11. Sponsoring French Colonialism: The State Department Decision (May 1950)*

By Secretary of State Dean Acheson

American military aid to the French began as early as January 1946, and by May 1947 recognition of French sovereignty in Indochina was national policy.1 When the Chinese Communists proclaimed the establishment of a People's Republic of China, in October 1949, US policy moved swiftly to full-scale material support of the French war against the Viet Minh. In the following reading, Secretary of State Acheson firmly tied American national interests to the victory of French colonialism. By the end of the French war, the United States was paying 80 percent of its cost.

The [French] Foreign Minister and I have just had an exchange of views on the situation in Indochina and are in general agreement both as to the urgency of the situation in that area and as to the necessity for remedial action. We have noted the fact that the problem of meeting the threat to the security of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos which now enjoy independence within the French Union is primarily the responsibility of France and the Governments and peoples of Indochina. The United States recognizes that the solution of the Indochina problem depends both upon the restoration of security and upon the development of genuine nationalism and that United States assistance can and should contribute to these major objectives.

The United States Government, convinced that neither national independence nor democratic evolution exists in any area dominated by Soviet imperialism, considers the situation to be such as to warrant its according economic aid and military equipment to the Associated States of Indochina and to France in order to assist them in restoring stability and permitting these states to pursue their peaceful and democratic development.

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