheson & Arrighi, 2015; Lisi et al., 2015). Unlike countries where external voters have special representation that secures seats in the legislature like France, Ecuador, and Italy, Turkey represents its external voters in the electoral system by *assimilated representation into the in-country voting total* (Yener-Roderburg, 2022). This means that the votes of non-resident citizens are distributed among existing national districts proportionate to the districts' population and the political party's voting rate within the total external votes. After the ballots are allocated, the electoral rules in the national territory will apply to the results. In this way, voters abroad cannot vote for independent candidates from a particular district. As a result of this vote-allocation method, which is still in force, smaller particularly opposition groups or individuals who might be regionally stronger are further disadvantaged; therefore, non-resident voters are limited in their voting decisions, and they turn towards political parties with higher vote potential.

4. Diaspora Organisations and Building Remote Supporters in Germany and the UK

This article builds on the findings based on fieldwork conducted in Germany and the UK. As noted, these countries offer an ideal context in which to examine and begin to understand why support for some Turkish political parties is stronger in certain countries and how the relation between the support level of diaspora organisations relates to the parties' country-specific success. Germany is by far the most popular residence country for Turkish citizens abroad and Turkey-originating diasporas, with the UK as the eighth (see Figure 2). Amidst the surge in Turkish migration to Germany since the early 1960s, driven by economic and political factors, the country maintains its status as the favoured destination for Turkish nationals seeking to emigrate, nurturing diverse diasporic communities from Turkey across various migration waves. Similarly, despite the smaller size of the Turkish-speaking minority in the UK, it is also characterised by heterogeneity, including Turks, Kurds, Alevis, and Sunnis from different parts and regions of Turkey, as well as Cypriot and Balkan Turks (King et al., 2008; Sirkeci et al., 2016). Moreover, even with recent waves of skilled immigrants from Turkey to Germany, the overall number still leans heavily towards the immigrants—previously defined within the category of guest workers—who continue to constitute a significant portion of the Turkish society present in

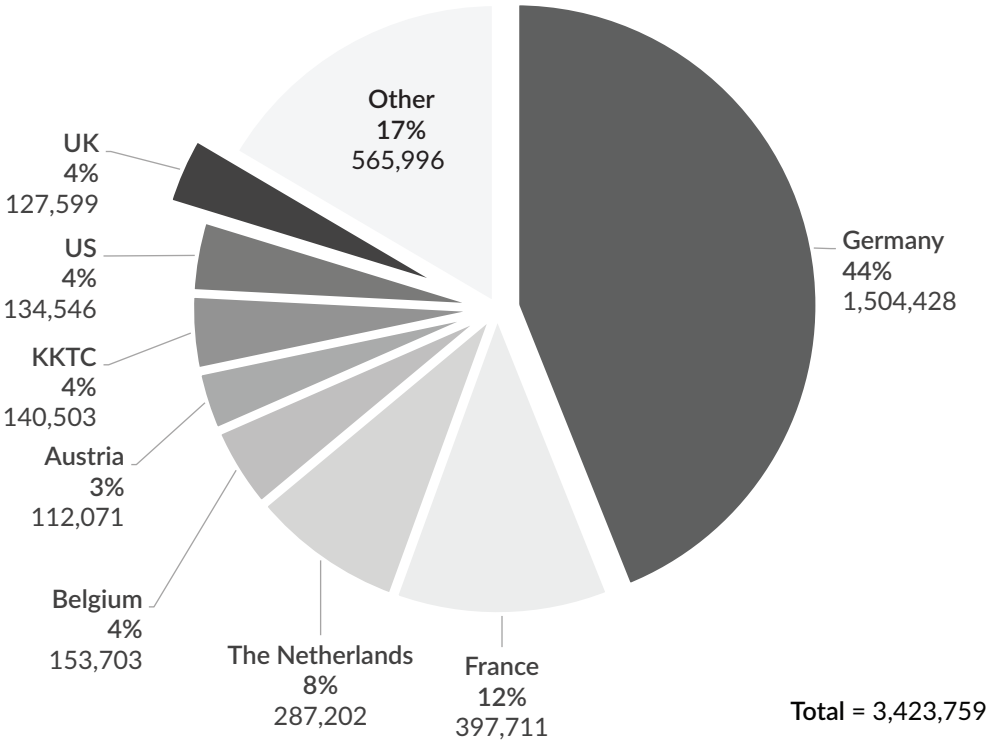

Figure 2. Percentage share of registered non-resident Turkish voters in the 2023 Turkish presidential and parliament elections per country. Source: Authors' work based on data from the Supreme Election Council (2023).

the country. Emigration to the UK from Turkey dates to the 1980s and consists of mostly political refugees and asylum seekers, mostly Alevis and Kurds. This situation made the UK a residence country for (proportionately) the largest Turkish diaspora population abroad that supports opposition parties. Additionally, these countries offer democratically freer circumstances than Turkey that allow the activities of not only the governing parties of Turkey, which have the chance of using the government sources to a greater extent in and outside of Turkey, but also new political parties, such as HDP/YSP, which has encountered many burdens in Turkey, including the risk of closure (HDP Europe, 2023) and imprisoned MPs and partisans(European Parliament, 2021).

Despite the political orientation differences of the Turkey-originating migrant profile in Germany and the UK, the ways in which non-resident Turkish citizens were mobilised as well as motivated to vote in the Turkish elections through diaspora organisations for certain political parties were highly similar. Some of the mobilising strategies of the parties arose both from conventional channels and also from non-traditional forms of campaigning, such as canvassing and enrolling voters in the non-resident electoral register, organising public rallies, and coordinating shuttle buses to transport individuals to polling stations. Thus, it would be easier to narrow down our research focus on the organisations rather than comparing these residence countries or their relation to their domestic diasporas. Against this backdrop and given the limited space, this article does not reveal every voting motivation stirred by non-resident voters through diaspora organisations. Rather, we show the ways in which the diaspora organisations influence their members' motivation to vote and their vote choice.

The overlapping motivations of various diaspora groups/individuals are hard to limit in relation to diaspora organisations. There are many organisations and, accordingly, there are many supporting actors with various

voting motivations at the institutional and individual levels. Thus, with no intention of dismissing the importance of the unmentioned diaspora organisations, for our purpose, the most prominent trans-local umbrella organisations and their members who also represent the greater part of the pro-AKP groupings in Germany and pro-HDP/YSP and pro-CHP groupings in the UK, and which obtained a political stance following the non-resident Turkish enfranchisement, will be scrutinised. These organisations are the Union of European Turkish Democrats (Avrupa Türk Demokratlar Birliği [UID], also known as UETD), the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği [DITIB]), and the Turkish Federation in Germany (Almanya Demokratik Ülkücü Türk Dernekleri [ADÜTDF]) in Germany, and the British Alevi Foundation (Britanya Alevi Federasyonu [BAF]), Kurdish Community Centres in Britain (Kürt Halk Meclisleri), and CHP Representation in the UK.

4.1. Germany

Since its victory in the 2002 election, the AKP, as the dominant party with exclusive access to state resources, has established a centralised organisational structure both locally and nationally, echoing the setup of other political parties in Turkey (Doğan, 2017). Examining the elections and referendum from 2015 to 2023 reveals the AKP's expansion of influence overseas, notably in Germany (Arkilic, 2022). This has been mostly via the UID. With President Erdoğan's sponsorship, the UID was established in Cologne, Germany, in 2004. Currently, the foundation has 54 branches across Western Europe, including 15 in Germany and one in the UK (UID, 2023). Since its foundation, the UID has mirrored AKP political stances and developed along AKP lines organisationally and politically during and also non-electoral periods (UID member, April 2018). Therefore, UID was also involved in the AKP's election campaign. The UID did not only organise and coordinate AKP rallies and cadre visits but also led the AKP's overseas election coordination which is also known as Local Election Coordination Centres (Seçim Koordinasyon Merkezleri). An UID member stated the following on his role in AKP mobilisation:

> We [UID members] are surely part of the election coordination. It is our job. I personally for example get some time off from my actual work to be able to coordinate my team [electoral coordination] during the elections to help people get to the polling stations. (UID member, May 2023)

DITIB also stands out as an important AKP mobilising agency in Germany. Despite it being known that DITIB has been the foremost instrumentalised foreign policy tool of the AKP since the party was established in 2001, DITIB is also known for its service to any government that ruled Turkey since 1984. However, seeing DITIB as a loyal supporter of AKP, the party that facilitated the expansion of the organisation's reach to 1,000 mosques in Germany (DITIB, 2023) and 17 in the UK, would only be valid so long as AKP-rule continues. Therefore, the current pro-AKP stance of the DITIB was not a secret (Carol & Hofheinz, 2022; Öcal, 2022). Furthermore, considering the number of DITIB mosques, coordinating mobilisation via these mosques not only made the activities more accessible but also extended the party's reach undeniably. One of the DITIB officers justified his AKP-favouring stance with the following:

> I am not able to say anything against what my state says. Thus, I should not have been expected to say anything against Turkey's President Erdoğan within my mosque, and I would forbid anyone from saying anything against him under my mosque's roof too. (DITIB imam, May 2023)

AKP-supporting organisations in Germany were not limited only to the mentioned openly pro-AKP formations. ADÜTDF, also known as the Grey Wolves, an ultra-nationalist group affiliated with the far-right MHP (Lemmen, 2000), have also shown indirect support for the AKP during Turkish elections. ADÜTDF today has approximately 170 local chapters and up to 20,000 supporters in Germany (Klein & Klauser, 2023; Topcu, 2020). Since 2018, MHP has been in the electoral coalition, People's Alliance (Cumhur İttifakı), and a partner of AKP. This situation instigated a whole new dynamic in the party sympathisers' approach to each other, as well as to the affiliated organisations' approach to one another. According to the electoral law, each ballot box must have a balloting committee consisting of five members: two government officers and representatives of the three most voted political parties according to the last election held (for the 2023 balloting committee, these were AKP, CHP, and MHP). The most recent Turkish elections of 2023 showed that MHP members show up at AKP rallies or take part in organisational tasks (Schmidt, 2023). It has also been observed that MHP sympathisers at the ballot boxes were filling AKP's representative's spot when the need arose. An interviewee stated:

> I am a nationalist. That is how I identify myself. I would never say that I am an AKP supporter. An electoral coalition is something. But no one can tell me that I support AKP. What I can safely say is that I am definitely not sympathising with other parties [outside of People's Alliance]. (ADÜTDF member, May 2023)

4.2. The UK

The most important difference between the Turkish-speaking diaspora in the UK, in contrast to mainland Europe, is the domination of left-wing homeland movements and parties. Among all these groups, the Kurdish community in the UK is comparatively far more engaged in political activity (Cakmak & Kalantzi, 2019). The first Kurdish Community Centre which was parallel to the emergence of the Kurdish political movement in the UK, established in London in 1985, is the best example of ardent and loyal supporters in the UK, which could mobilise a considerable number of voters from the Kurdish community in every prior election. In the run-up to the elections, it was decided to enter the elections under the mantle of YSP in case the pro-Kurdish HDP was closed following a potential Supreme Court ruling (Kucukgocmen, 2023). As a result, HDP/YSP representatives took part in the polls with more observers than any other party. It is possible to read this as a sign of perseverance of the Kurdish voters abroad, despite the marginalisation and criminalisation of their own party—Even if the name of the party changes, they embrace the new party which aligns with the Kurdish political movement. A Kurdish Community Centre member noted that:

> Yesterday it was HDP, today it is YSP, tomorrow it will be something else, nothing changes for us, we are here, there are as many observers as you see here, and there are also others waiting in reserve. We are ready, as always. (HDP/YSP observer, May 2023)

The Alevi population in the UK also has a significant presence within the diaspora community. BAF, established in 2013, has a considerable mobilisation capacity during the Turkish elections with its 17 cultural centres that claim to reach around 300,000 Alevis in the UK (British Alevi Federation, 2023). The voting orientation of Alevis, however, fluctuates with the current situation. Although, previously, Alevis were likely to vote for CHP, the inclusive and radical democratic political stance of the HDP in the 2015 as well as 2018 parliamentary elections attracted Alevi voters, especially Kurdish Alevis. However, in the 2023 election, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu,

the chairman of the CHP, became a candidate for the presidency and publicly declared that he was proud to be an Alevi in parallel to the press statement of the European Confederation of Alevi Associations (Avrupa Alevi Birlikleri Konfederasyonu) in which BAF is also a member of, calling on their members to support Kılıçdaroğlu at the ballot box (AABK, 2023), has also attracted Alevi voters in the UK towards CHP, increasing the party's vote share. One interviewee on this matter detailed her changing view of CHP: "I had resentments against the CHP in the past, but for this election, something different is being tried, Kılıçdaroğlu stood up for his identity. This is an important milestone. We need to support him and his party" (BAF member, May 2023).

This example illustrates that the diaspora community can exhibit different political tendencies according to the developments in origin-country politics and that the organisation is not the unilateral determinant in this, but rather comes to the fore through its mobilising capacity. This example also indicates situational support in terms of a shift in votes between different opposition parties, which might be considered as alternatives to each other. However, it can also be indicative in mobilisation processes and increasing turnout rates (the non-resident turnout rate in the UK raised from 42% in 2018 to 50% in the 2023 parliament elections and 53% in the second round of the 2023 presidential elections), as this is the case when Alevis show their support for CHP which became the leading party in the UK in the last election. Alevi communities do not demonstrate any unwavering support for a specific political party; instead, they are likely to favour the parties that they find close to them, dependent on time and circumstance. The intersectional compositions of Alevi identities in the UK (as demonstrated with, e.g., Kurdish Alevis) are also reflected in their voting behaviours where Alevis can individually vote for different parties, albeit predominantly in opposition.

In the last election, the most striking situation in the UK, especially among opposition voters, was the interest shown in the TİP. TİP's discourses and increasing visibility through the visits of its popular PM candidates to the UK attracted some of the voters who had voted for HDP/YSP and CHP in the past to turn towards TİP in the 2023 elections. CHP Representation in the UK was formed in 2013 and has spread in the major cities in the UK since then has sizable supporters which has turned the organisation into a well-functioning politically motivated diaspora organisation ("CHP İngiltere Birliği," 2013). However, some of the CHP representatives at the balloting committees stated that they voted for the TİP instead of the party they were representatives of. For example, one of the interviewees who is a member of CHP Representation in the UK stated: "We voted for Kılıçdaroğlu in the presidential election, so we feel comfortable about it. But this time I want a real change, so I voted for TİP [for the parliamentary election]" (CHP representative, May 2023).

Thus, this example shows that even if party organisations are effective on organisational issues such as mobilisation and taking part in elections, there may be different individual political preferences within the diaspora community. In other words, they do not have a direct influence on such preferences as organisations. TİP appears to be an alternative for other opposition parties HDP/YSP and CHP, while the mobilisation of voters still depends primarily on party organisations. It is striking to see that the party member still uses the pronoun "we" when he mentions his party organisation, CHP, while the pronoun turned into "I" when he underlines his changing preference for the parliamentary election. In this case, on the one hand, voting for Kılıçdaroğlu for the presidency and taking part in the organisational tasks during the election provided comfort for the CHP member and kept the party loyalty protected in a sense which can be compared with the MHP member in Germany case; on the other hand, this made it possible to support other alternative parties for the parliamentary election too.

5. Conclusion

Turkey-originating diaspora organisations in Germany and the UK show similarities in the ways in which their members display party loyalty towards different Turkey-originating parties, despite the political orientation differences. Both cases reveal the centrality of the diaspora profile at large in the residence country, which determines the origin-country party support levels, once non-resident citizens have external voting rights. These cases also demonstrate the ruling party's advantage, which includes but is not limited to making use of state resources for its own benefit.

By drawing out the consequent shift in the relation between the factions that stemmed from various migration waves to the residence countries, we move the discussion away from motivations for voting. However accurate they might be, it is the parties' out-of-country organisational structures, here being the Turkey-originating diaspora organisations in Germany and the UK, that form the key players in determining their members' political orientation in the countries where they are based. While our qualitative study faces limitations, organisations exemplified with AKP-affiliated UID and HDP/YSP-affiliated Kurdish political movement and community centres in Britain showed that their continuous support for these parties is ensured; BAF and pro-AKP DITIB indicated that unconditional continuity of such support cannot be guaranteed; AKP-favouring ADÜTDF and newly emerging support from members of the CHP Representation in the UK and HDP/YSP (other than their loyal supporters) for TİP presented support based on individual preferences depending on changing political actors and circumstances beyond the organisations' direct impact.

Given the scarce literature on the relationship between party mobilisation abroad and diaspora organisations' impact on members for certain origin-country parties, the Turkish case poses an important example since it broadens our understanding of the significance and existence of diaspora organisations' operations and role in remote mobilisation. By comparing Turkey-originating diaspora organisations in Germany and the UK with political orientations—the former prone to AKP and the latter being left-wing—this article demonstrates that diaspora organisations stand out as a key determinant of political mobilisation, which has hereto been largely overlooked in the external voting scholarship. The emerging alliances under the changed electoral law of 2012 and the profiles of presidential candidates also impact political mobilisation via diaspora organisations. Nevertheless, the upcoming research agenda should include voting eligibility of emigrants' profiles and recognize that non-electoral forms of political engagement are still part of the external voting phenomenon since they play a role in the electoral processes of origin countries and diaspora organisations. In this way, the reach of diaspora organisations will receive the attention they deserve as key players in politicising and mobilising their members, which directly impacts the origin country's electoral process and outcomes.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Victoria Finn, Mari-Liis Jakobson, Sebastian Umpierrez de Reguero, Mahir Tokatlı, John McManus, and Yekta Bakırlıoğlu for their comments and editing suggestions on earlier versions of this article. Additionally, we appreciate the constructive feedback from the reviewers and the academic editors of this issue, Sorina Soare and Sergiu Gherghina.

Funding

The findings presented in this article were partly funded by the UK Research and Innovation Grant (Grant No. EP/X030504/1). We also acknowledge support by the Open Access Publication Fund of the University of Duisburg-Essen.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE
ISSN: 2183-2463

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