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**A new measure of political stability –
Portfolio duration in the German Bundesländer 1990-2010 and its determinants**

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A new measure of political stability – Portfolio duration in the German Bundesländer (1990-2010) and its determinants

This article introduces the measure of portfolio duration as an indicator for political stability in democratic parliamentary systems. It expands the discussion that has mostly focused on government durability and overall ministerial tenure in cabinet by the time a minister remains as head of a ministry. A newly compiled dataset covering all German Länder ministers for the period 1990-2010 is analyzed using descriptive statistics and a Cox-model. Empirical evidence shows significant differences between the Länder and the survival analysis verifies that aggregate factors describing the political landscape, like the type of government or the ideological distance between coalition members, influence portfolio duration much stronger than biographic characteristics do. Therefore, at least at the level of the German Länder political and institutional factors are of utmost relevance when it comes to political stability understood in terms of portfolio duration.

German Bundesländer – ministers – portfolio duration – survival analysis – political stability

Ein neues Maß für politische Stabilität – Die Amtsdauern von Landesministern in den Deutschen Bundesländern (1990-2012), und welche Faktoren sind es die diese beeinflussen?

Dieser Artikel führt ein neues Maß für politische Stabilität ein: die Amtsdauer eines Ministers in einem spezifischen Ministerium. Damit erweitert er die bisherige Diskussion, welche sich primär auf die Dauerhaftigkeit von Regierungen und die gesamte Amtsdauer von Ministern im Kabinett kaprizierte um einen spezifischen Faktor, nämlich die Dauer, die ein Minister seinem Ministerium vorsteht. Ein neu erhobener Datensatz, der alle Landesminister von 1990 bis 2010 beinhaltet, wird sowohl deskriptiv statistisch als auch mit einem Cox-Modell analysiert. Es zeigt sich, dass signifikante Unterschiede zwischen den Bundesländern bestehen und dass es insbesondere Faktoren auf der Aggregatebene sind, die die Amtsdauer deutlich stärker beeinflussen als biographische Charakteristika der Minister selbst. Insofern spielt zumindest auf der Ebene der Bundesländer die politisch-institutionelle Umgebung in der ein Minister arbeitet eine große Rolle für die politische Stabilität wie sie in diesem Artikel verstanden wird.

Bundesländer – Minister – Amtsdauer – Cox-Modell – politische Stabilität

I. Introduction

Democratic systems in general face a multitude of hazards that determine their performance and stability. One of the main indicators for a well functioning political system is the ability of the executive to implement coherent and stable policies. For this reason, political stability can be seen as heavily dependent on the government and everything which takes place inside the cabinet is of interest when analyzing how stable democratic political systems are. Of course, political stability is a very much contested concept with many different approaches to define and operationalize it.¹ In this article I nevertheless concentrate on the main argument developed in the literature that sees duration in power as the best indicator for political stability. The only question remaining is, what are the subjects to be analyzed? At least four different approaches can be distinguished:

- 1) Studies that take a look at the *duration of political leaders*, i.e. the chief executives in power.²
- 2) Starting with the work of *Lowell* in the late 19th century,³ several studies have used *government duration* to explain political stability. In most cases they define the termination of governments by three events: elections, a change of the party composition within cabinet and a change of the prime minister.⁴

¹ *Russett* for example defines political stability as the absence of violence within a system and he operationalizes it in terms of the number of murders committed by inner state groups (*Russett, B.M.*: World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators, New Haven, 1964, 97-100.) *Lipset* considers the legitimacy of a political system as one of the main components of its political stability. He measures it by the performance of totalitarian and anti-democratic parties (*Lipset, S.M.*: Political Man. The Social Bases of Politics, Garden City, 1960, 73.) A third approach equates political stability with the absence of structural (institutional) changes within a system (*Ake, C.*: A Theory of Political Integration, Homewood, 1967, 100-101; *Budge, I./Farlie, D.*: Predicting Regime Change, in: Quality and Quantity 15 (1981), 335-364). Here the main question is of course, which changes of the system are big enough to be counted as changing the whole systemic structure, and how to deal with incremental changes that taken as a whole can also lead to big institutional transformations (*Lane, J.-E. and Ersson, S.O.*: Politics and Society in Western Europe, 4.ed., London u.a., 1999, 296; *Schmidt, S.*: Theoretische Überlegungen zum Konzept "Politische Stabilität", in: Faath, S. (ed.): Stabilitätsprobleme Zentraler Staaten. Ägypten, Algerien, Saudi-Arabien, Iran, Pakistan und die Regionalen Auswirkungen, Hamburg, 2003, 9-39, hier 35).

² *Bienen, H./van de Walle, N.*: Of Time and Power. Leadership Duration in the Modern World, Stanford, 1991. While this approach is also applicable to non-parliamentary systems and therefore enables students of political stability to compare between different systems of government, the following three approaches are much more meaningful to be applied in parliamentary systems.

³ *Lowell, L.A.*: Governments and Parties in Continental Europe Vol. 1, Cambridge, 1896.

⁴ *Blondel, J.*: Party Systems and Patterns of Government in Western Democracies, in: Canadian Journal of Political Science 1/2 (1968), 180-203; *Browne, E.C./Freundreis, J.P./Gleiber, D.W.*: An "Events" Approach to the Problem of Cabinet Stability, in: Comparative Political Studies 17/2 (1984), 167-197; *Jäckle, S.*: Determinanten der Regierungsbeständigkeit in parlamentarischen Systemen, Berlin and Münster, 2011; *Russett, B.M.*: a.a.O.; *Sanders, D./Herman, V.*: The Stability and Survival of Governments in Western Europe, in: Acta

3) Having their origins either in the more sociological elite studies or coming from a more comparative politics perspective a number of researchers concentrates on individual ministers. The main argument is that the *duration a minister remains in cabinet* can be regarded as a good indicator for political stability.⁵

4) A further path that has until now been neglected by most studies focuses also on individual ministers, yet not on their overall duration within cabinet, but on their duration within a ministry – their *portfolio duration*. This duration does not only end when ministers leave the cabinet completely, but also when they remain a member of the cabinet, while changing into other ministries. From the point of political stability this measure is at least as important as overall cabinet duration because a minimum of personal continuity within a specific ministry can be regarded as the precondition for implementing stable and coherent policies. Ministers that perpetually switch into different portfolios do not have the possibility to become such a factor of political stability.

II. Research question and related works

The following discussion builds on this fourth approach and therefore analyzes the duration of ministers within specific ministries. The research question can be formulated in the following way:

How long is a minister able to remain in his or her ministerial position and which factors determine this *portfolio duration*?

The general rationale which underlies this question is that we often witness a multitude of factors when a minister's time in his or her specific office comes to an end. I assume many of these factors to be contingent on the minister him- or herself as well as on the political sphere in which he or she operates. This stands in contrast to present studies which maintain a strong focus on the prime minister's capacities to hire and fire. For example, with their record of

Politica 12/3 (1977), 346-377; Warwick, P.: Government Survival in Parliamentary Democracies, Cambridge, 1994.

⁵ Dogan, M.: Pathways to Power, Boulder, 1989, 239; Dowding, K./Dumont, P., (eds.): The Selection of Ministers in Europe. Hiring and Firing, London, 2009; Huber, J.D./Martinez-Gallardo, C.: Replacing Cabinet Ministers: Patterns of Ministerial Stability in Parliamentary Democracies, in: American Political Science Review 102/2 (2008), 169-180; Siegfried, A.: Stable Instability in France, in: Foreign Affairs 34/1 (1956), 394-404; von Beyme, K.: Party Systems and Cabinet Stability in European Parliamentary Systems, in: Commager, H.S. (ed.): Festschrift für Karl Löwenstein. Aus Anlass seines achtzigsten Geburtstages, Tübingen, 1971, 51-70.

coalition governments the prime minister's⁶ autonomy for cabinet reshuffles or demotions is much weaker in the German Länder than it is in Great Britain or Australia – two countries often discussed in ministerial turnover literature.⁷ Thus, the context of coalition governments is one of the aspects that must be taken into account when analyzing ministerial turnover in the German Länder, while at the same time the principal agent relationship between the prime minister and his or her ministers that is decisive for the Westminster systems plays a smaller role in our context.⁸

For answering the research question the article incorporates two trends that have shaped research on governmental elites during the last years. First, a shift away from a largely institutional focus, bringing the individual and its biographic characteristics back into the analysis. Previously these kinds of biographic data have been analysed in a mostly qualitative and descriptive manner impeding the systematic testing of determinants of portfolio duration.⁹ In contrast I include these data into a large-N research design. Nevertheless, institutional factors shaping the political landscape will also be tested. The second trend concerns the level of analysis. While a number of studies exist that look at ministerial tenure on the national level,¹⁰ the subnational level has been given much less attention.¹¹ Therefore, data on

⁶ For reasons of simplicity the *Ministerpräsidenten* of the 13 territorial Länder as well as the governing mayors (*Regierende Bürgermeister*) in Berlin, Bremen and Hamburg are called prime ministers for the remainder of the paper.

⁷ *Berlinski, S./Dewan, T./Dowding, K.*: The Impact of Individual and Collective Performance on Ministerial Tenure, in: *The Journal of Politics* 72/2 (2010), 559-571; *Weller, P.*: Distinguishing Concepts of Ministerial Responsibility, in: *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 58/1 (1999), 62-64; *Woodhouse, D.*: Ministerial responsibility in the 1990s: when do ministers resign?, in: *Parliamentary Affairs* 46/3 (1993), 277-292.

⁸ This individual-oriented perspective separates this analysis from other works that approach ministerial turnover from the perspective of the prime minister and ask under which conditions and for what reasons he or she reshuffles the cabinet, demotes or promotes ministers and induces individual ministers resignations (see *Dewan, T./Dowding, K.*: The Corrective Effect of Ministerial Resignations on Government Popularity, in: *American Journal of Political Science* 49/1 (2005), 46-56; *Indridason, I./Kam, C.*: Cabinet Reshuffles and Ministerial Drift, in: *British Journal of Political Science* 38/4 (2008), 621-656).

⁹ Biographic encyclopedias, like the ones published by *Kempf* and *Merz* for the German chancellors and federal ministers or those on prime ministers of the Länder, provide a vast amount of information on individual career paths but are only ill-suited for conducting systematic large-N comparisons. (see *Kempf, U./Merz, H.-G.*: *Kanzler und Minister 1998-2005*, Wiesbaden, 2008; *Baer, F.*: *Die Ministerpräsidenten Bayerns, 1945-1962*, München, 1971; *Gösmann, S.*: *Unsere Ministerpräsidenten in Nordrhein-Westfalen, neun Porträts von Rudolf Amelunxen bis Jürgen Rüttgers*, Düsseldorf, 2008).

¹⁰ See e.g. *Berlinski, S./Dewan, T./Dowding, K.*: The Length of Ministerial Tenure in the United Kingdom, 1945-97, in: *British Journal of Political Science* 37/2 (2007), 245-262; *Fischer, J./Kaiser, A.*: Hiring and firing ministers under informal constraints: Germany, in: *Dowding, K./Dumont, P.* (eds.): a.a.O., 21-40.

¹¹ The existing works see the subnational level only as one part of a more complex multilevel system describing the ups and downs political careers can take (see *Rodriguez-Teruel, J.*: Ministerial and Parliamentary Elites in Multilevel Spain 1977-2009, in: *Comparative Sociology* 10 (2011), 887-907; *Stolz, K.*: Moving up, moving down: political careers across territorial levels, in: *European Journal of Political Research* 42 (2003), 223-248). Yet, more recently, there is work going on within the research network on the selection and deselection of

ministers in all of the 16 German Länder were recorded for the period 1990-2010. The statistical analysis in this article is based on this newly compiled dataset, including both classical political and institutional variables on the government and parliament level (e.g. type of government or policy-distance) as well as biographic and socio-demographic characteristics of the individual ministers (e.g. gender, age, education, experience in earlier cabinets).

For the analysis I do not only borrow from existing works on ministerial careers on the national and subnational level but also from the already quite extensive body of more institutionally focused government survival literature.¹² This tradition is furthermore not only relevant because of its contextual proximity to ministerial turnover, but also because the event history methods developed in the course of this research can be applied fruitfully to the analysis in this paper. I use a *Cox* proportional hazard model which has already proven its suitability in government durability research.¹³

This study enhances also the existing literature on political elites in Germany. Apart from more sociological works following the seminal book by *Herzog*¹⁴ who gave questionnaires to a more or less representative sample of top-politicians concerning their paths to power, existing research on selection and de-selection processes for German political elites has focused predominantly on parliamentarians¹⁵ and federal ministers¹⁶ or career patterns connecting both.¹⁷ Yet the subnational level is often only analysed as a recruiting pool for a

political elites (SEDEPE) which focuses exclusively on the subnational level (e.g. a conference on subnational political elites that took place in Montreal in October 2012. See www.sedepe.net).

¹² E.g. *Warwick, P.*: Government Survival in Parliamentary Democracies. a.a.O.

¹³ *Box-Steffensmeier, J.M./Jones, B.S.*: Event History Modeling, Cambridge, 2004; *Box-Steffensmeier, J.M./Sokhey, A.E.*: Event History Methods, in: *Leicht, K.T./Jenkins, J.C.* (eds.): Handbook of Politics, New York, 2009, 605-618; *Cox, D.R.*: Regression Models and Life-Tables, in: *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society. Series B (Methodological)* 34/2 (1972), 187-220; *Jäckle, S.*: Determinanten der Regierungsbeständigkeit. Eine Event-History-Analyse von 40 Parlamentarischen Demokratien, in: *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft* 3/1, (2009), 6-32.

¹⁴ *Herzog, D.*: Politische Karrieren - Selektion und Professionalisierung politischer Führungsgruppen, Opladen, 1975.

¹⁵ *Best, H./Jahr, S./Vogel, L.*: Karrieremuster und Karrierekalküle deutscher Parlamentarier, in: *Edinger, M./Patzelt, W.J.* (eds.): Politik als Beruf, Wiesbaden, 2011, 168-212; *Patzelt, W.J.*: German MPs and their roles, in: *Journal of Legislative Studies* 3/1 (1997), 55-78.

¹⁶ *Ali, A.S.*: Karrierewege und Rekrutierungsmuster bei Regierungsmitgliedern auf Bundesebene 1949-2002, Halle-Wittenberg, 2003; *Fischer, J./Kaiser, A.*: Hiring and firing ministers under informal constraints, a.a.O.; *Fischer, J./Kaiser, A./Rohlfing, I.*: The Push and Pull of Ministerial Resignations in Germany, 1969-2005, in: *West European Politics* 29 (2006), 709-735.

¹⁷ *Fischer, J./Kaiser, A.*: Linkages between parliamentary and ministerial careers in Germany, 1949-2008. The Bundestag as recruitment pool, in: *German Politics* 18/2 (2009), 140-154; *Fischer, J./Kaiser, A.*: Der Bundestag: Sprungbrett oder Auffangbecken? Ministerkarrieren zwischen Parlament und Exekutive, in: *Zeitschrift für*

position on the federal level.¹⁸ One exception is a book by *L. Vogel* describing the recruitment of federal as well as Länder ministers.¹⁹ Contrary to the more comprehensive literature on selection mechanisms, a systematic analysis of ministerial tenure or portfolio duration has nevertheless until now been missing for the German Bundesländer.

In the following section I explain the cases selection and give a short overview of the data, especially with regard to the different types of terminal events. In the fourth section I present the hypotheses about ministerial duration and their operationalizations before section five gives a very brief outline of the applied event history methodology. Section six discusses the results of the statistical analysis before the final section gives a résumé.

III. Definitions, data and first descriptive results

The definition of what constitutes a case is crucial for any statistical analysis. Particularly in event history analysis, this definition is often not completely self-evident: The question, which events have to be considered as being terminal for a subjects' event history, needs special reflection. According to the research question a case is defined as a person who has been holding a specific ministerial position in one of the German Länder.²⁰ When this person either leaves the cabinet completely or changes from one ministry to another, this is regarded as a terminal event for the dependent variable, ministerial duration. Thus, neither elections nor reshuffles automatically serve as terminal events. Aside from cases when the minister drops out of the entire cabinet which are clear instances of an end of his or her tenure within a specific ministry, I only assume complete changes into another ministry to be a terminal event (e.g. when the minister of finance changes into the ministry of interior). Cases when a minister gains some additional competences/portfolios or loses some other, as well as instances of minor portfolio changes²¹ are not regarded terminal for ministerial duration. That means that for persons experiencing such an event the clock measuring their duration within

Parlamentsfragen 41/1 (2010), 36-41. Works on party careers form another perspective for research on political elites.

¹⁸ *Fischer, J./Kaiser, A.*: Wie gewonnen, so zerronnen? Selektions- und Deselektionsmechanismen in den Karrieren deutscher Bundesminister, in: Edinger, M./Patzelt, W. (eds.): Politik als Beruf (Politische Vierteljahresschrift Sonderheft 44), Wiesbaden, 2011, 192-212.

¹⁹ *Vogel, L.*: Der Weg ins Kabinett - Karrieren von Ministern in Deutschland, Frankfurt, 2009.

²⁰ Only full ministers are counted, state secretaries without a vote in the cabinet are not included in the analysis.

²¹ Minor changes are cases where less than 50 % of a minister's portfolios are altered. If more than 50 % are changed, this is counted as a complete change and therefore as a terminal event.

their ministry continues to tick until he or she leaves the cabinet or changes into another ministry. For every case the starting and ending points of the ministerial spell, biographic information on the minister and information about the political-institutional setting of the government(s) of the respective ministerial spell(s) are recorded.²²

The dataset covers all German Länder ministers that left the cabinet between 01/01/1991 and 12/31/2010. Applying the aforementioned definitions for terminal events, 849 cases of ministers' duration in a specific ministry can be identified (909 with prime ministers included). The following table 1 provides an overview of the types of terminal events and their frequencies within the dataset. The categories for the classification of the terminal events are used in a mutually exclusive manner, although in the reality of research it is often not possible to determine the real, single cause of a ministerial turnover.²³ In contrast, we often face an accumulation of different reasons resulting in the end of a ministerial spell.²⁴ This phenomenon is well-established in the analysis of government terminations and addresses the complex issue of precisely naming the type of terminal event.²⁵ The categorization is thus based on the most relevant type of termination, knowing that this decision is subjective and far from being without ambiguity. The categorization of terminal events is first of all necessary for censoring and this dichotomous classification can be done without significant error.

Bearing the problem of a clear cut categorization in mind, some preliminary descriptive conclusions can be drawn from the table. For these, I will use the data including prime ministers. Approximately one fifth of all ministers had to leave the cabinet because their party was voted out of government, but we see a large variation here: While the CSU has been governing in Bavaria for the whole observation period (from 2008 on in a coalition with the FDP), there have been major electoral turnovers for example in Saxony-Anhalt where nearly all types of party cabinet compositions could be observed during the last 20 years (CDU/FDP, SPD/Green, SPD, CDU/SPD). While only one minister died during her time in cabinet, 29

²² The focus on the individual ministers also speaks against a definition often used for reshuffles which counts only simultaneous changes of two or more ministers as a reshuffle (cp. *Budge, I.*: Party Factions and Government Reshuffles: a General Hypothesis Tested against Data from 20 Post-war Democracies, in: *European Journal of Political Research* 13/3 (1985), 327-333). In the present analysis all ministers leaving their ministries are counted, regardless of whether they have left alone or at the same time together with colleagues.

²³ *Fischer, J./Kaiser, A./Rohlfing, I.*: The Push and Pull of Ministerial Resignations in Germany, a.a.O., 712.

²⁴ *Dowding, K./Kang, W.-T.*: Ministerial Resignations 1945-97, in: *Public Administration* 76 (1998), 411-429.

²⁵ *Budge, I./Keman, H.*: Parties and Democracy. Coalition Formation and Government Functioning in Twenty States, Oxford, 1990, 179.

had to leave government because of health reasons. Particularly in Berlin, Brandenburg and Lower Saxony ministers often left the cabinet for taking another political position, whereas we find the most ministers changing into private business in Berlin, Baden-Württemberg and Schleswig-Holstein.²⁶ We only find very few instances that a party breaks a governing coalition due to policy differences and entirely leaves the cabinet. One of these instances was in Berlin, when as a result of a SPD-initiated vacation of seized buildings, all three Green ministers resigned from their positions in the SPD/Green government shortly before the first joint elections for the Berlin chamber of deputies in December 1990. Moreover, Berlin witnessed one of the two cases where a vote of no confidence launched against a prime minister resulted in a ministerial turnover (the other was *Heide Simonis* in Schleswig-Holstein). In 2001, four ministers together with the governing mayor *Eberhard Diepgen* subjected their fate to a vote of no confidence and as a consequence left the government when the majority of the parliamentarians no longer supported *Diepgen*. A lack of support from one's own party can only be made responsible for the turnover in a small number of cases, whereas scandals account for more a significant amount of all terminations of ministerial spells.²⁷ For 112 terminations I was – at least with the informational basis available (*Munzinger Archiv*) – only able to assert that they were politically induced, but no particular terminal event could be singled out.

Up to this point all the events described are events when a minister completely leaves the cabinet. These are by definition also terminal events for portfolio duration. Taking a look at events that could additionally be regarded as terminal for the duration of a minister in a specific portfolio (the grey rows in table 1) we find that “changes into another ministry” being the most obvious choice for an additional exit variable for portfolio duration is also by empirical means the most frequently found (51.1 %). Three further types of events are also listed: Ministers who gained additional portfolios (25.7 %) and those who lost competences or parts of their portfolios (11.2 %) and finally minor portfolio changes where less than 50 % of

²⁶ For example the former senator of finance in Berlin, *Thilo Sarrazin*, left office in 2009 when he was appointed as member of the executive board of the *Deutsche Bundesbank* – a position he had to give up just the following year in the wake of a scandal regarding his positions on immigration. *Burkhard Dreher*, minister of economy in Brandenburg from 1994 to 1999 left government to become CEO at the VEW, then a large utility company, and is an example of a minister moving into private business.

²⁷ This category subsumes all types of scandals. The large majority are nevertheless either of financial or political nature. Sex scandals which – according to *Dowding* and *Kang* – make up a considerable portion of British ministerial resignations particularly for conservative politicians, are apparently not a big issue in the German Länder, as *Fischer, et al.* have already shown for the federal level (see *Dowding, K./Kang, W.-T.: Ministerial Resignations 1945-97*, a.a.O., 419-425; *Fischer, J./Kaiser, A./Rohlfing, I.: a.a.O.*).

a minister's portfolios are altered. As before, there is a large variance between the Bundesländer. In Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg we find a high number of ministers changing their portfolios while remaining part of the cabinet, whereas this is clearly an exception in Brandenburg and Saxony-Anhalt. Yet these three events are not that clear to be regarded as terminal for portfolio duration, as the respective minister in all of these instances keeps at least a significant part of the portfolios that he or she has had before. Therefore, the following analysis uses "changes into another ministry" as the only type of terminal event additionally to those instances when a minister completely leaves the whole cabinet.

Table 1: Types and frequencies of terminal events for portfolio duration by Bundesland without and (with prime ministers)

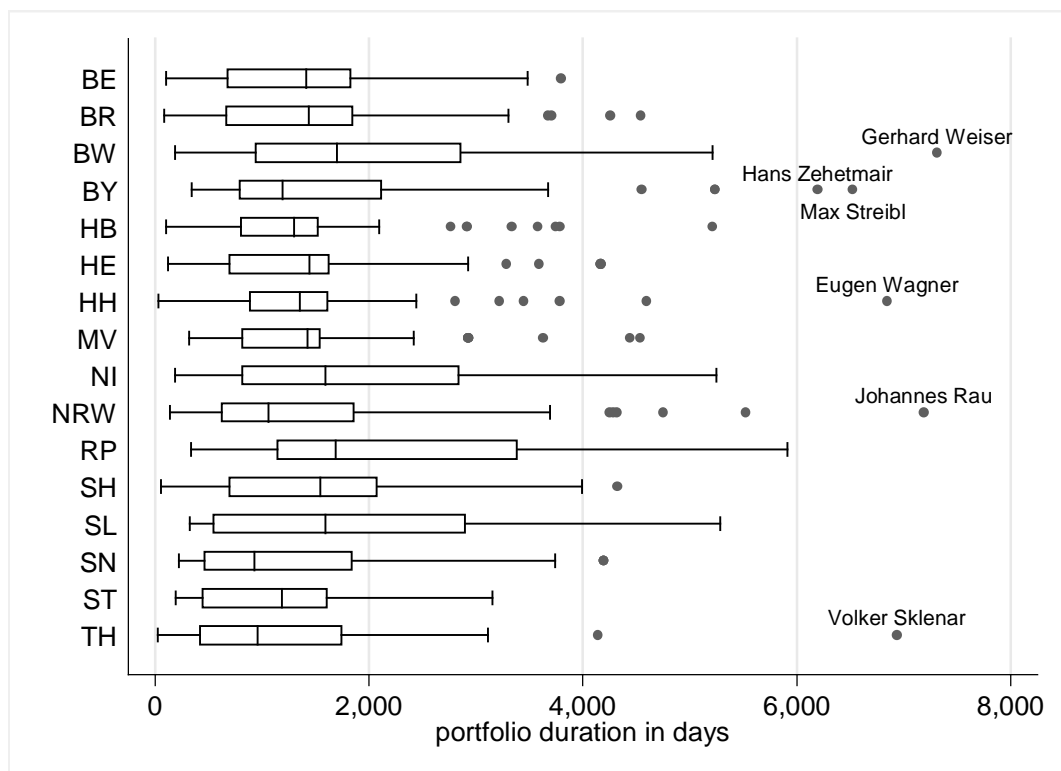
		BE	BR	BW	BY	HB	HE	HH	MV	NI	NRW	RP	SH	SL	SN	ST	TH	Sum	
portfolio changes	change into different ministry	6 (6)	4 (4)	14 (14)	19 (19)	13 (13)	7 (7)	9 (9)	6 (6)	7 (7)	14 (14)	5 (5)	6 (6)	5 (5)	12 (12)	3 (3)	11 (11)	141 (141)	
	additional portfolio/competences	3 (4)	- (-)	9 (9)	7 (7)	3 (6)	4 (4)	5 (5)	1 (1)	2 (4)	7 (7)	8 (8)	3 (3)	4 (4)	3 (3)	4 (4)	2 (2)	65 (71)	
	losing of portfolio/competences	2 (2)	- (-)	1 (1)	4 (4)	5 (8)	- (-)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (5)	1 (1)	1 (1)	2 (2)	2 (2)	1 (1)	- (-)	2 (2)	24 (31)	
	minor portfolio changes (less than 50% of portfolios)	2 (2)	- (-)	6 (6)	- (-)	3 (3)	2 (2)	- (-)	2 (2)	- (-)	4 (4)	1 (1)	8 (8)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)	2 (2)	33 (33)	
cabinet exits	collective	voting out of government (at elections)*	3 (4)	6 (6)	4 (4)	- (-)	6 (6)	18 (20)	18 (20)	9 (10)	22 (24)	21 (23)	9 (10)	2 (2)	7 (8)	2 (2)	20 (22)	8 (8)	155 (169)
		problems within the governing coalition (whole party leaving the government)	3 (3)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (1)	- (-)	3 (3)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	4 (4)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	10 (11)
		lost vote of no confidence against prime minister	4 (5)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (1)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	4 (6)
	voluntary	ill health / age*	- (-)	2 (2)	2 (2)	1 (1)	2 (3)	1 (1)	- (-)	4 (4)	3 (3)	3 (3)	3 (3)	3 (3)	1 (1)	- (-)	2 (2)	1 (1)	28 (29)
		change to other political/state position (e.g. federal government, other state government, central bank)	7 (7)	8 (9)	4 (5)	1 (1)	3 (3)	4 (4)	3 (3)	2 (2)	5 (7)	5 (6)	4 (5)	3 (3)	4 (5)	5 (5)	3 (3)	5 (5)	66 (73)
		change into private business/deliberately exiting politics	8 (8)	2 (2)	7 (7)	4 (4)	4 (5)	4 (5)	4 (5)	- (-)	1 (1)	2 (3)	2 (2)	8 (8)	- (-)	- (-)	1 (1)	3 (3)	50 (54)
	forced	problems within the own party	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (2)	5 (6)	1 (1)	- (-)	1 (1)	5 (5)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	4 (4)	2 (2)	1 (1)	1 (1)	- (1)	23 (26)
		scandal	3 (3)	7 (7)	4 (5)	6 (7)	3 (3)	6 (6)	8 (8)	2 (2)	2 (3)	5 (5)	1 (1)	1 (2)	1 (1)	5 (6)	6 (8)	4 (4)	64 (71)
		partial ministerial reshuffle after elections	8 (8)	1 (1)	7 (7)	- (1)	8 (8)	1 (1)	9 (9)	5 (5)	- (-)	5 (5)	2 (2)	3 (3)	7 (7)	2 (2)	2 (2)	3 (4)	63 (65)
	unclassified	other terminal event (politically induced)	9 (9)	8 (8)	4 (4)	9 (9)	4 (4)	8 (8)	5 (6)	3 (3)	8 (8)	2 (2)	3 (3)	6 (6)	4 (4)	18 (19)	6 (6)	12 (13)	109 (112)
		death*	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	1 (1)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	1 (1)
		still in office at 12/31/2010*	8 (9)	8 (9)	11 (12)	11 (12)	6 (7)	10 (11)	5 (6)	8 (9)	8 (9)	11 (12)	7 (8)	7 (8)	8 (9)	9 (10)	9 (10)	9 (10)	135 (151)
sum (duration in ministry – narrow definition of terminal events for main analysis)		60 (63)	47 (49)	58 (62)	56 (60)	51 (55)	59 (63)	65 (70)	44 (46)	56 (62)	68 (73)	36 (39)	47 (50)	39 (42)	54 (57)	53 (58)	56 (60)	849 (909)	
sum (duration in ministry – broad definition of terminal events for cross-check)		67 (71)	47 (49)	74 (78)	67 (71)	62 (72)	65 (69)	71 (76)	48 (50)	59 (71)	80 (85)	46 (49)	60 (63)	46 (49)	59 (62)	58 (63)	62 (66)	971 (1044)	

BE: Berlin; BR: Brandenburg; BW: Baden-Württemberg; BY: Bavaria; HB: Bremen; HE: Hesse; HH: Hamburg; MV: Mecklenburg-West Pomerania; NI: Lower Saxony; NRW: North Rhine-Westphalia; RP: Rhineland-Palatinate; SH: Schleswig-Holstein; SL: Saarland; SN: Saxony; ST: Saxony-Anhalt; TH: Thuringia. The first number is the one without prime ministers, the second one (in parantheses) the one for prime ministers included. The white rows include events due to which ministers completely leave the cabinet and which therefore also terminate their tenure in a specific ministerial office. The dark grey row includes all instances of complete changes into another ministry which are also regarded as terminal for ministerial duration. The light grey rows instead are not treated as terminal events in the main analysis. They will nevertheless be used for checking whether the results are also robust when the threshold for an event to be terminal is lower – which means that also minor portfolio changes are regarded as terminal for ministerial duration. The asterisk indicates terminal events which are right-censored in the statistical analysis.

The boxplot in graph 1 gives a first impression of the portfolio durations (prime ministers are included). It shows that there is a serious variation within and between the 16 Bundesländer. The mean duration for portfolio duration is between 1248 days in Thuringia and 2202 days in Rhineland-Palatinate. A couple of ministers clearly stand out compared with their colleagues: among them *Johannes Rau*, who was nearly 28 years without interruption member of the North Rhine-Westphalian government (cabinet duration), which he also led as prime minister for more than 19 years (portfolio duration). *Max Streibl*, who served as minister of ecology and later of finance in the Bavarian cabinet before becoming prime minister in 1988 is another long lasting minister.²⁸ We therefore see that particularly persons who once in their career made it to the office of the prime minister have a long cabinet duration, which is not so much of a surprise. But we also see that these persons often exhibit long lasting durations in single portfolios – either in the office of the prime minister as *Johannes Rau* (19 years), *Kurt Beck* (16 years), *Edmund Stoiber* (14 years), *Heide Simonis* (12 years) or *Henning Scherf* (12 years) or in ministries they had led before becoming prime minister like it was the case for *Max Streibl*. Another type of very long lasting ministers are persons that always remained in the same portfolio in which they often hold an indisputable competence like *Eugen Wagner* nicknamed *Beton-Eugen (concrete Eugen)* who was senator for construction in Hamburg for more than 18 years or *Volker Sklenar*, who had been minister of agriculture in Thuringia for more than 19 years, and hence almost for the whole sample period, when he left office in 2009.

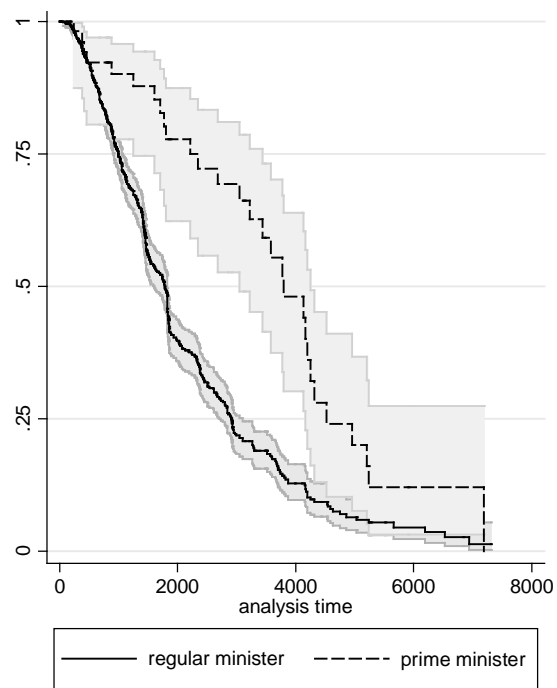
²⁸ The long portfolio duration of *Max Streibl* seems at first glance implausible, but it can be explained as a consequence of the decision to treat only complete changes into another ministry as a terminal event. Streibl started his cabinet career as minister of ecology and regional planning in 1970. In 1973 when he gained the additional portfolio of finance this was no complete change into another ministry. The same is true when he lost the ressort of ecology and regional planning in 1977 but stayed as the minister of finance. The incremental nature of the portfolio changes therefore prevent us from dividing *Max Streibls* portfolio duration until he became the bavarian prime minister in 1988 following the death of *Franz Josef Strauß*.

Graph 1: Portfolio durations of ministers (prime ministers included)

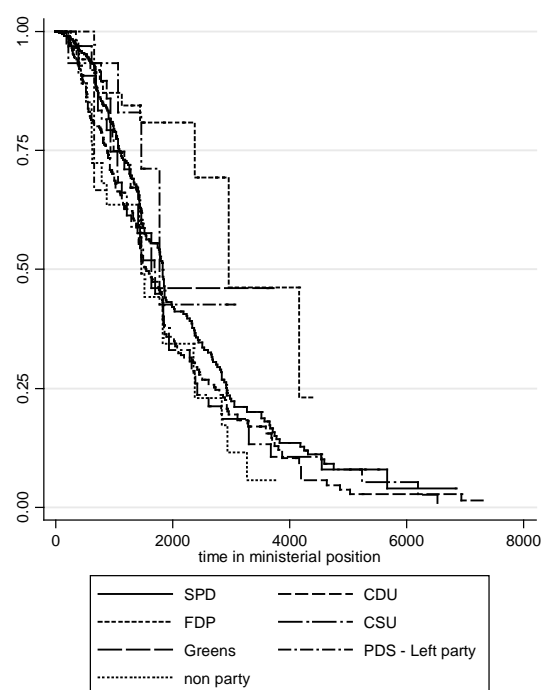


When it comes to ministerial turnover prime ministers are obviously more than just a *primus inter pares* within government. Being the principal, they have at least theoretically the power to dismiss their agents, the ministers, or to shuffle them around. On the other hand constitutional provisions prevent prime ministers from being dismissed so easily and the possibility that a prime minister steps down from his or her position for becoming a regular member of the cabinet is a mere theoretical one. The *Kaplan-Meier* curve in graph 2a shows the survival rates of prime ministers compared to regular ministers for portfolio duration. The results are very clear cut: Prime ministers survive significantly longer in their prime ministerial position than other ministers in their respective specific ministries. Taking theoretical arguments together with the empirical findings, prime ministers should better be treated in a separate research. Thus, the following analysis focuses only on regular ministerial spells. Graph 2b also shows that there are no party differences, therefore party membership will not be tested in the regression models.

Graph 2a: Kaplan-Meier estimates for prime and regular ministers + 95% confidence intervals



Graph 2b: Kaplan-Meier estimates by the minister's party



IV. Hypotheses and operationalization

Following theoretical and empirical works on ministers' lifetimes and government survival, two main blocs of factors can be identified as potentially relevant.²⁹ First, attributes of the institutional and political setting (aggregate level) determine the arena in which the ministers act and second, biographic information about respective ministers (individual level) could also have an influence (see table 2).

Table 2: Independent variables for the statistical analysis

aggregate level	individual level
H1: type of government (SPG, coalition government with the minister being from the same party as the PM)	H5: age (time-varying)
H2: majority (percentage of parliamentary seats of the government party/parties)	H6: gender
H3: ideological policy distance between the coalition partners	H7: tertiary education, doctorate/PhD, <i>Habilitation</i> (dummies)
H4: important ministry (dummy)	H8: regional rootedness (birthplace in the same Bundesland as the ministerial job; dummy)
controls: minority cabinets, length of constitutional interelection period (CIEP); possibility to launch a vote of no confidence against individual ministers	H9: expert ministers & non party affiliation (dummies)
	H10: number of spells the minister has served before the actual spell
	H11: length of party membership (time-varying)
	only tested for East German sub-sample
	H1-east: member of one of the bloc-parties in the former GDR (dummy)
	H2-east: <i>import</i> from West-Germany as <i>reconstruction helper</i> (dummy)

1. Aggregate level factors

Studies of government survival have shown that single party majority governments (SPG) and minimal winning coalitions (MWC) are the most durable types of cabinets,³⁰ even though they reveal significant differences in their kinds of terminations: while SPG more frequently exercise the option

²⁹ Berlinski, S./Dewan, T./Dowding, K.: The Length of Ministerial Tenure in the United Kingdom a.a.O.; Huber, J.D./Martinez-Gallardo, C.: a.a.O.; Indridason, I./Kam, C.: Cabinet Reshuffles and Ministerial Drift, in: British Journal of Political Science, 38/4 (2008), 621-656; Laver, M.: Government Termination, in: Annual Review of Political Science 6/1 (2003), 23-40; Warwick, P.: Government Survival in Parliamentary Democracies, a.a.O.

³⁰ Dodd, L.C.: Party Coalitions in Multiparty Parliaments. A Game-Theoretic Analysis, in: The American Political Science Review 68/3 (1974), 1093-1117; Warwick, P.: Government Survival in Parliamentary Democracies, a.a.O.

of dissolution of parliament followed by early elections, MWC show a higher risk for replacements.³¹ The underlying principal agent logic of this phenomenon can also be applied to the question of portfolio duration. In SPG prime ministers possess much greater autonomy in reshuffling their cabinets. Moving ministers from one portfolio to another can help to reduce agency loss,³² but in some instances there is likely no other option than to completely remove a minister who is either mired in a scandal or pursuing policies too far away from the prime minister's own policy position from the cabinet. In these cases it should be easier for prime ministers in SPG to replace problematic ministers or induce their resignations³³ than for prime ministers who are bound by coalition politics.³⁴ For these coalition governments a distinction must be made: if ministers are members of the same party as the prime minister, their turnover can most likely be pushed through as easily as in a SPG or even easier, as the coalition partner should normally have no reason to adhere to a politician from another political party. In contrast, coalition partners will generally try to keep their own ministers in power. The following hypothesis can be formulated:

H1: *In SPG and for those ministers in coalition governments that belong to the prime minister's party, the risk for ministers to leave their ministry should be higher than for ministers in coalition governments who belong to the small coalition partner(s).*

In their study on ministerial tenure in Great Britain, *Berlinski* and *Dowding* showed that majority size does not influence ministerial turnover.³⁵ In the context of Westminster Systems with their record of mostly SPG this is plausible, in the German Länder instead where coalition governments are the rule we expect to find an effect.

H2: *Ministers in governments relying on a large majority should be removed and shuffled around more easily and should therefore exhibit higher hazard rates.*

As for government survival,³⁶ ideological differences between government parties may play a role in ministerial turnover. For testing this assumption data on the political positioning of the parties on the

³¹ *Jäckle, S.*: Determinanten der Regierungsbeständigkeit in parlamentarischen Systemen, a.a.O., 111; *Kayser, M.A.*: Who Surfs, Who Manipulates? The Determinants of Opportunistic Election Timing and Electorally Motivated Economic Intervention, in: *American Political Science Review* 99/1 (2005), 17-27, hier 17.

³² *Indridason, I./Kam, C.*: a.a.O.

³³ *Fischer* and his colleagues have shown that, at least for German federal ministers, the role of the Federal Chancellor is often decisive for the minister's fate when the opposition or the media confront cabinet ministers with demands for resignation (*Fischer, J./Kaiser, A./Rohlfing, I.*: a.a.O., 730).

³⁴ *Budge*: a.a.O.

³⁵ *Berlinski, S./Dewan, T./Dowding, K.*: The Length of Ministerial Tenure in the United Kingdom, 1945-97, a.a.O., 256f.

³⁶ *Warwick, P.*: Government Survival in Parliamentary Democracies, a.a.O.; *Warwick, P.*: Policy Horizons and Parliamentary Government, Basingstoke, 2006.

two dimensions *economy* and *society* as well as data on the salience of these two dimensions for the respective parties were used.³⁷ The salience-weighted Euclidean distance of the two most remote coalition parties on these two dimensions serves as a proxy for intra-coalitional policy differences.³⁸ The assumption is that the higher the policy differences in coalition governments, the more often these differences will impact the personal level, leading to personal changes within the cabinet.

H3: *The higher the salience-weighted Euclidean distance between the coalition parties, the higher the hazard for ministerial turnover should be.*

Although the importance of a ministry is also a function of the parties' ideology (Greens will most likely assign more weight to the ministry of environment, whereas Social Democrats might deem the ministries of labour and social welfare more important), we can, with respect to the specific Länder competencies, nevertheless identify a certain core of ministries which are of specific relevance for all governments. These are the ministries of finance, education and cultural affairs, economic affairs and of the interior.³⁹ Especially in these important ministries personal continuity is essential and parties can be expected to appoint their best personnel to these positions. Both factors support the view that these ministers should have longer portfolio durations.

H4: *Ministers holding an important cabinet position should have a lower hazard for turnover.*

Minority governments are unusual in the German Länder. Examples are the so called *Magdeburg model*, a SPD led government tolerated by the PDS in Saxony Anhalt between 1994 and 2002 or the SPD-Greens coalition in North Rhine-Westphalia under *Hannelore Kraft* (2010 - 2012) which did not have a majority of its own, counting on changing support from either PDS or FDP. Other minority governments were mostly caretakers. The statistical analysis controls for minority governments. Furthermore, the analysis controls for the *length of the constitutional interelection period (CIEP)* which varies between 4 and 5 years and the possibility to launch a *vote of no confidence against individual ministers* (possible in BE, BW, HB, RP and SL).

³⁷ The data are from *Marc Debus* (Debus, M.: Parteienwettbewerb und Koalitionsbildung in den deutschen Bundesländern zwischen 1994 und 2006, in: Jun, U./Niedermayer, O./Haas, M. (eds.): Parteien und Parteiensysteme in den deutschen Bundesländern, Wiesbaden, 2008, 57-78). To gain salience-values and policy positions Debus applied the wordscore-technique on electoral programs. His period of investigation covers 1994 to 2006. As a consequence it was only possible to determine the policy distance for about half of the cases in this study.

³⁸ The empirical values of the ideological distances range from ca. 900 to 3400. To account for ideological differences of factions within single party governments the ideological distance value was set for all SPG to 300.

³⁹ The classification of ministries follows *Pappi et al.* (see *Pappi, F.U./Schmitt, R./Linhart, E.*: Die Ministeriumsverteilung in den deutschen Landesregierungen seit dem Zweiten Weltkrieg, in: Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen 39/2 (2008), 323-342).

2. Individual factors

Biographic information constitutes the second set of factors which potentially determine a minister's duration in cabinet. The age of the minister must be controlled for, because older ministers may have reached retirement age or may feel – especially when confronted with political pressure – that they “have reached the highest rung on the ladder and so [are] more willing to leave office to take a look at those outside options”.⁴⁰ Age is included as a time-varying covariate in the *Cox*-model and we can hypothesize:

H5: *Older ministers should have higher hazards.*

Women are still underrepresented in political positions. While gender has been shown to be a major factor for the probability of selection into office, most studies do not find gender effects for duration.

H6: *Women who made it into a ministerial position should have the same portfolio duration than their male colleagues.*

Education is another personal attribute that could influence the turnover rate.⁴¹ In this study, I distinguish between ministers with tertiary education, those holding a Dr/PhD and those having received a *Habilitation*.⁴² The following argument can be made: a university degree and especially a PhD shows, apart from the higher level of education, a certain dedication ministers put into their career, sometimes even during times when they were already politically active. Therefore having completed a university education, a PhD or a habilitation can in addition to being a proxy for higher education also be seen to some extent as a proxy for drive and assertiveness which can enhance the chances of remaining in power when problems arise. Ministers holding a habilitation can furthermore be regarded as (academic) specialists in their field who cannot be shuffled around into other ministries as easily as a more generalist minister:

H7: *Higher education should reduce the hazard rate. This should especially be the case for ministers with habilitation.*

Being regionally rooted in the *Bundesland* where the minister holds office could have a positive impact on portfolio duration. I use the place of birth as a proxy for regional rootedness.

⁴⁰ *Berlinski, S./Dewan, T./Dowding, K.*: The Length of Ministerial Tenure in the United Kingdom, 1945-97, a.a.O., 258.

⁴¹ *Ibid*: 254-256.

⁴² Distinguishing between ministers without tertiary education and those holding a university degree does not produce meaningful variance. Only three ministers in the whole sample did not attend university.

H8: *Ministers serving in the same Bundesland where they were born should have a lower hazard for leaving the cabinet than those lacking these regional roots.*

Career changers coming from private business, bureaucracy or academia who are appointed as expert-ministers are controlled for as well. Prime ministers sometimes use this option to gain expertise for their cabinets. Especially in the East German Bundesländer this phenomenon could be observed quite often. Additionally, these expert-ministers frequently do not hold a party membership which should result in more fragile backing in times of conflict. On the other hand, because of their specific expertise they cannot be shuffled around so easily to any other cabinet position. Therefore, no clear prediction can be made.

H9: *The hazard rates of expert ministers and more generalist ones should not differ much.*

The last biographic factor to be controlled for is the amount of expertise a minister has accumulated during his or her political career. Two operationalizations will be tested: first, the number of ministerial spells a minister has served before and second, the time a minister has been member of his or her party. A return into cabinet after some time during which the minister was not part of the government could be interpreted as an indication of her power or quality, both leading to a lower hazard:⁴³

H10: *The higher the number of spells a minister has served in a cabinet before, the higher his or her portfolio duration should be.*

Having a strong backing within the own party should also help. I use the time a minister is a member of his or her party as a proxy for this party-backing, therefore:

H11: *The longer a minister has been a member of his or her party, the lower the hazard for leaving the government should be.*

3. East German specifics

There are strong theoretical arguments for analyzing the East German Länder separately: a distinct socio-economic surrounding, a specific political culture, the common heritage of ‘bloc-parties’, a

⁴³ This argument resonates with a study which claims that the talent pool of potential ministers is not infinite (see *Dewan, T./Myatt, D.P.*: The Declining Talent Pool of Government, in: *American Journal of Political Science* 54/2 (2010), 267-286). Therefore, from the perspective of a prime minister who wishes to work with the most talented personnel, recourse to ministers that have already proven their qualities in earlier governments is often logically sound.

large influence of the PDS – the former Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) – and the import of West German politicians as so called *reconstruction helpers*. When the GDR ceased to exist, the bloc parties merged into their western counterparts. In the wake of the political events in 1989/90, members of the bloc parties who had previously worked together with the political leadership of the GDR turned coats and became ‘flawless democrats’. A significant portion of the new political establishment in East Germany has thus already been connected to the old system. Ministers with such a bloc party background should therefore be more often confronted with rumours about collaboration with the *Stasi* or mired in other political scandals concerning their history within the GDR and therefore should more often be pushed out of the cabinet. This should nevertheless not so much impact on their portfolio duration.

H1-east: Ministers who had been members of a bloc party should have a higher hazard for leaving the cabinet but not for changing into other portfolios. Therefore no strong effect for portfolio duration can be expected.

Another specific of the East German political landscape after the reunification was the systematic ‘import’ of politicians from the western part of Germany. Those so called *reconstruction helpers* (*Aufbauhelfer*) were nevertheless only needed for the first years when there was a lack of sufficiently qualified and politically untainted personnel.

H2-east: Reconstruction helpers should have higher hazards for exiting the cabinet, but to change into another ministry and therefore no effect on portfolio duration is expected.

V. Method

The study applies event history analysis (EHA). This method is appropriate as we are not only interested in the question *if* a certain minister leaves the cabinet (this kind of question could also be answered using a logit model), but also *when* this event takes place. Therefore I model the *hazard rate* λ – a combination of the survival and the probability density functions. The hazard rate can be regarded as the conceptual core of any EHA. The hazard rate represents the instantaneous risk that an event will occur, which means in this paper, that a minister will leave the ministry, during the extremely short interval Δt , under the condition that he or she has not left until time t . We estimate a

semi-parametric *Cox*-model.⁴⁴ This model enables researchers to estimate the influence of attributes on the hazard rate without knowing the functional form of the baseline hazard and thus without the danger of introducing error into the model through a misspecification of this underlying hazard.⁴⁵ It is therefore the best choice for the estimation of ministerial turnover hazards.⁴⁶ The following analysis treats ministerial spells ending due to death, ill health and old age, voting out of government and the end of the observation period as left-censored.⁴⁷

VI. Statistical Analysis

This section presents the results for the *Cox*-models in form of hazard ratios (table 3). A hazard ratio of 1.5 means that an increase of the independent variable of one point raises the hazard for turnover under *ceteris paribus* conditions by 50 percent.

The first three models are based on all Länder, while the fourth model is only for the East German subsample. In model 1 all variables are included simultaneously, then the model is reduced via stepwise backward selection to only those variables showing at least by trend some effects (model 2). Because of the lack of data for ideological distance only about 2/3 of the cases could be included in these models. To check whether these omissions biased the results model 3 is estimated without including ideological distance and thus being able to use all cases (same backward stepwise selection procedure). Model 4 includes all variables simultaneously, omitting ideological distance.

For the aggregate variables *H1* and *H2* can be confirmed: In SPG and in coalitions where the minister comes from the same party as the prime minister, as well as in cabinets that possess a large parliamentary majority the hazard for ministers to drop out of their ministerial position is higher. The latter effect can probably be attributed to grand coalitions where the parties are on average shorter in power and shuffle their ministers more around. If included, the ideological distance between the government parties (*H3*) is highly significant, but the effect goes into the other direction than expected. An ideologically polarized government reduces significantly the hazard for a minister to leave cabinet. Bearing in mind the scale of this variable, the effect is actually quite strong: Increasing the ideological distance between government parties by about 20 percent of the empirical range of

⁴⁴ Cox, D.R.: Partial Likelihood, in: *Biometrika* 62/2 (1975), 269-276.

⁴⁵ Yamaguchi, K.: *Event History Analysis*, Newbury Park, 1991, 101.

⁴⁶ For further information about this class of event history models and specific problems such as the proportionality assumption, tied events and the partial likelihood estimation procedure see Blossfeld, H.-P./Golsch, K./Rohwer, G.: *Event History Analysis with Stata*, Mahwah, 2007; Box-Steffensmeier, J.M./Jones, B.S.: *Event History Modeling*, a.a.O.; Jäckle, S.: *Determinanten der Regierungsbeständigkeit in parlamentarischen Systemen*, a.a.O., 75-91; Therneau, M./Grambsch, P.M.: *Modeling Survival Data. Extending the Cox Model*, New York, 2000.

⁴⁷ For a discussion about the theoretical reasons and implications of censoring see Yamaguchi, K.: a.a.O., 4-8.

this variable $\left(\frac{(34-9)}{20} = 5\right)$ reduces the hazard rate by 17 percent. This result was not expected, but a possible explanation apart from the operationalization that is clearly worth discussing could be that coalition members which have quite distant policy preferences perhaps try harder to keep their own ministers within in their portfolios as in governments which are ideologically more homogenous and where such decisions over the ministerial staff are reached in a more amicable way. The importance of a ministry (*H4*) does not impact on the hazard for ministerial turnover. The same is true for the controls, except that ministers in minority governments exhibit a bit higher hazards.

For the individual characteristics I find very few significant effects. The strongest one is for age (*H5*): Older ministers show a clearly higher hazard for their portfolio duration. As expected, gender does not play a role for portfolio duration (*H6*) and the educational background with tertiary education and PhD (*H7*) is if anything of marginal importance – on the contrary holding a habilitation reduces the hazard. The effect of regional rootedness (*H8*) has at least the hypothesized direction, although it is only significant in model 3. All other variables show no effects at all (*H9-H11*). This is also true for the bloc party and reconstruction helper dummies tested in the East German subsample (BR, MV, SN, ST, TH). These non-effects confirm our expectations. Furthermore, the East German subsample shows some differences to the overall pattern: Minority governments decrease here the hazard, probably due to the long lasting quite stable minority governments in Saxony-Anhalt. Additionally, parliamentary strenght shows an opposite effect than in the models while the variables for *H1* are no longer significant.

The overall conclusion must nevertheless be that individual and biographic characteristics are, except for age, not of a big relevance for explaining ministerial durations. Factors at the aggregate level, depicting the political landscape are more important.

Table 3: Cox-models – dependent variable: duration in cabinet

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<u>Aggregate variables</u>				
H1: SPG (1/0)	0.814 (0.218)		1.483*** (0.212)	1.236 (0.387)
H1: Coalition & same party as pm (1/0)	1.223 (0.216)	1.289 (0.200)	1.446*** (0.199)	1.344 (0.382)
H2: Parl. strength of governing parties (in %)	1.024*** (0.00650)	1.025*** (0.00631)	1.013** (0.00519)	0.957*** (0.0159)
H3: Ideol. distance between coalition parties (emp. values 9-34; SPG set to 3)	0.966** (0.0131)	0.973*** (0.00856)		
H4: Important ministry (1/0)	0.873 (0.0911)	0.877 (0.0891)		0.946 (0.189)
Minority cabinet (1/0)	1.549 (0.440)	1.595* (0.444)		0.309** (0.143)
CIEP (in years)	1.183 (0.143)	1.183 (0.140)		0.953 (0.245)
Individual vote of no confidence (1/0)	0.960 (0.108)			
<u>Individual characteristics</u>				
H5: Age (in years, time varying)	1.017* (0.00915)	1.016** (0.00807)	1.013* (0.00695)	1.005 (0.0154)
H6: Gender (0 = female; 1 = male)	1.007 (0.124)			1.161 (0.300)
H7: Tertiary education (1/0)	1.305 (0.236)	1.295 (0.224)	1.255 (0.193)	1.054 (0.521)
H7: PhD (1/0)	1.009 (0.117)			0.979 (0.213)
H7: Habilitation (1/0)	0.668 (0.165)	0.653* (0.150)	0.743 (0.136)	0.836 (0.307)
H8: Regional rootedness (1/0)	0.941 (0.102)		0.800** (0.0721)	0.957 (0.215)
H9: Expert minister (from academia, bureaucracy and private business)	0.942 (0.183)			0.845 (0.284)
H10: Spells before in cabinet	0.695 (0.220)			0.430 (0.264)
H11: Party membership (in years, time varying)	1.002 (0.00554)			0.993 (0.0110)
<u>East German specifics</u>				
H1-east: Bloc party (1/0)				0.823 (0.259)
H2-east: Reconstruction helper (1/0)				1.444 (0.449)
Number of subjects	599	599	849	220
Number of terminal events	407	407	527	119
loglikelihood	-2068	-2070	-2832	-491.6
chi2	40.65	37.79	27.79	16.75

Cox proportional hazard model with censoring (termination because of death, ill health & old age, elections and end of observation period). Hazard ratios with standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Models 2 and 3: stepwise backward selection removing p >= 0.20. Prime ministers excluded.

VII. Political stability in the German Länder in the light of portfolio duration

This article introduced the concept of portfolio duration as an additional measure for political stability and applied it to the German Länder ministers for the period 1990-2010. Empirical evidence illustrates that the German states differ significantly in terms of portfolio duration: ministers in Rheinland-Palatinate are on average more than 2.5 years longer in their respective portfolios than ministers in Thuringia. The results of the *Cox*-model furthermore show that this kind of political (in)stability can be largely attributed to characteristics depicting the political landscape at which the cabinet works and not so much to the biographic characteristics of the individual ministers (except that prime ministers have a much longer portfolio duration than regular ones). Especially the constraints that coalition governments impose on the principal agent relationship inside the cabinet increase portfolio duration. Here the vetoplayer theory, understood in a broad sense, can serve as an explanation. The more other parties are able to block prime ministers in their ability to hire, fire and shuffle ministers to other portfolios, the longer ministers will remain in their portfolios. Certain single cases on the other hand show that individual factors must have some influence as well. Otherwise, ministers like *Johannes Rau*, *Eugen Wagner* or *Volker Sklenar*, could never have remained in one single ministry for nearly 20 years, like they actually did.

Further research in the follow up of this article is definitely necessary. Two approaches seem to be especially fruitful in this regard: on the one hand to integrate the measure of portfolio duration together with other approaches better into the larger concept of political stability and on the other hand to extent the research on portfolio duration in a comparative manner also to other countries and organizational levels. Doing so would certainly enhance our understanding of multilevel career patterns of political elites as well as broaden our view on political stability in a more general way.