

## ANALYSE ET COMMENTAIRE DE TEXTES OU DOCUMENTS EN ANGLAIS

Durée: 6 heures

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

### Document 1

The 'rise and decline' of nations and empires has long been a seductive way to write about the past. Gibbon's famous account of Rome in these terms has been followed by many later authors, who have applied similar terms, and often similarly moralistic arguments, to every powerful state from ancient Greece to modern America. In recent decades the alleged decline of the USA, particularly widely claimed in the 1980s before the demise of the Soviet Union, generated another revival of the genre, most notably in the work of those such as Paul Kennedy<sup>1</sup>, for whom the fatal problem of 'overstretch' that undermined previous great powers provided an object lesson on the dangers facing contemporary America. In many of these world histories Britain plays a prominent role, with its rise to become a global power in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and its decline in the twentieth; indeed, it can plausibly be argued that the model for most of these modern global histories is in effect the British case. Telling the story of twentieth-century Britain as one of decline has become commonplace, and only a small minority have adopted a more sceptical attitude to the usefulness and consequences of this approach.

Central to most of this kind of 'declinology' is a focus on the place of individual states in the world system of power; it is global strategic and political capacity relative to others that measures rise and decline. Kennedy, like many others, sees this power status as closely linked to economic strength, but it is a country's ability to make itself felt in world politics that is the key measure of performance. In this view, economic performance is a problem mainly if it is inadequate to support great power ambitions. [...]

Whether as an account of world history over centuries or millennia, or as a local account of Britain in the twentieth century, the framework of 'decline' cannot be treated as an innocent description of the past. The use of the term necessarily organises our thinking into particular channels, and pushes us towards certain ways of looking at the world. So we need to step back and ask, where does the term come from, and what are the effects of using it? As Barry Supple puts it, 'declinism is an ideology, and like all ideologies has a history'. [...] As Andrew Gamble emphasises: 'Decline is therefore politically constructed and needs to be understood through the political debates which have taken place on its dimensions, its causes and its remedies'.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, London, Hyman, 1988.

30 This political aspect of economic decline has been recognised [...] for example by Ian Budge, but he treats the political use of economic decline as ‘cover’ for other political projects.<sup>2</sup> [...]

To treat declinism as an ideology is only of use if we define that often vague term with some precision. Here it is used to denote a set of ideas, which may exist in a tightly specified group of logically connected propositions, and/or as a loosely bundled together and perhaps half-implicit set of assumptions. Whether these ideas provide in some ultimate sense a ‘true’ account  
35 of the world is not the issue; we are not defining ideology in opposition to ‘truth’. Rather we are concerned with the conditions of existence and effects of these bundles of ideas. Whatever the form of the ideology, what is crucial about it is that it motivates action. It is not just something on paper, of interest to academic scribblers, but affects the beliefs of a significant section of the population (or at least the politically active part), who deploy it to attempt to  
40 change things. [...]

Declinism is an ideology that does not fit readily into the template of the great ‘isms’. It has had its impact on almost all parts of the political spectrum. [...] Declinism comes in a number of forms, but the two major types that may be discerned are, on the one hand, centrally concerned with global status, and on the other with economic performance. For certain periods  
45 in recent history accounts in terms of challenges to Britain’s pretensions on the world stage accurately reflect the politics of the time with which they deal. Friedberg’s excellent account of the period<sup>3</sup> before the First World War makes it clear that the overwhelming concern of ‘declinists’ at that time was strategic, with the perceived rise of challenges to British hegemony from Germany and the USA. Economic and fiscal issues figured strongly in the ensuing debates,  
50 but largely as alleged contributors to strategic weakness, not problems in their own right. For more recent years, a similar account might be given of the Suez affair in 1956, commonly seen as when Britain’s global hopes were finally dashed in the face of US opposition to the collusion with Israel and France in the invasion of Egypt. Undoubtedly this event gave rise to a great deal of soul-searching about Britain’s place in the world.

Jim Tomlinson, *The Politics of Decline*, Harlow, Pearson Education Limited, 2001, pp. 1-3.

## Document 2

If we could look simply upon the world as it presents itself to us, if we could merely count our colonies and our possessions and our growing enormous trade, we might, indeed, look forward to the future without disquietude. We know that we shall maintain against all corners that which we possess, and we know in spite of the jargon about isolation, that we are amply competent to  
5 do so. But that will not secure the peace of the world. You may roughly divide the nations of the world as the living and the dying. On one side you have great countries of enormous power growing in power every year, growing in wealth, growing in dominion, growing in the perfection of their organization. Railways have given to them the power to concentrate upon anyone point the whole military force of their population, and to assemble armies of a  
10 magnitude and power never dreamt of in the generations that have gone by. Science has placed in the hands of those armies weapons ever growing in the efficacy of destruction, and therefore,

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<sup>2</sup> Barry Supple, Andrew Gamble and Ian Budge are historians or political scientists and all wrote about decline.

<sup>3</sup> Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1988.

adding to the power - fearfully to the power - of those who have the opportunity of using them. By the side of these splendid organizations, of which nothing seems to diminish the force and which present rival claims which the future may only be able by a bloody arbitrament to adjust  
15 - by the side of these there are a number of communities which I can only describe as dying, though the epithet applies to them of course in very different degrees and with a very different amount of certain application. They are mainly communities that are not Christian, but I regret to say that is not exclusively the case, and in these States disorganization and decay are advancing almost as fast as concentration and increasing power are advancing in the living  
20 nations that stand beside them. Decade after decade they are weaker, poorer, and less provided with leading men or institutions in which they can trust, apparently drawing nearer and nearer to their fate and yet clinging with strange tenacity to the life which they have got. In them misgovernment is not only not cured but is constantly on the increase. The society, and official society, the administration, is a mass of corruption, so that there is no firm ground on which  
25 any hope for reform or restoration could be based, and in their various degrees they are presenting a terrible picture to the more enlightened portion of the world - a picture which, unfortunately, the increase in the means of our information and communication draws with darker and more conspicuous lineaments in the face of all nations, appealing to their feelings as well as to their interests, calling upon them to bring forward a remedy. How long this state  
30 of things is likely to go on, of course, I do not attempt to prophesy. All I can indicate is that that process is proceeding, that the weak States are becoming weaker and the strong States are becoming stronger. It needs no speciality of prophecy to point out to you what the inevitable result of that combined process must be. For one reason or for another - from the necessities of politics or under the pretence of philanthropy - the living nations will gradually encroach on the  
35 territory of the dying, and the seeds and causes of conflict amongst civilized nations will speedily appear. Of course, it is not to be supposed that anyone nation of the living nations will be allowed to have the profitable monopoly of curing or cutting up these unfortunate patients and the controversy is as to who shall have the privilege of doing so.

Lord Salisbury, Speech, "The Living and the Dying Nations", 4 May 1898, <https://clionaute.org/salisburys-dying-nations-speech.html>

### Document 3

Foreigners visiting this country shook their heads sadly when they remembered a resolute, industrious and great-hearted Britain which once had seemed to be able to move both "earth and Heaven". Our industrial life seemed marked by petty labour disputes which were often both  
5 self-destructive and humiliating. The time spent by works managers upon Trades Union matters of a non-productive nature might be half of their day's work. That was one reason for the failure of Britain both to gain and to fulfil export orders. [...]

What did all this mean for our country? It meant that the 1960s and the early 1970s became the great age of the countries which suffered defeat in the 1939/45 War. The peoples of Germany and Japan, and also of France, worked together to restore their countries, and then to move  
10 ahead. They did not behave as if the world owed them a living. In Britain, we spent too much

time dividing up the cake and pursuing petty sectional interest. So although we had won the War, we let other countries win the peace.

15 For a long time, too, many leaders of the Labour Party refused to recognise the reality of British decline, to which they had contributed more than their fair share. They seemed blind to the evident truth that, all over the world, capitalism was achieving improvements in living standards and the quality of life, while Socialism was causing economic decay, bureaucracy and, when it took authoritarian or totalitarian forms, cruelty and repression. [...] Our decline has not been only economic. Our defences have been allowed to fall below danger level. [...]

20 We won the Election on 3rd May because we pointed out these tragic shortcomings to the electorate. We believed that we could inspire the renewal of our past faculties and ingenuity. We communicated that belief to the people. We talked of the need for renewal of our traditional craftsmanship and civic spirit; renewal at every level, and in every profession, of our old vigour and vitality. The extent of our decline compared with other countries may show up most clearly in economic statistics. But that does not mean that the remedy lies only in economics. The  
25 economics will come right if the spirit and the determination is there. The mission of this Government is much more than the promotion of economic progress. It is to renew the spirit and the solidarity of the nation. To ensure that these assertions lead to action, we need to inspire a new national mood, as much as to carry through legislation. [...]

30 At the heart of a new mood in the nation must be a recovery of our self-confidence and our self-respect. Nothing is beyond us. Decline is not inevitable. But nor is progress a law of nature. The ground gained by one generation may be lost by the next. The foundation of this new confidence has to be individual responsibility. [...] We need, for example, to create a mood where it is everywhere thought morally right for as many people as possible to acquire capital; not only because of the beneficial economic consequences, but because the possession of even  
35 a little capital encourages the virtues of self-reliance and responsibility, as well as assisting a spirit of freedom and independence.

Some may suggest that Britain, though economically in decline, is leading the way to some kind of post-industrial life. Well, there were few signs last winter that Britain had any unique capacity for growing poor gracefully. [...]

40 My theme is expressed well by the word "renewal". Here we know that the restoration of the confidence of a great nation is a massive task. We do not shrink from it. It will not be given to this generation of our countrymen to create a great Empire. But it is given to us to demand an end to decline and to make a stand against what Churchill described as the "long dismal drawling tides of drift and surrender, of wrong measurements and feeble impulses". Though  
45 less powerful than once we were, we have friends in every quarter of the globe, who will rejoice at our recovery, welcome the revival of our influence, and benefit from the message and from the example of our renewal. Our recovery will give to all the free world a new hope and a new optimism. [...]

Margaret Thatcher, Speech to the Conservative Political Centre Summer School ("The Renewal of Britain"), 6 July 1979, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/104107>



## Document 4

Without undue vanity or unjust depreciation of others, we may claim to be, in many respects, the most fortunate of nations. We stand in relation to all others, as youth to age. Other nations have had their day of greatness and glory; we are yet to have our day, and that day is coming. [...] Other nations have reached their culminating point. We are at the beginning of our ascent.

5 [...]

Without fault or merit on either side, theirs or ours, the balance is largely in our favor. Like the grand old forests, renewed and enriched from decaying trunks once full of life and beauty, but now moss-covered, oozy and crumbling, we are destined to grow and flourish while they decline and fade.

10 This is one view of American position and destiny. It is proper to notice that it is not the only view. Different opinions and conflicting judgments meet us here, as elsewhere.

It is thought by many, and said by some, that this Republic has already seen its best days; that the historian may now write the story of its decline and fall. [...]

15 They never see the bright side of anything and probably never will. Like the raven in the lines of Edgar A. Poe they have learned two words, and these are “never more.” They usually begin by telling us what we never shall see. Their little speeches are about as follows: You will never see such Statesmen in the councils of the nation as Clay, Calhoun and Webster<sup>4</sup>. You will never see the South morally reconstructed and our once happy people again united. You will never see the Government harmonious and successful while in the hands of different races. You will never see the Government harmonious and successful while in the hands of different races. You will never make the negro work without a master, or make him an intelligent voter, or a good and useful citizen. The last never is generally the parent of all the other little nevers that follow. [...]

20 To those who doubt and deny the preponderance of good over evil in human nature; who think the few are made to rule, and the many to serve; who put rank above brotherhood, and race above humanity; who attach more importance to ancient forms than to the living realities of the present; who worship power in whatever hands it may be lodged and by whatever means it may have been obtained; our Government is a mountain of sin, and, what is worse, it seems confirmed in its transgressions. [...]

25 Something different, something better, or something worse may come, but so far as respects our present system and form of Government, and the altitude we occupy, we need not shrink from comparison with any nation of our times. We are today the best fed, the best clothed, the best sheltered and the best instructed people in the world.

30 There was a time when even brave men might look fearfully at the destiny of the Republic. When our country was involved in a tangled network of contradictions; when vast and irreconcilable social forces fiercely disputed for ascendancy and control; [...] when our good ship of state, freighted with the best hopes of the oppressed of all nations, was furiously hurled against the hard and flinty rocks of derision, and every cord, bolt, beam and bend in her body quivered beneath the shock, there was some apology for doubt and despair. But that day has

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<sup>4</sup> Henry Clay (Kentucky), John C. Calhoun (South Carolina) and Daniel Webster (Massachusetts), nicknamed “The Great Triumvirate,” were leading political figures in U.S. politics from the 1810s to 1850; they represented the three major sections of the country (the West, the South and the North) and their opposing viewpoints.

happily passed away. The storm has been weathered, and portents are nearly all in our favor [...].

40 The real trouble with us was never our system or form of government, or the principles underlying it; but the peculiar composition of our people, the relations existing between them and the compromising spirit which controlled the ruling power of the country.

We have for a long time hesitated to adopt and carry out the only principle which can solve that difficulty and give peace, strength and security to the Republic, and that is the principle of  
45 absolute equality. [...]

To the minds of superficial men, the fusion of different races has already brought disaster and ruin upon the country. The poor negro has been charged with all our woes. In the haste of these men they forgot that our trouble was not ethnographical, but moral; that it was not a difference of complexion, but a difference of conviction. It was not the Ethiopian as a man, but the  
50 Ethiopian as a slave and a coveted article of merchandise, that gave us trouble.

[...] If our action shall be in accordance with the principles of justice, liberty, and perfect human equality, no eloquence can adequately portray the greatness and grandeur of the future of the Republic.

Adapted from: Frederick Douglass, "Composite Nation", Lecture in the Parker Fraternity Course, Boston, 1867, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/mfd.22017/?st=gallery>

## Document 5

Today we live in a world with 500 channels, literally hundreds of thousands of web sites exploding all the time. We're trying to develop the Internet II. But still the role that you play in informing and educating Americans and in helping them to make the right kind of choices is terribly important.

5 I want to talk today about one of those choices that will have a profound effect on all of our lives and the lives of our children in the next century.

And that is the choices we must make to sustain America's leadership in the world.

Four years ago, I came into office determined to renew our strength and prosperity here at home, but I also believed that in the global society of the 21st century, the dividing line between  
10 foreign and domestic policy was increasingly an artificial distinction.

After all, our national security depends on strong families, safe streets and world class education. And our success at home clearly depends on our strength and willingness and our ability to lead abroad.

The conviction that America must be strong and involved in the world has really been the  
15 bedrock of our foreign policy for the last 50 years. After World War II, a generation of far-sighted leaders forged NATO, which has given us a half-century of security, and played a strong role in ending the Cold War.

20 They built the United Nations so that a hard-won peace would not be lost. They launched the Marshall Plan to rebuild a Europe ravaged by war. They created the World Bank and other international financial institutions to pave the way for unprecedented prosperity for American people and others around the world.

They did this throughout a half century Republicans and Democrats together, united in bipartisan support for the American leadership that has been essential to the strength and security of the American people for half a century now.

25 Now, we stand at the dawn of a new century in a new millennium, another moment to be far-sighted, another moment to guarantee America another 50 years of security and prosperity.

30 We've largely swept away the blocks and barriers that once divided whole continents. But as borders become more open, and the flow of information, technology, money, trade and people across the borders are larger and more rapid, the line between domestic and foreign policy continues to blur.

And we can only preserve our security and our well being at home by being strongly involved in the world beyond our borders.

35 From fighting terrorism and drug trafficking to limiting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, to protecting the global environment, we stand to gain from working with other nations, and we will surely lose if we fail to do so.

Just as American leaders of both political parties did 50 years ago, we have to come together to take new initiatives revitalize and reform old structures so that we can prepare our country to succeed and win and make the world a better place in this new era.

40 You know, it is commonplace to say that since the end of the Cold War, America stands alone as the world's only super power. That is clearly true, but it can be dangerously misleading.

45 Because our power can only be used if we are willing to become even more involved with others all around the world in an increasingly inter-dependent world. We must be willing to shape this interdependent work and to embrace its interdependence, including our interdependence on others. There is no illusory Olympus on which the world's only super power can sit and expect to preserve its position, much less enhance it.

Bill Clinton Speaks To A Meeting Of Newspaper Editors, April 11, 1997,  
<http://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1997/04/11/fdch/>