**Debate – "Brexit was a good idea after all"**

*Extract adapted from Debate Cards, by Sophie Sebah (2022)*

**FACTS AND FIGURES**

* Brexit: merging of the words Britain and exit to get Brexit.
* A referendum was held on Thursday 23 June, 2016, to decide whether the UK should leave or remain in the EU. Leave won by 51.9% to 48.1%. The referendum turnout was 71.8%, with more than 30 million people voting.
* Britain joined the EU in 1973.
* Britain had to pay a bill of £47.5 billion, to cover its share of proposed EU spending commitments, as well as liabilities including pension.
* Only 15% of British people considered themselves European (2015 Britain Social Attitudes Survey).
* The UK government started the withdrawal process on 29 March 2017 and left on 31 January 2020.
* Article 50 is a plan for any country that wishes to exit the EU. Before that treaty, there was no formal mechanism for a country to leave the EU.
* The Great Repeal Bill ended the primacy of EU law in the UK.
* The Windsor Framework enacted in February 2023 was ratified to help solve a few points of tension, notably with the Northern Irish border.
* The Schengen Agreement abolished many of the EU's internal borders, enabling passport free movement across most of the bloc. It was signed in 1985. It took effect in 1995.
* In 2015, the UK's full membership fee was £17.8 billion (12.9 after the rebate): the UK sent £35 million a day to the EU.

**VOCABULARY** :

* Europe
* Bailout : sauvetage financier
* Border control: contrôle des frontières
* Customs : douanes, coutumes
* Eurosceptic
* Farming : agriculture
* Growth : croissance
* Hub : plateforme
* Key player on the world stage: acteur majeur sur la scêne internationale
* Meddlesome : tatillon
* Membership: adhésion
* Naysayer : opposant, détracteur
* NHS (National Health Service)
* Regulatory barrier : barrière légale
* Subsidy = grant : subvention
* To be isolated : être isolé
* To be part of : faire partie de
* To cooperate
* To cut bureaucratic red tape : réduire les tracasseries administratives
* To damage = harm = impair : nuire à
* To make decisions = legislate
* To push up costs : faire monter les coûts
* To respond to threats: répondre à des menaces
* To take back its sovereignty: reprendre sa souveraineté
* To unshackle: libérer
* Trade deal = trade agreement: accord commercial
* Trade-off: concession, compromis

**Brexit debate – tip sheet for referees**

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1. **Faire, à l'oral une synthèse structurée des arguments sous forme de débat**

**Examples**

**PROS**

1. Easier to negotiate trade deals with other countries; not need a consensus among 28 quarrelling, disparate countries.
2. Remove tariffs: reduce the cost of food (40%), and the cost of clothing and footwear (20%).
3. Control immigration.
4. Cessation of net contributions to the EU: allow for some cuts to taxes or increases in government spending.
5. Choice of investments (soldiers, police, universities, research and development, infrastructure, tech sector).
6. Increase local and national production due to fewer imports. Possible reduction of carbon footprint.

**CONS**

* EU: free trade (50% of UK trade is with the EU). Lose EU trade deals.
* Many international companies in the UK: uneconomic to stay. Fewer margins due to higher import costs. Move out.
* Increase unemployment (3.5 million jobs directly depend on trade with the EU).
* High cost to pay to the EU (60bn euros).
* Loss of influence in setting policies for the whole of the EU.
* Decrease number of foreign students coming to the UK.

**2. Questions qui méritent potentiellement d’être clarifiées**

1. Why did the Leave campaign win?
2. Who benefits from a low pound?
3. Who may economically suffer from Brexit?
4. What is the difference between the EU, the Eurozone and Europe?
5. Will there be an impact on the UK's environmental engagements?

**Suggestions de réponses aux questions**

1. Many voters were motivated by frustration at the influence of Brussels on British politics and law, by immigration and by broken local economies whose decline was blamed on the pressures of immigration and on the EU.
2. Firms selling abroad, foreign tourists and investors may benefit from a low pound.
3. Those who lose are British consumers buying imported goods like food, petrol and electrical goods which will become more expensive, British tourists going abroad and foreign workers in the UK.
4. The European Union (EU) is a politico-economic union of 27 member states. Europe is the continent. The Eurozone refers to the 19 EU countries that use the euro.
5. It may not change the UK's targets in terms of recycling and green energy, but the UK may be free to repeal clean air laws and relax air quality standards and deadlines.

**Brexit is a good thing**

The UK decided to leave the EU during a referendum that was held on Thursday 23 June, 2016. Leave won by 51.9% to 48.1%. The referendum turnout was 71.8%, with more than 30 million people voting. The result was felt like a tsunami by European countries as it opened the door to numerous uncertainties. What are the implications of Brexit?

The UK government started the withdrawal process on 29 March 2017 and left on 31 January 2020. Brexit officially came into force on January 1st 2021. **Even if the future impacts are uncertain, the UK may enjoy several benefits.** The outcome of the referendum prompted jubilant celebrations among Eurosceptics in the UK, reflecting British people's distrust of Europe. Only 15% of British people considered themselves European in 2015

First, it is easier to negotiate trade deals with other countries; the UK will no longer need to wait for a consensus among 28 quarrelling, disparate countries.

It has removed tariffs, which reduced the cost of food by 40%, and the cost of clothing and footwear by 20%. Raising import costs is good news for exporters who struggled with the high value of the pound.

Brexit allowed to take back control of its borders in order to curb immigration and increase security, and the UK is freer to decide or not to host migrants fleeing war and destruction.

It has the possibility to choose its fields of investments and will probably prioritise soldiers, police, universities, research and development, infrastructure and the tech sector.

It has especially ended the UK’s net contributions to the EU, which allowed for some cuts to taxes or increases in government spending. In 2015, the UK's full membership fee was £17.8 billion (12.9 after the rebate) and it sent £35 million a day to the EU.

By reducing imports, it will increase local and national production. In turn, this may help reduce its carbon footprint.

These are some of the reasons why Brexit was celebrated as signifying the end of the supremacy of EU law over Britain's own legislation.

**Yet, leaving the EU may have impaired the UK's prosperity**. First, EU free trade guaranteed the UK trade deals as 50% of the UK trade was with the EU. Many international companies in the UK enjoy fewer margins due to higher import costs so they may decide to leave as they will find it too costly to stay. Brexit may increase unemployment. Indeed 3.5 million jobs directly depend on trade with the EU.

Britain had to pay £47.5b to cover its share of proposed EU spending commitments, as well as liabilities including pension.

It has lost influence in setting policies for the whole of the EU and its attractiveness has waned as it decreased the number of foreign students and foreign workers going to the UK.

**Many of the apocalyptic predictions linked to Brexit have not occurred yet, and even if a lot of uncertainties persist regarding the impacts on the economy, immigration and foreigners' status, British voters have taken a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to restore Britain's sovereignty.**

508 words

**Marking scheme: the referee takes away points out of a count of 15.**

* **Each participant needs a catchphrase (2 points)**
* **Each participant needs 3 arguments minimum, illustrated with examples and/or references (6 points)**
* **Each participant needs a powerful conclusion (2 points)**
* **Each participant needs to use at least 6 words from the word bank (2 points), 3 expressions imposed by the referee (2 points) and make one attempt at complex grammar (1 point)**
* **Every time a students asks for help either from you, the teacher or AI; you need to take away a point ;-)**