

SITUATION - THE UNITED STATES

The war in Vietnam has exacted a heavy price from the United States

- 9,378 Americans killed in 1967
- i- Over 28,000 Americans killed (9,378 in 1967, over 12,000 in 1968 by end September)
- 94,000 Americans wounded requiring hospitalization
- Approximately \$30 billion per year to support the war
- Over 550,000 American servicemen deployed to Vietnam..
- Divisiveness among Americans
- Inflation and balance of payments problems. 1/

Deployments to Southeast Asia have severely strained the ability of the Defense Department to meet possible additional contingencies with conventional forces. 2/

This heavy cost of war is accompanied by domestic problems which demand solution:

- civil rights
- poverty and lack of opportunity
- law, order, and justice
- generation gap and the growing apparent alienation of American youth.

The American people do not understand why we intervened in Vietnam, why we have stayed, nor what we expect to get out of it:

- The anti-communist crusade has lost a good deal of credibility since the 1950's.

- Those who still believe in the anti-communist crusade can't understand why we are fighting the war under restraints.
- Those who believe in neo - isolationism have increased in numbers, partly because of the cost of Vietnam.
- Our goals in Vietnam have not been spelled out in terms which are understandable, credible and acceptable to the American people.
- Consensus on the American involvement was not sought from the American people effectively by the Administration.
- Execution and implementation of our policy in Vietnam has often obscured the policy and blurred the goals.
- The "end" of the war seems to be a mirage ("out in '65"; "light at the end of the tunnel", 1967; etc).

A majority of Americans want our involvement ended honorably: 3/

- Less than 40% feel that this can be done by escalation of the military war, with about one-half of this group willing to risk bringing China or Russia into the war.
- About half favor de-escalation of the war and at least partial withdrawal of US forces.
- In late June 1968, the percentage advocating an all-out military effort remained about the same (25-28%) as in February. The percentage of doves had virtually doubled.

There are four communities of domestic influence that will be brought to bear on the new Administration while all are interdependent; the demands of each will be unique. Post-election surveys point to the following: 4/

- Public opinion: Characterized by a dangerous combination of ambivalence and impatience, the public is eager to get out of Vietnam but only on honorable terms.

- Politically relevant groups:

- Disenchanted youth are not likely to be appeased at any cost.
Theirs is a rejection of the current order - its values, its establishment, its style - and VietNam is but one part of a protest that is not topical and far more fundamental.
- The academic community probably will give the new Administration a title latitude initially - especially considering the number of intellectuals who made inputs in the campaign.
- The press has been much less troublesome lately and is likely to remain so unless there is some major escalatory step.
- The negro protest against the war will probably continue. It will be tied closely to negro concern over domestic issues.
- The financial/investment community will be profoundly divided, and few of its influential members will be ambivalent as to what course we should follow.

- Political pressures ----

- Congress --
- local and state political interests

- Budgetary demands to meet domestic needs will bring pressures to scale down the costs of the war.

Lack of general public support for the war is the single most serious US weakness in our support of Viet Nam:

Notes:

1. The National Economy and the Vietnam War: Committee for Economic Development.
2. JCSM-548-68, 14 Sep 68, Subject: US Military Posture Assessment (U).
3. American Opinion about Viet-Nam, by Lloyd Free.
4. Tad - provide up-date and substantiation after election.