

Legislators' Motivations, Institutional Arrangements, and Changes in Partisan Affiliation: A Cross-National Analysis of Party Switching

Abstract

Though party switching has been documented in legislatures around the world, there has been little cross-national research on this phenomenon. The prevalence of switching is therefore unknown, and the extent to which party- and system-level factors influence this behavior remains unclear. Addressing this gap in the literature, we use an original dataset of 239 parties in 20 democracies to illustrate both that inter-party movement is more common than previously assumed and that there are substantial differences in the prevalence of switching across parties. To explain this variation, we examine the relationship between legislators' motivations, institutional arrangements, and inter-party movement. We find that motivational explanations are correlated with defection and that institutional arrangements exhibit only limited independent influence on switching.

“As a phenomenon, party switching has received surprisingly little attention in the canon of political parties.”

(McElroy, 2003, p. 2)

On January 17th, 2011, Ehud Barak left his post as leader of the Israeli Labour Party and established the new Independence Party. Following Barak, on the same day four other Knesset members also left Labour for the new organization (Lis 2011). This was not the first instance of high profile party switching among members of the Knesset—six years earlier Ariel Sharon split Likud and established the new Kadima party (Sofer 2005)—nor are these anecdotes unique to Israel. To the contrary, party leaving and switching during a parliamentary session is not uncommon in democratic states. Brazil and Poland, for example, have often been cited as systems in which party switching is abundant (Desposato 2006*a*, Hug and Wüest 2011). Beyond these “extreme” examples, other countries have also been faced with legislators who leave their home party in the middle of a legislative session either to join a different party or establish a new one.

Though inter-party movement has been documented in legislatures across a number of countries, there has been comparatively little systematic cross-national research on party switching. Instead, the literature largely examines this phenomenon within a single country or small group of cases. While this work has led to significant advances in our understanding of legislators’ decisions to change parties, the prevalence of switching is unknown and the extent to which party- and system-level variation influences this behavior remains unclear. To address this lacuna, this paper conducts one of the first large-N cross-national studies of intra-session party switching. We begin by examining the prevalence of party switching across 239 party-level observations in 20 democratic regimes. This descriptive analysis reveals large differences in the presence and prevalence of switching both across and within national assemblies. To explain this variation,

we then draw on the research on inter-party movement and legislators' behavior to generate and test hypotheses concerning the motivational and institutional determinants of party switching.

Addressing inter-party movement is especially important because of its significant consequences for representation and party system institutionalization. Parties are the basic building blocks of democratic governance. Insofar as party switching blurs their boundaries and functions, it compromises voters' ability to hold their representatives accountable, changes the nature of representation, and weakens party systems institutionalization (Mainwaring 1999). Voters' capacity to hold politicians responsible for their actions, for example, may be challenged if legislators who are elected under a particular party banner "jump ship" and switch their partisan affiliation (Heller and Mer-shon 2009).

Party switching has additional implications for democratic governance, as it has the potential to change coalition composition and alter the nature of bargaining in the parliament. Switching can also influence the patterns of party competition and decrease party legitimacy, two key factors in party system institutionalization and democratic consolidation (Mainwaring and Scully 1995). Indeed Mainwaring (1998) explicitly argues that "organizational loyalty is much greater among politicians in countries with more institutionalized party systems" (79). Given the potentially large normative implications of party switching, it is crucial to examine this phenomenon in cross-national perspective.

The paper's contributions to the literature are thus two-fold. First, we illustrate that intra-session party switching is not an aberrant behavior, but rather much more common than previously assumed. Second, we provide new insights into the explanatory power of frequently posited motivational and institutional accounts of this phenomenon. Together, these findings not only advance our theoretical and empirical knowledge about party switching, but also illustrate why this research agenda merits further

study.

The Prevalence of Party Switching

Within the literature on inter-party movement, several distinct affiliation strategies have been identified as “party switching” (Heller and Mershon 2009, Kreuzer and Pettai 2003, Mair 1990). Most obviously, legislators may defect as individuals (or a group) from one party to another, leaving the total number of parties unchanged. Other forms of party switching alter the number of parties in the legislature. The number of parties decreases during “fusion,” for example, when two or more parties consolidate into a single organization. Switching can also increase the number of parliamentary parties. A party may wholly dissolve into two or more factions during party “fission,” or legislators from one or more parties may form a “start-up” organization without the dissolution of their “home” parties. Finally, beyond affiliating with new or existing organizations, a legislator can also repudiate party labels and serve as an independent.

While some scholars have used formal modeling (Desposato 2006*a*, Aldrich and Bianco 1992, Schofield 2009) or data drawn from a small number of countries to study inter-party movement (Mershon 2008, Mershon and Shvetsova 2008, Thames and Castleberg 2006, Shabad and Kazimierz 2004, Csaba 2011), most existing research on party switching focuses on single states. Work has been conducted, for example, on switching in Brazil (Desposato 2006*a*, 2009, Mainwaring and Linán 1997), Italy (Giannetti and Laver 2001, Mershon 2008), Japan (Cox and Rosenbluth 1995, Kato and Kantaro 2009, Kato 1998, Reed and Scheiner 2003), and the United States (Castle and Fett 2000, Nokken 2009). Though these analyses indicate that inter-party movement is pervasive within a small set of legislatures, outside of these cases it has been described as a rare phenomenon and receives comparatively little attention (cf. Desposato 2006*a*, Heller and Mershon 2009).

Though intra-session switching has been perceived as aberrant behavior (Heller

and Mershon 2009), as illustrated in Figure 1, inter-party movement occurs more frequently than has been previously acknowledged. Among 239 parties, almost one-third (78) exhibited some switching. Moreover, of the 145 unique parties analyzed, over 40 percent (60) experienced at least one intra-session defection. Just as party switching is not restricted to a small group of parties, neither is it limited to a few states. Of the 20 countries in the dataset, 14 contain at least one party that encountered some switching. The states with parties that experienced no switchers included Austria, Chile, France, Iceland, Sweden, and Switzerland. Among the countries with switchers, there are some examples in which switching appears to be a rare event. The Belgian, Finnish, and Norwegian parliaments, for example, contain only one party that witnesses switching during the legislative sessions studied. In other cases, however, switching is much more common. In Brazil, for instance, all of the parties included in the analysis experience some switching.

«Figure 1 around here»

In addition to illustrating that party switching occurs with greater frequency than previously acknowledged, Figure 1 also demonstrates that there is a large variation in the pervasiveness of inter-party movement. In some instances, switching is confined to a single party member. The UK Labour Party, for example, lost only one of its 413 MPs between 2001 and 2005. In other cases, the majority of the delegation leaves the party. This was the case when the Socialist People's Party of Brazil lost over 85 percent of its initial membership between the 2002 and 2006 general elections. Even within a single legislature, the percentage of switchers may vary widely by party. In the 16th Knesset between 2003 and 2006, some Israeli parties (such as Shas) experienced no switching, while another lost only one legislator (National Union), and still others (including Shinui and Likud) encountered defection by over one-third of their delegations.

Determinants of Party Switching

What explains this variation in inter-party movement both within and across national assemblies? Existing research on this topic can be classified into two distinct yet related comparative politics research agendas. The first concentrates on parliamentarians' *motivations* and draws on Müller and Strøm's (1999) typology of parties' and legislators' goals. The second addresses political *institutions*. This latter category focuses on the extent to which regime types, electoral systems, and intra-party candidate selection processes shape legislators' incentives to engage in party switching. Together, these literatures offer a theoretical framework for analyzing the determinants of inter-party movement.

Legislators' Motivations for Party Switching

In considering legislators' motivations for changing their partisan affiliation, Müller and Strøm's classification of political goals provides a useful framework. In their seminal piece, the authors argue that parties' objectives are three-fold: to maximize electoral support, or vote; to accrue the benefits of serving in office; and to implement their ideological goals by shaping policy outcomes. These vote-, office-, and policy-seeking aims were also identified by Fenno (1973) as the main objectives motivating individual legislator's behavior (specifically, with regard to committee choice). Fenno argued that reelection, influence on good public policy, and the goal of increasing power and prestige within the chamber—as well as the desire to advance to higher office—influence legislators' decision-making. Taken together, these three goals may be viewed as major motivations for MPs to leave their parties during a legislative term (Mershon and Shvetsova 2008).

Considering the vote motivation, legislators may switch parties to enhance their probability of reelection (Aldrich and Bianco 1992, Herron 2002, Shabad and Kazimierz 2004). Indeed, after leaving the Republican party in 2009, former US Senator Arlen Specter

(D, PA) explicitly stated, “my change in party will enable me to be reelected. . . ” (Bellantoni 13 May 2010).¹ A legislator who believes that she will not be reelected under her current party banner is more likely to seek alternative options than one who believes that she will regain her seat. Based on this theory, we expect:

H1: Parties in which members believe their chances of reelection are small are more likely to witness switching than those whose parliamentarians are confident in their electoral prospects.

Thus, parties that are expected to be less successful in the forthcoming election than in the previous election are more likely to encounter switching.

Beyond reelection, MPs also seek promotion within the political party and the legislature. Legislators’ office-seeking aims—or progressive ambition (Rohde 1979)—thus provide an additional explanation for their behavior (Kam 2009). In considering party switching, a legislator may change his partisan affiliation if he believes that he cannot advance within the party hierarchy or that the party cannot provide him with a desirable position within the legislature (such as a committee chair or ministerial portfolio) (McElroy 2003). This, in turn, leads to the office-seeking hypothesis:

H2: Parties in opposition are more likely to witness switching than those in government.

When in government, parties are more able to provide legislators with leadership roles and the benefits associated with them. Those in the opposition, in contrast, have limited access to these prized positions and are therefore less able to serve MPs’ progressive ambition.

The decision to switch parties may also be influenced by politicians’ policy-seeking aims. Heller and Mershon (2009, 29-51) argue that among legislators whose ideological goals are close to those of their co-partisans and party leaders, instances of conflict with

the party should be minimal. When an MP's ideological leanings differ from her party's, however, she may find herself forced to vote against her own preferences in order to support the party line. In these instances, the party becomes less "attractive" to the legislator, which in turn increases the probability both that she will vote against it and that she will change her partisan identification (Heller and Mershon 2009, McElroy and Benoit 2009, Mainwaring and Linán 1997, Desposato 2006*a*). In essence, if the policy positions of the party are far from a legislator's ideal point, she may opt to join a party that better reflects her policy preferences (Reed and Scheiner 2003, Mainwaring and Linán 1997, Herron 2002, Hug and Wüest 2011). In these cases, switching increases the legislator's capacity to advance policies she supports (or at least mitigates the probability that she will be forced to support legislation to which she objects). Drawing on the policy-seeking theory, we expect:

H3: Parties that are less ideologically cohesive are more likely to witness switching than more cohesive political parties.

Parties that are more cohesive should have fewer members who strongly disagree with the policy platform. Parties that are comparatively less ideologically cohesive, in contrast, are more likely to experience greater disagreement among their representatives. These less cohesive parties are thus both more likely to encounter a switcher and witness a larger percentage of their delegation defecting.

Though the first policy-seeking hypothesis posits that more cohesive parties experience less defection, cohesion may have the opposite effect on party switching. Within weakly cohesive organizations, voting against the party is less likely to be perceived as aberrant behavior. A legislator whose ideological position is far from that of his party may therefore be able to vote in accordance with his own beliefs, even when they differ from the party line. As such, in non-cohesive parties the legislator may not need to engage in party switching. This line of reasoning leads to a second policy-seeking hy-

pothesis:

H3a: Parties that are less ideologically cohesive are less likely to witness switching than more cohesive political parties.

As both policy-seeking hypotheses are theoretically justified, the relationship between cohesion and switching presents an open empirical question to be resolved by the data analysis.

Institutional Arrangements and Party Switching

In addition to the *motivational* hypotheses, *institutional arrangements* may also shape parliamentarians' incentives to switch their party affiliation.² Regime type, electoral systems, and candidate selection processes each influence the balance the legislator must strike between acting as a "servant of his or her party versus an agent of his or her constituents" (Heller and Mershon 2009, 16). Variation in these institutions therefore influences legislators' incentives to defect from the party line, which is in turn linked to switching behavior. Specifically, if switching can be viewed as an extreme manifestation of partisan disloyalty—and those MPs who switch parties (exit) exercise the greatest dissent (voice) (Kato 1998)—then regime types, electoral rules and selection processes that encourage personal vote-seeking incentives (Carey and Shugart 1995) should be associated with a greater presence and pervasiveness of party switching (Herron 2002). Drawing on both the switching literature and the broader study of legislators' behavior, we posit three hypotheses connecting institutional arrangements to inter-party movement.

Existing literature indicates that presidential systems incentivize personalized behavior to a greater degree than parliamentary systems (Epstein 1967). In parliaments, the survival of the head of the executive and government depends upon the legislature (Lijphart 1984, Persson and Tabellini 2003). In many parliamentary systems, for example, the government can attach a dissolution threat to a vote of confidence (Diermeier

and Feddersen 1998) forcing members of the assembly to choose between either accepting the government's policy or facing the voters in an election (Huber 1996, 8). For this reason, legislators in parliamentary systems behave in a more party-centered manner than their counterparts in presidential systems (Bowler, Farrell and Katz 1999, Carey 2009, Diermeier and Feddersen 1998, Huber 1996). This may in turn make them less likely to switch parties, leading to the regime-type hypothesis:

H4: Parties in presidential systems are more likely to witness switching than parties in parliamentary systems.

Though this is a previously untested hypothesis, within his work Cheibub (2007) calls for an assessment of the frequency of party switching across democracies in order to determine whether systematic variation exists across regime types.

In examining the role of electoral systems, we draw on theories that have been advanced concerning their effects on personal vote-seeking behavior and apply these expectations to party switching. In a fully open-list proportional representation system, for example, party leaders have no control over the final rank of candidates on the ballot. Candidates therefore compete both with rival parties and also with opponents from within their own party. To maximize their probability of (re)election, they rely not only on their party label, but also on their personal reputations.

This base of support—originally cultivated to distinguish the legislator from his co-partisans—can also encourage him to change his party identification. As the legislator has courted supporters that identify with him (beyond his party label) he can expect continued support from these voters even after adopting a new partisan affiliation. In party-centered legislatures (for example, closed list proportional representation systems) legislators rarely cultivate large personal followings. A legislator in this system is therefore less likely to switch parties, as he is not emboldened by the knowledge that his previous supporters will likely follow him across party lines. This leads us to hypothesize

that:

H5: Parties in candidate-centered electoral systems are more likely to witness switching than parties in party-centered systems.

Existing research offers some support for this hypothesis. Legislators' likelihood of breaking their alliance with their party has been argued to be lower in countries with party-centered systems (Csaba 2011) and greater in more personalized systems (Desposato 2006*a*). Similarly, in mixed electoral systems parliamentarians who are elected via the nominal tier, and thus capable of cultivating a personal vote, were more likely to switch than those elected via the party list (Thames and Castleberg 2006).

Like incentives created by electoral systems, the process by which candidates are selected has also been theorized to shape legislators' behavior (Giannetti and Benoit 2009, Pennings and Hazan 2001, Rahat and Hazan 2001). Legislators selected by party leaders face incentives to behave in a party-centered manner, accentuating their conformity with the party's ideological stances and emphasizing their loyalty (Bowler, Farrell and Katz 1999, De-Luca, Jones and Tula 2002, Faas 2003, Gallagher and Marsh 1988, Hazan 2000, Mainwaring and Shugart 1997, Obler 1973). In contrast, candidates selected by more democratized procedures, such as party primaries, must distinguish themselves from their co-partisans in order to appeal to a larger and more amorphous electorate. They are therefore incentivized to emphasize their personal reputation and records, which in turn leads them to deviate more frequently from the demands of the party leadership (Hazan 1999). Drawing on this theory, we expect:

H6: Parties that use permissive intra-party candidate selection procedures are more likely to witness switching than parties selecting by restrictive processes.

As is the case in candidate-centered electoral system, personal vote-seeking behavior is theorized to embolden the legislator, as he is now accustomed to operating outside of

the demands of the party and has a base of supporters that are more likely to follow him to his new organization.

Viewing inter-party movement as an extreme manifestation of personalized behavior, rules that encourage personal vote-seeking behavior should also allow legislators to more easily change their partisan affiliation. An alternative approach, however, might posit that party-centered systems are actually more likely to encourage switching. When legislators are forced to accept the government's policy and/or party leaders largely control (s)election, parliamentarians may feel unable to defy the party line because their re(s)election prospects are dependent on their relationship with the leadership. Legislators are therefore limited in their capacity to voice discontent with the party, as doing so jeopardizes their political careers. Without the opportunity to voice their dissatisfaction, parliamentarians may perceive exiting the party as their only alternative. This would be particularly true in cases where legislators have fallen out of favor with the party leadership and thus damaged their prospects of re(s)election. From this line of reasoning, three alternative hypotheses emerge. First, with respect to regime-type:

H4a: Parties in presidential systems are less likely to witness switching than parties in parliamentary systems.

Next, with respect to electoral systems:

H5a: Parties in candidate-centered electoral systems are less likely to witness switching than parties in party-centered systems.

Finally, in considering intra-party candidate selection mechanism, it is possible that:

H6a: Parties that use permissive intra-party candidate selection procedures are less likely to witness switching than parties selecting by restrictive processes.

Though the literature posits that candidate-centered systems and selection processes facilitate switching, these opposing hypotheses are also consistent with existing research on the effect of institutions on legislators' behavior. Thus, we subject these alternative hypotheses to empirical analysis in order to determine whether the data lend support to either of these competing sets of suppositions.

Data and Methods

In order to test these motivational and institutional hypotheses, the empirical analysis exploits an original dataset of 239 party-level observations nested in 20 countries (see Figure 1 for a complete list of countries included in the analysis). The data are a sample of democratic states³ chosen in order to maximize variation in institutional arrangements.⁴ These cases include systems in which legislators' changes in partisan affiliation have been widely studied—such as Poland and Brazil—and those that have received comparatively less attention (including Israel and Denmark). Drawing on this dataset, the empirical analyses assess both the presence and the pervasiveness of inter-party movement using logistic regression models with country-session random effects.

Measuring Party Switching

As noted in our discussion of the prevalence of party switching, in measuring inter-party movement we focus exclusively on switching during the legislative session. Thus, we exclude cases in which legislators switched parties between sessions. Inter-session switching has received attention elsewhere in the literature (Laver and Benoit 2003), and the causal mechanisms generating this behavior may be fundamentally different than those related to intra-session switching. The parliamentary delegation of parties that forms during legislative sessions, for example, is comprised exclusively of legislators' who have been serving in office. Their behavior is therefore more likely to be explained by motivational and institutional incentives. Parties forming at elections, however, may be com-

prised of both incumbent MPs and candidates who have never served in office. While they are undoubtedly influenced by some of the same factors encouraging intra-session switching, they may also be more closely tied to social movements or have other incentives that cannot be adequately captured by our theoretical framework.⁵

After recording all instances of intra-session inter-party movement—including cases in which legislators’ renounced party labels and become independents—we developed two different operationalizations of party switching. In the first model, we use a dichotomous measure of the presence of switching, distinguishing parties that witness no switchers from those that experience any switching during the legislative session. The second model accounts for the pervasiveness of switching within the party, and therefore measures the percentage of MPs leaving the party during the legislative session.

Measuring the Determinants of Party Switching

Tables 1 and 2 provide summary statistics for each of the variables operationalizing the motivational and institutional hypotheses. The first hypothesis (vote-seeking motivations) demands a measure of legislators’ beliefs concerning their probability of reelection. In practice, these beliefs are based on parliamentarians’ estimates of the number of seats their party will win in the next election and the probability that they will occupy those seats. To make these judgements, MPs use past results, their assessments of the state of events since the last election, and public opinion to gauge the position of the party among the electorate.

As an approximation of these subjective assessments, we measure the difference between the percentage of votes the party gained in the subsequent election and the percentage of votes won in the most recent election (Crisp, Jensen and Shomer 2007). When a party has made dramatic electoral gains— i.e. the difference in vote share is positive and comparatively large—its legislators are more likely to have viewed their probability of reelection as high. In contrast, when a party experiences deep losses in vote

share, its members are more likely to have doubted their electoral fortunes.⁶ Assuming that legislators are able to anticipate electoral gains and defeats, if the reelection-seeking hypothesis holds party switching should be negatively correlated with increases in parties' vote shares.⁷

«Table 1 and Table 2 around here»

As they can provide their members with "plum jobs within the executive" (Bowler, Farrell and Katz 1999, 10) and prestigious positions in the legislature, parties in government are expected to witness comparatively little switching. Similarly, because they cannot as readily address their members' progressive ambition, opposition parties may witness more defections. In order to test this office-seeking hypothesis, we compare party switching among governmental and non-governmental parties. In parliamentary systems, the dichotomous measure distinguishes between the party (or parties) in the governing coalition and opposition or unaligned parties. In presidential systems, we use the president's partisan affiliation to identify the governing party.

On the one hand, Hypothesis 3 posits that because they are more ideologically diverse, parties that are less cohesive are more likely to encounter switchers. On the other hand, Hypothesis 3a makes the opposite case. Parties that are less ideologically cohesive are more tolerant of dissent, and thus less likely to witness switching. Following Sieberer (2006) and Depauw and Martin (2009), we use parties' Rice scores to capture cohesion.⁸ Rice scores calculate the difference between the number of party members voting for and against a provision, divided by the total number of party legislators voting. For any given vote, Rice scores may range from zero—indicating an evenly divided faction—to 1, capturing perfect unity (Rice, 1928). The Rice Score Index is an average of the party's score on each vote over the course of the legislative session. A lower average Rice Score Index thus indicates larger differences among the ideological leanings of parties' MPs.

The second set of hypotheses explores the link between institutional arrangements and defection. The party switching literature posits that institutions that encourage candidate-

centered behavior also facilitate inter-party movement. The broader literature on legislators' behavior, however, leads us to hypothesize that the opposite relationship holds. Within this broader framework, the first set of institutional theories, the regime-type hypotheses, posit an association between parliamentary systems and inter-party movement. Drawing on Keefer (2006), we include a dichotomous variable controlling for regime type to test these competing assertions.

The fifth set of hypotheses focus on electoral rules that encourage candidate- and party-centered behavior. Based on Carey and Shugart (1995), we focus on three characteristics of the electoral system: ballot-type, pooling, and vote. The ballot-type measure accounts for the degree to which party leaders have control over both access to, and rank on, the party's ballot. This trichotomous variable distinguishes between fixed and strong preferential ballots, with an intermediate category of weak preferential ballots.⁹ The pool variable captures whether votes for the candidate also determine the seat share at the sub-party or party level. We distinguish between systems in which votes are pooled across the whole party, those in which votes are pooled at the sub-party level, and finally those in which there is no pooling and votes cast for the candidate only contribute to his own success (Wallack et al. 2003). Finally, the vote covariate separates cases in which the voter casts: a single-party vote, votes for multiple candidates (who need not be from the same party), and a single vote at a sub-party level. Fixed ballots, party-level pooling, and single-party votes each make the system more party-centric, while strong-preferential ballots, no pooling, and candidate voting are each associated with personal vote-seeking behavior.¹⁰

Intra-party candidate selection mechanisms determine who may run for office under the party's banner. Beyond electoral rules, the sixth pair of hypotheses posits that by further shaping party- versus candidate-centered behavior, these selection processes influence party switching (Hazan and Rahat 2000, Shomer 2009, Akirav 2010). Following the literature (Hazan 2002, Gallagher 1980), we classify selection processes according

to two main dimensions: the selectorate and the degree of decentralization. The selectorate variable is a threefold measure that accounts for whether the party's candidates are chosen by a small group of party leaders, party delegates, or primary voters. The decentralization variable differentiates parties in which the selection is conducted at the national versus local level, with an intermediate category identifying parties where selection is determined by both levels. Primaries and local-level contests are expected to empower individual candidates, while selection by a handful of elites at the national-level encourages party-centered behavior.

Finally, in addition to the main predictors, we also hold constant three factors that may otherwise bias the relationship between the covariates of interest and the presence and pervasiveness of party switching. First, we include a measure of the effective number of parliamentary parties to control for the possibility that having a greater number of potentially receiving parties may increase the probability that an MP will defect from her home party. Second, the models include a measure of district magnitude (M), which we operationalize as the log of the average of the district magnitudes in the country, weighted by the number of legislators running in districts of each size (Seddon et al. 2002, Johnson and Wallack 2007). Third, the models control for party size. Size can affect both the motivational variables and also the likelihood that a party will suffer from collective action problems (Olson, 1971), which can in turn influence the probability of switching.¹¹

Modeling Strategy

We use an original dataset consisting of two different measures of party switching to provide a cross-sectional analysis of inter-party movement. An identical set of party- and system-level predictors is used in both models, and the analyses account for both the *presence* and *prevalence* of party switching. Both analyses employ binomial logistic regression models, which link the probability of success p_i to the whole real line via

the transformation $\mu_i = \log\left(\frac{p_i}{1-p_i}\right)$. In order to account for the covariance between parties within a given country, the data is analyzed using varying-intercepts random effects models. We use country-session as our grouping variable, such that the hierarchical structure of our data consists of parties nested within 40 unique country-sessions.¹² Formally, the model is defined as:

$$\begin{aligned}\mu_i &= \alpha_{j[i]} + \beta x_i, \text{ for parties } i = 1, \dots, n \\ \alpha_j &= a + b u_j + \eta_j, \text{ for country sessions } j = 1, \dots, J.\end{aligned}$$

Here, x_i and u_j represent predictors at the party and country-session levels respectively. Additionally, the η_j are independent normal error terms that have variance σ_a^2 and are also independent of the observations.¹³

Results

The motivational and institutional theories each generate empirical implications that are tested using data on switching from parties across 20 democratic states. The findings indicate that motivational concerns are strong predictors of defection, and that institutional arrangements have only a limited independent effect on party switching.

Motivational Determinants of Party Switching

Table 3 presents the coefficient estimates and standard errors from both binomial logistic regression models.¹⁴ Two key results emerge from the hypotheses relating legislators' motivations to party switching: first, vote- and policy-seeking aims shape inter-party movement; second, the office-seeking effect is minimal. In considering the vote-seeking hypothesis, the analyses indicate that the proxy for reelection-seeking behavior is correlated with the presence and percentage of party switchers. In Model 1, increasing the percentage of votes gained in the subsequent election by one standard deviation

(5.67 percent) decreases the odds of experiencing any switching by a factor of 0.66. Correspondingly, decreasing the number of votes won by one-standard deviation doubles the odds of a party encountering a switcher. For Model 2, when vote loss is held at its maximum the predicted percentage of switchers is 3 percent. The predicted value at the maximum vote gain, in contrast, is near zero (0.1 percent).¹⁵ Though this difference may initially appear to be small, substantively the effect is large. The median percentage of switchers across all observations is zero, and losing even a single member can have serious implications for the party. Moving from having no switchers to losing 3 percent of the party's parliamentary caucus can clearly influence the perception of the party among both the electorate and other organizations.

«Table 3 around here»

The results also help to adjudicate the competing hypotheses linking switching and policy-seeking behavior. Recall that we hypothesized that more cohesive parties will witness less switching (H3), and therefore expected a negative relationship between inter-party movement and ideological unity. At the same time, because voting against the party line is more likely to be tolerated in non-cohesive organizations, we acknowledged that the opposite effect might hold (H3a). As evidenced in Table 3, our measure of ideological cohesion is negatively correlated with both the presence and prevalence of party switching. Increasing a party's Rice score by one standard deviation decreases the odds of any switching by a factor of 0.32. Holding all other variables constant, a party is one-third as likely to encounter a switcher when its Rice score increases by 0.08. This finding is robust to the operationalization of the outcome variable. Comparing the predicted values of the prevalence of switching for the minimum and maximum values of Rice scores yields a difference of 1.6 percent, from 0.4 percent of legislators switching in the most cohesive parties to 2 percent switching among the least cohesive organizations. The analysis thus offers support to the hypothesis of an inverse relationship between cohesion and switching (H3).

Though the model lends support to both the policy and reelection seeking hypotheses, it undermines the office-seeking claims. Model 1 shows no relationship between a party's position in the government and the presence or absence of switching. This indicates that, when controlling for other variables, opposition parties are no more likely to experience switching than government parties. Model 2, in contrast, reveals a positive relationship between coalition membership and the percentage of defectors. The difference in the predicted percentage of switchers in non-governmental and governmental parties, however, is minimal. While the predicted prevalence of switching among opposition parties is 0.3 percent, it is 0.4 percent for government parties. On the one hand, these results are surprising, given that opposition parties are expected to be less able to appease legislators' progressive ambition, and therefore more likely to encounter switching. On the other hand research, the literature on the influence of coalition parties on party discipline also generates inconclusive findings. Whereas Owens (2003) and Gaines and Garrett (1993) observe that coalition parties are more cohesive than opposition parties, Depauw and Martin (2009) and Rahat (2007) find support to the contrary. Leston-Bandeia (2009) found no difference between opposition and coalition levels of dissent.

Institutional Determinants of Party Switching

While the results presented in Table 3 offer support to two of the key hypotheses related to legislators' motivations as key determinants of party switching, the hypotheses testing the independent role of institutional arrangements on inter-party movement receive less support. With respect to the fourth hypotheses, which posit that parties in presidential systems witness more (H4) or less (H4a) switching than those in parliamentary regimes, the findings illustrate that regime type does not affect inter-party movement. These results lend support for Cheibub's intuition that the existence of a correlation between party switching and regime type is unlikely (Cheibub 2007, 76).

The models also reveal only moderate differences across electoral systems (H5 and H5a). Variation in ballot type, for example, influences neither the presence nor the prevalence of party switching. The results of both Models 1 and 2 show no differences between parties in fixed ballot electoral systems and those in countries using either weakly or strongly preferential systems.¹⁶ Similarly, the vote variable, which accounts for the number of individuals that voters can support, does not have an independent effect on inter-party movement. Thus, parties operating in electoral systems that limit voters to a single party-level vote cannot be said to experience more or less switching than those in other systems.

The final predictor operationalizing electoral system incentives is the pool variable, which accounts for whether votes for a candidate also determine the seat share of the party (or sub-party). In contrast to the ballot and vote variables, this measure adheres to theoretical expectations outlined in Hypothesis 5 and is correlated with inter-party movement. When compared with systems where votes cast are pooled across the whole party, parties with pooling at the sub-party level or no pooling at all are more likely to experience switching. The first model shows that moving from a wholly to partially pooled system increases the odds of switching by a factor of 35. The odds of switching are even greater in systems with no pooling (as compared to systems where votes are pooled across the whole party).

The second model lends further support to the importance of the pool variable. The predicted percentage of switchers in wholly pooled systems is under 1 percent, while it is 3.7 percent and 21 percent for partial and no pooling systems respectively. These results lend some support to the notion that systems that encourage personal vote-seeking behavior are associated with more switching. Given the non-significance of the other electoral system variables, however, the model does not lend strong support for the assertion that candidate-centered systems encourage inter-party movement.

In addition to electoral systems, intra-party candidate selection processes are also

hypothesized to influence party switching (H6 and H6a). Neither of these hypotheses, however, is supported by the data. The size of the selectorate influences neither the presence nor the prevalence of party switching. The level at which selection occurs, in contrast, is weakly significant in Model 1. Parties in which candidate selection is decentralized yet the national party retains final control are over five times as likely to experience an instance of switching than centralized parties. There is no difference, however, between wholly decentralized parties and parties employing either centralized or partially decentralized candidate selection procedures. These results also fail to hold for the model measuring the prevalence of party switching.

The results lend strong support to the motivational hypotheses. At the same time, the findings indicate that institutional arrangements have only a limited direct effect on switching.¹⁷ Of course, these results do not wholly mitigate the importance of institutions. Instead, it is possible that institutional arrangements indirectly influence inter-party movement. Research has shown, for example, that electoral systems and candidate selection processes influence the degree to which parties act in unison (Carey 2007, 2009, Hix 2004). Consequently, there may be an intervening relationship between institutions and switching, with institutional arrangements shaping party cohesion, which in turn influences inter-party movement. Alternatively, electoral systems and candidate selection procedures may enhance or mitigate the influence of legislators' motivations, such that institutional arrangements become relevant only after the motivational preconditions have been met. Nonetheless, though an intervening or interactive relationship may exist between institutions and switching, the underlying conclusion is that institutions alone do not have a direct effect.

Conclusions

Party switching can significantly influence democratic representation and governance, as well as voter's ability to hold legislators accountable. Inter-party movement can also

reflect the degree to which the party system is institutionalized. Despite the normative significance of legislators' defections, this topic has only recently been seriously addressed in the comparative politics literature. Through a series of case-specific analyses, scholars have generated a number of theoretical explanations for party switching. Drawing on these works, as well as the broader research on legislators' behavior, this paper makes two major contributions to the study of inter-party movement.

First, using an original dataset on switching among parties in 20 countries, we illustrate that contrary to popularly held assumptions, party switching occurs much more frequently than previously asserted. Of the 239 parties included in the dataset, almost one-third (78) exhibited some switching. Beyond showing the prevalence of party switching, we also offer new insights into the determinants of this behavior. The results from our varying-intercept random effects models demonstrate that the motivational hypotheses influence inter-party movement. Cohesive parties and parties making electoral gains are both less likely to encounter switching, and experience less pervasive switching, than their counterparts. At the same time, while we find some support for the claim that systems that encourage personalized (rather than party-centered) behavior are more likely to witness switching, the independent effect of institutional arrangements is minimal.

Though important in their own right, these findings also generate a number of additional research questions. First, as briefly noted in the results section, it is possible that the distinction between candidate- and party-centered institutions is more complicated than has typically been posited in the literature. Desposato (2006*a*), for example, argues that institutions may create the environments and opportunities that (de)incentivize inter-party movement. Thus, party switching may be better explained by a two-stage model, in which institutional arrangements become salient only after legislators' have the vote-, office-, or policy-seeking motivations needed to leave the party. Among these parties, candidate-centered systems may be correlated with switching. In

this paper we treat the motivational and institutional frameworks as two distinct theoretical approaches, examining the effect of one set of hypotheses while holding the other constant. This alternative theoretical account, however, calls for a more nuanced theoretical and empirical model, a task that should be addressed in future work.

Beyond this more complicated interactive relationship between the two theories, additional research is needed to identify the alternative institutional features that may account for these results. Parties may adapt to permissive candidate-centered institutional contexts, for example, by altering their internal procedures to reward loyal MPs and/or create barriers to reluctant legislators leaving the party. This assertion suggests that after witnessing significant switching, parties will amend their internal procedures and only minimal switching will be observed in the subsequent legislative session.

Additionally, though they have received only limited attention in the literature, the intra-cameral procedures and constitutional clauses governing party formation and inter-party movement are, in our opinion, essential to understanding the institutional context of party switching. Some countries adopt strict anti-defection procedures. Bulgaria, for example, prohibits party switching (instead forcing MPs to establish a new faction) (Csaba 2011). Other legislatures have even greater constraints, punishing switchers by prohibiting them from competing in the subsequent election or even removing them from their seats [e.g., Ukraine (Csaba 2011) and India (Janda 2009)]. The definition of a faction also varies across assemblies. While in some countries it is possible for a small group (or even a single MP) to be recognized as a party, in others the threshold is much higher.

Limits on recognition, in turn, constrain inter-party movement. Countries characterized by permissive intra-party candidate selection processes and personalized electoral systems may seek to mitigate the effects of these institutions by adopting more restrictive rules concerning party switching. The limited effect of the institutional environment may therefore result from a correlation between the presence of these re-

strictions and candidate-centered systems. While this topic has not received significant attention in the literature, in future research we intend to collect this information for the 20 countries included in this analysis in order to explain the adoption and influence of the rules and procedures governing inter-party movement.

Adopting a cross-national perspective on party switching illustrates that while significant headway has been made in the study of inter-party movement, a number of questions remain. This paper has addressed two major points of uncertainty in the research on intra-session changes in partisan affiliation: the prevalence of party switching and the extent to which it can be explained by motivational and institutional theories of legislators' behavior. Though we illustrate that party switching is a common phenomenon and that it is largely explained by vote- and policy-seeking aims, these results do not conclude the study of intra-session party switching. Rather, the cross-national perspective offers new insights and questions that ensure that this will be a promising field of study for years to come.

Notes

¹It is unusual to find an overt admission of switching as a means to increase the probability of re-election, as this disclosure undermines electability. It is also interesting to note that Sen. Specter was not re-selected to stand for office in Pennsylvania's Democratic Senate primary (Costa 2010).

²One could also posit an interactive relationship between motivations and institutions. For example, examining Brazilian switching Desposato (2006*b*, 63) claims, "the strongest motives for party affiliation are access to distributive resources, electoral opportunities, and compatible policy positions, but which is most important varies with voters' characteristics." In other words, Desposato (2006*b*, 2009) believes that MPs try to maximize their expected career utility and that institutions create the opportunities, and influence the transaction costs, associated with doing so. Institutions may therefore determine whether a legislator is better-off switching to another party. We return to this concern in the conclusion of the paper.

³As defined by the Freedom House rating on the political rights dimension.

⁴The data include both presidential and parliamentary systems. The selection of countries also includes CLPR, SMD, STV, OLPR, Mixed Members, and Alternative Vote electoral systems. The selection processes of the parties included, moreover, vary from the most restrictive extreme—one person or a small group of national party leaders selects—to permissive selection via primaries. Data on candidate selection processes at the party-level is difficult to acquire. Given the constraints of data availability, we were able to obtain data on parties for the following countries/years: Australia 96-98; Austria 96-97; Belgium 95-99; Brazil 02-07; Canada 94-07; 97-00; 00-04; Chile 97-98; Czech Republic 96-98; 98-02; Denmark 94-95; Finland 95-96; 03; Germany 53-57; 57-61; 61-65; 87-90; Iceland 95-96; Ireland 89-92; 92-97; 97-02; 02-07; Israel 92-96; 96-99; 99-03; 03-06; 06-08; New-Zealand 90-93; 93-94; 02-05; Norway 93-97; 97-01; 01-05; Poland 97-99; Sweden 94-95; Switzerland 99-03; UK 92-97; 97-01; 01-05; USA 63-65; 93-95. While observations within the study cannot be considered a truly random sample, we do not believe that the results are sample-specific and expect the findings to be generalizable. As more data becomes available, we will extend the list of countries included in future studies.

⁵Within this work we also chose not to address inter-session switching because it involves two distinct time periods (the sessions preceding and following the switch). Among the explanatory variables of interest, it is often unclear which time period would be most salient in explaining the presence and prevalence of inter-party movement.

⁶Unfortunately, legislators' subjective assessments are difficult to measure even in a single case, let alone across multiple countries over several years. This particular proxy measure may be subject to endo-

geneity issues, as a party's vote share at time $t + 1$ may be influenced by the switch we measure at time t . Specifically, if the switcher is a prominent MP with many personal followers, the movement may result in a large loss of votes for his "home" party and increased support for the receiving party. Though we recognize this shortcoming, there is no other available measure of vote-seeking incentives across all parties included in the dataset. Public opinion data, for example, does not cover several of the country-sessions included in the analysis.

⁷The cross-national nature of the project places severe restrictions on data availability. These constraints require that we use party-level data as a proxy for individual legislators' motivations. Inferring individual-level behavior from aggregate-level data may facilitate an ecological fallacy. Though we acknowledge this potential pitfall, without these party-level measures we cannot carry out a cross-national analysis of the determinants of party switching.

⁸Rice scores are not without their limitations. First, Rice scores cannot differentiate between cohesion and discipline. Often used interchangeably, cohesion and discipline are observationally equivalent but theoretically distinct concepts (Cox 1987, Hazan 2006, Krehbiel 1993, Ozbudum 1970). Second, Rice scores fail to account for absences and abstentions, which may bias the results (Hix, Noury and Roland 2005, Landi and Pelizzo 2006). Finally, Desposato (2005) illustrates that Rice scores can be biased when calculated for small groups, and proposes an alternative measure that corrects for this bias. One solution to these shortcomings would have been to use of Nominat-like, or Item Response Theory based, measures of party cohesion. Due to the constraints of data availability, however, we could use neither approach. These measures demand individual level data concerning each legislator's decision across a number of votes. Unfortunately, for some of the countries in our sample—such as New-Zealand 2002-2005—individual-level voting records simply do not exist or cannot be readily obtained. Rice scores, in contrast, can be calculated based on aggregate party-level measures of the proportion of Aye and Nay votes. Using Rice scores as a proxy for cohesion also allowed us to draw on some pre-calculated values. For Denmark and Sweden 1994-1995, for example, we use the Rice scores from Jensen (2000). Though in future research we will search for alternative measures, our use of Rice scores is consistent with the existing literature on legislators' behavior.

⁹Following Karvonen (2004), strong preferential ballots are defined as those in which preference votes are the sole basis on which individual legislators are chosen. In the middle category, which includes countries such as the Czech Republic and Denmark, parties are empowered by their control over the initial order of candidates on the ballot yet their role can be mitigated by voters' preferences (Crisp and Malecki 2009).

¹⁰An alternative approach is to use an index measuring the electoral systems' tendency to cultivate personal vote-seeking behavior similar to the one proposed by Carey and Shugart (1995) or Johnson and Wallack (2007). Existing indices, however, do not cover all country-years included in the current analysis and cannot be easily constructed.

¹¹For a detailed codebook please consult the supplemental materials at [author's website].

¹²Neither our definition of party switching nor our modeling strategy account for the receiving parties. While we acknowledge that a legislator's decision to switch is influenced by his choice-set—the alternative parties he may join (Desposato 2006*a*)—the cross-national nature of our study makes collecting this data an onerous task. As we are focused only on explanatory variables that are related to the “home” parties, and include no covariates describing the receiving parties, a binomial logistic regression approach is appropriate. In future research, however, we would like to expand our dataset to include measures describing the choice set and model party switching using a conditional logistic regression approach.

¹³The models are fit in R using the *lme4* package (Bates and Maechler 2010).

¹⁴The dataset includes some parties that are observed in more than one legislative session. The models presented here, however, include only country session-level random effects. In analyzing the data, we estimated models with party-level random effects, thereby accounting for these repeated observations. The results were robust to this modeling strategy, but because of the large number of unique parties these models imposed too much structure on the data. For this reason, we instead chose to present the session-level random effects models. We were also concerned that the Brazilian and/or Israeli cases were exercising undue influence on our coefficient estimates and standard errors. The results, however, are robust to the exclusion of these observations.

¹⁵All predicted values are generated by holding other variables at their mean or modal values. Additionally, all predicted values presented in the paper are significant at the $\alpha = 0.1$ level, insofar as the confidence interval of the difference of predicted values does not contain 0.

¹⁶We also estimated both models with a dichotomous variable distinguishing between electoral systems in which party leaders have control over the ballot (either through the electoral systems or through the intra-party candidate selection procedures) versus systems in which they do not. In both models, the coefficient estimates failed to reach statistical significance.

¹⁷The results are robust to an alternative model specification that aggregates these two variables into a single measure of intra-party candidate selection mechanisms. Additionally, we used likelihood ratio tests to compare the full models to nested models that exclude the institutional covariates. These tests also fail to support the explanatory power of these hypotheses. For the first model, which accounts for the pres-

ence of party switching, the likelihood ratio test favors the larger model (which includes all institutional variables) only when the pool variable is included. The effect of institutions is even more minimal for the prevalence of party switching model. When explaining the percentage of switchers in the parliamentary caucus, the full model performs no better than the parsimonious model that excludes all institutional variables (including the pool covariate). Thus, the likelihood ratio tests provide no support to the assertion that when taken together the institutional variables directly affect inter-party movement.

Tables and Figures

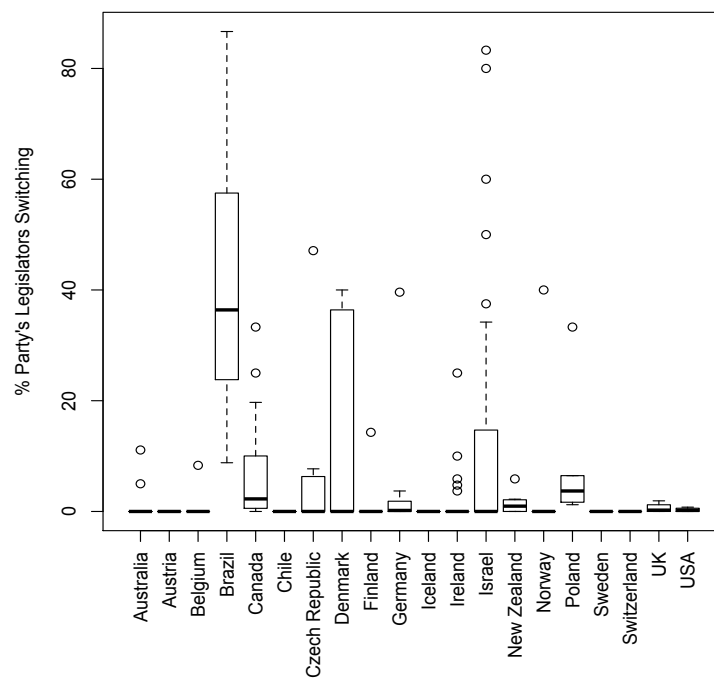
Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Continuous Variables Used in Analyses (N=239)

Variable	Min	q₁	\bar{x}	\bar{x}	q₃	Max	s	IQR
% Switchers	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.51	2.25	88.67	15.45	2.25
Δ Party Vote Share	-19.40	-1.80	0.30	0.71	3.20	33.83	5.67	5.00
Rice Score	0.52	0.92	0.96	0.94	0.99	1.00	0.08	0.07
Average District Magnitude	1.00	4.05	10.53	35.11	20.33	120.00	48.45	16.28
Effective Number of Parties	1.76	2.99	4.15	4.68	5.62	8.69	2.07	2.63
Party Size	1.00	7.00	19.00	43.36	47.00	418.00	67.63	40.00

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Discrete Variables Used in Analyses (N=239)

Variable	Levels	n	%
Switchers	Yes	78	32.64
	No	161	67.36
Coalition Member	Yes	105	43.93
	No	134	56.07
Ballot Type	Fixed Ballots	141	58.99
	Weak Preferential Ballots	26	10.88
	Strong Preferential Ballots	72	30.13
Pool	Complete Pooling	148	61.92
	Partial Pooling	53	22.18
	No Pooling	38	15.90
Vote	One Vote, One Party	62	25.94
	Multiple Votes	112	46.86
	One Vote, One Candidate	65	27.20
Selectorate	Party Leaders	25	10.46
	Party Delegates	137	57.32
	Primaries	77	32.22
Decentralization	National Level	62	25.94
	National and Local Level	59	24.69
	Local Level	118	49.37
System	Parliamentary	157	65.69
	Presidential	82	34.31

Figure 1: Box Plot of Percentage of Switchers in Parties' Parliamentary Delegations



Notes: The plot graphically depicts the prevalence of switching among parties in 20 democracies using five-number summaries: the smallest observation (sample minimum), lower quartile (Q1), median (Q2), upper quartile (Q3), and largest observation (sample maximum). The dots represent observations that may be outliers. Across all countries, the minimum and median percentage of switchers is zero, the mean percentage of switchers is 6.51%, and the maximum is 86.67%.

Table 3: Random Effects Logit Models of Party Switching

		Model 1: Any Switching (Std. Error)	Model 2: % of Switchers (Std. Error)
<i>Fixed Effects</i>	Intercept	4.97 (5.70)	-6.39 (3.08)
<i>Motivational Hypotheses</i>	Δ Vote-Share	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.02)
	Rice Score	-14.87 (4.95)	-2.44 (1.02)
	Coalition Member	0.41 (0.44)	0.39 (0.16)
<i>Institutional Hypotheses</i>	Parliamentary System	1.34 (1.44)	0.33 (1.00)
	Weak Preferential Ballots (Ballot Type=1)	1.66 (1.33)	1.11 (1.06)
	Strong Preferential Ballots (Ballot Type=2)	0.85 (1.13)	0.52 (0.86)
	Partial Pooling (Pool=1)	3.54 (1.41)	2.18 (1.08)
	No Pooling (Pool=2)	5.98 (2.34)	4.15 (1.87)
	Multiple Votes (Vote=1)	-1.51 (2.02)	-0.18 (1.47)
	One Vote, One Candidate (Vote=2)	-0.43 (2.43)	0.45 (1.75)
	Party Delegates (Selectorate=1)	-0.13 (0.71)	-0.53 (0.41)
	Primaries (Selectorate=2)	-0.23 (1.16)	-0.59 (0.61)
	National and Local Level (Decentralization=1)	1.73 (0.98)	0.39 (0.45)
	Local Level (Decentralization=2)	0.86 (1.15)	0.48 (0.53)
<i>Controls</i>	Effective Number of Parties	0.44 (0.28)	0.24 (0.23)
	Log District Magnitude	1.07 (0.66)	0.91 (0.54)
	Party Size	0.00 (0.00)	-0.01 (0.00)
<i>Random Effects</i>	Country-Level Std. Dev.	1.21	1.30

Notes: The outcome variable in Model 1 is a dichotomous measure of switching distinguishing between parties with no switchers and parties in which at least one legislator left the party during the legislative session. The outcome variable in Model 2 is the percentage of legislators switching out of the party during the legislative session. For both models, the baseline categories are as follows: fixed ballots (Ballot=0); complete pooling of votes (Pooling=0); electorate receives one vote for one party (Vote=0); candidate selection is conducted by a small group of party leaders (Selectorate=0); candidate selection occurs at the national level (Decentralization=0). Number of observations: 239 parties; number of groups: 40 country-sessions.

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