

UNIVERSITE du SUD TOULON - VAR
FACULTÉ des LETTRES & SCIENCES HUMAINES

Session de JANVIER 2010 – LICENCE SEMESTRE 1

Département d'anglais – UE 13 CIVILISATION

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SUJET DE CIVILISATION BRITANNIQUE (M. DARRIBEAUDE)

QUESTIONNAIRE

The document

- 1) Present the article (source, background, summary)

N B To answer the following questions, you need to use either your knowledge or the article or both.

Paragraph 1

- 2) What is the “*Union flag*”?
- 3) What is Buckingham Palace? Where is it located?
- 4) Why is the Palace of Westminster “*the home of parliamentary democracy*”?
- 5) Name other British national symbols.

Paragraph 2

- 6) What is “*devolution*”?
- 7) Why could it “*undermine [Britons’] sense of national identity*”?

Paragraph 4

- 8) “*The post-war era has seen the decline of many of the institutions that traditionally bound the peoples of the British Isles together (...)*”: what is the article alluding to here?

Paragraph 5

- 9) Why is it difficult “*to reinvent Britishness’ as a collection of different identities that draws strength from its diversity*”?

Paragraph 10

- 10) Comment on Gordon Brown’s view of Britain as “*the first successful multicultural, multiethnic and multinational country in the world*”.

A Nation Asks: What Exactly Does It Mean to Be British?

By Tom Buerkle

International Herald Tribune

May 5, 1999

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1 LONDON— To judge by its symbols, the state of Britain is as solid and enduring as ever. The guard changes daily at Buckingham Palace, the Beefeaters patrol the cobbled paths inside the Tower of London, and the Union flag flies proudly over the Palace of Westminster, the home of parliamentary democracy.

2 But as voters launched a historic experiment in self-government with elections in Scotland and Wales on Thursday, the big question facing Britons was whether the devolution of political power would undermine their sense of national identity.

3 The very notion of what it means to be British, and whether Britain itself is a useful entity for the 21st century, are the subject of an increasingly intense debate here, one that belies the popular impression of a timeless country with nearly 1,000 years of unbroken history.

4 The post-war era has seen the decline of many of the institutions that traditionally bound the peoples of the British Isles together, while the transformation of Welsh and Scottish cultural identities into political power shows signs of awakening English nationalism. With globalization pushing people to reassert local identities from Quebec to northern Italy, some people even question whether the United Kingdom itself can survive indefinitely.

5 "Many factors behind the Union have ceased to operate, like Empire and the dominance of Protestantism, or are coming under strain, such as the cult of the monarchy," said Linda Colley, a historian at the London School of Economics. Ms. Colley, whose views are widely admired inside the government of Prime Minister Tony Blair, says the country needs to "reinvent Britishness" as a collection of different identities that draws strength from its diversity.

6 Pronouncements about the death of Britain are no doubt premature. Mr. Blair's Labour Party seemed set to win the largest bloc of seats in Scotland and Wales after campaigning in defense of the Union and warning of the potential economic and political costs of independence.

7 Still, evidence abounds of shifting loyalties in Britain. According to recent polls, roughly two-thirds of people in Scotland identify themselves as Scottish rather than British, a finding that has echoes in Wales and Northern Ireland.

8 In what many people here perceived as the ultimate irony, the British Broadcasting Corp. recently warned its own programmers about using the term "British," because Scots get angry if English soccer hooligans are referred to as British, or referring to Britain as a "nation," since many Scots and Welsh consider themselves nations within the United Kingdom.

(...)

9 Gordon Brown, the chancellor of the Exchequer who helped revive the Labour Party's election campaign in Scotland by championing constitutional reform, insists that devolution will preserve Britain by making government more responsive to local needs. Britishness today is best defined not by unchanged institutions but by common values shared by diverse peoples, such as "being creative, adaptable and outward-looking, believing in liberty, duty and fair play," he said in a recent speech.

10 "We can be proud of a Britain, which becomes the first successful multicultural, multiethnic and multinational country in the world," Mr. Brown said.

11 The success of Labour's campaign and the decline in support for Scottish independence, which polls indicate only a minority would favor, suggest that Mr. Brown's vision is shared by many Britons.

(...)

12 Devolution risks a backlash in England itself because the political changes have drawn fresh attention to the way in which power and money is shared in the country. Thanks to a 1970s formula that took account of Scotland's geographic isolation, the British government spends 22 percent more per person in Scotland than in England, or £4,772 (\$7,800) last year compared with £3,897.

13 Meanwhile, after obtaining its own Parliament, Scotland will still have 72 members in the British House of Commons, who will be able to vote on matters affecting England even though English members will have no say over issues like education and health in Scotland. Scots dominate the cabinet, including Mr. Brown at the Treasury, Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, Defense Minister George Robertson and Lord Chancellor Derry Irvine, the top judicial official.

14 "The Scots used to be cold and needy," said Teresa Gorman, a Tory member of Parliament. "Now they're bold and greedy. Sooner or later it's going to get up the noses of England."