

US must not turn away from Asia

By Frank Jannuzi and Richard Pearson



The catastrophe in Kabul evoked scenes eerily similar to the fall of Saigon to North Vietnamese forces and the less well-known fall two weeks earlier of Phnom Penh to the Khmer Rouge. The older generation might also draw comparisons to the swift collapse of Chiang Kai-shek's (蔣介石) government in China in 1949 and its hurried evacuation to Taiwan.

In China and Indochina, the sudden defeat of an ally dealt serious blows to US prestige and created propaganda opportunities for those seeking to sow seeds of doubt about its reliability as a security partner. That pattern is evident again today. China's propaganda organs are calling Kabul "a clearer demonstration of US impotence than the Vietnam War."

The administration of US President Joe Biden has much work to do to repair the damage caused by the US' maladroit exit from Afghanistan, but while the US cannot get a do-over for 20 years of missteps and missed opportunities in central Asia, it can avoid repeating the mistakes made after the Chinese revolution and the fall of Saigon, when it pivoted away from Asia and defunded programs designed to ensure that the US had the personnel needed to navigate Asia's treacherous waters.

The rancorous, highly partisan "Who Lost China?" debate of the 1950s gutted what limited Asia expertise existed in Washington and left the country ill-prepared to understand later developments on the Korean Peninsula and in Indochina. Then-US senator Mike Mansfield was one of the few members of the US Congress with the expertise and humility to foresee the looming disaster in Vietnam, and warn three presidents against sending troops there.

North Vietnam's victory sapped what little enthusiasm Congress had ever mustered in support of Asian studies, and two decades of neglect of regional studies followed, undermining the US' ability to respond to the fluid conditions found in the Indo-Pacific region — today's ground zero for a great power competition between the US and China.

In the weeks and months to come, Congress is to hold hearings and convene commissions to study how and why the US' long engagement in Afghanistan ended so ignominiously. Such postmortems are warranted, and should be undertaken with the goal of learning lessons rather than scoring political points, but the US cannot simply look backward. It must prepare for what is ahead — for a future in which the Indo-Pacific region is to be the world's economic and security center of gravity.

Locked in a strategic competition with China, the US needs to marshal support for a free and open Indo-Pacific region, and reinforce the norms that have defined its core interests since the end of World War II.

This is a competition in which the US requires partners, and winning them demands more than pronouncements from the podium. The US and Asia need practical, tangible, on-the-ground initiatives that reassure Asian peoples and policymakers of the US' commitment to engagement and partnership with regional democracies.

Biden did just that in April during his summit meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, pledging to strengthen the Mansfield Fellowship Program that trains Americans in the Japanese language and sends them to work in the Japanese government, strengthening the fabric of community across the Pacific.

In his remarks on Kabul on Monday last week, Biden explained his decision to withdraw by repeatedly addressing the use of US "resources and attention" to advance national interests. He is right. For a decimal fraction of the resources expended in Afghanistan, the US could radically alter its level of engagement in the Indo-Pacific region, not through additional hardware and military deployments, but through targeted outreach initiatives, and trade and commercial programs.

Most Popular >

- 1 Interview: Neuroscientist Anil Seth: 'We risk not understanding the central mystery of life'
- 2 High blood pressure cases double in 30 years
- 3 COVID-19: Chen 'satisfied' with Medigen vaccine rollout
- 4 Stimulus vouchers coming in October
- 5 COVID-19: CECC reports zero new COVID-19 cases


Taipei Times
 51,010 個讚

說這專頁讚


Taipei Times
 3 小時前

Taiwan's national basketball team yesterday punched their ticket to the FIBA Asia Cup after edging Guam 85-77 in the US territory on the final day of qualifier

TAIPEI


Washington should immediately launch programs with Asian democracies patterned on the Mansfield Fellowship Program, beginning with its friends in Taiwan. Washington should invest in new training initiatives for the officials of emerging democracies in Asia.

Washington needs to come together and develop a coherent policy that includes a strengthened commercial diplomacy and export promotion effort. Such smart investments would amplify the US security alliance structure in the western Pacific and reassure threatened democracies such as Taiwan.

The US withdrawal from Afghanistan must not be solemnized by the playing of Taps on the bugle. Washington needs to play Reveille — a wake-up call to strengthen US engagement with nascent Asian democracies, while building up its own regional expertise. Let the tragedy in Kabul be the impetus for an era of smarter and stronger US engagement.

Frank Jannuzi is president and chief executive of the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation and former Asia policy director for the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Richard Pearson is executive director of the non-profit Western Pacific Fellowship Project.

讚 分享

Comments will be moderated. Keep comments relevant to the article. Remarks containing abusive and obscene language, personal attacks of any kind or promotion will be removed and the user banned. Final decision will be at the discretion of the Taipei Times.

3則留言

排序依據 最舊



新增回應……



Alix Rogers

This is solely an Afghan tragedy emanating from the US invasion and occupation .

The brave Afghans who fought with the US forces who are now left behind must be totally devastated when the head of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) secretly met the leader of the Taliban in Kabul in Monday.

What a da-kine double tragedy for them and their families.

The Taps are for them while the Reveille is for the Taliban and their new Gringo partners .

讚 · 回覆 · 1 · 4天 · 已編輯



Patrick Bird

The Taps are for the democracies while the Reveille is for the terrorism, which is really a tragedy.

讚 · 回覆 · 4天



Tony Giamporcaro

The Afghan pullout was inevitable, the dirty part is, Trump has voted out and Biden was voted in, unfortunately. For it to be totally screwed up by Biden should be no surprise to anyone. Sort of crazy, especially when you pull troops out before evacuating people, and then the enemy overrun the entire country !

Fact being, the US pullout of Afghanistan was due to military assets needed in the indo-pacific region primarily because of China's aggression and illegal expansion into international waters into others economic zones, and China's use of military intimidation against all of the u.s. fri..... [查看更多](#)

讚 · 回覆 · 1 · 4天 · 已編輯



James Mustin

The middle east is full of tribal fights and or religious fights. It has never known peace.

In country that gets involved with Afganistan lives to regret. Russia is very wary of Afganistan and so is Great Britain. China

You might also like

The KMT is destined to face history

2021-08-24

The year 1979 was the tipping point for the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) one-party state and its dreams for the Republic of China (ROC). Most in the KMT did ...

By Jerome Keating

Taiwan has allies across the Strait

2021-08-27

Studying in a foreign country can change one's perspective of the world, and the unpredictable ways this shapes a person is an education that cannot be credentialed...

By Pete Starkey

Give Taiwan's foreign policy a job

2021-08-25

Since taking office in 2016, President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) has spearheaded and been a vocal proponent of the government's New Southbound Policy. As Tsai told...

By Manoj Kumar, Panigrahi, Ahan Gadkari

Medigen debate is a wake-up call

2021-08-29

The COVID-19 vaccine developed by Taiwan's Medigen Vaccine Biologics Co has been available to the public since last week, based on an emergency use...

By Michael Tai 戴正德



TAIPEI TIMES

[Front Page](#) [Taiwan News](#) [Business](#)

[Editorials](#) [Sports](#) [World News](#) [Features](#)

[Bilingual Pages](#)

[About Us](#) [Employment](#) [Contact Us](#)

[RSS](#)

Copyright © 1999-2021 The Taipei Times. All rights reserved.