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Samedi 20 février 2016

ANGLAIS

durée de l'épreuve : 1h30 – coefficient 1

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Les réponses aux questions ne devront pas excéder l'espace qui leur est réservé.

PARTIE RESERVEE A LA CORRECTION

Détail des notes

I. Compréhension du texte /10

II. Essai /10

TOTAL : /20

Note après harmonisation : /20

Commentaires

I. TEXTUAL COMPREHENSION.

After reading the text carefully, reply in English and in your own words to the following questions.

1. What kind of strategic blunder should the West try to avoid according to the columnist?

2. For what specific reasons should Barack Obama worry about intervening in Syria?

3. What assessment does the columnist make of Barack Obama's military campaign in Syria?

4. What options are left for America in Syria?

TEXTE A CONSERVER PAR LE CANDIDAT

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The cost of inaction

To witness the mass of humanity flowing from the Middle East into Europe leads to only one conclusion: no matter what Europe does on its borders, the crisis will not end until the Syrian civil war stops. This newspaper has long held the view that peace is impossible as long as Bashar al-Assad remains in power. That is as true today as when he first started killing unarmed pro-democracy protesters in 2011.

So the West should not fall for the dangerously seductive idea, put forward by Russia, that it should embrace Mr Assad the better to fight the jihadists of Islamic State (IS). This would be not just morally wrong but also a strategic blunder. Most civilians are being killed by Mr Assad's forces, and most refugees are fleeing his bombs. In any case Mr Assad's depleted army has been losing ground, which is one reason why Russia has had to deploy fighter jets, bombers and armoured vehicles to Syria in recent weeks.

Backing Mr Assad, or acquiescing in the survival of his regime, would only push more Sunnis into the arms of the jihadists. If IS is the ugliest face of Sunni Arabs' sense of disenfranchisement, Mr Assad is the worst embodiment of their nightmare. A diplomatic deal under which Mr Assad would surrender power to some kind of federal, broad-based government, now or at some point in the future, might be the best transition. Russia's intervention may yet help bring about that outcome. More probably, it will embolden Mr Assad to cling to power; and keep fighting a war he cannot win but that will do more damage to the country, and the region.

Even at this late stage, the best way to secure a diplomatic deal is to exert stronger pressure on Mr Assad by changing the balance of forces and protecting the population. The West and its allies should thus create protected havens; impose no-fly zones to stop Mr Assad's barrel-bombs; and promote a moderate Sunni force to expand the middle ground between the mass-murdering Alawite regime and the gore-loving jihadists.

Barack Obama has reason to worry about the cost of toppling Mr Assad. The West has been wretched at fostering decent, stable governments to replace Arab dictators it has overthrown, whether by invasion in Iraq in 2003 or by air bombardment and popular rebellions in Libya in 2011. Yet non-intervention in Syria has also had dire results: some 250,000 killed; about half the population displaced or pushed out; and a

refugee crisis in Europe. IS has established a “caliphate” in Iraq and Syria; its survival amounts to victory, which draws recruits and spreads its creed to Libya, Egypt and elsewhere.

Mr Obama seeks to “degrade and ultimately destroy” IS, but his military campaign has been half-hearted and is fatally flawed by the lack of a plan for Syria. He said he would train and equip a moderate Sunni force in Syria—to fight only IS, not Mr Assad. That notion was doomed from the start. It attracted only a pitiful number of recruits, and the first batch sent into Syria was all but annihilated. Now the White House says, in effect, that arming Syrian rebels was an idea foisted on Mr Obama, who never believed in it. Rarely has an American president so abjectly abandoned his global responsibility.

Mr Obama’s wariness has made the options in Syria much harder. But not impossible. The mainstream Syrian rebels, mocked by Mr Obama as made up of “doctors, farmers [and] pharmacists”, have been superseded by multiple Islamist groups. Even so, it is still possible to work with some of the less hideous, non-jihadist militias. Groups supported by Turkey and Arab states have gained ground. With commitment and resources, America could ensure its allies backed the more acceptable forces; and fighters would be drawn to any group that demonstrated battlefield success. If America put a stop to the barrel bombs, its standing among Syrians would immediately improve. Dependence on outside support would also increase the prospect of the West exerting some influence over rebel behaviour, and avoid the dark possibility of Sunni atrocities against defeated Alawites, Christians and other minorities.

Now that the doctors and pharmacists are fleeing to Europe, Syria will be harder to rebuild. But a haven would give Syrians an alternative to exile, and create the chance for moderate forces to offer services and build legitimacy. A no-fly zone carries the risk of clashing with Russian jets. But Mr Putin does not want a direct fight with rebels, or with America. The model should be Bosnia in the 1990s—applying pressure on Russia’s client to get a peace settlement—not the Soviet Union’s rout in Afghanistan in the 1980s. If Russia wants to keep its naval base in Syria, protect orthodox Christians and limit IS in the Caucasus, it should dump Mr Assad.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle is Mr Obama himself. Right now his legacy will record not just sensible rapprochement with Iran and Cuba, but also the consolidation of a jihadist caliphate and countless boat-people. He may worry about the risks of American action and “owning” the Syrian crisis. But the greater risk is standing aside and disowning the Middle East.

The Economist - Sept 26th 2015



