

# **Media impressions of the legitimacy of coalition government in the UK**

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## **Abstract**

In 2010, the first coalition government in the post-war era was formed in Westminster. Long-term electoral change indicates this may not be a one-off – that, in future, coalitions may become much more common in the UK. It has been theorised that traditionally majoritarian political cultures may resist consensual politics, however, and survey data suggests that the British public may be sceptical of the legitimacy of coalition government. This paper aims to add to this existing empirical evidence by analysing media impressions of the legitimacy of coalition government – in theory and in practice – along different dimensions, based on content analysis of press coverage. The results suggest that media conveys a broadly negative impression the legitimacy of coalition government overall, as well as of its democratic nature and governmental performance – indicating perceived legitimacy deficits along both input and output dimensions.

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## Introduction

The United Kingdom has long served as a prime example of the majoritarian model of democracy. The coalition government formed by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats in 2010 is the first the British public have experienced in Westminster in the post-war era.

Outside Westminster, however, a decade of devolution based on principles of proportional representation has made coalition a more familiar prospect to Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish voters. Moreover, long-term voting trends indicate that coalition government may well become considerably more common in Westminster, too, despite its electoral system (Dunleavy 2005). The past fifty years has seen a steep and steady decline in the proportion of votes attracted by the two main parties, from a peak of over 96% in the 1950s to less than 68% at the most recent general election.

Whether or not such a development would be a welcome prospect amongst the British public is unclear, however. Benjamin Disraeli famously noted that 'England does not love coalitions', and more recently, political scientist Arend Lijphart has theorised that 'cultural traditions may present strong resistance to consensus democracy' (Lijphart 1999: 305). It seems plausible, then, that an ingrained majoritarian political culture in the UK could have significant, negative implications for perceptions of the legitimacy of coalition as a form of government.

Available empirical evidence suggests this may indeed be the case, highlighting apparent concerns about both the democratic nature and the governmental performance of coalition – about both its input and output legitimacy (Beetham 1991; Sharpf 1999). For instance, recent public opinion surveys suggest that clear majorities of the British public believe that coalition has made government less responsive, on the one hand, and

weaker, more indecisive, and more confused, on the other – and that, on the whole, it is ‘a bad thing’ if a single party does not win an overall majority in a general election (Nye 2011).

In this paper, I seek to complement the existing evidence by investigating impressions of the legitimacy of coalition government conveyed in British press coverage. The paper adopts a broad, ‘multi-dimensional’ conceptualisation of legitimacy, aiming to exploring how the legitimacy of coalition government is perceived along different dimensions, as well as on the whole. I also investigate the perceived legitimacy of the current Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government in particular.

## Literature Review

### *Legitimacy*

In exploring how the legitimacy of coalition government in the UK is perceived, a brief review of the political science literature on the concept of legitimacy seems a useful starting point. Legitimacy is, of course, a contested concept and the subject of much academic debate – the discussion that follows is necessarily limited in scope, intended to shed light on a few key issues and develop a useful conceptual framework for analysis.

One central question in the literature is whether legitimacy is to be defined on a descriptive or normative basis (Barker 1990; Peter 2010). The descriptive approach casts legitimacy in terms of public consent to an authority. It is adopted, for instance, in the influential account of legitimacy developed by Weber, who insists on the importance, from a social scientific perspective, of assessing legitimacy in light of citizens' own beliefs (Weber 1964). On this approach, whether or not an authority is deemed to be legitimate boils down to an empirical question of whether or not it is *perceived* as legitimate. Political theorists, on the other hand, have often been critical of the Weberian approach, deeming it inadequate in its indifference to moral dimensions of an authority's rule, arguing that legitimacy ought instead to be assessed on the basis of set normative criteria (for instance, Dyson 1980; Grafstein 1981).

While this question is hotly debated, for the purposes of this paper, I deliberately skirt it. My focus is on the *perceived* legitimacy of coalition government in the UK. Like Russell and Sciara (2006), who have conducted similar research on the House of Lords, I do not assume that legitimacy can, in fact, be reduced to its perception. I simply assume that whether or not coalition government is perceived to be legitimate is an interesting subject of research in its own right. Beyond this basic question, this paper also seeks to

develop a richer understanding of *how* its legitimacy is perceived, and on what grounds it may or may not be perceived to be legitimate. In considering these questions, it is useful to examine the influential theoretical accounts of legitimacy developed by Beetham (1991) and Sharpf (1999), both highlighting the ‘multi-dimensional’ nature of legitimacy, and the fact that, as Beetham notes, ‘legitimacy is not an all-or-nothing affair, but a matter of degree’ (Beetham and Lord 1998: 9).

Beetham argues that legitimacy in liberal democracies such as the UK has two fundamental dimensions: legality and justifiability.<sup>1</sup> *Legality* denotes the extent to which constitutional rules are adhered to. Beetham argues that basic ‘rule of law’ is an important source of legitimacy for all authorities, but is far from sufficient in itself, as the rules and the institutional arrangements they generate must also be justifiable in light of shared societal beliefs (Beetham 1991: 15-20).

*Justifiability* itself encompasses two distinct components. The first component requires institutional arrangements to reflect shared beliefs about the ‘rightful source of political authority’. In liberal democracies, this established source is ‘the people’, and so satisfying this component depends on how well institutional arrangements conform to ideals of *democracy* and facilitate the operation of key democratic mechanisms. The second component requires institutional arrangements to facilitate satisfactory government *performance*, in light of shared expectations about the ‘proper ends and standards of government’ (Beetham 1991 15-20; Beetham and Lord 1998: 3-9, 22-23).

The two components of justifiability Beetham outlines – democracy and performance – align well with the framework for analysis of legitimacy in liberal

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<sup>1</sup> A third dimension, *consent*, is included in Beetham’s general framework, denoting whether an authority’s legitimacy is validated by popular support – but as Beetham and Lord (1998: 8) point out, in the case of liberal democracies, consent is subsumed under the dimension of justifiability and the democratic process it requires.

democracies developed by Sharpf (1999). Sharpf draws a key distinction between *input legitimacy* and *output legitimacy*. Input legitimacy, or ‘government by the people’, is a measure of how open and responsive the political process is to citizen inputs, requiring government to be shaped by the ‘authentic preferences of citizens’ and ‘held accountable to the governed’ (Sharpf 1997: 19). Output legitimacy, on the other hand, or ‘government for the people’, denotes how successful government is at ‘achieving the goals, and avoiding the dangers, that citizens collectively care about’ (Sharpf 1997: 19; see also Lijphart 1999). As Beetham points out, the democracy component of his own framework fits the concept of input legitimacy well, while his performance component corresponds closely to output legitimacy (Lord and Beetham 2001: 444).

Important questions surround both input legitimacy and output legitimacy. On the input side, ideals of the democratic process are hotly contested. Majoritarian visions of democracy, on the one hand, prioritise the ideal of *public control* – and its key mechanisms, electoral mandates and accountability – whilst proportional visions emphasise the central importance of broad-based *representation* (Powell 2000). Institutional arrangements – including coalition government, as shall be discussed in depth in the next section – tend to fit one vision better than the other.

On the output side, there are also interesting questions to ask. Both Beetham and Sharpf frequently discuss output legitimacy in terms of ‘effectiveness’. How, more specifically, this notion is to be understood is not wholly clear, however. Both Beetham and Sharpf seem focused primarily on effectiveness in meeting the expected ‘ends’ of government – in reaching desirable *policy outcomes* – as the key source of output legitimacy. As Russell and Sciara (2006) note, input legitimacy and policy outcomes may well come apart: ‘[i]t is possible that an institution which is considered legitimate may

produce policy decisions that are not supported, or that an institution whose procedures are dubious produces decisions which achieve significant popular support' (Russell and Sciara 2006: 6). Moreover, Mezey (1979) contends that perceptions of individual policy outcomes can influence overall perceptions of an institution's legitimacy. Drawing on Easton's (1965) distinction between episodic *specific support* and long-term *diffuse support* for authorities, Mezey argues that:

'diffuse support, over the long run, is related to specific support. Successful policies ... produce specific support; successive successful policies over an extended period of time will produce diffuse support' (1979: 31, quoted in Russell and Sciara (2006: 7)).

Beetham and Lord (1998: 4) point out that securing output legitimacy also requires that 'acceptable standards of government rule' are met, however. This suggests that beyond a specific focus on policy outcomes, effectiveness may also usefully be understood in a broader sense. For instance, in the case of the EU, Beetham and Lord (1998: 23-5) point to efficacious decision-making as a key factor in institutional performance. Moreover, debates over coalition government performance often centre precisely on questions of effectiveness more broadly defined, such as government strength, decisiveness, and stability. For the purposes of this paper, therefore, I opt to look at government effectiveness broadly, as well as policy outcomes in particular, as possible contributors to output legitimacy.

Combining the dimensions discussed generates a broad outline of potential sources of legitimacy that may be relevant to coalition government, summarised below. In the sections that follow, it shall serve as a useful basis for analysis.

**Figure 1: Potential sources of legitimacy for coalition government**

<b>I. Legality</b>	<b>II. Input Legitimacy (Democracy)</b>	<b>III. Output Legitimacy (Performance)</b>
	public control representation	effectiveness policy outcomes

An important caveat should be noted here. Beetham’s analysis was first developed to be applied to the state and to individual institutions within it, while Sharpf’s analysis was originally applied to the EU and its institutions (Beetham 1991; Sharpf 1999). Coalition government, by contrast, is not a fixed institution in itself, but rather a specific form of the institution of government. There seems to be no obvious reason that the same basic theoretical lens cannot meaningfully be applied to coalition government, however. Indeed, it seems wholly meaningful – and not unimportant – to ask whether or not the formation and rule of coalition government accords with constitutional rules and norms, whether coalition government facilitates or hinders democratic mechanisms of public control and representation, and whether or not coalitions tends to govern effectively and generate popular policy outcomes.

#### *Coalition government and legitimacy*

This paper seeks here to apply the conceptual framework developed above to coalition government. First, the paper reviews the related political science literature with the aim of uncovering clues as to how and why coalition government may or may not be expected to be successful in tapping into the different sources of legitimacy identified above. The paper then proceeds to review the available empirical evidence on *perceptions* of the legitimacy of coalition government in the UK.

The first dimension, legality, denotes the extent that the constitutional 'rule of law' is adhered to. Although the UK constitution has developed to accommodate the majoritarian model of democracy that has traditionally applied to Westminster and is, in some ways, not ideally equipped to deal with complexities of coalition government (Seyd 2002), coalition government is by no means prohibited by constitutional rules and norms. This fact in itself may be interpreted as a source of legitimacy. Indeed, constitutional lawfulness was a key narrative deployed by political parties attempting to assert legitimacy during coalition negotiations after the general election in May 2010 (Anstead 2010).

On the second dimension, *input legitimacy*, the academic literature is divided on the merits of coalition government. Two key schools of thought in contemporary democratic theory articulate two distinct 'visions' of democracy – the majoritarian vision and the proportional vision – which offer sharply different ideals of the democratic process (Lijphart 1999; Powell 2000).

The majoritarian vision prioritises the ideal of *public control*. In order to secure the dominant role of voters in shaping government, two mechanisms are seen as key: *mandates* and *accountability* (Powell 2000: 10-2). For a government to possess a mandate in this particular sense, its voters must have been able to anticipate prior to the election that the votes they cast would translate into support for that specific government and the specific manifesto it intended to implement (Budge 1998: 6). Accountability, on the other hand, requires that voters can identify who in government is responsible for individual areas of policy, so adherence to the mandated manifesto can be rewarded or punished at the next election. Thus mandates provide voters with prospective control, while

accountability provides retrospective control (Budge 1998; Powell 2000: 12).<sup>2</sup> Coalition government is judged to underperform on this perspective compared to single party government, as post-election elite bargaining over government composition and policy is seen to weaken the link provided by electoral mandates, while shared or unclear policy responsibilities in coalition are deemed to pose problems for accountability (Budge 1998; Powell 2000: 51-2, 71-6).

The proportional vision, on the other hand, stresses the importance of broad-based *representation* for authentic democracy to flourish. Advocates of this vision are suspicious of the principle of simple majority rule, and argue that governments ought to provide representation for as broad a share of the electorate as possible (Lewis 1965; Lijphart 1999; 1-2; Powell 2000: 97-98). Within government, too, the dispersion of influence amongst voter representatives is considered critical for democracy. Power must be shared in order to bring a wide spectrum of voter perspectives to bear on policymaking; consensus and compromise are seen as virtues, and checks and balances as vital (Lewis 1965; Steiner 1971). In particular, the relative influence of voter representatives ought to be proportional to the electoral strength of the parties involved (Powell 2000: 92).

Coalition government seems to fare considerably better on this perspective. Coalitions usually perform particularly well in terms of overall voter representation, often being underpinned by a true majority of votes cast – unlike single party government (Powell 2000: 98-101). Also, research indicates that the distribution of cabinet portfolios amongst parties in coalitions is, in practice, usually roughly proportional to electoral strength, on the basis of seats won (Laver and Schofield 1990). Nevertheless, the

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<sup>2</sup> For this reason, the notion of a mandate is sometimes referred to as ‘prospective accountability’ (Seyd 2002:23).

substantive influence of junior coalition partners is a matter of considerable debate. Some argue that, in practice, small parties tend to wield disproportionate influence in coalition, as the threat of exit can amount to a veto; others contend, on the other hand, that small parties tend to get outmuscled by senior coalition partners and wield less influence than cabinet seat numbers may suggest (Seyd 2002). Thus coalitions seem, on balance, to perform well against the yardstick of representation, although not unambiguously so.

On the third dimension, *output legitimacy*, the first broad component, coalition government *effectiveness*, calls to mind familiar stereotypes: coalitions are commonly criticized for underperformance in terms of government strength, decisiveness, stability, coherence, unity, and so on. Indeed, Lowell, one of the first modern political scientists, considered it an 'axiom in politics' that effective government meant single-party majority government (1896: 70, 73-4). There is some general evidence in the political science literature to lend support to such views. For instance, all things equal, coalition governments in Europe tend to be less durable than single party governments, and at least half end due to conflict between or within governing parties (Damgaard 2008). On the other hand, assessments of effectiveness may well vary depending on the context. For instance, if the alternative considered is minority government, coalition may be judged the stronger, more stable option, in that it tends to facilitate an executive-dominated policymaking process similar to that of single party majority rule (Hazell et al 2009). Moreover, contrary to stereotypes, the governance of the current Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition in particular has, in fact, been judged to be quite effective (Paun 2011; Hazell and Yong 2012).

On the second component of output legitimacy, *policy outcomes*, the literature is less clear. It seems plausible that there are links between the dimensions already

discussed and the general nature of policy outcomes, however. It might be speculated, for instance, that the broader base of voters represented by coalitions tends to generate policy outcomes that are more widely popular. On the other hand, it may be that the necessity of compromise leads to outcomes that few voters in fact favour – or that coalition ineffectiveness leads to policy inaction on key issues facing a nation. Notably, Lijphart (1999) comes down on the positive side: he concludes that consensus democracies governed by coalitions tend to outperform majoritarian democracies in terms of the proximity between voters' preferences and government policies – while performing roughly as well on basic economic indicators and in upholding law and order.

*Perceived legitimacy: coalition government in theory and practice*

This paper turns here to review the existing empirical evidence on how the legitimacy of coalition government in the UK is *perceived*. As noted in the introduction, this paper investigates the perceived legitimacy not just of coalition government in general, but also of the current Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government in particular. Beetham warns against conflating the legitimacy of specific governments with the legitimacy of broader institutional arrangements, or drawing direct inferences from one to the other (Beetham 1991). Caution in maintaining a clear distinction here does seem warranted. Impressions of the current coalition are interesting, however, not only because it is a first in recent British political history, but also because it seems plausible that specific support (or a lack thereof) for the current coalition may have long-term implications for the diffuse support for coalition government in the UK in general. Indeed, in the case of minority government, it has been suggested that dimly viewed practical experience in the UK has led to a 'historically bounded' negative impression of minority

government in principle (K. Strom, cited in Mitchell 2008). Additionally, it may be interesting to observe how impressions of the legitimacy of coalition government in theory compare to impressions of its legitimacy in practice.

### *Public opinion on coalition government in the UK*

As noted in the introduction, Lijphart (1999: 305) has theorised, based on his analysis of democracies worldwide, that a traditionally majoritarian political culture may present 'strong resistance to consensus democracy', of which coalition government is a key feature. Available survey data on British public opinion suggests this may indeed be the case in the UK.

On the whole, the existing data paints a broadly negative picture of attitudes towards hung parliaments and coalition government in general. A ComRes survey in April 2010 found that 72% of the British public preferred 'a clear majority government', compared with 20% who favoured 'a hung parliament with a coalition government'. On the eve of the general election in 2010, Ipsos Mori found that 55% of the British population felt it would be 'a bad thing for the country' if no party won an overall majority of seats. Similar results had been found in response to the same question throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, indicating that this opinion has been fairly robust over time (Ipsos Mori 2011). Moreover, by April 2011, this figure had risen to 58% in one survey, and 63% in another, suggesting that the lived experience of the current coalition government had not had a positive impact on public opinion on hung parliaments (Ipsos Mori 2011; Nye 2011). Rick Nye, the Director of Populus, argues that these findings

indicate, if anything, that ‘the experience of coalition in practice has turned more people away from the idea in principle’ (Nye 2011: 71).<sup>3</sup>

Overall trends in the data on the current coalition in particular mirror this downward trajectory. YouGov found that 60% of the public supported the coalition on its formation, and various polls indicated a ‘coalition honeymoon’ period in public opinion between May and September 2010; ratings started to fall considerably following the October 2010 spending review, however (YouGov 2010; Cowling 2011).

The available data also provides more specific clues about the perceived legitimacy of coalition government along individual dimensions. On the input side of legitimacy, an Ipsos Mori poll found that 68% of the public agree that ‘MPs should never break the promises they make to get elected’, suggesting much importance placed on public control (Ipsos Mori 2010). A survey of the Scottish and Welsh electorates conducted after the introduction of devolution is also illuminating, indicating that many voters prefer clear ‘winners’ to emerge from elections in order to enhance public control over the executive. In Scotland, however, just as many felt it is ‘more important that elections should produce a fair result, even if this means it is not clear who should form the government’ (Curtice et al 2000). These findings indicate some ambivalence towards the relative importance of public control and representation amongst the public – in turn suggesting possible ambivalence towards the democratic nature of coalition government itself.

On the output side, the overall verdict seems clearer – although it is a little trickier here to disentangle perceptions of coalition in general and the current coalition in particular. A Populus survey in April 2011, for instance, found that clear majorities of the

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<sup>3</sup> While Nye (2011) interprets responses to this question to signal attitudes towards coalition government, it seems possible it also taps partly into attitudes towards minority government, or the prospect of no stable government being formed in the wake of a hung parliament.

British public felt that coalition had made government weaker (68%), more indecisive (73%) and more confused (80%) (Nye 2011). In May 2011, Populus found that only 37% of the public believed the current coalition has demonstrated that coalition government can be strong and decisive – and this number slipped to 35% in May 2012 (Populus 2011; Populus 2012). Also, an Ipsos Mori survey found that whereas 63% of the public had felt the government was ‘working as a united team’ in June 2010, this figure had plummeted to 29% by April 2011 – although perceptions of the ability of the coalition ‘to provide stable government’ remained virtually unchanged at 53% (Ipsos Mori 2011b). Overall, these measures seem to suggest fairly negative public perceptions of the effectiveness of coalition government. In April 2011, Populus also found that most people felt coalition had made government less responsive to the public (57%) (Nye 2011). This measure seems more ambiguous. It may be viewed as a negative judgment of input legitimacy – but it could also be interpreted as a negative assessment of the ability of coalition government to meet public expectations of policy outcomes. Indeed, surveys suggest that while public opinion on coalition policy decisions has been divided, overall it has become less positive over time (Cowling 2011).

On the whole, then, the available data on British public opinion suggests overall perceptions of coalition government – both in theory and in practice – are fairly negative, and seem to have become more negative since 2010. It also indicates potential deficits in perceived legitimacy of coalition government on both the input and output sides.

### *The media and coalition government*

This paper seeks to complement this existing evidence on the perceived legitimacy of coalition government by investigating perceptions conveyed in British press coverage.

Anstead (2011) notes that, although the intersection of media and politics is an area of significant scholarly attention, due to its relative novelty as a phenomenon, very little research has been conducted on the relationship between the media and coalition government in the UK (2011: 68).

Anstead's early observations, however, suggest that the media struggled in 'defining coalition and finding appropriate forms of language to describe it' (2011: 69). He also observes that the majoritarian norms embedded in British political culture seemed to lead the media to continue to view democratic responsiveness strictly in terms of manifesto-based mandates and accountability, and to hone in on cases of broken promises (Anstead 2011: 70). On the input side of legitimacy, this suggests negative media impressions of public control in relation to coalition. Anstead's observations also hint that media impressions of the representation offered by coalitions are more mixed, however. On BBC Newsnight on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, for instance, he notes that Jeremy Paxman seemed to complain about the disproportionate influence of the Liberal Democrats and Nick Clegg, remarking on how 'the man that fails to live up to expectations becomes the centre of attention ... the leader of the party that came third has the power to make or break the next government' (quoted in Anstead 2010: 8). In the same programme, however, political commentator David Kynaston seemed to speak more positively about the dispersion of representational influence in coalition government:

'I think the collective message, as expressed through our rather clumsy electoral system, is that the Tories should have a go, but cannot quite be trusted ... that there should be some checks and balances' (quoted in Anstead 2010: 8).

Early analysis by Walker (2012) indicates, however, that overall, media coverage of the coalition's first year focused more on its output legitimacy than its input legitimacy.

He notes that rather than focusing on the notion of 'the Government nobody elected', the media seemed to fixate in particular on the unity and decisiveness of coalition, persistently drawing attention to both 'splits' and 'u-turns' (Walker 2012). These observations suggest that media impressions of coalition government effectiveness have tended to be negative.

Overall then, early studies of media coverage of the current coalition in the Westminster indicate that issues of democracy and performance have both been addressed in the media – and that both sides have been portrayed with some degree of negativity. I aim in this paper to contribute to this early literature, hoping to offer a somewhat more extensive and systematic analysis of media impressions of the legitimacy coalition government.

## Research Questions

The following research questions are explored in this paper:

- 1) Overall, does the media convey a positive or negative impression of the legitimacy of:
  - a) coalition government in general?
  - b) the current coalition in particular?
- 2) How often does the media address individual dimensions (legality, input legitimacy, and output legitimacy) of the legitimacy of coalition government?
- 3) Are the media impressions of individual dimensions of the legitimacy of coalition government positive or negative?

## Expectations / Hypotheses

This paper represents a primarily exploratory piece of research. Nevertheless, the literature reviewed provides at least some hints as to what findings might be expected.

It is anticipated, firstly, that the overall impression the legitimacy of coalition government (question 1) – both in theory and practice – will be negative. The available survey data paints a picture of public perceptions that is less than rosy, lending support to Lijphart's argument that a traditionally majoritarian political culture may be expected present 'strong resistance to consensus democracy'. There seems, then, to be *a priori* justification to anticipate a negative overall impression.

*H1: The overall impression of the legitimacy of coalition government conveyed in the media is negative.*

The literature offers few clues about how often to anticipate various dimensions of legitimacy to be addressed (question 2), other than an expectation that the output side of legitimacy will be addressed more often than the input side.

*H2: The media addresses the output legitimacy of coalition government more often than the input legitimacy of coalition government.*

It seems possible to form tentative expectations about whether impressions of individual dimensions will be mainly positive or negative (question 3). The literature and opinion poll data provide reason to expect perceptions of the input legitimacy of coalition government to be somewhat mixed, and to anticipate perceptions of its output legitimacy to be, on balance, negative.

*H3: The media conveys a mixed impression of the input legitimacy of coalition government.*

*H4: The media conveys a negative impression of the output legitimacy of coalition government.*

Within input legitimacy, the literature and empirical evidence provide reason to anticipate that impressions will be negative regarding public control, but more positive regarding representation.

*H5: The media conveys a negative impression of the input legitimacy of coalition government in relation to public control.*

*H6: The media conveys a mixed or positive impression of the input legitimacy of coalition government in relation to representation.*

Within output legitimacy, there is reason to expect perceptions of the effectiveness of coalition government in general to be negative. The same seems true for the current coalition as well – while, as noted, researchers have assessed the effectiveness of the coalition positively, public and media perceptions seem to have been largely negative. For the current coalition, perceptions of policy decisions are also expected to be largely negative, or mixed.

*H7: The media conveys a negative impression of the effectiveness of coalition government.*

*H8: The media conveys a negative or mixed impression of policy outcomes in relation to the current coalition.*

## Research Design and Methodology

To address the research questions above, content analysis was conducted of press coverage of coalition government spanning over 16 years, from 1 May 1996 to 15 July 2012. The analysis covered six national newspapers, including four of the five national broadsheets – the *Guardian*, the *Independent*, the *Telegraph*, and the *Times* – as well as the leading middle market newspaper (or ‘black top’), the *Daily Mail*.<sup>4</sup> Analysis was restricted to the editorial column – the section in which a newspaper expresses a collective opinion, without a byline.

Articles were extracted primarily from the NexisUK database.<sup>5</sup> A key methodological question centred on the search term to be used. It was decided that a search using specific terms (such as ‘legitimacy’ or ‘effectiveness’, for instance) was undesirable, as this could severely limit the number of articles returned unduly. As this research is primarily exploratory, it was also judged to be inappropriate to prejudge the words or phrases the press might use in addressing the legitimacy of coalition government. The word ‘coalition’ was therefore selected as the sole search term. This was problematic in itself, however, as it generated very high numbers of results, particularly between May 2010 and mid July 2012. It was thus determined that a more manageable approach for these three years was to select a fixed, limited time period to examine. The months of May, June and early July were selected, as they covered the eve and short-term aftermath of the general election in 2010, and, predictably, annual editorial assessments

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<sup>4</sup> I had hoped to extend the present analysis further to include the fifth major national broadsheet, the *Financial Times*, as well as a wider range of non-broadsheet titles. Unfortunately, both time constraints and – particularly in the cases of the *Financial Times* and the *Sun* – problems with article availability via Lexis led to a more limited set of titles forming the basis of analysis.

<sup>5</sup> For some titles – particularly the *Independent* and the *Telegraph* – Lexis searches did not return all editorials for some time periods. Where this was found to be the case, the dataset was supplemented with editorials from paper sources or the newspapers’ own websites.

of the coalition government in 2011 and 2012, as well as other key events in the life of the current coalition so far, such as the AV referendum and local and devolved elections.

Searching in this way returned an overall total of 1895 editorials. Of course, not all editorials mentioning the word 'coalition' referred to coalition government in the UK. Those discussing coalitions in other senses of the word, or coalition governments in other countries, were immediately excluded. This left a total of 740 editorials referring specifically to coalition government in the UK. Of these, 277 were considered to include judgments of some aspect of the legitimacy of coalition government in general, or of the current coalition in Westminster in particular, and were coded. Editorials referring to historic coalitions in Westminster or to coalitions in Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland were coded only if they were considered to include judgments about coalition government in general.

The coding scheme was devised based on the literature synthesised above, and a short pilot run. The unit of analysis for coding purposes was the article as a whole. The coding scheme included 27 variables in total, covering basic descriptive information about the editorials in addition to substantive matters of editorial content related to the central research questions. The latter variables drew on the broad, 'multi-dimensional' conceptualisation of legitimacy developed in the literature review. Editorials were coded on the overall impression conveyed of the legitimacy of coalition government, as well as impressions conveyed along the three broad dimensions focused on – legality, input legitimacy, and output legitimacy – plus numerous sub-dimensions discussed in the literature review. For each dimension, impressions of both coalition government in general and the current coalition in particular were recorded. Coding was mostly closed, with possible responses for most variables limited to 'positive', 'negative', or 'mixed or

unclear'. In relation to policy outcomes, however, open coding was also employed to note specific policies or policy areas referred to. Notable arguments and language were also recorded in general to facilitate richer, more nuanced understanding and description. The full coding scheme is included in the appendix.

The research method deployed has some general limitations. The coding involved in content analysis of this sort is ultimately a highly subjective process – whether the overall impression conveyed in an editorial towards coalition legitimacy on a given dimension is positive, negative, or mixed may not be clear in any objective sense, and the judgment of an individual coder may not be wholly unbiased. In general, the reliability of content analysis can be improved by using two or more coders, which also enables 'inter-coder reliability' to be measured by assessing the overall extent of agreement or otherwise in coding results (Neuendorf 2002). Due to resource constraints, however, the present study was restricted to a single coder.

The particular research design employed here has further limitations. Confining the analysis to newspaper editorial columns, for instance, may not present a full picture of the impression of coalition government conveyed in the press. The decision to examine only ten weeks a year in the period between 2010 and 2012 may also limit or bias overall impressions gained; it may mean, for instance, that key events and trends in press coverage are not registered in the analysis, or not registered as clearly as they could be.

More fundamentally, media analysis provides no *direct* evidence about public perceptions of the legitimacy of coalition government. However, the media is often argued to wield considerable influence in shaping public opinion on political affairs (for instance, Curtice 1999), and so media analysis may well offer valuable indirect evidence in this respect nevertheless. Moreover, as Russell and Sciara (2006) point out, media analysis

also has key advantages over opinion surveys for the purposes of this sort of research. Surveys are expensive to administer, and provide only a snapshot of opinion at particular point in time. Media analysis, on the other hand, 'enables us to look deeper, at how legitimacy has been conceptualised, and at which factors are considered important to it. This is difficult within surveys, both because of time and cost constraints and the danger of constructing leading questions' (Russell and Sciarra 2006: 11-12).

Another potential issue to note in using this method relates to the possible implications of what Barker (1990) terms 'habitual legitimacy'. Barker points out that political legitimacy is often strongest where it is 'settled and unchallenged', and therefore mostly unarticulated in the public sphere. Conversely, it tends to be discussed most 'loudly and clearly' when it is called into question, or widely perceived to be absent (Barker 1990: 29-33). This presents another potential methodological issue to bear in mind – media analysis may be biased towards negative perceptions of legitimacy, simply because positive perceptions more often go unarticulated in day-to-day public discourse, including perspectives presented in the press.

## Results and Discussion

277 newspaper editorials were coded in total, of an average length of 604 words. In this section I present the results of the research in relation to the three central research questions outlined above.

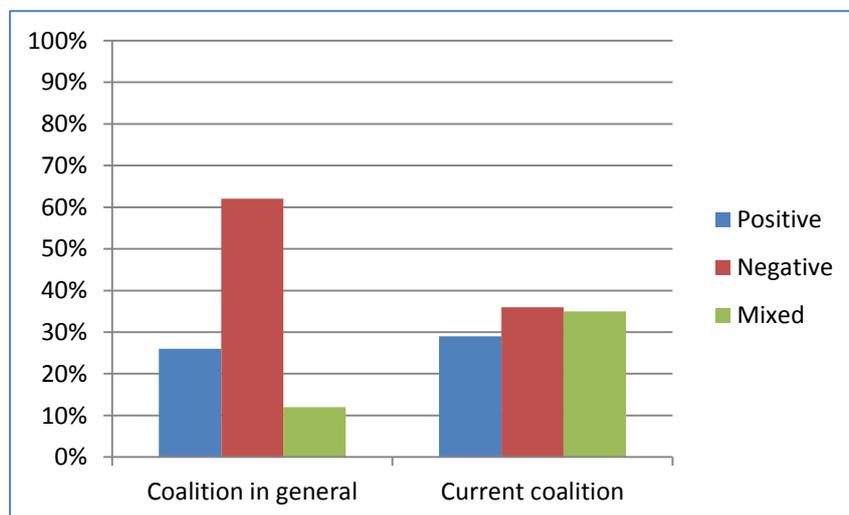
### *Overall impressions of legitimacy*

Research question (1) addressed overall impressions of the legitimacy of (a) coalition government in general, and (b) the current coalition in particular.

Overall, just 50 editorials (18%) were deemed to include a judgment of some aspect of the legitimacy of coalition government in general, while 240 editorials (87%) were deemed to address the legitimacy of the current coalition in particular. Of those editorials addressing coalition government in general, 26% conveyed a positive impression of legitimacy overall, whereas 62% conveyed a negative impression. Of those discussing the current coalition in Westminster, 29% conveyed a positive impression overall, while 36% conveyed a negative impression.

On the whole, then, media impressions of the legitimacy of coalition government – both in theory and in practice – were more negative than positive, as expected per *H1*.

**Figure 2: Percentage of editorials positive, negative and mixed about legitimacy of coalition in general and the current coalition in particular**



A clear example of an unambiguously negative overall impression of coalition government in general is supplied by the *Daily Mail*, who feared that the recently announced AV referendum could mean ‘condemning Britain to unstable coalition governments forever’ (‘Mr Cameron and a Huge Gamble’, 3 July 2010). It continued:

‘Our country would have to settle for weak collegiate government; there would be no place in this new world for strong and decisive leaders like Margaret Thatcher. Despite the early success of the ConDems, the Mail believes that coalitions, whenever and wherever they have been tried, have always proved to be weak and undemocratic in the end’

Notably, however, the picture in relation to the current coalition is by far the less clear-cut of the two – with many more instances of editorials conveying overall impressions judged to be ‘mixed or unclear’. A possible reading of this result is that practical experience of a coalition government in the flesh has in not, in fact, lived up to some detractors’ worst fears about coalition and its legitimacy in principle. Conclusions of this nature seem hasty, however. It is not clear that the two pictures are directly comparable – for instance, it may be that they do not track the same dimensions of legitimacy to same extent, and that the more ambivalent findings in relation to the current coalition mostly just reflect unremarkably mixed opinion on the current government’s policy decisions, say, rather than a less negative assessment of its democratic nature or effectiveness. The following sections on coverage of different dimensions of legitimacy aim in part to shed some light on such issues.

### *Salience of individual dimensions of legitimacy*

Research question (2) asked how often press coverage was deemed to pass judgment on different dimensions of legitimacy. The results are outlined in the table below.

**Table 1: Dimensions of coalition legitimacy addressed in editorials**

Dimension	Coalition in general	Current coalition	All	Percentage
<b>Legality</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Input legitimacy</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>41%</b>
Public control	27	36	69	25%
Representation	21	54	71	26%
<b>Output legitimacy</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>95%</b>
Effectiveness	32	157	180	65%
Policy outcomes	10	203	213	77%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>100%</b>

Zero editorials were deemed to include a judgment of coalition legitimacy based on its constitutional *legality*. A few editorials in early May 2010 made passing comment on the constitutional ins and outs of a government being formed in the case of a hung parliament, but none seemed to draw on the constitution rules as a basis for viewing coalition government *per se* as ‘legal’ or ‘illegal’. This result is perhaps unsurprising, given that there is, of course, precedent for coalition government in Westminster. The closest an editorial came to passing such a judgment was over a decade earlier, when *The Times* (‘Shot across the bows’, 15 June 1999) hinted that coalition government was not just an ‘unpopular innovation’, but also in conflict with ‘the long-established political rules’. This clearly does not amount to asserting that coalition government is unlawful, however. One instance in which an editorial *did* use legality in an argument in relation to a coalition government – this time positively – was in *The Guardian* (‘To seize this historic moment,

the Lib Dems must turn to Labour’, 9 May 2010) in the aftermath of the general election in 2010. Advocating for Labour and the Liberal Democrats to form a government together, *The Guardian* stressed that there was ‘no constitutional obstacle to a coalition between them’, despite neither having secured a plurality of votes or seats in Parliament. This is an example of an editorial argument drawing on legality to assert legitimacy in relation to a specific hypothetical coalition. However, as it did not refer directly to the legality of coalition government *per se*, or the current coalition in particular, this particular argument was not coded.

*Input legitimacy* was referred to in some way in 114 editorials altogether, a little under half (41%) of the total. Within input legitimacy, almost the same number of editorials made reference to coalition government in relation to public control (25%) and public representation (26%), suggesting that the underlying principles of neither ‘vision of democracy’ have been used as a basis for framing coalition legitimacy to the exclusion of those of the other.

By contrast, a total of 262 editorials included a judgment of some aspect of *output legitimacy* – almost 95% of all editorials coded. This included 180 editorials (65%) that made reference to the effectiveness of coalition government in theory or in practice, and 213 (77%) that assessed policy decisions. Those editorials addressing effectiveness included 83 (30%) commenting on decisiveness, 76 (27%) on strength, 74 (26%) on coherence, and 57 (20%) on stability. Further, 110 editorials (39%) commented on coalition unity.<sup>6</sup> Editorials assessing policy outcomes referred to a wide range policy areas – by far the most common being deficit reduction and economic policy more broadly

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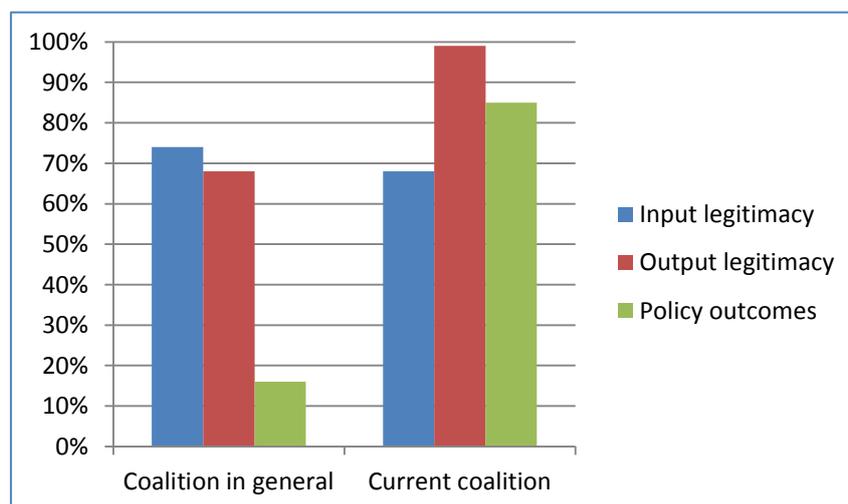
<sup>6</sup> Editorial mentions of unity or division were coded out of interest, but it proved difficult to distinguish between passing mentions of differences of opinion and major ‘splits’ that threatened coalition effectiveness. As such, a mention of unity itself was not taken to contribute to an editorial’s overall impression of effectiveness unless unity was portrayed as having broader implications, such as for coalition strength, decisiveness, coherence, or stability.

(54%). Overall, then, the press focused on output legitimacy far more often than input legitimacy – on coalition performance more than democracy – as anticipated in *H2*. Moreover, the salience of input legitimacy fell over time, while the salience of outcome legitimacy rose.

Once again, there are also notable differences in the results for coalition government in general and for the current coalition in particular. Of those editorials (50 in total) that addressed the legitimacy of coalition in general, 37 (74%) commented on some aspect of input legitimacy, and 34 (68%) commented on output legitimacy. On the other hand, of those editorials (240 in total) that discussed the current coalition, just 85 (35%) referred to input legitimacy, while 238 (99%) referred to output legitimacy in some sense.

The difference is most stark within output legitimacy, in relation to mentions of policy outcomes in particular. While policy outcomes were discussed in connection with coalition government in general in just 8 editorials (16%), they were addressed in relation to the current coalition in 203 editorials (85%). This key divide also seems to help explain to a significant extent why, in the previous section, the overall impressions of the current coalition are so divided, and so often ‘mixed or unclear’ – as shall be seen in the next section, overall impressions of the current coalition’s policy outcomes are similarly split.

**Figure 3: Editorials mentioning input and output legitimacy (and policy outcomes specifically) in relation coalition in general and the current coalition.**



*Impressions of individual dimensions of legitimacy*

Research question (3) asked whether press impressions of individual dimensions of legitimacy were positive or negative. The main results of the research in this respect are outlined in the table below.

**Table 2: Percentage of all editorials conveying negative, positive, or mixed impressions of input and output legitimacy**

Dimension	Coalition government in general			Current coalition		
	% Positive	% Negative	% Mixed or unclear	% Positive	% Negative	% Mixed or unclear
<b>Input legitimacy</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>7%</b>
Public control	1%	7%	2%	3%	10%	7%
Representation	5%	3%	0%	7%	10%	3%
<b>Output legitimacy</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>29%</b>
Effectiveness	3%	8%	1%	12%	24%	21%
Policy outcomes	1%	2%	0%	23%	30%	21%

*H3* predicted a mixed picture of input legitimacy to emerge, while *H4* anticipated impressions of output legitimacy to be primarily negative. With respect to input legitimacy, while some ambivalence is evident in the data, the picture seems decidedly more negative on the whole, with notably more editorials conveying, on balance, a negative impression of democratic aspects of coalition government, both in theory (8% negative versus 4% positive), and in practice (15% negative versus 9% positive). Conversely, while overall impressions of output legitimacy were, indeed, negative on balance, they were not unambiguously so – particularly for the current coalition, they were somewhat more mixed than expected, as the table shows.

On the two sub-dimensions of input legitimacy – public control and representation – expectations were more accurate. As *H5* anticipated, impressions of *public control* afforded by coalition were almost universally negative. Here, almost all editorials focused on the perceived inability of the public to hold coalition government to account

*prospectively* via a *mandate*, due to bargaining amongst coalition partners leading to outcomes voters had not authorised. For instance, contemplating the possibility of a hung parliament after the 2010 general election, *The Times* argued that ‘behind the scenes wrangling, leading to a coalition administration that absolutely nobody has voted for, is hardly a triumph for democracy’, and insisted that a coalition government would possess ‘no mandate for the change the country needs’ (‘Nobody’s Vote’, 17 April 2010). Similarly, *The Daily Mail* complained that coalitions take power out of the hands of voters, as ‘party managers – faced with the inevitable mess of no party having an overall majority – would decide the country’s government on the basis of shady backroom deals and compromises’ (‘This is no time for weak government’, 30 May 2010).

In relation to the current coalition in particular, many arguments about a lack of prospective public control tended to focus on missing mandates for particular policies or programmes, rather than the government as a whole. For example, discussing the emergency budget in June 2010, *The Guardian* writes that Liberal Democrat voters ‘did not anticipate wholesale adoption of Conservative fiscal strategy after polling day’ (‘The austerity agenda must not go unopposed’, 20 June 2010). Similarly, in response to the proposed increase in capital gains tax, *The Times* complains that ‘sharply increasing taxes on savings that have been carefully salted away for retirement – penalising people for a lifetime of thrift and diligent financial housekeeping – is not the policy that 11 million people voted for when they voted for a Conservative Government’ (‘Tax Losses’, 29 May 2010).

Perhaps ironically, one of the very few strong defences of the current coalition’s democratic mandate also came from *The Times*, who, in response to criticism of the

coalition from the Archbishop of Canterbury, countered with the following argument (Bully Pulpit, 10 June 2011):

'[I]t is simply not true to say that the coalition is committing Britain to "radical, long-term policies for which no one voted" ... The construction of a coalition means, inevitably, that the pure intentions of manifestos are compromised. However, the dominant political question of this Parliament is the reduction of the deficit, which was entirely expected and the main question of the electoral campaign. ... Even if Dr Williams does not like the direction the Government is travelling in he is quite wrong to imply that most of its programme has come as a surprise.'

Only two articles in total referred to *accountability*, defined here specifically as the ability of the public to control government retrospectively. Although the theoretical literature had suggested that coalition government tends to fare badly on this count because it becomes more difficult to identify responsibility for policy (Powell 2000: 51-2), no editorials raised this point. The editorials that were deemed to address accountability were, in fact, positive in tone. For example, after the formation of Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition, *The Guardian* argued that '[Nick Clegg] exercised his judgment; it will be quickly tested by events and ultimately punished at the ballot box if found wanting. Whatever criticism might be levelled against the new government, its formation is not an affront to democracy' ('The Lib Dems' responsibilities are awesome', 16 May 2010).

In contrast to judgments of public control, impressions of the *representation* offered by coalition were rather mixed. While not mentioned very often (6% of all editorials), opinion on the *breadth of voter representation* provided by coalition was almost unanimously positive. *The Guardian* declared, for instance, that 'in multiparty

politics, pacts between parties that speak for a majority of voters are always legitimate' ('Britain's next government: Out of confusion, an opportunity', 8 May 2010), and had earlier also contended that in 'representing a wider range of voters', coalition would 'confer greater moral authority on government' ('Parties need a true mandate in tough times', 11 April 2010), while *The Telegraph* noted that 'it remains striking, one year on, just how much popular support the Coalition commands. Despite the Liberal Democrats' slump, the two parties together consistently poll over 50 per cent, an approval rating rarely achieved even by the most popular single party governments' ('One year on, Cameron commands the field', 11 May 2011).

In terms of the general *dispersion of influence* in coalition governments, much coverage was also positive. *The Independent* argued, for instance, that 'the potential benefits of a hung parliament have scarcely been mentioned in public debate. Yet these are real ... A more consensual political process could result in better governance in a host of areas. One-party rule has hardly been an unalloyed blessing for Britain these past three decades' ('A hung parliament would not be a disaster for Britain', 3 March 2010). Opinion was far more negative on the more specific question of the *proportionality of influence* in coalition government, however, with many editorials judging junior partners in general, or the Liberal Democrats in particular, to wield a disproportionately large amount of much influence (36 editorials, 13% of the total). For instance, following the unveiling of the coalition agreement, *The Daily Mail* asked whether it was 'really necessary for Mr Cameron to give the Lib Dems such enormous influence over policy? Was he really obliged to give a quarter of Cabinet seats to partners who polled 3.8 million fewer votes?' ('Brilliant tactics... but what about principles?', 13 May 2010). A year later, *The Daily Mail*

described Nick Clegg's say over government policy (not for the last time) as 'grotesquely disproportionate' ('Putting the Lib Dem losers in their place', 9 May 2011).

On balance, then, impressions of the democratic nature of coalition in terms of *representation* were positive in some respects, but mixed overall, broadly as *H6* anticipated.

Impressions of the first sub-dimension of output legitimacy, effectiveness, were broadly negative in relation to coalition government in general (8% versus 3%), as expected per *H7*. In relation to the current coalition they were a little more mixed, overall, however. While perceptions of most individual elements of the coalition's effectiveness were quite negative, including strength (12% negative versus 6% positive), decisiveness (13% negative versus 7% positive), and coherence (14% negative versus 4% positive) – and despite many mentions of disunity (66 editorials, 24% of the total) – on the element of stability, the newspapers presented a surprisingly sanguine impression (8% positive, 1% negative, and 9% mixed).

Negative examples of first three notions were abundant, becoming more common as time passed. For instance, *The Daily Mail* judged that 'in the tortuous politics of coalition, good government is always the casualty' ('A truly pathetic day for coalition politics', 14 June 2012), and had worried previously that 'something is going wrong with Britain's system of governance. In vital areas, where clear-headed policies are desperately needed, stasis and confusion rule. And much of this can be blamed on the compromise and fudging that are intrinsic to the push-me-pull-you nature of coalition politics' ('Coalition adrift in the fog of confusion', 8 June 2011). *The Times* noted in the aftermath of the 2012 local elections that the coalition parties' losses indicated that the public

viewed it as 'incoherent' and 'incompetent', and further, it argued ('End of the love affair with coalition', 6 May 2012):

'They see it collapsing under the weight of its own internal contradictions; two parties with very little in common trying in vain to rub along together in government. Voters thought they liked coalition government but this love affair is over. We have rediscovered why we did not have coalitions for all those decades since the second world war. ... In short, they do not work.'

More positive impressions of stability were more common. However, while positive mentions early on were quite optimistic in tone – for instance, *The Times* declared on the coalition's formation that 'David Cameron has achieved a settlement that will provide strong, stable government and change the way that politics is conducted' and that 'the coalition provides Britain with the stable government that it needs at a time of economic peril' ('The New Politics', 12 May 2010) – they seemed to become somewhat more cynical over time; for instance, *The Independent* noted after the 2012 local elections that 'the Coalition has brought in fixed-term parliaments, meaning that it is another three years before the voters have to choose a new government. Nor, with their current levels of support, will either coalition partner want to force an election sooner' ('A good result, but Labour must beware a false dawn', 5 May 2012).

As already noted, impressions of policy outcomes were quite divided, as anticipated in *H8*, with 23% of editorials conveying a positive tone, 30% a negative one, and 21% being judged as mixed or unclear. Given that the overall pattern of these assessments seemed to correspond fairly closely to the individual newspapers' political orientations, however, this last result is perhaps the least interesting theoretically.

Overall then, most of the expectations outlined earlier in the paper were matched. Overall impressions of coalition legitimacy were more often negative than positive. Output legitimacy of coalition government was addressed more often than its input legitimacy. Perceptions of output legitimacy were negative on balance, as were perceptions of input legitimacy, although neither were unambiguously so. Within input legitimacy, impressions of public control were almost universally negative, while impressions of representation were considerably more mixed. Within output legitimacy, most indicators of effectiveness were judged negatively more often than positively, with the exception of stability, while impressions of policy outcomes were mixed.

## Conclusion

Despite its long-standing majoritarian political tradition, long-term partisan dealignment and constitutional change have made coalition government a far more likely prospect in the UK in the twenty-first century. There is growing body of evidence indicating that there is some truth to Disraeli's maxim, however, and that this development will not be a wholly welcome one in the eyes of the British public.

I have sought in this paper to complement the existing empirical evidence by analysing media impressions of the legitimacy of coalition government in the UK. The results of this research lend some support to findings elsewhere that suggest, firstly, that overall perceptions of the legitimacy of coalition as a form of government in the UK are broadly negative, and secondly, that there are specific concerns within British public discourse about both its democratic nature and governmental performance – indicating perceived legitimacy deficits along both input and output dimensions. The paper has also highlighted early signs of broadly similar perceptions in relation to the current Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government in Westminster.

As already discussed, media analysis provides only indirect evidence about public opinion itself, however. A potentially fruitful avenue for further research, then, may be more extensive, better theoretically informed survey research, designed to uncover finer nuances in public opinion – particularly in relation to the input side of legitimacy, and how British voters' attitudes square with Powell's 'two visions of democracy'.

Empirical research investigating factors that influence public opinion on coalition government could also help to provide a better understanding of how perceptions of particular coalition governments influence perceptions of coalition government in general – and should also aim to shed further light on Lijphart's suggestion that traditionally

majoritarian political cultures sometimes present 'strong resistance' to consensus democracy.

Finally, the research presented here is necessarily quite limited in scope. Extending this sort of analysis to a broader selection of media sources or over a longer time frame may prove interesting – as might investigating media impressions in the devolved regions of the UK, where coalition government has already become a more familiar prospect.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Coding Scheme

VARIABLES AND VALUES	DESCRIPTION
<b>Basic Information</b>	
1) Title	Indicates the full title of the editorial (open code).
2) Newspaper 1. The Daily Mail 2. The Guardian 3. The Independent 4. The Telegraph 5. The Times	Indicates the newspaper the editorial appears in.
3) Date	Indicates the date the editorial appeared (open code).
4) Period 1. May 1996 – April 2010 2. May 2010 – June 2010 3. May 2011 – June 2011 4. May 2012 – June 2012	Indicates the time period in which the editorial appeared.
5) Length	Indicates the word count of the editorial (open code).
<b>Editorial content</b>	
<i>I. Legality</i>	
6) Does the editorial address <i>legality</i> ?	Indicates whether the editorial includes a judgment of the constitutional legality or illegality of coalition government.
7) What is overall impression conveyed of <i>legality</i> ? a) Coalition in general b) Current coalition 1. Positive 2. Negative 3. Mixed or unclear 4. n/a	Indicates the overall impression conveyed of the legality of coalition government.
<i>II. Input Legitimacy</i>	
8) Does the editorial address <i>input legitimacy</i> ?	Indicates whether the editorial includes a judgment of any aspect of the input legitimacy of coalition government.
9) What is <i>overall</i> impression conveyed of <i>input legitimacy</i> ? a) Coalition in general b) Current coalition 1. Positive 2. Negative 3. Mixed or unclear 4. n/a	Indicates the overall impression conveyed of the input legitimacy of coalition government.

<i>A. Input Legitimacy: Public control</i>	
<p>10) What is <i>overall</i> impression conveyed of <i>public control</i>?</p> <p>a) Coalition in general b) Current coalition</p> <p>5. Positive 6. Negative 7. Mixed or unclear 8. n/a</p>	Indicates the overall impression conveyed of the impact of coalition government on public control.
<p>11) What is the impression conveyed of <i>prospective accountability (mandate)</i>?</p> <p>a) Coalition in general b) Current coalition</p> <p>9. Positive 10. Negative 11. Mixed or unclear 12. n/a</p>	Indicates the impression conveyed of the impact of coalition government on public control via prospective accountability, or the mandate of government.
<p>12) What is the impression conveyed of <i>retrospective accountability</i>?</p> <p>a) Coalition in general b) Current coalition</p> <p>13. Positive 14. Negative 15. Mixed or unclear 16. n/a</p>	Indicates the impression conveyed of the impact of coalition government on public control via retrospective accountability.
<i>B. Input Legitimacy: Representation</i>	
<p>13) What is the <i>overall</i> impression conveyed of <i>representation</i>?</p> <p>a) Coalition in general b) Current coalition</p> <p>1. Positive 2. Negative 3. Mixed or unclear 4. n/a</p>	Indicates the overall impression conveyed of the impact of coalition government on public representation in government.
<p>14) What is the impression conveyed of <i>breadth of voter representation</i>?</p> <p>a) Coalition in general b) Current coalition</p> <p>1. Positive 2. Negative 3. Mixed or unclear 4. n/a</p>	Indicates the impression conveyed of the breadth of voter representation offered by coalition government.
<p>15) What is the impression conveyed of <i>dispersion of influence</i>?</p> <p>a) Coalition in general b) Current coalition</p> <p>1. Positive 2. Negative 3. Mixed or unclear 4. n/a</p>	Indicates the impression conveyed of the dispersion of influence amongst voter representatives within coalition government (including, for instance, references to the consensual nature of coalition politics, or checks and balances coalition generates).

<p>16) What is the impression conveyed of <i>proportionality of influence</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Coalition in general</li> <li>b) Current coalition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positive</li> <li>2. Neg. (too much junior partner influence)</li> <li>3. Neg. (too little junior partner influence)</li> <li>4. Mixed or unclear</li> <li>5. n/a</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Indicates the impression conveyed of the proportionality of influence amongst voter representatives in coalition government (where influence is deemed to be disproportionate, includes whether junior partner is judged to have too much or little influence).</p>
<p>III. <i>Output Legitimacy</i></p>	
<p>17) Does the editorial address <i>output legitimacy</i>?</p>	<p>Indicates whether the editorial includes a judgment of any aspect of the output legitimacy of coalition government.</p>
<p>18) What is <i>overall</i> impression conveyed of <i>output legitimacy</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Coalition in general</li> <li>b) Current coalition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positive</li> <li>2. Negative</li> <li>3. Mixed or unclear</li> <li>4. n/a</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Indicates the overall impression conveyed of the output legitimacy of coalition government.</p>
<p>A. <i>Output Legitimacy: Effectiveness</i></p>	
<p>19) What is <i>overall</i> impression conveyed of <i>effectiveness</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Coalition in general</li> <li>b) Current coalition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positive</li> <li>2. Negative</li> <li>3. Mixed or unclear</li> <li>4. n/a</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Indicates the overall impression conveyed of the effectiveness of coalition government.</p>
<p>20) What is the impression conveyed of <i>strength</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Coalition in general</li> <li>b) Current coalition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positive</li> <li>2. Negative</li> <li>3. Mixed or unclear</li> <li>4. n/a</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Indicates the impression conveyed of the strength of coalition government.</p>
<p>21) What is the impression conveyed of <i>decisiveness</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Coalition in general</li> <li>b) Current coalition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positive</li> <li>2. Negative</li> <li>3. Mixed or unclear</li> <li>4. n/a</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Indicates the impression conveyed of the decisiveness of coalition government.</p>

<p>22) What is the impression conveyed of <i>unity</i>?</p> <p>a) Coalition in general</p> <p>b) Current coalition</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positive</li> <li>2. Negative</li> <li>3. Mixed or unclear</li> <li>4. n/a</li> </ol>	<p>Indicates the impression conveyed of the unity of coalition government.</p>
<p>23) What is the impression conveyed of <i>coherence</i>?</p> <p>a) Coalition in general</p> <p>b) Current coalition</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positive</li> <li>2. Negative</li> <li>3. Mixed or unclear</li> <li>4. n/a</li> </ol>	<p>Indicates the impression conveyed of the coherence of coalition government.</p>
<p>24) What is the impression conveyed of <i>stability</i>?</p> <p>a) Coalition in general</p> <p>b) Current coalition</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positive</li> <li>2. Negative</li> <li>3. Mixed or unclear</li> <li>4. n/a</li> </ol>	<p>Indicates the impression conveyed of the stability of coalition government.</p>
<p><i>B. Output Legitimacy: Policy Outcomes</i></p>	
<p>25) What is the <i>overall</i> impression conveyed of <i>policy outcomes</i>?</p> <p>a) Coalition in general</p> <p>b) Current coalition</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positive</li> <li>2. Negative</li> <li>3. Mixed or unclear</li> <li>4. n/a</li> </ol>	<p>Indicates the impression conveyed of the policy outcomes produced by coalition government.</p>
<p>26) Which policy area(s) are addressed?</p>	<p>Indicates the specific policy area(s) referred to.</p>
<p><i>IV. Legitimacy: Overall</i></p>	
<p>27) What is <i>overall</i> impression conveyed of <i>legitimacy</i>?</p> <p>a) Coalition in general</p> <p>b) Current coalition</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Positive</li> <li>2. Negative</li> <li>3. Mixed or unclear</li> <li>4. n/a</li> </ol>	<p>Indicates the overall impression conveyed of the legitimacy of coalition government, based on the combined impression of the individual dimensions outlined above.</p>