Reviewing 2010 in political blogging: the spotlight moves from the Tories to the Liberal Democrats

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Chris Gilson *and* **Jane Tinkler** *bid goodbye to 2010 with a short round up of some of the main trends in the political blogging scene this year.*

In April *British Politics and Policy at LSE* began a weekly round up of political blogs, tracking the main topics discussed on the UK's political blogging scene. We've now gone back and looked at three five-week periods this year and found that the way the main parties have been discussed has certainly changed.

We have placed the text of our round ups (sans blog names) into Wordle, so we can see exactly how important topics have been. This is not a 'scientific' study of blogs – as we chose what to mention in our round ups. But it's still very interesting to see what we felt stuck out as important and how that has changed over the year.

Pre-election 2010

In the round-ups of political blogs we conducted in the five weeks prior to the General Election in May, it's clear that the main political parties and their leaders were very important – likely because of the debates. Indeed, we can see that the term 'debate' is reasonably important itself. The Tories are definitely the biggest in terms of mentions, though 'Labour' and 'Clegg' are close behind. This reminds us of quite how big 'Cleggmania' was after the April debates. Even at this point the possibility of a coalition government is being mentioned – though most commentators were looking at a Lib-Lab coalition rather than what actually eventuated.

Post election 2010

In the five weeks after the election political blogs changed their tack greatly. The important terms were 'new', 'coalition', 'government', and 'Labour' . While the first three are understandable given the nature of politics in May, the prominence of 'Labour' seems out of place, but if we look back at that period we do see

many commentators on the left writing election post-mortems for the party and eagerly anticipating the leadership election was that eventually won by Ed Miliband. Discussions of cuts are there, but only just.

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Moving forward now to the most recent five weeks of our blog round ups, we see a very different picture. Fees and protests are all over the political blog scene (as is Wikileaks), as well as policy areas such as education and tuition fees. Ed Miliband is there too – and much more so than Nick Clegg or David Cameron. One of the more telling things from this Wordle is that mentions of the Liberal Democrats are very prominent, but mentions of the Conservatives are not. This is hardly surprising given recent infighting within the Liberal Democrats and the perception that they have reneged on election promises on tuition fees. From this picture it is hard to see that the government is a coalition – the Liberal Democrats are certainly bearing the brunt of the public's ire over the government's policies, and are getting much more coverage in the political blogging world.