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Why Some Leaders Die Hard (and Others Don't):  
Party Goals, Party Institutions, and How They Interact

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## Introduction

What determines party leader survival? The *first* and most straightforward answer to this question is that leaders who do not deliver on essential party goals are likely to be replaced. In a study of six similar parliamentary democracies Andrews and Jackman (2008) report that electoral performance and participation in government are strong predictors of party leadership replacement. The *second* answer to this question is that institutions impact on party leader survival because they facilitate or delay leadership replacement. For example, So (2012) finds that in an electoral system with single-member districts party leaders are replaced more rapidly than in electoral systems with multi-member districts. Also, an

analysis of the survival of Austrian party leaders demonstrates that intra-party support and leadership selection procedures are key predictors of party leader survival (Ennsner-Jedenastik and Müller 2013). Other studies find no such effects (Cross and Blais 2012b). A *third* answer – to the best of our knowledge not addressed by the literature – is that the effect of performance on leader survival is moderated by institutions. For example, a leader of a party that lost elections is less likely to survive if she faces a congress of outraged delegates rather than a council of loyal friends. In this chapter we estimate the direct and combined effect of performance and intra-party institutions on party leader survival.

Our chapter makes two contributions. First, it provides the most comprehensive study of party leader survival to date, encompassing a diverse set of democracies and parties. Second, we are the first to develop and test arguments about the interactions between intra-party institutions and leader performance. For developing hypotheses about these interactions we draw inspiration from selectorate theory – a theory of leader survival at the country level – (Buono de Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson, & Smith, 2002), the party goals literature (Müller & Strøm, 1999) and Simon’s work on aspiration levels (Simon, 1955). Utilizing a survival analysis of 525 party leaders in about 100 parties we explore the relationship between leader survival, selectorate type, electoral defeat and opposition/government status. Our most important finding is that a leader’s tenure shortens as the selectorate becomes more inclusive. Also, poor electoral performance and losing executive office prematurely end leaders’ tenure, especially – in the former case – for parties with a member selectorate. In the conclusion we discuss the paradox that, while enfranchising party members is generally seen as reinforcing the leader’s position within the party (Katz & Mair, 1995), our research demonstrates that it shortens the political lifespan of party leaders.

### **Party Performance and Party Leader Survival**

It is important for parties to choose the right leader. Party leaders may be agents of organizational and programmatic change (Harmel, Heo, Tan, & Janda, 1995; Harmel & Janda, 1994; Meyer, 2013) and can have a positive impact on a party’s electoral performance (Aarts, Blais, & Schmitt, 2011; Bittner, 2011; Garzia, 2012, also see Pedersen and Schumacher in this volume). Yet, party leader transitions may also backfire if not properly managed (Bynander & ’t Hart, 2008). Still, there is relatively little research into the causes of

party leadership replacement (Andrews & Jackman, 2008; Bynander & 't Hart, 2007; Enns-Jedenastik & Müller, 2011; Horiuchi, Laing, & 't Hart, 2013; So, 2013) and its consequences (Meyer, 2013; Pedersen and Schumacher this volume), theoretical work is even more limited (Ahlquist & Levi, 2011; Bynander & 't Hart, 2006; Dewan & Myatt, 2008, 2012; Mutlu-Eren, 2012).

Every leader needs support from the majority of the selectorate or similarly the dominant faction in the party (Harmel & Janda, 1994). In the first place they need this support to get elected or appointed as leader. After being selected as leader, leaders need at least implicit support from the selectorate to continue as leader and ward off challengers (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2002). Regardless of the size and composition of the selectorate, a leader's performance is important as it satisfies the ambitions of the leader and members of the supporting coalition. Poor performance may motivate aspirant leaders to mount a challenge for the leadership.

But what is performance? Generally, we conceive of parties as interested in some combination of policy, office and votes (Müller and Strøm 1999; Strøm 1990a). Regardless of the method by which a party leader is chosen and removed, leaders who deliver electoral gains, access to executive office, and policy success are more likely to satisfy the ambitions of their support coalition and thus able to fend off potential challengers. While parties vary widely in how much relative weight they put on each of these three goals, it is safe to assume that they would rather win elections than lose them. Votes are the basic currency of democratic politics, and while they have no intrinsic value, they are instrumental in achieving office and policy goals. Extant empirical evidence also suggests that electoral success makes party leaders stay in office longer (Andrews & Jackman, 2008; Enns-Jedenastik & Müller, 2011). Our first hypothesis thus reads:

H1 Party leaders survive longer if their party is electorally successful.

'Opposition is rubbish', Franz Müntefering famously said in a speech to the 2004 party conference that would eventually elect him as the new leader of the German Social Democrats. Indeed, most politicians aspire to the benefits of executive office – for either intrinsic or instrumental reasons. Gaining office gives members of the party elite the opportunity to serve in a high-ranking government job with lots of prestige, power, and a

nice salary. It also is the most promising way for a party to implement its policy platform. All else being equal, leaders whose party is in government are thus more likely to satisfy the ambitions of their support coalition and ward off potential challengers:

H2a Party leaders survive longer when their parties are in office.

However, there are some notable exceptions that show how this hypothesis does not apply in all cases. The most prominent example is perhaps Margaret Thatcher who was deposed by her party while she was the prime minister (Alderman & Carter, 1991). More recently, Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard deposed each other as party leader and prime minister of Australia. These cases notwithstanding, Andrews and Jackman (2008) find that government participation generally prolongs party leader survival in their analysis of mostly Westminster democracies. However, Ennsner-Jedenastik and Müller (2013) in their analysis of Austria – a country with proportional representation and coalition government where electoral success does not automatically translate into office gains – find no such effect.

We therefore propose a more nuanced approach to examining the impact of office-seeking behavior on leader survival. In making decisions, the level of performance the decision-maker aspires to is important. According to Simon (1955), decision-makers search for new strategies or solutions when their performance is below their aspiration level, and stop searching and repeat previously chosen strategies or solutions if the aspiration level is met or exceeded (also see Bendor, Diermeier, Siegel, & Ting, 2011). Applying this concept to the context of this chapter, we argue that members of the selectorate have certain aspirations and that failing to meet these aspirations motivates them to consider alternatives to the leadership. This logic supports H2a, meaning that if members of the supporting coalition deem executive office an important performance criterion – for intrinsic or instrumental purposes – they cease to support the leader when the party is in opposition.<sup>1</sup>

However, aspiration levels can also be updated with new information: poor performance lowers one's aspiration level while good performance increases one's

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<sup>1</sup> Following a similar reasoning Horiuchi, Laing and 't Hart (2013) argue that the current leader's performance is benchmarked against that of the previous leader. This makes it especially hard for new leaders to replace a long-lasting and successful predecessor.

aspiration level (Bendor et al., 2011). Hence, once a party moves into office the members of the selectorate will increase their aspiration level over time, and once the party is thrown out of office these members will gradually reduce their aspiration level. This has two consequences. First, party leaders are most at risk of losing their position when they have just lost office. At this stage the party still has high aspirations and performance now clearly is below the aspiration level. However, this risk recedes over time, because aspirations drop and the outlook of the party may improve. For example, due to the cost of governing, the government may look likely to lose office in the near future from which the opposition may profit (Schumacher, van de Wardt, Vis, & Klitgaard, *forthcoming*). With these positive outlooks for the opposition we expect it to be less likely that these opposition parties will change leader. Second, party leaders have the least risk of losing their position when they just entered government. At this stage performance clearly exceeds aspiration levels. Aspiration will however increase as long as the party continues in government. Members, activists, and party elites will increasingly expect policy concessions or jobs. Also, being in government almost always requires one to make difficult and unpopular decisions at some point. The success of having secured a seat at the cabinet table may therefore dissipate after some time because the party's performance drops below an increased aspiration level. These two consequences lead us to propose a more nuanced effect of government participation on party leader survival, arguing that parties respond to changes in government status.

H2b Party leaders are more likely to be removed when their parties just lost office.

H2c Party leaders are less likely to be removed when their parties just entered government.

### **Selectorate types and party leader survival**

In addition to performance, the size and composition of the selectorate is likely to influence leader survival. Following Kenig (2009) we can classify party leader selectorate types according to their openness. The most inclusive (though empirically rare) type of selectorate is the electorate as a whole, followed by party members. Party agencies (e.g. party congresses made up of delegates) are considerably less inclusive, although typically more so

than parliamentary party groups (PPGs). At the exclusive end of the scale are selectorates composed of some party elite body (e.g. the party executive) or single individuals (typically self-appointed leaders who often enjoy quasi-dictatorial powers within their parties).

We have already noted that leaders seeking to remain in office need to maintain the support of the body that has the power to remove them and install a new leader. One of the most elaborate theoretical approaches to the strategic interactions between selectors (or de-selectors) and leaders is selectorate theory (Bueno De Mesquita et al. 2002; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003). The primary empirical implication of selectorate theory for the tenure of leaders is that coalition size is inversely related to the probability of survival. Indeed, in their empirical research Bueno de Mesquita and co-authors (2002) find that leadership survival in democracies (which have large selectorates) is significantly shorter than in autocracies (which have small selectorates).

While selectorate theory is mostly used to explain the fate of leaders of countries, we propose that its basic logic applies to party leaders as well. In small selectorates party leaders can easily distribute private benefits to keep members of the winning coalition happy. These members are uncertain whether a challenger will be equally charitable in distributing private benefits. The larger the size of the winning coalition required to be elected leader, the more the leader needs to rely on public goods, most typically promoting policies popular with his or her supporters. In this case all a challenger needs to do is to propose a policy for the party that is closer to the median selector than the policy position of the incumbent leader (if that is possible). In addition, incumbent party leaders may have some formal or informal control over the composition of smaller selectorates (e.g. party executive bodies), whereas such manipulation is more difficult in systems that enfranchise a large number of delegates, party members, or even all party supporters. As a consequence, smaller selectorates may be staffed with enough loyalists to guarantee the incumbent the support of a winning coalition, thus making it difficult for challengers to compete. We therefore conjecture:

H3 Party leaders will have longer tenures the less inclusive the mechanism of selection and deselection in their party.

Note that, empirically, a minority of parties uses different mechanisms for the selection and removal of leaders. Since we analyze leader survival (i.e. the time that passes until the incumbent is removed), we therefore usually refer to the '(de-)selectorate'. However, even when we use the term 'selectorate', we use it to denote the group of potential supporters among which a party leader needs to keep a majority happy enough to remain in office.

### **(De-)Selectorate Type, Performance and Leader Survival**

Does the (de-)selectorate type moderate the impact of performance on leader survival? Members of the winning coalition judge the leader in terms of the ability to deliver policy, office, and votes. However, these goods vary considerably in the degree to which they are 'public', that is, non-excludable and non-rivalrous. Not all groups within a party stand to benefit equally from the provision of policy, office and votes. The size and type of the party leader selectorate will thus influence the calculus of party leaders when negotiating trade-offs between these three objectives.

While the literature on pork barrel spending and clientelism is awash with examples of policies that are narrowly targeted towards very specific groups of supporters (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007), policy can safely be assumed to be the most 'public' of the three goods, since it is not only non-subtractable (i.e. consumption by one actor that does not diminish its availability for others) but also targeted at broad social groups that are often much larger than the selectorate itself. Electoral success, by contrast, is most directly beneficial to the people being elected to legislative office, which in parliamentary democracies means members of parliament. To be sure, votes can be translated into policy and office benefits, but their most immediate effect is to determine a party's legislative strength. Finally, office rewards in the sense of ministerial posts are typically even scarcer than legislative seats, thus constituting the most exclusive good. We thus develop a number of hypotheses on how selectorates may moderate the effect of the party leader's success in obtaining these goods.

Even today the vast majority of ministerial posts are filled with partisans (Andeweg 2000; Blondel and Cotta 1996; Neto and Strøm 2006). Parties thus still represent the most important channel of recruitment for high government office. Assuming that party elites put greater value on the opportunity to hold executive office than activists or party members,



we hypothesize that elite-centered selection and deselection mechanisms will make party leaders more vulnerable to the (non-)achievement of executive office or to changes in a party's government status.

H4 Party leader survival is more responsive to (changes in) government participation if selection and/or removal are controlled by party elites.

Among the different echelons of the party, the grassroots members are most likely to be policy-oriented. This is because they stand to gain little in the way of direct benefits from winning elections or entering government. The most important goal for party members is thus the achievement of policy objectives, for which they in turn provide capital (in the form of membership fees) and labour (Strøm 1990a: 575-6). The fifth hypothesis therefore proposes that party leaders are affected by their policy performance to a greater extent if their nomination and survival hinges on the support of grassroots members. While policy-orientation is a theoretically important notion, it is much harder to operationalize than government participation or electoral performance. One plausible but problematic proxy indicator is government participation. Taking executive office is usually a prerequisite to furthering one's policy agenda (see, however, Strøm 1990b), yet using this indicator conflates office- and policy-seeking and makes it impossible to empirically distinguish between the two types of motivation. However, in the absence of a more suitable operationalization of policy success, we will test H5 with this proxy.

H5 Party leader survival is more responsive to (changes in) government participation if selection and/or removal is controlled by party members.

Next, we turn to vote-seeking as a party goal. As Strøm and Müller (1999: 9) put it, 'votes can only plausibly be *instrumental* goals' (italics in the original). In other words, electoral support in and of itself is not worth anything. Unless parties can employ votes to further their policy and office ambitions, they are of little use. However, a party's vote share has a most direct link to its parliamentary representation. The most immediate beneficiaries of electoral success are thus party candidates who become members of parliament.

Conversely, MPs stand to lose most from an electorally unsuccessful leader. Our sixth

hypothesis therefore holds that parliamentary party groups will put greater emphasis on a party's electoral performance when deciding whether to replace a leader.

H6 Party leader survival is more responsive to electoral performance if selection and/or removal are controlled by the parliamentary party group.

### **Data overview & empirical strategy**

To examine our hypotheses, we use data on 525 party leaders covering about 100 parties in the 14 countries<sup>2</sup> included in the COMPALS data between 1965 and 2012, thus aiming for a most comprehensive research design. While there is much value to the examination of single cases of leadership transitions (Alderman and Carter 1991; Heppell et al. 2010; Heppell and Hill 2008), the analysis of individual parties (Denham 2009; Denham and O'Hara 2009) or countries (Courtney 1995; Enns-Jedenastik and Müller 2013; Müller and Meth-Cohn 1991), the greatest analytical leverage can be achieved by maximizing the number of cases under study. This is especially true for the present research question, since one of the central independent variables, the type of (de)selectorate, often clusters within countries (Cross and Blais 2012a; Pilet and Cross 2014).

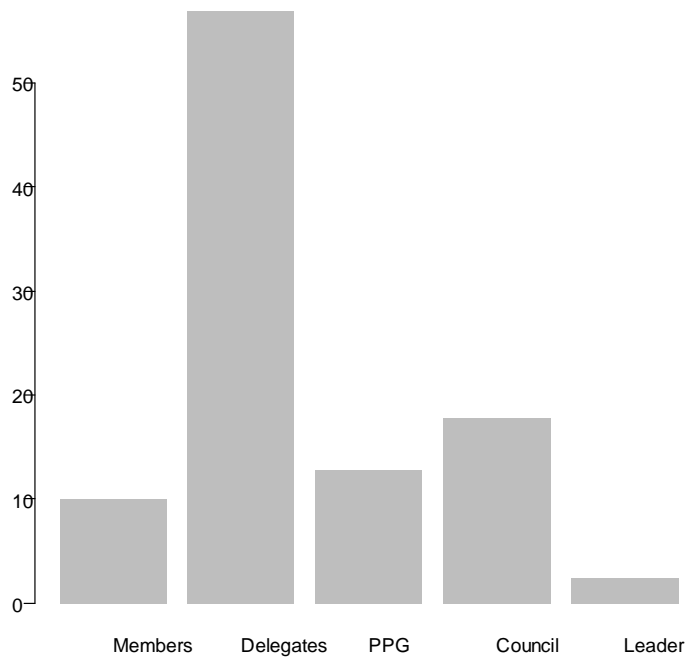
The average duration for party leaders at the helm is just under seven years,<sup>3</sup> but there is important cross-national variation. Party leaders in Belgium, Hungary, and Australia have the shortest average tenures (all below five years), whereas leaders in Denmark (8.4 years), Italy (9.1 years), and Spain (10.8 years) can expect to survive much longer.

### **Figure 1: Distribution of deselectorate types in data (percentages)**

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<sup>2</sup> Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

<sup>3</sup> All averages refer to the extended mean, which takes into account censored cases by fitting an exponential curve to the Kaplan-Meier survival estimate and calculating the area under that curve.



In order to test our institutional hypotheses, we need to look at the inclusiveness of the body that is entitled to remove the leader.<sup>4</sup> Figure 1 presents a distribution of deselectorate types across the full range of the dataset.<sup>5</sup> Since the data are organized into monthly spells (in order to enable the use of event history models, see below), the numbers presented amount to time-weighted shares across all parties in the sample. Clearly, deselectorates comprised of delegates (usually to party congresses or conferences) are the most common category with 57 percent of all observations. The party elite deselectorate (party councils or other executive organs) is the second largest group with a share of about 18 percent. Membership votes make up 10 percent of all observations. Yet, this (de-)selection mechanism has become considerably more widespread during the more recent past (Cross and Blais 2012a; Cross and Blais 2012b; Pilet and Cross 2014), so that it covers about 20 percent of the observations in 2012. This increase has happened at the expense of parliamentary party deselectorates which make up approximately 13 percent of the sample, but used to cover more than a quarter of all cases at the start of the observation period in 1965.

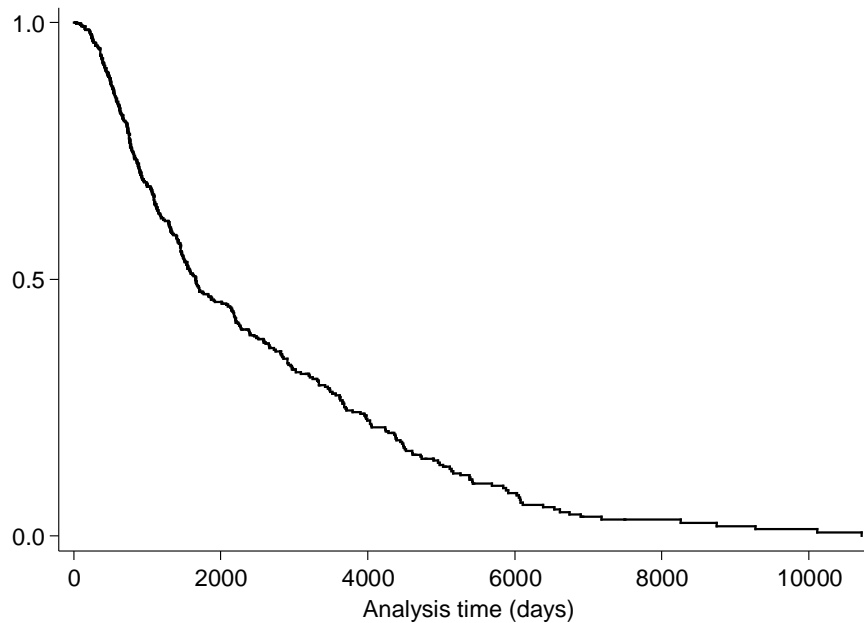
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<sup>4</sup> In cases where no removal procedure was specified, we coded the value for the selectorate, assuming that removing the incumbent leader is equivalent to simply electing a successor. In practice, however, selectorates and deselectorates are identical for the large majority (almost 85 percent) of all observations.

<sup>5</sup> We have recoded all mixed selectorate types to the most inclusive type used.

The dependent variable in the analysis will be the time (measured in months) party leaders spend in office. Figure 2 presents the distribution of leadership durations in the sample.

**Figure 2: Distribution of leadership durations**



As can be seen, after five years, less than 50 percent of all leaders are still in office. The distribution is thus heavily right-skewed (with mode < median < mean). The most durable party leader in the data is Carl Ivar Hagen who headed the Norwegian Progress Party for over 28 years.

To test our hypotheses, we operationalize electoral performance as the gains or losses in the vote share that a party has registered at the most recent parliamentary election. We assume that each new leader starts from a blank slate and thus code electoral performance with zero for party leaders during the 'grace period' before they fight their first election.

Government participation is measured with a simple dummy variable. We also differentiate between leaders who took the post of prime minister and those who did not. For H2b and H2c we code a dummy that indicates whether a party gained or lost executive office during the last 12 months under the incumbent leader.

We operationalize H3 with dichotomous indicators for the removal mechanisms, using party conference as the reference category. We also include indicators for gender and experience in national political office as predictors.<sup>6</sup> Table 1 presents an overview of the independent variables used in the multivariate analysis. Our dataset has a leader-month structure and the dependent variable is duration. Hence we employ survival analysis to evaluate the impact of our independent variables on the dependent variable.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the independent variables**

Variable	N (obs.)	N (leaders)	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Electoral performance	30727	525	0.51	4.47	-38.6	40
Party in government	30727	525	0.32	0.47	0	1
Party leader is prime minister	30727	525	0.13	0.33	0	1
Party lost office	30727	525	0.04	0.19	0	1
Party gained office	30727	525	0.05	0.21	0	1
Deselectorate: leader	30727	525	0.02	0.14	0	1
Deselectorate: party members	30727	525	0.11	0.31	0	1
Deselectorate: party council	30727	525	0.18	0.38	0	1
Deselectorate: PPG	30727	525	0.13	0.34	0	1
Deselectorate: party conference	30727	525	0.56	0.50	0	1
Female party leader	30727	525	0.12	0.33	0	1
Prior experience in national politics	30727	525	0.81	0.39	0	1

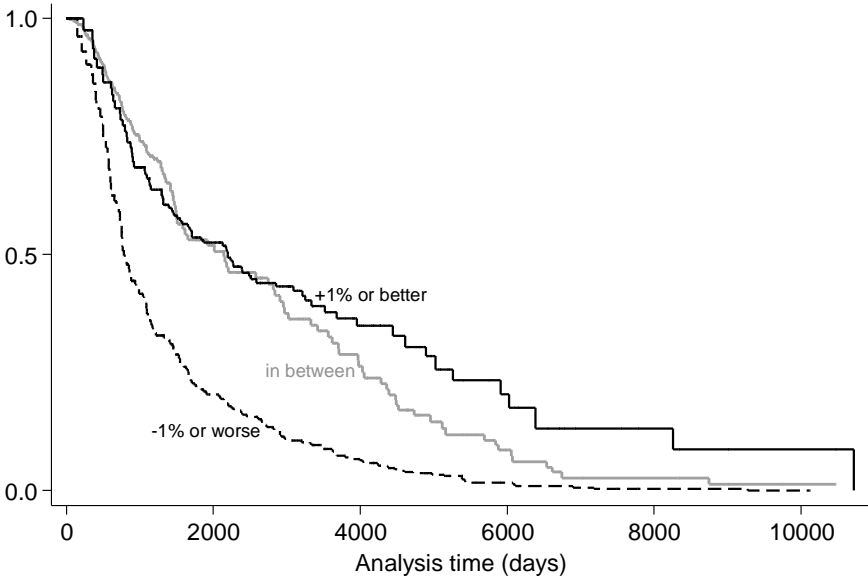
### Does Performance Influence Party Leader Survival?

<sup>6</sup> We also tested for an impact of variation in electoral systems with data from the Comparative Political Data Set (Armingeon et al. 2013). No effect was found. Neither did any other variables in the analysis produce different results than those reported below.

Before moving to the multivariate analysis, we will present a descriptive look at some of the relationships posited by our hypotheses. To that end we use Kaplan-Meier estimates which can be interpreted as probabilities of survival, given that a leader has stayed in power up to a certain point in time.

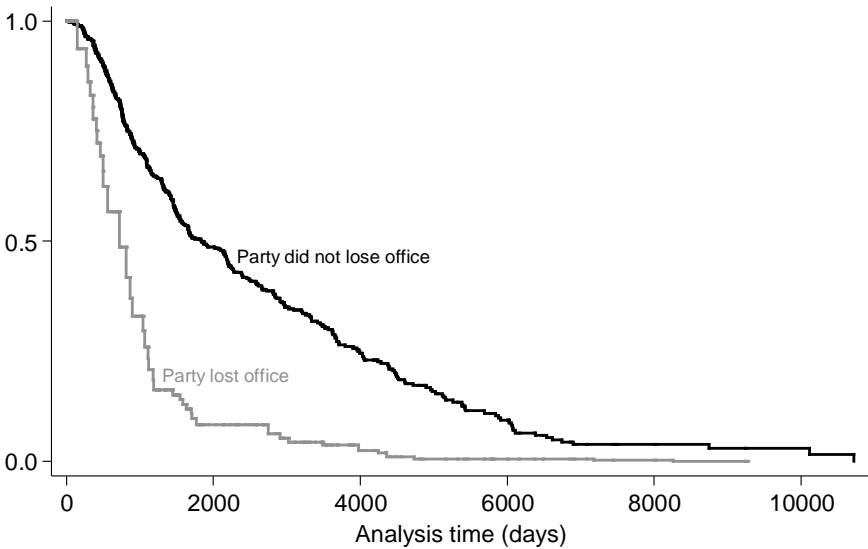
Figure 3 clearly shows that winning elections is a strong predictor of leadership duration. However, the effect does not seem to be linear. For the first seven to eight years (recall that the majority of leaders does not survive that long), there is hardly any difference between leaders who win elections and those who basically retain their party's vote share. Overall, losing votes thus appears to increase leaders' hazards much more than winning decreases them. There thus seems to be a logic of loss aversion (Kahneman et al. 1991; Tversky and Kahneman 1991) at work, whereby parties remove their leaders when they perform poorly at elections, yet they do not reward them with longer durations to the same extent when they are electorally successful.

**Figure 3: Survival functions by electoral performance**



Next, we look at the impact of government participation. Since we have three different hypotheses here, we only display results for the one that generates the largest effect empirically. Figure 4 displays survival probabilities for leaders whose party was removed from executive office at some point during the last 12 months (only including those cases where the transition to the opposition happened under the incumbent leader).

**Figure 4: Survival functions by losing/not losing government office**



The effect is remarkably strong. The probability of surviving as party leader decreases sharply after a party moves from government to the opposition.

To see whether the results presented above hold in a multivariate context, we estimate a Cox proportional hazard model with time to removal as the dependent variable. The main advantage of the Cox model is that it is a non-parametric method which does not require any assumptions about the distribution of duration times. We include country dummies in our regressions to cope with unobserved between-country differences that could influence our inferences. We treat all leaders as censored cases if their removal was due to death, illness or term limits, or if they were still in office at the end of the observation period (31 December 2012). We also censor cases where incumbent leaders started a new party (e.g. Pia Kjaersgaard who left as leader of the Danish Progress Party to found the Danish People’s Party in 1995). We also check the proportional hazards assumption (Cleves et al. 2002: 206-9) for all variables in all models, yet we find no violations in any of the estimations.

**Table 2: Party leader performance and survival**

	I	II
Electoral performance (H1)	0.940**	
	*	
	(-6.50)	

Party in government (H2a)		1.142	
		(0.96)	
Party leader is prime minister (H2a)		0.353**	
		*	
		(-4.11)	
Party lost office during last 12 months (H2b)		2.529**	
		*	
		(4.95)	
Party entered government during last 12 months (H2c)		0.701	
		(-1.10)	
Country dummies	Yes	Yes	
<hr/>			
Log likelihood	-1853.9	-1848.5	
N	30727	30727	
N (leaders)	525	525	
N (failures)	365	365	

Note: Figures are hazard ratios from Cox proportional hazard models; *t* statistics in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

The figures in Table 2 largely confirm the findings from the descriptive analysis. Electoral performance and losing executive office are strong determinants of leader survival. In addition, we find partial support for H2a. Whereas government participation has no overall effect on survival, there is a substantial duration premium for party leaders who also occupy

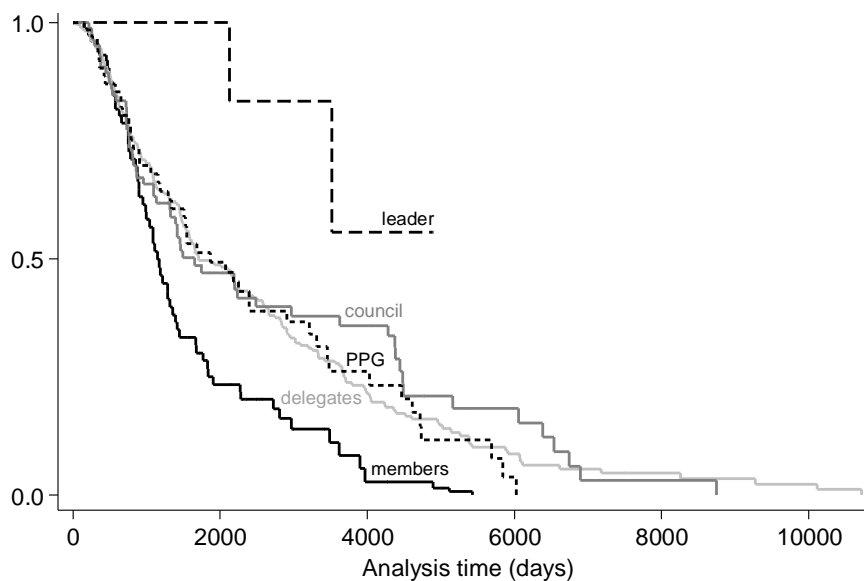


the post of prime minister. The hazard ratio of 0.35 suggests that prime ministers' hazards are almost two-thirds lower than those of other party leaders.

### Does Selectorate Size Influence Party Leader Survival?

Next, we present estimates of the survival function, broken down by (de-)selectorate type. Figure 5 demonstrates that leaders of parties where removal happens through a member vote are on average deselected much earlier than leaders (de-)selected by most other types, with self-appointed leaders more likely to survive longer (although there are not many individuals in this category). The survival estimates for the three intermediate types of (de-)selectorate (delegates, PPG, and party council) are remarkably similar in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Survival functions by selectorate type**



The average duration (i.e. the extended mean) of leaders in parties with a membership vote is a mere 4.3 years. For party council, PPG, and party conference deselectorates, the corresponding figures are 7.7, 6.7, and 7.1 years. The few leaders who were self-appointed (this category covers only eight leaders who founded a party themselves, (e.g. Silvio Berlusconi or Karel Dillen, the long-time chairman of the *Vlaams Blok*) have an average tenure of no less than 23.7 years. These descriptives support the theorizing behind H3, indicating that more inclusive (de-)selectorates make it more difficult for leaders to stay in

office, whereas more exclusive forms of selection and removal favor the sitting party leaders. Indeed, among the five most durable party leaders, no less than three are or were heads of typically leader-centered parties of the populist radical right (Carl Ivar Hagen, Karel Dillen, and Pia Kjærsgaard).

Table 2 now presents the Cox models including indicators for different deselectorate types, thus displaying the empirical tests for the first set hypotheses (H1 through H3).

**Table 2: Explaining party leader survival (I)**

	III	IV
Deselectorate: leader (H3)	0.352 (-1.43)	0.350 (-1.42)
Deselectorate: party members (H3)	1.772** (3.01)	1.834** (3.17)
Deselectorate: party council (H3)	1.092 (0.48)	1.048 (0.25)
Deselectorate: PPG (H3)	1.076 (0.26)	1.056 (0.19)
Deselectorate: party conference (H3)	<i>referenc e category</i>	<i>referenc e category</i>
Electoral performance (H1)		0.946** * (-5.55)
Party in government (H2a)		1.162

		(1.07)
Party leader is prime minister (H2a)		0.370** * (-3.88)
Party lost office during last 12 months (H2b)		2.356** * (4.51)
Party entered government during last 12 months (H2c)		0.745 (-0.91)
Female party leader		0.938 (-0.38)
Prior experience at national level		1.148 (0.87)
Country dummies	Yes	Yes
<hr/>		
Log likelihood	-1865.0	-1826.1
N	30727	30727
N (leaders)	525	525
N (failures)	365	365

Note: Figures are hazard ratios from Cox proportional hazard models; *t* statistics in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Again, the results confirm the findings from the descriptive analysis. Electoral performance, losing office, and selection/removal by party members all have a statistically significant impact on the survival of party leaders.

With regards to electoral performance, the hazard ratio of 0.95 in model IV indicates that each increase in the vote share by one percent reduces the probability that a leader will be removed in a given time period by five percent. This is an effect of substantial size and high statistical significance, providing good evidence for the validity of H1. Yet, as shown in Figure 3, closer examination reveals that the effect is not linear. Separate runs of model IV (not shown) with dummies for the three performance categories used in Figure 1 (loss of 1 percent or worse, gain of 1 percent or better, or some result in between) indicate clearly that the effect is driven by poor electoral performance.<sup>7</sup> Parties are thus not rewarding electoral success to a great extent, but rather punishing electoral failure. In other words, it is more important for party leaders not to lose elections than to win them.

A similar logic appears to apply to the office-related hypotheses. There is no significant impact of being in government, unless the party leader is also the prime minister (PM). Yet, the effect of holding this office is substantial. All else being equal, the hazards for PMs are 63 times lower according to model IV. In cases where a party is in government without the party leader taking the most senior cabinet position (e.g. because the party is a junior partner in a coalition government, or because the party has decided to split the offices of party leader and prime minister), there are no discernible benefits to the party leader in terms of survival. Neither is there a significant effect of entering executive office. However, there is a strong effect of losing it. The hazard ratio in model IV suggests that leaders who presided over their party's exit from government are almost two and a half times more likely to leave their position in the following 12 months. As with electoral performance, parties respond to losses much more than they do to gains. The data thus corroborate H2b, but give only partial support to H2a, and no support to H2c.

The impact of the deselectorate also conforms to the general expectation outlined in H3. Using the modal category (party conference) as a reference, it becomes clear that leaders survive for much shorter periods in parties that give their members the final say over

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<sup>7</sup> Using the 'in between' category (gains/losses between -1 and +1 percent of the vote) as a baseline category in a re-run of model IV, the indicator for electoral gains (> +1 percent) is 0.94 (p-value: 0.686), whereas the indicator for losses (< -1 percent) is 2.15 (p-value: 0.000).

the removal of the leader. The most inclusive deselectorate thus produces the shortest leadership durations. No other categories display significant differences with respect to the reference category of removal by party conferences. Switching to a different reference category does not change this result. The hazard ratios for removal by party council or the PPG are close to one and have p-values greater than 0.4. At 0.39, the hazard ratio for self-appointed leaders is very small, yet there are too few cases in this category to produce a statistically significant effect (p-value: 0.195). However, it appears plausible that – in line with what selectorate theory predicts – self-appointed leaders who usually rely on a very small coalition have good chances to stay in office for a very long time.

### **Do Selectorates Moderate the Effect of Performance on Leader Survival?**

Moving to the third question in this chapter we estimate the joint effect of the performance indicators for different selectorates. We present results from the ‘losing office’ and ‘electoral performance’ variables.<sup>8</sup> To evaluate these effects we ran two separate regressions, the first evaluating the interactions effect between (de-)selectorates and losing office, the second evaluating the interactions effect between (de-)selectorates and losing elections.<sup>9</sup> Standard regression output displays the effect of our performance indicators when the conditioning variable is zero. This is meaningless since the selectorate variable is never zero and is hypothesized to have an effect on leader survival. To remedy this we follow the suggestion to present plots of the marginal effect of each performance indicator for different selectorates (Brambor, Clark, & Golder, 2006). Thus, Figure 6 presents the effect of losing office for four different selectorates (left panel).<sup>10</sup> The effect size is positive for all four selectorates, yet the effect is only significant in the case of a conference (de-)selectorate (i.e. party congresses). The right panel in Figure 6 presents the effect of electoral performance on leader survival for different removal types. Again, all effects are in the same direction (negative), but we only find a significant, yet tiny, effect for the party congress type. In sum,

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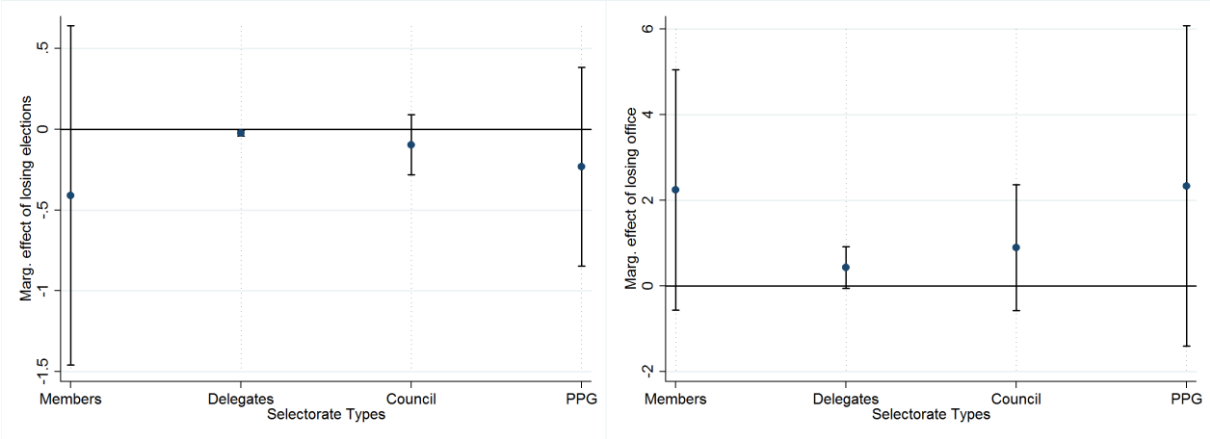
<sup>8</sup> We found no results for the interaction between the other performance indicators and (de-)selectorates.

<sup>9</sup> A single model with a three-way interaction between losing elections, losing office and selectorate type is more appropriate here. However, this model ran into some estimation issues, most likely stemming from empty cells in the various combinations of the three variables.

<sup>10</sup> We omitted the leader selectorate here because it has only few observations which results in large errors bars, and makes the plots difficult to interpret.

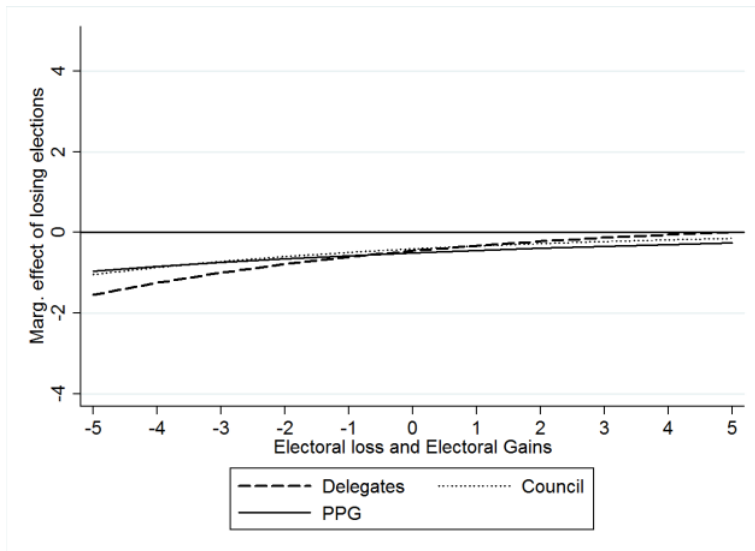
losing office or losing elections increases the risk of leader survival, primarily for leaders selected and deselected by party conferences.

**Figure 6: Marginal effects and 95% confidence intervals of losing office (left panel) and losing elections (right panel) for different selectorates**



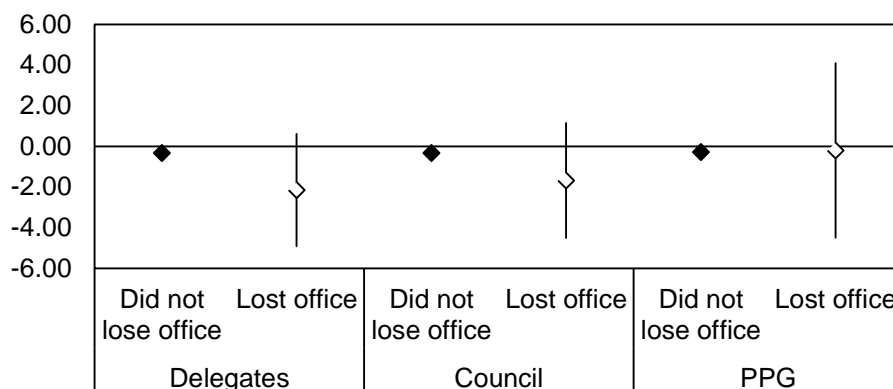
We can also study the interaction effects differently. Perhaps the difference between selectorates is not present in the average effect of losing elections but is present at specific values of the electoral performance. In Figure 7 we display these effects. There we compare the effect of three types of selectorates (conferences, council and PPG) to that of the membership selectorate at various levels of electoral performance. The lines of the three selectorates are below zero across the horizontal axis. To keep the figure understandable we omitted the 95% confidence intervals. Including them would show that the difference between the selectorates disappears above zero, thus in the case of electoral gains. Thus, party leaders in a membership selectorate are more at risk of losing their position if the party lost seats than parties with other types of selectorates.

**Figure 7: Differences between effects of selectorates on leader survival (reference category: members) for various levels of electoral performance**



We can perform a similar analysis for the lost office variable. In Figure 6 we compare parties that lost office and parties that did not lose office with the same (de-)selectorate. In Figure 8 we compare parties that lost office and parties that did not lose office to parties with a member-selectorate. All diamonds – mean effects – are below the zero line, indicating that (1) party leaders of parties that did not lose office have a significantly lower risk of being ejected from office compared to party leaders with a membership (de-)selectorate and (2) that party leaders who lost office run less risk than party leaders who lost office in a party with a membership vote. The latter result is, however, insignificant.

**Figure 8: Differences between effects of selectorates on leader survival (reference category: members) for lost office and did not lose office**



Diamonds represent mean effects, bars present 95% confidence intervals. Black diamonds denote significant effects; white diamonds represent insignificant effects.

As the graphs above show, none of our interaction hypotheses (H4 to H6) are borne out by the data, suggesting that different institutional frameworks for removal do not lead to very different evaluations of leader performance according to office-seeking and vote-seeking criteria. The only statistically significant finding is related to electoral performance and membership deselectorates. While both variables have an independent impact on leader survival, they also have a joint effect, in that losing elections is more risky for leaders in parties with membership deselectorates.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter we have analyzed whether and how performance and selectorate types influence party leader survival. To sum up our results: party leaders are more vulnerable when (1) they have lost elections, (2) they have lost office, and (3) the power to remove them lies with party members. In addition, the effects of losing elections are stronger for leaders who are selected by members. What is particularly interesting in light of earlier findings is that selectorates matter and that we detect a more time-specific effect with respect to office-seeking behavior. Party leaders are most at risk shortly after being ejected from office, rather than for their entire term in opposition. Below we will further qualify these findings and also address why we did not find evidence for our other hypotheses.

Concerning our findings on performance, we admit that our electoral performance measure is rather rough. For example, the effect of losing an election you could not win should differ from losing an election you should have won (Bynander & 't Hart, 2007). In other words, what also matters are the expectations that selectorate members have. These expectations can for example be fueled by the initial support of the leader at the leadership election (Ennsner-Jedenastik & Müller, 2011), the context of the leadership succession and the behavior of the outgoing leader (Bynander & 't Hart, 2006), or develop while following public opinion polls (Bynander & 't Hart, 2007). Margaret Thatcher, for example, faced a tremendous beating in the elections according to polls (Alderman & Carter, 1991) and was thus 'pre-emptively' removed. Perhaps it is not only electoral performance that is important, but also the *expectations* about a leader's electoral performance. If (de-)selectorate members anticipate an election result below their aspiration level, they might choose to support a challenger.



Concerning our findings on (de-)selectorates, a source of potential error is our assumption that selectorates equate deselectorates, if it is not further specified by the party statutes who can remove the leader. It happens to be quite rare that a party specifies how a leader is deselected, thus making the selection of a new leader the default removal mechanism. On a different note, some studies on the selection of party leaders have argued that the formal selectorates are often less important than assumed. In analyzing the selection of Belgian party presidents de Winter (1993) concluded that although the formal procedures are typically open and democratic, the party usually rubber-stamps the decisions made by the party elite. Austrian parties have similarly oligarchic selection methods for their party presidents, although they differ in how much the formal oligarchy is exercised (Müller & Meth-Cohn, 1991).

Still, we find significant differences between selectorates in terms of party leader tenure. Leaders in parties with full member votes enjoy their office for – on average – four years, while leaders from other parties survive for about seven years. This difference is even stronger if party leaders with membership (de-)selectorates lose elections. This result is surprising because the popular shift to more inclusive leader selection methods (Cross & Blais, 2011; Pilet & Cross, 2014) is often seen as empowering leaders rather than a redistribution of power to the grassroots (Katz & Mair, 1995). In fact, it is often argued that membership ballots shift power from informed, active party members and mid-level party elites to uninformed and inactive party members (Mair, 1994; Scarrow, 2002; Wauters, 2013; Webb, 2000). By consequence, the best-known candidate has the best chance to win these one-member-one-vote leadership elections (Katz & Mair, 1995, 2009). At the same time this type of election for the party leadership generally attracts more candidates but does not necessarily produce more competitive elections than other selection methods (Kenig, 2009). For these reasons it is unsurprising that parties have become more leadership-dominated over time, especially if they introduced membership elections (Giger & Schumacher, 2014). Our analysis does not necessarily contradict these findings because we do not directly analyze internal power structures. Yet, it remains somewhat paradoxical that, if leadership elections by members are supposed to empower leaders, these leaders have on average much shorter tenures than leaders with other, less inclusive selection procedures.



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