

## Important Vocab For the Editorial

1. **grave** (adjective) – crucial, critical, serious, terrible.
2. **war-torn** (adjective) – (of a place) devastated, ruined, wrecked (by war).
3. **go through** (phrasal verb) – undergo, experience, suffer.
4. **amid** (preposition) – in the middle of, surrounded by; during.
5. **critic** (noun) – detractor/fault-finder, censurer, attacker.
6. **running mate** (noun) – the person who runs with someone in an election (such as an election to choose a new president) and who is given the less important position (such as vice president) if they are elected (Courtesy: VOA Learning English).
7. **irony** (noun) – paradox, incongruity, peculiarity.
8. **insurgent** (noun) – dissenter, agitator, rebel.
9. **fortified** (adjective) – protected, secured, safeguarded.
10. **get down to** (phrasal verb) – begin, start, undertake, embark on.
11. **full-fledged** (adjective) – fully, developed, fully established.
12. **leverage** (verb) – use, make use of, utilize (to maximum gain).
13. **bargaining position/power** (noun) – the relative ability of parties in a situation to exert influence over each other.
14. **delink** (verb) – separate, segregate, isolate.
15. **free run** (noun) – a state or condition without any constraints/restrictions.
16. **notorious** (adjective) – infamous, ill-famed, with a bad reputation.
17. **chronic** (adjective) – persistent, long-term, continuing (or happening again and again for a long time).
18. **erode** (verb) – (gradually) deteriorate, destroy, spoil.
19. **beleaguered** (adjective) – hard-pressed, troubled, in difficulties.
20. **strain** (verb) – struggle, labour, toil; overwork, overburden.
21. **prolonged** (adjective) – continuous, lengthy, unending.
22. **stalemate** (noun) – deadlock, impasse, standstill/stand-off.
23. **turn around** (phrasal verb) – change course, reverse direction, change direction.
24. **hinterland** (noun) – remote areas of a country away from the coastal areas/the banks of major rivers.
25. **scenario** (noun) – course of events, situation.
26. **leeway** (noun) – freedom, liberty, licence/elbow room.
27. **quest** (noun) – search, hunt, pursuit; mission.
28. **compromise** (noun) – agreement, understanding, settlement.
29. **ceasefire** (noun) – a temporary stoppage of a war, truce, armistice.
30. **under way** (phrase) – going on, continuing, in progress.
31. **cease** (verb) – end, stop, conclude.
32. **back** (verb) – support, endorse, uphold.
33. **resolutely** (adverb) – firmly, determinedly, purposefully.

## Talks and terror: on Afghan peace talks

The attack on Afghan vice presidential candidate **Amrullah Saleh**'s office in Kabul on Sunday that **killed at least 20 people and injured 50**, including Mr. Saleh, is a grave reminder of the crisis the war-torn country is going through even amid attempts to find

peace. Mr. Saleh, a former intelligence chief and a strong critic of the Taliban and Pakistan, is President Ashraf Ghani's running-mate for the September 28 election. And the irony is that the assault occurred a few hours after President Ghani officially launched his campaign in which he promised that "peace is coming". The message the insurgents are trying to send is that even the most fortified political offices in the country or its top politicians are not safe. The insurgents have made it clear they will carry out their offensive irrespective of the peace process, especially when Afghanistan gets down to a full-fledged election campaign. In recent months, even when the U.S. and Taliban representatives have held multiple rounds of talks in Doha, Qatar, insurgents have kept up attacks, both on military and civilian locations. The Taliban appears to be trying to leverage these assaults to boost its bargaining position in the talks with the U.S. And the Kabul government's inability to prevent them and the U.S.'s apparent decision to delink the negotiations from the daily violence are giving the insurgents a free run in many Afghan cities.

Afghanistan's crises are many. Half the country is either directly controlled or dominated by the Taliban. In the eastern parts, the Islamic State has established a presence and the group targets the country's religious minorities. The government in Kabul is weak and notorious for chronic corruption. Its failure to ensure the basic safety and security of civilians is in turn eroding the public's confidence in the system. At present, the government appears beleaguered. Its security agencies are strained by the prolonged **war**. It is true that Afghanistan needs a political settlement. The war has been in a stalemate for long. The government, even with U.S. support, is not in a position to turn the war around. The Taliban, on the other side, has expanded its reach to the hinterland, but not the urban centres. While a peace process is the best way ahead in such a scenario, the question is whether the U.S. is giving too much leeway to the Taliban in its quest to get out of its longest war. The decision to keep the Afghan government out of the peace process was a big compromise. The absence of a ceasefire even when talks were under way was another. The result is that Afghans continue to suffer even when the Americans and the Taliban talk. This has to change. There has to be more pressure, both political and military, on the Taliban to cease the violence. And the U.S. should back the Afghan government and the coming elections resolutely, while Kabul has to get its act together.