CHAPTER 2

Italy: Diaspora Parliamentary Representation

This was the first time that a Canadian resident was elected in Canada to represent his constituents, Italians and Italian Canadians, in another parliament in a different country.

—William Kaplan, *Is It Time to Close Hotel Canada?*

This chapter dispels the idea that the world is now seeing both a dispersion of the population of the homeland nation through international immigration and a transnational reassembling of its territorial and extraterritorial demographic components, a process resulting in a transglobal social formation. In contrast, the classic model of the nation projects it as being confined to the territorial bounds of the state. In other words, the making of the cosmonation consists of legally and infrastructurally reuniting or relinking the tentacles of the expanded multisite nation by formally connecting or reconnecting the homeland with its diasporic communities. In this evolving scenario, the state operates within its jurisdictional boundaries and, therefore, the territory of the state remains the same, but the nation that sees itself as the lifeblood of the state has expanded beyond the territorial bounds of the state. But the process by which the nation is being reassembled also impacts and reflects both the traditional and new ways in which the state conducts its business. The process of the restructuring of the nation has also led to that of the restructuring of the state. An important manifestation of this diaspora-induced change in the composition of the nation's social landscape and the reformatting or reengineering of the state can be seen in the rise of the cosmonational parliament. In other words, the state is being pressured to pay attention to what the diaspora does abroad, provide required services, and collaborate

M. S. Laguerre, *Parliament and Diaspora in Europe*  
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with it in matters pertaining to the development and governance of the homeland.

An analysis of diaspora representation in the Italian Parliament serves as an example of the transnationalization of a national institution and how the cosmonation is being formally, legally, and geographically constituted. The Italian Parliament has developed over time and expanded with the recent addition of its overseas components that is, diasporan parliamentarians who live outside of Italy and were elected to represent diasporic circumscriptions abroad.\textsuperscript{4} Until the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Parliament of Italy, comprising elected officials residing in the country, was the only legislative body legally recognized to represent the Italian people at home and abroad, and the homeland was the exclusive site of its deployment. In 2006, twelve deputies and six senators from the diaspora were elected to serve as members of the Italian Parliament, thereby expanding its mission beyond the borders of the state. To accommodate diaspora parliamentarians without augmenting the total number of seats in either the Chamber of Deputies or the Senate, redistricting for a new geographical repartition of electoral districts took place prior to the first diasporic legislative elections.

As the chapter will further explain, the Italian example is an instructive case of the transborder parliament of a cosmonation-centric state because it shows various mechanisms used in the expansion of the nation and its transformation into a cosmonation; sheds light on the transnationalization process of the parliament; unveils how the regulation of cosmonational practices of diasporic participation in the legislature has affected the state; and explains how diasporic members of Parliament (MPs) are active agents who help coordinate part of the relations, not only between the homeland and its diaspora, but also between the homeland and the hostland.

To explain how the national parliament has transformed into a transnational institution of the cosmonation-centric state, I focus the analysis of this chapter on three conceptual dimensions of the problem: the geographical expansion of the legal regime and the rule of law beyond the normative jurisdictional boundaries of the state, the cross-border institutional infrastructure of support, and the operational performative practices of the cosmonational parliamentary process.

\textbf{Italian Politics and Diaspora Representation}

Scholarly political science literature on recent Italian politics has shed much light on the transnational context of diaspora representation in