

1. **heed** (verb) – pay attention to, adhere to, consider.
2. **ceasefire** (noun) – a temporary stoppage of a war, truce, armistice.
3. **underscore** (verb) – emphasize, highlight, underline.
4. **chieftain** (noun) – leader, head, master/ruler.
5. **insurgent** (noun) – dissenter, agitator, revolutionist.
6. **amid** (preposition) – in the middle of, surrounded by; during.
7. **clout** (noun) – influence, power, control.
8. **honour** (verb) – fulfil, observe, heed.
9. **shoot down** (phrasal verb) – crush someone/their opinions by criticism.
10. **vow** (verb) – swear, pledge, promise.
11. **reciprocity** (noun) – exchange, substitution, reparation.
12. **hold** (verb) – remain available, remain valid, exist; be the case.
13. **fortified** (adjective) – protected, secured, safeguarded.
14. **intransigence** (noun) – refusal to change opinions/views or agree/compromise something.
15. **prospects** (noun) – possibilities, potential, outlook.
16. **primarily** (adverb) – mostly, mainly, most importantly.
17. **seek** (verb) – aim, try/strive, attempt/desire to achieve something.
18. **safe haven** (noun) – refuge, shelter, asylum, place of safety/security.
19. **transnational** (adjective) – involving/relating to two/more countries.
20. **eventual** (adjective) – final, ultimate, concluding.
21. **stalemate** (noun) – deadlock, impasse, standstill/stand-off.
22. **endorse** (verb) – uphold, support, approve.
23. **prolong** (verb) – lengthen, make longer, extend/drag out.
24. **morale** (noun) – confidence, enthusiasm, team spirit.
25. **tack** (noun) – approach, way, method.
26. **forge** (verb) – build, form, create.
27. **endanger** (verb) – imperil, jeopardize, risk.
28. **deficit** (noun) – shortfall, deficiency, shortage.
29. **bridge** (verb) – join, link/connect, unite.
30. **overlook** (verb) – fail to notice/observe, ignore, disregard.
31. **cease** (verb) – end, stop, conclude.
32. **hostilities** (noun) – fighting, conflict, war.

## Endless war: on U.S. putting pressure on Taliban

### The U.S. must put pressure on the Taliban to heed the Afghan government's concerns

A call by Afghanistan's Loya Jirga, a grand assembly of senior politicians and tribal and religious leaders, for a ceasefire between **government troops and the Taliban** **underscores** the mood in Kabul. Afghanistan's leaders, from its rulers to tribal chieftains, want to resolve the 17-year-long conflict. Over a four-day meeting that ended on May 2,

the Jirga asked the government to set up a negotiating team with members from the assembly for talks with the insurgents. It also backed women's rights, a critical issue being debated by the political class amid the Taliban's rising clout. President Ashraf Ghani has said his government would honour the assembly's proposals, but wants the ceasefire to be mutual. The Taliban, for its part, immediately shot down the proposal, vowing to continue attacks through the Ramzan month. Without the Taliban's reciprocity, no ceasefire will hold. The group controls half of Afghanistan and has shown its capacity to strike anywhere, including in the most fortified of locations. It has also been engaged in direct talks with the U.S. for months. But the peace talks haven't prevented the Taliban from carrying out its summer offensive against the government. By rejecting the Loya Jirga proposal, the Taliban has once again made it clear that it is not ready yet to engage with the government in Kabul.

The Taliban's intransigence has darkened the prospects for peace. The talks between Taliban representatives and Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. special representative, are primarily focussed on withdrawing foreign troops from **Afghanistan**. The U.S. seeks, in return, an assurance that Afghanistan will not provide a safe haven to transnational terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. But for an eventual settlement of the Afghan crisis, the government and the Taliban need to talk. The war has long been in a stalemate. But the government and the Taliban see different ways out. The government is willing to engage the insurgents, a move which has now been endorsed by the Loya Jirga as well. But the Taliban, like any other successful insurgent group, wants to prolong the conflict, hoping that it can weaken the government's morale and reduce its military strength. The Taliban will change tack only if it is forced to do so militarily or through pressure. The government lacks the resources to accomplish either. It cannot defeat the Taliban militarily, as the 17 years of the war suggest. It cannot forge peace on the Taliban's terms as it would mean endangering whatever few freedoms the Afghans enjoy right now. This resource deficit can be bridged only with the help of the international community. The U.S., which is in talks with the Taliban, should not overlook the interests of Kabul. It must put pressure on the Taliban to cease hostilities and engage with Mr. Ghani's government.