ECG1B – Résumé analytique comparatif ELVI

According to documents 1 and 2, how has Britain caused its own economic downfall? **Answer the question in your own words** (350 words).

**Document 1**: Britain’s Cautionary Tale of Self-Destruction

Jan. 25, 2023, By David Wallace-Wells, *The New York Times*

In December, as many as 500 patients per week were dying in Britain because of E.R. waits, according to the Royal College of Emergency Medicine, a figure rivaling (and perhaps surpassing) the death toll from Covid-19. The waiting list for scheduled treatments recently passed seven million — more than 10 percent of the country — prompting nurses to strike. The National Health Service has been in crisis for years, but over the holidays, as wait times spiked, the crisis moved to the very center of a narrative of national decline.

But the descent of Britain is in many ways more dramatic. By the end of next year, the average British family will be less well off than the average Slovenian one, according to a recent analysis by John Burn-Murdoch at The Financial Times; by the end of this decade, the average British family will have a lower standard of living than the average Polish one.

On the campaign trail and in office, promising a new prosperity, Boris Johnson used to talk incessantly about “leveling up.” But the last dozen years of uninterrupted Tory rule have produced, in economic terms, something much more like a national flatlining.

For a few weeks last fall, as Liz Truss failed to survive longer as head of government than the shelf life of a head of lettuce, I found myself wondering how a country that had long seen itself — and to some significant degree been seen by the rest of the world — as a very beacon of good governance.

It was of course not that long ago that American liberals looked with envy at the British system — admiring the speed of national elections, and the way that new governing coalitions always seemed able to get things done.

Post-Brexit, both the outlook for Britain and the quality of its politics look very different, as everyone knows.

The country’s obvious struggles have a very obvious central cause: austerity. In the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis, and in the name of rebalancing budgets, the Tory-led government set about cutting annual public spending.

The consequences have been remarkable: real wages have actually declined, on average, over the last 15 years, Even the right-wing Daily Telegraph is now lamenting that England is “becoming a poor country.”

Over two centuries, a tiny island nation made itself an empire and a capitalist fable, essentially inventing economic growth. Over just two decades now, it has remade itself as a cautionary tale.

**Document 2**: How the U.K. Became One of the Poorest Countries in Western Europe

By Derek Thompson, Oct 25, 2022, *The Atlantic*

The past few months have been rough for the United Kingdom. Energy prices are soaring. National inflation has breached double digits. The longest-serving British monarch has died. The shortest-serving prime minister has quit.

British news is covered amply in American media. Behind the lurid headlines, however, is a deeper story of decades-long economic dysfunction that holds lessons for the future. In the American imagination, the U.K. is not only our political parent but also our cultural co-partner, a wealthy nation that gave us modern capitalism and the Industrial Revolution. But strictly by the numbers, Britain is pretty poor for a rich place. U.K. living standards and wages have fallen significantly behind those of Western Europe.

This calamity was decades in the making.

When the global financial crisis hit in 2008, it hit hard, smashing the engine of Britain’s economic ascent. Wary of rising deficits, the British government pursued a policy of austerity. They served up to anxious voters a menu of scary outsiders: bureaucrats in Brussels, immigrants, asylum seekers. A cohort of older, middle-class, grievously nostalgic voters demanded Brexit, and they got it. The results were disastrous. Real wages fell for six straight years.

In the past 30 years, the British economy chose finance over industry, Britain’s government chose austerity over investment, and British voters chose a closed and poorer economy over an open and richer one. The predictable results are falling wages and stunningly low productivity growth.

Thus, the U.K., the first nation to industrialize, was also the first to deindustrialize. Britain gave rise to the productivity revolution that changed the world, and now it has some of the worst productivity statistics of any major economy. What was once the world’s most powerful globalized empire has now voted to explicitly reduce global access to trade and talent. Since Brexit, immigration, exports, and foreign investment have all declined, likely reducing the size of the U.K.’s economy by several percentage points in the long run.