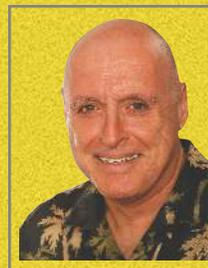


THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



889 War, Like Business, Needs the right “Exit Strategy.”

I’ve been thinking about the debacle in Afghanistan for the past few days. If you look to this spot for a daily jolt of optimism and ideas, I thank you for your attention. I hope you’ll forgive me for having to vent a little, maybe just once in a while. That venting is next, on The Extra Point.

Perhaps like you, I’ve been watching the horror of what’s happening in Afghanistan, as American troops are pulled out and Taliban forces are taking over.

I saw a Facebook post Tuesday with two images placed side by side, that rocked me. At left was a 1975 photo of hordes of South Vietnamese people, trying to storm a U.S. aircraft, in a desperate attempt to get on board to save themselves from the advancing Viet Cong army.

At right was a photo of the same exact scene, except it was taken on Afghan soil, with different people, in a different part of the world, during a different generation — but under similar circumstances. I looked at those two images for many minutes, and I could feel anger building up inside me.

The Vietnam War lasted 20 years, and America was involved from the beginning. Lyndon Johnson escalated the war in 1964, and by the time it ended in 1975 with the fall of Saigon, the numbers were staggering.

Over 58,000 Americans died, including dozens from Guam. Over 300,000 were wounded. Nobody knows how many Vietnamese were killed, military and civilians on both sides. Some estimates are a million, and maybe two million.

I’ve seen the dollar cost tabbed at \$1.2 to 1.5 trillion in today’s money. Other estimates are higher.

The Afghanistan War also lasted 20 years.

Fewer troops were there and the war was different. So are the numbers. About 2,500 U.S. military fatalities, and tens of thousands of wounded. The spending was higher, well over \$2 trillion.

Every time America involves itself in a foreign conflict, the public relations guys work overtime to choose a snazzy name to attach to it, to gain public favor. In Afghanistan, the name was Operation Enduring Freedom.

In this case, “enduring” meant for as long as U.S. troops were physically present, and not a minute longer.

As I looked at that image of the two airport scenes, taken 46 years apart, it hit me that the people who run wars for this country didn’t learn much during that time.

We don’t seem to know when to leave, and when we finally do get out, we do a lousy job of it. Worse, death, destruction, chaos, and oppression immediately follow. Immediately.

We had a generation to build infrastructure in Afghanistan — in terms of leadership as well as facilities — that should have given the people there some chance at forging a free society. We failed.

From George W. Bush, to Barack Obama, to Donald Trump, to Joe Biden. We failed. Just as we failed in Vietnam.

This leads me to the conclusion that “suits” are lousy at running wars. That’s both Democrat and Republican suits.

Virtually none of those suits have what they call “skin in the game,” which means that none of their children would be in harm’s way.

(Con’t.)

That “fighting thing” is not for the elite class. Middle class and poor kids do the dirty work, and when they finally come home, for too many it’s in a flag-covered box.

Still, in some ways, they’re the lucky ones. Others will spend the rest of their days trying to lead a normal life without a body part, or battling mental disorders, or having to fight the cruelest fight of all — with their own government, which seems to roadblock efforts to secure the benefits these loyal Americans are due.

The suits give lip service to veterans, while watching polling data on public opinion, so they can make politically beneficial decisions.

They’re more concerned with feeding money to defense contractors, the real winners in any war, and to pacify lobbyists.

There is less concern over what happens to the troops, and the people they’re trying to protect with that, what was it? Oh yeah, enduring freedom.

If you served in either of the wars mentioned, thank you for that service. If you lost a loved one, know that many people appreciate their sacrifice, and yours, and will never forget.

Right now, Biden is taking the heat for what is happening in Afghanistan, and the fear of what is surely to come. Truth be told, however, there are three other presidents whose fingerprints are all over this disgrace.

In business, there’s a thing called an “exit strategy.” A company is formed or bought, and the owners quite often have a solid plan for how long they’ll hold on until they decide to sell it off for a profit.

Without a realistic and well executed exit strategy, success is often very difficult, if not impossible.

The people who commit America — and Americans — to war, need to learn that lesson.

That’s The Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I’m Jerry Roberts.

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