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Safety in Numbers: Group Linkages and the Persistence of Party Switching in Poland

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Introduction

- Party switching: everyone s' doing it
  - Risks versus payoffs?

- Rational calculus
  - Downs (1957), Müller & Strøm (1999)
  - Heller & Mershon (2009),
    Mershon & Shvetsova (2008)
    Kreuzer & Pettai (2009)
    Shabad & Słomczyński (2004),
    Zieliński et al. (2005)

Introduction

- A *group-basis* of defection

Figure 1. Number of switches and MPs who switched in Poland, 1991-2011.

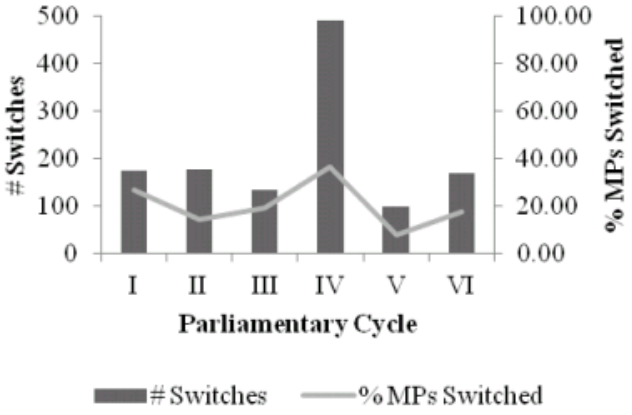

Table 1. Party switching in Poland, 1991-2011.

Parliamentary cycle	# Switches	MPs switched[1]		Group-based switches[2]	
		#	%	#	%
I Kadencja (1991-1993)	174	124	26.78	130	74.71
II Kadencja (1993-1997)	178	68	14.26	142	79.78
III Kadencja (1997-2001)	134	93	19.29	100	74.63
IV Kadencja (2001-2005)	490	178	36.40	406	82.86
V Kadencja (2005-2007)	99	37	7.74	75	75.76
VI Kadencja (2007-2011)	170	91	17.50	133	78.24

1. The Sejm has 460 deputies at any given time; the total number of deputies in a given cycle may be greater due to the termination and re-assignment of mandates.
2. Refers to the proportion of group switches to the total number of switches.

Data collected with the assistance of the Sejm RP Chancellery and the Sejm Library Archives; special thanks to Marta Kołczyńska for her invaluable assistance with material for IV Kadencja.

Research Questions

- Why do sitting parliamentarians persistently and frequently switch parties?

- On the group-basis of defection:
  - Why, and to what extent, do group linkages affect decisions whether or not to switch parties?
  - What is the effect of group-based dynamics on political party systems and democratic development?
  - Is this phenomenon unique to Poland, or is it a feature of other democracies?

Contributions

- Central Argument
  - Group ties have a substantial effect on MPs' behavior, thereby overshadowing individual material incentives
  - Old principles, new applications? (Latham 1952)
  - Social Identity (e.g., Tajfel & Turner 1986)

- Direct contribution
  - Distinction between individual versus group-based motivations for party switching
    - What is group-switching?
    - How to measure or account for group linkages?

- Broader contributions
  - Political party and behaviour scholarship
    - Elite behaviour
    - Implications and broader domestic (and regional?) consequences

Methods

- Methods:
  - Quantitative analysis
    - Novel data
    - EAST-PaC
  - Qualitative analysis
    - Elite Interviews
    - QCA, past media

Incorporation of EAST-PaC

- Primary data is my own

- EAST-PaC's contribution:
  - Further testing during an informative time-gap in primary data

  - MP biography/demographics accuracy check

Appendix

- References

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