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Part 1

After reading retired general Douglas Kinnard's story I interpreted it as a turning point for a group of senior military leaders (generals). In the beginning he states, "I wasn't disillusioned with the military; I was disillusioned with the nature of the war and what it was doing to our country." After retiring from the military and taking a job in academia and sent out a questionnaire to all 173 army generals who served as combat commanders Vietnam. The responses he received shocked him in their honesty and critical nature. In this story what struck me the most were how the attitudes and views of some of the generals on the ground began to change from one of victory to one of skepticism and an overall disbelief in the military and political strategy of the war. Case in point, almost seventy percent of the generals said they did not fully understand the overall war's objective. They knew their own tactical or operational objective but did not know how their effort was helping achieve the larger strategic goal of the war. This begs the question how can we achieve military success if our own military does not know or understand the goals or steps needed for success. Along with unclear objectives, the Army used large units and massive firepower to fight to fight a guerilla war that devastated the land and produced many unintended civilian casualties. This "search and destroy" strategy of General William Westmoreland eventually was deemed flawed by most of generals. Under this strategy the war had no front lines and territory was not held so it became hard to tell who was winning the war. The only way of measuring success was "body count" or attrition and if you kill more of them would quit or no longer be able to fight. The whole military strategy was based upon this assumption but proved false. Kinnard states, "The enemy was never going to quit, no matter how many we kill or how good our statistics look. We had the power, it turned out they had the will." It should be noted most military historians and commanders admit the enemy body count was inflated and did not accurately reflect success or failure. This is a time when the commanders began to have self-doubts about a victory in Vietnam and the realization of losing settled in. The war for them had no end in sight and became a waiting game until U.S. pulled out of Vietnam. Once they began to doubt, the thoughts of all the soldiers that were killed on body-count mission it became apparent just how wasteful it all was. To drive this point home Kinnard recounts the time he heard a general talking to a young up-and-coming colonel. They were discussing the body count and the colonel said to the general, "Well, the VC are getting harder to find". And the general replied, "Well, brigade commanders aren't." Meaning, show results or you will be fired and replaced. Within the next couple of days while out on a body-count mission the young colonel was killed. The U.S. was committed to a military solution without firm military objectives; with the flawed strategy of attrition. Overall, the war strategy offered no solution. "Just like the famous quote by President Lyndon Johnson, "If I've lost Cronkite, I've lost Middle America", Washington lost the faith of the generals and soldiers.

Part 2

For the best example of an ending I chose Alexander Haig's story. To me this proved to provide the best reasons why we did not win the Vietnam War. As with all military conflicts it is easy to look back and see the missteps made and there is no guarantee the outcome would be different but I think the resulting conclusion would have come about

sooner. The war was not lost on the battlefield but lost and mismanaged in Washington. As Haig states, "If you don't go in to win, don't go in at all. Either you conduct the conflict with all the available assets the United States has at its disposal to bring about a quick and successful outcome or you stay out. We didn't do either in Vietnam." The war was a proxy war with Russia and fought with half-measures or in incremental responses. The strategy shifted from one of massive retaliation during the Eisenhower years to of flexible response or limited response. As Haig concludes, this type of strategy usually invites rather than discourages escalation. The middle of the road stance that was started by President Kennedy and later by Johnson and Nixon leads credence to this realization. We never really put to use the full might of the military to use in an effective manner in Vietnam, instead fighting a limited war. Approximately, 70 percent of the military battles were fought in South Vietnam. How could we have expected a short and victorious outcome without taking the fight to the enemy and denying him sanctuary? Haig relates he was asked to provide a list of military options to use in Vietnam, including the full mobilization of the United States military that was modified by General Johnson and presented to President Johnson. The new list only included the lesser options and excluded the more vigorous actions which aligned with the political thinking of the time. This was a clear failure of the military high command to speak the truth to political leaders and not to do what is expedient. Haig echoes the same thoughts as Douglas Kinnard, in that a lot of top military leaders failed to stand up and say this is not the way.

explain

SP

SP

conclude

was

w/ a reference

to the

"ending" theme

not the Kinnard

"turning pt" theme.

lacking outside info / data / support
from Herring on videos

proofread your work

overall good job