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## ‘Stupid is as Stupid Does’ in Vietnam and Afghanistan<sup>(1)</sup>

By R.W. Trewyn

Yes, *Forrest Gump*’s “stupid is as stupid does”<sup>(2)</sup> sums it up. So does “someone with the I.Q. of a cabbage could have predicted the outcome”<sup>(3)</sup> that I used recently to describe the mentality it takes to defund the police. The consequences for South Vietnam and Indochina are known but have been ignored; they didn’t fit the preferred political narrative. However, those results decades ago are important to gauge the human costs on Afghanistan’s horizon.

In Afghanistan, the crimes against humanity could hit a new high, AKA low. Sharia law won’t be kind to the vanquished, and women will suffer unimaginably. Taliban “justice” is ugly at best, horrific more often.

The scenarios leading to the outcomes in Vietnam and Afghanistan are different, but the cabbage-level I.Q. causes are the same. One reason the resulting horrors of the former are not well remembered is that the media conveniently glossed over them back then. They cast America and American warfighters as the problem.



Being proud of my combat service in Vietnam, I take the communist victory and outcomes personally, for myself and my 58,000-plus brothers and eight sisters who died. The Vietnam War wasn’t lost on the battlefield; it was lost in Washington.

The last combat troops left Vietnam March 29, 1973.<sup>(4)</sup> It wasn’t until March 1975 that North Vietnam mounted the final offensive against South Vietnam.<sup>(5)</sup> That makes it very different from Afghanistan. However, the end came quickly — April 1975 — which is why the analogies are being drawn today.

Images of Saigon in 1975 — helicopters plucking people off the embassy roof — have been seen everywhere since the news flash hit that thousands of Marines were heading to Afghanistan to rescue the remaining Americans. In blitzkrieg fashion, the Taliban had taken city after city; Kabul was obviously next.

Question: With America’s massive investment of money, political capital, and *human capital* in South Vietnam and Afghanistan, how could they be abandoned to collapse so quickly?

Answer: “Stupid is as stupid does.”

For Vietnam, the time lag prior to the rapid fall was due to the shellacking North Vietnam got from their invasion of the South in 1972. It took them until 1975 to recover. Then, between 1972 and ‘75, Washington’s “I.Q. of a cabbage” took steps that guaranteed their victory.

First, as highlighted by the former Vietcong minister of justice, “the Paris Peace Accords created vast new opportunities to bring the Thieu [South Vietnam] government to an end.”<sup>(6)</sup> More importantly, “then on June 4, [1973] the Case-Church Amendment passed, blocking funds for Indochina military involvement after August 15.”<sup>(7)</sup> That meant there would be no U.S. support in or *over* Vietnam — no air support — so the final nail in South Vietnam’s coffin was ready and waiting two years before the invasion.

Additionally, the resupply of ammunition to South Vietnamese troops was so bad by 1975 that soldiers were receiving a ridiculous “85 rifle bullets per man per month.”<sup>(8)</sup> That’s not even a one-minute quickie with an M-16, so they were doomed when the invasion was launched.

And what were the results of the U.S. bailing on a longtime ally?

“Between 1975 and 1992, almost two million Vietnamese risked their lives to flee oppression and hardship after the Vietnam War, in one of the largest mass exoduses in modern history.” Communist brutality drove the departures, mostly by sea. Appallingly, “estimated deaths have ranged from 200,000 and 600,000 from pirate attacks, rape, torture, prosecution, drowning and starvation.”<sup>(9)</sup>

One account of seeing South Vietnamese “boat people” images on TV read: “Piles of corpses were on the beach, mostly of children who had died of hunger and thirst. A woman was carrying her dead child in her arms.”<sup>(10)</sup> That’s what the North Vietnamese communist victory delivered.

Even worse was the communist Khmer Rouge takeover in Cambodia that accompanied North Vietnam’s conquest in April 1975. “The Cambodian Genocide was the murder of between 1,500,000 and 3,000,000 Cambodians by the Khmer Rouge.”<sup>(11)</sup> That occurred in just four years: 1975 to 1979.

What’s happening in Afghanistan doesn’t bode well for America or the world. The Cambodian Genocide might pale in comparison to where the Afghan fiasco is heading. ISIS and al-Qaeda prisoners have already been freed from prison, and the Taliban will happily allow them to reside in their country.

Question: Does America allowing the Taliban to take over Afghanistan uncontested mean that another September 11 is on America’s horizon?

Answer: “Stupid is as stupid does,” so most likely, *yes!* Regardless, al-Qaeda and ISIS will both have a safe haven from which to operate globally. Terrorism worldwide will be on the rise.

How Afghanistan will compare to Vietnam in the long run is to be determined, but “stupid is as stupid does” is what comes when politicians don’t learn from history. Unfortunately, it’s the norm in Washington, D.C., where the I.Q. of a cabbage — *skunk cabbage* — is as good as it ever gets.

***R.W. Trewyn was a Staff Sergeant in Vietnam, earned a Ph.D. and has slogged academe’s once hallowed halls 50-plus years.***

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