



CROWDSOURCING POLITICS:

HARMAN / HAGUE PMQS TRIAL RUN - 8 JULY

KEY MESSAGES:

→ TORY PMQ STRATEGY IS WORKING WITH SWING VOTERS

→ WANT TO WIN? DON'T BEHAVE LIKE A TYPICAL POLITICIAN

- Overall yesterday was a win for William Hague. Crucially, voters who defined themselves as being in the centre scored the contest as a win for Hague. On a scale where -10 would mean a total victory for Harman and +10 a total victory for Hague, the average score for the whole session among swing voters was +5.1, which was only a little less than the score among voters who defined themselves as being on the right (+5.3).
- Even those who defined themselves as being on the left tended to think that Hague won the argument, and recorded an average score of +3.
- There are some fairly noticeable differences between what is most convincing for those on the right and the left and what moves the centrist voter (i.e. the “median” or “swing” voter). For example, Harman lost swing voters early on in the debate with a highly combative and partisan attack on the Tories. Her claim that the Tories “have got proposals to cut public spending now” actually saw support swing sharply away from her.
- William Hague’s most effective moments were when he stuck to the facts, struck a measured tone, and stood apart from typical politics. His peak rating in the debate was when he said that “**any government**” would face a terrible mess after the election. Another strong hit for Hague was his argument that the Government’s claims about Tory cuts are exactly “the sort of statement that damages the credibility of politics.”
- Harman’s references to Labour building schools and hospitals worked for Labour voters but left swing voters unmoved. Her most effective line was that the Tories “would pull the plug on the public sector while the private sector is struggling”. Her second best moment was her joke about Osborne spending 40% of his time doing nothing.
- However, Harman never really recovered from her partisan tone at the start of the session. Her ratings dropped after her seeming failure to address the first question on spending (“the figures are in the book”) and there was a second lurch away from her when she immediately moved onto claims about Tory cuts.
- The findings of the first Mindtracker PMQs poll suggest that David Cameron’s initial instinct that people want a less partisan style was right. It seems you don’t have to do “Punch and Judy politics” to hit hard. The Tories’ strategy in recent weeks of “focussing on the facts” is indeed succeeding in making the government look non-credible in the eyes of swing voters.

NOTES

- A video showing how swing voters reacted to the two deputy leaders is available at:
<http://www.youtube.com/user/mindtrackerresearch>
- Mindtracker surveyed 1,150 people online between 4 PM and 10 PM on 8 July.
- Panellists in this survey are not intended to be a representative sample of the population of the UK as a whole.
- Mindtracker is a new technology which allows users to conduct online dial groups with a statistically significant sample size. It enables users to recruit extremely specific test audiences and test their concepts with unprecedented speed and accuracy.
- A detailed analysis of the charts for the whole debate is attached below.

Harman: "they have got proposals to cut public spending now"

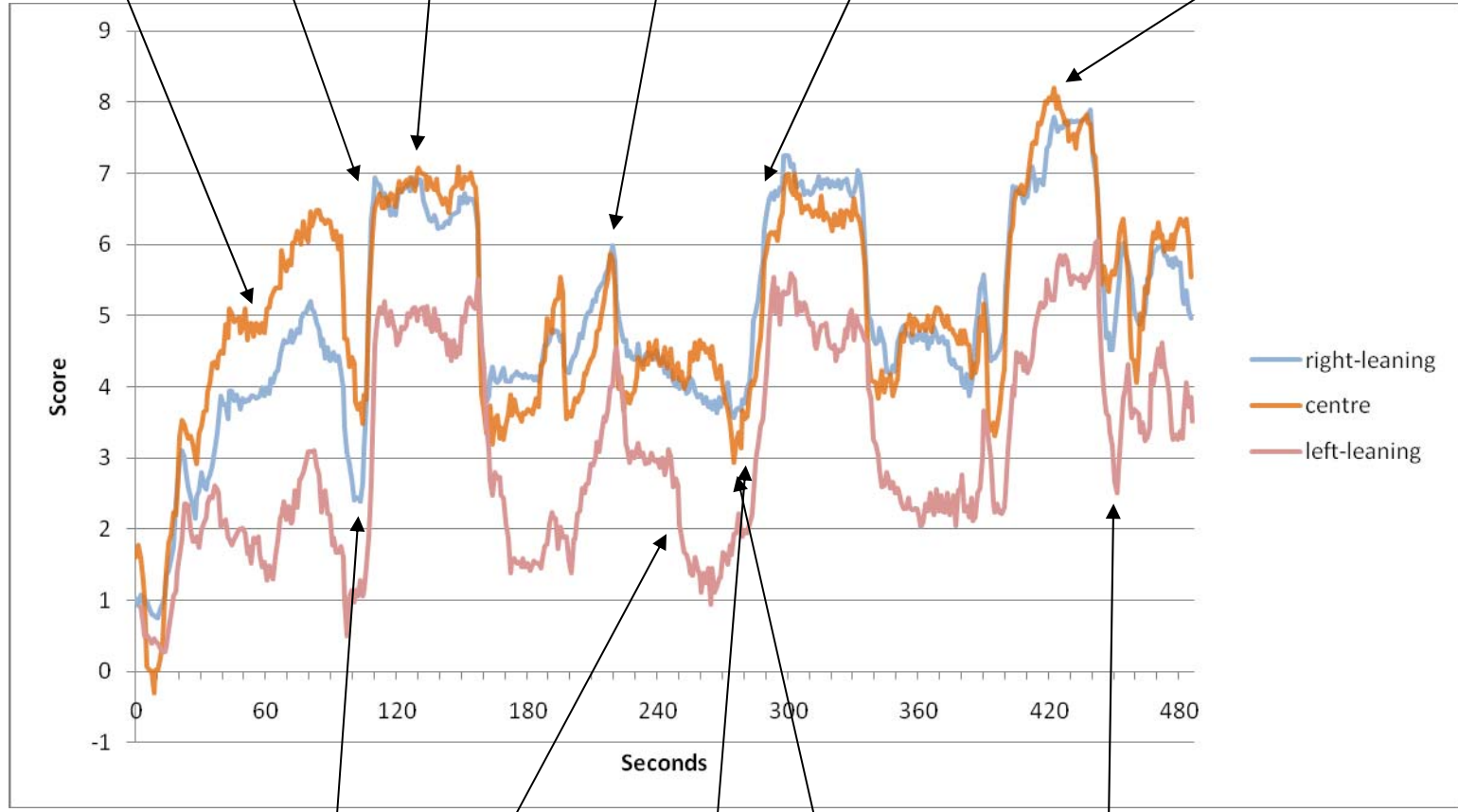
Hague: "Perhaps she could spend 100% of the next minute answering the question..."

Hague calls for honesty and realism about spending

Hague: "Isn't it an indisputable fact that capital spending is being halved?"

Hague: "The government's own figures show capital spending declining... the sort of statement that damages the credibility of politics"

Hague: the government is out of touch... **any** government elected at the next election will inherit public finances in an unbelievable mess"



Harman: "All the figures are set out in the budget book"

Harman: How does Osborne spend 40% of his time doing nothing at all?

Harman: Labour are building children's centres and schools...

Harman: "They would pull the plug on the public sector while the private sector is struggling"

Harman: "we have rebuilt hospitals over the last ten years, we have rebuilt schools"