

# How the USA Could Have Won the Vietnam War Essay

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The U.S. attempted to apply conventional warfare strategy to the communist insurgency in South Vietnam. The result of this strategy was that U.S. forces were victorious in almost every military battle, but could not translate tactical achievement into operational and strategic success. However, during the course of the war, the U.S. discovered three elements of strategy that, if melded into a cohesive whole, could have achieved American objectives for a reasonable cost. First, the U.S. should have fully resourced and implemented a counterinsurgency strategy of pacification, as the primary U.S. military effort in Vietnam. Second, a robust network of South Vietnamese paramilitary forces, integrated with U.S. pacification, would have been the vital link to winning South Vietnamese popular support. Third, the synchronization of pacification with air mobility and air power operations would have effectively incorporated U.S. conventional firepower with the counterinsurgency effort. Next, the claim that U.S. military forces could not have been organized or resourced to implement an effective counterinsurgency will be refuted. Finally, a bridge forward explores whether the U.S. learned from Vietnam how to identify and fight a complex insurgency. In Vietnam, the insurgent's source of strength was the South Vietnamese population (Krepinevich, 10). The methodical effort to deny the enemy access to the South Vietnamese population was the counterinsurgency strategy known as pacification. Mao Tse-Tung stated that "weapons are an important factor in war, but not

the decisive factor; it is people, not things that are decisive” (Tse-Tung, 217). Wresting control of the population from the insurgency through pacification should have been ..... middle of paper .....es in Vietnam relating to the nature of war? It depends. Operation Iraqi Freedom is a perfect example. The rapid defeat of the Iraqi Army and subsequent fall of Baghdad lulled U.S. forces to believe that superior technology and firepower had achieved a quick decisive victory (QDV). However, the QDV did not happen because the U.S. was not adequately prepared to protect the population following the destruction of the Iraqi regime. The resulting insurgency almost defeated the U.S. effort, but after three years, a change in strategy was made by U.S. leadership, and the “surge” was eventually successful. The U.S. experiences with insurgencies in Vietnam, Iraq, and currently in Afghanistan underscore the point that to wage a successful counterinsurgency the core line of effort must be towards defeating the goal of the insurgent which is to control the population.

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