Sujet :

Ce sujet est composé de 5 pages.

Il est demandé aux candidats de répondre directement sur leur copie en indiquant clairement les numéros des exercices.
Politics

Downtrodden Labour

Why Conservatives are talking up a Labour-SNP coalition

The Economist; Mar 14th 2015 | GLASGOW

See paragraph 5: “On billboards in English marginal constituencies a Conservative poster depicts a huge Mr Salmond (who was leader of the SNP until he resigned after the referendum) with Mr Miliband (the Labour leader) in his pocket.”

1. SPRING is in the air in Westminster and the Conservatives are upbeat. Having lagged behind the opposition Labour Party in polls for most of the past five years, they are now narrowly ahead two months before the general election. The Tories’ clear messages on the economy mainly account for these green shoots. But an additional explanation is emerging 400 miles to the north: the rise of the secessionist Scottish National Party (SNP).

2. Since the 1980s Scotland has been Labour’s granite-like electoral base. Though often run by Scots, the party hardly had to think about the country north of Hadrian’s Wall. When the SNP failed last year to win a referendum on Scottish independence, Labour expected it to
fall apart, remembers one shell-shocked former staffer. Instead the opposite happened. The SNP has hoovered up the sprawling, leftish Yes (to independence) movement and turned it into a campaigning machine. The party’s membership has grown from 26,000 to 100,000 in six months. Polling published by Lord Ashcroft, a Tory peer, on March 4th suggests that it is on track to take most of Labour’s 41 seats in Scotland, including some of its oldest strongholds.

3. This helps the Tories in several ways. The first is practical: Labour must divert scarce campaigning resources north to fight for once-safe Scottish seats. The second concerns electoral arithmetic. Even if no party emerges from the election with a majority, as looks likely, the one with the most votes will enter coalition talks with momentum and authority. Nick Clegg, the leader of the centrist Liberal Democrats, says that he will speak to the biggest party first—as he did in 2010, when he formed a coalition with David Cameron’s lot. The fewer seats Labour wins, the better the Tories’ chance of being in that position and thus of holding power.

4. But the main reason for Conservative cheer is that the nationalists’ rise may force Labour to seek an accommodation with the SNP. The latest projection by Election Forecast, a group of political scientists, suggests that Mr Miliband will lack the numbers to govern without the backing (or, at least, tolerance) of the party’s MPs. Nicola Sturgeon, the SNP’s leader, appears to be preparing for such an arrangement: she has assured Scottish voters that her party will never prop up the Conservatives, and on March 6th confirmed that its opposition to Britain’s nuclear deterrent would not block a deal with Labour.

5. Tory strategists believe that the prospect of a Labour government reliant on the support of MPs who would shatter the United Kingdom horrifies the English. They are gleefully talking up a Labour-SNP deal in the hope that it will cost Labour votes south of the border. In February Mr Cameron claimed that the two leftist parties were “halfway up the aisle” and preparing for “a honeymoon in North Korea”. On billboards in English marginal constituencies a Conservative poster depicts a huge Mr Salmond with Mr Miliband in his pocket.

6. Tactically, this is smart. Labour frontbenchers wriggle when asked about the SNP, denying that a deal is “on the agenda” but refusing to rule it out. Yet the Tories’ ruse could backfire. Humza Yousaf, an SNP bigwig, claims that Mr Cameron’s theatrics will “only increase our support in Scotland”. He has a point. Last September the prime minister begged the Scots to stay, saying that he would be “utterly heartbroken” if they seceded. Yet his recent attacks on the SNP can only strengthen the nationalists’ claims that the English and the Scots are better off apart. Mr Cameron may protest that he is merely trying to win a second term. But at what cost to the union?

Glossary:

A **constituency** = a **seat** = the area represented in parliament by an MP.

A **safe seat** = a constituency won easily at the last election, and very unlikely to fall to another party at the next.

A **marginal seat** = a constituency where the outcome of the next election is very uncertain. What happens in marginal constituencies determines which party will win an election.
William Wallace’s dreams
Scottish Westminster constituencies
By political party
2010 general election
Labour 41
SNP 6
Lib Dem 11
Conservative 1
2015 forecast*
9
45
2
3
Source: electionforecast.co.uk
*As of March 11th
Economist.com
I. Synonyms (2 points)

For each of the following definitions, find a word or an expression in the body of the article. The terms you are looking for appear in the same order as in the list below.

1. Optimistic
2. To collect in large quantities (here, informal)
3. An area in which there is a lot of support for a group of people, especially a political party
4. (Here) an agreement, an arrangement
5. To describe sb/sth in a way that makes them sound more important (here more likely) than they really are
6. (Here) to avoid giving a clear answer
7. To exclude, to deny the possibility of
8. To have the reverse of the desired or expected effect

II. Comprehension (7 points)

Answer the following questions in your own words.

1. What is the main reason why the Tories’ electoral prospects seem to have improved? (1 point)
2. What was the purpose (and the official result) of the referendum held last September in Scotland? What were the consequences for the Yes camp? (2 points)
3. What were the consequences for the mainstream parties (Labour and the Conservatives)? (2 points)
4. How are the Tories trying to exploit the issue? What is the journalist’s view on this? (2 points)

III. Detailed comprehension (2 points)

1. Which party/ies govern/s Britain at the moment? Quote at least two elements in the text explaining it.
2. Explain the following phrase (in the literal sense and in the context of this article, 1 point).
   The two parties were “halfway up the aisle” (paragraph 5)

IV. Written Expression (9 points)

Write an essay on the following subject (300-400 words):

Are coalitions a betrayal or a reasonable solution to a political stalemate? Discuss, drawing on examples from various countries.