

1. Translate the following passage into English. 25 marks

An unwinnable war

**Joe Biden has called time on America's longest war.
The decision exposes the limits of US power and
leaves an uncertain future**

Britain's former prime-minister Harold Macmillan is said to have told colleagues that the first law of politics should be "never invade Afghanistan". It was a lesson that imperial Britain had learned the hard way, following three separate casualty-strewn incursions in the 19th and 20th centuries. After 11 September 2001, when al-Qaida radicals, based in Afghanistan and protected by the Taliban government, successfully attacked New York and Washington, the lesson was quickly forgotten.

Instead, the United States, backed by Britain and Nato, launched a retaliatory campaign to destroy al-Qaida and overthrow the Taliban. After spectacular initial success, marked by the unexpected collapse of Kabul and massive bombing of the al-Qaida presence in the eastern mountains, the military campaign became overcommitted and, in the end, even faced defeat. Western ambitions were long on idealised visions of the postwar order, but short on a grasp of regional realities and military capabilities. The Taliban regrouped and rearmed. Long attritional years of civil conflict followed. This week, almost 20 years in, Joe Biden has decided America has at last had enough of an unwon and unwinnable war. He is

bringing the troops home. America's allies, including Britain, will now follow the US through the exit door.

In his televised address this week, Mr Biden announced that nearly 10,000 US and Nato troops – including 750 from the UK – will start pulling out within weeks. All of them will be gone in time for the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks later this year. The president's words were a valediction over what, in the end and in spite of its achievements, has been a failed campaign. "We cannot continue the cycle of extending or expanding our military presence in Afghanistan, hoping to create ideal conditions for the withdrawal and expecting a different result," the president said. He is surely right. Donald Trump had reached a similar conclusion from a different, more isolationist standpoint, although, unlike Mr Biden, without consulting his allies first. None of that will stop congressional Republicans denouncing Mr Biden's decision as reckless.

The US president's announcement exposes some of the limits of 21st-century American power. It is true that, while the US has been engaged in Afghanistan, education has blossomed across much of the country, including for girls, who were largely excluded by the Taliban. Life expectancy, now at 65, has risen each year. But these gains remain fragile and their future is highly uncertain. When the Russian-backed Afghan regime collapsed in the early 1990s, the Taliban were able to take back control quickly. The same thing may happen after America's departure 30 years later. Peace talks are

continuing, but the Taliban will now have less reason to treat them seriously.

Mr Biden's decision marks the death of a particular kind of American hubris. New forms of warfare, increasingly technologically ambitious and involving fewer ground troops than in earlier wars such as Vietnam, were championed two decades ago by the former US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld. They have not achieved the goals that he claimed. Winning this kind of war without major troop commitments has not worked. Afghan opinion has been more divided and is marked by greater hostility to the US than the simplistic western assumptions of 2001 ever allowed. Regional hostilities have not been overcome. American public opinion has also become increasingly hostile towards committing to the conflicts. The nation-building claims that were made about Afghanistan and, later, Iraq have been exposed as unachievable. A lot of this was predicted and predictable when the conflict was launched. But there is very little satisfaction to be drawn from seeing it come to pass amid continuing uncertainty and insecurity for so many Afghan men and women.

Editorial
The Guardian

2. Answer the questions below. Do not copy any sentence from the passage above. Write the answers in your own sentences having your own wordings and phrasing.

10 x 3 = 30 marks

- a) What is the passage about?
- b) What was the experience of British Empire in Afghanistan?
- c) Who attacked Afghanistan for what reasons?
- d) Why has the US as well as its allies decided to withdraw troops from Afghanistan?
- e) How does the US President's declaration reveal the limitations of American power in the 21st century?
- f) In what areas did Afghan public life improve during the US occupation in Afghanistan?
- g) What may now happen in Afghanistan after America's leaving 30 years later?
- h) Who do you think has won the Afghan war?
- i) What did you mean by American hubris?
- j) Write a suitable title of the passage.

3. Write a summary of the passage within 100 words.

25 marks