

America's role the first indochina war



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The First Indochina War, also known as the French Indochina War, began in December 19, 1946 and ended in August 1, 1954.[1]It was a major conflict in the Asian region known as Indochina, which is composed of the modern nations of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. The war was between the French forces and the Communist Rebels Viet Minh, Pathet Lao, and Khmer Issarak. In the West, this conflict is called the First Indochina War while in Vietnam it is known as the Anti-French War. The war ended with French defeat following the surrender of the French army to the Viet Minh rebels in the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

HOW THE WAR BEGAN

It started as a clash between “ two republics: the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and the French Fourth Republic”.[2]It was never just about Vietnamese national independence, it was also about “ DRV’s quest for recognition of its authority and sovereignty and the French insistence on maintaining French sovereignty – and authority – in the colonies”.[3]

By 1885, most of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos were controlled by France. The Vietnamese resisted French rule from day one of the French conquest until the start of World War II. Japan invaded Indochina in the year 1940 and defeated the French. The Japanese occupation was fought by a Vietnamese resistance movement resulting to their defeat in 1945. Following the surrender of the Japanese, Vietnam was left without a single government. With this, the Vietnamese resistance movement (Viet Minh) also hoped to be independent of the French and declare Vietnamese independence. On September 2, Hồ Chí Minh had proclaimed in Hanoi the establishment of the

Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV).[4] British troops tasked to oversee the Japanese withdrawal occupied Southern Vietnam. Furthermore, Nationalist Chinese troops disarmed the Japanese in Northern Vietnam “ in conformity with the Potsdam agreements and the issuance of Order No. 1 by Harry Truman”.[5] The French forces soon clashed with the Viet Minh resistance forces, and the conflict grew to include all of French Indochina. The First Indochina war began in the south. On contrary, the DRV remained in power in Hanoi due to the decision of China “ not to overthrow the government or allow a rapid French return”.[6]

MORE COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN THE FIRST INDOCHINA WAR

The First Indochina war was not only fought among French and Vietnamese. There were other countries who provided support on each side. It also involved the United States and Great Britain. In 1950, they recognized the government of Bảo Đại, called the Associated State of Vietnam, and supported French side[7]. On the other hand, the Soviet Union and China supported Hồ Chí Minh and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam[8]. They supported the rebels with equipment and training. The Vietnamese rebels were also allowed to use southern China as a staging point for attacks into northern Vietnam.

THE INVOLVEMENT OF AMERICA

The involvement of the United States in the First Indochina War has always been of great interest. According to Chapter 2, “ U. S. Involvement in the Franco-Viet Minh War, 1950-1954” of Pentagon Papers Gravel Edition, “ it has been argued that even as the U. S. began supporting the French in <https://assignbuster.com/americas-role-the-first-indochina-war/>

Indochina, the U. S. missed opportunities to bring peace, stability and independence to Vietnam.”[9]Indochina was of little importance to the US State Department; however, France was vital to the European recovery effort.[10]In the beginning, the United States remained neutral and even encouraged France to negotiate. Franklin Roosevelt once talked about this. In a press conference on February 23, 1945, he said that he thought that there is a feeling that the Indo-Chinese ought to be independent but are not ready for it.[11]He even suggested “ that Indo-China be set up under a trusteeship-have a Frenchman, one or two Indo-Chinese, and a Chinese and a Russian because they are on the coast, and maybe a Filipino and an American-to educate them for self-government”; however, the British didn’t like the idea.[12]

The United States of America wanted to support nationalists, or the people who fight for the right to self-govern and to be free from foreign colonizers. However, the United States, at that time, was also becoming concerned about the rising power of communism in the world. Their priorities began to shift from anti-colonialism to anti-communism.[13]Furthermore, another important factor as to why the United States leaned toward supporting the French is how leaders viewed Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnamese revolutionaries.

Before the end of the war, the he United States had already funded approximately one third of France’s attempt to retain control of Indochina. Just like, President Truman, President Dwight D. Eisenhower continued to provide support for the French occupation without much deviation from Truman’s policy believing that it would eventually lead to the liberation of

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the Vietnamese people from communism. By 1953, the failure of full-scale occupation of Indochina against the Viet Minh resulted to the recession of U. S. support. France requested an additional \$400 million in assistance but only received \$385 million.[14]

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[1]Christopher Goscha, *Historical Dictionary Of The Indochina War (1945-1954): An International And Interdisciplinary Approach* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2012), ix.

[2]Stein D. Tønnesson, *Vietnam 1946*. (Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of California Press, 2009), 1.

[3]Ibid, 2.

[4]Goscha, *Historical Dictionary Of The Indochina War (1945-1954): An International And Interdisciplinary Approach* , x.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid, xv.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Chapter 2, “ U. S. Involvement in the Franco-Viet Minh War, 1950-1954”, The Pentagon Papers, Gravel Edition, *Vietnamwar50th. Com* , Boston, Beacon Press, 1971, n. p. https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/education/primary_sources/.(July 27, 2019).

[10]Sami Abouzahr, “ *The Tangled Web: AMERICA, FRANCE AND INDOCHINA 1947-50.* ” History Today, 10 (2004): 49.

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[11]Franklin Roosevelt on French Rule in Indochina, Press Conference, February 23, 1945, from *Major Problems in American Foreign Policy, Volume II: Since 1914*, 4th edition, edited by Thomas G. Paterson and Dennis Merrill (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1995), p. 190.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Abouzahr, “ *The Tangled Web: AMERICA, FRANCE AND INDOCHINA 1947-50.* “, 50.

[14]Goscha, *Historical Dictionary Of The Indochina War (1945-1954): An International And Interdisciplinary Approach* , xvii.