

HOW AND WHY DID THE UNITED STATES DECIDE TO SUPPORT THE FRENCH IN INDO-CHINA IN 1950?

Tyler HERBER*

Abstract: This article explores the intersection of competing ideologies of the post-World War Two world through an examination of American policy towards French Indo-China. In the battle between American anti-colonial and anti-communist visions for the world, the Truman Administration abandoned Franklin D. Roosevelt's pragmatic, but sincere, aims for a world without European colonialism for a more ideologically-bound vision of a world split between capitalist and communist. This article examines how the serendipity of death, the structures of bureaucracy, and the stratification of ideology converged with devastating effects in Indo-China and explain how America switched from opposing French rule to overtly aiding its return.

Keywords: anti-colonialism, anti-communism, Cold War, American diplomacy, Vietnam

* Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA. herber0@purdue.edu