**Reading Comprehension Select Many Practice Test 5**

**Passage for Questions 1 to 5**

It must be the season of pessimism. Having worried about the war in Afghanistan, the battle against Al–Qaeda, the Arab reaction and the anthrax scare, we have found the next target for our gloom and it’s an easy one: the prospect for Afghanistan. You can hear the weary phrases tripping off people’s tongues: the country can’t be rebuilt, it will revert to civil war and a Marshall Plan would be a colossal waste of money. If these were just the musings of commentators, they wouldn’t matter much. But many within the administration are urging Washington to quickly and quietly wash its hands off Afghanistan and move on. Not only would this be a strategic error, but it would show blindness to one of the most important lessons of the last decade. What comes to mind when you think of the following: Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor, Mozambique and Uganda? For most people the answer is civil war, ethnic cleansing, failed states and intractable woes. And that’s what they represented the last time you looked at them. But a funny thing happened over the last five years. As the UN Development Chief, Mark Malloch Brown puts it, “The spotlight went away, but these countries slowly began putting their houses in order. Today they are all peaceful, reasonably stable societies with the first stirrings of genuine economic activity

**Question 1**

**Which of the following has NOT been cited as a reason for a pessimistic viewpoint with respect to the situation in Afghanistan?**

1. The future of Afghanistan
2. The prospect of a civil war in Afghanistan
3. Pulling out of Afghanistan would be strategic error for Washington
4. It will be difficult to rebuild Afghanistan
5. The situation in countries like Uganda is improving now

**Correct Answer: C and E.**

**Explanation:**

A The author clearly brings out in the beginning of the passage that it must be the season of pessimism and he follows up this claim with evidence that reinforces the pessimistic thoughts that people are having. Also, it has been clearly indicated that the prospect for Afghanistan is the next target for gloom. The passage also brings out the various other issues that reflect the pessimistic viewpoint of people with respect to the situation in Afghanistan. A, B and D have clearly been outlined in the passage and hence, they all have been cited as reasons for a pessimistic viewpoint. Therefore, A, B and D are all incorrect answer options to the question asked. C does not refer to a reason for a pessimistic approach; it simply indicates the outcome of the pessimistic viewpoint. E is clearly incorrect and the fact mentioned at E cannot be related to a pessimistic viewpoint in respect of the situation in Afghanistan. Therefore, C and E are the correct answers.

**Question 2**

**Which of the following is being referred to by ‘the most important lessons of the last decade’?**

1. ‘Today they are all peaceful, reasonably stable societies with the first stirrings of genuine economic activity’
2. ‘You can hear the weary phrases tripping off’
3. ‘civil war, ethnic cleansing, failed states and intractable woes’
4. ‘these countries slowly began putting their houses in order’
5. ‘the country can’t be rebuilt’

**Correct Answer: A and D.**

**Explanation:**

A A careful reading of the passage will highlight the important lessons that are being referred to. The examples of various strife-torn countries have been cited to illustrate how the international community has learnt that constant support has eventually led to the beginning of the establishment of peaceful societies in those countries. These are the most important lessons that have been learnt. In other words, it has been learnt that not withdrawing from a strife-torn country is for the good of that country despite the odds against being involved in peacekeeping operations in a strife-torn country. Out of all the answer options given, A and D clearly refer to the most important lessons that are being discussed and hence, A and D are the correct answers.

**Question 3**

**What will happen if Washington washes its hands off Afghanistan?**

1. The hopes of Afghanistan limping back to normalcy will be dashed
2. Afghanistan will be in a situation that is similar to the one present in countries like Bosnia and Kosovo today
3. It will be unlikely that the situation in Afghanistan becomes comparable to the one present in countries like Rwanda and Uganda today
4. Peace will be restored in Afghanistan
5. Afghanistan could go to war with its neighbouring countries

**Correct Answer: A and C.**

**Explanation:**

A The passage clearly outlines the effects of Washington withdrawing from Afghanistan. Firstly it will be a strategic error and secondly it will be akin to turning a blind eye to the most important lessons that have been learnt in the past while dealing with peacekeeping in countries that are in similar situations. It has been brought out that other countries which are in situations similar to that in Afghanistan are slowly limping back to normalcy with the support from international agencies. Withdrawal of Washington from Afghanistan will lead Afghanistan to a situation which will not even be close to that in other countries being referred to. There is no indication of the fact that Afghanistan could go to war with its neighbouring countries if Washington withdraws from Afghanistan. In view of the above, it is evident that A and C are the correct answers.

**Question 4**

**Which of the following conclusions based on the given passage are justified?**

1. International agencies are paving the path for the citizens of Afghanistan to live peacefully
2. Afghanistan is likely to relapse into civil war
3. Washington needs to pull out of Afghanistan as it is a waste of money
4. Washington should not take the hasty decision of withdrawing from Afghanistan
5. People are very optimistic about Afghanistan’s future

**Correct Answer: A and D.**

**Explanation:**

A The passage clearly brings out that withdrawing from Afghanistan would be a strategic error and it will also amount to ignoring the important lessons that have been learnt by international peacekeeping agencies from similar situations in the past. B is a statement that reflects the pessimistic thinking of some people. It will be erroneous to deduce it as a conclusion based on the contents of the passage. Therefore, B is incorrect. The claim at C has been brought out in the passage, but it has been refuted by the arguments following the claim. Therefore, the conclusion at C is not warranted, but the conclusion at D is justified. E is clearly incorrect as it has been brought out that people have a pessimistic view regarding Afghanistan’s future. In view of the above, it is evident that A and D are the correct answers.

**Question 5**

**In the context in which it appears, ‘intractable’ means**

1. Stubborn and inflexible
2. Facile and amenable
3. Difficult and incompliant
4. Easy and manageable
5. Docile and pliable

**Correct Answer: A and C.**

**Explanation:**

A The word intractable is used to refer to something that is not easily controlled or directed. In other words, it refers to something that is stubborn or obstinate. The words facile, amenable, easy and docile mean the opposite of intractable. Therefore, B, D and E all are incorrect and the correct answers are A and C.

**Passage for Questions 6 to 10**

There are good reasons for pessimism. Afghanistan is the most ambitious project that the international community will have ever undertaken. And as a senior American official said, “The one thing that seems to unite Afghans over long period of time is they don’t much like foreigners. But consider what the foreigners were up to in the past. The British and the Russians tried to colonize the place. The Arabs turned it into a base for international terrorism. Maybe now that the foreigners are coming for quite different reasons, the locals will be more welcoming”. The country has been through invasion, occupation and civil war for two decades. Despite mountains of skepticism the reality has been that over the last five years the international community and the United Nations learned tough lessons from their initial failures in dealing with peace–keeping and nation–building. Today the major powers and the international agencies are pulling together and working effectively. As a result, once hopeless situations are moving toward some semblance of normalcy. Is it so crazy to think that may be Afghanistan can be next on this list?

**Question 6**

**The outlook of the Afghans towards the foreigners is likely to change because**

1. The foreigners are now coming to Afghanistan for reasons other than propagating terrorism
2. Britain and Russia have tried to colonize Afghanistan
3. The Arabs used Afghanistan for terrorist activities
4. The foreigners have good reasons for being pessimistic
5. The international community is trying to establish peace in Afghanistan

**Correct Answer: A and E.**

**Explanation:**

A B and C refer to facts that have been highlighted as reasons for the dislike that the Afghans have towards foreigners. B and C do not imply that Afghans will now start liking the foreigners and hence, they both are incorrect. The passage opens with the comment, ‘There are good reasons for pessimism’. This comment has not been made to indicate the viewpoint of the foreigners. It simply describes the general viewpoint of people. Therefore, D is clearly incorrect. Towards, the end of the passage, it has been clearly brought out that the Afghans will now be more welcoming as the foreigners are coming for different reasons such as peacekeeping. Hence, A and E are the correct answers.

**Question 7**

**Which of the following means the same as ‘reasons for pessimism’?**

1. a cynical attitude
2. events leading to a belief in bad outcome
3. reasons for being optimistic
4. basis for a cynical attitude
5. events leading to a state of having of having positive beliefs

**Correct Answer: B and D.**

**Explanation:**

A The word pessimism refers to the tendency to anticipate or see only bad or undesirable outcomes or conditions. The antonym of pessimism is optimism which refers to a state of positive beliefs. The question asks for the meaning of ‘reasons for pessimism’. A is incomplete as it describes pessimism only. Therefore A is incorrect, but D is correct. C and E are clearly incorrect as both of them mean the opposite of ‘reasons for pessimism’. In view of the above, it is evident that B and D are the correct answers.

**Question 8**

**The author uses ‘mountains of skepticism’ to refer to**

1. the mountainous terrain of Afghanistan
2. the cloud of doubt that surrounds the success of international agencies in Afghanistan
3. the actual truth surrounding the lessons learnt by the United Nations
4. the failure of the international agencies to maintain peace in Afghanistan
5. the apprehensions regarding the peace-keeping process in Afghanistan

**Correct Answer: B and E.**

**Explanation:**

A The word skepticism means doubt, apprehension or uncertainty. Hence, A is clearly incorrect. The author uses ‘mountains of skepticism’ to describe the feelings associated with the ongoing peace-keeping process in Afghanistan. The meaning being conveyed by using ‘mountains of skepticism’ is that despite the uncertainty surrounding the success of the peace-keeping mission in Afghanistan, the on-ground reality is that tough lessons have been learnt during various other operations and the international agencies have now realized how to slowly progress towards their aim. ‘Mountains of skepticism’ has not been used to either describe the truth of the lessons learnt by the international agencies and nor has it been used to refer to the failures encountered by the peace-keeping forces; rather it has been used to indicate the cloud of doubt that surrounded the success of international agencies in Afghanistan. In view of the above, it is evident that C and D are incorrect and B and E are the correct answers.

**Question 9**

**Which of the following would be the list on which the author questions placing Afghanistan?**

1. International agencies working for establishment of peace in strife-torn countries
2. Strife-torn countries
3. Troubled countries in which the internal situation is improving
4. Countries with peaceful societies
5. Countries on the path to normalcy

**Correct Answer: C and E.**

**Explanation:**

A Towards the end of the passage, the author explains that the situation in Afghanistan is now improving as the international agencies are working in a positive direction. He follows it up by stating that situations that were earlier hopeless are now limping towards normalcy. This is the list where he questions placing Afghanistan. In other words, he states that it will not be incorrect to place the country in a list of situations which are now improving. The author is not referring to troubled countries which are not showing any signs of improving. B does not specify whether the strife-torn countries being referred to are going from bad to worse or whether they are on the path to normalcy. Therefore, A, B and D are all incorrect and C and E are the correct answers.

**Question 10**

**Which of the following conclusions based on the given passage is NOT justified?**

1. The pessimistic views of people regarding Afghanistan are justified
2. A pessimistic view on the situation in Afghanistan is not warranted
3. The United Nations has not always been successful in establishing peace in strife torn countries
4. It is unlikely the Afghanistan could ever head towards normalcy
5. The outlook of the Afghans towards foreigners is likely to undergo a change

**Correct Answer: B and D**

**Explanation:**

A The passage opens with the note that there are good reasons for pessimism. This implies that A is justified and it is therefore, an incorrect answer to the question asked; whereas B is not justified and therefore, B is a correct answer option to the question asked. The author brings out that the international community and the United Nations have learnt tough lessons from their initial failures in dealing with peacekeeping. This implies that the conclusion at C is justified and hence, C is an incorrect answer to the question asked. The passage ends on the note that it is not so crazy to think that Afghanistan could end on the list of nations that are moving towards a semblance of normalcy. Therefore, the conclusion at D is not justified and hence, it is a correct answer. It has been brought out that the locals will now be more welcoming to the foreigners and therefore, E is justified. In view of the above, it is evident that A, C and E are incorrect and B and D are the correct answers.

**Passage for Questions 11 to 15**

The Indian mind delights in ambiguity in ambivalence, in trying to have the best of both worlds, in harboring a medley of conflicting ideas without much discomfort. Whatever the public rhetoric, the practice is always based on half- measures, of leaving things half done, of a refusal to anticipate trouble and a tendency to wake up when the crisis has already matured, this may be an exaggeration. But the slovenliness of approach to every problem is a fact of life which hits in the eye even the most sympathetic foreign observer. But, India is a democracy and democracies make many small mistakes. However, dictatorships are more susceptible to making huge ones and risking everything on one decision – like going to war. Democracies are the political equivalent of free markets. Companies know they can’t fool the consumer too often; he will simply switch to the competition. The same goes for political parties. When they fail to live up their promises in government, the political consumer opts for the competition. Democratic freedoms too are important for the economy, especially now that information is supreme. Few doubt that the internet will play an important part in the global economy in the decades to come out. But China, by preventing free access to it, is already probably destroying its capabilities in this area. As service industries grow in importance, China may well be at a disadvantage though that may not be apparent today when its manufacturing juggernaut is rolling ahead.

**Question 11**

**Which of the following best describes how the problem being discussed in the passage is approached?**

1. In a slipshod manner
2. Successfully
3. Neatly
4. In an accomplished manner
5. In a disorderly manner

**Correct Answer: A and E.**

**Explanation:**

A The passage brings out that there is slovenliness in the approach being taken towards the problem. Slovenliness stands for something that is disorganised, slipshod and untidy. This makes it obvious that B, C and D are all incorrect and A and E are the correct answers.

**Question 12**

**According to the author, the Indian mind**

1. is capable of supporting contradictory ideas
2. wants to make the most of whatever is available
3. can predict oncoming problems
4. doubts the utility of the internet
5. cannot adjust to the demands of dictatorships

**Correct Answer: A and B.**

**Explanation:**

A The passage begins on the note that the Indian mind is comfortable harbouring conflicting ideas. Hence, A is correct. It has also been specified that the Indian mind delights in having the best of both worlds. This implies that B is also correct. It has been highlighted that the Indian mind refuses to anticipate trouble. This implies that C is incorrect. D and E are clearly incorrect as the facts mentioned at D and E have not been implied anywhere in the passage. In view of the above, it is evident that A and B are the correct answers.

**Question 13**

**Which of the following have been drawn as similarities between a market and a democratic form of government?**

1. Both make small mistakes
2. The consumers in both have the liberty of choice
3. The consumers in both cannot be misled for long
4. Both cannot exist in harmony with a dictator as the leader
5. The consumers in both can be easily misled for long

**Correct Answer: B and C.**

**Explanation:**

A Although the author mentions that democracy makes small mistakes, he makes this statement with reference to the mistakes committed in a dictatorship. There is no reference to the mistakes committed by companies marketing their products. Hence, A is incorrect. D is clearly incorrect as it has not been implied anywhere in the passage. The author explicitly brings out the similarities between a democracy and a market that have been mentioned at B and C. Therefore, E is incorrect and B and C are the correct answers.

**Question 14**

**Which of the following strengthen the claim, ‘is already probably destroying its capabilities in this area’?**

1. The internet will play a significant role in improving the economy in future
2. China has imposed restrictions on free internet access
3. China has become a manufacturing giant
4. China will not be able to use the internet to its fullest potential
5. There is no democratic freedom in China

**Correct Answer: B and D.**

**Explanation:**

A The claim in question indicates that China will not be able to make the best use of the internet for improving its economy and the reason cited for this is that China has denied free access to the internet to its citizens. Therefore, this makes it evident that B and D are correct. A, C and E are facts that do not support the claim in question in any way whatsoever and hence, A, C and E are all incorrect. Therefore, B and D are the correct answers as both of them support the claim being discussed.

**Question 15**

**‘The political consumer opts for the competition’ carries the same meaning as**

1. an unpopular political party can be voted out of power
2. the citizens would like to see competition between political parties
3. the voter switches his loyalties if he is not happy with the party he chose initially
4. the consumer in the political sense is very competitive
5. the political consumers compete with each other for votes

**Correct Answer: A and C.**

**Explanation:**

A The author uses the word ‘competition’ to refer to the opposing political party in a democracy. He makes this reference to bring out the similarities between a market and a democracy. A consumer will buy the same product being marketed by another company if he is not happy with the one he is currently using; similarly a political consumer or a citizen will vote for the other party or the opposing party if he is not happy with the party that is currently in power. In view of the above, it is evident that B, D and E are all incorrect and A and C are the correct answers.