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SEPTEMBER 2014

1. Introduction

As early as March of 2014, Vice President Jejomar Binay had been candid about his dissatisfaction with his old party, the Partido Demokratiko Pilipino—Lakas ng Bayan (Philippine Democratic Party—People Power) or PDP-Laban. Binay, the figurehead of the opposition United Nationalist Alliance (UNA), noted how some of his party-mates ran under the administration ticket in the recently concluded elections (Rappler 2014). He criticized PDP-Laban of vague leadership and factionalism.

Yet because of the flare-up in the pork barrel scandal in early 2014, Binay had to delay the scheduled June-2014 launch of his yet-to-be-named political party. He nevertheless mentioned to media that he would be open to different leaders joining his party, even as he acknowledged that they had to "iron out the details later" on things like his new party's platform of policies and priority reforms. One of his allies, Navotas Rep. Tobias Tiangco, already predicted a "mass exodus" of politicians, primarily from the House of Representatives and local government units, from the administration party to Binay's new political group (Ilas 2014). Tiangco further claimed: "There's so many of them, people from all walks of life, who eagerly want to join the Vice President, [...] the Vice President decided to form a new political party so that they can formally take their oath." (Romero 2014)

The recent move of the Vice President was not unprecedented; and it appears to follow a fairly consistent trend for Philippine leaders. The very first incidence of major party switching happened during the early decades of the Republic, when politicians such as Manuel Roxas and Elpidio Quirino led a disgruntled faction of the Nacionalista Party to a new political party, the Liberal Party, in the 1940s (PCIJ 2013; Tehankee 2012: 155).

* The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors' and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Asian Institute of Management. Questions and comments should be directed to the AIM Policy Center at policycenter@aim.edu.

In fact, nearly half of the former Presidents were party switchers: Roxas; Ramon Magsaysay, the Liberal-affiliated Defense Secretary of then President Elpidio Quirino, who switched to Nacionalista to thwart his old boss' re-election bid; Ferdinand Marcos, who switched from Liberal to Nacionalista out of anger from an unkept promise by Diosdado Macapagal to serve just one full term; Fidel V. Ramos, who formed the Partido Lakas ng Tao (People Power)-National Union of Christian Democrats (Lakas-NUCD) when he failed to get the presidential nomination of LDP for 1992; Joseph Ejercito Estrada, who was elected as senator under the Nacionalista banner in 1987, switched to Liberal when he assumed his Senatorial office, left the party in 1991 to start the populist Puwersa ng Masang Pilipino (Power of the Filipino Masses), and ran as Vice Presidential candidate of the Nationalist People's Coalition; and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who was part of LDP as a Senator, formed the Kabalikat ng Mamamayang Pilipino (Ally of the Filipino Citizen) or Kampi in 1997, ran as Vice Presidential candidate of Lakas-NUCD in 1998, and once served as honorary chairperson of the Liberal Party (PCIJ 2013; Ufen 2007: 14-15).

Nevertheless, political turncoatism is not “only in the Philippines”. Party switching had been observed across diverse democracies such as Thailand, Ecuador, New Zealand, Hungary, Ukraine, Turkey, South Africa, and even Japan as notable examples (Booyesen 2006; studies cited in Miscin 2003; Saito 2007; Thames 2007; Ufen 2007; studies cited in Heller and Mershon 2003; Owens 2003). Its regularity as a political issue is evinced by the many terms and labels attached to it: political turncoatism, political migration, floor-crossing (especially in parliamentary democracies), *waka* (canoe) hopping (New Zealand), *camisetazo* (“changing shirts” in Latin American countries), political butterflies, *chaleco* politics, and the Filipino idiom *balimbing*¹ (Booyesen 2006; Matlosa and Shale 2006; Miscin 2003; Teehankee 2014).

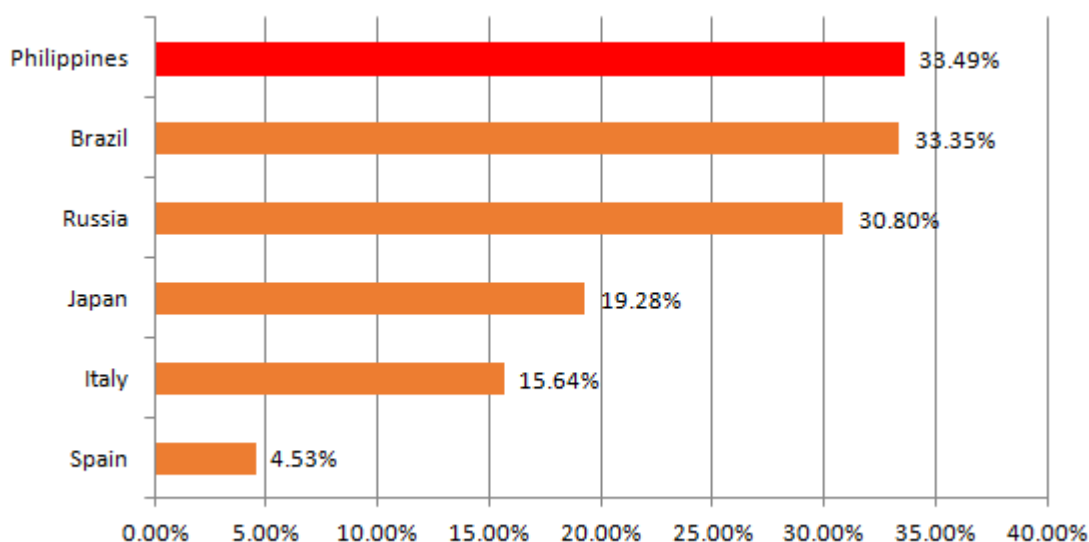
As noted by Prof. Julio Teehankee (2014), most political parties in the Philippines have become dysfunctional so that party switching has become a routine phenomenon, notably prior to Presidential elections (and immediately after once the victor is declared). Due to strong personality-based politics, it is also not uncommon for aspiring Presidentiables to set up their own political party, attracting the bulk of the necessary political machinery through party switching rather than party-building. Many leaders from virtually all levels of the Philippine

¹ *Balimbing* is the domestic name of the carambola fruit that appears to have many sides or faces. The term has since taken on a derogatory meaning for politicians, implying a lack of loyalty to one's party-mates.

government (national, regional and local) are also prolific party switchers.

The attention to the Philippine case is derived from the immediate observation that there is a higher degree of party switching in the country relative to other democracies (Figure 1). This eventually leads to the following inquiries: If party switching is pervasive in the Philippines, what is its impact on democratic politics? What are the possible factors associated with increased party switching, notably from a regional perspective? Are poorer regions associated with more party switchers, due to the need for pragmatic relations with whoever holds central authority? And does increased party switching tend to create a more volatile policy environment? Anecdotal evidence provides a mixed, if not subjective, view on these questions; hence, a more empirical and data-driven approach could be helpful in ascertaining over-all patterns.

Figure 1. Average Share of Party Switching Legislators for Selected Countries



Sources: AIM Policy Center staff calculations based on data obtained from Desposato (2006); Heller and Mershon (2003: 18); Heller and Mershon (2005: 25); Kato and Yamamoto (2005: 13-14); Mershon and Shvetsova (2005: 35); and Teehankee (2012: 199).

Note: The period covered for the Philippines include eight congresses of the House of Representatives (1987-2010); for Brazil, three and a half legislative sessions of the Chamber of Deputies (1990-2004); for Japan, four congressional terms of the House of Representatives (1993-2005); for Russia, one legislative term in the Duma (1993-1995); for Italy, four legislative sessions of the Chamber of Deputies (1987-2001); and for Spain, seven legislative terms of the Congress of Deputies (1977-2000).

In what follows, Section 2 reviews the literature on party politics and party switching. Section 3 then scrutinizes the patterns of party switching in the Philippines by developing and

analyzing a novel dataset covering the Philippine House of Representatives from 2004 to 2013 (i.e. a total of 4 Congresses, with 2001 as the initial reference year). The goal is to help identify possible patterns in party switching, including the intensity of party switching across Philippine geographic regions, and some of the possible factors associated with this. To the best of our knowledge, this study presents the first systematic empirical analysis of party switching in the Philippines, drawing on the most comprehensive dataset of this political phenomenon compiled on the Philippine Congress. Section 4 concludes.

2. Review of Literature

Political Parties in Governance

Modern democracies wrestle with the gargantuan tasks of managing complex bureaucratic systems, while also trying to reflect, as best as possible, the diverse views and aspirations of citizens in coherent public policymaking. Citizens' involvement in the functioning of government is often critical, especially in holding public officials accountable to citizens. Nevertheless, there are important limits here. This is evident when one speaks of monitoring the legislative branch of government, the body tasked to create, revise, and cancel laws and statutes of a country. Desposato (2005:3) notes that here most citizens face problems of information: “[T]hey do not have time to monitor the daily activities of legislators, including roll-call votes, bill initiations, and committee work.”

It is at this juncture that political parties play a critically important role in modern democracies. They legitimize the political system as they help represent, especially in the law-making institution of government, different stakeholders. Among their key functions are: aggregating social interests and engaging in policymaking; sustaining and rationalizing economic development strategies; formulating political programs and policy alternatives; and recruiting and developing future leaders.² Party labels provide easy identification among citizens during elections, where the symbols and branding of a political party automatically registers to the mind of a voter a “team of candidates” with consistent views on political decision-making (Miscin 2003:6; Heller and Mershon 2003:3).

² See among others Croissant and Merkel (2004), Hutchcroft and Rocamora (2003), Manacsa and Tan (2005) and Rivera (2011).

On the other hand, for political parties to perform their functions in democratic governance, there are nuances to be remembered: “For parties to play such a role, they must create and defend stable party positions: sticking together on polemic issues and toeing the party line. On roll-call votes, stable unity in defense of a professed ideological goal makes representation possible. To create credible policy labels and attract voters, political parties should discipline their members, rewarding faithful and consistent support of the part, and punishing defections from the party's preferred position (Desposato 2005:3).”

As such, most analysts contend that excessive party switching tends to be detrimental to party-based democracies. Excessive party switching weakens accountability, severs meaningful electoral choice and is detrimental to cohesive party-based advocacies and policy development. In addition, voters are less able to identify optimal candidates when party labels become meaningless due to excessive party switching.³ Saito (2007:2) underscores that frequent switching in party affiliation sends “mixed signals” to voters about “pursued policy outcomes” of incumbent officials. Thames (2007), focusing on the effect of party switching in legislatures, contends that floor-crossing among legislators prevent the formation of stable and effective coalitions that can pass timely and urgent reforms.

Party Switching in Legislatures

Nevertheless, party switching occurs in many democracies, in varying degrees. In Italy, between 1996 and 2001, up to 25% of the Chamber of Deputies (i.e. the lower house of Italy) were party switchers (Heller and Mershon 2005). Similarly, around 15% of the 3rd European Parliament during the period from 1989-1994 were party switchers (McElroy, 2003). One can refer to Figure 1 to see the state of party switching in selected countries.

The literature suggests that party switching appears less pervasive in countries with relatively longer histories of democracy. Mershon and Heller (2003:3) observe that in Europe, generally, parliamentary democracies are relatively more immune from party switching.⁴ In the United States, Nokken (2005:1) mentions that only 38 Senators and 160 House members in total changed parties, based on an exhaustive study that covers a 163-year period.

³ See among others Desposato (2005), Manacsá and Tan (2005) and Montinola (1999).

⁴ Notable exemptions include the 1992-1996 Czech parliament, where a third of legislators switched parties, and the German parliament in the “early years of the German Federal Republic” (Heller and Mershon 2003: 4), albeit these merely correspond to the observed trend where rampant switching of party labels manifests only in young democracies or recently established republics (Castle and Fett 2000; Desposato 2005; and McElroy 2003).

In principle, the ability to switch parties offers options to build and shape coalitions for evolving reform platforms, allowing greater flexibility for politicians to form alliances that advance pragmatic policy agendas. But in these countries with mature democratic governments, the citizenry carries a negative view of turncoats, usually regarding party switchers as opportunists (Miscin 2003).

Nevertheless party switching does occur, even in countries with established formal political institutions. Analysts often focus on the incumbent's motivations, which Kato and Yamamoto (2005:1-5) summarize as the goals of re-election, position, and policy. An incumbent legislator might want to turn to the political party, usually the ruling party or the party leading in pre-election surveys, that will increase the probability of re-election or has a wide base of grassroots mobilization and strong financial resources that can be tapped during electoral campaigns. Moreover, a legislator might change party affiliation depending on which party can offer strategic committee assignments in the Congress or leadership positions in the party bureaucracy.

Finally, an incumbent official can switch to the political party that supports her/his preferred government policies, or to the party she/he feels could best enhance his ideological consistency. This might be reflected in an adjusted voting pattern when one joins a new party. For example, party switching legislators in Brazil were found to increase their propensity to vote with their new party—increasing to 75% of the time with their new party mates, compared to 60% of the time in their previous party.⁵

Of these various motivations, Kato and Yamamoto (2005:2) lay greater emphasis on the so-called “office-seeking perspective.” Re-election is the strongest among the three goals, according to them, for without it the other two are improbable to achieve.

Party Switching as a Matter of Principle

Yet, this line of thinking yields mixed results when tested in practice. In Japan, following a wave of political reforms before the 1993 elections, defectors (i.e. to be differentiated from opportunistic party switchers; defectors change parties due to differences in opinion on policies) from the ruling LDP performed better in the elections with new parties compared to their previous LDP colleagues (Reed, 1997). In this instance, switching parties offered legislators a

⁵ See Desposato (2005).

way out of being associated with unpopular policies, helping them get re-elected. On the other hand, party switching in Eastern European countries and in Brazil appeared to reduce the probability of re-election (Shabad and Slomczynski, 2004; Samuels, 2000). In the United States, political turncoats faced substantially reduced shares of votes in primary and general elections, creating obstacles to re-election bids (Nokken 2005:3-4).

Moreover, there are situations when officeholders willfully change their official political affiliation with complete knowledge that such act endangered their ability to win office again. Anecdotally, one can point to Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., who formed the Progressive Party and led it as its presidential nominee after disagreements with William Howard Taft, who went on to win the nomination of Republican Party. Roosevelt's actions not only ensured that neither Taft nor he would win after splitting the conservative base, it also resulted in the Democrat Party gaining hold of the White House. On a more empirical level, Heller and Mershon (2003: 2) highlighted how in the third Spanish legislative session, which registered the highest occurrence of turncoatism in the two researchers' study, most of the switchers actually went to opposition parties that, by virtue of them belonging to the opposition, could neither assign the party switchers to influential positions in the government nor assure them of re-election. In fact, Heller and Mershon (2003: 19) opined that despite strong disincentives, some of the Spanish MPs still opted to switch parties.

These observations led to a shift from the dominant office-seeking orientation to ideological/policy-oriented perspectives in explaining political turncoatism. This perspective primarily situates an incumbent official's decision to transfer to a new political party through the rubric of one's core beliefs and view on politics and governance. Thames (2007) elaborates on this "policy-seeking perspective" by saying that a legislator will go for a party that better articulates his ideals; gives greater legislative resources (e.g. positions of power) for him to shape party stand and direction; and gives a more "consistent ideological message" during elections.

Some analysts concede that this perspective might better explain why, for example, floor-crossing among American legislators within 1789 to 1984 often coincided with major changes in macro-political and economic conditions. One such event was the civil rights movement of the 1960s, where the Republican Party "aggressively recruited" all Southern Democrats to shift

allegiances after the passage of the civil rights laws⁶. In general, during times of extreme political polarization and uncertainty, the most liberal Republican (the most conservative Democrat) will likely change party affiliation to the Democratic Party (Republican Party) (Nokken 2005:4). The policy-seeking perspective also better situates party switching in Australia, where massive floor-crossing happened in the legislature between 1931 and 1936 as a result of debates over policies that the government should pursue in reaction to the Great Depression (Miscin 2003:12).

Beyond stable-democracy assumptions

Can these perspectives explain the dominance of political butterflies in Philippines politics, especially in the House of Representatives? Desposato and Scheiner (2007) are hesitant to use frameworks in the literature just reviewed without considering the institutional and structural environment of a country under study. They even extended a word of caution: “Political scientists and would-be reformers commonly argue that having the ‘right’ institutions is essential to the success, stability, and strength of democracies. However, arguments of this kind are founded on institutional theories that are only as accurate as their assumptions allow them to be. *Most of the formal literature is built around wealthy and issue-driven democracies. But most democracies are poorer, with less experience in democratic institutions [...]* (Desposato and Scheiner 2007: 25; emphasis ours).”

The latter-mentioned characteristics aptly describe the scenario in the Philippines. Changing party labels in most Western countries is met with hesitation among government officials. Nevertheless in the Philippines, turncoatism appears to be embedded in the political culture. Rampant floor-crossing in the House of Representatives has led to the labeling of many Congressmen *balimbing*. And, the percentage of party switchers in the Lower House is moreover rising. Teehankee (2014) notes that: “Since 1987, an average of 33.5% of all lower house representatives elected to Congress has switched parties in pursuit of resources allocated through clientelistic networks. Tellingly, 60.2% of these party switchers usually jumped into the party of the sitting president thereby producing monolithic (albeit short-lived) political behemoths. Among the party switchers in the house from 1987 to 2010, 97.4% switched to the LDP in 1987,

⁶ Although the position of the national leaders of the Democratic Party was to support legislation in favor of African Americans, the Southern Democrats represent a constituency hostile to black minorities.

88% to Lakas NUCD in 1992, 93.5% to LAMMP in 1998, 49.4% to Kampi in 2004, and 50.9% to the Liberal Party in 2010.”

Political analysts acknowledge that excessive party switching in young democracies like the Philippines could be viewed as a by-product of a broader malaise traceable to a weak party system, wherein, among the broader dysfunctions, policy platforms are poorly articulated, financing is dominated by vested interests, and the parties themselves are disconnected from grassroots movements. Hence, instead of a bottom up approach to selecting national leaders, vested interests dominate party politics from the top down. At least one scholar has resorted to calling these “dynastic parties”, noting how political families with strong name recall and political and financial clout dominate the party machinery (see among others, Chhibber 2011).

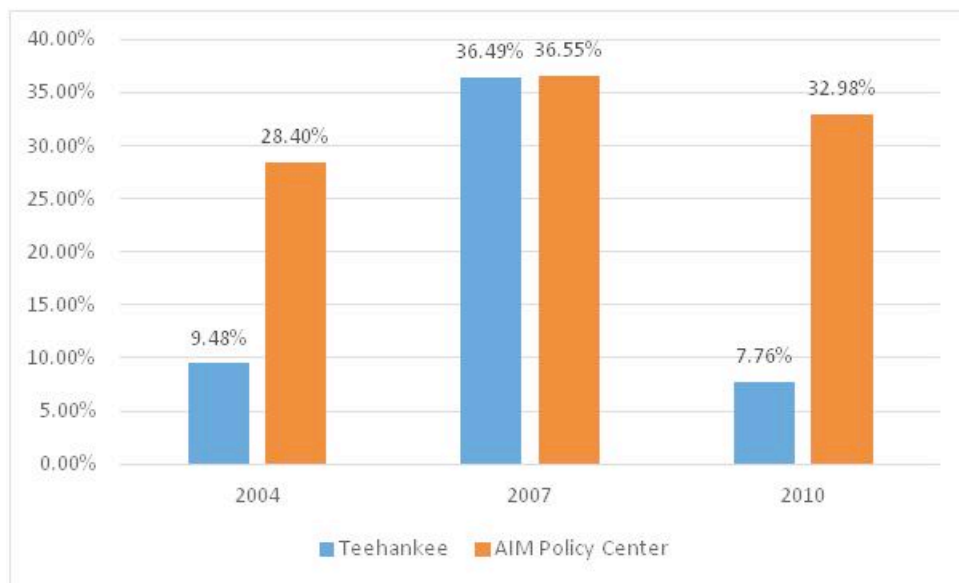
3. Party switching in the Philippine Congress

The authors complement the earlier literature in this area by developing and analyzing a novel dataset on party switching, which covers the Philippine House of Representatives, locally known as *Kamara* or *Batasan*, from 2001 to 2013. This period overlaps with the administration periods of two Philippine presidents: President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and President Benigno S. Aquino III. In our dataset, 2001 serves as the reference year for determining the original party for lower house legislators in the first instance. The political party of each legislator was identified from data obtained from the Commission on Elections, primarily the certificates of candidacy and election returns, thus capturing the change in party of the legislator between these filings.

Attempts to measure political party switching have been done before, and the most notable of these is the one compiled by Teehankee (2012). It must be noted that his computations differ from the methodology of the AIM Policy Center (APC) in several ways. First, Teehankee measures party switching per legislative period, which covers from the time a district representative files his candidacy to the end of the three-year term. Our dataset, meanwhile, compares the party affiliation of a legislator in a given legislative term with his official party label(s) in all previous elections he ran for (regardless of whether he won or not, and irrespective

of the position he vied for) since 2001⁷. In other words, while Teehankee's method captures party switching within a legislative cycle, the APC dataset captures the party switch occurring within an incumbent's political career from 2001 to 2013⁸. The latter, therefore, offers a much more comprehensive view of party switching instances for any given legislator. See Figure 2 for comparison.

Figure 2. Measures of Party Switching in the House of Representatives (2004-2010)

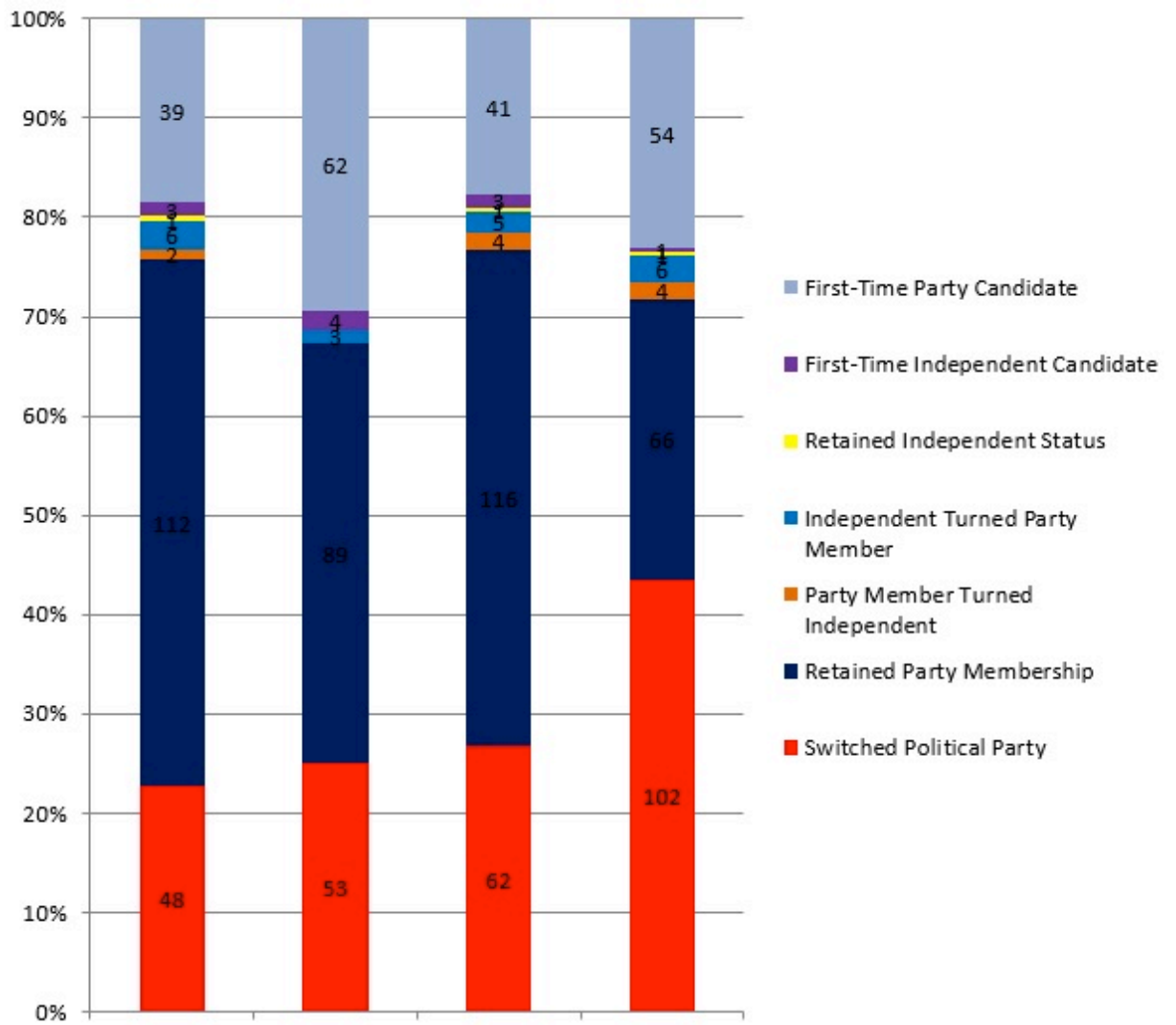


Source: AIM Policy Center staff computations from COMELEC data; Teehankee (2012: 199).

⁷ To illustrate the difference: A person ran for a congressional seat in 2004 under the Lakas-NUCD banner but lost. In 2010, he ran under the Liberal Party, won as district representative, and stayed in the administration party until 2013. Under Teehankee's methodology, the 2010-2013 term will not be counted as a party switch while it will be considered party switching under the APC computation.

⁸ This does not necessarily imply that one method is per se better than the other. Teehankee's computations could be used for empirical research where party switching is rendered as a causal factor (e.g. the effect of party switching to voting behavior in Congress). The AIM dataset is suited for research where party switching is considered the end result (e.g. the effect of dynastic governance to party switching).

Figure 3. Breakdown of Legislators' Party Affiliation Background, 2004 to 2013



Source: AIM Policy Center staff calculations based on data from COMELEC.

Notes:

- (1) Switched Political Party: The party membership of the district representative during the reference year (e.g. 2013) is different from the one he had in the previous election he participated as candidate (e.g. 2010, or 2007 if he did not run in 2010);
- (2) Retained Party Membership: The party affiliation of the district representative is the same as the one he had in the previous election;
- (3) Party Member Turned Independent: The congressman won as independent candidate during the reference election, although he had a previous party affiliation;
- (4) Independent Turned Party Member: The congressman won under a political party in the reference election, although he ran as an independent in the previous elections;
- (5) Retained Independent Status: The district representative was independent during the time of his incumbency and in the previous elections he participated as candidate;
- (6) First-Time Independent Candidate: First time to run for a congressional seat and win as an independent;
- (7) First-Time Party Candidate: first time to run for a congressional seat and win under a political party.

Figure 3 shows the number of legislators who are party switchers based on APC estimates—suggesting that anywhere from 20% to 45% (or roughly one-third on average) of legislators in the Philippine House of Representatives are party switchers. What is notable here is that it seems party switching is increasing (from 48 legislators in 2004 to 102 in 2013), while legislators who retain their party membership have been declining (from 112 in 2004 to 66 in 2013). In order to fully capture those who switch party-affiliations or party-status, we should add those who ran and won as independents who then later joined a political party, as well as those party members who later ran and won as independents. These two categories are, however, quite negligible in their number.

Armed with this dataset, the present section attempts to situate party switching in the Philippine House of Representatives under the assumption that context matters. By this, the authors mean that political turncoatism can be explained by understanding the institutional make-up that forms and informs the country's political system, as well as the economic conditions under which it operates. Specifically, this section is an attempt to relate party switching among Filipino legislators with (a) the legislative model followed by the Philippine House of Representatives; (b) the proliferation of political dynasties; (c) awareness and engagement of voters with political parties; and (d) regional underdevelopment.

Voting Systems

It is possible that the stability of political parties, or the lack thereof, can be influenced by the way legislators are elected into office (see Owens 2003). Thomas (2007), for example, dichotomizes parliamentary/congressional elections into party-centered and candidate-centered electoral systems, where the occurrence of party switching is expected more from the latter than the former⁹.

In party-centered electoral systems, the ability to choose candidates to run for office is largely orchestrated by the political parties. This is true, for instance, in the cases of legislatures

⁹ An interesting case study is the Italian Chamber of Deputies from 1987 to 2001. In the tenth legislature (1987-1992), the share of turncoats in the Chamber was less than 2% of the total deputies. During this time, the lower branch of the parliament followed a proportional representation system. The share of turncoats increased to 30% in the eleventh legislature (1992-1994), coinciding with the revision of the parliament's electoral code that made the Chamber transition from proportional representation to a model combining the latter with district-based constituency. In the two succeeding legislatures, the share of party switchers in the Chamber ranged from 10% to 20%. As can be seen from this, there is a significant increase in party switching after the electoral reform. Shares of turncoatism were computed based from data in Heller and Mershon (2005).

that follow closed-list proportional representation. Citizens choose political parties on the ballot, and political parties win seats in proportion to the percentage of their voters. Through party-centered electoral systems, lawmakers depend largely on the reputation of their political parties and the clarity of its message. Since politicians are less likely to succeed in elections if they are deprived of the resources, grassroots support, and finance coming from a party, party switching (more so if this occurs within a legislative term) is taboo. Cohesion among party cadres is prioritized and party discipline is strictly enforced. In such an environment, party switching is expected to be infrequent, if any incidences at all take place (Thomas 2007; Miscin 2003).

A candidate-centered electoral system, on the other hand, values an individual's performance and credibility. It primarily operates within single-member district plurality representation systems. The parliamentary seats are often equal to the number of legislative districts, where each legislative district comprises a subnational constituency. Here, winning a seat depends less upon unity with the platform of one's political party and more upon a candidate's reputation and ability to develop a sustained voter base (i.e. *bailiwicks*) and loyal following (Thomas 2007; Miscin 2003). Party switching can be expected (perhaps even justifiable) if a legislator can claim that changing party labels will benefit the interest of her/his constituency (Heller and Mershon 2005: 7).

The above-stated distinctions give credence to the argument that rampant party switching in the lower house of the Philippine Congress can be traced to its long history of district-based representation.¹⁰ The legislature under the American colonial era started as a unicameral system with single-member constituency, eventually evolving into a bicameral system with the Senate as the upper house and House of Representatives as the lower house. The country has been divided into legislative districts, where each legislative district could send one congressman to the House of Representatives. The country has also been divided into regions, wherein each region could send two representatives to the Senate. This bicameral model (with some adjustments) was appropriated to the new Republic once the country gained independence from the United States, and remained in force until its abolition by the martial law regime.

The restoration of democratic order following the 1986 People Power Revolution and the passage of a new Constitution a year after introduced two innovations. First, members of the Senate, chosen through a regional-level constituency scheme in the pre-Marcos Congress,

¹⁰ See Teehankee (2002:150-163) for an in-depth discussion of congressional electoral history.

became nationally elected officials. On the other hand, the party-list system was established in the lower house, where a significant percentage of seats in the House of Representatives are now set aside for representatives of marginalized sectors and minor political parties¹¹, and are distributed according to a formula that follows the proportional representation electoral scheme. Despite these changes, the House of Representatives largely remains a district-based legislature in nature.

This is a pattern that finds some similarities with the system in Thailand. Like the Philippines, mature and platform-driven political parties failed to be institutionalized in the National Assembly of Thailand. Similar to the Philippine House of Representatives, both upper and lower branches of the Thai parliament follow a district-based/constituency-based system. Ufen (2007: 23-24) concludes that failure for ideologically consistent parties to permeate in the Philippine and Thai legislatures is due to the fact that legislators in both systems are directly elected by the people. He then contrasts the Philippines and Thailand with Indonesia, which has a moderately developed party system divided along urban/rural, religious/secular, and nationalist/market-oriented distinctions or “social cleavages.” The Indonesian legislature follows the proportional representation system, which Ufen (2003: 24) identifies as a reason for party institutionalization¹².

Dynastic Politics

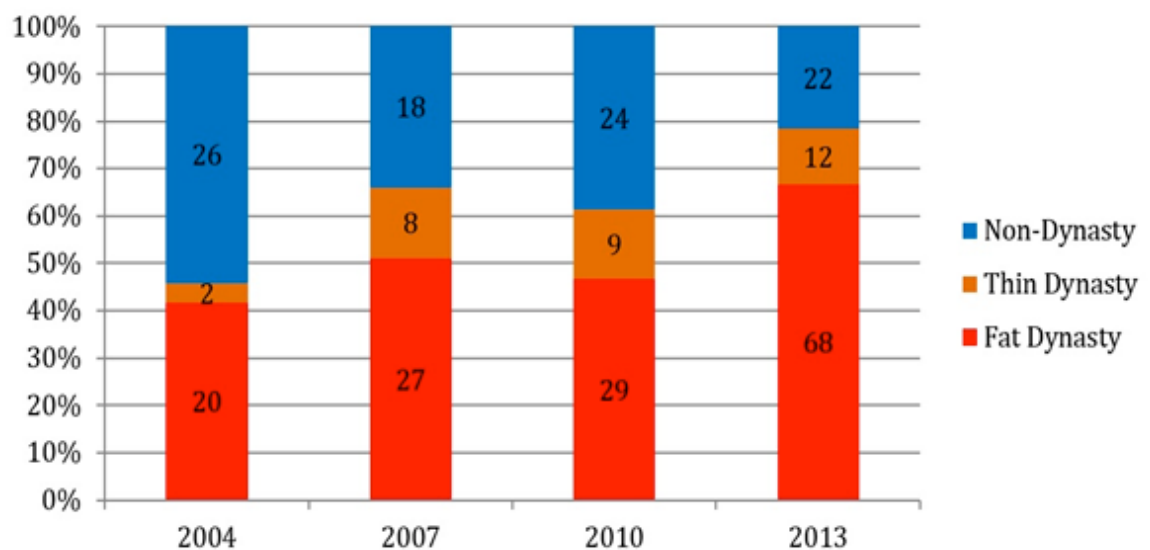
Access to more detailed information on party switching patterns allows us to empirically assess the linkage between party switching and dynastic politics—two often cited malfunctions in the Philippine political system which have never been linked by any empirical evidence before. In theory, and as elaborated earlier, the lack of strong political parties is part and parcel of the personality-centered politics that tends to dominate Philippine elections. And the most dominant feature of personality-centered politics is often associated with the rise of dynastic clans. Thus family allegiances rather than party- and policy- focused allegiances tend to dominate the landscape of Philippine politics.

¹¹ Prior to 2013, party-list representation was exclusively for marginalized sectors, or sectors recognized by law as belonging to minorities and at the margins of society. Last year, a decision by the Supreme Court abolished this notion, stating that: “National parties or organizations and regional parties or organizations do not need to organize along sectoral lines and do not need to represent 'any marginalized and underrepresented' sector.” See Romero (2013) for the news report.

¹² See Ufen (2007). The typology he used for comparing the legislatures of the three countries is reproduced in this paper as Annex Table 1.

Figure 4 tries to ascertain the extent to which there is any link between political dynasties and party switching. Anecdotal evidence suggests that political dynasties possess long-lived political careers, in part because they engage in extensive party switching (notably defecting to the party of the winning candidate for the Presidency). This practice could be compounded by Presidential candidates who actively seek alliances with dynastic clans in key vote-rich regions, in order to garner stronger political and financial support. In the literature, these practices are considered part of the broader pattern of personality-based politics that hollows out the party-based system (Quimpo 2008:22-25, 33-40).

Figure 4. Share of Non-Dynasties and Dynasties among Party switchers in the Philippine House of Representatives, 2004-2013



Source: AIM Policy Center staff calculations based on data from COMELEC.

Note: Figures indicate actual numbers, not percentages, for respective categories.

The data suggests that dynastic legislators have increasingly dominated the group of party switchers in Congress. Their number has increased from 22 in 2004 to 80 in 2013—or from roughly 45% of the total number of party switchers in 2004 to almost 80% by 2013. It is interesting to note that the majority of party switchers are comprised of what Mendoza, et al. (2013) refer to as “fat dynasties”—politically dynastic legislators who have relatives in other elected positions at the same time of their incumbency. Put differently, these are dynasties often with multiple family members encumbering elected offices at the same time.

These fat dynasties are expected to muster even greater political clout when compared to “thin” dynasties (those dynastic clans that field merely one family member at a time) and non-dynastic politicians, largely because they have control over far larger shares of public resources and the state apparatus. The political dominance of some of the “fattest” dynasties (e.g. those with large numbers of family members in office) also potentially provide a much stronger political base in some of the Philippine regions where these patterns have become more pronounced.

This appears to provide initial evidence of a possible link between two major dysfunctions in the Philippine democratic politics—political dynasties that have begun to dominate the political landscape at the local and national levels and excessive party switching that is deemed by analysts to render political parties inutile in developing and advancing coherent policy platforms on social and economic development (McCoy 2007:10-19; Teehankee 2002: 180-188; Mendoza, et al., 2012).

Grassroots Support for Political Parties

One can also argue that the absence of competitive party politics in the Philippines, other than being purely influenced by formal (e.g. form of legislature) and informal (e.g. dynastic governance) political institutions, is also premised on the acceptance of the status quo by the grassroots (see Tan 2012). Appropriating textbook supply-demand analysis to the issue, the supply of credible political parties will only be given if there is a strong demand among voters for it.

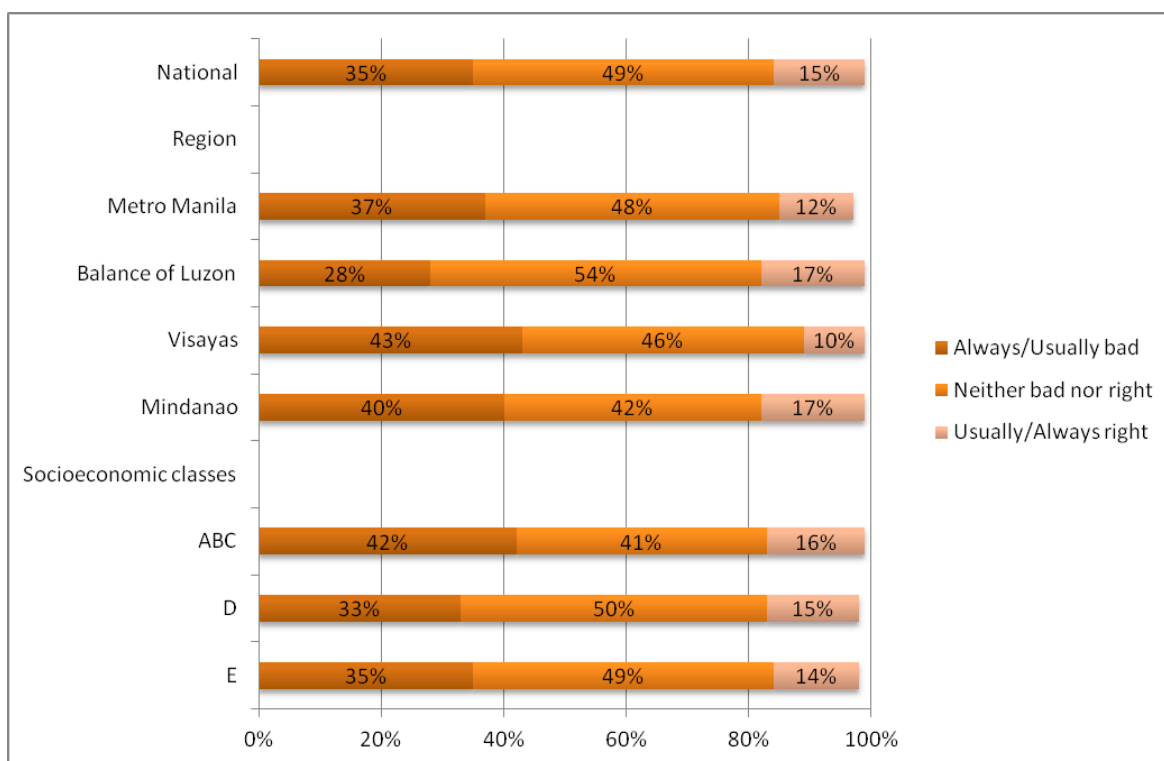
This reasoning tends to be supported by some initial evidence, as shown in Figure 5, where three out of five Filipinos do not share a negative view of political party switching. Looking at the survey results gathered by the Social Weather Station (2006), almost half of the respondents said that party switching is “neither good or bad,” implying either cautious ambiguity or downright indifference to party switching, while the remaining 15%, in fact, said that party switching is “usually or always right.”

Most of the subnational areas (e.g. Metro Manila, Visayas, and Mindanao) reflect the national pattern: Around 12 to 13% believe that party switching is always or usually right; 42% to 48%, neither good nor bad; and 37% to 40%, always or usually bad. It is curious to note that in the Balance of Luzon, only 28% of the respondents (the lowest percentage among regions) state that party switching is always/usually bad, while a significant 17% (the highest) believe that

party switching is always/usually right.

Comparing socioeconomic classes, the masses are more receptive to party switching politicians (66% for Class D and 63% for Class E who responded “always/usually right” and “neither bad nor right”) than the higher income groups (57% for Classes ABC). Nevertheless, the survey outcomes question conventional thinking that there is strong and united demand for platform-driven party politics even from higher income groups—assumed to be an educated, urbanized, and cultured demographic—since even among them, those who think that party switching is wrong do not even constitute a majority (at 42%).

Figure 5. Perceptions on Party Switching



Source: SWS Social Weather Survey on Political Parties (2006).

Furthermore, it is widely perceived that political parties in the Philippines are neither intended for accumulating mass membership nor engaging citizens in planning platforms and nominating electoral candidates. To illustrate, the Lakas party could not convene a biannual assembly of its members despite it being mandated by the party constitution. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Laban ng Malayang Masang Pilipino (Struggle of the Liberated Filipino Masses) or LAMMP—a coalition of parties that catapulted Joseph Estrada to the presidency—

did not even have a formal organizational hierarchy, party rules and statutes, nor main office (Ufen 2007: 13, 16). These anecdotally support the idea that political parties do not have the resources and structures, nor are they willing to devote such necessities, to develop legitimate and sustainable linkages between party leaders and voters.

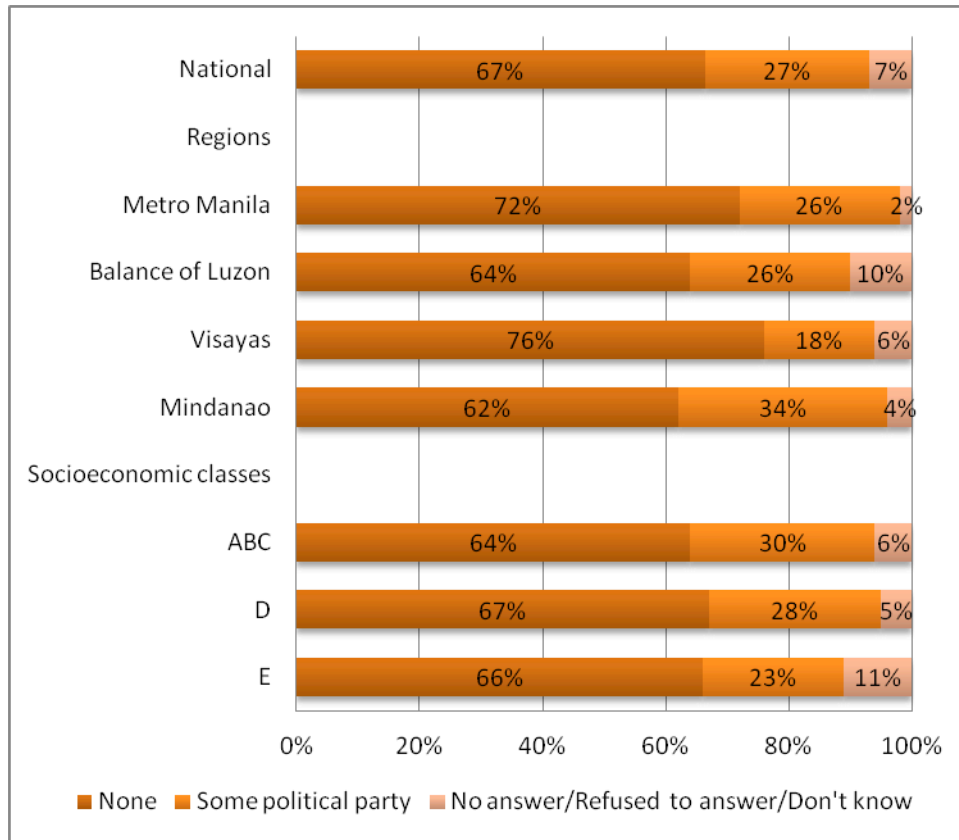
Such a conclusion can be supported by empirical data from Pulse Asia (2010), as cited in Teehankee (2012: 195), showing that nine out of ten Filipinos do not subscribe to a particular political party, as laid out in Table 1. The findings hold across occupations, socioeconomic classes, and urban-rural partitions. A survey from SWS (2006) complements this, in which 67% of the respondents stated that no political party “truly promotes their welfare.” As shown in Figure 6, the observation also holds across regions and socioeconomic classes.

Table 1. Party Membership among Filipinos

	None	Affiliated
National	91.0%	8.3%
Locale		
Urban	89.1%	11.3%
Rural	92.9%	7.6%
Classes		
ABC	84.4%	15.5%
D	91.6%	7.7%
E	91.5%	8.5%
Occupation		
Government	88.3%	12.2%
Private	92.0%	8.3%
Self-employed	89.0%	11.0%
Farmer/Fisherfolk	91.6%	8.9%
Not working	91.9%	7.7%

Source: Pulse Asia (2010), from Teehankee (2012:195).

Figure 6. Perception on the Effect of Political Parties in Promoting Public Welfare



Source: SWS Social Weather Survey on Political Parties (2006).

Note: The survey asked the respondents, “In your opinion, which political party, if any, truly promotes your welfare?” The response “some political party” in the graph means that the respondent stated a particular party as answer.

These figures are relevant in the understanding grassroots involvement in party institutionalization. Lane and Ersson (1997:180-182) argue that party stability requires cleavages and alignment. Cleavage pertains to the linkage and ties formed between a political party and the groups that serves as its base.¹³ Alignment pertains to the processes that cement the cleavages.

¹³ To demonstrate: Urban voters favor a party, rural voters favor another. Secular voters will support the party that complements their views; religious voters will endorse another. Other cleavages include liberal/conservative, business groups/labor unions, elite/masses, etc. It must be asserted that cleavages must operate in a programmatic or issue-driven relation with the political parties, instead of a clientelistic or personal-relations-driven networking.

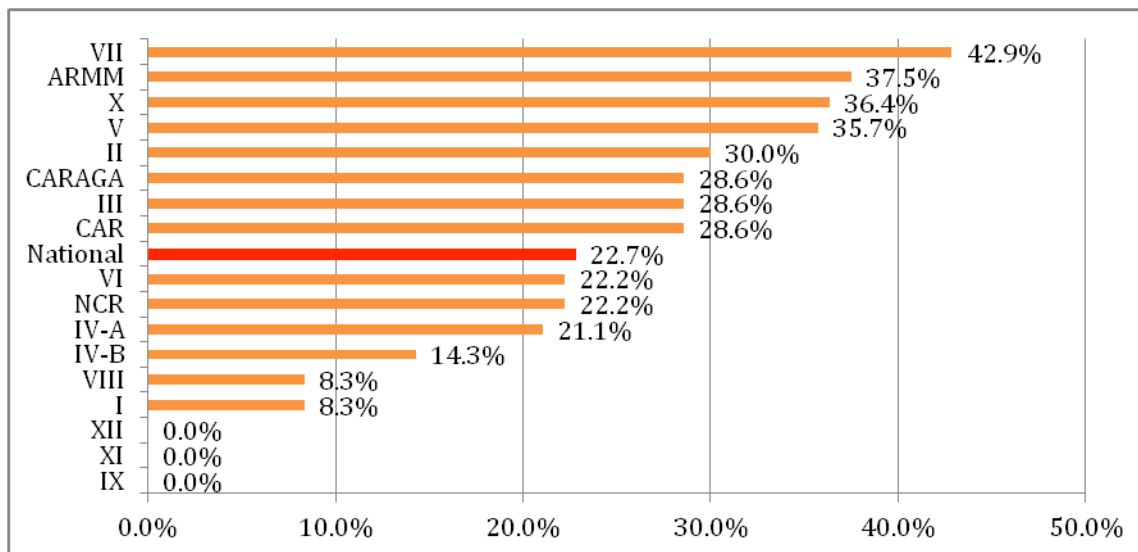
While Ufen (2007:6) insists that the institutionalization of party systems require “moderate polarization” among voters (i.e. cleavages), Lane and Ersson add that there must at least be consistency¹⁴ among these interest groups (i.e. alignment). Their theory is predicated, nonetheless, on voters that maintain a political vision or ideology, are empowered to participate in internal party processes, and are interested in such active engagement. Data cited in the preceding paragraphs appear to suggest that the Filipino voter diverges from the ideal that Lane and Ersson depict.

Turncoatism and Socio-Economic Indicators

One possible set of factors explaining this divergence may be associated with the prevalent poverty and deprivation that weakens the potential demand for stronger parties. For example, Mendoza et al (2013) find evidence that deeper poverty is often associated with the prevalence of “fatter” dynasties—a phenomenon largely associated with malfunctioning political parties. We attempt to examine this angle as well by assessing the possible geographic features of party switching. Figures 7 to 10 provide further insights by identifying the Philippine provinces with the most party switchers (expressed as a share of total regional legislators).

¹⁴ To extend the example above: “Consistency” means there is a relative stability in the support given by a voter to a party. Urban voters will vote for a party in a given election and will vote for the same party in the next elections as the party remains to its platform that attracted the urban voters in the first place. Secular voters will continue to vote for a party in successive elections as long as the latter maintains secularism as one of its tenets. Contrast this to the idea of “gross volatility,” which refers to voters voting for different political parties in successive elections or voters randomly changing political leanings. See Lane and Ersson (1997) for further discussion.

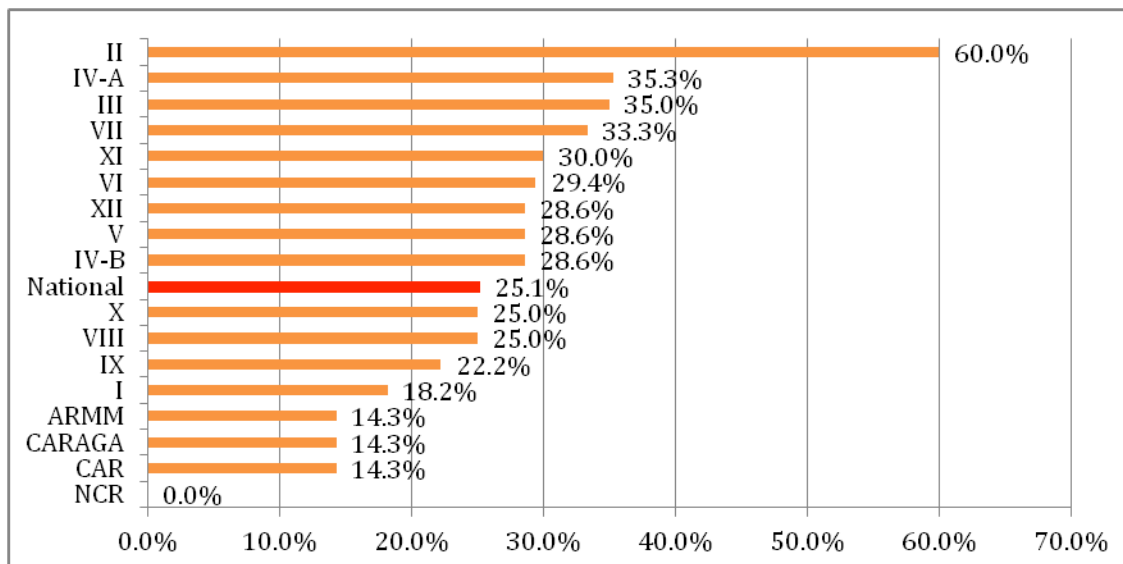
Figure 7. Ranking of Philippine Regions according to Share of Party switching Legislators in each Region, 2004



Source: AIM Policy Center staff calculations based on data from COMELEC.

Note: **National** pertains to the number of party switchers as percentage of the total number of legislators in the House of Representatives. It does not refer to the average of the regional shares.

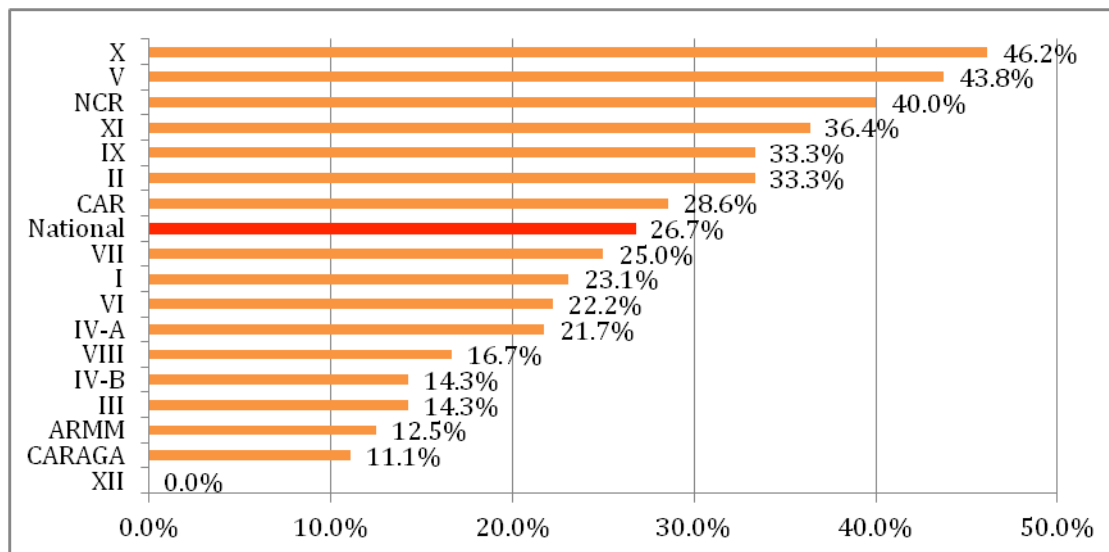
Figure 8. Ranking of Philippine Regions according to Share of Party switching Legislators in each Region, 2007



Source: AIM Policy Center staff calculations based on data from COMELEC.

Note: **National** pertains to the number of party switchers as percentage of the total number of legislators in the House of Representatives. It does not refer to the average of the regional shares.

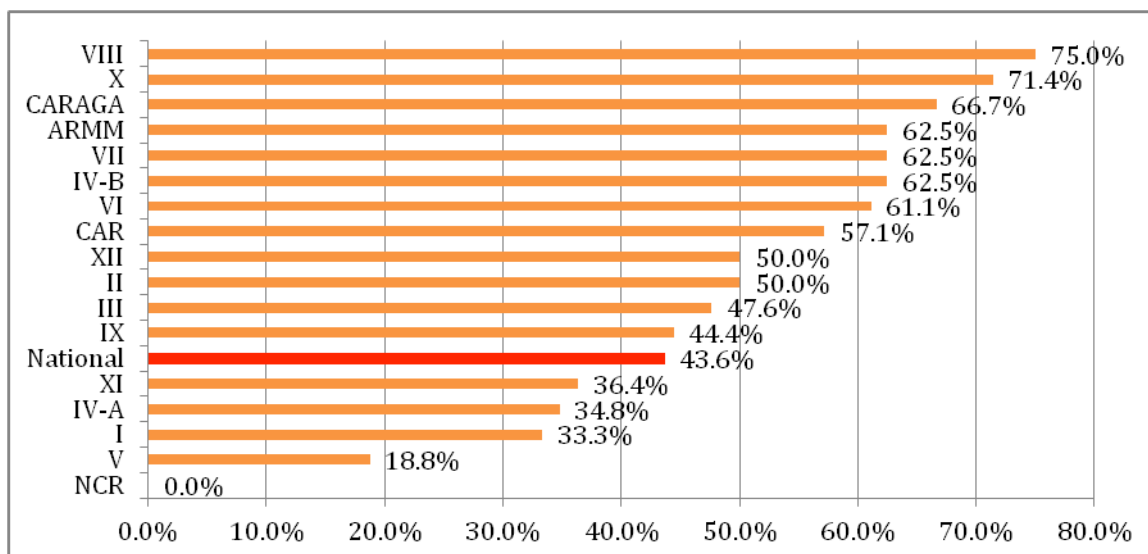
Figure 9. Ranking of Philippine Regions according to Share of Party switching Legislators in each Region, 2010



Source: AIM Policy Center staff calculations based on data from COMELEC.

Note: **National** pertains to the number of party switchers as percentage of the total number of legislators in the House of Representatives. It does not refer to the average of the regional shares.

Figure 10. Ranking of Philippine Regions according to Share of Party switching Legislators in each Region, 2013



Source: AIM Policy Center staff calculations based on data from COMELEC.

Note: **National** pertains to the number of party switchers as percentage of the total number of legislators in the House of Representatives. It does not refer to the average of the regional shares.

There are various reasons why party switching may produce distinct regional patterns. For instance, poorer regions (or those with higher poverty incidence, lower natural resources and capital, or less developed business sectors and thus also lower tax revenues) may depend extensively on allocations from the central government. This could motivate local and regional political leaders to align themselves to those who control public finance policies at the central level. De Dios (2007:160-166;173-177) further state that the centralization of economic and bureaucratic activity in the nation's capital means that significant resources of the State, whether financial or political, fall under the dominion of the national government. To access it, local elites must "project a national presence," often by aligning themselves to the ruling President.

It is also possible that politicians running for national office (e.g. the President, Vice President and Senators in the context of the Philippines) may court regional leaders and politicians to entice them to be part of their political party machinery in lieu of grassroots party-building. In the presence of a "weak State," the masses identify more with their local patrons than with the national government, and thus the Chief Executive also often turns to the provincial elites to mobilize grassroots support for his political agenda (de Dios 2007: 163-166, 173-175; de Dios and Hutchcroft 2003: 68; McCoy 2007: 10-11). This constitutes a "stable equilibrium" wherein central-local political links and patron-client dependencies tend to reinforce each other.

At first glance, the rankings of regions in Figures 7 to 10 do not appear to suggest any pattern over the four points in time that party switching legislators were recorded in our dataset (see Figures 7 to 10). But it is interesting to note the four regions that consistently obtained high shares of party switching: the Cordillera Administration Region and Regions II (Cagayan Valley), VII (Central Visayas), and X. All four garnered regional turncoat shares that were above median in at least three in the four elections under the study. Likewise, four regions consistently got low shares of party switching legislators: Regions I (Ilocos), IV-A (CALABARZON), VIII (Eastern Visayas), and IX (Zamboanga Peninsula). These regions had turncoat shares below median in at least three of the four elections from 2004 to 2013.

Is there a correspondence between the party switchers' shares from the said regions and their conditions of poverty? In the list of the twenty poorest provinces¹⁵, five provinces belong to the regions with the consistently high shares of party switching congressmen (Bukidnon, Lanao del Norte, Abra, Mt. Province, Misamis Occidental) while four provinces came from the regions

¹⁵ Media often call these provinces as the "Club 20." The province of Kalinga recently "graduated" from the list. See Dumlao (2013).

with consistently low shares (Zamboanga del Norte, Eastern Samar, Zamboanga Sibugay, and Western Samar). Looking at several poverty indicators (poverty incidence, subsistence incidence, poverty severity, and poverty gap), the consistently “high-party switching” regions score higher than the consistently “low party switching” regions on most of the poverty indicators.¹⁶ As evidenced by Table 2, however, the difference is not statistically (nor in our view practically) significant. Given these findings, we conclude that the linkages between our legislative party switching indicators and poverty are still inconclusive.

We therefore turn to a more formal analysis of correlations between indicators of party switching legislators in each region and regional indicators for development. Working under the assumption that party switching behavior from the 2004 to 2013 legislative sessions is possibly influenced by the pre-existing environment within each region (i.e. geographic and socio-economic characteristics already present in the regions around 2004), the regional shares of party switching (averaged from 2004 to 2013) are correlated to variables that proxy for initial socio-economic conditions (mostly taken from 2003 government data). The latter include regional per capita income, to represent the local economic performance; share of higher institutions, to represent human capital¹⁷; and share of agriculture to regional employment, to represent the extent to which the local economy depends for agrarian activity¹⁸. Proxy variables for initial conditions of infrastructure are also included in the analysis. This draws in part on Saito’s (2007) theory on the impact of underdevelopment, represented by poor infrastructure, and party switching. He theorized that party switching of legislators is more frequent in constituencies with poor and negligible infrastructure than in areas with enough quality infrastructure.¹⁹

¹⁶ See annex table 2.

¹⁷ For example, Tecson (2007:388-389) associates the presence of institutions of higher learning (i.e. “good educational and vocational facilities”) with supply of semi-skilled and skilled labor. Tecson also used the said variable to explain why some regions are able to attract more foreign investments over other regions.

¹⁸ In development economics, agrarian-based economies are commonly associated with lower incomes and greater poverty. In political economy, feudal relations usually operate in agrarian contexts, e.g. the landlord-tenant system or the sharecropping model. This is the premise of Anderson’s “*cacique* democracy,” where the Philippine democratic institutions are captured by an elite that has a long history of dominance over and ownership of agricultural lands (see Anderson 1998: 193-226).

¹⁹ Saito (2007:8-10, 12-13) explains that investments of infrastructure projects promise financial inflow to the locality via construction spending. Moreover, positive externalities such as better labor mobility, increases in value of real property, lower transportation costs for business, and the like come in when investments are made especially in areas that before had very poor infrastructure. In sum, for areas where there is underinvestment of infrastructure, infrastructure projects deliver a high marginal economic benefit equal to the financial inflow brought by construction spending and the returns from associated positive externalities.

**Table 2. Comparison of Average Poverty Indicators
Between High and Low Party Switching Regions**

Poverty Indicators (2012, Regional Averages)	Regions with Consistently High Party Switching Share	Regions with Consistently Low Party Switching Share	Calculated t^*
Poverty Incidence	28.65	28.68	-0.0027
Subsistence Incidence	12.53	12.05	0.0878
Poverty Severity	2.50	2.33	0.1604
Poverty Gap	6.35	5.93	0.1555

* Critical t for a two-sample t test with $df=6$ at 5% level of significance is 2.447.

Source: Policy Center staff calculations based on data obtained from NSCB (2012)

Notes:

- (1) Regions with consistent high turnout shares include the Cordillera Administration Region and Regions II (Cagayan Valley), VII (Central Visayas), and X. Regions with consistent low turnout shares include Regions I (Ilocos), IV-A (CALABARZON), VIII (Eastern Visayas), and IX (Zamboanga Peninsula).
- (2) Poverty indicators are regional measures from latest official data (2012). Poverty incidence and subsistence incidence are expressed as percentage of regional population.

Table 3. Pairwise Correlation of Share of Party Switching to Selected Geographic Indicators

Correlation With	Average Party Switching Share (2004-2013)	Average Party Switching Share (2007, 2013)
Regional Per Capita Income (1985 prices)	-0.3239	-0.5906
Share of Agriculture to Employment	0.3410	0.5491
Share of Higher Education Institutions	-0.3666	-0.5844
Road Density	-0.4884	-0.7654
Access to Potable Water	-0.0148	-0.1207
Access to Electricity	-0.1479	-0.3855
Irrigation Serviced	0.0639	-0.1373

Source: Policy Center staff calculations based on data obtained from BLES (2003); NSCB; Balisacan, Hill, and Piza (2007: 29); and Tecson (2007: 390).

Notes:

- (1) “Share of agriculture to employment” is the number of people employed by agriculture as percentage of total employed people in a region.
- (2) “Road density” is expressed as kilometer per square kilometer.
- (3) “Share of Higher Institutions” is the share of higher educational institutions of a region as percentage of the national total.
- (4) “Access to Potable Water” and “Access to Electricity” are expressed as percentage of households.
- (5) “Irrigation serviced” is total irrigated area as percentage of irrigable area of a region.
- (6) Proxy variables for initial socio-economic and infrastructure conditions are statistics from 2003.

Drawing on the results reported in Table 3, there is weak to near-moderate correlation between the average share of turncoats and initial socio-economic conditions. Likewise, two of the three infrastructure variables are weakly correlated with the average share of turncoats. The exception is the variable for road density, which suggests a moderate correlation with turncoatism behavior. The correlation between the two is negative 49%, providing some initial support to Saito's hypothesis that party switching is more pronounced in initially poor-infrastructure areas than the rich infrastructure-areas. Regardless, the results seem to suggest that no strong patterns exist with party switching behavior and aforementioned variables. Patterns of party switching could be affected by (and also could influence) different socio-economic and other factors at the regional level.

However, if one excludes the period of presidential elections in computing the average share of turncoats—henceforth, average share of midterm party switchers—one can see an increase in the absolute values of the correlations. There is now moderate correlation between initial socio-economic conditions and party switching in midterm elections. For the initial infrastructure conditions, the result is mixed and the correlation value is sensitive to the proxy variable used. There is a negative and strong relationship between road density and party switching, while the correlation between access to electricity and turncoatism is negative but moderate. The remaining infrastructure variables, access to potable water and irrigation serviced, still display weak correlation.

All in all, these initial findings provide an indication that other factors could be at play regarding the decision of a legislator to change her/his party affiliation. However, the stronger correlation values from midterm share of turncoats and selected variables suggest that the regional characteristics of a legislator's turf are more pronounced during midterm elections than in the presidential ones in influencing her/his decision to switch.

This hypothesis can be supported by going back to Figure 3, where one can see higher party switching during midterm election years (namely, 2007 and 2013). A possible explanation is predicated on the notion that the legislator wants to align to the ruling party (which registers only when they file their certificates of candidacy during the midterm elections) to maximize access to State resources, and that the ruling party in the legislature is usually the party of the President.

Since guessing the next ruling party in the legislature is difficult during the presidential election years where often approximately a dozen candidates compete for the position,²⁰ district representatives typically preserve their party affiliation and switch only once a new President has been elected. This is supported by Figure 3, where there are more congressmen (in magnitude and in percentage) who retained their party affiliation during 2004 and 2010 than in 2007 and 2013.

4. Concluding Remarks

Excessive party switching potentially weakens accountability and ideological coherence from which party-based democracies operate. Some analysts contend that this framing of the issue is not enough to explain the existence of party switching as a norm in other democratic traditions, especially in the governments of developing countries. Given the variety of contexts, case studies and context-specific analyses might provide deeper insights.

The study responds to this challenge and empirically analyzes party switching in the Philippine House of Representatives touching on issues at the macro-level (e.g. the legislative model) to the micro-level (e.g. regional socio-economic characteristics), from the institutional (e.g. the entrenched political dynasties) to the agency-oriented (e.g. voters' perception). While the analysis is not yet conclusive, it nevertheless points to some possible factors affecting a legislator's decision to change official party affiliation.

The current district-based legislative model in the lower house, for example, supports personality-centered politics. The very competitive electoral democracy that emerged after the fall of Marcos in 1986 forced politicians to frequently align themselves with the national government to access its chest of resources. Lack of voter engagement in the internal workings of political parties further undermines institutionalization of party politics. Correlations between party switching and selected regional indicators yields mixed results, but nonetheless hint that there is a difference in the decision calculus of a congressman to switch around the midterm elections than during the presidential election season. Finally, the bulk of the voting population appears to condone party switching.

²⁰ Surveys, of course, hint at the strongest contender for the presidency. But they become unreliable signals during neck-to-neck electoral battles, such as the ones seen by the country during 1992 and 2004. In fact, Miriam Defensor-Santiago was the consistent top choice in the surveys in the late 1990s but it was Fidel V. Ramos who went on to win as President. See Shannon (1992). Similarly, the vice presidential position in 2010 was said to be a choice between Loren Legarda and Mar Roxas, but Jejomar Binay was the one who clinched the position. See Dalangin-Fernandez (2010).

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**Annex Table 1. Ufen's (2007) Comparison of Party Institutionalization
of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand**

Country	Electoral System	Translation of Social Cleavages to Party Systems	Stability of Interparty Competition
Indonesia (1949-1957)	Proportional representation	Strong	low to medium
Indonesia after 1998	Proportional representation	medium to strong	medium to high
Philippines (1946-1972)	Plurality	Weak	low to medium
Philippines after 1986	Segmented (mainly plurality)	Weak	low
Thailand	Segmented (mainly plurality)	Weak	low

Notes:

- (1) Presented here is an edited and abridged version of party typology done by Ufen (2007: 23).
- (2) "Plurality" can be interpreted as constituency-based/district-based legislative model, while "segmented" pertains to a bicameral congress.
- (3) "Social Cleavage" could pertain to the electorate divided into interest groups that each espouse an advocacy or ideology.
- (4) "Interparty Competition" is interpreted as the presence of political parties that carry competing political visions and participate in an agonistic electoral exercise.

Annex Table 2. Poorest 20 Regions of the Philippines according to Average Poverty Incidence

PROVINCES	RANK	AVE. POVERTY INCIDENCE (2006-2012)
Zamboanga del Norte	1	62.80
Lanao del Sur	2	58.37
Eastern Samar	3	57.13
Maguindanao	4	56.83
Agusan del Sur	5	53.97
Masbate	6	53.73
Saranggani	7	53.30
Northern Samar	8	51.90
Surigao del Norte	9	50.80
Sultan Kudarat	10	50.67
Davao Oriental	11	50.23
Zamboanga Sibugay	12	49.40
Bukidnon	13	46.20
Camarines Sur	14	45.63
Surigao del Sur	15	45.40
Lanao del Norte	16	45.33
Abra	17	45.17
Mt. Province	18	44.63
Misamis Occidental	19	44.43
Western Samar	20	44.30

Source: Policy Center staff calculations based on data obtained from NSCB.

Notes:

- (1) The computations did not consider provinces with samples less than 100.
- (2) Highlighted in blue are the provinces in consistently low turnout-share regions, while those in red are provinces belonging to consistently high turnout-share regions. +AMDG



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