Cabinet instability and the accumulation of experience in the cabinet : the French Fourth and Fifth Republics in comparative perspective

CABINET INSTABILITY AND THE ACCUMULATION
OF EXPERIENCE IN THE CABINET:
THE FRENCH FOURTH AND FIFTH REPUBLICS IN
COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Drawing on arguments about politics during the French Fourth Republic, we reconsider the concept of cabinet instability. Rather than studying cabinet duration, we examine the accumulation of experience by individual cabinet ministers. We measure two variables in nineteen parliamentary democracies: *portfolio experience* (the experience of cabinet ministers in the specific portfolios that they hold) and *political experience* (the experience of cabinet ministers in *any* significant portfolio). Our results cast doubt on existing claims about cabinet government in the Fourth and Fifth Republics. They also uncover substantial cabinet turnover in majoritarian systems, suggesting that existing claims about stability in such systems may be overstated.

Introduction

The French Fourth Republic, which began following the Second World War in 1946, is notorious for its high level of cabinet instability. The average duration of a cabinet was only about six months, with 24 cabinets forming under 16 prime ministers during the brief twelve-year history of the regime.[1] Party leaders often seemed incapable during the Fourth Republic of addressing many of the problems France faced, particularly in its colonies. Finally, during a crisis in Algeria in May 1958, a majority in the National Assembly voted themselves and the constitution out of "office" by delegating responsibility for the drafting a new Constitution to General Charles de Gaulle and his cabinet. The result of de Gaulle's handiwork, the Fifth Republic, is widely hailed for its high level of cabinet stability and government decisiveness.

Perhaps because of the visible conjunction of cabinet instability, political paralysis, and regime failure in the Fourth Republic - along with recognition that cabinet instability also existed in other troubled regimes, such as the French Third Republic, Weimar Germany, and Italy - studies of cabinet duration are extremely well-developed and central to research on advanced parliamentary democracies. The standard approach in this research is to measure cabinet duration as the elapsed time between the birth and death of a government, and to identify factors that have an effect on this duration.[2]

Somewhat ironically, however, specialists on French politics have implicitly suggested that the scholarly focus on cabinet duration may be misplaced. These scholars often argue that the alleged instability during the Fourth Republic was more apparent than real. Although cabinets frequently fell and re-formed, there existed a remarkable stability in the personnel who occupied key cabinet posts. The stability in personnel, they argue, provided the cabinet with a core of leaders with the experience necessary for effective policymaking in many areas. Since this accumulation of experience is said to have occurred while cabinet instability appeared problematic, the research on the Fourth Republic suggests a new pathway regarding the study of cabinet instability. Rather than concentrating on factors affecting

government duration, scholars should turn their attention to understanding the underlying continuity and experience of individuals in the cabinet.

These claims about French politics raise interesting questions, both about France and about the study of cabinet government more generally. What is cabinet experience and how should it be measured? Are the scholars of French politics correct about cabinet instability and cabinet experience in the Fourth and Fifth Republics? Across parliamentary democracies, is the accumulation of experience in the cabinet related to cabinet instability? And what factors influence the accumulation of cabinet experience?

This paper addresses these questions. We draw on arguments about the Fourth Republic to motivate two new measures of cabinet experience. *Portfolio experience* is the average amount of experience that ministers have in the specific cabinet portfolios that they hold. *Political experience* is the average amount of experience that ministers have in *any* significant cabinet portfolio. Our data on these variables from twenty parliamentary democracies in the post-War period allow us to put France into comparative context, and thus to make two general points about stability in French politics. First, arguments by French specialists about government by a core of irremovable ministers in France IV simply do not hold up under closer scrutiny: the cabinets of the French Fourth Republic were not only short-lived by conventional measures of cabinet duration, there were also staffed by ministers who typically had little experience in government. Second, the stability of the Fifth Republic is vastly overrated. Although stability improved after 1958, France nonetheless remains a country with low government duration and low levels of cabinet experience.

But while we find that the French specialists are wrong about France, we also find that they are correct to underscore the distinction between cabinet instability and underlying cabinet turnover. By focusing on this distinction, our study raises questions about a central tradeoff that is frequently discussed in research on institutional design in parliamentary systems. Scholars often argue that single-member-district plurality rule systems, or other majoritarian systems like that of the French Fifth Republic, produce cabinet stability, whereas fractionalized party systems under proportional representation, such as the Fourth

Republic, lead to shorter-lived cabinets. Thus, one can enhance stability and accountability by choosing a majoritarian system like Britain's, or one can enhance inclusiveness and "fairness" by choosing a more proportional system. It is difficult, however, to have stability and inclusiveness, because the proportional systems that yield inclusiveness mitigate against stability.

Our analysis calls into question the terms in which this trade-off is understood. By analyzing cabinet experience instead of government duration, we find that the alleged stability of majoritarian systems masks substantial turnover within the cabinet itself. Such "individual instability" might arguably lead to some of the pernicious effects that are usually attributed to proportional systems. Similarly, certain proportional systems show considerable continuity, in spite of relatively short governments, precisely through the reappointment of experienced policy makers. If we believe that the cabinet is a relevant arena of policymaking, and that experience is a valuable asset when formulating and implementing policy, then this change of focus is interesting and significant.

Cabinet instability in post-war France

Three themes about cabinet stability are prevalent in the literature on post-war French politics. The first is that the high level of cabinet instability in the Fourth Republic made it very difficult for politicians to govern effectively, leading to a transfer of power to the civil service, and ultimately to the demise of the system. According to this line of argument, cabinet ministers often lacked incentives to pursue their policy goals because they knew they would be out of a job before they could complete the task. And civil servants, knowing that the minister in charge of their department was likely to be gone soon, could effectively obstruct any initiatives that they opposed. The end result, according to most interpretations, was crises after crises, and stagnation in governance (e.g., Debré 1957; Scheinman 1965; MacRae 1967; Suleiman 1974; Chagnollaud 1996).[3]

The second theme is that the problem of instability was solved by the electoral laws and constitution of the Fifth Republic, which is widely hailed for its stable, coherent majorities. Parodi (1988), for example, calls the

emergence of a stable majority one of the three fundamental characteristics of the Vth Republic. Maus (1988) contends that the most obvious consequence of the majoritarian electoral law "is government stability. No one, since 1962, has seriously imagined that a motion of censure could be adopted" (317). And Debré (1981) says that it is undeniable that "[t]hrough government stability and the principle of majority vote, the 1958 Constitution reduced the number of crises" (22). Indeed, cabinet stability in the Fifth Republic is part of our textbook understanding of France.

The third theme is that the movement from instability in the Fourth Republic to stability in the Fifth is more apparent than real. Scholars making this claim do not - and could not - deny that cabinet instability, as traditionally measured (i.e., as the time between the formation and termination of governments), was extremely high during the Fourth Republic. But these scholars argue that the relevant type of instability was not problematic during the Fourth Republic. What matters most, according to these scholars, is *continuity in the personnel* who hold cabinet positions. Such continuity creates the experience necessary for effective governance, and it can exist underneath high levels of cabinet instability. This is particularly true when the same individuals are re-appointed to the same portfolio, allowing them to acquire specialized portfolio experience.

Dogan and Campbell (1957) were probably the first to study this issue empirically. They argue that the perceived cabinet instability actually masked a "profound" stability (326), and they described a *"noyau guvernmental du personnel ministérial"* - a small core of individuals who hold the most important posts and who remain in office for a long time (334). Their analysis involved simple comparisons with Britain. They noted, for example, that in the 15 most important departments, 87 men were appointed as ministers during six years of the Fourth Republic, which they view as not significantly more than the 65 men who were appointed during a similar period in Great Britain. They also found that the number of new men brought by 5-6 reshuffles in Great Britain during the 1950's was almost identical to the number of new men that came into the cabinet for the first time in France during this time.

Williams (1964) similarly argues that despite changes in the governing coalition, "the rotation of ministers did not prevent a surprising degree of continuity" in the Fourth Republic (206). Politics in the Fourth Republic was safeguarded by the similarity between one administration and the next: "In every French Parliament about twenty senior *ministrables* each served in several governments. They provided the core of every cabinet" (206). Like Dogan and Campbell, he noted that turnover in important portfolios was very similar to turnover in Great Britain during the same period. Between 1944 and 1958, he argued, the six highest posts were occupied by 48 individuals in Paris, 27 in London and 30 in Washington, which he saw as comparable numbers.

Petry (1994) also argues that there is relative stability in cabinet ministers who occupy key posts in the Fourth Republic. He finds that there is a nucleus of about 30 ministers who were often reappointed, and a core of 23 men who were appointed to 9 or more cabinets. He writes: "Frequent ministerial reappointment gave individual ministers more practical experience and political expertise and thereby contributed to their decisional autonomy. This was all the more true when a minister was reappointed repeatedly to the same portfolio..." (132; see also Wright 1989, 91). Similarly, Chagnollaud (1996), in an article provocatively entitled to question the "administrative dominance" perspective on the Fourth Republic, argues that there was a core of ministers who were often reappointed, with many serving more than three years during the Fourth Republic.

The strongest argument in favor of the "underlying stability" hypothesis is advanced by Dogan (1989). He argues:

"Briefly stated, during the Fourth Republic, a stable nucleus remained solidly anchored to power.... The fact that the same men directed the same departments, and also the allocation of certain positions to men recruited from the same party, added to the firmness of the governmental core. The notion of ministerial nucleus is essential to understanding how the Fourth Republic functions and succeeded in so many fields" (250).

These Fourth Republic scholars, then, direct our attention away from the importance of traditional definitions of cabinet duration and toward the relevance of cabinet experience in policymaking. In particular, they argue that what we will call *portfolio experience* - continuity of ministers in the same post - and *political experience* - continuity of the same individuals in government - enhance policymaking effectiveness, even when cabinet instability appears problematic. The argument, of course, is not limited to the Fourth Republic. Dogan (1989) is very clear on the general analytic point: "The negative consequences of ministerial instability are limited because it is normally accompanied by the maintenance in power of a core of political leaders who ensure the continuity of state leadership" (239). Klaus von Beyme (1971, 882-82) similarly argues that stability of individuals in government is more significant that the stability of cabinets, themselves. And Huber and Lupia (1999) focus on cabinet turnover in a formal model, arguing that as it becomes more likely that an individual minister will be replaced in the cabinet, it also becomes more likely that bureaucrats will obstruct politicians, especially when the bureaucrats and politicians share *similar* policy objectives. This more conceptual work has been supplemented by more recent empirical research on the impact of cabinet turnover on policymaking.[4]

But our empirical understanding of policy and political experience in cabinets remains very scant. Even in the case of the Fourth Republic, no systematic evidence has been collected to measure the different forms of experience in French cabinets. Most of the research described above involves simple counting of individuals and cabinet posts. Much of it involves only Fourth Republic data, some of it makes comparisons with Britain in the 1950's, and Dogan (1989) compares France with several other democratic regimes. But none of this research measures experience in a careful cross-section of the most significant portfolios across a large cross-section of parliamentary systems. Only by so doing can we assess the relative level of cabinet experience in French politics. In the next section, we develop explicit measures of cabinet experience that will allow us to put France in comparative perspective.

Measuring cabinet stability and cabinet experience

We now describe the three measures of cabinet stability and experience that we shall analyze in the remainder of the paper. To measure conventional cabinet duration, we draw on data from the *European Journal of Political Research [EJPR]* (Woldendorp *et al.* 1998 and annual updates). This data has the advantage of covering a wide range of countries, including the Fifth Republic and several Westminster systems.

Scholars of cabinet duration often debate the types of events that should be coded as cabinet terminations, and it is important to bear in mind the decision that was made for the *EJPR* data. Six different types of events are considered terminal events in these data: 1) Elections, 2) Voluntary resignation of the Prime Minister, 3) Resignation of the Prime Minister due to health reasons, 4) Dissension within the government, 5) Lack of parliamentary support, and 6) Intervention by the head of State (see Woldendorp *et al.* 1998 for a full description of each type of event). These data allow us to measure government duration as the time between the occurrences of any of these different events.

The most controversial aspect of this coding is that events considered as terminations are very diverse.[5] Following a termination, for example, the same parties could reform a government, entirely new parties could take office, a handful of individuals could change, the government's majority status could change, or nothing at all could change. All such consequences, however, are treated identically. Moreover, any changes in cabinet composition that occur between terminal events are not captured by standard measures of cabinet duration. It is therefore very difficult to identify the mechanisms that might link cabinet duration to other aspects of political performance.

These same drawbacks do not exist with respect to cabinet experience, which measures changes in cabinet composition rather than a diversity of events. To examine empirically the two concepts of cabinet experience, this paper draws on a new data set that we created using *Keesings Record of World Events* and the *European Journal of Political Research.* Based on both of these sources, we recorded every change that occurs in the composition of the cabinet in 19 countries of Western Europe in the post-war period through 1999. Unlike previous data sets, such as that published in *EJPR*, we record all changes that occur in the cabinet, including

those that occur between the "births" and "deaths" of governments (as conventionally measured). A new observation is created by any change that occurs in the name of an individual controlling a specific portfolio. The data record the date of each such change, and the nature of the change, including the names and party identification of each person that controls each portfolio. With this data set, we can determine the composition of the cabinet (to the extent that our data sources permit) at any moment in time. This possibility, of course, also allows us to measure the level of cabinet experience at different points in time.

Our measures of *portfolio experience* and *political experience* are based on changes in the identities of the individuals that control specific portfolios.[6] To maximize cross-national comparability and to be as faithful as possible to interpretations of French politics (which stress the existence of a core of political leaders in key portfolios), we focus only on changes in the 10 most important portfolios. To determine these portfolios we used a combination of the rankings constructed by Laver and Hunt (1992) (who ask country experts to rank the five most important portfolios) and an index that we construct of the number of days that each portfolio is occupied throughout the period of our study. Implicit in this index is the idea that the most important portfolios will be the ones that are most consistently filled. This assumption is born out by the fact that the Laver and Hunt experts consistently name portfolios that are the most frequently occupied. The index allows us to include portfolios beyond the five that Laver and Hunt name, and to include portfolios that were very important earlier in our time period, but which may not have been deemed as important at the time of the Laver and Hunt surveys.

Previous measures of what we have called *portfolio experience* have counted changes *within* a government during a particular time period. Simmons, for example, measures cabinet stability as the number of times each year in which at least 50% of the cabinet changed or else the Prime Minister was replaced (Simmons 1994). Huber (1998) measures stability through changes in both the identity of particular ministers and changes in the party composition of the cabinet. And Martinez-Gallardo

(2001) uses a similar measure to asses the impact of portfolio turnover on inflation control in Mexico. In this paper, we focus on the actual number of days of experience held by individuals in government (in the most important posts). We feel this approach more accurately captures the notion of aggregate cabinet experience. If there are a small number of posts that experience frequent turnover, for example, but others with long periods of continuity, then measures of turnover or volatility will mask the underlying experience.

Our measure *of portfolio experience* therefore calculates the average number of days that the individual in each of the top ten portfolios has held that portfolio on December 31 of each year. So if on December 31 of year x, five individuals (who hold a top ten portfolio) have held their portfolios for 500 days and five individuals have held their portfolios for 1,000 days, the average *portfolio experience* for these 10 portfolios during that year is 750 days.[7] The assumption behind this measure of experience is that a longer tenure in a specific portfolio will allow a minister to gain expertise in the policy area, and to build a better relationship with other cabinet members and with the civil servants that work in that ministry. Such experience should make him or her more effective at pursuing desired policy outcomes.

Our measure *of political experience* is similar to our measure of portfolio experience, though it is not based on continuous control of specific portfolios. Political experience measures how much cumulative experience is enjoyed by the cabinet's leaders, regardless of whether they are switching from one portfolio to another. Thus, *political experience* calculates the average number of days that each individual has held *any* top-ten portfolio prior to December 31 of each year. So if on December 31 of year x, five individuals had held some "top-ten" portfolio for 500 days (though not necessarily the one they currently hold) and five individuals had held any top-ten portfolios for 1,000 days, the average "portfolio experience" for these 10 portfolios during that year is 750 days. The key difference between our measures of portfolio experience and political experience is that with portfolio experience, we count only the days of service by the minister in the portfolio he or she currently holds, whereas with political experience we count service in any prior key portfolios. Thus, political experience, by definition, is always greater than portfolio experience.

Political experience should improve the ability of ministers in the cabinet to address the major political issues of the day because the key leaders have experience at forging consensus and brokering compromises.

To assess the level of experience in a given country, we take averages across all years in that country. In so doing, unwanted biases will be created when comparing averages across regimes that exist for different time periods. This is particularly significant when comparing average annual experience in the Fourth Republic with other countries because the Fourth Republic lasts such a short period of time. This short duration makes it impossible for politicians in the Fourth Republic to accumulate the same level of expertise we find in other countries with long lasting regimes. Below, we discuss two ways of addressing this problem.

At this stage, we want to recognize that cabinet duration and our two measures of experience need not be correlated. Indeed, a point of the French politics literature is that they are not. Cabinet duration can be low (as it was in the Fourth Republic), but if the same basic individuals stay in office (as Fourth Republic scholars claim), political or portfolio experience can be relatively high. Political and portfolio experience also need not be related. If there is little political experience, then portfolio experience must be low as well. But if the same core of individuals stays in power relatively long, trading portfolios in "musical chairs" fashion, then portfolio experience can be low but political experience can be high. Finally note that cabinet duration can be high but political or portfolio experience low. This would occur if substantial reshuffles occur between "government terminations" as conventionally measured. Of course, the actual empirical relationship between the different forms of stability is an empirical question to which we now turn.

**Stability in Four Major Democracies before the Collapse of the Fourth Republic**

We begin with a simple comparison of the three stability measures in four countries: France (Fourth Republic), Germany, Italy and the UK. We first focus here on the pre-1958 period during which the Fourth Republic existed. The results are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1 reveals the standard story about cabinet duration. The Fourth Republic has extremely low duration compared to the other major European democracies at this time. The average duration of the cabinet in France, for example, is only about twenty percent as long as the average duration of a cabinet in the UK. We also see that the Westminster system in the UK produces the most long-lasting cabinets, followed by Germany. Italy during this time period has relatively unstable cabinets, but ones that last over twice as long as French cabinets.

Next consider portfolio experience. As noted above, scholars have often argued that underlying the cabinet stability in the Fourth Republic was relative personnel stability, with particular individuals often controlling particular portfolios for a long period of time. Our comparative data do not bear this out. The French Fourth Republic has by far the worst level of portfolio experience. Its level of portfolio experience is slightly greater than one-third the level we find in Germany, which has the highest level of portfolio stability, and it is also substantially worse than what we find in Italy and the UK.

Figure 1 also reveals that Britain's level of portfolio experience is much lower that its level of cabinet duration. Portfolio experience there is barely higher than in Italy - which is often regarded as being among the most unstable democracies - and it is much lower than Germany. This finding nicely illustrates the distinction between cabinet duration and portfolio experience.

Figure 1. Mean Political and Portfolio Experience and Government Duration in Four Countries, Before 1958
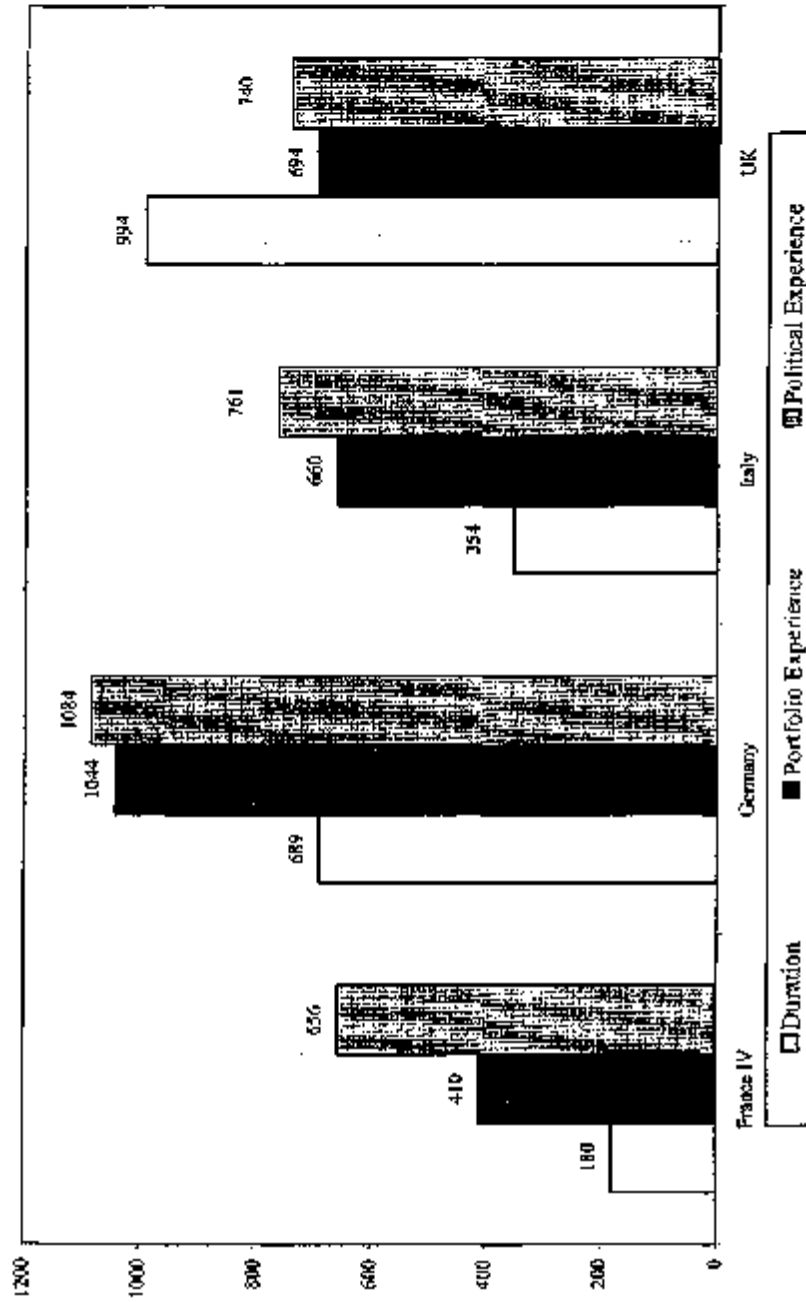
Finally, consider political experience. Again, the French Fourth Republic produces the lowest levels of experience, but the differences with the other countries is less stark than we find with the first two measures. Cabinet duration in the Fourth Republic, for example, is only eighteen percent as long as the UK, but political experience is eighty-nine percent as long as in the UK. It is still only 61 percent as long as that of Germany, however. Thus, the relatively low level of political experience in the UK is almost as striking as the results for the Fourth Republic.

In sum, three general points emerge from this preliminary look at the various stability and experience measures in Figure 1. First, inconsistent with previous claims, the Fourth Republic is quite unstable in all respects. This is no surprise regarding cabinet duration, but it is unexpected for the two cabinet experience measures. And even though the Fourth Republic does better on political experience, the arguments about the existence of a core of leaders are wrong - indeed, portfolio experience in the Fourth Republic is just over half that in Germany. Second, the benchmark often used for studying stability in the Fourth Republic -the UK - is not an especially helpful one. Britain clearly has the long cabinet duration expected of a Westminster system, but its performance on the experience variables is roughly the same as Italy, which is often viewed as among the least stable countries. Given the very long cabinet duration in Britain, the lower level of cabinet experience suggests that substantial reshuffles occur in Britain between the births and deaths of governments. Finally, though there is substantial reason to believe that the three measures should be correlated, they need not be. The Fourth Republic, for example, has much higher levels of political experience than portfolio experience, suggesting a reasonably active game of "musical chairs." Similarly, the UK has a higher level of cabinet duration than of portfolio or political experience, suggesting that substantial personnel changes can occur without a cabinet breakdown. The opposite is true in Italy, where cabinet breakdowns occur relatively frequently, without substantial turnover in personnel.

Stability in the Fourth and Fifth Republics

We now turn to a comparison of the Fourth and Fifth Republics. In what respects and to what extent has the Fifth Republic been more stable than the Fourth? One way to answer this question is to simply calculate the variables for the two Republics separately. Although we do this, we also feel it is important to address the issue of regime duration: the Fourth Republic lasted just over ten years and the Fifth Republic much longer. This allows for a greater accumulation of experience in the Fifth Republic than in the Fourth Republic. To address this issue, we divide the Fifth Republic up into decades, arbitrarily setting experience to zero at the outset of the decade. We then have four decades for which we can compare average annual experience to the Fourth Republic. Each of these decades is roughly the same length as the Fourth Republic itself. In subsequent sections we will use the same strategy to compare the Fourth Republic to the other parliamentary democracies in our sample.

The results are given in Figure 2. First consider the comparison of the Fourth with the entire Fifth Republic. On every dimension, we see substantially more stability in the Fifth than in the Fourth. Cabinet duration is, on average, nearly three times as long during the Fifth Republic, and portfolio and political experience are nearly 48 percent longer in the Fifth than in the Fourth.

Figure 2. Stability in the Fourth and Fifth Republics
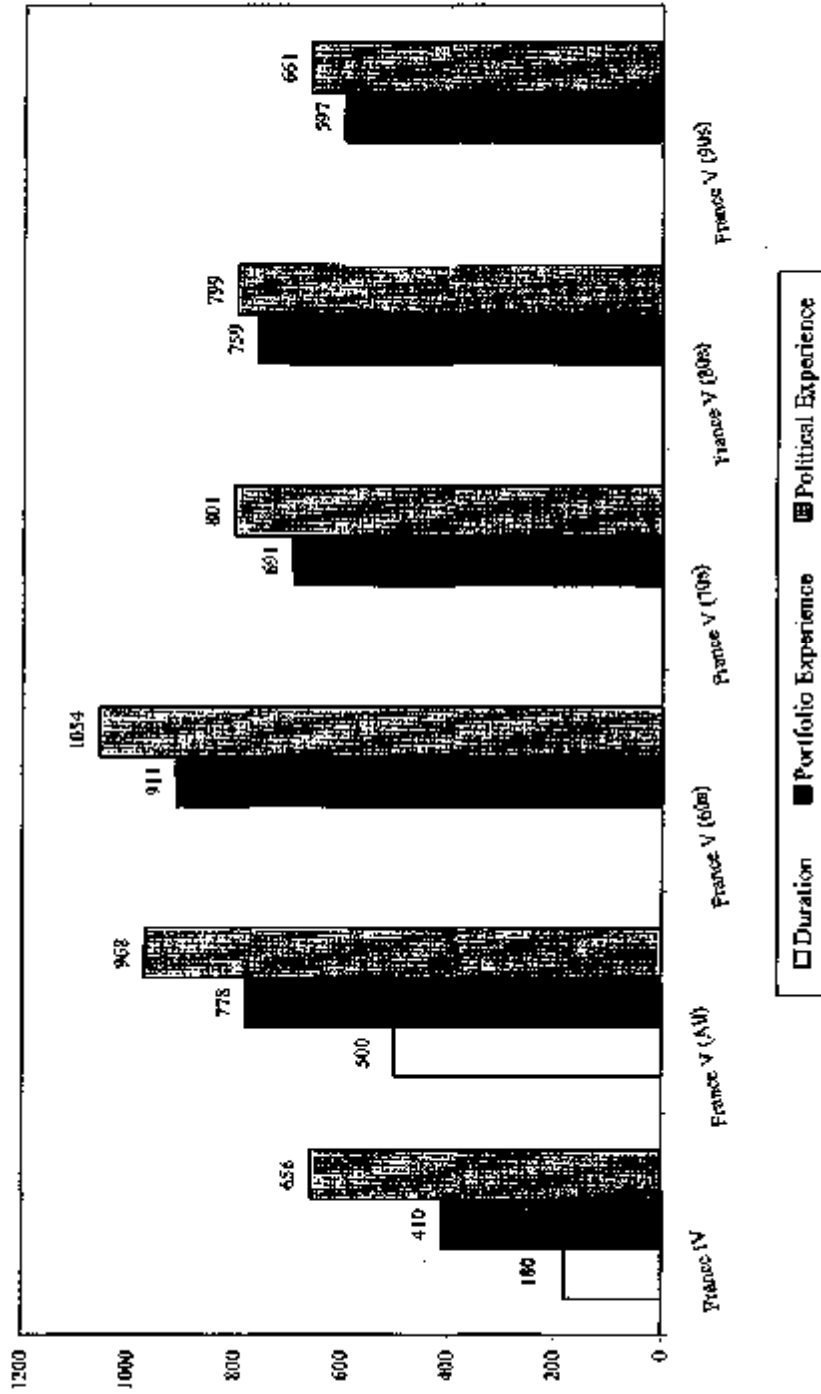
This story is attenuated a bit, however, when we break the Fifth Republic down into decades. Under President Charles de Gaulle, the Fifth Republic was extremely stable with respect to the personnel of government. If we compare the Fourth Republic with this initial period of the Fifth, there's an incredible shift from instability and inexperience to stability and experience. But stability in the personnel of Fifth Republic cabinets soon began to break down, even before the *alternance* of 1981, when the Socialists came to power for the first time. During the 1970's there's a substantial decline, especially in political experience. By the 1990's, in which there were two different elections that changed the majority in the National Assembly, cabinet experience is at its lowest, with political experience just barely higher than during the Fourth Republic. It is also worth noting that during the Fourth Republic, political experience is much higher than portfolio experience, whereas in the Fifth Republic, these two measures are roughly the same. This indicates that a game of "musical chairs" -the same cabinet ministers trading posts — occurred to a greater degree during the Fourth Republic than during the Fifth (where losing a portfolio also entailed losing a spot in government).

In sum, while it is clearly the case that the stability of the Fourth Republic is less than that of the Fifth, much of the difference is attributable to the fact that the Fifth Republic was so stable under President de Gaulle during the 1960's. After that time, the Fifth Republic is still more stable than the Fourth, but perhaps less so than many authors believe. This is largely due to the commencement in the 1980's of legislative elections that regularly change the nature of the majority.

Cabinet Stability and Experience in Comparative Perspective

We now extend our analysis to twenty advanced parliamentary regimes. Like the previous section, this broader comparative perspective provides a picture that is quite different than the one derived from studies of government duration, lending further support to claims we have made about the Fourth and Fifth Republics. The analysis also raises interesting questions about the traditional distinction between stability in majoritarian and proportional systems.

We use two different data sets, which differ according to the time periods they cover. The first data set includes all the years available for each country (generally from 1945-46 to 1999, with the exception of France, Portugal and Spain). This data set allows members of government to build up their political and/or portfolio experience over a long period of time (and thus can lead to some biases when we compare regimes that existed for different lengths of time). The second data set is based on distinct decades, as in our analysis above of the Fifth Republic. We assume that experience is zero at the beginning of the decade and that accumulation of experience ends on December 31 of the last year of the decade. This allows the maximum accumulation of experience during any decade to be roughly the same as the maximum possible during the Fourth Republic. By averaging these scores within countries across decades, we alleviate problems with the comparisons in the first data set.[8] Figures 3 and 4 show our measures of cabinet experience using the data from all years and from those averaged across decades. The countries are ranked according to their average level of the two kinds of experience. Using the data set that aggregates across all years, the difference between the country with the lowest political experience (Fourth Republic) and the country with the highest (Luxembourg) is 1914 days; when using the data based on decade means, the difference is 878 days. This difference between the two measures indicates that ministers are obviously accumulating experience for more than one decade. This underlines that it is inappropriate to compare experience in the Fourth Republic with experience in other countries across a longer time period.

The portfolio experience rankings of the countries are not significantly affected by how the data is aggregated: France IV, Italy, Portugal, France V and Finland have the lowest accumulation of portfolio experience, and Luxembourg, Sweden, Iceland, Austria and Germany the highest. For political experience, in contrast, some countries do change rather significantly when we compare across Figures 3 and 4. Italy and Ireland are relatively more stable when all data is used (compared to the decades data), and the Netherlands is relatively less stable when all data is used. These changes may be due in part to the need to choose arbitrary start and end dates for the decades data.

Figure 3. Mean Political and Portfolio Experience and Government Duration, All Years
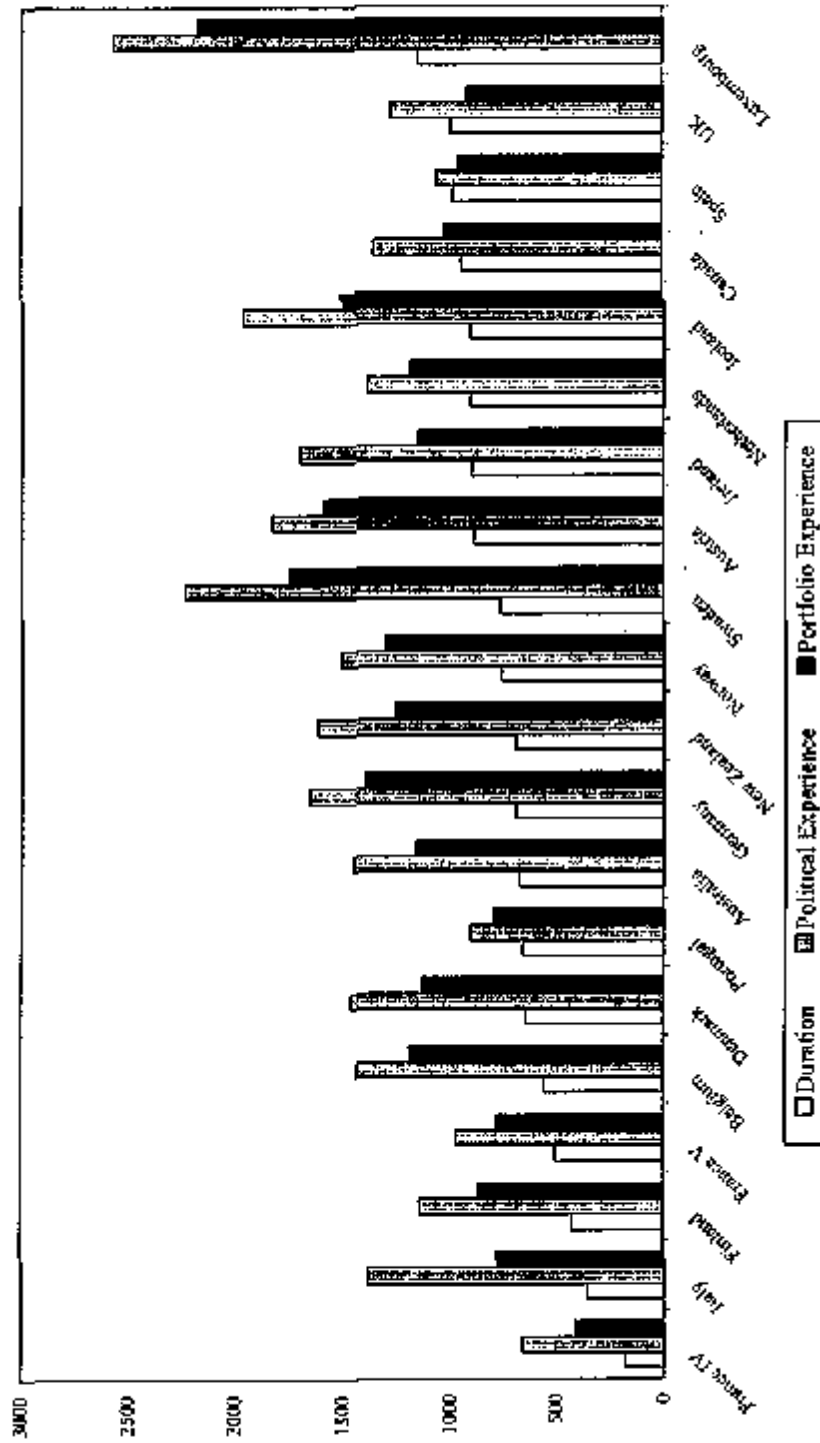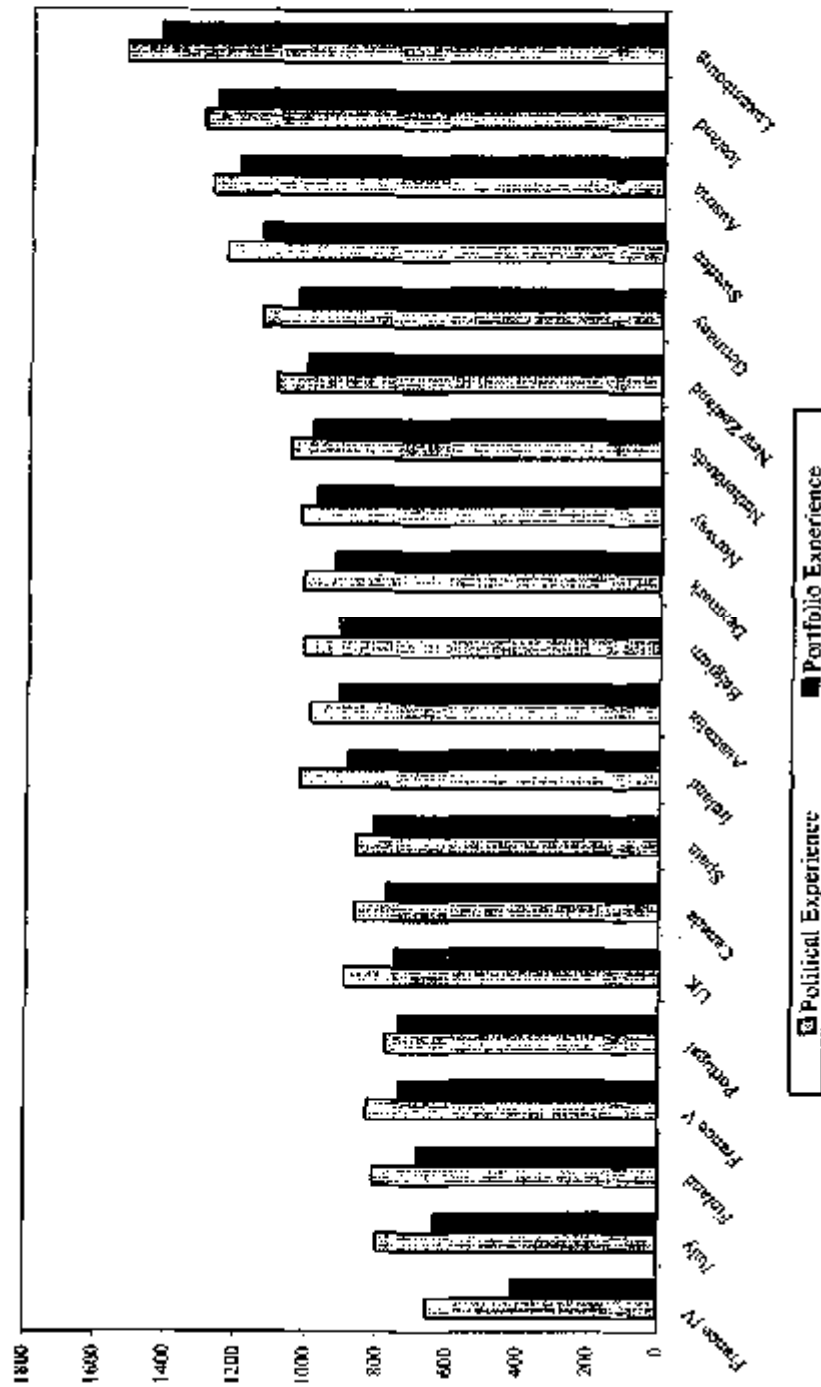
Figure 4. Mean Political and Portfolio Experience in 20 Regimes, Mean of Five Decades

Although these differences across the data sets are worth noting, it is more interesting to note several points that consistently emerge from Figures 3 and 4. First, the numerous arguments about a core of leaders in the Fourth Republic do not stand up when considered in comparative context. No matter which data set is used, the French Fourth Republic has the lowest level of portfolio and political experience. Not only is the Fourth Republic the worst, it is much worse than any other country. Italy, for example, usually has the next lowest level of experience, and portfolio experience in the Fourth Republic is nearly half of that in Italy. The contrast is a bit less for political experience but still substantial: the mean for all decades for Italy was 797 days and only 656 for the Fourth Republic.

Second, the comparative data show that contrary to textbook descriptions, the Fifth Republic has a very low level of cabinet experience. Cabinets in the Fifth Republic are consistently more experienced than the Fourth Republic. But is the most unstable system the right standard for comparison? When placed in the larger context of European democracies, France V does very poorly. For all measures of experience it is among the five most unstable regimes, surpassed consistently only by the Fourth Republic, Italy, Finland and Portugal.

Third, we find that with a handful of exceptions, political and portfolio experience are very closely related. As we noted above, an important theme in the literature on the Fourth Republic concerns the existence of a core group of ministers who were consistently reappointed to successive cabinets, some to the same portfolios but others moving from one portfolio to another. Similarly, Dogan (1989) argues that "a ministerial core" often exists in unstable countries - the same individuals remain in the cabinet but rotate positions among themselves. He argues, for example, that there was such a core of ministers in Finland between 1917 and 1983.

If ministers are reappointed to subsequent governments but are rotated within the cabinet, we should see a high level of political experience even in the presence of low portfolio experience. However, an analysis of the patterns of turnover in a wider sample of countries shows that this rarely occurs. Instead, Figures 3 and 4 show that the relative rankings of the countries on both dimensions of cabinet experience

move together, especially when we use the measures based on means by decades. The correlation between both variables is .98 based on the means by decade and .95 based on data for all the years in our sample. Taking into account only the years before 1958, the correlation between the measures of political and portfolio experience is .97. Such a core of ministers clearly does not exist in France, and the data also do not support Dogan's claim for Finland. Using both datasets, Finland ranks in the bottom three or four countries with the lowest levels of cabinet experience.

Two countries, however, do stand out in this respect. In Ireland and Italy there does seem to exist a "governmental nucleus" that persists in the midst of a high level of rotation within the cabinet. While Italy ranks low on the dimension of policy stability (19th), there is higher level of political experience that is being accumulated in the top portfolios (13th). Equally, Ireland is the 11th country in terms of portfolio experience but is the 5th country with the most political experience. With these two exceptions, the numbers seem to indicate that both types of experience are closely related.

We now turn to comparisons of our measures of portfolio and political experience with the traditional measure of government duration.[9] The first thing that stands out from Figure 3 is the point we have made before: measures of experience tend to move together but they are not necessarily related to government duration. There are countries that consistently have both short-lived governments and very low experience (the usual suspects: France, Portugal, Italy and Finland), or long-lived governments and high levels of experience (Luxembourg). However, there are countries that have few terminal events but high intra-government cabinet turnover (like the UK, Netherlands and Canada), or countries where there are more frequent 'events' but they are not of too much consequence for the accumulation of experience because ministers stay in subsequent governments (like Germany, Sweden or Belgium).

The data also raise questions about government stability in majoritarian and proportional systems. As noted in the Introduction, claims about stability in these two types of systems are central to the literature on comparative democratic processes. Powell (1982: 63) nicely summarizes the conventional viewpoint:

[T]he majoritarian parliamentary constitutions were the most effective at avoiding minority governments ... and were quite effective in generating executive stability. The median duration of a cabinet in such systems, before either being defeated or having to call an election, was around 33 months of the 36-month maximum. The representational parliamentary systems, by contrast, experienced considerable problems with both stability and effective majorities. The average tenure of their chief executives was only around 22 months, and minority governments were quite common.

Though we find that this distinction clearly exists when focusing on government duration, it does not seem to exist when we examine cabinet experience. The most striking examples come from Canada and the UK. In Figure 3 we can see that the UK is in fact one of the countries with the highest levels of cabinet stability, ranking second in terms of the duration of its governments. Nevertheless, the UK ranks quite low on both political experience and portfolio experience. The same is true for Canada, which has governments with a mean duration comparable to that of Luxembourg but a level of political and portfolio experience closer to that of Spain or Finland. These systems in fact tend to create stable majorities and thus governments that stay in office for longer periods. However, members of government are frequently leaving the cabinet or changing from one ministry to another following reshuffles that occur during the life of a given government. This implies that at any given point the membership of the cabinet can be quite different from the original one, and probably different from the one that will exist when the government ends. New Zealand, by contrast, conforms more closely to the notion of stable majoritarian systems, ranking 11th for duration and 7th for both types of cabinet experience.

The proportional systems in our sample show similar variation in their patterns of stability and experience. Clearly, the worst performers among the 20 countries (France IV, Finland, Portugal, and Italy) have political systems based on proportional representation, although Italy has a higher level of

political experience than the UK or Canada. But three countries with the highest levels of cabinet experience (Luxembourg, Austria and Iceland) also have proportional representation (see Figure 3). Thus, the relationship between electoral laws and the accumulation of cabinet experience is not straightforward.

In sum, the variation in patterns of cabinet experience and government stability challenges us to rethink conventional distinctions between different electoral systems and, importantly, to consider how different institutional features might affect both stability and experience, and whether there are different factors that affect these measures of turnover.

Factors influencing experience in the cabinet

The preceding analysis suggests that although individual experience in the cabinet and cabinet stability are correlated, they are clearly different. Relatively stable cabinets can be staffed with ministers who have low levels of experience, such as in Britain, or with ministers who have relatively high levels of experience, such as Luxembourg. And relatively unstable cabinets can be staffed with ministers who have relatively high levels of experience, such as Italy, or relatively low relatively levels of experience, such as the Fourth Republic. Given these different possible relationships between cabinet instability and cabinet experience, an obvious question poses itself: What factors affect cabinet experience, and how are these factors related to the factors that affect cabinet instability?

In what follows, we offer some very preliminary analyses of factors underlying the level of experience in the cabinet. We limit ourselves to simple aggregate tests at the cross-national level. The mean level of cabinet experience for each country (for all years; see Figure 3) is our dependent variable, and we focus only on the countries that existed for a comparable time period (thus excluding France IV, Portugal, and Spain). We want to understand variation in these cross-national means. Why do some countries have more average experience in the cabinet than others?

The existing literature on cabinet stability emphasizes both electoral variables and government status variables to explain variation in cabinet duration. This literature argues that single-party

majorities are the most stable, and that minority governments are the least stable. As a party system becomes more fractionalized, single party majorities become more difficult to form, minority governments become more common, and bargaining complexity among members of majority coalitions increases. The result is less stable cabinets.[10] For this reason, scholars often argue that Westminster-type systems, which are very successful at producing single-party majorities, have stable cabinets (e.g., Powell 1982 and Lijphart 1999).

It is unclear whether or how these factors related to party systems (e.g., the number of parties or the existence of a Westminster system) or government type (e.g., the prevalence of single party majorities or minority governments) might affect experience in the cabinet. On one hand, a large number of parties or the existence of minority government should lead to conflict within the cabinet and outside it, with other parties. In such cases, cabinet positions could function as part of a logrolling mechanism, whereby the cabinet leaders use rotation as a device to search for support in parliament. This is precisely what MacRae (1967) argued happened in the Fourth Republic. If such "cabinet post logrolling" occurs, then more fractionalized party systems and minority governments should lead to more turnover, and thus less experience. However, regarding the *type* of government, Diermeier and Merlo (2000) argue that governments use reshuffles to adjust the payoffs to coalition members or outside parties when there is a policy or electoral shock. Thus, they argue that majority governments, especially coalition governments, might have to resort to logrolling by reshuffling portfolios more than minority governments.

Table 1. Factors Influencing Cabinet Experience*

Dependent Variable:	Mean Portfolio Experience						Mean Political Experience
Independent Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Number of parties	-228.59 (83.88)	-211.61 (68.58)	-215.01 (67.35)	-235.44 (76.37)	-106.80 (63.34)	-212.33 (85.59)	-213.87 (101.20)
Westminster	-423.60 (199.30)	-382.06 (162.76)	-396.48 (159.16)				-406.53 (240.45)
Population	-114.99 (39.12)	-41.11 (51.05)					-137.98 (47.198)
Policy Value of Portfolio	66.78675 (44.55)	83.53 (39.09)	94.53 (36.04)	98.50 (36.62)	98.02 (48.29)	86.90 (41.36)	25.53 (53.75)
% Single Party Majority				-553.08 (235.40)		-589.91 (247.67)	
% Minority Government					107.35 (268.13)		
Mean Government Duration						.2613 (.3894)	
Constant	2839.17 (511.25)	1960.62 (625.06)	1529.59 (317.54)	1623.58 (359.61)	1018.40 (299.12)	1428.53 (469.69)	3535.00 (616.80)
N	17	15	15	15	15	15	17
Adjusted R-squared	.55	.50	.51	.49	.25	.46	.45

* Standard errors are given in parentheses.

On the other hand, we have noted that many scholars of the Fourth Republic argue that a fractionalized party system can lead to cabinet instability without resulting in cabinet inexperience. Instead, the party system fractionalization that leads to instability can occur alongside the development of a core of ministers who lend stability to the government. In fact, Dogan (1989, 239) goes so far as to argue:

The negative consequences of ministerial instability are limited because it is normally accompanied by the maintenance in power of a core of political leaders who ensure the continuity of state leadership. The instability of cabinets and the stability of core ministerial personnel are usually inseparable phenomena.

If this is true, then the party system attributes that lead to cabinet instability should not have a negative impact on experience, and could even have a positive impact on stability.[11] Of course, our findings regarding the actual low level of cabinet inexperience in the Fourth Republic may lead us to be doubtful of the relationship between cabinet instability and cabinet experience.

To this point, we have considered only variables that are known to influence the level of cabinet duration, with the goal being to think about how these same variables might influence cabinet experience. We also consider two factors that are not in the existing literature on instability, but which should be related to the level of experience in the cabinet. The first such variable is population. It is striking to observe in Figures 3 and 4 the extremely high level of experience in the extremely small countries of Luxembourg and Iceland, both of which have populations of less than 500,000 people. In such small countries, the core of individuals who are *"ministrables"* may be small, leading to rotation of posts across the same set of people.

The second variable is the value of a cabinet post. Strom (1990) points out that in different contexts, parties will value "votes," participation in "office," and "policy influence" differently. In some contexts, participation in the government is valued in its own right, in other contexts it is most valuable because it affects opportunities to influence policy, and in other contexts, vote-maximizing parties may not place a high value on participating in government. We might expect that as the *policy value of a cabinet post increases,* because politicians perceive portfolios as means of affecting policy and not only as office payoffs, policy expertise should become more valuable and thus portfolio experience should increase. The relationship between the perceived value of portfolios and experience might be seen from a different, and related, perspective as well: where portfolios are more likely to be used as logrolling devices or as payoffs

it is more likely that turnover will be higher and thus experience will decline. In both cases we would expect experience - especially portfolio experience -to increase in countries where portfolios are most valued as a means to affect policy.

In sum, we will consider the effects of party systems, government status, Westminster systems, population, and the policy value of portfolios on government experience. The specific variables we use are as follows:

Percent single-party majority is the percentage of days in a country where a single-party majority government is in office;

Percent minority government is the percentage of all days where a minority government is in office;

Effective number of parties is taken from Lijphart's measure of the effective number of parties. Lijphart uses the Laakso and Taagepera index, based on the number of parties in parliament and their share of seats (see Lijphart 1999, Appendix A).

Westminster system is a dummy variable that takes the value 1 in each of the four Westminster democracies in our data (Australia, New Zealand,[12] Canada, and the UK);

Log(Population) is the log of a country's population; and

Policy value of portfolios is a survey response by country experts consulted in Laver and Hunt (1992). Laver and Hunt asked respondents "Are cabinet portfolios valued more as rewards of office or as a means to affect policy?" The scale ranges from 1-9, where 1 indicates that portfolios are valued as rewards of office and 9 indicates that they are valued as means of affecting policy.[13]

The OLS results are summarized in Table 1. Given the small number of observations, and given that the party system and government status variables are highly correlated, we will present a variety of different specifications that will allow us to get a sense of the robustness of the results.

Column 1 includes the Westminster dummy variable rather than the government status variables. The first three variables have a negative sign, indicating that fractionalized party systems, Westminster systems, and large populations all mitigate against cabinet experience. The *Policy Value of a Portfolio* variable has a positive sign, indicating that where portfolios are valued as means of affecting policy, not as office payoffs, experience will be higher. Each of the coefficients is precisely estimated, with the exception of *Policy Value of Portfolio.*

From Figure 3, it seems unclear whether there is any relationship between cabinet experience and population when we exclude the two extremely small countries. We test this relationship in column 2 by omitting the two small countries. In this regression, population has no significant impact on experience, and the coefficients for the other variables are relatively stable, and each of them is now estimated quite significantly. Since there are reasons to believe that in countries with extremely small size, variables like party system size and the value of portfolios may have little impact (because the pool of available leaders is so small), in the remaining regressions, we omit Iceland and Luxembourg.[14]

In column 3, we drop the population variable with no impact on the results for the other variables. In column 4, we substitute *Percent Single-Party Majority* for *Westminster.* This variable, like *Westminster,* has a large, significant, and negative impact on cabinet experience. In Column 5, we add *Percent Minority.* It has no effect on experience, and does not affect the results for the other variables. Finally, in column 6 we include the actual cabinet duration of the country to test the relationship between cabinet stability and cabinet experience when we control for other factors that affect cabinet experience. Interestingly, we find that *Government Duration* has no effect on experience, and that it does not influence the results for the other variables.

We have also run similar regressions with *Political Experience* rather than *Portfolio Experience* as the dependent variable. The results are similar across models and we report only one such regression, in Column 7. We find similar results for all variables except *Policy Value of*

Portfolio, which has no effect on political experience. This is true consistently across various specifications.

Substantively, these results confirm that although cabinet stability and experience are related, they are not the same thing and they are not necessarily related to the institutional environment by the same mechanisms. In the literature on cabinet instability, for example, Westminster systems and single-party majorities increase cabinet duration, while minority governments decrease it. Our tests on cabinet experience indicate that minority government has no effect, and Westminster systems and single party majorities lead to *less* experience. But the cabinet instability literature also shows that fractionalized party systems lead to short-lived cabinets, and we find that the same effect exists for cabinet experience.

It is interesting that party system fractionalization *and* single party majorities lead to less experience, and it is useful to consider the relationship between these coefficients. If one two-party majoritarian system had all single party majority governments and another multiparty PR country had none, how many more effective parties would have to exist in the PR country than in the Westminster country to have less predicted experience there? Consider column 4. Based on the results for the *Number of Parties* and *% Single Party Majorities* coefficients, a PR system with no single party majorities would have less predicted experience than a two-party majoritarian system with all single party majorities if the PR system had more than 4.3 effective parties. This is true for four countries in our data (Denmark (4.51), the Netherlands (4.91), Italy (4.91) and Finland (5.03)). The predicted level of experience in Finland would be only 150 days less than the predicted experience in the two-party majoritarian system. Thus, for most proportional systems, the predicted level of cabinet experience in our models is roughly the same or higher than that of the majoritarian systems.

Conclusion

Drawing on insights from the literature on unstable systems, especially the French Fourth Republic, the analysis above reconsiders what it means for a cabinet to be stable, what the relevant

dimensions of stability are, and how they relate to the wider institutional context. Traditionally, stability is defined in terms of government duration. The drawback to this approach is that the events that are coded as government terminations are very diverse, as are the consequences of such terminations for government composition. Given this diversity, the substantive importance of standard duration variables is difficult to interpret.

Previous research on the- Fourth Republic and other unstable systems, suggests the importance of focusing on cabinet experience rather than cabinet duration. Measures of cabinet experience tap the consequences of government terminations for the composition of governments, and they add additional information about changes in personnel that occur in reshuffles between terminal cabinet events. This provides a more accurate picture of continuity and change in cabinets over time than do standard measures of duration.

Our study of cabinet experience has implications for our understanding of France, and for the study of cabinet stability more generally. With respect to France, we reject standard claims that a stable core of ministers remained throughout the Fourth Republic, even in the context of short-lived cabinets. Such claims about a stable core are meaningful only if a comparative benchmark exists. We find that measured against any such benchmark, the Fourth Republic cabinets were extremely unstable and inexperienced. It is true that "cabinets passed," but by comparative standards, ministers did not "remain" (see Williams 1958). We also reject claims regarding stability in the Fifth Republic. Although the Fifth Republic improved things over the Fourth, the reforms of 1958 did little to eradicate instability. Indeed, the Fifth Republic has remained among the parliamentary democracies with high levels of cabinet instability and low levels of cabinet experience.

With respect to the study of cabinet stability and experience more generally, we find that although portfolio and political experience typically are closely related, they also can move separately, as in Italy and Ireland. The relationship between cabinet experience and government duration, however, is much less strong. We find unstable countries with high levels of experience (e.g., Italy) or low levels of experience (e.g., France IV), and we also find stable countries with high (e.g., Luxembourg) and low (e.g. Britain)

levels of experience. Not surprisingly, then, our analysis of the factors affecting cabinet experience finds that cabinet duration plays no role.

That same analysis also suggests that conventional claims about the distinction between majoritarian and proportional systems is misleading. In particular, in contrast to the usual understanding of the relationship between duration and the party system, we found that Westminster systems and single-party majorities are not conducive to high experience. As noted above, the overall relationship of the party system to experience is ambiguous though since we also found party system fractionalization decreases experience, but our predicted level of experience is lower in Westminster systems than in all but the most fractionalized proportional representation systems.

These interesting relationships are worthy of further investigation. On one hand, it seems possible that as the party system becomes more fractionalized, the size of parties in government will decline, and cross party conflict will increase. Such conflict across parties could lead to cabinet turnover and inexperience. On the other hand, single party majorities can only exist with large parties, which are likely to be heterogeneous. Our data suggest that such heterogeneous parties almost certainly undertake substantial reshuffles across the life of the government. The causes and incidence of re-shuffles is little studied, and may help us to understand our unexpected findings regarding Westminster governments. More generally, it would be useful to further examine experience at the party rather than individual level. In the fractionalized party systems, for example, individual experience could be low, but "party experience" -- the control of specific portfolios by specific parties - could be high. Our preliminary analysis of cabinet experience thus raises a host of interesting questions for further research at a less aggregated level.

Perhaps the most interesting question for further research is one we have not discussed at all- the optimal level of cabinet experience. Since the Fourth Republic has motivated much of our analysis, we have implied that more experience is better. More specifically, we have argued that cabinet experience may be a more valuable variable for understanding parliamentary government than is government duration. Cabinet experience can foster more effective decision-making by enhancing the policy expertise of ministers, by enhancing

their ability to forge compromises across parties and party factions, and by enhancing their ability to work effectively with civil servants. At the same time, the extreme of no turnover, and thus maximal experience, hardly seems ideal. Little rotation in government could lead to corruption, to iron triangles, to a lack of innovation, or to low satisfaction with democracy. Some turnover is obviously desirable. But the question of what sort of turnover and how much is a very difficult issue to address. We feel that the most useful pathway forward in this regard is to redress the imbalance between studies that look at the causes of instability - of which there are many - and studies that look at the consequences of instability and inexperience - of which there are few.

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Appendix 1. Experience and Stability Measures for Twenty Parliamentary Democracies*

	Before 1958		All Years		Decades Means		
	Political Experience	Portfolio Experience	Political Experience	Portfolio Experience	Political Experience	Portfolio Experience	Duration
Australia	1238.52 (8)	1240.93 (7)	1452.70 (10)	1160.42 (10)	992.98 (12)	912.75 (11)	669.66 (13)
Austria	1548.69 (3)	1471.64 (2)	1825.92 (4)	1590.46 (3)	1282.45 (3)	1208.33 (3)	878.19 (7)
Belgium	980.47 (12)	938.29 (12)	1434.65 (11)	1190.82 (9)	1014.73 (11)	913.75 (10)	528.32 (15)
Canada	1504.25 (4)	1404.60 (4)	1355.98 (14)	1024.37 (13)	865.69 (14)	775.78 (14)	944.50 (3)
Denmark	911.98 (13)	803.08 (13)	1458.52 (9)	1130.66 (12)	1017.21 (10)	929.63 (9)	636.07 (14)
Finland	760.85 (14)	645.74 (16)	1141.72 (16)	860.89 (16)	814.18 (17)	685.23 (18)	398.80 (17)
France IV	656.12 (17)	409.88 (18)	656.12 (20)	409.88 (20)	656.12 (20)	409.88 (20)	175.44 (20)
France V	608.41 (18)	410.92 (17)	968.46 (18)	777.68 (18)	828.94 (16)	739.42 (17)	502.00 (16)
Germany	1084.44 (11)	1043.89 (11)	1651.02 (6)	1395.45 (5)	1142.08 (5)	1037.23 (5)	686.46 (12)
Iceland	1356.40 (6)	1216.74 (8)	1964.88 (3)	1504.00 (4)	1312.76 (2)	1273.72 (2)	879.50 (6)
Ireland	1230.74	1135.23	1695.87	1147.48	1023.33	888.65	900.60

	(9)	(9)	(5)	(11)	(9)	(12)	(5)
Italy	761.29	660.12	1388.57	776.90	797.08	636.07	350.04
	(15)	(15)	(13)	(19)	(18)	(19)	(18)
Luxembourg	1641.26	1432.69	2570.31	2169.20	1534.08	1433.40	1121.75
	(2)	(3)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)
Netherlands	1158.57	1102.28	1390.24	1196.36	1055.19	990.09	904.90
	(10)	(10)	(12)	(8)	(7)	(7)	(4)
New Zealand	1315.73	1261.38	1617.36	1261 59	1096.32	1010.14	692.33
	(7)	(6)	(7)	(7)	(6)	(6)	(11)
Norway	1451.56	1399.58	1509.44	1308.96	1025.50	980.39	775.16
	(5)	(5)	(8)	(6)	(8)	(8)	(8)
Portugal	--	--	903.02	798.45	779.12	740.32	327.00
			(19)	(17)	(19)	(16)	(19
Spain	--	--	1060.29	962.25	862.73	814.10	750.00
			(17)	(14)	(15)	(13)	(9)
Sweden	1789.02	1479.79	2231.22	1746.18	1242.28	1140.29	725.13
	(1)	(1)	(2)	(2)	(4)	(4)	(10)
UK	739.80	694.48	1276.13	919 01	897.27	754.41	994.53
	(16)	(14)	(15)	(15)	(13)	(15)	(2)

* Numbers in parentheses are country rankings with (1) being the most stable country and (20) the least.

Rankings for measures before 1958 are based on 17 countries only. See text for explanation of how the different measures were calculated.

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[1] There are different ways of measuring cabinet duration (see below), and this number is based on data that is published in the European Journal of Political Research (Wolendorp et al 1998).

[2] Many factors have been uncovered that systematically influence levels of cabinet instability. See, for example, Warwick (1994) and citations therein.

[3] In contrast, LaPalombara (1958) suggests that if the French look to the "administrative arena as the place where the aggregation of group interests occurs.... [then] French society may, in fact, derive important benefits from the very patterns [of cabinet instability] that are frequently cited as injurious" (138).

[4] See Huber (1998), Huber (2000), Huber and Shipan (ND), Martínez-Gallardo (2001), and Simmons (1994) for the impact of cabinet turnover on policymaking.

[5] See Warwick (1994) for a careful discussion of the measurement of government duration. See Huber (1998) for a critique of the drawbacks of focusing on government duration.

[6] Summaries of our measures of political and portfolio experience, as well as the measures of cabinet duration for all countries are found in the Appendix.

[7] For both portfolio and political experience, we count *any* prior experience by a minister in a top ten portfolio. It does not have to be uninterrupted experience.

[8] We also calculated the measures using a third data set based on roughly the same period of the Fourth Republic, which begins with the first year for which we have data and ends in December 1957. The measures of experience for the most unstable countries (the Fourth Republic, Finland and Italy) and the most stable ones (Luxembourg, Austria and Sweden) are the same but the level of experience for other countries changes considerably. We include the measures of experience based on these data in the Appendix but do not discuss them at length since these data underline the fact that idiosyncratic factors can affect measures of experience in any given ten-year period.

[9] As before, the measure of duration used here is based on the *European Journal of Political Research* (Woldendorp et al 1998).

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[10] Some scholars argue that party systems that allow for the representation of more, and more diverse, groups contribute to regime stability. This need not be the case when studying *cabinet turnover* See Powell (1982) for a discussion.

[11] In fact, most arguments about portfolio allocation and number of parties refer to the percentage of cabinet positions awarded to each party in a government but have little to say about changes in this distribution within a single government. See, for example, Mershon (2001) and Warwick and Druckman (2000).

[12] New Zealand was a classic Westminster system for all but four years in our data set.

[13] Laver and Hunt's scale actually goes from 1 (policy payoffs) to 9 (office payoffs). We reverse coding of this variable to facilitate interpretation.

[14] The results are very similar when these countries are included along with a control for population.