

A New Measure of Political Stability – Portfolio Duration in the German Länder and its Determinants (1990-2010)

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This contribution introduces “portfolio duration” as an indicator for political stability in democratic parliamentary systems. It builds on a discussion that has largely focused on government durability and overall ministerial tenure in cabinet. A newly compiled dataset covering all German Länder ministers for the period 1990–2010 is analysed 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, such as the type of government or the ideological distance between coalition members, influence portfolio duration much more strongly than biographic characteristics. Political and institutional factors are, therefore, of utmost relevance when looking at political stability as measured by portfolio duration.

Der Beitrag führt ein neues Maß für politische Stabilität ein: die Amtsdauer eines Ministers in einem spezifischen Ministerium. Damit erweitert er die bisherige Diskussion, die sich primär auf die Dauerhaftigkeit von Regierungen und die gesamte Amtsdauer von Ministern im Kabinett kaprizierte. Ein neu erhobener Datensatz, der alle Landesminister von 1990 bis 2010 umfasst, wird sowohl deskriptiv-statistisch als auch im Rahmen eines Cox-Modells analysiert. Es zeigt sich, dass signifikante Unterschiede zwischen den Ländern 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 Länder die politisch-institutionelle Umgebung, in der ein Minister arbeitet, eine große Rolle.

I. Introduction

Democratic systems 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 that takes place inside the cabinet. Political stability is, of course, a strongly contested concept using many different approaches of definition and

operationalisation.¹ This contribution concentrates on a central argument developed in the literature that perceives duration in power as the best indicator for political stability. In this context, at least four different approaches can be distinguished:

- Studies that take a look at the *duration of political leaders*, i.e. the chief executives, in power.²
- Starting with the work of *Lowell* in the late 19th century,³ several authors 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
- With origins either in more sociologically oriented elite studies or stemming from a comparative politics perspective, a number of researchers concentrate on individual ministers. The main argument here is that the *time a minister remains in cabinet* can be regarded as a good indicator for political stability.⁵

- 1 For example, *Russett* defines political stability as the absence of violence within a system and operationalises 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 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 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./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./Frendreis, 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 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

- A further approach that has until now been neglected by most authors 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 for good, 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 across different portfolios have no possibility of becoming such a factor of political stability.

II. Research question and related works

The following discussion builds on this fourth approach and therefore analyses the duration of ministers within specific ministries. The research question can be formulated in the following way: how long are ministers able to remain in their ministerial position and which factors determine this *portfolio duration*?

The general rationale underlying 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 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 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 the literature on ministerial turnover.⁷ Thus, the context of coalition governments is one of the aspects that must be taken into account when analysing ministerial turnover in the German *Länder*, while, at the same time, the

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.

- 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 throughout this contribution.
- 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.

principal-agent relationship between the Prime Minister and his or her ministers, decisive for Westminster-type systems, plays a smaller role in our context.⁸

In answering the research question this contribution incorporates two trends that have shaped research on governmental elites over the last few 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, the following analysis includes 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 afforded much less attention.¹¹ Therefore, data on ministers in all of the 16 German *Länder* were recorded for the period 1990-2010. The statistical analysis is based on this newly compiled dataset, including both classical political and institutional variables at the governmental and parliamentary levels (e.g. type of government or policy-distance) as well as biographic and socio-demographic

- 8 This focus on the level of the individual 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 ministerial 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, such as those 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 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 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).

characteristics of the individual ministers (e.g. gender, age, education, experience in earlier cabinets).

The analysis does not only borrow from existing works on ministerial careers at 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 productively to the analysis presented here. A *Cox* proportional hazard model is used as it 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 work following the seminal book by *Herzog*¹⁴ who analysed a more or less representative sample of top-level politicians in view of 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 analysed only as a recruiting pool for a position on the federal level.¹⁸ One exception is a book by *L. Vogel* describing the recruitment of federal as well

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 Karrierealküle 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 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.

as *Länder* ministers.¹⁹ Contrary to the more comprehensive literature on selection mechanisms, a systematic analysis of ministerial tenure or portfolio duration in the German *Länder* is still to be produced.

The following section outlines the case selection and gives a short overview of the data, especially as regards the different types of terminal events. Subsequently (IV.), the hypotheses on ministerial duration and their operationalisations are presented before outlining the ‘event history methodology’ applied in the analytical part (V.). This is followed by a discussion of the results of the statistical analysis (VI.) and a brief conclusion (VII.).

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 on which events need to be considered as being terminal for a subject’s event history requires special reflection. According to the research question put forward here, 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 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 where the minister drops out of cabinet – clear instances of an end of his or her tenure within a specific ministry – only complete changes into another ministry are assumed to be terminal events (e.g. when the Minister of Finance changes into the Ministry of Interior). Cases when a minister gains some additional competences/portfolios or loses others, as well as instances of minor portfolio changes²¹ are not regarded as terminal for ministerial duration. This means that for persons experiencing such an event the clock measuring their duration within 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

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 percent of a minister’s portfolios are altered. If more than 50 percent are changed, this is counted as a complete change and therefore as a terminal event.

spell, biographic information on the minister and information about the political-institutional setting of the government(s) are recorded.²²

The dataset covers all German *Länder* ministers that left their cabinets 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). 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 reality 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 categorisation is thus based on the most relevant type of termination, knowing that this decision is subjective and far from being without ambiguity. The categorisation of terminal events is first of all necessary for censoring, which can be done without significant error.

Bearing the problem of a clear cut categorisation in mind, some preliminary descriptive conclusions can be drawn from the table. 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 onwards 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 had to leave government because of health reasons. Particularly in Berlin, Brandenburg and Lower Saxony minis-

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 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.

ters often left the cabinet for taking another political position, whereas most ministers changing into private business are to be identified in Berlin, Baden-Württemberg and Schleswig-Holstein.²⁶ We only find very few instances where 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 occupied buildings (“squats”), 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 proportion of all terminations.²⁷ For 112 terminations it was – at least due the available informational (*Munzinger Archiv*) – merely possible 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 frequent (51.1 percent). Three further types of events are also listed: ministers who gained additional portfolios (25.7 percent) and those who lost competences or parts of their portfolios (11.2 percent) and finally minor portfolio

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 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.*).

Table 1: Types and frequencies of terminal events for portfolio duration by Land (without and with Prime Ministers)

		BE	BR	BW	BY	HB	HE	HH	MV	NI
portfolio changes	change into different ministry	6 (6)	4 (4)	14 (14)	19 (19)	13 (13)	7 (7)	9 (9)	6 (6)	7 (7)
	additional portfolio/competences	3 (4)	- (-)	9 (9)	7 (7)	3 (6)	4 (4)	5 (5)	1 (1)	2 (4)
	losing of portfolio/competences	2 (2)	- (-)	1 (1)	4 (4)	5 (8)	- (-)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (5)
	minor portfolio changes (less than 50% of portfolios)	2 (2)	- (-)	6 (6)	- (-)	3 (3)	2 (2)	- (-)	2 (2)	- (-)
collective	voting out of government (at elections)*	3 (4)	6 (6)	4 (4)	- (-)	6 (6)	18 (20)	18 (20)	9 (10)	22 (24)
	problems within the governing coalition (whole party leaving the government)	3 (3)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (1)	- (-)	3 (3)	- (-)	- (-)
	lost vote of no confidence against prime minister	4 (5)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)
voluntary	ill health / age*	- (-)	2 (2)	2 (2)	1 (1)	2 (3)	1 (1)	- (-)	4 (4)	3 (3)
	change to other political/state position (e.g. federal government, other state government...)	7 (7)	8 (9)	4 (5)	1 (1)	3 (3)	4 (4)	3 (3)	2 (2)	5 (7)
	change into private business/deliberately exiting politics	8 (8)	2 (2)	7 (7)	4 (4)	4 (5)	4 (5)	4 (5)	- (-)	1 (1)
	problems within the own party	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (2)	5 (6)	1 (1)	- (-)	1 (1)	5 (5)	- (-)
	scandal	3 (3)	7 (7)	4 (5)	6 (7)	3 (3)	6 (6)	8 (8)	2 (2)	2 (3)
	partial ministerial reshuffle after elections	8 (8)	1 (1)	7 (7)	- (1)	8 (8)	1 (1)	9 (9)	5 (5)	- (-)
unclassified	other terminal event (politically induced)	9 (9)	8 (8)	4 (4)	9 (9)	4 (4)	8 (8)	5 (6)	3 (3)	8 (8)
	death*	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	1 (1)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)
	still in office on 12/31/2010*	8 (9)	8 (9)	11 (12)	11 (12)	6 (7)	10 (11)	5 (6)	8 (9)	8 (9)
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)
<i>sum (duration in ministry – broad definition of terminal events for cross-check)</i>		<i>67 (71)</i>	<i>47 (49)</i>	<i>74 (78)</i>	<i>67 (71)</i>	<i>62 (72)</i>	<i>65 (69)</i>	<i>71 (76)</i>	<i>48 (50)</i>	<i>59 (71)</i>

Notes: Numbers in parentheses include Prime Ministers. 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 white rows include events due to which ministers leave the cabinet. The dark grey row includes all instances of

(Table 1 - continued)

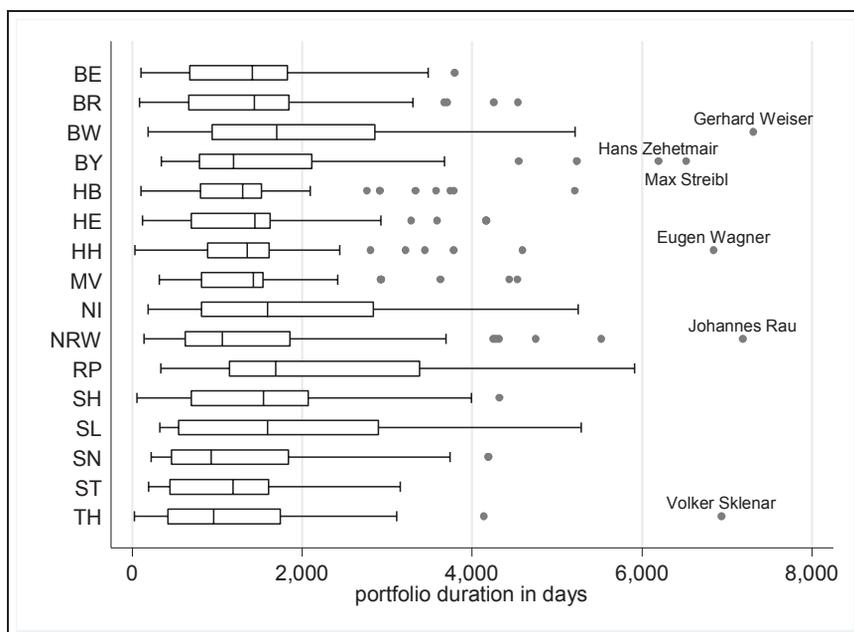
		NRW	RP	SH	SL	SN	ST	TH	Sum
portfolio changes	change into different ministry	14 (14)	5 (5)	6 (6)	5 (5)	12 (12)	3 (3)	11 (11)	141 (141)
	additional portfolio/competences	7 (7)	8 (8)	3 (3)	4 (4)	3 (3)	4 (4)	2 (2)	65 (71)
	losing of portfolio/competences	1 (1)	1 (1)	2 (2)	2 (2)	1 (1)	- (-)	2 (2)	24 (31)
	minor portfolio changes (less than 50% of portfolios)	4 (4)	1 (1)	8 (8)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)	2 (2)	33 (33)
collective	voting out of government (at elections)*	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)	- (-)	- (-)	4 (4)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	10 (11)
	lost vote of no confidence against prime minister	- (-)	- (-)	- (1)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	4 (6)
voluntary	ill health / age*	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)	5 (6)	4 (5)	3 (3)	4 (5)	5 (5)	3 (3)	5 (5)	66 (73)
	change into private business/deliberately exiting politics	2 (3)	2 (2)	8 (8)	- (-)	- (-)	1 (1)	3 (3)	50 (54)
forced	problems within the own party	- (-)	- (-)	4 (4)	2 (2)	1 (1)	1 (1)	- (1)	23 (26)
	scandal	5 (5)	1 (1)	1 (2)	1 (1)	5 (6)	6 (8)	4 (4)	64 (71)
	partial ministerial reshuffle after elections	5 (5)	2 (2)	3 (3)	7 (7)	2 (2)	2 (2)	3 (4)	63 (65)
unclassified	other terminal event (politically induced)	2 (2)	3 (3)	6 (6)	4 (4)	18 (19)	6 (6)	12 (13)	109 (112)
	death*	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	1 (1)
	still in office at 12/31/2010*	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)		68 (73)	36 (39)	47 (50)	39 (42)	54 (57)	53 (58)	56 (60)	849 (909)
<i>sum (duration in ministry – broad definition of terminal events for cross-check)</i>		<i>80 (85)</i>	<i>46 (49)</i>	<i>60 (63)</i>	<i>46 (49)</i>	<i>59 (62)</i>	<i>58 (63)</i>	<i>62 (66)</i>	<i>971 (1044)</i>

(Notes - continued) complete changes into other ministries. The light grey rows are not treated as terminal events, but will be used to check the robustness of any results. * = terminal events which are right-censored in the statistical analysis. *Source*: own representation.

changes where less than 50 percent of a minister’s portfolios are altered. As before, there is a large variance between the *Länder*. 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 clear enough to be regarded as terminal for portfolio duration, since the respective minister in all of these instances keeps at least a significant part of the portfolio that he or she held before. Therefore, the following analysis uses “changes into another ministry” as the only type of terminal event additionally to those instances when a minister leaves the cabinet.

The box-plot in figure 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 *Länder*. The mean is between 1,248 days in Thuringia and 2,202 days in Rhineland-Palatinate. A couple of ministers clearly stand out compared with their colleagues: among them *Johannes Rau*, who was a member of the North Rhine-Westphalian government for nearly 28 years without interruption

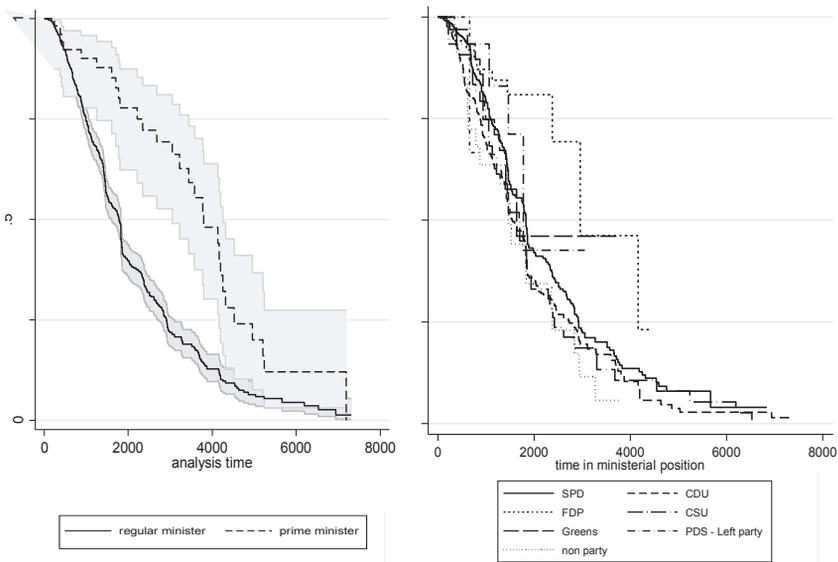
Figure 1: Portfolio durations of ministers (Prime Ministers included)



Source: own representation.

(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 example.²⁸ We can observe that politicians who once in their career succeeded in taking the office of Prime Minister enjoy a long cabinet duration, which is not overly surprising. But we also see that these persons often exhibit long lasting durations in single portfolios – either in the office of Prime Minister, such 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, as was the case for *Max Streibl*. Another type of very long lasting ministers are persons that always remained in

Figure 2a/b: Kaplan-Meier estimates for prime and regular ministers + 95% confidence intervals (a); Kaplan-Meier estimates by the minister’s party (b)



Source: own representation.

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 portfolio 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 Streibl*'s portfolio duration until he became the Bavarian Prime Minister in 1988 following the death of *Franz Josef Strauß*.

the same portfolio in which they often held an indisputable competence, such as *Eugen Wagner* (nicknamed *Beton-Eugen* – concrete *Eugen*) who was Senator for Construction in Hamburg for more than 18 years, or *Volker Sklenar*, who was 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.

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 have 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 to become a regular member of the cabinet is merely theoretical. The *Kaplan-Meier* curve in figure 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. Adding the theoretical arguments to the empirical findings, Prime Ministers should better be treated separately. Thus, the following analysis focuses only on regular ministerial spells. Figure 2b also shows that there are no party differences, therefore party membership will not be tested in the models.

IV. Hypotheses and operationalisation

Following theoretical and empirical analyses of 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 (cf. 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)

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.

Aggregate Level	Individual Level
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)
Tested only for the 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)

Source: own representation.

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 when it comes to termination: while SPG more frequently exercise the option 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 distant from the Prime Minister's own

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.

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.

policy position. 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 strong record of SPG this is plausible, in the German *Länder*, however, 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. To test this assumption, data on the political positioning of the parties on the 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

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.

37 The data stem 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.

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 on the personal level, leading to 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 party 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 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*, an SPD single-party 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, for the *length of the constitutional interelection period (CIEP)* which varies between 4 and 5 years and for the possibility to launch a *vote of no confidence against individual ministers* (possible in BE, BW, HB, RP and SL).

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 hypothesise:

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.

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.

Being regionally rooted in the *Land* 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.

H8: Ministers serving in the *Land* 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 *Länder* this phenomenon could be observed rather frequently. 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 other cabinet positions. Therefore, no clear prediction can be made.

H9: The hazard rates of expert ministers and generalists 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 operationalisations 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. The length of time a minister is a member of his or her party is used as a proxy for 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.

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.

3. East German specifics

There are strong theoretical arguments for analysing the East German *Länder* separately: a distinct socio-economic surrounding, a specific political culture, the common heritage of ‘bloc-parties’, a 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 were subsumed 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 have little influence 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. These helpers (*Aufbauhelfer*) were nevertheless only needed for the first few transitional 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. 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, the *hazard rate* λ is modelled – a combination of the survival and the probability density functions. The hazard rate can be regarded as the conceptual core of any EHA. It represents the instantaneous risk that an event will occur, which means 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 right-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

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.

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

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Aggregate variables</i>				
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)			
<i>Individual characteristics</i>				
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 var.)	1.002 (0.00554)			0.993 (0.0110)
<i>East German specifics</i>				
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

Notes: 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. Source: own representation.

be attributed to grand coalitions where the parties are, on average, in power for shorter periods and shuffle their ministers around more frequently. If included, the ideological distance between the government parties (*H3*) is highly significant, but the effect goes in the opposite direction from what was expected. An ideologically polarised government significantly reduces 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 this variable (5) reduces the hazard rate by 17 percent. This result was not expected, but a possible explanation (apart from questions of operationalisation) 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 their portfolios as compared to governments which are ideologically more homogenous and where such decisions on 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 slightly higher hazards.

For the individual characteristics, very few significant effects were found. The strongest relates to age (*H5*): older ministers exhibit a 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 hypothesised 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 the hazard, probably due to the long lasting, stable minority governments in Saxony-Anhalt. Additionally, parliamentary strength shows an effect opposite to the models while the variables for *H11* are no longer significant.

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

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

This contribution 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, on average, remain in their respective portfolios more than 2.5 years longer than ministers in Thuringia. The results of the *Cox* model furthermore indicate that this kind of political (in)stability can be largely attributed to characteristics depicting the political landscape in 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 other cabinet ministers). Especially the constraints that coalition governments impose on the principal-agent relationship inside the cabinet increase portfolio duration. Here, veto player 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 such as *Johannes Rau*, *Eugen Wagner* or *Volker Sklenar* could never have remained in one single ministry for nearly 20 years.

Further research is necessary. Two approaches seem to be especially promising in this regard: on the one hand to better integrate the measure of portfolio duration together with other approaches into the larger concept of political stability, and on the other hand to extend the research on portfolio duration in a comparative manner 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.