

ANALYSE ET COMMENTAIRE DE TEXTES OU DOCUMENTS EN ANGLAIS

Durée : 6 heures

Analysez et commentez, **en anglais**, les cinq documents suivants:

DOCUMENT ONE

The American Revolution sharply weakened the noblesse oblige, hierarchically rooted, organic community values which had been linked to Tory sentiments, and enormously strengthened the individualistic, egalitarian, and anti-statist ones which had been present in the settler and religious background of the colonies. These values were evident in the twentieth-century fact that, as H. G. Wells pointed out close to ninety years ago, the United States not only has lacked a viable socialist party, but also has never developed a British or European-type Conservative or Tory party. Rather, America has been dominated by pure bourgeois, middle-class individualistic values. As Wells put it: “Essentially America is a middle-class [which has] become a community and so its essential problems are the problems of a modern individualistic society, stark and clear.” He enunciated a theory of America as a liberal society, in the classic anti-statist meaning of the term:

It is not difficult to show for example, that the two great political parties in America represent only one English party, the middle-class Liberal party. . . . There are no Tories . . . and no Labour Party. . . . [T]he new world [was left] to the Whigs and Nonconformists and to those less constructive, less logical, more popular and liberating thinkers who became Radicals in England, and Jeffersonians and then Democrats in America. All Americans are, from the English point of view, Liberals of one sort or another. . . . The liberalism of the eighteenth century was essentially the rebellion . . . against the monarchical and aristocratic state—against hereditary privilege, against restrictions on bargains. Its spirit was essentially anarchistic—the antithesis of Socialism. It was anti-State. . . .

The United States is viewed by many as the great conservative society, but it may also be seen as the most classically liberal polity in the developed world. To understand the exceptional nature of American politics, it is necessary to recognize, with H. G. Wells, that conservatism, as defined outside of the United States, is particularly weak in this country. Conservatism in Europe and Canada, derived from the historic alliance of church and government, is associated with the emergence of the welfare state. The two names most identified with it are Bismarck and Disraeli. Both were leaders of the conservatives (Tories) in their countries. They represented the rural and aristocratic elements, sectors which disdained capitalism, disliked the bourgeoisie, and rejected materialistic values. Their politics reflected the values of noblesse oblige, the obligation of the leaders of society and the economy to protect the less fortunate.

The semantic confusion about liberalism in America arises because both early and latter-day Americans never adopted the term to describe the unique American polity. The reason is simple. The American system of government existed long before the word “liberal” emerged in Napoleonic Spain and was subsequently accepted as referring to a particular party in mid-nineteenth-century England, as distinct from the Tory or Conservative Party. What Europeans have called “liberalism,” Americans refer to as “conservatism”: a deeply anti-statist doctrine emphasizing the virtues of laissez-faire. Ronald Reagan and Milton Friedman, the two current names most frequently linked with this ideology, define conservatism in America. And as Friedrich Hayek, its most important European exponent noted, it includes the rejection of aristocracy, social class hierarchy, and an established state church. . . .

Canada's most distinguished conservative intellectual, George Grant, emphasized in his *Lament for a Nation* that “Americans who call themselves ‘Conservatives’ have the right to that title only in a particular sense. In fact, they are old-fashioned liberals. . . . Their concentration on freedom from governmental interference has more to do with nineteenth century liberalism than with traditional conservatism, which asserts the right of the community to restrain freedom in the name of the common good.” Grant bemoaned the fact that American conservatism, with its stress on the virtues of competition and links to business ideology, focuses on the rights of individuals and ignores communal

rights and obligations. He noted that there has been no place in the American political philosophy “for the organic conservatism that predates the age of progress. Indeed, the United States is the only society on earth that has no traditions from before the age of progress.”

Seymour Martin Lipset
American Exceptionalism: A Double Edged Sword, 1996 (adapted)

DOCUMENT TWO

It is a great honor to be asked to be the inaugural speaker of this series of Lectures on the Principles of Conservatism, organized to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Heritage Foundation. Heritage has flown the flag for conservatism over this last quarter-century with pride and distinction.

5 I've always considered America fortunate in having an apparently inexhaustible supply of conservative thinkers prepared to challenge the fashionable liberal consensus. That is a tribute to the intellectual energy and the taste for debate which are so characteristic of this great country and which sometimes seem distressingly absent in contemporary Europe. But it is also a tribute to Heritage ... that these conservative thinkers have been motivated and sustained in their mission.

10 It is no less an honor—and, dare I say, still more of a pleasure—to be invited here on the occasion of the presentation of the Clare Booth Luce award to my old friend Ronald Reagan.

President Reagan is one of the greatest men of our time, and one of the greatest American Presidents of all time. If that is not fully appreciated today, and sadly it is not, it isn't really surprising. After all, so many people have been proved wrong by Ronald Reagan that they simply daren't acknowledge his achievement. ...

15 Right from the beginning, Ronald Reagan set out to challenge everything that the liberal political elite of America accepted and sought to propagate. They believed that America was doomed to decline. He believed it was destined for further greatness. They imagined that sooner or later there would be convergence between the free Western system and the socialist Eastern system, and that some kind of social democratic outcome was inevitable. He, by contrast, considered that socialism was
20 a patent failure, which should be cast onto the trash heap of history. They thought that the problem with America was the American people, though they didn't quite put it like that. He thought that the problem with America was the American government, and he did put it just like that. ...

25 After all, if you believe that it's business success that creates prosperity and jobs, you leave business as free as you possibly can to succeed. If you think that it's governments—taxing, spending, regulating and printing money—that distort the business environment and penalize success you stop government doing these things. If, at the deepest level, you have confidence in the talent and enterprise of your own people, you express that confidence, you give them faith and hope: Ronald Reagan did all these things—and it worked.

30 Today's American prosperity in the late 1990s is the result, above all, of the fundamental shift of direction President Reagan promoted in the 1980s. Perhaps it's something of an irony that it's an administration of instinctive spenders and regulators that now is reaping much of the political reward. But we conservatives shouldn't really be that surprised; for it was the departure from some of those conservative principles, after Ronald Reagan and I left office, that left conservative politicians in both our countries out in the cold. One of Thatcher's iron laws is that conservative governments which put
35 up taxes lose elections....

America's duty is to lead: the other Western countries' duty is to support its leadership. Different countries will contribute in different ways. Britain is closer to the United States by culture, language and history than is any other European country; British public opinion is therefore readier to back American initiatives; moreover, Britain's highly professional armed forces allow us to make a
40 unique practical contribution when the necessity arises.

But the fundamental equation holds good for all of us: provided Western countries unite under American leadership, the West will remain the dominant global influence; if we do not, the opportunity for rogue states and new tyrannical powers to exploit our divisions will increase, and so will the danger to all.

45 So the task for conservatives today is to revive a sense of Western identity, unity and resolve. The West is after all not just some ephemeral Cold-War construct: it is the core of a civilization, which has carried all before it, transforming the outlook and pattern of life of every continent. It is time to

50 proclaim our beliefs in the wonderful creativity of the human spirit, in the rights of property and the rule of law, in the extraordinary fruitfulness of enterprise and trade, and in the Western cultural heritage without which our liberty would long ago have degenerated into license or collapsed into tyranny.

55 These are as much the tasks of today as they were of yesterday, as much the duty of conservative believers now as they were when Ronald Reagan and I refused to accept the decline of the West as our ineluctable destiny. As the poet said:

That which thy fathers bequeathed thee
Earn it anew if thou would'st possess it.

“The Principles of Conservatism”: Margaret Thatcher’s Lecture to the Heritage Foundation
December 10, 1997 (adapted).

DOCUMENT THREE

5 In October 1976, the philosopher Anthony Quinton was invited to deliver the T. S. Eliot memorial lectures at the University of Kent. He took as his topic the history of conservative thought in England, tracing a lineage that stretched from the Tudor thinker Richard Hooker, via Bolingbroke, Burke and Disraeli, to the 20th-century political theorist Michael Oakeshott. The conservatism espoused by these thinkers was, Quinton argued, a “politics of imperfection”—that is, their views about the nature and proper extent of government were rooted in a vision of human weakness. . . .

10 When Quinton gave his lectures, the capture of the Conservative Party by the neoliberal “New Right” was not yet complete, but he knew which way the wind was blowing. Looking across the Atlantic, Quinton noted that in the United States, in “colloquial speech . . . a conservative is a defender of legislatively untrammelled free enterprise, of the absolute rights of property ownership, with an eccentric fringe of adherents who drive around in vans with placards on them, proclaiming the unconstitutional character of the federal income tax”. Conservatism, in other words, had congealed into an ideology, a set of inflexible principles. To be a “conservative” was simply to hold a particular bundle of beliefs—about socialised medicine, taxation, the minimal state and so on.

15 By the mid-1980s, this was true of British conservatism, too. And in remaking itself in the image of the American Republican right, the Conservative Party forgot not only Burke's warnings about the dangers of a priori theorising in politics (like other experimental sciences, he wrote, the “science of building a commonwealth” cannot be taught as if it were logic), but also Disraeli's concern with the ravaging effects of an unchecked free market.

20 During his second stint as prime minister, between 1874 and 1880, Disraeli had overseen wide-ranging legislation designed to mitigate the depredations of industrial capitalist expansion. The Employers and Workmen Act and the Public Health Act, both passed in 1875, were part of an attempt to impose on the owners of industrial property the kinds of obligations to the propertyless that had in the past been assumed by rural squires. It could be argued, moreover, that Disraeli was the first British politician to accept that it was one of the responsibilities of the state to provide essential public services; and that, in doing so, he took the first steps, however tentative, towards the establishment of the welfare state. That is certainly the revisionist view of Marquand, who sees the Beveridge report as being as much a victory for the “Whig imperialist” tradition, in which he counts Burke and Disraeli, as it was a triumph for Keynesianism.

30 So, rather than railing against the spread of big cities and the growing influence of the commercial spirit, Disraeli recognised that these changes were largely irreversible. The task of a conservative politics, therefore, was not to take refuge in a kind of reactionary immobilism or nostalgia, but rather to work to attenuate the most serious consequences of a new set of social conditions.

35 In this, as in other respects, Disraeli was a Burkean. He understood that, in Burke, the “disposition to preserve” had combined with an “ability to improve”. His most substantial work of political theory, the *Vindication of the English Constitution* (1835), is, among other things, a paean to what he calls the “spirit of conservation and optimism”. (The *Vindication* is also a thoroughgoing attack on Benthamite utilitarianism, which Disraeli regarded as the attempt to measure or judge

40 political institutions according to a formal principle—the principle of utility, according to which an action or policy is desirable to the extent that it promotes the “greatest happiness of the greatest number”. He thought that rule hopelessly abstract: it may well be the task of government to increase happiness, but it is always the happiness of some particular group or other, not the sum of “human happiness”, whatever that might be.)

45 Disraeli saw that Burke's traditionalism, the view that political knowledge was a matter not of logic, but of accumulated collective wisdom, did not entail a belief in the restoration of an earlier, putatively ideal state of affairs. “A state without the means of some change,” Burke had written, “is without the means of its conservation.” Conservatism, in other words, is not the same as counter-revolution.

50 This distinction between conservatism, on the one hand, and counter-revolutionary or reactionary revanchisme, on the other, is one that contemporary conservatives (and Conservatives) of various stripes would do well to remember. When, for example, a cultural fundamentalist such as Peter Hitchens complains that there is no room for “conservatives” in the modern Conservative Party, what he really means is that those who, like him, yearn to overturn the post-1960s settlement in personal mores no longer have a place, or at least a voice, in a party which, under Cameron's leadership, has finally reached an accommodation with the “cultural, sexual and moral revolutions”. Whatever horrors one might have to fear from a Cameron government, the restoration of Section 28 [which outlawed the promotion of homosexuality as a normal family unit in British schools] will surely not be among them.

60 Cameron grasped very quickly that making the Tories electable would demand, among other things, undoing their reputation as the “nasty party”, a rebarbative, reactionary rump ill at ease with the cultural and social transformations of the past 40 years. What is much less clear, however, is whether he understands exactly why the Conservatives found themselves imprisoned in that revanchist dead end in the first place.

65 The clearest assessment from within the party of the Conservatives' predicament in the years immediately before and after their cataclysmic defeat in the 1997 election has come from Cameron's own front bench. In May this year, David Willetts, shadow secretary of state for universities and skills, argued in an article for *Prospect* magazine that the “core of the crisis” lay in the fact that the Conservatives had allowed it to appear as if their “understanding of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*” was not accompanied by an “underlying account of our moral sentiments”; as if they did not know, as Disraeli had known, that the father of the free market was also acutely aware of the “disadvantages of a commercial spirit”.

70 The Tories, rather than acknowledge that the free-market reforms of the 1980s had unleashed forces that were highly corrosive of the “shared understandings” and institutions on which the party's “historic success” had rested, retreated into a cultural atavism that blamed the decomposition of family and community life on, in no particular order, the 1960s, comprehensive education and the malign influence of a libertarian metropolitan elite. Progressive or “civic” conservatism of the sort espoused by Willetts and Cameron does not entail the repudiation of the free market. But it does require a recognition that human beings are not motivated solely by, as Disraeli once put it, a “desire of power and a desire of property”.

Jonathan Derbyshire

“The Meaning of Conservatism”

The New Statesman, 8 October 2009 (adapted).

DOCUMENT FOUR

If physical force is to be barred from social relationships, men need an institution in charge of protecting their rights under an *objective* code of rules.

This is the task of a government—of a *proper* government—its basic task, its only moral justification and the reason why men do need a government.

5 *A government is the means of placing the retaliatory use of physical force under objective control*—i.e., under objectively defined laws.

10 The fundamental difference between private action and governmental action—a difference thoroughly ignored and evaded today—lies in the fact that a government holds a monopoly on the legal use of physical force. It has to hold such a monopoly, since it is the agent of restraining and combating the use of force; and for that very same reason, its actions have to be rigidly defined, delimited and circumscribed; no touch of whim or caprice should be permitted in its performance; it should be an impersonal robot, with the laws as its only motive power. If a society is to be free, its government has to be controlled.

15 Under a proper social system, a private individual is legally free to take any action he pleases (so long as he does not violate the rights of others), while a government official is bound by law in his every official act. A private individual may do anything except that which is legally *forbidden*; a government official may do nothing except that which is legally *permitted*.

20 This is the means of subordinating “might” to “right.” This is the American concept of “a government of laws and not of men.”... The proper functions of a government fall into three broad categories, all of them involving the issues of physical force and the protection of men’s rights: the police, to protect men from criminals—the armed services, to protect men from foreign invaders—the law courts, to settle disputes among men according to objective laws. ...

25 In mankind’s history, the understanding of the government’s proper function is a very recent achievement: it is only two hundred years old and it dates from the Founding Fathers of the American Revolution. Not only did they identify the nature and the needs of a free society, but they devised the means to translate it into practice. A free society—like any other human product—cannot be achieved by random means, by mere wishing or by the leaders’ “good intentions.” A complex legal system, based on *objectively* valid principles, is required to make a society free and to *keep it free*—a system that does not depend on the motives, the moral character or the intentions of any given official, a system that leaves no opportunity, no legal loophole for the development of tyranny.

30 The American system of checks and balances was just such an achievement. And although some contradictions in the Constitution did leave a loophole for the growth of statism, the incomparable achievement was the concept of a Constitution as a means of limiting and restricting the power of the government.

35 Today, when a concerted effort is made to obliterate this point, it cannot be repeated too often that the Constitution is a limitation on the government, not on private individuals—that it does not prescribe the conduct of private individuals, only the conduct of government—that it is not a charter *for* government power, but a charter of the citizens’ protection *against* the government.

40 Now consider the extent of the moral and political inversion in today’s prevalent view of government. Instead of being a protector of man’s rights, the government is becoming their most dangerous violator; instead of guarding freedom, the government is establishing slavery; instead of protecting men from the initiators of physical force, the government is initiating physical force and coercion in any manner and issue it pleases; instead of serving as the instrument of *objectivity* in human relationships, the government is creating a deadly, subterranean reign of uncertainty and fear, by means of nonobjective laws whose interpretation is left to the arbitrary decisions of random bureaucrats; instead of protecting men from injury by whim, the government is arrogating to itself the power of unlimited whim—so that we are fast approaching the stage of the ultimate inversion: the stage where the government is *free* to do anything it pleases, while the citizens may act only by *permission*; which is the stage of the darkest periods of human history, the stage of rule by brute force.

Ayn Rand, *The Virtue of Selfishness—A New Concept of Egoism*
Excerpt from Chapter 14, “The Nature of Government”, December 1963 (italics in the text.)

DOCUMENT FIVE

5 The American colonies were first settled by Protestant dissenters. These were people who refused to submit to the established religious authorities. They sought personal relationships with God. They moved to the frontier when life got too confining. They created an American creed, built, as the sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset put it, around liberty, individualism, equal opportunity, populism and laissez-faire.

This creed shaped America and evolved with the decades. Starting in the mid-20th century, there was a Southern and Western version of it, formed by ranching Republicans like Barry
10 Goldwater, Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush. Their version drew on the traditional tenets: ordinary
people are capable of greatness; individuals have the power to shape their destinies; they should be
given maximum freedom to do so.

This is not an Ayn Randian, radically individualistic belief system. Republicans in this mold
15 place tremendous importance on churches, charities and families — on the sort of pastoral work Mitt
Romney does and the sort of community groups Representative Paul Ryan celebrated in a speech at
Cleveland State University last month.

But this worldview is innately suspicious of government. Its adherents generally believe in the
20 equation that more government equals less individual and civic vitality. Growing beyond proper
limits, government saps initiative, sucks resources, breeds a sense of entitlement and imposes a stifling
uniformity on the diverse webs of local activity.

During the 2012 campaign, Republicans kept circling back to the spot where government
25 expansion threatens personal initiative: you didn't build that; makers versus takers; the supposed
dependency of the 47 percent. Again and again, Republicans argued that the vital essence of the
country is threatened by overweening government. These economic values played well in places with
a lot of Protestant dissenters and their cultural heirs. They struck chords with people whose
30 imaginations are inspired by the frontier experience. But, each year, there are more Americans whose
cultural roots lie elsewhere. Each year, there are more people from different cultures, with different
attitudes toward authority, different attitudes about individualism, different ideas about what makes
people enterprising. More important, people in these groups are facing problems not captured by the
fundamental Republican equation: more government = less vitality.

The Pew Research Center does excellent research on Asian-American and Hispanic values.
35 Two findings jump out. First, people in these groups have an awesome commitment to work. By most
measures, members of these groups value industriousness more than whites. Second, they are also
tremendously appreciative of government. In survey after survey, they embrace the idea that some
government programs can incite hard work, not undermine it; enhance opportunity, not crush it.

Moreover, when they look at the things that undermine the work ethic and threaten their
40 chances to succeed, it's often not government. It's a modern economy in which you can work more
productively, but your wages still don't rise. It's a bloated financial sector that just sent the world into
turmoil. It's a university system that is indispensable but unaffordable. It's chaotic neighborhoods that
can't be cured by withdrawing government programs. For these people, the Republican equation is
irrelevant. When they hear Romney talk abstractly about Big Government vs. Small Government, they
45 think: He doesn't get me or people like me.

Let's just look at one segment, Asian-Americans. Many of these people are leading the lives
50 Republicans celebrate. They are, disproportionately, entrepreneurial, industrious and family-oriented.
Yet, on Tuesday, Asian-Americans rejected the Republican Party by 3 to 1. They don't relate to the
Republican equation that more government = less work.

Over all, Republicans have lost the popular vote in five out of the six post-cold-war elections
55 because large parts of the country have moved on. The basic Republican framing no longer resonates.
Some Republicans argue that they can win over these rising groups with a better immigration policy.
That's necessary but insufficient. The real problem is economic values. If I were given a few minutes
with the Republican billionaires, I'd say: spend less money on marketing and more on product
development. Spend less on "super PACs" and more on research. Find people who can shift the debate
away from the abstract frameworks — like Big Government vs. Small Government. Find people who
can go out with notebooks and study specific, grounded everyday problems: what exactly does it take
these days to rise? What exactly happens to the ambitious kid in Akron at each stage of life in this new
economy? What are the best ways to rouse ambition and open fields of opportunity? Don't get hung
up on whether the federal government is 20 percent or 22 percent of G.D.P. Let Democrats be the
party of security, defending the 20th-century welfare state. Be the party that celebrates work and
inflames enterprise. Use any tool, public or private, to help people transform their lives.

David Brooks, "The Party of Work"
The New York Times, November 8, 2012