

"Democracy In Action"



THE 2001 UK GENERAL ELECTION

Media Content Analysis of UK, US & French Press

echo

THE COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCH GROUP



UK GENERAL ELECTION 2001

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INTRODUCTION

Echo Research is a world leader in analysing reputations and researching the effectiveness of communications. We help a range of clients from major companies to government departments monitor their image and reputation through analysis of media coverage and survey research.

This report, which can also be found on our website www.echoresearch.com/election, is the result of a comprehensive analysis of British press coverage (with additional views from the French and US media) of the 2001 General Election. The 2001 campaign resulted in a turnout of only 59 per cent and the media insisted on characterising it as one of the most boring on record. By defining it in this way, it could be argued that the press actually contributed to voter apathy and public disinterest. The overriding problem for journalists attempting to generate interest in the campaign was the obvious fact that the outcome of the election was never really in doubt; the only variable was the size of Labour's majority. Some of the most engaging, enjoyable and memorable highlights in the election were unscripted events, those moments when what was meant to be a carefully stage-managed and well-spun campaign became unmanageable and un-spun. The drama of the 2001 general election came to life when the actors forgot their lines, the stage sets came tumbling down and the props were not where they should have been.

The Echo team in the UK, France and the USA worked together to demonstrate the pattern of coverage, the swings of media and journalists – and above all – the importance of tracking issues and commentators and their potential impact on the public. We hope you find this review interesting, surprising and illuminating and would welcome your views.

Peter Christopherson
Director



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FOREWORD

by Peter Kellner, Political Commentator, Evening Standard

How much do newspapers matter at election time? The answer is: to some extent, but not in the way that tends to provoke most comment – the stance of each paper's editorials. Much was made in the recent campaign of the fact that The Times and Daily Express backed Labour for the first time in their history. The Sun's endorsement of Labour also attracted much attention. But history shows that editorials matter far less than news and feature coverage.

In 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt won the US Presidency, despite the fact that the great majority of American papers backed his Republican rival and incumbent president, Herbert Hoover. In 1945, Clement Attlee led Labour to its first landslide victory despite the opposition of most newspapers. Yet on both occasions, the press helped the winner. Their news pages – reporting recession in thirties America, and the popular appetite for social reform in Britain at the end of the second world war – described countries crying out for change; and on polling day, voters opted for change.

This is why a far more detailed analysis of newspaper content is needed than simply to list the partisanship of each paper's editor. As Echo's analysis of the past two British elections has showed, the Conservatives had a bad press in the 1997 election campaign, even from the Tories' supposed supporters, simply because their campaign kept generating news that could not help but reflect badly on the party (Neil Hamilton's doomed fight to hold Tatton; party divisions over Europe, and so on). This year, Labour had a rockier ride than four years ago, even from its natural supporters, simply because it was impossible to argue that the Blair government had transformed our public services for the better.

That said, there remained clear differences, with the pro-Labour Mirror at one end of the spectrum and the anti-Labour Daily Mail at the other. The Mail's final editorial position was surprisingly cool towards the Tories; but the paper's main characteristic was its unremitting hostility to the Blair government in its news and feature coverage.

Nobody could seriously pretend that different press coverage could have reversed the result in either 1997 or 2001. The gap between the parties was too wide, and people's attitudes, especially towards the Tories, too entrenched. But if we return to a more competitive contest in 2005 or 2006, then the press could well be influential. In particular, the press could well help to shape the climate of opinion in the months leading up to the next campaign, in the way it covers Labour's record after two full terms, and the way it reports the revival (if any) of the Conservative Party. However, once again, it will be the news and feature pages that matter. Whether or not The Times decides in the final week to revert to the Conservatives will excite great attention, but in truth not make a jot of difference to the outcome.

Peter Kellner
July 2001



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DURATION

Echo's research ran from the election announcement on 8th May until Polling Day 7th June 2001.

SCOPE

National daily and Sunday newspapers. Broadcast coverage was considered, but excluded, as it is required by statute to offer a balanced picture of the main political parties.

United Kingdom

Broadsheets: Daily/Sunday Telegraph, The Times/Sunday Times, Independent/Independent on Sunday, The Guardian/The Observer, Financial Times, Sunday Business

Mid-market tabloids: Daily Mail/Mail on Sunday, Daily Express/Express on Sunday

Down-market tabloids: The Sun/News of the World, The Mirror/Sunday Mirror, Daily Star, Sunday People

USA

National press: Wall St Journal, Financial Times, AP, Business Week

Regional press: Washington Post, San Francisco Chronicle, New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Houston Chronicle, Chicago Tribune, Boston Globe, Atlanta Constitution

France

National Press: Le Monde, Les Echos, La Tribune, Le Parisien, L'Humanité, Le Figaro, Libération, Le Canard Enchaîné

METHODOLOGY

Echo Research's media analysis system is provided to both commercial and non-commercial organisations around the world for analysing the content of editorial coverage in the press and broadcast media. It is used to determine perceived reputation and awareness and support management decision-making. It provides a wide range of measures including: **Volume** (count), **Impressions** (aggregate circulation figures), **Readership** (potential readers in key demographic groupings), **Audience Reach** (where relevant) and **Rating** (a measure of bias - see Appendix A).

Articles relevant to the General Election in the following categories were selected by the analysts: News, Opinion, Feature, Editorial/Leader, Diary, Business sections, Arts & Leisure sections. Cartoons and Events listings were excluded.

Political parties included in the study: Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat.

Articles were coded on a daily basis and entered into the Echo input module. Data was run in daily batches and reports prepared using the proprietary Echo database.

A list of 400 topics was drawn up (see Appendix B) which were divided into a number of categories such as Placement of mention, Nature of Coverage, Position of Article, Main Hard and Soft Issues and Personalities. Individual journalist bylines were noted.



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OBJECTIVES

The research was undertaken to ascertain

- ✂✂ The role of the media in the election campaign
- ✂✂ The issues affecting the coverage of each political party
- ✂✂ The effect negative coverage had respective on the parties' image
- ✂✂ To what extent media coverage was dominated by issues or personalities
- ✂✂ The media ratings of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal-Democrat parties on a percentage scale
- ✂✂ The amount of positive, negative and neutral coverage given to each party carried by individual newspaper titles
- ✂✂ The degree to which key journalists were biased towards any of the parties
- ✂✂ The degree to which positive/negative coverage was received by individual demographic groupings
- ✂✂ Which personalities drove the coverage of each party
- ✂✂ Which personalities were 'shielded' from the press by their parties

TERMINOLOGY

Note: Echo gives a rating to each item analysed based on a scale of 0 – 100, where 50 is neutral or balanced. Less than 49 is increasingly negative and more than 51 is increasingly positive. The Media Rating of each party is based on an average of the ratings of all items appearing in the media.



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UK HIGHLIGHTS

	LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
Volume	3,693	2,897	1,182
Total impressions (millions)	3,851.2	2,908.5	977.8
Media Rating	48.7	47.3	50.9
Leading issue 2001	Health Service	Europe	Electioneering
Leading issue 1997	Europe	Europe	Opinion polls
Most favourable issue	Technology & the internet	Local government	Public services
Least favourable issue	Housing	Biotechnology	Racism
Most favourable personality	Stephen Byers	Archie Norman	Don Foster
Least favourable personality	Keith Vaz	Ken Clarke	Vincent Cable
Party Leader's media rating	47.7	47.7	53.8
Most supportive publication 2001	The People	Daily Mail	The Observer
Most supportive publication 1997	Daily Mirror	Daily Telegraph	Independent
Least supportive publication 2001	Daily Mail	The People	Sunday Mirror
Most supportive journalist (>3 articles)	Andrew Rawnsley (The Observer)	Lynda Lee-Potter (Daily Mail)	Michael McCarthy (Independent)
Least supportive journalist (>3 articles)	Robert Harris (Sunday Times)	Oliver Morgan (The Observer)	Richard Littlejohn (The Sun)

Table 1



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HOW THE PARTIES COMPARED

Overall Breakdown of Coverage

Total number of articles = 4,280

	Total	Fav	Unfav	Neutral	Rating
Labour	3,693	957 (26%)	1,445 (39%)	1,291 (35%)	48.7
Conservative	2,897	506 (18%)	1,222 (42%)	1,169 (40%)	47.3
LibDem	1,182	325 (28%)	205 (17%)	652 (55%)	50.9

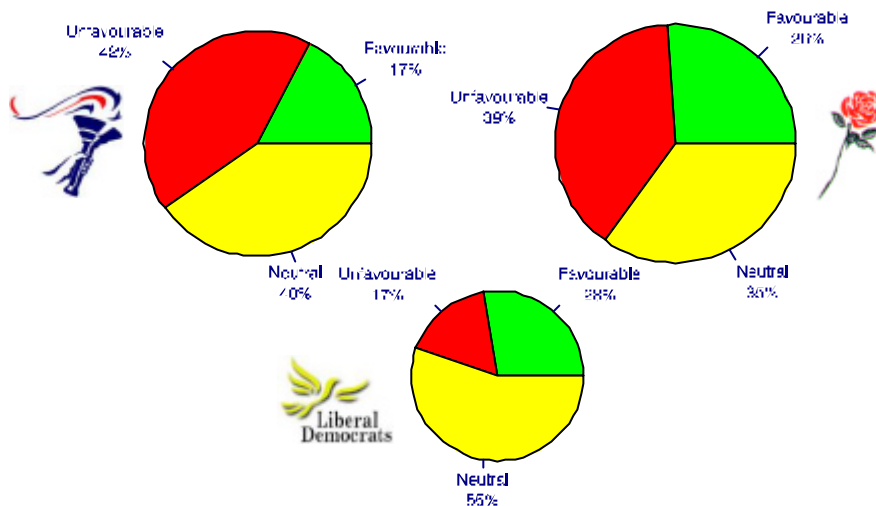
Table 2

As the table above demonstrates, the lion's share of coverage went to Labour, but only 26 per cent of this was favourable. Neutral (35 per cent) and unfavourable (39 per cent) articles constituted the majority of Labour's coverage. Labour's rating, at 48.7, was only marginally higher than the Conservative's (47.3). The highest rating, 50.9 was generated by the Liberal Democrats, who under Charles Kennedy's leadership, had a good campaign. Only 18 per cent of the Conservative's coverage was favourable, with William Hague's leadership, the strategy of turning the election a referendum on the euro and differences on tax and spending, coming in for particular criticism. Whereas in 1997, Labour had been the challenger, unspoilt by government and unsullied by sleaze, in 2001 they were the incumbents, defending a record and rebutting allegations of impropriety in the Hinduja affair. Suggestions that they might remove the upper earnings limit on National Insurance Contributions, concerns about the state of the National Health Service and the decision to parachute former Conservative defector, Shaun Woodward into the unlikely surroundings of St Helen's South all generated unfavourable coverage for Labour.



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By Volume



Based on 4,280 articles 8th May - 7th June 2001

SOURCE: Echo Research

Chart 1

"Whatever the Conservatives say either backfires or fails to gather steam against the juggernaut that is Blair."
Washington Post

The **volume** of coverage generated during the 2001 election campaign was considerably less than in 1997; a result of the shorter duration of the 2001 campaign. However, the percentage of favourable, unfavourable and neutral coverage accorded to the three main parties remained very similar to the pattern which emerged in 1997, the main difference being the increase in unfavourable coverage of Labour's campaign. As the incumbent, with a record of four years in power to defend, Labour was always likely to incur more negative comment than it did during the 1997 campaign. Its task was harder in 2001 than in 1997 and this was reflected in the increase in the volume of unfavourable coverage from 31 per cent in 1997 to 39 per cent in 2001.

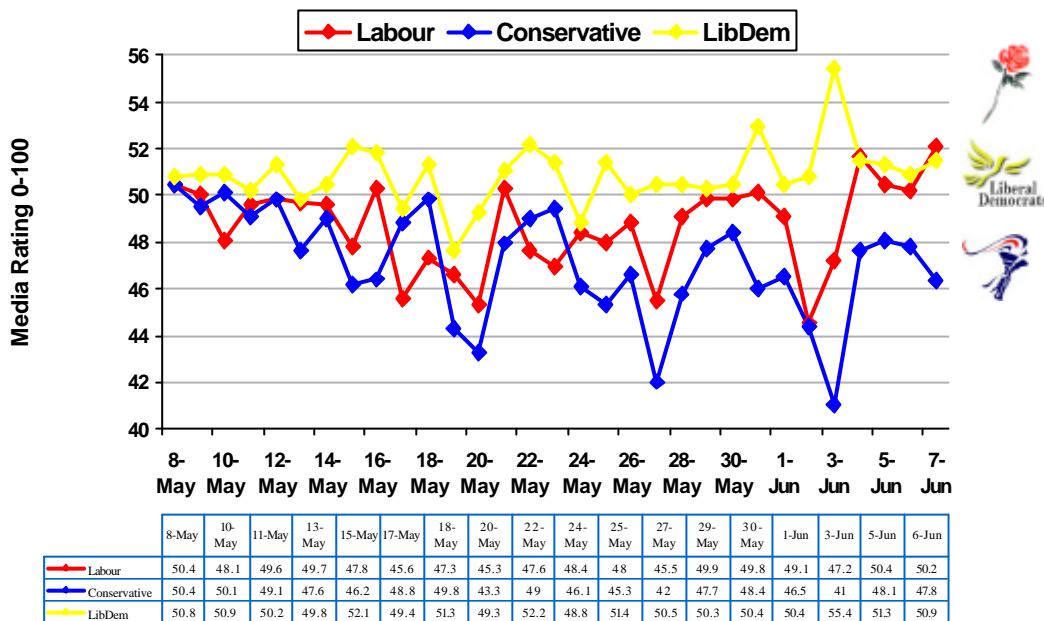
Labour's volume of **favourable** coverage fell from 29 per cent in 1997 to 26 per cent in 2001. In contrast to 1997, when Labour generated the highest percentage of favourable coverage (29 per cent), in 2001 the Liberal Democrats were accorded the most positive coverage; 28 per cent of all items on the Liberal Democrats were favourable and only 17 per cent of articles which referred to their campaign were unfavourable. In contrast, 39 per cent of Labour's coverage and 42 per cent of the Conservatives' coverage was unfavourable. Charles Kennedy had a good campaign and this helped to lift the total volume of favourable coverage for the Liberal Democrats. The French media also highlighted the Liberal Democrat campaign, with Le Monde (8/6) pointing out that the party was now *"on the left wing of New Labour"*.

The percentage of **unfavourable** coverage generated by the **Conservative** Party in the 2001 campaign was only two points lower than in 1997. The decision to focus such a significant part of their campaign on Europe, and the strategy of trying to turn the election into a referendum on the euro were widely seen as having backfired, entrenching their unpopularity. Only The Daily Telegraph, The Sunday Telegraph, Daily Mail and The Mail on Sunday remained loyal to the Conservatives and overall, only 17 per cent of all coverage of the Conservative's campaign was favourable. In the US, the Conservative campaign was widely perceived as hopeless with the Washington Post (29/5) commenting that whatever the party said either *"backfires or fails to gather steam against the juggernaut that is Blair"*.



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Daily Media Rating



"Kennedy's campaign has seemed a model of modest common sense", Rory Bremner, Sunday Telegraph

Chart 2

As the above chart demonstrates, the Liberal Democrats generated the most consistently high ratings during the election campaign, although this was often a case of limited negative coverage and neutral passing mentions rather than consistent praise. Their high point came on Sunday 3 June with a very positive article in The Sunday Telegraph by Rory Bremner who commented that "Kennedy's campaign has seemed a model of modest common sense", adding that the Liberal Democrats "should do well. They deserve to do well".

The Conservatives began the campaign well and hit the ground running by launching their manifesto ahead of Labour, but after the first few days, ratings took a turn for the worse on 15 and 16 May, a result of an unscripted event that was not to the advantage of the party. Michael Portillo's deputy in the Opposition Treasury posse, Oliver Letwin, had suggested in an interview in the Financial Times that the Conservatives real aim over the lifetime of a Parliament was to make tax cuts totalling £20bn, a far larger figure than the £8bn originally proposed. Even The Daily Telegraph (15/5) had to admit that "Mr Hague ... found himself under pressure to explain which public services the Conservatives would cut to finance such big tax reductions". Their rating then picked up on 18 May before taking a nosedive over the weekend of 19 and 20 May (44.3 and 43.3 respectively). The Guardian accused the Conservatives of "running scared" (19/5) after William Hague decided to abandon daily party press conferences, contrasting this with "Labour whose leading figures, including Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, face up to 45 minutes of interrogation every morning at Millbank". The Sunday People (20/5) also featured bad news for the Conservatives in the shape of a poll showing "OAPs deserting Tories" and a series of poor headlines, such as "Asylum lunatics" in The Daily Mirror (19/5). Their rating picked up again between 21 and 23 May, before declining dramatically to 42 on Sunday 27 May, because of unfavourable coverage of the decision to focus the latter stages of the campaign on the euro and





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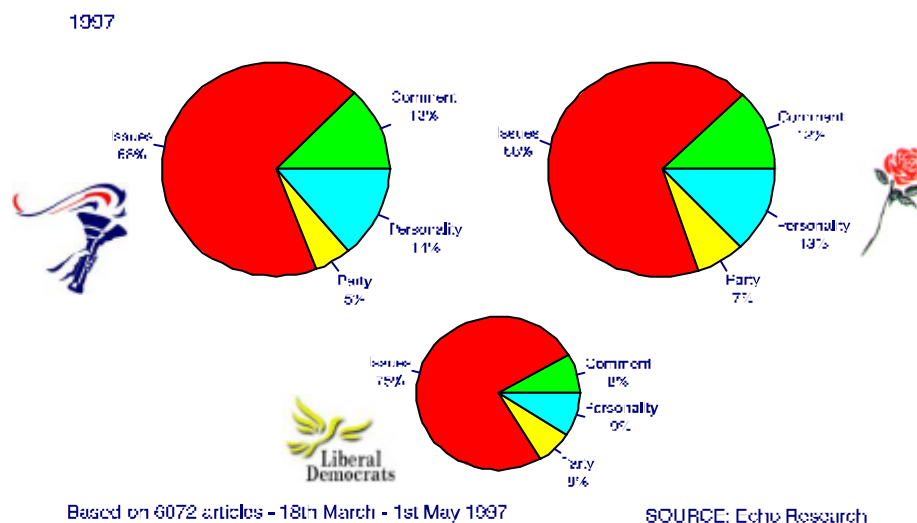
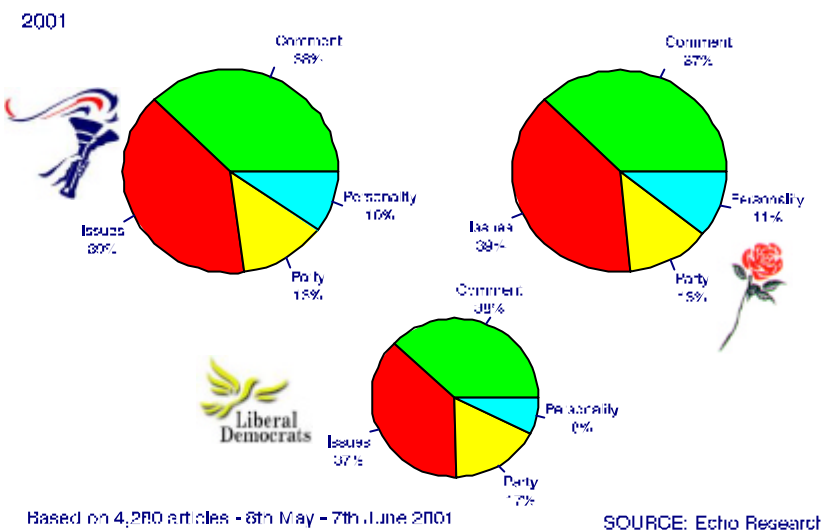
on issues such as asylum seekers. An editorial in The Sunday Express (27/5) suggested that the Conservatives were “*still marching ever deeper into the wilderness*” and accused William Hague of being “*too ready to jump on a bandwagon ... and too ready to flirt with the extremes within his own party*”. Their rating moved upwards over the next three days, but declined to the lowest point of the entire campaign on Sunday 3 June (41.0). This was a consequence of the fact that all but two of the Sunday newspapers urged readers to either vote Labour or to vote tactically on 7 June. Although their ratings improved over the last few days of the campaign, the Conservatives ended four points below where they started on 8 May, having declined from 50.4 on 8 May to 46.3 on 7 June.

“*Labour will win by a country mile because real incomes are rising, public spending is increasing and the Tories cannot come up with a credible answer*”
Larry Elliot,

Labour began the campaign with a rating of 50.4 on 8 May and ratings remained fairly steady until 17 May, the aftermath of a verbal assault on the Prime Minister by an NHS patient’s wife, Sharron Storer, outside The Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham. The day before, the election campaign had sprung to life, courtesy of John Prescott’s short fuse in the face of an ovarious assault. This was a gift to a press corps hungry for action. They could hardly have hoped for a more deliciously off-message reaction from the Deputy Prime Minister, who, in the long run, probably helped to revive flagging interest in the election and increase favourable coverage for Labour. Ratings duly bounced back on 18 and 19 May but dipped on Sunday 20 May, a result of the Sunday newspaper’s coverage of ‘Sugar Ray’ Prescott. Labour’s rating picked up to hit 50.3 on 21 May, with positive reporting of the Government’s economic record. “*Labour will win by a country mile because real incomes are rising, public spending is increasing and the Tories cannot come up with a credible answer when asked how they would pay for their tax cuts*”, said Larry Elliott in The Guardian. Ratings remained steady until Sunday 27 May, when they fell to 45.5, a result of the poor reaction to the party’s ‘Blair the Movie’ election broadcast and its policy on Europe. “*Tony Blair will tonight denounce ‘the personality nonsense’ in modern politics in a TV election broadcast solely about himself*”, said the Sunday Express (27/5). Having picked up again, the next low point for Labour came on Saturday 2 June. In The Guardian, Andrew Dilnot of the Institute for Fiscal Studies suggested that “*despite Labour’s success in boosting the income of the poor, inequalities are still growing*” and in the Financial Times, the paper’s leader column argued that there were still too many unanswered questions on Labour’s proposals for public expenditure: “*So when asked if they would increase taxes to put ‘schools and hospitals’ first, Labour politicians squirm. They say they would take a ‘balanced’ approach. In other words, they do not know,*” it suggested. However, after this, their ratings increased, ending on 7 June at 52.1, the highest of all three parties on Election Day.

In the final week of the campaign, the Daily Mail, The Daily Telegraph, The Sunday Telegraph and The Mail on Sunday all exhorted their readers to vote to avoid a Labour landslide rather than whole-heartedly endorsing the Conservatives as had been their wont in previous campaigns. All other newspapers, in varying degrees, backed Labour, although this was by no means, unqualified support. The Independent concluded with regret that the Conservative Party on this occasion “*does not deserve to be elected*” (6/6). The Independent on Sunday said none of the three parties had its wholehearted endorsement, but urged voters to “*vote tactically*” in order to strengthen the “*opposition backbone*” on Thursday (3/6).

WHAT DROVE THE PRESS COVERAGE



Charts 3 & 3a

The striking difference between the coverage of the 1997 and 2001 general election campaigns was the greater prominence of 'comment' in the 2001 campaign. In the 1997 election, coverage was predominantly 'issues' driven, for all three main parties; 68 per cent of coverage for both Labour and Conservative parties was issues driven and the figure for the Liberal Democrats was even higher, at 75 per cent. 13 per cent of Conservative coverage, 12 per cent of Labour coverage and only eight per cent of Liberal Democrat coverage was comment driven.

In 2001, the percentage of comment-driven coverage for all parties had increased, to 38 per cent for the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats and to 37 per cent for Labour. Comment and analysis featured more strongly in the 2001 campaign than in 1997. Several newspapers, perhaps in an effort to boost interest in their coverage of the campaign, made greater use than in



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the past of features by those traditionally seen as being outside the party-political arena; for example, Joanna Trollope and David Hare in *The Daily Telegraph* and Rory Bremner in *The Sunday Telegraph*. Traditional commentators and sketch writers all featured prominently in 2001, with Matthew Parris in *The Times*, Simon Carr in *The Independent* and Quentin Letts in *The Daily Mail* all contributing several articles throughout the campaign.

Despite the Prime Minister's assertion to the contrary, little coverage in 2001 was **personality driven**, even less than in the 1997 campaign with its strong focus on Tory sleaze. The percentage of personality driven coverage fell from 14 to 10 per cent for the Conservatives, from 13 to 11 per cent for Labour and from eight to seven per cent for the Liberal Democrats. Much of the personality driven coverage focused on the campaign's 'missing persons'; Keith Vaz, Oliver Letwin and Shaun Woodward's butler. Where other personalities featured strongly, this was often the parties' own doing; the most obvious example being the Party Election Broadcast starring Tony Blair. Having attacked the media for putting personality above policy in its Election coverage, the Prime Minister then appeared in a PEB which was almost completely dominated by one personality – his own. *The Sunday Express* (27/5) could not resist pointing out the irony, saying: "*Tony Blair will tonight denounce 'the personality nonsense' in modern politics in a TV election broadcast solely about himself.*" It was clearly too much for Quentin Letts in *The Daily Mail* (28/5), who described the Prime Minister as a "*Lip-wobbling hypocrite with a spivvy accent*".

"It speaks well of British politics – and the British electorate – that an odd duck such as Hague should be leading the ticket of a major political party".
Michael Kingsley,
Washington

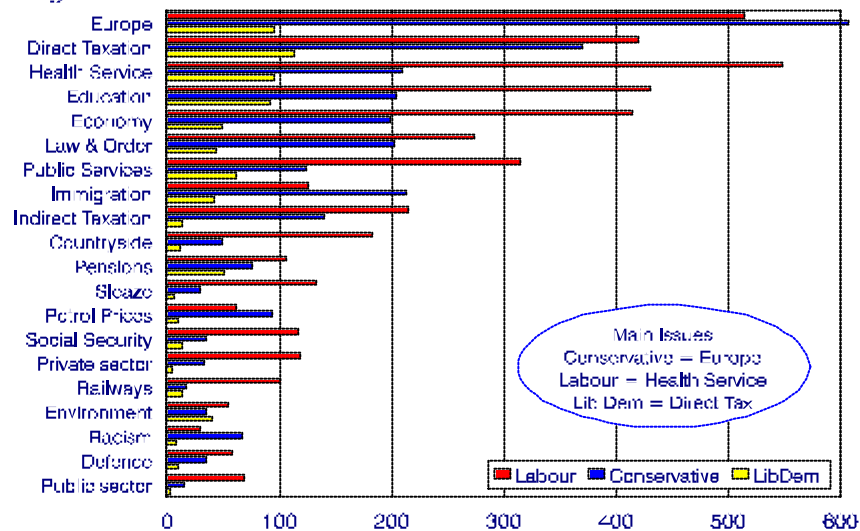
US coverage of the election was driven by personality to a greater extent than in the UK, with the focus firmly on the party leaders. While US coverage of the Prime Minister resulted in an overall rating of 54, he was deemed, "*not loveable, but electable*", by *The New York Times* (5/6). William Hague generated an overall rating of only 43 in the US media. This was not surprising given the tone of some of the comment on the unfortunate Conservative leader. Michael Kingsley, writing in *The Washington Post* (25/5) referred to him as a "*dorky right wing political operative*", who "*seems at first like nothing else on earth*". However, he went on to argue that his leadership of the party "*speaks well of British politics – and the British electorate – that an odd duck such as Hague should be leading the ticket of a major political party*".



LEADING TOPICS AND ISSUES

For this analysis we divided issues into 'hard' and 'soft'. Hard issues are the main issues of policy, while soft issues are more general eg, profiles of candidates, 'electioneering' (a term used to cover Battlebus campaigns, public meetings, etc) and 'marketing' issues in general. A full list of issues is attached as Appendix B.

Leading Hard Issues



Based on 4,280 articles - 8th May - 7th June 2001

SOURCE: Echo Research

Chart 4

As in 1997, the dominant 'hard issue' by volume in 2001 was **Europe** and again, this was the leading hard issue for the Conservatives. The leading issue for Labour in 2001 was not Europe, as it had been in 1997, but the **health service**, with proposals for greater private-sector involvement proving controversial. A total of 608 (21 per cent of the Tory total) articles focused on the Conservatives' campaign on Europe, whereas the same figure for Labour was 516 (14 per cent).

One issue, which had almost come to dominate the 1997 election campaign, namely **sleaze**, barely featured in 2001. In 1997, Conservative sleaze was the second most prominent issue for the Conservatives, but in 2001, it was the subject of only 32 articles for the Conservatives and 135 for Labour, the majority of which focused on Keith Vaz's involvement with the Hinduja brothers.

In 2001, the second most prominent hard issue by volume and the leading issue for the Liberal Democrats was **direct taxation**. Several articles referred to the fact that they were the only party calling for an increase in income tax. However, this policy was not always favourably reviewed. The prospect of tax cuts was not something which enthused the electorate and as The Sun (12/5) pointed out, it was dangerous for William Hague to demand a commitment from the Prime



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Minister not to raise taxes, when he himself had failed to do the same in an interview in the Financial Times (8/5).

Several issues, which one might have expected to feature prominently during the election campaign, were barely mentioned. **Countryside issues** were the focus of only 51 items for the Conservatives and 185 for Labour. Foot and Mouth Disease, which had received saturation coverage in the run-up to the election, almost disappeared from view during the campaign, featuring in only 87 articles for Labour and 38 for the Conservatives. Simon Jenkins, writing in The Times (23/5), was bitterly critical of Labour's handling of the crisis, accusing the Labour Government of *"killing healthy animals not from any concern for welfare but to help livestock exports"*. However, in general, there was much less antagonism towards Labour's policies on the countryside than might have been expected, with only 22 articles focusing on 'town versus country' issues and only 21 items suggested that Labour was ignorant of the countryside.

"The Labour government kills healthy animals not from any concern for welfare but to help livestock exports".
Simon Jenkins,
The Times

Other dogs that didn't bark during the campaign were, perhaps surprisingly, the environment in general (except for the Liberal Democrats), any discussion of foreign policy or defence as well as culture, media and the arts. The Millennium Dome was barely mentioned and Northern Ireland was hardly referred to during the campaign, re-emerging as an issue only after the declaration of results (not covered by the period of this study). The constitution failed to arouse any interest during the campaign, apart from a few references to the possibility of establishing regional assemblies in England after the election.

Labour	Ranking				
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Overall
NHS	3	1	3	1	1
Europe	5	5	1	2	2
Education	4	6	2	3	3
Direct Taxation	2	2	4	5	4
Economy	1	3	5	4	5
Public Services	7	7	7	7	6
Law & Order	6	4	8	6	7
Indirect Taxation	8	8	6	8	8
Countryside	12	9	9	9	9
Sleaze	10	11	-	10	10
Immigration	15	10	10	11	11
Social Security	9	16	-	-	13

Table 3

For the Conservatives, Europe and direct taxation dominated coverage of their campaign and were either first or second in the league table of leading issues in all four weeks. Europe was the most prominent issue for them overall, followed by direct taxation and immigration.



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Ranking					
Conservative	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Overall
Europe	2	2	1	1	1
Direct Taxation	1	1	2	2	2
Immigration	10	3	5	6	3
NHS	4	5	4	3	4
Education	7	8	3	5	5
Law & Order	6	4	8	7	6
Economy	3	6	6=	4	7
Indirect Taxation	8	7	6=	8	8
Public Services	9	9	9=	9	9
Petrol Prices	5	13	-	10	10
Racism	13	10	9=	-	12

Table 4

Most Negative Issues for each party

LABOUR	Media Rating	Volume
Housing	41.4	11
Sleaze	41.6	135
Farming	43.3	30
Defence	44.2	59
Countryside	45.2	185
Arts/Culture/Lottery	45.5	28
Local Government	45.7	36

CONSERVATIVE	Media Rating	Volume
Immigration	46.3	214
Public Services	46.3	126
Fiscal Policy	46.9	24
Racism	47.0	69
Europe	47.6	608
Arts/Culture/Lottery	47.9	14
Economy	48.1	200

Table 5a & 5b

Issues which generated negative coverage for the Labour Party did not, with the exception of the arts, culture and the lottery, generate similarly negative coverage for the Conservatives. **Housing**, followed by **sleaze**, generated the lowest ratings for Labour (41.4 and 41.6 respectively) whereas immigration and public services were the least favourable subjects for the Conservatives.

Immigration and **racism** generated negative coverage for the Conservatives whereas farming and the countryside were unfavourable issues for Labour. Paul Routledge in The Mirror (19/5) thought the Conservative proposals for detention centres for asylum seekers was nothing more than "a crude attempt to play the race card".

Importance of issues affecting voting intentions compared with leading issues for each party

The table below compares the ranking given in a MORI poll on issues affecting voting intentions, published in The Times (7/6), with the prominence they were given in the press, as revealed by Echo's research. The most glaring discrepancy was, of course, **Europe**. This was the most prominent issue in all coverage of the Conservative campaign and yet according to those questioned by MORI it was the 10th most important issue in determining how they would vote. The second most prominent issue for the Conservatives was **taxation** – this was only fifth on the voters' list of priorities. The Conservatives proved to be out of touch with the voters again on the question of **immigration**, which was ninth on the voters' list of priorities, but was the third most prominent issue in terms of press coverage of the Conservative campaign. Coverage of the

"The Conservative proposals for detention centres for asylum seekers are nothing more than a crude attempt to play the race card". Paul Routledge, The Mirror



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Labour Party's campaign also proved to be out of touch with voters' concerns. **Pensions** was fourth on the voters' list of priorities, but was only the 15th most prominent issue in terms of press coverage.

Health, however, was the most pressing issue for the electorate and also ranked top in terms of media interest in Labour's campaign. There was some scepticism about further private sector involvement in its running, with Jonathan Freedland in *The Guardian* (23/5) calling the proposition "naïve or disingenuous or both ... they still see titans of efficiency, leanness and discipline while we see Railtrack and Marks and Spencer".

"A critical group of voters" more likely to "register and cast their ballots in greater proportions than younger people".
Robert Waller,
Daily Telegraph

For the Liberal Democrats, health was the sixth most prominent in terms of press coverage of their campaign. They were the only major party to propose that long-term personal, as well as nursing, care should be free at the point of delivery a policy which was supported by *The Independent* in its leader on 31 May. "It is morally indefensible to force elderly patients to pay for their health care", said the paper, stressing that the Liberal Democrats were "the only party with the courage to argue in favour of doing the right thing" and pointing out that "The third party argued that the elderly are entitled to free health care".

It was perhaps surprising that the so-called 'grey vote' was not a more prominent feature of the campaign, given the outcry over pensions at the Labour Party Annual Conference in 2000. As it had in 1997, the issue featured strongly towards the end of the campaign, with *The Daily Telegraph* commenting that "with the elderly making up one in four voters, pressure mounted on Tony Blair to end the policy that forces older voters to surrender their assets to the state" (31/5). Robert Waller, writing in the paper on 31 May pointed out that the so-called 'grey vote' constituted a "critical group of voters" more likely to "register and cast their ballots in greater proportions than younger people".

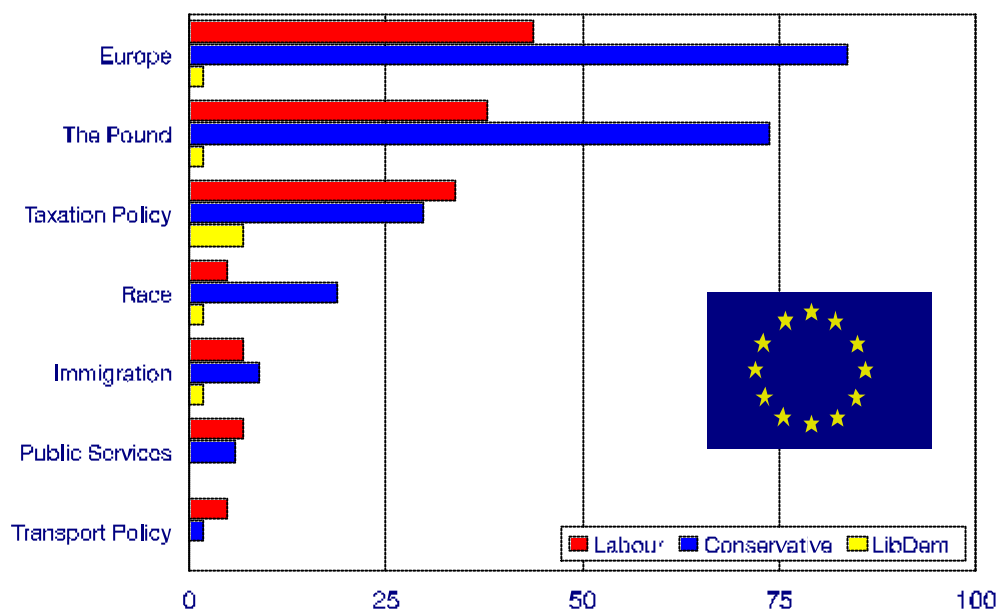
Issue/Voter concern	The Times/MORI ranking	Labour in the media	Conservative in the media	LibDem in the media
Healthcare	1	1	4	3
Education	2	3	5	2
Law & Order	3	7	6	9
Pensions	4	15	11	6
Taxation	5	4	2	1
Public Transport	6	10	14	11
The Economy	7	5	7	8
Unemployment	8	18	27	29
Immigration	9	12	3	10
Europe	10	2	1	5
Environment	11	23	16	7
Housing	12	36	37	36
Animal Welfare	13	30	29	32
Defence	14	20	15	19
Constitution/Devolution	15	21	24	18
Northern Ireland	16	39	40	34

Note: MORI data based on poll published in *The Times* on 7 June.

Table 6



What The Parties Were Divided On



Based on 4,280 articles - 8th May - 7th June 2001

SOURCE: Echo Research

Chart 5

It was **Europe** which most divided both Labour and the Conservatives, but it was a particularly divisive issue for the Conservatives; 49 out of 84 articles referring to Conservative divisions on Europe were negative. The **future of sterling** proved equally contentious for the Conservative Party and out of 74 items which focused on divisions within the party over the strategy of 'saving the pound', 32 were negative. The Conservatives' official policy of opposing the euro just for the lifetime of the next Parliament failed to appease the hardline Eurosceptics and antagonised the pro-Europeans in the party. Tensions surfaced early on in the campaign, with disparaging comments from Sir Peter Tapsell giving *The Observer* (13/5) the opportunity to declare: "*Tories in turmoil and candidates defy Hague over joining the euro*".

Conservative divisions on Europe were also the subject of comment in the US media. For example, the *New York Times* (3/6) saw the 'save the pound' strategy as flawed as it denoted a "*fatalistic admission that the British public would say hes in the promised referendum*". In the immediate aftermath of the election, the paper pointed out that the Conservatives' defeat on an anti-euro platform had reinforced the view that "*the outcome of the election had lowered the political hurdles to joining the 12-nation euro currency union*" (9/6).

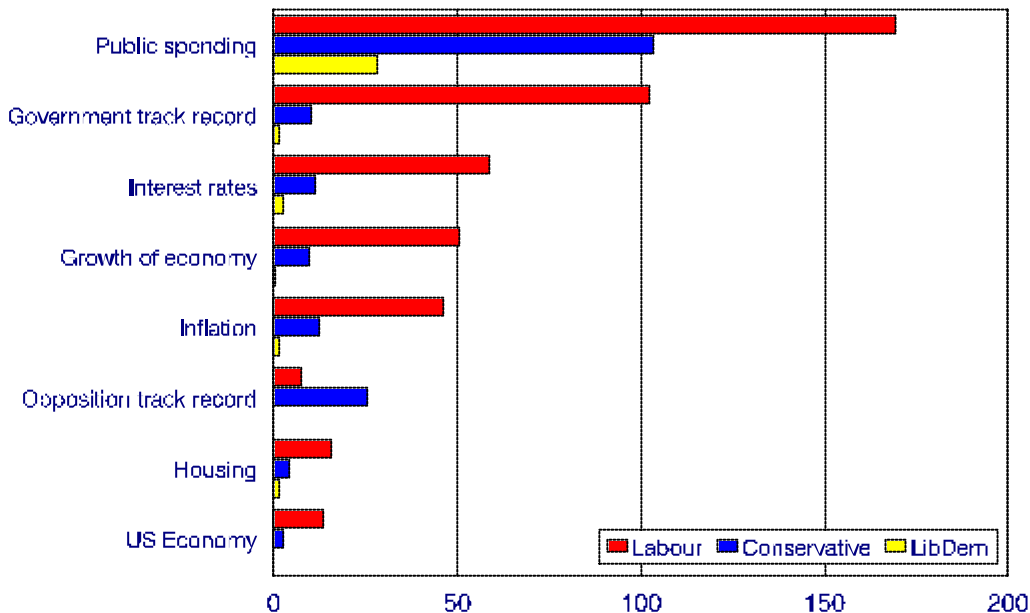
Taxation policy was a more divisive issue for Labour than it was for the Conservatives and out of a total of 34 items on this subject, only three were positive. During the first week of the campaign, the Institute for Fiscal Studies claimed to have discovered a 'black hole' in Labour's post-2004 spending plans, while there was confusion in the Conservative Party as to whether their tax-cutting proposals amounted to £7bn, £8bn or £20bn.



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For the Conservatives, the other contentious issue, apart from Europe, was **race**, which featured more prominently in the run-up to the campaign than during it, although it continued to generate negative coverage throughout, resulting in an overall rating of 47.4. The Daily Star (19/5) felt the Conservative's promotion of detention centres for asylum seekers was "loony", but The Sun thought William Hague was "right to raise the issue and to do so in cautious, measured tones" (19/5).

Leading Economy Issues



Based on 4,280 articles - 8th May - 7th June 2001

SOURCE: Echo Research

Chart 6

"If the Tories had 18 years, Labour should have eight to show what it can do"
Los Angeles Times

The leading economic issue during the campaign, for all three main parties, was **public spending**, but only those items on public spending which referred to the Liberal Democrats generated a positive rating (55.2). Coverage of Labour and public spending resulted in an overall rating of 48 and articles referring to the Conservative Party generated a rating of only 46.1. If public services and public spending failed to generate overtly positive ratings for Labour, the public seemed willing to give the government the benefit of the doubt, by granting them a second term. The foreign as well the domestic media captured this mood, with the Los Angeles Times pointing out that the electorate was willing to give Labour "another four years to keep trying. If the Tories had 18 years, Labour should have eight to show what it can do, the thinking goes" (4/6). Public services were perceived by the French media as being in decline, with transport in particular coming in for criticism.

The majority of economic issues were only referred to in passing during the campaign and there were few articles which focused specifically on economic policy. For example, only 14 articles referred to the impact of the **slowdown in the US economy** on Labour's policies and only three items mentioned the Conservatives outlook on the US recession. William Keegan in The



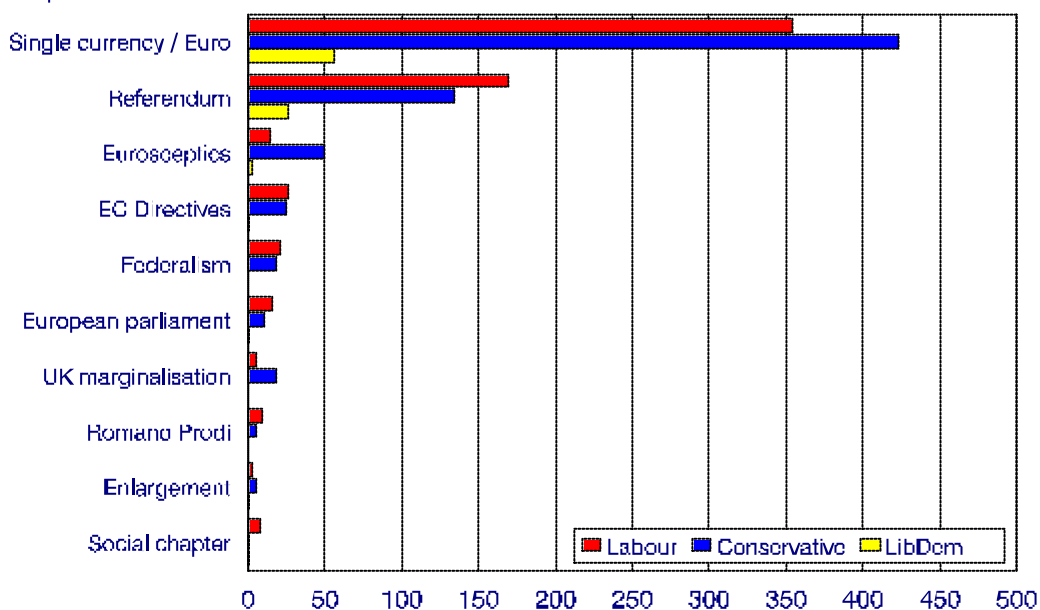
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Observer (13/5) was a lone voice in referring to the economic downturn in the US, arguing that from Labour's point of view, the election was *"taking place just in time"*. Relations with the US received little coverage, either here or in the US, with The Chicago Tribune (7/6) pointing out that relations with the US were unlikely to be affected whoever won the election, despite the fact that *"the Conservatives are more in tune ideologically with the Bush administration than Labour"*.

The **government's track record** on economic issues was praised, even when the subject was only mentioned in passing. Graham Searjeant, writing in The Times on 12 May pointed out that *"In Gordon Brown's hands, Labour is now seen as an economically safe bet"*. This was also true in the US media, with The Washington Post (9/5) pointing out that *"Blair enters the campaign with enviable levels of prosperity and economic stability"* and adding that the UK was *"enjoying its longest period of continuous expansion on record"*.

"In Gordon Brown's hands, Labour is now seen as an economically safe bet".
Graham Searjeant,
The Times

European Issues



Based on 4,280 articles - 8th May - 7th June 2001

SOURCE: Echo Research

Chart 7

The single currency was the dominant European issue in 2001, just as it had been in the 1997 campaign. The euro generated a greater volume of coverage for the Conservatives than it did for either Labour or the Liberal Democrats. A total of 424 articles which mentioned the euro also referred to the Conservative campaign, generating a negative rating of 48. However, the issue was not a positive one for Labour, resulting in an overall rating of 49.5 for all items referring to both Labour and the single currency. Both The Sun and The Times, which supported Labour, made clear their opposition to joining the euro. The Sun assured its readers on 28 May that it had not *"moved an inch"* on the issue.



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The prospect of a **referendum** on joining the euro generated predominantly negative coverage for the Conservatives (76 out of 135 articles were unfavourable) whereas for Labour, coverage was evenly balanced, with 63 favourable and 62 unfavourable items. For the Liberal Democrats, the most pro-European of the three main parties, only three out of 28 articles referring to a referendum were negative. The Conservative strategy of attempting to turn the election into a referendum on the single currency was criticised, even by the most pro-Tory press. The Daily Telegraph (28/5) thought the *“new Tory tactic is ultimately defeatist. It gives the impression that the leader of the Conservative Party seriously believes that in any referendum on the euro, the ‘no’ forces are certain to lose”*. Writing in the paper on 29 May, Alice Thomson and Rachel Sylvester made the same point, arguing that if William Hague turned the election into a referendum on the euro and Labour won, *“Mr Blair will use it as a mandate to rush ahead with further integration”*. The referendum was not always a positive issue for Labour, with The Sunday Times (27/5) pointing out that the Chancellor was casting himself in the role of eurosceptic in order to *“boost his chances of becoming Prime Minister should the government lose the referendum”*.

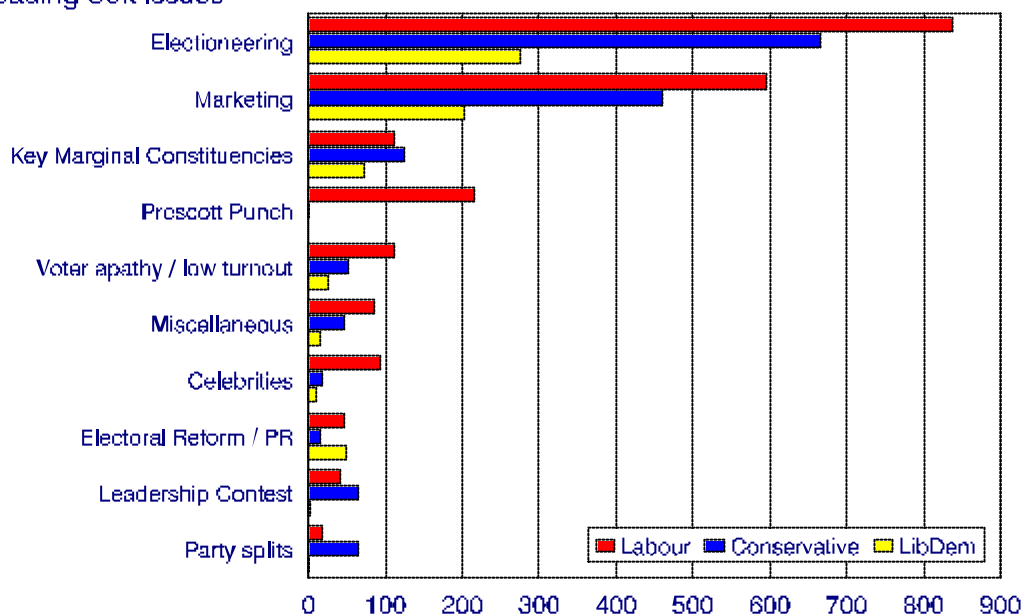
Other European issues barely featured during the campaign and despite the referendum on the Nice Treaty in Ireland, the prospects for European enlargement were hardly mentioned.

“The new Tory tactic is ultimately defeatist. It gives the impression that the leader of the Conservative Party seriously believes that in any referendum on the euro, the ‘no’ forces are certain to lose”
Daily Telegraph.



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Leading Soft Issues



Based on 4,280 articles - 8th May - 7th June 2001

SOURCE: Echo Research

Chart 8

The two leading ‘soft’ issues for all three main parties were **electioneering** and **marketing**. Electioneering featured in 839 articles on the Labour Party’s campaign, and in 669 and 279 items on the Conservatives’ and Liberal Democrats’ campaign respectively. Items on electioneering referred to everything from in-depth analyses of the parties’ battlebuses to articles on the election strategy being employed at Millbank and Central Office and trips to schools, hospitals and far-flung constituencies. Writer Joanna Trollope, travelled with the Blair entourage on the day of what was, perhaps with hindsight, a rather ill-judged visit to the UK headquarters of Microsoft. *“We troop into Microsoft’s huge, pearl-grey palace and assemble in a vast central atrium. On a raised platform, both Blairs - Cherie has arrived - are trapped with Microsoft people determined to turn this into a sales-pitch for their new Office XP system ... It is awkward, embarrassing and dull. The journalists mutter and shuffle”*, she wrote (The Daily Telegraph, 2/6). Ian Buruma, writing in The Guardian (30/5) was sceptical, not just of the election campaign, but the whole process of electioneering in general. *“The election campaign is a farce”*, he argued, *“so why not let the theatre critics cover it?”*

“It is awkward, embarrassing and dull. The journalists mutter and shuffle”.
Joanna Trollope, Daily Telegraph

How important was that punch?

The third most prominent soft issue for Labour was, not surprisingly, the infamous **‘Prescott punch’**. This was referred to in a total of 217 articles. It was a difficult issue for the traditionally Conservative press (the Daily Mail and The Daily Telegraph and their sister Sunday stable-mates) given their traditional defence of the right of the victim to retaliate, most notably in the case of Norfolk farmer Tony Martin. Now, that defence was being put to the test, by a Labour Deputy Prime Minister, who had quite literally, hit back. The Daily Mail (19/5) resorted to portraying Mr



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Evans as the honest farm worker provoked beyond endurance by Labour's policies on the countryside who had simply thought that *"throwing an egg at politicians was part of the British way of protesting"*. Richard Stott in *The Sunday Mirror* was having none of it, writing that *"Evans' self serving whinge about being a gentle man who planned a peaceful protest and now demands his privacy be respected suggests his brain is as scrambled as his eggs"* (20/5). Polly Toynbee, writing in *The Guardian* (18/5) rather enjoyed the spectacle of the Tory press that had *"championed the right of Tony Martin to defend his home against burglary by murdering a 16-year-old, now pontificating on the disgrace of a 62-year-old man hitting back"*.

Mark Steyn in *The Daily Telegraph* (19/5) described John Prescott as an *"elite one-man rapid response unit"* but warned that *"Jane's Fighting Eggs"* had concluded the situation was rapidly deteriorating, with many more free-range missiles being targeted on the UK. John O'Farrell in *The Guardian* (19/5) suggested that the Deputy Prime Minister had only retaliated because he feared the egg was not free-range and felt compelled to act on behalf of *"oppressed chickens everywhere"*.

"The Tory press that had championed the right of Tony Martin to defend his home against burglary by murdering a 16-year-old, now pontificated on the disgrace of a 62-year-old man hitting back".
Polly Toynbee,
The Guardian

Ben Macintyre in *The Times* (19/5) thought Mr Prescott had given new meaning to *"punched ballots, by knocking a chad out of a voter"* (a reference to the 2000 US election recounts), but added that Mr Evans would never have been allowed close enough to launch an egg in the US, where traditionally, the missiles aimed at politicians tend to be of a more ballistic kind. In the US itself, the incident provoked a bemused reaction, as if such forthright protest was rather unseemly. In a moment of profound insight into the British psyche, *The Houston Chronicle* (18/5) commented that *"the raw egg is a common form of political protest in British campaigns"*. Decades of political protest have of course proved that the raw egg is a far more effective missile than either the boiled or poached variety.

115 articles focused on the problems of **voter apathy** and **low turnout** and as many items on the Labour Party referred to these two issues as to the campaign in key marginal constituencies. Steve Richards in *The Independent* on Sunday (27/5) felt the media were partly to blame for the low opinion in which politicians were now held by the public: *"The defensive strategies of the parties and some of the media coverage feed off each other, reinforcing voters' indifference,"* he argued. Even the French media thought voter apathy worthy of mention, with *Le Parisien* (8/6) commenting that Tony Blair's most serious opponent was not William Hague but abstention.

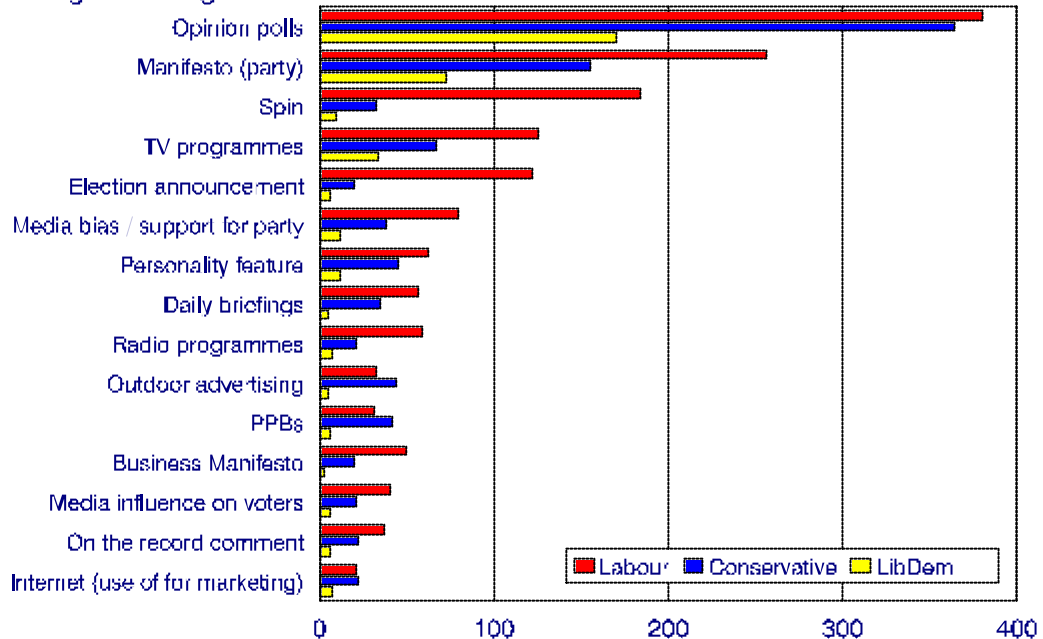
Unsurprisingly, there were more items about a likely Conservative **leadership election** contest than there were about a similar battle in side either the Labour Party or Liberal Democrats. 67 items focused on the Conservatives internal divisions on the leadership. However, Labour was not exempt and as Peter Osborne argued in *The Daily Telegraph* (14/5), *"Every administration contains the seeds of its own destruction, and the heavy presence of Gordon Brown will in due course destroy Mr Blair's."*

Towards the end of the campaign, postal voting became an issue, with a number of articles expressing concern about the rise in the number of postal vote applications, particularly in certain constituencies. On 5 June, the *Financial Times* said the security of postal votes had been called into question following a BBC investigation in Torbay, where completed postal ballots were returned in the names of seven recently deceased electors.



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Leading Marketing Issues



Based on 4,280 articles - 8th May - 7th June 2001

SOURCE: Echo Research

Chart 9

The leading marketing issue for all three parties was **opinion polls**, which were referred to in 341 articles on the Labour Party, 365 articles on the Conservatives and in 171 on the Liberal Democrats. Items referring to the Conservatives' poor showing in the opinion polls were predominantly negative (174 out of 365), prompting headlines such as the Guardian's (30/5): *"Tories face poll meltdown."*

"Cheesy as a cheddar bap",
 Quentin Letts,
 Daily Mail
"nauseating and emotionally exploitative".
 Peter Ridelgy,

The launch of the respective party **manifestos** provided extensive coverage for all three parties and this was the second most prominent marketing issue overall. This was one of the few areas where the parties were able to set the agenda and drive forward the coverage. This was particularly true of the Conservatives who 'hit the ground running' at the beginning of the campaign and were the first to launch their manifesto, a week ahead of Labour. The Labour manifesto was not universally well-received, with The Financial Times (17/5) calling it essentially *"timid"*, and The Times (17/5) labelling it *"technocratic"*.

The **election announcement** itself generated significant coverage for Labour, however, 71 out of 123 items were unfavourable and the decision to announce the election and launch the campaign in a school provided much grist to the sketchwriters' mills. *"Cheesy as a cheddar bap"*, said Quentin Letts in The Daily Mail (9/5), *"nauseating and emotionally exploitative"*, commented Peter Riddell in The Times (9/5) underlining the strategists' error in advising Blair of the manner and venue of the announcement.

Considering that this was supposed to have been the UK's first real **'internet'** election, there was relatively little interest in the respective parties' use of the internet for campaigning purposes. A few items compared the three main parties' websites, coming to the conclusion that none was particularly impressive and that the role of the internet in elections had been overstated.



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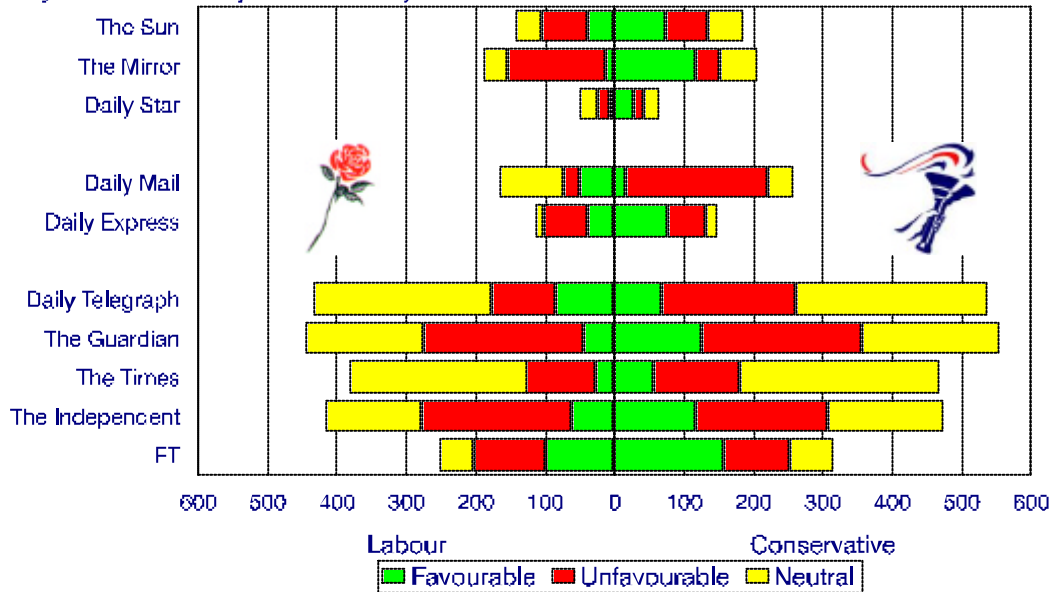
THE PRESS PROFILE

Although there were no momentous pronouncements on behalf of the press to rival that of The Sun's 1997 splash "The Sun Backs Blair - give change a chance", there was plenty of jostling for position amongst third estate. Most of the titles followed their accustomed path, although there was a discernible groundswell of support for the Liberal Democrats, notably from the Independent and Independent On Sunday. The Daily Express proved to be the leopard that changed its spots, under the new ownership of Richard Desmond, he of the stable of 'top shelf' titles. The paper was blatantly supportive of Labour, although, interestingly, its Sunday counterpart was much more balanced, perhaps in deference to its somewhat aging readership profile.



Media Breakdown Daily Newspapers by number of articles and percentage

Daily Media Titles by Favourability



Based on 4,280 articles - 8th May - 7th June 2001

SOURCE: Echo Research

Chart 10



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As the previous chart demonstrates the volume of election coverage in the broadsheets was, not surprisingly, far more significant than either the mid-market or down-market tabloids, with The Guardian generating the highest volume of coverage of the Conservative and Labour campaigns and the Daily Star the least. Of the broadsheets, the Financial Times generated the highest percentage of coverage favourable to the Conservatives and The Times the least. However, the FT emerged as providing the most balanced coverage, as Andrew Ward wrote: "According to the research by Echo, the media analysis consultancy, the Financial Times produced the most impartial reporting" (FT, 7/6).

The Times generated the highest percentage of coverage neutral to the Conservatives. Of all the broadsheets, The Guardian and The Independent were the most hostile towards the Conservatives – 52 per cent of their coverage of the Conservative campaign was unfavourable. However, this was not necessarily to Labour's advantage, as 42 per cent of all The Guardian's coverage was unfavourable to Labour, a higher percentage than any of the other broadsheets. The Financial Times was the most positive about Labour and The Times the most neutral. The Independent gave the most coverage to the Liberal Democrats (62 articles), but the highest percentage of favourable coverage was generated by The Daily Express; 67 per cent of all their coverage of the Liberal Democrat campaign was favourable. The highest percentage of unfavourable coverage of the Liberal Democrats was generated by The Daily Mirror (38 per cent).

	Conservative						Labour					
	Fav		Unfav		Neutral		Fav		Unfav		Neutral	
	Vol	%	Vol	%	Vol	%	Vol	%	Vol	%	Vol	%
The Sun	38	27	66	46	38	27	75	40	59	32	53	28
Daily Mirror	11	6	143	76	33	17	118	58	33	16	55	26
Daily Star	7	15	18	38	24	47	27	40	15	23	25	37
Daily Mail	51	31	21	13	93	56	16	6	204	79	38	15
Daily Express	37	33	64	55	13	12	77	51	56	39	15	10
The Daily Telegraph	84	20	92	22	257	58	69	13	193	37	276	51
The Guardian	43	10	231	52	171	38	127	22	231	42	198	36
The Times	27	7	99	26	256	66	56	12	126	28	286	60
The Independent	62	16	214	52	140	32	117	23	191	41	168	35
Financial Times	99	40	103	41	48	18	157	49	95	31	64	20

Table 7

Of the two mid-market tabloids, The Daily Mail was the most hostile to Labour; 79 per cent of all its coverage of the Labour campaign was unfavourable, but only 31 per cent of its coverage of the Conservatives was positive. The Daily Express actually generated a slightly higher percentage of articles favourable to the Conservatives (33 per cent), but overall was far more friendly towards Labour than The Mail and 51 per cent of its coverage of the Labour campaign was positive. Both the Daily Express and the Express on Sunday had the difficult task of backing Labour without completely alienating their residual Conservative readership.

Of the down-market nationals, the Daily Mirror was the most openly hostile towards the Conservatives; 76 per cent of its coverage was unfavourable and only six per cent was



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favourable. 58 per cent of its coverage of the Labour campaign was favourable. In the case of both The Sun and The Star, 40 per cent of Labour coverage was positive while only 27 and 15 per cent of Conservative coverage respectively, was favourable.

	Liberal Democrats					
	Fav		Unfav		Neutral	
	Vol	%	Vol	%	Vol	%
The Sun	7	26	8	35	11	39
Daily Mirror	9	17	19	38	25	46
Daily Star	1	5	5	26	14	68
Daily Mail	4	6	9	18	36	76
Daily Express	24	67	4	13	8	21
The Daily Telegraph	28	16	17	10	123	74
The Guardian	71	33	36	17	102	49
The Times	21	13	14	9	125	78
The Independent	62	27	52	21	118	52
Financial Times	55	55	12	12	32	33

Table 8

The Independent gave the most coverage to the Liberal Democrats (232 articles), but the highest percentage of favourable coverage in the daily newspapers was generated by The Daily Express; 67 per cent of all their coverage of the Liberal Democrat campaign was favourable. The highest percentage of unfavourable coverage of the Liberal Democrats was generated by The Daily Mirror (38 per cent), but the most negative of all reporting of their campaign was found in The Sunday Mirror.

	Net coverage 2001				Net coverage 1997			
	Con	Lab	Overall 'bias'		Con	Lab	Overall 'bias'	
Daily Mirror	-132	85	Lab	217	-87	57	Lab	144
The Guardian	-188	-104	Lab	84	-37	-3	Lab	34
The Independent	-152	-74	Lab	78	-27	0	Lab	27
Financial Times	-4	62	Lab	66	-18	-3	Lab	15
Daily Express	-27	21	Lab	48	-12	-20	Con	8
The Sun	-28	16	Lab	44	-45	23	Lab	68
Daily Star	-11	12	Lab	23	-13	-1	Lab	12
The Times	-72	-70	Lab	2	-13	-2	Lab	11
The Daily Telegraph	-8	-124	Con	116	-2	-21	Con	19
Daily Mail	30	-188	Con	218	-6	-33	Con	28

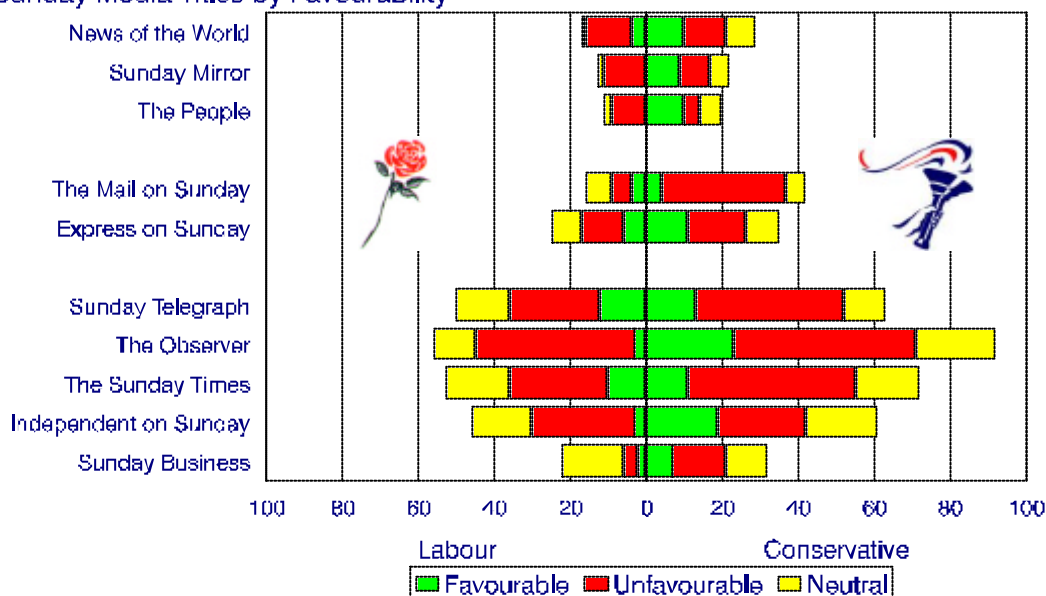
Table 9

In addition to Echo's own analysis of the media, Peter Kellner, political correspondent of the Evening Standard, undertook some further analysis using Echo's data. By subtracting the number of negative from positive articles in each media title and combining the scores for each party, he arrived at an overall 'bias' score for each newspaper (bias being a measure of the fact that its impact was likely to be helpful or damaging to each party). His analysis, printed in the Evening Standard on June 6, underlined the fact that the Daily Mail and The Mirror had both been "unrelentingly hostile" to Labour and the Conservatives respectively. Using figures for the whole

campaign, it is clear that The Times produced the most even-handed coverage, being as negative to Labour as to the Conservatives, while The Mirror and the Daily Mail were equally distant from the 'median' as each other. It also confirms the swing of the Daily Express, from pro-Tory to pro-Labour, under its new ownership.

Media Breakdown Sunday newspapers by number of articles and percentage

Sunday Media Titles by Favourability



Based on 4,280 articles - 8th May - 7th June 2001

SOURCE: Echo Research

Chart 11

Of the Sunday newspapers, it should come as no surprise that the most favourable to the Conservatives and the most openly hostile towards Labour was The Mail on Sunday; 79 per cent of its coverage of the Labour campaign was unfavourable. However, 31 per cent of its coverage of the Conservative campaign was negative and only a quarter positive. The most hostile of the Sunday papers towards the Conservatives was the Sunday Mirror; 85 per cent of its coverage was negative and, like The People, it failed to generate any favourable coverage at all of the Conservative campaign. Of the broadsheets, The Observer was the most unfavourable towards the Conservatives and 75 per cent of its coverage was hostile, however, just over half of its coverage of the Labour campaign was also unfavourable and only a quarter was favourable. The Independent on Sunday was more favourably disposed towards Labour and 31 per cent of its coverage of Labour was positive. The Observer was the most sympathetic of all the Sunday newspaper towards the Liberal Democrats; half of its coverage was positive. Surprisingly, The Sunday Telegraph generated slightly more coverage favourable to the Liberal Democrats than the Independent on Sunday, a newspaper which applauded the party's commitment to the environment; 44 per cent of all coverage of the Liberal Democrats in The Sunday Telegraph was favourable, as opposed to 42 per cent in the Independent on Sunday.



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	Conservative						Labour					
	Fav		Unfav		Neutral		Fav		Unfav		Neutral	
	Vol	%	Vol	%	Vol	%	Vol	%	Vol	%	Vol	%
News of the World	4	24	12	71	1	6	10	34	11	38	8	28
Sunday Mirror	0	0	11	85	2	15	9	41	8	36	5	23
The People	0	0	9	82	2	18	10	50	4	20	6	30
The Mail on Sunday	4	25	5	31	7	44	4	10	33	79	5	12
Express on Sunday	6	24	11	44	8	32	11	31	15	43	9	26
Sunday Telegraph	12	22	24	49	14	29	13	19	39	63	11	18
The Observer	3	5	42	75	11	20	23	25	48	52	21	23
The Sunday Times	10	17	26	50	17	33	11	15	44	61	17	24
Independent on Sunday	3	7	27	59	16	35	19	31	23	38	19	31
Sunday Business	2	9	4	18	16	73	7	22	14	44	11	34

Table 10

	Liberal Democrats					
	Fav		Unfav		Neutral	
	Vol	%	Vol	%	Vol	%
News of the World	2	22	6	67	1	11
Sunday Mirror	0	0	3	100	0	0
The People	0	0	1	50	1	50
The Mail on Sunday	1	25	2	50	1	25
Express on Sunday	3	25	4	33	5	42
Sunday Telegraph	7	44	4	25	5	31
The Observer	13	50	4	15	9	35
The Sunday Times	6	26	0	0	17	74
Independent on Sunday	8	42	4	21	7	37

Table 11

“The revelation that Tony Blair wears Calvin Klein underwear may not seem overly important at first. But this one fact is the final nail in William Hague’s coffin

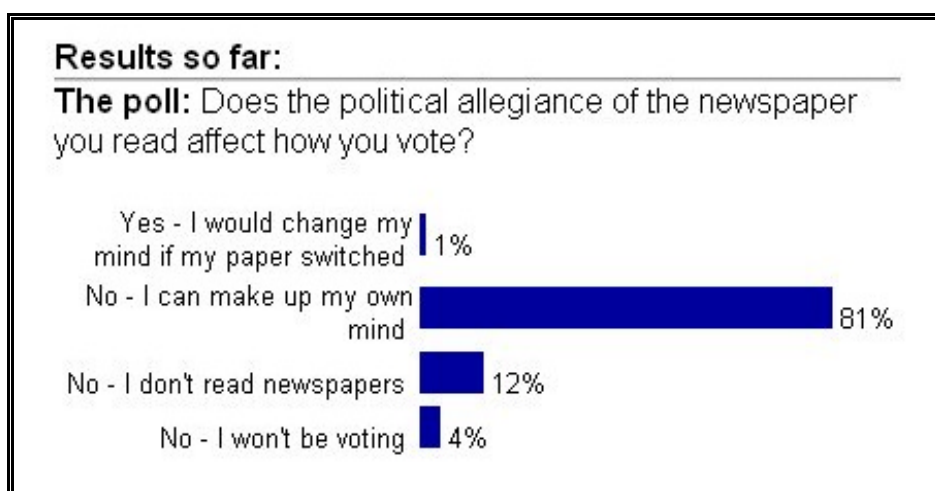
Leader,
The Mirror

In the final week of the campaign, the Daily Mail, The Daily Telegraph, The Sunday Telegraph and The Mail on Sunday urged their readers to vote against a Labour landslide, rather than endorsing the Tories. All other newspapers, in varying degrees, plumped for Labour. There were, however, qualifications. The most off-message recommendation for voting Labour came from The Mirror which in its leader column on 6 June said: *“It all comes down to a pair of pants”,* going on to remind readers that the *“revelation that he (Tony Blair) wears Calvin Klein underwear may not seem overly important at first. But this one fact is the final nail in William Hague’s coffin. Because it reminds us why we love Tony Blair and feel nothing but contempt and ridicule for Hague.”* Of course, on reading the column, it may not have been William Hague so much as the paper’s leader writers, for whom the readership felt contempt and ridicule. The Independent said that *“In keeping with our founding principles, we do not presume to recommend to our readers a vote for a particular party”,* but added that *“we conclude with regret that the Conservative Party on this occasion ‘does not deserve to be elected’”* (6/6). The Independent on Sunday said none of the three parties had its wholehearted endorsement, but added that *“After four years of better-than-the-Tories administration, the party of devolution and the minimum wage just about deserve their second term”.* The paper went on to urge voters to *“vote tactically”* in order to strengthen the *“opposition backbone”* on Thursday (3/6).



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In the final analysis however, it seems that the electorate, far from following the advice of the leader writers, are more inclined to make up their own minds about how to vote. If the internet poll below, carried out by ananova.com, is to be believed, the impact of newspapers on their readership is minimal to say the least. Of those surveyed, only one per cent of newspaper readers said they would switch party allegiance if their paper recommended it. 81 per cent said they were more than capable of making up their own minds.



Source: www.ananova.com

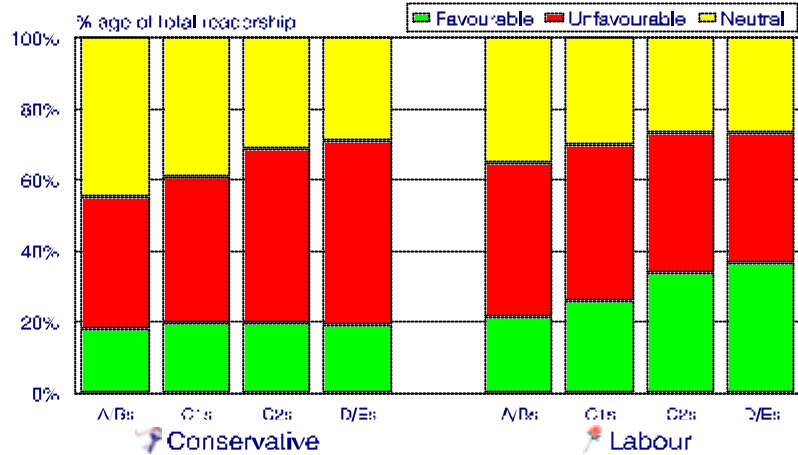
Chart 12



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Demographic Breakdown of Readership

Daily & Sunday newspapers by readership - (based on ABC audited readership)



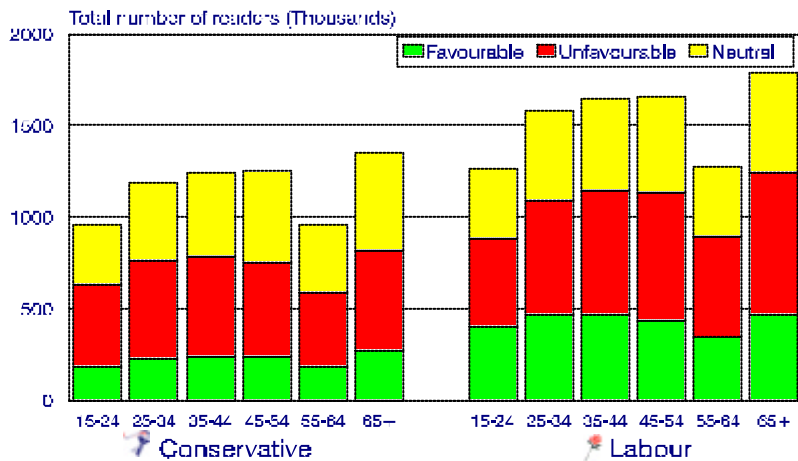
Based on 1,280 articles - 8th May - 7th June 2001

SOURCE: Echo Research

Chart 13

A breakdown of newspaper readership reveals that Tory support was fairly evenly spread amongst the socio-economic groups, running at 20 per cent for each, however negative Tory coverage (and positive Labour coverage) is evident from the reach of the red-top tabloids amongst the C2 and D/E groups. However, the four years since the previous election have seen considerable decline in readership numbers of the mass-circulation newspapers, calling into question their influence in the face of competition from alternative news sources in broadcast and the new media.

Daily & Sunday newspapers by readership - (based on ABC audited readership)



Based on 4,280 articles - 8th May - 7th June 2001

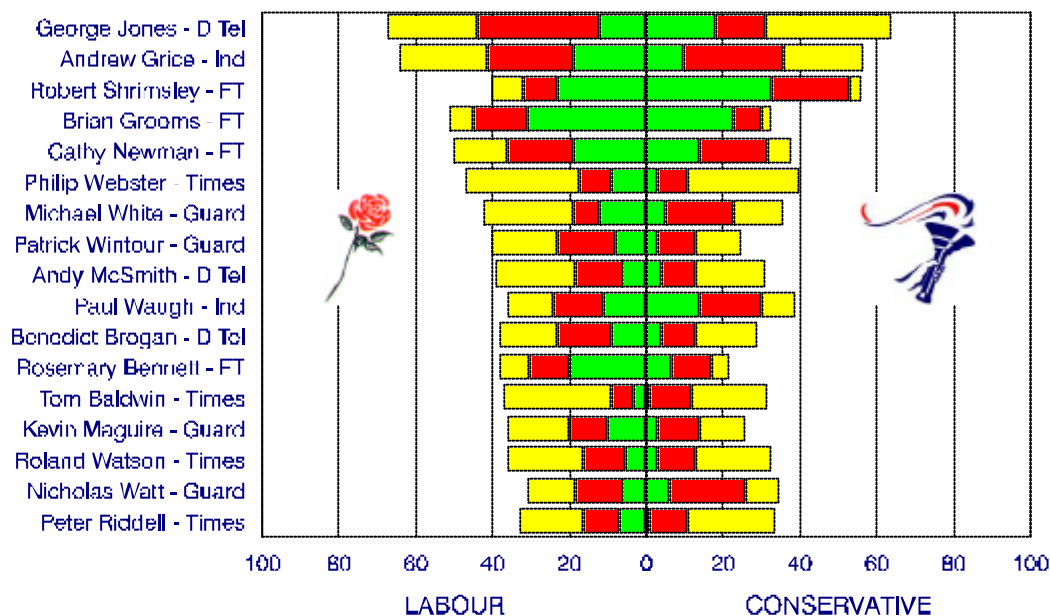
SOURCE: Echo Research

Chart 14

When the newspaper titles are viewed by readership breakdown, the extent of Tory trauma is even more clear, with a clear and considerable lead in terms of positive Labour coverage in all age groups, but principally in the 25 - 44 range.

BREAKDOWN OF JOURNALISTS

Journalists by Favourability (Broadsheets)



Based on 4,280 articles - 8th May - 7th June 2001

SOURCE: Echo Research

Chart 15

Of the leading broadsheet journalists, the most prolific in terms of coverage of the Labour and Conservative parties was George Jones of The Daily Telegraph; 33 of his articles on the Conservatives were neutral, while 32 of his items on the Labour campaign were unfavourable. The next most prominent journalist in volume terms, was Andrew Grice, Political Editor of The Independent, the majority of whose coverage of Labour was neutral and of the Conservatives unfavourable. Robert Shrimmsley of the Financial Times was the most favourable of all the leading journalists towards the Conservatives; 33 of his articles were positive about the Conservative campaign. On 21 May he wrote that *"the Tories promise a lower-tax, lower-regulation Britain. They pledge first and foremost to 'save the pound', ensuring interest rate decisions are taken with the economy's needs at heart"*. Brian Groom of the FT on the other hand was the most favourable towards Labour. 31 of his articles during the campaign were positive about Labour. However on 5 June in an article co-written with Nicholas Timmins on reform of the civil service, he pointed that *"Mr Blair has little time to waste. Voters appear ready to give Labour a second chance. In four years' time they could be less generous"*.

Voters appear ready to give Labour a second chance. In four years' time they could be less generous".
 Nick Timmins, FT



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Leading Broadsheet Journalists by number of articles

		Labour			Conservative		
		Fav	Unf	Neut	Fav	Unf	Neut
George Jones	Daily Telegraph	12	32	23	18	13	33
Andrew Grice	The Independent	19	22	23	10	26	21
Robert Shrimpsley	Financial Times	23	9	8	33	20	3
Brian Groom	Financial Times	31	14	6	23	7	3
Cathy Newman	Financial Times	19	17	14	14	18	6
Philip Webster	The Times	9	8	30	3	8	29
Michael White	The Guardian	12	7	23	5	18	13
Patrick Wintour	The Guardian	8	15	17	3	10	12
Andy McSmith	Daily Telegraph	6	12	21	4	9	18
Paul Waugh	Independent	11	13	12	14	16	9
Benedict Brogan	Daily Telegraph	9	14	15	4	9	16
Rosemary Bennett	Financial Times	20	10	8	7	10	5
Tom Baldwin	The Times	3	6	28	1	11	20
Kevin Maguire	The Guardian	10	10	16	3	11	12
Roland Watson	The Times	5	11	20	3	10	20
Peter Riddell	The Times	7	9	17	1	10	23

Table 12

Leading Sketch Writers and Columnists by number of articles

		Labour			Conservative		
		Fav	Unf	Neut	Fav	Unf	Neut
Quentin Letts	Daily Mail	0	13	7	4	2	9
Matthew Parris	The Times	1	7	7	2	7	7
Simon Hoggart	The Guardian	1	8	7	0	2	10
Simon Carr	Independent	4	12	3	1	15	3
Frank Johnson	Daily Telegraph	2	4	15	1	8	1
Hugo Young	The Guardian	2	11	1	1	11	1
David Aaronovitch	Independent	4	2	4	1	8	1
Mary Ann Sieghart	The Times	1	5	6	1	3	7
Polly Toynbee	The Guardian	2	6	3	0	7	2

Table 13



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Of the leading sketchwriters and columnists, the most unfavourable to Labour was Quentin Letts of The Daily Mail, 13 of whose articles were negative, with Simon Carr in The Independent contributing the highest number of sketches unfavourable to the Conservatives (15). In his Election Sketch on 1 June, on the subject of Boris Johnson, Conservative candidate for Henley and editor of The Spectator, Simon Carr could not resist saying: *“Politicians are opposite to people. The more like the one you are, the less like the other. Boris may well be a person. Unless ... he’s the most brilliant politician we’ve yet seen. That’s a joke, by the way.”*

Leading Tabloid Journalists by number of articles

		Labour			Conservative		
		Fav	Unf	Neut	Fav	Unf	Neut
Patrick O’Flynn	Daily Express	27	3	1	10	19	2
George Pascoe-Watson	The Sun	14	9	7	8	13	2
James Hardy	Daily Mirror	24	1	4	2	18	5
David Hughes	Daily Mail	2	22	4	9	3	11
Trevor Kavanagh	The Sun	13	6	9	10	7	6
Oonagh Blackman	Daily Mirror	17	4	4	0	20	3
Paul Eastham	Daily Mail	2	18	2	3	3	12
Paul Routledge	Daily Mirror	8	6	8	0	16	5
Kirsty Walker	Daily Express	11	4	2	8	4	3
Alison Little	Daily Express	8	5	2	6	6	3

Table 14

Of the leading tabloid journalists, the most prolific in volume terms was Patrick O’Flynn of The Daily Express, 27 of whose articles were favourable to Labour and who also contributed the highest number of articles favourable to the Conservatives. Writing in the paper on Monday 4 June he pointed out that *“More damningly still, the Conservative campaign was rated in a Mori poll as by far the worst of the three main parties”*. Oonagh Blackman in The Daily Mirror contributed the highest number of articles unfavourable to the Conservatives, while David Hughes in The Daily Mail was the most negative about Labour (22 items). *“EU Fakes”*, was the headline above Oonagh Blackman’s article on Conservative Eurosceptics on 1 June, in which she reported that *“William Hague has been accused of gagging Tory MPs and duping voters”*. In the Daily Mail on 1 June, in an article written with John Deans, he said that *“Tony Blair put Labour’s record on health and education at the centre of the election yesterday – then saw it blow up in his face”*. The article went on to report the views of Dr Peter Hawker, head of the BMA’s consultant’s group that the NHS was providing a standard of care he would not wish on his own family.

“Politicians are opposite to people. The more like the one you are, the less like the other.”
Simon Carr
The Independent



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The View From America

Introduction

This section of the report summarises the US media coverage of the UK 2001 election. This analysis is based on 70 articles from leading US newspapers and business publications published between May 9 and June 10. Articles were analysed to monitor the UK political parties effectiveness in projecting their image and enhancing their reputation in the US media.

Leading Election Issues in the US media coverage

Tony Blair: Throughout the election campaign, British Prime Minister and Labour Party leader Tony Blair was projected as a confident and competent leader. More importantly, the media coverage did not associate Tony Blair with the Labour government's failures to meet public expectations during its first term of office, nor was he associated with recent party scandals.

Labour Government: Instead, the Labour government - while still comparatively popular - was widely blamed by the US media for failing to meet goals set out for the UK public services (such as health and education) during the previous election in 1997.

William Hague: William Hague, leader of the Opposition and the Conservative party, was widely perceived by the US media to be unelectable within the modern day political climate. Likewise, the Conservative party was portrayed as a deeply divided party who were unable to engage the British electorate, nor show any potential to provide a competent alternative to the Labour government.

The Euro: The Conservatives failure to make the UK's entry to the common European currency as the central issue of the election was compounded by an apparent softening in the public's opposition towards the Euro during the election campaign. Furthermore, by failing to win support over the Euro issue and by losing the election so heavily, the party had no room to manoeuvre. This latest political miscalculation by the party prompted heavy criticism from the US media.

US – UK Relations: The US media seldom mentioned the US-UK relationship during the election campaign. After the Labour party had been re-elected for a second term, the media noted their satisfaction that the two countries could continue to co-operate both politically and economically.



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Overview of the Election campaign's media coverage

Tony Blair's official election announcement was carried by the leading US newspapers noting that the campaign date had been delayed by the recent foot & mouth crisis, which had swept across the UK. While none of the media coverage seriously doubted that Tony Blair and the Labour party would win an unprecedented second term in office, many voices within the US media did expect the Conservative party to draw attention to the state of the public services, not to mention focus on the issue as to whether or not Britain should exchange the Euro for the Pound. Much was made of Labour's double-digit lead in the opinion polls - due in part to the US obsession with such polls - even though American scepticism of them has increased lately.

As the campaign progressed, the focus of the media coverage drifted away from the party line as the parties themselves failed to engage the British public and did little to interest the media – either in the UK or the US. Instead, the US media began to look at the political and cultural differences between the US and the UK, while attempting to draw parallels between Blair and Clinton, as well as Hague and Bush.

From the first week of June, US media coverage levels rose sharply and media ratings changed noticeably (see chart below). The media began to lavish praise on Tony Blair in anticipation of another electoral landslide for the Labour party, while becoming increasingly critical of the certain defeat looming for William Hague and the Conservatives.

Blair's victory in the election was well received by the US media who then challenged the Prime Minister to face up to the difficult challenges that lie ahead and to implement more radical policies in the government's second term.

Volume and Media Rating for each party by Month

May (9th-31st) and June (1st-10th)

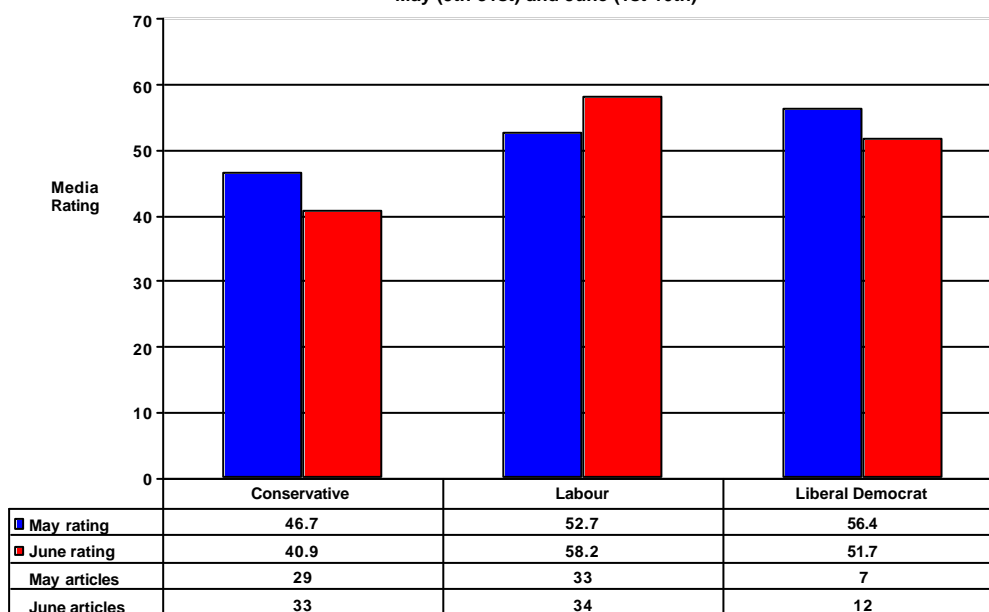


Chart 16



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Party Media rating by Article Headline

As shown in the media rating table below, Labour was the only party to generate articles with positive headlines during the election campaign. Not surprisingly, these articles generated a very favourable 63 rating for the party. However, negative headlines for Labour had an equally powerful effect on the party's image as those articles generated a very unfavourable 29 rating. The Conservatives received very unfavourable coverage when they had a negative headline, and were still rated unfavourable when they were not mentioned within the headline. Meanwhile the Liberal Democrats received the most favourable coverage for neutral headlines.

Headline Comment	Labour	Conservative	LibDem
Positive	63.0	-	-
Neutral	48.8	55.0	60.0
Negative	36.7	28.8	-
No party mention	56.0	43.9	52.5

Table 15

Much of the Conservative party's initial coverage was either neutral or did not mention the party within the article headline. Towards the end of the campaign with electoral defeat confirmed, the headlines became increasingly critical of the party.



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The Liberal Democrats generated a comparatively small volume of coverage, much of which consisted of favourable passing mentions. Their increasing acceptance as a viable alternative to the Labour government was highlighted by the Chicago Tribune (5/6) who speculated that should the Conservatives lose badly, then something new would have to replace the party as the official opposition. Two days later, the Chicago Tribune (7/6) said that party leader, Charles Kennedy, was *“the star of the campaign”* and voiced expert predictions that the election could see *“an increase in votes for minor parties, such as the Greens and Socialist Alliance, that have made little impact in the past”*.

Party media rating on the Europe issue

Throughout the election campaign, the US media coverage made much of the Conservative's inability to dampen Labour's popularity. While it was no secret that the Conservatives intended to make the European monetary union as the “bellwether issue” of the campaign (Associated Press, 5/9), media coverage gave few clues into how this could be done. The widely published assertion was that the British public wanted to keep the pound. Unable to communicate their messages to the media, the Conservatives suffered badly in their press coverage on Europe and their media rating was lower than Labour for articles that made reference to the Euro currency and/or the referendum which is expected to be announced during the next 2 years.

Europe	Labour	Conservative
Europe (overall)	55.9	42.7
Single Currency	54.6	42.0
Referendum	52.5	30.0

Table 16

William Hague's campaign tactic to repeatedly name the number of days left *“to save the pound”* was seen by the New York Times (3/6) to be a political miscalculation because *“implicit in the daily claim was a fatalistic admission that the British public would say yes in the promised referendum.”*

Tony Blair's statement in an interview with the Financial Times that a referendum was “there for the taking” was widely reported as a new found confidence in his handling of this momentous issue. The Wall Street Journal (8/6) explained Blair's dilemma for Britain saying this issue will determine whether it binds its economy more tightly to the rest of Europe or continues to fend for itself as a midsize power on the fringes of the European Union.

Following William Hague's resignation after the election, the New York Times (9/6) concluded that leading his party to defeat on an anti-euro platform would reinforce *“the perception that the outcome of the election had lowered the political hurdles to joining the 12-nation euro currency union”*. Merrill Lynch economist Ian Stewart said *“the real obstacle lies not in the economic tests, but in whether the government can get the assent of the people in a referendum”*.



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The power struggle between Blair and the Chancellor of the Exchequer about the European currency was seldom mentioned in the US coverage despite receiving widespread coverage in the UK. This underlined the widely acknowledged conclusion within the media that “*part of Blair’s strength is really the opposition’s current weakness*” (*Boston Globe* (10/5)).

Other Leading Election Issues

Leading Issues	Labour	Conservative	LibDem
NHS / Health	51.0	40.0	-
Public Services	58.3	33.3	55.0
Direct Taxation	50.0	45.0	57.5
Economy	58.6	-	-
Education	48.3	30.0	-
Railways	56.3	40.0	-
Petrol (Gas) Prices	60.0	57.5	-
Immigration	40.0	37.5	55.0
Countryside	53.8	-	-
Constitution	47.5	-	-

Table 17

Aside from Europe, much of the US media coverage focused on the state of the economy, public services and immigration (see table above). Although each of these issues should have provided opportunities for the Opposition to exploit government embarrassments in the media, the Conservative party could not shrug of its image of helplessness. *Washington Post* (29/5) reporter Fareed Zakaria concluded that “*whatever [the Conservatives] say -- cut taxes, cut spending, curb immigration, stay out of Europe -- either backfires or fails to gather steam against the juggernaut that is Blair*”.

“A funny thing happened on the way to the British election. When the Conservatives let it be known that they would cut taxes if they won, there was a sharp backlash.”
New York Times

Cutting taxes – traditionally a safe bet to win votes in UK elections - did not produce the expected results for the Conservatives as the *New York Times* explained (26/5): “*A funny thing happened on the way to the British election. When the Conservatives let it be known that they would cut taxes if they won, there was a sharp backlash. It turned out that in Britain today, tax cuts are political poison*”. This is in deep contrast to the US Congress, which recently approved substantial tax cuts that were the centrepiece of President Bush’s recent election campaign.

Not only were the Conservatives unable to generate favourable coverage on the Europe issue in which they had support from both the British media and the people, they were unable to exploit arguably Labour’s weakest issue – the state of the public services. Blair turned Hague’s planned “tax cuts” into “spending cuts” into public services – a move that was widely condemned by the British electorate.



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The government did not escape criticism however. The New York Times (27/5) was almost alone in turning the spotlight back onto the government describing Britain as a “joyless place” and that while Blair’s victory is all but assured, his glow has long gone with “public disgust stems from lapses in visible public service areas like health, transportation, education, farming and policing”. The Financial Times (18/5) added “Labour has over promised and under delivered. That as much as anything else is why the voters are in turn angry, apathetic, and cynical “.

To add to William Hague’s woes, the electorate were prepared to be patient with the rate of improvement to the public services as the Los Angeles Times explained: “they [the electorate] are willing to give him another four years to keep trying. If the Tories had 18 years, Labour should have eight to show what it can do, the thinking goes”.

The Conservatives received some of its most fierce media criticism on issues in which they felt they were taking a strong stance such as immigration. The Washington Post (5/29) drew parallels between William Hague and U.S. Reform Party leader, Patrick Buchanan when Hague “proposed putting all immigrants into locked detention centres on arrival“ [to the UK].

“Labour has over promised and under delivered. That as much as anything else is why the voters are in turn angry, apathetic, and cynical “.
Financial Times

Media Rating by Politician

Washington Post columnist George Will (10/6) echoed the media’s general consensus that this election completed the transformation of general elections into “presidential” elections in which issues are framed not as which party should control the House of Commons but which leader should live at 10 Downing Street. Indeed, much of the US media coverage focused on the leaders, not the parties. Not surprisingly, Tony Blair generated a favourable media rating (see table below), but only marginally, thereby reflecting the headline of the New York Times (5/6) profile of the Prime Minister – “not loveable, but electable”. Former Conservative leader Margaret Thatcher also received considerable coverage but rated even lower than William Hague.

Politicians	Media rating	Articles
Tony Blair (Labour)	54.1	28
William Hague (Conservative)	42.4	19
Margaret Thatcher (Conservative)	40.6	9

Table 18

Tony Blair was consistently portrayed as a competent politician who can reach out to the electorate. Following the election announcement, the New York Times (9/5) noted that his double-digit lead in the polls “indicated that he has emerged unscathed from the feuding within the top ranks of his Labour party, a whiff of scandal among some lieutenants, furious protests over fuel prices, widespread aversion to his support of the euro as Europe’s single currency and the potential political fallout from the foot-and-mouth crisis”. On the same day, the Washington Post noted, “Blair enters the campaign with enviable levels of prosperity and economic stability...which is “enjoying its longest period of continuous expansion on record”.



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Some media coverage, however, was able to pick its way around the government's manufactured image and found challenges that lie ahead for the Prime Minister. The Wall Street Journal (6/6) noted that the "*real Prime Minister is going to have to stand up*" or face a swarm of perils pressing him to make some hard, defining choices that he has avoided. New York Times (9/6) reporter Clyde Haberman drew parallels between Blair and New York City Mayor Rudy Guilianni noting both leaders exhibited "enthusiasm for power, obsession with image, and ruthlessness in stifling dissent".

The US media showed no hesitancy in espousing its feelings about Conservative leader, William Hague. Slate.com columnist, Michael Kinsley, writing in the Washington Post (25/5) said that Hague was a "*dorky right wing political operative*" and that he "*seems at first like nothing else on earth, let alone in the United States*". Kinsley then eased up a little saying that Hague's inclusion in the campaign "*speaks well of British politics -- and the British electorate -- that an odd duck such as Hague should be leading the ticket of a major political party*".

"It speaks well of British politics that an odd duck such as Hague should be leading the ticket of a major political party".

Michael Flusley,
Washington Post

While no one doubted Hague's intellect and energy as a leader, his political moves prompted widespread criticism. The Washington Post (29/5) said his campaign was "*emulating not George W. Bush's touchy-feely campaign but Bob Dole's angry, defensive one*". The Times' sketchwriter Matthew Parris writing in The Wall Street Journal (1/6) concluded that his appearance reminded him "*of Eisenhower -- but without the military record. For 2001, it just looks weird*" -- a word Mr. Blair has used of Mr. Hague to damaging effect". US media consultant Robert Shrum who advised Tony Blair during the election campaign pointed out that in the Los Angeles Times (6/6) that Hague failed to connect with the voters adding that "*He doesn't have a language that identifies with their lives*".

References to the US

The implications of the UK election outcome on the British-American relationship received little attention in the US media coverage. As the Chicago Tribune (7/6) concluded, this is partly due to foreign policy issues being largely absent from the campaign itself; regardless, "*relations with the U.S. are unlikely to be affected no matter which party wins, but the Conservatives are more in tune ideologically with the Bush administration than is Labour*".

One could argue, though, that the small differences between Labour and Conservative will make little difference to the US. As an editorial in the Washington Post (7/6) pointed out "*Blair has proved himself a solid Atlanticist, and the fact that he is at least open to joining the euro makes him more effective than his opponent could ever be in persuading his neighbours to temper their instinctive anti-Americanism. By happy coincidence, the choice that Britain's voters seem on the point of making is also the choice that best serves this country*".

Indeed one could argue that Hague has very little in common with President Bush. Washington Post (29/5) reporter T.R. Reid opined that Hague's "*policy portfolio would put Hague on the far left fringe of American politics*" while his big-government style of conservatism reflects the most striking difference between this election and the previous US election. "*The whole debate on this side of the Atlantic is several notches to the left of the American political conversation*".



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John Prescott's efforts to get in touch with the voters prompted a bemused reaction from the US media as it grappled with the forthright style of electioneering, which is lacking in the US. The Houston Chronicle (18/5) said the incident (in which John Prescott thumped a protestor) illustrated two ways that British campaigning differs from American-style politics. The first being security and the second being that *"the raw egg is a common form of political protest in British campaigns"*.

Party Media Favorability by Publication

Overall, the international edition of the Financial Times showed yet again the fairest balance in its coverage of the election campaign (see table below); otherwise there was remarkable consistency between the remaining leading newspapers. Shortly before the election, the Financial Times (5/6) endorsed the Labour party on 3 key issues: Europe, economic management, and public services.

Publication	Labour	Conservative	LibDem
Washington Post	56.8	42.8	55.0
Wall Street Journal	56.4	42.9	53.8
New York Times	54.2	41.4	52.5
Los Angeles Times	56.0	44.0	55.0
Financial Times	60.5	48.5	50.0
Chicago Tribune	58.8	37.5	52.5

Table 19



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The View From France

While the British media was obsessing over its election, its French counterpart took a more detached view. The French media showed little interest in a campaign, which it considered dull, boring and without suspense. It also took the view that the campaign focused solely on UK-specific topics which was of little interest to a French audience. Despite this, the French media welcomed Tony Blair's "*widely predicted*" second victory.

An historic victory for the Labour Party...

The election saw an unprecedented victory for Labour. The French media gave credit to Tony Blair's government policy and its hitherto four years in power, which (it said) gave rise to a strong economy and significant constitutional changes.

A good economy for Britain

The media hailed the good results achieved after four years in power: the near repayment of the public debt, the control of inflation, the fight against unemployment—which is at its lowest rate for two decades—and the tight control of spending which has seen some budgetary surpluses. The credit for all this good work was attributed to Gordon Brown, the so-called "*Iron Chancellor*".

Reforms and decentralisation

Two main areas stood out: the regional autonomy installed in Wales and Scotland, with their own elected executive and parliaments and the fragile, semi-autonomous, executive set up in Northern Ireland which successfully incorporates both the Catholic and Protestant communities.

On the whole, Tony Blair's government policy was perceived as positive, even if some of the promised reforms in 1997—namely public services—had yet to materialise. "*For Middle England, the New Labour alchemist has a true talent: he can change the heavy inheritance of Mrs Thatcher's years into a promising future*" (Les Echos, 8/6).

But an historic abstention from the British citizens...

Tony Blair's victory was described as the result of two combined factors: the lack of a credible opposition leader and the high proportion of abstention. The lack of enthusiasm from the British voters was said to be Tony Blair's "*worst enemy*". "*The most serious opponent to Blair is not William Hague, it is abstention*" (Le Parisien, 8/6). A radical change from the euphoric election of 1997.

So what has happened in four years? Foot and mouth disease and the poor state of public services were blamed for this crisis of confidence among British voters. Tony Blair was said to have reacted slowly to the foot and mouth crisis and to have under-estimated its seriousness. With public services he was criticised for not enacting the much-needed reforms to regenerate the public services of the world's fifth-biggest economy. The British people also were disappointed by other social reforms such as the creation of a national minimum wage, which the media reported to be 10 per cent inferior to its French equivalent; that in a country where the cost of living is 20 per cent stronger. Some reforms—to aid the poorest groups of society—did



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not prevent the division between rich and poor from widening. *“Tony Blair appears to be far more on the Tory side than most expected. Methodically, he promoted the essential axes of the Tory programme and consolidated Thatcher’s revolution. As a result, for the first time in its 100-year existence, the Labour party is now positioned on the centre-right where the Tories were traditionally positioned. The Conservatives, however, have now been pushed to the far-right of the political spectrum, while the smaller Liberal Democrat party is, all of a sudden, to the left of New Labour”* (Le Monde, 8/6).

To these critics, the “clever” Labour leader had a clear answer: the aim of the first mandate was to set down the necessary foundations for New Britain, from the second mandate will emerge Britain’s renaissance. Despite these good words, the media reckoned that Tony Blair was the *“worst re-elected PM over the last 90 years.”* (Le Monde, 8/6).

What the future holds

Beyond reporting of the victory itself, the French media discussed the key issues to be tackled by the re-elected government. The mainly healthy state of the British economy is, like all other European countries, threatened by economic recession. As a result, the new Blair team is to face a more difficult second term. The media questioned how the Labour government will perform in its next term and how it will implement the ambitious reforms of, and investment in, public services—which Mr Blair promised throughout the campaign.

An ambitious programme

From French-media perspectives, the future falls into two main issues: firstly, reform of public services and secondly, the euro. It is clearly these issues that Britons are expecting clear and straightforward answers.

Public services in a state of decay

“Out of breath”, this is how the French media described the National Health Service. Despite the efforts of the last two years, there is still a lot to achieve in order to *“compare it with current continental health services and reduce the waiting list significantly”*. The media reported Labour’s promise expand the NHS by a third within the next four years, to employ some 10,000 doctors and 20,000 nurses, to create an additional 7,000 hospital beds, to build some 100 new hospitals by 2010 and to create 500 first-aid centres. All this for a cool £7 billion.

“Education, Education, Education”; Tony Blair’s buzz-phrase of 1997 was regularly revived. The French media reported the reforms in state-primary schools during his party’s first term and his intention to invest £8 billion in building or repairing some 650 senior schools over the next three years. It also referred to Mr Blair’s intention to connect schools up to the internet—an investment worth £1.8 billion. The plan for hiring 10,000 new teachers and boosting the pay of 150,000 existing teachers was also widely reported.

“The daily nightmare of thousands of British citizens with delayed trains, railway disasters, overcrowded roads, and the old asthmatic London Underground”; is how the French media portrayed Britain’s transport infrastructure. They focused on past lack of investment and on Labour accusations of Tory mismanagement in its privatisation of the rail network. The media



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reported Mr Blair's vision of a public-private partnership as the answer to funding problems for many public services and, most topically, London's Underground.

The programme is seen as ambitious: an investment based on an increase of public expenses (3½ per cent a year until 2004) without increasing taxation on wages, founded on 2¼ per cent annual economic growth.

The referendum on the Euro

The euro and Europe, spearheads of the Tory campaign, were responsible for the failure of the Conservatives in 2001. The French media generally thought that William Hague had chosen the wrong focus for his party's campaign.

Throughout the campaign, Mr Blair was said to have avoided the issue of the euro and the referendum on its uptake. These are now, however, hot topics for the re-elected Labour government. Speculation on a possible referendum date has already started. Some political experts thought he would organise it before 2005, others said not.

Sword of Damocles

The French media were as one in the view that Mr Blair cannot afford to disappoint the British voters a second time around. His government will have to tackle the key issues, mentioned earlier, in this term, in order to relieve the state of decay in which transport, the NHS and the education system were left under the Tories. Mr Blair is also expected to find a solution to the much-debated entry of the UK into Euroland.

Praise for a leader

Mr Blair attracted fulsome praise as the youngest Prime Minister in recent British history when he was elected in 1997. The French media also described the evolution of the Labour leader who was successively referred to as Bambi (because of his charming smile), Sunny Tony and then Tory Blair.

Undoubtedly, Mr Blair is seen as a genius in communication, although often perceived as a manipulator of the media. He is commonly described as the "*master of spin*", as someone who managed to modernise his country with the help of a prosperous economy and who left behind traditional political differences. The daily *Le Parisien* wrote "*Is it a coincidence if almost all the British daily press (even the tabloid Sun, the prestigious Economist and the symbol of the Establishment, The Times) called the vote in favour of him?*"



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PORTRAIT OF TWO LEADERS

Descriptors employed in the French media

Tony Blair	William Hague
Our Tony	Boring Billy
Teflon Tony	Dull
Tony the European	Lack of ideas
Maestro of the radical modernism illusion	Leader of a drifting party
Maestro in communication	Bald
Tony the arrogant	Old fashion manners
Christian/religious	Strong Yorkshire accent
Magic Blair	
Fabulously intelligent	
Prodigy of the Labour party	
Fascinating	
Good looking and style	
Tonic, energetic	
Flexible	
Britanno-European	

Table 20



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APPENDIX A: CONVENTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

In the charts and graphs, the following conventions have been used:

Volume is shown as bars, lines or pie-chart segments and is a measure of the count of articles or the number of items in which an issue appears. If used in a vertical bar chart the scale and its reference will be shown on the left-hand axis. If used in a horizontal bar chart the scale and its reference will be shown on the left-hand axis. Favourability is shown exclusively as lines (generally on a bar chart in association with a volume measure). Its scale and reference will be shown on the left side of the chart. Please note that scales vary from chart to chart and are presented in such a way as to emphasise variations. Therefore where there is a variation of data from 42 to 56, the scale used may be 40 to 60 as opposed to 0-100.

Volume Bars may be Green denoting favourable coverage (more than 50 on the 0-100 scale), Red denoting unfavourable coverage (less than 50) or Yellow denoting neutral or balanced coverage (exactly 50 on the ECHO rating scale). Volume bars may also be colour-coded to reference a Political Party. Blue denotes the Conservative Party, Red the Labour Party and Yellow the Liberal Democrats. These are shown as a 'legend' attached to the chart.

Media Analysis Methodology: what happens to an article

Articles are supplied either by independent agencies (PR or cuttings specialists), direct from the client or sourced from the internet by the Echo team and are sent to analysts with expertise in the particular industry. The analysts read each article carefully, looking for issues and messages, and give it a rating. Their findings are recorded in batch files using our special media analysis computer program.

After passing through Quality Control (ISO 9002) procedures, batch files are collated and run to produce data reports for each client. Writers base their reports on this data, and draw specific examples from the cuttings to give substance and life to their reports and recommendations. Each final report is carefully edited to ensure stylistic consistency, quality of recommendations, grammar and accuracy before printing and transmission (hard and/or electronic copy) to the client.

Terminology

Rating: Echo evaluates each item (press article or broadcast item) and assigns a rating on a scale of 0 to 100. Each item starts with a neutral rating of 50, and is raised (more positive) or lowered (more negative) based on a number of characteristics of the item. These include placement, prominence, visuals, the strength and presence of messages for and against the organisations tracked, sources, content and tone.

Apart from the overall content or tone of an article, there are three components which analysts consider when calculating the research item's rating:

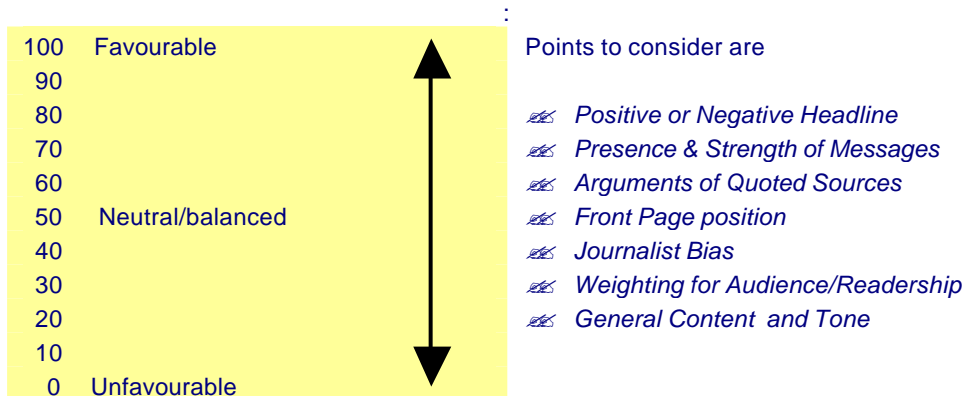
1. Messages. These reflect the client's messages and are noted as opposing statements, implying praise or criticism. An example would be "Product x offers value for money", with the opposing negation being "Product x does not offer value for money".
2. Sources. These are broken down into three categories: those favourable to the client and its concerns, those unfavourable and those who are quoted on issues relevant to the topic, but neither condemn nor support the client and its concerns.
3. Presentation - this includes the headline, layout, and use of images as well as position in the publication or newscast.

Typically, the presence of a favourable comment, favourable message, quotation from a favourable source, or the presence of good company material (eg photograph, logo, press release items) would increase the rating for each occurrence. Conversely, negative occurrences of similar types would decrease the rating for each occurrence.



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RATING



- □ Favourable items have ratings between 55 and a completely favourable 100.
- □ Unfavourable items have ratings ranging between 45 and a completely unfavourable 0.
- □ Neutral items are rated as 50. These are usually of two types. First, items which just mention the client and its concerns in passing with no evaluative comment: for example, a brief reference to a managerial appointment will normally be considered as neutral in the absence of any qualifying statement. Second, items which contain favourable and unfavourable comment in equal measure result in a balanced, or 'neutral' item.

Volume: This is the number of articles analysed during the report period.

Impressions: This is the combined circulation of the publications in which articles appeared. This equates to "Opportunities to see" (OTS).

Issues: These are key topic areas. They can be simply products or services or more complex items such as image statements or comparison with competitors. The first issue category is normally placement, which indicates where in the article the client is mentioned (headline, first paragraph etc).

Messages: These are usually pre-determined statements, describing the client's key branding, corporate and / or product statements, which are tracked by Echo analysts. Messages can be positive or negative towards the client. Often the message is implied rather than appearing verbatim.

Sources: Sources are commentators on the company / sector and the issues which surround it.



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APPENDIX B: ISSUE LIST

The following list is the topics coded for each party:

HEADLINE COMMENT

Negative to Party
Neutral
No specific Party mention
Positive for Party

NATURE OF COVERAGE

Cartoon
Comment
Issues
Party
Personality

DRIVERS OF COVERAGE

Media
Political Party
Third Party
POSITION OF ARTICLE
Editorial Leader page
Front page - main section
Inside page
Sub-section,
Supplement

HARD ISSUES

Arts/Culture/Lottery
Biotechnology
Constitution
Countryside
Defence
Direct Taxation
Economy
Education
Environment
Europe
Farming
Fiscal Policy
Food Safety/BSE
Foreign Policy
Immigration
Indirect Taxation
Law & Order
Local Government
Minimum Wage
Health Service
Party Policy
Pensions, savings
Petrol Prices
Private sector
Public sector

Public Services
Security
Sleaze
Social Security
Technology
Tourism
Trade Unions
Railways
Roads
Unemployment
Racism
International issues

SOFT ISSUES

Celebrities
Electioneering
Electoral Reform
Family Values
Fundraising
House of Lords
Key Marginals
Leadership Contest
Lib-Lab Pact
Miscellaneous
Patriotism
Postal voting
Sport
Marketing
Party split
Party unity
Voter apathy
Ethnic MPs

MARKETING ISSUES

Business Manifesto
Daily briefings
Election announcement
Excalibur
Feelgood Factor
Party Manifesto
Media bias/support
Media influence on voters
Off the record comment
On the record comment
Opinion polls
Outdoor advertising
Paid-for advertising
Personality feature
Party Broadcasts
Print advertising
Radio programmes
Spin
TV debate
TV programmes

REGIONAL ISSUES

London S-E
N Ireland
Scotland
SW England
Wales
Midlands
NW England
NE England

VOTERS

Asian voters
Black voters
Grey vote
Middle-England
Rural voters
Tactical voters
Urban elite
Women
Working-class
Youth
Gay Voters

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Balance of payments
Exports
Far East Economy
Government track record
Growth of economy
Housing
Imports
Inflation
Interest rates
Opposition track record
Public spending
Recession
Stock Market/shares
US Economy

COUNTRYSIDE ISSUES

Foot & Mouth
Hunting
Labour ignorance
Rural Economy
Tory support
Town v Country

SLEAZE ISSUES

Favours
Financial
Labour sleaze
Misuse of Position
Sex
Smear campaigns

Tory sleaze

EUROPEAN ISSUES

EC Directives
Enlargement
European Parliament
Eurosceptics
Federalism
Referendum
Romano Prodi
Single currency / Euro
Social chapter
UK marginalisation

DIVISIVE ISSUES

Environment
Europe
Immigration
Public Services
Race
Taxation Policy
The Pound
Transport Policy

