

Survival of the ministers

On ministerial durability in post-war Norway¹

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Abstract

Over the last decade, the field of ministerial durability – exploring why some cabinet ministers are replaced and others not – has taken an empirical turn. Among others, Berlin-ski, Dewan and Dowding (2012) scrutinize the relationship between cabinet ministers and Prime Ministers in Britain, while Bucur (2013) analyze how ministers in semi-presidential systems are held accountable by presidents, parties, and prime ministers. However, ministers in multi-party parliamentary democracies have received little attention. In this study, I explore what determines ministerial durability in post-war Norway. By using an unmatched data set combination of Norwegian ministers and the resignation calls they received during their tenure, this study provides two main contributions. Firstly, I find that Norwegian ministers are held accountable by party leaders based on their performance and experience. Secondly, I uncover that newspapers have an alarming influence on the ministerial deselection process. The findings suggest that the accountability mechanism between ministers and their party leader(s) work, but not necessarily in the most preferred way.

1 Introduction

On March 5 2012, Audun Lysbakken of the Socialist Left Party (SV) resigned from his post as head of the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion. He stated the following:

Let me be very clear: I *have* full responsibility for the errors that have been made, and I *take* full responsibility. I have therefore informed the Prime Minister that I have made the decision to resign as cabinet minister (NRK, 2012).

The issue Lysbakken resigned over was granting money to a women's defense club. The problem was in part that the competition over the grant had been almost non-existent, but also that Lysbakken himself had close ties to parts of the leadership, which led to questions on impartiality (Bordvik, 2012).

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Similarly, in 2007, the foreign minister Jonas Gahr Støre, a prominent figure in the Labor Party (Ap), took part in pressuring the Minister of Climate and Environment into a controversial decision by giving permission for oil-reloading in Bøkfjorden to the company Tschudi & Eitzen Shipping. One of the leading persons of Tschudi & Eitzen Shipping, Felix Tschudi, was revealed to have had continuous personal connections to Støre (Magnus, 2012). Questions over impartiality were raised yet again, but, interestingly, this time the minister was not given the axe.

How can the differing outcomes of the Lysbakken and Støre case be explained when the circumstances are so similar? Did Støre perform his cabinet duties in a more satisfactory way than Lysbakken? Was the media and opposition more hostile towards Lysbakken? Is the political experience of Støre the reason for his survival as cabinet minister? Or, was Lysbakken considered too young for handling the pressure of being a cabinet minister? More generally, this paper will be focused on the determinants of ministerial durability in Norwegian post-war cabinets.

By exploring which factors make ministers more prone to dismissal, this paper makes an empirical contribution to the ministerial deselection literature; a test for whether executive politicians are held accountable or not. The case of Norway is not only interesting by itself, but also because previous studies on ministerial durability have focused on political systems that differ from Norwegian multiparty parliamentarism. In addition to the three main explanatory variables used in the literature – performance, political experience, and personal characteristics (Berlinski, Dewan and Dowding, 2012) – Norwegian post-war history has seen a lot of variation between single-party, coalition, majority, and minority cabinets.

The analyses show many similarities to other studies; resignation calls coming through the media have a strong effect on ministerial durability: the more resignation calls a minister gets, the more likely the minister is to be removed. Consequently, I argue that ministers are generally held accountable by their party leaders whenever they are perceived to perform badly. Furthermore, the results of an actor based resignation call model suggest that neither the opposition nor the minister's own party have any influence on tenure when they judge ministerial performance. Newspapers, however, are found to have influence on the deselection process, which means that newspapers have a more important monitoring function than the parties and the opposition do. Accordingly, I argue that this could pose some democratic problems; an unelected entity influences the accountability mechanism between party leaders and ministers more than elected officials do. Additionally, political experience in form of previous parliamentary experience is found to make the minister more durable, while previous cabinet experience make ministers less durable. Finally and surprisingly, neither cabinet size in parliament nor cabinet composition have any effect on ministerial durability.

The paper is organized as follows. First, I will lay the foundation of ministerial durability by briefly describing its relation to principal-agent theory through accountability, and review the most important findings in the literature. Second, I describe how the data were gathered and justify the use of non-parametric over parametric statistical models. Third, I present the findings from the analyses. Finally, I discuss some of the implications of the findings.

2 Principals, agents, and accountability

Most cabinet ministers lose their job because the cabinet as a whole was replaced, but some ministers are dismissed or, more plainly, fired, before the cabinet is replaced. Of these, most are replaced without much fuzz, while some has to go because they caused a political scandal. No matter *why* the minister is replaced, it is an important mechanism of democratic systems that politicians are held accountable (Müller, Bergman and Strøm, 2003, 20). Hence, the foundation of ministerial durability is the principal-agent theory. In the principal-agent theory, an ideal-type of parliamentary democracies is seen as a chain delegation and accountability (Müller, Bergman and Strøm, 2003, 20). For the Norwegian political system, this means that the electorate delegates power to the legislature; the legislature to the party leaders; the party leaders² to ministers; and ministers to civil servants. Principals delegate tasks to agents, but agents are also accountable to their principals.

With regards to ministerial performance, imagine, for example, a minister outlining a policy proposal. The principal will evaluate whether the proposal is what she was looking for. If the principal finds the policy proposal unsatisfying, there has occurred an agency problem (or agency loss) – a divergence between the policy outcome preferred by the principal, and the outcome delivered by the agent (Lupia, 2003, 35). The ultimate consequence of agency loss between a minister and his principal, which is the main interest of this paper, is ministerial dismissal.

The dismissal of Minister of Government Administration, Anne-Lise Bakken, in early June 1988 illustrates agency loss between a minister and her principal. Bakken went out publicly with criticism of the Head of Personell, Nils R. Mugaas, after it was revealed that the new head of the Postal Bank had received a huge salary. Bakken was immediately met with disavowal of responsibility claims; she was the head of the department, had the responsibility for its policy areas, and was believed to have taken a central part in the appointment (Helgesen and Reesen, 1988). The situation worsened when Bakken refused to apologize in a parliamentary hearing. Bakken was met with resignation calls from the opposition, newspapers, and even her own party (Versto, 1988; Versto and Solberg, 1988; Øverby and Solberg, 1988). A couple of days later, Bakken was dismissed by the Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundland (Helgesen and Reesen, 1988).

As is evident in the case of Bakken, agency loss can lead to dismissal. In situations where the agent is perfect, he would perform the delegated task in the exact same manner as the principal would have if the task was not delegated (Lupia, 2003, 35), but this is, of course, very uncommon. Hence, agency loss is a big part of everyday politics in parliamentary democracy. Are Norwegian ministers are held accountable by their party leaders when agency problems occur?

²In its ideal-type, Prime Ministers are seen as cabinet principals. However, coalition cabinets complicate the picture. In coalitions, ministers are assumed to be held accountable by their respective party leaders, and PMs are usually the *de facto* leader of their party.

3 What we know and expect

Over the last decades, scholars of comparative politics have scrutinized both government formation and survival, but only recently, significant interest has been shown towards the individuals of the cabinet as well – the ministers. As mentioned above, the main explanatory variables used in these studies can be categorized into measures of performance, political experience, and personal traits.

With regard to performance, the seminal paper by Fischer, Kaiser and Rohlfing (2006) on ministerial resignations in Germany was one of the first papers to utilize resignation calls empirically. They used resignation debates occurring in the first two pages of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* as a measure of performance and found that the Federal Chancellor and the minister's own party were the decisive actors in determining whether a minister should face dismissal or not (Fischer, Kaiser and Rohlfing, 2006, 730).

In an approach closer to this paper, Berlinski, Dewan and Dowding (2012, 154-157) introduce resignation calls as a performance measure. These are calls for resignation during the minister's tenure, as reported by the media. More specifically, when "someone in Parliament, media, or some nonpolitical organization suggest the minister should resign, then it is defined as a 'resignation call'" (Berlinski, Dewan and Dowding, 2010, 559). Their findings are clear; on the one hand, the more resignation calls a minister gets, the more likely he is to be dismissed (Berlinski, Dewan and Dowding, 2012, 165-166). On the other hand, cumulative calls for resignation in the cabinet as a whole also increase the hazard for the individual ministers. This means that there is a strong sense of collective responsibility as well: some ministers will have to fall as a consequence of bad government performance (Berlinski, Dewan and Dowding, 2012, 166).

Finally, Bucur (2013) uses resignation calls as a performance measure on three semi-presidential systems: France, Portugal, and Romania. She finds that resignation calls is a strong predictor of "ministerial deselection under unified executive and cohabitation, but not under divided executive" (Bucur, 2013, 247). In other words, on the one hand, performance matters when the President and the PM are representatives of the same party (unified executive) or when the president does not represent the government party (cohabitation) (Bucur, 2013, 7). On the other hand, performance is less important when the president represents one of the governing parties, but the PM represents a different party (divided executive) (Bucur, 2013, 7).

In summary, based on these studies, one should expect resignation calls to have a negative effect on ministerial durability; performance measures have generally produced accountability effects in both semi-presidential and parliamentary systems. Hence, I expect the same effect to be present in the Norwegian case as well:

H: Ministers are held accountable by their principal when their performance is unsatisfactory

Even though the main interest of this paper is to test the accountability link between ministers and their principal, other factors should be controlled for. With regard to political experience, Berlinski, Dewan and Dowding (2012, 79-81) finds that British ministers with cabinet

experience in the baggage are more prone to dismissal than inexperienced ministers. A finding they explain by pointing at "being a minister is a stage in a career, rather than a career itself". Based on similar findings in semi-presidential systems, Bucur (2013, 221) argues that "inexperienced ministers are less likely to enter into conflict with their principals than cabinet members who have held such highly pressured jobs for a longer period of time". Both pointing in the same direction. However, a number of studies have also found that ministers with experience from parliament are less prone for dismissal than their colleagues (Bucur, 2013; Bäck et al., 2009; Fischer and Kaiser, 2010). This is explained by Fischer, Dowding and Dumont (2012, 209) to come as a consequence of ministers having worked their way through the party, and proven themselves worthy before entering office. Because of this, I also control for youth party experience among former MPs – if the explanation holds, this variable should have an even bigger effect than parliamentary experience on ministerial durability. In sum, political experience gives these expectations:

As for cabinet composition and parliamentary basis, there are few studies to lean on. The most pertinent way to look is the government survival literature, which clearly has established that majority cabinets last longer than minority cabinets (Gallagher, Laver and Mair, 2011, 447). Indeed, Norwegian minority cabinets on average retain office one year shorter than majority cabinets. Furthermore, coalitions are expected to give more ministerial shirking than single-party cabinets, because the policy positions presumably will diverge more in coalitions, and cabinets rarely terminate collectively because of policy differences (Bergman et al., 2003, 128). Hence, it is plausible to argue that coalition cabinets are looser on the trigger when it comes to dismissing ministers in coalitions.

Lastly, I control for age, gender, and education as confounding variables in order to not overestimate the effects of the other variables. Indeed, ministers do get different amounts of resignation calls based on, for example, gender and education (Søyland, 2015, 74-75).

4 Data and methods

The data³ used for the paper can be split into two different sections: one for fixed ministerial characteristics, and one for resignation calls. I collected most of the fixed characteristics part of the data manually,⁴ supplemented by birthdays from the NSD-data on Norwegian ministers (Munkejord, 2007). Previous parliamentary experience and youth party experience was gathered from the study by Eilertsen (2014), while cabinet level attributes, originally used in Rasch (2004), was kindly shared by Bjørn Erik Rasch. Descriptive statistics of the variables used in the study are provided in table 4.1.

The dependent variable of the analysis is a combination of ministerial duration and ministerial dismissal. The former being the days in office and the latter a binomial event variable for

³The data and documentation is available either through <https://github.com/martigso/ministersNor>, or for R-users by installing the package *martigso/ministersNor* directly from GitHub

⁴All the cabinets and their ministers can be easily accessed at <http://www.regjeringen.no>. Data on education and gender was gathered <https://www.stortinget.no/>

Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics

| Variable | Class | N | Mean | St.Dev | Min | Median | Max |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| Duration | Numeric | 625 | 615.107 | 376.998 | 6 | 580 | 1527 |
| Event | Dichotomy | 625 | 0.157 | - | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Resignation calls (RC) | Count | 625 | 0.472 | 0.985 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Time (logged) | Numeric | 625 | 3.193 | 1.435 | -5.901 | 3.582 | 4.203 |
| RC opposition | Dichotomy | 625 | 0.126 | - | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| RC own party | Dichotomy | 625 | 0.077 | - | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| RC newspaper | Dichotomy | 625 | 0.117 | - | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Cabinet exp. | Numeric | 625 | 1.841 | 2.59 | 0 | 0.523 | 17.199 |
| Parl. exp | Dichotomy | 625 | 0.478 | - | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Youth exp. (central) | Dichotomy | 625 | 0.083 | - | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Youth exp. (local) | Dichotomy | 625 | 0.194 | - | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Cabinet type (majority) | Dichotomy | 625 | 0.371 | - | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Cabinet structure (coalition) | Dichotomy | 625 | 0.382 | - | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Age | Numeric | 625 | 49.035 | 8.098 | 29 | 49 | 73 |
| Gender (female) | Dichotomy | 625 | 0.267 | - | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Education (lower) | Dichotomy | 625 | 0.19 | - | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Reshuffle | Dichotomy | 625 | 0.067 | - | 0 | 0 | 1 |

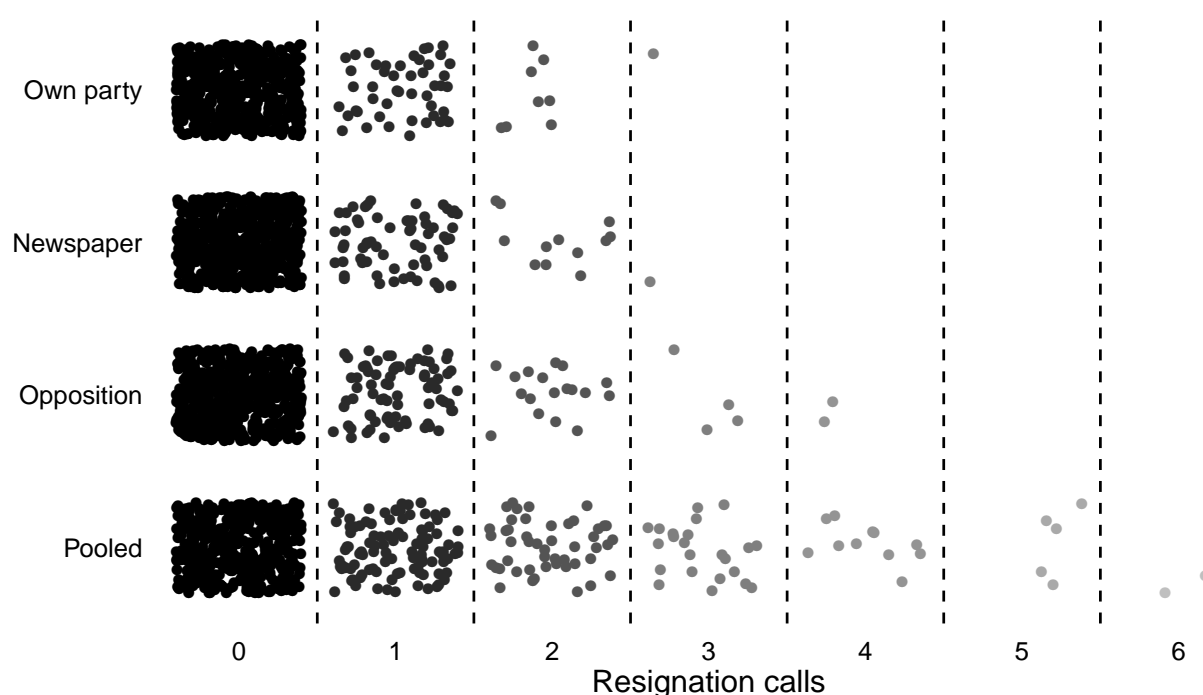
whether the minister was dismissed (1) or not (0). Table 4.1 shows that duration has a wide range – from 6 days to 1 527 days, with a mean of 615 days, and that almost 16% of the ministers in the sample was dismissed.

Performance is measured in resignation calls – a measure, as mentioned, used for the same purpose in both Bucur (2013) and Berlinski, Dewan and Dowding (2012). Following these studies, a resignation call is recorded against a minister whenever a political or non-political actor asks for the minister’s resignation⁵. Furthermore, each resignation call is categorized into one of four categories. Firstly, resignation calls from the opposition were recorded whenever a member of the opposition in parliament asked the minister to resign. Secondly, resignation calls from the minister’s own party was recorded whenever a member of a cabinet party asked for the minister’s dismissal. Finally, I record a resignation call as coming from the newspaper when an editorial or author of an article demands that a minister should be dismissed. As figure 4.1 shows, most ministers do not get resignation calls. There is some variation in the pooled measure, while the actor based resignation call categories mostly contain resignation calls in the zero and one boxes. Hence, I cannot justify using the actor based resignation calls as continuous; they are included as dummies for whether ministers have received resignation calls in the given category (1) or not (0).

Ideally, more than one newspaper should have been used for cross-reference, but three main limitations contributed to only using *Verdens Gang* for collecting resignation calls: the paper has been political independent throughout the post-war period; it is the only paper that is easily accessible with good search mechanics all the way back to 1945; and, it has been identified in media studies as the main initiator of political scandals (Allern and Pollack, 2009, 200), which makes it especially suitable for the purpose at hand.

⁵I also include resignation calls per year model in order to test whether the relationship between duration and resignation calls is endogenous.

Figure 4.1: Resignation call distribution across categories



Four measures are used in order to control for political experience. Firstly, I measure cabinet experience in years by using the cumulative lagged duration of each minister. In other words, cabinet experience is the number of years a minister has been in previous cabinets upon entering the new cabinet. Secondly, parliamentary experience is coded as a dichotomous variable scoring 1 for ministers with parliamentary experience and 0 for ministers with no parliamentary experience. Finally, the two youth experience variables are dichotomous measures, scoring one for experience (local or central/national) and zero for no experience. The youth variables are only recorded for former MPs, and not the ministers without parliamentary experience. Hence, these are the hardcore party members that have been climbing the ladder of the party from a young age, via parliamentary representation, to cabinet duties.

In order to control for cabinet specific attributes, I use two dichotomous variables: parliamentary basis, where majority governments take the value of 1 and minority governments the value 0, and cabinet structure, where coalitions take the value 1 and single party cabinets 0.

Personal characteristics are also controlled for in order to not overestimate the effect of variables with more political nature. Firstly, the age variable is recorded when the minister enters cabinet, has a mean of 49 years, and spans from the youngest minister, Hadia Tajik, 29 years old, to the oldest minister, Johan Ulrik Olsen at 73 years old. In the analysis, the age variable is centered. Secondly, the dichotomous gender variable is coded with males as the reference category. Table 4.1 shows that 73% of the ministers in the post-war period are male, although the female share of cabinet posts have increased throughout the period capping at over 50%. Thirdly, education is coded according to two levels: 0 for higher education, which is university degrees or higher, and 1 for lower education, which is less education than a university

degree. The reason for the crude categorization is that the register on `stortinget.no` has limited information on some of the ministers, but more exhaustive on other. The measure can, however, not be better than its weakest link.

Minister reshuffles are controlled for with ambiguous expectations: in theory, ministers can either be reshuffled to a less prestigious position because of bad performance, or to a more prestigious position because of good performance (Kam and Indridason, 2005, ?). The reshuffle variable is coded as 1 for ministers that have been reshuffled within the same cabinet as they hold their current post, and 0 otherwise.

The last variable to consider is the minister's jurisdiction. The variable is added as a shared frailty term to control for unobserved heterogeneity (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones, 2004, ?). More plainly, the idea is that some jurisdictions are more prone for dismissals than others. Because departments are restructured, discontinued, and established steadily across the period, I assign all department titles (37) to 16 categories. Assignment to each category was done by examining which departments succeeded those that were discontinued and by assessing their responsibilities.

4.1 Event history

The topic of ministerial durability fits well with event history models (Berlinski, Dewan and Dowding, 2012; Bucur, 2013), and specifically for this paper, the non-parametric Cox Proportional Hazards model is preferable to parametric models, because parametric models depend on assumptions about the shape of the baseline hazard. There is no sensible way of assuming when ministers are more at risk of being dismissed; they could be safe today and dismissed tomorrow if, for example, some hidden action suddenly is revealed. The Cox-model dodges this prerequisite by leaving the baseline hazard undefined.

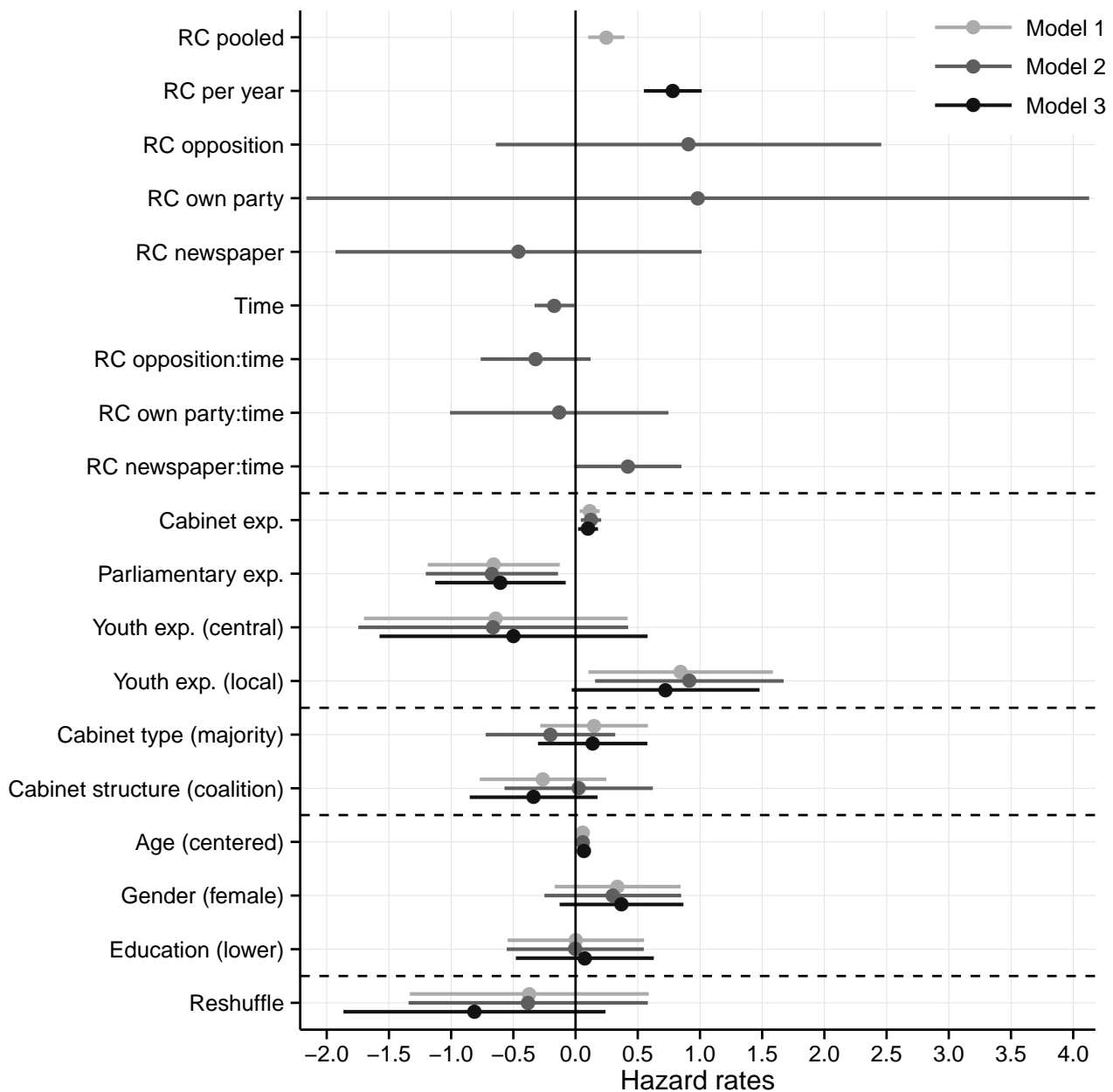
With regard to right-censoring, I stop recording the minister's duration whenever he survives until an election, the PM is replaced, or the party composition of the cabinet changes. Hence, all ministers that retain their post until one of these events occur are right-censored – they are not observed as the same unit anymore, and if they remain in their position after the change, their duration is reset. There are two reasons for doing this. Firstly, individual ministerial dismissal is the only event type of interest in the study; ministers that fall together with the cabinet is a different and, in this case, uninteresting event type. Secondly, some ministers are replaced when these changes occur, but not necessarily based on the same reasons as other dismissals; some might get tired (like Einar Gerhardsen in 1951) receive tempting job offers (Erik Brofoss became central bank governor), retire, or wanting to step down as politicians.

An important note in relation to the proportional hazard assumption of the Cox model is that the first post-war Minister of Defense, Jens Christian Hauge, has been excluded from all analyses. The reason is simple; Hauge's inclusion in the model skewed the results heavily because he received eleven resignation calls in his first period – almost double of the second highest occurrence of six resignation calls. Hauge was met with much skepticism because he was young and had strong opinions on how to modernize the military after the war. Especially after

a fallout with four generals, in what was coined the *Hauge-Helset* scandal (Verdens Gang, 1948), Hauge received a bunch of resignation calls. With Hauge included in the model the proportional hazard assumption was always violated, and he was easily identified as an outlier. Additionally, PMs are excluded because they, as a consequence of recording new cabinets after a change of PM, only fall together with the cabinet, and never individually.

5 Performance and durability

Figure 5.1: Cox models of ministerial durability



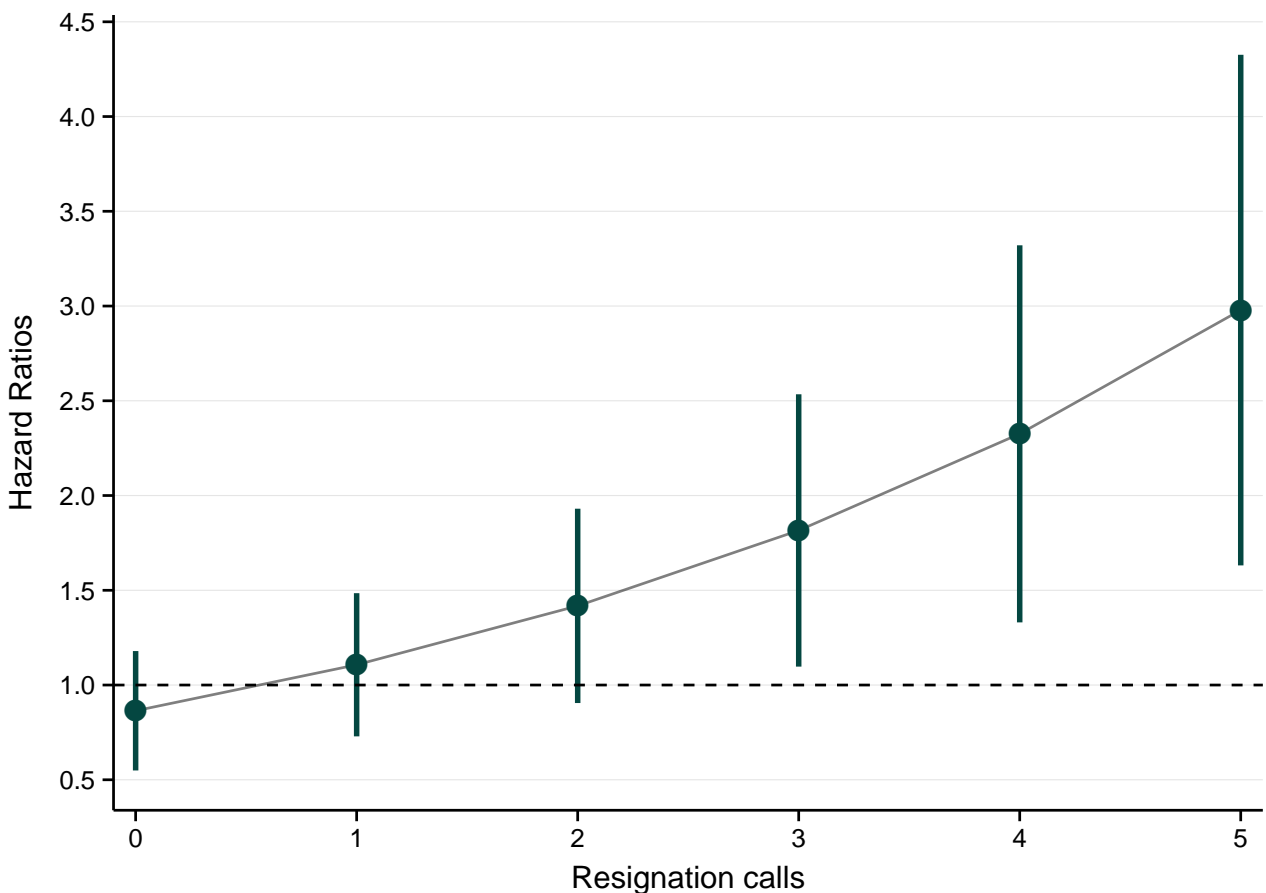
Notes: Cox Proportional Hazards models. Point estimates are hazard rates, with 95% confidence intervals represented by the lines. The jurisdiction frailty variances are 15.3% in model 1, 17.6% in model 2, and 9.3% in model 3. Full proportional hazard tests can be found in the appendix.

Figure 5.1 shows three models, where the political experience, cabinet specific, and personal

characteristic variables are held constant, while the resignation call measures vary by model. Over the three models, cabinet experience, previous local youth experience, and higher age increase the chance of being dismissed, while parliamentary experience decrease the dismissal chance. Furthermore, central youth experience, cabinet type and cabinet structure, gender, education, and reshuffles have too high uncertainties to make any valid inferences about their effect.

With regard to performance, and as expected, the pooled resignation call measure in model 1 does increase minister’s likelihood of getting the axe. The point estimate of 0.247 implies that for each resignation call a minister gets, the hazard – probability to be dismissed at t_{i+1} for the ministers that have survived until t_i – is expected to increase with 28.1%⁶ for a minister with one resignation call relative to a minister with no resignation calls. Further, ministers that get two and three resignation calls have an increased hazard of 64.0% and 110.1% respectively, compared to ministers with no resignation calls. Figure 5.2 illustrates this effect through the estimated hazard ratio for a minister with one through five resignation calls, and all other variables held at their mean (the dotted line across 1 on the y-axis is a minister with mean on all the variables). A minister with 3 resignation calls are almost two times, and a minister with five resignation calls three times as likely to get the axe than the mean minister.

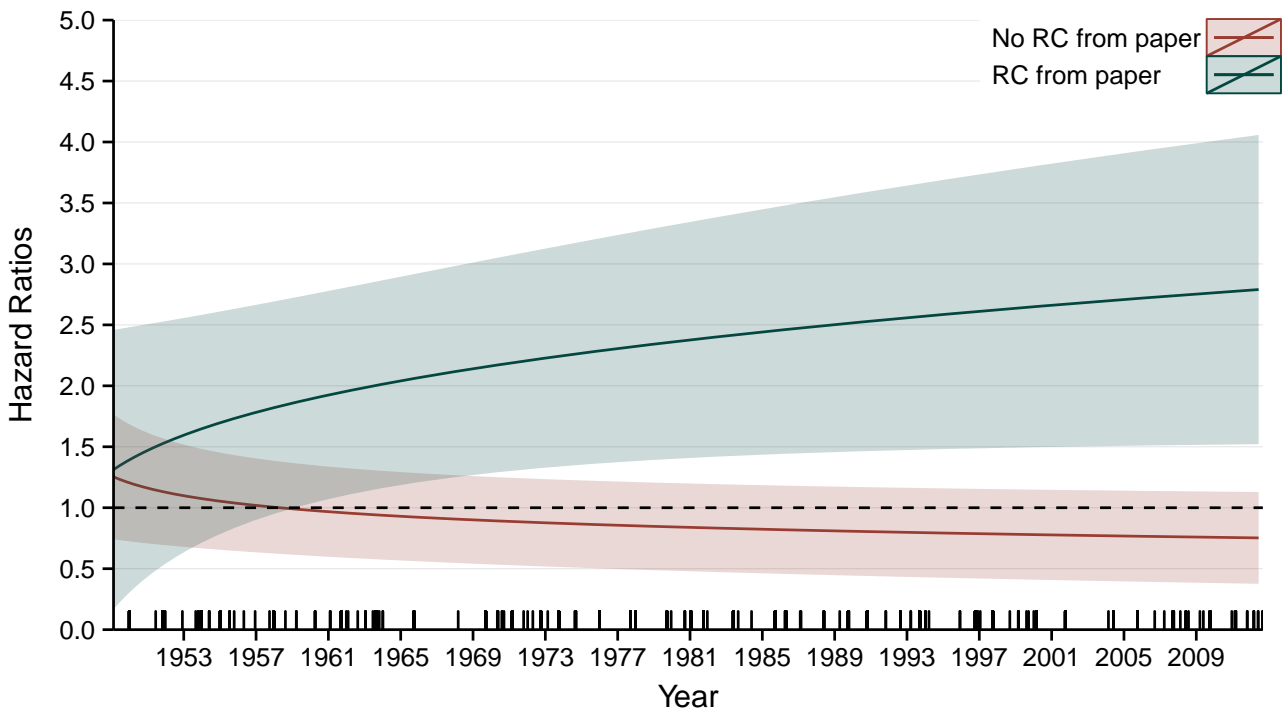
Figure 5.2: Effect of resignation calls pooled



⁶Formula for relative change in hazard: $100 * \left[\frac{\exp^{\beta X_1} - \exp^{\beta X_2}}{\exp^{\beta X_2}} \right] = 100 * \left[\frac{\exp^{0.247*0} - \exp^{0.247*1}}{\exp^{0.247*0}} \right] = 28.1\%$ (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones, 2004, 60)

For the actor based resignation call model (model 2), only the newspaper based resignation calls are certain enough to make any inferences about. Figure 5.3⁷ shows that after the late 1960s we are very certain that ministers getting resignation calls from newspapers are more prone to dismissal than ministers not getting such calls for resignation – at the very end of the period, the ministers that got resignation calls from newspapers are expected to have between 50% and 300% higher hazards. Hence the effect size is uncertain, while the direction is more certain.

Figure 5.3: Effect of newspaper based resignation calls



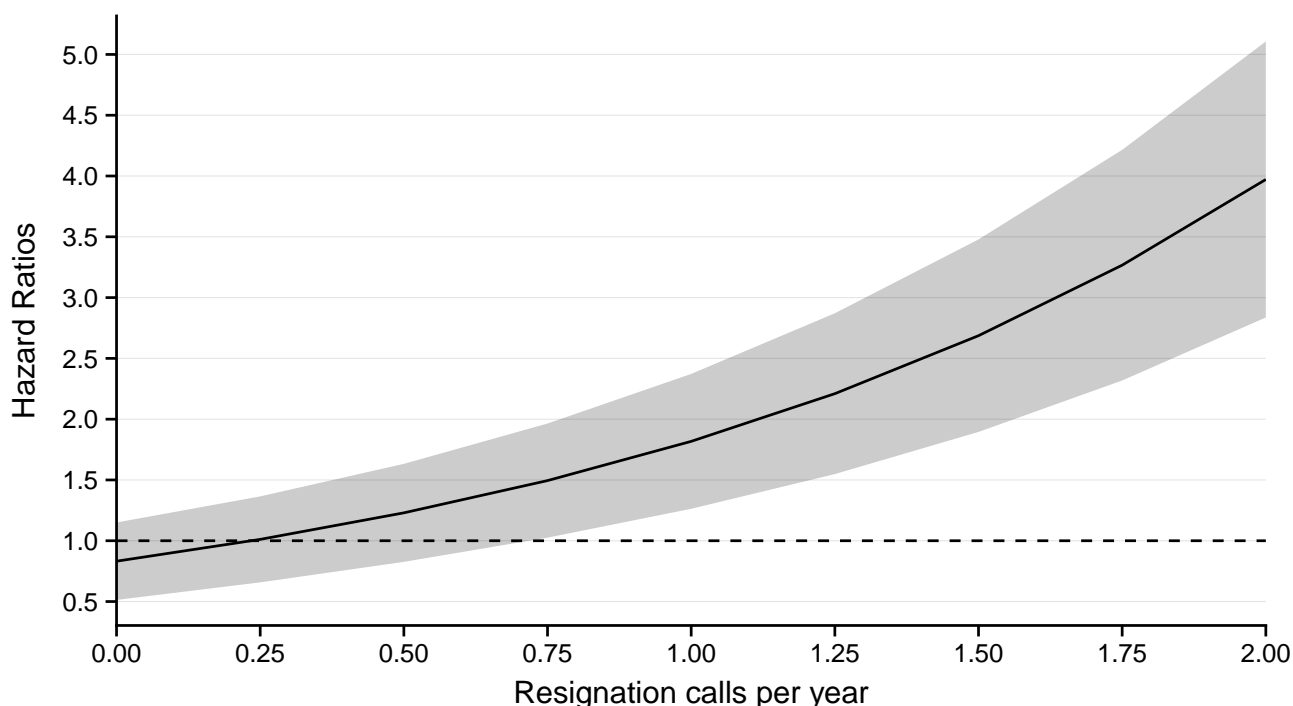
As mentioned above, there were some concerns with endogeneity in relation to the resignation call measure; ministers that sits longer will get more resignation calls. Hence, model 2 shows the effect of resignation calls per year in order to control for this. Figure 5.4 shows the effect of different levels of resignation calls per year, holding all other variables at their mean, and the effect resembles that of the pooled resignation call measures; ministers getting one resignation call per year are expected to have almost double the hazard of the mean minister, and two resignation calls per year gives an expected 300% higher hazard.

With regard to political experience, ministers with previous cabinet work on their back are expected to be dismissed quicker than fresh ministers, while parliamentary experience has the opposite effect. The youth party measure have diverging effects, and both have high uncertainties. The null-hypothesis should stand for both of them.

Both cabinet specific attributes estimates have confidence intervals crossing zero by a good margin in all three models, making the null-hypotheses stand for both variables. Minority and coalition cabinet ministers are in model 1 and 3, by the point estimate, expected to sit safer than those in majority and single-party cabinets, which is the opposite of the expectations of

⁷The opposition and party based effect plots can be found in the appendix

Figure 5.4: Effect of resignation calls per year pooled



$H3a$ and $H3b$, but in line with the hypotheses in model 2. These are, however null-findings, and will be discussed thoroughly below.

Age, on the other hand, has one of the strongest and least uncertain effects. The coefficient for age is positively signed, meaning that the older a minister is, the more likely he is to face dismissal. A one point increase is estimated (0.059) to rise the hazard by 6.1%. This is not too impressive with a one unit increase, but recall that the age variable spans from 29 years old to 73 years old. Hence, a minister at age 45 when entering cabinet has a 81.1% higher hazard than a minister at age 35, which is a substantial increase in the chance of getting the axe.

Lastly, gender, education, and reshuffles have large confidence intervals crossing zero by a fair margin. Women are, with the point estimate, expected to sit less safe than men, ministers with higher education slightly shorter than those with lower education, and reshuffled ministers sit safer than ministers remaining in their post. However, the uncertainty connected to these estimates makes it impossible to draw valid inferences from them – the null-hypotheses stands for all of them.

6 Accountability by performance, experience, or political structure?

6.1 Performance

Occupying a post in government is a prestigious political position with high stakes. To remain in cabinet, ministers have to stay out of trouble and deliver policy development that matters to the party leadership, the majority of parliament, and the voters. At least, that is what the results of the analyses in this study indicate. The pooled resignation call model showed that

ministers getting resignation calls are more likely to be sacked than the ministers not receiving resignation calls, and the results are fairly robust. In principal-agent terms, this implies that party leaders hold ministers accountable when they are publicly perceived to perform badly.

Additionally, the actor-based resignation call model indicates that the opposition and the ministers own party (or coalition partners) have little influence on ministerial durability, while resignation calls from newspapers are found increase the likelihood of shorter ministerial tenure after the early 1970s. This is interesting because it means that media performance evaluations play a more important role than other actors' performance evaluations. Thus, ambitious ministers would be more wise to spend time on pleasing their party leaders through not getting bad publicity than by actually implementing party policies under their jurisdiction. Newspapers give an important channel for uncovering misbehavior within the government, and the newspaper effect could come as a consequence of these. But, I argue that this could pose a problem for Norwegian democracy; if party leaders evaluate ministers on criticism by the media and not on their ability to carry out the policy preferences of their party, we have a situation where an unelected entity with no formal rights is able to influence the ministerial deselection process. Uncovering shirking is an advantage, but what happens afterwards should be decided by the cabinet leaders, parliament, and parties. It might, however, also be the case that party leaders do not care what newspapers write, and the effect simply reflects that newspapers are well-informed on ministers' status within the cabinet. Nevertheless, I maintain that elected officials should be the ones who evaluate ministerial performance.

The reasons for the lack of influence by opposition and parties are puzzling at face value, but it also highlights some of the flaws with using resignation calls as a measure of ministerial performance. On the one hand, the opposition can use resignation calls as strategic maneuvers, aiming at a policy nudge towards their own party's ideal point, instead of resignation calls as a tool for actually making the minister resign. Resignation calls from ones own party, on the other hand, are very diverse in nature, ranging from a resignation call against Harald Løbak (DNA – Gerhardsen V) for going against the majority of his own party in parliament, to resignation calls aiming at strengthening the party's position in parliament, as happened in 1964 when the DNA asked for Trygve Bratteli's removal from cabinet because they wanted him to lead their parliamentary group (Verdens Gang, 1964).

Additionally, there are some concerns with how well resignation calls actually measure ministerial performance. Resignation calls do a good job of measuring *public performance*, in that it is responsive to ministers being criticized publicly. What it does not account for, however, is *hidden performance* – how satisfied the minister's principal is with the performance of the minister behind closed doors. Indeed, we know remarkably little of how the inner principal-agent mechanics in cabinets work, and even less how to measure it.

The argument (discussed more thoroughly in Søyland (2015)) is that the resignation call measure needs to undergo some serious measurement validation: either through development of new indicators based on the same systematized concept that can be compared with resignation calls, or constructions of indicators based on different systematized concepts of ministerial

performance to be compared with resignation calls.

Finally, there are some concerns with regard to reliability of the resignation call collection. Some resignation calls are not straightforward to code as resignation calls. For example, it is not given that other academics would regard the Bratteli case, described above, as a resignation call, and there is no guarantee that all resignation calls are identified when going through the newspapers. A possible improvement here is to get more people to go through the same material simultaneously, and compare the results.

6.2 Experience

The political experience measures do not meet the same validity and reliability problems as the resignation call measure. Cabinet, parliament and youth party experience are directly observable, have incontestable operationalizations, and are, with regard to reliability, only exposed to random coding errors.

The analyses established that previous cabinet experience increased the probability, and parliamentary experience decreased the probability for ministerial dismissal. Although this is in line with both the hypotheses of this paper and the findings of other studies (Bucur, 2013; Berlinski, Dewan and Dowding, 2012), the findings are puzzling at first glance. Both are measures of political experience, and the first expectation should be that they have similar effects on durability.

So why do party leaders prefer ministers with parliamentary experience, and not ministers with previous cabinet experience? On the one hand, I argue that low durability among ministers with previous cabinet experience might be a consequence of a *"wear-and-tear"* effect (Narud and Valen, 2001, 30), where ministers get exhausted by their responsibilities, and party leaders get tired of working with the same people over a long period of time. Additionally, new party leaders might want to find place in cabinet for party members they have close relationships with. For example, Odvar Nordli replaced half of his cabinet during his second term, where half of the dismissed ministers had previously occupied posts within the Bratteli II cabinet⁸. Party leaders might also replace long-sitting ministers because they simply want to keep the cabinet vital and fresh.

Parliamentary experience, on the other hand, might increase ministerial durability because these ministers are more knowledgeable on how politics work or because parties want to reward loyalty with loyalty – politicians that work their way through the party should be better equipped to know the party line and act based on it. But the results of the youth party membership among former MPs in a way undermines this explanation; long service within ones party is not found to give any benefits for cabinet ministers. In terms of accountability, cabinet ministers are much more exposed to the public than parliamentary members. Bad performance in parliament is seldom noticed publicly, while cabinet ministers are susceptible to vultures circling over them in wait for a political scandal. Finally, the formal rule in Norway that ministers can not sit in

⁸The dismissed ministers that took part in both cabinets were: Leif Jørgen Aune, Gro Harlem Brundtland, Jens Evensen, Bjartmar Gjerde, Per Kleppe, Annemarie Lorentzen, and Inger Louise Valle.

parliament and cabinet at the same time could, especially for small parties, exhaust the pool of the best politicians whenever the party holds portfolios and parliamentary seats at the same time.

6.3 Political structure

The null-findings with regard to cabinet attributes are somewhat surprising and interesting. Minority cabinet ministers are not found to be more or less durable than their majority colleagues. In effect, this could mean that the parliamentary basis of cabinets has little relevance for ministerial durability. The same can be said about the cabinet structure variable; ministers in coalitions seems to be evaluated by similar criteria as ministers in single-party cabinets. Hence, the Norwegian case does not stand out from, for example, the British case, where most cabinets have majority status, based on these attributes alone.

Consequently, party leaders are able to judge ministers on performance and baggage, rather than being forced to restructure the cabinet due to the political environment. Or, they might act strategically in allocating portfolios by taking into consideration whether party members will be tolerated by the majority of parliament before appointing them. Indeed, the absence of dissolution rights in Norway could contribute to this latter point; party leaders might be more reluctant to appoint controversial ministers susceptible to votes of no confidence, which could lead to situations where they must take a stance on whether to stand by their minister or put forward a confidence motion over the minister's destiny.

Furthermore, one could argue that these findings indicate that ministerial durability is not different between countries as a consequence of different political systems, but rather due to other country specific attributes. However, such conclusions should be treated with care because similar studies on other countries could prove that the cabinet attributes are important elsewhere.

6.4 Personal characteristics

Finally, only age proved highly influential on ministerial durability among the personal characteristic variables. The age measure is most likely a proxy for tiredness; older ministers get worn down more hastily than younger ministers. I nevertheless argue that it is important to control for age as a confounding variable, because been shown to have a lot of explanatory power, in both this study and other studies (Berlinski, Dewan and Dowding, 2012).

Furthermore, neither gender nor education has any explanatory power on ministerial durability together with the reshuffle measure, with the two former being good for representative democracies, and the latter unsurprising as reshuffles can be used both as punishment and reward.

6.5 Implications

This study has given a good indication on what determines ministerial durability in post-war Norway, but can the findings be generalized to other populations? For example, consider the

new *blue-blue* coalition (Solberg I) between the the Conservatives and the Progress Party: we can expect that ministers from the Progress Party generally are safe because they have never participated in cabinets before (no previous cabinet experience); the mean age of 43 years is the lowest in the post-war period, and low age is found to make ministers more durable; the cabinet is heavy on parliamentary experience, also estimated to increase durability. Indeed, replacements have yet to occur in the Solberg I cabinet, after having remained in office for over two years – only the Borten I and Bondevik I cabinets dismissed their first minister later than the current cabinet length of the Solberg I cabinet.

The external validity beyond Norway is, however, relatively low. Other multiparty systems could prove to be completely different from Norway. Especially, the cabinet attributes having no effect in Norway does not mean that they will be unimportant in other countries. However, combined with other studies, we can be even more certain that resignation calls, previous cabinet experience, and age generally decrease ministerial durability, while the effect of education, gender, and reshuffles can be argued to have slightly more uncertain interpretations based on the results here.

Then how can more general assessments be made? What is the natural step forward? Of course, case studies on other countries would always prove useful in pinning down general trends of what makes ministers survive longer. In the long run, however, cross-case studies looking into how different institutional factors, such as investiture rules, vote of (no) confidence, election system, and more, affects ministerial durability would be crucial.

As for measuring ministerial performance, which I argue is one of the main potential improvements within case-studies, I maintain that new measures should be developed to validate resignation calls. For example, hearings, interpellations, and questions in parliament could be the base of measuring how well a ministers perform; a minister that never gets called to parliament should be likely to perform well, while ministers that are frequently called to parliament should be likely to not perform well. There would, as with resignation calls, be some noise attached to such measures; policy disagreements between the minister and the opposition, could be an example of this.

In the Norwegian case, performance validation could be a natural starting point for improving the analyses of this study. Additionally, better party elite measures could shed new light on the relationship between political experience, parties, and ministerial durability. Furthermore, case studies on why individual ministers are sacked (mainly based on scandal studies) are plentiful; case studies on why individual ministers are *not* sacked after a scandal, personal error, or for other reasons, has not been as prominent in the literature; deep cross-case analyses of individual ministers with similar situations and different outcomes could prove enlightening.

7 Conclusion

The motivation for writing this study was to contribute to the fast growing ministerial durability literature by empirically exploring why some ministers in post-war Norway are fired and others

not. I apply a slightly modified version of the principal-agent theory, where I argue that party leaders are the main principals of ministers, to scrutinize how ministers are held accountable. The general finding is that Norwegian ministers are judged on their performance, experience, and ambitions rather than on unchangeable personal attributes.

The most intriguing finding is that ministers performing poorly are less durable than well-performing ministers, where performance is measured through resignation calls. More specifically, this means that party leaders hold ministers accountable when they do not deliver what is expected from them; the accountability link between the cabinet principal and agents works in the Norwegian case. However, I also find that party leaders consider resignation calls from newspapers more seriously than those from parties and the opposition. Consequently, this could indicate that there is a democratic deficiency in what determines ministerial dismissals. I also argue that some effort should be made to construct different measures for ministerial performance as alternatives to resignation calls to increase the validity of the measure.

Furthermore, non-performance based characteristics are also found to affect ministerial durability in different ways: ministers with long service across cabinets are found to be more prone to dismissal than newly employed ministers, while parliamentary experience seems to increase durability. Because these two measures of political experience have diverging effects, I argue that the cabinet experience decrease ministerial durability as a consequence of a *wear-and-tear* effect; party leaders replace ministers that sit for a long period of time to keep the cabinet fresh. Parliamentary experience, however, has given ministers political experience in the shadows of the public, grooming the best politicians for an arguably higher post in the cabinet, which should decrease the chance of ministerial drift or bad performance.

The most important null-finding of this study is that both cabinet composition and parliamentary basis are not found to have little impact on ministerial durability. No matter whether the minister sits in a majority, minority, single-party, or coalition cabinet, the risk of dismissal is not found to differ. Consequently, this could indicate that party leaders do not replace ministers due to different political environments. In these results, paths for further studies are plentiful; cross-country studies exploring whether cabinet characteristics are irrelevant for ministerial durability would provide enriching insights for the literature.

With regard to personal characteristics, age has been unveiled as important for tenure – older ministers are more prone for dismissal than their younger counterparts. I have argued that this effect could be attributed to older ministers probably having more health related issues on a general basis, making them leave cabinet duties faster than younger ministers.

Finally, I argue that the internal validity of the study is high, but also that deeper cross-case analyses of uncovered ministerial misbehavior leading to dismissal and *not* leading to dismissal could give more flesh to the bone for the Norwegian case in particular. However, I also maintain that the results of this study hardly can be generalized beyond Norway; comparative studies of several multiparty systems (and other types of parliamentary democracies) would prove useful for discovering whether institutional factors such as cabinet composition or parliamentary basis are more important, and whether the same attributes affect durability similarly across countries.

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Appendix

Table 7.1: Cox proportional hazard models

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Performance | | | |
| RC pooled | 0.247 (0.074)*** | | |
| RC per year | | | 0.782 (0.118)*** |
| Time | | -0.170 (0.082)* | |
| RC opposition | | 0.909 (0.790) | |
| RC own party | | 0.982 (1.605) | |
| RC newspaper | | -0.458 (0.751) | |
| Time:RC opposition | | -0.321 (0.226) | |
| Time:RC own party | | -0.131 (0.448) | |
| Time:RC newspaper | | 0.421 (0.219) | |
| Experience | | | |
| Cabinet exp. | 0.114 (0.041)** | 0.124 (0.042)** | 0.100 (0.041)* |
| Parliamentary exp. | -0.658 (0.271)* | -0.672 (0.271)* | -0.604 (0.268)* |
| Youth experience (central) | -0.641 (0.540) | -0.662 (0.553) | -0.498 (0.550) |
| Youth experience (local) | 0.845 (0.378)* | 0.915 (0.387)* | 0.724 (0.385) |
| Cabinet | | | |
| Cabinet type (majority) | 0.150 (0.221) | -0.202 (0.266) | 0.138 (0.224) |
| Cabinet structure (coalition) | -0.261 (0.259) | 0.025 (0.304) | -0.337 (0.262) |
| Personal | | | |
| Age (centered) | 0.059 (0.016)*** | 0.059 (0.016)*** | 0.068 (0.016)*** |
| Gender (female) | 0.338 (0.258) | 0.300 (0.280) | 0.370 (0.254) |
| Reshuffle | -0.371 (0.490) | -0.381 (0.491) | -0.812 (0.537) |
| Education (lower) | 0.003 (0.280) | -0.002 (0.281) | 0.075 (0.283) |
| AIC | 1068.091 | 1062.625 | 1013.365 |
| Num. events | 98 | 98 | 95 |
| Num. obs. | 625 | 625 | 621 |

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. Cox Proportion Hazards models where estimates are in hazard rates, and standard errors in parentheses.

Table 7.2: Proportional hazards test – Model 1

| | rho | chisq | p |
|-------------------------------|---------|---------|-------|
| RC pooled | 0.092 | 0.759 | 0.384 |
| Age | 0.040 | 0.181 | 0.671 |
| Gender (female) | -0.001 | 0.0001 | 0.991 |
| Youth experience (central) | 0.123 | 1.495 | 0.221 |
| Youth experience (local) | -0.113 | 1.351 | 0.245 |
| Cabinet exp. | -0.091 | 0.720 | 0.396 |
| Parliamentary exp. | -0.005 | 0.003 | 0.958 |
| Education (lower) | 0.004 | 0.002 | 0.965 |
| Reshuffle | 0.098 | 0.961 | 0.327 |
| Cabinet type (majority) | 0.048 | 0.222 | 0.638 |
| Cabinet structure (coalition) | -0.0003 | 0.00001 | 0.997 |
| Global | | 4.990 | 0.932 |

Table 7.3: Proportional hazards test – Model 2

| | rho | chisq | p |
|-------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| RC per year | 0.165 | 2.730 | 0.098 |
| Age | 0.027 | 0.076 | 0.782 |
| Gender (female) | 0.018 | 0.037 | 0.848 |
| Youth experience (central) | 0.102 | 1.028 | 0.311 |
| Youth experience (local) | -0.088 | 0.785 | 0.376 |
| Cabinet exp. | -0.081 | 0.492 | 0.483 |
| Parliamentary exp. | 0.005 | 0.002 | 0.961 |
| Education (lower) | -0.010 | 0.012 | 0.913 |
| Reshuffle | 0.195 | 3.664 | 0.056 |
| Cabinet type (majority) | 0.038 | 0.135 | 0.713 |
| Cabinet structure (coalition) | -0.036 | 0.153 | 0.696 |
| Global | | 8.683 | 0.651 |

Table 7.4: Proportional hazards test – Model 3

| | rho | chisq | p |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| RC opposition | 0.161 | 1.249 | 0.264 |
| Time | -0.035 | 0.157 | 0.692 |
| RC newspaper | -0.085 | 0.378 | 0.539 |
| RC own party | -0.054 | 0.292 | 0.589 |
| Age | 0.080 | 0.832 | 0.362 |
| Gender (female) | 0.002 | 0.001 | 0.977 |
| Youth experience (central) | 0.113 | 1.275 | 0.259 |
| Youth experience (local) | -0.124 | 1.696 | 0.193 |
| Cabinet exp. | -0.116 | 1.229 | 0.268 |
| Parliamentary exp. | -0.009 | 0.009 | 0.927 |
| Education (lower) | -0.010 | 0.012 | 0.914 |
| Reshuffle | 0.111 | 1.244 | 0.265 |
| Cabinet type (majority) | -0.042 | 0.177 | 0.674 |
| Cabinet structure (coalition) | -0.009 | 0.008 | 0.927 |
| Time:RC opposition | -0.132 | 0.952 | 0.329 |
| Time:RC newspaper | 0.026 | 0.039 | 0.844 |
| Time:RC own party | 0.093 | 0.926 | 0.336 |
| Global | | 13.542 | 0.699 |

Figure 7.1: Effect of opposition based resignation calls

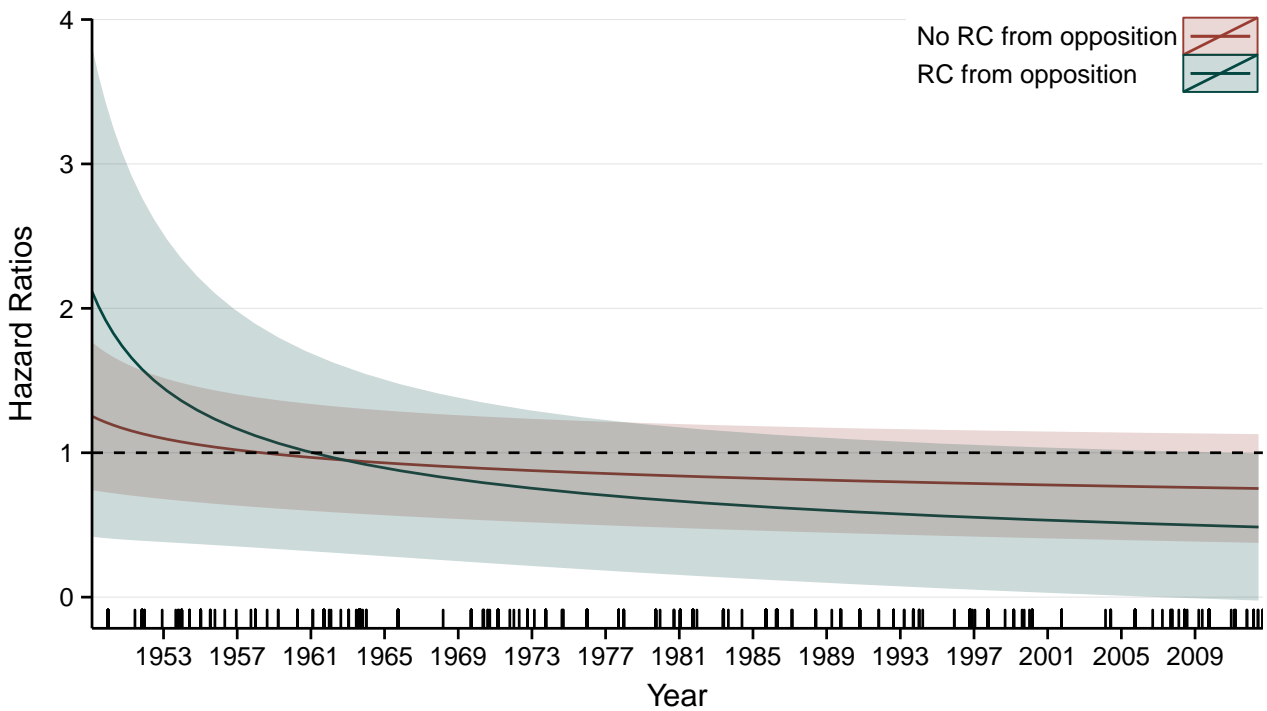


Figure 7.2: Effect of own party based resignation calls

