

PT - LVA

En vous appuyant uniquement sur les documents du dossier thématique qui vous est proposé, vous rédigerez une synthèse répondant à la question suivante :

To what extent is Covid-19 questioning the existence of the UK ?

Votre synthèse comportera entre 450 et 500 mots et sera précédée d'un titre. Le nombre de mots rédigés (titre inclus) devra être indiqué à la fin de votre copie.

Liste des documents:

1. "How Coronavirus strengthened Scottish independence", *The Economist*, August 8, 2020
2. "Why the Covid-19 will hasten the break-up of Britain", www.newstatesman.com, August 19, 2020, by Alex Niven
3. "Coronavirus: Foster criticises Irish unity claim by Sinn Féin", *BBC*, April 27, 2020, by Jayne McCormack
4. Stay Alert, www.politicalcartoons.com, by Martyn Turner, May 11, 2020,
5. YouGov statistics, April 2020

How coronavirus strengthened Scottish independence

The Economist, August 8, 2020

The country has a powerful case of independence fever

Nicola Sturgeon recoils from the suggestion that coronavirus could be politically advantageous. It has, after all, been linked to more than 4,200 Scottish deaths. Even so, the pandemic has left Scotland's first minister in rude political health. Some 74% of Scots think her handling of the pandemic has been good or very good, according to Panelbase, a pollster. In contrast, Boris Johnson, who spent three nights in intensive care and scores just 21%, has been stricken by the virus personally and professionally.

In the 2014 referendum, the Nationalists struggled to get Scots to imagine what an independent government might look like. The pandemic was just what the doctor ordered. Health is devolved under Britain's constitution, so Ms Sturgeon's administration has the trappings of a state-in-waiting. Unlike the rumpled, details-light Mr Johnson, she has given poised daily televised press conferences packed with useful information.

Pointing to rising support for independence, Sir John Curtice, of the University of Strathclyde, says that "some people may, in the wake of coronavirus, have bought into the argument that, 'You know what, maybe an independent Scotland could govern itself a wee bit better'." That perception is detached from reality. Scotland's outbreak has followed a distinctly British course. In early March Scotland's chief medical officer said the outbreak would mean "business as usual" for Scots, mirroring English scientific officials' optimism. As in England, hundreds of elderly Scots were discharged into care homes to free up hospital beds, which may have hastened the spread of the virus. Ms Sturgeon's administration is accused of covering up an outbreak at a conference in February. She was censured by Scotland's chief statistician for claiming that the virus was a fifth as prevalent in Scotland as in England. Scotland's excess mortality rate, a measure that accounts for different reporting methods in different states, is high.

Westminster has helped Scotland through the crisis. The Treasury has funded the furlough scheme which pays the wages of Scottish workers. The central government also runs a network of mobile-testing centres in Scotland and Scottish scientists sit on British expert committees.

The government has thus fulfilled the unionists' promise in the 2014 referendum that Britain would be Scotland's protector in hard times. Yet the appetite for separation has rarely been so high. The threat of a hard border between England and Scotland after divorce has been the unionists' trump card. But 37% of Scots polled in early July said border controls to stop covid "should already be happening", while a further 36% said they may be necessary in the future. Fewer than one in five opposed them.

Scottish Conservatives are worried. It was bad enough when nationalists had to build their case on solid foundations. Now they seem to be able to win the argument on soggy territory,

too. Says one despairing Tory: “How are we losing ground when the Union is working as it never has before?”

Document 2

Why the Covid-19 will hasten the break-up of Britain

www.newstatesman.com, August 19, 2020

by Alex Niven

After a long period of nationalist dominance in Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon has been acting during the crisis like the head of an independent nation in waiting

[...] By the third decade of the 21st century, in spite of major threats such as the knife-edge result of the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, the British state was just about surviving in the absence of any disruptive external shocks. Covid-19 will change all that. The Conservative establishment in England looks stronger than ever, with a large parliamentary majority, and a leader in Boris Johnson who remains popular.

Buttressed by a long period of nationalist dominance at Holyrood (and now also firm control of the Scottish fraction at Westminster), Nicola Sturgeon has been acting during the crisis like the head of an independent nation in waiting. In contrast to the muddled messaging emerging from Westminster, Sturgeon’s communications to the Scottish public during lockdown resembled those of more level-headed northern European nations in their clarity and decisiveness.

With support for independence consolidating north of the border, and with a savage contraction of the UK economy looming, it seems possible that the SNP will secure a second independence referendum before the end of the 2020s. In that event, it is likely that the Yes vote will prevail.

Meanwhile, in Ireland, the pandemic has exposed the absurdity of the constitutional anachronism that is partition. As Northern Irish residents were forced to look to a distant London government for overall leadership during the crisis, nationalist calls for an all-island response to the spread of the virus seemed increasingly persuasive.

With demographic changes likely to create a Catholic majority in the North in the next decade, and with Sinn Féin now a major force both north and south of the border, it seems reasonable to suggest that pressure for a border poll on unification will grow. (Dublin is far better positioned than London to coordinate an effective local response to emergencies such as Covid-19.)

Even within England, coronavirus has increased demands for greater devolution of power. Towards the end of the 2010s, the combined effects of a housing crisis and an increase in

remote working had started to reverse the London-centric economy of Britain, as professionals who did not have to be physically present in the capital started migrating to cheaper provincial cities.

The revolution in home working sparked by the lockdown will expedite this process. How long until the migratory flow away from London dovetails with debates about regional inequality to produce fundamental reforms in the governance of the English regions? For all the hollowness of Conservative talk about “levelling up”, Covid-19 and its accompanying recession will intensify the urgency of calls for a fairer spread of power and resources throughout England in the 2020s.

Given the enduring resourcefulness of British traditionalism, we should not expect a full-on, imminent collapse of the UK. But the history of the British Isles suggests that fundamental political change does often come about – after an interval, and with an element of messiness and compromise – in the wake of sudden and unforeseen disasters. Whatever comes next, let’s hope that it offers a better, more egalitarian model of statehood than the British unionist fantasy of stable, unchangeable national foundations that never really existed.

Document 3

Coronavirus: Foster criticises Irish unity claim by Sinn Féin

BBC, April 27, 2020, by Jayne McCormack

Arlene Foster has described as "regrettable" comments by the Sinn Féin president that Covid-19 is a greater accelerant towards a united Ireland than Brexit. Mary Lou McDonald said the pandemic showed the need for one approach across Ireland. In response, the DUP leader said some leaders were more interested in "constitutional navel-gazing". "My priority is to warn and to protect lives," she said. Also speaking at the daily Stormont press briefing, Sinn Féin's deputy leader Michelle O'Neill said her leader was not making a political point. On Monday, a further 10 hospital deaths in Northern Ireland were announced, bringing the total number of deaths recorded by the Public Health Agency in NI to 309. A further 66 positive cases have been recorded, bringing the total number in Northern Ireland to 3,374. In the Republic of Ireland, a further 18 deaths were confirmed on Monday, bringing the total to 1,102. Speaking at the press conference, Mrs Foster warned that the collective effort against coronavirus was far from over, and said if restrictions were lifted too quickly, the UK government and devolved institutions would be forced to "slam on the brakes again". She was then asked about the comments made by Mrs McDonald to the Sunday Times at the weekend. The Sinn Féin president had criticised the British Government's approach to Covid-19 and described the lack of a single health policy across the island of Ireland as "astonishing".

'Danger of partition'

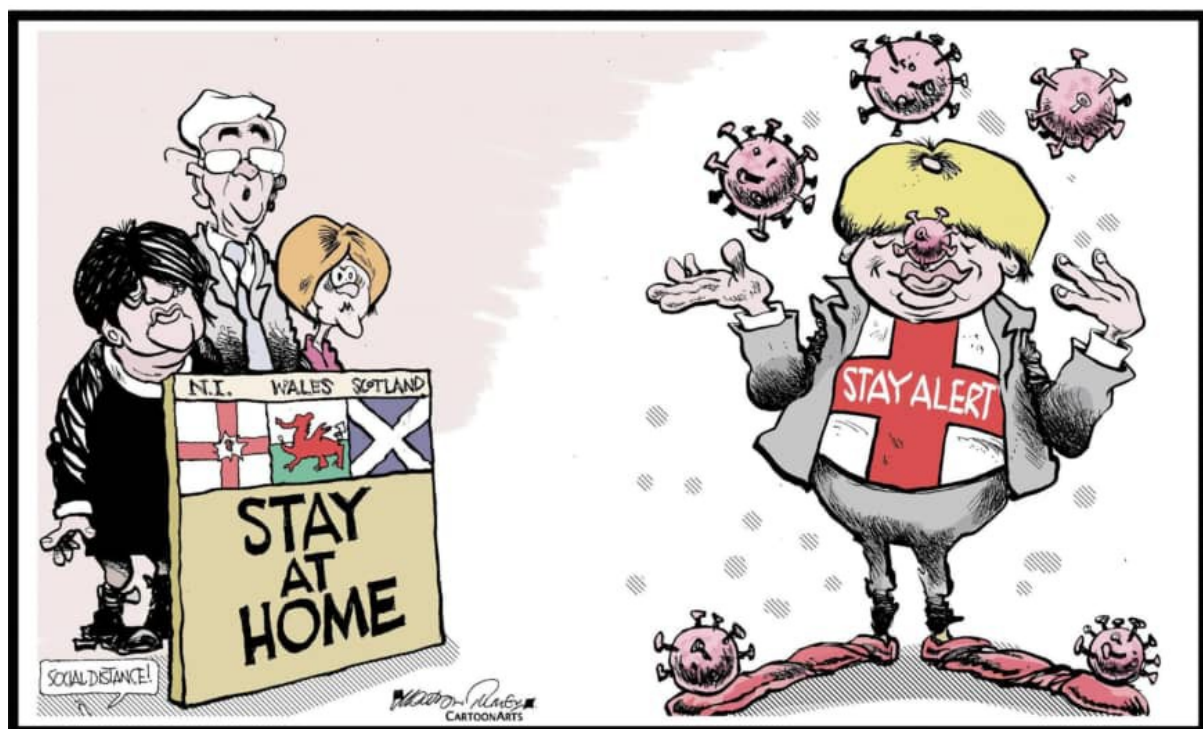
"When Brexit happened, people said this is an accelerant in terms of the unity debate, because it was so obvious with the danger to the border," she said. "I think this dwarfs Brexit

in terms of reflecting the danger of partition, the fact that it's not sustainable, and the necessity for us to work as one island. "Everything we do to keep people safe has to be on the understanding we are a single population on a small island and have to look after each other." However Mrs Foster accused some leaders of "having their priorities lie elsewhere" in the middle of a pandemic. "I do think it is regrettable that other leaders are interested in constitutional navel-gazing at this time," said the first minister. "My priority is to warn and to protect lives and that's what I'm focused on doing." The deputy first minister Michelle O'Neill said it was practical to have an all-island approach to public health. "It's not even a political point, it's a point of good, common sense," she told the press conference.

'No time for impatience'

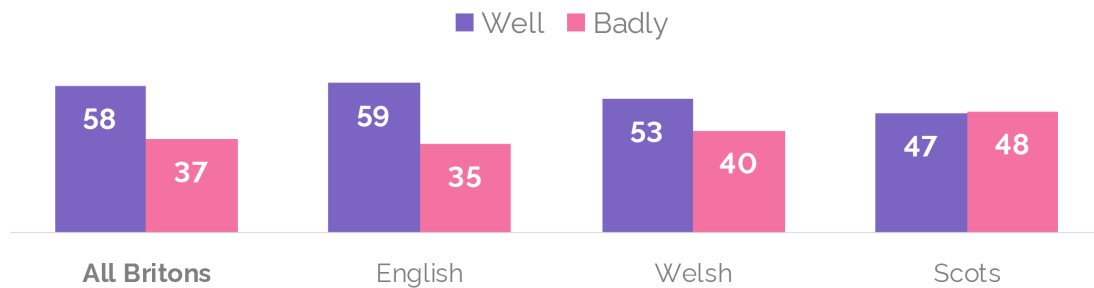
She also said there was already regular engagement with ministers in the Republic of Ireland, and that another north-south meeting would take place this Thursday. Both the first and deputy first ministers urged the public to continue following the guidance on social distancing. Ms O'Neill said there was "light at the end of the tunnel", and that more lives were being saved. "Having come so far it would be more than a crying shame to undo it, it would be catastrophic for a society as small as Northern Ireland," added Mrs Foster. "Now is not time for impatience to get the better of us."

Document 4



Scots are least likely to think the UK government is handling the coronavirus outbreak well

How well or badly do you think the UK Government is handling the coronavirus outbreak? %

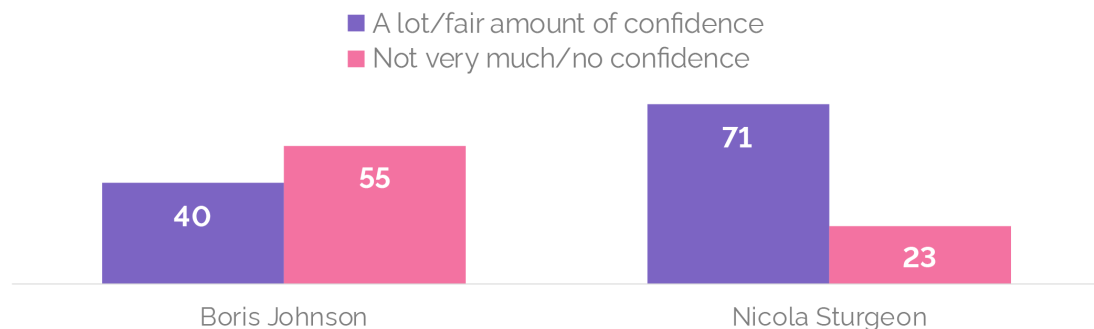


YouGov

24-27 April 2020

Scots have more confidence in Nicola Sturgeon than Boris Johnson to make the right decisions on coronavirus

How much confidence, if any, do you have in the following to make the right decisions when it comes to the coronavirus outbreak? % of 1,095 Scottish adults

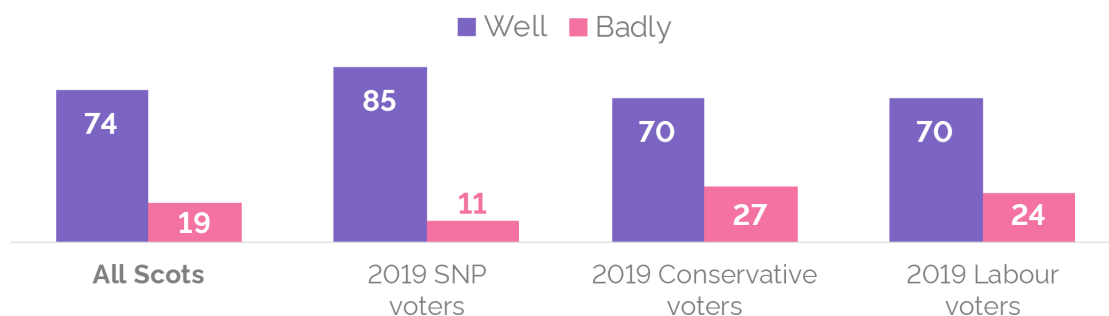


YouGov

24-27 April 2020

Three quarters of Scots think the Scottish government is handling coronavirus well

And how well or badly do you think the Scottish government is handling the coronavirus outbreak? % of 1,095 Scottish adults



YouGov

24-27 April 2020