Article

International Political Science Review
2018, Vol. 39(3) 369–383

DOI: 10.1177/0192512118758154
journals.sagepub.com/home/ips

States or parties? Emigrant outreach and transnational engagement

Katrina Burgess
Tufts University, USA

Abstract

Home-country institutions are increasingly engaged in reaching out to their emigrants to further their domestic agendas. Using a most-different systems design, I compare two cases in which emigrant outreach is dominated by the state (Philippines and Mexico) and two cases in which it is dominated by parties (Lebanon and the Dominican Republic). My main argument is that each type of outreach results in a different trade-off between electoral mobilization and partisan autonomy. State-led outreach encourages emigrants to transcend partisan divisions but does not mobilize overseas voters. By contrast, party-led outreach generates higher electoral turnout while reproducing and reinforcing sectarian and/or clientelist patterns of interest representation. I conclude with the implications for whether emigrants are likely to play a democratizing role in fragile democracies with serious deficits in participation, representation, and accountability.

Keywords

Emigrants, diasporas, transnationalism, Philippines, Mexico, Lebanon, Dominican Republic

Introduction

Home-country institutions are increasingly engaged in reaching out to their emigrants to further their domestic agendas. In most countries, the main protagonist of outreach is the state, with recent studies suggesting that a majority of states in the Global South have outreach institutions beyond their traditional consular networks (Gamlen, 2014; Garding, this issue; Waterbury, this issue). An increasing number of states have also granted their emigrants the right to participate directly in home-country elections through overseas voting (Rhodes and Harutyunyan, 2010), with a few creating overseas districts to represent emigrants in the legislature (Collyer, 2014). Political parties also have a growing presence overseas (Lafleur, 2013; Mandaville and Lyons, 2012; Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2003; Tabar, 2014). Party outreach can range from intermittent mobilization of resources and infrastructure during the election season to permanent overseas branches and organized emigrant cadres.

Corresponding author:
Katrina Burgess, Fletcher School, Tufts University, 160 Packard Ave., Medford, MA 02155, USA.
Email: katrina.burgess@tufts.edu

This article explores the transnational implications of whether emigrant outreach is dominated by states or parties. Specifically, I argue that each type of outreach produces different patterns of emigrant engagement in homeland politics. I develop my argument through paired comparisons of four countries in the Global South with well-developed outreach institutions. Using a most-different systems design, I compare two contrasting cases in which outreach is led by the state (Philippines and Mexico) and two contrasting cases in which outreach is led by parties (Lebanon and the Dominican Republic (DR)). I draw on secondary sources, media reports, organization websites, national and global datasets, and a few key informant interviews to construct a narrative linking types of outreach to patterns of transnational engagement.[1]

My main finding is that each type of outreach produces a different trade-off between partisan autonomy and electoral mobilization even in the presence of major differences in homeland politics and emigrant profiles. State-led outreach encourages emigrants to transcend partisan divisions but does not mobilize overseas voters. By contrast, party-led outreach generates higher electoral participation while reproducing and reinforcing sectarian and/or clientelist patterns of interest representation.

State-led outreach: Philippines and Mexico

The Philippines and Mexico are among the best-known cases of state-led outreach to emigrants, particularly among post-1980 democracies. In both countries, the state constructed an extensive infrastructure for interacting with its emigrants while parties established only a weak overseas presence. I argue that state-led outreach, reinforced by institutional barriers to electoral participation, contributes to a similar trade-off in both cases between high partisan autonomy and low overseas voter turnout despite significant differences in homeland politics and emigrant profiles.

State outreach in a weak state in the Philippines

The Philippines has a long history of emigration driven primarily by economic factors. During the first half of the 20th century, most Filipino migrants went to the United States (US), where they enjoyed preferential access as colonial subjects. Migratory networks and labor demand continued to draw Filipino workers to the US after the Philippines gained its independence in 1946, but changes in US law and the emergence of new centers of demand for cheap labor in the 1960s and 1970s contributed to a diversification of Filipino emigration, first to Europe and then to the Middle East. A wave of mostly middle-class Filipinos left to escape political repression and instability in the 1970s and early 1980s, but their numbers paled in comparison to the millions of temporary workers going abroad with the help of the state. By 2013, an estimated 10 million Filipinos lived outside their country of origin, of whom more than two million worked in the Gulf States on temporary contracts.

Neither the state nor political parties engaged in emigrant outreach until the 1973 oil crisis threatened the nascent political project of President Ferdinand Marcos, who had declared Martial Law and abolished Congress the year before. Ruling as a personalist dictator until the mid-1980s, Marcos created new state institutions and invested some of the country's resources in industrialization but he never really broke the power of local elites or incorporated the masses into a state-building project. As a result, the Filipino state remained relatively weak and patrimonial with one notable exception: its extensive infrastructure to manage emigration.

Desperate for both revenue and legitimacy (Bach and Soloman, 2008; Rodriguez, 2002), Marcos embarked on a two-track strategy to mobilize overseas earnings for homeland development. First, he reached out to permanent settlers in the United States and other Organisation for Economic

Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, creating the 'Balikbayan' program to attract them back as tourists and investors in 1973 and establishing the Commission on Filipinos Overseas in the President's Office in 1980. Second, he encouraged millions of Filipinos to go abroad to seek temporary employment and send remittances back home. Following a 1973 Presidential Decree that mandated the creation of state agencies to deploy overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), he formed the Overseas Worker Welfare Administration (OWWA) to coordinate benefits for OFWs in 1981 and the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) to regulate the recruitment of OFWs by private companies in 1982.

State outreach deepened and democratized after the People Power movement forced Marcos into exile and reestablished competitive elections in 1986. On the one hand, the old institutions remained in place to manage the country's labor exports and to court the support and resources of permanent emigrants. On the other hand, state outreach became more responsive and inclusive. First, Congress passed the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995, which strengthened the state's role in assisting OFWs, created an Undersecretary of Migrant Workers' Affairs, and reserved three seats for OFWs on the 12-seat boards of the OWWA and the POEA (Bach and Solomon, 2008). Second, the state finally extended its outreach to include political rights. In addition to passing an Overseas Voting Law in 2003, Congress approved a Dual Citizenship Bill in 2004 that allowed naturalized citizens of other countries to restore their Filipino citizenship and thereby become eligible to vote from abroad as well as own property and travel to the Philippines without a visa.

Initially, state outreach took place in the absence of overseas mobilization by parties. Never more than personalistic vehicles for competing for state spoils (Hicken, 2009), parties vanished rather than relocating overseas when Marcos imposed Martial Law, although several factions re-emerged after Marcos lifted the ban on political parties. While parties began to pay more attention to emigrants and their families after passage of the Overseas Voting Law, most of them limited their efforts to supporting pro-emigrant legislation rather than engaging directly with Filipinos overseas. Nonetheless, the highly fragmented party system provided openings for a few, small parties targeting OFWs and their families. The OFW Family Party won two seats in the legislative elections in 2010, and its founder, former Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates Roy Señeres, ran for president in the 2016 elections until his death a few months before the vote. Meanwhile, Rodrigo Duterte became the first major presidential candidate to invest significantly in overseas organization and campaigning, contributing to a spike in overseas turnout in 2016. Even if this trend persists, however, parties are likely to remain minor players compared to the state, especially in the context of the country's weakly institutionalized party system.

From neglect to incorporation in Mexico

Like the Philippines, Mexico has a long history of emigration driven primarily by economic rather than political factors and shaped by its 'special relationship' with the United States. Although the Mexican Revolution (c. 1910–1920) temporarily displaced nearly a million Mexicans across the US–Mexican border, the first wave of mass emigration did not occur until the 1940s. Since then, the most significant change has been a shift from circular migration to permanent settlement starting in the 1980s. Despite some recent diversification in their socio-economic characteristics and geographical origins, Mexican migrants are still predominantly young men from rural areas with low levels of education. By 2013, approximately 13.2 million Mexicans lived abroad, 98% of whom were in the United States.

In contrast to the Philippines, Mexico's authoritarian regime invested very little in emigrant outreach despite its relatively strong and interventionist state. Ruling as a hegemonic party from 1929 to 1997, the Party of the Institutionalized Revolution (PRI) used the state to penetrate civil

society and construct an industrial infrastructure. While never free of the influence of powerful families, the PRI seized the opportunity provided by the Mexican Revolution to broaden its coalition beyond traditional elites to include workers, peasants, and emerging middle classes. Yet it largely neglected the country's emigrants, whom it portrayed as traitors while quietly benefiting from their access to overseas employment. Between 1942 and 1964, the government negotiated a series of guest worker agreements with the United States, known collectively as the Bracero Program, but did little to manage these contracts or provide benefits to migrant workers. Once the program ended, the state adopted a 'policy of having no policy' (García y Griego, 1988) despite the continued flow of Mexicans northward to find work or join their families.

It was not until the PRI began to lose its grip on power in the late 1980s that emigrant outreach became a priority. In 1988, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas nearly defeated the PRI candidate, Carlos Salinas, with strong support from Mexicans in the United States. After the elections, Cárdenas and his allies formed the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), which quickly formalized party outreach by establishing branches in several key US cities (Dresser, 1993). Rather than responding to this partisan challenge with party outreach, however, President Salinas invested in a multipronged strategy of state outreach that included the Program for Mexican Communities Abroad (PCME) and the Program of International Solidarity to provide matching grants for local development projects financed by US-based migrant associations. In 1996, the PRI-dominated Congress approved a dual nationality law and a constitutional amendment to grant voting rights to emigrants, although the latter did not take effect until 2006.

This pattern persisted after the transition to democracy. After winning the 2000 elections, President Vicente Fox of the National Action Party (PAN) used the power of the presidency to privilege state outreach even while seeking partisan advantage. He replaced the PCME with the Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME) and resurrected and expanded Salinas' matching grant program for philanthropic projects co-financed by migrants, which he renamed the 3×1 Program. As in the Philippines, democracy also engendered a more inclusive style of state outreach. The IME included a *Consejo Consultivo* (CCIME) composed of around 125 elected representatives from the Mexican community in the United States and Canada (Délano, 2011), and emigrants gained seats on many of the state-level Committees of Validation and Attention to Migrants responsible for reviewing and overseeing projects in the 3×1 Program (Burgess, 2016). Finally, the Mexican Congress passed implementing legislation in 2005 to allow emigrants to exercise their right to vote from abroad.

Rather than sparking party outreach, however, the overseas voting law had the paradoxical effect of dampening it even further (Smith, 2008). Party leaders, particularly from the PRI and the PAN, were fearful that emigrants could upset the political balance in Mexico, especially given the number of emigrants in the United States and the potentially narrow margins of victory in presidential elections with no second round. They also worried about a negative reaction from the United States. Thus, the law included a prohibition against candidates and parties engaging in any campaign activity abroad. Combined with the implosion of the PRD in recent years, this rule effectively stifled the nascent party outreach that had begun in the late 1980s. Parties and candidates still find ways to deliver their message abroad during election season, but they are highly constrained in their ability to provide information and get out the vote. Instead, their main avenue of outreach is to win office at the national, state, or local levels, which gives them access to state-based programs and resources.

Partisan autonomy without electoral mobilization

Filipino and Mexican emigrants have responded to state-led outreach in remarkably similar ways despite major differences not only in their homeland political systems, as described above, but also

in their socio-economic status (SES). 46% of Filipinos living abroad attained some level of post-secondary schooling before migrating, and nearly half of OECD-based Filipinos are naturalized citizens. While there is some unauthorized migration to neighboring countries, most overseas Filipinos have legal status through either temporary work contracts or family reunification. By contrast, only 7% of Mexican migrants have any tertiary education while nearly 47% (6.2 million) are undocumented. Relatedly, they have a naturalization rate of only 24%, even though 75% of them have spent more than ten years abroad. These differences translate into a wide income gap, with only 7% of US-based Filipinos living in poverty compared to 28% of Mexicans.

Regardless of how one expects SES to affect transnational engagement, these differences require that we look elsewhere to explain a similar trade-off between partisan autonomy and electoral participation in the two cases. I argue that an important variable is the state's dominant role in reaching out to emigrants. On the one hand, state-dominated outreach has enabled emigrants to construct and defend non-partisan spaces for making demands on homeland authorities. In the Philippines, this kind of advocacy has its roots in the anti-Marcos movements of the 1970s and 1980s (Bello and Reyes, 1986), whose leftist leanings and broad critiques of homeland governance are carried on today by groups such as Migrante International, a global alliance of organizations representing Filipino OFWs. Emigrant activists have also actively lobbied the government to protect migrant workers against fraud and abuse and to extend political rights to overseas Filipinos (Rodriguez, 2002; Solomon, 2009). Even organizations that openly support candidates for political office tend to make their support conditional, as illustrated by the shifting position of Migrante International toward Rodrigo Duterte, whom they strongly supported during the campaign but are now harshly criticizing for breaking his promises.[2]

Mexican emigrants are similarly inclined to avoid partisan politics and base their political alliances on pragmatic considerations. As in the Philippines, the campaign for overseas voting rights was largely a bottom-up initiative driven by emigrants acting independently of parties reluctant to enfranchise them (Smith and Bakker, 2008). Likewise, emigrant activists have proven able and willing to negotiate with politicians across party lines and to make strategic alliances contingent on results. In the 3×1 Program, for example, migrant leaders often negotiate projects with mayors from different parties and sometimes use their leverage to ensure that local politicians do not neglect communities that did not vote for them (Burgess, 2016).[3] While emigrant activists are by no means immune to partisan allegiances and conflicts, especially at the local level, partisanship is not the prevailing dimension along which emigrants organize and mobilize.

On the other hand, weak party outreach has contributed to very low rates of emigrant participation in homeland elections in both countries.[4] Overseas turnout is especially anemic in Mexico, with fewer than 1% of its migrants casting votes in 2006 and 2012. Turnout in the Philippines is slightly higher but fell from 3.3% in 2004 to less than 2% in 2007, 2010, and 2013 until increasing to 4.2% in 2016. Participation is especially low in the Americas, where turnout did not surpass 1% until 2016, when it jumped to nearly 2%, but it is also quite modest elsewhere, averaging 2% in the Middle East and Europe and 5% in Asia until increasing by several percentage points in 2016.

To some extent, these numbers can be explained by the high barriers that both countries erected when they first extended voting rights to their emigrants. In the Philippines, permanent settlers were required to sign an affidavit pledging to return home within three years. Besides creating a major administrative hurdle, this requirement effectively disenfranchised most Filipinos in Europe and the United States. In Mexico, emigrants had to present a voting card that did not exist prior to the late 1990s and could only be obtained in Mexico. As in the Philippines, this rule disenfranchised millions of potential voters, in this case proving especially problematic for those unable to travel back and forth legally across the border.

Upon closer examination, however, the causal story is more complicated. In the Philippines, the affidavit requirement helps explain why turnout is especially anemic in the Americas, but it cannot account for low turnout in Asia and the Middle East, where most overseas Filipinos are temporary workers. Likewise, while Mexico's voting card requirement helps explain why the center-right PAN has done even better abroad than at home, it cannot account for the very high rate of abstention even among the estimated 1.5 to 4 million Mexicans in the United States who already had the card in 2005 (Lafleur, 2013: 71).

Moreover, the legislatures in both countries have since passed reforms that lowered or eliminated these barriers. In the Philippines, Congress reformed the voting law in 2013 to eliminate the affidavit requirement and allow dual citizens to vote without establishing residence in the Philippines. Yet turnout by OECD-based Filipinos did not increase disproportionately in the 2016 presidential elections. Rather, it rose everywhere, most likely as a result of the strong overseas campaign launched by Rodrigo Duterte. In Mexico, Congress reformed the electoral code in 2014 to allow emigrants to obtain their voting card at consulates and vote electronically. We have yet to see whether this reform will boost turnout in Mexico's 2018 presidential elections, but the aforementioned abstention among cardholders suggests that any increase will be limited, particularly since candidates and parties are still prohibited from campaigning abroad.

The 2016 elections in the Philippines may be the exception that proves the rule. Quantitative studies of turnout at home and abroad find that voters are less likely to participate in the absence of 'external mobilization' by candidates or parties (Burgess and Tyburski, 2017; Norris, 2002; Smets and van Ham, 2013). The Filipino and Mexican cases lend qualitative support to this finding and, in the process, reinforce my argument that state-led outreach in the absence of partisan mobilization is likely to be accompanied by weak electoral participation even as it encourages non-partisan engagement in other arenas.

Party-led outreach: Lebanon and the DR

Lebanon and the DR offer further evidence of the strong link between the type of emigrant outreach and the nature of transnational engagement, but from the other side of the coin. While state outreach institutions do exist, they are largely symbolic in Lebanon and underdeveloped in the DR, reflecting their especially weak states (Garding, this issue; Koinova and Tsourapas, this issue). By contrast, Lebanese and Dominican parties have an extensive overseas presence and actively court emigrants. As a result, emigrant engagement is channeled primarily through parties rather than the state, resulting in higher levels of mobilization but also the export of dysfunctional partisanship to transnational spaces. As in the Philippines and Mexico, these patterns hold despite major differences in homeland politics and emigrant profiles.

Transnationalization of sectarian competition in Lebanon

Lebanon has been a country of emigration since the days of the Ottoman Empire. Triggered by dislocations associated with socio-economic development, the first wave began in the 1860s and was dominated by Maronite Christians settling in the Americas. After independence, other sects followed, and the main destinations diversified to Africa and Australia in the 1950s and the oil-producing countries of the Persian Gulf in the 1960s and 1970s. During this period, Christians migrated primarily to the Americas, Shia Muslims to Africa, and Sunni Muslims to the Gulf States (Brand, 2006; Pearlman, 2014). These lines blurred somewhat during the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990), when members of all sects sought refuge abroad, mostly in Western Europe, North America, or Australia, although Muslims were still more likely to go to the Gulf or Africa. Not

surprisingly, this cohort was more politically active and outspoken than its predecessors, whether abroad or upon their return home (Koinova, 2010: 445; Pearlman, 2013). Lebanese continued to leave after the end of the Civil War, as residual violence, the Syrian occupation, and economic stagnation prompted the departure of another 10 to 14% of the population between 1992 and 2007 (Pearlman, 2013: 120).

Emigrant outreach in Lebanon can be described as an inside-out process, whereby domestic politicians have courted emigrants as a resource in a political system shaped by sectarian divisions and regional power politics. The system's foundational moment was a 1943 National Pact that allocated parliamentary seats and government offices along confessional lines based on the 1932 census. This arrangement, which gave a slight edge to Christians over Muslims, persisted into the 1970s despite the country's growing Muslim majority, creating a representational mismatch that eventually sparked a civil war. Fighting first broke out in 1975 between Palestinian and Maronite Christian forces, but it quickly devolved into a free-for-all of violence, betrayal, and shifting domestic and international alliances that lasted until the signing of the Taif Agreement in 1989. More than 100,000 people died and nearly one million fled to other countries (Abdelhady, 2011). Meanwhile, existing parties became militarized while new challengers emerged in the form of militias that subsequently transformed themselves into parties.

The Taif Agreement paved the way for a new formula to better reflect the country's demographic realities, but the confessional system of allocating power remained intact. As a result, the Civil War did little to change the penetration of sectarian interests and conflicts into every corner of political life (Brand, 2006; Pearlman, 2014). Nor did it strengthen the Lebanese state, which has long deferred to financial and commercial elites and relied on non-state actors to carry out basic functions. At the same time, political coalitions became even more unstable, as a larger and more diverse set of actors fought over a finite supply of patronage resources. A path-breaking electoral law passed in June 2017 promises to weaken confessional fiefdoms by adopting proportional representation, but it may also produce an even more inchoate party system (Muhanna, 2017).

At first glance, Lebanon appears to be another case of state-led outreach. In 1945, the government created an Emigrant Directorate as a branch of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants (MFAE) (Brand, 2006: 140–142). Fourteen years later, Prime Minister Fouad Chehab convened a conference at which delegates from 36 countries approved the creation of a World Lebanese Union (WLU) to represent all Lebanese and descendants of Lebanese living abroad. A closer look, however, reveals that neither institution was an effective instrument of state-led outreach. The MFAE's role has always been more symbolic than substantive (Brand, 2007; Pearlman, 2014). Lacking adequate funding or a formal policy framework to govern state–emigrant relations, it never developed the kinds of socio-economic, cultural, legal, or political programming we find in the Philippines and Mexico.

The WLU initially provided a better channel of engagement between emigrants and state officials but from *outside* the state. Although its permanent secretariat included officials from MFAE, and the government provided it with financing and office space (Brand, 2006: 149–151), it was a non-governmental organization designed to keep sectarian conflict outside the state. This strategy may have worked for the MFAE, but it left the WLU exposed to the debilitating effects of Lebanon's shifting demographics and sectarian conflict. Renamed the World Lebanese Cultural Union (WLCU) in the early 1970s, the organization suffered crisis and division during the Civil War. By the end of the 1990s, the WLCU's ability to function as an interlocutor had been severely compromised by splits, defections, and an overall loss of legitimacy (Brand, 2006).

The state's most substantive contribution to emigrant outreach may be the extension of overseas voting rights. In 2008, the Lebanese Parliament passed an electoral reform that included non-resident absentee voting, although the MFAE missed the deadline for preparing a study on the

mechanisms of non-resident voting in time for the 2009 elections (Pearlman, 2014: 54–55). The implementing legislation finally passed in 2012 only to languish as elections were repeatedly postponed. Parliament broke the electoral deadlock in June 2017 with passage of the aforementioned electoral reform and set a new election date in May 2018. The new law retains the right to vote from abroad and reserves six seats for non-resident legislators, although the latter provision is unlikely to take effect until 2022 at the earliest (Elghossain, 2017).

Despite starting out as a state initiative, however, this law is likely to reinforce the historic role of Lebanese parties as the leading agents of emigrant outreach. Concerned less with governing and more with channeling particularistic benefits to their sectarian constituencies, these parties resemble their Filipino counterparts in their high levels of volatility and personalism. A critical difference, however, is that their social bases are more stable, loyal, and clearly defined. As a result, the costs of identifying and mobilizing emigrant supporters are much lower while the likely payoffs in votes and financial support are much greater. Combined with Lebanon's confessional system, this arrangement creates strong incentives for parties to cultivate ties with 'their' emigrants in the sectarian competition for power (Pearlman, 2013, 2014).

Prior to the Civil War, Maronite Christian parties established especially strong ties with emigrants, whom they encouraged to claim their Lebanese citizenship as a bulwark against the growing Muslim population inside Lebanon (Pearlman, 2014). Muslim parties such as Amal and Hezbollah have since joined them as major players outside Lebanon, but the logic has essentially remained the same, resulting in a level of party engagement and expenditure abroad that would be unthinkable in the Philippines or Mexico. Even in the absence of overseas voting rights, all major parties 'have networks, news outlets, or organizational branches abroad' (Pearlman, 2014: 53; Tabar, 2014), and Lebanese politicians regularly campaign overseas and entice voters back home by paying their transportation costs and/or block-booking hotel rooms in key districts (Fielding-Smith, 2009; Pearlman, 2014; Tabar, 2014).

Exporting domestic politics in the DR

Mass migration from the DR began in the 1960s after the assassination of President Rafael Trujillo, which unleashed a period of instability that included a military coup against the newly-elected leftist government of Juan Bosch, founder of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), and a brief civil war followed by US military intervention in 1965. Aided by the removal of strict controls on emigration and relaxed requirements for Dominicans to get US visas, thousands of mostly urban and middle-class Dominicans left the island to settle in New York, including a critical mass of PRD activists. Dominican emigration accelerated in the 1980s but primarily among low-skilled workers seeking economic opportunity. While the majority followed their predecessors to metropolitan New York (including New Jersey), Dominican communities also began to emerge in Boston, Providence, Miami, and Madrid. By 2013, nearly one million Dominicans lived in the United States, with another 246,000 in other OECD countries, primarily Spain. These newer emigrants were less likely to have been politically active back home, but they often encountered a dense network of party and civic organizations upon their arrival, particularly in New York.

Mirroring the Lebanese experience, emigrant outreach in the DR can be described as an outside-in process whereby political exiles established overseas party branches and then used their transnational networks to bolster their domestic position once the political system opened up. Soon after the withdrawal of US forces in 1966, a Trujillo protégé, Joaquín Balaguer, defeated Bosch at the ballot box and won successive reelection through a combination of repression and patronage until 1978. During this period, political exiles formed overseas chapters of the PRD and, later, the Party of Dominican Liberation (PLD) (Lieber, 2010), and New York City became 'a transnational theater

for Dominican domestic political struggles' (Guarnizo, 1998: 65). Balaguer lost the 1978 elections to the PRD only to return in 1986 and win reelection yet again in 1994.

The Balaguer era finally ended in 1996 when he agreed to step down early in response to accusations of electoral fraud and massive protests. With the help of their overseas networks, the PRD and the PLD became the dominant players in a relatively stable party system. As in Lebanon, they financed flights home for loyal voters during elections (Lieber, 2010) and engaged in extensive fundraising in the migrant community. They did so, however, in the absence of identity-based cleavages. Their policy platforms and the socio-economic profile of their electorates are nearly indistinguishable, meaning that partisanship is based almost entirely on clientelist networks rather than deeper social cleavages such as ethnicity or religion (Morgan et al., 2011). Nonetheless, they are equally, if not more, engaged in emigrant outreach than their more volatile Lebanese counterparts. By the mid-2000s, the New York branch of the PRD claimed 23,000 members while the Massachusetts branch of the PLD claimed 1,500 members (Portes et al., 2007: 259). Today, the parties organize base committees, hold internal (primary) elections, raise funds, and arrange candidate visits to Dominican communities in the US, Puerto Rico, Panama, and Europe.

In the meantime, state outreach in the DR was non-existent until after the transition to democracy. Balaguer made a few modest investments in state-building and economic development, but his rule perpetuated the patrimonial style of governance inherited from Trujillo. Just as importantly, he saw little political advantage in courting emigrants, many of whom were hostile to his rule. By the time his power began to slip in the late 1970s, the opposition had already established itself firmly in the emigrant community. Thus, it was not until power shifted to the PRD and the PLD that the state made any effort to reach out to its overseas citizens.

Not coincidentally, the first step was to extend political rights to emigrants. The Dominican Congress passed laws permitting dual citizenship in 1994 and granting overseas voting rights in 1997, although the latter did not take effect until 2004. Six years later, Congress passed a constitutional reform to give emigrants the right to elect their own representatives to the House of Deputies starting in 2012. The state also created new institutions but in a way that largely reaffirmed the direct (and partisan) link between party elites and emigrants. The House and Senate established permanent commissions dedicated to Dominicans abroad, and President Leonel Fernández created Consultative Councils to the Presidency of Dominicans Abroad (CCPDE), which he later integrated into a National Council for Dominican Communities Abroad (CONDEX). In 2015, the legislature replaced CONDEX with the Institute for Dominicans Abroad and met a longstanding demand by emigrant activists for an Institute of Social Welfare of Dominicans Abroad. These reforms finally created formal mechanisms for state outreach to emigrants but with almost no personnel or funding to support them.[5]

Electoral mobilization without partisan autonomy

Party-led outreach has generated similar patterns of emigrant engagement in Lebanon and the DR despite vast differences not only in their political systems, as described above, but also in their emigrant profiles. Although emigrants from both countries are mostly documented, overseas Lebanese have significantly higher SES than their Dominican counterparts. Among the two-thirds of first-generation Lebanese emigrants who live in the OECD, nearly 40% have some post-secondary schooling and 84% are naturalized citizens. Those in the Gulf States have no option to naturalize, but most have formal contracts, and many are well-educated professionals (Hourani, 2010). By contrast, only 16% of Dominican emigrants have any college education and just 46% were naturalized citizens in 2010. Despite their legal status, Dominicans are even poorer than Mexicans, with a poverty rate of 30% in the United States compared to only 7% for US-based Lebanese.

Once again, these differences in SES require that we look elsewhere to explain a similar trade-off between autonomy and participation, this time to the leading role of parties in reaching out to emigrants. On the one hand, transnationalized parties have contributed to a higher level of emigrant participation in homeland elections. Although we have yet to see how many Lebanese emigrants will vote from abroad, thousands regularly return home to cast their ballots, often with the help of political candidates or parties using a legal loophole that enables them to pay voters' transportation costs to voting stations (Pearlman, 2014; Tabar, 2014). In June 2009, estimates of the number of votes cast by returning emigrants ranged from 48,000 to 121,000 (Tabar, 2014: 454), which, if true, would represent a turnout rate of between five and 14%. In the DR, turnout as a share of all emigrants has increased from 3% in 2004 to 11% in 2012 and 14% in 2016. While these numbers are low by domestic standards, Dominicans now participate in homeland elections at a higher rate than most emigrants from the Global South and a much higher rate than Filipinos or Mexicans.[6]

As in the Philippines and Mexico, these levels of participation partly reflect the institutional rules governing overseas voting. In the DR, the relatively symmetrical support for emigrant enfranchisement by the PRD and the PLD produced an electoral reform that encouraged rather than restricted overseas mobilization. Nonetheless, emigrants initially faced high barriers to participation because of logistical problems with voter registration and a limited number of polling stations. Over time, these barriers fell as the government made documents available at special overseas offices and implemented a six-fold increase in the number of polling stations. Not surprisingly, turnout went up, although at a rate that varies independently from the number of additional polling stations when disaggregated by country of residence. Moreover, voting from abroad still requires an investment of time and resources that is at least as high, if not higher, than in other countries with much less electoral participation by emigrants (Burgess and Tyburski, 2017).

If and when Lebanese emigrants finally exercise their right to vote from abroad, they may confront similar institutional conditions. The 2017 electoral law appears to make registration and voting reasonably accessible, although the precise distribution of polling stations will matter since voting (and possibly registration) must be done in person (Ace Project, 2017) as in the DR. Participation may also be dampened by logistical failures, at least initially, as reportedly occurred with overseas registration in 2012 (Gatten, 2012). We still do not know how many Lebanese emigrants will end up casting ballots from afar, but a striking number already participate despite the much higher barrier of having to return home. Whether this targeted engagement can eventually be scaled up, as in the DR, will partly depend on whether and, if so, how Lebanese parties adjust their overseas strategies in response to this new set of incentives and constraints.

The flip side of electoral mobilization is the export of partisan conflict and dysfunction to the non-electoral arena. Lebanese emigrants are very well-organized and politically mobilized, but their campaigns have rarely transcended sectarian divides (Koinova, 2010). While many groups pursue their sectarian agendas directly, others do so indirectly by lobbying for emigrant inclusion in politics. Groups advocating citizenship acquisition by Lebanese abroad are especially explicit about seeking to preserve the political balance among religious communities.[7] Notably absent from their campaign is support for an initiative to allow Lebanese women married to non-citizens (often Palestinians) to pass their citizenship to their children.

There are some emigrant activists, mostly young professionals, who promote a non-sectarian agenda of respect for human rights, reform of the gender-biased citizenship law, and an overall rejection of the sectarian political system, but their voices tend to get drowned out by the sectarian uproar. Most of their initiatives are online and do not appear to have an organizational base. Until very recently, there was surprisingly little evidence of collaboration between emigrant organizations and non-sectarian movements in Lebanon such as the mass demonstrations in the wake of the

Arab Spring in 2011. We may be seeing signs of change, however. In 2015, Lebanese emigrants used social media to organize protests around the United States and Europe in solidarity with the #YouStink movement whose immediate grievance was a garbage crisis in Beirut but which grew into a broader campaign for better governance (Ahmed, 2015). Whether we are witnessing a major shift toward non-sectarian mobilization from abroad remains to be seen and is likely to be influenced by the degree to which the 2017 electoral reform fulfills its promise to provide more space for non-sectarian candidates and parties.

We find a similar lack of partisan autonomy in the DR, although the main dynamic is competition for party spoils rather than sectarian struggle. Like their Filipino and Mexican counterparts, emigrant activists played a key role in the struggle to gain political rights (Graham, 2001; Guarnizo, 1998). But they had a much cozier relationship with party leaders, many of whom shared their objectives, especially after the creation of 'insider channels' such as the CCPDE, legislative commissions, and overseas districts. Not only do these channels privilege emigrants with partisan ties to homeland politicians, but they also give party leaders a valuable source of political patronage.

Beyond the partisan political arena, we find only sporadic evidence of Dominican emigrants lobbying for change back home. At the community level, some Dominican hometown associations use their leverage and influence to improve local governance (Lamba-Nieves, 2014). At the national level, emigrant activists mobilized in solidarity with their Haitian compatriots after the DR's Constitutional Court annulled the citizenship of anyone born to undocumented Haitian immigrants since 1929 (Cortes, 2013; Lieber, 2010). These activists were a small minority, however, and did not receive broad support from Dominicans at home or abroad.

Conclusion

My four cases suggest that there is a strong and interactive relationship between who takes the lead in reaching out to emigrants – states or parties – and how emigrants engage in politics back home even in the context of major differences in homeland politics and emigrant profiles. State-led outreach in the Philippines and Mexico provides emigrants with space to transcend partisan divisions but has a demobilizing effect on overseas voting. By contrast, party-led outreach in Lebanon and the DR encourages electoral participation but reproduces and reinforces sectarian and/or clientelist patterns of interest representation. Further research is necessary to test the internal and external validity of my argument. First, variables beyond the scope of this article, such as conditions in the host countries, may also matter, although I suspect that they will do so in interaction with the type of outreach. Second, we do not know whether these trade-offs hold in other countries with state-led or party-led outreach, although their presence in my cases, which are otherwise so different, suggests that they will.

These trade-offs have important implications for whether emigrants can play a democratizing role in fragile democracies. Neither is ideal but for different reasons. State-led outreach provides emigrants with more space for autonomous action and thereby enhances their potential to produce democratizing reforms at home. When emigrants can build effective coalitions with domestic organizations, they may be able to bring about concrete improvements in governance, as happened in the Philippines after the execution of a Filipina domestic worker in Singapore. In the absence of such coalitions, however, their inability to mobilize overseas voters makes it easier for homeland authorities to ignore or dismiss their demands, which has been a common complaint among CCIME *consejeros* (counselors) and other Mexican migrant leaders (Délano, 2010).[8] This 'voice without vote' echoes a broader problem in fragile democracies of shallow participation and weak mechanisms of accountability. Emigrants with weak mobilizing capacity are also vulnerable to losing their insider access if and when the state deems it too threatening or inconvenient, as recently

occurred in Mexico. In 2014, Mexican officials suspended the CCIME altogether, reportedly in response to its 'capture' by activists seeking to change government policies toward emigrants (Fernández de Castro, 2016).

Party-led outreach is better at mobilizing emigrant voters, which arguably strengthens democracy by enfranchising previously-excluded groups. Higher turnout can then give emigrant activists more leverage in their negotiations with homeland authorities, especially in the rare event that their vote has the potential to sway elections. Ideally, this leverage would translate into more effective mechanisms of what O'Donnell (1998) calls 'vertical accountability' whereby voters 'throw the bums out' if they disapprove of their performance. Unfortunately, these mechanisms are especially compromised in fragile democracies where voters depend on clientelistic networks and have low expectations of elected officials. Rather than being defined progammatically, parties are little more than vehicles for distributing spoils to individuals and/or groups and supporting the personal agendas of charismatic leaders. In this context, party outreach is likely to block rather than unleash the democratizing potential of emigrant activists, who either join the game of competing for patronage – with higher turnout serving as yet another bargaining chip – or disengage entirely from a system they perceive as hopelessly partisan and corrupt.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Notes

1. Quantitative data sources on migration and overseas voting can be found in the Appendix.
2. See, for example, Duterte's 'Broken Vows' Slammed as OFWs Commemorate Flor Contemplacion's 22nd Death Anniversary (2017). Posted on the Migrante International website, available at https://migranteinternational.org/2017/03/17/dutertes-broken-vows-slammed-as-ofws-commemorate-flor-contemplacions-22nd-death-anniversary/
3. Author interview with migrant hometown association leader, 11 May 2006, Los Angeles, CA.
4. Following Burgess and Tyburski (2017), I am using voters as a share of total migrant stocks to measure turnout.
5. Author interview with former consultant to the National Council for Dominican Communities Abroad, 17 November 2016, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.
6. Across 107 elections in 25 post-1980 democracies between 2004 and 2017, just over 6% of all emigrants cast ballots from abroad (Burgess and Tyburski, 2017).
7. See, for example, https://iamlebanese.org/index.php/why-citizenship-matters; http://www.clfw.org/our-news.html
8. Author interviews with leaders of Mexican hometown associations, 6 April 2010, Mexico City.

ORCID iD

Katrina Burgess https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3585-3105

References

Ace Project (2017) Lebanon, Law No.44, Parliamentary Elections. Available at: http://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/mideast/LB/lebanon-law-no.44-parliamentary-elections-2017/view

Abdelhady, Dalia (2011) *The Lebanese Diaspora*. New York: New York University Press.

Ahmed, Tarek Ali (2015) How Lebanon's #YouStink Protests Are Rippling across the World. *Saudi Gazette*. Available at: http://saudigazette.com.sa/article/134954/How-Lebanons-YouStink-protests-are-rippling-across-the-world

Bach, Jonathan and M Scott Soloman (2008) Labors of Globalization: Emergent state responses. *New Global Studies* 2(2): 1–19.

Bello, Madge and Vincent Reyes (1986) Filipino Americans and the Marcos Overthrow: The transformation of political consciousness. *Amerasia* 13(1): 73–83.

Brand, Laurie A (2006) *Citizens Abroad: Emigration and the State in the Middle East and North Africa*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Brand, Laurie A (2007) *State, Citizenship, and Diaspora: The Cases of Jordan and Lebanon*. La Jolla: Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, UCSD.

Burgess, Katrina (2016) Organized Migrants and Accountability from Afar. *Latin American Research Review* 51(2): 150–173.

Burgess, Katrina and Michael D Tyburski (2017) Explaining Patterns of Overseas Voting. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, 30 August–3 September 2017, San Francisco.

Collyer, Michael (2014) Inside out? Directly Elected 'Special Representation' of Emigrants in National Legislatures and the Role of Popular Sovereignty. *Political Geography* 41(1): 64–73.

Cortes, Zaira (2013) Repudian en NYC decisión de RD contra hijos de haitianos. *El Diario NY*, September 28. Available at: https://eldiariony.com/2013/09/28/repudian-en-nyc-decision-de-rd-contra-hijos-de-haitianos/.

Délano, Alexandra (2010) *Diagnóstico del Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior*. Mexico, DF: Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo y Fundación para la Productividad en el Campo.

Délano, Alexandra (2011) *Mexico and its Diaspora in the United States: Policies of Emigration Since 1848*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Dresser, Denise (1993) Exporting Conflict: Transboundary Consequences of Mexican Politics. In Abraham F. Lowenthal and Katrina Burgess (eds) *The California–Mexico Connection*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 82–112.

Elghossain, Anthony (2017) *One Step Forward for Lebanon's Elections*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Fernández de Castro, Rafael (2016) La Diáspora, Gigante Dormido. *El Financiero*, May 22, 2017. Available at: http://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/opinion/la-diaspora-gigante-dormido.html.

Fielding-Smith, Abigail (2009) From Brazil to Byblos, Lebanese diaspora pours in for vote. *The National*. Available at: http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/from-brazil-to-byblos-lebanese-diaspora-pours-in-for-vote

Gamlen, Alan (2014) Diaspora Institutions and Diaspora Governance. *International Migration Review* 48(1): 180–217.

García y Griego, Manuel (1988) Hacia una Nueva Visión del Problema de los Indocumentados en Estados Unidos. In Manuel García y Griego and Monica Verea Campos (eds) *México y Estados Unidos frente a la Migración de los Indocumentados*. Mexico, DF: UNAM/Porrúa, 123–152.

Gatten, Emma (2012) Petition for Expatriate Voting Officially Launched. *Daily Star*, July 15. Available at: http://ulcm.org/news/wlcu-news/2012/07/15/petition-for-expatriate-voting-officially-launched.

Graham, Pamela M (2001) Political Incorporation and Re-Incorporation: Simultaneity in the Dominican Migrant Experience. In Héctor R. Cordero-Guzmán, Robert C. Smith and Ramón Grosfoguel (eds) *Migration, Transnationalization, and Race in a Changing New York*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 87–108.

Guarnizo, Luis (1998) The Rise of Transnational Social Formations: Mexican and Dominican state responses to transnational migration. *Political Power and Social Theory* 12: 45–94.

Hicken, Allen (2009) *Building Party Systems in Developing Democracies*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hourani, Guita (2010) *Lebanese Migration to the Gulf (1950–2009)*. Washington, DC: Middle East Institute.

Koinova, Maria (2010) Can Conflict-Generated Diasporas Be Moderate Actors during Episodes of Contested Sovereignty? Lebanese and Albanian Diasporas Compared. *Review of International Studies* 37(1): 437–462.

Lafleur, Jean-Michel (2013) *Transnational Politics and the State: The External Voting Rights of Diasporas*. Oxford: Routledge.

Lamba-Nieves, Deepak (2014) *Empowering Cooperation: Dominican Hometown Associations and the Politics of Transnational Community Development*. PhD Dissertation, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, MIT.

Lieber, Matthew A (2010) *Elections Beyond Borders: Overseas Voting in Mexico and the Dominican Republic, 1994–2008*. PhD Dissertation. Department of Political Science, Brown University.

Mandaville, Peter and Terence Lyons (eds) (2012) *Politics from Afar: Transnational Diasporas and Networks*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Morgan, Jana, Jonathan Hartlyn and Rosario Espinal (2011) Dominican Party System Continuity amid Regional Transformations: Economic policy, clientelism, and migration flows. *Latin American Politics and Society* 53(1): 1–32.

Muhanna, Elias (2017) Is Lebanon's New Electoral System a Path Out of Sectarianism? *The New Yorker*, June 30. Available at: https://thevotingnews.com/is-lebanons-new-electoral-system-a-path-out-of-sectarianism-the-new-yorker/

Norris, Pippa (2002) *Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Political Activism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

O'Donnell, Guillermo (1998) Horizontal Accountability in New Democracies. *Journal of Democracy* 9(3): 112–126.

Ostergaard-Nielsen, Eva (2003) The Politics of Migrants' Transnational Political Practices. *International Migration Review* 37(3): 760–786.

Pearlman, Wendy (2013) Emigration and Power: A study of sects in Lebanon, 1860–2010. *Politics & Society* 41(1): 103–133.

Pearlman, Wendy (2014) Competing for Lebanon's Diaspora: Transnationalism and domestic struggles in a weak state. *International Migration Review* 48(1): 34–75.

Portes, Alejandro, Cristina Escobar and Alexandria Walton Radford (2007) Immigrant Transnational Organizations and Development: A comparative study. *International Migration Review* 41(1): 242–281.

Rhodes, Sybil and Arus Harutyunyan (2010) Extending Citizenship to Emigrants: Democratic contestation and a new global norm. *International Political Science Review* 31(4): 470–493.

Rodriguez, Robyn M (2002) Migrant Heroes: Nationalism, citizenship and the politics of Filipino migrant labor. *Citizenship Studies* 6(3): 341–356.

Smets, Kaat and Carolien van Ham (2013) The Embarrassment of Riches? A meta-analysis of individual-level research on voter turnout. *Electoral Studies* 32(2): 344–359.

Smith, Michael P and Matt Bakker (2008) *Citizenship Across Borders: The Political Transnationalism of El Migrante*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Smith, Robert (2008) Contradictions of Diasporic Institutionalization in Mexican Politics: The 2006 migrant vote and other forms of inclusion and control. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31(4): 708–741.

Solomon, M Scott (2009) State-Led Migration, Democratic Legitimacy, and Deterritorialization: The Philippines' labour export model. *European Journal of East Asian Studies* 8(2): 275–300.

Tabar, Paul (2014) 'Political Remittances': The case of Lebanese expatriates voting in national elections. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 35(4): 442–460.

Author biography

Katrina Burgess is Associate Professor of Political Economy at the Fletcher School at Tufts University. She is author of *Parties and Unions in the New Global Economy* (Pittsburgh, 2004) and co-editor with Abraham F. Lowenthal of *The California-Mexico Connection* (Stanford, 1993). She has also published numerous book chapters and journal articles, including pieces in *Comparative Political Studies*, *Latin American Politics & Society*, *Latin American Research Review*, *South European Society & Politics*, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, and *World Politics*.

Appendix. Migration and election data sources.

	Migration	Elections
General	World Bank (2013) Bilateral Migration Matrix, available at http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data; OECD (2010) Database on Immigrants in OECD and Non-OECD Countries (DIOC), available at http://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/dioc.htm.	
Philippines	Commission on Filipinos Overseas (2016) Stock Estimate of Overseas Filipinos, available at http://www.cfo.gov.ph/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1341:statistical-profile-of-registered-filipino-emigrants&catid=134:statisticsstock-estimate&Itemid=814; McNamara, Keith, and Jeanne Batalova (2015) *Filipino Immigrants in the United States*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.	Comelec (various) Overseas Voting, available at http://www.comelec.gov.ph/
Mexico	Zong, Jie, and Jeanne Batalova (2016) *Mexican Immigrants in the United States*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.	Instituto Federal Electoral (various), Resultados Electorales, available at http://computos2012.ife.org.mx/index.html
Lebanon	Lebanese Americans: An Overview (2015) Raleigh: Moise A. Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies, North Carolina State University, available at http://lebanesestudies.ncsu.edu/publications/lebaneseamericans.php	
Dominican Republic	Nwosu, Chiamaka, and Jeanne Batalova (2014) *Immigrants from the Dominican Republic in the United States*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.	Junta Central Electoral (various), Resultados Electorales, available at http://jce.gob.do/Resultados-Electorales