

Prêt-à-réviser

sous la coordination de Joël Cascade

ANGLAIS



80 fiches

Culture et civilisation

Classes prépas
Licence

B2/C1

avec
exercices
corrigés

2^e édition mise à jour

Grande-Bretagne

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Dans la même collection dirigée par Joël Cascade

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Avant-propos



Cet ouvrage de fiches culturelles au sens large – culture littéraire et civilisation, culturelle générale sur des faits de société – est centré sur le monde anglophone : La Grande-Bretagne, les États-Unis et le Commonwealth. De nombreuses fiches ont été en effet consacrées à la découverte des pays du Commonwealth.

Il offre une initiation à plusieurs domaines des cultures du monde anglophone, à travers une *factsheet* de trois pages rédigées en anglais. Après la présentation, vous trouverez des exercices très variés qui vous permettront de vérifier vos connaissances, de vous assurer que la fiche a bien été comprise, de vous faire progresser en assimilant les connaissances de base nécessaire à toute culture générale. Un corrigé se trouve en fin d'ouvrage. Une annexe chronologique clôture le livre, où est synthétisé l'ensemble des événements historiques et culturels les plus marquants du monde anglophone, en adoptant là aussi une approche tripartite–USA, Grande-Bretagne et le Commonwealth.

La présentation sous forme de fiche prête à réviser se veut avant tout pratique et, nous l'espérons aussi, utile pour enrichir la culture générale de tout préparatoire aux examens universitaires et aux concours des Grandes Ecoles, en anglais. Tel est le souhait le plus vif des auteurs de cet ouvrage.

Les auteurs

Prêt-à-réviser

Part 1. Britain

■ Small Government Ideology and Practice Past and Present

To “roll back the frontiers of the State”: with this radical statement of intent, the British Conservative Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, advocated a “hands-off” policy for central government especially as far as the economy was concerned. Rightly or wrongly (1), “Thatcherite politics” came to be synonymous with a decline in society’s Welfare State provision and the rise of the individualistic market based economy (2).

As the recent film *The Iron Lady* clearly shows, back in Thatcher’s turbulent eighties, this concept of the greedy society was pilloried by the Opposition and the Trade Union movement who resented mass privatisation leading to the sacrifice of whole communities such as the coal miners (3) or the steel workers. Though hailed as a courageous, economic visionary by staunch Tory supporters, Thatcher bequeathed social division through her dogmatic public refusal to negotiate: “This lady’s not for turning,” she once remarked at a Conservative Party conference.

In the context of economic recession, others on the political right, espoused the guiding principle behind Thatcher’s economic policy, namely that the State can not afford to step in and foot the bill (4) for a failing industrial sector. With rapid globalisation, competitiveness for industry revolves around increased cost-effectiveness and cost-cutting and not repeated bailouts from central government. David Cameron and Mitt Romney back in 2012 lambasted left-wing opponents for profligate spending. Running at approximately 16 trillion dollars the state budget deficit in the US leaves the country teetering on the brink of a financial cliff.

The alternative to Obama’s stimulus plans was to eliminate “every non-essential expensive government programme” which was to include repealing the controversial healthcare reform dubbed “Obamacare”. Trump, the newly elected President in 2016, attempted and failed to do just this provoking the ire of even senior Republicans like Senator John McCain who travelled to Washington despite being gravely ill to vote down Trump’s anti Obamacare bill.

Similarly, David Cameron lamented a past of totally irresponsible financial management during Gordon Brown’s term of office. According to the Conservatives, Labour had squandered public money in futile government schemes helping to finance Big Government “quangos” or government think tanks (5). Far from improving the quality of citizens’ lives this centralised power back in Westminster and increased red tape (6).

The Small Government solution favours laissez-faire capitalism! the principles Milton Friedman laid out back in 1962. The world of business is a “dog eat dog” world and with “social Darwinism” society, too, has to adapt or perish. Even left-wing governments have toyed with small government policies. In search of excellence, Mr Blair introduced privately run “Trust hospitals” and extended the Thatcherite grant-maintained school system so circumventing Local Education Authority controls.

■ Big Government Ideology and Practice

When television viewers witnessed the gruesome spectacle of Hurricane Katrina back in 2005 the world realised there had been an appalling leadership breakdown as government failed to rescue those afflicted by this natural disaster. Corporate America was shocked and the first helpers on the scene were Hollywood actors. The inept administration of a lame duck President was eventually shamed into action but it was a case of too little too late.

This painful incident came to embody “Small Government” based on individualism and indifference, quite the opposite of the Obama dream. The health scandal in Flint, where tap water was poisoned by lead due to incompetence from the water board but also cost cutting measures brought in by the authorities showed how poor communities could be let down by the powers that be.

In 2016 British PM Theresa May recently recognised the limits of “laissez faire” government when she evoked the need for a “shared society”. This soundbite refers to the need for a government to step in to regulate rogue markets which are widening the gap between rich and poor. This regulation was to be achieved by price caps on utilities but was pooh poohed by some in industry who saw it as an unnecessary intrusion in business affairs.

When he came to power and from his re-election Obama reaffirmed his controversial belief in Big Government. Unlike Reagan, who claimed “government is not the solution to our problem government IS the problem”, Obama boldly took on Congress to push through (7) groundbreaking legislation such as on health. Though his Big Government bills were fought tooth and nail (8) by the Tea Party and the Republican right and despite personal attacks and racist slurs against his name, Obama’s stimulus plan for the American economy seemed to pay off for car manufacturers like Jeep that were saved from bankruptcy by state aid.

Similarly, Big Government ideology places social justice firmly on the agenda. Whereas in the past Americans (9) benefited from health insurance merely through their jobs, the Obamacare policy aims to provide comprehensive health care for all regardless of their employment status. Granted Obama’s check amounted to a trillion dollars and complicated the nation’s tricky financial situation further, still. It was long overdue as health inequality used to be rife (10) since only wealthier inhabitants could afford private health insurance offering better quality care.

The principle of Big Government is to foster social mobility through equal opportunities like Affirmative Action in order to make society more inclusive, to curb institutional racism. The basic tenet is that a healthier, more just and less cutthroat society will be more productive and competitive. In a nation in which the pursuit of individual happiness is inscribed in the Constitution, Big Government entails guaranteeing basic rights and opportunities. It transcends mere economic concerns.



Vocabulary

1. rightly or wrongly : *que cela plaise ou non* ; 2. Thatcher believed in market forces to create a vibrant economy and society. 3. as vividly shown in the film *Brassed off (Les Virtuoses)* ; 4. foot the bill : *payer les pots cassés* ; 5. think tanks : *groupes d'experts* ; 6. red tape : *paperasse* ; 7. to push through : *make become law* ; 8. tooth and nail : *bec et ongles* ; 9. except the poorest covered by Medicare/Medicaid ; 10. rife : *ici, répandu*.

Exercises



I. Right or Wrong. Justify with a brief quote.

1. Thatcher believed in free market economy and small Government.
2. Small Government entails bailing out struggling industry with public money.
3. Republicans believe in eliminating all non-essential spending.
4. Mr Obama's Big Government spending safeguarded jobs in industry.
5. Many people were shocked by the Bush administration's inaction after Hurricane Katrina.

II. Comprehension questions. Answer in a brief sentence.

1. What were the social consequences of Thatcher's laissez-faire capitalism in the eighties in GB?
2. Explain why Obamacare is a good example of Big Government in practice.
3. What obstacles does Barack Obama face when attempting to implement Big Government policies?
4. Give two examples from the text of a left-wing government espousing small Government policy.
5. What effect has heavy government spending had on the federal budget?

Back in 2006 picking up on the words of his illustrious predecessor as head of the Conservative Party, Mrs Thatcher, when she referred to “rolling back the frontier of the State”, David Cameron promised to “roll forward the frontiers of society”. Indeed, as head of a political family often branded the “nasty party” for its lack of social agenda ever since the Iron Lady reportedly claimed there was no such thing as society, Mr Cameron had to pull out all the stops (1) in order to rebrand the Tories as people friendly.

His plan was to continue the Thatcherite process of fostering people power through localism. This involves disbanding expensive Labour quangos and replacing large government bodies with smaller locally administered groups based as far as possible on volunteering. Reduced government involvement entails enhanced local democracy, whilst enabling the Prime Minister to implement much needed budget cuts. Criticised as a measure of expediency or populism pandering to the right wing voters increasingly tending to favour fringe parties like UKIP (2), Mr Cameron believed his plan would heal a nation broken by almost twenty years of labour mismanagement.

■ The Bad News

Subsequent events may well have both dispirited and encouraged the P.M. at the same time. In August 2011, Britain witnessed some of its worst riots for decades. Widespread vandalism and looting took place and the Metropolitan police was overwhelmed, there was a breakdown in basic law and order. The government even had the British army standing by bringing back memories of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Coming just one year after the election this was hardly the manifestation of Big Society Number Ten (3) had in mind. Whilst many of the rioters were hell bent on causing gratuitous trouble more worrying were the genuine grievances voiced about Cameron's social plan.

Indeed, the Big society plan favoured volunteering instead of direct government funding in order to provide certain vital public services. Local libraries for example were to be manned by non-paid staff which sometimes led to downsizing shorter opening hours or even complete closure of certain facilities. Funding to non-essential services like youth clubs was heavily cut leading to unemployment among youth workers and increased idleness among youth already prone to anti social behaviour.



Vocabulary

1. pull out all the stops : *faire tout son possible* ; 2. right-wing anti-Europe party.
3. Number Ten Downing Street : *résidence du premier ministre britannique*.

■ The Good News

Despite the tricky economic climate, the new Prime Minister Theresa May's current administration can still rely on an undercurrent of goodwill and humanity fostered by the Christian tradition of the nation but also by the relatively harmonious multicultural make up of British society. This cohesion became evident in the aftermath of the riots in 2011 during the Royal Wedding and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympic Games.

In one scheme, for example, an entrepreneur originally from China, Natt Wei, launched a young enterprise scheme to motivate young people into getting involved in their local communities, a far cry from the binge-drinking lager louts we normally read about in the media. The "Riot Wombles" is an other heart-warming example of Big Society in action. Responding to a plea from a bereaved Muslim shopkeeper after the riots, Britons from all walks of life spontaneously turned up armed with brooms and rubbish bags in order to clean up, themselves, the mess left by the rioters in their towns.

Carefully orchestrated or "branded" events like the Jubilee celebrations or the Olympics have restored a national feel-good factor in Britain. Cameron's Big Society was much criticised as thinly veiled austerity but insisted about the inclusion of those who are different as shown by the very successful promotion of the Paralympics in London 2012 or Cameron's softening stance (1) towards gay marriage. Ex-drug addicts can prove excellent unpaid administrators of drug rehabilitation clinics.

If Mr Cameron hoped to inspire a beleaguered nation his unpopular austerity measures probably contributed to his downfall. Theresa May conscious of the need to mend fences with society introduced her own concept of the "shared society". In a complete departure from Thatcherite "laissez-faire" capitalism, she recognised government had to step in to regulate the imbalances of the market. The ever-widening gap between haves and have-nots undermined the good will in society. When even basic public services are slashed (2) by 60% in the name of austerity, hospitals and libraries close and roads are no longer repaired as in Northampton for example the whole concept of civilised society is called into question.

For Mr Cameron and Mrs May, the Big or Shared Society was supposed to herald a return to greatness for a Britain which has lost most of its former glory and clout (3) on the world stage especially in the almost farcical context of the Brexit negotiations. The British model is one of an inclusive, diverse and tolerant society but based on a firm foundation of a traditional shared identity. This is all well and good provided the "feel-good factor" persists. One threat resides in increasing nationalism, as Brits have increasingly to tighten their belts and hence they tend to look for scapegoats (4) amongst foreigners for their economic woes (5).



Vocabulary

1. stance : *opinion* ; 2. slashed : *severly reduced* 3. clout : *influence* ;
4. scapegoat : *bouc émissaire* ; 5. woes : *problèmes*.



I. Right or Wrong? Justify in your own words.

1. The term Big society was invented by Mrs Thatcher.
2. The Conservative government believes more central government involvement is necessary.
3. Big society entails more participation from ordinary citizens.
4. Young people often suffer from a very negative image in the popular press.
5. Business has a role to play in improving British Society.
6. Cameron's policy of Big Society could be a smokescreen to implement budget cuts.

II. Identify the people described below.

1. The Prime Minister who introduced "Big Society"
2. They joined forces to clean up their local community after the London Riots.
3. The political party nicknamed the "nasty party"
4. British politician who questioned the importance of society and favoured the individual.

III. Answer in your own words 20 words each question.

1. Explain the importance of events such as the Paralympics.
2. Why did young British people riot in August 2011?
3. How would you define Britishness?
4. Give examples of actions local inhabitants have taken in the Big Society programme.
5. What showed Mr Cameron took the riots very seriously?
6. What reproaches do the press often make about young people in Britain?
7. How does Theresa May's concept of society differ from Thatcher's one?

The lessons of the 2011 Riots in Great Britain and their historical context

One year into his term of office (1), in August 2011, David Cameron, the freshly elected Prime Minister of the British coalition government, had to tackle a full-blown crisis in domestic affairs. With the police forces overstretched, the government was compelled to place the armed forces on stand by, lest law and order should break down utterly. One may well wonder whether this sudden, often violent demonstration of public discontent is a new phenomenon and whether it symbolises a seachange in the conventional British character known as stiff-upper-lip.

A brief glance at history will tell us that from time immemorial and as early as the Roman occupation different sectors of the British population have always resisted. Queen Boadicea and the Picts, William Wallace from Scotland or the first trade unionists, like the Tolpuddle martyrs, to name but a few, resented the imposition of often tyrannical power in the name of the Crown arbitrarily confiscating land or goods or denying basic rights and a decent standard of living to workers.

More recently Hyde Park witnessed riots in 1866 when, after a disappointing election result peaceful protestors were barred entry to a park reserved for the upper class. Brixton, a predominantly West Indian quarter of south London, witnessed clashes with the police back in 1981, leading to a government enquiry into the grievances of ethnic minorities in Britain. In the ensuing report, Lord Scarman, chairing the enquiry concluded that Britain was riddled (2) with institutional racism which inevitably led to racial tensions and riots. What has been a constant feature of British political life is the constant setting up of official enquiries to try to fathom (3) the causes of unrest.

■ The different causes of unrest

In a class-ridden society like Great Britain, enmity (4) between lower and upper classes has always fuelled tensions. For Mr Cameron, the perceived failure of multiculturalism by which different faith communities tend to bond together in distinct groups without linking with the majority culture needs to be addressed if Britain aspires to a truly harmonious melting pot. Often based on calls for more democracy and better respect of human or animal rights, demonstrations have, by and large, rarely led to significant bloodshed. British environmental anti nuclear or other protestors have tended to be of a peaceful ilk (5) preferring human chains, chanting and singing to outright destruction. At a recent gathering of dairy farmers for example demonstrators lamented the fact they remained “frightfully well-behaved”. Perhaps the Big Brother society, policed by

4.5 million CCTV cameras helps to contain the majority of would be trouble-makers. Yet the events of summer, apparently sparked off by a police blunder (8), have raised fears of a break down in law and order.



Vocabulary

1. term of office : *mandat* ; 2. riddled : *infesté* ; 3. fathom : *comprendre* ;
4. enmity : *haine* ; 5. ilk : *sorte* ; 6. : *frightfully* : *terriblement* ; 7. trouble-makers : *fauteurs de troubles* ; 8. blunder : *bévue*.

Mushrooming from a local protest in Tottenham North London after the accidental shooting by the police of Mark Duggan, the protest developed into mini insurrection as mostly young demonstrators set fire to emergency vehicles and premises (1) and widespread looting broke out. Despite calling in reinforcements from other police forces the new secret weapon the police were facing was the mobile phone network. Dubbed (2) the “Blackberry revolution”, these were the first British riots to witness increasingly organised mobs able to communicate on the ground disperse, and regroup very quickly playing a sort of cat and mouse game with the police. The police were criticised for being slow to intervene yet they were clearly hampered (3) by racial sensitivities not wanting to be too heavy-handed especially in racially sensitive inner city areas.

Notwithstanding, the extensive damage and television pictures of desolated town centres as the movement spread nationwide prompted a swift and some felt kneejerk (4) reaction from Cameron’s government. Blaming a “slow-motion moral collapse” Mr Cameron ordered a “get-tough” approach to offenders. Courts sat around the clock and custodial sentences were meted out (5) to even young first-time offenders. In one infamous case, a woman was sentenced to two weeks imprisonment for receiving a pair of stolen underwear. Britain had returned to the short sharp shock tactics of the Thatcher era maybe an overreaction in order to curb this sudden unexplained blossoming of criminal violence.

Indeed, coming just weeks after the triumphant harmonious celebrations of the Royal Wedding and just twelve months before the Olympic Games came to town the Riots gave a very sharp reminder that despite extensive Camera surveillance, security issues remain in Great Britain. The police force still needs to mend fences with public opinion after accusations of racism corruption and incompetence. Mr Cameron’s government though widely supported for its intransigence with arsonists and looters doubtless failed to address some of the genuine grievances of some of the demonstrators.

Firstly, a lack of bridging between different communities who bond together in tight-knit exclusive groups. Secondly those angry about cuts brought about by the speculation of rogue bankers. Thirdly the dwindling purchasing power of many middle class households and especially for young people the utter lack of prospects due to the soaring university tuition fees. This last point particularly riled young protestors

as Mr Clegg, the Deputy Prime Minister, had personally pledged not to increase tuition fees. Coming in a context of uprising worldwide and clement weather, the 2011 riots illustrated that Britain was not immune to social unrest itself and issues of social and economic justice and inequality clearly need dealing with there too.

Recent commentators have warned of a real risk of a return to social unrest as a result of the crippling cuts carried out by successive Conservative governments under austerity coupled with the hostile environment instigated to crack down on so-called welfare scroungers.

Many young and vulnerable Brits are being failed by the education health and social services. Local councils like that of Northampton have slashed budgets because of 60 cuts in government funding. The resulting hardship and often inhumane benefit system could well drive people to despair and even violence. This is clearly illustrated in the excellent film *I Daniel Blake* by Ken Loach. The needy are singled out for criticism and those living on benefits are stigmatised. The number of regular users of foodbanks has soared in the same period. The toxic Brexit atmosphere has led to attempts to find scapegoats for Britain's woes. Minority groups like Poles are feeling increasingly unwelcome in a society once praised for its tolerance and enlightenment values.



Vocabulary

1. premises : *locaux*; 2. dubbed : *surnommé*; 3. hampered : *gêné*; 4. kneejerk : *exagéré*; 5. custodial sentences were meted out : *des peines de prison ferme ont été prononcées*.

Exercises



I. Justify in your own words. Right or Wrong.

1. The police had little difficulty in controlling the riots in the summer of 2011.
2. The police enjoy strong links with ethnic minorities in Britain.
3. Mr Cameron's government reacted very firmly to the violence.
4. Young Brits are increasingly impoverished.
5. The police were in part responsible for the flaring up of violence.
6. The punishment for offenders was severe.
7. The timing of the riots was unfortunate for London.

II. Explain what you understand by:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. overstretched | 4. racially sensitive policing |
| 2. a class-ridden society | 5. genuine grievances |
| 3. blunder | 6. Blackberry revolution |

Austerity in Great Britain: “feeling the pinch”

Fiche 4

When his coalition government took up office in 2010, Prime Minister David Cameron made no bones about his intention to attempt to balance the books. According to his manifesto, years of economic mismanagement through *profligate* (1) *spending* by the previous Labour administration under Gordon Brown had led the country into colossal debt. The economic recession after the subprimes crisis having worsened the *dire* situation still further, he claimed the only viable way out was to impose draconian austerity measures limiting government spending which had got out of control. His finance minister, George Osborne, announced a deficit reduction plan which relied on cutbacks in order to foster growth of between 2-3% in the economy. However by 2012 the economy was hit by a *double dip recession* and the government borrowing failed to decrease significantly as the economy shrank in real terms even in the services sector which represents 75% of the global economy in the UK. The government reaction to continued recession was further cuts which led to an outcry among trade unions and resulted in coordinated public sector industrial disputes in 2013 and 2014.

■ Those bearing the brunt of the cuts

Young people were hit by the deficit reduction plan, mostly by the announcement that university tuition fees were to be topped up to the gargantuan figure of 9000 pounds per year. Many students are understandably reluctant to commit themselves to university education which *entails* taking out a loan of up to £30,000 which has to be paid back in full once they are earning a decent wage. Furthermore cuts in so-called non-essential youth services or privatisation mean there were fewer facilities for young people to access culture and leisure activities. Youth workers were *laid off in droves* (2) in what some would call a *shortsighted* measure unlikely to calm an already tense social climate. The subsequent riots in the summer of 2011 witnessed unprecedented scenes on Britain's streets of looting, mindless violence and running battles with police which were a stark reminder of the anger and resentment many youths felt towards Cameron's government.

Families were also hard hit by the austerity measures. The now infamous bedroom tax reduced housing benefits for those living in accommodation with spare rooms. The plan was to incite them to vacate large properties for those awaiting accommodation. However vulnerable elderly people were also affected by the tax, many of whom *are loath* to leave their homes. Cuts to child education services resulted in council-run nurseries

and play schemes closing down. This is a *cruel blow* for disadvantaged children who otherwise lack access to such facilities which are vital to their development. More serious still was the abolition of legal aid, the scheme by which people's legal costs were paid by the government. This has led to some tragic cases in which citizens have attempted in vain to represent themselves in court.

Public sector workers had to endure pay cuts or freezes since the growth in the economy remained negligible. Even by 2013, with some signs of recovery the average increase of 1.4% in incomes did not offset the soaring inflation rate at 2.5% which meant that people were less well off in real terms. The reason for such discontent was also the increasing disparity between *the haves and the have-nots*, the top earners' salaries were increasing by as much as 15% whereas the poorest struggled to make ends meet, finding only low paid part time jobs. The liberal economic system adopted in GB also has led to abuses such as the increase in "zero-hour" contracts. These offer no guarantee of work from one week to the next and reproduce the casual labour conditions of the Depression era in the 1930s.

Among the grievances of public sector workers, who came out on strike in 2014, are the pressure to accept pay cuts or lose jobs. OECD reports highlighted the greater fall in real terms of disposable income in the UK compared with the rest of the EU: £19,900 compared to £23,000. This fall in real terms represents the longest decline in earnings since the 1870s. Associated with low pay and soaring (3) unemployment especially among the NEETS, (young people, not in employment, training or education), *caps* on benefit levels entrench poverty for families on income support.

Perhaps the most worrying fact about austerity is that falling wages have fostered the soaring level of household debt. This is due to the huge cost of servicing interest payments on loans. Payday loan companies have cashed in on the distress of cash-strapped workers providing short term relief to pay bills but compounding the problem of debt in the long term. Some economists have estimated that household debt in the UK could reach £2.2 trillion by 2019. the cost of living has increased: for example despite the work of government *watchdogs* and safeguards, energy bills have increased no less than 40% in recent years.

Ordinary citizens have been forced to adapt, making much greater use of charity such as food banks, or holidaying at home rather than abroad.

Reacting to this litany of hardships senior economists, including advisors to the Treasury, have questioned the soundness of the government's economic policy based exclusively on improving GDP (4). They propose a three-pronged alternative espousing reversing austerity by investment in green infrastructure for a transition to a sustainable low carbon economy, fostering robust local and regional economies and breaking up the banks into more *accountable institutions* more likely to provide social credit to the needy.

Cameron's Brexit defeat in 2016 and his successor Theresa May's poor showing at the snap election were put down to disenchanted youth. Mrs May vowed to continue in the austerity policy but was compelled to devote her attentions to delivering on Brexit. The crackdown on so-called *welfare scroungers* continued however. As starkly portrayed in the Cannes film festival winner "I Daniel Blake", many vulnerable people are caught out by the benefits sanctions system meant to *weed out* cheats but often merely punishing bona fide job seekers and sick people. Theresa May's new soundbite as of 2016 to promote a shared society recognised that without withdrawing austerity policies government has a duty to *step in* to remove the worst inequalities in the market. This was a surprising departure from Thatcherite economic policy as it included protecting poor consumers from price hikes in utilities through a *price cap* system. What remains of years of austerity are decimated public services as illustrated by local councils running out of money to provide mandatory basic services. 60% funding cuts have meant Northampton for example has been compelled to close public libraries and cut funding to schools. Rubbish is no longer collected regularly and roads are not repaired. Parents of special needs children in Bristol have even been forced to go to court to protect provision for their children at school.



Vocabulary

1. profligate : *extravagant* ; 2. in droves : *en masse* ; 3. soaring : *qui monte en flèche* ; 4. GDP : *PIB*.



I. Right or Wrong? Justify in your own words using elements from the text.

1. GB's economy is based mostly on the manufacturing sector.
2. Mr Osborne was the health minister in Cameron's administration.
3. The great expense of further education has put many young people off going to university.
4. Average incomes in the UK are higher today than before the crisis began.
5. There is a very high level of private debt in the UK.
6. The price of food has increased by almost half in the last few years.
7. The bedroom tax aims to encourage people to redecorate their bedrooms.
8. There is no government regulation of energy companies in the UK.
9. The gap between the rich and the poor in the UK is widening at an alarming rate.
10. The UK authorises some very precarious work contracts.

II. Vocab exercise. Complete the following sentences using some of the quality words in italics in the text once you have double checked their meaning in an English to English dictionary. You can also add other words.

1. Cameron's austerity measures have simply widened the gap between.....
.....
2. Young people demonstrated when facilities were closed down after youth workers were.....
3. Offgem is an example of a British government which endeavours to
4. If only certain banks had been more
5. The previous government's..... probably led us into a economic situation, but we are to accept such stringent austerity measures.

British Muslims: the Jihad and links to international terrorism

Fiche 5

The ongoing conflict in Syria has had repercussions on British society not least because an increasing number of devout Muslims are seeking (1) ways to succour their brothers and sisters oppressed by the Assad regime. Among the five pillars of faith is “Zakat”, the requirement to give financial and material aid to those in need. Despite warnings of the risks from the British authorities, the harrowing stories of suffering from Damas and Benghazi have prompted many British born and bred Muslims to collect funds or travel to the war zone either to bring humanitarian relief or to engage in front-line combat against government forces. Millions of pounds of aid have been sent via convoys and as of summer 2014, according to government sources several hundred British jihadists including professional people or even mere teenagers were fighting and regularly dying for the cause. Those who have died are elevated to the status of martyrs, as was the case of Mohammed and Akram Sebah, nicknamed the Lions of Britain, two brothers aged 24 and 28. Their photos are displayed on certain websites boasting the glory of the “5 Star Jihad”. Pictures of fast cars and swimming pools paint a rosy picture of a country transformed into a bloody battleground. Of the 300 already present in Syria at least 20 Britons have been killed. The situation is complex as foreign volunteers are not necessarily welcome and infighting between different resistance groups has taken place.

■ Don't bother coming back!

This exodus of young people from the UK is taken as a serious threat by the security forces since they are being trained in the use of automatic weapons and guerilla warfare and might turn into terrorists operating in cells plotting terrorist attacks along the lines of the appalling 7th July 2005 attacks in which scores of innocent people were killed. Indeed recruitment videos broadcast by the radical ISIS group feature Britons currently fighting in Syria. Some of these groups advocate the international jihad in the goal to spread the charia or strict Islamic law. One commentator vowing recently to fight to see the black flag of Islam hoisted over Britain. The fear for the authorities is that through experience abroad disenchanting British Muslims could be indoctrinated and radicalised into perpetrating terrorist acts once they return home. The network of international terrorism has sucked men and women into its ranks including an increasing number of converts. Interpol is currently searching for the most wanted woman, a British subject called Samantha Lewthwaite whose nickname the white widow (2) refers to her ex-husband Jermain Lindsay, one of the London suicide bombers.

Mrs Lewthwaite, who has since remarried several times to different radical Islamist leaders, has been linked to the recent Westgate shopping mall terrorist attack in autumn 2013. Having assumed false identities she has behaved as a fugitive and reportedly enjoys close protection as a senior operative in the international Islamist terrorist organisation. These networks are skilled at using the internet in order to broadcast anti western propaganda in a bid to indoctrinate young angry Muslims.

■ **Combatting the extremists**

The recent life sentences meted out to two Islamists in London for the brutal slaughter (3) of an unarmed young British soldier reinforced the feeling of insecurity in Britain. Since the murderers claimed to be exacting revenge for Muslims killed in Afghanistan, the Lee Rigby case has undermined still further relations between the Muslim community and the rest of society which were already strained. The tension was already high following speeches such as that of David Cameron in which he claimed Muslims had to do more to combat extremism and prove by the values they espoused that they belonged in Britain.

Mr Cameron's government issued a stark warning that British citizens should refrain from travelling to the combat zone and prefer to give indirect humanitarian aid. Those who fail to heed the warning face restrictive measures such as cancelled passports or arrest and interrogation on their return. However the challenge for the authorities is with the aid of the Muslim community at large to channel and counter the sense of injustice many young people feel. The very security measures intended to protect British citizens from the threat of terror such as Stop and Search are perceived as divisive as they are apparently often applied in a discriminatory way. There has been a backlash (4) against the wearing of the niqab which is authorised in the UK except in certain places such as in court or at airport security. People tend to fear it is leading to the Islamisation of Britain. This fear is supported by the recent Trojan Horse affair in which more extreme Muslim parents reportedly attempted to oust teachers from Birmingham schools in order to place the school under Islamist influence.

Despite calls from the far right to tackle the threat from "dangerous Muslims" paradoxically a recent BBC investigation has shown that imprisoning extremists can be counterproductive as it provides them access to vulnerable young people and the process of recruitment continues. Within prison Muslim groups provide spiritual guidance but in some cases also physical protection and this can be exploited to radicalise young people with a message of hatred towards Western culture.

■ **The role of the Imams and the wider Muslim community**

Unlike Abu Hamza, the radical Muslim cleric from the banned Finsbury park mosque in London who was extradited and then sentenced in the US for aiding and abetting terrorism and organising terrorist training, many Imams in the UK have joined forces in

a nationwide campaign to combat extremism. Parents have been urged to control their offspring's access to extreme material on the web and to educate their children about the risks of indoctrination and the preaching of cultural hatred. However, the exodus, with continues many Muslims bemoaning the lack of international intervention in Syria despite apparent proof of atrocities on both sides and is still considered as the greatest current threat to domestic security in the UK.

2017 was a year marked by terrorism with 40 deaths and hundreds of casualties such as during the terrible Westminster and Manchester arena attacks. Islamic extremists both with criminal records targeted the public firstly in London killing an unarmed policeman and heroic passers-by and secondly attacking an almost exclusively female crowd leaving a pop concert. The events rocked the nation and sparked a spirited reaction from the whole multicultural community who condemned the perpetrators unequivocally.

The head of MI5 reminded the high risk of attacks is unabated and an official report pointed out some of the failings of the government's Prevent anti terrorism programme despite having managed to foil countless terror plots around the UK. Critics of Prevent have accused it of "demonising" Muslims and raising tensions by requiring schools, mosques and other institutions to report suspected radicals. The authors of the report said that although Prevent, which received more than 7,600 referrals in just one year, is needed to combat the terror threat, wider work needs to be done to stop people falling prey to extremism or violence at a young age.

Senior politicians and experts backed *report by the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation* warning that perceived grievances with Prevent were damaging cooperation with the very communities it needs to succeed.

The Oasis Foundation, which is part of a Christian charity running 49 schools with 25,000 students, said it has formulated education programmes and structures fostering cohesion in deprived communities. Indeed 82% of those radicalised according to one report came from an underprivileged background, and 42% suffered from mental health issues as well as alcohol and drug dependence. The report said young people must be empowered and involved with society to prevent them seeking belonging and status inside criminal or terrorist networks. A recent *United Nations* report found that foreign Isis fighters mainly come from disadvantaged backgrounds, have low levels of education and "lack any basic understanding of the true meaning of jihad or even the Islamic faith".

While there has been alarm over the prospect of Jihadis returning from Isis's lost territories in Syria and Iraq, security officials have warned that the biggest threat emanates from domestic terrorists being radicalised at home. Mark Rowley, the head of national counter-terrorism policing, said there was no "silver bullet" to cure the terror threat facing the UK.

In June 2018 Sajid Javid, the new Home Secretary, warned that there had been a “step change” in the threat from terrorism, and drew a comparison between Islamist extremists and far-right terrorists, adding that both exploit grievances, distort the truth, and undermine the values that hold society together. Mr Javid announced plans to bring forward legislation giving the government new powers to disrupt terror threats at an earlier stage; and to step up the pressure on tech companies to remove extremist material. He also called for more cooperation from business in stamping out terrorism, and tackling the “safe spaces” in which it operates. “That includes faster alerts for suspicious purchases, improving security at crowded places across the UK, and reducing the vulnerability of our critical infrastructure”. He urged firms to raise the alarm when they spot worrying buying-patterns, or suspicious behaviour while hiring a vehicle, for example.

Furthermore the many inmates due for release after terrorism convictions place a resource burden on both specialist counter-terrorism detectives and on mainstream policing. Security agencies and counter-terror policing foiled 12 Islamist and four extreme rightwing plots between March 2017 and June 2018. MI5 and police are running more than 500 live operations involving roughly 3,000 “subjects of interest” at any one time. In addition, there are in excess of 20,000 people who have previously been investigated and who could again pose a threat.

A review in 2016 into Islamic extremism in prisons found it to be a growing problem. More terrorism offenders are being held outside the high-security jails and are proceeding through the offender management system towards release into the community. Such prisoners extend the threat of radicalisation beyond those arrested for terrorist offences. Other prisoners—both Muslim and non-Muslim—serving sentences for crimes unrelated to terrorism are nevertheless vulnerable to radicalisation by Islamist extremists.



Vocabulary

1. to seek : *chercher* ; 2. widow : *veuve* , 3. slaughter : *massacre* ; 4. backlash : *réaction brutale*.

Exercises



I. Vocabulary. Find equivalents in the text for the following words /definitions. They are in order.

1. current
2. convinced
3. frightening
4. where people die
5. believed in
6. helping (2 words)
7. very right-wing
8. to prevent /stop
9. miracle solution

II. Comprehension questions. Answer with the help of the text.

1. Which two events have made communication difficult between the Muslim community and the rest of British society?
2. Why do so many Muslims consider risking their lives in a war so far from home?
3. Describe the different ways young people can be radicalised.
4. Which event woke the UK up to the risk of homegrown domestic terrorism?
5. How has the traditional British tolerance of multiculturalism perhaps begun to wane?
6. Explain the importance of the Lee Rigby case.
7. What reproach has been levelled at existing government anti terrorism programmes?
8. What do Islamist radicals and far-right extremists have in common according to the new British Home Secretary?
9. Apart from through extremist Internet websites, how are certain terrorists believed to have become radicalised?
10. Give 2 ways business can help fight terrorism and extremism.

The Fourth Estate: Press freedom, its abuses and censorship

In 2012, there was public outrage in Britain after revelations of phonehacking implicating national newspapers and even members of the police. In the aftermath of these events the all-powerful press baron from Australia, Rupert Murdoch, took the unprecedented step of closing down his popular tabloid *The News Of The World* as it had broken the law by invading the privacy of vulnerable citizens. The ensuing public outcry (1) led to one of the most serious official independent enquiries into the activities of the media being entrusted to the eminent Lord Justice Leveson.

The subsequent long-awaited report raised considerable misgivings (2) about how the media are regulated. Whilst reaffirming it was imperative for the press to remain independent of government in order to continue holding it to account, Justice Leveson admitted the current self-regulatory body, The Press Complaints Committee, was unfit for purpose (3) as it lacked the teeth to punish improper behaviour on behalf of journalists. The general public, Leveson concluded, have very little faith (4) in the PCC to protect citizens, be they celebrities like Hugh Grant or mere commoners. Self regulation has struggled in the Internet era of round the clock newscasting. Even prestigious broadcasters such as the BBC, whose hallmark (5) for sixty years have been impartiality and accuracy, has been embroiled in scandals as a result of sloppy journalism. Indeed it has become tempting for news channels and newspapers in order to survive, to engage in newsmaking rather than newsgathering. To ensure healthy ratings or boost circulation priority is given to sensational stories which are beefed up or “sexed up”, in other words exaggerated to satisfy the public thirst for scandal. Despite court injunctions against the press, recent topless photos of the Duchess of Cambridge, Kate Middleton, sold for a fortune to even hitherto (6) reputable press companies. Needless to say, certain responsible newspapers, all to their credit, refused to engage in such immoral practices. Yet irresponsibility on the part of the media recently led to tragedy when a British nurse caring for Kate Middleton was hoodwinked (7) by a hoax call from an Australian radio presenter into divulging sensitive private information. The nurse involved promptly committed suicide due to the pressure.

These examples serve to illustrate a simple concept that press freedom, whilst remaining an essential element in the protection of democracy and free speech, should never serve as a pretext for the often criminal invasion of privacy. The *News of the World* phone hacking scandal dismayed (8) the whole nation as the most vulnerable in society were targeted by unscrupulous paparazzi out for a fresh scoop.



Vocabulary

1. outcry : *tollé* ; 2. misgivings : *doutes* ; 3. unfit for purpose : *qui ne remplit pas sa fonction* ; 4. faith : *confiance* ; 5. hallmark : *marque de fabrique* ; 6. hitherto : *jusqu'à présent* ; 7. hoodwinked : *trompé* ; 8. dismay : *attrister*.

Few would deny, however, that a free press remains a vital bulwark (1) against tyranny. Just as President De Gaulle used BBC radio to broadcast his message of defiance to Vichy and Nazi Germany back in the forties, so radio and television and social networks like Twitter have recently proved invaluable (2) in countering modern dictatorships. The BBC has prided itself on its independence from government despite receiving its funding directly from the tax payer via the licence fee (3). Paradoxically though an integral part of the Establishment, it has a reputation for questioning those in authority and holding them to account. In a bid to preserve impartiality it aims to spur true debate, not hesitating to open its airwaves to people of all persuasions, creed (4) or colour. When Tony Blair was reelected with a landslide majority in 1997, the BBC felt obliged to fill the vacuum left by a beleaguered opposition Tory party and crossed swords with (5) the Labour government over the Iraq war controversy. This is quite surprising when one considers the corporation used to be dubbed (6) the “Bolshevik Broadcasting Corporation” by Conrad Black of the right-wing Daily Telegraph during the Thatcher years. Censorship of the press is still regrettably rife (7) throughout the world. The BBC itself has been banned from many closed countries in which dictators fear the free circulation of information. An unbridled (8) access to the truth is crucial to combat tyrants like Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe or President Assad of Syria who endeavour to muzzle the free press as much as possible. Foreign press and the Internet are enabling Chinese dissidents to make their countrymen aware of their plight, instilling a desire for greater freedom in the country as a whole and empowering oppressed peoples.

The life-saving, world-changing work of the press is only possible thanks to the humbling commitment of reporters and photographers who risk life and limb, imprisonment or torture for the sake of freedom of information. Often soft targets for terrorists, many journalists perish in the course of their missions and yet their sense of duty spurs them to return into risk zones time and again. We only have to consider the graphic photographs of the 1976 Sharpeville massacre in Soweto, South Africa or the heart rending one of the children, victims of napalm burns in Vietnam, to know that reporters can help change the course of history. Though George Orwell's Big Brother lied when he claimed that “ignorance is strength” it is patently clear to all and sundry (9) that empowerment truly stems from free access to accurate information and knowledge. It is no surprise Oscar Wilde once quipped (10) that the British rarely rioted or demonstrated as their education system was “quite unsound”. To conclude the press does indeed play a vital role in preserving democracy. It is high

time therefore that government acted to regulate it efficiently and thus restore public faith in a profession beleaguered by accusations of scandals and improper even illegal practices.



Vocabulary

1. bulwark : *rempart* ; 2. invaluable : *précieux* ; 3. licence fee : *redevance* ;
4. creed : *religion* ; 5. cross swords with ; *croiser le fer avec qqn.* ; 6. dubbed : *appelé* ; 7. rife : *répandu* ; 8. unbridled : *sans borne* ; 9. all and sundry : *tout un chacun* ; 10. to quip ; *blaguer.*

Exercises



I. Vocabulary. Construct a meaningful sentence using the prompts given and following the example.

- example faith/dismay/hitherto/hallmark

Recently the British public was **dismayed** and **lost faith** in the press and the media, even the BBC with its **hitherto hallmark** accuracy and decency.

1. BBC/cross swords with / licence fee /misgivings

.....

2. tabloids /gutter press/ hacking/ dubbed / rife / hoodwink

.....

II. Explain in your own words.

1.The fourth power
2. newsgathering
3. newsmaking
4. sloppy
5.sexed up
6. invaluable
7. muzzle

Crime and Punishment: Law and Order in Great Britain

Fiche 7

The recent riots throughout mainland Britain, during the summer of 2011, led to a misconception that crime was on the increase. Broadcast on prime time television, scenes of looting, wanton (1) destruction of private property and vandalism might suggest that law and order has completely broken down. Recent statistics tell a different story, namely a ten per cent drop in all types though police records seem to underestimate the number of offences committed, which according to the public crime survey still lies at around 9 million: the general feeling is that people are becoming more law-abiding (2) than they used to be, especially locally. Obviously the general public's perception will be coloured by their personal experiences which can be deceptive. There are regional disparities which are striking. While London has recorded a higher rate of violent crime including murders, stabbings and acid attacks the once European capital of crime Glasgow has achieved an amazing turn around and has reduced the rate of violent crime by more than half its 2012 rate.

One may well wonder what may have triggered this apparent abatement (3) in the crime wave that Britain experienced in 2011, especially as criminologists had dreaded an upsurge (4) in law-breaking as a result of the hardships spawned (5) by the current credit crisis. Indeed charities such as the Joseph Rowntree Trust have always highlighted the link between social deprivation and crime. The first factor could concern the improvement in crime prevention thanks to a tougher criminal justice system, enhanced technology and greater public awareness and vigilance. The police can snoop on would-be criminals night and day, thanks to several million CCTV cameras. High Definition cameras can enable culprits (6) to be singled out in a crowd. Credit card use can be monitored and mobile phone communications can enable the authorities to track suspects and their victims down. Once an offender (7) has been located, DNA evidence, cameras and databases allow a police force to establish guilt more effectively. Furthermore, neighbourhood watch schemes have been created to maintain a surveillance of communities by the inhabitants themselves. Though they are not allowed to take the law into their own hands, the theory is they are the eyes and ears of the police force. Some shopkeepers have equipped themselves to deal with delinquents or thieves. Thus private security or alarms and other devices (8) are commonplace in order to deter (9) potential thieves. One device, called the Mosquito, keeps young people at a distance from a shop thanks to the emission of a high frequency sound inaudible to other age groups. If this were not controversial enough already, amateur internet detectives have been employed by some retailers. Via a web

can they snoop on shoppers in a bid to locate shop lifters (10) then they send a text message to the owner to warn him. While this must reassure fearful shopkeepers, it also raises major issues over the risk of Britain developing into a Big Brother state.



Vocabulary

1. wanton : *gratuit* ; 2. law-abiding:honnête ; 3. abatement:réduction ;
4. upsurge:recrudescence ; 5. spawn susciter ; 6. culprit coupable ; 7. offender :
criminel ; 8. device : *appareil* ; 9. deter : *dissuader* ; 10. shop-lifters : *voleurs*
à l'étalage.

In the aftermath of the 2011 riots in which police forces appeared overstretched (1) and ill-prepared for the scale of the violence they encountered, David Cameron's government favoured the get-tough or zero tolerance approach. The thinking behind clamping down (2) on criminals was simple. The "short sharp shock" method which involves short custodial sentences (3) even for first time offenders, aimed to frighten young people back onto the "straight and narrow way." (4) This method, previously employed by Mr Blair's Labour administration, incarcerates offenders for minor offences. Unfortunately, sending more people to prison, whilst reassuring a nervous general public and pleasing many from the right wing, merely exacerbates the huge problem of overcrowding (5) in many penal institutions. Official reports frequently deplore the inhumane conditions of confinement in British prisons due to lack of capacity. Ageing establishments dating back to the Victorian age have to accommodate six inmates (6) in cells designed for just two or four at the most. Furthermore, a prison sentence, far from teaching convicted criminals the error of their ways, often leads to further offences. The reoffending rate (7) in Britain is currently running at approximately two thirds. A hard core of criminals commit most crimes: around 45% of people convicted in 2011 had already committed a massive fifteen offences in the UK! The prison population is steadily increasing partly because minimum sentencing regulations have led to stiffer (8) sentences, therefore offenders serve longer sentences.

The blatant inefficiency of the criminal justice system has sparked a call for alternative measures to be applied. Minor offences such as shop-lifting can be dealt with via "on the spot fines" (9) which are left to the discretion of police officers. More radical still are the experiments in local justice which rely heavily on community service orders. The island of Jersey has piloted a parish court system in which those who have committed minor offences have to face a panel of local dignitaries such as the mayor, to explain their actions (often in front of red-faced parents.) They then have to redeem themselves by carrying out repair or clean up jobs for their victims whilst remaining under supervision. This method, whilst costly, has proved very effective indeed in reducing the reoffending rate. It would seem rather obvious to state that the punishment should fit the crime and community sentences, though on the increase, remain inappropriate for violent crime. One major challenge for the British police forces is the growing sophistication of criminals' modus operandi. The Internet has

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