

Taiwan would not collapse like Afghanistan in the event of an attack, Premier Su Tseng-chang said on Tuesday (Aug 17), offering an indirect warning to powerful neighbour China not to be “deluded” into thinking it could take the island.

Beijing regards Taiwan as a renegade province to be reunified, by force if necessary.

The defeat of the Afghan government after the withdrawal of US forces and flight of the president has sparked discussion in Taiwan about what would happen in the event of a Chinese invasion, and whether the United States would help defend Taiwan.

Asked whether the president or premier would flee if “the enemy was at the gates” like in Afghanistan, Mr Su said people had feared neither arrest nor death when Taiwan was a dictatorship under martial law from 1949 to 1987.

“Today, there are powerful countries that want to swallow up Taiwan using force, and likewise we are also not afraid of being killed or imprisoned,” he said.

“We must guard this country and this land, and not be like certain people who always talk up the enemy’s prestige and talk down our resolve,” Mr Su added.

What happened in Afghanistan showed that if a country is in internal chaos, no outside help will make a difference, and Taiwanese have to believe in their land and that they can defend it, Mr Su added.

Everyone working together to rapidly bring under control a recent domestic spike in Covid-19 infections has shown what can be achieved when Taiwan is united, he said.

“We also tell foreign forces who want to invade and grab Taiwan - don’t be deluded,” Mr Su added, referring to China.

The US, like most countries, has no official diplomatic ties with Taiwan, but is its most important international supporter and arms supplier.



Image source: The Taiwan Times

However, there have long been concerns in Taiwan that in the event of a Chinese attack, the US would either be unwilling or unable to come to the island's aid.

President Tsai Ing-wen is overseeing an ambitious military modernisation programme to bolster the domestic arms industry and make Taiwan a "porcupine" equipped with advanced, highly mobile weapons to make a Chinese invasion as difficult as possible.

In its editorial on Tuesday, China's Global Times said the departure of US forces from Afghanistan was a lesson for Ms Tsai's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP).

"They must have been nervous and feel an ominous presentiment. They must have known better in secret that the US is not reliable," the nationalist paper said.

The editorial said the DPP needs "to keep a sober head, and the secessionist forces should reserve the ability to wake up from their dreams".

It added: "From what happened in Afghanistan, they should perceive that once a war breaks out in the (Taiwan) Strait, the island's defence will collapse in hours and the US military won't come to help."

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