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UNITE D'ENSEIGNEMENT ET DE RECHERCHE DE LETTRES ET SCIENCES HUMAINES			
Département : Langues Etrangères Appliquées			Date : 22 janv
Diplôme : DEUG	Niveau : 2	1 ^{er} Cycle	Heure : 13h30
Intitulé de l'épreuve : Civilisation britannique UE 311			Salle : Beaujeu palais.
Durée : 3 heure (s)			
Noms des professeurs responsables : Mmes. LE JEUNE et THIEC, MM. CARBONI et GRAHAM			

Please read the text on the next page and then answer the following questions.

1. What is the immediate context of the article. (Find some quotes to illustrate your answer.)
2. Explain the subtitle. (Find quotes in the text to illustrate your answer.)
3. Describe Michael Howard's position on Europe with reference to the fourth paragraph.
4. Explain the references to Michael Howard's political strategy against Tony Blair in the three underlined passages in the sixth paragraph (lines 45-65)
5. "Mr Howard has said he will lead his party from its centre, but the centre of the Conservative Party these days is a long way from the middle ground of British politics where elections are fought and won." (lines 67-70) Explain and develop this quote by referring to the history (its successes and failures) of the Conservative Party since Margaret Thatcher's election.

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NOTES

Bagehot : pen-name of the regular columnist, writing on current affairs in Britain, in *The Economist*, a weekly newspaper published in Britain

abrasive (line 6) : acting in a way that may hurt other people's feelings

messiah (line 7) : saviour

teetering (line 9) : being very close to a very unpleasant or dangerous situation

gumption (line 10) : common sense

eschewing (line 11) : deliberately avoiding

stymied (line 28) : prevented

a closet Tory (line 55) : a crypto-conservative ; a person who hides his conservative views and pretends to hold other views

to run a much tighter ship (line 58) : to manage his party in a more rigorous and more disciplined manner

Bagehot | The Howard effect

The Tories are right to be thankful for Michael Howard.



5 THERE has been something almost moving about the sudden outbreak of Tory euphoria accompanying the ascension (no other word seems appropriate) of Michael Howard. In a way, of course, it is slightly absurd. The new Conservative leader has been on something of a journey since the days when he was an abrasive and ideologically arrogant home secretary. But he is no messiah; rather, he is a highly capable old pro.

10 That is not to deny the importance of what has happened. Teetering on the edge of the abyss, Conservative MPs collectively discovered the gumption to step back. By dumping the wretched Iain Duncan Smith, eschewing the destructive pleasures of a leadership contest and choosing a serious, grown-up politician to lead them, they have opted for life over death. That British politics will be changed by what has happened over a remarkable 15 few days is certain; what is less clear, is by how much.

20 The biggest change will be a united Conservative Party. Assuming that Mr Howard overcomes his own hitherto small "c" conservative instincts and reaches out to the party's social liberals by including a fair sprinkling of them in his frontbench team, the Tories will be less divided than at any time since Thatcherism's heyday [..]

25 As a moderate Eurosceptic, Mr Howard is slap in the middle of today's Tory party. Whereas Mr Duncan Smith's finest hour was his sustained rebellion over the Maastricht treaty, Mr Howard was a steadfast member of a 1992-97 government that approached most European issues pragmatically. Given the remoteness of any decision to join the euro and the likelihood of further integration being stymied by the arrival of the ten accession countries, Europe should lose much of its political sting. If 30 Mr Howard is sensible, he will keep his party together by limiting himself to the reasonable-sounding demand for a referendum on the new European constitution. A promise to renegotiate it once it is ratified, although tempting, would look to some like a threat to withdraw from the Union altogether [..]

35 The significance of this new-found unity should not be underestimated. As any opinion pollster can demonstrate, nothing is more debilitating to electoral credibility than the impression of internal division. With good reason. A party preoccupied with its own affairs squanders the time and energy it needs to compete effectively in the political market-place. Many, if not most, of the Conservative Party's troubles stem from facing inwards rather than outwards. This meant that Tories failed to notice the way that society was changing and thus lost the ability to respond to the needs and concerns of their fellow citizens.

40 As well as unity, Mr Howard delivers competence. That too will make a change. The former barrister will bring much greater incisiveness to holding the government and, especially, the prime minister to account. The prime minister's staff are already trembling at the prospect of Mr Howard shredding Tony Blair's already rather tattered credibility when Lord Hutton delivers his report on the circumstances surrounding the death of the weapons scientist, David Kelly. Mr Howard will also enjoy teasing out the differences between Mr Blair and the chancellor, Gordon Brown, over Europe and public-sector reform. As far as public services are concerned, he will portray Mr Blair as a closet Tory who wants to do the right thing, but cannot because he is held back by Mr Brown and his doctrinaire party.

45 Mr Howard can also be relied upon to run a much tighter ship than his predecessors. He is a firm believer in process and will use it to enforce a philosophical coherence that has been lacking. In education, for example, interesting ideas about giving parents vouchers to buy secondary education for their children are at odds with a highly statist approach to university funding. A disciplined electoral strategy will be built around communicating a few core policies effectively—much as Labour did before 1997.

The centre holds

70 Questions, however, remain. Unity is all very well, but it is possible to be united in error. Mr Howard has said he will lead his party from its centre, but the centre of the Conservative Party these days is a long way from the middle ground of British politics where elections are fought and won. You only have to look at Tory MPs to see what an odd and unrepresentative lot many of them are. Had Mr Blair chosen to lead Labour from its mid-1990s centre, its electoral rehabilitation would have been stillborn.

75 Mr Howard has also pronounced himself—a little too speedily—satisfied with the policies developed under his predecessor. Some of these, if they are carefully developed, have the potential to be as attractive to voters as Margaret Thatcher's sale of council houses. But others just look like expensive, uncosted bribes to the affluent middle classes. If Mr Howard really believes that he already has the basis for constructing a new, popular Tory majority, he is deluding himself.

80 That the Tories will do better under the clever and experienced Mr Howard is not in doubt. But whether he manages to change things a lot or only a little may ultimately depend on how much he has personally changed. And that is something which nobody, not even Mr Howard himself, yet knows. ■