Goodbye, Minister? The Accountability of Swedish Members of Government in Times of Crisis

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1. Accountability in Parliamentary Systems: Actors and Mechanisms

In theory, democratic power is accompanied by accountability. In practice the possibilities to hold political decision-makers accountable are of acute interest in democratic systems. Here, focus will be put on the principal-agent relationship between parliaments and Prime ministers (PM’s) and, respectively, between PM’s and ministers. The main aim of the study is to enhance our knowledge of the use and effectiveness of accountability mechanisms in parliamentary democracies. The single case-study presented may be viewed as a way of taking larger, comparative studies of accountability mechanisms (I think specifically of Strom et al 2003) one step further, making use of the case study’s possibilities of an empirically rich analysis, of detailed process tracing over time.

In recent public administration literature, accountability mechanisms are limited to hierarchical and external (to the agent) procedures while responsibility is defined as a feeling, “a sense of” responsibility, that is as something internal. (See for example de Leon 2004) This distinction is however seldom used by ministerial responsibility scholars, or by political scientists studying accountability/responsibility as a principal-agent problem. Here, “responsibility” or ”accountability” will not denote internal mechanisms. I find it reasonable to define accountability mechanisms as a multiple set of tools used by principals to make agents give an account of their actions. The ministers’ feelings are left out of the analysis. Here, accountability is studied as a procedure rather than an output. Strom et al suggests that accountability regimes can be studied as a (at least) three-dimensional phenomenon. Firstly, the ideal-type parliamentary chain of delegation serves as an analytical tool for studying both constitutions and constitutional practices. Secondly, we should focus on political parties and thirdly on constraints external to the parliamentary chain. (Strom et al 2003) Woodhouse suggests that when parliament is appointed the role of the sovereign principal, “accountability to the legislature is constitutionally of most significance”. But such a view does not prohibit that we, in a wider perspective, also
acknowledge that "government is held accountable through its responsibility to the party and through the electoral process and by the critical scrutiny of the mass media." (Woodhouse 1994, p. 3. See also Dewan & Dowding 2005)

From a political scientist’s point of view, the matter of which mechanism that is most important, constitutionally or politically significant or not, is of course an empirical question. Here I acknowledge the necessary distinction between constitutional mechanisms and the ones actors use on informal or private arenas outside the parliamentary chain of delegation. To uphold the distinction in the empirical analysis will require some effort. Consider for example the political parties, actors that are both parliamentary "insiders” with access to constitutional procedures, and "civil" organisations with their own ways to hold the party elite (party leadership, the PM and the ministers) accountable.

Apparently, the relative effectiveness of constitutional and other types of mechanisms are not obvious. Empirical evidence suggests that constitutional requirements regarding (in some sense) a minister’s portfolio are not the sole, or the most important, reason for ministers to resign. Comparing case studies carried out in Australia, Canada and Australia, Thompson and Tillotsen conclude that

If individual ministerial responsibility ever meant that ministers were expected to resign for major policy blunders or for serious errors of maladministration by a government department, it is dead. […] Even with a smoking gun placed clearly in the hands of a minister, a leader will attempt to tough-it-out. Much depends on whether the individual minister is a ‘mate’ of the leader and on the extent to which the issue has ‘legs’ politically. Factors that influence the political vitality of an issue include whether parliament is sitting and whether there is enthusiastic, consistent media coverage. If there is enough pressure and if there is evidence that toughing-it-out is damaging the leadership or the government, then the minister will be asked to resign as a damage limitation strategy. (Thompson & Tillotsen 1999, p. 57)

Given the study quoted above, a reasonable hypothesis is that relative effectiveness of different accountability mechanisms is influenced by the strategic actions of elite players and the contextual factors they perceive as relevant.

2. The Case Study

Here accountability mechanisms are studied in a single-case, pilot study of the Swedish Minister of Justice, Anna-Greta Leijon, who resigned in the aftermath of the murder of Prime Minister Olof Palme. The need of detailed case studies of mechanisms has been argued above. In this section I will discuss the pros and cons of the type of case chosen and argue the fruitfulness of studying accountability mechanisms in a Swedish context.

First of all, the accountability mechanisms are studied in the context of crisis¹. Knowing very little about the mechanisms for accountability used under different

¹ The definition of a crisis used here is a situation not only characterised by a sense of emergency, what puts it apart from emergencies are that events take place in an environment heavily challenged with uncertainty. As crisis management research shows us, pre-existing rules and norms may be of no use under dramatic circumstances. Sundelius 2001, Stern 2001 Further, in some cases, there are no officially stated norms available for ex post- investigators of governmental actions. This implies that rules are created ad hoc, a suspicion that increases
circumstances, a dramatic setting seems to be the right place to start an empirical investigation. The mechanisms will be easier to detect when someone’s (alleged) failures and virtues are openly criticised, and perceived of as important. In such a situation, accountability issues will be at fore in both discussions and strategies. Second, in comparison with other parliamentary democracies, Sweden represents no obvious or extreme circumstances that limit our use of the single-case study. At least this holds for the dimensions that Strom et al labels "partisan" and "external" constraints. (Strom et al 2003, p. 700, figure 22.2) But what then about the Swedish constitutional framework? The Swedish case is a less obvious choice when scrutinised from a constitutional point of view. On the other hand, all parliamentary democracies vary in relation to the ideal type, and each other. (Strom et al 2003) A reasonable conclusion is that Sweden is extreme only in one constitutional dimension, or one step in the chain of delegation: the relationship between cabinet and state agencies. The Swedish constitution can be described as an ideal-type of parliamentary democracy. (Bergman 2003) Considering constitutional practice we may note the following:

1. **Appointing and dismissing cabinets:** since no vote of investiture is required, Swedish parliamentarism is of the negative type. In practice, the PM-candidate suggested by the Speaker is always accepted. An uncommon demand is that support of no confidence votes requires an absolute majority. Since the 1970’s, a handful votes of no confidence have been cast, none of which were successful. Also, any governmental proposal can be presented as a confidence vote. The results of extra elections are only valid until the next scheduled election. Notably, this possible check on the legitimacy of government has only been used once (in 1958) since the 1940’s. (von Sydow 1997, pp. 15ff; Bergman 2003, Bergman 1995, pp.43ff; 2004, p. 206f)

2. **Scrutiny and questions:** Swedish MPs can pose questions and interpellations to the cabinet, and some member of cabinet is obliged to answer, in some cases in written statements, or orally. The effect of demanding such accounts is mainly indirect, via the potential attention of the media. Nevertheless, MPs use these instruments with an increasing frequency. (Bergman 2004, Mattson 1994, pp. 285ff) The same conclusion may hold for the scrutiny conducted by the Standing Committee on the Constitution. Given that the government party dominates the committee, its effectiveness is questionable. This does not stop MPs from using its services. (Hammargren 2002)

our interest in the mechanisms actually at play. Besides applying rules *ad hoc*, decision-makers may also be tempted to use un-conventional methods and procedures in trying to solve a crisis-related problem. As Stefan Olsson has suggested, ignoring routines or the rule of law can have a negative effect on the outcome, Olsson 2003

The Swedish parliament has obviously not been eager to challenge government through the use of no confidence votes. This lack of parliamentary action is perhaps surprising considering that Swedish governments, during the period of 1917-2002, on average had a 41.5 % support in parliament. As been noted by Lewin, Swedish parliamentarism usually builds on consensus, negotiations and minority governments seeking support from one or more parties in a multi-party system. At the same time, the sometimes harsh competition between the left and right wing parties divided parliament in two distinct blocs that resemble the competitors in a two-party system., Lewin 1996, pp. 41ff; 2002, pp 21ff; Bergman 2003.
3. The Swedish model of administration: The executive is divided in two, formally distinct, entities. Government departments are separated from the state agencies, and the latter given a high degree of discretion that is specified and protected by the constitution. Further, individual members of cabinet have no formal mandate to control state agencies since the government acts as a collective. The high degree of agency discretion and the non-existent individual power executed by ministers raises questions of the possibility to hold ministers and/or the cabinet as a whole responsible for the executive branch of government. In practice, however, Swedish parliamentarism may be functioning as any main stream parliamentary democracy. (Wockelberg 2003, Lindbom et al 2001)

Let me now turn to what we may call “the P’s of ministerial accountability”, and discuss the actors and mechanisms in the case study. First, a stating of the obvious: the people has an urgent interest in the political destiny of ministers, but its resources are limited to general elections and the potential power that lies in being regarded as an influential opinion by the media and/or the politicians. Public opinion is given different weight by different parties, due to ideological factors or their position in parliament. (Isberg 1999, s. 102) Here, the people-mechanism will be represented by any explicit references made by the political elite or media to the public opinion’s view of the minister/issue that is discussed. Parliaments and parliament are obvious candidates for the job of throwing rascals out. Here, I describe the work of the Standing Committee on the Constitution as well as any individual initiative taken by MPs. Further, the party groups in parliament present an interesting object of study. The political parties have potentially crucial parts to play in accountability procedures. There are numerous ways that ministers can be assets or liabilities to their own party. The question of who to appoint or dismiss is not only of importance for the PM but also for the party elite in a wider sense, other members of cabinet, party officials and the parliamentary party-group. This is to a large extent true also in the Swedish context. The main source for my description of party elites will be the politicians themselves; namely their autobiographies and statements made to the press. The dramatic events of interest here are described by several key players and not always in unison. This means that even if this kind of data is tendentious, it is probably possible to discover biased statements. Finally, the role of the media is operationalised as the way the press describes and judges ministers and their actions. The capture of any causal impact the press may have on the destiny of ministers needs other types of data than the press clips studied here. However, these will be able to tell us how one important actor defines the notion of accountability. The press clips will also be used to describe other actors’ rhetorical strategies and the events taking place.

3 Even though the larger of the Swedish parties have been found to be internally oligarchic (Teorell 1998), no government is served by severe critique from its own parliamentary party group. That is probably one reason to why almost all Swedish parties require loyalty from its members, also from the MP:s. Isberg 1999, p. 86, 185. This is certainly the case in the Social Democratic Party, whose MP’s have been described as “the loyal ones” in a recent study on party culture in the Swedish parliament, the Riksdag. Barrling 2004.

4 A way of developing this part of the study is to focus media coverage in its true sense, that is adding TV broadcasts to the data. The reason for this is obvious: TV can be said to have a more important impact on the public than the press. But given the limited resources at hand, collecting data from press databases is the less time-consuming strategy hence chosen.
3. Minister of Justice Anna-Greta Leijon and the Murder of Olof Palme

Introduction

Social Democratic Minister of Justice Anna-Greta Leijon turned in her resignation in June of 1988. Obviously, both Leijon and the Social Democratic party elite regarded the resignation as temporary. Leijon’s exit was accompanied by an explicit promise by Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson to put Leijon back in the cabinet after the election the coming fall. However, Carlsson got cold feet just weeks before the election, and turned his back on Leijon. Before we take a closer look at the actors and mechanisms of accountability at work in this specific case, let us briefly consider the main events in what came to be known as “the Ebbe Carlsson affair”.

Investigating a Murder

The murder of Prime Minister Olof Palme constituted a crisis, both in a short- and a long-term sense of the word. The murder of the PM on a street in downtown Stockholm caused an acute state of emergency and uncertainty. The murder investigation that followed the dramatic events of February 1986 did not go well and can be considered as 'long term crisis management'. The need to clarify the motives and catch the murderer became a question of the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Swedish government, the police and the secret police. (Hansén 2003) Due to the duality of the Swedish executive, this was, in a formal sense, not the problem of either the government as a whole or the Minister of Justice. The cabinet and its individual members are prohibited by law to interfere with the actions carried out by police, the district attorney and the courts. At the same time cabinet members defined an obligation of keeping themselves "informed" of the "developments". In practice this meant that the government sent representatives to observe the meetings of the investigators. In the mind of Leijon it also meant to listen to an old acquaintance that claimed to know things of importance for the murder investigation, former Department of Justice employee (now in the publishing business) Ebbe Carlsson. Ebbe Carlsson briefed the Minister of Justice in March of 1988, handing over information that implicated the secret police as incompetent and/or negligent. According to PM Ingvar Carlsson and Leijon, Ebbe Carlsson’s story had to be scrutinised, given its troublesome implications.

Writing a Letter

Using the terminology of Thompson and Tillotsen, Leijon had a gun in her lap and it was smoking when a journalist on the daily Expressen started to show interest in the contacts between Ebbe Carlsson and the government. The smoking gun turned out to be double-piped. Firstly, the mere contacts between Leijon and the semi-private investigator Ebbe Carlsson raised some sceptical questions. Why was the government encouraging private investigators? Secondly, a most concrete evidence of prohibited ministerial control surfaced when Leijon admitted to the writing of a letter of recommendation to Ebbe Carlsson, signed in her capacity as Minister of Justice. The letter was not discussed with the whole cabinet, and hence an obvious violation of the constitutional demand of collective decision-making. A further embarrassing circumstance was that Leijon failed to register the letter until it made headlines. A
sensational event followed the news of the letter of recommendation: Ebbe Carlsson’s bodyguard, a policeman, got caught attempting to smuggle an illegal surveillance-device into Sweden. When questioned, the bodyguard/police man referred to the top-level of the secret police. The intriguing connections between Leijon, Ebbe Carlsson, illegal surveillance devices, smuggling and the secret police seemed to serve the press Leijon’s head on a silver platter.

**Winning an Election?**

A general election was to be held only months after the Ebbe Carlsson-affair surfaced: in the backdrop to the affair, the political parties prepared and implemented their election campaigns. The strategy of the opposition was to get rid of Leijon, and then to perform a parliamentary committee investigation, as soon as possible. The Social Democrats faced a more delicate situation than the rest of the parties since the dismissal of a member of cabinet can be perceived as a failure. And, at least in the beginning of the affair, Leijon held a strong position in the party. Leijon’s popularity gave the PM the awkward option of pleasing the opposition while upsetting the members of his own party. Eventually, Leijon’s actions started to rub off on the PM.

**The Social Democratic Party: Friends and Foes**

**The Social Democratic Grass Rots**

Different members of the party elite claim to have acted on their perceptions of party members’ views on the Ebbe Carlsson-affair. Of course, we should not expect the elite to state that they ignored the grass roots’ opinions. In the first phase of the affair (beginning of June of 1988) the party elite concluded that Leijon enjoyed strong support among party members. Hence, Ingvar Carlsson had to move carefully so as not to step on any of the Leijon-friendly toes. In the second phase, after Leijon’s resignation, the interpretation of party member support changed. In the PM’s memoirs, Carlsson refers to a poll indicating that the public’s political preferences were not influenced by the affair. (Carlsson 2003, pp 55ff, 68; Petersson 1999, p. 315, 328f; Feldt 1991, p. 374)

**The Party Elite: Initial Support**

The party elite was not uniform in its attitude towards Leijon, not amongst themselves and not over time. In the beginning of June (the first phase) the problem was to decide whether Leijon should resign or not. During the period after Leijon’s resignation until the beginning of September (the second phase), the question was whether Leijon’s planned come back was a wise idea or not.

Leijon’s “fans” were to be found among the powerful members of the inner circle surrounding the PM Ingvar Carlsson. These members of the party elite found the accusations of misconduct on Leijon’s behalf formally correct, but her behaviour excusable. The Social Democratic doctrine of accountability was pragmatically rather than principally oriented: political conditions decided when constitutional misconduct was a sufficient ground for resignation. (Lidbom 1990, p. 116) Leijon’s good intention – to catch Palme’s murderer –was underlined rather than her unconstitutional conduct. The PM Ingvar Carlsson admits to have taken the Committee of the Constitution’s critique of Leijon lightly, not letting it influence his view of Leijon as an asset in a future government. (Carlsson 2003, 103) And one of the PM’s closest men, Minister of Industry Thage G Peterson’s conclusion is that “the
formal and constitutional [aspects] were given far too much consideration”. (Peterson 199, p. 331, my translation) Leijon herself have made no objections regarding the formal version of her misconduct; she wrote the letter to Ebbe Carlsson, and it was not constitutionally correct to do so. Nevertheless, the reactions and “years of condemnation” that followed surprised her. (Leijon 1991, p. 290, for the quote see p. 297, my translation) The fact that the PM and the inner circle were intent to forgive and forget manifested itself in the temporary note on which Leijon resigned. Leijon had to go, given the threat of a non-confidence vote but a come back to an important ministerial post accompanied the resignation. (Carlsson 2003, pp. 57ff; 66; Peterson 1999, pp. 315ff; Leijon 1991, p. 298) The PM was intent not to let the opposition dictate the terms of ministerial accountability and has described the come back plan as a conscious provocation aimed at the opposition. (Carlsson 2003, p. 103)

Leijon’s and the PM’s media strategies apparently was to keep repeating the “good intentions-argument”. Leijon put her aim to solve the Palme-murder at the fore, claiming that Ebbe Carlsson’s information was too interesting to be overshadowed by the recently revealed smuggling affair. She repeatedly told the world that Ebbe Carlsson worked for the police, pointing out the police as the responsible party. (DN 2/6 1988; DN 4/6 1988; DN 8/6 1988) Leijon stuck to the claim that Ebbe Carlsson’s information was important as well as to her “good intentions”-argument to the bitter end. (DN 5/6 1988; DN 6/6 1988) Commenting on the letter of recommendation given to Ebbe Carlsson, Leijon admitted that the letter was a sign of bad judgement on her behalf (DN 4/6 1988), and later called it her one, formal, mistake. (DN 8/6)

Announcing her actual resignation, Leijon claimed that the decision was not taken until it became clear that there was a majority for a no confidence-vote in Parliament. Leijon claimed that the only reason for her resignation was that the opposition forced her to leave. This statement could be viewed as a strategy to downplay the accusations of constitutional and legal misconduct. But it could also indicate that Leijon’s primary concerns were political: she was not ready to consider herself responsible for something so serious that it was reasonable to resign. Leijon underlined her important role in the up-coming election campaign when commenting on her future. (DN 8/6 1988)

The PM did not comment on the affair during the first days. His first response was one of openly defending Leijon, giving her credit for being a competent Minister of Justice and dedicated to solve the Palme murder. The PM underlined the great support Leijon had among fellow Social Democrats in the Parliament. And on the day of her resignation, Ingvar Carlsson announced his come back plan for Leijon, describing her as an asset. (DN 4/6 1988; DN 7/6 1988; DN 8/6 1988) Another part of Ingvar Carlsson’s media strategy was to signal that he respected the parliamentary processes available for Leijon’s critics. The PM refused to comment on the effect of a no confidence vote before it was actually demanded by the opposition. (DN 6/6 1988; DN 7/6 1988) This strategy of being quiet and distanced changed dramatically after Leijon’s resignation. Now, the PM launched an attack on the opposition, accusing the opposition leaders of being hypocrites and of turning Leijon’s fate into a campaign issue. The PM tried to turn the negative attention away from the government, to the

5 The conclusions are based on an analysis of the daily news paper Dagens Nyheter (DN).
opposition leaders. A new way of describing Leijon, as an almost-victim of terrorism, may have been an attempt to do exactly this. (DN 8/6 1988)

Commenting on his own involvement, The PM denied any knowledge of the letter of recommendation or the private funding of Ebbe Carlsson’s investigation, but admitted to knowing about the investigation as such. (DN 4/6 1988; DN 6/6 1988) The PM’s message about the letter of recommendation was in sum that it was a mistake, and in his eyes Leijon’s only mistake. (DN 8/6 1988)

"How could you, Ingvar?"

As will be noted below, Ingvar Carlsson has taken pains to demonstrate his respect for the formal parliamentary mechanisms of ministerial responsibility used by his own party in the Committee on the Constitution. The same appreciation has, however, not been extended to another critic: Birgitta von Otter, at the time the Minister of Finance’s Press Secretary. The issue causing the PM’s wrath was a chronicle titled “How could you, Ingvar?”, signed by von Otter. In Carlsson’s mind this “open letter” undermined his and the party leadership’s legitimacy. (Carlsson 2003, pp 68ff) Von Otter’s own position, close to the cabinet, made her publicly stated critique of the PM’s support of Leijon a politically sensitive issue. Further, the fact that von Otter’s husband was the Minister of Finance did nothing to help public relations-wise. Did or did not the government support the PM’s come back plan for Leijon?

According to himself Kjell-Olof Feldt, the minister of Finance and von Otter’s husband, shared his wife’s critical view but chose to publicly back his PM for two reasons. First, he disagreed with von Otter’s method, with her going public with her views on the affair. Second, he tried to discourage speculations about a conflict among cabinet members. (Feldt 1991, p. 374) Feldt subscribed to the Social Democratic norm of keeping up appearances of unity. This norm did not apply to the internal discussions among ministers. Feldt did not hesitate to make critical remarks on both Carlsson and Leijon to other members of cabinet. (Peterson 1999, p. 330) Feldt even put his own future as a minister at risk when he declared - to the PM - that he under no circumstances would be part of a government that included Leijon. Come back for Leijon would mean an exit for Feldt. (Carlsson 2003, pp. 96f)

During the summer of 1988, Thage G Peterson registered a growing uneasiness among the members of the party elite, the government and among party members in general. What seems to have been an internal lobby campaign hit Peterson in his capacity of being Ingvar Carlsson’s “gate keeper”. Party Secretary Bo Toresson and Foreign Minister Sten Andersson tried to convince Peterson that the government had to distance itself from Leijon. Nothing less than the chances of winning the election were at stake. Peterson claims to have shared this analysis. His reluctance to act according to the conclusions stemmed from the suspicion that an abandonment of Leijon could be interpreted as a critique of the PM. (Peterson 1999, p. 329)

The Social Democratic doctrine of accountability was pragmatic: political circumstances rather than formal/legal ones were to decide the political destiny of Leijon. The initial elite support of a strategic resignation followed by a quick come back diminished over time. Feldt’s ultimatum may have mattered in Carlsson’s

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6 In 1977, Kommando Siegfrid Hauser (German terrorists) planned to kidnap Leijon but the “Operation Leo” was revealed and stopped.

7 Aftonbladet 13/7 1988.
decision to back away from the promise of quick come back. And it is possible that the doubts emerging in the inner circle caused the change of strategy. According to Carlsson himself though, it was the reactions of the parliamentary part of the party that mattered the most.

The Parliament

The Social Democratic Party Group in Parliament

In the early days of the affair, the PM visited the party group in the Riksdag. The purpose of the visit was to inform the MPs of his views on the opposition’s demands for Leijon’s resignation and the threat of a no confidence-vote. According to Carlsson three Social Democratic MPs demanded Leijon’s resignation. At the following press conference the PM told the press that party group support for Leijon was strong. (Carlsson 2003, pp. 55ff)

Who were the “critical three”, and how shall we interpret their demands? As it turns out, there is some confusion even in regards to the more literal version of the first question 8. Further, commentators have drawn different conclusions of the incident itself. The PM claims to have found “strong” support for Leijon. (Carlsson 2003, pp. 55ff) while one critical MP, Bo Södersten argues that the harsh critique made the day of the meeting “the most memorable day of my nine years as a Member of Parliament”. (Södersten 1997, my translation) According to Södersten, Carlsson lied at the press conference, exaggerating the party group support. Södersten’s conclusion is that, in such a loyalty prone party as the Social Democrats, three critical MP’s was something remarkable. (Södersten 1997) This however was not the conclusion of Thage G Peterson, whose analysis at the time included the possibility to “persuade” one of the harshest critics, Hans-Göran Franck, to back off. (Peterson 1999, p. 316f) Considering the critique that Franck shared with the public via the press, Thage G Peterson’s analysis seems somewhat unrealistic. Backing away from publicly expressed accusations would have been politically costly for Franck. Commenting on the resignation Södersten, described it as strengthening for the party, a positive effect that would have been larger if Leijon had left earlier. (DN 7/6 1988; DN 8/6 1988)

Did Carlsson exaggerate the party group support when dealing with the media in the beginning of June? Carlsson admits that his parliamentary concerns at the time were not limited to the opposition. The PM was not sure that all Social Democrats would vote with the party in a no confidence-vote. (Carlsson 2003, p. 57) And according to Leijon, Carlsson was influenced by the party group also when he decided to re-consider Leijon’s come back as a member of the cabinet. (Leijon 1991, p. 298)

The members of the Social Democratic party group in the Riksdag stand out “loyalty wise” among members of other, internally loyal, parties. (Barrling-Hermansson 2004) This taboo of publicly expressed critique indicates that we should not expect to find critical MPs expressing their views in public. The Social

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8 While some sources remember the critical three to consist of Bo Södersten, Hans-Göran Franck and Margareta Persson in Stockholm, see Carlsson 2003, pp 55ff and Södersten 1997, others claim that Monica Andersson and not Margareta Persson was the third member of the group, see Peterson 1999, p. 316f. The daily news paper Dagens Nyheter also mentions Nilsson from Uddevalla as a member of the critical group, DN 8/61988.
Democratic view on loyalty also implicates that a small amount of open criticism of a minister could be a sign of a widespread lack of support.

**The Social Democrats in the Standing Committee on the Constitution**

According to Ingvar Carlsson it was not the critique of the Committee on the Constitution as such that made him change his mind regarding Leijon’s come back. Rather, another event that took place the same day as the Committee presented its preliminary findings played a decisive role in the matter: the Social Democratic chairman of the committee, Olle Svensson, publicly expressed his doubts regarding the quick comeback strategy. Would the opposition accept a government containing Leijon? (Carlsson 2003, pp. 96f, p. 103)

Olle Svensson was in his capacity of chairman of the committee a symbol of parliamentary control and hence a person who attracted a lot of media attention. At the same time, Svensson was a Social Democrat9, and as such left to deal with the true or false expectations of his own party, the opposition and the public. The game played by the chairman and the cabinet can be viewed as a struggle for power between the parliament and the government.

Olle Svensson announced his views already on the day after the affair surfaced, when parliament happened to debate the yearly scrutiny of the government. Olle Svensson was reported to have tried to avoid debate on the new affair. According to Svensson, any inappropriate conduct on behalf of the government would be subject to future scrutiny. For now Olle Svensson wanted to drop it and underlined that the police was the responsible party for engaging Ebbe Carlsson in the investigation. (DN 3/6 1988) Later on, DN quoted Svensson to have said that the right strategy was not to let Leijon resign, but to fight the opposition. Obviously, Svensson took an early stand on the accountability doctrine when arguing that the use of unconventional methods was to be excused in Leijon’s case. Svensson repeated the good intentions-argument used by both Leijon and Ingvar Carlsson. (DN 7/6 1988)

Svensson’s view was, according to himself, that the PM’s prerogative to appoint ministers included also the come back of Leijon. But Svensson made two types of analysis: the formal version of the PM’s right to form the government was one thing, the realpolitik of parliamentarism another. Svensson doubted that the opposition would accept a government containing Leijon as soon as after the election in 1988. Accordingly and as early as July 1988, Svensson presented Carlsson with a way out of the promise of a come back. Svensson now suggested that the PM withdrew his promise with reference to the fact that Leijon was yet to be scrutinised by the parliament. (Svensson 1992, p. 211, 264ff)

The Social Democrats in the Committee did not hesitate to find Leijon guilty of ministerial control. (KU 1988/89:30) And none of the sources available indicate that the party elite thought differently. But the way the committee handled the investigation soon became debated. Svensson’s ambition to avoid “party politics” by postponing the scrutiny to some time after the election was not easily fulfilled. The opposition accused Svensson of being a mere puppet on the government string and the attempts to co-operate with the opposition were criticised by Social Democrats. Also, members of the government and their staff did not hesitate to discuss the committee’s work with Svensson, neither did he seem to find this improper. These talks concerned

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9 In 1988, the Committee chair was still occupied by the largest, in practice the government party. Today the role of chairman is given to a member of the opposition.
both the timing of the investigation and the interpretation of Leijon’s actions. On the latter matter Svensson consulted Leijon’s State secretary, Sten Heckscher, who kept his job in the department after Leijon’s resignation. In Svensson’s mind, Heckscher was not to be considered “involved” in the affair, and hence could serve the purpose of discussion partner to the committee chairman. (Svensson 1993, pp 207ff, 220f, 226)

Obviously, Svensson was exposed to some crossfire between his own party and the opposition. The way Svensson motivates the close relationship with the government indicates that he underestimated – or did not care about - the way it may have undermined his chances of being convincingly impartial as committee chair. Another possible interpretation is that he was under a lot of pressure from the party elite, and that it is the norm of loyalty that is speaking in his and others accounts of the situation. Not only Svensson but also Carlsson appear eager to tell a story of mutual respect rather than conflict. (Carlsson 2003) Nevertheless, allowing some speculation, Svensson’s suggestion to the PM in July (back away from Leijon) can be perceived as an attempt to underline the parliament’s supremacy over the government, at least if we regard the initiative as an early warning. There was at least one point of real difference between Svensson and Carlsson: Svensson considered the promise of quick come back a politically impossible strategy. The opposition would not accept a government containing Leijon. (Svensson 1993, pp. 264ff)

The media was not soft on Svensson or the committee. Paradoxically, this attention may have increased Svensson’s influence over the outcome. Ingvar Carlsson has claimed that Svensson’s publicly expressed doubts was the final and most devastating blow to the come back plan. Apparently Leijon draw the same conclusion as Carlsson. (Carlsson 2003, p. 96; Leijon 1991, pp. 302ff) These statements may be interpreted as a way of symbolically acknowledging parliamentary supremacy: at least it is improbable that a PM would admit to the opposite. What Carlsson actually says about the influence of parliament, is that the publicly announced lack of support from Svensson was the issue of concern, not the way he or the committee decided in the matter of Leijon. (Carlsson 2003)

The Opposition

The right-wing opposition parties made, according to DN, their first moves when the annual investigation of the government and the ministers was debated in Parliament the first day of phase one. This is interesting material since it contains the party representatives in the Standing Committee on the Constitution early statements about the affair. These MP’s are to be considered party spokespersons on constitutional issues.

Earlier in the spring of 1988, the Conservative Party demanded that the government’s actions in relation to the murder investigation should be scrutinised. The demand was denied, and now conservative MP Anders Björck accused the government of trying to cover-up the Ebbe Carlsson-affair. Liberal party MP Birgit Friggebo was quoted to have supported the use of unconventional methods, but not any that involved Ebbe Carlsson, the former “hospital spy”10. Centre party MP Bertil Fiskesjö did not approve of the “parallel organisation”, and agreed with Friggebo that Ebbe Carlsson’s record made him unsuitable for assignments. (DN 2/6 1988)

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10 This was not the first time Ebbe Carlsson was involved in an un-conventional crime investigation, and his reputation was not the best in some circles.
Throughout phase one, a part of the right-wing opposition’s general media strategy seems to have been to leak information on the meetings between the opposition and Leijon and/or the PM, using the press to expose discrepancies or lies on behalf of the government. For example, the centre Party leader Olof Johansson was quoted to say that he was surprised that the PM defended Leijon, since he had told the right wing parties that he had knew to little to be able to decide on her destiny. (DN 4/6 1988)

On June 3rd the right-wing parties demanded Leijon’s resignation. Let us take a closer look at the arguments put forward for this demand. None of the opposition parties fell for the good intentions-argument. Instead they focused on the legal and constitutional aspects of the affair and on the use of “secret” and unconventional methods. The Conservative Party leader Carl Bildt repeatedly accused the government to pose a threat to the rule of law, and to law and order in Sweden. (DN 5/6 1988; DN 6/6 1988; 8/6 1988) The Swedish model of administration was defended or at least used to criticise the government. The right-wing parties probably hoped for a voluntary resignation, at least they hesitated to call a vote of no confidence. Liberal party leader Bengt Westerberg and Centre party leader Olof Johansson was quoted to prefer accountability via the election to a vote of no confidence. (DN 4/6 1988; DN 5/6 1988; DN 6/6 1988)

Why did the right-wing parties hesitate to call the vote? There may have been several reasons to hesitate, among which the most important probably was the delayed reaction of the Communist Party. It is of course politically unwise to demand a vote that you are not sure to win, and no one so far knew what the Communist Party’s views were. The party leader, Lars Werner, was not present during the first days of phase one, and MP Jörn Svensson acted as party spokesman in the press, demanding answers to questions about the legality of Ebbe Carlsson’s assignment and detailed information on the letter. (DN 5/6 1988) On the 6th of June, the Communist party group leader in parliament, Bertil Måbrink, was quoted to say that his personal opinion was that Leijon should resign. Perhaps it is fair to say that 1) the Communist party was stalling for time, waiting for the inner circle to decide how to act; and 2) that the Communists tried to appear as reasonable and thorough, like a party that did not jump to any conclusions. Further, the Communists were reluctant to participate in anything that could bring the whole government down. (DN 7/6 1988)

The right-wing parties were less careful than the communists and apparently tried to put some of the blame for the affair on the PM. They all expressed their discontent with Ingvar Carlsson’s defence and support of Leijon. Their basic argument was that Leijon’s guilt and bad judgement rubbed off on the PM as long as he backed her up. (DN 5/6 1988; DN 7/6 1988) After announcing the decision to cast a vote against Leijon, the Liberal party leader Westerberg was quoted to have said that continued support of Leijon from the PM would turn the vote against the whole government. (DN 7/6 1988) The Communist leader Werner did not find such an outcome “reasonable” and refused to make any promises of supporting it. On the other hand he made sure that it was publicly known that he objected to any “black-mail attempts” from the government. A threat (from the PM) to let the whole government resign would not make the Communists abstain from voting against Leijon. (DN 7/6 1988)

The outcome of phase one, the resignation, was as noted above accompanied by an attempt to portray the opposition as “bad guys”, chasing a minister with good intentions. Apparently, the strategy had at least one effect, intentional or not. According to the Liberal Party Leader Westerberg himself, it “pissed him off”. (DN 8/6 1988, my translation) The right-wing parties launched a counter attack. An upset
Westerberg told the press that the PM was “rude” in implying that right-wing politicians did not care about solving the Palme murder or fighting terrorism. The PM was arrogant and cared less for democracy and rule of law than for his mates in the Social Democratic party. And further, the PM and Leijon consciously had misled the opposition party leaders on at least “a couple occasions”; and that neither the PM or Leijon seemed to understand that Leijon’s behaviour was unconstitutional. The right-wing colleagues joined in, defending the opposition’s actions as a fulfilling of a duty: to preserve the rule of law. (DN 8/6 1988) The material lacks statements from the Communist party leader but Communist MP Bo Hammar expressed his great relief when hearing about the resignation. Apparently Hammar would have found it hard to vote against Leijon and was glad that he would not have to. DN concluded that more parties than the Social Democrats had cohesion problems concerning the vote of no confidence. (DN 8/6 1988)

The Standing Committee on the Constitution: Investigating a Former Minister

The Standing Committee on the Constitution started its investigation after Leijon’s resignation. As have been noted above, the right wing opposition tried to call in Parliament over the summer to deal with the accusations as soon as possible, a solution that Chairman Olle Svensson found improper. Since the political dimension of the committee’s scrutiny was decided by Parliament, it was reasonable to postpone the scrutiny until after the election. We can conclude that procedure became a source of conflict among - and inside - some parties. The Committee’s secretariat was instructed to spend the summer collecting data. And most importantly, the Committee conducted televised hearings with the PM, Leijon and other key actors during the summer. Further, outside the routine, the Committee decided to give its preliminary views on the affair on September the first 1988 (the scheduled decision was due during the spring of 1989). Hence, there are two versions\textsuperscript{11} of the Committee’s decision that differ fundamentally on important issues. This is probably explained by the new parliamentary situation, which indicates that the election mattered for the outcome of the Committee’s investigation. It can also be, at least to some extent, a result of the developments, new information and strategic action on behalf of the actors that took place during the fall of 1988.

The Committee defined the aim of the investigation as answering the following questions: (1) Were the contacts between Leijon and Ebbe Carlsson proper? (2) Did Leijon act in ways that were or could be considered to be part of the murder investigation? (3) Did Leijon try to influence the murder investigation, or act in such a way that she could be perceived as trying to? (4) Should Leijon have extended her attempts to inform the prosecutors of Ebbe Carlsson’s investigation? (5) Did Leijon or the PM act to check Ebbe Carlsson’s information, and if so did they do it without the government’s support?

A debated issue was whether Leijon’s intentions when writing the letter should be considered relevant in the interpretation of the legality of the action. The Social Democratic argued that it should, while the opposition was against. Writing the final version, the Social Democrats were defeated on this point. The critique of Leijon changed from the preliminary version to the actual decision. In the final version, the Social Democrats found themselves in minority and the Committee’s critique on Leijon was more severe than in the draft. The critique regarding the letter of

\textsuperscript{11} These are called, respectively KU 1988/89:30, \textit{draft} and KU 1988/89:30.
recommendation got harsher in the final version as did the Committee’s view of Leijon’s (neglected) contacts with the prosecutors.

The Press

The analysis of press data is here limited to the period between the second of June 1988 when the contacts between Ebbe Carlsson and Leijon was first made public, and the 8th of June 1988, the day after Leijon’s resignation. Only one newspaper is analysed, Sweden’s most widespread daily Dagens Nyheter (DN). Front-page coverage is used as an indicator of media interest and the political importance of the issue. Editorial material is studied as principally and politically oriented comments on the events and a manifest version of the paper’s views on the matter. An assumption is that editors are trying to influence politicians and/or public opinion. In the same way, debate articles can be considered to be manifest statements from important (in the eyes of the editor) actors trying to influence public opinion. The news articles have as noted above been used as sources in the analysis of the actors’ actions and reactions. In this section however, they will be analysed as interesting in themselves.

Front Page Coverage

The supposed wrongdoings of Leijon, the reactions from the opposition and the Social Democratic party, as well as related stories about Ebbe Carlsson and the police, made front page headlines everyday during the period12. Even though not comparable with another case at this stage of the project, the data can be interpreted as a sign of high media interest.

The Views of the Editors and Debate Articles

The editors were quick to discuss Leijon in terms of bad judgement, but needed a few days to formulate the critique in constitutional terms. This is perhaps explained by the fact that the letter of recommendation and its contents initially was un-known. Knowing the exact phrasing of the letter, it became possible to claim that Leijon’s actions were constitutionally incorrect. Further, the editors criticised the strategy of the Social Democratic party elite to bring forth Leijon’s good intentions. The editors did not express any straightforward demands on Leijon’s resignation, but speculated in its timing. (DN 2/6; 3/6; 4/6 1988) We should also note the early critique of the PM for being involved in or at least informed of, the activities and for his defence Leijon. The editors accused the PM of being both constitutionally and politically nonchalant and warned him of the consequences of such a stand. (DN 5/6 1988)

Some remarks on the proper mechanisms for cases like Leijon’s were made. Early on, the editors discussed the weak Swedish mechanisms for accountability and the Standing Committee on the Constitution’s dealings with another case. (DN 2/6 1988; DN 3/6 1988) Obviously, the editors preferred accountability through the electoral mechanism and argued that a vote of no confidence was an inferior method.

On the 7th of June the editors predicted that Leijon would resign within days. (She actually did, later the same day.) The editors did not explicitly demand that Leijon should resign. Instead they continued to argue that some of the blame should be put on the PM. The editors discussed the possibility that Leijon could bring the rest of the

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12 A quick peak at the data concerning the following months, covering the whole of June, July and August, we find that the affair made front page headlines on average every third day during the three month period.
government down with her and instructed the right-wing parties to be ready to take over if this happened. They also demanded that the Committee on the Constitution spent the summer investigating the affair and stated that the Communist Party had to back a no confidence- vote. (DN 7/6 1988)

In a signed article on the editorial page, Svante Nycander discussed the affair from a constitutional perspective. The Swedish model of administration, and the threat posed against it by the government, was in focus. Nycander also argued the point that the Palme-murder did not constitute any legitimate ground for exemptions from the rule of law. The same topic was discussed in a debate article by Anders Isaksson. (DN 7/6 1988)

**News Articles**

During phase one, DN published 47 news articles on Leijon’s alleged misconduct and related issues. The articles have been categorised by main content given by headlines, introductionary text and main subject.

**News articles, number and subject 2/6 1988 to 8/6 1988, Dagens Nyheter**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Leijon</th>
<th>PM</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Opposition</th>
<th>Parliamentary proc.</th>
<th>Ebbe Carlsson</th>
<th>Murder investigation*</th>
<th>Other **</th>
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N=47

*The investigation of the Palme murder, murder investigators’ comments.

**For example, the attempted smuggling of illegal surveillance equipment, back ground articles, or articles summing up the story so far, that is without or “main” subject or in rare cases impossible to categorise in a straight forward way.

The table reveals that the formal parliamentary mechanisms not were the main focus of DN’s news reports. This is not to say that such issues are not discussed, the Committee on the Constitution’s investigation and the vote of no confidence are indeed mentioned in some of the articles. Also, the news section contained several articles on the opposition’s actions, articles that implicitly informed the readers on possible parliamentary mechanisms. Further, Leijon’s actions (mainly the letter of recommendation) are considered news almost every day. The same holds for opposition’s reactions. The PM is given less attention at this stage. Reports of the reactions from various Social Democratic party groupings are not presented until the latter half of phase one.

Another way of analysing the news articles is to look for certain types of information in all articles. This strategy allows us to note how the accountability mechanisms are described even if they are not the main theme of an article. An interesting question is how legal and political aspects of the matter are represented. An answer to this question tells us something about, at least, DN’s version of the
accountability doctrine. Another question is whether DN’s reporting is biased or not, and if so in what direction. A closer study of the articles will also tell us if DN is passively reporting Leijon’s (or other actors’) story, or if the paper is checking claims made by the main actors. The analysis is organised as the following themes: Leijon’s actions and responsibility; the PM’s actions and responsibility; the Social Democratic party’s actions and views on the issues involved; the opposition’s reactions, their views; the description of the parliamentary procedures.

**Leijon**

There is no obvious bias in the news articles on Leijon even though DN initially rather passively telling Leijon’s own story, quoting her using the “good intentions-argument” and blaming the police for recruiting Ebbe Carlsson. But the police story was confronted when DN claimed that both Leijon and police chief Åhmansson were involved in the recruitment of Ebbe Carlsson. DN also published a background article that seems to be based on one or more initiated sources offering an explanation to Leijon’s interest in Ebbe Carlsson and supporting Leijon's version. (DN 4/6 1988) Leijon stuck to the claim that Ebbe Carlsson’s information was important as well as to her “good intentions”-argument to the bitter end. This alleged quality of Ebbe Carlsson’s information was eventually confronted by DN. On the fourth day DN started to tell the story of the sceptical, and “surprised” state prosecutors working the murder investigation. (DN 5/6 1988; DN 6/6 1988) These articles balanced Leijon’s version, and may have undermined her defence to some extent. If Ebbe Carlsson’s information was less interesting than Leijon claimed, the “good intention”-argument was less effective.

The news articles collected from the first days also contained some “negative press” for Leijon: Leijon was connected to a “secret group” investigating Palme’s murder. (DN 2/6) Further, DN reported on Leijon’s letter of recommendation and that it was not registered. (DN 3/6 1988) An un-registered official document, together with the supposed “secret” group, are to be considered problematic news in the Swedish political context. Swedish law requires a high degree of openness and public access to documents is supposedly extensive. Adding to this subtle but still negative press DN referred to Leijon’s press conferences as being “called in a hurry”. This phrasing gives an impression of a minister acting in panic or confusion. Leijon’s was also described as “admitting to” certain actions, a choice of terminology that implicates her as someone who have done something wrong. (DN 2/6 1988; DN 4/6 1988)

DN reported extensively on the letter of recommendation and on Leijon’s failure to register it until the press became aware of its existence. Revealing the latter detail, that Leijon acted only when found with a smoking gun in her lap, is an implicit way of describing Leijon as a hypocrite. Without actually saying that the essence of letter was that Ebbe Carlsson acted on behalf of Leijon, who had acted un-constitutionally, DN told this story. (DN 5/6 1988) On the 6th of June, DN printed a copy of the letter and offered an interpretation of its contents. DN concluded that the letter was a proof of Leijon’s trust in Ebbe Carlsson, a trust that later was to be questioned by the paper. (DN 6/6 1988, DN 7/6 1988) Hence, DN’s “own” story on the letter ends on a more negative note than Leijon’s own.

Let us finally take a look at the reports on Leijon’s resignation. The day before the resignation DN concluded that it was unlikely that Leijon should leave the cabinet: Leijon had a very strong position in the party and she wanted to stay. (DN 8/6 1988) Reporting on the actual resignation, DN told the same story as Leijon: the decision to
resign was not taken until it became clear that there was a majority for a no confidence-vote in Parliament. (DN 8/6 1988) Until the actual resignation, the news section did not focus on Leijon as a person, but rather at her actions. This changed dramatically when Leijon resigned: she was now portrayed as a member of a male power gang, regarding itself as an intellectual elite. Gender suddenly became an issue, and DN described Leijon as “considerate as a mother” and informed the readers learned that she “only recently” started to care about her looks! Turning to factors of more obvious relevance DN described Leijon’s career, pointing out that she had not been to law school but also that she was respected and liked by people she worked with. She would, concluded DN, probably be the Minister of Justice most grieved by the party. Leijon was also described as independent, tolerant, cold, reserved but human, shy and capricious. DN also picked up on what seems to have been one of Leijon’s and/or Ingvar Carlsson’s strategies: to mention that Leijon was an almost-victim of terrorism and a dedicated fighter of such threats. (DN 8/61988)

The PM

DN’s coverage of PM Ingvar Carlsson’s actions and reactions were less extensive but more passive than the reports on Leijon. The coverage was dominated by uncommented quotes, DN let the PM tell his own story. Hence, while the editors’ tried to put some of the blame on the PM, the news section was not very active in trying to confront Ingvar Carlsson’s version of his own involvement. DN backed the PM’s claim of not knowing about the letter, quoting Leijon confirming that the PM was unaware of its existence. (DN 4/6 1988; DN 6/6 1988) Reporting from the “dramatic” press conference where Leijon’s resignation was announced, the PM was reported to have put all of the blame for Leijon’s resignation on the opposition. The PM was described as being “ironic” and of accusing the opposition leaders of being hypocrites. (DN 8/6 1988)

DN also fragmentarily told a story of an inward strategy, where the “party leadership”, that is at least the PM, was supposedly applying a “gag rule” concerning the party strategy to the members of the Social Democratic parliamentary group. DN also reported that the PM, on the day of the resignation, had repeated his criticism of the opposition and tried to direct the MP’s attention to the election campaign ahead. (DN 7/6 1988; DN 8/6 1988)

The Social Democratic Party

DN did not pay much attention to the Social Democratic MPs or other party functionaries until the day of Leijon’s resignation. In sum two stories now balanced the picture of the MPs’ reactions. First and perhaps most, DN told a story of great support for Leijon. According to DN, using lots of quotes to support its conclusions, the good intentions-defence was accepted and advocated by Social Democratic MPs, but also by grass-root members and functionaries on the party district level. However, “several” MPs were reported to have been critical of Leijon’s actions. And DN confronted the great support-story told by the PM. (DN 7/6 1988; DN 8/6 1988) DN also reported that the MPs were divided on the subject of a political need for Leijon’s resignation (DN 7/6 1988) and that that some of Leijon’s fellow ministers, Thage G Peterson and Sten Andersson, were critical of Ebbe Carlsson’s assignment. (DN 8/6 1988)
The Opposition

DN reported the opposition to be astonished by the carelessness of the government. On June 3rd, DN told the story of the Conservative Party’s demand earlier that spring that the government’s actions in relation to the murder investigation should be scrutinised. The next day DN reported that the right wing parties demanded Leijon’s resignation, and that the PM had promised the party leaders a decision on Leijon’s future within days. (DN 3/6 1988; DN 4/6 1988) DN quoted rather than confronted the opposition’s story. During the initial absence of Communist party leadership, DN was left to tell its own story on the party’s reactions. The Communists were according to DN “troubled”, and if a vote of no confidence was demanded the party had to make a move. (DN 5/6 1988)

The Parliamentary Procedures

DN did not give the formal parliamentary procedures much attention. In a few articles the formal and political dimensions of a confidence vote against, respectively, Leijon and the PM, were described.

The news material was not obviously biased in any direction. The PM and the opposition leader’s got to tell their own stories undisturbed, while Leijon’s good intentions-argument was confronted. Formal and political aspects of accountability procedures were described but not elaborated on. This was to change: soon after Leijon’s resignation an extensive media interest was directed towards the Standing Committee of the Constitution’s and its scrutiny of Leijon.

4. Conclusions

The idea that Leijon had acted un-constitutionally was established early in phase one, and contested by no one. However, the consequences of this conclusion were not obvious but an effect of a political struggle. The doctrine was unclear or at least debated. The political conflict also concerned what accountability procedures to use and when. Main alternatives were a no confidence vote, parliamentary scrutiny and the election. The hypothesis formulated initially suggested that the effectiveness of different accountability mechanisms will be determined by the strategic actions of elite players and the contextual factors they perceive as relevant. In Thompson’s and Tillotsen’s words, elite players will try to ”tough-it-out”. Further, the political destiny of the minister will depend on the PM’s support, if parliament is sitting or not and on the media coverage. Indeed, the PM and Leijon tried to ”tough-it out”. The resignation was presented as ”temporary”: Leijon’s was to return to the cabinet after the next election. The strategy failed, but is it possible to interpret the circumstances under which this happened in a way that fits the pattern described by the hypothesis? The answer seems to be - yes.

Leijon initially had strong elite support and her resignation was according to the PM and other elite players temporary. The support was not limited to the PM and his inner circle but extended to powerful Social Democratic MPs and grass root-members. Critical Social Democratic voices were few but loud. Given the norm of loyalty dominating the party, the analysis may have missed some silently aired internal critique of Leijon. According to the hypothesis, the support of the leader is
crucial. What then, determined the leader’s support? Obviously, the PM changed his mind as the elite started to question the comeback plan. According to the PM, publicly expressed critique from party members influenced his decision-making more than the parliamentary scrutiny. Party-related mechanisms were of great importance for the PM. This does not mean that parliamentary accountability mechanisms were perceived as unimportant. The PM obviously pondered the probability of a majority for a vote of no confidence in parliament and the risk of cohesion problems in his own party.

Moving on to the use and effectiveness of parliamentary accountability procedures, the hypothesis predicts that a parliament on summer break will be less effective than a sitting one. The Swedish Riksdag was not gathered for a great deal of the critical summer months, but the Standing Committee on the Constitution nevertheless got together and started its scrutiny of the affair. We can only speculate on the importance of this: if the Social Democratic committee chairman Olle Svensson had succeeded in postponing the investigations and hearings, perhaps the outcome would have been different? The overall conclusion concerning parliamentary mechanisms is that both the committee’s scrutiny and the vote of no confidence were perceived as potential but not obvious alternatives for the political parties. The opposition hesitated to use the vote of no confidence, the right wing parties as long as they were unsure of its success, the Communist party because of the risk of a full cabinet crisis. The vote of no confidence-mechanism was perhaps perceived as a bit too effective?

Most central actors had easily detectable media strategies. The pragmatic Social Democratic version of the accountability doctrine was repeated by elite players, and confronted by the opposition. Accusations of irresponsible and dubious behaviour on behalf of both the government and the opposition were spread via the press. The newspaper analysed here, DN, rather passively distributed the PM’s and the opposition’s stories in the news section, while being more critical and independent in the reports on Leijon. The news section was not obviously biased. Rather, the mere reporting of the actual events seems to have been bad enough from Leijon’s point of view. DN’s editors took a clear stand against the Social Democratic interpretation of the accountability doctrine and against the political strategy of the PM. The analysis and the conclusions drawn were both constitutional and political. The PM’s responsibility was repeatedly discussed, the editors apparently trying to put some of the blame on Ingvar Carlsson. However, the editors did not demand Leijon’s resignation. The actual effect of a negative editorial is not easy to determine. It is somewhat safer to say that the enormous media attention probably increased the pressure on the PM to put an end to Leijon’s career as a minister. The affair got extensive media coverage during the summer of 1988. Hence the hypothesis that consistent media coverage can be problematic for ministers trying to “tough-it out” is supported by the case study.
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