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Pearson Edexcel Level 3 GCE

Politics

Advanced

PAPER 1: UK Politics and Core Political Ideas

Tuesday 21 May 2024 – Afternoon

Time: 2 hours

Source Booklet

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SECTION A

Political Participation

Source 1 (a)

The following two articles on pages 4 to 6 seek to explain if the established political parties are defined by their historical origins or rather now characterised by new policies and ideas. Article 1 claims that nothing much has changed in the established parties' policies and ideas. Article 2 argues that previous policies and ideas are no longer relevant today.

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Source 1 (a) continued.

Article 1

To understand the established political parties in the UK we have to appreciate how they evolved. The Conservative Party remains influenced by the One Nation and New Right ideas. This has delivered Thatcherism and also policies set in the One Nation mould. Liberal Democrats' policy contains elements of classical liberalism and attributes of modern liberalism reflecting its ideas and policies. Finally, the Labour Party is a mixture of Old Labour and New Labour which means the policy of the party looks in two opposing directions and allows it to shape its agenda by application of both privatisation and nationalisation.

Therefore the established parties continue on a left- or right-wing basis in line with their original ideas.

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Source 1 (a) continued.

Article 2

Descriptions of the established parties in the UK can no longer be defined by their historical origins. The Conservative Party has claimed both the title of One Nation and a link to the New Right but neither title fits any longer. The Conservative Party in recent years has been shaped by its attitude to Europe and immigration. The Liberal Democrat Party is not defined by the ideas of classical liberals or modern liberals but strives to be as independent as possible on policy and on ideas from the other two established parties – taking the party in multiple directions: quite often being strong on green policies. Finally, for the Labour Party, the influence of Old Labour is now irrelevant as recent revisions on policy show.

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Source 1 (a) continued.

The established parties aim to catch as many votes as possible from as wide an audience as they can, they crave success and no longer feel any sense of duty to their historical roots, ideas and policies. The left- and right-wing bases no longer apply.

Source 1 (b)

The following two paragraphs on pages 8 to 10 give two sides of a contested debate considering whether referendums since 1997 have promoted democracy or instead have really served other political purposes.

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Source 1 (b) continued.

The case for referendums promoting democracy

Referendums since 1997 have had a positive impact on political life and widened democracy. They have given a definitive answer on contested topics shaping the direction that the UK takes, be that devolution, membership of the EU or the rejection of alternative voting systems. Referendums add legitimacy to major constitutional changes. In Scotland 16- and 17-year-olds voted making choices about their future in referendums, thus widening participation. They have re-invigorated political life and opened up honest debate with their high turnouts and renewed activity in current events. They are a source of political education that engage the public and are a true injection of direct democracy.

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Source 1 (b) continued.

The claims against the use of referendums

Referendums have been held for the benefit of the governing political parties, often settling their internal disputes, never for public benefit. New Labour liked to be popular and a series of ‘yes’ votes added to the idea of popularity. New Labour wanted to ensure its dominance in Scotland where it drew a large number of seats. New Labour later tired of referendums. The Conservatives agreed to a referendum on voting reform – not much of a choice as the vote was not about proportional representation. In reality, the referendum was a price to pay for the support of the Liberal Democrats to enter the coalition. Then the EU referendum.

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Source 1 (b) continued.

This was not a democratic move for the people of the UK. The referendum was an outright attempt by the Conservative Party to stop UKIP in its tracks. In the end it was a battle fought over false claims. Such a close result as the one on the EU has limited legitimacy. A leading Brexiter, Steve Baker, accepts that major referendums should require 60% approval to be effective and valid.