This item was submitted to [Loughborough's Research Repository](#) by the author.
Items in Figshare are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved, unless otherwise indicated.

A bad press: newspapers

PLEASE CITE THE PUBLISHED VERSION

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95936-8>

PUBLISHER

Palgrave Macmillan © The Authors

VERSION

AM (Accepted Manuscript)

PUBLISHER STATEMENT

This book chapter was accepted for publication in the book Cowley, P. and Kavanagh, D. (eds). The British General Election of 2017 and the definitive published version is available at <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95936-8>

LICENCE

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

REPOSITORY RECORD

Wring, Dominic, and David Deacon. 2018. "A Bad Press: Newspapers". figshare.
<https://hdl.handle.net/2134/37183>.

X. A Bad Press: Newspapers

Dominic Wring and David Deacon

Like Theresa May many in the print media will want to forget the 2017 general election. The outcome of the campaign came as a particular shock to those newspapers that have long prided themselves on being able to understand and also represent the public mood. Even as recently as the 2015 election and 2016 referendum there was much commentary on the supposed ability of the press to make a critical intervention in major votes. But 2017 has challenged this and many other assumptions about electoral politics in Britain. The 'Tory press', which is the overwhelming majority of titles, did still contribute to a pro-Conservative effort that saw the party achieve its largest vote share in any election since 1983 and it is plausible that, these newspapers helped reinforce if not necessarily change their readers' opinions during a campaign in which they relentlessly attacked and in some cases vilified Jeremy Corbyn and Labour. What very few commentators appeared to realise at the outset of this election was the extent to which, in the words of Peter Hitchens, '([p]olitics in this country are a good deal less solid and stable than they seem' (*Mail on Sunday*, 23 April).

Contrary to the dominant press narrative throughout the campaign, Theresa May was not on course to win a decisive victory and nor were Labour in the process of disintegrating. This was reflected in polling although print media reporting of this trend was more limited and skeptical when compared with the 2015 election. Various newspapers' predispositions coloured their perceptions of what was happening in this campaign. Such a phenomenon is not new. But the fact that the final result was so at variance with what much of the press had both anticipated and wanted highlights the apparent disconnect between them and the electorate at large. This reflects the ageing profile of diminishing newspaper readerships.¹ It is noticeable how past events were often invoked in this election to provide historical parallels, thereby further reinforcing the distance between the press and younger potential consumers, many of whom were increasingly registering to vote. Readers

(such as they existed) aged under 50 would not have readily appreciated the references to Theresa ‘Maggie’ May being on her way to a 1983-style landslide victory, accompanied by references to the IRA, industrial discontent and a divided opposition party led by another leader perceived to be out of touch with the country. But like so much other newspaper comment and analysis about this election, print journalists largely missed the real story of the campaign as it unfolded.

Electoral engagement and falling readerships

One clear indication of the growing disconnect between the national press and the British public is offered by the continued decline in print circulation and readership figures, election by election (see Table X.1 and X.2). Comparison of available circulation figures for daily newspapers in 2017 shows a 10.7% decline from the 2015 campaign and a 37.4% reduction from the 2010 election. The equivalent figures for Sunday titles reveal a 12.8% decline from 2015 and a 43.7% drop from 2010. National daily press readership tells a similar tale, with a 15.4% reduction since 2015 and a 45.8% fall since 2010. There is no evidence that the political reach of these newspapers is being compensated by growth of their on-line readership. National Readership and Comm Score data track a 16.6% drop in print and online readership between 2015 and 2017.

INSERT TABLE X.1 ABOUT HERE

INSERT TABLE X.2 ABOUT HERE

Table X.3 lists the front page lead items in the daily press between 1 May and 7 June and it might be tempting to conclude that this ever bleaker commercial situation encouraged the most popular titles to focus less attention on the election in their bid to shore up readership. There were several major news events during the last weeks of the campaign that provided ample justification for a redirection of focus, including two terrorist attacks in Manchester and London and the death of the infamous ‘Moors murderer’, Ian Brady. In total, under a third (30.6%) of the front page leads

in Table X.3 in the *Mail*, *Express*, *Sun*, *Star* and *Mirror* were focused on the election campaign although this proportion is identical to that found for the same period of the 2015 campaign.² The biggest change in press engagement by this measure came with the 'quality' press, with 56% of lead items in 2017 focused on the election, down from 73% for the same period in 2015.

INSERT TABLE X.3 ABOUT HERE

But front pages only tell part of the story about the extent of press engagement with the election. Further analysis of media content analysis data sets held by Loughborough University's Centre for Research in Communication and Culture reveal significant reductions in the amount of space given to the election in the last twenty week days of the 2017 campaign across all sectors, compared with the same period for 2015. In the 'quality' papers total space reduced by 25.2%, in the 'mid- market' (*Mail* and *Express*) papers by 19.8% and in the 'red tops' by 26.1%.³

Whether this reduction was the result of commercial judgments or the crowding effect of other major news events is a moot point. It may well be that complacency also played a part in some quarters. Theresa May's announcement of the election proved a welcome surprise for many of her press supporters. Stephen Pollard applauded it as being 'right to call' (*Express*, 19 April) whilst Trevor Kavanagh agreed '[t]here'll never be a better time to strike' alongside a *Sun* editorial arguing 'Britain needs this new vote' (19 April). Predictably the anti-Conservative *Mirror* took a different view, declaring 'THE LADY IS FOR U-TURNING' (19 April), a reference to the Prime Minister reneging on her promise not to hold a snap election. This alleged deceit would be an issue for the *Mirror* to the end when it portrayed May as Pinocchio (8 June). But this was a minority view and rival newspapers preferred to speculate about what was likely to happen on polling day.

The Times' front-page 'May heads for election landslide' reflected an early press consensus as to the likely result (19 April). The *Sun* reinforced this narrative with a striking cover headline 'BLUE MURDER' and accompanying story that claimed the

'PM's snap poll will kill off Labour' (19 April). Notable opponents of the government agreed. For Jonathan Freedland May's was a 'gamble' but 'only in the sense that the risk is ultra-low' (*Guardian*, 19th April). The *Mirror* also quoted Labour party sources saying they faced 'disaster' ('WE FEAR BLOODBATH', 20 April). Reporting a poll taken following the calling of the election, an *Express* front-page claimed '1 IN 7 LABOUR VOTERS TURNS TORY' (23 April). Stories of this kind encouraged a view that, in the words of Andrew Rawnsley, the coming campaign would make little difference and a 'thumping' Conservative 'triumph looks unstoppable' (*Observer*, 7 May).

Anticipation of a decisive outcome informed press reporting throughout the election, particularly among the Tory supporting papers. Similarly Trevor Kavanagh hoped 'the promised election day landslide could yet become a tsunami' (*Sun on Sunday*, 15 May) estimating that she would 'do much better' than the majority of 94 seats initially projected by pollsters (*Sun*, 22 May). Even after the Prime Minister's difficulties over her so-called 'dementia tax' in the middle of the campaign many in the press remained confident that she would easily win the election. Writing in the aftermath of the hiatus Macer Hall predicted 'MAY IS STILL ON COURSE FOR A MASSIVE MAJORITY' (*Express*, 27 May). Likewise a reported narrowing in the polls was met with skepticism by the *Observer* which commented 'many are bewildered by figures showing Labour has closed the gap to within five points' (28 May). When another company's findings appeared to confirm this trend a few days later, John Rentoul also expressed doubts: 'Why I wouldn't trust the poll predicting a hung parliament' (*i*, 1 June). Conservative strategist Jim Messina's dismissive response to the same research (see p. 000) was widely quoted.

There was considerable doubt about the apparent shift in public opinion as the campaign drew to a close. Dominic Lawson, for instance, concluded: 'Don't panic about polls, May is way ahead' (*Sunday Times*, 4 June). Heightened expectations of a convincing victory did, however, create a potential problem for the Prime Minister as Mary Dejevsky noted: 'anything less than a thumping majority will be a failure for May' (*i*, 2 June). This comment hinted at another possible outcome that few

commentators had considered, specifically that the Tories were not on course for victory. *The Times*' Rachel Sylvester was one observer who, at the beginning of the campaign, questioned the prevailing consensus that the Conservatives would win because 'nothing is certain' given the fraught situation caused by Brexit (22 April). Andrew Marr also believed the issue might be detrimental to the government and warned: 'The PM has alienated the "48 per centers", and it could cost her dear' (*Sunday Times*, 23 April). Having speculatively linked May's decision to call the election to the potential prosecution of some of her colleagues over their 2015 electoral expenses, Hitchens presciently observed 'the Tory campaign this time will have to be a good deal more cautious about such things, which may weaken it, especially if the campaign goes wrong- and this is not impossible' (*Mail on Sunday*, 23 April).

There was a discernible tendency for press commentators to draw on historical comparisons in their analyses of the election's potential outcome. Professor Vernon Bogdanor suggested Labour was 'maybe heading for its worst humiliation since 1935' (*The Times*, 20 May). The expectation of a landslide victory for the Conservatives also rekindled memories of their 1983 triumph. Harold Wilson's former Press Secretary Joe Haines referenced that result when comparing current party policies to those of the then leader and the foremost comedy act from the time: 'Corbyn's Morecambe & Wise manifesto is madder than Michael Foot's' (*Daily Mail*, 12 May). The *Mail* explicitly mentioned the 1983 document to dismiss its contemporary as 'LABOUR'S NEW SUICIDE NOTE' (11 May). A *Financial Times* editorial was also critical and, conscious of historical precedent, described the party's programme as a 'misguided bid to turn the clock back' (12 May). Dominic Sandbrook agreed with this, observing: 'Mr Corbyn and Co increasingly remind me of one of those deranged Californian cults of the Seventies' (*Mail*, 10 May). An American example from the same decade provided the basis for another colourful attack, albeit in this case by Aditya Chakraborty on Theresa May: 'Britain risks becoming a one-party state following June's election with a PM who is an heir to Nixon' (*Guardian*, 25 April). Chakraborty would not have imagined that weeks later

his comparison would be apt but for very different reasons relating to the prospect of a once powerful incumbent having to resign.

Theresamaynia

The sitting Prime Minister is normally the most prominent figure in the reporting of an election and 2017 proved no exception.⁴ In 2017, this focus on the leader rather than her colleagues was frequently remarked upon. As Dominic Lawson noted: 'There are no Tories - only Theresa' (*Sunday Times*, 14 May). Similarly James Forsyth predicted: 'On June 8, Theresa May will be the queen of all she surveys' (*Sun*, 29 April). Even the unpredictable Peter Osborne embraced the prevailing wisdom: 'HISTORY BECKONS: This election gives Mrs May what every Conservative leader since Churchill has dreamed of - putting an end to Labour for ever...' (*Mail*, 19 April). May had enjoyed nearly a year in Downing Street during which time favourable press coverage had helped establish her credentials. According to Tim Shipman the 'Ronseal PM' and her 'cult of personality, rather than Toryism, is helping Theresa May in the left's heartlands' (*The Sunday Times*, 14 May). The local election results confirmed what the *Telegraph* heralded as the 'Great Tory rebirth' (6 May) a phenomenon encouraged by 'THERESAMAYNIA' (*Sun*, 6 May). Leo McKinsty believed the Tories' performance had been helped by May being 'a superb political strategist'. Moreover he linked her abilities to an upbringing that had helped make her 'a quintessentially English figure who exudes the respectability, trustworthy values of her upbringing as a vicar's daughter from the Home Counties' (*Express*, 8 May).

Some commentators questioned the assumption that the Prime Minister was as strong and stable figure as suggested by her soon to become notorious campaign slogan. Aside from Peter Hitchens such critics tended to be on the left and included Paul Mason who argued May 'doesn't understand' contemporary Britain (*Guardian*, 23rd May). Similarly Polly Toynbee contended a certain newspaper had had more impact on the Prime minister than her own formative experiences: 'The *Daily Mail*, not her father's church, is her spiritual guide, its editor, Paul Dacre, her compass. She never challenges its warped version of middle England' (*Guardian*, 6 June). Other

newspapers strongly disagreed with the *Telegraph* believing the election 'Mrs May's chance to become as dominant a figure as Mrs Thatcher' (19 April). The *Express* went further, using a front-page to declare this transformation was complete: 'THERESA THE NEW MAGGIE' (6 May). Such observations were encouraged by May's admission, reported by the *Mail*, that 'I'LL BE A BLOODY DIFFICULT WOMAN' (3 May) in dealings with the UK's European partners. The choice of words revived memories of Thatcher's approach to her EU counterparts and led *Express* columnist Judy Finnigan to complement the current Prime Minister as a 'British battle-axe' (6 May).

Whereas her supporters characterized Theresa May as steadfast, others detected weakness in her reluctance to answer questions. This began when the election was announced after the Prime Minister refused to participate in face-to-face debates with her rivals ('May accused of dodging TV showdowns', *The Times*, 19 April; similarly a *Telegraph* editorial later lamented the decision 'hardly spoke to confidence in her', 1 June). The Conservative leader also appeared uncomfortable on a rare public walkabout in Oxfordshire when directly confronted over disability benefit cuts by voter Kathy Mohan who subsequently told the *Guardian* 'I wanted to have my say. I just came out with it' (17 May). Observing her early election engagements Stephen Bush commented: 'You have more chance of bumping into a swing voter at Tory conference than you do at the PM's campaign events' (*i*, 4 May). For *Mail on Sunday* correspondent Andrew Gimson this was a facet of Conservative strategy: 'Our Supreme Leader will bore her way to victory' (23 April). Before re-using the nickname 'Maybot' (6 June) he had coined, *Guardian* sketch writer John Crace picked up on Gimson's theme to liken the Prime Minister's speeches to those of the notorious North Korean dictator ('Kim Jong-May', 26 April).

May's apparent reluctance to freely engage with the public was mocked by various publications including some sympathetic to the Conservatives. *The Times* even used the term 'Maybot' to describe her leaden performance in response to a local reporter while visiting Plymouth (2 June). Similarly *Telegraph* correspondent Michael Deacon referred to the Prime Minister's 'stiffly unrevealing answers' on another occasion (9 May). May's perceived lack of charisma became a persistent

feature in the reporting of her campaign. Matt Chorley was even more explicit in his unflattering assessment: 'Except for calling a snap election, Mrs May has barely said or done anything interesting for 11 months and yet is the subject of fevered fan-worship usually reserved for One Direction or Kim Kardashian's bottom' (*The Times*, 6 May).

This echoed critic Marina Hyde's labelling of the Tory leader as 'Groundhog May' (*Guardian*, 18 May). Hyde had earlier warned such a risk averse approach could yet rebound: 'With May the snowflake in charge, this is health and safety gone mad: Dalek soundbites and dodging debates may secure a Tory win, but contempt for voters can backfire' (*Guardian*, 29 April). Despite her refusal to debate with her opponents the Prime Minister did make some scheduled broadcast appearances. One of her most memorable was an interview she gave alongside husband Philip on BBC1's primetime 'The One Show'. Press reaction to this was mixed. In her highly sympathetic profile Jan Moir praised the couple for appearing the epitome of normality and decency ('Theresa: behind the mask', *Mail*, 13 May), with the paper later featuring them in a photograph doing their own shopping at Waitrose (20 May). Conversely Elizabeth Day bemoaned the interview as a 'dreary' attempt to 'humanize' them (*Telegraph*, 15 May) whilst John Crace dismissed the pair as boring, concluding: '[t]he Mays produce pure valium' (*Guardian*, 10 May). The Prime Minister's apparent awkwardness in public registered in other ways. A photo-opportunity involving her eating chips led to comparisons with the infamous image of Ed Miliband devouring a bacon sandwich (*Guardian*, 3 May). Following the controversy over the Conservative manifesto, critics such as Zoe Williams mocked campaign branding that had positioned May as 'strong' and 'stable': 'A woman who changes her mind on everything is running as the immovable rock in a turbulent world' (*Guardian*, 29 May). A *Telegraph* editorial response to the crisis was less damning but nonetheless telling when it suggested: 'We should see more of the PM's team' (2 June).

Theresa May's failure to assert herself when challenged over her manifesto proved the turning point in the campaign. The hiatus emboldened press critics and

reinforced a growing public perception that she was a brittle politician out of her depth. As Tony Blair's former speechwriter turned columnist Philip Collins put it, 'Mrs May has been rumbled as not very good' (*The Times*, 26 May). Various newspapers blamed May's close aide Nick Timothy for the fateful decision to include social care reform in the Conservative manifesto with an editorial in the *Telegraph* lamenting the way '(B)ad politics can thwart good policies' (23 May). Reports suggested the controversial measure had been approved without the knowledge of the Cabinet or the party's returning election strategist Lynton Crosby (*The Times*, 23 May). Prior to then Timothy, along with colleague Fiona Hill, had what Dominic Lawson called a 'fearsome' reputation (*Sunday Times*, 14 May). And it was pointedly Timothy's humble Birmingham origins that were cited as the inspiration for the so-called 'Erdington modernisation' plan to broaden the Conservatives' appeal to working-class voters (*Financial Times*, 6 May).

Mr Zen

The election proved as momentous for the Labour leader as his Conservative counterpart, and as with Theresa May, the campaign would alter public perceptions of Jeremy Corbyn. This would be a change that also ended the newspaper speculation that had continually plagued what Andrew Rawnsley dismissed as his 'abysmal leadership' (*Observer*, 9 May). From the announcement of the election poor expectations framed press analysis of Labour's chances. The party in turn limited print journalists access to its campaign (*Financial Times*, 9 May) although exceptions were made for *Mirror* and *Guardian* correspondents. This, of course, hardly stopped newspapers from commenting on Labour's predicament. Former Labour MP Tom Harris expected his former party would be 'crushed, but perhaps, in numerical terms, not by quite the margin it deserves' (*Telegraph*, 19 April). Polly Toynbee used similarly apocalyptic terms, believing the Labour leader's 'every impulse is to make the wrong call on everything'. Toynbee excoriated her target: 'Corbyn is rushing to embrace Labour's annihilation: This shockingly inept leader will preside over catastrophe. Politics has rarely looked grimmer' (*The Guardian*, 19 April). She drastically altered her view after the election, commenting 'Corbyn has

rescued Britain from the chaos of austerity. This is his moment' (*The Guardian*, 13 June).

Labour sympathizing *Times* columnist Janice Turner was downbeat at the beginning of the campaign, saying she felt like 'a powerless spectator at your party's probable destruction' (22 April). Stephen Pollard argued this fate could still be averted if MPs acclaimed former Shadow Home Secretary Cooper as their leader as 'Only Yvette can save her party from oblivion' (*Mail on Sunday*, 23 April). Labour losses in the local elections further concentrated minds on what lay ahead. Jonathan Freedland, fearing Pollard's prediction was now becoming reality, suggested one person was responsible: 'No more excuses: Corbyn is to blame for this meltdown' (*Guardian*, 6 May). The adverse council results also prompted *i* contributor Sarah Ditum to comment: 'We had the fiction that a "truly left-wing" leader could win by recruiting non-voters... If there's any wickedness in politics, it's not in Tory voters: it's in the self-righteous leftist ninnies who've given up on their own nation.' (*i*, 6 May).

Similarly, offering the kind of counsel normally delivered in an electoral post-mortem, former Cabinet member Peter Mandelson criticised what he called the 'populists offer(ing) false promise' now in control of his party. Mandelson lamented how '... the hard left leadership wants to build a socialist movement instead of an election-winning force' (*Financial Times*, 22 April). Invoking memories of 1983's 'longest suicide note', Philip Collins denounced the party's current programme as 'Labour's ticket to the Dignitas clinic' (*The Times*, 12 May).

Daniel Finkelstein predicted the Labour manifesto would 'haunt' the 'party's moderates long after (Corbyn) has been defeated' (*The Times*, 17 May). On the day of its manifesto launch, the *Sun* mocked the party for a series of mishaps ('Crash Bang Wallies!', 12 May). Reporting of this kind added to a sense that Labour was heading towards disaster although the paper was hardly devoid of a bias that would continue to inform its coverage throughout the campaign. For instance, overlooking the Prime Minister's non-appearance in the major face to face leaders' debate, the *Sun* claimed 'Corbyn (had been) walloped by all six opponents' ('WEAKEST LINK JEZ',

1 June) whereas *The Times*' correspondent Lucy Fisher's view was more typical of others' reporting in concluding the Labour leader had performed reasonably well (1 June).

The widespread expectation that Labour was facing oblivion encouraged speculation as to what would happen after polling day. Debate intensified following reports that former party deputy leader Roy Hattersley had already called for a 'campaign to oust Corbyn and "reclaim" Labour' (*Telegraph*, 5 May). In characteristically blunt terms the *Sunday Express* predicted the leader 'will face Labour attack dogs after he is defeated' (15 May). Anticipating such a scenario, Sebastian Payne advised candidates to promote their own rather than their presumed to be tainted party's credentials as part of 'A local approach (that) will help Labour moderates take back control' (*Financial Times*, 26 April). Speculation also turned to who might succeed Corbyn prior to polling day with Jim Pickard identifying Yvette Cooper and Chuka Umunna as two of the most likely contenders (*Financial Times*, 6 June).

Some journalists raised the possibility of a new centre party forming following reports that there could be a significant 'breakaway' from the Parliamentary Labour Party after the election (*Financial Times*, 6 June). The *Telegraph* had earlier reported as many as 100 MPs were planning to leave and set themselves up as the official Opposition in the event of an electoral rout (10 May). Rachel Sylvester welcomed such a prospect, urging 'It's time for Labour moderates to jump ship'. Drawing inspiration from the new French President, Sylvester argued: 'With deluded extremists in firm control of the party, the centre left must take inspiration from Macron's path to power... Centrists in this country need to show their courage. There is nothing to lose any more. Labour is drowning- it's time for moderates to take the plunge and break away' (*The Times*, 9 May). The party's improving poll figures diminished but failed to end such talk. Rather, believing 'Corbyn's surge marks a new low for Labour', Philip Collins suggested the leader remaining in place after the election could even turn out to be 'an act of accidental strategic genius by a lucky Conservative Party' (*The Times*, 2 June).

Jeremy Corbyn was routinely portrayed by the press as a revolutionary figure but often in language designed to undermine and attack him, sometimes in the most graphic of ways. *Mail on Sunday* 'Election Guru' Dan Hodges was unequivocal as to the threat posed: 'On June 8, Labour must face its reckoning. Jeremy Corbyn must be crushed' (23 April). Tony Parsons agreed, portraying the party as one that 'despises' the 'instinctive patriotism of our people' (*Sun on Sunday*, 23 April). In his column Richard Madeley railed against the 'Marxists, Leninists and Trotskyists who now control Labour' (13 May) whilst a fellow *Express* contributor likened Corbyn to a famous Vietnamese revolutionary, calling him 'Britain's Ho Chi Minh', (22 April). Some journalists took a particular interest in those advising the Labour leader. The *Mail* ran unflattering profiles of Corbyn aides, 'privately educated' James Schneider (22 April) and 'Hardline socialist' Andrew Fisher, the author of Labour's manifesto (25 April). But the greatest opprobrium was afforded Andrew Murray, the appointment of whom *The Times* reported as an: '[e]x-communist who defended Stalin will lead Corbyn's team' (16 May). The announcement provoked an editorial, 'Stalin's Sycophant', denouncing Murray as 'an enemy of democratic politics' (*The Times*, 16 May). By contrast there was noticeably little coverage of Corbyn's sons or wife Laura Alvarez reflecting one aspect of press reporting that the leader would have appreciated.

During the election some in the press challenged the consensus that Jeremy Corbyn was a disastrous candidate. These observers included leading *Mail* journalist Peter Osborne who drew a favourable comparison between Corbyn and Tony Blair, claiming the former had 'restored honest politics to Britain' (20 May). For Aditya Chakraborty the leader's misfortune was to be condemned by his predecessors' abandonment of their core supporters: 'With its bedrock smashed to pieces, Labour cannot win' (*Guardian*, 9 May). Others praised the displays of calmness by a politician John Crace referred to as 'Mr Zen', a name Corbyn had used to describe himself the previous week (*Guardian*, 13 May). The *Sunday Mirror*, a sympathetic paper, reported that voters who had come into direct contact felt him a 'lovely person' (4 June). Having accompanied Corbyn in the closing stages of the election, Ewen MacAskill of an increasingly supportive *Guardian* came to a similarly positive

conclusion when he praised the politician's campaign as 'dignified, assured and positive' (3 June). Fellow contributor George Monbiot even went as far as suggesting 'A Labour win isn't an impossible dream. We have Corbyn to thank' (7 June).

A Stark Divide

The snap election led to parallels being made with 1983, the most obvious of which was an incumbent female Conservative leader would win a landslide victory. But although the press was similarly overwhelmingly pro-Tory there were differences, notably in the case of the *Star* that had long abandoned its once trenchant right-wing position. The paper had subsequently adopted a policy of not publishing editorials about politics (nor anything else). Where it mentioned the election, it was to lament the need for the vote to be taking place at all ('Election: 47 ruddy days to go', *Star*, 22 April) and one edition of the *Star on Sunday* (21 May) even managed to avoid any mention of the election. The other title that opted not to endorse a party was the *i* that, like its *Independent* forerunner, had not existed in 1983. This self-styled 'quality tabloid' promoted its lack of partisanship as a virtue against rivals it pointedly called '(the newspapers that tried to tell you how to vote' (*i*, 9 June).

The *Guardian* and *Mirror*, the two daily newspapers that had been against the Conservatives in 1983, restated their opposition in 2017 (see Table X.1 above). Both had also supported Remain in the EU Referendum. The *Mirror* and its Sunday sister endorsed Labour as they have traditionally done for decades. During the campaign support for the party and Jeremy Corbyn became more enthusiastic culminating in a formal endorsement on polling day itself (*Mirror*, 8 June). The sister paper was less enthusiastic, restating doubts about Corbyn but nonetheless clearly preferring him to his Conservative rival (*Sunday Mirror*, 4 June). The *Guardian* also warmed to Corbyn having criticized him prior to the election. Applauding the manifesto 'as a genuine attempt to address a failing social and economic model' the relevant editorial declared 'The Tories run on fear and do not deserve our vote. Labour does because it offers hope' (*Guardian*, 3 June). Sister paper the *Observer*, mindful of Brexit, stopped short of endorsing a party but made clear its opposition to the

Conservatives and urged readers to vote likewise (4 June). The other Trinity Mirror title, the *People*, adopted a very similar position in a personalized attack on the Prime Minister ('Beware bucket shop Boudicca May' (4 June) (see Table 2 above for the Sunday editorials).

Six of the ten national dailies endorsed the Conservatives but with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Aside from the degree of their hostility towards Labour, Brexit was a factor with the *Financial Times* warning that 'Liberal cosmopolitanism does not have an active voice at present' (8 May) before later backing the Tories (1 June). Like the *FT*, *The Times* had supported Remain but ultimately endorsed the government having called May 'wooden' ('*The Times*, 7th June). The *Sunday Times* came out for the Conservatives but was similarly critical, focusing its ire on the deficiencies of May's fiscal policies alongside the obligatory attacks on Labour (4 June).

The *Telegraph* was the most enthusiastic pro-Conservative title among the party supporting qualities. It had also been the only one of the three to support Leave in 2016. Nevertheless the *Telegraph*, like its Sunday sister (4 June), shared its rivals' concern about May's economic policies and this slightly tempered a still clear endorsement: 'Britain has a stark choice- a Corbyn government would be a calamity' (7 June). The three other dailies, the populars (or what used to be called 'tabloids' before *The Times* adopted the format), had all campaigned in favour of Leave and now enthusiastically endorsed the Conservatives to deliver Brexit. The *Express* had been so preoccupied with the European issue that it had supported UKIP in 2015 but now switched its allegiances back to the government: 'VOTE MAY OR WE FACE DISASTER' (7 June). It featured some of the rare print advertising by the Conservatives, predictably about the EU (*Express*, 7 June). And though this marked a change of partisanship the EU issue was still the paramount concern as the sister paper made clear 'FIVE DAYS TO SAVE BREXIT' (*Sunday Express*, 4 June).

The *Mail* attacked Labour using the strongest language in an endorsement, 'APOLOGISTS FOR TERROR', that denounced the party's leadership as totally unfit to lead the country (7 June). The same editorial also unequivocally supported May and

her plans. The *Mail on Sunday* enthusiastically endorsed the Conservatives though it drew attention to the party's campaigning mistakes before focusing on the deficiencies of the Labour leadership (4 June). The *Sun on Sunday* did pretty much the same (4 June). For its part the *Sun* was unequivocally for the Tories but focused its headline on Labour, declaring DON'T CHUCK BRITAIN IN THE COR-BIN above a photograph depicting the politician sitting in a bin with its lid on his head (8 June).

Marginal Factors

During the campaign there was noticeably little coverage about parties other than the Conservatives and Labour. Plaid Cymru and the Greens once again barely featured in terms of print coverage (0.9% and 0.2% of all party sources, respectively). The Liberal Democrats, SNP and UKIP fared better although none of these received the amount of press interest afforded them in 2015. The Liberal Democrat news presence fell from 10% in 2015 to 6% in 2017, the SNP from 9% to 2.4% and UKIP from 8% to 3%. And where they were reported it tended to be critical in nature. Reviewing the Liberal Democrats' early campaign performance, for instance, Matt Chorley dismissively concluded: 'This is a party which seems to be returning to its gloriously bonkers past' (*The Times*, 29 April). Macer Hall in the *Sunday Express* attacked the Liberal Democrats as the 'yellow peril' (*Express*, 22 April). Even one of the more balanced accounts by Sebastian Payne midway through the campaign provided little encouragement: 'The Lib Dems' yellow bird is failing to take flight' (*Financial Times*, 17 May).

Tim Farron did not fare well in this, his first election as Liberal Democrat leader. The *Guardian*, a paper that had endorsed the party as recently as 2010, raised questions about his credentials with headlines such as 'Abortion is wrong at any time, Farron said in interview with Salvation Army' (17 May) in a piece revisiting past statements. The *Mail on Sunday* was one of the few national newspapers to take the Liberal Democrats seriously, with an editorial suggesting the election could help revive the party given the 'concerns of those who -like this newspaper- supported Remain' (7 May). And in a perhaps surprise move the paper's pro-Brexit daily sister even urged a tactical vote for Nick Clegg in Sheffield Hallam (*Mail*, 7 June).

The Scottish National Party had received unprecedented press coverage during the 2015 campaign. Despite widespread expectations Labour was on course for defeat some commentators will warned the party might play a role in a 'progressive alliance' government and this helped raise its print media profile, at least in the early stages of the election (*Mail*, 21 April). The *Mail* attacked such a scenario, believing a minority Labour government supported by the SNP would create a 'COALITION OF CHAOS' (22 April). This fear had, provided a major campaign narrative two years before and the *Sun* duly revived a prominent image from that election to again portray a diminutive Labour leader under the control of First Minister Sturgeon: 'JEZZA IN MY POCKET: Corbyn would be Nic puppet' (20 April).

Some in the print media remained sympathetic to UKIP, notably the *Express* newspapers who had both endorsed the party in 2015. Following its rout in the local elections the *Sunday Express* demonstrated its residual sympathy by attacking 'the schadenfreude shown by the liberal elite at Ukip's poor results' (7 May). By contrast a *Mail* editorial argued the realities of the British electoral system meant the party had effectively run its course: 'Rest in peace Ukip, now it's up to Mrs May' (6 May). Following a similar logic the *Sun* urged party supporters living in 35 key seats to vote Tory in order to 'Do Corbyn up like a Kipper' (7 June). Leader Paul Nuttall was not in this list, and his reluctance to confirm if and where he would stand in the election led to mockery if it elicited any reaction. *Telegraph* sketch writer Michael Deacon ridiculed Nuttall: 'Chicken? Maybe, but he can duck a question' (25 April). Aside from this adverse commentary, the *Star* harked back to better times for the party when it pointedly headlined its coverage by making reference to the previous leader rather than his successor: 'NIGEL: UKIP STILL HAS BREXIT ROLE: "We will be here to bash Brussels"' (8 May).

2017 saw a significant decrease in so-called 'process' coverage devoted to 'horse race' aspects of the campaign involving personalities, intrigue, and other non-policy related matters - much of which have been the focus of the preceding discussion (from 44.5% of all themes in 2015, to 33.6% in 2017, see Table X.4). Integral to this

was the relative lack of press attention devoted to the polls some of them had commissioned and which collectively identified the shift of public opinion. Nor was there much prominence given to the role and influence of social media. The election was therefore more preoccupied on substantive issues than had been the case in 2015 and this in turn concentrated greater media attention on the rival manifestos.

INSERT TABLE X.4 ABOUT HERE

The leaking of a full draft of Labour's plans in advance of its publication intensified the debate over its contents. But few could have predicted the drama about to unfold surrounding the government's proposals. When David Cameron's former Director of Communications Craig Oliver observed: 'Think this week's Tory manifesto scarcely matters? You couldn't be more wrong' he was writing in expectation the document would make a wholly positive contribution to the campaign (*Mail on Sunday*, 14 May). Initially at least the soon to be controversial Conservative proposals were sympathetically received even in the normally antagonistic *Mirror* ('CARE REVOLUTION', 18 May) that reported [o]nly those with £100k+ will have to pay (in)... sweeping changes'.

The subsequent debate surrounding a social care policy critics quickly attacked as the 'dementia tax' proved hugely embarrassing for the Prime Minister: 'THE LADY IS FOR TURNING: May backs off on care' (*Star*, 23 May). For Polly Toynbee the Tory leader inflamed the situation through her seemingly inept handling of the crisis: 'After May's U-turn she can't accuse anybody of weakness' (*Guardian* 23 May). The *Sunday Express* leapt to the defence: 'Prime Minister is right to listen to voters' concerns', claiming she had 'shown her flexibility' (23 May). But the episode did considerable damage given May had hitherto enjoyed a relatively good press.

Health and social care was a major issue in the campaign but its importance was greatly inflated by the debacle over the dementia tax. The remainder of this chapter focuses on the issues that routinely featured in newspaper coverage throughout the election- Brexit, security plus tax together with the economy - that attracted

substantial interest (Table X.4). It is worth noting that other substantive, so-called 'bread and butter' issues such as education and housing were comparatively marginalized in terms of press reporting, and typically it was the anti-Conservative *Mirror* that tended to highlight related stories (for example see cover headline '500 SCHOOL HEADS: TORY CUTS ARE DAMAGING OUR KIDS', 28 April).

The Brexit Campaign?

Although acknowledging Europe would be an issue commentators differed over the degree to which they thought it would make the headlines. Whilst Stephen Pollard doubted the subject would dominate the campaign (*Express*, 19 April), Polly Toynbee emphatically disagreed: 'This election will be pure Brexit, up to the blood and guts hilts' (*Guardian*, 19 April). Pro-Leave newspapers relished this prospect and one of them, the *Mail*, produced the most (in)famous front-page headline of the campaign 'CRUSH THE SABOTEURS' (19 April). The targets of the paper's ire were those claimed to be impeding the UK's orderly exit from the EU. The 'saboteurs' included Gina Miller, a fund manager who had organized a successful legal case for Parliament to have a vote before the Brexit process began. Miller featured prominently in reports in the *Star* among other papers: 'Gina will back the Remain fighters' (20 April).

Welcoming the campaign, the front-page of the *Sun* declared the election was a 'Bid for clear Brexit mandate' that would enable the 'PM' to 'smash rebel Tories'. The fate of these EU-supporting MPs exercised the *Mail on Sunday* which, unlike its daily sister, had campaigned against Leave. The newspaper reported, with apparent concern, a 'Plot to purge the Remainers' following allegations that certain Conservative MPs were under threat of being deselected (23 April). Stories like this suggested UK-EU relations might become the major issue throughout the election some had predicted. This expectation increased following a private meeting between Theresa May and EU President Jean-Claude Juncker.

When the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* broke the story about the meeting between Prime Minister and President the pro-Brexit *Sun* identified

Juncker's 'Rasputin' like adviser Martin Selmyr as the culprit responsible for the leak. *Mail* sketch writer Quentin Letts went on the counter-attack: 'Who'd want to be ruled by the risible Juncker and his poison-spreading Brussels sidekick?' (3 May). Responding to the leak, Theresa May warned what the *Mail* called the Commission 'plotters' against interfering in domestic British politics (4 May). The potential long-term damage of the episode led the *Financial Times* to argue 'One rotten dinner must not poison Brexit talks' (3 May). But a more typical reaction came from the *Star* 'Theresa: EU can't bully us', a story that reported the Prime Minister 'gave Brussels both barrels (to) meddling eurocrats' (4 May). Drawing parallels with Margaret Thatcher's approach to European negotiations, Letts believed the 'May handbag' had been similarly effective and concluded there had been only one winner from this encounter: 'Whack, whack, whack! Medical orderlies for Mr Juncker please!' (*Mail*, 4 May).

Like the Juncker leak, a public altercation between Tim Farron and a 'Brexiteer' was taken up by a *Telegraph* editorial (4 May) and again hinted at the way the EU yet might still dominate press coverage of the election. But commenting towards the end of the campaign Charles Grant expressed dismay that there had been 'virtually no discussion of the key issues' relating to Brexit during the preceding weeks (*Observer*, 4 June). Grant was likely referring to the 759 agreements the *FT* estimated the UK would need with 168 countries (31 May). Other Brexit related commentary focused on the respective parties' stances and in particular on what Andrew Pierce of the *Mail* dismissed as Labour's 'muddled' position (26 April). Pierce ridiculed spokesperson Keir Starmer's attempts to set out his party's position: 'Humiliation of Sir Flip-flop, the luvvie Left's darling tipped to topple Corbyn'. The *Express* took a similar view, believing Labour's 'lack of a Brexit plan is an insult to voters' (10 May). By contrast the Remain supporting *Guardian* applauded a seemingly nuanced approach: 'Labour takes the world as it is, not as it wants it to be' (26 April).

It has already been noted that the key Brexit supporting newspapers pledged allegiance to the Conservatives as the best choice to deliver British withdrawal. They

also believed the party, in doing so, would be able to restrict EU citizens' freedom of movement. So whereas the *Express* hopefully reported 'MAY VOWS TO SLASH MIGRATION' (9 May) it also published warnings such as 'CORBYN'S PLOT TO BRING IN MIGRANT WORKERS' (1 June). Similarly the *Mail* provided leading pro-Leave Tory Iain Duncan Smith with the opportunity to set out 'WHY WE HAVE TO TAKE BACK CONTROL OF OUR BORDERS' (8 June). And whilst it endorsed the Conservatives, the Remain supporting *Financial Times* still continued to provide the counter-argument, warning 'Britain need not slam its door to limit migration' because of 'Mrs May's clampdown' (10 May).

Talking the Peace

Prior to the terrorist attacks in Manchester and London the issue of security had already featured in extensive press coverage and, more specifically, allegations relating to Jeremy Corbyn's longstanding involvement in Northern Irish politics. In one of the more dispassionate newspaper accounts, the *Financial Times* acknowledged the Labour leader was 'dogged by past links to Irish republicans' (31 May). Similarly rare was a piece by Kevin Lynch defending the politician: 'It's absurd to criticise Corbyn for talking to the IRA... The British establishment has talked to Irish rebels for centuries' (*i*, 23 May). But overwhelmingly print coverage of the issue was unrelentingly hostile about Corbyn's record of meetings with Sinn Féin politicians. This included a *Mail* cartoon featuring two balaclava wearing men carrying guns coming up the pathway of an elderly couple peering at them from their window with the caption reading: 'Oh dear. Will you answer the door? I think they're canvassing for Jeremy Corbyn' (23 May).

In its front-page denunciation the *Sun* claimed Jeremy Corbyn had 'BLOOD ON HIS HANDS' and featured him in a photograph with Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams (23 May). The paper drew on the testimony of former Provisional member Sean O'Callaghan who denounced Corbyn and John McDonnell for being 'unambiguous supporters of the armed struggle'. An editorial accused the pair of being 'snivelling IRA fanboys'. This story coincided with the Manchester bombing, an attack that had already happened by the time the edition had gone to press. Most newspapers

abandoned their coverage of the election following this, an atrocity that claimed multiple victims. The *Telegraph*, however, took exception to what it perceived to be the Labour leader's slowness to respond: 'Corbyn condemned for delay before calling attack "terror"' (24 May). A week later the *Sun* returned to the veteran MP's record. In 'He's talking the peace' the historian Ruth Dudley Edwards alleged the Labour leader was lying about his past record of involvement in what she called 'pro-IRA circles' such as the Troops Out Movement (31 May).

Following Manchester the *Mail* accused Corbyn of being 'THE TERRORISTS' FRIEND' (27 May) and repeated the allegation in follow-up editions. Inside the paper Guy Adams pointedly drew parallels between the Arena attack and Provisionals' bombing on the city in 1996 and excoriated the Labour leader for being 'a shameless apologist for the world's men of evil' before claiming his 'support for the IRA most nauseating'. Adams' indictment came in response to Corbyn's speech following the Manchester attack, an intervention the veteran foreign affairs correspondent Patrick Cockburn had welcomed: 'Corbyn is correct: the war on terror puts us all at risk' (*i*, 27 May). Others strongly disagreed: 'HOGWASH: HE'S TRIED TO BLOCK ALL ANTI-TERROR LAWS... AND NOW HE BLAMES THE WEST' (*Sun*, 26 May). Inside columnist Iain Martin articulated the paper's concerns: 'There is no better time to ask if Corbyn would keep Britain secure'. Colonel Richard Kemp was even more trenchant: 'Corbyn is calling all Our Boys murderers' (*Sunday Express*, 28 May). In its following edition the paper returned to the question of the Labour leader's ability to defend the country. It superimposed his head on a photograph of Neville Chamberlain holding the Munich Agreement and warned: 'Don't trust that appeaser Corbyn' (4 June). The following day's sister paper took up this theme, linking it to the Labour leader's lifelong unilateralism and alleged attempts by the party to downplay this ('Spin doctor is secretly recorded telling Corbyn how to "shut down" outrage over refusing to use Trident', *Express*, 5 June).

In the aftermath of Manchester there were some press criticisms of the government's record on security. Former Deputy Prime Minister turned columnist John Prescott suggested the tragedy had serious resource implications: 'Cuts making

terror battle harder' (*Sunday Mirror*, 28 May). Peter Hitchens was also dismissive of the government's deployment of the army in response to the crisis: 'Put away your pointless troops, PM - only beat bobbies can stop terror' (*Mail on Sunday*, 28 May). Such criticisms intensified following the shocking events at London Bridge. Following these attacks newspapers considered the security implications with the *Mail* raising questions about the prior monitoring of those responsible for the killings: 'MI5 and Yard: We had him- and let him go' (*Mail*, 6 June). The *People* returned to the issue of policing, 'THINNER BLUE LINE', and repeated Labour claims that 16000 officers were in the process of being cut (4 June). This made for particularly uncomfortable reading for former Home Secretary May. The Prime Minister also came under direct attack from Jason Beattie who accused her of making a 'nakedly partisan' speech in response to the London outrage in contrast to her 'pitch perfect' reaction to Manchester ('Tory's get-tough message turned into campaigning', *Mirror*, 5 June). Beattie's colleague Alison Philips was more blunt. Declaring 'Enough is enough of terror flop May' Philips dismissed the Prime Minister's denials that cuts had not undermined public safety as 'a crock of arrogant, disrespectful horse dung' (*Mirror*, 7 June).

Following the London Bridge attacks the denunciations of 'CORBYN THE HYPOCRITE' continued with Guy Adams accusing him of '30 years cosying up to terrorists' and only belatedly supporting the police's right to 'shoot to kill' (*Mail*, 5 June). The *Mail* also gave prominence to Lord Carlile's insistence cuts had not exacerbated the terror crisis whilst columnist Richard Littlejohn ridiculed Labour on the same subject, sarcastically asking 'Corbyn the coppers' friend?' (6 June). Criticism of the Labour leader's record broadened beyond Northern Ireland to his involvement in Middle Eastern affairs. The *Sun* used a front-page image of Corbyn addressing a protest meeting, 'JEZZA'S JIHADI COMRADES', in an attempt to associate him with extremists (7 June).

The most memorable intervention in this debate came with the front-page headline 'APOLOGISTS FOR TERROR: The *Mail* accuses this troika of befriending Britain's enemies and scorning the institutions that keep us safe' (7 June). Inside the paper

went into considerable detail using 13 pages to explain why, among other things, Jeremy Corbyn, Diane Abbott and John McDonnell were wholly unsuitable to take office. Corbyn later mocked the *Mail* in his 2017 Party Conference speech: 'The day before the election, one paper devoted 14 pages to attacking the Labour party. And our vote went up nearly 10%. Never have so many trees died in vain. The British people saw right through it. So this is a message to the *Daily Mail's* editor: next time, please could you make it 28 pages?' Abbott, the Shadow Home Secretary, featured prominently in this Mail attack having earlier come in for particular criticism following her performance on LBC radio that the paper reported as the 'worst interview ever?' and sketch writer Quentin Letts likened to '...a frogman wading into cow manure' and even the *Star* picked up on the story with a rare election related front-page mocking 'Diane's dumb maths' (3 May).

Economic and tax policies

Several specialist contributors believed the campaign marked an important watershed in terms of fiscal policy. Observing the more interventionist policies of May (and Donald Trump), Martin Wolf concluded: 'Conservatism buries Reagan and Thatcher' (*Financial Times*, 24 May). John Kay concurred with Wolf, noting: 'The retreat from economic liberalism is most striking in the Tory manifesto' (*Financial Times*, 20 May). Anti-Conservatives such as Larry Elliott also agreed the programme marked a serious re-evaluation of the party's economic strategy, likening it to a 'clause IV moment' (*Guardian*, 19 May). In a *Sun* interview May explained that what the *FT* called her 'manifesto for Middle England' was designed with the 'People who can just about manage' in mind (18 May). Using a phrase associated with her rivals she pointedly added 'I'll help you all, not just the few'. The *Sun* enthusiastically embraced this vision on its front-page: 'BLUE LABOUR'- 'MAY'S "RED TORY" MANIFESTO: Bold PM bid to win over socialist voters' (19 May).

Emblematic of the Conservatives' more interventionist policies were plans to regulate energy prices. The measure had previously been associated with Labour and this link brought criticism from Philip Collins who dismissed the initiative: 'May's price cap as Marxist as Miliband's' (*The Times*, 28 April). Nevertheless the *Sun* now

promoted the measures on its front-page: 'R.I.P. TO RIP-OFFS: Consumer champ May targets fatcats' welcoming them as emblematic of her 'new centre ground policies' (18 May). The prospect of this and other 'Red Tory' initiatives on workers' rights was not universally welcomed by other Conservative leaning newspapers ('Leading Tories fear manifesto shift away from free markets' (*Financial Times*, 6 May). A *Sunday Telegraph* cover story, 'Tories: Don't ditch Thatcher', featured quotes from those closely associated with the late Prime Minister (14 May). Replying to Tom Harris' claim 'Now we socialists have a real leader: Theresa May', Andrew Roberts professed the Conservatives repositioning was '...alarming traditional Tories like me' (*Mail on Sunday*, 21 May). Comments like this led the Prime Minister to reassure core supporters in a *Sunday Telegraph* interview: 'I'm not abandoning Thatcherism: I just get in there, do the best I can and get on with it' (21 May).

If some in the Tory press were concerned about Theresa May's economic policy this was nothing compared to their fear of what the *Mail* dismissively called 'CORBYN'S LA-LA LAND ECONOMICS' (1 June). Tom Newton-Dunn used a front-page of the *Sun* to develop the metaphor: 'LEAF IT OUT: Corbyn's magic money tree will cost families extra £3.5K-a-year' (2 June). The notion of false promises had already been taken up by *Sunday Express* editor Martin Townshend who depicted the Labour leader as a predatory figure preying on the young: 'Devious Corbyn is like the Child Catcher, offering treats galore to ensnare voters' (4 May). The *Mail* likened the party's economic plans to another kind of fantasy: a 'Marxist' one (8 May). Tory papers also offered practical examples of what they believed might follow should Labour take office: 'Venezuela chaos... the future we would face under Corbyn' (*Sunday Express*, 15 May). Similarly the *Mail* attacked a 'bombshell' it called the 'Marxist Labour garden tax (that) would hit 10 million families' (5 June).

The 'Marxist' description of Labour's tax and economic plans was further popularised following a BBC interview with John McDonnell in which the Shadow Chancellor discussed the continuing significance of *Das Kapital*. The *Sun* mocked the revolutionary basis for McDonnell's financial profligacy ('MARX & SPENDER', 8 May).

But Larry Elliott defended Labour's economic strategy, arguing that they were practical as well as far sighted: 'What McDonnell proposes is more Keynesian than Marxist: these essentially social-democratic ideas will seem even more mainstream if- as is entirely possible- there is another crisis' (*Guardian*, 15 May). Others defended the party's policies as 'modest' (*People*, 14 May) a word that might have characterised Jeremy Corbyn's own explanation of his plans to a sympathetic Nigel Nelson when he commented: 'Those with broad shoulders should bear the greatest burden and our taxation system doesn't do that' (*Sunday Mirror*, 23 April).

Conclusion

This campaign marked an important watershed for the print media in exposing a divergence between the press and a public they have often claimed to represent. This was obvious in the terms of the newspapers' partisan disposition and, linked to this, their pursuit of certain topics to the exclusion of others. The latter included so-called 'bread and butter' issues such as schools, hospitals, housing and assorted perennial voter concerns. Even Brexit, or more precisely its implications, failed to attract the kind of incessant press scrutiny some had predicted. Economics and business were also noticeably relegated down the print agenda. By contrast press coverage of security related matters, especially after the Manchester and London atrocities, was pronounced although often bound up with past conflicts rather than the factors behind the devastation that so directly impacted on this campaign. These tragedies together with the snap election itself were unforeseen events that, together with the ongoing speculation over Brexit, stoked an already volatile political environment that few newspaper commentators really understood despite the near certainty with which many of them made their various pronouncements.

Hitherto newspapers' preferential treatment of a given party has been seen as a potentially important contributory factor to their ultimate success. But 2017 has challenged this assumption like no other election in recent times, particularly in view of the remarkable vehemence with which some of the press had attacked Jeremy Corbyn only to see his party's support dramatically rise in the polls. But it should be noted that the 'Tory press' was far from uniform in their endorsement of the

government. Whereas the *Sun* and *Express* were staunch in their support the *Times* and *FT* were markedly less impressed by the Conservatives' 'hard' Brexit and economic policies. It is also noteworthy that the *Star*, which consciously avoided endorsing a party, has maintained circulation compared with its more opinionated rivals, most notably the *Sun*. The latter, in particular, has become politicised to an extent that editorialising (not to mention the paper's form and other content) threatens to undermine its profitability: fierce pro-Conservative partisanship is unlikely to appeal to the younger audiences the daily needs to survive let alone prosper. In terms of its once formidable position of influence this campaign may yet come to be seen as the one in which 'it was the *Sun* that lost it'.

Table X.1: Daily newspapers' partisanship and circulation.⁵

Title (Proprietor/Chair) Editor	Declaration (2015)	Circulation ^a 2017 (2015) (000s)	Print readership ^b (000s)	Print and online ^c
<i>Daily Mirror</i> Trinity Mirror (David Grigson) Lloyd Embley	Strong Labour (Very Strong Labour)	687 (882)	1,691 (2,211)	2,083
<i>Daily Express</i> Northern and Shell (Richard Desmond) Hugh Whittow	Very Strong Conservative (Very Strong UKIP)	386 (438)	838 (993)	1,216
<i>Daily Star</i> Northern and Shell (Richard Desmond) Dawn Neesom	No declaration (No declaration)	438 (420)	769 (943)	980
<i>The Sun</i> News UK (Rupert Murdoch) Tony Gallagher	Very Strong Conservative (Very Strong Conservative)	1,617 (1,858)	3,653 (5,178)	3,998
<i>Daily Mail</i> Associated Newspapers (Lord Rothermere) Paul Dacre	Very Strong Conservative (Very Strong Conservative)	1,454 (1,631)	3,215 (3,704)	4,443
<i>Daily Telegraph</i> Telegraph Group (Barclay Brothers) Chris Evans	Strong Conservative (Very Strong Conservative)	467 (486)	1,171 (1,119)	1,768
<i>The Guardian</i> Scott Trust (Alex Graham) Katherine Viner	Moderate Labour (Moderate Labour)	154 (176)	898 (761)	2,015
<i>The Times</i> News UK (Rupert Murdoch) John Witherow	Moderate Conservative (Moderate Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition)	446 (394)	1,049 (788)	1,168
<i>The i</i> Johnston Press (Camilla Rhodes) Oliver Duff	No Declaration (Weak Liberal Democrat-Conservative Coalition)	263 (276)	475 (518)	491
<i>Financial Times</i> Nikkei (Tsuneo Kita) Lionel Barber	Weak Conservative (Weak Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition)	197 (212)	Not available	Not available

^a Audit Bureau of Circulation (April 2017)

^b National Readership Survey (April 2016-March 2017)

^c National Readership Survey and Comm Score (April 2016-March 2017) (NB changes introduced in this calculation in June 2015 prevent direct comparison with figures for April 2014-March 2015)

Table X.2: Sunday newspapers' partisanship and circulation

Title	Declaration	Circulation ^a	Readership ^b
<i>Sunday Mirror</i>	Moderate Labour (Strong Labour)	585 (833)	1761 (2,401)
<i>Sunday Express</i>	Very Strong Conservative (Very Strong UKIP)	335 (385)	893 (1,150)
<i>Sun on Sunday</i>	Strong Conservative (Very Strong Conservative)	1,358 (1,474)	3847 (4,207)
<i>People</i>	Strong Anti-Conservative (None)	228 (324)	(not available) (674)
<i>Mail on Sunday</i>	Strong Conservative (Strong Conservative)	1,239 (1,447)	3,399 (4,007)
<i>Star on Sunday</i>	No declaration (No declaration)	252 (254)	804 (825)
<i>Sunday Telegraph</i>	Strong Conservative (Strong Conservative)	355 (371)	1,219 (1,150)
<i>Observer</i>	Strong Anti-Conservative (Moderate Liberal Democrat)	181 (196)	947 (723)
<i>Sunday Times</i>	Moderate Conservative (Strong Conservative)	780 (809)	1,219 (2,010)

^a Audit Bureau of Circulation (April 2015)

^b National Readership Survey (April 2016-March 2017)

Table X.3 Front-page lead stories, 19 April-8 June

	<i>Daily Mirror</i>	<i>Daily Express</i>	<i>The Sun</i>	<i>Daily Mail</i>	<i>Daily Star</i>	<i>Daily Telegraph</i>	<i>The Guardian</i>	<i>The Times</i>	<i>The I</i>	<i>Financial Times</i>
19 April	(You did us proud)	Vote for me and I'll deliver EU Brexit	Blue Murder	Crush the Saboteurs	Brexit serial continues: Snap, cackle and pop!	May's bolt from the blue	May: give me my mandate	May Heads for election landslide	Stunned Britain heads to the polls	May calls snap election in bid to strengthen hand in Brexit talks
20 April	Fowl play! Chicken Theresa May still refuses to take part in live TV debates)	(New drugs to beat dementia)	(Terror drivers will be shot dead)	Theresa's cast-iron Brexit pledge	(Exorcist called in to Corrie haunting)	SNP plots a 'coalition of chaos'	Lives at risk if Tories cut aid, Gates warns	May forced to weaken key targets on migrants	Battle begins	(Brussels starts to shut British companies out of contracts)
21 April	(15 dead babies and 3 dead mums..And a scandal to terrify EVERY parent)	(Diet drinks health alert)	(I wish I'd raped school girl)	(New terrorist attack in Paris)	(Maddie: shock new evidence revealed)	(Terror on the Champs-Elysees)	(It's not too late to avert Brexit, says EU leader)	(Britain told to keep EU laws)	Corbyn's message to Remainers: no second Brexit referendum	(Trump fires protectionist warning over steel industry)
22 April	Tories' VAT bombshell	Migrant worker madness	Pay and DisMay	(Mortgage rates hit record low)	(real ghost caught on film for first time)	May risks backlash over tax and foreign aid	(France heads for poll on high alert)	(Trump puts EU ahead of Britain in trade queue)	Pensions face pinch	Fears of Hammond 'tax bombshell'
24 April	(Maddies 'was snatched for rich family')	(New foreign aid outrage)	(Cops taser Ferne Fella in his pants)	(New French Revolution)	(Maddie: MI5 hid her body)	Labour's nuclear implosion	(It's Macron versus Le Pen)	(New French revolution as outsiders sweep to victory)	Forget party allegiances, says Blair	(Macron and Le Pen to face-off in contest for French presidency)

25 April	(Husband beat up a shark to save my life)	(Exercises to beat dementia)	(Have a go hero Hardy)	(GPs failing thousands of cancer patients)	(Moaning Rhys killer: prison's too tough)	(Students told not to obsess over finding job)	Remain group seek to oust pro-Brexit MPs	(Brussels to hit Britain with \$2bn fraud claim)	Labour unveils Brexit Strategy	(Relief sweeps market as Macron secures place in French runoff)
26 April	(We have a major line of inquiry... it could provide an answer)	(Vital new clues in Maddy hunt)	(Who bun it)	(Maddie police chasing 'critical lead')	(New Rhys horror: Kid shot as TV drama screened)	Britain faces EU bill until 2020	(MPs condemn 'wasteful' schools policy)	(Borrowing falls to lowest level since Brown years)	We want May in TV debates, say voters	(Arnault tightens grip on LVMH as luxury assets become scarcer)
27 April	(51 investigations at baby death NHS trust)	(Turning down heating can beat diabetes)	(The fraud squads)	(Millions failed by GPs who shut in the afternoon)	(John Terry in vile sex tape fury)	May keeps Britain tied to Europe's human rights law	(Foreign fighter exodus leaves Isis weakened)	(Drug giants threaten to quit Britain)	(Taxman tackles football elite)	(White House pledges biggest ever tax cut to unleash US economy)
28 April	500 school heads: Tory cuts are damaging our schools	(New Whitehall knife terror)	(Knife one lads)	(Seized, with a sackful of knives)	(Smirk of a jerk)	(Downing Street terror plot)	(Police swoop on suspected terrorist near Westminster)	(Hit internet giants over danger to child safety)	(Westminster terror suspect thwarted by police)	(EU signal over united Ireland stokes fear for post-Brexit Britain)
29 April	(Butcher surgeon's 1,000 victims)	(Evil cancer doctor played god)	(Louise and Jamie on rocks)	(Why <u>did</u> NHS fail to stop butcher surgeon?)	(Billion-dollar beefcake)	Tory tax pledge to high earners	(NHS pays £9m to victims of rogue surgeon)	(Isis suspect seized in raid)	(Surgeon guilt of mutilating patients)	(Growth slows as rising prices hit households)
1 May	Blair: I'm back	(Your £15m goes up in smoke)	(I'll make a billion... and pay my bill at the laundrette)	Elderly care tax breaks lifeline	(Joshua: the movie)	(Facebook 'mus pay to police internet')	PM paves way to end key tax commitments	(Social media giants fail to tackle hatred, says MPs)	Corbyn pledges £3bn to close education gap	

2 May	(Brits facing Spanish holiday ban)	May's outrage at EU's dirty tricks	(Terrorist's cushty life on benefits in Peckham)	(Exploited by cash-for-eggs IVF clinics)	(Mel B tug of love hell)	EU plots to block May's deal on expats	May fights accusation of botched and humiliating start to Brexit talks	(Fears for car market amid loan mis-selling)	(Tax bills that don't add up)	(Brussels poised for power grab on London's euro-clearing market)
3 May	(Kate demands £1.3m over topless pics)	(Keep taking your statins)	(Quids on the skids)	(IVF clinics peddling false hope over egg freezing)	(Maddie: parents kept info from the cops)	Tory cash handouts to scrap diesel cars	I'll be bloody difficult in EU talks, says MP	You can't lead Brexit talks, EU tells May	(Statins: don't believe the scare stories)	(EU raises Brexit bill to €100bn as Paris and Berlin harden stance)
4 May	May plotting snap vote on bombing Syria	Don't meddle with our election	Nuclear Juncker	Hands off our election	(Cops talked stressed footie ace back from brink)	May unleashes fire at Europe	May declares war on Brussels	Brussels is meddling in our election, warns May	EU trying to rig election, warns May	May accuses Brussels of election sabotage and ramping up tension
5 May	(Beeb fury at Cliff's £1m legal bill)	(Thank you Sir!)	(He's had his Phil)	(The nation salutes you, sir)	(Fears for 62 more Prem stars)	(Service with a smile)	(Show respect in Brexit talks, Tusk tells May)	(Duke retires rather than grow frail in public)	(I can't stand up much longer! Duke of Edinburgh retires aged 95)	(Slide in prices casts shadow over buoyant oil earnings)
6 May	(Zoe Ball's torment as lover 'kills himself')	Theresa's the new Maggie	(Zoe's lover found hanged)	Theresa on the march!	(Zoe Ball's lover 'kills himself')	Great Tory rebirth as the Right unites	May crushes Ukip as Corbyn admits: 'we face historic challenge'	May on course for a landslide	Blue tide	Tories triumph in local elections
8 May	(England Star bet on his own transfer)	(Broccoli pill to save your life)	(118 calls costs £9)	(Shame of the insurance giants)	(Summer starts today)	(France's new hope puts cloud over Brexit)	(Macron wins French presidency - but a country remains divided)	(Landslide for Macron)	(Macron marches to victory)	(Macron sweeps to victory in French presidential election)

9 May	Secret Tory plot to bring back fox hunting	May vows to slash migration	(Why I tried to kill Trump)	£100 off your energy bill	(Katy Price steamy clinch with mystery man)	(Anger as energy bills rise by 37pc)	Corbyn pins election hopes on housing reform pledges	May faces backlash over energy cap	(UK border could move from Calais)	May to renew Tories' broken promises on immigration
10 May	(School trip girl, 11, dies at theme park)	(Ibuprofen: new heart danger)	Danczuk rape quiz	(Girl, 11, dies in theme park)	(Horror on the rapids: Girl 11 dead)	Labour faces historic party split	Corbyn: business tax rise will pay for £6bn boost for schools	(Stop splitting up elderly couples)	(Millions to miss out on full state pension)	May manifesto chief held talks with former Miliband aide
11 May	Corbyn will nationalise energy, rail and mail	(Britain's facing drought disaster)	(I warned park over death raft ride)	Labour's manifesto to drag us back to the 1970s	(Hotter than Ibiza)	Revealed: Corbyn's manifesto to take Britain back to 1970s	Corbyn's plans to nationalise rail, mail and energy firms	Cracks widen between chancellor and No 10	(Stroke epidemic to hit UK)	(Defiant Trump calls for closer Moscow ties after firing FBI chief)
12 May	Dear PM, you're destroying nursing	(Dementia crisis out of control)	Crash, Jez runs over TV man, Bang, Red Len on backside, Wallies! Manifesto launch is shambles	Corbyn's fantasy land	(Enders axes Danni for good)	Labour MPs ditch Corbyn manifesto	Corbyn vows to 'transform lives' as party backs radical manifesto	Labour fights civil war over hard-Left manifesto	Labour's £50bn wish list	(Boost for British tech as Softbank invests \$500m in software start-up)
13 May	(Hackers hold NHS to ransom)	(NHS chaos after hacker attack)	(National Hacked Service)	(Cyber hackers cripple the NHS)	(Fear of a clown: Cowell's new terror)	(Hackers hold NHS to ransom)	(NHS targeted in global cyber-attack)	(Huge hack attack hits hospitals)	(Huge NHS cyber attack paralyses hospitals)	(NHS hackers used stolen cyber weapons from US spy agency)

15 May	(Web hackers to strike Britain again)	May: I'll boost rights for the worker	(Brady on deathbed)	Your right to time off if relative needs care	(Gambler Roo in £140m China crisis)	Workers get leave to care for elderly	Labour and Tories step up the fight to win working class votes	May gives all workers new rights to time off	Workers offered new deal by Tories	(Businesses around the world told to prepare for fresh cyber attacks)
16 May	(Burn in hell, Brady)	(Moors killer Brady is dead)	(Monster Brady is dead)	(Monster of the moors is dead)	(Tragic Zoe: I'll keep loving)	Labour plan to pull 1m into top tax bracket	Labour 'fat cat' tax to rein in excessive pay	(Drug firm faces fine of £220m for hiking prices)	Labour's tax grab on the rich	(Hackers have second US weapon primed for attack, warns analyst)
17 May	(Scatter my ashes over Moors with my victims)	(Why was £10.4m wasted keeping monster Brady alive?)	(Too brainy to be jailed)	Corbyn plan to bankrupt UK	(Evil Brady wanted ashes scattered on moors)	(Family of shot WPC are denied justice)	Labour won't win, says top union backer	Labour's tax raid in shatters	Corbyn's sharp left turn	Labour pledges £49bn tax rise to fund huge spending push
18 May	(100 Rochdale paedos still walk the streets)	May's plans for a fairer Britain	RIP to rip-offs	You won't have to sell your house to pay for care	(Cowell facing quiz on Mel B threesomes)	Middle-class lose winter fuel payments to fund social care	PM gambles on making elderly pay their way	Thousands hit by new care costs	Millions of pensioners to lose winter fuel funding	(Trump faces escalating crisis after Congress demands Comey memo)
19 May	10 million OAPs to lose winter fuel cash	We'll put Juncker back in his box	Blue Labour	At last, a PM not afraid to be honest with you	(Pippa's sexy Ann Summers wedding)	May's manifesto for the mainstream	May manifesto rejects legacy of Cameron era	Mainstream May reaches out to Labour heartlands	May's vision for Britain	May break with Thatcherite faith in centrist pitch to Labour voters

20 May	('BBC stars had sex in woods and asked kids to join in')	(Alzheimer's cure hope)	(Wedding of the rears)	(What a creep)	(Harry and Meghan's bi (bum) day)	Scottish to keep winter fuel benefit (because it's colder)	('The war's just begun': Assange defiant after rape case dropped)	(Tough new controls on web giants)	(RBS justice denied)	(Trump turmoil erases dollar gains)
22 May	PM's election guru in tax scandal	(Ten days of sun on way)	(I walked plank over Jolly Roger with Orlando)	Corbyn's kick in teeth for IRA victims	(Meg's Yes to Harry after all-night wedding booze-up)	Corbyn engulfed in IRA furore	(Revealed: Facebook's secret rules on sex, violence, hate speech and terror)	Care crisis threatens to scupper May reform	Tories stand firm after care wobble	Senior Tories were kept in the dark over May's 'dementia tax'
23 May	How can we ever trust Mrs U-turn?	(Dementia runs in the family)	Blood on his hands: ex-IRA killer's Corbyn verdict	(Facebook lets teens see porn)	(Blooming Kell it's a scorcher)	Care cost chaos after May U-turn on key pledge	May's manifesto meltdown: U-turn on 'dementia tax' leaves PM on back foot	Pensioners to pay for May's social care U-turn	Dementia Tax' u-turn	May's U-turn on social care costs rattles Tory campaign
24 May	(Killed by evil)	(Evil beyond belief)	(Pure evil)	(Soldiers on the streets)	(Slaughter of the innocents)	(Troops on the streets in race to foil second terror attack)	(Young lives stolen by terror)	(Libya terror link)	(The girls who will never go home)	(Manchester man identified as concert bomber who killed 22)
25 May	('Bomber brother planning his own attack')	(Hunt for the bomb maker)	(Find the bomb gang)	(The jihadi family)	('My boy is innocent. He was about to become an uncle')	(Five missed chances to foil bombers)	(May to confront Trump as US leaks crucial bombing evidence)	(MI5 was warned)	(Terror network active in the UK)	(Police hunt terror network linked to Manchester concert bomber)
26 May	(Bank holiday bomb alert)	(Bombing was 'very wicked')	(Inside the bomb factory)	(Curb web giants that give terror a voice)	(Trash takes out the trash)	Corbyn: UK wars to blame for terror	(May: technology giants must lead fight against extremism)	(Bomber planned for a year)	(Net closes on Manchester terror gang)	(Opec strikes deal to extend supply squeeze imto 2018)

27 May	(Terror chief: go out & enjoy yourselves!)	(Net closes in on evil bombers)	('Mass murder terror targets')	(Bank holiday ring of steel)	(Sup for the cup)	Corbyn is making excuses for terror attacks, says May	May puts bombing at heart of the election with attack on Corbyn	(UK home to 23,000 jihadists)	Police urge public: 'go out and enjoy yourselves')	May puts Manchester bombing at centre of election campaign
29 May	(We are not afraid)	(UK faces wave of Libyan terror)	(7/7 hero is '23rd bomber victim')	(BA chaos: was cost cutting to blame?)	(We are not afraid)	Corbyn accused of honouring Palestinian terror chief	(MI5 launches two inquiries into missed terror warnings)	(Power to ban UK jihadis has been used 'just once')	10 days to decide the PM	(Asset managers Brexit-proof their businesses; Fund houses bolster presence in Europe)
30 May	(Cop hunt for the bomber's suitcase)	(Oily fish can beat dementia)	(Tiger kills keeper Rosa)	(Zoo girl mauled to death by tiger)	(The heat is on)	Corbyn ducks terror challenge	Corbyn tells Paxman: 'I'm no dictator' in TV debate	May woos working class with tough line on Brexit	May and Corbyn endure bruising TV debate	(Subprime-scarred banks retreat from \$1.2tn US car load market)
31 May	(Diana 'death car' outrage)	Migrant summer chaos	(Death trap)	Labour's plan to open doors to Britain even wider	(Megastars come out for Manchester)	Labour's secret plan to increase migration	May intensifies personal attack as polls narrow	Shock poll predict Tory losses	Hunt: Bad Brexit will damage NHS	(US shoppers put economy back on course to lead global recovery)
1 June	NHS: the money has run out	Corbyn's plot to bring in migrant workers	(B.B.Seedy)	Fury at bias on BBC TV debate	(Black panther stalks mum in UK woods)	Record number hit by 45p top rate of tax	Corbyn confronts Rudd on cuts in fractious TV debate	Have faith in me: May fights back with Brexit	Ambush	(China and EU seal climate pact as doubts rise over US commitment)

2 June	(Shame of the 10,000 bomb concert ticket leeches)	Corbyn doesn't believe in Britain	Leaf it out	Corbyn's sly death tax trap	(TV Caroline Love Isle lesbian romps)	Fake web accounts boosting Labour vote	(Anger at US as Trump rejects climate accord	We will use SNP to give us power, says Labour	Rivals clash over Brexit	May offers Brexit vow as Corbyn surge dims hope of landslide victory
3 June	Tory MP charged over election expenses	Sturgeon: I'll help Corbyn	(100 celebs in tax dodge)	Corbyn's nuclear meltdown	(Amanda's boobs win BGT)	Tory tax pledge to high earners	Labour accuses Tories of using fake news stories to attack Corbyn	('Myths' by Muslims hit anti-terror campaign)	Tory shock at criminal charges	May reaches out to business as Brexit tensions escalate
5 June	(Monsters and heroes)	(Enough is enough)	(Jihadi killer in an Arsenal shirt)	(Bloody day all of Britain said: enough is enough)	(Heroes)	(Police uncover YouTube link to London terror attack)	(Seven dead, 21 critically hurt: May says 'enough is enough')	(Massacre in the market)	(Defiant)	'Enough is enough' declares May in vows to ramp up war on extremism
6 June	(So how the hell did he slip through?)	May: trust me to keep you safe	(Why didn't they stop TV jihadi?)	(MI5: we had him - and let him go)	(How did we let him walk the streets?)	(Brazen jihadist who was free to parade his extremism on TV)	(Britain faces 'completely different' level of terror threat, police warn)	(London attacker linked to 7/7 bombing suspect)	('We will not be dragged into hatred')	(London attacker was known member of extremist group)
7 June	(I'm going to be a terrorist)	Vote May or we face disaster	Jezza's jihadi comrades	Apologists for terror	(Burning in hell forever)	(I'm going to be a terrorist)	May threatens to dismantle human rights law in wake of terror attacks	(MI5 warned attacker 'Wanted to be a terrorist')	(The nurse who ran towards danger)	May targets Labour heartlands and ramps up anti-terror rhetoric
8 June	Lies, damned lies and Theresa May	Vote for May today	Don't Chuck Britain in the Cor-bin	Let's Reignite British Spirit	Tezza vs Jezza	Your country needs you	Corbyn and May make last pitch for votes after bruising campaign	(Midnight terror plot five days before attack)	X marks the spot	(Santander buys Popular for €1 after ECB triggers bailout

Table X.4: Campaign issues- top 10 in the press

Rank	Topic	2017	2015 (rank)
1.	Electoral process	33.6	44.5(1)
2.	EU/ Brexit	10.4	3.4 (8)
3.	Health and Health Care Provision	6.9	3.7 (6)
4.	Defence/ Military/ Security	6.8	-
5.	Taxation	6.1	6.5 (3)
6.	Social Security	5.3	-
7.	Business/ Economics	5.1	13.1 (2)
8.	Immigration	4.3	3.5 (7)
9.	Standards	3.6	3.8 (4)
10.	Education	2.7	-

Notes: up to three themes could be coded per election item. Percentages=frequency of theme appearance/ total theme appearances.

Source: Loughborough University Communication and Culture Research Centre.⁶

¹ Half of those aged 65 or over regularly read a printed newspaper compared with just 14% of 16-24 year olds (Ofcom, 2017, *News Consumption in the UK: 2016*, 27th June, p.9.

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/103625/news-consumption-uk-2016.pdf

² David Deacon and Dominic Wring, 'Still Life in the Old Attack Dogs: The Press', in *The British General Election of 2015*, Palgrave, 2016, pp. 314-321.

³ In 2015 and 2017 The Loughborough CRCC studies coded all election related news items that appeared on the front page, the first two pages of the domestic news section, the first two pages of any specialist section assigned to the coverage of the campaign and the pages containing and facing papers' leader editorials.

⁴ <http://blog.lboro.ac.uk/crcc/general-election/>

⁵ The equivalent figures for 2015 are from the chapter on the press in the volume of this book on last election. The assignment of partisanship is based on analysis of each title's formal endorsement (see David Deacon and Dominic Wring, 'Partisan Dealignment and the British Press ', in John Bartle, Ivor Crewe and Brian Gosschalk, 2002 eds., *Political Communications: the British General Election of 2001*. London: Frank Cass, pp.197-211.

⁶ <http://blog.lboro.ac.uk/crcc/general-election/>