

## Obama Foreign Policy

### Repeating the Mistakes of History

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Both Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon thought that the biggest mistake of the Vietnam War was President Kennedy's involvement in the overthrow of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem in November 1963. Diem became the first president of South Vietnam in 1955 following the partition of Vietnam into a Communist North Vietnam and the Republic of (South) Vietnam after the French withdrawal from Indochina in 1954.

North Vietnamese dictator Ho Chi Minh immediately commenced a reign of terror in North Vietnam, killing 50,000 of his nationalist political competitors. Religious persecution of Christians, mostly Roman Catholics, also became intense. Nearly one million people fled the despotism and persecution in Communist North Vietnam across the 17th parallel into the Republic of Vietnam. Among the refugees, however, were a cadre of about 10,000 trained Communist agitators and guerillas that would form the core of the National Liberation Front (NLF)—formed by the Communist Party in North Vietnam to overthrow South Vietnam—and their military arm, the Viet Cong (VC). North Vietnam continued to infiltrate agitators, guerilla organizers, and weapons into South Vietnam with the object of uniting the two countries into a single Communist state. By late 1959, U.S. and Allied intelligence agencies had unequivocally established that North Vietnam's increasingly aggressive actions in South Vietnam were being supported, financed, advised, and approved step by step by Soviet leaders in Moscow.

Despite North Vietnam's continuous agitation and guerilla warfare to overthrow the South Vietnamese government in Saigon, Diem managed to bring considerable stability to South Vietnam. In 1963, Viet Cong attacks were becoming fewer, and his Strategic Hamlet Program had secured most areas from the threat of Communist terrorism and assassinations. New schools, bridges, and foreign investments were providing more jobs and prosperity than ever before. Rice production reached its highest level ever.

However, South Vietnam was still engaged in both political and guerilla warfare with Hanoi's front organizations: the NLF and their VC assassins and bullies. Diem knew that the first task of government is to establish order. He thus developed a firm leadership style that was little understood or appreciated by Western journalists. When then Vice-President Richard Nixon visited him in 1956, Diem defended his autocratic leadership style by pointing out that he was dealing with Communist terrorism, assassinations, and armed insurrections that could not be handled according to normal peacetime rules. He told Nixon, "We are at war and in war it is necessary to use wartime measures."

Beginning in May of 1963, a Buddhist protest arose in South Vietnam over alleged Diem administration discrimination against Buddhists. This was a total fabrication, but a protest movement was organized by a small band of Hanoi-connected Buddhist monks with sympathies for a Communist oriented Buddhism. They managed to recruit a young monk to douse himself with gasoline and ignited him for one of the most famous protest scenes in world history, as they passed out anti-Diem leaflets. They had tipped off American reporters in Saigon ahead of time, and

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the memorable photograph of a blazing monk kneeling in prayer filled the newspapers of the world the next day.  
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Thus the liberal press, including especially the New York Times, Time Magazine, and Associated Press reporters, made Diem a world-class villain. John F. Kennedy was strongly anti-Communist, but his political strength was in the liberal media. He and his close advisors decided that Saigon must have a regime change or the American mission in South Vietnam was in jeopardy. To their credit, this regime change was opposed by Vice-President Johnson and CIA Director John McCone.

Nonetheless, on November 1, 1963, Kennedy, assisted by Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, arranged for Diem's overthrow by a military coup headed by Duong Van "Big" Minh. Unexpectedly, Minh had Diem and Ngo Dinh Nhu, Diem's chief advisor and brother, killed in the process. Ironically, Kennedy was himself assassinated three weeks later. The result of the Kennedy-backed regime change in Saigon was a revolving door of ten more regime changes, destabilizing the South Vietnamese government and military for two years. The Communists could hardly believe their good luck. North Vietnam put in 48,000 more troops, and more kept coming. South Vietnam was in danger of falling. Unwilling to use American airpower effectively, Johnson reacted with a massive buildup of American ground troops in South Vietnam.

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter made much the same error by withdrawing support for the Shah of Iran because of autocratic measures against political unrest. The Shah had to flee in 1979, and was replaced by Ayatollah Khomeini, who founded a new Islamic Republic, making Iran a formidable enemy instead of an ally.

President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt was a strong American ally and defender of the vitally important Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty for 20 years until organized protests against his sometimes stern handling of potential threats to his government persuaded President Obama to encourage his departure from office. However, the democratic revolutions in the Islamic world—much encouraged and praised by the liberal media—are turning out to be the means of Muslim Brotherhood takeover and implementation of radical Islamic Law (Sharia). Now the militant Muslim Brotherhood controls the Egyptian Parliament and their candidate, Mohammed Morsi, is President of Egypt. The threat to Israel and the West is grave. Obama is on track for repeating many liberal foreign policy mistakes of the past, and we are living in a much more dangerous world.

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Mike Scruggs is the author of *Lessons from the Vietnam War: Truths the Media Never Told You*; published in 2009. Mike is also a decorated Air Force combat veteran of the Vietnam War and the author of a recently published books: *Lessons from the Vietnam War: Truths the Media Never Told You* and *The Un-Civil War: Shattering the Historical Myths*. The books, a unique combination of personal experiences and a military and political overview of the war, can be obtained by calling The Times Examiner at (864) 268-0576.

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