

QUESTION : TO WHAT EXTENT DID THE COLD WAR INTERFERE WITH THE DECOLONIZATION PROCESS ?

After a very brief presentation of the historical context and of the topics that will structure your presentation, use your knowledge and use the sources to :

- Explain why the US Government opinion on Vietnam changed between 1944 and 1959. (source 1 & 2)
- Explain how the war in Vietnam was fought after 1964 and why North-Vietnam and the Vietcong claimed it still was a war of liberation (source 3).
- Explain how the way the Vietnam war concluded had an impact on international relations (source 3 & 4).

Source 2 - Dwight D. Eisenhower's opinion on Vietnam, 1959

Viet-Nam is a country divided into two parts, like Korea and Germany. [...] A line of demarcation running along the 17th parallel separates the two. [...] While the [South-vietnamese] Government has shown real progress in cleaning out Communist guerrillas, those remaining continue to be a disruptive influence in the nation's life. [...] Strategically South Viet-Nam's capture by the Communists would bring their power several hundred miles into a [still] free region. The freedom of 12 million people would be lost immediately and that of 150 million others in remaining countries in Southeast Asia lands would be seriously endangered. The loss of south Viet-Nam would set in motion a crumbling process that could have grave consequences [...] for freedom. Because of these facts, military as well as economic help is currently needed in Viet-Nam.

Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Washington, DC, July 1967.

Source 4 - Armoured tank entering the presidential Palace grounds in Saigon, April 29th 1975



Source 1 - Franklin Delano Roosevelt's opinion on Indochina in 1944

« I saw Halifax [Lord Halifax, British ambassador to the United States] last week and told him quite frankly that it was perfectly true that I had, for over a year, expressed the opinion that Indochina should not go back to France. [...]. Each case must, of course, stand on its own feet, but the case of Indochina is perfectly clear. The people of Indochina are entitled to something better than that. »

Roosevelt Memorandum to State Secretary Cordell Hull, January 24, 1944

War in Vietnam, 1957-73

Source 3 - The War in Vietnam, 1957-73