

## Should I Stay or Should I Go? Patterns of Party Switching in Multi-party Taiwan

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Compared to some of its East Asian neighbours, such as South Korea and Japan, Taiwan's party system has been much more stable over the last two decades. The same two parties dominate the party scene in 2012 as did in the first multi-party election in 1986. Nevertheless, there have been periods where both new parties emerged to challenge the mainstream parties and also times when politicians from splinter parties moved back to the established parties.

This study aims to track key patterns of how politicians switched their partisan affiliation during the critical periods of party system change. This will use Central Election Commission election candidate data, the Legislative Yuan database and newspaper reports of party switching. The second dimension of the study will consider some alternative explanations of these trends. For instance, do the main explanatory variables for party switching in comparative politics apply to the Taiwan case? Are candidate's decisions principally motivated by ideological considerations or are personal career interests, particularly related to nomination paramount? This will rely both on newspaper reports but also interview material. Lastly, the study will consider the consequences of the patterns of party switching on the party types and party system.

Party switching is a huge topic and this paper will represent a preliminary attempt to tackle this understudied topic.