

Parliamentary defections and perceived proximity between politicians and their party

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Abstract

What are the effects of party defections on the attitudes of politicians who remain loyal to the party? We answer by combining multiple sources of data into a comprehensive novel dataset on parliamentary party switching, to estimate how this affects the perceived distance between a politician and his party. Focusing on the theory of cognitive dissonance and the black sheep effect, we hypothesise that politicians perceive themselves closer to their parties when those parties recently suffered defections. The effect should be greater among incumbent politicians as they directly experience divisions, but also among officials dissatisfied with the leadership as their dissonance should be stronger. Statistical analyses of data from two elite surveys, on a sample of 13,256 politicians belonging to 92 parties that ran in 28 elections held between 2005 and 2015 in 14 countries, provide support for our hypotheses and shed light on the consequences of intra-party defections.

Keywords: elite surveys, party switching, intra-party politics, cognitive dissonance, black sheep effect

1. Introduction

For decades, parties have been considered unitary actors. However, we know that divisions and disagreements are inherently part of intra-party dynamics. Scholars started to investigate internal divisions from many different perspectives, analysing splits in parliamentary roll call votes (Kam 2009), party switching and parliamentary defections (Heller and Mershon 2009a), party fissions (Ibenskas 2017), and disagreement expressed at party conferences (Ceron and Greene 2019; Greene and Haber 2015) or in parliamentary speeches (Bäck et al. 2016). Recent studies used political elite surveys as additional sources of data on intra-party disagreement (Carroll and Kubo 2019; Close et al. 2019; Schumacher and Elmelund-Præstekær 2018; Steiner and Mader 2019).

Starting from this literature, the present paper combines multiple sources of data and provides a novel and comprehensive dataset on legislative party switching to examine the impact of parliamentary defections on politicians' beliefs. Disagreement expressed in the answers provided in two elite surveys by candidates and Members of Parliament (MPs) forms a basis for such exploration: we will rely mainly on the Comparative Candidate Survey using the PartiRep MP Survey as a robustness check.

The consequences of intra-party division have been largely investigated in the academic literature. Scholars argued that intra-party division can be damaging in many ways. Given that party unity is often considered as an added value in terms of valence (Clark 2009), public disagreement and defections are signals that the party is not able to select the best parliamentary agents and reveal a weakening in the chain of responsiveness that goes from voters to their elected representatives. As such, splits and defections can undermine voter confidence that the party will provide a stable, consistent and effective leadership. This can damage a party's electoral support (Greene and Haber 2015; Ibenskas 2017) and jeopardize its stability and institutionalization (McMenamin and Gwiazda 2011). Parliamentary

defections can also alter the balance between government and opposition parties with consequences for everyday policymaking.

Accordingly, parliamentary defections are traumatic events that can alter the attitudes of politicians belonging to parties affected by such traumas. In real world politics there are plenty of examples of intra-party conflicts that generate repeated waves of dissent and defection. One of the latest events concerns the feud inside the French Socialist Party (2012-2017), which was affected by repeated episodes of parliamentary dissent culminating in the disintegration of the party itself when a number of prominent politicians left the party (including the new Head of State Emmanuel Macron and the former Prime Minister Manuel Valls).

Similarly, in countries like Italy, Israel or Japan, defections have been crucial to producing government reshuffles, overturning, termination and snap elections. Given that these switches are a source of political instability, Prime Ministers overthrown by the treason of individual defectors or splinter groups usually consider these episodes as traumatic and, in the subsequent electoral campaigns, they highlight how such defectors betrayed the voters' wills and undermined political accountability and responsiveness.

So far, scholars have focused mainly on the effects of defections on MPs' voting behaviour or on party performance in the electoral arena, while little attention has been devoted to the consequence that parliamentary feud produces inside the party, particularly on the beliefs and attitudes of individual politicians. With respect to parliamentary behaviour, some studies analysed how defections produce shifts in the ideological position of switchers, who align their preferences with the ideal points of their new parliamentary group (Desposato 2009; Hug and Wüest 2011; Nokken 2009). The consequences of defections on parties and on MPs who kept their label, however, have been understudied (with few important exceptions: Heller and Mershon 2009b; Nokken 2000). These studies suggest that parties affected by out-switching may become less heterogeneous (Heller and Mershon 2009b) and that, as a

result of the defection of a peer, non-switchers stick to the party line even when they are ideologically close to the defectors (Nokken 2000). Investigating whether switching affects the internal cohesion of parties is crucial given that intra-party cohesion can influence everyday policy-making and coalition formation (Ceron 2016).

The present paper tries to understand this mechanism from the above perspective, focusing on the beliefs of party candidates and MPs rather than on their actual behavior. With the premise that splits represent a traumatic experience, and taking into account the psychological effects of a party's in-group bias (Martocchia Diodati 2017; Sacchi et al. 2013), we argue that higher rates of defections strengthen the sense of belonging for those who remain so that politicians should perceive themselves to be closer to their party. We expect that such effect should be greater among incumbent MPs, as they directly experienced the trauma, and among legislators who are dissatisfied with the leadership (Close et al. 2019), as they will experience a stronger cognitive dissonance, which brings them to align their ideological beliefs with their past behaviour (i.e., the decision to stay inside). We test our hypotheses on a sample of 13,256 politicians belonging to 92 parties that ran in 28 elections held between 2005 and 2015 in 14 countries. The results are in line with our expectations and suggest that defections can strengthen the cohesion of remaining politicians (including other potential defectors): this makes the out-switching party more cohesive. By invoking (and highlighting) internal cohesion and coherence, while blaming the black sheep, the party leadership can also try to avoid further waves of defections.

2. Theory and hypotheses: Party breakups as traumatic events

2.1 Literature review

We know that party membership is not static because legislators can always decide to change affiliation. Considering party membership as a strategic choice, in every party system there are generic incentives

for parties to split and/or to merge (Laver and Benoit 2003). In this framework, every party system is therefore potentially unstable.

This instability can take two forms: collective or individual. Mergers and splits are examples of collective divisions, which are not uncommon phenomena in European countries (Ibenskas 2017). Sometimes, however, legislators decide to change party independently, swapping their parliamentary affiliation, a phenomenon known as “party switching”. The scope of switching varies across Europe: while in certain countries it occurs frequently, in other systems, legislators do not change their group often, yet the phenomenon is not utterly absent (Heller and Mershon 2009a). Individual defections, splits and mergers are therefore all instances of lack of unity within parties and their incidence confirms that party size and identity should not be taken for granted between two elections.

Several studies have tried to understand the determinants of party switching and individual defections. On the one hand, scholars highlight the importance of policy motives along with office and electoral concerns (Di Virgilio et al. 2012; Heller and Mershon 2005). On the other, attention has been devoted to the impact of electoral systems (McLaughlin 2012), regime type (O’Brien and Shomer 2013; Mershon and Shvetsova 2013) and party system institutionalization.

Conversely, other scholars analyse the consequences of defection on the (subsequent) electoral competition. Marinova (2016) analyses how party instability – resulting from splits, mergers and switching – affects voters and the kind of information they use to evaluate parties. Greene and Haber (2015) find that intra-party division negatively affects voters’ perceptions of parties and – as a consequence – endangers their electoral support. Similarly, Ibenskas (2017) looks at how parties’ electoral support changes after a split and tries to understand what factors might explain the differing degrees of success of splinter vis-à-vis rump parties.

A different stream of research focuses on the consequences that switching produces on parties and individual legislators. Some scholars look at the impact of switching on MPs' careers. Grose and Yoshinaka (2003) show that switching has considerable electoral costs; defectors see a substantial decline of votes in the following election. The behavioural consequences of switching have been investigated too. Hug and Wüest (2011) evaluated whether defecting produces a shift in the ideological position of MPs. They found that indeed switchers alter their ideal points and align preferences with those of their new group. This result is in line with Nokken (2009) and Desposato (2009) who found that defectors change their roll-call behaviour to match the policy goals of their new party¹.

These studies focus on switchers and their new affiliation, without considering the effect of defections on the party that has been left and more specifically, on MPs who decided to keep their label. Indeed, scholars have devoted less attention to the destiny of the parties and legislators that suffered defections (with a couple of exceptions: Heller and Mershon 2009b; Nokken 2000).

Nokken (2000) compares the voting behaviour of switchers vis-à-vis non-switchers and records a considerable re-alignment of preferences among defectors. This realignment does not occur for those MPs who kept their own party label, even for the legislators ideologically close to the switchers. Heller and Mershon (2009b) do not look at individual MPs, but at the effect that switching has on parties' unity in voting behaviour. According to these authors, preferences grow more heterogeneous when a party's size increases thanks to switching. On the contrary, ideal points within out-switching parties should become more alike and this effect should be stronger, compared to receiving parties.

In this regard, the present study aims to assess the impact of party switching on intra-party heterogeneity of the sending party (the one that suffer from defections). Instead of focusing on the overall effect within the party, we adopt an individual perspective. We pay attention to the self-positioning of individual politicians (rather than their voting behaviour) and, specifically, we look at the perceived distance

between politicians and their own party in the aftermath of party splits. This research question is both theoretically and empirically relevant.

Indeed, divisions and parliamentary defections weaken sending parties in many ways. First, by reducing the size of a parliamentary party group, defections can decrease the margin of the ruling coalition, weakening its ability to enact policymaking or, conversely, they can damage the strength of the opposition, granting more leeway to the government. Additionally, defections can represent a challenge for the party leadership, which might be weakened due to an outbound flow of legislators.

Second, defections are a stain on party's reputation and can damage its valence endowment. Clark (2009: 96) notes "unity can also be considered in valence terms, as again all would agree that voters prefer a unified party to a divided one. A party whose members publicly feud, for instance, will do little to inspire the public's confidence that they can provide stable, effective leadership." Additionally, from a valence point of view, switching also represents a threat to the chain of responsiveness, as it is very difficult to keep legislators accountable when they change label (Heller and Mershon 2009a), given that they adjust their voting behaviour and attitudes too. Consequently, parliamentary switches can be electorally damaging, like splits and intra-party divisions (Greene and Haber 2015; Ibenskas 2017); furthermore, switches can also seriously jeopardize party stability and institutionalization (McMenamin and Gwiazda, 2011). Accordingly, it is also crucial to investigate what happens inside parties affected by out-switching, evaluating whether internal cohesion gets strengthened or not; cohesion, in fact, can affect electoral outcomes but also everyday policy-making or the likelihood of being involved in coalition governments (Ceron 2016).

2.2 Theory and hypotheses

Given that defections and divisions can have serious consequences for the party as a whole (also in terms of payoffs related to policy, office and votes), we argue that the occurrence of party switching can be a traumatic experience that will also affect the behaviour of party leaders and politicians.

How do parties and politicians react to such traumatic events? In principle, given that some dissidents have moved to another group, when drafting the new party list for the next election the party leadership can try to replace the defectors with new party candidates who are deemed to be more loyal. Accordingly, we can expect that, on average, party candidates will perceive themselves to be ideologically closer to the party line after the occurrence of large splits so that parties affected by defections will be less heterogeneous (Heller and Mershon 2009b).

Beside this systemic effect, we contend that such traumatic events leave a strong impression in the minds of those politicians who remain in the party. The psychological literature on the black sheep effect (Marques and Paez 1994; Rullo et al. 2015) suggests that people tend to distance themselves from a defecting group members, as a form of group protection made in order to restore the subjective uniformity of the group affected by deviants, i.e. the switchers (Marques and Paez 1994). When group membership becomes salient, we observe assimilation to the group as members will defend it to preserve a positive social identity; the remaining group members can thus emphasize their distance from the deviants, by reaffirming their closeness to the group itself.

In this regard, the event, together with the awareness of its potential damage in terms of party's payoffs, leads politicians to over-emphasize their ideological closeness to the party line for reasons linked with party competition concerns, even though psychological mechanisms are at work too. Splits can be perceived as a menace to the party's social identity (Sacchi et al. 2013); accordingly, as suggested by theories of social identity (Martocchia Diodati 2017; Tajfel 1982), and in line with the in-group

projection model (Sacchi et al. 2013), we claim that politicians who did not switch will tend to minimize the perceived differences between themselves and their in-group, i.e. the party to which they still belong. Qualitative analyses of party breakup report that in-group politicians (those who remained inside the party) perceive their group to be consonant with the old party identity and argue that the splinter group is dissonant with that identity (Sani and Reicher 1998). Therefore, we argue that a higher rate of defections brings remaining politicians to perceive themselves as ideologically close to their party, though this effect can be stronger for some subsets of politicians as we will discuss later.

There are at least two reasons to expect greater closeness between politicians and their party after the split. One is related to the replacement of dissenters with new candidates who are assumed to be more loyal. Another reason has to do with the traumatic effect of defections. Politicians that are exposed to huge levels of switching can regard defection as a treason of the party's community. In turn, this can generate indignation; the remaining politicians can feel scorn for their colleagues who have crossed the party line. In principle, groups can be subjected to a non-abandonment norm; members will 'sink or swim' jointly with the rest of the group. From this perspective, observing a member violating this norm and leaving the group increases the salience of this norm; other members want to communicate to the rest of the group that they distance themselves from this treason (Van Vugt and Hart 2004). This will reinforce their willingness to support the party, bringing them to report a heightened ideological closeness to the party position. From a black sheep effect perspective, incumbent MPs are also more identified with the parliamentary party group directly hurt by the switches and, therefore, their reaction should be harsher (Branscombe et al. 1993).

If this latter pattern is prevailing, we should expect to observe a stronger effect of defections among politicians who directly experienced such trauma, namely among incumbent MPs (who served when the

defections took place), rather than among rookie (i.e., non-incumbent) candidates/legislators who might only have an indirect experience of defections.

Conversely, incumbent MPs who dealt with these episodes of defection in the previous legislature and observed their colleagues leaving the party might harbour stronger levels of bitterness. This reinforces the awareness about the importance of party unity, as well as their social identification with the group (Ellemers et al. 2002), and strengthens their perceptions concerning the ideological closeness between them and the party².

Hypothesis 1 (H1): A higher rate of defections brings incumbent politicians to perceive themselves as ideologically closer to their party, compared to non-incumbents.

Notwithstanding the existence of an alternative exit option (the one adopted by these colleagues), other potential dissenters could have made a different choice and, despite having concerns about the party line and the strategy proposed by the party leadership, decided to remain inside. This can generate a tension between the ideological attitudes (disagreement) and past behaviour (the decision to stay inside) producing the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957): an uncomfortable state of tension that happens when a person's cognitive and ideological perceptions are inconsistent with the choices taken in everyday life. This theory suggests that people will adjust their cognitions and beliefs in accordance to some discrepant act/behaviour in which they have engaged, and which are difficult to reconcile with their own beliefs (Hirschman 1970). We hypothesize that an analogous psychological mechanism applies also to politicians.

In this regard, those potential defectors (dissatisfied with the party leader or with the nature of internal decision-making that are, consequently, potentially less loyal to the leadership and more willing to leave

the party) who have nevertheless decided to remain inside the party, will experience a state of dissonance and will resolve this, justifying their resolution in light of a strengthened ideological closeness to the group. Cognitive dissonance will push politicians to feel less distant from their party in order to resolve the discrepancy between beliefs and behaviour.

This is also in line with a black sheep effect: Threatened by an association with the switchers, which could have been similar to them, potential defectors that chose to stay inside can fear retaliation and, as an individual protection strategy (Eidelman and Biernat 2003), they will try to distance themselves from the switchers by expressing the perception of a better match between their ideological position and that of the party.

This effect will be stronger, the larger the share of rebels who actually left; the cognitive dissonance should be higher, given that most of the colleagues who retained similar dissenting views and were analogously dissatisfied with the party's internal life, have left the group.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): A higher rate of defections brings less loyal politicians who opted to stay inside the party to perceive themselves as ideologically closer to their party, compared to more loyal colleagues.

3. Data and operationalization

We test our hypotheses using a new dataset that puts parliamentary switches in relation to the answers to elite surveys held after the defections. The information on party switching comes from an original dataset on all the inter-party movements that occurred in Western Europe from 1945 to 2015 (Volpi 2019). The details regarding the switches were retrieved from the parliamentary archives and statistical services of each country. Only when a movement was officially recorded in the parliamentary transcripts/archive have we included it in the dataset. In line with Heller and Mershon (2009a), we consider party splits,

mergers and start-ups as well as all cases in which an MP acquired the status of independent as instances of switching. This operationalization is particularly suitable for our research questions.

Switches are combined with another source of data represented by two elite surveys: the Comparative Candidate Survey (CCS 2016, 2018) and the PartiRep MP Survey³. The CCS consists of cross-country post-electoral polls of candidates who ran for national assemblies. The goal of the survey is to gather information regarding the policy preferences of candidates, as well as their attitudes vis-à-vis their party. We first rely on CCS Module I and then, as a robustness check, we also investigate Module II. Overall, by matching CCS survey data with information on parliamentary switching, we analyse answers provided by up to 12,728 respondents from 12 countries in 22 different elections⁴.

Similarly, PartiRep conducted an attitudinal survey among MPs. The survey was carried out between 2009 and 2012. The response rate varies across countries, but the sample is still representative of the entire population of MPs (for details: Deschouwer et al. 2014). By matching PartiRep MP Survey data with information on parliamentary switching, we analyse answers provided by 528 respondents from 11 countries⁵.

In the empirical analysis we mainly focus on CCS because the number of observations is considerably higher here than in PartiRep MP Survey. However, as a robustness check, we want to assess the reliability of our findings on a different sample of politicians (though, interestingly, there is some overlap in terms of countries and years considered). PartiRep data were collected in an unrelated survey project (thereby controlling for potential measurement errors), and include a lower number of observations (this represents a more stringent test). Notice that some PartiRep questions are slightly different from CCS ones and therefore PartiRep data have been analysed separately. Below we provide information on the operationalization of our CCS variables (see Online Appendix for details on operationalization of PartiRep MP Survey data).

To test our hypotheses, we are interested in assessing to what extent politicians consider themselves distant from their party, and we focus solely on their self-perception of such distance. In this regard, survey data are perfectly suitable to record the perceived distance between candidates and their party, instead of any actual disagreement related to observable behaviour (such as parliamentary votes; for a similar view: Schumacher and Elmelund-Præstekær 2018).

For this purpose, we compute the absolute difference⁶ between candidates' self-placement on the left-right spectrum and candidates' placement of their party on the same spectrum. This variable, *Ideological Distance*, is our dependent variable. It ranges from 0 (no perceived distance between the candidate and the party) to 10 (the candidate and the party are on opposite sides of the spectrum).

Our main independent variable, *Defections*, represents the percentage of MPs who switched over the total number of seats retained by that party during the previous legislative term. For instance, with respect to the surveys held in Germany after the 2005 elections, we put survey answers in relation to the percentage of switchers in the legislative term 2002-2005.

The first hypothesis suggests that the effect of defections on the perceived distance between candidates and their party should be greater among those who were already MPs at the time of defections, as they directly experienced the detriment of divisions in the daily legislative policy-making. In order to account for this, we use the variable *Incumbent* from CCS, which establishes the value of 0 for non-incumbent candidates⁷ and 1 for incumbent candidates, and we examine it in interaction with *Defections*.

The second hypothesis suggests that, due to cognitive dissonance, the effect of defections should be greater among those who are less loyal to the party leadership but who, despite this, decided to stay inside the party. Accordingly, we create an index of loyalty: *Loyalty Score*. This index is built through principal component analysis (see Online Appendix for details), based on the first component, and combines the answers to different questions related to the degree of loyalty toward the party leadership and agreement

with the party whip (for a related discussion on loyalty and agreement in candidate surveys: Close et al. 2019). This variable ranges from -3 to +3; it retains lower values when respondents believe that the party leader is too powerful, intra-party decision making is an excessive top-down process, and MPs should be free to vote in parliament (independently from the party whip) following mainly own opinions, or at most, voters' opinions, instead of the party line. Conversely, respondents receive a higher *Loyalty Score* when they believe that MPs should not be free to vote according to own opinions, but that they must follow the party line, not express concerns about the power of the party leader and not complain about the nature of intra-party decision making. To test H2 we then examine the interaction between *Defections* and *Loyalty Score*⁸.

We control for some individual traits of the respondents. Specifically, given that gender might affect candidates' reported level of disagreement (Close et al. 2019), we control for it through the dummy variable *Gender*, which assigns a value of 1 when a candidate is a male and 0 otherwise. Moreover, we also account for the political experience of candidates, measuring the years of experience within the party office; the variable *Experienced* also allows to detect which respondent belongs to the party leadership.

4. Analysis and results

We analyse data through a multilevel linear model with politicians nested in parties. The results are reported in Table 1. Three models are provided. The first one refers to CCS Module I; in the second we extend the analysis to include CCS Module II. Notice that, compared to Module I, in the second wave of CCS some questions were no longer asked. To account for this, in Model 2 we slightly change the operationalization of two variables: first, only one element of the *Loyalty Score* is still available in the new survey wave, therefore we measure loyalty through a dummy variable equal to 1 if the respondent believes that MPs should not be free to vote according to own opinions because they must always follow

the party line; second, to shed light on political experience, the variable *Experienced* becomes a dummy equal to 1 if the respondent held a national party office. Finally, Model 3 replicates the analysis using PartiRep data. The sample of politicians in PartiRep is different from CCS; this allows us to make sure that our findings from CCS are not driven by unobserved factors that are specific to the CCS survey. We can thereby control for potential measurement errors. Moreover, the observations available in PartiRep are considerably lower than those available in CCS. A smaller sample size represents a stringent test, given that statistical significance is more difficult to achieve. PartiRep and CCS are two different projects, therefore the variables of interest are not identical. This concerns in particular the *Loyalty Score* (still measured via principal component analysis, though on a slightly different set of questions) and the variable *Experienced*, which distinguishes politicians belonging to the party leadership. Nevertheless, we managed to maximise the similarities in order to measure and capture those concepts that are theoretically relevant for our argument (see the Online Appendix).

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Concerning H1, we notice that the coefficient of the interaction term between *Defections* and *Incumbent* is negative and statistically significant (at the 90% level of confidence) across all models. For instance, in Model 2 the marginal effect of *Defections* is approximately -0.003 (standard error: 0.001) when the candidate is a non-incumbent; conversely, when the candidate is an incumbent this effect becomes more than double and grows up to -0.008 (standard error: 0.002). This means that increasing defections by 10 points (i.e., a one standard deviation growth) will decrease the *Ideological Distance* between a candidate and the party by 0.08 points when the candidate is an incumbent, which represents an 8% increase compared to the average *Ideological Distance* of respondents (equal to 0.989); conversely, when the

candidate is a non-incumbent, the expected effect is limited to 3% (compared to the average ideological distance). Interestingly, the effect magnitude seems much larger when focusing only on elected MPs, as in PartiRep (Model 3): here a 10-points increase in defections decreases the *Ideological Distance* by 0.42 points for incumbents. These results provide support for our first hypothesis: the higher the percentage of defectors during the previous term, the smaller the perceived ideological distance between a remaining politician and her/his party, particularly for incumbents compared to non-incumbents who did not directly experienced detrimental switches. In this regard, defections of former colleagues appear as an exceedingly traumatic experience that produces a stronger impact among those who were already in parliament.

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Turning to H2, we find support for the idea that – due to cognitive dissonance – detrimental divisions produce a larger effect on candidates who report a lower *Loyalty Score*. Figure 1, based on Model 1, displays the marginal effect of *Defections* on *Ideological Distance*. When the *Loyalty Score* is low, a 10-percentage points increase in the share of switches reduces the perceived distance by 0.1 points (a 10% drop from the average *Ideological Distance*). This effect lessens as the *Loyalty Score* grows and the impact becomes no longer statistically significant among the most loyal candidates⁹.

[FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Remarkably, Figure 2 (based on Model 3) confirms that the marginal effect of *Defections* on *Ideological Distance* is stronger (-0.153; standard error: 0.055) when the *Loyalty Score* is low, and narrows further as loyalty increases, becoming no longer statistically significant among the most loyal legislators.

With respect to the control variables, in the CCS analyses we find that male candidates tend to report a greater distance (+0.07 points) compared to their female colleagues. This finding is in line with those of Close et al. (2019) who noted a very similar effect on the reported score of disagreement. Conversely, in PartiRep we notice that being experienced politicians in a leadership position decreases the self-perceived ideological distance by 0.2 points.

Intriguingly, the effect magnitudes of these two controls are in line with (or not much higher than) the conditional effect of a one-standard deviation increase in *Defections* for incumbents or non-loyal respondents in CCS, and are lower if compared to the same results on PartiRep data. This indicates that the role of *Defections* is not trivial.

To conclude, in the Online Appendix we report the results of additional robustness checks. In particular, we include additional party-level controls, such as party size (votes share), party age, party family, the ideological party position on the left-right scale and a dummy variable to discriminate between government and opposition parties (Schumacher and Elmelund-Præstekær 2018). In other robustness checks we limit our analysis to switches that occurred in the previous two years (with the idea that the traumatic effect of switching concerns only, or mainly, recent defections), we control for potential outliers and we minimize the number of missing observations by reducing the variables included in the analysis¹⁰.

In addition, we run the analysis considering only a sub-sample of parties for which we have data related to repeated elections, in order to track them over time taking into account the evolution of intra-party heterogeneity (Carroll and Kubo 2019) after the out-switching; in these additional models we also keep

constant the lagged average level of internal disunity, i.e., the average perceived distance between respondents and their party. By doing that, we evaluate the effect of defections net of the ex-ante level of intra-party heterogeneity, which could have produced the switches: this partially attenuates the concerns about the out-switching of distant MPs as the only cause of the lower self-perceived distances. All the results of these additional analyses confirm our substantive findings.

5. Conclusion

The present paper investigated the consequences of intra-party divisions, focusing on parliamentary party switching. We argued that repeated defections are detrimental events and represent a trauma for politicians exposed to high levels of party disintegration. This can promote cohesion among politicians who decided to remain inside the party. In fact, made aware of the dangers linked with disunity, politicians might strengthen their own perceptions of proximity to the party.

We hypothesized that this effect should be particularly strong for incumbents, who directly experienced disunity by observing the defections of their colleagues in the previous legislative term. Furthermore, these traumatic defections should produce even stronger consequences among politicians who are less loyal to the party and could have been considered as potential defectors in their own right. The decision to remain inside could, in fact, generate a tension between their attitudes (disagreement) and the actual behaviour (the decision to stay inside) producing a cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957) that ultimately exaggerates their perception of proximity to their party¹¹. These dissenting politicians have to self-explain their choice to remain inside; as long as they cannot legitimize it based on their loyalty to the party leadership, they will self-explain such behavior focusing on the stronger perceived self-proximity to the party. Symmetrically, due to cognitive dissonance, defections can also strengthen the sense of loyalty among those politicians who remained inside but still perceive themselves as ideologically distant

from their party (see the analysis in the Online Appendix). In this regard, self-perceived ideological proximity and loyalty can be a substitute for each other in explaining the choice of a potential rebel MP who decided to remain inside the party.

We tested our hypotheses using two elite surveys (CCS and PartiRep), collecting and analysing data related to a sample of 13,256 politicians belonging to 92 parties that ran in 28 elections held between 2005 and 2015 in 14 countries. The results are in line with our expectations, suggesting that defections reinforce the sense of belonging for politicians who remain inside the party and this effect is stronger for both incumbents and for less loyal politicians who experience a stronger cognitive dissonance.

Overall, it seems that after parliamentary switching, parties that suffer defections can become more cohesive. This is in line with the results reported by Heller and Mershon (2009b) that show how, during a legislative term, switches decrease heterogeneity inside the out-switching parties. Our analysis extends such findings, suggesting that it might apply also to intra-party cohesion in the following legislative term, at least with respect to the self-perception of candidates and representatives in terms of distance from the party line. If splits boost cohesion in parties, particularly among politicians that usually complain about party discipline, this can be taken as a good news in terms of accountability and responsiveness. In fact, to distinguish themselves from their contentious former colleagues, party candidates are more likely to toe the party line and respect the party platform in the following legislature.

Arguably, there are other alternative explanations that potentially fit with our empirical findings. First, in parties affected by high levels of defections, the party leadership can try to select more loyal candidates, who, in turn, express a closer proximity between their ideological views and the party's position. However, if the party leadership replaces defectors with new, more loyal candidates, we should have observed a stronger effect of defections among non-incumbent candidates rather than among incumbents, which is not the case. Furthermore, we also observed a stronger effect among candidates

who criticize the party leadership and complain about loyalty and discipline. This result cannot be explained by candidate selection (as the party leadership should try to select more loyal candidates) and points to a different theoretical mechanism.

Second, due to the fear of sanctions, dissenting politicians will strategically answer survey questions and rescind their disagreement. However, the fear of retaliation should only play a limited role in anonymous surveys, as candidates will hardly be punished for expressing dissent in such surveys, compared to what might happen in case of public disagreement expressed in parliamentary votes and speeches or on social media (Ceron 2017).¹²

In view of that, our empirical findings support the idea of defections as traumatic events that might alter intra-party cohesion and equilibrium by affecting the perceptions expressed by individual politicians.

This paper has some limitations. The main one concerns the fact that we are analysing a cross-sectional survey and not a panel. However, the fact that our main independent variable, *Defections*, is external to survey data can at least partially limit this concern. Nevertheless, future research could try to establish a more direct link between political events related to party splits and changes in the attitudes of politicians. Even so, the present study has several implications for scholars working with elite surveys as it suggests that the viewpoints of respondents can be affected by the process of cognitive dissonance, and their answers can therefore be adjusted to match their past behaviour. Our findings can be a positive news for scholars working with elite surveys. The fact that we report similar results when analysing two different surveys is good news as it suggests that the two data collection processes align.

Our paper also addresses an emerging stream of literature that investigates the links between political psychology and party politics, to explain the psychological aspects behind party mergers (Martocchia Diodati 2017; Sacchi et al. 2013) or the voter's choice to exit from the party (Bakker et al. 2016). From this perspective, the results wield implications about the mechanisms linked with political accountability

and responsiveness. In fact, ethical norms (Orbell et al. 1984) and psychological elements seem to play a role in intra-party disagreement. If, for those who stay, observing someone switching reinforces the sense of belonging, then political institutions can foster non-abandonment norms (Van Vugt and Hart 2004) to preserve party unity, thereby reducing political instability and strengthening the chain of responsiveness that extends from voters and parties to elected MPs. The present paper also addresses the wide literature on the black sheep effect (Marques and Paez 1994; Rullo et al. 2015), arguing that this effect can be expressed in terms of a stronger closeness between members of the threatened group, particularly when there is a direct identification with the threatened group (the parliamentary party group) and when individual politicians that can be somewhat associated with the defectors will try to distance themselves from the switchers (Eidelman and Biernat 2003). These mechanisms can also help parties to prevent a downward spiral, avoiding further waves of switching and limiting the electoral losses due to out-switching, by invoking (and highlighting) internal cohesion and coherence, while blaming the black sheep.

Finally, this study can also be of interest to scholars investigating the effects of party splits as it suggests that intra-party division might have unexplored consequences, such as strengthening the sense of belonging of politicians who remain inside the party and the cohesion of the party itself.

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Table

Table 1 – Multilevel Regression of Ideological Distance

Variables	(1) CCS (Module I)	(2) CCS (Module I & II)	(3) PartiRep
Switchers	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.006*** (0.001)	-0.007 (0.007)
Incumbent	-0.167** (0.064)	-0.113* (0.046)	-0.054 (0.087)
Switchers*Incumbent	-0.005 [†] (0.003)	-0.004 [†] (0.002)	-0.034 [†] (0.019)
Loyalty Score	-0.133*** (0.018)	-0.135*** (0.025)	-0.097** (0.033)
Switchers*Loyalty Score	0.002* (0.001)	0.007* (0.003)	0.025* (0.012)
Experienced	0.002 (0.004)	-0.027 (0.032)	-0.201 [†] (0.113)
Gender	0.072* (0.034)	0.075** (0.028)	-0.042 (0.091)
Constant	0.977*** (0.043)	0.988*** (0.037)	0.931*** (0.059)
Observations	3,610	6,674	528
Number of parties	55	70	61
R ² overall	0.03	0.01	0.03

Robust standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, [†] p<0.10

Figures

Figure 1 – Marginal Effect of Defections at different levels of Loyalty Score (CCS–Model 1)

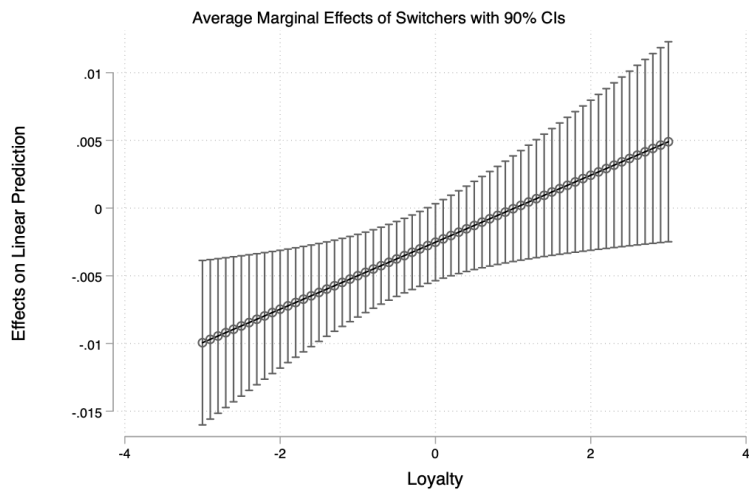
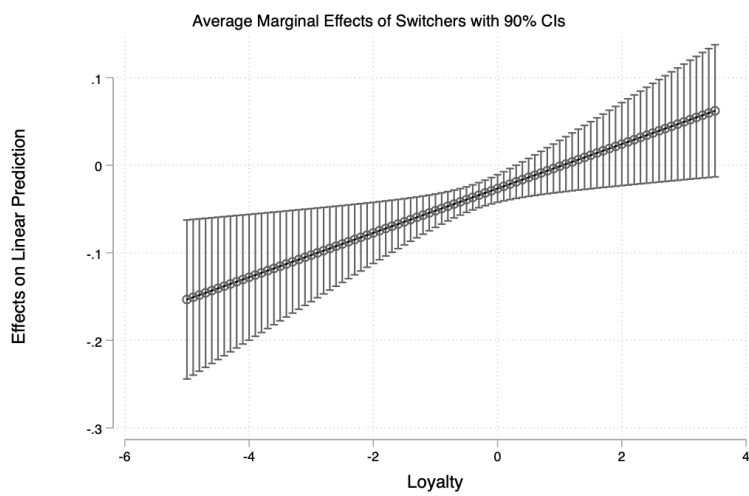


Figure 2 – Marginal Effect of Defections at different levels of Loyalty Score (PartiRep–Model

3)



¹ For a summary of studies on party switching: Mershon (2014), Mershon and Shvetsova (2014), Yoshinaka (2015).

² Arguably, the closer (perceived) proximity between politicians and their party can also be a by-product of the defections given that some dissenters, who presumably felt ideologically distant from it, have left. This concern will be addressed below.

³ <http://www.partirep.eu>

⁴ We analysed the following countries covered by CCS (election years are in parenthesis): Austria (2008), Belgium (2007, 2010, 2014), Denmark (2011), Finland (2011, 2015), Germany (2005, 2013), Greece (2007, 2009, 2012, 2015), Ireland (2007), Italy (2013), the Netherlands (2006), Norway (2009, 2013), Switzerland (2007, 2011, 2015) and the United Kingdom (2010).

⁵ We analysed the following 11 countries: Austria (2008-2013), Belgium (2007-2010), France (2007-2012), Germany (2009-2013), Ireland (2007-2012), Italy (2008-2013), the Netherlands (2006-2011), Norway (2005-2009), Spain (2008-2012), Switzerland (2007-2010) and the United Kingdom (2005-2015). In parenthesis the years of the legislative terms covered by PartiRep.

⁶ We are interested in the intensity of the distance (not in its direction).

⁷ PartiRep is addressed to legislators and not to candidates; to account for this we compare legislators who served as MPs in the previous legislative term (incumbents), with rookie MPs (non-incumbents) that were elected for the first time in the following legislative term.

⁸ We additionally investigated the impact of *Defections* conditional on intra-party democracy, based on party statutes (following Close et al. 2019) using data from the Political Party Database (Poguntke et al. 2016). However, we did not find any moderating effect. All the other results hold the same even when controlling for intra-party rules.

⁹ Similarly, in Model 2 such negative effect amounts to -0.6 points for non-loyal respondents, while the impact is not statistically significant for loyal ones.

¹⁰ Some questions were not asked in some countries. There is no information on experience in Austria and no data on incumbency in Austria and Ireland. Analogously, some questions included in the Loyalty Score were not asked in Austria and Germany (though this is of no concern in Model 2). In the Online Appendix we provide a different version of the Loyalty Score that contains fewer missing cases (the observations are 20% more than in Model 1). We also provide models without incumbency and experience (with the double of observations compared to Model 1, limiting missing cases to 22%). Our findings remain the same.

¹¹ This should not affect politicians that are already loyal and ideologically close to the party.

¹² The null conditional effect found for intra-party democracy further supports our argument.

ONLINE APPENDIX – OVERVIEW

Part 1: Data and descriptive statistics

Part 2: Robustness checks

Part 3: Effect on Loyalty as a dependent variable

PART 1: DATA AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table A1 – Descriptive Statistics CCS Module I

Variable	Mean	sd	Min	Max	Obs
Ideological Distance	0.97	1.11	0	10	10998
Ideological Distance (dichotomized)	0.59	0.49	0	1	10998
Defections	3.14	9.74	0	83	10581
Loyalty Score	0.00	1.33	-3.1	3	7792
Incumbent	0.08	0.27	0	1	9857
Gender	0.66	0.47	0	1	13123
Experienced	1.70	4.38	0	53	9343
Government	0.45	0.50	0	1	10581
Left-Right Position	-5.39	21.13	-53.4	52	10565
Survey variables used to calculate Loyalty:					
d4a	1.50	0.50	1	2	10156
d4b	1.34	0.47	1	2	10616
d4c	1.34	0.47	1	2	10550
d7a	3.46	1.23	1	5	10023
d7b	2.62	1.19	1	5	9160
d7c	3.48	1.15	1	5	9984

Description of variables used to create *Loyalty* score:

- *D4a*: “An MP in a conflict between the constituency voters the position of the party should follow: 1=party position 2=voter opinion”.
- *D4b*: “An MP in a conflict between own opinion and the constituency voters should follow: 1=own opinion 2=voter opinion”.
- *D4c*: “A MP in a conflict between own opinion and the party position should follow: 1=own opinion 2=party position”.
- *D7a*: “Intra-party decision making is too much top-down. 1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=neither 4=disagree 5=strongly disagree”.
- *D7b*: “MPs should be able to vote in parliament independently of their party’s position. 1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=neither 4=disagree 5=strongly disagree”.

- *D7c*: “The party leader is too powerful. 1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=neither 4=disagree 5=strongly disagree”.

Results of the Principal Component Analysis on CCS Module I

This Loyalty index is built through principal component analysis (PCA), based on the first component (which explains almost 30% of the variance; eigenvalue equal to 1.763), and combines the answers to different questions related to the degree of loyalty toward the party leadership and agreement with the party whip. This variable ranges from -3 to +3; it retains lower values when respondents believe that the party leader is too powerful, intra-party decision making is an excessive top-down process, and MPs should be free to vote in parliament (independently from the party whip) following mainly own opinions, or at most, voters’ opinions, instead of the party line. Conversely, respondents receive a higher Loyalty Score when they believe that MPs should not be free to vote according to own opinions, but that they must follow the party line, not express concerns about the power of the party leader and not complain about the nature of intra-party decision making. Here are the results of the PCA:

Tab A2- Principal Component 1 (CCS): Eigenvectors

Variable	Component 1
<i>D7c</i>	0.369
<i>D7b</i>	0.5587
<i>D7a</i>	0.3306
<i>D4b</i>	0.0383
<i>D4a</i>	-0.4194
<i>D4c</i>	0.5148

Table A3 – Descriptive Statistics CCS Module I & II

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Ideological Distance	10,998	0.97	1.11	0	10
Ideological Distance (dichotomized)	10,998	0.59	0.49	0	1
Defections	10,581	3.13	9.74	0	83.34
Loyalty Score	7,792	1.65	1.33	-3.07	3.12
Incumbent	9,857	0.08	0.27	0	1

Gender	13,123	1.34	0.47	1	2
Experienced	9,343	1.64	4.36	0	53
Government	10,581	0.45	0.50	0	1
Left-Right Position	6,919	4.95	2.07	1	9.86
Survey variables used to calculate Loyalty:					
d4a	10,156	0.50	0.50	0	1
d4b	10,616	0.34	0.47	0	1
d4c	10,550	0.34	0.47	0	1
d7a	10,023	2.46	1.23	0	4
d7b	9,160	1.62	1.19	0	4
d7c	9,984	2.48	1.15	0	4

Table A4 –Descriptive Statistics PartiRep

Variable	Mean	sd	Min	Max	Obs
Ideological Distance	0.87	0.95	0	5	631
Defections	0.92	3.01	0	33	685
Incumbent	0.60	0.49	0	1	685
Loyalty Score	-0.00	1.40	-5.2	3	537
Experienced	0.11	0.31	0	1	685
Gender	0.34	0.47	0	1	685
Survey variables used to calculate Loyalty:					
v005	2.83	0.92	1	4	668
v006	1.57	0.50	1	2	627
v007	1.25	0.43	1	2	638
v008	1.71	0.45	1	2	616
v012_4	5.50	1.25	1	7	667
v032_1	1.84	0.55	1	3	637
v033_3	2.01	0.43	1	3	637
v034_4	3.05	1.05	1	5	634

Description of PartiRep Variables:

- *Ideological Distance*: Absolute distance between a candidate’s self-placement on the left-right scale and candidates’ placement of their party on the same scale.
- *Defections*: percentage of defectors over the total amount of seat that each party witnessed during the previous legislative term.
- *Incumbent*: dummy variable that takes value 1 when the candidate is an incumbent, 0 otherwise (based on the variable *Rookie*, already provided in the survey).
- *Experienced*: dummy variable that takes value 1 when MP is (deputy) speaker of Parliament,

committee chair or PPG leader and 0 otherwise (based on the variable *Leadpos*, already provided in the survey).

- *Gender*: dummy variable that takes value 1 when the candidate is a female, and 0 otherwise (based on the variable *Sex*, already provided in the survey).
- *Loyalty*: this index is built through principal component analysis and combines the answers to different questions related to the degree of loyalty toward the party leadership and agreement with the party whip. This variable ranges from -5 to +3.5; it takes lower values when respondents often disagree with the party line (every month), when do not think it is important to promote the views and the interests of their party, when they think party discipline should be less strict (particularly with respect to sticking to the parliamentary party line in votes), and believe that MPs should follow mainly own opinions, or at most voters' opinions, instead of the party line in parliamentary votes. Conversely, respondents get a higher Loyalty score when MPs never disagree with the party line, when they believe that MPs should not be free to vote according to own opinions but must follow the party line, when they feel it is important to promote the views and the interests of their party, and when they think party discipline should be stricter (particularly with respect to sticking to the parliamentary party line in votes). For this purpose, the following PartiRep variables have been used: "v005", "v006", "v007", "v008", "v012_4", "v032", "v033_3", "v034_4".
- v005: Categorical variable, based on the question: "How often, in the last year, would you say you have found yourself in the position that your party had one opinion on a vote in Parliament, and you personally had a different opinion? 1: about once a month; 2: about every three months; 3: about once a year; 4: (almost) never".
- v006: Categorical variable, based on the question: "And how should, in your opinion, a Member of Parliament vote in this situation? 1: MP should vote according to his/her own opinion; 2: MP should vote according to his/her party's opinion".
- v007: Categorical variable, based on the question: "And, how should, in your opinion, a Member of Parliament vote if his/her own opinion on an issue does not correspond with the opinion of his/her voters? 1: MP should vote according to his/her own opinion; 2: MP should vote according to the opinion of his/her voters".
- v008: Categorical variable, based on the question: "How should, in your opinion, a Member of Parliament vote if his/her voters have one opinion and his/her party takes a different position? 1: MP should vote according to the opinion of his/her voters; 2: MP should vote according to his/her party's opinion".
- v012_4: Categorical variable based on 7-point scale related on the question: "How important

is it to you, personally, to promote the views and interests of your party?” (1: of no importance; 7: of great importance).

- v032: Categorical variable based on the question: “Generally speaking, what is your opinion about party discipline in your parliamentary party? Should it be stricter than it is now, should it remain as it is, or should it be less strict than it is now? 1: should be stricter; 2: should remain as it is; 3: should be less strict”.
- v033_3: Categorical variable based on the question: “More specifically, what is your opinion about party discipline in your parliamentary party when it comes to sticking to parliamentary party line in votes? 1: should be stricter; 2: should remain as it is; 3: should be less strict”.
- v034_4: Categorical variable based on 5-point scale related the question: “Members of Parliament face tough choices every day in their job. Presented below are a few of those choices you may face. For each of them, we would like to ask you for your opinion as to which choice a Member of Parliament should make. 1: A Member of Parliament should resist the demands of other interests and keep to the party line. 5: A Member of Parliament should be prepared to accommodate the demands of other interests.”

Results of the Principal Component Analysis on PartiRep

The Loyalty index is built through principal component analysis (PCA), based on the first component (which explains more than 24% of the variance; eigenvalue equal to 1.947). Here are the results of the PCA:

Table A5 - Principal Component 1 (PartiRep): Eigenvectors

Variable	Component 1
v005	0.3483
v006	0.4615
v007	0.2157
v008	0.3596
v034_4*	0.3064
v032	-0.2531
v033_3	-0.3901
v012_4	0.424

*NOTE: before running the PCA this variable has been reversed so that higher values indicate that MPs are more willing to keep the party line

PART 2: ROBUSTNESS CHECKS

2.1 Reducing missing cases

Some questions were not asked in some countries; for instance, there is no information on experience in Austria and no data on incumbency in Austria and Ireland. Analogously, some questions included in the Loyalty Score were not asked in Austria and Germany. For this purpose, we provide a different version of the Loyalty Score (mean:2.45 std. dev.:1.23) that contains fewer missing cases (for instance, in Model 2 below the observations are 20% more than in first model of Table A6, which corresponds to Model 1 in the main text). In the Model 3 below, in order to maximize the number of observations we also discard incumbency and experience (which contains many missing cases): this model has the double of observations compared to Model 1, and the missing here only represent 22% of the total (which is the minimum amount given the main independent variables that we want to test). All the findings remain the same.

Table A6 - Multilevel Regression of Ideological Distance with a Different Operationalisation of Loyalty

VARIABLES	(1) CCS (Module I)	(2) CCS (Module I)	(3) CCS (Module I)
Switchers	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.008 ⁺ (0.00)	-0.007* (0.00)
Loyalty	-0.133*** (0.018)	-0.186*** (0.02)	-0.180*** (0.02)
Switchers*Loyalty	0.002* (0.001)	0.002* (0.00)	0.002* (0.00)
Incumbent	-0.167** (0.064)	-0.160*** (0.05)	
Switchers*Incumbent	-0.005 ⁺ (0.003)	-0.004* (0.00)	
Experienced	0.002 (0.004)	0.001 (0.00)	
Gender	0.072* (0.034)	0.060* (0.03)	0.085*** (0.03)
Constant	0.977*** (0.043)	1.394*** (0.0636)	1.332*** (0.06)
Observations	3,610	4,314	6,865
Number of party_code	55	55	68

Robust standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.10

2.2 – Parties in multiple waves

In this sub-section we run the analysis considering only a sub-sample of parties for which we have data related to repeated elections, in order to track them over time taking into account the evolution of intra-party heterogeneity after the out-switching; in two of these additional models (Model 2 and 3) we also keep constant the lagged average level of internal disunity, i.e., the average perceived distance between respondents and their party. All the results of these additional analyses confirm our substantive findings. Interestingly, controlling for the average level of internal disunity suggests that defections do affect the self-perceived closeness to the party, net of the ex-ante level of intra-party heterogeneity.

Table A7 – Multilevel Regression of Ideological Distance (only parties in multiple waves)

VARIABLES	Model 1 CCS (Module I)	Model 2 CCS (Module I)	Model 3 CCS (Module I & II)
Switchers	-0.001 (0.00)	-0.002 (0.00)	-0.005** (0.00)
Incumbent	-0.206* (0.08)	-0.107 (0.10)	-0.119* (0.05)
Switchers*Incumbent	-0.005* (0.00)	-0.006* (0.00)	-0.006** (0.00)
Gender	0.054 (0.04)	0.043 (0.04)	0.042 (0.03)
Loyalty	-0.150*** (0.02)	-0.149*** (0.03)	-0.116** (0.04)
Switchers*Loyalty	0.003** (0.00)	0.004*** (0.00)	0.008* (0.00)
Experienced	0.000 (0.00)	-0.013* (0.01)	-0.022 (0.04)
Average_disunity (t-1)		-0.145 (0.20)	0.240+ (0.14)
Constant	1.056*** (0.05)	1.303*** (0.22)	0.780*** (0.16)
Observations	2,596	1,262	3,940
Number of parties	30	20	41
Robust standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.10			

2.3 – *The role of outliers*

As we can notice from the graph below (A1), our main independent variable (*Switchers*) is skewed. In principle, a skewed explanatory variable is not a problem in linear regression, if this does not violate the assumption that residuals are normally distributed and if there are no observations with a huge leverage that can influence the results. In this regard, we tried to control for outliers and potentially influential observations. To cope with this, the optimal solution would be to control for them. From a leverage versus residuals plot ran after an OLS, we noticed that there are no observations that have at the same time a huge residual and a high leverage. Nevertheless, some observations had a wide leverage or a large residual. These cases refer mostly to the Greek party Syriza, to the Danish party New Alliance and to the Belgian party New Flemish Alliance, which are the cases with a highest level of switches. Table A8 below displays the results of the analyses in which we control for these potentially influential observations. As we can notice from the table A8, all the results remain the same.

Notice that an alternative solution would be to transform the variable, for instance taking the square root. If we do this, all the results remain the same, but the variable remains skewed (as can be seen from the picture A2 below). Notice that this happens also with other potential transformations: the variable tends to remain skewed (see picture A2 below). Overall, it would not be possible to take the logarithm of the variable due to the presence of several observations with a value equal to zero, but even if we assign a figurative value different from zero to the observations with a value equal to zero and we take the log, the variable remains skewed as it was before (and as it happens with the other transformation) and all the marginal effects remain the same. In light of this, we decided to control for potentially influential observations keeping the original variable, as in table A8.

Figure A1 – Distribution of the variable *Switchers*

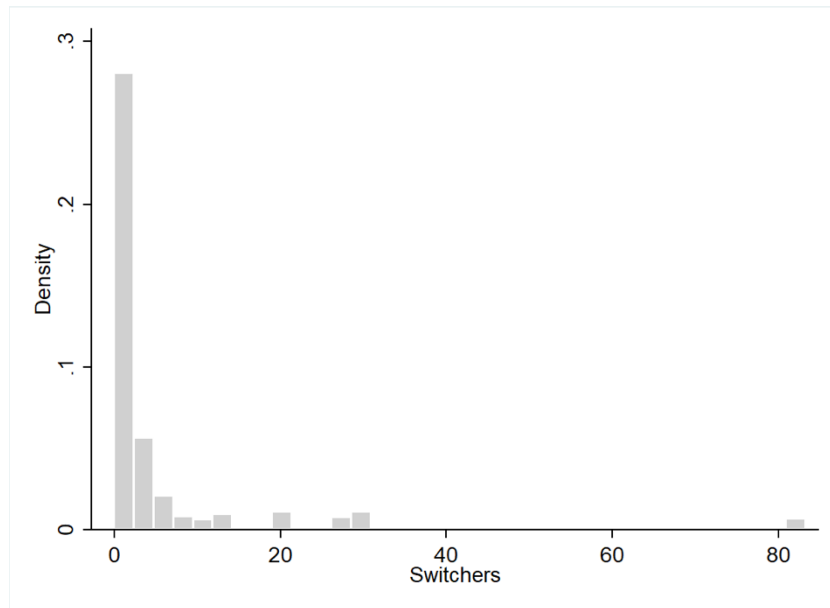


Figure A2 – Potential transformation of the variable *Switchers*

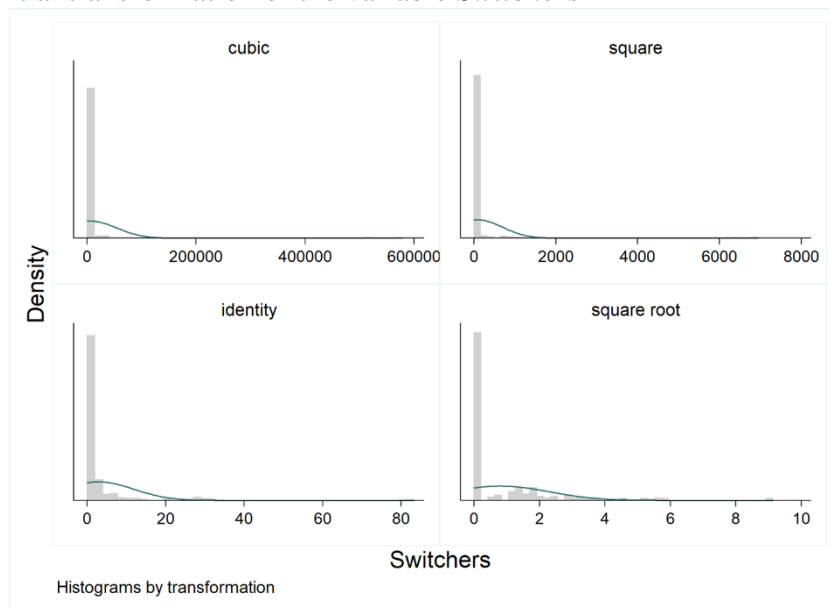


Table A8- Multilevel Regression of Ideological Distance (controlling for outliers)

VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	CCS (Module I & II)	CCS (Module I & II)	CCS (Module I & II)
Switchers	-0.002 (0.00)	-0.006+ (0.00)	-0.006*** (0.00)
Loyalty	-0.142***	-0.185***	-0.133***

	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Switchers*Loyalty	0.002	0.001**	0.006+
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Incumbent	-0.081	-0.084	-0.078
	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.0576)
Switchers*Incumbent	-0.032	-0.032+	-0.027
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Experienced	-0.001	0.001	-0.035
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.03)
Gender	0.068*	0.060*	0.070**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Outliers	3.313	3.499	3.039
	(2.28)	(2.29)	(2.14)
Constant	1.036***	1.385***	1.081***
	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Observations	3,610	4,314	6,674
Number of parties	55	55	70

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

2.4 – Additional Controls

In this sub-section we control for party-level variables, such as party size (votes share), party age, party family, the ideological party position on the left-right scale (based on the widely used RILE scale provided by the Comparative Manifesto Project – Marpor) and a dummy variable to discriminate between government and opposition parties. These additional party-level control variables can help to reduce potential confoundedness. Remarkably, our results hold the same even when controlling for these party-level variables.

Table A9- Multilevel Regression of Ideological Distance with additional party-level controls

VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	CCS (Module I)	CCS (Module I)	CCS (Module I & II)
Switchers	0.000	-0.005	-0.004*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Incumbent	-0.211***	-0.214***	-0.173***
	(0.07)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Switchers*Incumbent	-0.004*	-0.004*	-0.004*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Loyalty Score	-0.128***	-0.162***	-0.141***

	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)
Switchers*Loyalty	0.003***	0.002**	0.007**
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Experienced	0.002	0.002	-0.007
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.03)
Gender	0.079**	0.073***	0.072**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
% Vote	0.007**	0.005	0.006
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Age	-0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Party family (r.c. <i>Green</i>)			
<i>Radical Left</i>	-0.355***	-0.491***	-0.335***
	(0.08)	(0.13)	(0.08)
<i>Social-Democrats</i>	-0.121	-0.285	0.017
	(0.12)	(0.18)	(0.12)
<i>Liberals</i>	-0.197*	-0.319**	-0.072
	(0.10)	(0.16)	(0.11)
<i>Christian-Democrats</i>	-0.083	-0.214	0.081
	(0.10)	(0.16)	(0.10)
<i>Conservative</i>	-0.371***	-0.523***	-0.150
	(0.13)	(0.20)	(0.11)
<i>Radical Rights</i>	-0.129	-0.314	-0.021
	(0.17)	(0.20)	(0.10)
<i>Regionalist</i>	-0.150	-0.262	-0.079
	(0.18)	(0.23)	(0.16)
Left-Right	0.000	0.001	-0.000
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Government	0.030	0.019	0.005
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)
Tenure	0.002	0.004	-0.001
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Constant	0.977***	1.415***	0.990***
	(0.09)	(0.14)	(0.07)
Observations	3,474	4,166	6,250
Number of parties	54	54	61
Robust standard errors in parentheses *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1			

In Model 2 we use the operationalization of *Loyalty* with less missing cases

2.5 – Defections in the last 2 years before elections

Following the idea that the traumatic effect of switching concerns only, or mainly, recent defections, in this sub-section, as a robustness check, we limit our analysis to switches that occurred in the previous two years (mean: 1.82 std. dev.: 8.11). We notice that our findings remain the same.

Table A10 – Multilevel Regression of Ideological Distance using the percentage of switchers in last 2 years before elections

VARIABLES	Model 1 CCS (Module I & II)
Switchers	0.006** (0.00)
Loyalty	0.132** (0.02)
Switchers*Loyalty	0.008** (0.00)
Incumbent	0.118** (0.04)
Switchers*Incumbent	-0.004+ (0.00)
Experienced	-0.027 (0.03)
Gender	0.074** (0.03)
Constant	0.976** (0.04)
Observations	6,674
Number of parties	70

Robust standard errors in parentheses
 *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

PART 3: EFFECT ON LOYALTY AS A DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Beside affecting the self-perceived distance of politicians, from a theoretical perspective the cognitive dissonance could also produce a symmetric effect on loyalty. In fact, we argued that dissenting politicians have to self-explain their choice to remain inside; as long as they cannot legitimize it based on their loyalty to the party leadership, they will self-explain such behavior focusing on the stronger perceived self-proximity to the party. Symmetrically, due to cognitive dissonance, defections can also strengthen the sense of loyalty among those politicians who remained inside but still perceive themselves as ideologically distant from their party. In this regard, we double check our theoretical framework testing this expectation in Table A11 below. Indeed, we notice that a higher rate of switchers increases the loyalty of the remaining politicians, though mainly among those that self-perceived themselves as more distant from the party position. The greater their self-perceived distance, the higher the impact of defections on loyalty. In line with the expectation, this is perfectly symmetrical compared to the impact of defections on ideological distance. In this regard, self-perceived ideological proximity and loyalty can be a substitute for each other in explaining the choice of a potential rebel MP who decided to remain inside the party.

Table A11 – Models of Loyalty

VARIABLES	Model 1	Model 2
	CCS (Module I & II)	CCS (Module I)
Switchers	-0.009+ (0.00)	-0.001 (0.00)
Incumbent	-0.291** (0.10)	-0.028 (0.07)
Ideological Distance	-0.131** (0.03)	-0.169** (0.02)
Switchers*Ideological Distance	0.005* (0.00)	0.003* (0.00)
Gender	-0.159** (0.06)	-0.156** (0.04)
Experienced	0.059 (0.07)	0.003 (0.01)
Constant	-0.173 (0.14)	0.501** (0.09)
Observations	6,674	3,610

Number of parties	70	55
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Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

Figure A3 – Marginal Effects of Defections for different levels of Ideological Distance (Model 1, Table A11)

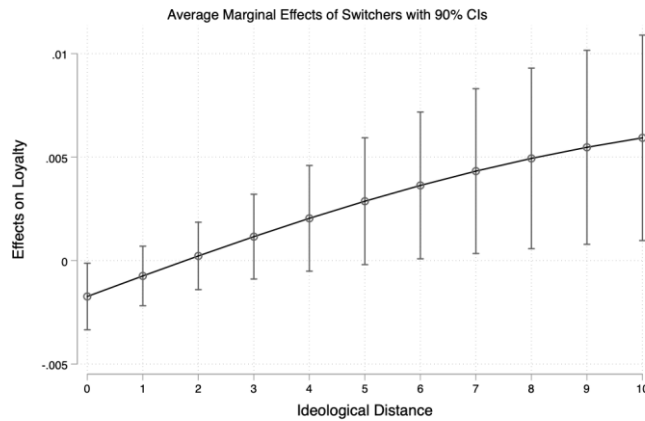


Figure A4 – Marginal Effects of Defections for different levels of Ideological Distance (Model 2, Table A11)

