

The Franco-Vietnamese War launched a period of French decolonization and The Algerian War of Independence ended the French colonial empire. Both conflicts shook the French Fourth Republic's foundations. French reasons for struggling in Vietnam were efforts to save national heritage but Algerian territory was considered to be fully part of France with a large minority of French population.

In September 1945 the League for the Independence of Vietnam (abbreviated *Viet Minh*: a communist revolutionary national liberation movement formed by Ho Chi Minh) proclaimed Democratic Republic of Vietnam. War started the following year after several attempts of negotiations while the Vietnamese authorities had refused autonomy within the **French Union** and the Indochinese Federation offered by France. This colonial war turned into a Cold War crisis in January 1950 because Viet Minh received support from the **communist China** and the **Soviet Union**. The war ended in 1954 after a massive French defeat in Dien Bien Phu and it was very significant because it was the first time that a western colonial power was defeated by an indigenous revolutionary force. The **Geneva accords**, under which France agreed to withdraw from its former **Indochinese** colonies, partitioned the country in two parts at the 17th Parallel as a temporary measure until unifying **elections** would take place in **1956**.

The Algerian War started in November 1954. It was led by The National Liberation Front (*FLN*), to obtain **independence** for Algeria. FLN proclaimed the Holly War against French occupier and also against other nationalist group, the Algerian National Movement (*MNA*). In reaction, the French Government initiated a campaign of "pacification" which turned into a full-scale war in August 1955 characterized by

terrorism against civilians, use of torture on both sides and counter-terrorism operations by the French Army.

Affected by parliamentary instability, the Fourth Republic was dissolved with Charles de Gaulle's return to power in May 1958 who founded the Fifth Republic and put through a new Constitution. However, De Gaulle progressively shifted in favor of negotiations with the FLN and Algerian independence, seeing it as inevitable. After the failed April 1961 General's putsch organized by French Generals hostile to the negotiations, the OAS (Organization of Secret Army), which grouped far-right radicals, initiated a campaign of bombings, sabotage and assassination in Algeria in order to prevent De Gaulle's decision. Talks with the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic (GPRA set up by FLN) in March 1962 led to signing the **Evian Accords** which were approved by French and Algerian population in referendum.

Both wars have affected in some way the French society. The first one because of irresolution of French political leaders and underestimating of the Vietnamese enemy by the French Army, the second one because of culmination of moral, social, political and economic crisis. The crisis which started during the II World War and continued in Vietnamese War.