

## Leveson: Bloggers vs the Press

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This week, the LSE Media Policy Project has presented an **initial analysis** of how national newspapers reacted to Leveson because it is interesting to **ask** if, and how, the Press used its power to shape public debate on its own future.

In a context of newspaper decline, and the rise of social media, it is worth asking if other media took a different line to newspapers. In the future we will analyse broadcasting coverage. Today we present some analysis of how popular UK political bloggers framed the story immediately following the publication of the report.

Using a similar method of content analysis, three researchers looked at ten popular political blogs, five from the right and five from the left of the political spectrum. These were selected from a list of the most popular political blogs, excluding blogs that are run by broadcasters or newspapers. Blog posts published as the first reaction to the Inquiry's Report on Thursday or Friday, were included in the analysis. (A more complete inquiry would have looked at a longer list of blogs, but we have not identified any reason that taking the top 10 would undermine the validity of our results).

As in our analysis of newspapers, the LSE MPP team examined the blogs in terms of the occurrence of three frames: (1) Freedom of the Press: threats to and defence of freedom of the press and those involved as falling one side or another of a battle on this issue. (2) Redress for Victims: struggle of the victims of phone hacking for vindication and for more protection in the future portraying those involved as supporting or disappointing the victims. (3) Politico-Media Complex: media power and large media corporations' interests and connections between politics and media. In addition to this frame analysis, we also examined if and how the bloggers evaluated the fact that the Internet was largely excluded from the report.

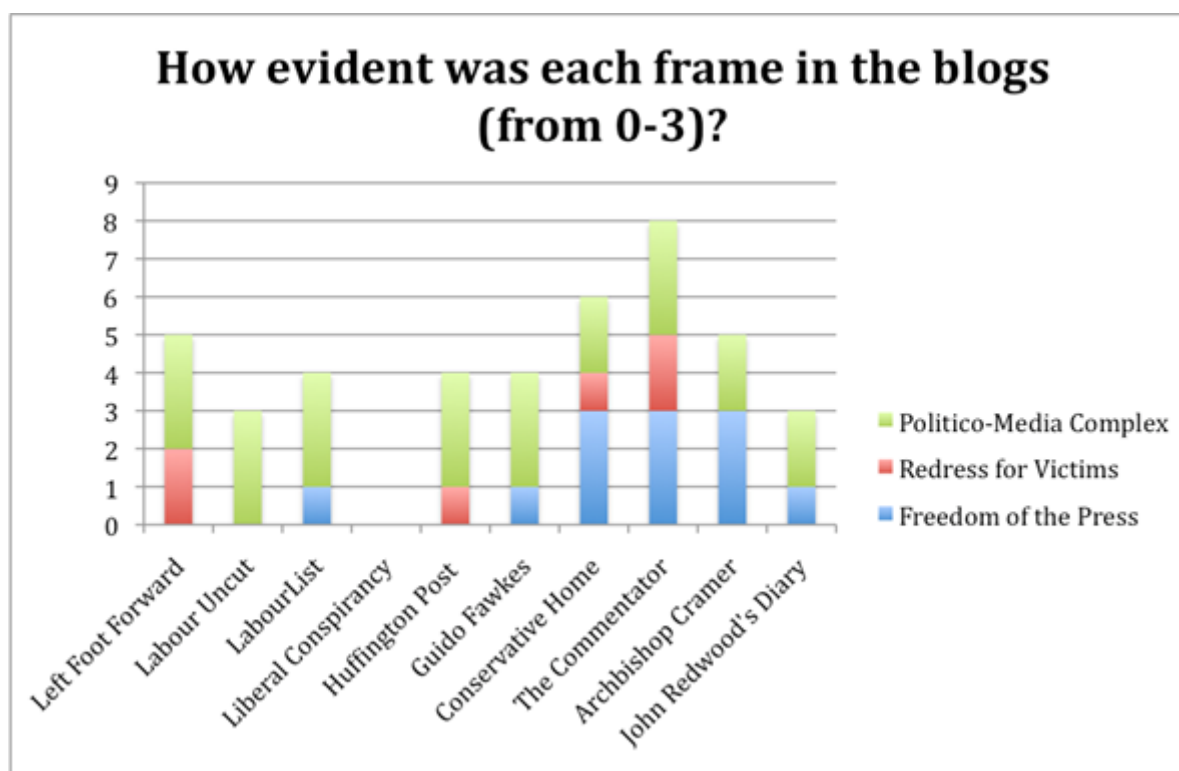


Figure 1: How left-wing and right-wing blogs (from left to right) reacted to the Leveson Report.

'Politico-media complex' was the most prevalent frame. Ironically, Liberal Conspiracy was the only blog not to use it at all. Some blogs, notably The Commentator had a more mixed reaction. In general, the close connections between politicians and mainstream media and the political battle concerning responses to the report were the aspects the bloggers focused most on. A divide between left-wing and right-wing blogs appeared regarding the issue of freedom of the press: right-wing bloggers showed concerns for the future of freedom of the press, whereas this frame was only somewhat evident in one of the left-wing blogs. Only two blogs from each side of the political spectrum dealt to a little or moderate extent with the struggle of phone hacking victims and the need for future protection.

One theme of particular interest to Bloggers was the internet. Despite the fact that the terms of reference for the Inquiry focus on the press, many bloggers questioned the lack of attention to new media. The view of the four blogs expressing views on this alleged omission however was divided. The Commentator and Liberal Conspiracy openly welcomed the exclusion of new media. In contrast, Conservative Home complained about online journalism not being included in the report, and LabourList regret that the Internet is not part of the report's recommendations. On the basis of our analysis of ten political blogs, bloggers were primarily concerned with the Inquiry's findings on the interests of and relations between the media and politicians. As blogs are seen often as an alternative to mainstream media, enacting even to some extent a control function, our findings suggest that the blogger's main concern was to point out the failings of the industry (and politicians); an issue the newspapers did not address significantly.

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December 7th, 2012 | [Media Plurality and Ownership](#), [Press Regulation](#), [Privacy](#) | [0 Comments](#)

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