

History 1810E

Annotated Bibliography

Due Date: Feb 13th, 2017

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Research Question:

How did The Tet Offensive change the momentum of the Vietnam War?

Thesis:

The Tet Offensive's military strategy most certainly had a chance to succeed had the Hanoi government played their cards right. However, regardless of the military failure. The Tet Offensive is still considered an astounding success as it delivered decisive blows to both oppositions of the North Vietnamese government. Firstly, it was able to completely disable the South Vietnamese government and destroy its infrastructure. Secondly, it was able to turn the U.S. public against its own government and cause it to de-escalate its war efforts in Vietnam.

Annotated Bibliography:

Addington, Larry H. *America's War in Vietnam: A Short Narrative History*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana Univ. Press, 2000.

In "The Johnson's War, IV: The Turning Year, 1968" chapter of *The America's War in Vietnam*. Addington examines the events of the year 1968. He specifically tackles the two major military operations carried out by the Viet Cong, The Siege of Khe Sanh and the Tet Offensive. He then focuses on the U.S. social outburst following those events, and the political havoc it creates. He then moves on to outlining the rest of the major events in 1968, most of which are consequences of the Tet Offensive and its aftermath. The significance of Tet to the war lays in the events that followed, Tet was the start of the domino effect and Addington manages to list a few of them.

Flak, Richard. "Appropriating Tet." *The Massachusetts Review* 29, no. 3 (1988): 391-420.

Flak's "Appropriating Tet" analyzes the post-Tet events that may have caused the U.S. to lose the Vietnam War. The journal article agrees that Tet was a complete failure militarily and that it could have been more damaging to the North Vietnam war efforts if the U.S. public did not intervene. However, the article argues that Tet had more than just the military dimension to its strategy. Flak claims that Tet's other strategic dimension was the psychological one. The offensive aimed to break the enemy, "Washington, Johnson, the media, and the American people," down psychologically. Which was the reason why Tet is considered the turning point in the Vietnam War.

Gilbert, Marc Jason and Head William, eds. "The Tet Offensive." In *The Tet Offensive*, edited by Larry Berman, 14-44. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1996.

Berman's chapter presents the events of the Tet Offensive as they unfold and the reaction of the U.S. public as the offensive mounts. Berman's first questions the strategy of not acting upon valuable intelligence of the possibility of the offensive. Then he delves into the events of the offensive, the U.S. media coverage, and the public reaction to the war. With the latter putting pressure on the U.S. government and ultimately altering the outcome of the war. The events that Berman discusses formulate the beginning of the end of the Vietnam War and according to him, Tet is where it all starts.

Gilbert, Marc Jason and Head William, eds. "The Warning That Left Something to Chance: Intelligence at Tet." In *The Tet Offensive*, edited by John Prados, 143-165. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1996.

Prados takes on the task of analyzing the intelligence failure of Tet. The chapter compares the failure of intelligence in the Tet Offensive to that of Pearl Harbor. There were many reasons to the intelligence failure in Tet, however, the most important would be the fact that the U.S. military had underestimated the abilities of the Viet Cong. This played a big role in the Tet Offensive. Though the U.S. had valuable intelligence of an imminent attack on a somewhat big target in South Vietnam they totally let their guard down on the evening of Tet.

Huebner, Andrew J. "Rethinking American Press Coverage of the Vietnam War." *Journalism History* 31, no. 3 (2005): 150-161.

In "Rethinking American Press Coverage of the Vietnam War," Andrew Huebner discusses the involvement of the U.S. media in the Vietnam War and how the media played a huge role in sabotaging their own governments war efforts. Huebner believes that the Johnson administration was wrongly done by the U.S. media as it did not show the U.S. public the full picture of the war; which ultimately led to Johnson declaring his withdrawal from the presidency race in 1968. Huebner's article sheds some light on valuable argument that may have led to the demise of the Johnson administration which brought a closer end to the war.

Lawrence, Mark Atwood. *The Vietnam War A Concise International History*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010.

In “The Tet Offensive” chapter of “The Vietnam War A Concise International History” Lawrence discusses the events of The Tet Offensive as they unfold. He reviews the brief success of the Viet Cong military strategy and its overall failure. Then he delves into the U.S. response, both military and politically, and how that response may have been affected by the U.S. media coverage in the war. Though Lawrence does not answer the question whether Tet was the turning point of the Vietnam War or not, he presents good evidence to help deduce an opinion on the matter.

Oberdorfer, Don. *Tet!* Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1971.

The book discusses the Tet Offensive and its aftermath in detail. However, what is more interesting is the author's opinion at the end of the book. Written at the near-end of the Vietnam war, the book does not have a real conclusive answer to whether Tet really was the turning point of the Vietnam War or not. Oberdorfer claims that at that point in the war everybody lost, North Vietnamese, South Vietnamese, and the U.S. Though the U.S. does seem to be the biggest loser of all, as they lost the trust of their people. This is significant because that was the real key to U.S. de-escalation in their war efforts, and will eventually lead to the end of the war.

Olson, James S. and Roberts, Randy. *Where the Domino Fell: America and Vietnam 1945-2010*.

Chichester, UK: Blackwell Publishing: 2014.

The chapter "Tet and the Year of the Monkey, 1968" discusses the events of the Tet Offensive briefly before it starts to investigate the offensive ripple effects on the U.S. public, and leadership. The authors of the book claim that the Tet Offensive with the straw that broke the camel's back, the camel being the U.S. public's patience with the ongoing war. Though the book does not claim that the Tet Offensive was the point where the war momentum had shifted it still supports its significance in bringing a quicker end to the war.

Walton, Jennifer. "The Tet Offensive: The Turning Point of the Vietnam War." *OAH Magazine of History* 18, no. 5 (2004): 45-51.

Walton's journal article is lesson plan that give a brief introduction to the events of the Tet Offensive, though it does not delve into many details of the offensive and its outcomes the listen plan targets the main points that are considered to make the Tet Offensive a turning point in the Vietnam War.

Werner, Jayne and Hunt, David, eds. "The Tet Offensive and Its Aftermath." In *The American War in Vietnam*, edited by Ngo Vinh Long, 23-46. Ithaca, New York: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 1993.

In "The Tet Offensive and Its Aftermath," Ngo Vinh Long writes to clarify some academic misconceptions of the Tet Offensive. He does so by tackling popular arguments and giving his well supported point of view on the matter. Long concludes his chapter by stating that the Tet Offensive had accomplished its main goal which was to force the U.S. military to de-escalate its war efforts in Vietnam. Long provides a very wide range of different contradictory arguments that prove the Tet Offensive significance to the Vietnam War.