

March toward No.10 Downing Street: A Preliminary Analysis of Labour's Victory in the 1997 British General Election

Wei-Feng Huang

Abstract

The result of the 1997 British general election was anticipated. The Labour party won a landslide victory and regained control of the government. Among the factors leading to Labour's victory were the failure of the Conservative government which had been in power since 1979. Controversial scandals, breaking promises, and ignoring public opinions all contributed to the Conservative's downfall. By the mid-1990's, the Labour party, for its part, had recovered public confidence through party reform and policy adjustment. Transforming these factors into votes, Labour's victory was seen as inevitable. This paper examines the factors leading to Labour's victory in 1997. Using thick description, I re-construct the process and outcome of the 1997 British general election. At the same time, I propose to re-examine the impact of anti-government tactical voting and economic voting on the outcome of recent British general elections.

Key Words: thick description, "Black Wednesday", by-election, feel-good factor, anti-government tactical voting