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Migrant rights, voting, and resocialization: suffrage in Chile and Ecuador, 1925-2020

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Chapter 3

Unpacking Migrants' Electoral Decisions: Insights from Ecuador

The purpose of this Chapter is to further explore the phenomenon of migrant voting by unpacking the meaning behind migrants' electoral decisions: to vote or not to vote? That is the question for many international migrants, as a national abroad for origin-country elections and as a foreign resident voter in the residence country. In Chapter 1, I outlined the main conceptual contribution of this dissertation and offered the migrant voting typology to classify the phenomenon. Thereafter in Chapter 2, I used an empirical illustration in a novel context to show that the four types of migrant voting exist, as well as explored independent variables that affect migrants' individual-level electoral turnout. To continue, in this Chapter I analyze the reasons migrants vote in national elections. Semi-structured interviews are a fruitful way to understand such reasons because it allows migrants explain in their own words their electoral decisions in both the origin and residence countries—revealing personalized peeks into underlying (re)socialization processes behind migrant voting decisions.

I chose Ecuador to conduct interviews with immigrants in 2019 since the country grants foreign residents multilevel voting rights after five years of permanent residence. Additionally, most immigrants in Ecuador also have emigrant voting rights, making it is possible to find migrant voters who can participate in national-level elections in two countries: the new country of residence without needing to naturalize (in Ecuador) and the origin country through voting from abroad. The selection process targeted migrants who had politically socialized under more than one regime type, thus including people from the origin countries of Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Peru, or Venezuela who now reside in Ecuador. This set of countries has experienced shifting political regimes over the last half century, ranging from closed autocracy to liberal democracy, which I relate in my analysis. Thereafter, the aim of the selection was to find varied sociodemographic characteristics and include those who moved to Ecuador between 1979, when Ecuador returned to democracy, and 2014 since this allows immigrants to have met the five-year requirement to vote in Ecuador. All questions posed to the Interviewees specified temporal (sequenced pre- and post-migration) and spatial (origin or residence country) aspects through a transnational lens to explore how voting in one country could affect voting in the other.

Findings from 71 semi-structured interviews provided rich information about how migrants' personalized trajectories influence why and where they decide to vote or abstain. While this small

group does not represent the entire migrant population, Interviewees from the five origin countries offered shortened versions of their political trajectories. Narrative patterns emerged, ranging between situations of scarcity, violence, and corruption to prosperity, freedom, and trust in democracy. Open-ended questions covered the topics of prior voting and future intention to vote, political socialization and resocialization, individual-state relations in two countries, as well as political identity and partisanship. Such targeted questions on political experiences allowed me to begin unpacking (re)socialization processes.

Migrant trajectories soaked in politics revealed dynamic (re)socialization processes that affect the outcome of migrant voting in two countries. Taken together, Interviewees' responses reveal that while varying (non)democratic political experiences leave a mark on migrants, neither positive nor negative experiences are determinative of migrant voting behavior in the short or long term. Many Interviewees who socialized in nondemocracy then resocialized in democracy display a critical eye for spotting false promises and a lack of transparency in politicians and governments, as well as realistic views of democracy's benefits and fragility. Almost half of the Interviewees are dual transnational voters—having voted at least once in both the origin country from abroad as well as in the country of residence—and almost three-quarters of Interviewees intend to vote in the two countries in the future (see Chapter 4).

In the next section, I chronicle Ecuador's eleven-year road to enfranchising both immigrants and emigrants (1998–2009) by explaining when migrants gained voting rights as well as existent registration and voting laws. Section 2 contains the method of analysis, the Respondent characteristics, and limitations to the analysis. In Section 3, I present the main results and outline the reasons migrants say they turn out to vote, as well as introduce a new variable: investment in a flourishing future, or the idea that some migrants participate because they are committed to improving a country's democracy and the economy. Section 4 expands on how Interviewees' past experiences in nondemocracy influence current political attitudes and electoral behavior.

3.1 A Short Road to Enfranchising Immigrants and Emigrants in Ecuador

The legal process of granting voting rights to both nonresident nationals and foreign residents is prevalent throughout Latin America, including in Ecuador (Escobar 2015). According to Palop-García and Pedroza (2019), legislation for emigrant enfranchisement must be 1) passed, 2) regulated, and 3) applied before nationals abroad can participate in elections, which can take years to achieve. It can take even longer to grant voting rights to long-term foreign residents, or 'denizens.' Migrant

enfranchisement is also not a guarantee—discussion at various governmental levels may never reach the first step of passing legislation. In states with federalist governments, legislation may pass at the local or regional level but get rejected at the national level, which occurred in Germany.⁵⁵ Alternatively, migrant suffrage legislation is passed and then lags between regulation, or thereafter between regulation and application. Emigrant voting rights in Ecuador encountered minor lags, whereas immigrant voting rights were granted quickly without setback.

Table 3.1 Milestones in Ecuador’s 11-year Road to Enfranchising Immigrants and Emigrants⁵⁶

Year	Action	Enfranchisement Step Description
1998	Enact	Article 27 of the 1998 Constitution enacts emigrant voting suffrage
2000	Regulate	Article 4 and 99 in the 2000 Electoral Law regulates emigrant voting
2002	Regulate	2002 reform regulates emigrant voting
2006	Apply	First time emigrants vote in national elections, in a presidential election
2008	Enact	Article 63 of the 2008 Constitution enacts immigrant voting suffrage with 5-year residence (universal, multilevel elections)
2008	Enact	Article 63 of the 2008 Constitution enacts special representation for emigrants
2009	Regulate	Organic Electoral Law of Elections and Political Organizations (i.e., the Democracy Code) regulates immigrant voting
2009	Regulate	Article 4 and 150 in Electoral Law 2009 regulate special representation for emigrants
2009	Apply	First time immigrants vote in Ecuadorian elections

3.1.1 Granting migrant voting rights in the 1998 and 2008 Constitutions

In Ecuador, Umpierrez de Reguero and Dandoy (2020) report that a migrant organization (*Federación de Ecuatorianos en el Exterior* [Federation of Ecuadorians Abroad]) originally instigated the external voting rights discussion in the mid-1990s. Their demands were met when emigrant voting was

⁵⁵ However, Pedroza (2019) suggests that decades-long discussions and political parties’ changing framing of the topic in parliamentary debates make Germany not so much an example of failure, but a long-debated, ongoing case of denizen enfranchisement.

⁵⁶ The steps of enact, regulate, and apply are from Palop-García and Pedroza (2019). While the five-year residence is specific for foreign residents, they must also meet the standard requirements (e.g., age) to vote.

enshrined in the 1998 Constitution (Article 27), which also allowed nationals abroad to hold dual nationality (i.e., retain original nationality even if they naturalized in the country of residence) (Article 11). However, considering the three steps to legislation, enfranchisement is incomplete until a country regulates and implements it.

Emigrant voting rights in Ecuador stemming from the 1998 Constitution were introduced in the 2000 Electoral Law (Article 4 and 99) and regulated in the 2002 reform (Umpierrez de Reguero and Dandoy 2020). But the National Electoral Council halted implementation of emigrant voting rights in Ecuador; as Umpierrez de Reguero and Dandoy (2020, pp. 116–117) explain, there was public debate about how the electoral process would unfold abroad and the Council, intending on “setting the rules of the game,” “did not allow nonresident Ecuadorians to participate in the 2002 presidential elections.” Implementation was achieved in 2006; that year’s presidential election marked the first time Ecuadorians abroad voted in-person, for example in Consulates (Ramírez 2018, Palop-García and Pedroza 2019). Although there were more registered Ecuadorians abroad during the most recent election of 2017 than initially in 2006, the 2006 presidential election attracted the highest percentage of registered voters (61% of voters of total registered Ecuadorians abroad) as compared to the 2017 election (39%) (Ramírez and Umpierrez de Reguero 2019). Despite taking eight years from beginning to end, Ecuador’s process of granting emigrant voting rights was linear, with no rights reversals.

After the election of Rafael Correa as president of Ecuador in 2006, the perceived role of emigrants as voters changed in tandem with legislative changes introduced by Correa’s administration in 2007 when he was sworn into his first term. Correa set a new kind of political discourse by coining the term “Fifth Region,” meaning Ecuadorians abroad form a distinct “region” in addition to the four existent parts of the country (Boccagni and Ramírez 2013, Boccagni 2014, Pugh 2017, Ramírez 2018). While the group of people who make up the region are real, the region itself is an idea, not an actual territory. The Fifth Region exemplifies how states can ‘shift’ their national borders, at will, far into other territories (Shachar 2020), for reasons such as implementing migration control strategies or reestablishing territorial connections with emigrants.

A decade after emigrants first gained suffrage rights, Ecuador enshrined immigrant voting rights via Article 63 of the 2008 Constitution, granting foreign resident voting rights, regardless of nationality, in all local and national elections and plebiscites after a five-year residence. The 2008 Constitution emphasizes migrant rights because it “advocates the principles of universal citizenship and recognizes the right to human mobility” (Escobar 2015, p. 941). The Constitution also designated special representation for Ecuadorians abroad, meaning voting for legislative seats to elect direct

representation in the origin country—which the National Electoral Council regulated in 2009 (Collyer 2014a, Palop-García 2017, Umpierrez de Reguero and Dandoy 2020; Electoral Law 2009, Article 4 and 150). As van Haute and Kernalegenn (2020) point out, giving emigrants special representation incentivizes political parties, new or existent, to establish themselves abroad since their presence and campaigning can incentivize more emigrants to vote. The Organic Electoral Law of Elections and Political Organizations—more commonly known as the Democracy Code (*Código de la Democracia*)—regulated immigrant voting in 2009. Thereafter, and likely because of a brief lag period between the 2008 Constitution and immigrants casting votes for the first time in Ecuador, the first turnout of foreign voters in 2009 was low (Escobar 2015, p. 941).

In sum, emigrant enfranchisement in Ecuador took eight years (1998–2006), immigrant enfranchisement took one (2008–2009), and the entire process took eleven (1998–2009). Compared to other countries—such as Chile where it took 92 years to achieve (1925–2017; see Chapter 2), or the United States where multilevel immigrant voting was widespread from independence until being repealed in the 1920s (Hayduk 2006, 2015)—Ecuador experienced a relatively short journey to extensive migrant enfranchisement. Ecuador has since expanded enfranchisement by designating special representation, and as of 2020, there is no indication that migrant voting will be reversed.

3.2 Findings from Interviewing Migrants in 2019

Between August and October 2019, a research team conducted 71 interviews with foreign residents in Ecuador from five origin countries: Chile (14 Interviewees), Colombia (20), Cuba (9), Peru (14), and Venezuela (14).⁵⁷ Colombian and Peruvian immigrants rank in the top three origin countries with the most migrants present in Ecuador (along with immigrants from the United States); the five selected origin countries accounted for around 35% of all foreign residents living in Ecuador (see Appendix 3.1). However, instead of trying to represent the entire immigrant population in Ecuador, the primary

⁵⁷ The data (in-person semi-structured interviews and verbatim transcriptions of the open-ended questions, both in Spanish) stem from a larger project completed between March 2019 and March 2020 entitled, “Democracy, Ideology, and Partisanship in Transnational Perspective: Evidence of Migrant Voting in and from Ecuador, 1979–2018,” funded by the Universidad Casa Grande in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Gabriela Baquerizo, Sebastián Umpierrez de Reguero, and I applied for the project through the University’s *Semilleros* program, then collaborated with four Research Assistants: Paula Lanata, María José Medina, Claudia Navarrete, and Vivian Cartagena. Based on techniques in Mosely (2013), the project totaled 83 interviews, from which I exclude those from Spain to focus on Latin America. I also exclude two (non-Venezuelan) Interviewees who arrived in the most emergent wave and thus did not yet have voting rights in Ecuador.

decision for choosing Interviewees from the five origin countries was to find variance in political learning experiences in democracies, hybrid regimes, authoritarianism, or a combination of these political regime types (see Table 3.4). All countries except Cuba offer external voting rights to emigrants abroad.⁵⁸

Interviewees belong to either in a traditional wave (1979–2009) or an emergent wave (2010–2019) of immigration to Ecuador. The traditional wave starts from 1979 when Ecuador returned to democracy and ends in 2009 after the 2008 Constitution that emphasized migrant rights (Escobar 2015) and was implemented. The emergent wave picks up in 2010, one year after implementation of the 2008 Constitution and ends in 2019 when the interviews were conducted. Over the period of analysis, immigrant stock (the number of foreign residents within total population) in Ecuador tripled, from approximately 0.8% to 2.4% of the total population (see Appendix 3.2). Table 3.2 summarizes the Respondents' characteristics and shows that they are about evenly split between the two waves.

Table 3.2 Description of 71 Respondents by Origin Country, Select Variables⁵⁹

Origin Country	Women	Men	Age Range	University Degree	Stable Employ.	Temporary Employ.	Arrived 1979–2009	Arrived 2010–2019
Chile	5	9	34–66	12	12	2	11	3
Colombia	8	12	24–76	12	17	1	11	9
Cuba	3	6	21–54	7	6	1	1	8
Peru	7	7	22–66	5	7	5	8	6
Venezuela	6	8	21–63	12	13	0	5	9
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>42</i>	--	--	--	--	--	--
<i>Total</i>	<i>71</i>		<i>21–76</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>35</i>

⁵⁸ Chile enacted external voting rights through the Constitutional Reform Law 20.748 in 2014–2015, which was implemented in 2017 (see Chapter 2); Colombia enacted them for presidential elections in 1961 (Law 39), which were extended to legislative elections in the 1991 Constitution (Bermudez *et al.* 2017); Peru enacted them in the 1979 Constitution and has applied them since 1980 (Umpierrez de Reguero, Erdilmen, and Finn 2021); Venezuela extended them in 2009 via the Organic Law of Electoral Processes, Article 124.

⁵⁹ Except for age range, all descriptions are given in numbers of Respondents in the category. Regarding employment, Interviewees were asked about their main economic activity, with eight choices (see Appendix 3.6); temporary employment includes seasonal and sporadic jobs. Appendix 3.3 shows a further breakdown of the arrival waves.

Overall, the group of 71 migrant Interviewees are highly educated: 16 Respondents indicated that their highest level of completed education was high school, 7 completed technical training, and the remaining 48 hold an undergraduate (33 people) or postgraduate degree (15 people). Capturing highly educated Respondents is not unusual: Boccagni and Ramírez's (2013) non-representative sample of non-resident Ecuadorian voters abroad captured about a quarter with a university degree. When Escobar and colleagues (2015) surveyed Colombian voters in various cities in Europe and the United States, around 55% of their survey's respondents had an under- or postgraduate degree. The average age among the group is 45 years old, and approximately 40% of the Interviewees are women. Three-quarters of the Respondents were currently working a stable job whereas nine people said they worked, but only in temporary or sporadic positions. Only three Respondents did not have jobs and four were students (two only study and the other two work and study).

In addition to their origin country, 14 Respondents had previously lived in one or more countries before Ecuador. More frequent migration patterns beyond 'temporary' or 'permanent' are emerging worldwide (Constant 2020), and in this group most repeat migrants were from Chile and Venezuela. After leaving the origin country, 12 Respondents had previously lived in Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, England, Mexico, Spain, Switzerland, the United States, or Venezuela, for an average of about 4 years (ranging from half a year to 13 years). The other two had also lived in an additional second country (2 years in Peru and 3 years in the United States) before moving to Ecuador. Four of these countries are in South America, and six in Latin America, underlining the prevalence of not only intraregional migration but also repeat intraregional migration. Geographical proximity and a common language facilitate movement and knowledge acquisition post-migration. Variation in residence history among Interviewees enriched cross-country and cross-time comparisons in the analysis, particularly regarding democratic freedoms, views on corruption, and institutional trust.

Most (53 people) reported holding permanent residency in Ecuador. Another 15 Interviewees held dual nationality, which seemed uncorrelated to previous migration elsewhere since 11 had naturalized in the destination country, making their second nationality Ecuadorian. Three individuals held their second passport from Costa Rica, Italy, or Russia. As a unique case, one Chilean Respondent had German and Ecuadorian passports; this 62-year-old woman left Chile in the early 1980s and for

political reasons had to renounce Chilean nationality.⁶⁰ The few remaining reported holding a temporary visa, refugee status, were undocumented, or they preferred not to answer this question.

Approximately one in every five Respondents reported that they or someone in their household had experienced some form of discrimination within the last year in Ecuador. This high rate was initially surprising to learn, given the group's educational credentials and shared native language, as well as most having a documented legal status. However, the discrimination had little to do with their jobs or status—the most selected reason for discrimination was “being a foreigner,” reported by 12 Respondents. Six others reported other types of discrimination, three of which said was based on their way of speaking. Although all Respondents speak Spanish as their native language, differences in accent, intonation, and word usage are used a basis for discrimination against the Interviewees by ‘native’ Ecuadorians.

About half (37 Respondents) send remittances and visit their origin country, with varying frequencies. While 9 people send remittances only in the case of emergencies, 10 send them one to six times a year, and 18 (a quarter of the group) transfer money seven times or more a year to family or friends in the origin country. Of those who send remittances, most preferred not to report how much they send, but 12 normally send less than \$100 USD each time and another 12 people send more than \$100 but less than \$250 each time. Trips to the origin country are common, but not for all Interviewees: 10 people report never visiting (choosing the answer: “not even once in the last five years”) and 21 rarely (“once or twice in the last five years”), whereas 28 visit occasionally (“once every year or year and a half”) and 12 frequently (“up to three times a year”). Remittances and visits to the origin country are evidence that at least half of the Interviewees continue financial and personal contact with the left-behind and maintain some connection to the origin country.

3.2.1 Selection process and method limitations

My selection procedure for interview respondents had four obligatory requirements (for specifications, see Appendix 3.4). Rather than trying to represent the immigrant population in Ecuador, the main aim was to explore political experiences in a variety of settings in both democracy and nondemocracy, which is why I selected the five origin countries. As such, the selected group captures typical migrant

⁶⁰ Dual nationals included: Chile-Costa Rica (CL2), Germany-Ecuador (CL9), Colombia-Ecuador (CO2 and CO4), Colombia-Italy (CO13), Cuba-Russia (CU1), Cuba-Ecuador (CU2 and CU9), Peru-Ecuador (PE10), Venezuela-Italy (VE3), Venezuela-Ecuador (VE4, VE5, VE7, VE10, and VE12).

voting trajectories, specific to regimes shifting between left- and right-leaning governments and between democracy and nondemocracy.

From there, the selection process aimed to vary the Respondent group by sex, age, and year of arrival between 1979 and 2014. I started in 1979, the year Ecuador returned to democracy and stop at 2014, since those who moved after 2014 fail to meet the five-year requirement to vote in Ecuador, except the four Venezuelans who arrived in the most emergent wave. Even though they do not yet have immigrant voting rights to participate in Ecuadorian elections, I nonetheless include them to explore events in, and ties to, the current authoritarian origin country.

Following these guidelines, possible Respondents were asked if they would be willing to interview. Starting with a small pool of Respondents who agreed to be interviewed, a snowball technique allowed expanding the pool of Interviewees to include other foreign residents. The trust-based referral system based on closer friends, colleagues, and acquaintances gained more interviews, which occurred primarily in Guayaquil. Furthermore, the referrals had to be someone outside the nuclear family and who was not a first cousin, to maximize variation in the political socialization familial experiences.

Selected Interviewees first read the Consent Information, signed the Consent Form (see Appendix 3.5), then participated in a questionnaire with close-ended (survey) questions and open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview (see Appendix 3.6).⁶¹ I designed the questions between April and June 2019. The literal transcriptions, in Spanish, contain only responses to the open-ended questions in Section C, which averaged approximately 45 minutes. This questionnaire section covered four topics, each with two to four questions, that provide the main empirics for the present Chapter: (1) electoral participation, (2) political socialization, (3) democracy and political resocialization, and (4) political identity.

To measure electoral participation, I distinguish instances of pre-migration voting (participating as a resident national) from post-migration voting. To categorize the latter, I use Finn's (2020) four types of migrant voting: immigrant (foreign resident and dual national) voting in the residence country,⁶² emigrant voting from abroad for the origin country, dual transnational voting (participating in both countries), and abstention (voting nowhere, despite having suffrage rights).

⁶¹ The Research Ethics Committee at the Universidad Casa Grande in Ecuador approved the questionnaire.

⁶² Respondents include foreign residents, dual nationals, undocumented residents, and a refugee. While Executive Decree 1182, Article 3, from 2012 prohibits refugees from political involvement in Ecuador, it is not always enforced, thus I include the refugee in the analysis.

I exclude Cubans from my analysis of prior voting since Cubans lack emigrant voting rights and cannot enter the emigrant or dual transnational voting quadrants. However, I include Cubans when analyzing the intention to vote since it is hypothetical for all Respondents. In contrast to Cubans, Peruvians are mandated to vote while abroad (Belgium similarly has a compulsory voting system for emigrants) and thus cannot enter the immigrant voting quadrant. This is because if Peruvians vote in Ecuador, they are also legally required to vote in Peru, so would enter the dual transnational quadrant. Nonetheless, I include Peruvians in both prior and future voting analyses since the Respondents show electoral variation—i.e., some vote and some abstain in origin-country elections, despite being legally compulsory.

I consider any pre-migration political experiences and learning as political socialization and post-migration experiences as political resocialization. Within the group of Interviewees, some pre-migration experiences occurred in a third or fourth country because of repeat migration (i.e., the Interviewees did not emigrate directly from their origin country to Ecuador). Nonetheless I focus only on resocialization in Ecuador and its effects on a migrant's perception toward Ecuador and the origin country because that is where the migrants can cast ballots.

The last part of the interview covered political ideology, party affiliation, and involvement in political movements—from which I focus on political identity. The Interviewees explained their views on democracy, perceptions toward political regimes and trust in institutions for the origin and residence countries, both before and after migrating. After placing themselves on a left-right scale of ideology in the questionnaire, Interviewees further detailed their political identity in both countries, which I categorized using a color-coding system for systematic reference. I then took notes on each nationality based on the various categories, remarking on differences and similarities in their responses.

The research faces two main limitations. First, I expect some misreporting on political engagement not only because memory is imperfect but also due to the social desirability response bias; some overreporting of voting could come from people feeling reluctant or embarrassed to say that they abstained, planned to abstain, or express their views on democracy, so they lie. Second, since the data collection technique formed a non-representative sample, I cannot generalize about all migrant voters of these nationalities in or beyond Ecuador. Nonetheless, the achieved purpose of semi-structured interviews was to explore a) the reasons for migrant voting, abstention, and obstacles to voting and b) why individual-level turnout decisions change over time in two countries. I captured nuances of political socialization and resocialization processes within the group of Interviewees, noting common occurrences during personalized trajectories (also see Chapter 4), as related to

institutional trust, ideology, and adaptation of political attitudes, values, and behavior in the origin and residence countries over time.

3.3 Reasons Migrants Vote: Ties and Being Invested in a Flourishing Future

Individual-level turnout is influenced by age, education, and intention to stay in the residence country (see Chapter 1). However, they fail to shed light on where and when migrants decide to vote or abstain. To gain such insight, I analyze responses explaining why migrants say they vote.

Table 3.3 Reasons for Migrant Voting

Main reasons	Family ties (connections with people)
	Territorial ties (connections with place) Emigrants: civic duty, citizenship/nationality, belonging as a nonresident national Immigrants: residence, belonging as a foreign resident, trust in the voting process
	Invested in a flourishing future for a positive change in politics and less corruption
Secondary reason	Formal recognition Emigrants: inclusion as nonresident nationals Immigrants: inclusion as foreign residents
(Case-specific) bureaucratic reasons	Avoid fines*
	Obtain voting certificate

Source: Based on 71 interviews with migrants in Ecuador in 2019.

Notes: *Except for Peruvian emigrants, avoiding fines as a reason for voting is often based on misinformation or a misunderstanding by immigrants, emigrants, or other people who believe that voting is compulsory, when in fact it is facultative.

As Table 3.3 outlines, three reasons stand out as the strongest: (1) migrants have ties to people, mostly family, living in the country; (2) migrants have deeply rooted ties to a territory through ideas of citizenship/nationality, duty, and belonging; and (3) migrants are invested in creating a flourishing future for the country—both a stronger democracy and stable economy. These three reasons were so often cited during the 71 interviews, and oftentimes interwoven with other reasons for voting, that in

Table 3.3 I label them as ‘main reasons’ for migrant voting. A less cited motive is labeled as the ‘secondary reason’. Having resources and a motive to vote creates a sufficient condition for the emergence of migrant voting.

3.3.1 Multiterritorial ties to people and places

When migrants explain why they vote, they almost always incorporate ties and geographical aspects into their answers. For example, when interviewing migrants after elections, Boccagni and Ramírez (2013, p. 722) report that “interviewees didn’t talk much about politics... they talked much more of their families, of their affections.” Similarly, none of the 71 Interviewees directly reported voting because they are interested in politics; rather, they are interested in politics because they care about family and friends and they care about what happens in the future since it affects their loved ones’ wellbeing. One Interviewee participated in emigrant voting because, “it is the country where I was born, where obviously my family lives, or I mean, the majority of my family lives there” (PE3).⁶³ For this Interviewee, familial ties are on par with territorial ties.

Territorial ties, such as feelings of duty to the origin country, have formed stable roots in most people’s political trajectories. Once formed, a sense of duty from the individual-state relation to a place or community is unlikely to become uprooted, even long after emigration (see Chapter 4).⁶⁴ Migrants’ identity with a country and the nationality stick with them, even after decades abroad. One Interviewee asserted: “I’m very Colombian, very nationalist... I’m Colombian, my family is Colombian, I have family in Colombia, my friends are Colombian, and we participate, let’s say, I actively participate in Colombian society online.... every day I know what’s happening in my town” (CO3). Taking it a step further, some commented that being abroad changes their perspective toward the origin country’s political scene: “I’m much more aware of the country now, looking at it from afar... we can see our country like from a bird’s eye view, for the good of the country” (CL6). As I further explore in Chapter 4, such a shift in perspective suggests that although the individual is the

⁶³ The interviews were conducted and transcribed in Spanish; all translations are my own. Referencing the interviews, I use the ISO Alpha-2 codes to abbreviate the countries, and number each interview (i.e., CL1 is Chilean Interviewee 1, CO for Colombia, CU Cuba, PE Peru, and VE Venezuela).

⁶⁴ Those forced to emigrate will not necessarily have civic duty or a sense of obligation to the origin country, although they may hold other long-lasting connections to people, communities, culture, customs, and so forth (see Chapter 4). Other catastrophic events (crisis, recession, war) related to the individual-state relation can also uproot a sense of civic duty.

same person, and the origin country is the same country, the new ‘bird’s eye view’ reflects the change from a national citizen-state relation to an emigrant-origin country relation when abroad.

Over time, immigrants residing abroad grow roots in the residence country, their “new home,” often with Ecuadorian spouses and children in the household. One Interviewee explains she is motivated to vote “because I love this country, the truth is I have a son here—my son is Ecuadorian” (P2). Politics inevitably intertwine with all other aspects of life; one Interviewee from Venezuela explained that she “[has] to participate in the country’s political life, in social life, in economic life because I live here, I produce here, I live off of the fruits of my labor, I work here, my family lives here” (VE3). She went on to say: “I can’t tell you that I feel Ecuadorian, [because] I’m Venezuelan, that I can’t deny, but my life is here.” Although she participates politically in Ecuador because she has planted roots in the country, she also maintains her role and connections as an emigrant to her origin country in terms of belonging, nationality, and citizenship.

Some find it only natural that residency and connections result in wanting to participate in politics, strengthening ties to the residence country. One Interviewee, who has lived in Ecuador for 15 years, considered it “obvious” that she cared about Ecuador since it was like her “second homeland” and believed that voting was a right that “we should exercise” and that “I want to exercise.” (CO6). Another Interviewee elucidated, “I feel a little Ecuadorian [after] so many years living here, it seems to me that I have *the right and the responsibility to participate*” (CL2, emphasis added). Territorial ties to the destination country over time of residence create bonds to the people and place, making migrants feel less like outsiders and more like insiders with a sense of belonging (see Chapter 4). Since the residence country grants suffrage rights to foreign residents, migrants can exercise the right to formally participate and become active political insiders as members of the demos.

When mentioning ties, Interviewees were usually referring to connections to family and friends. Through these networks, they grow attached to the country, which may or may not include a sense of duty (or the idea of belonging to the nation-state). In Eliasoph’s (1998, p. 82) words, voting is a civic act that is “close to home” and “do-able.” For migrant respondents, “close” reaches far beyond a geographical territory and “home” often refers to both the origin and residence countries, suggesting voting is a meaningful political act for individual migrants. As one Interviewee put it: “Everyone who lives in a country—regardless of being a resident, native, or foreigner—in my opinion, has the right and the responsibility to vote” (VE2).

Yet, feelings of duty as a foreign resident are again commonly based on established ties and residence: “I live here, I work here, I pay taxes here, I have the obligation to vote because it’s part of

my responsibility” (CO11). Even without previous electoral participation in any country, one Respondent’s ties grew so strong in Ecuador that it stirred a newfound sense of civic duty that motivated her to vote for the first time in 2017 because “as a resident of so many years, I feel the right and *the obligation to contribute* to this civic matter” and describes it as quite “an experience that in my almost 50 years I had never had, and it felt important to me. I felt that this was very patriotic, very civic” (CL13, emphasis added).

In such cases, feelings of duty expand beyond the emigrant-origin country relation since people can also develop a similar sense of duty to the residence country as an immigrant—whether as a foreign resident or those holding multiple nationalities (further explored in Chapter 4). Based on this group of Interviewees, migrants’ multiterritorial ties to place and to people within it are mutually reinforcing and connections to people can cause ties to the idea of the nation-state.

3.3.2 Investment in a country’s flourishing future

Another motive that affects migrant voting emerged from analyzing the in-depth interviews: investment in a flourishing future. Ideas of investment in a “collective interest” and contributing to a “flourishing” future originate from Bauböck (2015).⁶⁵ This is a distinct reason that migrants often acknowledged as *the principal motive* to vote. Respondents specifically referred to this reason as the betterment for themselves, their children, and all residents in terms of economic opportunities and wellbeing. They also referred to a well-functioning democracy, democratic institutions, and urban development as components of a flourishing future; people “always want things to work in the best way [they can], because it’s your home” (PE14).

I was not expecting to discover this as a reason that affects migrant voting at the individual level and, as such, it is absent from my previous outline (Figure 1.2) of necessary conditions for voting in a given country. In Chapter 1, and building from Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), I proposed that while time and money (resources) allow people the luxury of voting, people vote because they feel they *belong* to a country (ties and civic duty), because they *care* about people living there (ties to family

⁶⁵ Bauböck bases his stakeholder principle on two assumptions: 1) individuals are interested in being a member of the demos for instrumental and intrinsic reasons, and 2) those in the self-governing polity *share a “collective interest in preserving its autonomy and contributing to its flourishing”* (Bauböck 2015, p. 825, emphasis added). While this principle is used to demarcate the demos, I find the wording also captures many Respondents’ motives for exercising voting rights: migrant voters have aligned their individual-level interests to collective ones and vote to achieve a brighter future for the country.

and friends), or a combination of these two. I suggest that family ties and territorial ties are two strong reasons that motivate individual-level migrant turnout. Compared to other voters, migrants are first influenced by more combinations of resources and ties across the countries in which they have lived. Second, migrant voters more commonly position themselves in terms of people (especially family) and place ('here' and 'there'). Through my interviews, I also discovered a third main motive for migrant voter turnout: investment in a flourishing future. Migrant voters who want a flourishing future means they vote because they want to see a positive political change, less corruption, new economic opportunities, and to bolster democratic freedoms.⁶⁶

Wanting a brighter future reveals that rather than forgetting—or, using Paul's (2013) phrasing, "unlearning"—past political experiences, migrant voters prefer to *apply* learned lessons. "When I vote in Ecuador, I think that it's for you all to not fall into the same [mess] that we fell into. To help [ensure] that you don't experience what we lived through" (VE1), referring to the devastating consequences stemming from Venezuela's current political regime.

Others want a flourishing future given their roots in the destination country: "I love Ecuador because I've been here, I think, like 30 years... I'm one of those people who truly values Ecuador... so *we want something good for Ecuador* (CO9, emphasis added). One Respondent expressed that "we're all part of the decisions" implying that migrants have a stake in their residence country of Ecuador because "the results of the measures that the elected leaders apply" will affect everyone, including migrants (PE12). He stressed the consequences of policies and that having a stake in a country or community drives him and many others to want to "improve things." A third Respondent explained: "I'm a resident in Ecuador, and as an inhabitant of Ecuador living in this country, *I also want changes*—because I live here, I want things to go well" (CO20).

Despite migrant enfranchisement expansion, contemporary numbers of overseas voters are rarely high enough to affect aggregate electoral outcomes, as revealed by analyses of elections in New Zealand (Gamlen 2015), Romania (Burean 2011, Vintila and Soare 2018), Italy (Laguerre 2013, Østergaard-Nielsen and Ciornei 2019), and Turkey (Yener-Roderburg 2020). However, regardless of

⁶⁶ By reporting that migrant voters in my group of Interviewees are invested in a flourishing future, I do not exclude that other (non-migrant) voters may also want the same, or that they may turn out vote for the same reason. The difference here is that Respondents reported feeling invested in the future directly from residence and their newer 'roots' in the destination country and as well from nationality and family ties (their initial 'roots') in the origin country. These roots and desires seem to be more explicit for migrant voters (see Chapter 4). Again, it is the duality and explicit reference to spatial and familial relations that make migrant voters' responses stand out as distinct.

the election results, many Respondents who claim they are invested in a flourishing future assume (or believe) that electing a candidate who proposed to design and implement policies will achieve just that. As Acemoglu and Robinson (2006, p. 19) put it, people want “more income to less, and in addition, they may like peace, security, fairness, and lots of other things.” Respondents echoed this position and prioritized the benefits of a stable political system and a strong economy.

Some Respondents believed that a flourishing future meant a stronger democracy in terms of free participation, representation, and ‘good’ policy. Reflecting back to her first time voting, one Interviewee “felt happy because for the first time you do something like exercising democracy, to participate, since now I can vote, I can form an opinion, contribute,” and she still believed that “with my vote, I can contribute to maybe [help] that person continue, I mean, I offer a little help or a little contribution, that I am supporting democracy, [supporting] the country” (CO12). Many Interviewees repeatedly link election outcomes with policy—in other words, it was a common understanding among Interviewees that voters elect a candidate, the elected leader makes public policy (the output) that, when applied, either helps or hurts the country and the people within (the policy outcome). For this group of migrant voters, voting is how they directly contribute to strengthening democracy.

For other Respondents, a flourishing future meant a stronger economic outlook for a country, such as a stable currency, increased international trade, and quality public services. When describing why they vote in Ecuador, one Respondent answered that “my choices can also help better my life here... the quality of life for everyone in this country” (PE1), while another reports emigrant voting because he wants “a big change, to see my country improve its economy” (PE5). Specific economic-related reasons for voting included more opportunities for people within the country in terms of jobs, wages, and access to goods and services.

Several Respondents who prioritized a strong economy as a reason for investment in the future seemed to have been influenced by their pre-migration experiences. For example, tight political control goes along with tight economic control, such as the most recent occurrences in Venezuela: government interference is affecting millions of people because of food and medicine shortages (Freier 2018, Freier and Parent 2018, 2019). Concerns about government interference and its effect on the economy were also reflected in responses by Chileans who had lived with state intervention, recession, and rationing during Salvador Allende’s presidency, 1970–1973.

Wanting to “make a change” towards a flourishing future indicates that voters are unsatisfied with the country’s current state. Radcliff (1992) has proposed that voters in ‘developing countries’ turn out to vote when the economy is doing badly. However, Fornos and colleagues (2004), after an extensive

study and various models testing “the institutional, socioeconomic, and political process approaches to turnout”⁶⁷ in Latin America from 1980 to 2000, find no significant empirical evidence that Latin Americans are motivated to vote because of a country’s poor economic performance. Rather than disqualifying Radcliff’s findings, they call for further research examining factors that drive turnout reasons. Comments from the Interviewees seem to support Radcliff’s hypothesis. While the interview questions did not specifically ask whether Respondents turned out to vote because of macroeconomic reasons, the topic nonetheless appeared various times throughout open-ended responses, particularly from Colombians and Venezuelans.

Finally, Respondents repeatedly mentioned democracy as a tool to express opinions and make a change. Paraphrasing various Interviewees, people overall participate when life falls apart but become complacent political actors when life feels like smooth sailing. Many Respondents conveyed concerns about the future since they considered some Ecuadorians as indifferent toward politics. Various Respondents also spoke about change, even in nondemocracy, for example in contemporary Venezuela,

Venezuela definitely needs a political change, it needs a change of government, and it has to be done through elections. It’s simply a step that has to be taken because I’m sure that the desire for change and the willingness for change is [embodied] within the great majority of Venezuelans. But we must endorse the change in *a free, fair, transparent election*, independently, in which even [those from] Chavismo or Madurismo can participate... and whatever [ideological] leaning within the opposition who also want to openly participate. But if such a change will happen, it will happen the moment that we have the chance to express it and do it freely... *through voting*. (VE2, emphasis added)

Overall, being invested to contributing to a flourishing future is a distinct reason to vote because it was a primary motive in these interviews for individual-level migrant turnout. To avoid using this as a catch-all reason for migrant voter turnout, I have identified two parts of this reason: a better future

⁶⁷ Fornos and colleagues’ (2004) institutional model’s main variables are nationally competitive districts, electoral disproportionality, multipartyism, unicameralism, compulsory voting laws (coupled with sanctions for noncompliance) and concurrent elections; for the socioeconomic model, they use urbanization, literacy, and per capita Gross Domestic Product (scaled up from the significant variables for individual-level turnout of wealth, literacy, and education); and the political process model includes the quality of democracy and political freedom, founding elections (the first democratic election after transition), and electoral competition.

means a stronger democracy (with more extensive participation, representation, and ‘better’ political outputs), a brighter economic outlook, or both. Some Interviewees believed the political and economic aspects converge, not necessarily in a positive light, for example when an incumbent government is strong-handed or overly interventionist, weakening the chances of a flourishing future. Migrants—especially who have lived through political violence, corruption, and food shortages—conveyed that people should vote during ‘bad times’ to ameliorate the situation as well as during ‘good times’ to avoid falling into poor political or economic circumstances.

3.3.3 Formal recognition as a voter

Some Interviewees cited formal recognition, or the outcome of a state legally including new voters in the demos, as a motivation to vote. For emigrants, this means the origin country offering external voting for nonresident nationals; for immigrants, it is the country of residence granting denizen suffrage rights. The largest origin-country group that stated this as a reason to vote was Chileans since Chile was relatively late in granting external voting rights, compared to the rest of South America (Escobar 2015; see Chapter 2).

Of the 14 Chilean Interviewees, ranging from 34 to 66 years old, 12 reported a future intention to vote in origin-country elections (1 was unsure and 1 intends to abstain)—even though about a third of the Interviewees never had the chance to vote as a resident national of Chile before emigrating, primarily because they left when “there weren’t elections because there was a military government” (CL13) under Pinochet in the 1970s and 1980s. At the time of the interviews, only one election had occurred in which emigrants could vote from abroad (in 2017; see Chapter 2), in which 8 of the 14 Chilean Respondents registered and voted. Regarding the first experience of voting from abroad, an Interviewee comments,

For me, that was exciting, I mean we almost got there [to vote] crying from the excitement because, for the first time, *they considered us as Chileans*. It was always said that those of us who live abroad aren’t part of Chile; there are a lot of people who think that. So, *they recognized us as Chileans*... I’m Chilean and I am going to be Chilean my whole life, so the fact that they let us vote while living abroad gives me *recognition*. (CL10, emphasis added)

At first glimpse ‘recognition’ seems to be the same as the concept as ‘belonging;’ however, they are distinct because external recognition can solidify feelings of belonging. For example, saying that

“I’m Chilean and I am going to be Chilean my whole life” (CL10) encompasses a feeling of belonging, whereas enfranchisement in Chile meant formal recognition of the emotional connection to the origin country, which motivated her to vote. Recognition can also instigate feelings of belonging: “I felt like I was part of Ecuador, I felt I was part of here... *when they took me into account for something so important, something that’s dear to the country*. So, I felt amazing” (PE2, emphasis added). Another Respondent agreed, “When they take [you] into account for something so important like voting, *it’s unavoidable to not feel like you’re a part of Ecuador*” (PE3, emphasis added). Formal recognition made these Respondents feel included and contributed to a sense of belonging, but for them, the recognition itself was the principal motive to vote.

3.3.4 Bureaucratic reasons for migrant voting

Other Interviewees mentioned two bureaucratic reasons that motivate them to vote: avoiding fines and obtaining a voting certificate. Contrary to a sense of obligation toward the origin country, Peruvians have a legal obligation to vote from abroad and some Interviewees expressed irritation at voting: “I go to Peruvian elections by obligation” (PE6) and “...it isn’t a motive. It’s perhaps for [avoiding] the fine that would be sent to me” (PE9). Nonetheless, Respondents differ on their understanding of how effective the origin country is at delivering fines to those abroad. Based on the 14 Peruvian interviews, the general understanding is that if they do not *travel* to Peru, they will not receive a fine. Thus, some Respondents vote while others abstain in origin-country elections.

Voters who participate in some Latin American countries’ elections receive a voting certificate as evidence of having participated. Some emigrants report that the origin country gives them tangible benefits from participating in external voting. One Interviewee explained that “I did it for a document that I needed, but not because I’m interested in voting” (CO15), explaining that it will help obtain another document since the Colombian Consulate offers discounts on some consular services when nationals show their voting certificate.

Voters in Ecuador similarly receive a voting certificate proving that they participated in the election. The Ecuadorian voting certificate is required (or at least commonly asked) for other bureaucratic tasks, such as when completing legal paperwork and accessing bank services (e.g., opening an account). Although the vote is facultative for foreign residents, many Interviewees reported that other people are unaware of this fact, believing it mandatory for everyone, since it is compulsory for Ecuadorians in Ecuador. Having it makes life easier, as one Respondent attested to:

Voting provides you with a document for doing [bureaucratic] paperwork. Personal paperwork, banking procedures, and everything else—so to not have that document, later it's going to make it impossible to do that paperwork, or you can go get it, go and pay some amount to get it, even though the amount isn't so much, but the thing is, you waste time in going to get it afterwards. So, people feel pressured to do it [vote]. (PE4)

The confusion of facultative voting is problematic for foreign residents who wish to abstain, because they are then repeatedly asked to show their voting certificate throughout the year. To avoid problems and the hassle of explaining facultative voting to others who are less informed, some immigrants who want to abstain end up going to vote, just to obtain the certificate.

3.4 Migrants' Enduring Authoritarian Imprints in Two Countries

Political learning that occurs during socialization endures, but will it determine whether migrants vote or abstain? The concept behind this question is an “authoritarian imprint,” what Antoine Bilodeau (2014, p. 362) explains as migrants having “an imprint of their political socialization under an authoritarian regime [that] marks their general outlook on politics.” Several analyses of immigrants who socialized under authoritarian rule show that they then resocialized in, and adapted to, the democratic destination countries of Australia and Canada (Bilodeau and Nevitte 2003, Bilodeau 2004, 2014, Bilodeau, McAllister, *et al.* 2010). At the same time, as Ciornei and Østergaard-Nielsen (2020) point out, not all migrants relocate from a less to more democratic country. I apply this question of authoritarian imprints to Latin America since the region involves high intraregional migration (with low linguistic barriers for adaptation) and extensive experience of shifting political regimes.

As Table 3.4 shows, countries in the region have moved between liberal democracy and closed autocracy over the 19th and 20th centuries, sometimes fluctuating more than once, and experiencing democratic breakdown, transition, and setbacks in quality (Hagopian and Mainwaring 2005, Levine and Molina 2007, Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2013, Acosta 2018). For intraregional migrants, the fluctuations in political regimes and democratic quality mean many Latin Americans have had a variety of nondemocratic and democratic experiences. Interviewees described in detail their (re)socialization experiences while living under various regimes in the origin and residence countries.

Table 3.4 Political Regimes and Leaders in Origin and Residence Countries, 1979–2020

Regime Classifications:						
No de-facto multiparty, or free and fair elections: Closed Autocracy (C.A.) or Electoral Autocracy (E.A.)						
De-facto multiparty, free and fair elections: Electoral Democracy (E.D.) or Liberal Democracy (L.D.)						
Origin Countries	<div><div></div><div>1979</div><div>1990</div><div>2000</div><div>2010</div><div>2020</div></div>					
Chile	C.A. (1979–88) Augusto Pinochet	E.A. (‘89)	Liberal Democracy (1990–present) Patricio Aylwin, Eduardo Frei, Ricardo Lagos, Michelle Bachelet, Sebastián Piñera, Michelle Bachelet (2 nd term), Sebastián Piñera (2 nd term)			
Colombia	Electoral Autocracy (1979–90) Julio César Turbay, Belisario Betancur, Virgilio Barco		Electoral Democracy (1991–present) César Augusto Gaviria, Ernesto Samper, Andrés Pastrana, Álvaro Uribe (2 terms), Juan Manuel Santos (2 terms), Iván Duque			
Cuba	Closed Autocracy (1979–present) Fidel Castro, Raúl Castro, Miguel Díaz-Canel					
Peru	C.A. (‘79)	E.A. (‘80)	E.D. (1981–91)	C.A. (‘92–94)	E.D.+ (1995–2000) Alberto Fujimori (2 nd –3 rd term)	Electoral Democracy (2001–present) Alejandro Toledo, Alan García (2 nd term), Ollanta Moisés Humala, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, Martín Alberto Vizcarra
Venezuela	Electoral Democracy (1979–2002) Luis Herrera, Jaime Lusinchi, Carlos Andrés Pérez, Ramón José Velázquez, Rafael Caldera, Hugo Chávez (2 terms)				Electoral Autocracy (2003–present) Hugo Chávez (3 rd –5 th terms), Nicolás Maduro (1 st –3 rd terms*), Juan Guaidó*	
Residence Country						
Ecuador	E.A. (‘79)	Electoral Democracy+ (1980–Present) Jaime Roldós, Osvaldo Hurtado, León Febres-Cordero, Rodrigo Borja, Sixto Durán-Ballén, Jamil Mahuad, Gustavo Noboa, Alfredo Palacio, Rafael Correa (3 terms), Lenín Moreno				

Source: Compilation from Regimes of the World (RoW) operationalized using Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) data (Lührmann *et al.* 2018).

Notes: Table 3.4 excludes acting presidents. *Maduro's 3rd term and Guaidó are both only partially recognized as legitimate; *Presidents serving less than two years are excluded; for the complete list, see Appendix 3.7. Initial changes toward an E.A. in Venezuela began during Chávez's second term. Contrasting the RoW classification of Ecuador, in the mid-1980s under Febres-Cordero, the country did not meet the full requirements of an E.D. and has been considered as competitive authoritarianism under Correa (see Mejía Acosta 2002, Basabe-Serrando and Martínez 2014).

To understand the effect of authoritarian imprints in Latin America, I follow Acemoglu and Robinson's (2006, p. 18) distinction between (non)democratic political systems: "In democracy, everybody has a vote, and at least potentially, can participate in one way or the other in the political process. In nondemocracy, an elite, a junta, an oligarchy, or in the extreme case just one person, the dictator, is making the decisions." Table 3.4 shows the chronological fluctuations in political regimes in both the selected origin countries and in Ecuador. The classifications help to better gauge which intraregional migrants moved from democracy to nondemocracy or vice versa, in order to then understand the effects on migrant voting.

Table 3.4 relies on the Regimes of the World (RoW) typology proposed by Lührmann, Tannenberg, and Lindberg (2018, pp. 3–4), which includes two types of autocracies and two democracies: 1) in a *closed autocracy*, there are no elections for the executive and legislature or there is no competition for those positions of power (e.g., one-party regimes); 2) in an *electoral autocracy*, the executive depends on an elected legislature but electoral accountability is absent since the institutions are de-facto undermined; 3) in an *electoral democracy*, there are multiparty and free and fair elections, providing a basis of accountability to voters; 4) in a *liberal democracy*, which is less common than electoral democracies, in addition to multiparty and free and fair elections, people (e.g., minorities) have more rights and there are more measures in place to limit the government and avoid "tyranny of the majority" (for further details on operationalizing RoW, see Appendix 3.8).

Given the variety of government types throughout the region over the selected decades of interest, relocating to Ecuador may mean moving from a less to more democratic country (e.g., from Cuba to Ecuador; from Chile to Ecuador in the 1980s), or vice versa (from Venezuela to Ecuador in the 1980s; from Chile to Ecuador in the 2000s). As Sánchez (2008) argues, Ecuador has not necessarily consolidated its democracy, aligning with the RoW classification as an electoral democracy rather than a liberal democracy.

3.4.1 Authoritarian imprints and typical trajectories

To evaluate the effects of authoritarian imprints in this group of Interviewees, I analyzed their responses about political socialization and resocialization and the current effect on views on democracy and on voting behavior. When asked if political experiences growing up in the origin country currently affects how they interact with politics, one Interviewee said,

Yes... for Venezuela's very distinct situation and experiences going through political turbulence with coups... it was an interesting lesson to learn. We also forcibly learned a lot of things, we lived through the negative [part] of that, and *obviously that leaves its mark on you, and opens your eyes to these types of systems or governments or political parties; it's political learning.* (VE2, emphasis added)

For migrants who moved from a less or nondemocratic country to a more democratic country, there are two intuitive yet contrasting views on whether to vote or not. One view is that these migrants will not vote because they are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with using democratic voice and practices. But, as extensive literature has shown, while migrants transfer some previous knowledge with them to the residence country, they can still politically learn throughout their adult life (Almond 1960, Bender 1967, Searing *et al.* 1973, Niemi and Sobieszek 1977, Niemi and Hepburn 1995, White *et al.* 2008). So, adult migrants can familiarize themselves with democratic institutions and practices. Moreover, among this group of Interviewees, their selected origin countries share the same language as the residence country, making it easier for them to stay politically informed.

From the other perspective, one could view early political learning in a different context as the opposite of a barrier to voter turnout; in other words, some migrants will vote *because of* previous experiences with nondemocratic regimes. While distrust or disillusionment with origin country institutions and politics can lower emigrant voting from abroad, having such experiences with political corruption may inspire migrant voting later in democracy. Despite negative experiences with dysfunctional democracies or nondemocracies, Bilodeau (2014) finds that migrants still participate in the democratic destination country.

Negative experiences under nondemocratic regimes (e.g., restricted civil liberties, mistreatment of minorities) affect the political learning process (Hyman 1959). Studies of immigrants in Australia and Canada have found that authoritarian imprints eventually dissipate after living in democracy (Bilodeau, McAllister, *et al.* 2010, Bilodeau 2014). Some Interviewees noted that political socialization

experiences (as part of the national citizen-state relation) left a “mark” on them that could have affected their current voting behavior. The impression was enduring but did not exclusively determine migrant voter turnout.

Instead, Respondents’ voting behaviors were influenced by both positive and negative experiences. For instance, many Interviewees enjoyed social and familial time while voting together, then sharing a meal, followed by watching electoral results in a group. While Interviewees reported that the collectiveness did not affect their vote choice, it built a habit and positive notions around the idea of electoral participation. Most Interviewees reported having discussed politics with family at the dinner table (Peruvians to a lesser extent), especially close to elections. Furthermore, most Respondents, even those living with families with divided ideologies, reported it having no effect on vote choice since their parents and relatives believed in the freedom to choose whichever candidate each person thought was best.

However, some Respondents admitted that politics was a grave topic of discussion that was avoided to maintain family unity and peace. The avoidance of discussing politics followed many migrants into the residence country, who claimed that they actively avoid talking about politics with friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. Nevertheless, almost every Respondent who reported avoiding talking about politics still displayed knowledge of past and present policies, election outcomes, which leader had done what, and various political parties’ campaign information in both countries. In other words, the inclination to lean away from *discussing* politics was unrelated to their interest in politics and electoral participation.

Typical narratives around certain regimes and leaders emerged when the 71 Interviewees explained their migrant trajectories—which are soaked in politics. Interpreting these common patterns sheds light on dynamic (re)socialization processes that affect migrant voting outcomes. For the Interviewees, most negative marks, or authoritarian imprints, came from experiencing political violence, rampant corruption, and the breakdown of democracy (also see Finn and Umpierrez de Reguero 2021). Those free from these experiences (e.g., earlier immigrant waves of Venezuelans and recent waves of Chileans) have partial marks since their immediate family members passed down their stories to them. Those with first-hand experiences had more vivid memories: Chileans who left nondemocracy in the 1970s have lived in Ecuador the longest, but recall the violence, torture, terror, and disappearances as if they had just occurred. While Pinochet is a well-known dictator, the country was also in a desperate state prior to his regime, under Allende’s administration. As Doña-Reveco (2020) details with Chilean exiles during that period, memory relates not only to the past but also to

the present since it shapes how emigrants construct their identities and citizenship with the origin country. One Chilean Respondent in the interviews asserted, “I don’t believe that there could be a Chilean who lived through that period who could have forgotten anything [about it]; yea, *it really leaves its mark*” (CL7, emphasis added).

The mark similarly runs deep in the lives of Interviewees who described leaving Castro’s Cuba and moving to democracy was like moving into the unknown. Peruvian Interviewees spoke often about corruption and how it resulted in a complete loss of trust in politics and politicians, which was often framed around Fujimori and his lasting effect on the country. Colombian Interviewees were influenced by decades of violence, fear, and narco-politics, as well as its ongoing repercussions in everyday life; they strongly voiced either approval or disapproval of political peace pacts with guerillas. Venezuelan Interviewees either recently fled persecution or spoke of family left-behind and their collapse of quality of life in the current authoritarian state, openly discussing the country both pre- and post-Chávez.

3.4.2 Democracy close at hand? Violence, corruption, and narco-politics

Compared to Cubans and other nationalities within the group of Interviewees, Peruvian Interviewees spoke less at length about living in nondemocracy. Fewer Peruvian Interviewees discussed politics at mealtime with family while growing up, posing politics as separate from their daily events, although most Interviewees were well informed about past and present politics in both Peru and Ecuador. An exception was a 22-year-old Respondent (PE1), who spoke about how her parents are “very against the left” after having recounted corruption, narcotrafficking, missing people, and curfews under the left. She was referring to the left-wing dictatorship 1968–1975 led by Juan Velasco. She remembered, “you grow up with that idea that, that you always have to vote for the right” (PE1). In this Respondent’s case, the mark is generational and impacts her vote choice, without ever having lived under authoritarianism in Peru.

Older Peruvian Interviewees remember growing up with limited food supply and choices: a 62-year-old commented that “they sold us meat only twice a week [and] we could buy only one or two kilos, no more... I would hear my mom say that no, for how much longer, I don’t know how much longer, that we’re in a bad situation and we want to get back to democracy” (PE2). Yet this same person feels represented in Ecuador by Correa and identifies as left-leaning, reporting herself as a 3 on the left-right 10-point scale. Another Interviewee recalled terrorism, curfews, the APRA (*la Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana* [American Popular Revolutionary Alliance], now a social-democratic

political party), food shortages of flour, rice, and meat, as well as a lack of freedom of the press, particularly “manipulated news” in Peru during the 1980s (PE5).

Many Peruvian Interviewees’ (unprompted) main talking point was contemporary Peru being undemocratic and its facilitation of past and present corruption. Four Respondents (PE1, 6, 11, and 12) noted the amount of corruption in Peru. Another Interviewee (PE10) linked corruption in Peru as a major contributor to her low trust of the electoral process in the Peruvian Consulate in Ecuador. Other evidence of prior nondemocratic practices brought up during interviews included the prevalence of Fujimorismo as a political ideology, the abundance of narcos and guerrillas, and Fujimori’s dissolution of Congress. Some Interviewees conceded that traces of democracy always existed in Peru—even under the regimes of Toledo, García, and Fujimori—but it is “all the same, at the end, they all ended up disappointing us” (PE13). Such views have carried over until today, evaluating contemporary Peru: PE12 says that Peru is a façade of a democracy and that the last two governments were dictatorships, despite their democratic appearance, because they failed to have separate branches of government or civil servants. Thus, contrary to the classification in Table 3.4, some Interviewees would not agree that Peru is a democracy, as they understand it.

In contrast, coming from a country with deep-rooted violence, corruption, and narco-politics, Colombians moving to Ecuador have generally seen an improvement in democracy. Responses from interviewed Colombians displayed an enduring mark from violence, corruption, kidnappings, issues around peace pacts, and restricted freedom. They intertwined these experiences with perceptions related to the link between narco-traffickers and politics, stemming mostly from events in the 1980s and 1990s. One Interviewee recalled how Pablo Escobar “bought the people in the towns; he gave them money, he gave them housing, he gave them things and they hid them, he gave them jobs” (CO3) and recounted that it was an extremely violent time in Colombia. During the same period, another Interviewee expressed feeling disconnected with politics because, “[Luis Carlos] Galán was the only, only, only presidential candidate that, in my whole life, we knew that he would change the country, but Pablo Escobar got him killed because the political group he was managing, and that he was funding, had to win. That’s how things are done, and that’s why I prefer not to talk politics” (CO16).

Even decades later, a liberal democracy in Colombia seemed far off to the Respondents. In the early 2000s, “Álvaro Uribe got all that: there were the guerillas, there was the FARC, there was the ELN, which were supposedly political organizations, but they’re narco-political, rather during that time, we hadn’t even wrapped our minds around what narco-politics was, and the M-19 was also right

behind” (CO3).⁶⁸ These events have had a significant impact on Colombian Interviewees’ views about democracy; for one Interviewee, even though there are “ups and downs” in politics, “democracy in Colombia has been unstable, really subjective, very cold, and very calculated. That’s the ‘democracy’ in Colombia” (CO7). Other Respondents agreed and saw no real change in democracy in Colombia because it is “similar to how it’s always been: the same parties asking for the same thing” (CO18). Certain Colombian Respondents professed having no trust in candidates running: “the majority of Colombians in my generation, and I think the younger ones [too], don’t really trust politicians anymore” (CO15). One Respondent opposed the current political situation in Colombia because “we’re in the hands of many guerillas,” who she stands strongly against because,

... they kidnapped some relatives of mine... they even paid extortion [money], that was something very sad, really ugly there, it was a monthly [payment] that you had to pay there so that they wouldn’t get you, so that they wouldn’t kidnap you. So no, honestly, I don’t agree with what our past president did... the peace with guerillas. No, because in Colombia there’s no peace, right now there’s no peace... no, it didn’t work, it honestly didn’t work. (CO9)⁶⁹

Nonetheless, experiences with violence, corruption, and narco-politics do not by default deter migrant voting. The previously quoted Interviewee (CO9) is a dual transnational voter and conveyed that she really loves Ecuador, where she has made a home and family. Other Interviewees were similarly undeterred from voting by prior experiences with corruption: “I thought I could change the world... it’s difficult, it’s difficult while so much corruption exists. It’s not only Ecuador, but it’s Colombia, it’s Brazil, it’s Argentina, it’s Chile, it’s the US, it’s Russia. It’s the whole world. We live in a very corrupt world” (CO3). Although this Interviewee’s comments have a pessimistic ring to it, they reflect a critical eye and realistic views of someone who actively follows politics in both countries and is a dual transnational voter.

⁶⁸ The FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*) is the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, the most well-known guerilla movement in Colombia; the ELN (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*) is the National Liberation Army, an armed leftwing group; and the M-19 (*Movimiento 19 de abril*) is the 19th of April Movement, a previous guerilla organization, turned political party (see, e.g., Benítez 2006).

⁶⁹ The Interviewee was referring to 2016 when President Juan Manuel Santos came to an agreement with the FARC for a ceasefire.

3.4.3 Voting ‘here’ in democracy and ‘there’ in nondemocratic elections

Venezuelan Interviewees repeatedly drew a definitive line between Venezuela pre- and post-Chávez. Pre-Chávez Venezuela had an open, free, flourishing society with great salaries and jobs, and high immigration—these were times in which “we were happy, and we didn’t even know it” (VE3, VE6). Post-Chávez Venezuela was referred to as a nondemocracy, dictatorship, and a constitutionally disguised dictatorship. “We all thought that when Chávez died, everything would end” (VE12) one Respondent recalled, but knew that the country “was no longer democracy, but a dictatorship” once he saw the electoral body’s trucks burning, destroying the ballots in the process. At that time, he decided to emigrate since “you already knew what was coming, a total dictatorship.” In the Interviewees’ own words, the post-Chávez world has been a closed, corrupted, manipulated, heartbreaking place to live, dominated with fear, deprivation, lines for basic food and supplies—a nation deprived of colors, laughter, and life:

Our Caracas doesn’t exist anymore, it doesn’t exist. It’s done for. And it’s a shame, because young people today can’t even imagine how beautiful it was; they can’t imagine the Venezuelan colors. Today Venezuela is grey, it’s ocher. Before Venezuela was joyful, it was a yellow, blue, and red that shined along the highways, everywhere that you would go, but now that doesn’t exist anymore... Before it was optimistic, it smiled at you. Now it cries, now it mourns, now it suffers. (VE7)

The starkest takeaway is that Respondents who had negative experiences during political socialization developed unique and insightful perspectives toward democracy, which fostered electoral participation. Of the 14 Venezuelan Interviewees, eight have already participated in dual transnational voting, two in immigrant voting (only in Ecuador), two in emigrant voting (casting a ballot from Ecuador for Venezuelan elections), and two have not participated in migrant voting. More than the other Interviewees, the Venezuelans interviewed most often agreed with the statement “democracy is the best type of government.” The difference in responses may suggest that experiences with recent or current authoritarian regimes cause migrants to feel more strongly about staying politically informed, opposing corruption, and contributing to positive change, which I interpret to mean expansion of democracy and individual freedoms.

Comparing Interviewees who emigrated from an earlier, democratic Venezuela to those emigrating from a later, nondemocratic ‘post-Chávez’ Venezuela (in Table 3.4) reveal various

connections between politics and the economy. Those who left a prosperous democratic country decades ago came to what they derided as a dilapidated and underdeveloped country. One Respondent recalled, “Ecuador wasn’t democracy; it was a dictatorship... and Guayaquil was a disaster... there were mountains of trash all over the city, it reeked, Guayaquil was disgusting” (VE7). These early arrivals marveled at the progress the city has made since.

In contrast, newer Venezuelan emigrants who moved from a failed democratic state in ruins consider Ecuador’s political processes, especially its voting procedures, to be more organized. Venezuelan Respondents described prior voting in Venezuela as extremely time-consuming, caused by waiting in lines up to 12 or 14 hours, machines breaking down, or power outages (relevant since voting is electronic). Most Respondents interpreted these issues as government tactics to discourage people from voting. Most Peruvian Interviewees also describe Ecuadorian elections and the voting process as being “really organized... there weren’t that many people either” (PE2), as compared to Peru. These responses are additional examples of how a negative authoritarian mark can positively affect views and electoral participation in the country of residence.

Although the recent Venezuelan cohort was marked by nondemocracy, they adapted to Ecuador and the mark left by their experience with authoritarianism dissipated quickly (also see Umpierrez de Reguero *et al.* 2020). Unsurprisingly, all Venezuelan Interviewees report overwhelmingly negative perceptions of the origin country due to a low quality of life, fraudulent elections, political corruption, and lack of personal security as well as personal and civic freedoms. Of the 14 Venezuelan Interviewees, 13 reported highly distrusting the president, the Armed Forces, the Judiciary branch, and the electoral body in Venezuela.

Some Venezuelan Respondents yearned to participate as an emigrant voter, if and when Venezuela holds free and fair elections: “I would be willing to participate in the next Venezuelan elections, always and [only] when we have another electoral body, because obviously when you have a biased referee for an electoral body, you can’t trust it” (VE3). Despite the negative mark—from a regime still in power—this Respondent nonetheless remains open to political participation and trusts other governments. Case in point, 5 of the 14 Venezuelan Interviewees reported trusting Ecuador’s office of president, 6 the electoral body, 9 the immigration department, and 12 the Armed Forces in Ecuador. Venezuelan Respondents vote in two countries for different reasons: in Venezuela, “voting can be an act of rebellion. In Ecuador, it’s a sign of trust” (VE1). As a sign of “rebellion,” migrant voters cast ballots since it is the only remaining option to express formal demands to a state, even to a state that will not listen. Others refuse to vote until elections are free and fair in which all can

participate: “There’s no democracy in Venezuela. Contributing a vote, going to vote, is like giving a regime more room to put up its smokescreen of democracy—and I’m not willing to do that, it’s as simple as that” (VE7).

Incredulously, most Venezuelan Respondents remain optimistic about the political situation in their origin country. They clamor for change and are motivated to engage in politics in the residence country—specifically to avoid repeating recent negative experiences with living in Venezuela in Ecuador. One Respondent exercised his right to vote since he considered it “the only weapon we have,” despite believing that a democratic end to the current regime was next to impossible: “I’ve definitely never seen any dictatorship in any country the in world that ended through democratic means. Unfortunately, that’s how it is... dictators always end through other means” (VE11).

One may argue that it is possible for Venezuelan migrants to stay positive since, not that long ago, Venezuela was a thriving democracy, so they can easily recall the benefits and economic prosperity. Some Respondents view the current political regime as a break rather than the end of the country’s democracy. This begs the question: is it possible for other migrants to be as involved and pro-democracy without ever having experienced it first-hand? Enter Cuba.

3.4.4 From no voting to democratic voting

While Cuban Respondents cannot be emigrant voters (for Cuba)—and thus cannot fit into the four types of migrant voting—they are immigrant voters in Ecuador who have unique migrant voter trajectories. Given the revolutionary process that began in 1959, coupled with regimes led by Fidel then Raúl Castro, the resulting consequences were a focus on political and economic order, including withholding the right to choose one’s own job or progress in it, and high religious intolerance (see, e.g., Aja Díaz *et al.* 2017).

Cuba’s volatile political situation and conflict since 1959 has led to forced emigration of individuals and families (see, e.g., Rubio 2016). Varieties of Democracy ranks democracy and in 2019, Cuba placed a pithy 163 of 179 countries (Coppedge *et al.* 2019). Given the origin country’s history, many were unwilling to engage in a survey and interview about politics and voting. After reading the Informed Consent Information, more than half of the Cubans who initially agreed to meet chose not to participate in the interview, despite anonymity and being used for academic ends.

Despite their authoritarian imprint, several Cuban Interviewees identified as migrant voters. While Cubans cannot participate in emigrant voting by law, Cuban Respondents nonetheless answered all electoral participation questions and discussed their future intention to vote. Of the 9 Cuban

Respondents, 5 had voted at least once in Ecuador as a foreign resident, 4 intended on voting as immigrants (in Ecuador) in the future and 2 expressed interest in becoming dual transnational voters, hinging on the hope that Cuba will hold democratic elections within their lifetimes.

Many Cuban Interviewees commented extensively about the communist doctrine that was embedded throughout the socialization process—first in the school system and then over their working life. After emigrating they recognized that, although imperfect, democracy allows freedoms that they had never known were possible,

The Ecuadorian has grown up in freedom—with limits, restrictions, some weaker parts—but [nonetheless] in a free city and *he knows that everything is possible*; and he himself says what he wants to achieve and what he doesn't want, and he sets his [own] goals. There *in Cuba we didn't even know that something else existed*. We thought that the world was we had on the island, and nothing more. (CU2, emphasis added)

For this Respondent, the quality-of-life difference between origin and residence countries was obvious and it did not take long or much effort to politically resocialize and appreciate the benefits of democracy—even if she had never experienced it prior to emigrating to Ecuador. Of the 9 Cuban Interviewees, 6 agreed with the statement, “Democracy is the best type of government,” whereas 1 preferred not to answer and 2 neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. Compared to the other Interviewees of other nationalities, 49 of 62 agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, suggesting they have enjoyed the benefits of democracy, especially participating in free and fair elections. As Bilodeau (2014, p. 361) finds, migrants from nondemocracy recognize that democratic states guarantee rights and freedoms, which comprise some of the “tangible benefits” of moving to a democracy. The tangible benefit of exercising suffrage rights makes it easier to politically participate in democracy.

Given the one-party elections in Cuba, there is no public debate or electoral options, which restrict any possibility of Dahl's (1971) other dimension of polyarchy: opposition. Despite not having emigrant voting rights, the Cuban Interviewees commented on prior voting while they still lived in the origin country, describing it as a despised and manipulated process: “in Cuba, first off, it's not my vote; it's obligatory. It's not spontaneous or voluntary... there *they don't let me form an opinion*, I have to choose what's specified, [it's] indirectly specified what you should pick” (CU2, emphasis added). The Respondent added, “it tenses me up and it traps me because *I'm not free to vote*, I'm not *choosing*, having the vote is a manifestation of a choice that you make, a choice you make voluntarily and consciously.”

Voters' demands and preferences are not represented in authoritarian regimes, as Hartmann (2015) points out for Cameroon and Rwanda, as well as in other African countries without electoral registration lists even for resident nationals. Regardless, some Respondents still vote: "I'm motivated to vote in Venezuela, in Ecuador, here and anywhere else, because it's the only way to give your opinion, to express yourself, and as such, you get the right to complain or the right to express your demands to the elected leader" (VE5). Of course, the difference between a democratic state and an authoritarian regime is that the regime can ignore complaints and claims. Authoritarian regimes do not reflect voters' preferences because *there are no choices* that represent real preferences or because, in the case of opposition, the incumbent government conducts fraudulent electoral procedures. Voting in undemocratic elections, however, is worth it for some Respondents because even in fixed elections, "at least the government knows that there are people against them" (VE1).

In sum, Chileans and Peruvian Interviewees from older emigrant waves to Ecuador, Venezuelans from the emergent wave, and Colombians and Cubans from both waves, emigrated from a less or nondemocratic country to a more democratic one (see Table 3.4). Using Bilodeau's term, their 'authoritarian imprints' are enduring but not determinative of migrant voter turnout. The responses show that having lived under heavy restrictions on personal liberties does not discourage migrant voting. Based on the Interviewees' responses, prior negative experiences with restricted rights cause migrants to value freedom and democracy. Migrants are then motivated to be active immigrant voters in the residence country and take steps to 'voluntarily and consciously' make a choice by researching candidates and getting informed before elections.

3.5 Conclusion

Certain factors—such as age, education, civic duty, residence, intention to stay, and mobilization efforts—increase or decrease the probability of migrant voting (see Introduction and Chapter 1). But it takes more than these to understand the phenomenon of migrant voting. When asked why they vote or abstain, migrants give *reasons* to explain their electoral behavior. I claim that while resources and ties create a necessary condition for voting (see Figure 1.2), resources and a motive establish a sufficient condition for migrant voting. To find migrant voters for interviews, I looked to Ecuador since the country enshrined voting rights for foreign residents in 2008, then regulated and applied them in 2009. Given most of these immigrants also hold emigrant voting rights, it is possible to find people who can vote in national-level elections in two countries. Adding their reasons to the

established factors better specifies the initial theoretical argument to state that migrants with resources plus a *motive* will vote.

Based on an analysis of 71 Interviewees, most migrants say they vote at the national level because of family ties, territorial ties, and because they are invested in contributing to a flourishing future. The reasons hold true for emigrants voting in origin-country elections as well as for immigrants in residence-country elections. For emigrants, ties to a territory relate to civic duty, practicing citizenship as nationality, and a sense of belonging despite the physical distance to the origin country (e.g., “I’m Venezuelan,” “it’s still my country”). For immigrants, territorial ties relate more to current residence, belonging as a foreign resident, and trust in the destination country’s voting process (e.g., “I live and work here,” “my life is here,” “casting a ballot is fast and efficient”). While the ties are geographically bound to a country, the same broad variables affect the chances of being a dual transnational voter. Combining ties in the two countries—having multiterritorial ties—translates to dual transnational voting, as I will further explore in Chapter 4.

It is qualitatively difficult to untangle the relation between belonging and ties. I categorized belonging into territorial ties as a reason for migrant voting; however, some migrants report belonging but abstain. As McIlwaine and Bermudez (2015) find, some Colombians abroad report identity or belonging with a place or community, but it does not translate into emigrant voting. One explanation is migrants’ understandings of citizenship. As Pedroza and Palop-García (2017b) and Pedroza (2019) outline, citizenship no longer refers to only nationality, but also includes membership and identity. Different understandings of citizenship, as an idea and in practice, can shape identities (Pedroza 2019, p. 6). While ‘feeling Colombian’ creates an identity and a tie to the territory through nationality, the same person may separate her belonging from external voting and decide to abstain in Colombian elections. These Interviewees lead me to an informed inclination that territorial ties based on belonging may increase voting (“I vote because it’s still my country”), while belonging based on ties (e.g., being or feeling a certain nationality translates to an identity) does not necessarily result in migrant voting in the country.

Ties and notions of citizenship (as nationality) become more complex under political regimes that shift between democracy and nondemocracy. Despite civic duty or attachment to a country, an autocratic regime can squash individuals’ willingness to vote. Most of the 71 Interviewees moved from a less to more democratic country. Moving to democracy brings *tangible* benefits, as Bilodeau (2014, p. 361) outlines, such as guaranteeing rights and freedoms, as well as *symbolic* ones like “the hope for a better life.” My analysis of the interviews strongly supports and expands Bilodeau’s findings. Migrants

appreciate the freedom to participate in free and fair elections, to voluntarily participate and to be able to choose who they consider the best candidate. They maintain connections and duty to the origin country, and many vote from abroad, even in electoral autocracies. The symbolic benefits of a better life in the residence country stretch beyond initial emigration, given migrants' commitment to a flourishing future (a stronger democracy and economy) solidifies into a main reason for migrant voting.

In closing, considering the 71 Interviewees, political learning motivates these migrant voters to participate in elections to improve democratic quality and transparency moving forward, in both the origin and residence countries. A general knowledge of democracy, as well as sharing the same language, facilitate political participation. Migrants who have lived under tyrannical or violent nondemocracy showed that they quickly learned about the residence country's political system and value democracy, but are hesitant to trust politicians, political parties, and the electoral system. In Orwell's *1984*, Winston lived the dangers of doublethink and learned firsthand what really happens in the Ministry of Love; similarly, migrants who have lived in nondemocracy have experienced the worst of it decide to vote to avoid anyone else having to live through such political mayhem.