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Illustration: Liu Rui/GT

The US troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan has led to the rapid demise of the Kabul government. The world has witnessed how the US evacuated its diplomats by helicopter while Taliban soldiers crowded into the presidential palace in Kabul. This has dealt a

heavy blow to the credibility and reliability of the US.

Many people cannot help but recall how the Vietnam War ended in 1975: The US abandoned its allies in South Vietnam; Saigon was taken over; then the US evacuated almost all its citizens in Saigon. And in 2019, US troops withdrew from northern Syria abruptly and abandoned their allies, the Kurds. Some historians also point out that abandoning allies to protect US interests is an inherent flaw that has been deeply rooted in the US since the founding of the country. During the American War of Independence, the US humbly begged the king of France, Louis XVI, to ally with it. After the war, it quickly made peace with Britain unilaterally and concluded a peace treaty with Britain that was detrimental to France's interests. This put Louis XVI's regime in a difficult position, giving cause for the French Revolution.

How Washington abandoned the Kabul regime particularly shocked some in Asia, including the island of Taiwan. Taiwan is the region that relies on the protection of the US the most in Asia, and the island's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) authorities have made Taiwan go further and further down this abnormal path. The situation in Afghanistan suddenly saw a radical change after the country was abandoned by the US. And Washington just left despite the worsening situation in Kabul. Is this some kind of omen of Taiwan's future fate?

Tsai Ing-wen, who had sent a message of condolence to the US president for the death of his dog, did not mention even a word about the change in the situation in Afghanistan. Other DPP politicians as well as the media that tilt toward the DPP downplayed the shocking change as well. But they must have been nervous and feel an ominous presentiment. They must have

known better in secret that the US is not reliable.

The geopolitical value of Afghanistan is no less than that of Taiwan island. Around Afghanistan, there are the US' three biggest geopolitical rivals - China, Russia and Iran. In addition, Afghanistan is a bastion of anti-US ideology. The withdrawal of US troops from there is not because Afghanistan is unimportant. It's because it has become too costly for Washington to have a presence in the country. Now the US wants to find a better way to use its resources to maintain its hegemony in the world.

Taiwan is probably the US' most cost-effective ally in East Asia. There is no US military presence on the island of Taiwan. The way the US maintains the alliance with Taiwan is simple: It sells arms to Taiwan while encouraging the DPP authorities to implement anti-mainland policies through political support and manipulation. As a result, it has caused a certain degree of depletion between the two sides of the Taiwan Straits. And what Washington has to do is only to send warships and aircraft near the Straits from time to time. In general, the US does not have to spend a penny on Taiwan. Instead, it makes money through arms sales and forced pork and beef sales to the island. This is totally a profitable geopolitical deal for Washington.

Once a cross-Straits war breaks out while the mainland seizes the island with forces, the US would have to have a much greater determination than it had for Afghanistan, Syria, and Vietnam if it wants to interfere. A military intervention of the US will be a move to change the status quo in the Taiwan Straits, and this will make Washington pay a huge price rather than earn profit.

Some people on the island of Taiwan hype that the island is

different from Afghanistan, and that the US wouldn't leave them alone. Indeed, the island is different from Afghanistan. But the difference is the deeper hopelessness of a US victory if it gets itself involved in a cross-Straits war. Such a war would mean unthinkable costs for the US, in front of which the so-called special importance of Taiwan is nothing but wishful thinking of the DPP authorities and secessionist forces on the island.

In the past two decades, the Kabul government cost over 2,000 US soldiers, \$2 trillion, and the majesty of the US against the "bandits." But how many lives of US troops and how many dollars would the US sacrifice for the island of Taiwan? After all, the US acknowledges that "there is but one China and that Taiwan is part of China." Will the US get more moral support from within and from the West if it fights for the secession of Taiwan than it did during the Afghan War?

The DPP authorities need to keep a sober head, and the secessionist forces should reserve the ability to wake up from their dreams. From what happened in Afghanistan, they should perceive that once a war breaks out in the Straits, the island's defense will collapse in hours and the US military won't come to help. As a result, the DPP authorities will quickly surrender, while some high-level officials may flee by plane.

The best choice for the DPP authorities is to avoid pushing the situation to that position. They need to change their course of bonding themselves to the anti-Chinese mainland chariot of the US. They should keep cross-Straits peace with political means, rather than acting as strategic pawns of the US and bear the bitter fruits of a war.