

Tuesday 10 May

How did the coverage of the Vietnam War in the USA lead to demands for peace?

TV &
media



Coverage
of war?



Fulbright
Hearings

Protest
movements

Kent State

TV and media

- 'First media war'
- No censorship
- Exposed My Lai massacre
- Always coverage of war on colour TV
- 'Blood looks very red in colour' Sir Robin Day
- Newspapers & magazines gave full colour coverage
- Despite the impact of the media, many Americans continued to support the war.
- 2 images had particular impact:

Chief of Police in Saigon executes a Vietcong suspect, 1968



1972 South Vietnamese children running to escape a napalm raid. The photographer won a Pulitzer Prize for this & it was named as the World Press Photo of the year, 1972. After taking the photo the photographer took the injured children to hospital.



Protest movements in the USA, 1968-1973

- Many people patriotic
- Fear of Communism was genuine
- Media coverage led to greater questioning of war.
- Draft – many young men opposed this as they did not want to fight.
- Resentment that middle class and rich Americans avoided the draft by going to university or got medical disability certificates
- Burning ‘draft papers’
- Growth of anti war slogans
- Demonstrations & protest marches August 1968
- Police used violence to disperse them
- Nov 1968, 35,000 protested outside White House

Veterans Against the War

- Us soldiers who had fought in Vietnam
- 1971, 35000 took part in Vietnam Veterans march.
- Many had been seriously injured, many had medals
- Veterans speaking out effected US public attitude to war.
- Invasion of Cambodia in 1970 & My Lai massacre (new broke late 1969) led to more protests.

Protest in universities

- 1960's & 70's many young Americans dropped out of society.
- Extravagant clothes, punk rock, drug abuse, hippy movement
- Anti establishment
- Some opposed Vietnam war because of draft & others because it was seen as morally wrong
- well organised demonstrations on campus
- Most peaceful, but others got out of control if coinciding with increased bombing against Vietnam/Cambodia etc...

- Clashes occurred between students and police or National Guard (part time soldiers)
- Also had peaceful strikes
- Burnt draft papers
- Sit-ins in draft offices
- Blockaded transport routes carrying troops & military supplies
- Got media attention

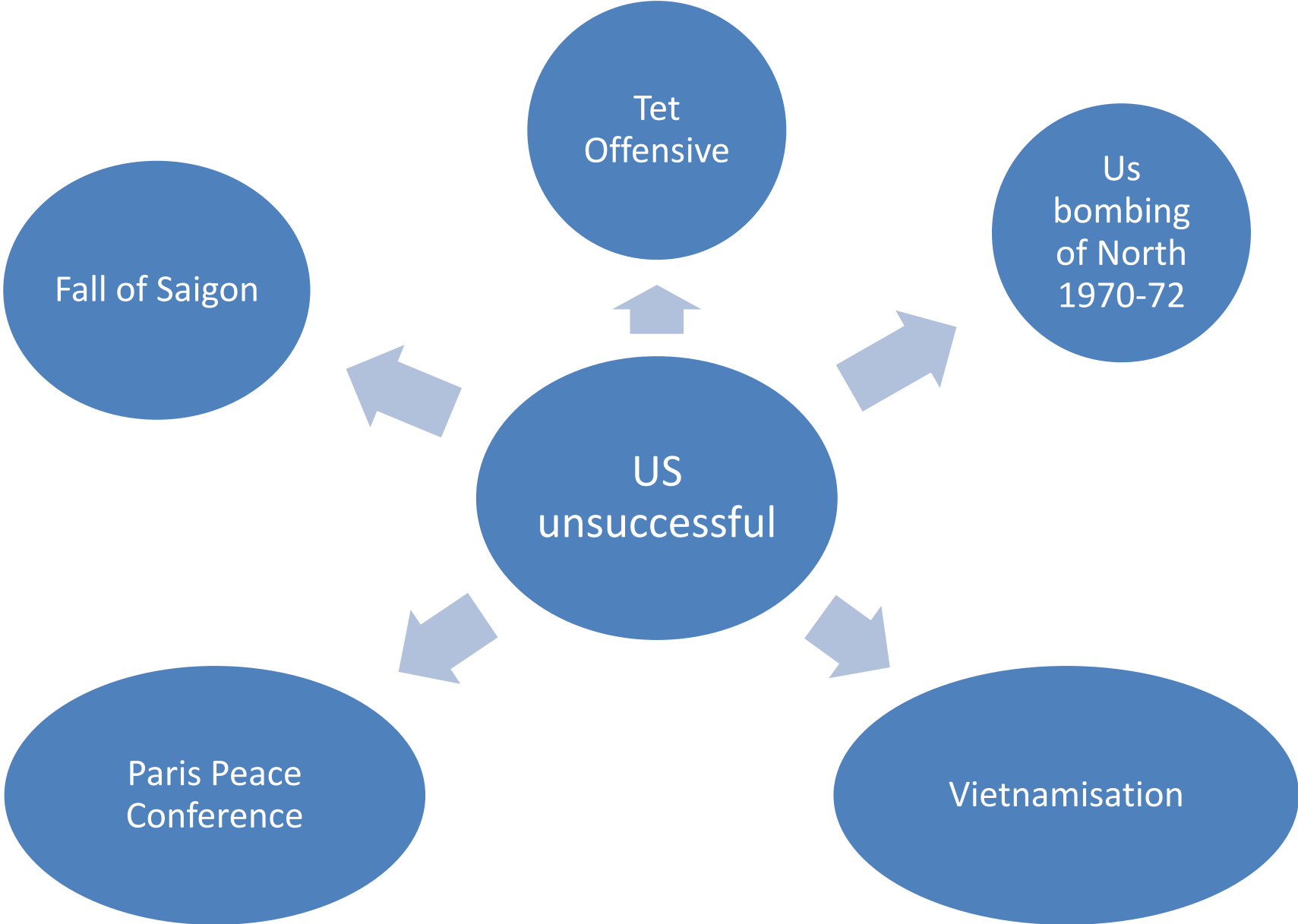
Kent State 2 May 1970

- Over 1000 students demonstrated
- University building set on fire
- 4th May Ohio National Guard called
- Shooting began & 4 students were shot dead
- Went against democratic right to protest
- Images of shootings appeared on TV
- Nixon realised victory in Vietnam impossible due to so much opposition
- War may have ended without student protests anyway
- But they did show that the people expected to do the fighting did not support the war.

The Fulbright Hearings

- William Fulbright – chair of Senate Foreign Affairs Committee looked at ways to end war
- 22 people gave evidence
- Winter Soldier Investigation carried out by veterans revealed atrocities committed by US soldiers with approval of officers
- Showed My Lai not isolated but part of US policy
- Hearings recommended USA leaving War

Why were US actions to end the war in Vietnam unsuccessful?



Tet Offensive 1968

- Over half million US troops in Vietnam
- ARVN seemed to control cities in south
- Countryside was quiet
- Over 100,000 Vietcong killed in 1967
- US soldiers thought they were winning
- 1968 31st Jan Tet Offensive festival celebrating New Year.
- Vietcong had been attacking US air bases since Sept 1967 to draw US troops away from cities

- 31st Jan attacked over 100 cities in South Vietnam
- VC were hoping the people of South Vietnam would support them in overthrowing the government
- Saigon – VC broke into US embassy & also took over radio station building
- Took 48 hours to regain control of Saigon & a week to win back Saigon streets
- 30,000 VC died & gained little & took 4 years to recover
- North Vietnamese army now took on most of fighting against USA
- But it did make USA realise they couldn't win

- US army believed they had won
- US public had seen media footage and were shocked
- 1000's civilian casualties, 100,000's of refugees
- How could this happen in a strong point of US troops?
- Congress refused General Westmoreland's request of 200,000 more troops to 'finish the job'
- President Johnson decided not to go for re-election

US bombing campaigns 1970-72

- Peace talks in Paris started 1968
- Lasted on/off for 5 years
- US wanted South Vietnam to be independent (from communism)
- North Vietnam wanted to be independent (from US influence)
- North refused to recognise the South as an independent country & so South Vietnam did not attend peace talks
- US put military pressure on North Vietnam throughout peace talks
- Nixon felt bombing North would make North Vietnam accept US terms at Peace talks

- North Vietnam was still supplying VC with weapons along Ho Chi Minh Trail & through Cambodia & Laos
- Bombing Cambodia was unpopular and was one cause of Kent state protests
- Bombing failed to stop supplies
- Gradually US withdrew troops.
- By 1970 150,00 remained
- 1972 North Vietnam army invaded South
- With Soviet tanks & weapons
- US could not counter attack & so bombed North – Operation Linebacker
- 1972 200,000 bombs dropped in 11 days over cities of North.
- It put pressure on North to come to peace talks

- 'Mad man theory'
- US government spread a rumour that President Nixon was mentally unstable & might use nuclear weapons against the North
- It showed the north that US would not abandon the South
- 1973 North Vietnam returned to peace talks

Vietnamisation

- 1969 onwards US gradually withdraws troops
- ARVN would replace US soldiers
- Conscription aged 17- 43 used to get men to join South Vietnamese army
- USA trained & equipped ARVN
- 1968-72 there was little communist activity
- VC were still recovering from Tet
- 1972 NVA invaded South. US bombing of North held up their advance
- Jan 1973 peace was signed

Paris Peace Conference

- Agreement:
- US forces to withdraw completely
- US prisoners of war to be released
- North Vietnam recognised government of South Vietnam
- Elections to be held in future to decide if Vietnam was to be reunited
- 1973 all US troops left Vietnam
- Only some advisers stayed
- Money from US to Vietnam limited

Fall of Saigon 1975

- North Vietnam advanced into South
- Attacked from North & Laos and Cambodia
- Major cities fell to Communists
- Refugees left cities & moved further South
- 'convoy of tears'
- April 1975 Saigon fell to communist
- As last US officials were airlifted out communists took the city.

Vietnam War today

- 57,000 US troops died
- 300,000 wounded
- Many veterans did not get recognition they deserved for fighting
- Some people proud of fighting in Vietnam
- Still ruled by Communists
- 4 million Vietnamese died or were wounded
- Land destroyed by bombing & chemicals
- Tourism is a growing industry.