Case studies illustrating the usefulness of the quality monitoring framework set out in chapter one of *The Future of Quality News Journalism: a cross-continental analysis*

The material that is produced below is still under development and may be modified when the final draft is produced shortly.

a) Introduction

This set of case studies has two main purposes.

First, to provide examples of how the quality monitoring framework outlined in chapter one might be applied to online news stories of quality mainstream news providers.

Second, to provide some representative sample evidence of the quality of the hard news provision of some of the best of the mainstream news providers. This is intended to back up the case for their continuing importance that is made within the bonus chapter (available only online at: HTTP://CLOK.UCLAN.AC.UK/7824)

There are several things that it is important to emphasise.

First, as chapter one makes clear, the preferred means of quality assessment would be via the kind of expert/professional panels outlined and suggested there. This should enhance the rigour of the evaluative process in so far as several pairs of expert eyes are likely to pick up inconsistencies in the application of that process in a way that would not be possible for one. Given that such panels do not yet exist to apply it and that the purpose here is mainly illustrative, the evaluations have been made by the author alone. That means that they should be treated with greater caution than had they been panel produced, but providing that is remembered it does not detract from their illustrative value.

For the purposes of transparency and the need to provide readers with enough information to help them cross-check the judgments for themselves if they so wish, concise sample reasons are provided at the end of each piece as to why the individual quality ratings have been arrived at. It has to be emphasised that they are for illustrative purposes only and it would be expected that panel evaluations would be more detailed, given the greater level of human resources available for the exercise.

It is of course important to remember that where online news is concerned and various bits of key explanation, context, etc. have been provided in earlier reports or commentaries relating to an on-running story, then it is quite legitimate for journalists to avoid unnecessary and possibly wearing repetition (for those who have read the stories before) by not recapping on such content. The advantage of online is that they can instead provide links to the reports/commentaries in which such content was covered for the benefit of those who have joined a story at a mid point in its coverage.

As pointed out in chapter one, where such content has been provided earlier then the quality ratings applied to later stories can take into account the quality of the previous coverage as well, indicating that this is the case by placing the relevant ratings in brackets. However, it is important that the later coverage includes links to the earlier coverage, otherwise readers joining an on-running story part way through its cycle will not be aware of it. For this reason, evaluations of the sample pieces do not take into account earlier coverage that readers are not made aware of via appropriate links when rating the quality of material included within the various analytical categories that are applied to the content.

It would of course be possible to use the quality evaluation framework to arrive at overall quality ratings for each story by simply adding up each individual category rating and dividing the result by six. While the author has no objection to this being done, it is not the approach that is adopted in the case studies for the simple reason that the author believes that it is more useful to look at the individual category ratings to identify more precisely the areas of weakness that need to be addressed. It should also be remembered that different types of story, commentary etc. will require different amounts of context, explanation, etc. This should automatically be taken into account when deciding on ratings for each category area and this is the case in the case studies that follow.

Finally, in order to provide readers with a quick recap on how the framework is actually applied to produce the colour coded case studies that follow, the relevant section from chapter one is reproduced below in edited form.

b) An edited summary of the quality monitoring framework outlined in chapter one

The framework is based on five C's and one A. The A is accuracy. Accuracy requires proper sourcing and verification and arguably the range of sources used should not be decided purely on a numerical basis, but wherever possible should reflect the range of voices on an issue, or at the very least those which are representative of the key arguments and concerns.

The first of the five Cs is comprehensibility. The writing and/or audio/visual story construction must be of a high enough quality in terms of logical structure and the clarity of exposition for the news report to be readily comprehensible to readers/listeners/viewers of the average to high level of intelligence or education (bearing in mind that many people can be of a high level of intelligence, but disadvantaged in things like the tradition of news accessing as a result of social/educational deprivation) that would be the range of the expected audience for quality news journalism.

The second is context. There must be sufficient context, either within the report itself, or across the range of related running reports/backgrounders, to enable the audience to see the issues that are raised in the story within the key contexts – whether these be economic, political, historical, cultural, or whatever – that are necessary for their understanding.

The third is causality. The story must convey to the reader, in a well explained manner, the key and most likely causal factors at work within the events and/or issues reported, insofar as they can reasonably be known at the time of the report being filed.

The fourth is comparativeness. Key issues are poorly covered if they are reported within only one 'ideological prism' when others of a practical, logical and well-constructed nature are available which could offer the reader alternative ways of viewing the matters at the heart of the report for comparative purposes. The example of judging the US and UK economies within the German vision of free market economics and not only the Anglo-Saxon model, is appropriate.

The fifth is comprehensiveness. A useful evaluation of the range of questions monitored across a story's life and development can be made by relevant specialist correspondents, and professionally or academically qualified members of the audience. They can assess the extent to which the *key* questions and issues relating to a topic in the news have been covered across the range of its coverage. It would be worth exploring whether retired correspondents, together with interested academics, etc. would be interested in helping set up and participate in web panels dedicated to the monitoring of representative samples of stories from quality news producers, covering such issues as comprehensiveness. Our initial soundings suggest that there would be interest in this idea.

Checking for the five C's and one A – colour coded content analysis

The colour coded content analysis system explained below is an approach borrowed from the matrix mentioned in chapter one and simplified for the more modest human and financial resource scale envisaged here. It is in essence a system of colour highlighting, plus simple scoring, which allows those using it to see quickly and easily the approximate amount of each of the five above criteria that are present in any ongoing story that is being monitored.

Some examples (in colour) of how it would work are provided shortly. As will be seen from these examples, the colour coding system would work hand in hand with a simple numerical coding system. In the case of these sample case studies, the *amount* of context within each story would be shaded in turquoise to give a crude but nevertheless usefully indicative and highly visual picture of the extent of its presence, using the simple word/sentence shading facility available on MS Word programmes. The *extent* to which *adequate context* was provided for the average audience member (as judged via existing audience research for the news provider concerned) would be indicated by a scoring of 1 to 6, with 1 denoting an unacceptably low provision of context and 6 an excellent provision. The scoring would be marked in turquoise bold large superscript at the end of each individual piece. Where adequate context had been provided by an earlier report in a continuing story the score would be raised to reflect that, but put in brackets to alert the reader to the fact that this is a judgment that relates to quality across the range of the coverage and not just within the individual report. A scoring for comprehensibility using the same sliding scale of 1 to 6, with 1 representing an unacceptably poor performance and 6 an excellent one, would also be made in bold large superscript at the end of each report, this time in blue.

Similarly, sentences including explanations of relevant causal factors would be highlighted in green. The adequacy of the quality of the causal explanations, in terms of coverage of an adequate number of possible causes in a well explained manner, would be indicated again by the use of the 1-6 scale in large superscript bold, this time obviously in green, at the end of the story.

The same approach would be used for the remaining Cs. With regard to comparativeness, the 1-6 scale would be used to indicate the extent to which the alternative key ideological prisms through which a story might be viewed have been included across the range of a topic's coverage. In this case the colour coding would be in yellow, with the content containing alternative prisms being highlighted in this colour, as well as the overall rating at the end. Finally, in relation to comprehensiveness, the same scale would be used to assess the extent to which *key* questions and issues relating to a topic in the news have been raised across the range of a story's coverage and the colour used in this case would be purple. Again each key question would be highlighted in this colour at the point where it appears in the story.

As with context, where adequate degrees of any of the above have been provided across the range of on-running coverage of a story, then, in instances where their presence in an individual story is limited, the overall quality reading could be inserted at the end of the piece, but again in brackets to make it absolutely clear that the judgment is based on the coverage as a whole, not the single item.

As far as accuracy, is concerned any inaccuracies should be both underlined and highlighted in red. The quality assessment of the sourcing should, wherever the nature of the issue makes it appropriate in quality terms, include a rating for the extent of the representative range of the sourcing which should be provided in the usual way (a scoring on the basis of 1-6) at the end of the report and highlighted in orange.

To revisit briefly the issue raised above as to who would be best placed to make the judgments in each of the above cases, if the resources of relevant news producers were available in-house to do a number of random samples across the range of their coverage on a monthly basis, for example, then this would at least give an indicative picture of the quality of coverage being provided that would be useful both for the self-monitoring of quality standards and for using in response to criticisms of the news producers' quality levels from outside. However, unless the range of staff willing and able to do this job effectively is reasonably large, as is the case generally at the BBC, there would be problems with the credibility of the results. In smaller organisations, and most have been 'downsizing' in the face of the economic challenges of recent years, there would be a strong likelihood of the producers of the reports having a significant role in judging themselves and not spotting things that they had left out or done poorly for the same reasons that they didn't see them or cover them adequately in the first place. For this reason ideally the judging would be done by the kind of independent web panels suggested above, comprised of retired leading correspondents, academics etc. working in conjunction with the industry, either on a voluntary independent basis, or on a funded basis that avoids any dependent or interest based link with individual news producers. Another possible model would be an organisation such as fullfact, funded by charities such as the Rowntree Trust, overseen by a cross party body of people experienced in making relevant professional judgments and with a small but effective staff to do the 'donkey

work' (fullfact.org a 2013). To give the exercises some attractiveness in terms of traditional media industry ways of doing things, the latter two models could be tied in to an awards scheme, the 'news Oscars perhaps, that is specifically linked to the judgments that they produce. The question of who should fund such a scheme is a matter of debate, but the prestige accruing to those who might fund it as a result of their name being publicly attached to the awards may well be tempting for some.

There is no way of producing absolutely 'objective' judgments regarding the one A and the five Cs, for all the reasons that have been exhaustively rehearsed within the literature relating to the inevitable presence of subjectivity within qualitative judgments (see Bogart 2004, for example). However, what can be done is to ensure that those judgments are as rigorously and as transparently arrived at as possible. Those providing the quality ratings would need to make available the rationale behind their judgments so that those with the expertise and interest necessary for the provision of cross-checking would be able to interrogate and independently evaluate the data and its quality.

c) The sample case studies – 9,446 words of news stories and concise summary analysis

David Cameron needs more than a clique of four to succeed

Andrew Rawnsley

The Tory leader promises to restore cabinet government. There's no evidence he will do so from the way he runs things now

- The Observer, Sunday 15 March 2009

Eight members of the shadow cabinet sat down for a private breakfast the other day with three former heads of the civil service. Over the orange juice, Lords Butler, Wilson and Turnbull, successive cabinet secretaries between 1988 and 2005, offered a tutorial on power to the hungry Tories. Having little experience of government in some cases, and none at all in most, the Conservatives were keen to learn.

The three wise men of Whitehall wanted to impress on the neophyte Tories the imperative to restore proper systems of government after years in which Tony Blair ruled from his sofa followed by the equally centralised habits of the even more controlling Gordon Brown. "You need to respect the organogram of the civil service," Robin Butler told them. "You also need to respect the organogram of politics." By this he meant that he hoped that the cabinet, so often treated as a redundant item of furniture under Blair and Brown, would once more become the forum for decision-making when the Conservatives got their hands on power.

The Blair cabinet had no influence over either the bad decisions of his years - such as the Millennium Dome - or the good ones - such as independence for the Bank of

England. That early stroke was presented to the cabinet as a fait accompli. A substantial majority of senior ministers were opposed to the dome, and volubly so when they were permitted a discussion about it, but that expensive folly was rammed through anyway because the prime minister had set his mind on it.

The really awesome choices, none bigger than the decision to join the war in Iraq and the decision not to join the euro, were not made around the coffin-shaped cabinet table. The rows were had, the compromises were brokered, the deals were done in wrangling between Numbers 10 and 11. Only once Blair and Brown had wrestled with each other did large issues arrive before cabinet, by which time the course had been fixed.

In the early days of Gordon Brown's premiership, there was some revival of discussion around the cabinet table. This was a self-conscious attempt to show that he would not be such a control-freak as his predecessor or as he had been as chancellor. It is still the case that arguments can break out - and quite viciously. The most recent example was the spat about how to deal with bankers' bonuses. But this is more a case of ministers letting off steam with each other than of them making significant decisions.

The big debate now raging within the Brown government is about the extent to which they can risk adding even more red ink to the deficit to try to give another fiscal injection to the economy. That pre-budget argument is taking place between prime minister, chancellor and Peter Mandelson, a triangle that excludes most of the rest of the cabinet.

A super-centralised regime squanders the talents and wastes the lives of those further down the food chain. There are revelatory accounts of the absurdity of ministerial life under Blair in Chris Mullin's just published diaries. He foolishly surrendered the chair of a select committee to become what he self-satirically calls "the under-secretary of folding deckchairs" under John Prescott. His diaries are a highly comic and deeply tragic testament to the futility of the life of a junior minister. Mullin finds himself powerless to take even tiny decisions without referring them up. He is as suffocated as he had feared under "the avalanche of tedium". The heavy hand of Number 10 crushes even a modest attempt to do something about leylandii hedges.

David Cameron likes to suggest that things will be different with him in Number 10. His instincts, he declares, are to cast away power. He will unshackle people to be innovative. The civil service will get back its respect. Cabinet government will return. The old conventions will be restored after the years of personal rule under Blair and Brown. The führer principle worshipped by New Labour will be abolished. Ministers and their departments will win back the freedom to do their jobs without endless meddling and heavy breathing from Number 10 and the Treasury. The cabinet will be restored to its former glory as the forum where the big arguments are had and the large decisions are taken.

The Tory leader talks the talk. Yet his own personal "organogram" suggests that he is just as cabalistic as Gordon Brown and Tony Blair and no more minded to allow a thousand flowers of debate to bloom among his colleagues. If he truly plans to restore cabinet government, there is precious little evidence of that intent from the way in

which he runs the shadow cabinet. "There's a little clique who control everything," complains one member of the shadow cabinet who, like the vast majority of their number, is excluded from that magic inner circle. At the core of the clique is the leader and his friend George Osborne. Colleagues find Mr Cameron personable and easy when they get any time with him while the shadow chancellor is regarded as more insecure, turf-conscious and controlling.

Also at the centre is Andy Coulson, the chief of spin, a dominating and domineering figure according to those who chafe in his grip. His power is derived from the huge importance his leader attaches to presentation. Mr Coulson is resented by members of the Tory frontbench for the power of his veto and the enthusiasm with which he wields it. On some accounts, he treats the shadow cabinet as if he were still editor of the News of the World and they were the hacks on his spike. They grumble that he gets his kicks from telling them what they can't do rather than facilitating opportunities for Tory frontbenchers to act and speak. A hotline to the leader is still possessed by Steve Hilton, a continuing player "when he is here". That guru of the softer Conservatism with which Cameron began his leadership spends most of his time in America.

Intermittently, the Tory leader sees a presentational problem with this way of operating and gets worried that it looks too much like "the Dave and George show". So he raised up William Hague as "my deputy in all but name" and recalled Ken Clarke to add some heft to the Tory top team. Both men have the clout to make their voices heard, but they do not have a place in the clique. Michael Gove, the shadow education secretary, has one foot in the innermost circle. Shadow home secretary Chris Grayling is winning associate membership of the clique. "Their bit of rough", in the phrase of one of his colleagues, he is receiving preference from Mr Coulson who likes the tabloid-appealing, headline-chasing approach of the Tories' new man at crime.

The clique was not consciously constructed by David Cameron who is not a dictatorial type by temperament. The gang of four is more a product of personal history and chemistry, physical intimacy and the emphasis on presentation. Some shadow cabinet members report that their leader can be good at soliciting the views of colleagues and treating their portfolios with respect. Others complain that they are so frozen out of the inner gang that they have never had the opportunity for a one-to-one discussion with him about their policy areas.

Meetings of the shadow cabinet are reasonably happy and they have got jollier since the return of the prodigal Ken. "Forgive me for reminiscing," he will chortle before launching into anecdotage about John Major's government. What their discussions lack is any feeling that this is the forum in which significant decisions are taken. Everyone knows that the crucial meetings happen in Dave's den, the leader of the opposition's office in the Norman Shaw building. This matters now and will matter a whole lot more soon. Unless something very dramatic happens to change the current political climate, the Conservatives will be in power within 15 months. They will come to office in some of the most challenging circumstances faced by any British government since 1945. They will face horrendous choices about tax, spending and borrowing. They will need to pick their battles and pare their priorities. There will be a big premium on staying cohesive and assuming collective responsibility for the hard

choices they will be forced to take. They will be quickly overwhelmed if they try to govern by making it up as they go along.

The Tories are going through the preparatory motions of taking breakfast tutorials from Whitehall grandees, but they have not concentrated their minds on what they face and what they will do about it. "If you look at our legislative programme for the first year, it is a blank piece of paper," says one member of the shadow cabinet. What ought to be on that piece of paper is one rather important topic that they should be discussing, but aren't.

The Blair-Brown governments, operating for most of the time in a much more benign economic environment, made bad mistakes. Some of those errors might have been avoided had there been more considered discussion by a larger range of players instead of decisions being taken by small groups in frenzied moments in the prime minister's den.

Under the sort of pressure that will face the Tories, the chances of a little gang having all the right answers must be regarded as vanishingly small. Britain will not be successfully governed by a clique of four. 5 5 4 5 4 6

Sample reasons for the above ratings: *The quality of explanation is rated as five on the grounds that the journalist constructs a solid, well argued case using well marshalled arguments and evidence. Within the parameters set by the article's title and agenda, the range of questions and issues covered is tightly focussed but appropriately so and is rated as five. There is a degree of coverage of alternative ideological perspectives regarding the core concerns of the article and it is of sufficient quality and quantity to merit an adequate but not outstanding rating of four. The context is rated as five because it is detailed and based obviously on first hand insider experience. Accuracy is rated as four because while there is sufficient high quality sourcing for an adequate analysis of the situation at the heart of the piece, it would have to extend notably beyond it for a more representative picture to be presented. Finally, the comprehensibility of the piece merits a rating of six because it is written with a high degree of clarity.*

It's the Tory party ... but not as we knew them

Voters will recognise the pledge to cut welfare, but the opposition to big retail and the green agenda are new. With a Cameron government now a real possibility, Nick Mathiason reports on Conservatives' changing attitudes

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    - Nick Mathiason
    - The Observer, Sunday 10 May 2009

Though generously funded by hedge fund financiers, spread betting tycoons and a Belize-connected billionaire, David Cameron has devoted a large part of his four years as leader of the Conservatives to distancing the party from big business. Now, as Gordon Brown's administration limps towards an election that must be held by June 2010, business wants to get closer to the Tories again.

With the party's coffers awash with City cash, major consultancies are enthusiastically supplying secondments to key Conservative figures. Heading the queue is the Boston Consulting Group, where shadow climate change and energy minister Greg Clark used to work.

Boston has supplied staff to Francis Maude, head of the Tories' implementation unit, as well as to shadow chancellor George Osborne and schools minister Michael Gove. Other advisers making a beeline to the Tories include PricewaterhouseCoopers and Grant Thornton.

In the past month, business leaders have recognised that the toxic combination of Damian McBride's leaked emails, the row over the Gurkhas, and public alarm at the size of the UK's debt following the budget means a Tory victory in the next election is all but certain.

Now business wants to know what the Conservatives will do with power. Faced with a huge budget deficit, the answer seems to be a savage cut in spending; strong encouragement of green energy; a block on any airport expansion; investment in high-speed rail; a scaling down of government IT programmes and a package of measures to support small businesses. A wholesale reform of housing delivery is also on the cards. And Tory intervention to protect car industry jobs - inconceivable under Margaret Thatcher - cannot be discounted.

Dominating the next government will be the massive deficits that have to be narrowed. "If you look at the yawning chasm in the public finances, people want to know: Will the Conservatives face up to it?" said a senior business figure very close to the party. "The national emergency in public funding will be a catalyst for a rethink of what people see as untouchable. It will be time for a structural rethink about the cost of welfare."

The £15.7bn incapacity benefit budget and the £6.6bn spent on housing benefit would be dramatically sliced in a move that would be fiercely resisted.

The senior source would not rule out Tory tax rises even in the middle of the recession, while Labour's solution - a Keynesian fiscal stimulus- would be unravelled.

There are indications that the Conservatives would not be as disposed to big business as Labour is. They would anger supermarkets by reintroducing measures to protect town centres and high streets. Shadow business minister Mark Prisk said a Tory government would reinstate the needs test, which permits the building of major shopping schemes only if an area's population is deemed to have insufficient retail space.

The ditching of the needs test by Ruth Kelly, then planning minister, incensed green groups who warned it would spell disaster for small shops and run counter to efforts to stem climate change. It was likened to bringing back Thatcherite out-of-town development policies that killed off urban centres.

The Tories are also considering reintroducing 1980s-style enterprise zones where planning rules are waived and taxes reduced to encourage business activity in hard pressed areas.

A major shake-up of regional development agencies (RDAs) will also be on the cards. Initial plans to scrap RDAs, a legacy of John Prescott's agenda for catalysing economic growth, have been watered down by the Tories. Instead, they would change their boundaries. For instance the south-west RDA, which stretches from Cornwall to Bristol, could be divided up to make Cornwall and Devon a self-contained entity.

The Tories have indicated that rail franchises will last longer. Network Rail, the public body that owns and maintains the track, will be market tested, which could signal a break-up of Railtrack's successor.

But the Tories are wary of a time-consuming reorganisation of the UK's rail network and will focus on pushing through a new north-south high-speed line. They have costed the project and believe that if the government cleared planning hurdles and made compulsory purchases of land, the scheme would be sufficiently "de-risked" to attract private-sector funding.

What will alarm major banks and businesses in the south-east will be indications that the Conservatives are prepared to ditch the £16bn Crossrail scheme connecting Heathrow to the City and Canary Wharf.

Historically the "motorist's friend", the Tories have worked out that there will be no money for new roads. The extent of their ambition is to "unlock blackspots" but even that is expensive. As befits a leader who cycles, albeit occasionally, two wheels would be encouraged.

Housebuilders are worried that Cameron's stated determination to devolve power to local authorities would mean the end of national and regional housing targets. The Tories would let councils decide how many homes get built. To encourage development, they are considering allowing local authorities to keep council tax receipts.

As local government in England is dominated by the Conservatives, who won control of scores of councils partly by promising to oppose new development, the UK would be likely to see an era of low volume building despite a rising population.

The Tories argue that Labour's ambitious housing target numbers - two million new homes by 2016 - will never be met and that housing starts have consistently been at historic lows under Labour. The Conservatives hope improved numbers can be achieved through partnership with local authorities instead of the current top-down approach.

The emphasis on disbanding unaccountable quangos would see the end of Labour's proposal for an independent planning commission to decide where projects of national strategic importance, such as nuclear power stations, major housing developments and rail lines can be sited. The decision would revert to the secretary of state in charge of planning. Business fears this will lead to costly delays.

Nuclear would be part of the Tory energy mix, though the party seems to be taking a more sceptical stance than Labour and is worried about potential taxpayer liabilities. "Smart grids" and "smart meters" would be pushed, claim official policy statements. Feed-in tariffs to encourage micro-generation would get the green light and offshore wind and marine power would be expanded with government backing for a network of large-scale marine energy parks.

The Tories are considering only funding public IT projects of £1bn or less, contrasting with Labour's ill-fated technology procurement initiatives, such as the NHS patient records programme. Next week they will reportedly trigger a Commons vote by blocking this year's £3 rise in the TV licence fee in a move that will concern BBC bosses.

A central strand of Conservative business policy would be to encourage small- and medium-sized business. The Tories would reduce corporation tax from 28p to 25p for large businesses and would overturn the government's planned rise in small business tax from 20p to 22p.

Businesses with fewer than five employees would get a reduction in National Insurance contributions equivalent to a saving of £400 per month. The complex tax system which often sees businesses failing to claim rebates to which they are entitled would be stripped back, say the Tories. Any small or medium-sized business that takes on an apprentice would get £2,000, with training aimed at the workplace.

The Conservatives have long championed a £50bn National Loan Guarantee Scheme to see businesses through the credit crunch. The scheme would include credit insurance cover, which is still a pressing issue for retail and construction industry suppliers and which the government has failed to address.

The Tories may look to amend capital gains tax rates, which were increased to 18% eight months ago, to encourage smaller-scale entrepreneurs who sell their businesses. There are suggestions, though, that Alistair Darling may get there first in his autumn statement.

Speculation is mounting that even if the Tories win the general election, George Osborne would not be chancellor and Cameron would give the job to the more experienced William Hague.

The fate of Ken Clarke is unclear. The former chancellor, currently shadowing business secretary Peter Mandelson, will turn 70 in July 2010 and has not committed to being a front-line minister, but his potential earnings in the private sector if the Conservatives win the next election would rocket. A case of a Tory cosying up to big business - just like the old days.

The blues' money team: from big beast to small firms

George Osbourne, shadow chancellor

As the long-time friend and confidant of David Cameron, Osborne was given his pick of shadow cabinet posts in 2005 and chose the Treasury. Back then, when the economy was boring, it looked as though his biggest challenge would be deciding how soon a new Conservative government would have squeezed enough from public spending to afford tax cuts. These days, the economy is where the action is - and if Osborne does end up as chancellor, he will face a titantic battle to bring the public finances back under control.

In his thirties and the son of a baronet, Osborne suffers from the criticism that he is privileged and inexperienced, and, unlike his LibDem counterpart Vince Cable, an economist, lacks specialist expertise for the job. However, he is given ballast by a solid team of advisers, including economists from the Bank of England and Institute for Fiscal Studies and has grown into the role. He makes shrewd moves such as the decision to announce that a Tory government would tax high-earning "non-domiciles", a decision quickly aped by Alistair Darling. Labour's alarm at Osborne's growing credibility was evident from the fact that he was a target in the smear campaign being plotted by No 10 adviser Damian McBride, before he was forced to resign.

Kenneth Clarke, shadow business secretary

Wheeled out to face the newly rehabilitated Lord Mandelson on the business beat in January, the affable Clarke, who will be 70 next year, is the epitome of a Tory "big beast". He was the last Conservative chancellor, but also had serious ministerial experience at education, health and the home office, something few current Tory frontbenchers can claim. David Cameron has decided he's willing to trade off the advantages of having a heavyweight on the front line against the vocal euro-enthusiasm that helped to lose Clarke three bids to lead his party.

He dismayed colleagues when he dropped a heavy hint that George Osborne's populist pledge to raise the inheritance tax threshold to £1m might have to be abandoned in the face of the recession. Clarke was forced to recant and has since toed the party line more strictly.

Insiders shrug their shoulders and say "Ken's Ken" - though they admit that when bright sparks at central office come up with a whizzy new scheme for cutting government spending or tackling recession, Clarke harrumphs: "We tried that in 1993, and it didn't work!". He has said a new Conservative government would pursue an "extremely pro-business agenda".

Philip Hammond, shadow chief secretary to the Treasury

Hammond's job traditionally deals with tax and spending and fits neatly with his diligent manner. But with a background in business, he has taken a growing role in a broader range of industrial and economic policies during the crisis.

Last week alone, for example, he noisily condemned City minister Lord Myners for trying to wash his hands of the fiasco over Sir Fred Goodwin's pension, refused to confirm whether the Conservatives would back the crucial Crossrail infrastructure project in London if they were elected, and clashed with Yvette Cooper over the details of last month's budget.

He is widely expected to be given a cabinet post if the Tories win the election. In an age of government austerity, he would join Osborne in combing through public expenditure plans in search of cuts, helping to take some of the heat from the young chancellor. MP for Runnymede and Weybridge since 1997, Hammond is a low-key parliamentarian, but has begun to score points against Labour's floundering ministers as the economic outlook has deteriorated.

Mark Prisk, small business spokesman

Prisk ran his own business - a marketing consultancy - for a decade, before being elected as MP for Hertford and Stortford in 2001. His job is to focus on small business, and he's keen to project a less hard-nosed image than the devil-take-the-hindmost stereotype of "nasty party" Conservatives. He talks about nurturing manufacturers, encouraging apprenticeships and creating the right environment for business success - though is less forthcoming on detail.

He recently returned from a trip to Silicon Valley and is an evangelist for free-and-easy American-style entrepreneurial capitalism. He also spends time delving into the minutiae of government policy on business, monitoring where new regulations are costing firms money, for example.

As a student, Prisk campaigned against nuclear disarmament and chaired the youth wing of the cross-party group Peace Through Nato.
Heather Stewart

Tories and big business: a brief history

• Margaret Thatcher arrived in Downing Street determined to shrink the size of the state. In 1982, Amersham - maker of radioactive substances for use in medicine and industry - became her first privatisation. Many more followed, including British Telecom, British Gas and BP.

• In 1984, Thatcher took on striking mineworkers in a bitter, year-long industrial dispute - and won.

• Banks and City investment firms were set free of many controls in a frenzy of deregulation, culminating in the so-called Big Bang, in 1986 - and arguably, laying the groundwork for the financial services mega-boom that eventually led to the credit crunch.

• Top rates of income tax were slashed, from 83% in 1979 to 40% by 1997, to encourage "wealth creators".

• Struggling nationalised carmaker British Leyland was propped up with government funds for almost a decade until Thatcher finally sold it to BAE in 1988.

• John Major's contribution to the flood of privatisations was to carve up Britain's rail system, creating Railtrack, which lurched from one crisis to another, before being renationalised by Labour in 2001.

• Occasionally, the relationship with business got too close for comfort - as in the "cash-for-questions" affair, when several MPs, including Neil Hamilton, were accused of accepting money to influence parliamentary debate. 6 4 6 6 5 N/A

Sample reasons underlying the above ratings: *the context provided within this piece is excellent in terms of its breadth and depth of detail and relevance and is given a rating of six. The quality of explanation within the piece is not up to the same standard and is rated as an adequate but not outstanding four. There is a reasonable amount of explanatory detail across the piece, but some of it is of a rather basic nature. In terms of the nature of the piece and what is and is not relevant to it, the comprehensiveness of the questions and issues raised is of a high standard and is given a rating of six. It is also very clearly written and merits a six for comprehensibility also, although had the quality of explanation been just a little weaker this would have downgraded the rating to five. Accuracy is rated as four. It is unclear precisely where the sourcing is coming from in parts of this piece and the reader has to rely on the journalist's reputation for being well sourced rather more often than might be regarded as desirable. Given that the piece is simply and declaredly focussing on what the Conservatives at the time might do if they got into power, competing ideological perspectives are irrelevant in this case and it is for this reason that no rating is given.*

Why do Trident submarines have to be replaced?

WHO, WHAT, WHY?
The Magazine answers...

The renewal of Britain's Trident nuclear deterrent is causing controversy. But why can't these submarines just be kept going, without spending billions?

The government plans to spend up to £20bn designing and building a new class of submarines to carry the Trident missile system in a process that will take 17 years.

In the US, there are plans for the equivalent submarine, the Ohio class, to extend its life from 30 years to over 40 years.

For the UK's Vanguard-class Trident-carrying submarines no such plan is possible because of the way it was designed. Everything from the nuclear propulsion system to the electric cables in the sub have a lifespan that means no equivalent extension is possible.

Risky

The officials say if the government had wanted the Vanguard class to last 40 years they would've had to incorporate that into the original design, as was done with the Ohio class.

Some of the kit, like the generators that make the steam from the nuclear energy in order to power the turbines, would require an expensive refit to install and would extend the life of the submarine for only a short while.

The MoD says the lifespan of the submarines can be extended by five years to 30 years, but that any further would be risky. During this five-year period, the subs will have a much higher risk of going out of service for maintenance.

An American physicist Prof Richard Garvin has told the Commons Defence Committee the decision to replace the Trident subs is "highly premature".

He believes they can "safely and economically be operated for 40 to 45 years rather than 30", with changes to water chemistry extending the lifespan of the steam generators.

But the MoD insists any extension in life beyond 30 years will require the replacement of "external hydraulic systems, elements of the control systems (plane and rudder), sonar systems, electrical systems (including main battery) and refurbishment or replacement of elements of the nuclear propulsions system".

As well as this, the "turbo generators, secondary propulsion gear and assemblies, deterrent missile hydraulics, hatches and mechanisms" would need looking at. Eventually the main engine and gearbox mechanism might need replacing. Much of this would involve cutting open the hull and would cost a lot of money.

'Madness'

Despite the controversy, Britain's Trident missile system will fundamentally remain the same. Although there will be a programme, as part of American efforts, to modernise the existing missiles, the government insists "there will be no enhancement of the capability of the missile in terms of its payload, range or accuracy". Any such improvements could have diplomatic repercussions.

So if the missiles are just being copied and rebuilt, or having outdated components replaced, why do the submarines need to be redesigned from scratch, instead of copied?

Duncan Lennox, editor of Jane's Strategic Weapons Systems journal, says this would be madness.

"The lifespan is fairly typical, with a nuclear reactor on them. It is an idea, but anybody would tell you that it wouldn't work because more modern technology is available. They were designed more than 20 years ago. They are very old in terms of the technology."

A new submarine will allow new computer systems and an improved nuclear reactor that will get more power for the amount of fuel. This could save money in the long-term as the chance of it needing an expensive refuelling will be reduced.

Safety standards have improved since the design of the Vanguard-class was started in 1980 and the MoD will want to see these improved standards incorporated into the new Trident-carrying subs.

But their lifespan will still be in the region of 25 years, meaning the same debate about renewal will have to be had in 2030 to 2035. A "non-submariner" might ask whether it would be a good idea to give the new boats a longer lifespan from the start.

One of the problems is the British submarines are built on a tightly-controlled cost. Rear Admiral Andrew Mathews has said the Americans "built some fat into their design" for the Ohio.

No defence

And as for a massively improved lifespan there is also a question of the submarines being rendered a white elephant. To the officials it's rather like asking whether you could build a fridge that could last for 100 years. You might very well find an engineering solution to do it, but it would cost lots of extra money.

Also, despite the money you'd spent, you might find after 25 years there had been huge advances in refrigeration technology which you would find too expensive to install in your super-lifespan fridge.

In addition, the government might feel the political situation may have changed so much in 25 years that it really no longer needs a fridge.

The good thing, Mr Lennox says, is that Trident remains a missile system against which no nation has any defence.

"There are 25-30,000 nuclear warheads in the world. Trident is a sensible insurance policy at a relatively low cost." 4 5 5 4 4 0

Story from BBC NEWS:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/magazine/6454273.stm

Published: 2007/03/15 13:06:31 GMT

Sample reasons for the above ratings: *context is rated at four on the grounds that the material that is provided is of an adequate standard within the defined parameters of the article, but it would have needed a little bit on the wider context of the relevant debate outside of those parameters if it was to be rated as six. Explanatory quality is rated as 5 because the level of explanation for the most part is very good, but the piece would have benefited from a little bit more explanatory detail with regard to some of the technical arguments to make them more easily understandable to the lay reader. The overall quality in terms of comprehensibility is rated at 5 for the same overlapping reason. The quality in terms of the comprehensiveness of the coverage of key relevant questions and issues is rated as four because, while the defined parameters of the piece necessarily confine its discourse to a narrow field within the main body of the discussion, it would have benefited from a very brief summary of why the Trident replacement issue is so controversial for those who are not fully up to speed with the debate. Accuracy is rated as four on the basis of an adequate range of sources which would have needed to be broader if excellence was to be achieved. Competing ideological perspectives are rated as zero because they are absent when it could be argued that they need to be at least briefly mentioned in the opening paragraphs if readers who are not fully up to speed with the debate over Trident are to understand what is meant by the content of paragraph one.*

Story from BBC NEWS:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/magazine/6454273.stm

Published: 2007/03/15 13:06:31 GMT

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Is the voting system fair?
Feature
By Brian Wheeler
BBC News political reporter

The Conservatives have said the general election could be decided by as few as 800,000 voters in marginal constituencies.

Tony Blair has said it could be just a few hundred.

So what happens if you are not fortunate enough to be among that number? Does your vote count for anything at all?

And what if the massive increase in postal voting at this election leads, as some observers fear, to a big increase in electoral fraud?


The Electoral Commission is trying to boost turnout

Concerns about the security and fairness of Britain's voting system have, arguably, never been greater.

But although the Liberal Democrats and most smaller parties remain committed to proportional representation - and Labour's manifesto includes a pledge to "review the voting system" - electoral reform is not exactly at the top of the political agenda.

Confidence

"We would say there is a point in voting - but I can understand it when people say there isn't," says Alex Folkes of the Electoral Reform Society, which campaigns for proportional representation.

Mr Folkes claims Britain's first-past-the-post electoral system "reduces the number of people who are targeted by parties to about 2% of the voting population".

> **"It is hard not to feel a little self-conscious when you are standing next to the mayor of London in your stocking feet"**
>
> A tale of two constituencies

As a result, the ERS says it could safely declare the result in 425 constituencies in England, Wales and Scotland tomorrow morning.

So what is the point in voting on 5 May if you live in a safe Labour, Conservative or Liberal Democrat seat?

"To express confidence in the system of democracy," says Mr Folkes.

"A lot of other things are also decided on the share of the vote, such as nominations for the House of Lords or whether your party is entitled to party political broadcast, and local elections are also taking place on 5 May.

"These are not huge things, but they are important."

Apparent bias

He dismisses suggestions that proportional representation would break the link between MP and constituency - always cited by Tony Blair as the reason for maintaining the status quo - pointing to local council wards, with more than one representative.

The Scottish parliament, which uses a form of proportional representation, proves it can work in the UK, he adds.

> **It is difficult for us pollsters to say what is happening the marginal constituencies when we do national polls**
>
> Mark Gill, MORI

Pollsters MORI take a less gloomy view of the general election than the ERS, saying it will be decided by about 20% of voters - no more or less than in previous years.

And MORI's head of political research, Mark Gill, says people tend to vote "because they feel it is their duty" - and are not likely to be put off by lack of confidence in "first past the post".

He also hits back at claims of a bias in the system towards Labour.

Because of population movements that have yet to be reflected in boundary changes, he admits the Conservatives will need to gain 5% more of the popular vote than Labour to gain an overall majority in the House of Commons.

'Better organised'

But that figure is a uniform swing across the country - and does not take into account the results in the seats that really matter.

"It is difficult for us pollsters to say what is happening in the marginal constituencies when we do national polls," he says.

> **Every time there is a story in the press about vote fraud it reduces confidence in the system**
>
> Alex Folkes, Electoral Reform Society

Labour, for example, did better in 1997 and 2001 in key marginals than their national share of the vote.

This time the Conservatives are ruthlessly targeting their resources at marginal constituencies and, Mr Gill says, "they are better organised than in 2001. They have more councillors, their morale is clearly higher".

Vote-rigging scandals

There is also likely to be less anti-Tory tactical voting by Labour and Liberal Democrat supporters, Mr Gill adds.

But what about concerns over vote fraud?

Two vote-rigging scandals involving postal voting in Birmingham and Blackburn have undermined confidence in the system, according to some experts.

"Every time there is a story in the press about vote fraud it reduces confidence in the system," says Alex Folkes.

> **If you don't vote, don't complain**
>
> Lawrence, Crowthorne, UK

Have Your Say

"People think what is the point of voting when the fraudsters ha already decided the outcome.

"I don't think that is the case, but that is how people feel and the won't vote because of it."

The Electoral Commission, which finds itself in the difficult po of criticising the postal vote system, while at the same time attempting to inspire confidence in it, is advising people on its website on how to ensure their ballot is safe.

It says it will be carrying out a review of postal voting after the election, but for many disenchanted voters, that will be too late

4 4 5 3 4 5

Sample reasons underlying the above ratings: *the amount of context is adequate for a general piece on this topic and is rated as four, but it lacks the extra detail that would be necessary for an excellent rating. This is due, among other things to the deficiencies identified below with regard to the quality of the explanation and the provision of competing ideological perspectives. The quality of explanation again is adequate for the nature of the piece, but lacks the thoroughness that would be necessary for an outstanding result. For example, no real explanation is offered for why pollsters find it difficult to say what is happening in marginal constituencies when they do national polls. The lay reader therefore is left puzzled as to why this is the case. The comprehensiveness of the issues and questions raised merits a high rating of five, given the range of relevant factors concisely raised. However, as far as mention of competing ideological viewpoints is concerned only a three star rating can be given. This is due to the limited amount of space and analysis devoted to proportional representation. Accuracy is rated as four on the basis of an adequate but not outstanding use and number of sources. The piece is clearly written and merits a rating of five for comprehensibility. The deficiencies identified in some of the explanatory detail prevent it from being six.*

Cameron's Britain: Defence policy

By Caroline Wyatt
Defence correspondent, BBC News

The Conservative defence team has been very careful to steer clear of any outright spending commitments at this stage, so far avoiding promises of any extra cash for Britain's armed forces.


The Conservatives claim the "military covenant" is broken

But David Cameron has spoken of defence as one area were extra spending will be "essential".

The Conservatives' main fear is the state in which they may find the defence budget - when and if they gain access to the books - or the level of "unpleasant, unpaid bills", as the shadow defence secretary Liam Fox put it in a recent newspaper interview.

It is clear that this year's MoD planning round has been particularly difficult, leaving many at the ministry in grim mood, with a "black hole" in the long-term defence budget estimated unofficially at anything from £1bn to several times that amount.

That makes any firm promises on major procurement projects or extra spending extremely risky for the Conservatives until the full extent of the shortfall is known.

And that is why one of the party's key plans for defence, should it come to power, would be a comprehensive strategic review, in a fresh attempt to match Britain's military commitments to its resources.

Army 'too small'

The last such review came under Labour in 1998, and the current demands made on Britain's armed forces on operations far outstrip the defence planning assumptions made a decade ago - one reason the defence budget is so overstretched, as well as the troops themselves.

The Tories say they will streamline procurement and review all major capital projects.

However, it is believed that Mr Fox is committed to keeping three of the most expensive current defence equipment programmes: Britain's two aircraft carriers, the "future rapid effects system" (a new generation of armoured vehicles for the Army) and the replacement for Britain's nuclear deterrent.

The Conservatives also want to enlarge the British Army, saying that it is too small for its current commitments.

The party would pay for this by reducing the number of civilian MoD staff.

The Tories have also said they want to see the restoration of three infantry battalions abolished by Labour, although that might prove harder to achieve in practice.

There are worries among some former military chiefs that a Conservative government might not be any more generous on defence spending than the current administration.

TORY DEFENCE POLICY

Carry out strategic defence review

Look after armed forces "better"

Make changes to equipment procurement

One of the main planks of Conservative defence policy is likely to be a promise to look after those in the armed forces better. The focus will be on improving retention as well as on recruitment.

To that end, the Conservatives have set up a Military Covenant Commission, headed by author Frederick Forsyth, to look at how to provide better care for service personnel and their families.

Among the commission's recommendations in a recent interim report, which could form some part of a future Tory government's defence policy, was a scheme for preferential treatment on the NHS for the armed forces.

It also proposed extra school funding for the children of serving personnel, who often have to move between postings within the UK

and abroad.

European defence

The commission also claimed that the military covenant had largely broken down, after 11 years of Labour government and tough operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

On the defence budget, the Conservatives are keen to see if any lessons can be learned for procurement from the current use of "urgent operational requirements", or UORs.

Falklands veteran Simon Weston has advised the Tories

These have enabled the forces to circumvent MoD bureaucracy to order equipment needed urgently in theatre.

However, the current use of UORs may come with a sting in the tail for any future government, as the Treasury could seek to claw back some of the £3.5bn it has paid out from its reserves to fund these acquisitions.

There are no Conservative plans to reopen the military specialist hospitals and other facilities closed under previous Tory governments.

However, the party wants to see a dedicated military ward at Selly Oak Hospital in Birmingham, exclusively for use by the armed forces.

New procurement criteria for defence equipment would include capability, affordability, adaptability, interoperability and - crucially - exportability, with a promise to restore the Defence Export Services Organisation, axed last year by the government.

It is also clear that the Conservative defence team are no fans of the European Defence Agency, which Brussels wants to co-ordinate EU defence spending.

Many Tories see as it a direct challenge to the primacy of Nato, and as a wasteful duplication of resources.

Nor do they agree with closer EU defence integration, opposing the defence aspects of the Lisbon treaty.

444504

Sample reasons underlying the above ratings: *the quality of explanation is rated as four on the grounds that it is adequate but not outstanding. The reasoning on display is concisely but effectively*

presented. However, such things as the situation surrounding the restoration of three infantry battalions required more investigation and explanation, for example. The comprehensiveness of the range of coverage is given a 4 also. It is adequate within the stated concerns of the piece, but more questions and issues of importance could have been at the very least mentioned, given the wide range of key factors on which defence policy impacts and is in turn impacted by. The piece is very clearly written and is rated as five in this regard, the explanatory weaknesses referred to above precluding a six rating. It doesn't look at any of the points through competing ideological perspectives, even very briefly, and is therefore rated as zero in this regard. It confines itself very specifically to the nitty gritty of a Conservative defence policy that can be seen very differently through other ideological viewpoints. Finally, it is rated as four with regard to accuracy on the grounds of adequate but not outstanding sourcing, with it not always being clear as to which category of sources within the Conservative Party particular bits of information were coming from.

Page last updated at 10:33 GMT, Friday, 16 January 2009

Is America now the Weary Titan?

The world is changing for America, and thereby for Anglo-American relations, just as it did when Britain was top dog in the late Victorian era

As Gordon Brown polishes his shoes and his prose ahead of today's big speech in Washington and his session with Barack Obama the London papers are full of it – as the US papers will not be. It's the same when any foreign leader passes through the Oval Office for the photo-op: big at home, small in DC.

I spent part of yesterday hastily researching the turbulent relationship between British prime ministers and US presidents in the near-century since David Lloyd George met Woodrow Wilson soon after the Princeton professor-politician arrived in Europe for the Versailles peace conference in December 1918.

But was I wasting my time? Is all that stuff over, or at very least passé?

I ask, not because I think the Obama administration doesn't value the British link or hold Brown in less than reverence. The PM may not know the new president well – Obama has not been a big player for long, after all. His rise has been meteoric.

But Brown is well known in Democratic power circles, not least because he has worked them hard for 20 years, holidaying in Cape Cod, close to Harvard and Boston. Massachusetts is to the Democratic party what Scotland is to Labour, a heartland state. The "special relationship" will stagger on, because mutual interest dictates that it should.

But the world is changing for America, and thereby for Anglo-American relations, just as it did when Britain was top dog in the late Victorian era and became what Aaron Friedberg's book calls the Weary Titan. Jeremy Paxman, a bit of a weary titan himself, caught a whiff of it in Victorians, his Sunday night BBC series on painters of the period. Suddenly we sensed the coming fall from pre-eminence.

Is that now happening to the Yanks? I've bet the farm for years that the United States has enormous powers of resilience, that it isn't over yet. Obama seems to agree: he'd have been suicidal not to. But the emerging new world order will not be bipolar, as it was in the cold war, nor Eurocentric as it was for 250 years. Not yet unipolar, as foolish "end of history" types told each other in Washington after the Berlin wall came down.

But look at recent events. The financial crash that has affected everyone in the world (today's Guardian story about the ubiquity of mobile phones is the most heartening globalisation story I have read in years) has shifted power away from the west, back towards Asia, for the first time in 500 years. Obama's tilt is already Pacific-orientated. After all, he was born in Hawaii. Japan's PM has already paid a call.

Manchester United's forward, Park Ji-Sung of South Korea, is now a bigger star than any team rival at home and beyond. As with microchips and car production – and cricket too now – it is only a matter of time before the biggest football leagues in the world will also be in Asia.

Latin American teams have long proved that it's not just a matter of money, though it always helps. By the same token, Penélope Cruz's Oscar win the other day reflects globalisation too. All right, she's a Spaniard, but she reflects the growing power of the Hispanic peoples of the United States – in Hollywood and beyond.

And Bobby Jindal may have screwed up making the Republican response to Obama's economic package on TV last week. But the governor of Louisiana, a famously mixed ethnic state, is still Baton Rouge-born of Punjabi parents, Indians of the non-John Wayne variety.

It's not a one-way street, of course. British-born Howard Stringer (Sir Howard actually) is the naturalised American head of Sony of Japan. There are plenty such examples. And is Slumdog Millionaire's Oscar night triumph a cultural win for Britain – or for India? Both, of course.

But all this is going to feed through to the UN security council – whose "permanent five" reflect the past, not the present – to the IMF and World Bank, their voting rights and financial contributions, and much else. Britain may choose to snuggle up to the

US – as it has done in the 20th century – or throw in its lot with Europe. Rising China and India – Japan, too – will not lose much sleep either way.

Which is not to say that Brown's trip is pointless or without value. He needs to have a success, both theatrical and substantial, in economic policy and in international affairs, as well as personal. The wonk in Gordon needs to cosy up to the inner wonk in Barack.

Flicking through the shelves yesterday I was surprised to notice how much the personal chemistry mattered. Less well known than Ron and Maggie or Tony and Bill/George, Clem Attlee and Harry Truman, long overshadowed by charismatic men, felt comfy with each other. Jim Callaghan respected Jimmy Carter, but felt happier with his modest moderate Republican predecessor, Gerry Ford. They became firm friends. Harold Macmillan's warm relationship with JFK survived with his wife, Jackie, long after the president was murdered; one bond was unfaithful spouses.

Most intriguing was a near-disaster I had quite forgotten. Lloyd George may have charmed Wilson in December 1918, but in July that year it was Winston Churchill who had made a far more important American contact at an allied war ministers' dinner at London Gray's Inn.

According to the then-US junior navy minister, Franklin Roosevelt, his far more famous British counterpart, then minister of munitions, rudely "acted like a stinker" towards him at the dinner. Unsurprisingly, Churchill did not recall the occasion when FDR told Joe Kennedy (JFK's Brit-hating Irish-American bootlegger dad) 20 years later.

Fortunately for Anglo-American relations in the dark days of the second world war, FDR, by then US president and the most powerful man on earth, chose to forgive the war leader of bankrupt and beleaguered Britain.

But in dealings between Downing Street and the White House, self-interest and sentiment have usually been mingled – with self-interest well on top. FDR drove very hard bargains in the second world war. Truman cut off the cash in 1945. Even the peace-loving Wilson warned Britain in 1918 that if it wanted to retain its historic naval preponderance it had better think again.

"The United States could and would show her how to build a navy," he confided. And she did. Somewhere behind closed doors in Beijing, Chinese admirals, the first with a blue water fleet since the 1420s, are probably having the same thought.

4 4 4 5 4 3

Sample reasons for the above quality rankings: *the quality of explanation is rated as four on the basis of its variable levels. In parts of the piece it is of a reasonable level, based on historical examples, for instance, while in others the explanations offered are of a rather flimsy nature, the most obvious example being the reference to Penélope Cruz. The context is reasonably broad and detailed within the necessary confines of the piece, but does not rise above a rating of 4 for the same overlapping reasons of explanatory quality mentioned above. The comprehensiveness of the range of issues and questions raised merits*

a four star rating for being adequate within the context of the piece, but not excellent for the simple reason that, for example, the downsides of the special relationship are not really mentioned, whereas they could be judged to be relevant to this piece, even if only mentioned in brief summary form. The comprehensibility rating is five on the grounds of the article being very clearly written, but less than completely perfect in its communication of key points because of the explanatory weaknesses referred to above. The accuracy rating is four on the basis of the relatively small number of sources directly quoted. Historical sources are stated to have been used, but no indication is given as to their reputation and reliability. With regard to competing ideological perspectives, the relevant ideological perspectives associated with globalisation and the competing focus of Europe are mentioned, but not delved into in any significant detail, meriting a rating of 3, which is possibly a little generous.

Has the G8 met its promises to Africa?

The BBC is investigating how Africa is faring one year on from the promises of increased aid made at the G8 summit in Gleneagles.

BBC Developing World correspondent David Loyn asks if G8 countries are meeting their promises to boost aid and write off debts in Africa.

Did the West deliver its promises?

The Gleneagles G8 summit was unusual in requiring leaders to sign up to a series of specific measures.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair wanted to put the seal on his "year for Africa", not with vague offers of goodwill, but concrete measures.

When he launched his Commission for Africa report earlier that year he said that the radical and costly package of measures in it would now be British government policy.

A year on Britain remains committed, and even publishes a monthly account of "milestones" achieved, but much more remains to be done.

Fractured

Even before Gleneagles, the G8 countries had agreed to increase debt write-offs, and at the summit itself Mr Blair won the endorsement he wanted for major increases in aid, as well as a promise to make Aids treatment free and provide universal access to free primary education and health care.

World leaders gather as the G8 summit in Gleneagles ends

Enlarge Image

But keeping the commitments - and the funding needed for them - has been harder than making them.

The coalition of support for the Gleneagles process fractured even before the ink was dry on the declaration.

At one end, Bob Geldof said: "On aid 10 out of 10, on debt eight out of 10."

At the other, Kumi Naidoo of the Global Campaign against Poverty, said: "The people have roared but the G8 has whispered."

The decision to phase in the aid increases by 2010 was "like waiting five years before responding to the tsunami", according to Mr Naidoo.

Since then, much of the attention from campaigners has been on whether the promised $50bn increase in aid for Africa was really new money, and whether it was right to count debt cancellation as part of the development budget - as has traditionally been done - or whether this is, in the words of Oxfam, "double counting".

Broken promises?

Now even those who were most enthusiastic about the progress made at Gleneagles are hardening their positions.

G8 pledges - Have Your Say

Bob Geldof's close ally in this, Bono, said after the latest pre-summit G8 Finance Ministers' meeting in St Petersburg that "last year's promises to Africa are already in danger of being broken".

Zambia's poverty worries

He was speaking after a decision was delayed on funding for new research into vaccines for diseases that affect the poor.

It is in details like this that the hopes of Gleneagles will be lost if the funding does not come.

Apart from Britain, the other European G8 members - Germany, France and Italy - have not yet committed themselves to the funding they promised. Germany in particular, under Angela Merkel, is proving to be lukewarm.

In the US, President Bush is battling with Congress over keeping his promises. He requested a $3bn rise in his aid budget, but Congress has cut that by two-thirds.

Funding boost

The debt picture, though, looks much clearer.

Free health care in Zambia, better roads and more secure food supplies are all now more possible because many countries have access to funds that they were previously remitting to service their debt.

It will be easier for campaigners to say that it is not enough, but harder to make the case stick than the case for higher aid.

On the other big element that aimed to make a big difference - fairer trade rules - there is little progress.

Although the current round of world trade talks was supposed to be "the round for the developing world", it has now broken through several deadlines without agreement.

There is increasing concern among the poorest countries in the world that they may suffer from imposed liberalisation, rather than being able to trade their way out of poverty on their own terms.

A new proposal is due to emerge from the World Trade Organization in Geneva before the end of this month.

3 4 4 4 3 0

Sample reasons underlying the quality rankings: *the explanatory quality of the piece is given a barely adequate rating of 3 on the grounds of the lack of explanation of some*

key factors that are necessary if readers who are not fully familiar with the issues are to understand why, for example, the key wealthy states have found it so difficult to agree on the various proposals for helping the poorer economies – the fact that the US Congress and Angela Merkel's German government have been 'diluting' or 'blocking factors' for some of the proposals is mentioned, but the reader is not given any information as to why this is the case. There is quite a lot of useful, relevant context, but this is given an adequate but not outstanding rating of four because again of the lack of the extra explanatory context referred to above. Equally, while the number of key questions and issues raised within the piece is adequate, meriting a rating of 4 for the comprehensiveness of coverage of such matters, had a little more explanatory context been provided more issues and questions would have been identified. A rating of four is given for the comprehensibility of the piece because it is very well written with a high level of clarity, but the communication of key points is undermined in places by the above mentioned weaknesses. As far as the accuracy rating is concerned, a barely adequate grade of 3 is given simply because of the small number of sources used and the skewing of too much focus on celebrity voices, without quotes from some of the relevant political big hitters, or, alternatively, their key officials or spokespeople. Finally, the questions raised can be viewed very differently from the point of view of competing ideological perspectives and as these are not mentioned even briefly the rating in this regard is zero.

Page last updated at 14:15 GMT, Thursday, 5 November 2009