

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEST

Surname:

First Name:



Academic integrity is a fundamental principle at Sciences Po.
From the admissions process onward, we uphold a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism and expect all candidates to complete this test independently, without the use of AI or external assistance.

The test should take no longer than 90 minutes

> 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. It 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.

Taliban takeover of Afghanistan will reshape Middle East, official warns

The Guardian, 13 September 2021

Gulf states are having to reconsider their alliances and especially whether they can still trust the US, says senior source.

The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan is a shattering earthquake that will shape the Middle East for many years, a senior Gulf official has said, warning that – despite the group's promises of moderation – the militant group is “essentially the same” as last time it was in power.

Speaking on the condition of anonymity, the official also said that the rapid and chaotic US withdrawal also raises serious questions for Gulf states about the value of US promises of security over the next 20 years.

“Afghanistan is an earthquake, a shattering, shattering earthquake, and this is going to stay with us for a very, very long time,” the official said on Monday. He added that the episode marked a complete break with the outdated Carter doctrine – a commitment that an oil-dependent US would use military force to defend its interests in the Gulf.

“Can we really depend on an American security umbrella for the next 20 years? I think this is very problematic right now – really very problematic.”

He suggested that 20 years of warfare, supposed to be “a battle against those who had hijacked Islam”, had left no legacy in Afghanistan, and predicted that the Taliban's seizure of power would prompt concern among leaders in West Africa and the Sahel about the rise of a newly confident Islamic extremism. The official added he had no expectation that the Taliban would behave differently from when it was previously in power, saying, “They are essentially the same, but just more world-savvy.”

The biggest surprise, the official said, was the sheer incompetence of the US operation and the signs of bureaucratic infighting that marred US thinking.

Afghanistan, he said, will probably come to be seen as a Pakistan victory, and a Chinese opportunity – with the US playing a minimal role. “If there is a geopolitical struggle over Afghanistan, we will see Pakistan and China on one hand and India, Iran and Russia on the other hand,” the official said. “And I don't think the Americans are going to be a part of the geopolitical struggle over Afghanistan.

Many Gulf states have already begun recalibrating their foreign policy to take into account declining US dependence on oil and the growing popular insularity of the US, but the official said he now expected that process to speed up, leading to realignments in alliances and a desire for some historical rivals to establish more pragmatic relations. The general aim will be to de-escalate tensions in the region, the official said.

The official added that he expected to see greater discussions between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the future, as well as between the United Arab Emirates and Iran. The official also pointed to the signing of a defence agreement between Saudi Arabia and Russia as a sign that in a post-carbon age, the Gulf states wanted to diversify their sources of security away from the US.

Iran, under its previous government, led by Hassan Rouhan, had started to hold discreet talks with Saudi Arabia at an intelligence cooperation level, but that may now become more open. Bahrain has already been seen to look for new alliances in the region including through the Abraham Accord with Israel, and in the UAE's case by restoring diplomatic relations with Syria.

The emphasis will be on “trying to make this region less of a pressure cooker”.

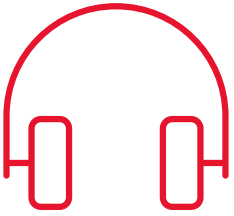
Exercise

1. What is 'the Carter Doctrine'?
2. According to a senior Gulf official, what issue seems to be 'very problematic' at the moment?
3. What does this official predict the seizure of power by the Taliban will bring about?

4. According to this same official, which nations will be involved in the geopolitical struggle over Afghanistan?

5. What causes are given for US withdrawal from the Middle East?

6. New alliances between which nations are likely to be formed in the future?



PART 2

Listening Comprehension

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

Radio report: "[Biden And Xi Jinping Speak For The 1st Time In Months Amid Fraying U.S.-China Ties.](#)" – National Public Radio, United States, September 10, 2021

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. How many phone calls have there been between the White House and China since Biden took office?

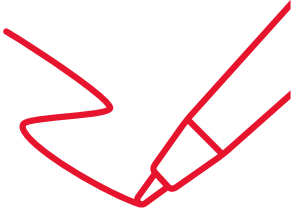
2. Who asked for the latest phone call to be made?

3. What was the purpose of this call?

4. What is China unhappy about?

5. What has been the 'US mantra'?

6. Will China take part in this year's G20?



PART 3

Writing Exercise

Instructions: This song was released over sixty years ago. How is it still relevant today? Comment using the proper essay format and without a dictionary.

Song: Bob Dylan - The Times They Are A-Changin'