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EXAMEN COMMUN D'ENTREE EN PREMIERE ANNEE

EPREUVE D'ANGLAIS

SAMEDI 20 MAI 2017

13h30 à 18h00

(durée conseillée : 1h30)

coeff. 2

Ce sujet est composé de 4 pages

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

[Aucun document autorisé]

Blair is right on Brexit : Parliament must have a democratic debate

The Guardian, Anatole Kaletsky, 24 February 2017

Former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair's recent call for voters to think again about leaving the EU, echoed in parliamentary debates ahead of the government's official launch of the process in March, is an emperor's new clothes moment. [...] Such is the tyranny of the majority in post-referendum Britain that a "remainer" proposal for rational debate and persuasion is considered an insurrection. And anyone questioning government policy on Brexit is routinely described as an "enemy of the people," whose treachery will provoke "blood in the streets."

What explains this sudden paranoia? After all, political opposition is a necessary condition for functioning democracy – and nobody would have been shocked if Eurosceptics continued to oppose Europe after losing the referendum [...].

The difference with Brexit is that last June's referendum subverted British democracy in two insidious ways. First, the leave vote was inspired mainly by resentments unconnected with Europe. Second, the government has exploited this confusion of issues to claim a mandate to do anything it wants.

Six months before the referendum, the EU did not even appear among the 10 most important issues facing Britain as mentioned by potential voters. Immigration did rank at the top, but, as Blair noted in his speech, anti-immigration sentiment was mainly against multicultural immigration, which had little or nothing to do with the EU. The leave campaign's strategy was therefore to open a Pandora's box of resentments over regional imbalances, economic inequality, social values and cultural change. The remain campaign completely failed to respond to this, because it concentrated on the question that was literally on the ballot, and addressed the costs and benefits of EU membership.

The fact that the referendum was such an amorphous but all-encompassing protest vote explains its second politically corrosive effect. Because the leave campaign successfully combined a multitude of different grievances, May now claims the referendum as an open-ended mandate. [...] Anyone who disagrees is dismissed as an elitist "remoaner" showing contempt for ordinary voters.

Making matters worse, the obvious risks of Brexit have created a siege mentality. “Successful Brexit” has become a matter of national survival, turning even the mildest proposals to limit the government’s negotiating options – for example, parliamentary votes to guarantee rights for EU citizens already living in Britain – into acts of sabotage. As in
35 wartime, every criticism shades into treason. That is why the Labour party has collaborated in defeating all parliamentary efforts to moderate May’s hardline Brexit plans, even on such relatively uncontentious issues as visa-free travel, pharmaceutical testing or science funding.

40 [...] But this scenario is not inevitable. A more constructive possibility is now emerging along the lines suggested by Blair. Instead of vainly trying to influence May’s hardline stance in the negotiations, the new priority should be to restart a rational debate about Britain’s relationship with Europe and to convince the public that this debate is democratically legitimate.

45 This means challenging the idea that a referendum permanently outweighs all other mechanisms of democratic politics and persuading voters that a referendum mandate refers to a specific question in specific conditions, at a specific time. If the conditions change or the referendum question acquires a different meaning, voters should be allowed to change their minds.

50 The process of restoring a proper understanding of democracy could start within the next few weeks. The catalyst would be amendments to the Brexit legislation now passing through Parliament. The goal would be to prevent any new relationship between Britain and the EU from taking effect unless approved by a parliamentary vote that allowed for the possibility of continuing EU membership. [...]

55 Allowing Parliament to decide about the new relationship with Europe, instead of leaving it entirely up to May, would restore the principle of parliamentary sovereignty. More important, it would legitimise a new political debate in Britain about the true costs and benefits of EU membership, possibly leading to a second referendum on the government’s Brexit plans.

This is precisely why May vehemently opposes giving Parliament any meaningful voice on
60 the outcome of the Brexit negotiations. Presumably, she will block any such requirement from being attached to the Brexit legislation in March. But that may not matter: if a genuine debate about Brexit gets restarted, democracy will prevent her from closing it down.

A. Reading comprehension (8 points).

Please use your own words and do NOT copy from the text.
40/45 words are expected per question.

1. Why was Blair right according to the journalist? (2 points)
2. Why does the journalist suggest that the vote in favour of Brexit was not really a vote on the UK's EU membership? (2 points)
3. Why is the Labour Party so timid in its opposition to the government (2 points)
4. How can a "rational debate" on Brexit be restarted at this stage? (2 points)

B. Synonyms (4 points)

Find ONE synonym in the text for the following words.
Be careful, the words are given in the order of the text but some may be verbs and are here given in the infinitive form.

1. Reasonable
2. Undermine
3. Complaints
4. Uncompromising
5. Uncontroversial
6. Persuade
7. Result
8. Authentic

C. Essay (8 points)

Write an essay of 300 words (+/-10%) on the following subject:

In what ways is Brexit the result of a troubled relationship between the UK and its European partners?