This assessment is designed to ensure that you have the required listening, reading and writing skills to be accepted into the Science Po Summer School.

The test should take no longer than 90 minutes (30 minutes for each part).

The use of dictionaries and translation tools is not allowed.

This assessment is for use exclusively in the context of Summer School applications. It may not be used to apply to a Sciences Po degree programme. Candidates will not receive their scores nor the corrected version of the test.
Part 1
Reading Comprehension

Instructions: read the text and then answer the questions listed below.

Macron Steps Into Middle East Role as U.S. Retreats

The New York Times, 9 December 2017

PARIS — A year ago, no one would have envisioned President Emmanuel Macron of France as the public face of Western diplomacy in the Middle East. But that is not the case anymore.

President Trump’s decision this past week to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, his anti-Muslim tweets and his State Department staffing cuts have signaled to many a retreat of American diplomacy.

That has made room for those who want to expand their presence on the world stage, Mr. Macron among them. He has quickly embraced a more visible role in the Middle East, especially as Britain and Germany have become more deeply preoccupied with domestic politics.

Mr. Macron called Mr. Trump two days ahead of the American president’s recognition of Jerusalem to tell him that France was “troubled” by the move.

He personally intervened in November to stabilize Lebanon when the country’s prime minister resigned and many believed Saudi Arabia was behind it. He weighed in with a plan to halt sub-Saharan migrants before they could reach Libya. Now, Mr. Macron is positioning France to help shape the postwar policy in Syria.

By contrast, the United States has seemed reluctant to engage in policymaking in any detail in Syria, leaving the field open for Russia to play the largest part.
"If this was five years ago, there would already have been American diplomatic involvement" to extricate the Lebanese prime minister, Saad Hariri, from the grip of the Saudis, said Gilles Kepel, an expert on Islam and a professor at Sciences Po in France, who traveled with Mr. Macron on his recent trip to Abu Dhabi and Riyadh, the Saudi capital.

Mr. Kepel added that "the Trump administration is unreadable because the president tweets something in the morning and he does the contrary in the afternoon."

Former diplomats see much the same pattern.

"Clearly, in the past the U.S. did play a major role in Lebanon, but presumably the Saudis did this thing with Hariri without a word to us, which is saying something," said Ryan Crocker, a retired diplomat with decades of experience in the Middle East under Republican and Democratic presidents.

"Since this is more of a Saudi issue than a Lebanese one, under normal conditions we would have been very much involved," Mr. Crocker said.

One measure of the depth of the American withdrawal is that even in countries that Mr. Trump views as friendly, like Saudi Arabia, there is no ambassador in place. The same is true for six other countries in the region.

Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson denied this past week that unfilled senior diplomatic positions had affected the department’s engagement. Speaking at the Hotel Bristol in Vienna, he said: “I want to say this because a lot of stuff gets written out there in the media about the hollowed-out State Department and the empty hallways that I’m walking in, where all I can hear are the echoes of my footsteps. And it’s not true. And I tell people everywhere it’s not true.”

He added: “We have great, competent, capable career people that have stepped up in leadership positions while we’re working to fill those roles, and we haven’t missed a beat. Not one.”

However, Mr. Trump’s primary point of reference in the Middle East appears to be Israel, the only state in the region that is not predominantly Muslim. And while he has expressed support for Sunni Arab leaders, it is harder for the United States to wield its influence without ambassadors to reinforce his message, especially in a part of the world that values protocol.

Moreover, in the Muslim world, Mr. Trump has focused on demolishing the Islamic State and isolating Iran, but he has avoided delving into the region’s fraught politics.

By contrast, the French government has not shied from tackling political problems in the Middle East. France has “capital to spend” in the region, said Emile Hokayem, a senior fellow for Middle East security at the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London.

Indeed, France’s deep involvement in North Africa and the Middle East is not new. It ruled Algeria as a colony for more than 130 years, until it was pushed out in a brutal war in the early 1960s. After World War I, France and Britain divided the Ottoman Empire. France received a mandate for governing Syria and Lebanon, forging lasting ties with the latter.

More recently, France won the support of Arab Sunnis both for its refusal to back the American invasion of Iraq and for its willingness to fight President Bashar al-Assad of Syria.

Its second-, third- and fourth-largest export markets for defense equipment are Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Egypt. Just this past week, Mr. Macron, during a visit to Qatar, announced a $1.3 billion sale of fighter jets.

On Wednesday, Mr. Macron was in Algeria, shoring up relations in anticipation of an uncertain leadership transition, given the long-failing health of that country’s leader.

Mr. Macron, who came to the job with few Middle East connections, put in place a team that knows the region intimately.

His foreign minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, a former defense minister, has a wealth of contacts with Arab militaries. Other senior officials in the Foreign Ministry include a former ambassador to Lebanon who also served in Saudi Arabia and Iran, as well as a stable of career diplomats with years of experience working in the Middle East.
It is a different approach from that of two predecessors, François Hollande and Nicolas Sarkozy, said Hubert Védrine, a foreign minister under President Jacques Chirac.

“He wants to keep contact with the Saudis, with the Qatars, with the Emirates — he’s said he will go to Iran one day; this is someone who does not want to be confined to one camp or another,” Mr. Védrine said. “He calculates that Sarkozy was too linked to Qatar and Hollande to Saudi Arabia.”

France could not supplant the United States — it’s a smaller country and does not have the ability to guarantee its agreements in the same way, several diplomats said.

“Despite their misgivings about Trump’s approach,” said Mr. Hokayem of the International Institute of Strategic Studies, “the French are not freelancing or charting a course away from the U.S. in the Middle East — they often have quiet American support; they are the visible face of diplomacy.”

But analysts remarked on the contrast in personal engagement and strategies compared with Mr. Trump’s.

“Before Trump, we were still in the American century,” noted Joost Hiltermann, the director of the Middle East North Africa program for the International Crisis Group based in Brussels.

“The Americans would use its British and French allies to do some work consistent with U.S. strategy; they were trusted advisers,” he said. “Today it is different. The Trump administration is not interested in diplomacy.”

He added, “If Trump has a strategy that permeates the institutions, it’s about withdrawal.”

Mr. Macron, he said, sees filling that vacuum as not only an opportunity for France, but also as vital to maintaining a pole of power in the West as “the Chinese century is coming up.”

“He sees the dangers of being absent from the world stage,” Mr. Hiltermann said, “and sees it as a way of raising the profile of France and maybe Germany and Europe, while holding the fort in the absence of a strategy and U.S. diplomacy.”

Mr. Macron’s impulse for engagement was most evident in his intervention to stabilize Lebanon, when Mr. Hariri was believed to have been coerced by the Saudis into resigning.

The French leader, who was traveling at the time in the Persian Gulf to open a branch of the Louvre in Abu Dhabi, feared that the situation could deteriorate in Lebanon, tilting the country closer to Hezbollah, the already-powerful Lebanese political and military force backed by Iran.

Mr. Macron flew to Riyadh to meet with the Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman. Mr. Macron followed up the visit with several more conversations with the prince and worked out the plan for Mr. Hariri to visit France.

The gambit succeeded in tamping down, albeit temporarily, the Saudi-Iranian tensions, which underlie much of the regional strife.

“The real question about Macron is did he actively engage the Saudis and move them to a different place,” said Mr. Crocker, the former ambassador to several countries in the region. “If so, that’s huge.”

Questions

Answer the following questions using your own words, in one or two sentences, and without the aid of a dictionary. Please take care to use your own language - do not copy phrases from the text.

1. What reasons are given for President Macron’s growing concern for a French presence in the Middle East?
2. What factors mentioned in the article indicate that American diplomacy is decreasing in the Middle East?

3. What recent French interventions in the Middle East are described in the article?

4. How is Macron’s foreign policy regarding the Middle East different from that of his two predecessors?
5. What were Macron’s reasons for wanting to stabilize the situation in Lebanon?
Part 2
Listening Comprehension

Instructions: Listen to the following radio program and answer the questions below.

Radio report: “Millenials: be careful how we use this label” – National Public Radio, United States, December 9, 2017 (also available on the Summer School website)

Questions

Answer the following questions using your own words, in one or two sentences, and without the aid of a dictionary. Please take care to use your own language - do not repeat phrases from the radio report.

1. What does the term “millennial” refer to?

2. How does today’s definition of millennial differ from that of the 17th century?

3. What did the Wall Street Journal recently apologise for?
4. What does Ben Zimmer say about the way millennials have been portrayed by the press?

5. What other generational labels are mentioned in the excerpt?
Part 3
Writing Exercise

Instructions: watch the following video and comment. Your answers may include, but are not limited to, the following points: What are your opinions of this video? How are women portrayed in it? What kind of message does it convey?

Video: “Sexist Ads” (also available on the Summer School website. An alternate link for mainland China is available.)

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