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# The Nixon Paradox

By James Reston

The two things that have preoccupied President Nixon most of his waking hours for the last two years have been winning the war in Vietnam and winning re-election to the Presidency. Both have been hard, ambiguous and agonizing problems, but the contrast between his handling of the war and his direction of the election campaign is startling.

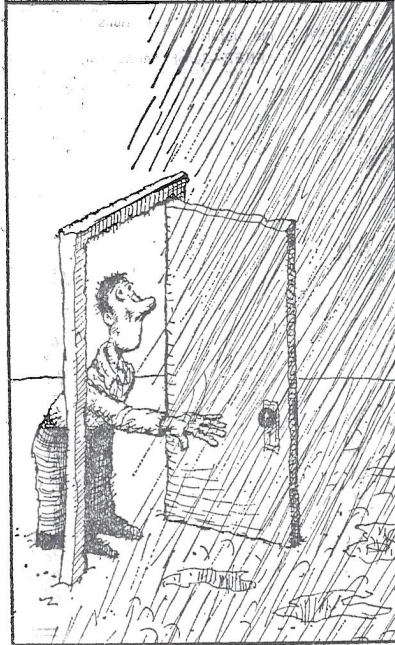
On Vietnam, he has argued, not for victory but for a compromise that would endure, not merely for a cease-fire, but for practical arrangements between the contesting forces that would move from confrontation to negotiation and cooperation but finally to what he calls "a generation of peace."

In the election struggle with the Democrats, he has much the same problem. But while he has talked endlessly about "peace with honor" and the future in Vietnam, he has said nothing about "victory with honor" in the election, and what may come after.

While the President has been considerate of the future in Vietnam, and willing to compromise with the Communists, he has used every trick in the book, and quite a few that have never been in the book, to defeat the Democrats in the election, without regard for the future when they may still be in control of the Congress.

This is one of the mysteries of this election. The President has won but is so used to losing that he doesn't know it, and is now pressing hard for a landslide that he may win, but in the process so antagonize the Democratic majority in the Congress that he cannot govern effectively in the next four years.

On the whole, Washington is very tolerant of the easy ethics and even



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dirty tricks of Presidential politics. Everybody understands why the President doesn't agree to debate George McGovern, though most of them think he would do all right if he did. And they're all used to the deceptions of campaign finances.

But this campaign has moved from Tammany Hall dirty tricks to guerrilla warfare, espionage and sabotage, bugging and burglary, and while the Democrats concede that they have run a poor campaign, and maybe even that they deserve not to win, they resent and even hate the C.I.A. tactics that have been used against them, and will probably carry their resentment into the next four years.

It will be interesting to see how the President deals with this dual problem in the last few days of the cam-

paign. He is insisting that he will not sign an ambiguous peace with the Communists in Vietnam because, while this would help him in the election, it would create trouble later on. Look to the future, he says.

At the same time, he is being asked to look to the future beyond the election at home, answer the charges of financial corruption, espionage and sabotage, and go on to an honorable victory that will win the respect and cooperation of the Congress and the people in the coming years.

The important thing now is that, if he is going to win, that he should win clean and fair, but while he is now riding high, he is in trouble of winning both in Vietnam and in the election under circumstances that will hound and defeat him in the next four years.

For the moment, he is following what he calls his "game plan," but this comparison between sports and politics is not really very accurate. For he is playing to win in the election and in the Vietnam peace talks, but not regarding how he will live with the consequences.

The polls tell us that he is still not very popular personally but that he is going to win by a landslide. They also tell us that the Democrats have outregistered the Republicans three to two, but that Senator McGovern may lose every state in the Union, and that his only chance of avoiding a shut-out lies with the people who know Mr. Nixon best—in California and the District of Columbia. It is an extraordinary paradox.

Still, when it is all over, Mr. Nixon has to deal with the practical problems, and will need some trust, if not affection, to deal with them. His problem now is not whether he can win next week, but whether he can win in such a way that he will be able to govern effectively in the next four years, and so far he has not addressed himself to this question.

fundamental question.