

## Important Vocab for the Editorial

1. **pullout** (noun) – departure, withdrawal, retreat, disengagement, exit.
2. **settlement** (noun) – agreement, deal, arrangement; resolution, solution.
3. **pull out** (phrasal verb) – withdraw, retreat, get/move out.
4. **effectively** (adverb) – practically, virtually, in effect, all but.
5. **uphold** (verb) – confirm, endorse/approve, vindicate/validate.
6. **spirit** (noun) – real/true meaning, intention, essence.
7. **rather than** (phrase) – instead of.
8. **insurgent** (noun) – dissenter, agitator/rioter, subversive.
9. **pull back** (phrasal verb) – withdraw, retreat, disengage.
10. **in return for** (phrase) – in exchange for.
11. **strategy** (noun) – plan of action (in order to achieve a more expansive set of political, economic, and security interests).
12. **speculation** (noun) – prediction, guesswork, opinion/thought.
13. **orderly** (adjective) – well organized, methodical, systematic, careful.
14. **besides** (preposition/linking adverb) – in addition to, as well, apart from.
15. **coalition** (noun) – alliance, union, partnership.
16. **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** (noun) – NATO was created in 1949 by the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations to provide collective security against the Soviet Union.
17. **command** (noun) – authority, control, power; order, instruction, directive.
18. **push** (noun) – effort, initiative, drive.
19. **revive** (verb) – reintroduce, reinstate, bring back.
20. **hit** (verb) – crash into, run into, bang into, collide with.
21. **roadblock** (noun) – barrier, hindrance, obstruction.
22. **hit a roadblock** (phrase) – stop, stall.
23. **make clear** (phrase) – explain, clarify, elucidate.
24. **step up** (phrasal verb) – increase, intensify, scale up, escalate.
25. **go through** (phrasal verb) – be carried through, be officially completed.
26. **shaky** (adjective) – faltering, unsteady, weak, precarious.
27. **precarious** (adjective) – risky, dangerous, unsafe; hazardous, perilous, unreliable.

28. **leave** (verb) – abandon; left to oneself means “be alone”.
29. **hold together** (phrasal verb) – cause something to remain united.
30. **provincial** (adjective) – regional, territorial.
31. **stalemated** (adjective) – deadlocked, standstilled, checkmated.
32. **decisively** (adverb) – definitely.
33. **in favour of** (phrase) – in support of, to the advantage of, approve of.
34. **overrun** (verb) – invade, occupy, overwhelm, swamp, spread over (a place in large numbers).
35. **drive back** (phrasal verb) – fight off, repulse, rebuff, repel, oppose.
36. **activist** (noun) – a person who supports a political or societal change/cause.
37. **civil society** (noun) – civil society refers to the space for collective action around shared interests, purposes, and values, generally distinct from government and commercial for-profit actors.
38. **verge** (noun) – edge, border, margin, limit.
39. **shared interest** (noun) – mutual benefit.
40. **might** (noun) – strength, force, power.
41. **road map** (noun) – schedule of a (complex) program.
42. **ominous** (adjective) – threatening, menacing, inauspicious, unpromising, unfavourable.

## Exiting Afghanistan: On U.S. troop pullout

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### **The U.S. pullout without any settlement leaves the Taliban stronger**

By announcing that all **U.S. troops would be pulled out of Afghanistan by September 11**, President Joe Biden has effectively upheld the spirit of the Trump-Taliban deal, rather than defying it. In the agreement between the Trump administration and the insurgents in February 2020, U.S. troops were scheduled to pull back by May 1, in return for the Taliban’s assurance that they would not let terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State operate on Afghan soil. When Mr. Biden ordered a review of the U.S.’s Afghan strategy, there was speculation that he would delay the pullout at least until there was a political settlement. But he chose an orderly pullout — the remaining troops (officially 2,500) will start leaving Afghanistan on May 1, with a full withdrawal by September 11. Besides the U.S. troops, the

thousands of coalition troops under the NATO's command are also expected to pull back along with the Americans. Mr. Biden's push to revive the peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban has hit a roadblock. A U.S.-initiated, UN-led regional peace conference is scheduled to take place in Ankara, Turkey, on April 24. But the Taliban have made it clear that they will not participate in it, and have threatened to step up attacks if the U.S. did not meet the May 1 withdrawal deadline. It is not clear whether the peace conference will go through without the Taliban's participation and what it would achieve even if it goes through without the Taliban.

This leaves the already shaky Ghani government in an even more precarious situation. After September, the government will be left with itself on the battleground against the Taliban. For now, Mr. Ghani has held together the powerful sections of the state and society against the Taliban at least in the provincial capitals. But once the Americans are gone, the balance of power in the stalemated conflict could shift decisively in favour of the Taliban. In the recent past, whenever the Taliban overran cities, U.S. air power was crucial in driving them back. The country is already witnessing a series of targeted killings of journalists, activists and other civil society members opposed to the Taliban. This does not mean that the government is on the verge of collapse. The U.S. has promised that it would continue remote assistance to the government. The role of regional players such as Russia, China and India, which have a shared interest in a stable Afghanistan, will also be crucial in deciding the country's future. But one thing is certain: the U.S., despite all its military might, has lost the war and its withdrawal, without any settlement or even a peace road map, leaves the Taliban stronger and the government weaker. That is an ominous sign.