Political Participation by the Romanian Diaspora

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This chapter presents an account of the role of the Romanian Diaspora in the current political life of the country. The Diaspora is mostly apathetic and uninvolved in Romanian politics despite the positive effect on voter turnout of recently increasing the number of voting stations in regions in the world inhabited by Romanians. The overall number of citizens living abroad that turned out to vote in the 2009 presidential elections was low, probably not exceeding nine percent. Yet, Diaspora voting in recent years has had a partisan impact, favoring the Democratic-Liberal and Liberal parties. This impact was particularly beneficial, if not determining, for President Traian Basescu in his campaign for reelection in 2009. Basescu systematically garnered a higher share of Diaspora support in countries that are more democratic, enjoy more economic freedom, and are less corrupt.

The Political Context

The 2009 presidential elections were characterized by increased polarization of the Romanian political landscape. Basescu, the incumbent president from the Democratic-Liberal Party (PD-L), held a minimal lead over the Social Democratic Party (PSD) candidate, Mircea Geoana, after the first round of voting. The
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Turnout was almost 54 percent, quite high compared to the 2009 European Parliament elections held a few months earlier (33 percent) or the Romanian Parliament elections of 2008 (39 percent), but modest when compared to previous presidential elections. The runoff campaign was bitterly fought and attracted intense media attention. On the evening of the December 6, immediately after the conclusion of second-round balloting, on the basis of authorized exit polls it was widely announced that Geoana would become the new Romanian president. The exit poll results were remarkable similar: Insomar: Geoana 51.2 percent and Basescu 48.8 percent; CSOP: Geoana 50.4 percent and Basescu 49.6 percent; CCSB: Geoana 51 percent and Basescu 49 percent; Curs: Geoana 50.7 percent and Basescu 49.3 percent (Kristofer93.com: 2009). Yet, the next day, Basescu emerged as the election winner with 50.33 percent of the vote from a turnout of nearly 58 percent of eligible voters, a turnout figure slightly higher than initially reported.

The main reason for this remarkable reversal was the fact that the Romanian Diaspora voted overwhelmingly for Basescu. Those who voted abroad had not been included in the exit poll samples, distorting their findings. One might say that the Diaspora elected Traian Basescu for his second term in office. Statistically, he would not have won without their votes. The outcome induced former Prime Minister Adrian Nastase of the PSD to declare on his personal blog that somehow votes from the Diaspora should weigh less than votes from Romanian citizens residing in Romania (Nastase, 2009a). The statement was retracted later that same day; according to Nastase, there was “an unwise choice of word ordering in a phrase” (Nastase, 2009b).

Nastase was reacting to a phenomenon that was unique for Romania but not in the world. Although it is rare that expatriates have a decisive impact on the politics of their home country, it is not unprecedented. In Italy in 2006, votes from the Italian Diaspora helped to constitute the slim Senate majority that tipped the balance in favor of the government of Romano Prodi (Arcioni 2006). In the 2000 U.S. presidential elections, American citizens living abroad had an important role given the close contest between George W. Bush and Al Gore. Voting rights for a Diaspora are a matter of heated debate in many nations. Beyond strict ideology, the extent to which Diaspora inclusion advantages or disadvantages a person or party seems to dictate the positions taken on the issue.

This chapter addresses a series of topics relating to the political character of the Romanian Diaspora. First, I summarize the primary theoretical issues raised by a participatory Diaspora politics in the modern world. I then explore historically the political and legal development of Diaspora voting rights in Romania, focusing on the 2008 electoral law. Empirically, I examine political participation among Romanians living abroad and the effect that voting station availability has had on voter turnout. To the extent permitted by available data, I also evaluate the partisan voting preferences of Diaspora voters and their impact on the 2009 Romanian presidential elections. I test whether partisan preferences of the
Diaspora reflect the political and economic context of the host countries in which votes were cast. Thus, I hypothesize that this small but mobilized portion of the voting public exhibits some predictable patterns of behavior with the possibility that political outcomes within a country may be decided from beyond its borders. I conclude with some reflections on the implications of my findings for democratic theory.

**Diaspora and Voting Rights in Democracies**

Voting rights of a Diaspora confronts the fundamental theoretical question regarding the appropriate conceptualization of a political community. Should the image of national citizenship be united with the reality of an increasingly mobile world population? The question increasingly has drawn attention as a dimension of the rapid globalization of labor and the consequent responses by nation-states, both recipients and senders, in their efforts to manage and utilize migrant populations (Varadarajan 2010).

To some, extending voting rights to expatriates is a foundational element of political integration with the goal of full political inclusion for all of a nation’s citizens and social groups. To others, expatriates are seen as renegades who should not be permitted a say in government selection since they are not affected to the same extent by its decisions, laws, and regulations as citizens living in the home country; by the principle of “No Taxation Without Representation,” those migrants who no longer pay domestic taxes should not enjoy full political rights. In either case, the Diaspora is often a marginalized category, both by the country of origin that views them as outside the political community and by a host country that views them as foreign, temporary, and perhaps, second-class inhabitants.

The alienation many within a Diaspora face is reflected in multiple meanings that the term holds, some of which are highly contextual. In the ancient world, the term “Diaspora” was associated with a community that was forcibly displaced to another country and most often referred to the Jewish community. The Greek use of the term connoted colonization. The contemporary literature strives to establish clear definitions and to distinguish among various migrant situations. Cohen (1997), for example, differentiates among victim-refugee, imperial, labor, trade, and cultural migrants. He acknowledges that the concept of Diaspora has evolved over time and currently has the following features: (1) dispersal from an original homeland; (2) expansion from the homeland in search of work; (3) collective memory about home; (4) idealization of the ancestral home; (5) a return movement; (6) strong ethnic consciousness; (7) a troubled history; (8) a transnational sense of solidarity; and (9) possibility of having a creative and culturally rich life in the host country. Nicholas Van Hear (1998) similarly emphasizes three characteristics of Diaspora: the population should be dispersed from the homeland in two or more countries; its presence is enduring; and the potential for movement between the host country and homeland exists.
Most scholars admit inherent conceptual fuzziness and overlapping shades of meaning that allow interchangeable usage among such terms as migrant, Diaspora, trans-national community, and citizens living abroad (Sheffer 2003; Wolbeck 2002). Given the complexity of real circumstances, this chapter puts less emphasis on ideal traits and distinctions. Most Romanian migrants, but certainly not all, would qualify under the category “labor Diaspora,” referring to “an unskilled immigrant group that is locked into a subordinate status through lack of opportunity, inappropriate cultural commitments, or prejudice” (Cohen 1997, 163). Yet, this does not characterize all Romanians abroad since many are highly skilled. Likewise, some Romanians are recent migrants while others are long-settled. The reasons for migration are many and diverse. There is a community of Romanians that migrated for political reasons to escape the communist regime. Another community dreamed of economic security and a better life elsewhere and took advantage of the more open borders created after the 1989 revolution. Some idealize the home community and maintain a sense of cross-national solidarity and others do not. Some plan to return to Romania, some have decided to stay permanently, making the decision either before or after arrival in the host country, and others are quite uncertain. Whatever categorization is used, the population shifts across any conceptual line that we might try to draw.

Given that the focus of this chapter is political rights, there is no practical reason to differentiate among migrants or to restrict the use of “Diaspora.” There is no cost to grouping this entire population together for they all share the same formal rights under Romanian law. We need only to distinguish them from occasional visitors abroad such as tourists or business travelers who do not share these rights.

The quantitative increase in the total size of the Romanian community abroad apparently gave legitimacy to demands for greater political rights and representation. However, the extension of rights to the Romanian Diaspora was not simply a result of counting numbers. The politics of the decision is complex: Romanian political actors, citizens in Romania, and those within the Diaspora all affected the outcome. Gamlen (2006) provides a model through which we can understand the Romanian situation. Through his discussion of national objectives, he identifies three reasons why home countries pursue Diaspora integration. First, states engage in capacity building intended to reinforce linkages with expatriate individuals and communities, especially with those who had fled due to former regime oppression or unfavorable historical circumstances. The goal is to establish and enforce a “transnational nation” by building institutions to strengthen symbolic ties to the home country. For example, states might create cultural centers or fund national associations in countries of the Diaspora to promote national identification and values. Government officials might meet with representatives of migrants to hear their problems and might use international pressure on their behalf. Second, states engage in extracting obligations
from the Diaspora in exchange for loyalty. For example, remittances can help ease legislation on passport issuance. Finally, states expand the sphere of political rights in order for individuals to exercise legitimate sovereignty. These can include franchise rights, for example, or flexibility in acquiring a second citizenship without losing the first one. The Romanian case can be applied to all three objectives.

Østegaard-Nielsen (2003) argues that states desire to integrate their nationals living abroad in order to achieve a number of diverse objectives. First, they wish to secure remittances. According to the Romanian National Bank, in 2009 the amount of funds transferred to Romania from outside was 6.6 billion Euros, representing 6.2 percent of GDP. From 2003 to 2009 Romanians abroad transferred approximately 37 billion Euros and foreign investments were 45.7 billion Euros (Orgonas 2010). It is not clear whether significant remittances provide for healthy economic development. On the one hand, remittances can fuel wasteful consumption, discourage labor, generate uneven distributions of wealth, foster inflation, and raise economic risk. On the other hand, according to optimists, remittances help improve the quality of life, stimulate consumption demand for new investment, and assist the needy beyond the capacity of domestic production.

Second, according to Østegaard-Nielsen, states are interested in controlling or even suppressing political dissent and in mobilizing support. To authoritarian countries, expatriates can be viewed as unwelcome promoters of democratization. To regimes liable to criticism, constraints upon the voice of expatriates reduce pressures to reform. For example, in Zimbabwe only military and consular service officers living abroad are allowed to vote (Magaisa 2008). In Uganda, Ghana, and Zimbabwe voting rights of the Diaspora are restricted (Boateng 2005).

Third, states are interested in defending the interests of migrants in the host country. This can be done by providing institutional opportunities for migrants to achieve upward social mobility and fighting against inherent prejudice associated with their transitory status. The goal is not merely to help insert members of the Diaspora into the modern economy. A Diaspora welcome in the host country raises the prestige of the sender. A Diaspora supportive of the home country can be used politically to generate international good-will or to lobby on behalf of national interests.

Itzigsohn (2000), by contrast, emphasizes the interests of domestic political actors mediating between the sending state and migrant representatives. Political parties and organized factions in the home country are aware of the potential political power of migrants and desire to secure political and financial support from communities abroad. Where such support is forthcoming, the parties tend to endorse pressure for expanded rights; where such support is not forthcoming, they instead promote contraction. For instance, the legal advisor to the Party of Communists, Republic of Moldova (PCRM), asked that voting sections abroad
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be closed, ostensibly due to suspicion of fraud, for the September 5, 2010 referendum on changing the way the president of Moldova is elected. Moldova had 32 voting sections abroad in the last elections and 78 voting sections for the 2010 referendum (Jurnal.md: 2010). Beyond their narrow partisan impact, migrants have the potential to act as a democratizing force. Granting political rights to previously excluded social groups and improving the framework that makes such rights politically effective can be viewed as an indicator of democratic citizenship and improved democratic performance.

The relationship between migration and citizenship is complex. Although voting rights are deemed essential to democratic politics, they have most often been linked to residence (Baubock 2005). Several countries have adopted voting rules that extend beyond territorial borders. Nevertheless, not all citizens have been awarded the franchise. In general, there are four basic positions. (1) Domestic Citizens: only citizens present in the home country, as full stakeholders in the community, should enjoy voting rights; citizens not in residence cannot participate since they are not subject to the laws and regulations imposed by the government from the country of origin; individuals without citizenship but in residence can petition to join the national community and thereby gain voting rights, yet the admission rules should be clearly stated and administered. (2) Ethnic Nationalism: legal citizenship in a country entitles one to full political rights regardless of the location of residence; by implication, domestic residents with citizenship from other nations are not granted such rights. (3) Domestic Residence: all legal residents in the country, including both citizens and legal aliens after a given number of years of inhabitance, should enjoy voting rights since they are subject to the laws enacted by the elected government; those living outside the country’s borders are not entitled to such rights. (4) Community of Affect: all those affected by the laws and decisions taken in a country should have the ability democratically to influence those laws and decisions; by implication, both foreign expatriates and domestic migrants can be offered voting rights in certain situations and regarding certain issues.

The approaches embraced by different nation-states are quite diverse. Citizens are allowed to vote from abroad in 115 nations although five countries (Angola, Bolivia, Greece, Nicaragua, and Panama) that adopted such provisions have yet to implement them. We also see variation depending on the type of election. In thirty-one countries, migrants living abroad are allowed to vote only in legislative elections; in fourteen countries, they can vote only in presidential elections; in twenty countries they can vote in both, but no other types of elections. Eleven countries also allow migrants to vote in referenda. Six also allow migrants to vote in sub-national elections. There are some peculiar combinations. Seven countries grant migrants the right to vote in presidential elections and referenda; seven grant migrants the vote in legislative elections and referenda. There are nineteen other combinations (Fierro, Morales, and Gratschew
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2007, 17). It will be seen, in the respect, that Romania is one of the most permissive countries regarding Diaspora voting rights.

Some nations require voter registration for citizens living abroad. A few restrict voting to certain classes of residents living abroad, such as the diplomatic staff. Many have regulations regarding the length of stay. This can work both ways. On the one hand, after a certain period of time citizens abroad may lose their voting rights. For Germany the length of time staying abroad is 25 years; for Turkey it is 6 months. On the other hand, some countries require a certain period of time of living abroad in order to obtain the right to vote. For Chad, citizens have to register to vote at the embassy six months prior the election; for Mozambique, citizens have to be away for one year to begin registration procedures (Fierro, Morales, and Gratschew 2007, 19-20).

Diversity is present even among members of the European Union. Ireland awards no voting rights for nationals living abroad. France, Italy, Portugal, and Romania have reserved parliamentary seats for expatriates. Austria, Germany, Luxembourg, and Italy allow absentee balloting. The Czech Republic restricts voting by citizens living abroad to consulates and embassies, while Poland allows voting in polling stations managed by representatives of Polish Diaspora. (Doyle and Fidrmuc 2005). Voting rights for resident other-country nationals are extended at the local level in Spain and Portugal, while in Austria and France such proposals were rejected as being unconstitutional (Kastoryani 2005). In East-Central Europe, many countries permit dual citizenship as a tool for granting rights to national minorities living in neighboring countries (Iordachi 2004).

The perspective of this chapter is that improving voting rights for the Romanian Diaspora is a matter of democratic quality. Greater inclusion is indicative of respect for political voice and participation. Greater exclusion entails limitation on citizenship capacity for an important share of Romanians. Yet moral claims often are not sufficient to bring effective action. The following sections present a chronological account of the Diaspora in Romanian politics, emphasizing debates over voting rights and the legal framework through which those rights are exercised.

Policies Toward the Romanian Diaspora

The story of the Diaspora’s role in Romanian politics should be understood in three different stages. The first, during communism, was characterized by restrictions on effective citizenship. The rights awarded were used as a tool of political control (Iordachi 2004). In 1948, repatriation of Romanians was still possible from the territories of Bucovina and Basarabia. Soon afterward, constraints were introduced affecting the ability of Romanians to travel abroad. The Romanian Diaspora was largely dissident and often issued protests broadcast through Radio Free Europe. Political participation from the Diaspora was through communiqués and letters addressed to Nicolae Ceaușescu. In response,
the regime sought to manage and sometimes repress the Diaspora, which was carefully monitored by the Romanian Secret Police.

The second period begins with the fall of the communist regime in December 1989 and emphasized supporting and integrating kin communities in neighboring countries. There was a migrant wave of Romanians departing. Officially, nearly 100,000 Romanian citizens moved their residence to another country in 1990 (Romanian Statistical Institute 2008). The 1991 Constitution acknowledged the existence of communities of Romanians living abroad and subsequent enactments legitimated voting stations in embassies and consulates. More importantly, Romanian officials concentrated on strengthening ethnic identity and fostering the integration of Romanians living in Moldova, Bulgaria, Serbia, Ukraine, and Hungary. Proponents of extending political rights to the Diaspora advocated successfully for Romanians in Moldavia to acquire formal Romanian citizenship. For Romanians in Hungary, Serbia, and Bulgaria, an emphasis was placed on “symbolic politics” and building the transnational Romanian community (Iordachi 2004). Dual citizenship became permissible by Romanian authorities to help prevent possible animosities, especially between Romanians and Hungarians.

Citizenship relations with Hungary were particularly problematic. For example, in December 2004 the Hungarian government organized a referendum potentially to award citizenship rights to the three million Hungarians living in Romania but it was defeated due to low participation. The Hungarian government instead approved the “Act on Hungarians Living in Neighboring Countries” that offered individuals of Hungarian ethnicity abroad symbolic citizenship. The Romanian Government was deeply involved in the negotiations, with the intent of keeping the provisions under the Hungarian Status Law no more than symbolic. In this way, no category of its citizens would enjoy greater formal rights than others. Under these conditions, the Romanian government acquiesced, allowing any Romanian citizen who so wished to join the transnational identity-community of Hungarians (Iordachi 2004).

The third period, starting in 2007, shifted emphasis away from identity politics to the economic effects of European labor migration and the political role of a rapidly increasing Diaspora. The precondition, in 2001, was the decision by European Union officials to lift visa requirements for Romanian citizens. This decision paved the way for Romanians to seek work in EU member countries. The Spanish government was the most visible in its efforts to promote significant numbers of temporary workers from Romania, mainly as strawberry pickers for three or four months a year. Given similarities in language between the two countries and the high unemployment in Romania at the time, the program was a great success.

The process accelerated in 2007 after Romania’s full accession to the European Union. By 2008, Spanish and Italian officials reported approximately one million Romanian legal workers each (Adevarul 2009), while Romanian authori-
ties more conservatively estimated about half a million workers. Given the size of the migrant population, the Romanian government established within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a new “Department for the Relations of Romanians from Abroad” with the explicit role of elaborating “policies related to Romanians abroad according to the main foreign policy objectives and governmental program” (Soros 2009, 37).

With the establishment in 2008 of special parliamentary constituencies for Romanians living abroad, politicians began to pay greater attention to the voting power of the Diaspora. The main political parties organized electoral campaign tours in 2008, primarily to Italy and Spain. Romanian political leaders issued appeals intended to promote patriotism and warm feelings toward the home country. President Traian Basescu speaking in Spain asserted, “In three years it will be much better in Romania. I assure you that in Romania you will find a workplace in the next period, a well paid, decent working place” (quoted in Soros 2009, 36). According to Mircea Geoana, leader of the PSD, “It is the collective guilt of Romanian politicians since 1989 why we were not able to create civilized, decent working conditions, and the economic migration was imposed by the difficult environment at home” (quoted in Soros 2009, 36).

Attention to votes from the Diaspora was even greater during the presidential election of 2009, notable for the personal animosity among the candidates and the intensity and bitterness of the campaign. The news media showed Romanians abroad standing in long lines, waiting to exercise their right to vote. The process of voting took longer abroad because voters were obliged by law to sign a statement that they would not vote at another polling station.

The results of the runoff election were close. Both candidates proclaimed themselves victors although all exit poll agencies projected that Geoana had won. The next day, after the votes were tabulated from abroad, the outcome was reversed. Basescu gathered more than 78 percent of the vote from the Diaspora. He would have lost had the election counted only the votes cast within Romanian borders. It was the first time in Romania when the vote of the Diaspora mattered, determining the winner of a critical election. Predictably, there were complaints about possible fraud. The most contested voting station was in Paris, because 3,785 voters turned out within 14 hours. The opposition expressed doubts that so many citizens could vote in such a short time. The Central Electoral Bureau did a recount of votes from the Diaspora, producing no significant change to the final count. Before turning to an analysis of Diaspora vote patterns, it is first necessary to attend to the changing Romanian legal framework that increasingly facilitated expatriate voting.

### The Legal Framework for Diaspora Voting

The Romanian Constitutions of 1866, 1923, 1938, and 1948 limited voting rights to Romanian citizens having their domicile in Romania. There was no mention of voting rights for Romanians living abroad. These were mentioned for
the first time in the Constitution of 1991. The fundamental act explicitly asserted that the state supports the strengthening of ties with Romanians abroad and supports the preservation of their ethnic, linguistic, and religious identity (Constitution of Romania 1991).

The consequent electoral laws of 1992 established voting stations in embassies and consulates for Romanians out of the country at the time of official balloting. The votes cast were not attributed to any special Diaspora electoral district, but were merely added to those from the Bucharest district. Diaspora associations like the World Romanian Council (Popescu 2004) noted the need for more polling stations abroad and petitioned Parliament for a modification of the law to improve the ability of Diaspora voters to get to a legal polling place. In 2004, the Nastase government increased the number of polling stations, thus permitting more Romanian citizens resident in other countries to exercise their voting rights.

The major change came in 2008. The new election law created a special electoral constituency for the Romanian citizens living or traveling abroad. The constituency would contain four designated electoral seats (“Colleges”) in the lower chamber of Parliament and two in the upper chamber. The four seats in the lower chamber were matched to four large geographic regions (Western and Central Europe, Eastern Europe and Asia, North and South America, Africa and the Middle East), regardless of the resident Romanian population in each or the number of votes cast. The consequence was relative under-representation for the millions of Romanians in Europe, far more than any other part of the world. Moreover, critics of the law contended that Romanians living abroad would now be politically over-represented given the small numbers in the Diaspora who in fact turn out to vote. For the 2008 parliamentary elections, for example, the 24,010 citizens who cast their votes abroad were to be represented by four Deputies and two Senators, far fewer active constituents than the smallest domestic county with similar representation. Distortions in what many perceive as appropriate lines of representation became possible, fueling the concerns of critics. For example, because of the extreme complexity of the Romanian parliamentary electoral system, one of the candidates elected from abroad, Koto Jozsef from the UDMR became entitled to the seat from Asia despite garnering only thirty-four votes (Marian and King 2010).

Debate over the 2008 electoral law focused on whether it would yield a more responsible parliamentary assembly. Organization of the Diaspora vote was a minor topic, minimally discussed given the huge conflict between President Basescu and Prime Minister Tariceanu that centered on the replacement of proportional representation with single-member constituencies and on a reduction in the number of seats to be elected. The provisions referring to the Diaspora were quite inclusive, most likely because none of the parties anticipated a major impact. Anyone eighteen years old or older, who had not been convicted of a criminal offence, and who had Romanian citizenship certified by a passport...
or an identification card, was awarded the right to vote. There were no special registration requirements to be fulfilled at the embassy or general consulate. Romanian citizens living abroad could vote in national parliamentary elections, presidential elections, referenda, and European elections. There was no limitation based on the duration of stay or length of time away from Romania. When Romanian citizens vote abroad, their names are written down on a special list and they have to sign a declaration stating that they did not and will not vote at another voting station in that election.

The 2008 modifications constituted an important step toward recognizing the political rights of Romanian migrants and establishing distinctive representation for that community. The number of voting stations was increased for the 2008 parliamentary elections, the government making a unilateral decision regarding the sites but often in consultation with representatives from the Diaspora and host countries. In Italy, for example, creation of new voting stations was a result of discussions between Romanian and local Italian officials, members of the Romanian Orthodox Church, and representatives of Diaspora associations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs engaged in an information campaign for Romanians abroad with the aim of encouraging electoral participation. They distributed lists with the addresses of the new voting stations, mainly among Romanians living in Italy and Spain, and they created Twitter and Facebook accounts for citizens to react if the electoral procedures were vitiated. The new voting stations reduced the cost of voting for much of the Diaspora in 2008 and in 2009. The consequences of the new institutional setting upon voter turnout and electoral outcomes are examined next.

**Voter Turnout of the Romanian Diaspora**

Voter turnout is calculated as a percentage: total number of voters who cast ballots in a given election divided by the total number of voters eligible to cast ballots in that election. Regarding the Diaspora vote in recent Romanian elections, there are difficulties with both numbers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>96,929</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>12,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>44,160</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>14,753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>32,152</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>9,921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>18,446</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>8,154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>17,146</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>10,643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>25,675</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>13,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>21,526</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>10,938</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Votes 1997</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Votes 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>19,945</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>14,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>17,536</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>8,830</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Romanian Statistical Institute, 2008

Regarding the denominator, official data regarding how many Romanians live and work abroad are grossly outdated and most likely underestimate reality. For example, according to the Romanian Statistical Institute (2008), the number of Romanians who changed their permanent residence to abroad each year has declined since 1990. The high rates of migration after the 1989 revolution are plausible; the low rates in recent years are much less so.

Since 2007, when Romania joined the European Union, it has become especially difficult to estimate how many Romanians live in other countries. Public opinion surveys from Spain and Italy and counts of officially registered workers in those countries indicate a very different picture, one closer to reality than the Romanian government count. In 2009, the Spanish Statistical National Institute reported 731,806 Romanians in Spain (Ziare.com: 2010). A Caritas Report, “Romani a Immigrazione a Lavoro in Italia” (2008), reports more than one million Romanian migrants in Italy, consisting of 749,000 workers, 239,000 family members, and 28,000 others. A survey performed by CURS in 2008 in the metropolitan areas of Rome and Madrid revealed approximately 350,000 Romanian workers that were illegal and thus invisible in official statistics; they estimate more than two million Romanians living in Spain and Italy alone (Adevarul.ro 2009).

Not all of these individuals are Romanian citizens with the right to vote. Many, for example, are children. Absent authoritative counts, one must rely on crude estimations. The population of Romania in 2007, according to the Statistical Institute (2008) was about 21.5 million persons. The number of persons eligible to vote in the 2008 Parliamentary elections (Biroul Central Electoral 2008) was about 18.5 million. By implication, 14.27 percent of Romanians living in Romania were without the right to vote. I used this percentage to approximate the eligible-to-vote and not-eligible-to-vote share of the Diaspora population. (If anything, it overestimates the not-eligible share, as many temporary Romanians working abroad have left their families at home.) Assuming that there are at least 2 million Romanians living in other countries, the estimated size of the adult voting population for recent years would be a bit more than 1.7 million persons. This figure is certainly not meant to be precise but it provides an approximation that is closer to reality than official data.

Regarding the numerator, data on Diaspora voting are made available by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry publishes the number of Diaspora voters who turned out for every election since 2000, total and for individual country of residence. The substantive allocation of Diaspora votes by political party and/or candidates for office was reported in the aggregate starting
only in 2007. In 2008, disaggregated party results were released for four geographic regions, each of which elected a candidate to the Chamber of Deputies. Finally, in 2009, partisan allocation results were reported by country for both the first and second round of presidential voting. Although some research institutes such as CURS and Metromedia Transilvania (2007) implemented surveys of Romanian migrants living abroad, these do not contain information about their voting behavior.

In Table x-2, we see that the absolute number of Romanians voting abroad tends to be low, especially when compared to the estimate of 1.7 million eligible voters. One plausible explanation for the low turnout is that citizens abroad are not especially interested in home country politics since they are not directly affected. However, we cannot test this hypothesis without detailed survey information. An indirect indicator of voter apathy might be type of election contested. Voters seem to care more about elections involving the presidency, as the symbol of the nation and its chief executive officer, far more than elections for the representative national parliament and especially more than for European parliamentary elections.

Table x-2 Turnout of Romanians Living Abroad and Number of Voting Stations, 2000-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Election</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Turnout</th>
<th>Voting Stations</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parliament/President 1st Rd</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>33,169</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President 2nd Rd</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>16,331</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament/President 1st Rd</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>40,868</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President 2nd Rd</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>40,149</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Dismissal Referendum</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>75,027</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Parliament</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>22,557</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>24,008</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Parliament</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>14,330</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President 1st Round</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>94,305</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President 2nd Round</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>147,795</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another plausible explanation concerns the time, expense, and energy required by the Diaspora to vote. Voting stations are often in capital cities, in embassies or consulates. If true, the number of available voting stations should be related statistically to the turnout of votes cast. An increase in the number of stations should be associated with a reduction in voting costs and thus with higher turnout. Alternative methods, with a similar potential effect, might include voting by proxy, postal voting with absentee ballots, or electronic voting. However, these methods require some sort of registration system.

As seen in Table x-2, the number of polling stations for Romanians abroad has nearly doubled over time, from 152 in 2000 to 294 in 2009. The greatest
increase in polling stations occurred, predictably, in Italy (2 in 2000; 19 in 2008; 55 in 2009) and Spain (1 in 2000; 20 in 2008; 38 in 2009). They also increased significantly in Moldova (1 in 2000; 4 in 2008; 13 in 2009). Yet the trend was not positive and monotonic in all countries. Israel was granted ten polling stations in 2000 but only three since then. Great Britain had one polling station in 2000, fourteen in 2008, but only eight in 2009. The number used in the United States similarly fluctuated with twenty-one polling stations in 2000, thirty in 2008, and twenty-eight in 2009. Most of the 90 countries with official polling stations in 2009 had three or fewer and the historic variation was comparably minor.

Voter turnout has also varied by countries over time. Fewer than 1,000 Romanians living in Italy cast ballots in the 2000 runoff election for President; fewer than 4,000 cast ballots in the 2004 runoff election for President; yet 42,676 cast ballots in the 2009 runoff election for President. A similar dramatic increase is observed for Spain and Moldova. Again, the trend was not positive and monotonic in all countries. There was declining Diaspora voter participation for Israel. There were upward and downward Diaspora turnout fluctuations for Great Britain and the U.S. From the data, both in the aggregate and comparatively by country, it seems plausible that the number of polling stations for Romanians abroad has had an important causal effect on voter turnout.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reports the number of polling stations and the total turnout for every country with recorded Romanian voters for every national election since 2000. Treating each country for each election year as a separate observation (n = 1027), the correlation between turnout and number of polling stations is strong and significant (r = .820). The correlation remains strong and significant even after I subdivided the sample by type of election (parliamentary r = .749; presidential r = .908; referendum r = .598; European parliament r = .706). Regression analysis permits analysis of the simultaneous causal influence of polling stations and type of election, entered as a series of dummy variables, upon Diaspora voter turnout per country. The effect of election type is at best moderate while the effect of polling station number is dramatic (b = 469.01; se = 10.16).

The complication in interpreting these results is that the size of the Diaspora also increased over time. Possibly, with a larger Diaspora, more Romanians abroad would have voted regardless of the number of voting stations, making the above findings spurious. Alternatively, the larger Diaspora may be responsible for the increase in voting stations, which then results in a larger turnout, making the number of voting stations an intervening variable with little or no independent impact. Yet there are no reliable data regarding the size of the Diaspora by country; it is thus impossible to enter this variable into the regression equation for purposes of statistical analysis and control.

As an alternative, I utilized proximity of elections. Elections held relatively closely to one another decreases the chances that a major change in population
occurred and was determining in terms of the outcome. For example, the 2009 European Parliament election took place on June 7; the 2009 Presidential first-round election took place on November 22. As seen in Table x-2 above, turnout in the latter was 6.5 times greater than the former; there was also a 50 percent increase in voting stations. However, it is reasonable to assume that much of the difference in turnout was due to the higher salience of the presidential contest, and that the salience effect is relatively stable across all potential voters in all countries. Nevertheless, not all countries experienced changes in the number of polling stations, facilitating independent estimation of voting station effect. Thus I estimated the following equation for proximate elections, where each observation was a country with recorded turnout:

\[
\text{Turnout in Election}_2 = a + b_1 \text{Turnout in Election}_1 + \ldots + b_2 \text{Change in Polling Stations (E}_2 - E_1)\]

This equation was applied to five the Romanian national elections since 2008 (Table x-3). In all cases, the voting station coefficient was large and statistically significant. In four of the comparisons, the government added voting stations in E₂ relative to E₁ and net turnout increased. The analysis shows that each additional voting station generated hundreds of additional votes from the Diaspora. In the fifth comparison (Parliament in November 2008 – European Elections in 2009), voting stations and net turnout both declined, likely because of much lower electoral salience. Still, a smaller reduction (or no reduction) in the number of voting stations by country was systematically associated with a smaller reduction in votes cast, and a larger reduction in the number of voting stations was systematically associated with a larger reduction in votes cast, as indicated by the systematic positive sign.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proximate Elections</th>
<th>Turnout E₁</th>
<th>Change in Voting Stations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parliament (Nov. 08)/European (June 09)</td>
<td>0.421**</td>
<td>61.442**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament (Nov. 08)/President Rd 1 (Nov. 09)</td>
<td>2.514**</td>
<td>367.224**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament (Nov. 08)/President Rd 2 (Dec. 09)</td>
<td>4.058**</td>
<td>675.967**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European (June 09)/President Rd 1 (Nov. 09)</td>
<td>2.715**</td>
<td>523.914**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European (June 09)/President Rd 2 (Dec. 09)</td>
<td>3.278**</td>
<td>971.893**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** = p < .01

An increase in the number of voting stations abroad brings out more Romanian citizens to vote. Voting stations placed in regions with a large number of
migrants helps to improve voting conditions. The next section will look at voting preferences of the Diaspora and attempt to provide explanations for the 2009 election results.

**Vote Preferences of the Romanian Diaspora**

Traian Basescu garnered 78.86 percent of the Diaspora vote in the 2009 Presidential second-round runoff, receiving 115,831 of the 146,876 votes cast. His majority (84,786 more votes than Mircea Geoana) effectively won him the presidency. Had the election been determined solely by the votes cast within Romania’s borders, Basescu would have lost. Yet it is not surprising that Basescu was overwhelmingly popular within the Diaspora. To the extent that we have comparative regional data, candidates from mainstream parties of the right/right-center regularly performed better than candidates from the left. This finding holds as well for the Czech and Polish Diaspora regarding the parliamentary elections of 2001 and 2002, respectively (Doyle and Fidrmuc 2005). However, we do not expect that Basescu’s support was uniformly so strong in every country. Therefore, we will examine geographically where Basescu’s votes came from, and use the findings to speculate about the aggregate outcome which contributed to his victory.

Separate reporting for the vote of the Romanian Diaspora by party exists only since the 2007 election for the European Parliament. Calculated vote percentages for the main Romanian political parties (those that always achieved the minimum threshold for legislative representation) are found in Table x-4. There is a remarkable consistency in the vote across elections. In the five multi-candidate contests reported, the PD-L always was the plurality winner and the National Liberal Party (PNL) always took second. The Diaspora has shown a systematic tendency to vote for the right over the left. In fact, the PSD in multi-candidate contests never obtained as much as one-sixth of the turnout.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PSD</th>
<th>PD-L</th>
<th>PNL</th>
<th>UDMR</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007 European Parliament</td>
<td>8.84</td>
<td>44.10</td>
<td>10.31</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>33.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>15.17</td>
<td>46.52</td>
<td>21.22</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>12.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 Senate</td>
<td>13.23</td>
<td>46.46</td>
<td>23.52</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>11.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 European Parliament</td>
<td>14.87</td>
<td>37.13</td>
<td>15.68</td>
<td>7.16</td>
<td>25.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 President-First Round</td>
<td>12.41</td>
<td>56.05</td>
<td>17.43</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>13.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 President-Second Round</td>
<td>21.14</td>
<td>78.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Biroul Electoral Central
The apparent surprise in Table x-4 is not that Basescu led strongly after the first round of voting in the 2009 presidential election, but that that he increased his margin so dramatically in second round compared to the first. All the other major parties allied against him in the second round. Domestically, Geoana’s vote percentage grew by 18.51 percentage points, second-round over first-round, which is slightly more than Basescu’s increase (17.89 percent). In the Diaspora, by contrast, Basescu’s percentage grew by more than 22 percentage points while Geoana’s grew by less than 9 points.

This does not necessarily mean that voters for the candidates eliminated after the first round shifted to Basescu far more in the Diaspora than elsewhere; more likely it was the consequence of turnout. Diaspora turnout in the second round in 2009 was more than 150 percent of the first round turnout, a much greater increase than was experienced in any of the domestic counties. It is probable that many voters in the Diaspora anticipated the probability of a second round runoff in the 2009 presidential election. Given the difficulty of traveling to a polling place, many saved the effort for the round that mattered. My suspicion is that new voters were far more responsible for the huge Basescu gain, second-round over first-round, rather than any unique shift among continuing voters expressing their second-best preferences once their preferred candidate was eliminated.

The 2009 presidential vote can be disaggregated by country, facilitating a more detailed examination. The 2009 election is the only one for which differentiated country-level results are available for Romanians voting outside of domestic borders. Results are reported for 90 individual countries. In the first round of voting, Basescu did especially well in those with an especially large voter turnout, indicative of large Romanian communities. Of the nine countries in which more than 2,500 votes were cast, Basescu won absolute majorities in seven of them (Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Moldova, Spain and the U.S.) and strong pluralities in the other two (Germany and the UK). Geoana (PSD) won a first-round majority only in Uzbekistan (nine total votes cast). Crin Antonescu (PNL) won a first-round majority only in Montenegro (six votes cast). As anticipated, Kelemen Hunor of UDMR won a majority of Romanian voters in Hungary.

Although Diaspora results by country are not available for the 2008 parliamentary election, votes for the Chamber of Deputies were aggregated by the four regional “Colleges” each of which elected an MP. I performed a parallel aggregation for the 2009 presidential first-round vote. The comparison is found in Table x-5. The Romanian Diaspora again demonstrates considerable consistency in the percentage vote by party.

In 2009, Basescu received a first-round majority of votes cast in three of the four Colleges and a strong plurality in the fourth. It represented only a moderate increase in vote share for the PD-L over 2008 in three of the four constituencies. The exception is Asia/Eastern Europe where his vote share nearly doubled. This was overwhelming the effect from Moldova, which had by far the largest turn-
out of the twenty-eight countries comprising this College; no dramatic change in vote percentage is observed for the twenty-seven others.

It is interesting to examine the relationship between the number of polling stations and the 2009 first-round vote by country. In nineteen countries, there were more polling stations in 2009 than for the 2008 parliamentary elections. Basescu did not garner a first-round majority in eleven of them. He did not even win a plurality in four. On the other hand, there were four countries in which the number of polling stations increased by four or more; he received sizable majorities in all of these (Italy: 54.13 percent; Spain: 57.69 percent; France: 53.54 percent; Moldova: 90.95 percent). There were six countries with fewer polling stations in 2009 than for the 2008 parliamentary elections. Basescu won first-round majorities in two. It does not appear, from the surface, that the distribution of polling places was motivated by narrow partisan concerns. Yet I offer this conclusion with considerable hesitance. Absent comparative country-level election results for the 2008 parliamentary election, it is statistically impossible to determine whether Basescu did better or worse than previously when the number of polling stations was altered.

Table x-5: Diaspora Vote by Region, 2008 and 2009 Elections
By Percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College 1: Western Europe</th>
<th>PSD</th>
<th>PDL</th>
<th>PNL</th>
<th>UDMR</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008 Chamber of Deputies</td>
<td>14.51</td>
<td>48.13</td>
<td>19.38</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>12.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 President-First Round</td>
<td>12.89</td>
<td>53.12</td>
<td>17.92</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>14.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 President-Second Round</td>
<td>21.68</td>
<td>78.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College 2: Asia and Eastern Europe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008 Chamber of Deputies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 President-First Round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 President-Second Round</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College 3: Americas and the Pacific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008 Chamber of Deputies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 President-First Round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 President-Second Round</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College 4: Africa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008 Chamber of Deputies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 President-First Round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 President-Second Round</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More important than the first-round of presidential voting was the second round runoff between the top two vote-getters from the first electoral round. Based on his numbers from the first round, Basescu would have qualified for the runoff without the votes of the Diaspora. However, based on his number from the second round, he would not have been re-elected President of Romania without them.

Of the ninety countries outside of Romania with votes reported for the 2009 runoff election, Basescu won a majority in sixty-six (73.3 percent). Even this understates the degree of his victory within the Diaspora. Of the twenty-four countries where Basescu did not secure a majority, only four of them had one hundred or more total votes cast. There was only one country in which he lost by more than 100 votes, Afghanistan (by 107), which was likely the consequence of Romania’s military deployment there. There were fifteen countries with electoral turnout greater than one thousand votes. Basescu won them all. The most votes were cast in Italy (42.5 thousand), and Basescu garnered 77.8 percent of these. The second most votes were cast in Spain (35.8 thousand) and Basescu garnered 81.1 percent. The other country with more than 10,000 votes cast was Moldova where Basescu obtained 94.8 percent. His triumph among Diaspora voters was overwhelming.

Of the twenty-six countries in Western or Central Europe where the Diaspora were allowed to vote, Basescu won twenty-four, losing only Poland (by 1 vote out of 117 cast) and Slovakia (by 3 votes out of 71 cast). Of the twenty-five communist or former-communist nations, Basescu won fourteen of them. These included neighboring Bulgaria, Ukraine, Moldova, and Serbia, as well as Lithuania, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Vietnam, and China. Not surprisingly he lost in Russia. The preliminary conclusion is that Basescu performed especially well among Diaspora voters living in Western liberal democracies. Yet, equally, he did not perform especially badly compared to Geoana among the Diaspora voters living in less democratic societies, including those in which the communist-successor party still maintains a substantial democratic presence.

A more systematic analysis is required to better understand the variation in the Basescu 2009 runoff result across countries. Toward this end, I considered each country as a single observation: the findings are not weighted for the vast differences in turnout across countries; they are potentially affected by the very small number of voters in many countries, making the recorded vote percentages unreliable indicators of underlying opinion. Nevertheless, using the data available, I examined the profile of countries that voted for Basescu. More precisely, I ran a series of correlations which evaluate by country the percentage of the Diaspora vote obtained by Basescu in the second-round runoff with established national rankings regarding democracy, corruption, freedom, and economic development.
World Audit (2009), for example, produces a comparative ranking of countries by their level of democracy, level of press freedom, and level of corruption. Because these are rankings, a lower number indicates higher performance. The hypothesis is that Basescu’s 2009 vote percentage rose systematically as ranked performance improves, as indicated by strongly negative and statistically significant bi-variate correlation coefficients. The hypothesis is sustained for the 83 countries without missing data for all three of the World Audit measures ($r = -0.439$ democracy ranking; $r = -0.415$ press freedom; $r = -0.470$ corruption).

Transparency International (2009) produces a comparative scoring for countries by the degree of perceived corruption. The more points a country receives, the less corrupt it is perceived to be. As hypothesized, the bi-variate correlation coefficient, Basescu’s 2009 runoff percentage against perceived corruption score, for the 83 countries without missing data is $r = 0.504$.

Freedom House (2009) orders countries by the extent of political rights and civil liberties. The more points a country receives, the less free is that country perceived to be. The bi-variate correlation coefficient of the Basescu vote with political rights, as hypothesized, is $r = -0.371$ and for civil liberties is $r = -0.424$.

The CIA World Factbook (2009) ranks countries by their GDP per capita. The bi-variate correlation coefficient with the Basescu vote percentage, for the 82 countries without missing data, is as anticipated, $r = 0.555$.

The Heritage Foundation and Wall Street Journal (2009) produce an index that orders countries according to their level of economic liberty. Countries with greater economic freedom receive a higher score. The bi-variate correlation correlation coefficient for the 80 countries without missing data is $r = 0.348$.

The data reveal strong and statistically significant associations between the 2009 runoff Basescu vote share and a series of global measures of democracy, political and economic freedom, and economic prosperity. The strongest association is found with GDP per capita and the least strong for political rights. The setting in which Romanians live abroad seems to have affected their vote preferences. This raises an exciting question. Is it likely that Romanians living abroad have internalized to a considerable degree the values and practices of the host country? If so, did the fact that so many members of the Romanian Diaspora live in economically developed, consolidated democracies influence their attitudes and opinions, resulting in the high share of votes awarded to Basescu? Quite possibly, the Diaspora might be seen as a voting group that acts as a catalyst for reform, not only through the economic remittances sent but also through their political preferences, altered by their experiences in living abroad. Alternatively, a self-selected group of pro-reform individuals who chose to live abroad may be the driving force in electoral activity. Much further data are necessary before these claims can be assessed with certainty.

**Conclusion**
The 2009 presidential elections represented a peculiar event for Romania. It was the first time when presidential elections were organized separately from parliamentary elections. There was the smallest margin of victory in any presidential election. The presidential elections brought the highest number of Romanian migrants to the polls.

Theories on the role of the Diaspora focus primarily on formal citizenship status and the economic contribution of remittances, and not on political influence. Research on Diaspora turnout and voting preference is scarce and occasional. The issue achieves the political agenda only when migrant votes seem to matter due to the closeness of the electoral contest. One explanation is that for many countries there are too few migrants who vote to affect the election result. Another complication is data collection. For example, there are no reliable counts regarding the number of Romanians living abroad. Official government documents systematically underestimate the size of the Diaspora.

This chapter presented the institutional, legal, and historical background of Romanian Diaspora voting rights. It showed that the Romanian Diaspora, despite its proven importance in the 2009 presidential contest, tends to be apathetic and largely absent from elections. By increasing the number of voting stations, more citizens can reach the polls with minimum financial effort and shorter time commitments, facilitating turnout increase to a point of diminishing returns. The chapter also examined the voting preferences of Romanians living abroad. Results indicate that the Diaspora prefers to vote for parties of the right, which has aided the cause of the PD-L and Traian Basescu. The number of polling stations appears to be associated with higher than previous turnout rates; however, more detailed data are needed to confirm this speculation. Basescu received a higher share of support in more democratic countries, with more economic freedom and less corruption; it remains to be investigated whether the values of the host country affect those of Romanians living in those countries. Further research depends on the availability of data. Ideally, we would be able to examine the effects of such variables as years abroad, income level, work status, previous political preference, access to sending country media, integration into the host country, and exposure to host country cultural values.

The Romanian Diaspora has grown exponentially over the past few years. Its political influence, despite the costs of voting and apparent lack of interest, potentially can be decisive in a country in which political tensions are high, election outcomes are close, and every vote matters. After the 2009 elections, their votes certainly will not be taken for granted.

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