

Book note by Odd Arne Westad in the  
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Tønnesson, Stein, 1991. *The Vietnamese Revolution of 1945: Roosevelt, Ho Chi Minh and de Gaulle in a World at War*. London: Sage. xiii, 458 pp.

With the end of the age of the Cold War, the origins of its conflicts have come under renewed scrutiny by a new generation of historians. This 'third generation' of historians have often centred their work on events outside Europe, offering new insights on both domestic and international aspects of the conflicts. Tønnesson's book represents an important contribution to this emerging literature. It is a complex and fact-filled work, emphasizing contexts and explanations. By joining domestic and international lines of development, the author presents a set of powerful arguments, dealing not only with the Vietnamese revolution, but also with the origins of the Vietnam wars outside Indochina. Tønnesson argues that the success of the 1945 Communist revolution was accidental, and due largely to American policy and to the speed with which the Japanese regime collapsed. Franklin D. Roosevelt became, in an almost direct sense, the benefactor of the Vietnamese revolution through his machinations against the French and his plans for how to end the war in the Pacific. In between the main interpretative lines of the work we learn a lot about the auxiliaries of revolution, from Vietnamese peasants to American officers and diplomats, all caught in the web of rapidly changing events. Some of this material may be considered superfluous, both to the general content of the book and to the author's argument. Still, by approaching the Vietnamese revolution through a plurality of causal threads, the author has succeeded in presenting a vivid and instructive view of the 1945 events.

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