

**REFLECTION IN THE SHADOW OF BLAME:
WHEN DO POLITICIANS APPOINT COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY?**

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Abstract

Commissions of inquiry play an important role in the aftermath of crisis, by serving as instruments of accountability and policy learning. Yet crises also involve a high-stake game of political survival, in which accountability and learning pose a serious threat to incumbent politicians. The political decision of whether to appoint a commission of inquiry after crisis thus provides a unique prism for studying the intense conflict between politics, accountability, and policy learning. Using data from the UK, this study develops and tests a choice model for this political decision. The results show that the political decision to appoint inquiries into public crises is strongly influenced by short term blame avoidance considerations, media salience, and government popularity.

Key words: commissions of inquiry, responsibility attribution, blame avoidance, intertemporal choice

“It is not always clear why a government sets up an inquiry at all or why it chooses one kind rather than another” (Drewry, 1975: 53)

“There is no standard blueprint for the type of circumstances in which an inquiry might be needed” (The UK Government's written evidence to the Public Administration Select Committee 2005: 64)

Introduction

A well-known trait in the aftermath of national crises is the appointment of ad-hoc bodies of investigation to provide a credible source of information about the affair. A few notable examples are the Roberts Commission after Pearl Harbour (1941), the Warren Commission into the Kennedy assassination (1963); the Widgery and Saville Inquiries into the Bloody Sunday incident (1972), the Scott Inquiry appointed following revelations of the sale of arms to Iraq by British companies (1992); the Dutch NIOD inquiry into the Srebrenica massacre (1995), and the US 9/11 Commission. In such contested times, these ad-hoc independent institutions are portrayed as possessing the unique capacity to provide impartial assessment, and bring certainty and closure in situations of doubt and conflict. Commissions of inquiry play an important role in the aftermath of crisis in many countries, by serving as instruments of accountability and policy learning (Howe 1999, Clarke 2000: 7, Elliott and McGuinness 2001, Polidano 2001, Boin et al. 2005, PASC 2005, Boin et al. 2008). Yet crises also involve a high-stake game of political survival, in which such accountability and learning rituals pose a serious threat to incumbent politicians. Blame avoidance motivation (Weaver 1986) on their part, is thus likely to play a central role under such circumstances, as the appointing of an inquiry into a crisis sets in motion not only a learning process, but also embodies a series of explicit and implicit messages and moves in the ensuing blame-game (Boin et al. 2005). Hence the political decision of whether to appoint a commission of inquiry after crisis provides a unique prism for studying the intense conflict between politics, accountability, and

policy learning. This study addresses this question by providing the first quantitative analysis of blame attribution as a predictor of elite behaviour.

Commissions of inquiry, whether willingly or not, play a political role by often providing critical information about issues of governance and responsibility, either through the course of their investigation, or in those reports and parts thereof that get publicized (Boin et al. 2005, Boin et al. 2008a). Moreover, notwithstanding the unique and deliberate feature of independence from political influences of these institutions, the decision of whether to initiate a commission of inquiry in the wake of such events lies in the hands of elected politicians. Despite their important role in public discourse, the research on commissions of inquiry has so far left unresolved the question of why politicians choose to appoint these ad-hoc institutions in some cases, and refrain from, or indeed resist demands to do so, in others.

This article presents an analysis of 132 government inquiry appointment decisions in the United Kingdom between 1984 and 2003, covering all 44 appointed inquiries, and a random sample of 88 non-inquired issues.¹ The findings show that three main political factors determine the choice of whether to establish a commission of inquiry: the politics of blame, public agenda (issue-salience), and government popularity. As predicted by blame avoidance theory, the pattern of inquiry appointment decisions suggests that inquiries are perceived by appointing office-holders as incurring a short term cost of ‘loss acknowledgment’ (rather than a long-term risk of a critical report). This cost plays a larger role when the problem is attributed to agents that are close to the appointing office holder. Yet, at a certain level of issue salience – when the problem becomes undeniable – this cost of appointment becomes

¹ Randomly drawn from the entire set of 620 non-inquired issues identified for the research period.

‘sunk-cost’. At this stage, a new equilibrium is formed as potential benefit from ‘venue alteration’ by appointing an inquiry motivates the office holder to appoint, and increasingly so the more salient the issue is. This notion of post crisis inquiries as a “costly” response of crisis management for the government rather than as a panacea, is also supported by the conditional positive relationship between electoral support and inquiry appointment propensity. The implications of these findings to policy learning and accountability are further discussed in the concluding section. The study adds strong empirical support to the claim that the politics of blame acts to restrict the realization of policy learning after crisis (Boin and 't Hart 2003, Maor 2004, Boin et al. 2005, 120, Moynihan 2008), and the theoretical model can also account for the typical intense debate over inquiries’ terms of reference observed in the literature (Woodhouse 1995, McLean and Johnes 2000, Jenkins 2002, Parker and Dekker 2008).

The United Kingdom is an ideal case for this research for several reasons. First, it has a strong executive with parliamentary system of government. This entails that decisions whether to appoint inquiries are in the hands of the government, while the legislature has limited capacity to engage in politically contested investigations (PASC 2005).² Secondly, single-party government is the rule in the United Kingdom (applicable to all the governments included in this study). Therefore, the decision whether to appoint an inquiry need not be the outcome of an inter-party bargain. In the United Kingdom, as in many other countries (e.g., Australia, Canada, Israel, and The Netherlands), constitutional norms prescribe, yet do not mandate, the appointment of formal investigations after crises, disasters and scandals

² It has been lately argued that “in light of the expansive assertions of executive power recently made by the Bush Administration” there is a need for increased use of commissions of inquiries in the US to ensure executive accountability in the national security context" (Simon 2005: 1421).

(Salmon 1966, Woodhouse 1995, Thompson 1997, Howe 1999, Clarke 2000: 8, Maclean 2001). These characteristics facilitate the ability to draw inferences from the observed behaviour of inquiry appointment decisions to the underlying political considerations and motivations in the wake of a crisis.

Inquiries and blame avoidance

Commissions of inquiry

The term commission of inquiry (henceforth: ‘inquiry’) is defined as: (1) An ad-hoc institution (i.e., established for a particular task, and once concluded, it is dissolved); (2) formally external to the executive; (3) established by the government or a minister; (4) as a result of the appointer’s discretion (i.e., not mandated by any formal rule); (5) for the main task of investigation; (6) of past event(s) (Sulitzeanu-Kenan 2006).³ Yet, more selectively, this study concentrates on the particular cases in which the office-holder, with the power to decide whether to set up an inquiry or not is at least potentially responsible for the negative event to be investigated, or in other words - it had happened "on her/his watch". Such a

³ Conditions 5 and 6 are meant to exclude policy advice commissions (Wheare 1955: 43-4, Howe 1999: 294). Sulitzeanu-Kenan’s (2006) definition includes a seventh criterion – ‘that the inquiry is held in public’. This criterion was relaxed in this study for several reasons. A number of non-public independent inquiries were appointed in response to major events in recent British political history, and some have consequently taken an important place on the public agenda. Indeed many accounts of public inquiries in the UK include “private” ones, usually without acknowledging the distinction, and sometimes explicitly, as in Annex 1 of the PASC report (2005), which includes some non-public inquiries in its comprehensive list of “public inquiries” since 1921. It is expected that the decision to appoint an independent non-public inquiry will share a considerable degree of the attributes of the decision to appoint a public one. Omitting the former decisions from the analysis

condition excludes from the analysis events which occurred under a previous government.⁴ These events or inquiries are termed “historical” and considered here to be distinct from “current” cases, since the considerations in appointing them are expected to differ substantially, as they are not dealing with an existing crisis that may influence current political evaluations, but rather with “setting the record straight.”

Whether an inquiry should be appointed – as a normative question – has received far more attention in the literature (Salmon 1966, Segal 1984; Woodhouse 1995, Thompson 1997, Howe 1999, Clarke 2000, Maclean 2001) than explaining when and why politicians decide to set them up in practice. Previous attempts to understand this political choice, are mostly based on a single case or a limited number of cases (Kremnitzer 1989, Drewry 1996, Winetrobe 1997, Bovens et al. 1999, McLean and Johnes. 2000a 200b, Polidano 2001, Brändström and Kuipers 2003, Boin 2008, Parker and Dekker 2008, Schwartz and McConnell 2008, Staelraeve and ‘t Hart 2008), and do not account systematically or quantitatively for all instances (as Boin et al. 2008a: 287-8 explicitly acknowledge). More importantly, nearly all this research is based on cases in which an inquiry was established, ignoring the cases where the decision was negative. This underlying case selection potentially renders the attempts to infer the causes of inquiry appointment flawed, due to selection bias (Geddes 1990, King et al. 1994: 129).

would unduly reduce the number of cases (limited as it is), and coding them as 'zero' investigative response is likely to bias the results.

⁴ That is, a government formed by a different party. e.g., events that took place under the Major (Conservative) government are “historical” when addressed by the Blair (Labour) government, yet events that took place under Thatcher (Conservative) are not “historical” when addressed by the Major government. This requires a close

Formal documents (Tribunals of Inquiry Act 1921, Inquiries Act 2005) provide only normative guidelines to the appointment decision, and do not help much in clarifying the political dynamics of this decision. Although some formal reports include guidelines (Council on Tribunals 1996, PASC 2005: 66) these provide only optional considerations, and we remain lacking in empirical knowledge as to the actual factors which govern these decisions.⁵ The literature on the politics of inquiries tends to be divided between those who argue that politicians are averse to inquiries (Hunt 1986, Brown 2003, PASC 2005: 9, Parker and Dekker 2008), and those who suggest that these ad-hock bodies are sought by politicians in time of crisis (Drewry 1975, Lijphart 1975, Lipsky and Olson 1977: 443-4, Woodhouse 1995: 25, Bovens et al. 1999: 128, Flinders 2001: 165, Brändström and Kuipers 2003, Boin et al. 2005: 99-105). However, no model has been suggested to account for the reality in which inquiries are voluntarily appointed by ministers in some cases, and fiercely resisted in others.

A common claim found in a number of countries is that the appointment of an inquiry acts to reduce the level of public interest in the affair (Lijphart 1975, Lipsky and Olson 1977, Woodhouse 1995, Bovens et al. 1999, Brändström & Kuipers 2003, PASC 2005: 9). Yet, despite the prevalence of this claim, no empirical support was found for any mitigating effect of inquiry appointment on media salience in recent studies (Hood et al. 2007, Sulitzeanu-

look at whether some implications of the affair, e.g., participation in an ongoing cover-up, raises concern regarding the blame of current office-holders.

⁵ At the time of writing these lines, the most recent formal document on this matter is the 2005 Inquiries Act, in which Section 1(1) states only that “A Minister may cause an inquiry to be held under this Act in relation to a case where it appears to him that: (a) particular events have caused, or are capable of causing, public concern, or (b) there is public concern that particular events may have occurred.

Kenan, 2007). A more nuanced argument, suggested by Elliott and McGuinness (2002, see also: Fortune and Peters 1995) posits that the appointment of an inquiry can be attractive to officeholders as it facilitates non-engagement on their part, even in the face of great public attention. It is widely accepted as legitimate to refrain from addressing the issue while these ad-hoc institutions are investigating. This enables ministers to regroup, conduct consultations, learn the situation, and consider alternative options – all of which require time, and a relative pause in the pace of events. This is facilitated not by an agenda-effect of the inquiry, but rather by the nature of the inquiry process and norms associated with it.⁶ We may therefore understand the appointment of inquiries as a *venue alteration exercise* – replacing one volatile critical audience (the media, the opposition and the public) with a much slower-moving and predictable audience – the inquiry commission. Such a move can be seen as a unilateral modification of the *rules of the game* (Tsebelis 1990: 93) in order to attain a political setting that is more likely to facilitate successful coping with the crisis. This analysis leads to the *venue alteration hypothesis*: A positive association is expected to be found between the salience of the issue in question and the appointing officeholder's propensity to appoint an inquiry.

Still, in his testimony before the British Public Administration Select Committee, former deputy prime minister, Lord Heseltine, has noted that: "no government wants inquiries; they are usually in circumstances where the government is in trouble [...] They are not popular things for governments" (PASC, 2005: 9, see also: Brown 2003: 14, Parker and Dekker

⁶ Additionally, it has been argued that the appointment of an inquiry serves to "block" other investigative procedures – e.g., of parliamentary committees or criminal proceedings – as a result of rules and conventions governing conflicts of institutional investigative authority and freedom of speech, and particularly of the press (e.g., subjudice) (Kremnitzer 1989, Flinders 2001: 164, Elliot and McGuinness 2001: 21, Polidano 2001).

2008).⁷ A similar account can also be inferred from the tendency of governments to favor limited terms of reference (scope) of inquiries, practically entailing that “less of the issue” will be inquired into (Woodhouse 1995, McLean and Johnes 2000a, Jenkins 2002). Such a preference suggests a reserved attitude towards inquiries. As can be expected, direct evidence regarding the reasons to avoid inquiries, or the weighing of various considerations in inquiry appointment decisions is rare, and if at all, becomes available many years after the fact. One such rare example vaguely points to the possible underlying calculus of this decision. The 1955 Cabinet's deliberations over the decision of whether to appoint an inquiry into the question of how Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean (British diplomats who defected to the Soviet Union) continued to spy undetected were released in 1985 by the British Public Record Office under the 30-year rule. A secret memorandum by Foreign Secretary Harold Macmillan noted his agreement that something had to be done to placate public opinion, but ruled out a tribunal of inquiry as too dangerous (as quoted by Hunt 1986).

Blame avoidance

How should we understand this reported aversion to inquiries? Given the highly contested nature of post crisis situations, it is suggested that blame avoidance presents a potential theoretical basis. In his 1986 article, Kent Weaver argued that among three policy motivations: “good policy,” “credit claiming” and “blame avoidance” – the latter is the dominant one (1986: 372). This argument rests on the assumption that at least some voters employ retrospective voting (Weaver 1986: 380, see also: Arnold 1990); and on the notion of

⁷ Brown (2003), for example, reports that the appointment of the Hutton inquiry was contrary to Blair's general intention to avoid inquiries: “The death of a public servant has led Tony Blair to do three things he never before contemplated. First, after vowing years ago not to get bogged down in a public inquiry over any aspect of his own government, he has been panicked into setting one up” (Brown 2003: 14).

‘negativity bias’ – the greater likelihood of losers to notice and act on their grievance, than gainers are to act on the basis of their improved state (Bloom and Price 1975, Kernell 1977, Kahnemann & Tversky 1981, Lau 1985, Soroka 2006). In essence, Weaver's claim is that under negativity bias, a rational policymaker is expected to be dominantly blame-avoiding.

The notion of blame avoidance motivation has served in a range of studies.⁸ In this paper it is suggested to look more closely at two aspects of the theory of blame avoidance: the theoretical conception of public blame on the basis of which a more theoretically grounded, and empirically testable way of assessing blame-avoidance motivation can be devised.

Public blame

The Felstiner et al. (1980) sociological model for the emergence of legal disputes suggests a sequential three stage process: *naming*, *blaming*, and *claiming*. The first stage begins with "any experience that is disvalued by the person to whom it occurs" and consciously becomes perceived as such ("naming") (633-4). The next step occurs when a person attributes an injury to the fault of another individual or social entity ("blaming") (635).⁹ Such a concept of blame thus rests on two elements: a perceived negative experience, and an element of attribution of responsibility for either causing or failing to prevent, treat or duly rectify this

⁸ In the fields of procedural and legislative choices in the US Congress (Weaver 1986, Arnold 1990), delegation in politics and bureaucracy (Fiorina 1982, Ellis 1994, Hood 2002), welfare policy changes (Pierson 1996, Ross 2000) and risk regulation (Twight 1991, Hood et al. 2001). Another strand of studies has concentrated on the activities of officeholders when faced with a critical audience (Bovens et al. 1999, Brändström and Kuipers 2003) and their effectiveness in mitigating blame (McGraw 1991).

⁹ Only when naming and blaming have occurred, can we expect claiming to take effect – "when someone with a grievance voices it to the person or entity believed to be responsible and asks for some remedy" (635-6).

experience to a particular agent (Iyengar 1989, 1991; see also: the notion of “traceability” in Arnold 1990). Quite in line with Felstiner et al. (1980), and based on a number of more recent studies (Lau and Sears 1981, Peffley 1985, Peffley and Williams 1985, Stein 1990, Rudolph and Grant 2002, Rudolf 2003, Arceneaux 2003, Javeline 2003), it appears that a range of political attitudes and behaviors are not simply related to the magnitude of a negative experience, but rather are the result of an interaction between this experience and the direction of its attribution. The blame (B) experienced by a particular officeholder (α) can therefore be stated as: $B_{\alpha} = n * a_{\alpha}$ where n represents a perceived negative experience, and a_{α} represents the degree of blame attributed to α . Only by indicating both the negative experience and the direction of attribution can a meaningful concept of blame become conceivable, and sufficiently defined.

Blame avoidance motivation

Blame avoidance motivation implies a causal relationship between blame and some activity on the part of an (avoiding) officeholder. Absent such a relationship, the said activity cannot be deemed blame avoidance.¹⁰ If indeed blame accounts for an officeholder’s behavior, variations in this behavior should be associated with the degree of blame attributed to that particular officeholder. As noted above, the role of blame attribution has been extensively studied in political science, yet to the best knowledge of the author, never as a quantitative predictor of elite behavior. This study attempts to do so in order to directly assess the effect of blame attribution on an officeholder’s choice, thereby enabling to infer the effect of blame avoidance motivation.

¹⁰ This is important in order to identify blame avoidance activity based on its motivation rather than its consequences.

Loss-acknowledgment and the risk of critical report

How does blame avoidance relate to the political decision to appoint inquiries? It is suggested that appointing an inquiry sends an implicit and often explicit message that acknowledges the existence of a problem (though leaving open the question of responsibility). Such a move drastically (if not wholly) diminishes the potential of defensive activities that aim to deny, conceal, or reframe a problem. These may include argumentative strategies such as *justifications* (Edelman 1977, 1988, Semin and Manstead 1983, McGraw 1991, Bovens et al. 1999),¹¹ and such policy strategies as "throwing good money after bad" (Weaver 1986).¹² This hypothetical short term cost of appointing inquiries is referred to here as "loss acknowledgment". The notion of avoiding loss acknowledgment provides a theoretical framework for the political aversion to appointing inquiries, and also appears to conform with the tendency of governments to prefer limited terms of reference when choosing to appoint an inquiry, thereby minimizing the extent of acknowledged-loss. Moreover, setting up an inquiry does not end there. It entails a long process, which typically culminates with the publication of a report. Office holders' reluctance to appoint inquiries may also stem from the desire to avoid the long-term risk of a critical report.

If blame avoidance indeed plays a role in the proclivity of ministers to set up crisis inquiries, then the gravity of both the short term spectre of loss-acknowledgement and the long term risk of a critical report are expected to increase, the closer blame attribution is to the appointing officeholder. This relationship can be specified as the *blame avoidance*

¹¹ Justifications "deny some or any measure of offensiveness in the act for which the individual admits responsibility" (Semin and Manstead 1983: 80, in McGraw 1991: 1136). Justifications express attempts to reframe the undesirable outcome so that it is viewed as more favorable (McGraw 1991: 1137).

¹² For a typology of blame avoidance strategy, see: Hood (2002).

hypothesis: The proximity of blame attribution to the appointing officeholder is negatively related to her/his propensity to appoint an inquiry.

To summarize, the political choice of whether to appoint an inquiry is expected to entail a short term cost of ‘loss acknowledgment’ and/or a long term risk of a critical report, while it also offers an option for venue alteration in the short term. Counteracting the blame-avoidance motivation to resist an inquiry is public pressure (issue-salience), which may be relieved by short-term venue alteration.

Disentangling short and long-term considerations

Considering both short and long-term implications in the appointment decision constitutes an intertemporal choice – among current and future consequences (Frederick et al. 2002). The risk posed by the inquiry report will potentially materialize at a later time than the appointment's effect. However, due to the particular institutional structure of inquiries, the long-term risk has to be assessed at the time of appointment. This rests on the premise that appointing an independent body of investigation involves surrendering at least a measure of control over the investigation process, particularly its outcome. Conventional norms severely restrict the possibility of aborting the inquiry at a later stage. This restriction on future choice is implied by the notion of “independence”, and provides a crucial characteristic of the appointment decision.

Relying on behavioural economics literature, one can expect that future consequences will be discounted (Frederick et al. 2002; Camerer and Loewenstein 2003). Thaler (1981) found that the implicit discount rate (derived from the choices made by subjects) over longer time horizons is lower than the implicit discount rate over shorter time horizons. Later studies

replicated this finding of falling discount rates as duration increases, and the most striking effect was the “immediacy effect” found by Prelec and Loewenstein (1991), suggesting dramatic discounting when delaying a utility that otherwise would be immediate. In simple terms, these studies have shown that people tend to exhibit much higher levels of impulsiveness when faced with choices in the near future, as opposed to choices with utilities that will materialize further in the future.¹³ An interesting pattern that emerged in a meta-analysis reported by Frederick et al. (2002) is that implicit discount rate decreases as time horizon increases; however, beyond about a year there is no evidence that discount rates continue to decline. A notable example of intertemporal policy choice is provided by the political business cycle literature (Nordhaus 1975, Alesina et al. 1992, Drazen 2000). The crux of the political business cycle is the notion that the time-lagged negative consequences of present expansionary policy are heavily discounted at the time of choosing the policy (election period), since they are expected to occur after the elections, while retrospective voting, or what Weingast et al. (1981) refer to as the “what have you done for me lately” principle (WHYDFML) renders present outcomes (soon to become short-term past) highly important. Combining this insight with negativity bias suggests that the “what have you done TO me lately” principle is potentially even more formidable – resulting in relatively stronger blame avoidance motivation close to the end of an electoral cycle.¹⁴ Hence, the electoral cycle is associated with varying time horizons of elected officials. Short-term considerations

¹³ An important consequence of the varying discount rates in different time horizons is the result that preferences among two delayed rewards may reverse in favour of the more proximate reward as the time to both rewards diminishes – a phenomenon called *dynamic inconsistency* (Baron 2000: 476, Frederick et al. 2002: 361).

¹⁴ For example, Shepsle et al. (2004) describe the 1991 pay raise bill in the US Senate, which was passed by building a coalition of Senators that did not include most of those who faced re-election in 1992.

greatly outweigh long-term ones the closer we are to the next elections, thereby producing a different pattern of intertemporal choices, compared with non-election periods.

This literature is utilized in the analysis of inquiry appointment decisions, by providing a predictable relationship between political timing and the degree of impulsiveness (i.e., the relative weight of short and long term considerations).¹⁵ This relationship enables disentangling short and long term considerations by developing more specific hypotheses regarding the effect of blame attribution on the propensity to appoint inquiries. If the short term consideration of loss acknowledgment is the dominant reason for officeholder's aversion to appointing inquiries, then the *loss acknowledgment hypothesis* predicts that: the negative effect of blame attribution on the propensity to appoint an inquiry increases in election periods, compared with non-election periods. However, if the long term spectre of a critical report is the dominant factor, then the *critical report hypothesis* predicts that: the negative effect of blame attribution on the propensity to appoint an inquiry decreases in election periods, compared with non-election periods.

Empirical Evidence

The focus of this study is the political decision of whether to appoint an inquiry. In order to allow adequate variation in this dependent variable, the analysis should include instances

¹⁵ Extending the intertemporal choice literature into policy choices across the electoral cycles poses, however, a general theoretical question: Is it pure time discounting that is altered across time horizons (or the electoral cycle), or actually these are changes in the instantaneous utility function (Frederic et al. 2002: 389-90)? The answer to this question is not pertinent for this specific study, as the main interest is in the outcome – the variation in intertemporal choice from less to more impulsive across the electoral cycle – rather than the underlying reasons for it.

where an inquiry was ordered as well as those in which it was not – jointly referred to as “inquiry issues.” Identifying all inquiry issues for the period from January 1984 until the end of 2003 in the UK relied on systematic yearly-based searches in the British national press using the Lexis-Nexis media database. For each year, a sample of two national broadsheets was used (based on the availability of the various newspapers in different years).¹⁶ An “inquiry issue” was defined as an issue that resulted in a call for the appointment of an inquiry (and was published in the national press).¹⁷ From the set of inquiry issues, those cases where an inquiry was appointed within a month from the call were coded as “inquiries”, and if not as “non-inquired”. This case selection method follows the ‘possibility principle’ (Mahoney and Goertz 2004) as it: (1) identifies all the positive cases (inquiries); (2) draws a line between negative and irrelevant cases that is adequate to the lack of existing ‘eliminary variables’, and (3) introduces a scope condition by excluding ‘historical’ inquiries and inquiry-issues.

Many non-inquired issues (and a few inquiries) have led to repeated calls for the appointment of an inquiry, or in some cases, for a second inquiry.¹⁸ In a substantial proportion of the cases, repeated calls were made when new information emerged about the issue, or when similar events occurred. Other examples are anniversary dates (e.g., the Marchioness and

¹⁶ January-July 1984: *Financial Times* (the only period for which only one newspaper was used); August 1984 – June 1985: *Financial Times* and *The Guardian*, July 1985 – December 1988: *The Guardian* and *The Times*, 1989 – 2003: *The Times* and *The Independent*.

¹⁷ A similar method was employed by Dowding and Kang (1998) and Dewan and Dowding (2005) for their study of ministerial resignations.

¹⁸ For example, the 1972 “Bloody Sunday” incident, which indeed had a second inquiry; and the 1989 Hillsborough disaster, which did not receive a second inquiry.

Lockerbie disasters). This study included repeated calls for an inquiry as additional inquiry issues, if more than a month had passed since the previous call, and were coded as such and controlled for in the analysis. This approach is consistent with the basic premise that the phenomenon studied is a social construct. Real-world events do not directly affect the appointment of an inquiry; rather their influence is mediated by social and political factors. Hence, a repeated call for an inquiry represents a potential case in which the issue is (again) an object for social and political interest. Including such cases also increases the number of decision instances in the study.

This data gathering resulted in a set of 664 (after excluding historical issues), which includes 44 inquiries – 6.6% of all inquiry issues. This and other descriptive statistics are provided in Table One. For reasons of data collection efficiency, sampling followed a case-control design, in which all inquiries were selected (44), and a random sample of twice this number of non-inquired issues (88). This method optimizes the trade-off between the number of observations and the quality of variables (Lilienfeld and Stolley 1994, King and Zeng 2001). Case-control studies do not allow one to estimate the incidence of the cases in the population. To do that, one would have to know the number of all cases and the number of the entire population of interest (Lilienfeld and Stolley 1994; Schulz and Grimes 2002). As noted above, since the case-control design involves selecting on $Y = 1$ (inquiries), the resulting sample-probability of inquiries in this study (.33) is larger than the fraction of inquiries in the population – τ (.066). This does not bias the regression coefficients, but requires correcting the regression constant based on prior information about τ . Where appropriate, this correction has been performed, following the method suggested by King and Zeng (2001).

Determining blame attribution – i.e., its proximity to the potentially appointing officeholder – was based on content analysis of newspaper articles (included in the salience measure, below). Each inquiry issue was classified into one of three categories based on the agent/s to which blame was attributed: (0) *Remote blame*– individual citizens, private corporations, NGOs, and local authorities; (1) *Close blame* – central government bureaucracy (e.g., government agencies, military units); (2) *Direct blame* – cabinet members and/or the Prime Minister.¹⁹ The content analysis included only articles that referred to blame/responsibility evaluations. When a number of blame attribution levels were suggested in the sampled press coverage, the highest level of blame attribution found was coded as the issue’s blame attribution rating. A random sample of 128 articles (17% of the total number of articles used) were coded independently by three coders, who received guidance and specific instructions on the coding process, and went through a prior training session of coding, based on 30 articles. Intercoder reliability was tested by Krippendorff’s alpha (1970), using the macro provided by Hayes and Krippendorff (2007). Treating the coding data as ordinal showed acceptable level of agreement (Krippendorff’s $\alpha = .7729$, 95% confidence interval: $.7026 - .8378$). This measure thus provides an ordinal scale for the “closeness” of blame to the appointing office-holder.²⁰

The measure of salience used in this study relies on media salience, for both substantive and practical reasons. The alternative measure of issue salience, based on public opinion polls,

¹⁹ The original coding instructions included four categories. The first two – “private individuals or corporations” and “local authorities” were merged into one category – “remote blame” (see coding instruction in Appendix 1).

²⁰ Treating the coding as nominal data resulted in Krippendorff’s $\alpha = .6292$, well below the lower limit of the 95% confidence interval (.7026), providing support to the coders’ ordinal conceptions (see: Hayes and Krippendorff 2007: 88).

was not available for the great majority of inquiry issues. Most polls ask about general issues (e.g., health system, economic conditions, sleaze), rather than about specific affairs.²¹ A theoretically grounded reason for selecting media salience is that the issues included in this study are typically quick-onset unobtrusive issues, for which the media plays a central role in determining both public and policy agenda (Rogers and Dearing 1988, Soroka 2002). The measurement of media salience was based on the number of newspaper articles in the week before appointment (inquiries), or the week following a call for the appointment of an inquiry (non-inquired).²² Measurement relied on a sample of two broadsheets for each inquiry issue that were averaged to provide the mean number of articles per newspaper per week. A test for the correlation between media salience in broadsheets and tabloids suggested that although the proportion of political stories is higher in broadsheets, salience co-varies in the two types of publications – indicating the validity of using broadsheets as a general measure of press salience.²³

In a considerable number of inquiry issues the appointment of an inquiry came sooner than a week following the triggering event, and in some cases appointment was practically immediate.²⁴ These cases presented a problem for assessing pre-appointment media salience, since little or no press coverage preceded the appointment. The solution in such cases was to

²¹ Even when a specific event is asked about, the question rarely appears more than once.

²² This measure is a simplified index of media salience, after pre-tests have suggested that the use of a more complex index, which included the number of words per article and placement in the newspaper added very little information (5%).

²³ Comparing the media salience of 20 inquiry issues between The Independent and The Times (averaged) to The Daily Mail (including the Sunday editions of all 3 newspapers) yielded a strong and significant correlation: $r = .807, p < .001$.

²⁴ For example, in the Dunblane shooting of 1996, and following the death of Dr David Kelly in 2003.

measure media salience for the week following the triggering event, even if the appointment came before the end of that week. This was based on the assumption that short-term media salience was due to the event and not greatly influenced by the appointment of the inquiry (actual inquiry activity typically took much longer than a week to begin), and in the cases where the appointment came without any delay, measured media salience provides a proxy for office-holders' expected salience, assuming that politicians are good predictors of short-term salience. As the theoretical model which has been advanced in this study aims to describe a decision, expectations of short term salience are equivalent to current salience.²⁵ As noted above, the effect of inquiry appointment on consequent media salience has been shown to be negligible (Sulitzeanu-Kenan 2007, Hood et al. 2007), yet in order to limit this potential bias, articles that mainly addressed the inquiry were omitted (for media salience coding protocol, see Appendix 2).

The electoral cycle was accounted for by including a dummy “election period” measured 1 when the inquiry issue is within twelve months of the next expected election, and 0 otherwise. Determining this is not always straightforward in the British political context as prime ministers can call elections at will. Four general elections occurred between 1984 and 2003. Two of them (1992, 1997) at the end of the statutory term (2 and 1 months early, respectively), and two others (1987, 2001) were called early (10 and 11 months, respectively). For 1992 and 1997 the “election period” was coded as such for the period starting a year before the scheduled compulsory elections, yielding ten and eleven months periods respectively. For the early elections (1987, 2001) Smith (2004) analysis of election timing was consulted. His analysis indicates that throughout the six months preceding both

²⁵ For another use of (more distant) future conditions as a predictor of current behavior, see Smith (2004: 113).

election announcements (made one month before election in both cases) expectations for early elections existed. Therefore, for 1987 and 2001 “election period” was coded as such for the period starting seven months before actual election date.²⁶

Since crisis management is part of the general political rivalry (Boin et al. 2005), it is expected that the state of the government's electoral support will play a role in inquiry appointment decisions. According to the model of inquiry appointment suggested in this study inquiries are essentially undesired by politicians, and are appointed as a minimax choice. Therefore it is expected that electoral support will be positively related to appointment propensity. Given the UK's single-membered district, first-past-the-post electoral system, the measure of electoral support used was the current governing party's lead over the main opposition party. For each inquiry issue this figure was drawn from the most recently conducted MORI poll preceding it. Preliminary analyses suggested that the association of electoral support and appointment propensity was moderated by media salience,²⁷ and this was taken into account in specifying the appointment models reported next.

²⁶ Smith (2004) employed two quantitative measures for evaluating the likelihood of elections, and also provided qualitative accounts on the level of public expectations or lack thereof for election. The 1987 election was “late” (clearly expected) according to one of Smith's quantitative measure (Ratio of News Stories), yet his second measure (Ratio of Cumulative Hazard) suggests it was among the relatively early (less expected). However, the qualitative account indicates that the 1987 election were largely expected in the six months that preceded the election announcement (pp. 91, 137). The 2001 elections were late (clearly expected) by both quantitative measures of expectations (p. 181), and according to Smith's qualitative account (p. 91).

²⁷ With low salience, the association was insignificant, and only at higher salience levels, a positive relationship is reported.

Given the centrality of the prime minister in the British system, her/his possible effect on the decision to appoint inquiries is controlled for by two indicator variables: “Thatcher” and “Major” coded 1 for issues that occurred during Margaret Thatcher’s or John Major’s terms in office, respectively, and 0 otherwise (the condition in which both are 0 accounts of Tony Blair’s term in office).²⁸ As noted above, the analysis included repeated calls for an inquiry as additional inquiry issues, if more than a month had elapsed since the previous call. It is expected that previous unanswered calls, may have consequences for a later appointment decision, either for reasons of preference consistency, status-quo bias (Baron 2000: 468), or “impression management” (Bazerman 1994: 86-7). This is accounted for in the analysis by including a dummy variable “previous refusal” measured 1 when the inquiry issue was preceded by an earlier one and 0 otherwise.²⁹

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

<u>Inquiry issues:</u>		
Inquiries	6.6%	(N = 664)
Non-inquired	93.4%	
<u>Blame attribution:</u>		
Remote	49.2%	(N = 132)
Close	31.8%	
Direct	18.9%	
<u>Media salience:</u>		
Mean	12.042	
Median	3.250	
<u>Election period:</u>		
Election year	19.7%	
Non-election year	80.3%	
<u>Electoral support:</u>		
Mean	-2.250	
Median	1.000	
<u>Prime minister:</u>		
Thatcher	32.6%	
Major	38.6%	
Blair	28.8%	

²⁸ The research period is almost equally divided among the three prime ministers: Thatcher – 7 years of, Major – 6.5 years, and Blair – 6.5 years.

The three hypotheses presented above, were tested in three logistic regression models, reported in Table 2. The blame avoidance hypothesis was tested by estimating the main effect of blame attribution on the propensity of ministers to appoint inquiries in Model 1. The venue alteration hypothesis was tested by estimating the main effect of media salience in Model 2. And the loss acknowledgment hypothesis and critical report hypothesis were tested by estimating the interaction effect of blame attribution and election period in Model 3.

The Chi-square statistic for all three models allows us to reject the null hypothesis that the independent variables do not improve the prediction of an inquiry appointment probability. Nagelkerke pseudo R-square (R^2_L) values (.460 – .496) suggest that the models accounts for the variation in the dependent variable moderately well. The percentage of correctly predicted classification by the full model is 81.1%, an improvement compared to the 66% accuracy attained by assuming that all cases are non-inquired issues. Model one shows that the closer the blame (as attributed by the media) is to the appointing minister, the less likely the appointment of an inquiry is. This decrease in appointment propensity is not significant between remote and close blame ($p = .192$), but it clearly is when comparing remote and direct blame ($p = .005$). For example, the probability of an inquiry appointment when blame is remote is 7.98%; it decreases to 4.07% when blame is close; and reaches 0.76% when blame is direct.³⁰ These findings support the blame avoidance hypothesis. Moving to Model two, the significant positive association of media salience supports the venue alteration

²⁹ Additional political variables were included in early analyses (see below), yet were omitted from the analysis reported here: overall time-trend, and the number of human casualties.

³⁰ Using the corrected regression constant based on the fraction of inquiries in the population ($\tau = .066$) (King and Zeng 2001), and for median media salience (3.25), modal election period (0), mean electoral support (-.25), modal prime minister (Major), and modal previous refusal (0).

hypothesis. The average probability of an inquiry appointment when three newspaper articles per week cover the issue is 5.12%; it increases to 6.41% for five articles a week, and 11.10% for ten.³¹ Finally, comparing Models three and one, the addition of blame attribution*election period interaction terms significantly improves Model three's performance based on likelihood of ratio test, and increases the model's Chi-square, indicating significant interaction. Analysis of this interaction provides support for the loss acknowledgment hypothesis over the critical report hypothesis.

³¹ Following a similar method, when holding blame attribution at its modal – remote blame.

Table 2: Logistic Regression Estimates of Blame Attribution Effects on Inquiry Appointment Probability

	(1)		(2)		(3)	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Blame attribution:						
Close blame	-.714 (.547)	.490	-.152 (.591)	.859	-.193 (.600)	.824
Direct blame	-2.421 (.869)***	.089	-1.598 (.862)*	.202	-1.891 (.933)**	.151
Media salience	.123 (.028)***	1.131	.120 (.026)***	1.127	.126 (.027)***	1.134
Election period	.572 (.579)	1.772	-.604 (.906)	.547	1.392 (.705)**	4.023
Electoral support	-.014 (.024)	.986	.023 (.023)	1.024	-.004 (.025)	.996
Thatcher	-.087 (.820)	.917	.070 (.793)	1.072	.085 (.837)	1.089
Major	.583 (1.085)	1.791	1.280 (1.135)	3.598	1.180 (1.156)	3.253
Previous refusal	-.918 (.550)*	.399	-.909 (.566)	403	-.958 (.575)*	.384
Close blame*Election period			-3.934 (2.279)*	.020	-3.833 (2.306)*	.022
Direct blame*Election period			-2.139 (1.611)	.118	-2.454 (1.888)	.086
Media salience*Electoral support	.003 (.001)**	1.003			.003 (.001)**	1.003
Constant	-1.472 (.725)**	.240	-2.598 (.775)**	.074	-1.962 (.801)**	.141
Constant prior correction ³²	-3.4286	.0324	-4.5547	.0105	-3.9187	.01987
Chi-square	53.171***		53.307***		58.311***	
Change in Chi-square	5.269**		5.405*		5.140*	
-2Log Likelihood	114.686		114.733		109.729	
% correctly predicted	81.8%		80.3%		81.1%	
Nagelkerke R ² _L	.460		.461		.496	
Observations	(132)		(132)		(132)	

Standard errors in parentheses: *significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; ***significant at 1%.

³² Constant prior correction = constant - $\ln \left\{ \frac{1-.066}{.066} \times \frac{.333}{1-.333} \right\}$ (King and Zeng 2001: 144).

A graphical demonstration of the blame attribution*election period interaction is depicted in Figure 1. The X axis represents the three proximity levels of blame-attribution, and the Y axis presents a logarithmic scale of inquiry appointment probability, computed from Model three, using the corrected regression constant based on the fraction of inquiries in the population ($\tau = .066$) (King and Zeng 2001). The two lines show a similar trend – a decrease in appointment probability the closer blame attribution is to the appointing minister, yet they differ in their slopes. The overall steeper slope of the curve for election periods suggests a stronger negative effect of blame avoidance compared with its effect in non-election periods. Given that elected officials give greater weight to short term considerations in election periods, this finding is consistent with the hypothesis that the content of the blame avoidance motivation in the political choice to appoint inquiries is a short term one – avoiding loss acknowledgment. Had it been the fear of a critical report, we would have expected to find a more moderate effect of blame attribution in election periods – as the report would likely be delivered after the elections.

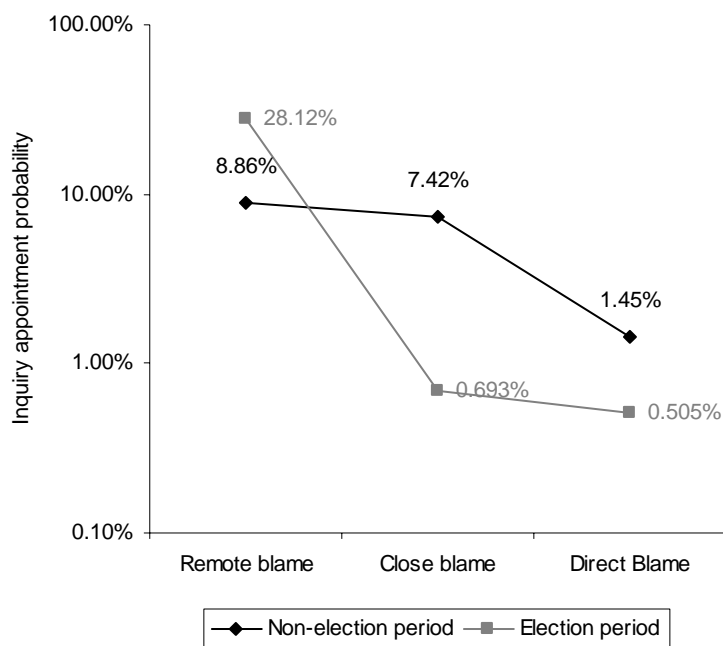


Figure 1: The relationship between blame attribution and inquiry appointment probability, across election and non-election periods³³

The electoral cycle was not found to have an overall association with inquiry appointment propensity, though an insignificant positive association can be seen in Model one. However, when separating the electoral cycle's effect across blame attribution levels, it appears that it has a positive effect on appointment propensity for remote blame issues. When blame is directed away from the appointing office holder, election periods are times of increased propensity for inquiry appointment. This finding conforms to the theoretical model advanced here. As blame becomes remote, so does the consideration of avoiding loss acknowledgment. This leaves a greater relative weight to the short term prospect of venue alteration, while the long term risk of a negative report is heavily discounted (compared with remote blame issues in non-election periods). In short, under conditions of remote blame and approaching

³³ For median media salience (3.25), mean government lead over the opposition (-.25), modal prime minister (Major), and modal previous refusal (0).

elections the appointment of an inquiry appears to provide a relatively low-cost choice for venue alteration.

Turning now briefly to the results on the effect of electoral support, the media salience*election period interaction was found to be significant, suggesting that the marginal effect of electoral support on appointment propensity varies across issue salience levels. Figure two graphically demonstrates this finding. As can be seen, in low issue salience, electoral support has no effect on the appointment decision. Yet the effect increases, and at a salience level of 16 articles a week per newspaper this positive effect becomes statistically significant. Therefore, non-salient issues do not appear to involve electoral considerations in the appointment decision, while salient issues increasingly do.

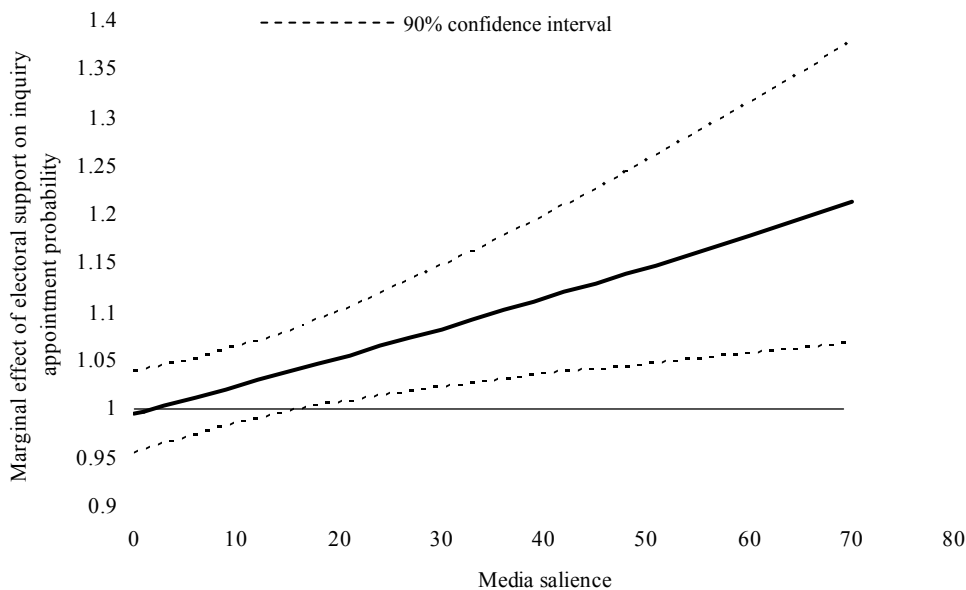


Figure 2: The marginal effect of electoral support on inquiry appointment probability, across issue salience levels

The identity of the prime minister was not found to have a significant effect on the propensity to appoint an inquiry. Finally, issues that have been previously raised had a smaller chance of inquiry appointment, by an odds ratio of .384.

To summarize the results: the closer the target of blame is to the appointing officeholders, the less likely they are to appoint an inquiry into that issue. This effect was found to increase during election periods, suggesting that short term loss acknowledgment consideration accounts for this finding better than the long term risk of a critical inquiry report. Issue (media) salience was found to have a strong positive effect on the appointment propensity, providing support for the venue alteration hypothesis. Additionally, the government's electoral support was found to have a positive relationship with inquiry appointment propensity, yet only for relatively high-salience issues.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that when things go wrong, the interplay of three main political factors determines the choice of whether to establish a commission of inquiry: the politics of blame, public agenda (issue-salience), and government popularity. Unlike previous studies of post crisis inquiries, the model of inquiry appointment advanced here incorporates observations of firm resistance to appoint, even in the face of public pressure, with the reality that politicians indeed sometimes set up inquiries at their own discretion. It confirms that through the prism of blame avoidance theory, inquiries are fundamentally “negative goods” for elected executives. Their appointment carries with it loss acknowledgment, the immediate cost of appointment, which is exacerbated by the fact that the appointment is at the discretion of ministers. Following the predictions of blame avoidance theory, this cost plays a larger role when the problem is attributed to agents that are close to the appointing office holder. However, at a certain point, this cost of appointment may become sunk-cost – when the problem is undeniable. This threshold of resistance, determined by loss acknowledgment, is lower when blame is directed away from the appointing office holders, and rises when they

“feel the heat” (borrowing Maor 2004 terminology). At this stage, a new equilibrium is formed as potential benefit from venue alteration by appointing an inquiry motivates the office holder to appoint, and increasingly so the more salient the issue is. Hence, an inquiry is typically seen as “part of the disease,” when its appointment is seen as loss acknowledgment, but may become “a bitter relief medicine” when the loss is practically undeniable and an appointment may relax the intensity of the engagement. The notion of post crisis inquiry as a “costly” response of crisis management for the government rather than as a panacea³⁴ is also supported by the conditional positive relationship between electoral support and inquiry appointment propensity - inquiries are sought more often when the government’s electoral condition is stable and safe, yet the electoral consideration becomes significant in the appointment decision only for salient issues. These findings thus provide credence to the claim that despite their intended a-political nature, these ad-hoc institutions represent “a continuation of politics by other means” (Gove 2003).

In the aftermath of a crisis, after taking care of its operational aspects, governments are expected to engage in policy learning – to draw lessons from the failure in order to reduce the likelihood of reoccurrence (Wildavsky 1984, Birkland 2004, Boin et al. 2005). As noted above, establishing a commission of inquiry in such circumstances is viewed as the most appropriate way of promoting and facilitating learning. This study has found strong empirical support for the hypothesis that the politics of blame acts to restrict the realization of this prescription (Boin and ’t Hart 2003, Maor 2004, Boin et al. 2005, 120, Moynihan 2008). Moreover, the need for learning is not expected to be associated with the direction of blame attribution. If anything, a positive relationship would be expected. Ignoring blame avoidance

³⁴ The latter notion of inquiries would be negatively associated with electoral support, since in such conditions such a solution would be more strongly needed.

for a moment, issues that give rise to remote blame could be expected to be inquired into by private bodies, by local authorities or by the more mundane organizations such as the police; while close and direct blame can be expected to be inquired by more independent bodies set up by the central government. If one accepts this counterfactual thinking, then this study's finding of a *negative* relationship between blame attribution and inquiry appointment propensity reported here may actually represent an underestimation of the true effect of blame on the proclivity of elected officials for post crisis learning.

As noted earlier, a typical element of the politics of post crisis inquiries is an intense debate over the inquiry's terms of reference (Woodhouse 1995, McLean and Johnes 2000a 2000b, Jenkins 2002). The findings suggest that the drive to limit the scope of current acknowledged loss fits the data better than an attempt to limit the risk of a future critical report. Hence, it appears that this struggle can be better understood as one between competing versions of perceived loss, over the chosen acknowledged loss entailed by the terms of reference.

The reasons for appointing, and especially not appointing inquiry are typically covert, and in the unlikely event that they are articulated by office holders – unreliable. Inasmuch as the findings of this study adequately represent inquiry appointment decisions, they can be also utilized to derive some inferences for unobserved political conditions, when a decision has been taken (by backward induction). For example, when the issue is salient and the possibility of (or demand for) an inquiry has been introduced into the public agenda; a resistance to appoint may indicate possible high-level blame, even when publicly available information does not indicate it. This is obviously a probabilistic inference; yet, as in other situations of limited information, it may provide a lead for a closer examination in a particular direction.

While the findings of this study show that inquiries are products of political considerations, they should not be regarded as derogating from the value of commissions of inquiries as informative and important vehicles of accountability and learning in a democracy. This study actually draws attention to those inquiries “that could have been,” and suggests that they are just one implication of the innate tension between blame and learning in politics.

Appendix 1: Coding protocol for blame attribution

At the end of each article you are asked to identify the main target of blame/criticism in the article by its proper name (e.g., Devon police), and assign it one of four categories:

1. Individual citizens / private corporations / NGO (non-governmental organization)
2. Local authorities/institutions
3. Central government bureaucracy
4. Ministers / Prime-Minister

Category one includes private individuals (for example, a person who committed a criminal or negligent act); private corporations (e.g., when a private airline company is blamed for an aerial accident); or non-profit organizations (e.g. a sports club). Note the difference between private individuals and office holders who are referred to in person (bureaucrats, ministers, local officials...). The latter should be categorized according to their official function under categories 2-4.

Category two includes local authorities such as local municipalities, local social services, local hospital, local police, local transport authority (e.g., London Underground), and any other authority which has only limited jurisdiction – as opposed to a national (entire UK) jurisdiction.

Category three includes central government bodies such as ministries/departments, government agencies, the military, intelligence agencies, and any other authority with a national jurisdiction, except those included in category four.

Category four includes government ministers and the prime minister.

Write your answers (target of blame & coding category) in the lines provided after each newspaper article on file. If a number of agents are targeted in the article, for example, both a business corporation (Cat. 1) and a government agency (Cat. 3), select the higher category addressed by the article (Cat. 3) for the article coding. Some events are referred to by a

number of articles. It is OK to code different articles about the same event differently, since the coding pertains to the responsibility attribution made by each article.

Some affairs resurfaced over time, and are addressed separately in each instance. For example, the Lockerby disaster resurfaced several times following the actual disaster, when new evidence was found. Since attribution of responsibility for the event and/or aspects of it may change over time and context, the coding may change too.

Even if you know or have an opinion about issues of blame and responsibility regarding an event, try to decide on the coding based on the content of the articles only. The idea is to represent the attribution of responsibility that is understood from the text regardless of its justification, correctness etc.

Appendix 2: Coding protocol for media salience

Counting the number of articles on a particular event included: (1) specifying the time-unit; (2) the newspapers searched; (3) the keyword/s used. This information was recorded for each case included in the analysis. Furthermore, the number of articles is not merely the database search result. All articles were checked for relevance, and the proportion of relevant articles from the automated search was also recorded.

The relevance was assessed by the following questions:

(1) Is the article about the event/issue?

(2) Is the article before or after inquiry appointment? If before – jump to (3)

If after: is the article about the event/issue or mainly about the inquiry that was appointed into it? (A guideline: if more than one-third of the article is about the inquiry = about the inquiry). If the article is about the inquiry – omit from the valid number of articles.

(3) Count the number of articles on the event/issue.

Thus, the measurement of media salience for each event was based on the number of articles from the automated search, subtracting irrelevant articles and articles about the inquiry.

Appendix 3: Electoral support

Electoral support is the government's percentage point lead over the main opposition party, reported by Mori from answers to the question: "How would you vote if there were a General Election tomorrow?"

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ועדות חקירה ממלאות תפקיד מרכזי לאחר משברים ציבוריים, בהיותן כלי לנשיאה באחריות (accountability) ולהפקת לקחים לצורך שיפור מדיניות. עם זאת ועדות חקירה מעורבות גם במשחק ההישרדות הפוליטית, אשר מתעצם בדרך כלל לאחר משבר, בו שאלות של אחריות ולמידה מהוות איום משמעותי לפוליטיקאים נבחרים. מכאן שההחלטה הפוליטית באם למנות ועדת חקירה לאחר משבר מציעה הזדמנות ייחודית לחקירת הקונפליקט בין פוליטיקה, נשיאה באחריות ותהליכי למידה במדיניות. מחקר זה נשען על נתונים מבריטניה על מנת לפתח ולבחון מודל בחירה (choice model) עבור החלטה פוליטית זו. התוצאות מצביעות על כך שההחלטה הפוליטית באם למנות ועדת חקירה לאחר משבר ציבורי מושפעת באופן משמעותי משיקולים קצרי-טווח של הימנעות מאשמה, בולטות תקשורתית ומידת הפופולריות של הממשלה המכהנת.

רשימת המאמרים לדיון בסדרה הכחולה

- 06.03 מומי דהן, ראש לשועלים או זנב לאריות : אי השוויון בליגת העל בכדורגל
- 01.04 אבי בן בסט ומומי דהן, זכויות חברתיות בחוקה למעשה
- 03.05 דוד דרי, ביקורת המדינה : נורמות ופגמים
- The Unintended consequences of IBT Pricing Policy in Urban Wanter 05.05
- 10.08 רענן סוליציאנו קינן, אשמה וחקירה : מתי פוליטיקאים ממנים ועדות חקירה

אודות בית הספר ע"ש פדרמן למדיניות ציבורית וממשל

בית הספר ע"ש פדרמן למדיניות ציבורית וממשל הוקם בעקבות החלטה של האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים לתת בעשור הנוכחי עדיפות לפיתוחה של תכנית עילית אשר תכשיר את עתודת המנהיגות המקצועית של המגזר הציבורי בישראל, ותתרום לטיפוחה כאלטיטה חברתית רחבת אופקים, אחראית ויוצרת.

חוסנה של החברה הישראלית, עתידה הכלכלי ואופייה הדמוקרטי תלויים במידה רבה באיכות המקצועית וברמה המוסרית של הנבחרת המקצועית המופקדת על ניהול המגזר הציבורי. מטרת בית הספר היא לתרום להכשרה מקצועית של הסגל הבכיר במגזר הציבורי ולהעשרת הדיון הציבורי בממצאי מחקר וברעיונות לחידושי מדיניות. הכלי העיקרי של בית הספר להגשמת יעד זה הינו תכנית המצטיינים לתואר "מוסמך במדיניות ציבורית".

הסדרה הכחולה מהווה מסגרת לפרסום מחקרים של סגל בית הספר, בתחומים שונים של מדיניות ציבורית.

תגובות, שאלות וכל חומר נוסף ניתן לשלוח לכתובת המערכת:
"הסדרה הכחולה"

בית הספר ע"ש פדרמן למדיניות ציבורית וממשל

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