

Independence versus Affiliation: What Determines Entry into Parliamentary Party Groups?

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Abstract

Political parties are often considered essential for structuring parliamentary decision-making in democracies. However, many MPs experience spells of being non-affiliated with any parliamentary party group (PPG), either because they were elected as independent candidates or left their PPGs earlier in the legislative term. Whether such non-affiliation periods end with an entry to a PPG, which PPG the legislator enters and how long they remain independent before the entry, as well as the reasons for these patterns, remains relatively unknown. This paper addresses these under-researched questions by examining PPG entry in three Central and Eastern European countries (Lithuania, Poland, and Romania) in the last two decades. We build and test an argument that electoral, office and policy concerns of both the MPs considering the entry and the potential receiving parties play an important role in driving entry. Our findings suggest that legislators' electoral incentives as a key explanation for their PPG affiliation decisions.

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Introduction

Political parties are often considered essential for structuring parliamentary decision-making in democracies. Theoretical arguments about legislative politics and executive-legislative relations build on the assumption that all MPs belong to a party in the legislature and parliamentary party groups “are the main actors in legislative politics” (Giannetti & Laver, 2001, p. 533). However, many MPs experience spells of being non-affiliated with any parliamentary party group (PPG), either because they were elected as independent candidates or left their PPGs earlier in the legislative term. Whether such non-affiliation periods end with an entry to a PPG, which PPG the legislator enters and how long they remain independent before the entry, as well as the reasons for these patterns, remains relatively unknown. This paper addresses these under-researched questions by examining PPG entry in three Central and Eastern European countries (Lithuania, Poland, and Romania) since the early 2000s. We build and test an argument that electoral, office and policy concerns of both the MPs considering the entry and the potential receiving parties play an important role in driving entry.

The study of the presence of independent politicians in parliament is important for several reasons. At the very basic level, by investigating why some MPs eschew parliamentary parties, one directly tackles the question of why parties exist in contemporary democracies (Aldrich, 1995). At the more practical level, the presence of independent MPs makes the legislative decision-making process and ruling majorities less stable and predictable. For example, the vote of Amineh Kakabaveh, a member of the Swedish legislature in the 2018-2022 term who departed the Left Party in 2019 to serve as an independent MP, was crucial for the approval of the Social Democratic-led government in November 2021 and the approval of this government’s policies in parliament.¹ Independents provided parliamentary support for multiple Irish governments and some of them have been formally included in several governments including the recent Fine Gael government in 2016-2020 (Weeks, 2021, p. 542).

The relevance of parliamentary independents is likely to be even more significant in younger democracies and/or countries with unstable party systems. In these contexts, the number of

¹<https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/independent-mp-kakabaveh-withdraws-support-for-social-democrats>

parliamentary independents tends to be higher than in established democracies, thus making them an important element of parliamentary voting coalitions. For example, the Gruppo Misto, gathering MPs affiliated with minor parties or without any party affiliation, at times reached nearly 20% of all MPs in the Italian Chamber of Deputies (Giannetti & Laver, 2001). In the three countries considered here, the average share of independent MPs in the 2000s and 2010s varied from 2% in Poland to more than 4% in Lithuania and Romania, but also reached 10% for short periods of time. These modest numbers notwithstanding, taking the average for all three countries, 17% of the time independents held the balance of power in parliament as neither the government nor the opposition had parliamentary majority.

Additionally, switching in or out of the independent MP status is common, more so than MPs directly defecting from one existing PPG to another or leaving an extant PPG to create a new one (Golder et al., 2022). In the three countries analyzed here nearly one in five MPs (18% in Lithuania and Poland and 19% in Romania) was an independent at some point during their careers in the time period covered here. We also record 308 instances of independent MPs joining existing PPGs and 217 cases of them creating new ones. Not only do these dynamics decrease the stability and predictability of parliamentary decision-making, but they are also essential for understanding new party formation (or the absence thereof) that frequently occurs because of parliamentary independents creating new PPGs and party organizations.

Last but not least, as a form of legislative party switching, PPG entry raises important questions about the electoral linkages between the electorate and representatives. An important normative argument is that switchers betray the voters who voted for their party (Bengtson, 2022). However, normative implications of switching may vary by its forms. Specifically, it may be more justifiable for the legislator to become an independent instead of joining and therefore strengthening another party that competes with the legislator's former party. Whether, when and why the legislators who have already left their former parties take what many scholars (and voters) would consider as a more morally questionable step of joining another PPG is therefore an important question from the normative perspective.²

Our study mainly builds on and contributes to two distinct research sub-fields. First, the work

²As mentioned below, only a small minority of legislators in our sample were elected as independents.

on political personalization has treated the rise of independent politicians as an indicator of party weakness or decline (Rahat & Kenig, 2018). Candidate-centered electoral institutions, party funding regimes that discriminate against new parties, less institutionalized parties and party systems, and the disenchantment of the electorate with (established) political parties have been suggested as important factors driving temporal and spatial variations in the strength of independents (Weeks, 2017). Our work complements these valuable perspectives by analyzing decisions of individual politicians. Once a politician is an independent, why and for how long do they decide to keep this status? While considering contextual country-level characteristics suggested in the research on personalization and party decline, we complement this body of work by investigating the importance of individual and party-level variables.

Second, since leaving the parliamentary independent status is one form of legislative party switching (Heller & Mershon, 2009), we draw on this work when developing our theoretical expectations. At the same time, we are not aware of any study in this research sub-field that examines specifically legislators' decisions to join or create a PPG. Theoretical accounts and, in some cases, empirical analyses of switching tend to focus on the individual decisions of legislators to move from one PPG to another. We therefore contribute to the research on switching by shedding light on one of its under-researched forms that is nevertheless empirically quite frequent.

We report three main findings. First, regarding the question which actor - parliamentary parties or independent legislators themselves - is more important in explaining the persistence of independent legislators, our findings point to the greater role of the legislators. Second, regarding which benefits - electoral, office or policy - explain variation in the number of independents, we find that electoral incentives appear to be most important. Third, we also find that an important role of institutions, such as regulations on the creation of parliamentary party groups and the degree to which election candidates without party support can win legislative seats. We discuss the implications of these findings in the conclusion.

Independence vs. Affiliation: Existing research

The increasing relevance and presence of independent politicians is one dimension of the broader trend of political personalization discussed in the literature. This literature operates with somewhat different definitions of independent politicians. The key distinction (particularly important in younger democracies) concerns whom the politician is “independent” from: extra-parliamentary party organization, party in the electorate, or parliamentary party (Katz & Mair, 2002; Key, 1964). Regarding affiliation with extra-parliamentary party organizations, scholars have examined the selection of non-partisan ministers (Costa Pinto et al., 2018). In the case of legislators, an important focus has been on the degree to which they are embedded in party organizations as demonstrated by, for example, the length of party membership and important positions in the party hierarchy (Cotta & Verzichelli, 2007; Rahat & Kenig, 2018). Other scholars have focused on politicians who run as independents in elections (Brancati, 2008). Weeks (2016, p. 582) combines two party “faces” in his definition of an independent as “someone running for office on their own and who does not take a party whip”. The definition permits for the independent politicians to be affiliated with “quasi-parties” (Weeks, 2021).

The work on political personalization has often connected the prevalence of independent politicians to various macro factors. These include voters’ disenchantment with political establishment and patterns of localistic political culture (Weeks, 2017), candidate-centred electoral systems (Brancati, 2008; Saalfeld & Strøm, 2014), (semi-)presidentialism (Costa Pinto et al., 2018), the degree to which legislative institutions are party-centered (Saalfeld & Strøm, 2014) and the structure of party competition (Weeks, 2017). Some authors also focus on party resources (Costa Pinto et al., 2018) and popular support (Kaltenegger, 2023). However, the focus on dynamic changes in individual politicians’ party affiliation, and individual-level factors that may explain it, is less prominent in this body of work.

Such individual, and to some degree parties’ incentives, are the core focus of the research on legislative party switching. Theoretical explanations of this phenomenon primarily focused on the move of an individual legislator from one PPG to another and stressed the importance of electoral, office and policy payoffs and costs that such moves can bring to the switchers as well as home and recipient parties (e.g., Desposato, 2006; McElroy, 2009; Mershon &

Shvetsova, 2013; Radean, 2022). Research explaining why MPs become independents, or, more relevant for the purposes of this study, remain independents, has been limited. That said, the possibility for MPs to exit their PPGs by becoming independents, and to join PPGs when they are independents, has been recognised. For example, Heller & Mershon (2009, p. 47) note that being independent can mean not being affiliated with any group or being affiliated with a formally established “mixed” group. More recently, Golder et. al. (2022) develop a conceptual typology (see Table 1) of different forms of parliamentary party instability defined as “changes in the size and/or identity of parliamentary party groups resulting from MPs changing their parliamentary party group (PPG) affiliations between elections.” The typology includes three conceptual dimensions: origin PPG, destination PPG, and the (ordinal) variable of the number of switchers.

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		

Source: Golder et. al. (2022). The highlighted types are the dependent variables in this study. The table only presents “single origin” events (see Golder et. al. (2022) for more detail).

Most relevant for the purposes of our research, it reveals that independent MPs may not only join (individually or collectively) existing PPGs, but they may also create new ones. PPG entry and PPG creation are therefore the two key events of interest in this study. The typology also reveals different ways in which legislators can become independents: through individual or collective exits from existing PPGs or collapses of existing PPGs that occur if the group no longer meets (usually the numeric) requirements for the existence of PPGs. In one of the countries considered here (Lithuania), a small minority of MPs (affiliated with very small parties or running in election as independents) also adopted the independent status at

the start of the legislative term.

Electoral, office and policy payoffs of PPG entry

In line with the research on legislative party switching, here we define independent politicians as MPs who are not affiliated with parliamentary party groups (which do not include “mixed” or “technical” groups that unite independents). While we recognize the importance of studying independence in relation to extra-parliamentary party organization or party in elections, non-affiliation with PPGs is an important topic for study for the reasons discussed in the introduction. At the same time, affiliation of some parliamentary independents with extra-parliamentary party organizations is an important explanatory factor in our theoretical framework, as discussed below.

Table 2 summarizes our theoretical framework. The starting point for our argument is research on legislative party switching in which the core assumption is that legislators’ parliamentary party affiliation strategies are driven by their goals to re-assure re-election, to acquire influential positions in the executive and legislature that provides them with office perks and policy influence, and to align with the parties that are close to them on relevant ideological and policy dimensions (Desposato, 2006; Heller & Mershon, 2009). Legislators continually re-consider the utility of each PPG affiliation option in terms of the total expected utility determined by re-election chances, office positions, and ideological and policy compromises that each PPG membership entails. However, leaderships of “home” and potential recipients PPGs also play an important role by providing incentives to legislators to stay and/or to switch (Desposato, 2006; Heller & Mershon, 2009; Laver & Benoit, 2003). Parliamentary independents lack a proper “home” PPG, which means that our focus below is on the strategic calculations of potential receiving parliamentary parties.

Table 2: Summary of theoretical expectations

Type of benefits	Hypothesis	DV	IV	Effect	Theoretical logic: key actor
Electoral	H1A	PPG entry	Legislators' electoral appeal	+	Parties
	H1B	PPG entry		-	Legislators
	H2	PPG entry	Minor party membership	-	Legislators
	H3	PPG creation		+	Legislators
Office	H4	PPG entry	Government's support in parliament	-	Parties
	H5	PPG creation		-	Parties
Policy	H6	PPG entry	Distance to 2 closest PPGs	-	Legislators and parties

Re-election is the most basic objective of career politicians (Müller & Strøm, 1999), and it is therefore not surprising that individual legislators' electoral vulnerability is among the most important factors of legislative behaviour (André et al., 2015). It has also played a prominent role in the research on legislative party switching (Radean, 2022; Thames, 2007). The most common argument is that switching parties can help electorally vulnerable legislators to increase their chances of being re-elected, while for their more electorally secure colleagues such incentives are absent. However, the theoretical story is more complex once parties' incentives are also considered. Since parties prefer candidates who are popular among the electorate, and in many electoral systems (e.g., open-list PR) voters can select which candidates of the party to support, less electorally vulnerable legislators are also likely to have greater individual electoral appeal. "Home" parties are therefore more motivated to keep these legislators onboard, which provides another mechanism for why electorally secure legislators are less likely to switch (Zhirnov & Mufti, 2019, p. 534). At the same time, legislators with higher electoral appeal are also more attractive to potential recipient parties. Since in most democracies political parties control which candidates run under their labels, they are more likely to be open to accept in-switchers with greater appeal (Zhirnov & Mufti, 2019, p. 532).

The electoral vulnerability of parliamentary independents tends to be quite high given that parties dominate the electoral process and most elected candidates are nominated by the parties. Still, there is variation in the electoral vulnerability and appeal of independent representatives. For example, in the open-list PR systems some parliamentary independents

may have obtained a significant number of preference votes when running for their former parties in the most recent national parliamentary election. Their electoral appeal should make such legislators more attractive to potential recipient parties. We therefore expect that:

H1A: As individual electoral appeal of an independent MP increases, the likelihood of entering a PPG *increases*.

At the same time, parliamentary independents with significant individual electoral appeal are less electorally vulnerable. At the most basic level, they may expect to win re-election when running as formal independents. Furthermore, since parties are often willing to nominate technocrats or celebrities as their candidates in order to take advantage of their appeal among the voters, popular parliamentary independents may also expect such nominations without formally joining any parliamentary party group and extra-parliamentary party organization. At the very least, greater electoral appeal provides these independents with an opportunity to adopt the “wait-and-see” approach – join a parliamentary party group later in the parliamentary cycle when the clarity about the outcome of the next election is greater.

H1B: As individual electoral appeal of an independent MP increases, the likelihood of entering a PPG *decreases*.

We do not expect for legislators’ electoral appeal to be related to the creation of new PPGs. Creating a new parliamentary group involves multiple legislators, which means that purely individual incentives may be less important. For example, an individual legislator with limited appeal may find creating a PPG as an attractive option because a more popular colleague is involved, making the party created on the basis of the new group a potentially electorally viable formation.

Legislators’ electoral vulnerability may depend not only on their record of electoral appeal in the past elections, but also the ongoing affiliation with extra-parliamentary party organizations. In many contexts it is not uncommon that parliamentary independents are members of minor parties that do not have sufficient number of MPs to create their own parliamentary party groups. This is particularly the case in younger democracies, where it is common to observe

new party creation through splits in parliamentary parties and the continued electoral entry of “second-league” parties that are not able to gain representation on their own but may have gained one or several parliamentary seats through electoral alliances (Ibenskas & Wardt, 2023). Entry into a larger PPG can create significant electoral costs for the parliamentary independents who are committed to their affiliation with such minor parties. More specifically, the minor party may weaken its electoral brand (and, by extension, chances to win seats in the next election while running independently) as the electorate may increasingly see it as a satellite of its larger ally. The larger party may promise an electoral alliance to its minor partner in exchange, but such promises may not be credible, especially because the bargaining power of the minor party decreases due to the likely (as explained above) dilution of its electoral brand.

H2: Entry is less likely if an independent MP is a member of a minor party.

However, members of minor parties should be eager to create their own PPGs whenever possible. Such opportunities may arise if, for example, they are able to attract additional parliamentarians to their party or at least from a new PPG.

H3: PPG creation is more likely if an independent MP is a member of a minor party.

Regarding office benefits, the most prominent argument in the literature is that opposition MPs switch to government parties in order to increase their access to office benefits. This argument implies that, since parliamentary independents are nearly always *not* among the MPs who formally support government, they should be motivated to switch to government parties (Desposato, 2006; Thames, 2007). However, even the move to the opposition parties is likely to increase independents’ office benefits, such as membership in parliamentary committees, parliamentary leadership positions, or financial and staff resources.

That said, the office incentives of the potential recipient parties may account for the variation in the entry of parliamentary independents to PPGs. Accepting an in-switcher may be costly for a PPG; for example, its current members may have to relinquish an important

position (say, a deputy parliamentary committee chair position) to the advantage of the switcher MP. Whether the PPG is willing to incur this cost depends on the expected benefits. Government's parliamentary support may be an important factor in this regard. In-switchers may be crucial for government's survival and ability to adopt public policies when the government parties lack or have a fragile parliamentary majority. Conversely, government parties with a large parliamentary majority have less to gain from taking in-switchers. The argument can also be extended to opposition parties: when the parliamentary support of government is weak, accepting in-switchers allows opposition parties to increase their influence and potentially even threaten the survival of the government. Such incentives are weaker when the government has significant support in parliament.

H4: Entry is more likely when government's parliamentary support is weaker.

A similar logic underlies the incentives to create a new PPG in presence of a weaker government's parliamentary support. By supporting the creation of new group, government or opposition parties may gain a more reliable partner than a scattering of individual independent MPs. Such support may range from more limited (e.g., declarations of political support) to more blatant forms (e.g., "lending" an MP so that the new group can meet the minimum size threshold set by the legislative regulations).

H5: PPG creation is more likely when government's parliamentary support is weaker.

Scholars have also established the importance of policy and ideological proximity between parties and legislators for legislative party switching - including in such younger democracies as Brazil (Desposato, 2006) and Romania (Radean, 2022). Whether such motivations influence the decisions of independent MPs to enter or create PPGs is nevertheless unknown. Since parliamentary independents lack a "home" PPG, proximity between them and potential recipient PPGs is of most relevance. A policy-proximate PPG is more likely to support legislator's policy agenda, promote them to important positions and nominate them in electable positions (Desposato, 2006). From the PPG perspective, it is important that in-switchers are at least broadly aligned with its policy positions. Otherwise, internal

conflicts - with the potential to undermine the PPG's effectiveness in achieving its policy goals and winning elections - are likely to emerge. Both legislators' and parties' incentives therefore imply that independent MPs are more likely to join existing PPGs when ideological proximity is high.

H6: Entry is more likely if the legislator is proximate to at least some existing PPGs.

Policy proximity plays a more ambiguous role with regard to PPG creation. While it is possible that an independent legislator would be more interested in creating a group if they are distant from all existing groups, there has to be other independents or MPs dissatisfied with their current groups for this new group to emerge. Thus, we do not formulate a hypothesis on the effect of proximity on PPG creation, but nevertheless include this variable in the statistical models.

Research design

Case selection and institutional contexts

While parliamentary independents are present, and can be consequential, in established democracies, PPG entry and creation are more common in the (often younger) democracies that have less stable party systems. Our empirical analysis therefore focuses on lower parliamentary chambers in three Central and Eastern European countries: Lithuania, Poland, and Romania. By conducting individual-level inferential analyses in several countries in the relatively long time period, we complement existing work on party switching in which common empirical strategies are single-country studies of individual MP switching or cross-national comparisons that use parties or parliaments (nested in time) as units of analysis.

In each country we cover the period from the late 1990s or early 2000s to the late 2010s (1996-2020 in Lithuania and Romania and 2001-2019 in Poland). While partially driven by data availability, the choice to exclude the early to mid-1990s is also justifiable on substantive grounds. These early years of democracy were characterized by high fluidity and multiple idiosyncrasies in parties and institutional frameworks, and as such their inclusion could make

our findings less generalizable to the broader set of democracies.

The three countries, while being part of the same region and sharing communist past, are quite different regarding their electoral and legislative institutions. This is important because institutions are important explanations for party switching (Klein, 2016; Mershon & Shvetsova, 2013; Nikolenyi, 2013; Radean, 2022). Electoral systems vary from party-centred closed-list PR (average district magnitude (DM) between 7 and 8) in Romania (1996-2008 and 2016-2020) to more candidate-centred systems of open-list PR (average DM 11) in Poland and mixed systems in Lithuania and Romania (2008-2016). More specifically, Lithuania uses mixed (parallel) system in which 71 MPs are elected in single member constituencies (in a two-round system with the exception of the election in 2000) and the remaining 70 are elected in the nationwide PR district (flexible-list in 1996-2004 and open-list in 2008-2020). In Romania in 2008 and 2012 elections, 43 constituencies were divided into 315 single-member districts (SMDs). Voters cast votes for the candidates; candidates with majority of the district vote were elected. Most of the remaining seats were distributed between parties at the constituency level using the Hare quota and between the candidates of the party based on the number of votes received in single-member districts. The remainder seats were allocated at the national level.

Levels of party switching are also closely related to legislative institutions, particularly the restrictions (or even bans) on (certain forms of) switching and requirements for establishing a PPG (Nikolenyi, 2013; Volpi, 2019). In all three countries all forms of switching were permitted. Regarding the rules for creating PPGs, in Lithuania a group can be formed as long as it has at least 7 or 5% of all MPs (3 or 2% in 1996-2000). In Romania, the numerical threshold of 10 MPs (approx. 3% of all MPs) is lower, but the additional requirement that at least 10 founder MPs have to be elected from the party or electoral alliance in the most recent election has made the formation of PPGs quite challenging. In Poland, only a numerical criterion is applied, but there are two types of PPGs: clubs (minimum 15 or 3% of all MPs needed) and circles (minimum 3 or 0.7% of all MPs needed). Both clubs and circles are eligible to receive resources from parliament, but the former enjoy substantially larger benefits (e.g. in terms of staff and financial resources). Circles have also a limited access to

political privileges, since most of the policy-making instruments are available exclusively to clubs or groups consisting of at least 15 MPs (“Regulamin Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej,” 1992). We consider circles as “proper” PPGs, which means that the formation of PPGs is significantly easier in Poland than in Lithuania or Romania. As discussed above, these institutional differences lead to significantly more PPG creations in Poland than the other two countries.

Dependent variables: PPG entry and creation

Our dependent variables are the number of days in a single legislative term that the legislator stays as independent instead of entering an existing PPG (first DV) or participating in the creation of a new PPG (second DV). This precision of measurement is relatively uncommon in the research on legislative party switching, which more frequently uses months, years, legislative sessions or terms as time units. If the same MP experiences more than one spell of independence in a legislative term, we count these as separate observations. In total, we observe 125 (Lithuania), 338 (Poland) and 355 (Romania) spells of independence. These numbers reflect roughly the size of lower parliamentary chambers (141 in Lithuania, 460 in Poland and between 329 and 412 in Romania). The number of entries was 47, 81 and 180, and the number of PPG creations 15, 159 and 43 (see Figure 1). The observations that did not experience either entry or PPG creation (50% in Lithuania, 29% in Poland and 37% in Romania) are right-censored because MPs remained independent until the end of the legislative term (or an early departure from the legislature).

Figure 1: Frequency of PPG entry and creation

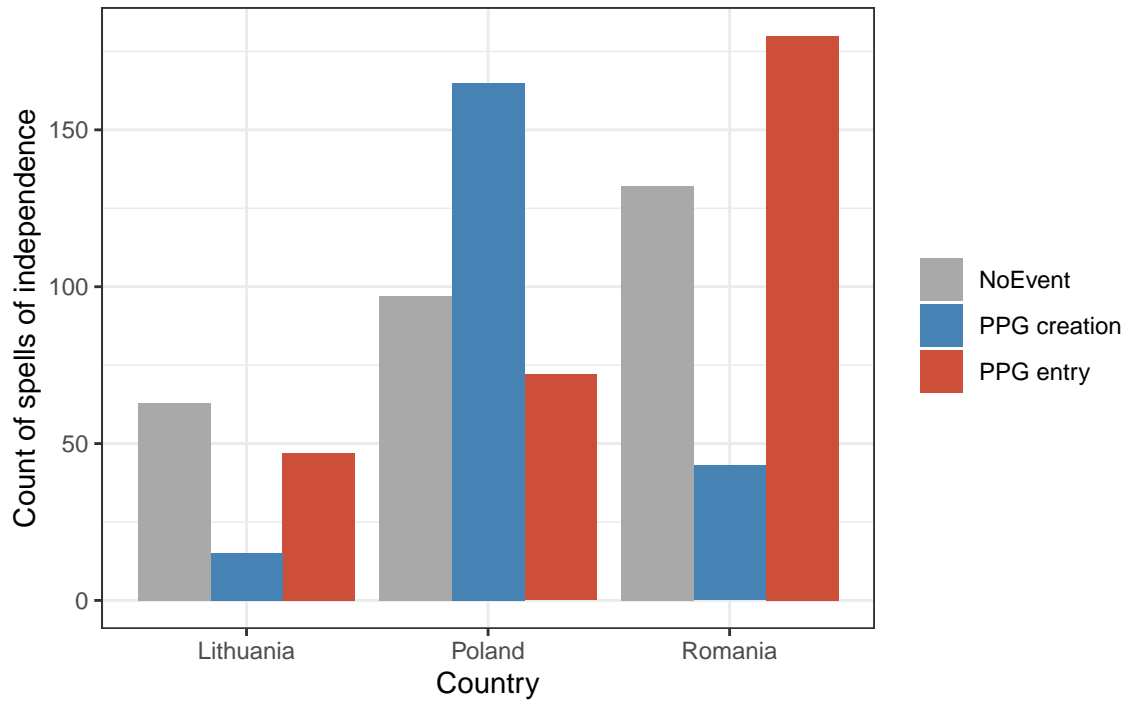
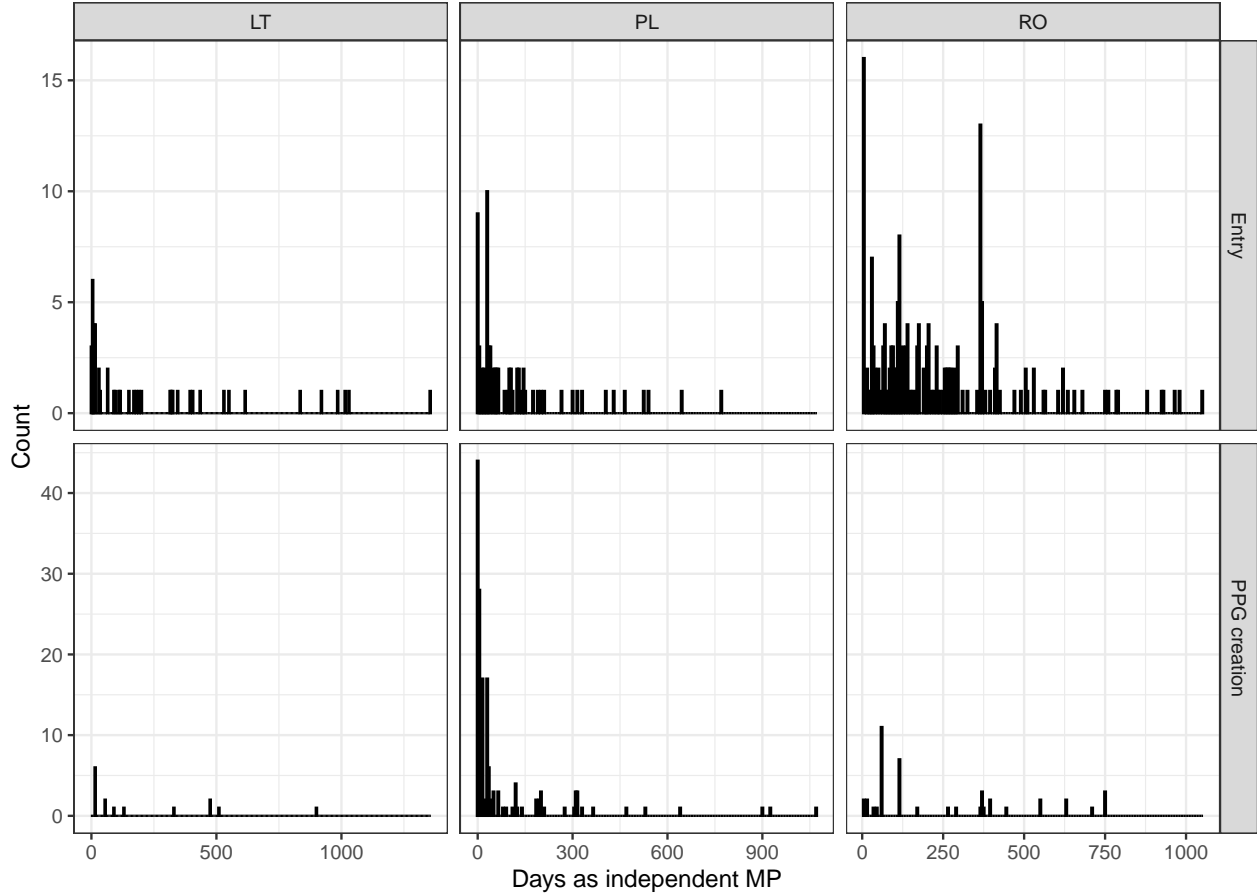


Figure 2: Duration until PPG entry and creation



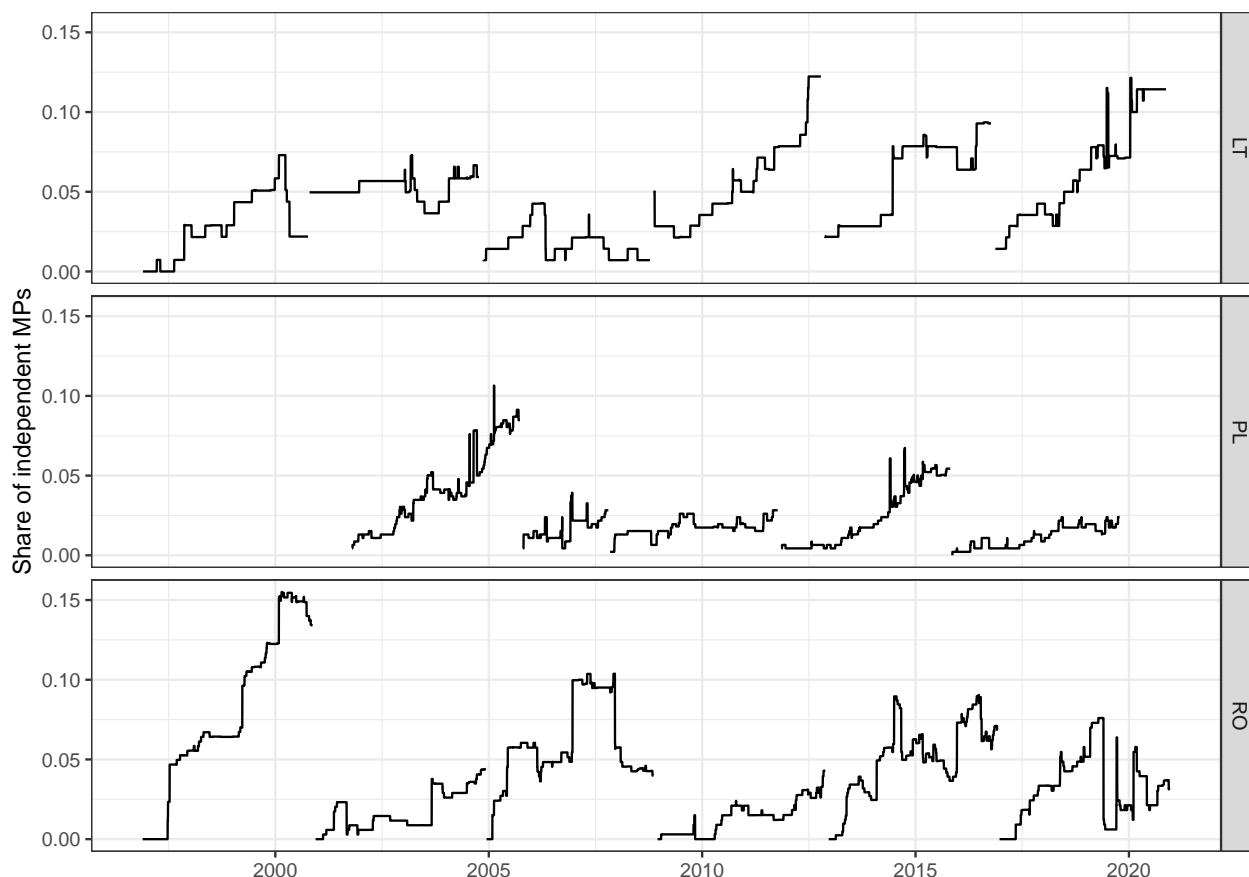
Reflecting the institutional differences discussed above, PPG creations are more likely in Poland (47% of all spells having this outcome) as opposed to Lithuania and Romania (only 12%). In the latter two countries, given the limited number of cases, in the statistical models presented below we examine PPG entry as the only dependent variable.³

Figure 2 shows the number of days as an independent for the MPs who *do* enter or create PPGs. For the sake of comparability we still show the duration times for both entry and creation in all three countries. The non-censored median independence spell is quite short: almost one month in Poland (55 days for entry but only 9 days for PPG creation), three months in Lithuania, and six months in Romania. In all three countries a significant number of entries occur days or weeks after the MP becomes an independent, but there are also cases

³The challenge of small number of cases is exacerbated by the fact that most PPG creations are collective events as multiple MPs are required to establish a group (even if we also include the cases where a single independent MP creates a new group with defectors from an existing group).

where MPs stay as independents for months before finding a PPG that they fit in with.⁴

Figure 3: Share of independent MPs



Source: Own elaboration

⁴We excluded “technical” cases of independence where MP had to be independent for short periods of time purely because of legislative rules and/or where the MP unambiguously declared, even before becoming an independent, their intention to move to another group. For example, in 2000-2003 Arturas Vazbys, a member of the Modern Christian Democratic Union, was affiliated with the joint parliamentary faction established by his party and two other small parties (the Centre Union and the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania). In March 2003 most MPs from the Centre Union and Modern Christian Democrats created a joint faction with the Liberal Union in preparation of the merger of the three parties. Vazbys opposed this development and declared his intention to join the Homeland Union in case it occurred. Once the new faction was created, Vazbys did not join it and became independent; one week later he joined the faction of the Homeland Union. We do not consider Vazbys’ spell of independence because, at that time he became independent, it was clear that he would join another PPG. However, in other cases, even if the spell of independence is short, there is more uncertainty about how and when it will end. Extending the same example, two MPs (Gabriel Mincevic and Valdemar Tomasevski) from the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania also did not join the new faction with the Liberal Union and stayed as independents for two weeks before joining the faction of the Liberal Democratic Union. However, they did not publicly declare their intention to do so, and the leader of the Centre Union expected that they would actually join the new faction created by his party, the Modern Christian Democrats and the Liberal Union. We therefore include these two spells of independence in our analysis. See <https://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/liberalai-centristai-ir-modernieji-krikdemai-ikure-frakcija.d?id=2007242>

Figure 3 reports the share of independent MPs at any given point in time. The average share ranges from 2% in Poland to more than 4% in the other two countries. However, there is a but there is a lot variation. This reflects not only frequent entries and PPG creations by independent MPs, but also many MPs shifting into the independent MP status after exiting from their former PPGs or after these PPGs collapsed.

Explanatory variables

We use the following measures to measure legislators' electoral appeal. For the Polish case we use the share of preference votes cast for the legislator in the most recent parliamentary election relative to the total number of valid votes in this election. This approach follows Nielsen et al. (2019), who study party switching in another country with open-list system, Denmark. We also construct the same variable using electoral results from the (flexible- or open-list) PR tier in Lithuania.⁵

Finally, for Romania, for the closed-list PR elections (1996, 2000, 2004 and 2016), we use the (square root) of the difference between the list position of the legislator in the party they ran for in the most recent parliamentary election and the number of seats that this party obtained in that district. Lower scores therefore indicate that the legislator was closer to not being elected. We expect that, all else equal, parties would place candidates with higher appeal in top positions on the list. For the elections (2008 and 2012) held under the more candidate-centred electoral system, we examine the difference between the legislator's vote share in their SMD and the average vote share of the legislator's party in the multi-member constituency. Since multi-member constituencies were relatively small (average DM is 7.3), we expect for the baseline party support within them to be quite homogenous. The deviations from it across the SMDs in the constituency are likely to be related to the appeal of individual

⁵Since Lithuania uses mixed electoral system, in alternative models (not reported in this version of the paper) we use measures of legislators' electoral appeal that also consider their performance in the majoritarian tier. To do so, we examine the difference between the vote share that the legislator obtained in the single member district (SMD) to the vote share the legislator's party gained in the PR tier in the same SMD. The legislators whose support in SMD exceed their party's vote share in the PR tier are likely to have a stronger personal appeal. We then combine the two measures by constructing a dichotomous variable that takes value of 1 if the legislator's preference vote share or SMD vote surplus are in the top 20% among all legislators in the legislative term. The models that use either the SMD surplus measure (with preference vote share included or not included in the same model) and the dichotomous variable that combines both measures lead to the same results as the ones reported below.

candidates.⁶

We code the dichotomous variable of minor party affiliation using a variety of media sources from each country. Minor party is defined as any party aside from the ones that had their own PPGs. Leaders and members of minor parties get elected to parliament when either running in electoral alliances with larger parties or, in Lithuania only, won seats in single member constituencies. Affiliation with a minor party may also occur if the legislator creates a new or joins an existing party organization. This variable is time-invariant. For several cases where we found that the legislator joined or left a minor party while being an independent in parliament, we coded the MP as having a minor party affiliation if this was the case for most of period the MP was an independent.

The parliamentary support of government is measured on the daily basis. To do so, we constructed the dataset that indicates each legislator’s PPG affiliation on any given day. Using parliamentary records and media sources, we find more than 2,500 instances of legislators switching PPGs in the three countries considered here (see Golder et. al., 2022 for more information). After coding the government status of PPGs using ParlGov (Döring et al., 2023) and ERDDA (Bergman et al., 2019) datasets, as well as official governmental pages, we were able to measure the number of MPs supporting the government. This is divided by the size of parliament on a given day, which itself varies due to MPs leaving or joining parliament.

To test our expectations about the effect of policy proximity, we develop a variable based on the absolute distance between the policy position of the legislator and the two PPGs with the policy positions closest to those of the MP. To compute the position of the PPG, we compute the median of the positions of all MPs who were its members on a given day.

We estimate legislators’ positions by scaling parliamentary vote records downloaded from the parliamentary websites. In all three countries electronic voting has been the standard procedure for casting votes in parliament, thus providing large number of votes that can be used to estimate legislators’ positions and reducing potential selection bias (Hug, 2010). We

⁶For example, Elena Udrea, a prominent candidate of the Right Romania Alliance in the Neamt constituency in 2012 election, obtained 42% of the vote in her single member constituency, 25 percentage points more than the average vote share of this electoral alliance in this constituency.

use the Optimal Classification (OC) procedure, which has been suggested by Armstrong et. al. (2014) as more suitable than Nominate methods for contexts (such as the three countries considered here) in which parties vary in terms of their cohesion and discipline. This is because OC is a non-parametric method that makes fewer assumptions about legislators' utility functions. OC of parliamentary votes has also been used in the work on party switching (e.g., Radean, 2022).

We fit OC for each governmental term using MPs' affiliation periods as units of analysis (cf. Hug & Wuest, 2012). By "governmental period" we mean the period, within a single parliamentary term, during which the party composition of government remained stable (even if PM may have changed, or some parties in government merged or had factions of MPs splitting off). So, if, for example, there were two government periods 1 and 2 in a given parliamentary term, and the legislator switched from PPG A to PPG B in period 1, and remained in PPG B in period 2, we have three observations for this legislator in this parliamentary term: affiliation with A in period 1, affiliation with B in period 1, and affiliation with B in period 2. We remove PPG affiliation periods during which the MP cast fewer than 10 votes. Caretaker government periods are included in the period of the preceding properly-mandated government, except for the immediate post-election periods that are included in the subsequent government period.

This approach allows for the legislators who change PPGs to change their positions, which they do quite substantially. Separating between government terms within a single parliamentary term also makes sense since the first dimension is nearly always very clearly identifiable as government vs. opposition. At the same time, we do not disaggregate time periods too much, which could lead to missing data where there are not enough votes to estimate legislators' positions.

In line with most existing research, we analyze legislators' positions in two dimensions. The first dimension in all OC analyses shows a clear division between government and opposition parties. This is in line with previous work on parliamentary voting (e.g., Hix & Noury, 2016). The second dimension is much less important substantively, and often seems to reflect more minor policy disagreements. We therefore use first dimension scores for computing policy

distances.

Control variables

An important argument in the research on legislative party switching is that the timing during the legislative term affects inter-party move rates (Mershon & Shvetsova, 2013). Legislators who switch in the middle of the parliamentary term are less likely to be punished by the voters, which makes switching at this time point more attractive than after or prior to elections. While this argument relates to the electoral benefits of switching, we include proximity to the past and forthcoming elections as two control variables. This is because the crucial assumption in the argument is that voters care about switching is less likely to hold in younger democracies that are considered here (Mershon & Shvetsova, 2013). Also, since the large majority of independents have exited their PPGs earlier during the term, it is not less clear whether the timing of exit rather than entry should be considered. At the same time, temporal proximity to elections can be correlated to some of our explanatory variables (especially the size of parliamentary majority), which justifies its inclusion as a control variable.

We also include legislators' parliamentary experience and gender in our empirical models. More experienced and female legislators tend to switch less and they are also likely to be correlated to legislators' electoral appeal.

Methods

Since our dependent analysis is duration until the occurrence of an event, we fit the Cox proportional hazards model with PPG entry (all three countries) and PPG creation (Poland only) as the dependent variables. This specific model choice - making no assumptions about the functional form of the hazard - is aligned with the state-of-the-art in existing research which says very little about how the risk of entries and PPG creations change in time. We treat observations that experience the other possible outcome (e.g., PPG creation in the model of entries) as right-censored. While for the Polish case we could also fit the joint Cox's model in which entry and PPG creation are two possible outcomes, the substantive effect

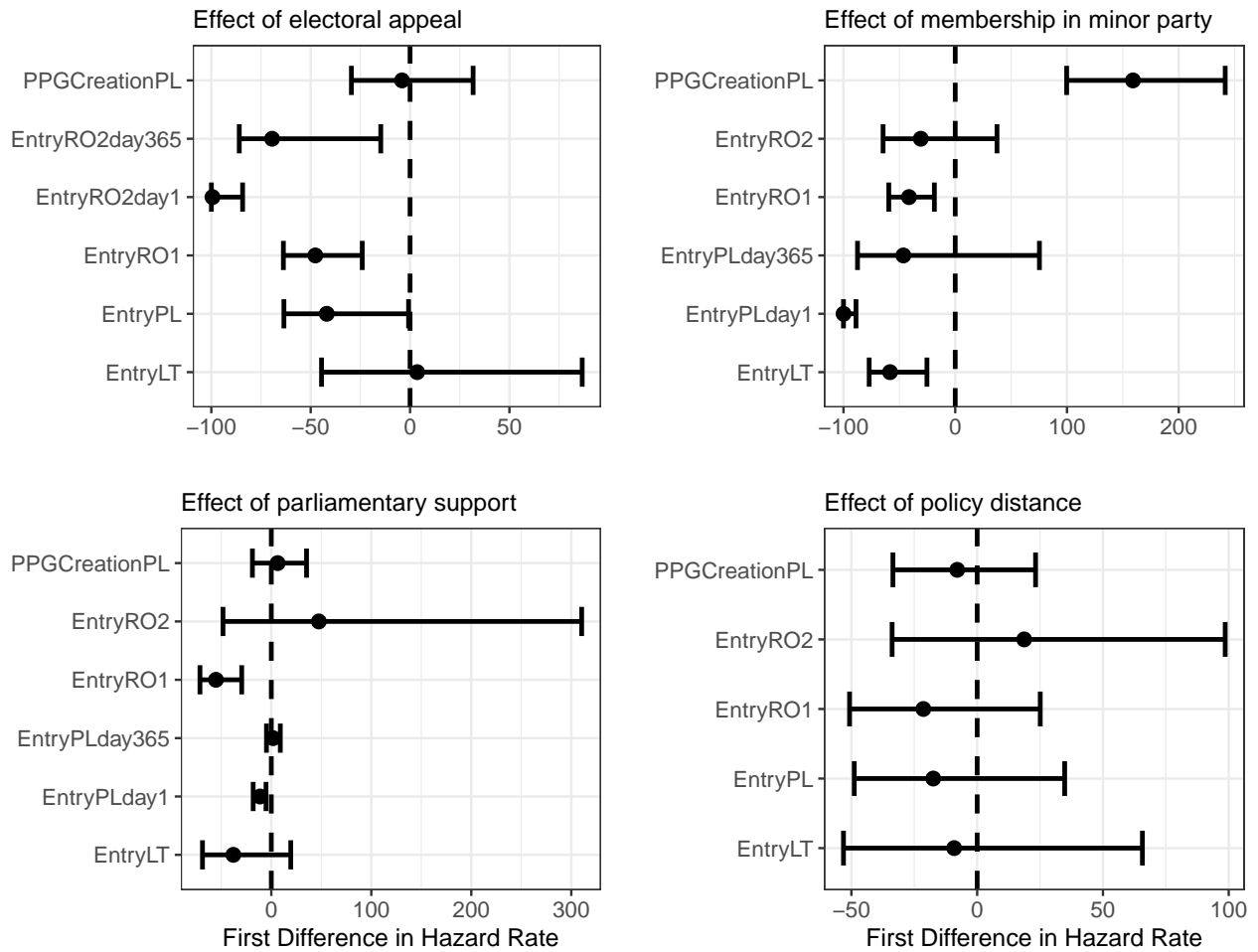
of the covariates on the cause-specific hazard are the same in the joint model and separate models for each risk (Quiroz Flores, 2022, p. 40).

After fitting initial models, we check for whether the proportional hazards assumption is violated. If that is the case, for the explanatory variables that violate the assumption we include interactions with the natural logarithm of time.

Analysis & results

To analyse the effects of the covariates on the cause-specific hazards, we employ the Cox PH models with PPG entry in all three countries and PPG creation in Poland as the dependent variables. Figure 4 shows first differences in the hazard rate of PPG entry and creation together with 90% confidence intervals. For the explanatory variables that violate the proportional hazards assumption 4 shows estimated effects at the beginning of non-affiliation period (day 1) and at a one-year distance (day 365). Full model estimates are available in the Appendix.

Figure 4: Changes in Hazard Rate of PPG Entry and Creation



Note: Estimates based on the models in Table 5 (variables measuring electoral appeal, membership in minor party and parliamentary support) and Table 6 (policy distance variable) as well as the simulations conducted using the simPH package in R (Grandrug 2018). Values of continuous explanatory variables changed from one SD below the mean to one SD above the mean. RO1: Romania 1996–2008 and 2016–2020. RO2: Romania 2008–2016. confidence intervals.

Overall, our findings suggest that the effect of the explanatory variables and the modality on re-affiliation decisions of the independent MPs are context-dependent, i.e. contingent on specific institutional and political configurations.

Turning to the first set of hypotheses, we find no empirical support for H1A, according to which higher electoral appeal of independent MPs would increase the likelihood of their entry into existing PPGs. On the contrary, our results substantiate the opposite pattern (consistent with hypothesis H1B): independent legislators with lower appeal are more likely to enter PPGs.

This effect is particularly strong in Romania between 1996-2008 and 2016-2020 (indicated as Romania1 from now onwards). Change in electoral appeal from one standard deviation (SD) below the mean to one SD above it (corresponding roughly to MP's list position being equal to the number of seats their party gained in a district to the list position lower than party's district seats by almost 2) decreases the hazard of entry into a PPG by 48%. The impact of electoral appeal is also sizable, albeit time-variant, in the case of Romania between 2008-2016 (Romania 2 from now onwards), where the same change in electoral appeal (equivalent to candidate's SMD surplus changing from -3 percentage points to 13 percentage points) in the risk of entry decreases by 99% at the beginning of the non-affiliation period but weakens somewhat to 67% after one year.

In Poland, change in the electoral appeal variable from one SD below the mean (preference vote share of the legislator equal 0.04% of all votes cast in the election) to one SD above the mean (0.16%) makes the entry into an existing PPG less likely by 42%, but there is less certainty about this effect (p-value of the regression coefficient is 0.07). Furthermore, the results suggest that PPG creation in Poland does not depend on non-affiliated MPs' electoral appeal. This finding is consistent with our speculation in the theoretical section suggesting that PPG creation may depend on the electoral appeal of all MPs involved rather than that of an individual MP.

We have also found no effect of electoral appeal on PPG entry in Lithuania. This may occur because the attempts of less popular politicians to join PPGs are countered by the more active recruiting (cooptation) strategies of popular independent MPs by Lithuanian parties (compared to their Polish and Romanian counterparts). However, this interpretation is challenged by the evidence (discussed above) showing that the share of spells of independence that do not end with entry or PPG creation is lower in Lithuania than in the other two countries.

An alternative explanation is that electoral and party systems in Lithuania provide greater opportunities for parliamentary independents to win re-election. The two-round majoritarian tier of the electoral system, in which two leading candidates compete in the second round (unless one of the candidates gains an absolute majority of the vote in the first round)

and fragmented parties with relatively weak roots in the society allowed for candidates without party support to win a handful of seats (4 in the most recent election in 2020) in all parliamentary elections so far. This may encourage less popular candidates to try their luck by running as independents.

For example, after leaving the Social Democrats in 2010, in 2012, Andrius Šedžius ran as an independent in Saules single member district. Šedžius was not a particularly popular candidate in 2008. His preference votes in the PR district were only 0.1% of the total number of voters who participated in the election (it is important to note here that Lithuanian voters can cast up to 5 preference votes for individual candidates). His first-round vote share in the single-member district was only 15% (very similar to that of the Social Democrats), although it increased to 53% in the second round. While his re-election bid failed in the first round after he gained only 8% of the vote, reaching the second round was not impossible as the first two candidates obtained only 18% and 16% of the vote.

Additionally, new political parties have been more successful in Lithuania than in Poland and Romania (Hanley & Sikk, 2016), thus providing another route for parliamentary independents to win re-election without entering existing PPGs. Aurelija Stancikienė, a moderately popular candidate of the Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrats in 2008 (her share of preference votes was 0.5% of the votes cast in the election), left the party's faction shortly before the 2012 election to join (and eventually get re-elected with) a new party "Drasos kelias".

The empirical results corroborate both of our hypotheses on the negative effect of membership in a minor party on the decision of non-affiliated MPs to enter (H2) and create a PPG (H3). Respectively, membership in a minor party decreases the likelihood of PPG entry in all the cases under examination, although in Romania² the coefficient does not reach statistical significance. In Lithuania, members of minor parties are 56% less likely to enter any existing PPGs, while in Romania¹ the risk is lower by 42%.

Interestingly, the minor party variable has a time-variant effect in Poland: it has a sizeable negative and statistically significant effect at the beginning of the non-affiliation period but weakens after one year and falls below the conventional statistical significance level. At the

same time, minor party membership in Poland is strongly correlated with PPG creation, and the effect is statistically significant. As revealed by our analysis, MPs affiliated with minor formations are 1.65 times more likely to launch their own groups in the Sejm. This trend suggests that MPs from minor parties initially prioritize establishing their own political groups rather than joining existing ones. However, when this strategy proves unsuccessful, their options narrow down to either joining an established group or remaining independent. The declining significance of the effect over time can be attributed to the permissive parliamentary rules in Poland where PPGs can be established by 3 MPs (0.7% of all MPs). This allows well-organized minor parties to create their own PPGs and implies that those independent MPs who remain unaffiliated for an extended period typically belong to smaller, micro-parties or organizations. As the political weight of such parties is relatively low, membership in them does no longer act as a determining factor for their members to entry into larger political groups.

Our findings suggest weaker support to H4 (parliamentary support for government decreases the likelihood of entry). This variable reaches statistical significance in Romania1: change from SD below the mean (government supported by 34% of MPs) to one SD above the mean (57%) decreases the hazard of entry by 56%. However, in the models that include policy distance variable (Table 4) the effect of this variable for Romania1 is positive but also decreasing in importance over time. For Poland, the variable is statistically significant at the beginning of the spell of independence but limited in substantive terms (change from one SD below the mean or 44% of parliament to one SD above the mean or 53% of parliament) reduces the hazard of entry by 12%. The effect is not statistically significant one year after the start of the non-affiliation period. Finally, in Lithuania the variable is not statistically significant in the models that exclude policy variables, but becomes statistically significant in the models that include policy distance variable. Overall, these findings suggest mixed evidence at best that entry decisions are driven by parliamentary parties' goals to maximize their parliamentary strength.

Similarly, we find no support to H5, which suggested that PPG creation would also be driven by the size of government's parliamentary majority. The coefficient of this variable in the

Polish analysis is not statistically significant.

Finally, the hazard of both PPG entry in all countries/periods we examine appears not to be related to the policy distance variable, thus suggesting fairly strong evidence against H6. We obtain similar results when using proximity to the closest PPG or average distance to all PPGs.

To further investigate the effect of policy distance variable, we also estimate (see the Appendix) mixed multinomial logit models in which the unit of analysis is the dyad of the legislator and potential recipient PPG. The models are only fit for the spells of independence that end with entry. The main variable of interest is policy difference between the independent MP and a PPG, and the controls include the size of the PPG and its government status. We find a fairly strong effect of the policy distance variable: the coefficient is negative in all models and statistically significant in Poland and one of the two time periods in Romania. The substantive size of the coefficient is largest in the Polish model, which reflects the policy-based party competition in Poland compared to Lithuania and Romania. These models suggest that policy motivations matter at least when MPs decide which PPG to join, if not when they decide whether to join any group.

Finally, turning to the control variables, the results display a mixed picture. Starting from gender, the coefficient reaches statistical significance only in Romania1, where being a female is negatively correlated with PPG entry, and in the case of PPG creation in Poland, where the coefficient has the opposite direction. Likewise, the timing during the legislative term, expressed by the proximity of the latest and the next elections, appears to be significant in the case of PPG entry in that of Romania1 (negative coefficient, thus suggesting that MPs switch closer to election) and PPG creation in Poland (positive coefficient, thus suggesting that PPGs tend to be created in the middle of parliamentary terms). Finally, parliamentary experience appears to be relevant for PPG entry in Poland (positive) and PPG creation in Poland (negative) and, to a lesser extent, in both Romanian cases. Some of these effects change when the model includes the policy distance variable.

Discussion

Despite the perceived importance of parties for representative democracy, legislators not affiliated with parliamentary party groups is an everyday reality in contemporary democracies, particularly the younger ones. In this paper we aimed to shed light on this phenomenon by studying why representatives who already are independents decide to keep this status. Our findings suggest that independent representatives with lower personal electoral appeal and no affiliation with extra-parliamentary party organizations are more likely to join existing parliamentary parties. Institutional contexts are also important. Permissive legislative rules for PPG formation lead to more PPG creations by independents in Poland. In Lithuania, electoral and party system contexts that provide a possibility for parliamentary independents to win re-election has likely discouraged them from joining PPGs. However, our findings are more mixed regarding the relevance of parliamentary parties' electoral, office and policy goals.

Our study aligns with the recent tendency in the research on party switching to differentiate between its different forms. While earlier work recognized the diversity of the switching phenomenon Heller & Mershon (2009), more recent studies examine individual and collective switches separately (Hix & Noury, 2018; Kemahlioglu & Sayari, 2017; Martin, 2021; Nikolenyi, 2019; Volpi, 2019) or focus on the less-researched forms of switching, such as PPG collapse (Martin, 2021). The reason for doing so is that switching is a heterogeneous phenomenon that requires scholars to adjust their arguments depending on its specific form studied. Here we make a further step to this direction by adopting the broad votes, office and policy framework (Müller & Strøm, 1999) to the study of affiliation decisions by independent MPs. Our findings that independent legislators with lower electoral appeal are more likely to enter PPGs aligns with some of the previous work that finds that electorally vulnerable MPs are more likely switch (e.g., Desposato, 2006). At the same time we also propose new arguments that are only relevant to the study of PPG entry and creation - especially regarding the relevance of affiliations with extra-parliamentary party organizations. This underscores the importance of separating between different forms of switching in theoretical and empirical analyses and the need for more research on other forms of party switching that are still

relatively under-researched (e.g., exit of MPs from PPGs to the independent status).

Our findings also underscore the importance of legislative institutions for explaining patterns of switching. As Nikolenyi (2019), we also find that legislative regulations have strong effects on which forms of switching are more likely to occur. Thus, increasing the thresholds for parliamentary party group formation could reduce the formation of new PPGs, by independent MPs but also by MPs in existing groups. However, such reforms may also increase the moves between existing PPGs, potentially with an intermediate stage as an independent. These findings are important for the policymakers who may be considering such institutional changes.

Our focus on independent politicians is also propitious for understanding the relative relevance of legislators and potential recipient PPGs in driving switching. This is because legislator's home party, an important actor in explaining other forms of switching, is mute. As mentioned above, we find that legislators' incentives are more important in driving their affiliation decisions than the incentives that recipient parties provide to them. It seems, also based on qualitative evidence, that parliamentary parties are quite open to accept in-switchers, although perhaps their offers are not enticing enough for at least some independent MPs to join them.

Our focus on individual politicians' ambition as well as the explicitly dynamic perspective that allows politicians to switch into and out of the independent status complements the research on political personalization in which predominantly country-level factors have been used to account for the presence of independent politicians. Our approach could be extended to examine, for example, whether ministers without party affiliation join existing parties or create new ones.

Appendix

Descriptive statistics

Table 1: Descriptive statistics: time-invariant statistics

country		ElectoralAppeal	PartyMember	Female	LegTerms
LT	Min	-5.02	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Mean	-0.68	0.46	0.13	0.58
	SD	1.12	0.50	0.34	0.57
	Max	1.65	1.00	1.00	1.79
	N	114	125	125	125
PL	Min	-5.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Mean	-2.55	0.32	0.14	0.35
	SD	0.71	0.47	0.35	0.51
	Max	-0.16	1.00	1.00	1.79
	N	334	334	334	334
RO1	Min	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Mean	0.54	0.68	0.10	0.41
	SD	0.75	0.47	0.30	0.51
	Max	3.74	1.00	1.00	1.95
	N	225	225	225	225
RO2	Min	-18.88	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Mean	4.93	0.53	0.12	0.29
	SD	7.78	0.50	0.33	0.44
	Max	35.92	1.00	1.00	1.61
	N	130	130	130	130

Note: Different operationalizations of electoral appeal in each country or electoral system context. See text for more details. RO1: 1996-2004 and 2016-2020. RO2: 2008-2016.

Estimates of regression models

Table 2: Descriptive statistics: time-variant statistics

country		GovSupport	PolicyDistance
LT	Min	36.88	0.00
	Mean	53.54	0.11
	SD	6.70	0.07
	Max	73.91	0.35
	N	55347	55653
PL	Min	32.61	0.00
	Mean	48.33	0.08
	SD	4.73	0.08
	Max	56.09	0.44
	N	53688	55829
RO1	Min	20.97	0.00
	Mean	45.49	0.11
	SD	11.38	0.12
	Max	58.31	0.71
	N	88589	39356
RO2	Min	35.03	0.00
	Mean	54.76	0.09
	SD	8.17	0.07
	Max	71.60	0.39
	N	23685	29222

Note: RO1: 1996-2004 and 2016-2020. RO2: 2008-2016.

Table 3: Cox PH models of entry and PPG creation (without policy distance)

	Entry				Creation
	LT 96-20	PL 01-19	RO 96-08/16-20	RO 08-16	PL 01-19
Electoral appeal (H1A, H1B)	0.009 (0.152)	-0.337+ (0.187)	-0.407** (0.146)	-0.269* (0.122)	-0.031 (0.123)
Minor party member (H2, H3)	-0.853* (0.374)	-6.983* (3.480)	-0.539** (0.204)	-0.361 (0.389)	0.946*** (0.160)
Parl. support of government (H4, H5)	-0.034 (0.030)	-0.125** (0.048)	-0.035** (0.012)	0.026 (0.038)	0.007 (0.016)
Female	-0.873 (0.619)	0.122 (0.361)	-1.379** (0.463)	-0.427 (0.579)	0.798* (0.319)
Log (terms served)	-0.186 (0.292)	-1.754+ (0.905)	0.365+ (0.195)	-8.985+ (5.105)	-0.356+ (0.188)
Days since last election	0.010 (0.022)	0.023 (0.034)	-0.409*** (0.087)	-0.050 (0.081)	0.052*** (0.013)
Days until next election	0.009 (0.022)	0.022 (0.035)	-0.409*** (0.087)	-0.051 (0.081)	0.050*** (0.013)
Minor party * log(time)		1.068+ (0.637)			
Parl. support * log(time)		0.024+ (0.013)			
Log (terms) * log(time)		0.322+ (0.192)		1.489+ (0.894)	
Days since last election * log(time)		-0.004 (0.006)	0.063*** (0.015)		-0.009*** (0.003)
Days until next election * log(time)		-0.004 (0.006)	0.063*** (0.015)		-0.009** (0.003)
Female * log(time)					-0.182 (0.125)
Electoral appeal * log(time)				0.034 (0.023)	
Num.Obs.	47 632	53 688	88 469	23 685	53 688
AIC	325.6	649.6	930.8	292.6	1612.8
BIC	387.0	756.3	1015.3	365.3	1701.7
RMSE	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.03
N events	40	69	107	44	162

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note: Different operationalizations of the electoral appeal in each country or electoral system context. See text for more details.

Table 4: Cox PH models of entry and PPG creation

	Entry				Creation
	LT 96-20	PL 01-19	RO 96-08/16-20	RO 08-16	PL 01-19
Electoral appeal (H1A, H1B)	-0.560 (0.500)	-0.411* (0.195)	-0.412* (0.203)	-0.277 (0.300)	0.009 (0.137)
Minor party member (H2, H3)	-0.792* (0.401)	-7.060+ (3.611)	-3.566* (1.490)	-0.620 (0.460)	0.741*** (0.183)
Parl. support of government (H4, H5)	-0.071* (0.034)	-0.160** (0.058)	0.312*** (0.092)	0.037 (0.043)	0.032 (0.021)
Female	-0.940 (0.633)	0.101 (0.405)	-1.406* (0.615)	-0.483 (0.688)	0.676 (0.477)
Days since last election	-0.060 (0.069)	0.002 (0.005)	-0.021 (0.063)	-0.022 (0.091)	0.071*** (0.017)
Days until next election	-0.064 (0.069)	0.002 (0.005)	-0.023 (0.062)	-0.024 (0.091)	0.069*** (0.017)
Minor party * log(time)		1.102+ (0.662)	0.686* (0.290)		
Parl. support * log(time)		0.031* (0.015)	-0.057*** (0.016)		
Days since last election * log(time)	0.006 (0.014)				-0.013*** (0.003)
Days until next election * log(time)	0.006 (0.014)				-0.012*** (0.003)
Female * log(time)					-0.136 (0.154)
Electoral appeal * log(time)				0.033 (0.056)	
Policy distance (H6)	-0.779 (2.955)	-1.245 (1.961)	-1.038 (1.251)	1.101 (2.454)	-0.575 (1.269)
Log(pref. vote share) * log(time)	0.116 (0.097)				
Num.Obs.	47 597	52 806	38 635	22 136	52 806
AIC	282.6	574.9	420.4	237.6	1256.8
BIC	379.0	672.5	506.1	317.6	1354.4
RMSE	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.02
N events	35	62	58	35	130

+ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Note: Different operationalizations of the electoral appeal in each country or electoral system context. See text for more details.

Table 5: Mixed multinomial logit models of entry and PPG creation

	LT 96-20	PL 01-19	RO 96-08/16-20	RO 08-16
Policy distance to PPG	-0.295 (0.538)	-4.099*** (0.682)	-1.392* (0.577)	-1.094 (0.729)
PPG size (share of total MPs)	-1.981 (1.950)	3.950*** (1.179)	5.739*** (1.146)	3.953** (1.284)
PPG in government	0.372 (0.386)	-1.058* (0.500)	-0.677* (0.315)	-0.019 (0.468)
Num.Obs.	370	930	406	210
AIC	146.6	193.6	177.9	111.5

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

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