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War, Performance and the Survival of Foreign Ministers

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STANCE

State-Making and the Origins of Global Order
in the Long Nineteenth Century and Beyond

War, Performance and the Survival of Foreign Ministers

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and Alejandro Quiroz Flores

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War, Performance and the Survival of Foreign Ministers*

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Abstract

Are foreign ministers punished for their performance in office, or when the country loses a war? The literature has increasingly recognized the importance of individual leaders when explaining foreign policy outcomes. Several scholars have focused on the survival of leaders as an important predictor of war onset, which has created an interest in predicting leadership survival. We contribute to this literature by shifting the focus to the survival of other important politicians in cabinet—foreign ministers. We hypothesize that the survival of foreign ministers depends on their performance in office, and that they are for example less likely to survive when the country experiences a high level of conflict. We evaluate and find support for our hypotheses using original historical data (during the “long 19th century”) on foreign ministers’ background and reasons for leaving office for 13 current or former great powers, including countries with very different conflict experiences.

Introduction

The literature on the relationship between regime types and war has increasingly recognized the importance of individual leaders when explaining foreign policy outcomes. In this literature, several scholars have focused on the (expected) survival of leaders as an important predictor of war onset. For example, Debs and Goemans (2010) show that compared to autocratic leaders, the tenure of democratic leaders does not depend on war outcomes, and offer an explanation to why democratic leaders are more willing and able to avoid war (cf. Croco and Weeks 2016). We contribute to this literature, following the work by Flores (2009), by shifting the focus to the survival of other important politicians in cabinet, more specifically, foreign ministers (FMs). The question we ask is, does the survival of these individual ministers, similarly to the head of government, depend on foreign policy outcomes, such as a win or a loss of war?

The specific aim of this paper is to inquire into why some FMs sit longer on their posts than others. Although obviously not the sole outcome of interest, survival in office can be seen as a proxy for prominence and influence. “Evidence at hand”, according to Modelski (1970, 144), “indicates that longer-tenured FMs are better known by more of their colleagues, are more highly regarded by them, and tend to be more active in the international arena.” In this sense we are trying to explain what makes some FMs more successful than others.

The question of tenure in office has also been in focus in the more recent comparative literature on cabinet reshuffles in parliamentary democracies. In this literature, ministerial selection and de-selection is often framed as a delegation problem, where the main principal, the Prime Minister (PM), delegates power to line ministers as agents. The PM has the power to dismiss ministers if ministers do not perform in line with his or her wishes (see e.g. Huber and Martinez-Gallardo 2008). We draw on this literature here, especially the literature focusing on the impact of “performance” on ministerial tenure. In this literature, performance has mainly been measured by analyzing so called “resignation calls” (Berlinski, Dewan and Dowding 2010), and few studies have connected exogenous shocks, such as conflict and crises events, to ministerial survival (Bäck, Kerby and Persson 2013).

We contribute to this literature, and to the literature on leadership survival and war (e.g. Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Debs and Goemans

2010; Croco and Weeks 2016), by presenting and evaluating original hypotheses about the features that influence foreign ministerial survival. We expect that specific background features of the individual FMs influence their tenure, and for example hypothesize that FMs with a diplomatic background have a lower risk of losing their posts because these individuals are expected to perform well in office. We also hypothesize that the survival of FMs depends on situational features, and that FMs are less likely to survive after a loss of war, either because this can be perceived as a “poor performance” on their part, or because heads of governments will shift blame within cabinet to avoid losing office. However, we not only expect that FMs are used as “scapegoats”, or are punished for poor performance, but that they are also “rewarded” for performing well in office, and thus we expect that when a country has experienced an armed conflict resulting in a win or in a compromise agreement, the FM’s tenure will be longer.

We evaluate and find support for several of our hypotheses on foreign minister survival by using a new and unique comparative historical data set on foreign ministers’ background and reasons for leaving office since 1789. The data set covers all foreign ministers of the world’s 13 great powers from the early modern period to the present: Austria, Britain, China, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Prussia/Germany, the Ottoman Empire, Russia, Spain, Sweden and the United States (Levy 1983).

Overview of the field

The literature on foreign policy leaders and foreign ministers

In this paper we draw on the previous literature on foreign policy analysis (FPA), a field which is characterized by an actor-specific focus, focusing on the idea that the foreign policy outcomes that are to be explained are the result of human decision-making (Hudson 2005). The largest literature within FPA that focuses on political leaders is the literature on policy-making, where several scholars have found that “the core psychological characteristics of presidents and prime ministers affect their personal policy preferences and the policies adopted by the states they lead” (Crichlow 2005: 179). For example, Hermann (1970; 1978) typologizes leaders according to ‘foreign policy dispositions’. Byman and Pollack (2001) argue that “International relations cannot be understood if the role

of the individual is ignored”, and present hypotheses on the role of individual leaders’ personality traits, for example that states led by risk-tolerant leaders are more likely to cause wars.

A number of scholars have more recently gathered and analyzed comparative systematic data on the personal features of individual leaders. For example, Horowitz, Stam and Ellis (2015) present results that evaluate, on the basis of the background experience (e.g. upbringing and military experience) of 2,400 leaders (1875–2004), “the probability that a leader will engage in interstate military conflicts while in office” (Horowitz et al. 2015: 12). These scholars build on the important work of the creators of the *Archigos* data set, presented by Goemans, Gleiditsch and Chiozza (2009). This data set includes information on leaders in 188 countries (1875–2004), focusing mainly on leader entry and exit, for example allowing for an analysis of the relationship between the fate of leaders and the stability of democracy.

As described by Crichlow (2005: 180), most of the previous research on foreign policy leaders has focused on the “individuals who are the pinnacle of power”, such as prime ministers and presidents. However, these individuals are not the only important politicians in the foreign policy-making process. Crichlow suggests that if we are to fully understand the impact of leaders on foreign policy outcomes, we need to investigate the role of subordinates of presidents and prime ministers (see also Byman and Pollack 2001). Crichlow (2005: 180) argues for studying foreign ministers’ psychological influences, and suggests that:

History is replete with examples of extraordinarily influential foreign ministers, from Talleyrand to Schuman and Adams to Kissinger [...]. Foreign ministers are officially charged with directing foreign policy [...] foreign ministers typically have a great deal of discretion, and their institutional resources and authority, plus the legitimacy they possess as the government’s primary voice on foreign affairs, allow them to move policy in directions they favor.

Hence, there are a number of reasons for focusing on individual leaders when aiming to explain foreign policy outcomes. Specifically, we here follow scholars suggesting that foreign ministers should be researched, because the foreign minister “can have a great deal of influence due to his or her policy expertise, institutional position, and in some cases political

strength” (Crichlow 2005: 180)¹. So far, however, relatively little systematic comparative work has focused on foreign ministers or state secretaries, and their personal characteristics.²

One important exception is the early work by Modelski (1970) that presents information on the background and “interactions” of the 175 foreign ministers who held office in 1965. Modelski for example shows that most of these individuals (about 80%) have a college or university education, often law and legal training, and that relatively few foreign ministers (about 20%) have military experience. Modelski (1970: 149) also shows that when it comes to occupational experience, many foreign ministers have a background in political office or within the party, but also that “the diplomatic service is another clear source of recruits”.

More recently, Oppermann and colleagues (2016) have suggested that foreign policy research should open up the “black box” of coalition governance in foreign affairs as this type of endeavor “promises more fine-grained insights into the drivers and characteristic of coalition foreign policy”. More specifically, they suggest, drawing on the literature on coalition governance, that foreign policy is shaped by which party is allocated the foreign ministry, and whether the FM has a high level of policy discretion. The latter feature can for example be influenced by the presence of coalition agreements and other control mechanisms aimed at limiting ministerial discretion (see e.g. Strøm et al. 2010).

The literature on leadership survival, foreign policy and war

Some of the literature on war and conflicts has, as described above, been interested in understanding leadership survival, since leaders’ expected survival should influence their foreign policy decisions, such as their willingness to go to war or to make bargaining concessions (e.g. Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995; Chiozza and Goemans 2004). The logic of this argument is that leaders understand that concessions at the bargaining table could lead to peace, but also that such concessions could affect his or her survival as a leader. Therefore, the “size of the concessions he or

¹ Note that the foreign minister is not the only individual who can exert such influence. Often there are several other important foreign policy makers, including the head of government. One such policy maker is the defense minister, who is also likely to have “policy expertise, institutional position, and in some cases political strength” (Crichlow 2005: 180). Defense ministers, though, are also responsible for the maintenance and performance of the military. That is, their portfolio is closely linked foreign policy outcomes in specific contexts, but is distinct from foreign policy decision-making or negotiation. That said, we are in the early stages of a similar data gathering process for defense ministers.

² There have however been several important case studies on the decision-making of some of the influential Secretaries of State (see e.g. Holsti 1970; Starr 1984; Crichlow 2005).

she is willing to make depends on the sensitivity of his or her survival to the share of the pie obtained internationally” (Debs and Goemans 2010: 430). This argument stresses the importance of understanding when and why leaders survive. Even though this literature mainly focuses on the survival of heads of governments, we suggest that it is still highly relevant for our argument about foreign ministers. Since FMs, the leaders that we study here, are likely to take part at the “bargaining table”, their survival is highly relevant to research focusing on explaining war and other foreign policy outcomes.

Whereas some of these previous studies have argued that the postwar tenure of leaders in democratic regimes is more sensitive to war outcomes (see e.g. Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003), recent empirical analyses seem to suggest the opposite (see e.g. Debs and Goemans 2010). Croco and Weeks (2016: 578) attempt to solve this “puzzle”, suggesting that previous work has overlooked the leaders’ “culpability” for a conflict. That is, when analyzing leaders’ tenure, it is important to consider that the “domestic audience’s willingness to sanction a leader” may vary both across and within countries. The authors build on the work by Croco (2011), which suggests that a leader’s perceived culpability for war is affected by whether the leader was in power when the war began, and whether the leader has a political connection to the leader who started the war. In addition, Croco and Weeks (2016) suggest that how “vulnerable” the leader is, or the degree to which a domestic audience is capable to punishing a leader, matters for a leader’s likelihood of staying in office. Analyzing leader tenure for leaders who entered office beginning in 1919, they show that the tenure of democratic leaders is highly sensitive to war outcomes if they are culpable. Culpable leaders in authoritarian regimes can also be sensitive to war outcomes, but only if they are also vulnerable.

Another potential explanation for why democratic leaders do not lose their posts after a defeat in a war, which is related to the argument about “culpability” is that other actors may be taking the blame for a “poor performance” in such systems, such as foreign ministers, acting as policy-makers or advisors of heads of governments. Hence, the idea is that leaders can “shift blame” to other actors for example when losing a war, which we elaborate on this below. However, we are not aware of any studies that have investigated whether foreign ministers lose their posts after a war defeat. The only study focusing specifically on foreign minister survival is Flores (2009), which is based on data on over 7,500 foreign ministers in office over three centuries (181 countries, 1696-2004). Flores shows, in a

survival analysis, that the fate of foreign ministers is strongly tied to the leader's departure from office.

The comparative literature on ministerial survival

The comparative literature on ministerial selection and de-selection departs from a view of parliamentary democracies as based upon a chain of delegation in which the prime minister (PM) acts as 'principal' of the ministers who are acting as 'agents', a view that is transferable to other systems, for example, presidential ones, but with somewhat more complex delegation relationships (see e.g. Strøm 2003). According to principal-agent theory, the principal employs several control mechanisms to mitigate 'agency loss' arising from 'adverse selection' and from 'moral hazard'. To avoid agency loss in cabinet, *ex ante* control mechanisms such as extensive screening of potential candidates for ministerial posts can be applied. The most important *ex post* measure is to simply end the principal-agent relationship, that is, the principal often has the opportunity to dismiss ministers that are deemed incompetent, disloyal or exceeding their range of discretion, and this is typically seen as an effective instrument for the PM to sanction agency loss (e.g. Strøm 2003).

The previous literature has recognized that PMs may use ministerial dismissals and reshuffles for several reasons, such as blaming policy failures or scandals on individual ministers (Dewan and Dowding 2005); by boosting government popularity among voters (Dewan and Dowding 2005; Kam and Indridason 2005); and to increase competence among cabinet members (e.g. Huber and Martinez-Gallardo 2008).

Thus, one important task of the head of government is to monitor the performance of ministers in order to detect "agency loss". Berlinski, Dewan and Dowding (2010: 559) argue that the PM "evaluates her ministers according to information available to her that is related to their performance", and test this argument by analyzing the number of resignation calls for a minister (in the press) as an indicator of individual performance. They show, for the UK, that the risk of a minister leaving his or her post increases significantly after the first resignation call. Berlinski and colleagues (2010: 561) suggest that a resignation call provides information to the PM "that was not available when she appointed the minister", recognizing that resignation calls are "noisy signals" of performance, as they may be compounding features for which the minister is responsible for with for example random shocks.

Hence, the comparative literature on ministerial survival has suggested that PMs use the dismissal instrument to deal with agency

problems, and that they most likely use this instrument as a way to deal with poor performance, but also to deal with other problems, such as, decreasing government popularity (see Dewan and Dowding 2005). A clear gap in this literature is the lack of work focusing on the role of other “shocks” besides public opinion ones (see however Bäck et al. 2013). There are also few studies using more direct measures of performance, which we do here by analyzing conflict levels and outcomes. We elaborate on our theoretical framework and hypotheses in the following section.

Theory and hypotheses

In this section, we elaborate on the hypotheses to be evaluated in the empirical analyses. We are here interested in explaining foreign minister survival in particular, that is, we here focus on predicting why some foreign ministers stay longer in their posts than others, when controlling for government duration. Following the literature on cabinet reshuffles, we are therefore not making predictions about why some cabinets or regimes last longer than others (see e.g. Laver 2003), but instead focus specifically on individual ministers in cabinet (see e.g. Huber and Martinez-Gallardo 2008).

Hence, we are here interested in the personnel decisions made by Heads of Governments (HoGs), and we should therefore take our starting point in the goals that these leaders have. Following the previous literature on war and leadership survival, and the comparative literature on cabinet reshuffles, HoGs (prime ministers, presidents, kings, general-secretaries, etc.) are assumed to be interested in staying in office – to be office-seeking (see e.g. Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995; Kam and Indridason 2005). In democratic systems this implies that they are instrumentally vote-seeking, that is, they should to some extent aim to “please their voters” to stay in office (see e.g. Dewan and Dowding 2005). In addition, leaders in any regime may also be policy-seeking in the sense that they are interested in implementing a specific policy program in order to remain in office (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). For office-, policy-, or vote-seeking reasons, leaders should thus be interested in hiring and keeping ministers in cabinet who perform well, and who act in the interests of the principal – they should aim to make personnel decisions that minimize agency loss.

As has been noted in the literature on ministerial selection and survival, the HoG is not always free to staff the cabinet as he or she sees

fit, without the approval of some other actors (see e.g. Bäck et al. 2016). Comparative research also shows that the risk that a minister gets fired from his or her post is lower in coalition governments, which suggests that the PM is constrained when making personnel decisions in such cabinets (Huber and Martinez-Gallardo 2008). Hence, even if we restrict ourselves to parliamentary democracies, it is not always clear that the PM is the main principal in the ministerial appointment process. Bäck and colleagues (2016) elaborate on this argument and on the idea that politicians may have “competing principals” (see Carey 2007). They suggest that in systems where coalition governments are frequent, the party leadership, the coalition as a collective, or the PM may be the most important principal. Which of these actors is the “dominant” principal depends on the institutional setting.

The literature on decision units and foreign policy making also make similar claims, where scholars have argued that it is important to consider that some governments are characterized by a “sharp fragmentation of political authority within the decision unit” (Hagan et al. 2001: 170; see also Hermann 2001). The argument is that any actor in the decision unit may be able to “block” or “veto” initiatives of the other actors, for example by threatening to leave the coalition, thereby bringing down the government (Hagan et al. 2001: 170). This literature also gives us some suggestions on other types of regimes that may be characterized by fragmented decision units. Hagan et al. (2001: 172) for example suggest that presidential and semi-presidential democracies, where executive and legislature are controlled by opposing parties, and authoritarian regimes with power dispersed over separate factions or groups, may be seen as fragmented decision units when explaining foreign policymaking.

This means that it is clearly a simplification to say that the HoG is always making decisions about who gets fired from their post. Even though reality is clearly more complex, and there should be competing principals in most systems, we believe that when it comes to the hiring and firing of foreign ministers, other actors, such as the party (in both democratic and authoritarian single-party regimes), or the ruling coalitions undergirding a leader’s tenure in office in more personalized dictatorships (Svolik 2012), should have similar interests as the HoG when it comes to the performance of foreign ministers, that is, they are likely to reward positive performance, and to punish poor performance.

In the following sections, we present two types of hypotheses relating to how the performance of foreign ministers influences their survival. We present hypotheses about: (1) individual background features of foreign

ministers; and (2) situational features, focusing on the level and outcomes of conflict. To clarify the distinction and how they relate to performance, the hypotheses about individual background features are focusing on the fact that some actors are more likely to “perform” well when holding the post as foreign minister, because they have some experiences that make them better able to deal with international conflicts, and hence *expected* performance may keep them in office. The situational hypotheses that focus on the level and outcomes of conflict instead center on that foreign ministers may be blamed or rewarded for the situation that the country is in, and may be sanctioned for “negative outcomes”, or rewarded for “positive outcomes”. Hence, the situation may be taken as an indicator of the FMs *actual* performance, either because they are perceived as being culpable, or because leaders shift blame to these cabinet members.

Hypotheses about individual background features and FM survival

In the literature on cabinet reshuffles, a number of background features of the ministers are expected to influence ministerial duration. Berlinski and colleagues (2007) argue that, “Ministerial performance is likely to be related to personal abilities and these might be indirectly related to their characteristics”. Much of the literature on cabinet reshuffles highlights cabinet experience as an indicator of ministerial ability, also allowing for intensive screening of potential candidates, and this might lead one to expect that experienced ministers will survive longer in their posts (see e.g. Huber and Martinez-Gallardo 2008).

We follow arguments in the previous literature, suggesting that the extensive screening of potential cabinet members serves to effectively reduce the risk of agency loss, which suggests that the PM’s (or another HoG’s) need to fire ministers or perform reshuffles is diminished when ministers have specific “positive” backgrounds (Bäck et al. 2012). In particular, the legislative and party venue allows *ex ante* screening of potential ministers in terms of their competence and loyalty, since the extensive screening of prospective parliamentarians and potential cabinet members is often assumed to be performed by centralized, cohesive, policy-oriented political parties (cf. Müller 2000). Hence, having a background within political parties, in the parliament, or in the executive, should increase the expected, and/or actual performance of ministers, and should thus decrease the risk that ministers are forced to leave their posts. We thus hypothesize that:

H1: Foreign ministers with a political background (in the parliament, party, or executive) have a lower risk of losing their posts.

In addition, we suggest that the diplomatic experience of foreign ministers should be especially important to consider since these ministers have a specific role within the cabinet, leading negotiations with other countries' representatives. As described by Flores (2009: 118), "as the highest diplomats in government, they [FMs] represent the sovereign state in one of its most important functions, that is, external relations". Having diplomatic experience should thus increase a politician's ability to handle international negotiations, and could therefore decrease the minister's risk of being forced out of office, either because they are expected to perform well in this position, or because they have a positive "track-record" in terms of external relations and international negotiations. We thus hypothesize that:

H2: Foreign ministers with a diplomat background, have a lower risk of losing their posts.

Another personal characteristic feature that has been suggested to matter for ministerial tenure is their educational background. For example, Berlinski and colleagues (2012: 79) find that ministers who have been to "Oxbridge" have a lower hazard rate. They suggest that "the educational credentials of a minister [...] may capture some inherent characteristics of the minister, such as acquired skills, latent ability or access to social networks" (see also Berlinski et al. 2007). Following this literature, we suggest that the educational level of FMs may influence their performance in office and their ability to "deal with the job", and therefore we hypothesize that:

H3: Foreign ministers with a higher level of education, have a lower risk of losing their posts.

Hypotheses about conflict level and outcomes and FM survival

Following the previous literature on leadership survival (see e.g. Chiozza and Goemans 2004; Chiozza and Goemans 2010; Croco and Weeks 2016), we expect that contextual features, related to the international conflicts that a country is involved in, matter for foreign minister survival. Here, we expect that conflicts are costly for foreign ministers, as for political leaders in general. Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson (1995) argue that there are

strong reasons to believe that there is a close connection between war and the domestic fate of political leaders.

The question is, how does going to war or being involved in international conflict affect the survival of foreign ministers? We suggest that HoGs, that are likely to be seen as being “culpable” (see Croco 2011), have an opportunity to “shift blame” within the cabinet, and to make FMs responsible for the country being at war. Here we can draw on the comparative literature on cabinet reshuffles, where Dewan and Dowding (2005: 46) have shown that the government as a whole can “pin blame on individual ministers and deflect criticism and subsequent falls in popularity by sanctioning or removing the minister concerned”. It may of course be that FMs “have a great deal of discretion” (Crichlow 2005: 180), allowing them to actually make important foreign policy decisions that to some extent explains why a country is involved in conflicts, and in this case, blame is “rightly” attributed to the FM. Regardless if a FM is to blame for a country being involved in conflict, or if the HoG uses the FM as a “scapegoat”, FMs should have a higher risk of losing their posts when the conflict level is high. We thus hypothesize that:

H4: The higher the level of conflict, the higher the risk that foreign ministers lose their posts.

As pointed out above, the previous literature has found mixed results regarding the outcomes of conflicts and leadership survival (Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995: 85r; Chiozza and Goemans’ 2004: 605; Croco and Weeks 2016). This may partly be due to the fact that these studies do not differentiate between individual leadership survival and regime survival, where the latter is likely to be more directly influenced by war outcomes in that (autocratic) leaders often lose office through “violent means [rebellions, civil wars, coups (Goemans 2008)]” (Debs and Goemans 2010: 435).

We suggest that foreign minister survival may be somewhat easier to predict, considering that we are here not studying “regime survival”, but rather the individual survival of FMs (as the HoG stays in office), and their “performance” in office should be more clearly linked to their tenure. Here, we suggest that conflict outcomes can be seen as “positive” or “negative” performances of the FM, as he or she is likely to be “blamed” or “credited” for these outcomes, being the “government’s primary voice on foreign affairs” (Crichlow 2005: 180). Two types of conflict outcomes should be advantageous for a FM: conflicts resulting in positive outcome,

or a “win”; and conflicts resulting in a “compromise agreement”. The latter is likely to be characterized as a positive “performance” by the FM since part of the job lies in leading negotiations with other countries’ representatives, and reaching a compromise agreement could thus be seen as the FM “doing his or her job”. We thus hypothesize that:

H5: When a country has experienced an armed conflict resulting in a positive outcome (“win”), there is a decreased risk that the foreign minister loses his or her post.

H6: When a country has experienced an armed conflict resulting in a compromise agreement, there is a decreased risk that the foreign minister loses his or her post.

Lastly, we follow the previous literature on leadership survival in expecting that losing a war is negative for political leaders. Here, one explanation to expecting such a negative effect of conflict defeat on ministerial tenure is that a loss “signals incompetence”, and that “the domestic audience cares about keeping competent leaders” (Debs and Goemans 2010: 431). Hence, a defeat in war is likely to signal poor performance of the government in general, which may lead to that heads of governments “pin the blame” on the foreign minister – therefore a “loss” of a war increases the risk of the FM leaves office, and hence defeat should decrease tenure. Or, a defeat in war may also signal that the FM, as a “policy-maker” is “incompetent” or has “performed poorly”. Regardless of the mechanism, we expect that:

H7: When a country has experienced an armed conflict resulting in a negative outcome (“loss”), there is an increased risk that the foreign minister loses his or her post.

Methods and data

Research design and case selection

We here draw on a unique data set covering foreign ministers in thirteen former or current great powers: Austria (the Habsburg Empire/Austria-Hungary), Britain, China, France, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, the Ottoman Empire, Prussia/Germany, Russia/USSR, Spain, Sweden and the United States. Although our data only cover the post-1789 period, we

thus include all thirteen great powers in the international system from the early modern period to the present (Levy 1983).

The starting point of the data collection for each country, if later than 1789, depends on what the term “foreign minister” more exactly is interpreted to mean. A broad definition would be the highest official in a country/state “exclusively or at least mainly concerned with the formulation and carrying-out of foreign policy” (Anderson 1993: 73). This definition leaves two problems unresolved. The first is how functionally differentiated the role of foreign minister must be from other government posts, most importantly the one as HoG itself. Otto von Bismarck is here a case in point, simultaneously holding the position as Reichskanzler (under the Emperor) and Prussian Minister of Foreign Affairs, the latter de facto implying FM for the whole German Empire. Second, a FM, to count as such, must have at least a minimal amount of policy-making authority. Purely administrative personnel that only carried out the decisions of rulers higher in the hierarchy should be excluded.

Our solution to both these problems is to operationally only consider a FM as such if he or she (a) holds such a title (possibly together with other titles) and (b) presides over a ministry of foreign affairs. This would seem to ensure both a minimal level of functional differentiation and policy-making authority. As a consequence, Bismarck, together with all other German Chancellors up until the fall of Imperial Germany in 1918 except one,³ are considered Germany’s foreign ministers. The German “state secretaries,” who formally headed the foreign office but in practice were subordinate to the chancellors in this regard (Doss 1982: 230), are excluded. By the same criteria, Russia/USSR enters our series in 1802 with the establishment of the Imperial Ministry of Foreign Affairs, preceded over by a minister (Uldricks 1982: 517); Sweden in 1809 when the title of “State Minister for Foreign Affairs” was first introduced (although an organizationally distinct ministry had been in place since 1791; Carlgren 1982: 458); the Netherlands in 1814 (although a ministry of foreign affairs was first set up by the French in 1798, not being able to pursue an independent foreign policy; Wels 1982: 366-8); Italy upon its unification in 1861 (Serra 1982: 298); the Ottoman Empire with the first creation of a Foreign Ministry in 1836 (Kuneralp 1982: 500), China upon the same in 1861 (Hsu 1982: 122-4), followed by Japan in 1869 (Nish 1982: 328).

³ The exception is Prince Hohenlohe, who during his chancellorship (1894-1900) was never foreign minister. The position is then de facto held by state secretary von Bieberstein (until von Bülow is appointed foreign minister in 1897).

The Austrian Empire presents a borderline case: although a ministry of foreign affairs was not established until 1848, Clemens von Metternich had held the title of foreign minister since 1809, together with that of state chancellor since 1821. If he were to be included, Metternich would, with 39 years in office, clearly be one of the most enduring foreign ministers in our sample, if not ever (cf. Flores 2009: 127). However, since the function of the State Chancery he presided over was *not* only to formulate foreign policy (Rumpler 1982: 52), we have by the criterion of functional differentiation from other government positions cautiously excluded Metternich from our sample.⁴

The UK, US, France and Spain present no special problems, all having foreign ministers (or secretaries of state) by title and in charge of a foreign office since our starting year in 1789 (Cromwell 1982; De Santis and Heinrichs 1982; Dethan 1982; Smyth 1982). With the exception of the Ottoman Empire, which drops out of our sample at its dissolution in 1922, our data includes all foreign ministers up until May 2017.

Comparative data on foreign ministers' background and survival

Through a team of research assistants knowledgeable in the language of the country they coded, we have, based on web searches and biographies, collected biographical information on 1,103 regular foreign-minister terms (some serving multiple terms) from the 13 selected countries. Some basic personal characteristics of these FMs are presented in Figure 1 (for more exact question wording and operational definitions, see the online Data Appendix). Much as in Modelski's (1970) global sample from 1965, the modal FM in our sample is a middle-aged man with university education. With the exception of education in the Netherlands and Austria on the one hand (where the bulk of FMs even have a post-graduate degree), and the Ottoman Empire on the other (where most have only primary education), there is very little variation across countries in these respects.

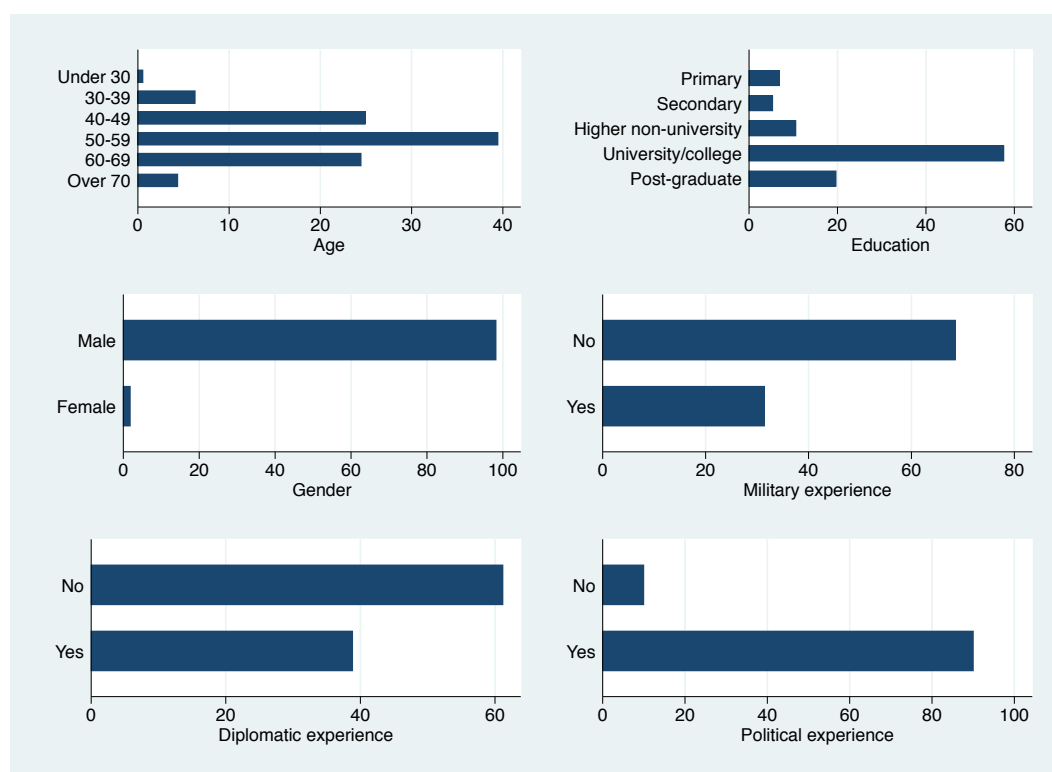
We have also surveyed the personal backgrounds of foreign ministers before entering office. Again in line with Modelski (1970), the majority of FMs lack military background (in terms of education, service or professionally). There is however variation across countries with respect to that rule: Prussia/Germany has throughout its history predominantly had a preference for putting someone from the military ranks on the post

⁴ We have however erred on the side of inclusion when also including all foreign ministers (many of whom were also federal chancellors) in Austria from 1922-1959, although the Austrian Foreign Ministry during this time, for cost-reducing reasons, was formally only an "Office" within the Federal Chancellery (Demdarsky 1982: 61, 68).

as foreign minister; and both France and the US has had almost as many FMs with military background as without one. We include military experience only as a control variable in our analysis as we do not have any expectations as to whether this feature should increase or decrease FM survival.

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, foreign ministers overall have predominantly *not* had personal experience with diplomatic service abroad, particularly not in the UK, US, Spain and Italy, although in Russia/USSR and the Ottoman empire, diplomatic experience is the modal characteristic of FMs. In terms of political experience more generally, which is a feature that we include in the analysis as it can be expected to influence the performance of ministers (see e.g. Berlinski et al. 2007), foreign ministers are clearly no rookies. When counting membership in a political party or background in a legislature, in the cabinet or other higher government office, only 10 percent of FMs lack any such experience.

Figure 1. Personal characteristics of foreign ministers (percentages)



The mean days of tenure for an FM in our sample is 800 days (i.e., around 26 months), but the median is only 412 days, so there is a fairly long tail of unusually long-tenured FMs. Not all FMs leave their posts for the same

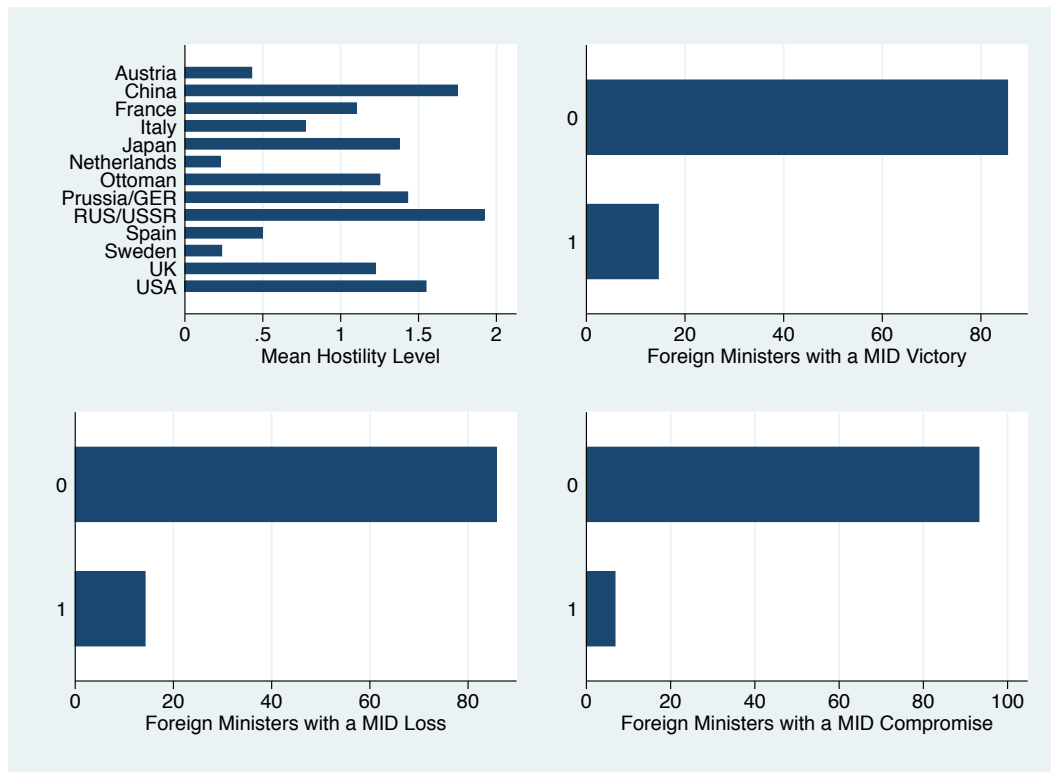
reason, however. We have therefore also collected information on the primary modes through which they exited office, presented in Table 1. Some FMs die by natural causes on their post, such as Nobel Laureate Gustav Stresemann who suffered from a stroke on October 3, 1929, while still FM of the Weimar Republic. Some face a more violent ousting, such as suicide (Lord Castlereagh in 1822), revolution (Max von Baden in Germany in 1918), deposition by a foreign power (Wilhelm Wolf during die Anschluss in Austria in 1938), or even assassination (Walter Rathenau of Germany in 1922, Englebert Dollfuss of Austria in 1934, and Anna Lindh of Sweden in 2003). A more common exit reason is retirement due to ill health or other types of unforced resignations, but the most common exit is simply that the term of the entire cabinet reaches its end, primarily due to term limits, elections or other constitutionally mandated government terminations.

In line with our theorizing of the principal-agent relationship between the FM and his or her HoG, the mode of exit that mainly concerns us here is what we call “forced resignation”, comprising slightly less than a third of the sample. This is when the FM is involuntarily removed from office by the head of government (PM, president, king, general-secretary etc.). The reasons for such removals may vary, but most importantly consist of political or policy disagreements. We will in accordance with this treat exits caused by other reasons as “censored” (see below in the section on the statistical model). Taking missing data on 68 occasions into account, this thus leaves us with 341 exits from office to explain.

Situational measures of conflict events

We use data on militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) (Palmer et. al. 2015) to construct a collection of measures of the foreign policy environment and performance of the foreign minister. MIDs have a variety of characteristics. We focus on two; hostility level and outcome. The variation in these independent variables is described in figure 3. The hostility level for every MID range from “no use of force” (1) to “war” (5). For each day the foreign minister is in office, we took the maximum hostility level of their ongoing MIDs. We then took the mean of that maximum hostility level, generating a measure that signifies the average hostility level over the tenure of that foreign minister, ranging from 0 to 5. Because countries have different propensities for conflict, there is substantial variation in average hostility level by country.

Figure 2. Situational Conflict Variables (percentages)



Because it is an average, weighted by day, there is one structural difficulty with our measure. The only way a foreign minister can have a value of 0 for their average hostility level is if there were no MID during their tenure. The chances of having absolutely no MID increases as tenure duration gets shorter, so while we expect that tenure will get shorter as average hostility increases, our measure has a statistical relationship between the value 0 and tenure that cuts the other way. As a result, we use a dummy for whether there was any MID experienced by the country during the tenure of the foreign minister. We include that dummy in one model, and use it to filter on several others. Put differently, for our measure of average hostility to work properly, there needs to be at least one dispute. Accordingly, we limit some of our models to those observations where there was at least one dispute.

MIDs are coded with a variety of potential outcomes. We focus on three: victory, loss, and the resolution through compromise. In each case, the variable is just a dummy for whether the country won, lost, or resolved a MID through compromise during the tenure of the foreign minister. As can be seen in Figure 3, each outcome variable is predominantly characterized by zero values. Foreign Ministers who experienced clearly coded MID outcomes are relatively rare. Similar to the dummy variable for

whether a MID existed, we use a dummy variable for whether any MID ended during the minister's tenure as a control variable.

The statistical model and censoring

We here apply an event history model, also called a “survival model”, which is the standard approach used when analyzing cabinet duration (see e.g. King et al. 1990; Diermeier and Stevenson 1999), and which is typically used when analyzing cabinet reshuffles or ministerial survival (see e.g. Berlinski et al 2007; Huber and Martinez-Gallardo 2008). In this specific application of event history analysis, we are interested in the duration of individual ministers on their posts, and we estimate the effects of features that increase or decrease the length of time a foreign minister survives at his or her post (Berlinski et al. 2007: 247).

An especially important issue when dealing with event history data is “censoring”. Censoring occurs when we have not observed the entire event history of a unit, and so called “right-censoring” is a common problem in event history analysis, mainly due to the fact that, in all empirical analyses, we have to end the observation period at some point in time, which means that we often cannot analyze the entire “life cycle” of a unit of analysis. As Box-Steffensmeier and Jones (1997: 1416) put it, “since we cannot foretell the future, we do not know how ‘much longer’ (if ever) censored observations would go before experiencing an event”. In our study, we have coded the “exits” of all foreign minister appointments up until May, 2017, which means that appointments where the foreign minister is in office, that is, where they have not experienced the “event” of leaving their post, at that point in time, are “right-censored”. They are “censored” since we do not know how long the foreign minister will be in office, or how long they will “survive” in cabinet. A standard regression framework does not distinguish between censored and uncensored observations, whereas the event history approach enables us to do so (see e.g. Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 1997).

In addition to treating cases that have not experienced the terminating event when our data collection ended as censored, we can also use more theoretically motivated censoring regimes (see e.g. Diermeier and Stevenson 1999). This enables us to focus on specific terminations or “exits” that are especially important for answering the research question. We here censor all ministerial spells where the foreign minister died at his or her post, left the post due to health reasons, or where the minister survived until the end of the government. All of these “exits” are less interesting for us since we are specifically focusing on the personnel

decisions made by the HoG, and how these decisions are influenced by performance. In addition, and for the same reason, we have also chosen to censor all exits that are not “forced”, that is, when the foreign minister leaves the post voluntarily, for example taking another post outside cabinet or for retirement (see e.g. Bäck et al. 2013).⁵

In event history analysis, we are in general interested in modeling the so called “hazard rate”, which can be interpreted as “the instantaneous probability that an event occurs given that the event has not yet occurred” (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 1997: 1427). Here, the hazard rate describes the probability or “risk” that an individual foreign minister exits his or her post at time, conditional on that the FM has not exited the post before that time. The model that we apply here is a semi-parametric Cox proportional hazards model, which allows us to study the relationship between various features and the duration of ministerial spells without making any specific assumption about the shape of the hazard function.

Table 1. Why foreign ministers lose office

<i>Mode of exit</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Death by natural cause	22	2.0
Violently	37	3.3
Retirement/unforced resignation	196	17.8
End of government term	427	38.7
<i>Forced resignation</i>	341	30.9
Missing:		
Incumbent	12	1.1
Unknown	68	6.2
TOTAL	1,103	100 %

Note: The “forced resignation” category consists of 9 subcategories, where we code the following primary reasons for removals by the HoG (no of occurrences in parentheses): “Political scandal” (14), “Policy disagreement between minister and premier/PM” (36), “Policy disagreement between minister and monarch/president” (55), “Policy disagreement between minister and own party/other minister” (34), “Personal/departmental error or low personal performance” (24), “Move to other post within cabinet (only concerning the FM)” (68), “Move to another post within cabinet in the general context of a reshuffle” (52), “Loss of eligibility for the post” (3), and “Other reason” (55).

⁵ As described in Table 1, there are a number of different types of “forced” resignations which we now group together and use to create our dependent variable. One type of “exit” which should be discussed here is the one where a FM is forced to leave their post, but remains in cabinet in another post (which happens in 68 of our 341 forced resignations). This is clearly not as “severe” of a punishment as being completely removed from cabinet, but we believe that since most other ministerial posts are less prominent than the FM post (see, e.g., Druckman and Warwick (2005), these exits can be treated in a similar manner as the other forced resignations.

Multivariate analysis

Table 2 presents estimates of cox proportional hazard models.⁶ We present hazard ratios, so coefficients above one represent increased hazard rates, meaning shorter tenures, while coefficients below one suggest decreased hazard rates, meaning longer tenures. Models 1 and 2 contain only minister characteristics (evaluating H1 H3), Models 3 and 4 contains only situational conflict variables (evaluating H4 H7), and Models 5 and 6 include both minister characteristics and situational conflict variables. We include control variables in our models, including the age and gender of the foreign minister, whether they are themselves the HoG, whether they previously served in the post, whether they had any military experience, and whether the state is a democracy or not (Marshall, Jagers and Gurr 2009).⁷ Models 2, 4, and 6, use the sample limited to those ministers who experienced an international dispute. All models allow shared fragility by state.

Models 5 and 6 provide the most comprehensive test of our hypotheses, on the full data and the 1-dispute-minimum subset of the data. We do not find evidence in favor of hypothesis 1, that ministers with political experience will have a lower risk of being forced to resign. In fact, in the models that use the full sample, we find the opposite. Foreign ministers with political experience have a statistically significant but *higher* hazard rate.⁸ In the MID limited sample, the coefficient is in the same direction, but no longer statistically significant.

⁶ As a robustness check we have also run these same models broken down by time period: pre-World War I, and post-World War I. Political experience is associated with more forced resignation in the post-WWI period, and the estimates of the minister experience variables are not significant in the pre-1914 period. With these two minor exceptions, results are broadly consistent with our general findings.

⁷ We use *Polity* to measure regime type, and treat it as a control variable here. In the future, though, we plan for a more nuanced examination of how institutional characteristics of the state shape tenure of foreign ministers. Presumably, it is easier to fire ministers in some kinds of regimes than others, but that ease may not be primarily a question of how democratic the regime is – other regime characteristics may matter as well. Unfortunately, we do not have the space to give such considerations a full treatment here, which is why regime type here remains a control variable rather than including it as a conditional feature.

⁸ This counterintuitive finding is nevertheless in line with what has been found by some scholars looking at cabinet reshuffles more generally in the UK, where previous executive experience seems to decrease the survival of ministers (see e.g. Berlinski et al. 2007; 2012).

Table 2. Cox proportional hazard models of FM survival

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Previous term	1.228 (0.176)	1.293 (0.253)			1.305* (0.190)	1.292 (0.256)
Political experience (H1)	1.651* (0.451)	1.224 (0.477)			2.356*** (0.678)	1.281 (0.518)
Diplomatic experience (H2)	0.657*** (0.0923)	0.534*** (0.112)			0.676*** (0.0935)	0.535*** (0.113)
Military experience	0.940 (0.136)	1.225 (0.230)			1.034 (0.151)	1.231 (0.234)
Gender	1.199 (0.562)	1.374 (1.013)			1.131 (0.528)	1.053 (0.782)
Age	1.013 (0.00786)	1.020* (0.0124)			1.009 (0.00765)	1.010 (0.0125)
Head of Government	1.037 (0.193)	0.733 (0.207)			1.143 (0.219)	0.763 (0.231)
Education (H3)	0.825*** (0.0574)	0.853 (0.0870)			0.822*** (0.0591)	0.772** (0.0819)
Level of democracy (Polity)	0.961*** (0.0112)	0.961** (0.0170)	0.975** (0.00971)	0.986 (0.0143)	0.967*** (0.0110)	0.971* (0.0168)
Average dispute level (H4)			1.271*** (0.0641)	1.320*** (0.0695)	1.326*** (0.0725)	1.374*** (0.0797)
Any dispute			0.847 (0.205)		0.728 (0.187)	
Win dispute (H5)			0.429*** (0.0912)	0.350*** (0.0771)	0.491*** (0.109)	0.424*** (0.0994)
Lose dispute (H7)			0.773 (0.159)	0.671* (0.141)	0.769 (0.166)	0.659* (0.149)
Compromise dispute (H6)			0.676 (0.181)	0.577** (0.157)	0.526** (0.152)	0.489** (0.149)
Any dispute end			0.407*** (0.0974)	0.339*** (0.0849)	0.414*** (0.104)	0.330*** (0.0878)
Observations	912	507	988	538	912	507

Exponentiated coefficients (hazard ratios); Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

In contrast, we find robust support for our second hypothesis, that diplomatic experience will decrease the likelihood of forced resignation. Across every model in which it is included, the coefficient is statistically significant and suggests a lower hazard rate. Hence, having diplomatic experience is clearly positive for a FM's survival. Hypothesis 3, that ministers with higher levels of education are less likely to be forced to resign, is also supported. We find a lower hazard rate at a statistically significant level in three of four models, including both models 5 and 6. These results may thus suggest that individual ministers who are expected to perform well in office are less likely to lose their post through forced resignation.

We also find evidence in support of hypothesis 4, as average hostility level is positively and significantly associated with higher hazard rates in Models 5 and 6, and all prior models. Hence, it does appear that the higher the level of conflict, the higher the risk that foreign ministers lose their posts. We also find statistically significant support for hypothesis 5, which argues that a positive outcome in a dispute (e.g. win) decreases the risk that a foreign minister loses his or her post. That finding is consistent across all models that include conflict variables. In alternative specifications, we used win percentage, rather than just win presence, with similar results. Hypothesis 6 is also supported: in all models in which it is included, resolving a dispute through compromise is associated with a lower risk of removal from office. In contrast, we find no support for hypothesis 7, that a loss in a dispute increases the foreign minister's risk of removal. Indeed, the coefficient suggests that losses are associated with a lower risk of removal from office, though it is only significant when the sample is limited to foreign ministers who experienced a MID.

There is also evidence in our models that some of the variables that we include as controls, but did not theorize, may have an effect on foreign minister risk of removal. The most consistent of these findings are that democracy, as measured by *Polity*, reduces the risk of removal through a forced resignation. The military experience of a foreign minister does not seem to significantly influence their survival in office.

Concluding remarks

Drawing on previous work in the literature on leadership survival and war (e.g. Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Debs and Goemans 2010; Croco and

Weeks 2016§), we have in this paper asked whether the survival of foreign ministers, as important actors in the foreign policy making process, depends on conflict events and outcomes and in general, their performance in office. Drawing on the literature on cabinet reshuffles in parliamentary democracies (see e.g. Berlinski et al. 2010), we suggest that the performance of FMs should influence the likelihood that they stay in office. In this literature, the PM as head of government delegates power to line ministers, and has the opportunity to fire ministers, when they do not “perform”. Following this line of argument, we hypothesized that a high level of conflict in a country, or a loss of a war could signal “poor performance”, and such features should therefore decrease the tenure of FMs.

These hypotheses have been evaluated using original historical data on FMs, their background characteristics, and their exits, collected in thirteen countries, starting with the late 18th century, up until today. The thirteen former and current great powers in our sample have very different experiences with conflict and war. Analyzing these data, we find support for several of our hypotheses. For example, we find support for the hypothesis that the level of conflict matters for ministerial tenure, where FMs are significantly more at risk of losing their posts if the level of conflict is high during his/her time in office. This may be due to that HoGs “pin blame” on individual ministers and deflect criticism by removing the foreign minister when the country is involved in a conflict.

Some individual-level features also affect foreign minister tenure. Diplomatic experience and a high level of education both decrease the likelihood of forced resignation, suggesting that some FMs may be kept in office due to an expected high performance. The diplomatic experience result is here most interesting to us as this type of experience should be especially important for FMs as the “highest diplomats in government” (Flores 2009: 118). No previous studies have shown that this type of experience may be important for survival.

Notably, and contrary to hypothesis 1, we found that foreign ministers with political backgrounds are more likely to be fired. There are a number of possible explanations. First, it may be that foreign ministers with political backgrounds are ill-suited to the post, but are selected for reasons separate for their qualifications. A foreign minister with a political background might be sensible politically for the leader or coalition, even if they are unlikely to be good at their jobs. Essentially, political background makes someone more likely to be appointed foreign minister, independent of whether they would be good at it, resulting in a population

of ministers who are, on average, worse in ways our performance measures do not capture. Second, it could be that a political background is poor training for diplomacy, and having it actually makes the foreign minister worse at their job, again in ways that our performance measures do not capture. Finally, it may be that foreign ministers with political backgrounds are more likely to be forced to resign because of changes in, or considerations related to, domestic politics, independent of their performance in office.

Just as in some of the previous literature on leadership survival (see e.g. Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995), we find that conflict outcomes matter for the tenure of foreign ministers. We find clear support for the idea that positive conflict outcomes, such as winning a conflict or ending it by reaching a compromise agreement, increases the tenure of FMs, which could suggest that their “good performance” in office is rewarded by the HoG, or that ministers are at least not at risk of losing their jobs as “scapegoats”.

However, we do not find strong support in our data for the hypothesis that losing a militarized dispute influences the tenure of foreign ministers hence, they do not seem to be “punished” for a loss to the same extent as they are punished for there being a high level of conflict during their time in office. This is not fully in line with the results found in the literature on leadership survival, where for example Debs and Goemans (2010) find that defeat in war increases the hazard of losing office for nondemocratic leaders. Here, part of the explanation of the differing results may of course lie in the fact that we are here studying foreign ministers and not HoGs, and that the features influencing these politicians’ fate are slightly different, or that we have a different sample of countries that we are analyzing. However, part of the explanation may also be that we are, with these data on individual-level exits, able to censor such cases where the minister leaves office due to some theoretically less interesting reason, such as retirement and leaving for another position. This also allows us to focus on specific “forced” exits rather than the ending of the entire cabinet or regime, which makes it more straightforward to evaluate if our theory about performance is supported.

Finally, it may be that, while foreign ministers get partial credit for foreign policy decisions that lead to good outcomes, and for compromise solutions to disputes, they do not get blamed for lost militarized disputes. Foreign ministers might help make policy, but are rarely responsible for the performance of the military that lies with defense ministers. Thus, it may be that defense ministers get blamed for the loss of militarized

disputes, while foreign ministers get partial credit for foreign policy success. If so, that would explain why wins and compromised disputes decrease the likelihood of forced resignation, while dispute losses do not affect the likelihood that foreign ministers lose their posts. Future research should address this possibility more directly, ideally by performing analyses similar to ours, focusing on whether the survival of defense ministers is influenced by conflict outcomes.

A question that we have not answered in this paper is whether the expected tenure of foreign ministers also influences their decisions and whether foreign policy outcomes can be predicted by various features of the individual ministers. In the literature on leadership survival and war, several scholars have stressed the importance of looking at the fate of leaders as this is likely to influence their incentives and policy choices. For example, Debs and Goemans (2010: 430) provide an explanation to the so called “democratic peace” relationship, arguing that since “the survival of dictators is more sensitive to the outcome of war than that of democrats and that the consequences of losing office are more punitive for dictators, the model predicts that peace is most likely when two countries are democracies”. Assuming that foreign ministers are also important actors in the foreign policy making process, partly responsible for the decisions made before and during conflicts, and who can influence whether peace agreements are reached or not, we suggest that it is important to also analyze these politicians’ incentives and decisions. In future research, we will therefore analyze whether the expected tenure of foreign ministers also influences the probability that a country goes to war, or of making concessions during international negotiations.

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