

POLITICAL PARTIES
AND LEGISLATIVE
PARTY SWITCHING

*Edited by William B. Heller
and Carol Mershon*



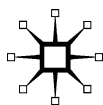
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POLITICAL PARTIES AND LEGISLATIVE

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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2009 978-0-230-60755-2

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First published in 2009 by

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®

in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN 978-1-349-37425-0 ISBN 978-0-230-62255-5 (eBook)

DOI 10.1057/9780230622555

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available from the Library of Congress.

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Newgen Imaging Systems (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: July 2009

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Preface

Political parties and democratic politics go hand in hand. Since parties matter, it matters too when legislators and other elected politicians change party affiliation. The phenomenon of party switching becomes puzzling when the switch occurs during a politician's term of office. Why would a sitting legislator who won his seat under one party label jump to another during a legislative term? What are the effects of such switches? This book investigates these and related questions.

Scholarship arises from curiosity, advances through some form of collaboration, and typically requires financial support as well. In the late 1990s, the coeditors of this book first discussed the curious frequency of legislative party switching in Italy, when we met for dinner at one of the annual meetings of the American Political Science Association. In our collaboration, one thing has led to another, including this book. We first coauthored several conference papers on the phenomenon of party switching, and then, in 2003, we secured support from the National Science Foundation for collaborative research (NSF SES-0339920 to Heller and SES-0339877 to Merston, for "Collaborative Research on Legislative Party Switching: Integrating Theoretical and Comparative Empirical Analyses"). This book represents the culmination of that project and of the joint work of the 12-member Research Work Group on Legislative Party Switching, which we recruited and co-chaired.

We and the other contributors to the volume are convinced that the study of elected politicians' changes and choices of party affiliation can enrich the understanding of political parties, legislative politics, policy making, and democratic representation. The first two chapters and the concluding chapter perhaps emphasize this conviction most strongly. All chapters, however, seek to demonstrate the analytical purchase to be gained from considering party switching as one of the

possible results of the strategic interactions between legislators and party leaders. All share as a premise and as a theme the notion that taking party switching seriously sheds new light on issues of enduring importance in political science. The contributors to this volume investigate a wide range of empirical settings, from Western Europe to the Baltics, from the United States to Japan, from Russia and Romania to Brazil. At the same time, the research integrates formal and empirical approaches to the study of politicians' decisions on party affiliation.

To identify this book as the culmination of our work is to point to prior stages of collaboration. The Party Switching Research Group (PSRG) held its first meeting at Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland, July 2004, and its second meeting at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, July 2005. The group also organized panels, featuring papers from several of the contributors here, at the 2005 Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association and the 2005 Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association. Both meetings of the PSRG qualified as true workshops, with wide-ranging conversations, informal presentations, and active debate and discussion among all participants. We welcomed and profited from the participation of several political scientists who were not strictly speaking members of the PSRG, including graduate students and, in Dublin, Daniela Giannetti from the faculty of the Università di Bologna.

This book and the research that underpins it benefited greatly from the contributions of several key players. The first is Michael Laver, who as a member of the PSRG prepared papers for Dublin and Charlottesville. As then-chair of the Department of Political Science at Trinity College, moreover, Laver also was a generous and gracious host for our Dublin meetings. As it turned out, Laver did not write a chapter for the book, but his voice in the conversations and collaboration remains. We also acknowledge the very helpful comments of John Aldrich, offered at several stages in this project, and the thoughtful remarks of Dave Clark, Daniela Giannetti, Dan Gingerich, Mikhail Filippov, Michael McDonald, Lucio Renno, Keith Poole, and Katri Sieberg. We extend our deep thanks to all of these individuals.

We are grateful in addition to a number of research assistants who in one way or another have made it possible for us to pursue research and writing on legislative party switching: Nina Barzachka, Robin Best, B.J. Bloom, Susan Brewer, Adriana Buliga-Stoian, Daniela Coleman, Lindsay Flynn, Weiwei Hu, Miriam Hurley, Rado Iliev, Drew Kurlowski, Sam Seeley, Jon Shoup-Mendizabal, and Julie VanDusky. All have facilitated our work and have earned our thanks.

We have been fortunate to work with Emily Hue, Asa Johnson, Farideh Koohi-Kamali, and Toby Wahl at Palgrave Macmillan. We greatly appreciate their expertise and advice in shepherding the book through to publication.

We dedicate this book to our families, for their love, joy, and ability to pull us away from our work. Will thanks Tere, Norma, and Andrea for their patience and willingness to put up with the various travels (and other travails) involved in bringing this book to fruition. It has been a learning experience all around, and their sacrifices and support are deeply appreciated. They may never read it, but they are present on every page. Carol dedicates the book to Lyle and Harriette, whose example and inspiration remain. Their presence too echoes throughout the book.

I

The Importance of Party Switching

Introduction: Legislative Party Switching, Parties, and Party Systems

William B. Heller and Carol Mershon

I.1 Political Parties and the Question of Party Switching

That political parties are fundamental to the functioning of modern democracies is well known. Politicians build their careers within parties, parties convey information to voters about candidate preferences, and parties provide labels that identify candidates to voters. When voters choose candidates for office, they delegate decision making on public policy to parties and to party-identified representatives. Repeated elections give voters the opportunity to hold parties responsible and accountable for policy decisions and outcomes. Parties thus are indispensable elements of democratic delegation and representation (Cox 1997; Filippov, Ordeshook, and Shvetsova 2004; Powell 2000; Schattschneider 1942; Stokes 1999).

Honing in on the legislative arena highlights the vital role of parties. In the United States, the majority party in each chamber organizes that chamber, filling all legislative offices and managing the flow of legislation (Cox and McCubbins 1993; 2005). Parties manage the business of the legislature in parliamentary systems too, albeit generally through their control of the executive (Cox 1987). This control, along with the tight discipline commonly ascribed to parliamentary parties (Bowler, Farrell, and Katz 1999), means that majority parties (or coalitions) in parliamentary systems not only manage the legislative process, but also determine legislative outcomes (see, e.g., Baron 1998; Heller 2001; Huber 1996; Laver and Schofield 1990; Martin and Vanberg 2004; 2005).

Given the essential place of parties, it seems reasonable to expect legislators to stick to the party labels under which they have won election.

In many democracies, much of the time, this expectation is upheld, as is generally the case in the established parliamentary systems of Western Europe (Bowler, Farrell, and Katz 1999). In some settings, however, it is not uncommon for elected legislators to abandon one party and enter another, even during the legislative term. For instance, approximately one-fourth of the members of the Italian lower house switched parties at least once during the 1996–2001 legislature (Heller and Mershon 2005; 2008), and more than one-third of the Brazilian MPs elected in 1986 had transferred from one party to another by late 1990 (Mainwaring and Pérez Liñán 1997). Observers of politics have recorded legislators hopping parties relatively frequently in such diverse contexts as Fourth Republic France (MacRae 1967), Hungary and the Czech Republic (Ågh 1999), Russia between 1993 and 1995 (White, Rose, and McAllister 1997), Papua New Guinea and India (Miskin 2003), and the United States during what political scientists deem to be periods of realignment (Canon and Sousa 1992; for additional examples of abundant switching, see section 1.3 and Mershon and Shvetsova 2007).

The null hypothesis—that politicians hold fast to the party affiliations they at first choose—evidently fails to hold uniformly. Compared to the null, even an annual average of a single switcher, sustained more than a century—the record for both chambers combined in Australia since federation (see Miskin 2003, 4)—and the two-score switches in the House and Senate since 1947 (Nokken 2000) command attention. Why do politicians switch parties, and to what effect? That overarching question motivates the research in this book.

Despite its manifestation across countries and continents, party switching remains an understudied phenomenon. This is not to say that students of legislative and party politics have neglected it entirely, but rather that they have underestimated the breadth and depth of its significance. In line with the common sense intuition that legislators should stick with the parties that got them elected, scholars have tended to treat switching as anomalous (and undesirable) behavior symptomatic of some underlying system-wide condition, such as electoral realignment (Canon and Sousa 1992) or a weakly institutionalized party system (Mainwaring 1999; Mainwaring and Torcal 2005). Switching can be these things, but it also is much more. First, switching can occur even in the most stable of systems. Second, even when party switching (presumably) indicates some underlying disease of the body politic, its importance goes far beyond any utility it has as a diagnostic tool. Simply put, party switching has vital normative, theoretical, and substantive implications.

The next section here elaborates on the implications of party switching. Section 1.3 provides a definition and typology of switching, used in common by all contributors to this volume, and also surveys the incidence of switching. The fourth section takes stock of extant research on switching and the place of switching within research on legislative and party politics. This introductory chapter closes with an overview of the other chapters that make up the book.

1.2 The Implications and Importance of Party Switching

The normative concerns raised by party switching center on accountability, responsibility, and representation. At least at first blush, the link between voters and politicians is undermined if voters elect a politician as a candidate of one party and he or she jumps to another during the legislative term, without consulting his or her constituents at the polls. All the same, analysts should be wary of assuming or arguing that party switching impairs democratic representation. If representatives are in essence seat holders for their parties, if voters choose representatives based solely or at least primarily on their party affiliation, and if switchers adopt the priorities of their new parties, then switching indeed amounts to a betrayal of democratic representation. These are big “ifs,” however, and to the extent that they do not obtain, it is possible that switching might even improve representation, not undermine it.

The validity of the presumption that legislators are seat holders for their parties depends on how voters choose and view their representatives, which in turn depends in part on electoral and legislative rules, as well as on the party system. If voters vote purely on the basis of party label, without reference to the identities of individual candidates, then sitting legislators are indeed agents of their parties and only indirectly of voters. Such party-focused voting seems most likely in systems with closed-list electoral rules (Carey and Shugart 1995), but even here there is room for individual candidates to entice some voters to choose one party over another, or at least to go to the polls rather than stay at home on election day (e.g., on Spain see Bruneau et al. 2001). In this context, party switching is a betrayal of democratic representation *as long as party positions remain fixed or at least faithful to party voters*: if parties drift, whether because their membership changes (e.g., as a result of elections, by-elections, or

switching), their leadership changes, or for some other reason, then party members who want to remain faithful to the voters who elected them might have no recourse but to seek a new party home (Crewe and King 1995; Hopkin 1999; Mair and Marsh 2004; Miskin 2003).¹ In chapter 7, we cast doubt on the notion that party positions are fixed when we show that party positions in legislative voting are determined in some measure by the preferences of party members, and changes in party membership occasion changes in party positions. Switchers thus cause movements in party positions that potentially could make parties—or at least policy making—more representative, rather than less so.

The third assumption, that switchers adapt to their party positions, does seem to hold in at least some cases. It is borne out by evidence from the US House (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2001; and cf. Nokken this volume) and Brazil (Desposato this volume), where low levels of observed party unity make expectations of party influence over legislator behavior seem a priori unrealistic. Which is more important for outcomes, changes in party positions or changes in legislators' behavior, is an empirical question that hinges in part on party discipline and in part on how other legislative players respond to changes in individual legislator or party positions (Best and Heller 2005).

Finally, the significance of switching also might depend on the degree to which it affects outcomes. The normative implications of party switching, in short, must be disentangled with care. They are likely to depend greatly on the institutional context and on the array of individual and party preferences in the legislature, as well as the extent to which voters care about “descriptive” or “symbolic” representation alone (e.g., the simple presence of ethnic minorities in the legislature) versus the ability to influence political and policy outcomes.

On the theoretical front, party switching provides new and powerful leverage on prominent, longstanding questions in the study of politics. Principal among these is the issue of “why parties” (Aldrich 1995; McElroy 2003, 21), which subsumes questions of what parties are, what they do, and how they influence (and are influenced by) individual legislators. Research on switching illuminates not only parties and party discipline but also the dynamics of party systems. Students of legislative politics typically—albeit usually implicitly—assume parties to be stable entities. Work on government coalitions in parliamentary democracies routinely rests on the same assumption.

In probing the conditions under which this assumption fails to hold, examination of party switching can “lift the lid” on parties (Laver 1998, 22) and set out guidelines for linking analytically the micro-foundations of parties to legislative organization and governance, and to interparty competition at and between elections. Party switching opens a new window onto party systems, enabling the analyst to see and treat partisan identities not as fixed and exogenous but as fluid and endogenous, to examine the processes whereby politicians choose party identities at one election, reevaluate them during the life of the legislature, and potentially revisit partisan identities again at the next election. Systematic thinking about party switching thus affords novel insight into the dynamics, evolution, and institutionalization of party systems (cf., e.g., Laver and Benoit 2003; Mainwaring and Torcal 2005).

Substantively, party switching matters because it can at least potentially alter policy bargaining in the legislature and even government composition. Party switchers in Spain (see Tomás Mallén 2002) have brought down local governments, for instance, and Senator Jeffords’s defection from the Republican Party in 2001 changed the balance of power in the US Senate, giving the Democrats a degree of agenda authority that elections had denied them. Similarly, in Canada, one MP’s May 2005 defection from the opposition Conservative Party to join the minority Liberal cabinet helped the government survive a vote of no confidence (*Economist* 2005b; 2005a). Absent such obvious swings in the legislative balance, party switching still can affect the legislative bargaining context by changing parties’ seat shares and policy positions, with possible repercussions that include the allocation of ministerial portfolios among government parties (since a coalition party’s share of cabinet portfolios is roughly proportional to its contribution to the seats controlled by the government; Browne and Franklin 1973; Mershon 2001; 2002; Schofield and Laver 1985; cf. Mershon 2008), the allocation of legislative committee seats among parties (Yoshinaka 2005), parties’ ability to impose voting discipline on their members (Heller and Mershon 2008; see also, Best and Heller 2005), and, as a consequence of all of this, policy outcomes.

The basic point is that party switching is neither as rare nor as idiosyncratic as conventional wisdom suggests. Indeed, focusing on party switching highlights the observed stability in parties and party systems as an equilibrium, the result of legislator and party leadership strategies developed partially in response to the possibility of switching. The contributors to this volume take seriously that possibility. To

investigate it, of course, they need common terminology and analytical instruments, to which we now turn.

1.3 The Phenomenon of Party Switching

1.3.1 *Definition and typology*

All contributors to the book adopt the term “switch” as the umbrella label for any recorded change in party affiliation on the part of a politician holding or competing for elective office. As table 1.1 indicates, operationalizing this basic definition depends on the type of register of switches that is available. For instance, membership lists may be maintained at the level of the parliamentary group and made available relatively infrequently, as for the European Parliament (EP) and Russia. Or the national legislature may provide chronologies of each move executed, each day, as for Canada and Italy. Additional possibilities exist. The point is that the empirical analysis of switching hinges on the nature of the records at the disposal of the researcher.

We identify different types of switches in four ways, as table 1.1 exhibits. First, switches may be distinguished by direction. In the United States, Senator Jeffords exited the Republicans in 2001, effecting an “outswitch,” without officially carrying out an “inswitch” into the Democrats. Even as an Independent, as noted, Jeffords handed majority control of the Senate to the Democrats. Operationalizing this distinction depends as well on party and legislative records. If inswitches and outswitches are not recorded separately, information on one must be inferred from information on the other. Second, switches may be classified by their impact on the number of legislative parties (or groups or factions or fractions). Both the raw number and the effective number of parties² are useful, since they tap changes in the legislative bargaining context somewhat differently; such changes in context matter, in turn, because they might affect the calculations of potential switchers. Whereas switches across two existing parties leave intact the number of parties, the number of parties changes with other types—fission (i.e., the splintering of a single party into two or more distinct parties), fusion (where two or more parties merge into one), and start-up (where switchers from multiple parties join to create a new one).³

Third, switches may be distinguished by how isolated or close in time they are relative to other moves. When individual switches are isolated in time, it makes sense to consider them as independent from

Table 1.1 The definition and measurement of switches and types of switches

<i>Label</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Measure and/or comment</i>
<i>Umbrella label: Switch</i>	Change in party affiliation	Measure is recorded change in affiliation; data depend on how (and how often) legislature or party records change
<i>1—Type by direction</i>		
Inswitch	Formal adoption of new label by MP after having another label	Data depend on whether inswitch and outswitch are recorded separately
Outswitch	Abandonment of one label in favor of another	
<i>2—Type by impact on N parties</i>		
		Both the raw number and the effective number of parties hold interest
Across existing parties	Move leaves intact raw N parties	
Fission	Existing party splits to create two or more new	
Fusion	Two or more extant parties merge to create one new	
Start-up	Move founds new party with MPs from multiple parties	
<i>3—Type by relative timing</i>		
		Legislative (or party) records determine how fine-grained temporally data can be
Solo	Move isolated from others in time	
Simultaneous	Same day (week, etc.) as other moves	Coordination of moves (or, related but distinct, signaling) may or may not occur
Near-simultaneous	Close in time to other moves	
<i>4—Type by degree of (apparent) choice</i>		
Rule-driven move	Move forced by parliamentary rules	Example of rule is minimum of 20 MPs in parliamentary group
Voluntary	Any move not driven by rules	Includes moves recorded as expulsions

each other. When legislators' changes of party affiliation occur simultaneously or nearly so, by contrast, their moves might well be coordinated. For instance, switches might cluster in time as legislators respond to the initiatives of a political entrepreneur starting up a new party, or they might come in response to actual or expected party-system changes that switching could provoke (cf. the conclusions and contributions by Kato and Yamamoto, Kreuzer and Pettai, Mershon and Shvetsova, and Schofield of this volume). With or without deliberate coordination, near-simultaneous switches on the part of one set of actors may signal to others a change in shared aims. Switches also could be orchestrated as one legislative party helps another meet a minimum threshold for official recognition—and rights—as a parliamentary party group. Of course, clusters of switches could be coincidental, or, more likely, a common (but essentially individual) response to some exogenous shock.

Fourth, switches may be distinguished by the degree to which the actors involved are able to exercise free choice. Parliamentary rules governing the formation, membership, and importance of legislative parties can lead to forced switches, as when a party's membership dips below some rule-defined threshold and its label disappears, forcing its members to switch into some other established group, to merge with other MPs to form a new group, or to fall into the mixed group or become independents. Another variant of involuntary moves might seem to come in the form of expulsions; yet since elected politicians can be assumed to exercise some degree of foresight, it is reasonable to view expulsions as in essence stemming from voluntary choice. On the flip side, laws, party rules, or interparty agreements may formally constrain MPs' ability to switch parties: For example, in 1982, the Spanish Cortes prohibited MPs from joining groups (other than the mixed group) later than five days after the start of the legislative session (Sánchez de Dios 1999, 151), and in 1998, Spanish parties signed a "pact" designed to discourage switching at lower levels of governance (Santero 1998).

1.3.2 *Incidence*

As we and other contributors to the literature on party switching have indicated, the incidence of switching varies across countries—that is, across institutional contexts and party systems. Even where switching is rare, it is not utterly absent and its occurrence varies over time. Against stereotype, as table 1.2 shows, the phenomenon

is not confined to new democracies or weakly institutionalized party systems.

Table 1.2 includes but is not limited to the country cases examined in our book. Tables 1.2 and 1.3 below are brief and simple, yet ambitious and unique in the field. To our knowledge, nothing like them exists in the available literature; we thus construct them from some two dozen sources.⁴ The contributors to this volume go well beyond the observation of how many MPs switch parties in a legislative term, focusing on the motivations for, and the effects of, switching. In so doing, they take switching as a product of individual choice (whether coordinated or not), with consequences that can range from the level of the individual switcher to the party system as a whole.

Table 1.2 Illustrations of the incidence of switching (% MPs ever switched) in established and new democracies

<i>System</i>	<i>Term 1: % switched</i>	<i>Term 2: %</i>	<i>Term 3: %</i>	<i>Term 4: %</i>
Australia	1975–1977: 3	1977–1980: 0	1980–1983: 0	1983–1984: 0
Brazil	1991–1994: 39	1994–1998: 33	1998–2001: 36	
Britain	1974–1979: 1	1979–1983: 5	1983–1987: 0	1987–1992: 1
Canada	1993–1997: 2	1997–2000: 4	2000–2004: 9	2004–2006: 2
Denmark*	1966–1968: 3			1994–1998: 2
EP*	1989–1994: 16			
France	1997–2002: 4	2002–2007: 10		
Germany	1969–1972: 2	1972–1976: 0.4	1976–1980: 0.2	1980–1983: 1
Hungary	1990–1994: 13	1994–1996: 6**		
Italy	1988–1992: 27.6	1992–1994: 33.7	1994–1996: 34.4	1996–2000: 32.1
Japan	2000–2003: 7			
New Zealand*	1993–1996: 12	1996–1999: 6		
Romania	1992–1996: 11	1996–2000: 17	2000–2004: 10	
Russia	1993–1995: 33			
South Africa	1999–2004: 6	2004–2009: 2**		
Spain	1982–1986: 1	1986–1989: 12	1989–1993: 1	1993–1996: 0.3
Turkey	1961–1965: 22	1965–1969: 21	1969–1973: 23	1973–1977: 10
Ukraine	1998–2002: 56			
United States	1991–1993: 0.2	1993–1995: 0	1995–1997: 1	1997–1999: 0.5

* Unicameral legislature; all other data pertain to lower houses.

** First two years of four-year term (Hungary); first 2.5 years of five-year term (South Africa).

Sources: Ágh (1999, 172, 182); Australia, Parliament (2007); Booyen (2006, 735); Butler and Butler (2000, 248–249); Canada, House of Commons (2006); Bille and Pedersen (2004, 216); Corstange (2000); Desposato (2006, 69; this volume); France (2007); Heller and Mershon (2008); Kato and Yamamoto (2005, Table 2); Left Socialist Party, Denmark, 1997; McElroy (2003, 4); Mershon and Shvetsova (2007, 2008a); Miskin (2003, 17, 31); Nokken (this volume); Nokken and Poole (2004, 555); Schindler (1999, 926–929); South Africa, Parliament (2008); Thames (2005, 9, 24); Tomás Mallén (2002, 207–216); Turan (1985, 23).

1.4 Extant Research on Switching: Lessons and Open Questions

The forces that drive individual MPs' decisions on party membership have attracted the attention of analysts of party switching. In particular, the contributors to this volume agree on the centrality of legislator ambition in choices and changes of party affiliation. Together, the available theoretical models and empirical findings (including contributions to this volume) highlight office perks, policy influence, and electoral advantage as motives for "jumping ship" (Aldrich and Bianco 1992; Desposato 2006; Heller and Mershon 2005; 2008; Laver and Benoit 2003; Mejía Acosta 1999; Mershon and Shvetsova 2005; 2008a; 2008b; Reed and Scheiner 2003; on multiple aims for parties, see Müller and Strøm 1999; Strøm 1990).

Hence, switching not only is widespread but also is the product of strategic behavior, of a calculus of cost and benefit on the part of the individual legislator who faces incentives and constraints in his or her institutional environment (e.g., Desposato 2006; this volume; Heller and Mershon 2005; 2008; ch. 2 this volume; Kato and Yamamoto this volume; Mershon and Shvetsova 2008a; 2008b; this volume). More to the point, as strategic behavior switching has a profound impact on policy and politics. For instance, as illustrated in table 1.3, switchers in Canada have strengthened the hand of a new Premier, and those in France have forced government concessions on the budget (Huber 1996, 21, 154–159). Mobile German MPs have ruptured a governing coalition (*Keesing's Contemporary Archives* 1957, 15757–15759); their counterparts in Brazil and the Ukraine have enlarged the presidential majority (Ames 2001, 191–192, 273–276; Thames 2005, 9, 24), and in Japan have endowed the Liberal Democrats with a majority (Kato and Yamamoto this volume). Switchers in Spain have created "dysfunctionalities" in committee (Tomás Mallén 2002, 296–303); those in the EP and the United States have earned rewards via committee assignments (McElroy 2003; Mershon and Shvetsova 2008a; Yoshinaka 2005).

The literature currently furnishes evidence on relationships between MPs' ambition and goals, on the one hand, and institutional variables, on the other. For example, in the United Kingdom, the prime minister's use of cabinet office to reward loyalists, which developed in the 1890s (Cox 1987), inhibited switching in phases of unidimensional party competition (Mershon and Nokken 2008). Under open-list proportional representation (PR) in Brazil, the automatic

Table 1.3 The incidence and impact of switching: Illustrations from established and new democracies

<i>System</i>	<i>House</i>	<i>% Switched (MPs in house)</i>	<i>Total Switches</i>	<i>Term(s) Covered</i>	<i>Example of Effect of Switching</i>
Australia	lower	n.a. (75–150)	97	1901–2003	one split led to rival's "hegemony"
Brazil	lower	36 (513)	262	1998–2002	switchers pipe more pork to win
Britain	lower	5 (635)	29	1979–1983	electoral challenge to Labour
Canada	lower	9 (301)	36	2000–2004	strengthened hand of new PM
Canada	lower	1 (308)	4	2004–2006	government survived confidence vote
Denmark	unicameral	2 (175)	4	1994–1998	SDP moved rightward
EP	unicameral	15 (518)	81	1989–1994	switchers shape policy in committee
France	lower	7 (577)	41	1988–1993	government concessions on budget
Germany	lower	7 (487)	49	1953–1957	government composition changed in 1956
India	state-level	m.d. (30–403)	2,700	1957–1973	~45 state governments fell
Italy	lower	25 (630)	277	1996–2001	fall of government in 1998
Japan	lower	m.d. (480)	40	2000–2003	LDP gained majority in 2001
New Zealand	unicameral	6 (120)	7	1996–1999	minority government ruled from 1997 to 1999
Russia	lower	33 (450)	342	1993–1995	switchers grab agenda advantage
South Africa	lower	6 (400)	23	1999–2004	law on switching in constitutional court
Spain	lower	12 (345)	55	1986–1989	"dysfunctionalities" in committee
Spain	upper	11 (260)	38	1986–1989	"dysfunctionalities" in committee
Ukraine	lower	56 (450)	527	1998–2002	presidential majority enlarged
United States	lower	1 (435)	5	1995–1997	switchers shape policy in committee

n.a. = not applicable.

m.d. = missing data (not reported or cannot be constructed from source).

Sources: Ames (2001, 46–47); Belford (2005); Bille and Pedersen (2004, 216); Booyens (2006, 735); Canada, House of Commons (2006); CBC News (2003a; 2003b); Corstange (2000); Crewe and King (1995, 104, ch. 23); Desposato (2006, 69); *Economist* (2005b; 2005a); Huber (1996, 21, 154–159); Kato and Yamamoto (2005, 14–16, Table 1); *King's Contemporary Archives* (1957, 15757–15759); Lalvani (2005, 133–134); McElroy (2003, 4); Mershon and Heller (2003, 18); Mershon and Shvetsova (2008a, 104, 122–123); Miskin (2003); Nokken (this volume); Nokken and Poole (2004, 555); Thames (2005, 9, 24); Tomas Mallén (2002, 207–209, 296–303).

renomination of MPs has lowered the electoral costs of switching (Desposato 2003; 2006). Under open-list PR in Poland, incumbents switch to the opposition when economic performance is poor, as part of (typically successful) bids for reelection (Zielinski, Slomczynski, and Shabad 2005).

One lesson from the extant literature that, in our view, too often remains implicit or is even ignored is that observed switching is the proverbial tip of the iceberg. To appreciate the point, note that the key insight underlying thinking on the strategic doctrine of mutual assured destruction was that the infrequency of the use of nuclear weapons testified not to the absence of a credible nuclear threat, but rather to the strength of the threat and the consequent effectiveness and power of mutual deterrence (Waltz 1990). Analogously, if—under some conditions—changes of party affiliation are infrequent (Norway provides a real-world example of stable legislative party membership), this observation can reflect the presence, effectiveness, and power, not the absence, of MPs' strategic threats to switch or reconsider party affiliation, and of party leaders' strategic moves to keep their legislative followings intact. For Britain, Crewe and King (1995, esp. 479) explicitly analyze 40 potential recruits to the SDP who remained in the Labour Party.⁵ The contributions to this volume are also explicitly premised on the notion that observed switching is the start, not the end, of the story.

As we discuss in chapter 2, parties (i.e., party leaders in one form or another) seek to manipulate potential switchers, deterring or encouraging their moves (depending on context) with carrots or sticks, buying them off or threatening or imposing sanctions. MPs as a result decide whether to switch in a continuous calculus of affiliation that under some circumstances has the potential to change parties and possibly even legislative party systems (see Best 2008; Mershon and Shvetsova 2007). These can be viewed as transactions costs (Desposato 2006), but also as the product of strategic interaction. To elaborate, the transactions costs that dampen switching may be viewed as largely exogenous constraints. At one extreme, rules on ballot access might deprive switchers of their prerogative to run at the next election. At the other extreme, rules might enable *any* incumbent, regardless of switching behavior, to be automatically renominated (the case in Brazil until 2002, as stressed by Desposato). Internal legislative rules may lower the attractiveness—and hence the probability—of switching if, for example, parties control committee seats, so that MPs risk losing treasured committee positions if they

change parties (see Desposato 2006). In Spain, for instance, legislative rules restrict switching to a very short span of time (Sánchez de Dios 1999; Tomás Mallén 2002).

From the perspective we take in this book, as noted earlier, any observed stability in parties and party systems must be understood as an equilibrium result of legislator and party leadership strategies developed partially in response to the possibility of switching. Chapter 2 captures these strategic interactions in a four-stage game. For now, Figure 1.1 depicts these relationships among voters, legislators, party leaders, and the legislative party system and highlights the central role of institutions in mediating and structuring their interactions.

The four basic elements of legislative politics illustrated in Figure 1.1 have long attracted political scientists' attention. Our focus on party switching allows us to locate them all in the same theoretical framework and subject them to consistent, coherent empirical investigation. Although normative and positive studies of representation focus on the relationship between voters and their representatives, in the bottom left quadrant of the figure (e.g., Barnes 1977; Kohno 1997; Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999), for instance, and research into elections and electoral rules investigates the links occupying either the upper left or the lower left quadrant (Cox 1997; Duverger 1964; Grofman and Lijphart 1986; Riker 1982), each type of study tends to refer to the other as an afterthought at best. Scholars on the US Congress take the lead in examining relationships between legislators and party leaders (on major debates in the vast literature, see Cox and McCubbins 1993; 2005; Krehbiel 1991; for prominent examples of comparative work, see Cox 1987; Döring 1995; Müller

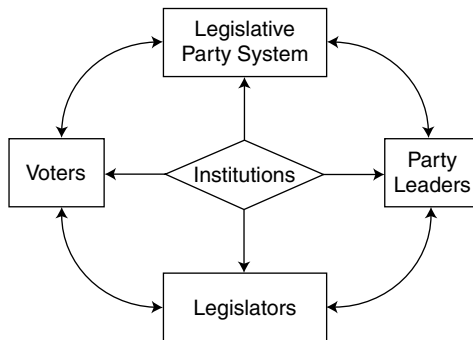


Figure 1.1 The legislative context for party switching.

and Strøm 1999; Strøm 1990), but rarely—and understandably, given their tight focus on politics in the United States—do they examine legislative party systems.⁶ Studies of parties and party systems (the upper right quadrant in the figure), for their part, tend to leave voters very much in the background and, as noted, view parties and party systems as stable (the classic case, as well as the classic example, is Lipset and Rokkan 1967). These studies do not focus specifically on *legislative* party systems and thus neglect the possibility of legislative party switching as a source of change in party systems broadly defined. More broadly, the place of party switching is underestimated in all four well-tilled fields represented in the quadrants of figure 1.1.

Just as each of the four quadrants in the figure has attracted substantial scholarly attention, so too has the role of institutions in the different quadrants. Different electoral rules yield varying incentives for sitting legislators to care about what their constituents want, for instance, hence fundamentally affecting the relationship between represented and representatives. Legislative and party rules, as well as electoral rules, define how closely a sitting legislator will be identified as a servant of his or her party versus an agent of his or her constituents. And party and legislative rules, within the parameters described by individual legislators' independence, on one hand, and the legislative party system on the other, define party leaders' ability unilaterally to set party objectives, induce the compliance of the party rank and file, and generally make a mark on policy. Other types of rules also have important consequences for political processes and outcomes—for example, whether a legislature is unicameral or bicameral (see, e.g., Druckman, Martin, and Thies 2003; Druckman and Thies 2001; Heller 1997; 2001; 2007; Tsebelis and Money 1997), or whether the system is presidential or parliamentary (Huber 1992; Moe and Caldwell 1994)—precisely because they structure how much actors with influence in decision making can cleave to their own desires versus follow someone else's lead. As the contributions to this volume make abundantly clear, these institutional effects are crucial to legislators' decisions about their party affiliation. This aspect of the impact of institutions on legislative politics is, however, essentially ignored by most scholars; the resulting understanding of legislative, party, electoral, and constitutional rules thus is incomplete.

Once we see switching as the product of strategic calculation, we have to consider the role of reelection prospects in switchers' calculations. After all, legislative careers grind to a halt for politicians who fail to win elections. In this vein, Grose and Yoshinaka (2003) find

that switchers in the US Congress are less often reelected than are nonswitchers. Schmitt (1999) shows the same in a comparison of switchers and nonswitchers in the Brazilian lower house. Mershon and Heller (2003) also find that deputies who switch parties in Spain win reelection at lower rates than their less-mobile peers; Heller and Mershon (2005, note 9) observe that switchers are both less likely than nonswitchers to run for reelection and to be reelected if they do run. The easy inference would be that switching often carries an electoral cost.

That inference should not be embraced too hastily, however, for this issue requires counterfactual thinking and more. If the switcher had stayed put, would he have faced some form of demotion (placement low on the party list, movement to a district where the party is historically weak) that would have increased the probability of electoral defeat had he not switched? Who among switchers and nonswitchers decides not to run again? What kinds of candidates challenge those who have switched versus those who have not? Of course, the electoral prospects of switchers depend also on factors beyond their own behavior or control, not least among which are national or local trends that affect party performance (and also could motivate switching). As Kato and Yamamoto emphasize in this volume, the electoral prospects of switchers hinge as well on the nominating strategies of the parties (of the party leaderships) that have accepted them as new members.

The proper baseline for analyzing the consequences of switching is what would have happened in the absence of switching. It is important, in other words, to consider counterfactuals; reelection is just one instance—albeit perhaps the most obvious—where this awareness of what might have been is vital. The key point is that the choice to switch parties is strategic, and the unobserved decision not to switch—we cannot, after all, easily tell who among nonswitchers might have entertained the idea of moving to a different party (but see Crewe and King 1995)—also is strategic. This treatment of strategy, choice, and chance leads naturally to the next section’s preview of the overall architecture of the book.

1.5 Map of the Book

All of the chapters here build on a common theoretical foundation and demonstrate the common aspects of party switching across countries and systems, even though no two chapters address precisely the

same aspect of the phenomenon and its consequences. The shared foundation, laid out by Heller and Mershon in this chapter and the next, begins with the implications of switching, a definition of the phenomenon, and a survey of its incidence. The discussion culminates in the next chapter, as we set up what is *in principle* a multistage game between party leaders, party rank and file, and voters. The game, which is complex and probably intractable in its general expression, suggests the different and sometimes conflicting goals of political actors. The remaining chapters in this volume investigate how political actors pursue these varying goals in different contexts.

Part two of the book, “Party Switching and Representation,” focuses on how party switching both affects and reflects voters’ indirect influence over policy. In this vein, Norman Schofield examines party switchers’ motivations by leveraging the general observation that party positions tend to be heterogeneous in policy space. Schofield not only explores an integrated theory of party strategy but also uses examples of party switching in the Israeli Knesset and from US politics to demonstrate that party systems can be stable as long as party positions are insensitive to switching. Schofield further identifies conditions for switching: under PR rules, a party leader with high valence may switch so as to adopt centrist policies; and under plurality rules, the conflicting demands of activist groups may lead politicians to switch party.

For party positions to be insensitive to switching, parties must in some sense be immune to influence from new members who might want to rearrange party priorities or goals. Switchers, in other words, have to adapt to the positions of their new parties, and not vice versa. In separate chapters focusing on the United States and Brazil, Timothy Nokken and Scott Desposato show that switchers do indeed change their behavior to fit the positions of their new parties. For the US Congress, previous analyses (Nokken 2000; Nokken and Poole 2004) had found that switchers change their behavior at times of high ideological polarization. In “Party Switching and the Procedural Party Agenda in the US House of Representatives,” Nokken focuses on procedural votes, which are less publicly visible than final passage votes on bills, but arguably equally or more important for policy outcomes, to show that party switchers consistently toe their new party’s line in procedural and amendment votes, even when they evince relatively little change of behavior in final passage votes. Along the same lines, Scott Desposato demonstrates in “Party Switching in Brazil: Causes, Effects, and Representation” that party switchers in Brazil alter their

behavior to align themselves with their new parties. Desposato's argument, presented in two distinct steps, turns on parties' ability to control the flow to their members of the benefits of membership in the legislature, including but not limited to policy outcomes as well as ballot access for reelection. To the extent that they control resources important to legislators, parties can make themselves more or less attractive to a potential switcher, depending on the switcher's contribution to the party and its existing members. It follows straightforwardly that parties that can manipulate the incentive to switch also can manipulate individuals' incentives to toe the party line in legislative voting. Taken together, Nokken and Desposato's results lend strong support to Schofield's key condition for a structurally stable party equilibrium. Hence, switching might not threaten representation as long as voters condition their ballots on choice of parties, not of individual candidates who then could change both party and position.

The chapters in the third part, "Party Switching, Party Competition, and Policy Making," examine how party switching affects and is affected by interparty competition. In their investigation of switching among party groups in the EP, Gail McElroy and Kenneth Benoit explore the relationships among the officially designated party groups in the EP, national parties, and the incentives of individual Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). Drawing on original datasets of party group affiliations in the EP at the level of both national parties and individual MEPs, McElroy and Benoit isolate ideology and party policy as the central influences on choices of EP group affiliation.

In the next chapter, William Heller and Carol Mershon use party switchers' movements to gain analytical leverage on the determinants of party positioning. They show, using roll-call data from the Italian parliament, that party positions are sensitive to party switching, but in a one-sided manner. Starting with the notion that party positions ought to reflect the preferences of their members, Heller and Mershon find that party positions change when old members switch out, but not when new members switch in. They conclude that outswitchers probably often defect under pressure, and that their exits allow their now-former parties to adjust their positions in ways that they could not have otherwise. Inswitching, by contrast, appears to have no effect on party positions, a finding that marches with those of Nokken and Desposato's findings, just described.

The final chapter in this section, Carol Mershon and Olga Shvetsova's "Timing Matters: Incentives for Party Switching and Stages of