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## **Peace in Vietnam - Statement by Senator Edmund S. Muskie at the Democratic National Convention**

Edmund S. Muskie

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## "PEACE IN VIETNAM"

Statement by Senator Edmund S. Muskie of Maine  
Prepared for Delivery Before the  
Democratic National Convention  
Chicago, Illinois  
Wednesday, August 28, 1968

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MR. CHAIRMAN, DELEGATES TO THIS CONVENTION:

Sometimes in the emotion of the debate on Vietnam, we over-emphasize our differences and ignore our wide areas of agreement.

No responsible leader wants unilateral withdrawal; none seeks to escalate the war.

All major participants in this debate seek a negotiated political settlement and an end to the war.

All call for an end to the bombing, a cease fire and withdrawal of all foreign troops from South Vietnamese soil.

And, finally, all look forward to the day when the fighting ends and we and other industrial nations of the world can join in a concerted effort to rebuild both North and South Vietnam.

The disagreement among us involves the question of finding the most effective way of moving toward a political settlement and an end of the war.

Some would have us take another unilateral action and stop all bombing north of the 17th parallel--hoping that this would induce the North Vietnamese to respond accordingly.

Others cannot understand why, if the North Vietnamese truly want a negotiated settlement, they refuse to provide a meaningful indication that they are prepared to respond to a further de-escalation on our part. They argue that successive unilateral steps by us to de-escalate the war, without the slightest response from Hanoi, will serve to prolong the war -- not shorten it -- and result in needless casualties for South Vietnamese civilians, our boys, and those of our allies.

The two planks before us reflect differences of opinion.

There are real differences, but the dividing line is not the desire for peace or war. The dividing line is limited to means, not ends.

Both versions call for an end to bombing in North Vietnam. The majority plank does so within the framework of protection for our troops in the field. The minority plank does not consider such bombing to be relevant to troop protection.

The majority leaves the question of timing and tactics to the President and his negotiators. The minority attempts to dictate tactics from this political convention.

Both versions call for withdrawal of foreign troops from South Vietnam. The majority calls for negotiation of "an immediate end or limitation of hostilities and the withdrawal from South Vietnam of all foreign forces." The minority plank refers to a "phased withdrawal over a relatively short period of time." The practical difference, if any, between the two versions is negligible.

Both planks address themselves to the postwar government of South Vietnam. The majority plank looks to negotiations between the interested parties and to free elections, carried out -- if necessary -- under international supervision to protect the rights of all the citizens of South Vietnam. The minority provides no equivalent protection once troops are withdrawn.

The minority plank would force a coalition government on South Vietnam, without any encouragement toward free elections.

Both planks suggest a reduction in the intensity of the war in South Vietnam and a shift of responsibility to the South Vietnamese for defensive operations, even prior to a final agreement with the North Vietnamese and the National Liberation Front.

Both planks support economic assistance in Southeast Asia with increased emphasis on "regional and multilateral cooperation."

Both planks suggest new directions in our relations with the countries of Southeast Asia.

I wish, Mr. Chairman, there had been accommodation within the Platform Committee. I wish a spirit of compromise had moved to resolve the differences.

Each of these planks commits us to an early and honorable peace.

Each supports the idea of calculated risks to move us toward a negotiated settlement of the war.

The choice before us is this:

A negotiated settlement with -- or a negotiated settlement without -- safeguards to protect the right of all South Vietnamese to a free choice in free elections.

A negotiated settlement which forces a coalition government on the South Vietnamese or one that supports their right to decide that question.

A bombing halt with -- or a bombing halt without -- consideration of air protection for our troops against military risks arising north of the Demilitarized Zone -- the kind of protection, I remind you, that brought relief to our boys at Khe Sanh.

Mr. Chairman, I urge adoption of the Majority Plank.