

with effective online communication strategies with party members abroad were the keys to success across the diaspora.

Overall, in contrast to traditional accounts that link institutionalization, organization, electoral strategies, and nationwide electoral success, for the diaspora it is the online organization combined with issue salience and issue congruence that ensures most party success. It is not the old parties that benefit most from this recipe for success but rather new parties that manage to get their message across the diaspora—that is, not the new splinter parties but instead the newly established parties with a specific anticorruption program. ■

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AUSTRALIAN PARTIES ABROAD

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Australian political parties, as they exist abroad, are best described as modest, digitally mediated, volunteer-driven organizations that revolve around the periodic mobilization of the Australian expatriate community during election periods. The two parties abroad that exist—Labor Abroad and Australian Liberals Abroad—are offshoots of their respective home parties, the Australian Labor Party and the Australian Liberal Party, rather than distinctive

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political organizations. They are not characterized by the formal structures that might be associated with political parties within Australia—branches, formal management committees, and representative decision-making bodies such as conferences; rather, they comprise relatively loose networks of party supporters. These networks are situated in the global cities that host the largest Australian expatriate populations, disproportionately focused in London. They hold few resources (monetary or personnel) and exercise little influence on the outcome of national elections.

This relative lack of Australian party-abroad development can be explained by the structure of the electoral system in which the

political parties operate, which holds few incentives for them to mobilize overseas (van Haute and Kernalegenn 2020, 243–44). The first constraint created by the electoral system is ballot access—in particular, the difficulty faced by Australians voting overseas. Although Australians may retain their right to vote for six years (i.e., two electoral cycles) after they leave, they must declare an intention to return, enroll as an overseas voter, and renew this declaration annually by contacting the Australian Electoral Commission. These provisions are rather onerous. Although as many as one million Australians can be living or working overseas at any time (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2019), only 61,000 votes were cast (i.e., 0.5% of the electorate) in the 2019 Australian federal election (Australian Electoral Commission 2019).

The second constraint is the decentralized nature of Australia's electoral system, in which members of the lower house of the legislature are elected in one of 150 single-member electorates. Unlike countries such as Italy and France, where there are special reserved seats for legislators representing citizens living abroad, Australian expatriates are accommodated by an "assimilated representation" model (Orr 2019, 78–79) in which they continue to vote in the electorate in which they were formerly enrolled. An analysis of the 2019 federal election conducted by this author shows that the largest number of overseas votes were cast in electorates characterized as "safe," meaning that there is almost no chance that these voters can influence the outcome of an election. The fact that so few ballots are cast overseas, as well as the nature of the electorates in which they are cast, provides few incentives for Australian parties to organize overseas.

Despite these constraints, both Labor Abroad and Liberals Abroad have been created as the international supporters' networks for Australians residing overseas. The primary form of organization is through social media (specifically Facebook). The scale of these groups is modest: the Labor Abroad Facebook group has approximately 600 members and the Liberal Abroad page has only 50 followers. An analysis of both of these groups' social media pages suggests that their focus is on campaigning and mobilizing voters during elections. These face-to-face volunteering opportunities involve distributing election materials outside

Australian embassies (which serve as overseas polling places). For the 2019 Australian election, Labor Abroad recruited 50 volunteers to staff Australia House in London (i.e., the largest overseas polling place) for 81 hours across the final two weeks of the campaign. Overseas polling stations also were staffed by volunteers in Bangkok, Delhi, Singapore, New York, Vancouver, Washington, Paris, and Tel Aviv. Australian Liberals Abroad were particularly active online in encouraging Australians abroad to vote in the 2017 postal plebiscite on the legalization of same-sex marriage. The two groups also periodically host networking and social events when Australian politicians are in

town, serving as important opportunities for party supporters to interact outside of election periods.


Although their electoral presence may not be significant, through a combination of events, meetings, and predominantly online discussions with like-minded individuals, Australian parties abroad also perform an important social function for expatriates. It is particularly interesting that although organization is facilitated by social media, these parties abroad remain rooted in particular geographic locations (i.e., London, Singapore, and Hong Kong). This suggests that although the emergence of parties abroad is driven by patterns of migration and increasing global interconnectedness, one of their primary functions is to connect communities and individuals in a far more localized sense, with many activities occurring at the city level. Further research is needed to investigate the extent to which parties abroad facilitate

communities of political activists and elites, reinforce existing social networks, or create new ones. ■


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