

Understanding the Complexity of Party Instability in Parliaments

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Sona N. Golder (sgolder@psu.edu)
Pennsylvania State University

Raimondas Ibenskas (raimondas.ibenskas@uib.no)
University of Bergen

Paulina Salek (p.salek@ucl.ac.uk)
University College London

Allan Sikk (a.sikk@ucl.ac.uk)
University College London

Abstract. We propose a new typology of parliamentary party switches (switching events) that focuses on three dimensions: (1) the number of MPs and the degree of coordination, (2) the origin of switchers and (3) the destination of switchers – a parliamentary party group (PPG) or independent status. We further distinguish between switches with single and multiple destinations. Our approach sheds new light to party instability in various ways. We elucidate types of party instability to emphasize the complexity of party instability that have eluded the conceptual toolset available thus far. For example, “collective defection” (coordinated movement from one PPG to another), “collective exit” (MPs exiting their parliamentary group to become independent MPs) and “multi-PPG split” (coordinated moves from several PPGs to form a new PPG). Using preliminary data compiled for [Instaparty](#) (Party Instability in Parliaments) project from (mostly) Poland and Ireland, we find rich diversity in the forms of parliamentary party instability. While individual defections are much more common than group defections, they are clearly more dominant in Ireland than in Poland; furthermore, switches between PPGs (rather than between PPGs and independent status) have been more common in Poland. Our typology is illustrated by the analysis of the 8th Polish Sejm that provides examples of nearly all single-origin switching events and of most multi-origin ones. The new typology presents the first step of our inquiry into the patterns, causes and consequences of party switching in eight democracies (Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, the Netherlands, Poland and Romania) from 1960s/1990s to early 2020s.

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1 Introduction

Party instability in its various forms is on the rise in democracies new and old. Often associated with the emergence of new parties, party instability also involves, among other forms, changes in politicians' party affiliation, group defections of legislators, and party splits and mergers. Instability has been rife in third wave democracies – 30% of parties in Central and Eastern Europe in 1990-2015 experienced at least one split (Ibenskas and Sikk 2017). In the Polish parliament's lower chamber, on average 68 party switches occurred annually between 1991 and 2007 (McMenamin and Gwiazda 2011). As Italy since the 1990s demonstrates, established democracies are not immune to persistent instability either, especially in times of crisis. Indeed, party instability has increased in the hitherto more stable West European democracies as well.¹ As Mershon and Shvetsova (2013: 14) note, change in parties' inter-election legislative strength resulting from legislative party switching often exceeds variations in party strength due to elections.

Party instability matters because it can lead to important changes in electoral and government formation outcomes, as well as having profound consequences on public policy (Rasmussen and Knutsen 2019). It can also disrupt long-standing cleavage structures. This possibility was emphasised by Lipset and Rokkan (1967:26), who argued that “cleavages do not translate themselves into party oppositions as a matter of course...there is the weighing of pay-offs of alliances against losses through split-offs”. Moreover, highly unstable parties hinder the formation of stable partisan identities (Lupu and Stokes 2010), impede policy representation by confusing voters about parties' policy positions (Marinova 2016) and allow politicians to avoid electoral accountability by changing party affiliation (Mershon 2014: 419). That said, where elites' commitment to democracy and the rule of law is nebulous, party instability can hinder the accumulation of political power in the hands of dominant parties, thus lessening the chances of democratic backsliding. Some party instability may also improve voter representation by providing voters with new ideological alternatives or clarifying the political landscape.

The project “Party Instability in Parliaments” (INSTAPARTY; instapartyproject.com), with which the authors of this paper are all affiliated, examines parliamentary party instability in eight European democracies (Estonia, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Romania). The project has three overarching objectives: to map out diverse forms of instability, to explain why instability occurs, and to understand whether and how instability affects voter support for parties. As the first step, we are creating a dataset with detailed information about each instance of party switching in the eight countries. We argue that to understand patterns, causes and consequences of party instability, we need to build upon literature operating at different levels of analysis: that of the individual politician, parliamentary party groups (PPG), political parties, and party systems. In this paper, we combine insights from corresponding streams of literature and first insights from our empirical work

¹ For example, a major split in the Finns Party in 2017 led to the re-organization of government in Finland; the defection of left-wing Social Democrats in 2005 boosted the popularity of a far-left party in Germany, restricting credible government options and pushing the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats into an uneasy grand coalition; the split of the left-wing Syriza party in 2012 prevented it from winning an election, ensuring the compliance of Greece with EU/IMF bailout conditions; the defection of Geert Wilders from the mainstream liberal party in 2004 consolidated the Dutch populist radical right; and the Emmanuel Macron-led breakaway of centrist elites from the main parties uprooted the French party system, transforming the existing cleavage structure.

by proposing a new typology of *party instability in parliaments* defined as changes in the size and/or identity of parliamentary party groups resulting from MPs changing their PPG affiliations between elections. Moving beyond the focus on a single level of analysis, our typology incorporates changes in PPG affiliation by individual legislators, groups of legislators acting in a coordinated manner, and (nearly) whole PPGs.

We aim to provide a conceptual contribution on two fronts. First, by focusing on instability in *parliaments*, we primarily contribute to the research on legislative party switching. With some important exceptions, this body of work tends to conceptualise switching as the move of an *individual legislator* between two existing PPGs. We argue that switching can be a manifestation of very different types of party instability in parliaments. At the most basic level, pooling together in a quantitative analysis diverse switching events – for example, an individual MP losing the whip and half of a PPG setting up a new political organisation – constitutes a prototypical case of apples and oranges.

Second, our typology is also useful for scholars who study the development of party systems or party organizations. Our conceptual framework incorporates types of instability (such as splits, mergers, dissolution and relabelling) that have been conceptualised in this body of work. However, by also considering the level of individual politicians and groups of politicians, our typology proposes types of instability that have not been considered by this line of research. These include politicians switching between parties, either individually (individual defection) or in coordinated moves (collective defection), exiting parties to become independents (individual or collective exit) or independents entering parties (individual or collective entry).

We proceed by first reviewing the main tenets in current approaches to party instability. We then outline our typology and provide examples and preliminary analysis concerning the prevalence of the different kinds of switching events in Ireland and Poland (the 8th Sejm). We demonstrate that parliamentary party instability comes in a rich variety of forms, with countries experiencing more party system stability in general (newer democracies such as Poland, but also Italy that is not extensively covered in this paper) also offering greater variation in terms of the forms of switches. We conclude with some directions for future research.

2 Current Approaches to Studying Instability

Several distinct research fields have examined party instability. By far the largest research literature has examined new political parties in advanced industrial democracies, particularly the left-libertarians, greens, and far right. Such parties tend to be “genuinely new” (Sikk 2005) in the sense that their elites lack connections with previously existing parties. Careful analyses have connected the emergence and electoral success of new parties with the on-going change in voter preferences since the 1960s (e.g., Kriesi et al 2008). Another prominent approach in analysing party system dynamics focuses on party system institutionalisation using measures such as aggregate electoral volatility and electoral success of new parties (e.g., Birch 2003; Sikk 2006; Haughton and Deegan-Krause 2015; Mainwaring 2017).

While providing very valuable contributions to understanding instability, these approaches also have some shortcomings. The emergence of genuinely new parties, while important, is only one form of party

instability; the study of political parties in newer European democracies has pointed out the distinction between new parties and mere continuations – between parties formed outside of the parliament and “rooted newcomers” (Bolleyer & Bytzeck 2013). This warrants closer attention to the dynamics of party systems in parliaments – how do different kinds of switches, party group splits and mergers and dissolutions contribute to the changes in party competition and the electoral menu available for voters? This includes the question of how intra-parliamentary dynamics contribute to party exit or “death” (Bolleyer, Correa & Katz 2019). One prominent approach in analysing party system dynamics is looking at electoral volatility (party vote changes from one election to the next), but this does not fully capture nuances in the dynamics between elections.

Studies focusing on *individual politicians* have mostly examined party switching of MPs in national parliaments (e.g., Mershon and Shvetsova 2013, McMenamin and Gwiazda 2011; Yoshinaka 2016). Some scholars in this research tradition have proposed theoretical models that consider both politicians’ incentives to stay or leave their parties and the incentives for parties to keep or accept switchers (e.g., Desposato 2006; McElroy 2008). Empirical analyses generally focus on the costs and benefits of switching for individual legislators in terms of votes, office and policy.

Party-level factors have been the key focus for scholars who have approached the phenomenon of party instability by examining such manifestations as party dissolutions (e.g., Bolleyer, Ibenskas and Bischoff 2019), splits (e.g. Ceron 2013), mergers (Ibenskas 2016a, Bolleyer, Ibenskas & Keith 2016), or the formation of electoral alliances (e.g. Golder 2006; Ibenskas 2016b, Ibenskas & Bolleyer 2018). The importance of collective defections – that conceptually fall between splits and mergers – in Central and Eastern Europe has also been emphasized (Sikk & Köker 2017).

Despite an impressive array of studies on parliamentary party switching and party system change, a convincing explanation of causes and consequences of party instability in parliaments has not materialised for several reasons. Most importantly for our present purposes, the conceptual tools and empirical measures used to map out instability do not fully capture the complexity of parliamentary party instability. Most importantly, research on legislative switching overwhelmingly tends to conceptualise switching as the move of an *individual legislator* between two existing parliamentary groups. However, even a cursory examination of party switching reveals that rather than a universal rule, this could be considered a special (if widespread) case of parliamentary party system change. Aside from individual politicians hopping between parties, many instances of switching are coordinated moves by *groups or factions* of politicians, an area of study that is “ripe for investigation” (Mershon 2014: 429). Another dimension concerns the *destination* of switching: politicians can switch to an existing party, form a new party, or become independents, in some countries, formally joining a so-called “mixed group”.² Likewise, the *source* of switching may be a single or multiple “donor” party but can also involve independent MPs joining PPGs.

The literature on party switching is primarily concerned with the behaviour of individual MPs – even when the *reasons* analysed behind switches may apply for groups of MPs (e.g., Nielsen, Andersen and

² Some independents remain politically non-affiliated while others join (extra-parliamentary) parties without joining or setting up a group in a parliament. This can happen because the numbers of party representative in a parliament fall short of the minimum requirement to set up a party group. In Estonia, MPs that leave their parliamentary group cannot join another group or set up a new one. That does not prevent them from joining another party, but they remain formally independent in the parliament.

Pedersen 2019³). Mershon & Shvetsova (2013:135-140) briefly analyse “mass switches” of 20 MPs or more in a month, but, in our experience collective switches often occur in smaller groups.⁴ Heller & Mershon (2009:289-91) also emphasize the importance/potential of switching cascades, in particular, the potential that a switch increases the likelihood of further switches but comparative literature on collective switching events remains very limited.

In the few instances when scholars do differentiate between individual and collective switches, they find significant differences between the two. Kemahlioglu & Sayari (2017) find that in Turkey, electoral prospects motivate the individual switches and policy factors collective switches (often stemming from existing fractional splits). Volpi, in her analysis of 14 West European parliaments, also finds that the factors explaining parliamentary party switching vary considerably for solo and collective switches (2019). Our approach builds on these findings as we consider party instability as a holistic phenomenon and aim to integrate the individual and organizational perspectives by looking at different aspects of switches. Our typology brings together the study of legislative switching and party system dynamics with the goal of explaining the determinants and consequences of various types of switching events. On the one hand, we connect coordinated switches by several MPs (rather than seeing them as isolated events) and, on the other hand, we consider party instability events beyond broad organizational changes (mergers, splits, new party formation).

3 Conceptualizing Party Switching: A New Typology

In line with the methodological advice on the development of typologies (Collier et. al 2012), we start elaborating our typology by defining the over-arching concept of parliamentary party instability as changes in the size and/or identity of parliamentary party groups resulting from MPs changing their PPG affiliations between elections. Several clarifications are important here.

First, we need to clarify what a PPG is, because legislative regulations concerning parliamentary party groups vary across countries, both in terms of what comprises a PPG and why membership in a PPG matters. PPGs typically have access to benefits like funding, administrative staff, opportunities to speak on the floor, committee positions, etc. that are not available to formally independent MPs. For the purposes of our research project, we define a PPG as a recognized group in parliament that receives benefits and privileges above and beyond those automatically accorded to all MPs. We do not require that the members of the group were originally elected under the same party label, and we do allow ‘groups’ that comprise only one member if membership in the group means that the MP receives the kinds of benefits mentioned above. In this way, our definition varies from some that can be found in the literature. Heidar and Koole (2000, 8) define a PPG as “an organised group of members of a representative body who belong to the same political party.” This is similar to our definition although

³ The study by Nielsen, Andersen and Pedersen (2019) provides an interesting starting point by qualitatively coding the reasons for all 72 cases of switching by the Danish MPs between 1953–2015, but there is a clear need to collect more detailed qualitative information about switching in a broader comparative perspective.

⁴ Especially in smaller parliaments where switches of 20 or more are near-impossible

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we allow for a single member of a party to comprise a PPG if such an MP receives legislative benefits not available for independent MPs.⁵

Second, our focus on parliamentary parties distinguishes us from the studies that adopt broader definitions of party instability and often examine parties with and without (national) parliamentary representation. For example, Litton (2015), Emanuele and Chiaramonte (2018) and Haughton and Deegan-Krause (2020), among others, conceptualise party instability as (1) changes in party identity through the formation of new party organisations, splits and mergers of existing parties, and changes in party labels, and (2) changes in party attributes, such as party candidates, members and organizational branches, that capture other party “faces” (Katz and Mair 1995) than the “party in public office” analysed here. Parliamentary party instability, as defined here, is conceptually and empirically related to these broader definitions of party instability, but it is also a distinct phenomenon on its own with important implications for government composition, voter party preferences and, more broadly, quality or even survival of democracy.

Third, our focus is on parliamentary party instability *between elections*. We certainly acknowledge though that the size and even the identity of parties almost always changes as a result of elections. Specifically, among the parties that were represented in parliament before the election, some parties increase their parliamentary strength, others lose some seats but remain represented in parliament, and yet others drop out of parliament completely. Furthermore, some parties (new or otherwise) that did not have seats prior to the election may obtain parliamentary representation. However, such election-driven changes are not our focus here.

Fourth, changes in MPs’ affiliation can often be described as legislative party switching, a term widely used in the literature (e.g., Mershon and Shvetsova 2013). As such, and we make this assumption throughout this paper, parliamentary party instability arguably occurs whenever MPs switch between parliamentary party groups. That said, we note that some changes in parliamentary party group affiliation are somewhat more difficult to describe as “switching”. One example, as discussed below, is a PPG collapse, which occurs when the group size drops below the minimum threshold for group existence set by parliamentary rules.

⁵ Our definition also allows for “technical” or “mixed” PPGs, in which members of the PPG receive the administrative benefits and privileges accorded to group members even though the members do not belong to a common political party.

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We argue that three conceptual dimensions and values on these dimensions capture the heterogeneity of parliamentary party instability:

1. The origin of switchers:
 - a. An existing PPG.
 - b. Unaffiliated MPs.
2. The destination of switchers:
 - a. Existing PPG.
 - b. New PPG, i.e. with a novel label.
 - c. Unaffiliated MPs.
3. Number of switchers:
 - a. Individual switch by a single MP.
 - b. Coordinated switch by at least two MPs but not all MPs in the origin PPG.
 - c. Coordinated switch by all MPs in the origin PPG.

In Table 1 we map out the types of parliamentary party instability resulting from these three conceptual dimensions. The maximum number of combinations of values on three conceptual dimensions is 18 (= 2 x 3 x 3), but we identify 12 types. This is because three combinations are logically impossible since the status as independent(s) cannot be both origin and destination. Collective entry encompasses two combinations and PPG creation includes three combinations.

Table 1: Types of parliamentary party instability

Origin	Destination	Number of switchers		
		One	Several but less than half of a PPG	Most or all of PPG
PPG(s)	Existing PPG	Individual defection	Collective defection	Absorption
	New PPG	Individual split	Split	Relabelling
	Independent(s)	Individual exit	Collective exit	PPG collapse
Independent(s)	Existing PPG	Individual entry	Collective entry	
	New PPG	PPG creation		

Our justification for selecting these three dimensions is straightforward. The first two dimensions investigate the nature of change in legislators' PPG affiliation by answering the question "change from what to what?" While one could differentiate between PPGs in different ways (e.g., based on their ideology or government status), we consider the difference between existing PPGs, new PPGs and the unaffiliated MPs as most fundamental.

The third dimension further unpacks the heterogeneity of instability by answering the question "how much change?" As discussed above, the distinction between individual and collective or coordinated switches is increasingly recognised as crucial for understanding legislative party switching. Our conceptualisation of this idea is similar to that of Volpi (2019), who emphasizes actual coordination over a mere number of switches taking place in the same window of time (Mershon & Shvetsova 2013 and Kemahlioğlu & Sayarı 2017 do not consider the direction of switches – using a threshold of 20 MPs and 3 MPs in a month for "mass"/ "collective" switches, respectively). We consider everything involving more than a single MP switching on the same day as (potentially) a collective switch and also

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allow for non-simultaneous collective switching events (discussed below). We also add a further category of all MPs switching from a PPG.

Before illustrating each type with examples in the next section, we now discuss why we expect the types of switching events in Table 1 to be different “beasts” regarding their causes and effects. Starting with types involving only one switcher MP (third column in Table 1) – *individual defection* corresponds to the common conceptualisation of legislative party switching as the move of an individual legislator between two existing PPGs. Explaining individual defection thus requires the analyst to explain why the switcher wanted to switch, but also why the origin group (leadership) was not ready or able to keep the switcher and why the destination group (leadership) accepted the switcher. When the destination PPG is a new group (*individual split* and *PPG creation*) or independent status (*individual exit*), the role of the destination in explaining the switch is less significant. While it is possible that the MP created a new PPG or became independent because none of the existing PPGs accepted the MP, it is also possible that the MP did not want to join any of the existing PPGs even if they would have welcomed the defector. When the switchers’ origin is among the independents (*individual entry*), the origin group is not relevant for understanding the switch. Regarding the effects of these types of instability, while individual defection marginally changes the size of two existing PPGs, individual exit and entry change the size of only one existing PPG but also change the number of independent MPs; an individual split creates a new PPG while changing the size of one of the existing PPGs; and PPG creation changes the number of independent MPs and creates a new PPG.

The differences among five types of instability (*collective defection*, *split*, *collective exit*, *collective entry* and *PPG creation*) when the number of switchers is more than one but fewer than all MPs in the origin PPG (fourth column in Table 1) are similar to those just discussed (when only a single MP switches). However, distinguishing coordinated switches by groups of MPs requires the analyst to consider the interdependence between the decisions of individual MPs and the coordination between individual switchers. Our notion of collective (= coordinated) switching events goes beyond simultaneous switches but also captures switches that may be some time apart but share a motivation and where there are signs of coordination. This goes even beyond switches along the same path (e.g., from group A to independent status) as sometimes coordinated switches can involve MPs from different origins (we discuss multi-origin switching events in more detail below). We expect the effects of the coordinated switches on political parties and party systems to be more significant compared to the effects of individual MPs.

A distinct set of types of instability emerge when all or most MPs in an existing PPG switch. *Absorption* occurs when all MPs in an existing PPG switch to another existing PPG. To explain absorption, one needs to analyse the incentives of the leaderships of the absorber and absorbed PPGs. *Relabelling* is simply a change in the label of an existing PPG; to explain it, one needs to analyse the costs and benefits of relabelling for the PPG leadership. Finally, the *PPG collapse* is a distinct type of instability because of its involuntary nature. Given that incentives to continue as an existing group are likely to be strong, the event is almost exclusively likely to occur when the PPG no longer has the required minimum number of members.

Finally, when more than one MP switches, they can depart from different origins. The bottom halves of Table 2 and Figure 1 outline *multi-origin switching events* that can also be seen as combinations (or hybrids) of single origin switches (see the rightmost column in Table 2). Note that some such

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combinations are not logically possible – most importantly, they need a joint destination and, hence, some types (e.g., 1 and 4) cannot go together. This leaves us with eight empirically feasible types that always involve an existing PPG because independents (either individually or collectively) entering an existing PPG or setting up a new one is covered by single-origin types 10-12. We combine individual and collective moves from both origins as multi-origin switching events, are in essence collective events regardless of how many MPs are involved from a particular origin. Clearly, connected switches can also involve multiple *destinations* – e.g., when a PPG breaks up following a split in the party – but such connected events are not *coordinated*, and we consider them separate switching events. We add only one conceivable variant with multiple destinations where the MPs involved may act in concert – a “strategic” split where a cohesive group is divided into smaller ones to maximize their parliamentary clout in terms resources and speaking time allocation during parliamentary debates.

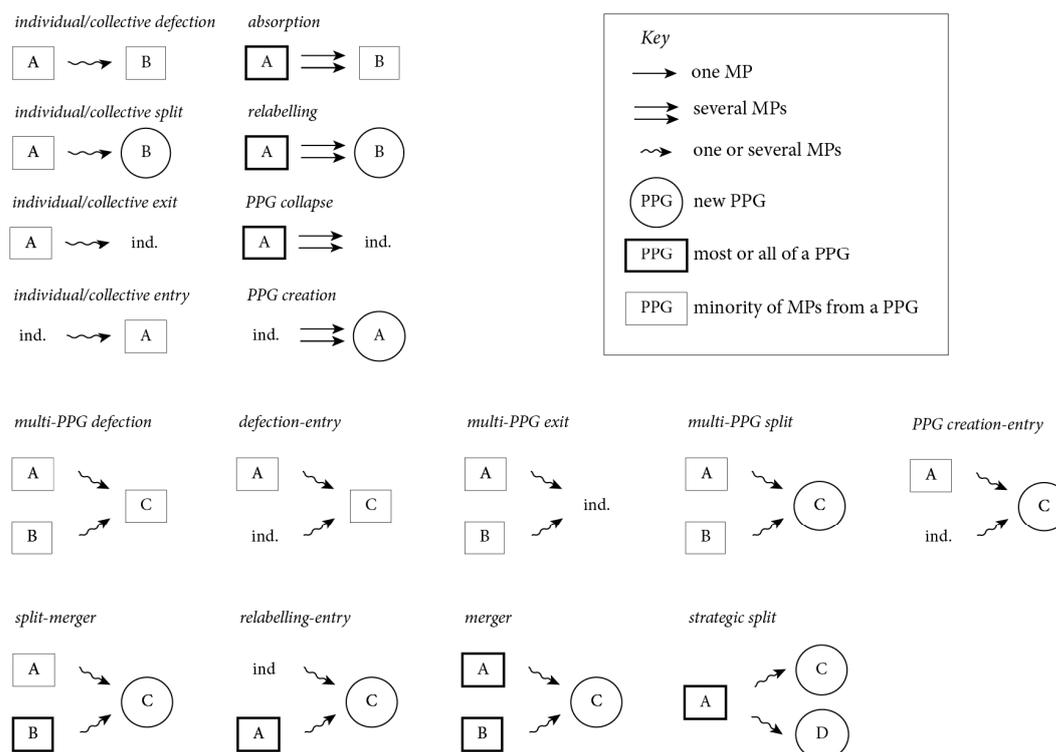
Table 2: Switching events with single and multiple origins

Single-origin switching events							
Type	origin	number	destination				
1	individual defection	PPG	Individual	Existing PPG			
2	collective defection	PPG	Collective	Existing PPG			
3	absorption	PPG	All/most of PPG	Existing PPG			
4	individual split	PPG	Individual	New PPG			
5	split	PPG	Collective	New PPG			
6	relabelling	PPG	All/most of PPG	New PPG			
7	individual exit	PPG	Individual	Independent			
8	collective exit	PPG	Collective	Independent			
9	PPG collapse	PPG	All/most of PPG	Independent			
10	individual entry	Independent	Individual	Existing PPG			
11	collective entry	Independent	Collective	Existing PPG			
12	PPG creation	Independent	Individual/Collective	New PPG			

Multi-origin switching events							
Type	origin1	number1	origin2	number2	destination	combines single origin switches	
13	multi-PPG defection	PPG	Individual or collective	PPG	Individual or collective	Existing PPG	1/2 with 1/2
14	defection-entry	PPG	Individual or collective	Independent(s)	Individual or collective	Existing PPG	1/2 with 10/11
15	multi-PPG exit	PPG	Individual or collective	PPG	Individual or collective	Independents	7/8 with 7/8
16	multi-PPG split	PPG	Individual or collective	PPG	Individual or collective	New PPG	7/8 with 4/5
17	PPG creation-split	PPG	Individual or collective	Independents	Individual or collective	New PPG	4/5 with 12
18	split-merger	PPG	Individual or collective	PPG	All/most of PPG	New PPG	4/5 with 6
19	relabelling-entry	PPG	All/most of PPG	Independents	Individual or collective	New PPG	6 with 12
20	merger	PPG	All/most of PPG	PPG	All/most of PPG	New PPG	6 with 6

Multi-destination switching event							
21*	strategic split	PPG	Collective	PPG	Collective	Several new PPGs	5 with 5

Figure 1: Typology of parliamentary party instability



4 Identifying Party Switching: Applying the Typology

In this section, we move from a conceptual discussion of our typology to a consideration of how to apply it empirically. It is worth noting briefly that distinguishing among different types of instability requires detailed information about each switching event. It is not enough to compare the names and affiliations of MPs over time during a legislative term, as such a list of changes will not necessarily indicate the type of event and, in some cases, does not capture a switching event at all.⁶ Our general data-gathering strategy is to begin by identifying as many potential switching events as possible. In the case of Ireland, for example, this meant using lists of parliamentary changes during a legislative term that are available on Wikipedia pages. In the case of Poland, we found no lists of MPs and their affiliations throughout the full course of legislative terms, so we scraped roll call voting data to detect changes in MP affiliation during legislative terms. The next step is to investigate each potential switch, as well as look for additional events, using a variety of media and secondary sources, cross-checking where possible when the details seem opaque. We also take advantage of academic work that contains accounts of some types of switching events (e.g. Martin 1997), though few studies, especially cross-national ones, provide sufficient information for us to identify specific characteristics of individual cases.

⁶ Every legislature experiences MP turnover; death, resignation, temporary absences due to illness or parental leave, as well as by-elections, can all change the composition of the parliament. None of these kinds of changes – exits or entries from or into the parliament – count, for us, as switching events.

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Our investigation into each switching event helps us to establish connections on non-simultaneous collective switches (discussed above) but also to exclude “technical switches” that occur due to formal legislative rules rather than because an individual chooses to switch (or is ousted by their party). A recent French example illustrates a technical switch that might look at first glance like a switching event. When Nathalie Elimas, a French government minister, resigned from the cabinet and returned to her seat in the legislature, she was considered an independent because formal rules required her to wait several days before joining her PPG. The official legislative record notes that on April 6, 2022, Elimas’ name was added to the group of independent MPs; six days later, Elimas switched to the MoDem group. In the absence of the formal rule, she would have taken her seat as a MoDem MP straightaway. Thus, this change in status from being an independent MP to being a member of a PPG captures a technical requirement rather than an intentional switch, and we would artificially inflate our count of switching events were we to include it. Similarly, there can be instances of MPs being formally independent for a very limited time between leaving one and joining another PPG like in the case of 12 deputies (out of 14) from *.Nowoczesna*, who became independent for one day for purely technical reasons before joining the PO-KO club (see 2018-12-05 in Appendix 1).

To illustrate and test the applicability of our proposed typology, we contrast the parliamentary switches in the 8th term of the Polish Sejm (2015-2019) and multiple legislative terms in Ireland (Tables 3 and 4).⁷ Overall, Poland has experienced more switching events than Ireland – while the Irish Dáil between 1960 and 2021 experienced 92 switches, we counted 48 switching events during a single term of the Sejm.⁸ The majority of switching events involved just one MP in both countries but switching events involving several MPs were twice as common in Poland (one third of the switches) than in Ireland (about one in six switches). More than half of the switches in Ireland classified as individual exits (a single MP leaving a PPG and becoming an independent); these were also the most common type of a switch in Poland but provided fewer than one third of all switches. Notably, Ireland has rarely experienced an individual defection (an MP changing from one PPG to another) which was the second most common type of switching events in the 8th Polish Sejm. Likewise, we detected collective defections (minority of MPs from a PPG leaving for another existing PPG) and splits (a minority of a PPG setting up a new group) in Poland but not in Ireland. Independents becoming affiliated with a PPG is considerably more common in Ireland than Poland – especially in the form of individual entry (a single independent MP joining an existing PPG) that is the second most common type of party switching in the Dáil. Overall, more than three quarters of switching events in Ireland have involved individual MPs moving between PPG and independent status; these have certainly also been common in Poland but constitute only just over a third of all switching events.

⁷ We have included data on the distribution of parliamentary switching events for terms 5-7 in Appendix. While the overall number of switching events has declined somewhat and the distribution of switching events fluctuates over time, the big picture (i.e. more switches in Poland than Ireland and lower prevalence of individual switching events) remains fairly stable.

⁸ Yet, party switching in Ireland has been considerably more frequent compared to, for example, the United States, where only a total of 33 switches was recorded in the House and the Senate combined during a period of over six years (Yoshinaka 2016: 11).

Table 3: Parliamentary party switches in the Irish Dáil (1960-2021)

Total number of switching events: 92			Number of switchers		
			One	Several but less than half of a PPG	Most or all of PPG
Origin	Destination		83.7%	10.9%	5.4%
PPG(s)	Existing PPG	6.5%	Individual defection 3.3%	Collective defection 0%	Absorption 3.3%
	New PPG	3.3%	Individual split 1.1%	Split 0%	Relabelling 2.2%
	Independent(s)	59.8%	Individual exit 53.3%	Collective exit 5.4%	PPG collapse 1.1%
Independent(s)	Existing PPG	26.1%	Individual entry 23.6%	Collective entry 2.2%	
	New PPG	4.3%	PPG creation 4.3%		

Table 4: Parliamentary party switches in the 8th Polish Sejm (2015-2019)

Total number of switching events: 48			Number of switchers		
			One	Several but less than half of a PPG	Most or all of PPG
Origin	Destination		66.7%	22.9%	10.4%
PPG(s)	Existing PPG	20.8%	Individual defection 16.7%	Collective defection 4.2%	Absorption 4.2%
	New PPG	6.3%	Individual split 0%	Split 2.1%	Relabelling 4.2%
	Independent(s)	52.1%	Individual exit 30.4%	Collective exit 8.3%	PPG collapse 4.2%
Independent(s)	Existing PPG	14.6%	Individual entry 4.6%	Collective entry 0%	
	New PPG	6.3%	PPG creation 6.3%		

Table 5 summarises the types and frequencies of switches from multi-party origin to a common destination in the 8th Polish Sejm. The eight switching events that occurred between 2015-2019 represent six theoretical types from Table 2. Among these are three examples of PPG creation-split, i.e., a joint establishment of a new PPG by a group of independent deputies and one splinter from an existing PPG. The other five instances represent various configurations of origins and the number of deputies involved, as discussed in more detail below.

The comparison of four years of party switching in Poland and six decades of party switching in Ireland obviously does not allow us to make wide-ranging conclusions regarding the causes or consequences between different types and their frequencies or even about the prevalence of certain patterns in different countries. However, it does highlight that: (a) all switching events outlined in our typology exist in real life and (b) parliaments can vary considerably in terms of the distribution of types of switching events.

Table 5: Multi-origin switches in the 8th Polish Sejm (2015–2019).

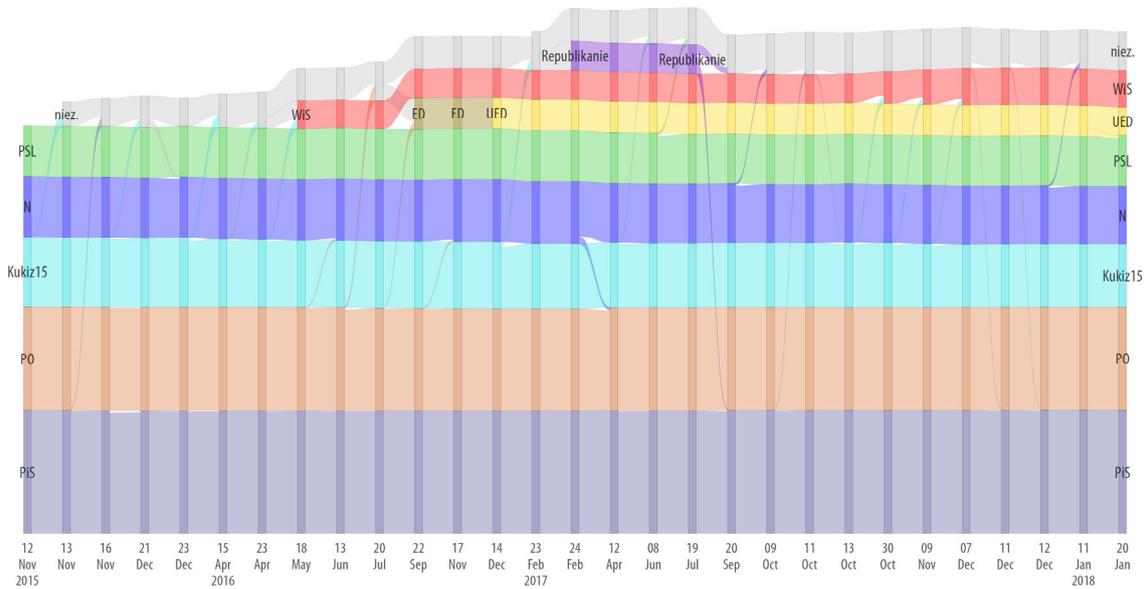
Type	Frequency
PPG creation-split	3
Split- Merger	1
Defection-entry	1
Relabelling-collective entry	1
Merger	1
Entry-split-relabelling	1

5 Party Switching in the 8th Sejm in Poland and Beyond

We can use the switching events during a single legislative term in Poland to illustrate most of the cases in our typology, although we will draw on a few examples from parliaments in other countries as well. One thing to keep in mind about the Polish Sejm (the lower chamber of the parliament) is that MPs can establish two types of PPGs, as outlined by article 8 of Sejm Regulation: (a) *klub poselski* (club) by a minimum of 15 members, and (b) *kolo poselskie* (circle) by a minimum of 3 members. PPGs are required to be based on political criteria, meaning that they typically gather deputies from the same parties, electoral lists or, at least, sharing a common political platform. MPs who do not wish or cannot take membership in any PPG become independents and, as such, do not enjoy any rights or privileges granted to clubs and circles.

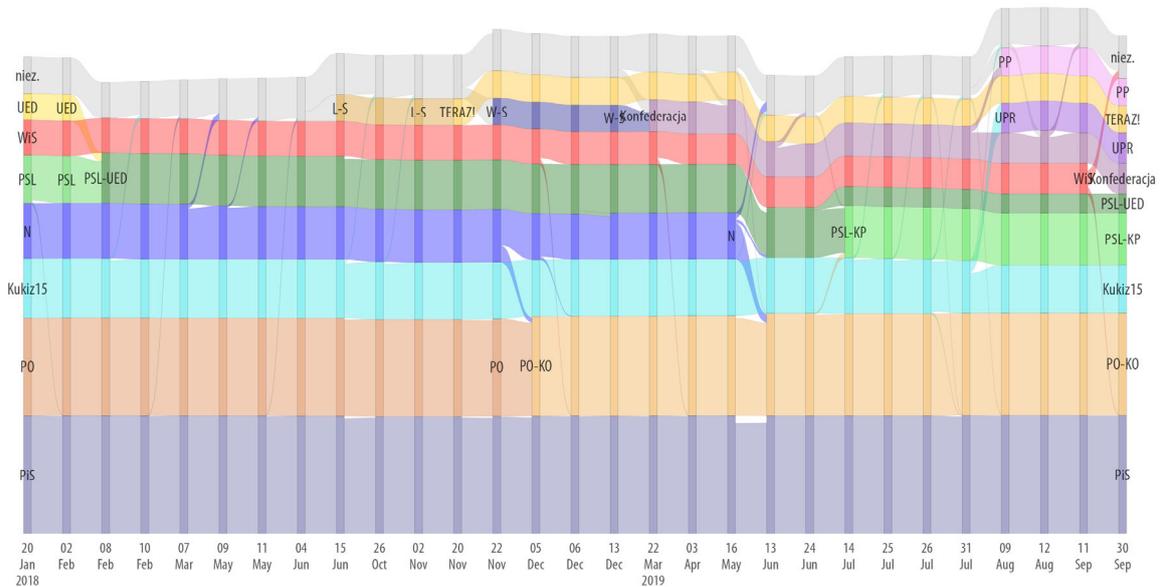
There were 56 switching events in the Polish Sejm between 2015-2019. These included 48 switches having a single destination and origin and eight switches directed to a single destination but having multiple origins (see Table 4). Additionally, there were eight cases of forced/technical ‘non-switches’ (discussed below). Figure 2 presents a graphical overview of all switches in the 8th Sejm (see Appendix 1 for the complete list of switches). We proceed with our discussion of these switches in three stages, starting with ‘simple’ switching events involving a single origin (starting from the most frequent types), next analysing the multi-origin switches and finishing with a note on technical switches. While the discussion is focussed on the 8th term of the Sejm, we occasionally mention pertinent examples from other countries.

Figure 2 Parliamentary party switches during the 8th term of the Polish Sejm 2015–2019



Note: MPs from smaller groups have higher weights

Figure 2 (cont.) Parliamentary party switches during the 8th term of the Polish Sejm 2015–2019



Note: MPs from smaller groups carry higher weights

5.1 Individual switches

Individual switches are usually triggered by personal or ideological reasons, and their classification is quite straightforward. They constituted two thirds of all switching events in the 8th Polish Sejm.

Individual exit (30% of all switches) is the most common single type of switch, constituting nearly one third of all switches in the 8th Polish Sejm. It involves a single MP leaving their PPG to become independent, like in the case of Robert Majka. He left the nationalist Confederation (*Konfederacja*)

circle in September 2019 following an ideological clash, which led him to refuse a place on Confederation's slate for the upcoming parliamentary elections. **Individual defection** (17%) is a switch from an existing PPG to another existing PPG. It is rare in some parliamentary settings – e.g. there have been almost no cases in Ireland since 1960 but constituted a sixth of all switching events in the 8th Sejm. An example of this type is the defection Michał Jaros, who left Citizen's Platform (*Platforma Obywatelska*, PO) to join Modern (*.Nowoczesna*, N) in June 2015 as the latter better suited his ideological preferences. **Individual entry** (5%) occurs when an independent MP joins an existing PPG. This, for example, is the case of Paweł Skutecki joining Confederation in August 2019, followed by his announcement that he would run on its list in the upcoming fall parliamentary elections.

5.2 Collective switches

According to our typology, collective switches can occur simultaneously (i.e. on the same day) or in a coordinated sequence – i.e. when switches of individual MPs or simultaneous switches of groups of MPs are clearly linked but take place over a more extended period. While this may render their classification more challenging, a few examples from the Polish case illustrated below empirically validate our more fine-grained approach regarding coordinated collective switches as a single switching event. While less common than individual switches, collective switches still made up a third of all switching events in the 8th Sejm.

Most common among collective switches was a **collective exit** (8% of all switching events), where a group of several MPs (but still a minority of a PPG) leaves their PPG to become independents. An example of a coordinated collective exit is a cascade switch of three deputies who left N in May 2018 – two deputies exited within a few hours on the same day and a third one after two days. Personal and political ties linked the three MPs, who jointly launched a short-lived political party *Teraz!* a few months later. **PPG creation** (6%) occurs when independent MPs set up a new parliamentary group. For example, in 2017 three independent MPs (Błęńska, Sierakowska and Janowska) set up the *Republikanie* circle. The first two deputies were former members of the Kukiz'15 club who belonged to a separate political association that parted ways with Kukiz'15 for ideological reasons. Janowska, also elected from Kukiz'15 but never joining its club, had entered the parliament a few weeks before *Republikanie*'s creation. **Collective defection** (4%) is a switch of several MPs (but less than a majority of their PPG of origin) from an existing to another existing PPG. The 8th Sejm experienced two collective defections. Three MPs left the Kukiz'15 club to the Free and Solidary (*Wolni i Solidarni*, WiS) circle over the course of one month in 2017. Two of the deputies who left within a week (Adam Andruszkiewicz and Sylwester Chruszcz) were members of the *Endecja* association working closely with Kukiz'15 and elected on the Kukiz'15 list. The third one, Jarosław Porwich, was a friend of Andruszkiewicz, and his defection was linked to these close personal ties. Another example of a collective defection is a simultaneous switch of four MPs from N to PO in April 2017 following an internal conflict over party's political strategy and organization. **Absorptions** (4%) involve switching of all (or most) members of an existing PPG to another existing PPG. Two such switching events took place in the 8th Polish Sejm. In June 2019, 12 out of 14 MPs from N switched to PO-KO (*Platforma Obywatelska-Koalicja Obywatelska*, Citizens' Platform-Citizen's Coalition) club. It followed long-term negotiations preceded by an internal split within N when a group of 8 MPs joined PO in a united PO-KO club in December 2018 (see below).

In *Ireland* in 1963, Noël Browne and Jack McQuillan disbanded their five-year old National Progressive Democrats party and joined the Labour Party. These two MPs had been exceedingly active members of the Dáil, particularly in terms of proposing parliamentary questions, until a change in the rules in 1962 curtailed the ability of groups with fewer than seven members to propose motions on the floor. This change had been introduced, in large part, to limit the outsized parliamentary participation by the NPD's two MPs and it had the effect of reducing the appeal of belonging to such a small party in parliament.

Relabelling (4%) is the name change of an existing PPG. An example is the renaming of the European Democrats (*Europejscy Demokraci*, ED) circle as the Union of European Democrats (*Unia Europejskich Demokratów*, UED) in December 2016 following the registration of the new party that originated from a merger of the ED association and the extra-parliamentary Democratic Party (*demokraci.pl*) a month earlier. A **PPG collapse** (4%) occurs when most or all members of a PPG become independents, as happened in September 2019 with a four-member-strong WiS circle. The circle leader's death and the defection of another of its members to PiS forced the remaining two deputies to become independents.

A **split** (2% of all switching events) occurs when MPs collectively leave a PPG from an existing to a new PPG. The only split in the 8th Polish Sejm took place in August 2019 following the defection of four MPs from the Kukiz'15 club, who established a Real Politics Union (*Unia Polityki Realnej*, UPR) circle. The split resulted from internal conflict over possible electoral coalitions for the upcoming fall parliamentary contest – the four MPs were against a potential alliance with the Polish People's Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*, PSL).

We did not find examples of two types of single-origin switches (collective entry and individual split) from the 8th Polish Sejm, but they can be found in other countries. For example, a **collective entry** – which occurs when a group of independent MPs join an existing PPG – took place in Italy in January 2021 when a group of five independent MPs joined a four-member Democratic Centre (*Centro Democratico*, CD) group – a so-called *componente politica* (political component) within the Mixed Group,⁹ resulting in CD doubling in size. Another example of a collective entry occurred in October 1994, when four independent MPs were readmitted to the Irish Labour Party. They had all lost the Labour Party whip four months previously, either for abstaining or for voting against their party's position in an important vote. **Individual split** is an impossibility in many countries – including Poland – where PPGs have a minimum required members as a party group. We do, however, find examples of individual splits in countries where there are no such requirements. For example, in 1971, Sean Sherwin left the Irish Fianna Fáil to join the new party Aontacht Eireann as its only representative in the Dáil. The party had been created by a former Fianna Fáil MP, Kevin Boland, who had quit a position in the cabinet, the Dáil itself, and then Fianna Fáil, due conflict over government policy on Northern Ireland.

⁹ *Componenti politiche* within the Mixed Group, introduced by the 1997 amendment to parliamentary rules, are a peculiar Italian feature – while Mixed Groups exist in different European parliaments (e.g., in Spain), no other legislature foresees the creation of separate sub-groups within them. *Componenti politiche* were intended to ensure greater visibility and relevance to minor political forces. However, the relative permissiveness of the rules on sub-groups creation has ultimately altered the nature of the Mixed Group from a shelter for non-affiliated deputies to a "parliament in miniature, a kind of political microcosm on its own" (Maestri 2021, 22) offering a temporary or permanent solution for parliamentarians affected by all forms of party instability.

5.3 Multi-origin switches

Multi-origin switches are single events combining multiple switching types discussed above. Six types of multi-origin switching events took place in the 8th Polish Sejm.

There were three cases of a **PPG creation-split**. The creation of the new European Democrats (ED) in September 2016 by MPs from two origins is a combination of two switching types: PPG creation involving a group of three independent MPs and one MP switching from an existing PPG (PO). A similar combination led to the creation of the WiS circle in May 2018 by two independent MPs and a Kukiz'15 defector. The third example concerns the Restore the Law (*Przywrócić Prawo*, PP) circle created by two independent MPs and a splinter from the Confederation circle.

Four other switching events with two separate origins occurred in the 8th Polish Sejm. A **split-merger** occurred in December 2018, eight out of 22 MPs left the N club to join PO, which changed its name to Citizens' Platform – Citizens' Coalition (PO-KO) as part of the agreement with the splinters from N. This switching event combined two types of switching events: a split for the MPs from N and a merger for PO, all of which members joined the new group. **Individual defection - Individual entry**: An example of a switch involving two MPs coordinating the joining of an existing PPG from two different origins is a switch to Law and Justice (PiS) of Tomasz Rzymkowski, the former leader of Kukiz'15 PPG and Krzysztof Sitarski, an independent. Both joined PiS in July 2019 after being offered a place on PiS electoral list for the forthcoming parliamentary elections. **Relabelling - collective entry** took place in March 2019 with a simultaneous joining of two independent MPs – members of two different smaller formations – to the existing W-S circle, which changed its name to *Konfederacja* as a result of this entry. It combined two types of switching events: a collective entry of the two independent deputies as they joined a new PPG and a relabelling as all W-S members became part of *Konfederacja*. The only **merger** – where most or all members of several existing PPGs joining to create a new PPG – in the 8th Sejm took place in February 2018. It brought together all members of the PSL club and the UED circle. As a result of this merger, a new federative club – Polish People's Party – Union of European Democrats (PSL-UED) – was registered. PSL-UED was a programmatic union between the two formations that maintained their individual structural and ideological profiles. The PPG was later involved in a complex switching event (see next).

Finally, one of the multi-origin switches defies easy classification as it involved three distinct kinds of origins (while our typology only considers two) and combined **an individual entry, a split and relabelling**. In July 2019 PSL-UED club was transformed into a new PPG called Polish People's Party – Polish Coalition (PSL-KP). This switch involved deputies from three different origins: the *relabelling* of PSL-UED (22 members), an *entry* of an independent MP and a *split* of the two MPs from PO-KO.

Four types of all types of multi-origin switches from Table 2 did not manifest themselves in the 8th Polish Sejm. Still, these are not only abstract cases in our typology as real-world examples can be found. We found several examples of **multi-origin split**. In March/April 2004, Social Democracy of Poland (SDPL) was formed from splinters from the democratic Left Alliance (SLD, 32 MPs) and Labour Union (UP, 2 MPs). In September 2019, 24 Italian MPs from *Partito Democratico* (out of 111) and one MP from *Civica Popolare-AP-PSI-Area Civica* set up a new PPG *Italia Viva*. A well-known classic example of a multi-origin split (also an asymmetrical one) is the establishment of the British Social Democratic Party in 1981 that included more than two dozen of Labour MPs and one Conservative (Richards

1982).¹⁰ More recently, the Independent Group, established in the UK House of Commons in February 2019, attracted eight MPs from Labour and three from the Conservatives.¹¹ We also identified a **multi-PPG defection** from Italy: in December 2017, five MPs from existing *componenti politiche* – 3 MPs from *FARE!-Pri-Liberali* and 2 MPs from UDC-IDEA sub-groups within a Mixed Group (see footnote 7) – simultaneously joined the *Scelta civica-Ala per la Costituente Liberale e Popolare-MAIE*.¹²

Finally, the 8th Polish Sejm did not experience any **strategic splits**, our only multi-*destination* switching event. Examples close to that come from 1992 and 1995 when one of the electoral coalitions that was elected to the Estonian parliament set up several PPGs – the organizations involved in the ‘Safe Home’ (*Kindel Kodu*, KK) electoral coalition in 1992 set up two PPGs (the Coalition Party and Rural Union) and in 1995, the Coalition Party and Country People’s Union (*Koonderakond ja Maarahva Ühendus*, KMÜ) established no less than four PPGs (the Coalition Party, Country People’s Party, Rural Union and the Party of Pensioners and Families). These two cases narrowly fail to qualify as a strategic split as the separate PPGs were set up immediately after the election. However, it is at least conceivable that such an event takes place later in the parliamentary term – e.g. when a group acquires enough defectors to have the required numbers to set up several groups or the parliamentary rules change, allowing for smaller PPGs.

5.4 Technical switches and forced moves

We detected in the 8th Polish Sejm eight anomalous cases of technical or forced nature, including MPs changing their allegiance before attending any parliamentary sittings. For example, Jan Klawitter, from the Right Wing of the Republic (*Prawica*) party who ran on the PiS list and was listed as a PiS club member for procedural reasons but became independent (following the coalition agreement between the parties) after the first parliamentary sitting. Janusz Sanocki was expelled from the Kukiz’15 club before the parliament convened for the first session (following internal conflict). Finally, Michał Mazowiecki, who entered the parliament as a PO member to substitute an MP elected to the European Parliament in 2019 but immediately joined PSL-UED is another example of a what we consider a technical ‘non-switch’ or a ‘pseudo-switch’ to use the terminology of Yoshinaka (2016: 10).

Forced moves – when members are forced to become independents when their PPG collapses once the majority of its members left the group – are also ‘non-switches’ according to our typology. This was, for instance, the case of Małgorzata Janowska from *Republikanie* when the other two MPs composing the circle switched to PiS. Forced moves can affect more than a single MP. In Estonia, the PPG of the People’s Union (*Rahvaliid*, ERL) collapsed in 2010 after three MPs left the five-strong PPG to join the Social Democratic Party (SDE).¹³ Because the parliamentary rules required all PPGs to have at least

¹⁰ The setting up of the new party was not simultaneous: three Labour MPs resigned the party whip on 20 February (*The Glasgow Herald*, 1981), ten days before SDP was launched; the only former Conservative defected two weeks after the launch.

¹¹ Strictly speaking, all seven founding members came from Labour but the Conservative members joined only two days later.

¹² We currently lack examples of multi-PPG exit, presumably a rare type of multi-PPG switching events.

¹³ Even though they remained independents in the parliament because the Estonian parliamentary rules do not allow MPs to join any other PPG except the one based on the party that they ran with in the election. Hence, their switch qualifies as a collective exit in the parliamentary sense but a collective defection from the point of view of the extra-parliamentary party.

five MPs, the rest of its members also became independent MPs without giving up their party membership. This is one example of the impact of parliamentary rules on the types of switching events, in addition to the impact of the minimum number required for setting up and retaining a PPG, also illustrated by the demise of the Polish WiS PPG in September 2019 (see Figure 2 cont). Other countries allow for much smaller PPGs and, therefore, make PPG collapse less likely.¹⁴

A separate case of anomalous ‘non-switches’ is the ‘borrowing’ of MPs’ between opposition PPGs to ‘save’ them from falling below the 15-member threshold required for maintaining a club status. For instance, in the 8th Polish Sejm, the UED circle borrowed an MP to the PSL club in January 2018 (who never returned to UED as PSL and UED later merged) and PSL-UED lent an MP to N in December 2018 (who did return to PSL-UED once PO-KO absorbed N).

6 Conclusion

Party instability is on the rise in democracies new and old. Typically associated with the emergence of new parties, party instability is also prevalent in parliaments in a variety of forms. Parliamentary representatives, acting individually or in coordination with current copartisans, legislators from other parties or independents, can enter existing parties, form new parties, or become independents without a formal party affiliation. Such parliamentary party instability can have important effects on electoral and government formation outcomes and stability of cleavage structures. Endemic instability can undermine government stability, policy representation, electoral accountability, control of corruption, and development of important public policies. However, party instability can also change stultified party systems in old democracies or hinder the formation of dominant party systems and democratic backsliding in young democracies.

In the larger Instaparty project, we plan to examine parliamentary party instability in eight established and young democracies over several last decades. The first stage is to unravel the previously under-researched complexity of parliamentary party instability through careful conceptual work and the collection of extensive quantitative and rich qualitative data on each instance of legislative party switching in our country sample. This paper demonstrates both our new conceptualization of switching events and examples of the kind of data collection we are conducting. A second stage will be to test the implications of theoretical arguments that explain these diverse forms of party instability while accounting for the concerns of switcher politicians, their current parties, and potential receiving parties. Third, we will investigate the impact of diverse forms of party instability on party popular support while considering the two-way relationship between party instability and voters’ party preferences.

In this paper, we presented a new typology of parliamentary switching events that considers the different possible origins and destinations of switchers and distinguishes between individual and collective switches with a further distinction between collective switches involving a minority of a PPG and those where all or most of a PPG is involved. As a preliminary part of our larger empirical project to gather data on party switching in eight countries, we find that the distribution of the types varies between two

¹⁴ As explained above in Section 4, we also exclude from our analysis the transient short-term status of MPs as independents when they were between PPG (where the period was very short – e.g., one or two days) or entered the parliament but had yet to formally register with a PPG.

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cases – Ireland 1960-2021 and the 8th Polish Sejm 2015-2019. We find that switches involving several PPGs and several MPs are more common in Poland than Ireland even though individual switches dominate in both. We illustrate our typology with a closer look at all switching events in the 8th Polish Sejm and find examples of all single-origin types bar two and examples of six types of multi-origin types. This confirms that the typology is comprehensive and mutually exclusive – i.e., all switching events map on to one and only one type, and (most) of the types are present even in a relatively limited sample considered (88 switching events in Ireland and 48 in Poland).

The typology highlights the wide variety of forms that switching events can take – ranging from single MPs exiting or entering a PPG to mergers or splits of PPGs or dozens of MPs leaving to form another PPG. Existing literature tends to focus on only one or two of these forms at a time, and for the most part, scholars have examined party instability at one of three levels: individual politician, political party, and party system. Each perspective is valuable, but none on its own can provide a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon. In our broader project we seek to bring together these sub-fields into a consolidated research agenda on party instability. A key premise in this agenda is that accounting for the patterns, causes, and system-level consequences of party instability is only possible by appreciating the diversity in the forms of party instability.

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Appendix 1. Full list of switches (8th Polish Sejm, 2015-2019)

Date	Name(s)	Origin	Destination
2015-11-13	Sanocki Janusz	Kukiz15	independent
2015-11-16	Klawiter Jan	PiS	independent
2015-12-21	Kobyliński Paweł	Kukiz15	independent
2015-12-23	Kobyliński Paweł	independent	N
2016-04-15	Morawiecki Kornel, Zwiercan Małgorzata	Kukiz15	independent
2016-04-23	Winnicki Robert	Kukiz15	independent
2016-05-18	Zyska Ireneusz	Kukiz15	WiS
	Morawiecki Kornel, Zwiercan Małgorzata	independent	
2016-06-13	Jaros Michał	PO	N
2016-07-20	Huskowski Stanisław, Kamiński Michał, Protasiewicz Jacek	PO	independent
2016-09-22	Huskowski Stanisław, Kamiński Michał, Protasiewicz Jacek	independent	ED
	Niesiotowski Stefan	PO	
2016-11-17	Sowa Marek	PO	N
2016-12-14	Huskowski Stanisław, Kamiński Michał, Protasiewicz Jacek, Niesiotowski Stefan	ED	UED
2017-02-23	Błęska Magdalena, Siarkowska Anna Maria	Kukiz15	independent
2017-02-24	Błęska Magdalena, Siarkowska Anna Maria, Janowska Małgorzata	independent	Republikanie
2017-04-12	Augustynowska Joanna, Furgo Grzegorz, Golbik Marta, Stasiński Michał	N	PO
2017-06-08	Liroy-Marzec Piotr	Kukiz15	independent
2017-07-19	Możdżanowska Andżelika	PSL	independent
2017-09-20	Błęska Magdalena	Republikanie	independent
2017-09-20	Janowska Małgorzata, Siarkowska Anna Maria	Republikanie	PiS
2017-10-09	Gryglas Zbigniew	N	independent
2017-10-11	Rzepecki Łukasz	PiS	independent
2017-10-13	Rzepecki Łukasz	independent	Kukiz15
2017-10-30	Chruszcz Sylwester	Kukiz15	WiS
2017-11-09	Andruszkiewicz Adam	Kukiz15	WiS
2017-12-07	Porwich Jarosław	Kukiz15	WiS
2017-12-11	Gryglas Zbigniew	independent	PiS
2017-12-12	Możdżanowska Andżelika	independent	PiS
2018-01-11	Cyrański Adam	N	independent
2018-01-20	Kamiński Michał	UED	PSL
2018-02-02	Baszko Mieczysław Kazimierz	PSL	PiS
2018-02-08	Bejda Paweł, Jarubas Krystian, Kamiński Michał, Kasprzak Mieczysław, Kłopotek Eugeniusz, Kosiniak-Kamysz Władysław, Kotowski Kazimierz, Łopata Jan, Maliszewski Mirosław, Pastawska Urszula, Paszyk Krzysztof, Sawicki Marek, Sosnowski Zbigniew, Tokarska Genowefa, Zgorzelski Piotr	PSL	PSL-UED
	Huskowski Stanisław, Niesiotowski Stefan, Protasiewicz Jacek	UED	
2018-02-10	Wilk Jacek	Kukiz15	independent
2018-03-07	Babiarz Piotr Łukasz	PiS	independent
2018-05-09	Mihułka Joanna, Scheuring-Wielgus Joanna	N	independent
2018-05-11	Petru Ryszard	N	independent
2018-06-04	Pięta Stanisław	PiS	independent
2018-06-15	Mihułka Joanna, Petru Ryszard, Scheuring-Wielgus Joanna	independent	L-S
2018-10-26	Kulesza Jakub	Kukiz15	independent
2018-11-02	Jakubiak Marek	Kukiz15	independent

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Date	Name(s)	Origin	Destination
2018-11-20	Miłuńska Joanna, Petru Ryszard, Scheuring-Wielgus Joanna	L-S	TERAZ!
2018-11-22	Kulesza Jakub, Liroy-Marzec Piotr, Wilk Jacek	independent	W-S
2018-12-05	Ajchler Zbigniew, Artukowicz Bartosz, Arndt Paweł, Augustyn Urszula, Augustynowska Joanna, Aziewicz Tadeusz, Bańkowski Paweł, Białkowska Anna, Biernacki Marek, Borowczak Jerzy, Brejza Krzysztof, Budka Borys, Bukiewicz Bożenna, Chmiel Małgorzata, Chybicka Alicja, Cichoń Janusz, Cieśliński Piotr, Cimoszewicz Tomasz, Czernow Zofia, Czerwiński Andrzej, Drozd Ewa, Dunin Artur, Dzikowski Waldy, Fabisiak Joanna, Frydrych Joanna, Furgo Grzegorz, Gądek Lidia, Gadowski Krzysztof, Gajewska Kinga, Gapińska Elżbieta, Gawlik Zdzisław, Gawłowski Stanisław, Gelert Elżbieta, Gierada Artur, Głogowski Tomasz, Golbik Marta, Grabarczyk Cezary, Grabiec Jan, Grupiński Rafał, Halicki Andrzej, Hanajczyk Agnieszka, Henczyca Bożena, Hibner Jolanta, Hok Marek, Janyska Maria Małgorzata, Kamińska Bożena, Karpiński Włodzimierz, Kidawa-Błońska Małgorzata, Kierwiński Marcin, Kluzik-Rostkowska Joanna, Kochan Magdalena, Kotacz-Leszczynska Agnieszka, Kotodziej Ewa, Konwiński Zbigniew, Kopacz Ewa, Korol Adam, Korzeniowski Leszek, Kosecki Roman Jacek, Kosciuszko Tomasz, Krawczyk Iwona, Król Wojciech, Kropiwnicki Robert, Krząkała Marek, Krzywonos-Strycharska Henryka, Kucharski Tomasz, Lamczyk Stanisław, Lassota Józef, Lenartowicz Gabriela, Lenz Tomasz, Leszczyna Izabela, Lipiec Grzegorz, Matecka-Libera Beata, Marchewka Arkadiusz, Marczałajtis-Walczak Jagna, Marek Magdalena Ewa, Mężydło Antoni, Miller Rajmund, Młynarczyk Aldona, Mroczek Czesław, Mrzygłocka Izabela Katarzyna, Mucha Joanna, Munyama Killion, Myrcha Arkadiusz, Nemś Anna, Neumann Stawomir, Niedziela Dorota, Niemczyk Małgorzata, Nitras Stawomir, Nowak Tomasz Piotr, Nykiel Mirosława, Nykiel Włodzimierz, Obrycki Norbert, Okła-Drewnowicz Marzena, Olszewski Paweł, Osos Katarzyna, Papke Paweł, Pawłowicz Zbigniew, Pępek Małgorzata, Piechota Stawomir Jan, Pietraszewska Danuta, Piotrowska Teresa, Plocke Kazimierz, Pomaska Agnieszka, Protas Jacek, Radziszewska Elżbieta, Raniewicz Grzegorz, Raś Ireneusz, Rozpondek Halina, Ruszczyk Leszek, Rutkowska Dorota, Rutnicki Jakub, Rząsa Marek, Schetyna Grzegorz, Sibińska Krystyna, Siemonek Tomasz, Skowrońska Krystyna, Śledzińska-Katarasińska Iwona, Stasiński Michał, Suski Paweł, Święcicki Marcin, Szczepa Michał, Szumilas Krystyna, Szydłowska Bożena, Szymański Tomasz, Tomczak Jacek, Tomczyk Cezary, Tyszkiewicz Robert, Urbaniak Jarosław, Wasilewska Anna, Wielichowska Monika, Wilczyński Ryszard, Witczak Mariusz, Wójcik Marek, Zembala Marian, Ziemniak Wojciech, Ziółkowski Szymon, Żmijan Stanisław, Truskolaski Krzysztof	PO	PO-KO
	Gasiuk-Pihowicz Kamila, Jaros Michał, Kobylński Paweł, Misioł Piotr, Sowa Marek, Stępień Elżbieta, Wróblewska Kornelia	N	
2018-12-06	Zyska Ireneusz	WiS	PiS
2018-12-13	Protasiewicz Jacek	PSL-UED	N
2019-03-22	Jakubiak Marek, Winnicki Robert	Independent	Konfederacja
	Kulesza Jakub, Liroy-Marzec Piotr, Wilk Jacek	W-S	
2019-04-03	Chruszcz Sylwester	WiS	PiS
2019-05-16	Majka Robert	independent	Konfederacja
2019-06-12	Mazowiecki Michał Jan	independent	PSL-UED
2019-06-13	Lubczyk Radostaw, Ruciński Marek	N	independent
2019-06-13	Protasiewicz Jacek	N	PSL-UED
2019-06-13	Dolnik Barbara, Hennig-Kłoska Paulina, Lieder Ewa, Lubnauer Katarzyna, Meysztoń Jerzy, Mieszkowski Krzysztof, Pampuch Mirosław, Pudłowski Paweł, Rosa Monika, Suchoń Mirosław, Szłapka Adam, Zembaczyński Witold, Cyrański Adam	N	PO-KO
2019-06-24	Jakubiak Marek	Konfederacja	independent
2019-07-14	Lubczyk Radostaw	independent	PSL-KP
	Biernacki Marek, Tomczak Jacek	PO-KO	
	Bejda Paweł, Jarubas Krystian, Kamiński Michał, Kasprzak Mieczysław, Kłopotek Eugeniusz, Kosiniak-Kamysz Władysław, Kotowski Kazimierz,	PSL-UED	

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Date	Name(s)	Origin	Destination
	Łopata Jan, Maliszewski Mirosław, Mazowiecki Michał Jan, Niesiołowski Stefan, Paśawska Urszula, Paszyk Krzysztof, Protasiewicz Jacek, Sawicki Marek, Sosnowski Zbigniew, Tokarska Genowefa, Walkowski Piotr, Zgorzelski Piotr		
2019-07-26	Kaczmarczyk Norbert	Kukiz15	independent
2019-07-26	Maciejewski Andrzej	Kukiz15	independent
2019-07-31	Jachnik Jerzy	Kukiz15	independent
2019-08-09	Liroy-Marzec Piotr, Jachnik Jerzy	Konfederacja	PP
	Sanocki Janusz	independent	
2019-08-09	Skutecki Paweł	Kukiz15	independent
2019-07-31	Rzymkowski Tomasz	Kukiz15	PiS
2019-08-09	Jaskóła Tomasz, Józwiak Bartosz, Kozłowski Jerzy, Zielińska Elżbieta	Kukiz15	UPR
2019-08-09	Kaczmarczyk Norbert	independent	PiS
2019-07-31	Sitarski Krzysztof	independent	PiS
2019-08-12	Skutecki Paweł	independent	Konfederacja
2019-09-11	Majka Robert	Konfederacja	independent
2019-09-30	Zwiercan Małgorzata	WiS	PiS
2019-09-30	Andruszkiewicz Adam, Porwich Jarosław	WiS	independent

Appendix 2. Switches in the Polish Sejm (5-7)

Term 5 (2005-2007)

Total number of switching events: 38		Number of switchers			
		One	Several but less than half of a PPG	Most or all of PPG	
Origin	Destination	57.9%		28.9%	10.5%
PPG(s)	Existing PPG	10.5%	Individual defection 10.5%	Collective defection 0%	Absorption 0%
	New PPG	5.3%	Individual split 0%	Split 0%	Relabelling 5.3%
	Independent(s)	55.3%	Individual exit 34.2%	Collective exit 15.8%	PPG collapse 5.3%
Independent(s)	Existing PPG	18.4%	Individual entry 13.2%	Collective entry 5.3%	
	New PPG	7.9%	PPG creation 7.9%		

Total 38 switching events
 37 single origin
 1 multi-origin

Term 6 (2007-2011)

Total number of switching events: 51		Number of switchers			
		One	Several but less than half of a PPG	Most or all of PPG	
Origin	Destination	62.7%		25.5%	9.8%
PPG(s)	Existing PPG	17.6%	Individual defection 15.7%	Collective defection 0%	Absorption 0%
	New PPG	13.7%	Individual split 0%	Split 7.8%	Relabelling 7.8%
	Independent(s)	49%	Individual exit 33.3%	Collective exit 11.8%	PPG collapse 3.9%
Independent(s)	Existing PPG	15.7%	Individual entry 11.8%	Collective entry 3.9%	
	New PPG	2%	PPG creation 2%		

Total 51 switching events
 50 single origin
 1 multi-origin

Term 7 (2011-2015)

Total number of switching events: 77		Number of switchers			
		One	Several but less than half of a PPG	Most or all of PPG	
Origin	Destination	76.6%	11.7%	7.8%	
PPG(s)	Existing PPG	16.9%	Individual defection 11.7%	Collective defection 3.9%	Absorption 0%
	New PPG	2.6%	Individual split 0%	Split 0%	Relabelling 2.6%
	Independent(s)	50.6%	Individual exit 42.9.3%	Collective exit 2.6%	PPG collapse 5.2%
Independent(s)	Existing PPG	22.1%	Individual entry 22.1%	Collective entry 1.3%	
	New PPG	3.9%	PPG creation 3.9%		

Total **77 switching events**
74 single origin
3 multi-origin