

## Suffrage Beyond Borders: The Adoption of Extra-Territorial Voting Rights

Why do countries extend the right to vote to their non-resident citizens? The number of countries granting extra-territorial voting rights increased from only 17 in 1980 to nearly 100 in 2011. This paper analyzes a newly collected dataset on the adoption of extra-territorial voting rights, covering 170 countries around the world from 1980 to 2011. We argue that both domestic and international factors play a crucial role in the adoption of extra-territorial voting rights. Countries with poor economic performance are more likely to adopt extraterritorial voting rights, as are those whose neighbors have extra-territorial voting rights. The former result suggests that vulnerable governments may seek to strategically broaden their base of support, while the latter suggests an important role for policy diffusion, learning and/or regional norm development.

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## Introduction

Why do countries extend the right to vote in national elections to non-residents? For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the dominant conceptualization of the democratic polity was based on territory and residence. Only citizens living within the borders of the country had a moral claim to participate in governance - those who paid taxes and were directly affected by state services and laws. Yet the territorial conception of citizenship and voting has been increasingly challenged by new patterns of migration and new forms of communication. More than 200 million people now live outside their country of origin, and these modern migrants are taking a direct role in the economic and political life of their home countries. Governments have responded to the development of active, powerful migrant communities in diverse ways, but one noticeable trend has been the increasing tendency to offer non-resident citizens the right to vote in national elections. In 1980, approximately 11% of all countries offered some form of extraterritorial voting rights; by 2010, 51% of all countries had extended voting rights to citizens abroad. There has been an immense change in democratic norms and practices.

But why have some countries adopted extraterritorial voting rights and not others? What factors explain the timing of these reforms? Why have some countries like Brazil been early adopters, while other countries like Chile have been slow to extend similar rights? The easy answers provide clues but also raise questions. The stock of migrants abroad may weigh on legislators and generate a demand for rights expansions, but also create greater electoral risks. Countries in seemingly similar situations, like El Salvador and Honduras, have opted for different policies.<sup>1</sup> Trends toward democratization have expanded opportunities for participation,

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<sup>1</sup> El Salvador does not offer non-resident citizens the right to vote from abroad. Honduras has taken steps toward enfranchisement, though their early consular voting efforts only covered a limited geographical territory.

but more authoritarian countries like Tunisia (under Ben Ali) extended rights while comparable, somewhat more democratic, countries like Nigeria have been slow to enfranchise migrants.

Our approach in this paper is to focus on the domestic partisan and economic motivation for extending voting rights, as well as assess the possibility of international policy diffusion and neighborhood effects. We expect that countries are more likely to pass legislation granting non-resident citizens the opportunity to vote from abroad when the incumbent political leaders are vulnerable. When incumbent political leaders fear they lack sufficient support from their domestic constituencies, particularly when they face economic downturns, they may be tempted to try to shore up their support by expanding the franchise.

Expanding the franchise is a risky strategy, but when leaders are able to reassure themselves about the consequences of adopting extraterritorial voting rights by looking to the example of similarly situated countries that have already adopted extraterritorial voting rights, they are more likely to believe that the potential benefits outweigh the likely risks. Thus we expect a diffusion effect whereby countries are more likely to adopt extraterritorial voting rights if they can see successful implementation in similar countries.

We test our argument using a new dataset of extraterritorial voting rights extensions. The dataset covers the adoption of extraterritorial voting in all countries between 1980 and 2011. Using Cox proportional hazard models, we explore the domestic and international causes of enfranchisement. We find that recent economic hard times correlate with the adoption of extraterritorial voting rights. Neighborhood effects strongly condition the likelihood of adoption, with countries more likely to adopt when their neighbors or other countries in their region have previously adopted extraterritorial voting rights.

## **Defining extraterritorial voting**

The right to participate in elections while living abroad has been referred to as “absentee voting”, “migrant voting”, “out of country voting”, “voting from abroad”, “external voting”, “expatriate voting”, and “diaspora voting”. In general, we will use the term “extraterritorial voting” to refer to the right of non-resident citizens to participate in national elections from abroad. The first key element of extra-territorial voting (XTV) is non-residency. The non-residency condition distinguishes extraterritorial voting from simple absentee voting. In most countries, soldiers, sailors, travelling businessmen, and other itinerant professions have been accommodated in some way during election time, whether through early ballots or postal ballots. These groups are almost always considered residents of the country, with some ability to register through normal administrative channels. It takes a deliberate effort to accommodate non-residents, however. On a technical level, non-residents do not get contacted during door-to-door registration drives and they often fail to show up on tax rolls. The mere process of the registration process makes it difficult for non-residents to participate in elections unless electoral authorities take specific measures to reach out beyond the country’s borders.

Despite registration challenges, non-residents can still make it on to the voting rolls in many countries. This brings us to the second key condition: a mechanism for voting from abroad. In many countries, non-residents who make it on to the electoral roll can travel to their home country to vote. Cypriot elections, for instance, often involve parties chartering cheap flights for supporters to return from abroad. Turkey sets up polling booths at customs offices on the border to facilitate voting by non-residents. The requirement to return home, however, is an implicit

property requirement on the franchise. Only those that can afford the travel and lost wages can participate. Extraterritorial voting exists when non-residents are not required to return home to cast a vote. This may take the form of postal voting, consular voting, or appointing a delegate. These processes are always imperfect, but they are conceptually and practically different from returning home to vote.

### **Puzzle**

Granting extraterritorial voting rights constitutes a *de facto*, if not necessarily *de jure*, expansion of the electorate. Why do politicians extend the franchise? Why do politicians empower previously excluded groups by granting them citizenship rights? In countries with competitive elections, sitting politicians attain office through the support of the public. They invest resources gauging public opinion, crafting their messages to fit the crowd, pushing policies that will earn them credit during campaign season, and building organizations to mobilize their voting bases. Sitting politicians attain office by knowing their electorate. Incumbents typically should be content with the electorate that put them in power. It is the electorate they know and in which they have successfully achieved office. So why do sitting politicians extend the vote to new groups? Why risk the possibility of being turned out of office by a new group of voters?

Przeworski () suggests that the explanations for extension of new voting rights fall into two categories: conquered or granted. Either the looming threat of social conflict forces the establishment to extend the franchise to avert revolution, or strategic politicians support franchise extension because they anticipate new voters will help them meet their electoral or policy goals. Extraterritorial voting rights fall almost universally in Przeworski's "granted"

category, as the revolutionary potential of non-residents is typically circumscribed by their physical distance from the organs of power. Yet conceding that extraterritorial voting rights are granted is hardly a revelation. The bigger question remains: why are they granted? Even if rights are granted for strategic purposes, what strategies do they serve? How can we make sense of the timing of these franchise extensions?

The empirical phenomenon of extraterritorial voting rights expansion elicits additional theoretical questions. The pattern of XTV rights extensions has been remarkably steady over the last thirty years. There is no clear ‘tipping point’ to mark a period in which countries rush to adopt XTV. Yet while the extensions appear to be a collection of state-level decisions, a clear regional pattern of expansion still exists. It is also striking that extraterritorial voting rights have been remarkably enduring—there have been remarkably few cases in which extraterritorial suffrage rights have been revoked after being initially granted.

### **Existing Explanations**

While the theoretical literature on extraterritorial voting remains in the early stage of development, there are discernible approaches. The work emphasizing structural change in the international system has often been more concerned with conceptualizing the normative implication of the empirical phenomenon rather than explaining variation across cases. With the exceptions of Lieber () and Collyer and Vathi (), the empirical work has typically focused on explaining variation across a small number of cases but has not grappled with the broader empirical trend. Some scholars have emphasized factors ‘external’ to the domestic political system, and the other emphasizing factors ‘internal’ to the system. External explanations have

typically emphasized emigrant resources, international norms, and interstate conflict, whereas internal explanations have typically emphasized regime transformation, state capacity, electoral interests, and institutional structures. While the existing explanations make valuable contributions, they are typically incomplete, as discussed below.

### *External explanations*

Extraterritorial voting exist because citizens live outside the country, thus the natural starting point for explaining XTV rights is invariably the size and resources of the emigrant community. Migrant communities are not necessarily passive actors in home country politics. Emigrant organizations mobilize supporters and lobby politicians in pursuit of their political and economic goals, and one common goal is extension of extraterritorial voting rights. Politicians respond to organized pressure, and the likelihood of adopting extraterritorial voting rights may be conditioned by the resources the emigrant community is able to marshal in its defense. For instance, IDEA found that migrant lobbying was a key factor in generating reform in the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and the Philippines (IDEA 180, 184, 189).

A natural expectation, then, is that the size and resources of the migrant community are crucial. Organizations and lobbying activities require money. There are common start-up costs for aspiring emigrant groups: meetings need to be organized, travel expenses need to be accommodated, promotional materials need to be printed, lawyers need to be consulted, and – sometimes – office space needs to be secured. Funding emigrant organization is easier when there is a large pool of emigrants to tap into for material support. Thus large emigrant communities with large populations have more resources to devote to organization and lobbying.

Emigrants frequently have great economic clout in their home countries, and some have argued that countries that are economically dependent upon migrant remittances may be more willing to extend rights (Itzigsohn 2000).

An alternative external explanation for extraterritorial rights extensions is the effect of international conflict. One of the classic explanations for manhood suffrage is the need to generate greater cooperation of citizenry in the face of expansion to military conflict (Ticchi & Vindigni 2006), and one can readily extend this logic to the extension of extraterritorial voting rights. As Machiavelli and Weber have argued, when facing an external threat the elite will grant broad rights in order to elicit the cooperation of the broader mass of citizens. The core insight is that rights are extended to generate support for the system and to encourage citizens to do things they otherwise would avoid (e.g. die in battle). Similarly, there are historical examples of authorities extending the vote to non-resident citizens during a time of war. Canada, the US, and Britain all experimented with XTV during the wars of the 20th century. More recently, Brand () has tied XTV extensions in Algeria and Morocco to the existence international conflict. In effect, the North African regimes attempted to rally their emigrant populations to the national defense by extending them expanded citizenship rights.

A third strand of external explanations for the enfranchisement of emigrants highlights the influence of new international norms and actors. Sassen () has placed extraterritorial voting in a context of “denationalized citizenship,” or an emerging normative framework in which democratic participation is detached from traditional nation-state structures. Lieber () has identified the influence of epistemic communities of election experts who have promoted the practice of extraterritorial voting. A handful of expert elections groups, including International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), the International Foundation for



Election Systems (IFES) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), have spread the practice of extraterritorial voting through consultations with lawmakers and electoral bodies. The influence of international norms and actors is particularly strong in those cases where international peacekeepers and administrators play a pivotal role organizing elections in post-conflict societies. For instance, the organization of extraterritorial voting in post-conflict Cambodia, East Timor, and Afghanistan was overseen by international bodies. In all three cases, extraterritorial voting was initially enacted by international organizers of elections, and the obligation then transferred to domestic actors for subsequent elections.

However, while the existing external explanations receive support from close examination of individual cases, they are often theoretically underspecified and generally prove inadequate in explaining the broader patterns of extraterritorial voting rights adoption. The resources argument has a clear counter-weighting logic: a large emigrant community with greater financial resources may have more funds to lobby for their cause, but the fact that they are large and have their own financial resources also contain heightened political risks for politician. Emigrants economic independence from their makes them less vulnerable to clientelist appeals and other traditional forms of politics and relatively free to oppose the sitting government and support parties based on policies and performance. Where there is a large pool of potential migrant voters, sitting politicians will naturally feel anxious about extending them rights. Furthermore, home country voters may feel they are the ones most affected by the policies pursued by the government, so they should have the right to pick to government. As one Uruguayan politician remarked during the recent debate on extraterritorial voting, “Conceptually the Uruguayans that live in the country are just as Uruguayan as those outside of the country, but those that live here are the ones who have to elect their representatives, become responsible of

them, enjoy or suffer the consequences of their vote” (Ultimas Noticias 5 Oct 2010). Collyer and Vathi () note a tendency for small countries to avoid out-of-country voting due to the possibility that “even a numerically small emigrant community could have a disproportionate influence on the outcome of elections” (2007, 17).

The need to garner greater citizenry support during interstate war is an appealing argument in many cases, but it is clear that interstate conflict may also increase security risks which prevent or delay the implementation of XTV rights. Singapore, for instance, delayed the implementation of XTV following the September 11 attacks which raised fears for embassy and consulate security worldwide. If a country is at war with a neighboring state in which many of its emigrants reside, the logistical challenges of extending extraterritorial voting rights may outweigh any desire to do so. Most fundamentally, however, the expansion of extraterritorial voting rights to 80 new countries over the last 30 years does not match any pattern of interstate war.

Explanations relying on emerging global democratic norms and epistemic communities run into similar problems in explaining broader patterns of adoption. The relevant global epistemic community has only developed recently and the global XTV trend clearly predates the epistemic community. As Lieber () recounts, many of the initial meetings and reports by international NGOs were done at the behest of the Mexican government, whose turn-of-the-millennium research into extraterritorial voting was initially stymied by a lack of information. Furthermore, as Brand () recounts, the rise of extraterritorial voting amongst countries that do not subscribe to global democratic norms highlights the importance of considering other factors.

### *Internal explanations*

If existing external explanations have been inadequate to explain the broader global trend in the extension of extraterritorial voting rights, what about internal domestic explanations? Most internal explanations for enfranchisement of emigrants focus on identifying domestic opportunities that may be particularly amenable to the extension of suffrage rights.

First, periods of regime change also offer a window of opportunity for rights expansions. Existing work suggests the expansion of extraterritorial voting rights correlates with changes in regime type, particularly transitions to democracy (Smith 2003). Democracy does not necessitate that non-resident citizens be granted rights, nonetheless, democracy does entail that the citizens be involved in the process of leadership selection, and it is natural for institutional designers in transitional countries to revisit the question of what constitutes the polity. Transitions provide a window of opportunity in which extraterritorial rights can be written into law without seriously disrupting the status-quo.

Furthermore, institutional designers will often feel a moral obligation to incorporate non-residents during the democratization process. Migrant populations play a symbolically important democratizing role in countries where authoritarianism leads dissidents to seek political asylum in foreign countries. These moral considerations were seen in Brazil, where “politicians who discussed [extraterritorial voting] assumed that Brazilians who had left the country had done so for political reasons under the dictatorship, and therefore democracy needed to recognize and guarantee their political rights” (IDEA 128). The transition to democracy, then, provides both an opportunity to redefine the scope of participation and tends to occur in a political context sympathetic to the interests of the migrant community.

Bureaucratic structure and capacity also affects XTV adoption and implementation. Whether the process involves sending ballots out by mail or setting up overseas polling booths in diplomatic missions abroad, granting emigrants the right to vote is financially costly and administratively burdensome. Even countries that have previously provided opportunities for participation abroad will rethink the policy in light of costs. In Afghanistan and the Cook Islands, extraterritorial voting rights were withdrawn, largely due to financial concerns (IDEA).

Beyond cost and administration, the relative autonomy of state bureaucracies can affect the decision to enfranchise emigrants. Overseas elections are typically administered by foreign ministries and state electoral bodies. Officials within the bureaucracies have their own interests, which can conflict with politicians' desire to extend XTV rights. Brand (), for instance, recounts how XTV rights in Morocco were rescinded due to intra-agency conflict over the right to speak for Moroccans abroad. Lieber () describes the resistance to XTV by Mexican foreign affairs officials cautious about potential backlash against political campaigning among Mexican communities abroad. He contrasts the Mexican case to that of the Dominican Republic, where the politicization of the bureaucracy spurred the implementation of inclusive XTV rights.

A third domestic explanation highlights the role of electoral, typically partisan, interests. Parties propose extraterritorial voting rights because they think they will earn the support of voters abroad and increase their legislative power, or because they think the public act of supporting migrant voting rights will earn the party support simply for appearing on the side of "political reform" or "migrant rights" more generally. Both Smith () and Lafleur (2011) have underlined the importance of these outcome contingent motivations. Lafleur notes, "once homeland political parties determine what the potential impact of the addition of external voters on overall election results will be, they will support of block legislation according to expected

electoral gains or losses” (2011, 484). Examples of self-interested reform proposals - and opposition to these proposals - abound. In Italy, rightwing parties pushed for enfranchisement partially because they expected Italians abroad to support right-of-centre options. In Belgium, Liberals expected support from Belgians abroad and put extraterritorial rights on the agenda. In Chile, conservatives have consistently opposed enfranchising migrants as they expect the left to benefit from such a reform. In South Africa, the African National Congress removed extraterritorial voting rights as they expected to receive few votes from a relatively white migrant base. The calculations made by parties are not always accurate; in Italy, voters abroad have not supported the right, despite the predications of reformers. Still, electoral projections color position taking.

Pursuit of electoral advantage is not limited to capturing new voters abroad. Parties will publically support migrant enfranchisement to appear on the side of political reform. This is particularly true of parties that have been out of power for long periods and have spent years advocating a reformist agenda. In Bolivia, it was the rise of the Movement to Socialism (Movimiento al Socialismo) that put the electoral rights of migrants on the agenda. In Uruguay, it was the ascension of the Broad Front (Frente Amplio) that created the conditions for the (ultimately unsuccessful) referendum on voting from abroad. Parties that spend time out of office have a tendency to endorse extraterritorial voting rights as part of their broader challenge to the establishment, and their motivation is particularly strong when they view the emigrant population as a potential support base.

Discussion of political interests lead to a fourth set of domestic variables that can condition the likelihood of adoption; namely, the institutional rules that structure political competition. Institutions affect what type of political actors are able to translate support into

legislative representation and what impact political actors have on the policy-making process. Two potential relationships exist. First, XTV is most likely to find a champion when there is a wide range of nationally oriented interests represented in the legislature. Thus countries with proportional systems should be most likely to adopt XTV. For instance, in the Philippines case the adoption of a mixed-member system allowed new nationally-oriented politicians to gain election. These actors were instrumental in placing the adoption of XTV rights on the political agenda. Second, XTV is most likely to be adopted when there is a diffusion of political power. In particular, systems that incentivise coalition bargaining should be more likely to adopt extraterritorial voting rights simply because a small party might insist on it as the price of entrance. In Italy, for instance, Berlusconi was not in favour of extraterritorial voting rights but backed the reform in order to please his coalition partners (Lafleur ).

Again, while individual case studies may highlight the importance of the existing internal explanations, like the existing external explanations they run into serious challenges when explaining the broader global pattern of XTV adoption. While regime transitions may provide a key window of opportunity for the extension of extraterritorial voting rights, the argument provides little leverage for the bulk of cases in which extraterritorial voting rights have been granted independently of regime transition, and does not necessarily help explain the many cases of regime transition that do not result in the adoption of extraterritorial voting rights. For example, most of the countries that adopted XTV rights in the 1980s were long-established democracies. The ‘waves’ of democracy do not show up when we actually examine XTV adoption rates. Post-communist countries in Central Europe, for instance, took different paths; two adopted as part of the transition process (Poland 1990; Slovenia 1992), two waited over a decade before adoption (Czech Republic 2002; Hungary 2004), and one has never adopted

(Slovakia). Even though windows of opportunity from regime transitions may play a role in understanding the adoption of extraterritorial voting rights, the argument remains a partial explanation at best.

Bureaucratic and institutional explanations cannot explain the timing of adoption and are best at establishing broad across-case differences in the likelihood of XTV extension. Electoral explanations provide a compelling logic XTV rights extensions, but run the risk of over-predicating change: if the logic of extensions were purely electoral in motivation there ought to be expansions and retrenchments whenever new parties came to office or power. Furthermore, the electoral argument frequently ignores the considerable risks inherent in enfranchising new voters. Predicting the partisan preferences of disenfranchised voters is difficult, and experience demonstrates that parties are prone to miscalculation. Enfranchising new groups is one strategy for boosting a political actor's electoral fortunes, but it is a risky strategy and more careful analysis is needed to explain when parties are willing to take on such a risk.

## **Our Theory**

Our argument builds on the previous, what we believe are largely partial, explanations. The adoption of extraterritorial voting rights is, in most cases, an instance of political leaders acting on behalf of a constituency other than that those who brought them to power. Indeed, given that in most countries there is a perception that emigrants are disproportionately likely to support opposition parties and politicians, the adoption of extraterritorial voting rights potentially entails quite serious electoral risks for incumbent governments. If we believe that leaders

typically do not choose to vote themselves out of office, how can we best explain the adoption of extraterritorial voting rights?

One possible explanation, discussed briefly above, is the role of international actors and the rise of global norms of political participation promoting extraterritorial voting. In a handful of cases that we have investigated, the intervention of international actors was clearly determinative. However, the clearest cases of the importance of international actors (Afghanistan, Cambodia) are also the comparatively rare cases of the reversal of extraterritorial voting rights. Similarly, arguments about the rise of global norms has a ring of truth, but it is clear that the systematic rise of extraterritorial voting rights both predates most of the global norms advocacy in the area, with the number of countries adopting extraterritorial voting rights increasing at a nearly uniform rate from 1980 through the present, suggesting that there is more to the story.

We believe the most important factor in explaining the adoption of extraterritorial voting rights instead lies in understanding why political leaders will make risky decisions to attempt to change their electorate. When should leaders choose to dance with someone other than those who brought them to power? Ultimately, we believe this is driven primarily by domestic vulnerability (and more specifically, poor economic performance) combined with the ability to assess the benefits and costs of the policy. In other words, vulnerable political leaders are more likely to actively seek out ways to buttress their support. And when leaders are able to reassure themselves about the consequences of adopting extraterritorial voting rights by looking to the example of similarly situated countries that have already adopted extraterritorial voting rights, they are more likely to believe that the potential benefits outweigh the likely risks.



Thus while we emphasize the crucial role of domestic considerations that influence the desire of political leaders to actively court a new potential electorate, albeit an international electorate (migrants), we believe that there is an important role for policy learning. Political leaders draw on the lessons learned from similarly situated countries. And in the case of extraterritorial voting, they typically appear to learn that extension of migrants' voting rights entails fairly modest administrative costs and rarely upsets the existing domestic electoral balance. We explore both the domestic vulnerability and policy diffusion sides of our argument in further detail below.

### *Domestic Vulnerability*

Enfranchising new groups is risky, and incumbents are typically comfortable with the electorate that put them in power. However, economic downturns influence their comfort with their electoral base. Voters are liable to blame the incumbent for their economic hardships. Knowing that popular support is likely to decline in tandem with economic conditions, incumbents look for new voting bases and new strategies to shore up their flagging support.

Enfranchising non-resident citizens may be an attractive option for vulnerable political leaders for three inter-related reasons. First, declining fortunes at home prompt incumbents to view see emigrants as a potentially receptive voter base. Living and working abroad, emigrants may not share the same economic grievances as their fellow citizens back home. Although migrants and their families are typically seen as disproportionately supporting opposition parties, to the extent that granting them the franchise may help sway them to increase their support of the government, thus extending the franchise may be an electoral opportunity, not just a risk.

Second, economic decline at home raises awareness of remittance flows. As jobs become scarce and the value of foreign currency more valuable, remittance flows take on increasing importance. Given the increasing value of remittances, resident voters receiving remittances may become more likely to communicate with their out-of-country network or at least more aware of their dependence on their support system abroad. With a heightened consciousness of the importance of networks abroad, citizens become more receptive to politicians claiming to defend the rights of non-resident citizens. When this is the case, politicians may see electoral advantage in placing extraterritorial voting rights on the agenda.

Third, economic decline produces a more diffuse demand for political reform at home. Politicians and citizens blame the failures of the political system for their economic hardships. Critiques of the system can lead to more general calls for reform. Though political reform proposals are unlikely to fix the current economic crisis, they are at least an initiative politicians have some control over. Economic decline itself, then, leads to reformist proposals that could expand to discussions of electoral institutions and suffrage. *(CITE on the literature about increase in granting rights when economic difficulty makes it harder to provide goodies).*

There are, in short, good reasons for policymakers to consider XTV adoption around the time of economic crisis. Whether the direct motivation is to capture new voters abroad, please domestic voters positively disposed to their network abroad, or simply to compensate for poor economic performance by enhancing political rights more generally, politicians have electoral an electoral motivation to support proposals for extraterritorial voting during tough economic times.

*Policy Learning*

The argument about the domestic vulnerability of political elites, however, rests on assumptions about the beliefs of policymakers concerning the potential benefits and costs of the extension of extraterritorial voting rights. The costs and benefits of such a policy change are no doubt evaluated based not only on the domestic circumstances they face, but based on what they can learn from the experiences of other countries. As the extensive literature on international policy learning and diffusion has long argued, when a policy is seen as potentially risky or costly, policymakers frequently look to the experiences of other policymakers who have faced similar choices.

Countries are often likely to emulate the policies of the direct neighbors. Countries look to their neighbors or other countries they have ties to as a policy referent. Initial experience in one country demonstrates to policy-makers in neighboring countries that extending rights is feasible. In terms of electoral risk, policy-makers in bordering on a country with XTV rights are likely to learn that emigrants rarely swing elections, thus extensions are mainly harmless. Similarly, migrants from one country view the privileges and lobbying successes of migrants from another country and may seek similar expansion of rights.

Our belief is that the primary mechanism for international diffusion of extraterritorial voting rights is that political actors are learning from the political experiences in other states, rather than attempting to adapt to (exogenously) changing global norms. As we discuss in our empirical section, the evidence suggests to the extent we see normative changes playing a role, we think they are more likely to be regional rather than global.

Neighborhood effects tend to be strong when countries are enmeshed in a dense network of regional organizations. These organizations promote norms and best practices, provide

opportunities for communication, and, in some cases, require reforms to electoral laws. Europe has the most comprehensive set of regional organizations, some of which deal directly with the issue of extraterritorial voting. The Council of Europe's Venice Commission published a detailed report of legal provisions for out-of-country voting rights for its member countries. European Union member states are required to provide their non-resident citizens living within another EU country the opportunity to participate in European Parliamentary elections. This regularized the norm of enfranchising non-resident citizens for some elections, which seems to have contributed to the adoption of similar extraterritorial voting rights for national level elections.

The mechanisms of international diffusion are frequently difficult to distinguish empirically (e.g. Franzese and Hays 2008, Gilardi 2012). Our empirical strategy involves testing a range of alternative mechanisms using what have become fairly widely adopted spatial econometrics (cf. Beck et al. 2006, Elkins et al. 2006, Dobbin et al. 2007, Gilardi 2010). We discuss our empirical strategy in more detail in the next section.

## **Empirical Analyses**

To analyze the extension of extra-territorial voting rights, we collected an original dataset on extra-territorial voting rights over time. For the analyses in this paper, we focus on modeling the decision to extend voting rights. Specifically, we build on a question from the dataset: "If elections were held tomorrow, would migrants be allowed to vote from abroad?" If the answer is "yes", the variable is coded as 1; if the answer is "no", the variable is assigned a value of 0.

The variable is coded annually for 170 countries from 1980-2011. A country is coded as "yes" starting from the year the legal framework for non-resident voting is adopted. In most

cases, the legal framework is provided by new legislation, typically a new electoral law. In a small number of cases, the legal framework is provided by a ruling from the judicial system. A country is coded as “yes” only if the legal framework for non-resident voting was implemented. A legal framework is considered implemented once the country has completed one election with extraterritorial voting. In some countries a legal framework was adopted but the laws were not implemented. Bolivia, for example, passed laws enabling voting from abroad in 1991 and 2005, but it was not until after the constitutional and electoral reforms of 2009 that voting from abroad was implemented. Accordingly, Bolivia is coded as “yes” beginning in 2009, the year of the legal reform and the year of the first election. On the other hand, if a legal framework is adopted prior to an election year, and the legal framework is eventually implemented during the next election, the country is coded as 1 starting from the year the legal framework is adopted. Thus Brazil was coded as 1 starting in 1988, even though the first election with extraterritorial voting was not held until 1989.

The strategy for data collection was as follows. First, we set out to acquire documentation of the relevant legal framework (electoral laws, constitutions, etc) during the time period of study. Where we could not find the documentation, we relied on reporting from IDEA’s “Voting from Abroad” study. Next, we sought to confirm the established dates and implementation using news sources, government press releases, and election monitor reports. If the information we found contradicted the IDEA report, we ensured that we had two independent sources and relied on our own coding decisions. An appendix with our data coding will be made available with this paper, highlighting in particular the differences we found from the IDEA report.

[Figure 1 About Here]

Figure 1 shows the global trend in extra-territorial voting rights adoption. In 1980 only 17 countries had adopted extra-territorial voting rights. This number has increased quite regularly—indeed almost linearly—since that time. With very few exceptions, once a country has implemented extraterritorial voting rights, it maintains those rights. This suggests that from a methodological perspective, an event history approach focusing on analyzing how a range of covariates affect the likelihood of adoption of extraterritorial voting rights, with the post-adoption observations being censored in the analyses, is appropriate. We use a standard Cox proportional hazard model for our analyses.

Given our interest in both the domestic and international factors influencing the adoption of extra-territorial voting rights, our explanatory variables are drawn from a wide range of datasets. Data on domestic economic and political factors are drawn from the World Bank's World Development Indicators, the NELDA dataset (Hyde and Marinov 2012), Polity IV (Marshall and Jaggers), and the Database of Political Institutions (Beck et al.). Our international variables draw on additional migration data from the World Bank (cite), as well as geographic and conflict data from the MEPV project (cite).

The analyses presented in the current conference paper version of this project are preliminary. Given the wide range of data sources and the great heterogeneity in coverage across datasets, we are somewhat chary of suggesting that these models are final, and we are particularly open to suggestions for strengthening the analyses. Some of the limitations of these analyses are tied to the loss of observations due to the exclusion of 'micro-states' from key datasets from which we draw (both NELDA and DPI exclude micro-states). This data loss typically leads us to exclude more than 20% of possible observations. However, as we are

typically only drawing one or two variables from these datasets, many of the observations we lose could be remedied by coding political characteristics for micro-states.

That being said, in the subsequent pages we report our initial analyses testing the relationship between a wide range of domestic and international variables and the adoption of extraterritorial voting rights. As our statistical models are proportional hazard models, rather than standard coefficients, we report hazard ratios in our tables. Hazard ratios significantly greater than 1.0 in our tables suggest that the covariate is associated with a significantly greater likelihood of adoption of extraterritorial voting rights, whereas a ratio significantly less than one suggests that the variable is associated with a lower likelihood of adoption.

Given the relative scarcity of statistical analysis of this question, there is not a standard ‘baseline’ model which we can build upon. Instead, we attempt to draw upon the explanations existing literature to create a baseline model. For our baseline model, presented in Model 1 of Table 1, we considered the inclusion of thirteen variables: seven variables to capture domestic factors and five variables to capture international factors.

We include four institutional variables to capture basic aspects of the domestic political system: the *Polity* variable (-10 to 10, from Polity IV) to capture the basic level of institutional democracy, a dummy variable indicating whether or not a country has a presidential system (*Presidentialism*), a dummy variable indicating whether or not the legislature is election by proportional representation (*PR*) and a variable for the effective number of governing parties (*Gov Parties*). These latter three variables are all drawn from the DPI dataset.

Two variables focus on domestic windows of opportunity. We include a dummy variable that indicates the first three years that a new party in power (*New Party in Power*), using data

from DPI, and a dummy variable indicating the year of a structurally competitive executive election (*Exec Election*, NELDA). We also include the natural log of the country's GDP (*Total GDP*) as a proxy for state capacity, given the existing argument in the literature that the administrative burden of extraterritorial voting may be particularly problematic for smaller states.

The four international variables we considered for our base model include two models capturing the extent to which a state is involved in international war (*Intl War*) and civil conflict (*Civil War*), taken from the MEPV dataset. We also capture the demographic weight of emigrants by taking the total number of emigrants and dividing it by population (*Migrant % of Pop*, calculated from WB and WDI), and the total remittances to the country as a share of GDP (*Remit/GDP*, taken from WDI). After careful consideration, we chose to drop the remittances variable as preliminary analyses indicated that its coefficient was consistently insignificant in our models, and led to a sizable loss of observations.

We considered the inclusion of a full set of regional dummy variables to attempt to identify regional differences, however preliminary analyses suggested that the only region that was significantly different from others was Europe, so we simply included a *Europe* dummy variable in our base model. We also include a time trend variable (*Year*) to account for any changes in the underlying hazard rate of adoption of extraterritorial voting rights over time. In our analyses inclusion of quadratic or cubed terms (cf. Carter and Signorino) to account for nonlinearities in the time trend proved to be insignificant, so we exclude them in our main models.

[Table 1 About Here]



The results for Model 1, reported in Table 1 above, are largely as scholars in the literature might expect, although the effects for many of the variables are not particularly strong. In particular, the four domestic institutional variables are wildly insignificant. Most striking, perhaps, is the lack of significance of the Polity variable, given that expansion of suffrage has been typically associated with democratization. Alternative variables that attempt to capture democracy give largely similar results. We believe that this reinforces the arguments made by Brand (2010), who has highlighted that the extension of extraterritorial voting rights may occur in fairly authoritarian settings.

The variables associated with the window of opportunity and state resources arguments generate stronger results. There is a substantial increase in the likelihood of adoption of extraterritorial voting rights in the year of an election and a smaller increase associated in the first three years a new party is governing, although the latter effect is not statistically significant in Model 1. Consistent with the bureaucratic resources argument, the larger a country's economy, the more likely they are to adopt XTV, an effect that is consistent across most of our models, although only marginally significant.

In contrast with much of the expectations of the literature, however, the greater the ratio of emigrants to domestic population, the less likely we are to see extraterritorial voting rights adopted. Although this effect is not quite significant in Model 1, it is significant in some of our models and the magnitude is consistent across our models. This finding runs counter to much of the emphasis in the existing literature on the importance of the power and organization of migrants in explaining the adoption of extraterritorial voting rights. However, it is consistent with our argument that policymakers may view the extension of extraterritorial voting rights to be risky. Given that a greater proportion of a country's population abroad means that extending

extraterritorial voting rights potentially entails a greater risk of upsetting the domestic electoral equilibrium, this finding should not be entirely surprising.

The extent of civil war is weakly associated with a lower probability of adoption of extraterritorial voting rights, and the coefficient on the variable capturing the extent of international war shows signs of being inflated by the inclusion of the domestic institutional variables and is difficult to interpret in Model 1 (we address this below). There also is a significantly higher baseline hazard rate for European countries in our sample, and overall the hazard rate is increasing over time. However, it is important to note that the increase in hazard rate over time that we see from the coefficient on the time trend variable is mitigated by a decreasing baseline hazard rate for the model as a whole. The leverage differentiating a time trend from the time-varying hazard rate in this model is based on new entrants into the system (e.g. post-Soviet republics), and the analyses suggest that new entrants into the system have higher baseline hazard rates (*calculate this out and report substantive effects*).

Given the insignificance of the domestic institutional variables, the loss of some observations associated with them, and the fact that they appear to confound our international conflict variable, we rerun Model 1 without the four domestic institutional variables as Model 2. The coefficients for most of our variables remain similar, although the coefficient for Total GDP shrinks slightly and drops below standard levels of statistical significance. The coefficient on international war in this model is above one, suggesting a somewhat increased likelihood of adoption of extraterritorial voting during international conflicts, although the result is insignificant in this model, and across the subsequent models, the effect is not robust.

In Model 3 we add GDP growth in the current year, growth in the previous year (L1) and in two years previous (L2) to the variables included in Model 2. All three are below one, suggesting that higher levels of economic growth are associated with a lower probabilities of adoption of extraterritorial voting. The one-year lag in growth is the variable that is most significant and robust across specifications, and the variable we include in subsequent models, as in Model 4. In Model 4, substantively, a move from low levels of growth (GDP Growth = -2%) to high levels of growth (8%) nearly cuts the hazard rate roughly in half: for example, with all other covariates held at their mean/median, the hazard rate drops from 3.7% to 2.0%.

While we do not report full robustness checks in this version of the paper, GDP growth (lagged) proves a surprisingly robust factor in its association with the adoption of extraterritorial voting. This is striking, given that many of the factors more frequently highlighted in the existing literature prove less robust in the statistical models reported in Table 1.

[Table 2 About Here]

In Table 2, we turn to consideration of the possibility of international diffusion affecting the adoption of extraterritorial voting rights. Model 5 begins these analyses by including all the variables from Model 4 of Table 1, and including a variable that is simply the lagged proportion of a country's neighbors that have adopted extraterritorial voting rights. Data on which countries neighbor each other is taken from the MEPV dataset. Although the coefficient on our variable attempting to capture diffusion from neighboring countries is fairly large (suggesting that countries whose neighbors have XTV are more likely to adopt XTV themselves), the standard errors are even larger and the overall effect is insignificant.

However, for a policy like the adoption of extraterritorial voting rights, it is not clear that emulation or learning from neighbors is the only possible mechanism from diffusion. Indeed, when exploring the possibility of adopting extra-territorial voting, Mexico looked far more closely at the Colombian example, than the neighboring US example. This suggests that overall regional experiences with extraterritorial voting might be more important in explaining the adoption of extraterritorial voting rights.

We explore that possibility in Model 6. Model 6 provides more robust evidence of regional diffusion of extraterritorial voting rights, with higher (lagged) proportion of countries in the same region (region defined as per MEPV dataset) being significantly associated with an increase in the probability of XTV adoption. While the effect is only significant at the 10% level (two-tailed test), it is striking that the inclusion of average XTV in the region renders the previously powerful and robust Europe dummy variable insignificant. This highlights the possibility that the difference in baseline hazard rates between Europe and the rest of the world seen in the previous models could largely be a function of the prior diffusion of XTV in Europe, and thus the regional dummy could be inflating standard errors on our diffusion effect.

We re-run Models 5 and 6 without the Europe dummy variable as Models 7 and 8. While the effect of the presence of XTV in neighboring countries is marginally larger in Model 7 than in Model 5, it remains well below standard levels of statistical significance. However, removing the Europe dummy dramatically increases the significance of the regional average of extraterritorial voting in Model 8. Calculations based on Model 8 suggest that the probability of the adoption of extraterritorial voting rights for a country in a region with no other countries having extraterritorial voting rights (1.7%) is dramatically lower than the probability of a country

adopting extraterritorial voting rights when half of the other countries in the region have extraterritorial voting rights (4.4%).

Model 9 suggests, however, that the story is more complex than that, and that perhaps we should be looking at different regional dynamics. If we interact the regional average of extraterritorial voting rights with the Europe dummy variable, we find that the diffusion effect—as captured by the proportion of countries in the region that have previously adopted extraterritorial voting rights—appears to be much greater outside of Europe than in it. Within Europe, the hazard rate of adopting extraterritorial voting rights in a given year is comparatively high (4.5-5.5%) regardless of whether one-third of the countries had previously adopted extraterritorial voting rights (i.e. 1980) or more than three-fourths had (i.e. 2010). However, outside of Europe, the difference between being in a region in which fewer than 10% of countries had adopted extraterritorial voting rights (most regions in 1980) to more than 25% of countries adopting extraterritorial voting rights (most regions in 2010), is an increase from a hazard rate of less than 1% (0.8%) to nearly 5% (4.7%).

## **Conclusion**

Why do countries extend suffrage rights to their citizens who are not resident? The results from the analyses of this paper suggest, consistent with the existing literature, that a wide range of domestic and international factors are associated with likelihood of suffrage extension to emigrants. However, while many of these factors may play an important role in individual cases, their effects are often not robust across a large sample of cases.

Our key results both contrast with and complement our prior understanding of the factors influencing the adoption of extraterritorial voting. Perhaps the greatest contrast to most of the literature in our findings is that the existence of numerous and economically influential emigrants does not actually increase the probability of adopting extra-territorial voting rights—if anything it decreases it. Furthermore, our analyses find that a consistent factor in the extension of extra-territorial voting rights is weak economic performance, suggesting that the extension of extraterritorial voting rights may be a strategy of vulnerable political elites attempting to shore up their electoral support.

We also found clear support for the existence of policy diffusion, although teasing out the precise nature of the policy diffusion remains a challenge. It is a challenge that we hope to turn more attention to in subsequent drafts of the paper. It is clear that a country is increasingly likely to adopt XTV rights as the number of countries in the region who have already adopted XTV increases, although careful exploration of which countries are influencing other countries remains an important task for future work. While our analyses at the moment cannot tease out whether this is policy learning, the diffusion of regional norms, or a common response to common shocks (i.e. Galton's Paradox, cf. Franzese and Hayes 2008), they both call into the question simple versions of global norms arguments, and suggest a greater need to tease out the actual dynamics of diffusion in this case.

If our argument about policy learning is correct, we should expect that the probability of policy adoption should not simply be influenced by whether the policy is adopted in neighboring states, but also influenced by perceptions of the policy consequences (or lack thereof) of adoption of extraterritorial voting. To the extent that extraterritorial voting rights extensions are a strategic choices in light of policy learning from the choices of other countries, we would

expect that variation in the ‘success’ and ‘failure’ of the adoption of voting rights should be important. Policy success and failure may not necessarily be easy to operationalize as they are in the eyes of the beholders, but as scholars have diffusion have noted, they are important in distinguishing different mechanisms of diffusion (Gilardi 2010).

For now, our analyses highlight that there is a gap between the existing, largely case study-based, analysis of the adoption of extra-territorial voting rights and the broader regional and global patterns of extra-territorial voting rights. Our argument has focused on how strategic political elites may choose to extend the franchise when they see themselves vulnerable (i.e. when they face weak economic conditions) and have reason to believe that the adoption of extraterritorial voting rights is feasible and unlikely to be too costly (other countries in the region have done so successfully). Our analyses have found consistent evidence of both the effect of economic conditions on extraterritorial voting rights extension and signs of policy diffusion, although we remain in the early stages of exploring this latter dynamic.

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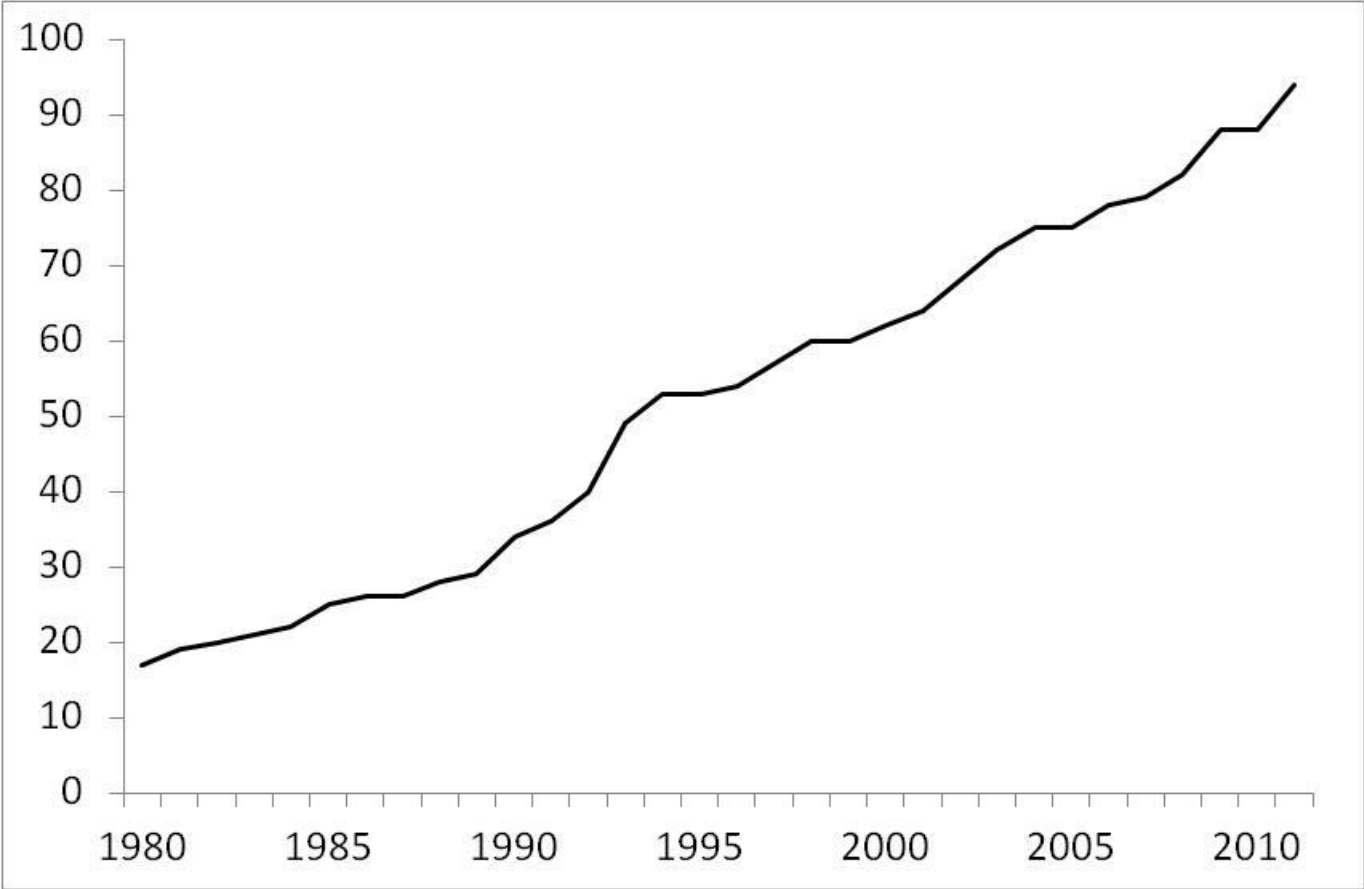
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**Figure 1. Number of Countries with Extra-Territorial Voting Rights 1980-2011**



**Table 1. Determinants of Adoption of Extra-Territorial Voting Rights**

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4					
GDP Growth					0.99	(0.02)						
GDP Growth (L1)					0.95	(0.03)	*	0.95	(0.02)	**		
GDP Growth (L2)					0.97	(0.03)						
Polity	1.01	(0.03)										
Presidentialism	1.21	(0.50)										
PR	1.02	(0.40)										
Gov Parties	1.04	(0.15)										
New Party in Power	1.51	(0.51)	1.58	(0.47)	1.41	(0.45)		1.36	(0.43)			
Exec Election	5.52	(1.88)	**	5.12	(1.53)	**	3.94	(1.39)	**	4.43	(1.39)	**
Total GDP	1.19	(0.11)	*	1.14	(0.09)		1.20	(0.10)	**	1.18	(0.10)	**
Migrant % of Pop	0.95	(0.03)		0.96	(0.03)		0.95	(0.03)	*	0.96	(0.03)	
Civ War	0.93	(0.10)		0.89	(0.10)		0.85	(0.11)		0.85	(0.11)	
Intl War	0.08	(4.00)		1.19	(0.24)		1.02	(0.24)		0.99	(0.25)	
Year	1.16	(0.05)	**	1.14	(0.04)	**	1.15	(0.05)	**	1.14	(0.05)	**
Europe	2.67	(1.43)	*	3.19	(1.32)	**	2.12	(0.96)	*	2.54	(1.08)	**
N	2113		2248		2208		2208					

**Table 2. Diffusion and the Adoption of Extra-Territorial Voting Rights**

	Model 5		Model 6			Model 7			Model 8			Model 9			
XTV Avg (Border)	1.61	(0.70)				1.94	(0.82)								
XTV Avg (Region)			1.04	(0.02)	*				1.02	(0.01)	**	1.08	(0.03)	**	
XTV Avg (R) x Europe												0.93	(0.03)	**	
GDP Growth (L1)	0.95	(0.02)	**	0.95	(0.02)	**	0.94	(0.02)	**	0.95	(0.02)	**	0.95	(0.02)	**
New Party in Power	1.36	(0.42)		1.37	(0.44)		1.45	(0.44)		1.36	(0.44)		1.45	(0.47)	
Exec Election	4.37	(1.36)	**	3.99	(1.32)	**	4.19	(1.29)	**	4.07	(1.35)	**	4.12	(1.38)	**
Total GDP	1.17	(0.10)	*	1.23	(0.11)	*	1.25	(0.09)	*	1.22	(0.10)	**	1.22	(0.11)	*
Migrant % of Pop	0.97	(0.03)		0.97	(0.03)		0.98	(0.02)		0.96	(0.03)		0.98	(0.03)	
Civ War	0.88	(0.11)		0.86	(0.11)		0.84	(0.11)		0.86	(0.11)		0.86	(0.11)	
Intl War	1.00	(0.23)		0.98	(0.24)		0.93	(0.22)		0.99	(0.24)		1.00	(0.24)	
Year	1.13	(0.05)	**	1.08	(0.06)		1.16	(0.05)	**	1.11	(0.05)	**	1.10	(0.07)	
Europe	2.29	(0.99)	*	0.35	(0.48)								6.08	(10.6)	
N	2208		1926			2208			1926			1926			