

The salient features of the American political scene vis-a-vis Vietnam are:

(1) The American people do not understand why we went there, why we have stayed and what we expect to get out of it:

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

b. Those who still believe in the anti-communist crusade can't understand why we are fighting the war "under restraints."

c. Those who believe in neo-isolationism have increased in numbers, partly because of the cost of Vietnam.

d. Our goals in Vietnam have never been spelled out in terms which are understandable, credible and acceptable to the American people.

e. Consensus on the American involvement was not sought from the American people effectively by the Administration.

f. Execution and implementation of our policy in Vietnam has often obscured the policy and blurred the goals.

g. The "end" of the war seems to be a mirage ("out in '65"; "light at the end of the tunnel", 1967; etc).

(2) A majority of Americans want "out" in one fashion or another:

a. About half of those wanting "out," feel that this can be done by escalation of the military war with about one-fourth of this group willing to use nuclear weapons.

b. About half of those wanting "out" favor withdrawal of U.S. forces (de-escalation) with nearly one-third of this group willing to get out in any way possible.

c. Most want an honorable way out.

(3) American public opinion on Vietnam reflects a lack of coalescence behind any specific course of action in Vietnam:

a. The general attitude seems to be to disbelieve anything the present Administration says vis-a-vis specific courses of action or progress in the war.

b. Specific courses of action have not been tied effectively to goals or outcomes in a way which is meaningful to the majority of the American people.

(4) The incoming Administration will be expected to provide the American people with "new" solutions:

(a) Regardless of whom is elected he will be expected to make changes from the present Administration policy.

(b) The "new" solutions should provide some promise to the American people of short-term results which show a near term end to the present level of American involvement.

c. The "new" solutions should provide to the American people some promise of a "meaningful" outcome to the whole experience.