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With the United States disengagement from Afghanistan, the world is witnessing “the world where the Taliban has returned” rather than one in which “America is back” as Biden declared. Just three months after the United States withdrew its troops in May of this year, Afghanistan has once again become a Taliban-controlled country. The sight of helicopters hovering over Kabul to assist in evacuating United States embassy staff gives us a sense of déjà vu of April 1975, when American helicopters were desperately hovering over the United States embassy during the fall of Saigon. The Afghanistan crisis has become a symbolic event of the ‘uncertainty’ of the international order and the ‘instability’ of the Middle East. Why did the United States decide to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan, and what are the impact and implications for international politics?

The task of “ending the longest war in American history” is humiliating to the United States due to the miscalculations and confusion occurring in the course of its implementation. The chaos taking place in Afghanistan's capital Kabul may spread beyond its borders to cause chaos in the international order. This is because not only the people of Afghanistan but also the international community must prepare for an unstable and uncertain future shared with Taliban.

Nevertheless, there are several key reasons and backdrops for President Biden's insistence on the disengagement of United States forces. The first is that the move is the result of Biden's long-standing beliefs; second, it is an ambitious decision interlinked with a transition in United States policy; and third, it is crucially influenced by domestic political considerations ahead of next year's midterm elections being held in the United States. Above all, while Biden had voted in favor of the War in Afghanistan in 2001 as then-Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, with the prolonging of war, his views shifted toward regarding the United States involvement as pouring water into a sieve. After Biden assumed the position of Commander in Chief of the United States military following his election as President, he stuck to such beliefs by personally announcing and implementing the task of withdrawing troops from Afghanistan.

The chaos and instability in the region in the wake of the disengagement from Afghanistan could be a factor that, among the world outside, causes unrest and weakened confidence in the United States' political, military capabilities and leadership. Particularly, allies and supporters who saw the Afghanistan crisis unfold would have realized the incompetence of the United States and become skeptical about its leadership. Meanwhile, domestically within the United States, its disengagement from Afghanistan may recreate an "Afghan Syndrome" akin to the previous "Vietnam Syndrome." If that happens, South Korea, Japan, and many other countries who, under the umbrella of the United States military alliance, rely on extended deterrence

and military support, could now fall into a vortex of security instability. In addition, the United States' disengagement will inevitably affect the increasingly fierce competition for hegemony between the United States and China. China wants to step forward to rebuild Afghanistan, thereby filling the void the United States is leaving behind and expanding its influence in the region.

The situation in Afghanistan offers several undertones and implications for international politics. First, it provides the opportunity and highlights the necessity for reinterpreting the 21st century from the viewpoint of geopolitical and geostrategic dimensions. The United States' disengagement from Afghanistan will be remembered as a trigger for the strategic and academic reimagination of geopolitics of the 21st century. Second, the situation in Afghanistan makes us rethink the definition and conceptualization of terrorism set by the United States. This is because the Taliban's occupation of Afghanistan suggests that the forces that had protected or were in solidarity with the terrorists overthrew the existing regime and established a new government. Third, the disengagement does not simply mean a military pull out, but rather, may become remembered as a turning point from which the United States' superpower status was weakened or, conversely, revived. Fourth, the disengagement shows that it is no longer acceptable for the United States to constantly deploy its forces in overseas internal conflicts.

The United States' disengagement from Afghanistan also poses a serious question to South Korea about the latter's responsibilities and role as a military ally and regarding

sovereign military authority. This is due to the implications of the disengagement being that the United States can leave at any time if its presence does not serve its national interests. This could alternatively be called Biden’s “America First.” At the same time, in line with increasing “strategic flexibility” of the United States military, which prioritizes national interests, it becomes necessary to break away from the idea that the United States forces in Korea will always stay on the Korean Peninsula solely in preparation for a North Korean threat. For South Korea, it is vital to anticipate the possibility that parts of the United States Forces Korea may be repositioned and deployed at any time in the event of a military confrontation in surrounding areas, such as the Taiwan Strait, the South China Sea, and the East China Sea.

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