

would strengthen the ideological and institutional standing at both the national and European Union levels. ■

NOTES

1. This figure is widely shared among experts. However, due to illegal immigration, accurate data are missing.
2. In 2018, remittances were higher than Foreign Direct Investments.

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US PARTIES ABROAD: REPRESENTING VERSUS MOBILIZING EXPATRIATES

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On March 23, 2020, news arrived that Bernie Sanders had scored his biggest percentage-term victory so far in the US Democrats' presidential primary season, winning almost 58% of the vote (and nine of 13 delegates) in the Democrats Abroad (DA) Global Presidential Primary. By the time this news was released, 13 days after the contest concluded, public and private life in the United States was fully focused on Covid-19; therefore, the results garnered little attention. Yet, whatever its impact on the presidential race, for the Democrats, the far-flung contest marked a success in terms of voter mobilization. The 40,000 votes cast represented a 15% increase compared to 2016. This was a major organizational accomplishment, even if these voters were only

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a fraction of the more than 3 million voting-eligible US nonresidents.¹

The DA is one of two major partisan organizations dedicated to reaching out to this global electorate. In an era of many differences between the main US parties, perhaps it is no surprise that these organizations differ profoundly in both their legal status and relations with their parent parties. The DA is a suborganization of the Democratic Party, with seats on the Democratic National Committee and a status similar to that of a state party. In 2020, the DA used a Global Presidential Primary for the fourth time to allocate its pledged delegates to the Democrats' presidential nominating convention. The primary was open to all adult US citizens living abroad who support the Democratic Party.²

The DA's Republican counterpart is the Republicans Overseas (RO). Unlike the DA, the RO is not a party subunit. Instead, it is a registered 501(c)4 organization, making it an interest-advocacy group. In keeping with this advocacy status, its main political activities have revolved around lobbying to change or repeal the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act and the Foreign Bank Account Report, policies that the organization considers unfair to expatriates. (For more details on both organizations, see Klekowski von Koppenfels 2020.) The RO—like its predecessor organization, Republicans Abroad—has never held seats in the Republican presidential nominating convention. As a result, it does not organize a primary or another process to allocate convention delegates (although in some presidential years, it has conducted a candidate straw poll). Lacking such an event to spur mobilization, the RO has less need to coordinate the work of its country affiliates, and it conducts less outreach to enlist supporters. Both the DA and the RO are similar in their low funding and almost exclusive reliance on volunteers. Neither organization releases membership figures; however, given that the largest RO chapters (in the United Kingdom and Germany) claim at most 1,000 members, its reach seems well below the participation levels recorded by the DA in its recent Global Presidential Primaries.

One reason that these differences in organizational capacity are notable is because two decades ago, the Republican expatriate operations were better funded and seemingly more effective, and the Party seemed to have good reasons to continue investing in them. Indeed, in 2003, Dark III (2003, 242) predicted that both US parties, given their large and growing numbers abroad, would increase their activities to mobilize overseas voters. However, this has turned out to be only (modestly) true for the Democrats, whereas the Republicans' overseas organizing has gone in another direction.

What explains these differences in US parties' approaches to the challenges and opportunities of representing and mobilizing expatriate partisans? Klekowski von Koppenfels (2020, 49) rightly notes that in the US system, federalized vote counting and the lack

of congressional seats reserved for expatriates minimize incentives for parties or candidates to attempt to mobilize expatriate voters. However, she attributes the parties' organizational differences to their differing political philosophies: the Democrats see politics as more group-based and Republicans take a more individualistic approach. Nevertheless, it might be argued that it is Republicans, not Democrats, who mostly treat expatriates as a distinct group and who seek to represent them accordingly. Thus, the RO prioritizes advocating for co-partisans on an issue that uniquely affects expatriate citizens. In contrast, by constituting the DA as similar to a state-party organization, the Democrats are treating their expatriate supporters like all other supporters. That is, rather than being defined as having a shared interest, they are encouraged to make their voices heard by participating in the

party's policy and personnel-selection processes (and then by voting in the general election). Although the DA, like the RO, also objects to some of the ways that current tax laws affect expatriates, it prioritizes mobilizing partisan electoral participation over providing representation on a specifically expatriate issue.

In summary, since the turn of the twenty-first century, the DA has overtaken the RO as a force for overseas mobilizing. With electoral turnout of Americans residing abroad remaining under 10% (Federal Voting Assistance Program 2018), and with more than 3 million US expatriates who are eligible to vote, there seems to be scope for increased overseas organizational efforts from both parties. Nevertheless, the geographic localization of US federal and state elections dampens incentives for candidates or parties to invest in such mobilization, setting firm limits on how much growth we should expect in this area. ■

NOTES

1. Official estimates vary widely. The number 3 million is from a report by the Federal Voting Assistance Project (2018).
2. Alternatively, these citizens could vote in the primary of the last state in which they resided. The DA requires participants in its contest to affirm that they are not voting in a state-level primary.

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TRANSNATIONAL OUTREACH EFFORTS AND ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE OF ITALIAN PARTIES ABROAD: DO THEY EARN WHAT THEY DESERVE?

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When discussing the political rights of nonresident citizens, and particularly the concept of political parties abroad, it is difficult to not think of the Italian case. Aided by the fact of it historically being one of the main emigration countries in Western Europe, Italy boasts an almost 20-year experience in running a system of special representation for its approximately 5 million citizens residing overseas.¹ The 14th Legislature (which took place between 2001 and 2006) can be considered a watershed in this sense because it is when emigrant constituencies were legislatively acknowledged and electorally organized in four different regions (i.e., Europe; North and Central America; South America and Africa; and Asia, Oceania, and Antarctica).

As in all other cases discussed in this Spotlight, Italian political parties are pivotal actors of their overseas electoral system: first, as subjects deciding its establishment at the very beginning; and, second, as actors elaborating specific outreach and electoral strategies, including candidate selection, aimed at maximizing their electoral bonuses at election times. Regarding the first aspect, many scholars have already clarified how the introduction of external voting rights in Italy did not respond—at least initially

—to a commonly felt will of reconciliation with “distant” citizens among political parties. Rather, it was especially the National Alliance (i.e., the former post-Fascist Italian Social Movement) that intercepted pressures coming from emigrants and proposed specific measures with respect to improving their political inclusion.² Regarding the second aspect of whether parties' electoral performance benefits from their transnational outreach efforts, existing studies are more reticent.

As shown by Østergaard-Nielsen and Ciornei (2019) in a recent comparative analysis, parties' efforts to convey electoral consensus from abroad can take different forms. The leftist Democratic Party (PD), for example, tends to combine a structured grassroots presence across overseas territories with an emphasis on emigrant policy issues in its party program. The rightist People of Freedom (PdL, formerly Forza Italia) and the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S) both present a relatively less structured organizational profile. The latter party, moreover, keeps a much lower emigrant profile in its campaign style compared to the other two.

Against this background, it seems reasonable to assume that the most structured parties abroad—which also consistently emphasize emigrant issues in their campaigns (i.e., the PD)—are the most successful at mobilizing the Italian emigrant vote. However, looking at the distribution of aggregate vote shares in the latest General Elections of 2018 across constituencies, such an expected relationship does not appear to hold in all cases. Indeed, in countries affected by more recent or working-class-based emigration patterns (e.g., the United Kingdom and France, respectively), the PD and a few other leftist parties appear to perform relatively better than their competitors. Conversely, in territories characterized by long-term “conservative” electorates accustomed to personal voting based on specific issues, such as Argentina and the United States, either emigrant-led parties (e.g., Associative Movement Italians Abroad) or center-right actors turn out to be the most prominent (Battiston and Luconi 2018).

Despite their preliminary character, these figures seem to suggest that, regardless of how much effort parties make in building strategies of transnational outreach, much of their electoral performance abroad depends on an external factor—that is, the characteristics of their “host” emigrant constituencies. In the absence of adequately extensive data on the profiles and political orientations of Italian citizens across such vast territories, however, this conclusion is currently no more than a possibility. Future efforts should be directed toward a systematic data collection of parties' vote shares across overseas constituencies along with other information, including their campaign contents and style, the type and intensity of their transnational activities, and the characteristics of the emigrant electorate they aim to mobilize. This combination will provide the necessary empirical basis for testing how electorally rewarding parties' outreach efforts actually are vis-à-vis other relevant factors. ■

NOTES

1. Before the introduction of the new mixed electoral system in early 2018 (i.e., the so-called Rosato Law), the number of special representatives granted to emigrants was 12 for the Chamber of Deputies and eight for the Senate. Beginning with the 19th Legislature, there will be 12 and six, respectively.
2. This is not surprising or unique to Italy because a similar dynamic was found in comparative studies highlighting how right-wing ideology can favor party support for external voting rights (e.g., Østergaard-Nielsen, Ciornei, and Lafleur 2019). In the case of Italy, however, an additional element that possibly played a