

- Issue of Indochina at Potsdam Conference 1945
  - Brits occupy - south of 16<sup>th</sup> parallel
  - Rep of Chinese - north of 16<sup>th</sup> parallel
- Japan surrenders (Aug 15, 1945)
  - Viet Minh launch August Revolution
  - Liberate much of northern Vietnam
  - Seize control of Hanoi
    - » Emperor Bảo Đại abdicates
  - Hồ declares - Democratic Republic of Vietnam
- Fall 1945, Ho sought relationship with US
  - Continued talks w/ OSS
  - Writes to POTUS Truman
    - » Ho's argument: FR sold Indochina to Jap
    - » NOTE: realizes no help from USSR or China
- Viet Minh position in South = weaker than in North
  - Brits restore FR authority
  - In North, Ho's popularity uncontested
  - Result, Ho moves to save portion of his power
    - » Early 1946 began negotiation with FR
  - But, by Fall 1946, Ho = pessimistic
- FR at 1<sup>st</sup> promised to recognize new gov't as free state
  - Reversed decision by Nov

- Nov 23 – FR navy bombarded port of Haiphong
- 1<sup>st</sup> Indochina War began
- Aug 15, 1945, Japan surrenders
  - Viet Minh launch August Revolution
  - Portions of northern Vietnam “liberated”
  - Seized Hanoi by Aug 19
  - Emperor Bảo Đại abdicates
  - Sept 2, Hồ declares independence Democratic Republic of Vietnam
- Ho seeks relationship with US
  - Talks w/ OSS; letters to Truman
  - NOTE: USSR & CCP not interested
- Viet Minh strength in north
  - Ho’s popularity uncontested
  - BUT, Brits restore FR authority in South
  - Ho moves to save position
    - » Attempts negotiations with FR
  - But soon = pessimistic
- FR “promised” recognize new gov’t
  - But reversed
  - Nov 23 – Haiphong bombed
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Indochina War begins
- US response

- Fate of Ho plays out in backdrop of WWII
- During war, FDR preoccupied
  - Focus = holding allies together
  - View of post-war world = US & USSR rise; Europe diminish
  - Outraged by collaboration of Vichy
  - BUT, FDR reversed position – European empires restored
- Truman = no interest in S.E. Asia
  - Ignores pleas from Ho
  - Focus = changing international system
- March 12, 1947, Truman proclaims that US must *support “free peoples”*
  - Which “free peoples”?
  - Initial focus = defend strong points NOT boundaries
  - Devised by George F. Kennan
  - Admin’s focus = narrow
- As for Indochina:
  - Mixed feelings on FR colonial rule
  - US wants change in FR policies
  - View of Vietnam
  - View of Ho shifts
  - American “catch 22”
- 1948-1949, Cold War flares
  - Threat of communism

- Focus switches from \$\$ to military
- AND from strong points to perimeter defense (re: containment)
- Cold War raises stakes in Indochina
  - 1949 – fear of Cold War in Asia
  - Triumph of CCP impacts Indochinese War
  - USSR & CCP support links Ho & cause to Cold War
  - By 1950, Indochina = key domino
- 1949, FR creates native gov'ts in Cambodia, Laos & Vietnam
  - All = “free states” within French Union
  - BUT, all = puppet states
  - Vietnam led by Bao Dai
- US supports
  - Recognize all 3 gov'ts
  - Intervenes in war
  - Military Assistance & Advisory Group (MAAG) created
  - US civilian experts appear
  - Shift in support = crucial escalation
- Outbreak of Korean War
  - Previously, Korea = outside perimeter
  - All Communist powers acting in concert?
  - Korean War increases anxiety about S.E. Asia
  - NOTE: July 1950 Melby Mission

- Fall 1950 – Korean War intensifies
  - Viet Minh also strike FR positions in North
  - Issue: FR = road bound
  - Ex. .Retreat from town of Cao Bang
  - Defeats stun FR
- 1951 saw a change
  - Dec 1950, FR sent General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny
  - Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap launches offensive
  - Giap miscalculates
  - Result = stalemate
  - But time is Viet Minh's side
- Ho's two-fold propaganda front
  - War against "white foreign invaders" & "native clients"
- Vietnam = difficult place for war
  - Most = dense forests & mountains
  - Viet Minh devised ingenious ways to move
  - FR depends on mechanized equipment
  - Geography = advantage for Viet Minh
- 1<sup>st</sup> Indochinese War = bizarre
  - FR used remnants colonial empire vs. revolutionary nationalism
  - FR Expeditionary Corps = ~200,000 men
  - Ex. Observation of Howard Simpson

- By 1952-53, US realized war = quagmire
  - How to break stalemate?
  - US urged FR to use 3-step strategy
  - Belief = people would rally to Bao Dai
- FR didn't share US vision
  - 1<sup>st</sup> FR held contempt for Vietnamese
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> convinced would eventually win
  - Thus, from US wanted:
    - » More military & economic aid
    - » Regional collective security treaty
    - » & US troops if China interfered
  - US leaders NOT want treaty or troops
    - » BUT didn't want to risk FR withdrawal
  - So, US maintained aid
    - » Needed FR & VNA to fight
- BUT 1952 = bad year
- PLUS 1952 = Presidential election
  - Truman = decides not to run
  - Eisenhower easily beats Stevenson
  - Ike = military man
  - Also worked with many world leaders
  - Most Americans admired & trusted Ike

- Ike's Admin shared view of Truman Admin
  - RE: Communist expansion globally = threat to US
  - BUT, was more cautious about escalation
- Ike agreed with commitment to Indochinese War
  - NOTE: boundaries stabilized in Europe
  - BUT Asia = more fluid
- Ike agreed with assessment of FR war effort
  - Urged FR to accept Truman's 3-step strategy
  - Ike's private view
- FR gov't not easily influenced
  - War weariness & parliament resistive
  - FR-US relations = delicate
  - PLUS, armistice ends Korean War
  - FR faced desperate military situation
  - Viet Minh strength growing
- May 1953, General Navarre develops plan
  - NOTE: recognized decisive defeat of Viet Minh = impossible
  - 1<sup>st</sup> gathered troops in Red River Delta
  - Then, parachuted best troops into Dien Bien Phu
  - Then, move in more support
  - De Castries built fortress in valley floor
  - Navarre wanted base deep in interior

- Fatal flaw = “high ground”
- Viet Minh opened fire on May 13, 1954
- FR lost before firing single shot
  - They underestimated Giap
  - Failed to anticipate that flights in & out of valley would be cut off
  - Wrongly assumed Giap would throw troops at Fortress positions
  - FR = completely outgeneraled
  - FR did fight bravely to save garrison
  - End = May 7, 1954
  - Fall of Dien Bien Phu clip
- Ike assessed situation as military man
  - Faced tough choices
  - Fate of Indochina deeply concerning
  - BUT, worried about direct US involvement
  - Yet, he reached out to Great Britain
  - Ike spoke with Congress
  - US could not rescue Dien Bien Phu
  - BUT, Admin pivoted
- Admin anticipated division of Vietnam
  - Pushed for SEATO
  - Convinced non-Communist Vietnamese = South Koreans.
- Geneva Conference – April 26, 1954



- Held two weeks before fall of Dien Bien Phu
- “Big” Powers met
- Goals of Conference
- Cambodia, Laos, State of Vietnam & Viet Minh invited
- US position = torn
- Viet Minh wanted to capitalize
- FR PM Mendès-France wanted dignified retreat
- Chinese & Soviets wanted concessions
  - » NOTE: both pressed Viet Minh
- Outcome = two-fold
- NOTE: division to be temporary
- Other terms
- Irony – only portion signed = cease-fire
- US didn't endorse
- Ngo Dinh Diem rejects terms
  - » Hanoi agreed