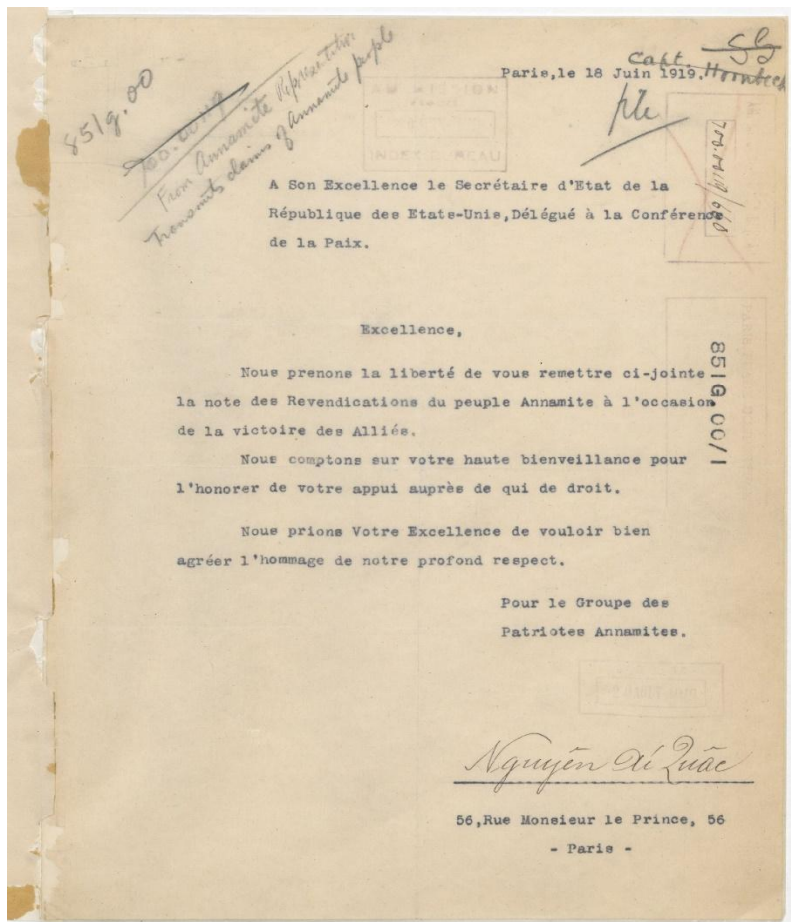


**HO CHI MINH AND THE VIETNAMESE
STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE:
A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL AND
INSTRUCTIONAL CAPSTONE PROJECT**

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<https://www.docsteach.org/documents/document/ho-chi-minh-lansing>

Translation:

To his Excellency, the Secretary of State of the Republic of the United States, Delegate to the Peace Conference.

Excellency,

We take the liberty of submitting to you the accompanying memorandum setting forth the claims of the Vietnamese people on the occasion of the Allied victory.

We count on your great kindness to honor our appeal by your support whenever the opportunity arises.

We beg your Excellency graciously to accept the expression of our profound respect.

For the group of Vietnamese Patriots

[signed] **Nguyen Ai Quoc**

56, Rue Monsieur le Prince, 56

-Paris-

Note: The name signed here, **Nguyen Ai Quoc**, translates to “Nguyen the Patriot.” This was one of the many names Ho Chi Minh used throughout early and midlife.

Ho Chi Minh viewed the United States as an inspirational example of anti-colonial revolution. America’s colonial history combined with Woodrow Wilson’s “Fourteen Points” gave Ho, and other nationalists around the world, reason to be optimistic that the U.S. would be an ally in

establishing a post-colonial world. Ho appealed to American officials on numerous occasions seeking their help in brokering a peaceful end to French colonialism but without success. His first known attempt was this telegram (dated 6/18/1919) to Secretary of State Robert Lansing while President Wilson was in Paris to negotiate the terms of peace following World War I. Although Ho received word that the petition would be shared with President Wilson directly, there was no further response and it remains unclear whether or not Wilson ever read the message.



<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/09/vietnam-paris-nguyen-ai-quac-le-paria-french-left-de-gaulle>

Ho Chi Minh (standing, third from left) pictured with members of the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in Tan Trao August, 1945).

With France considerably weakened by World War II, Ho Chi Minh returned to Vietnam in 1941 after almost three decades in exile. With much of the country under Japanese rather than French control, Ho and his followers began working closely with the American OSS (later renamed CIA) providing assistance to American military operations in the area. In addition to rescuing downed American pilots, Ho and his followers provided intelligence on Japanese movement and disrupted railroad operations and supply routes when possible. Also picture in the photograph is Vo Nguyen Giap (center right, wearing suit and tie) Ho's longtime lieutenant. Despite having no formal military training (he had previously worked as a history teacher) Giap would earn the tabloid nickname "red Napoleon" as the architect of Vietnam's wars against both the French and the Americans.

I. Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.

II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.

III. The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance.

IV. Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.

V. A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.

VI. The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest cooperation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy and assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing; and, more than a welcome, assistance also of every kind that she may need and may herself desire. The treatment accorded Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their good will, of their comprehension of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy.

VII. Belgium, the whole world will agree, must be evacuated and restored, without any attempt to limit the sovereignty which she enjoys in common with all other free nations. No other single act will serve as this will serve to restore confidence among the nations in the laws which they have themselves set and determined for the government of their relations with one another. Without this healing act the whole structure and validity of international law is forever impaired.

VIII. All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored, and the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine, which has unsettled the peace of the world for nearly fifty years, should be righted, in order that peace may once more be made secure in the interest of all.

IX. A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality.

X. The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity to autonomous development.

XI. Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro should be evacuated; occupied territories restored; Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea; and the relations of the several Balkan states to one another determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality; and international guarantees of the political and economic independence and territorial integrity of the several Balkan states should be entered into.

XII. The Turkish portion of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.

XIII. An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.

XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.

http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp

Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points

In a speech delivered to the United States Congress on January 8, 1918, President Woodrow Wilson put forth "Fourteen Points" that he thought should serve as an outline for promoting a lasting peace. Reeling from the unprecedented carnage caused by World War I, Wilson was addressing what many saw as a need for a new sense of order in the world. Among the principles advocated by Wilson in this proposed world view was the importance of self-determination, the ability for a people to govern their own country free from external influence. Often referred to as the "Wilsonian Moment," this speech inspired a wave of momentum for budding nationalistic movements in colonized territories throughout the world. The reality, however, is that overwhelming evidence suggests that Wilson and his advisors had only been referring to Europe when calling for self-determination and in no way meant for the Fourteen Points to apply to those under colonial rule.



<http://www.postcolonialweb.org/singapore/arts/painters/vietnam/nguyenkhang/1.html>

“Uncle Ho Visiting the Villages” by Nguyen Khang, 1958. Original size: 36 x 75in.

This painting was part of a 1996 exhibit at the Singapore Art Museum entitled, “Modernity and Beyond: Themes in Southeast Asian Art.” The work’s bright colors and vivid detail help to convey the mythical hero status Ho Chi Minh held for many of his countrymen. Affectionately referred to as “Uncle Ho” by his followers, he was seen as a tireless and selfless defender of their freedom. Every aspect of his life from his speeches to his humble lifestyle and frail physical appearance combined to cultivate the ultimate ‘man of the people’ persona. While disputed in certain parts of the country today, Ho is largely looked upon in a similar light to that of George Washington in the United States. And although Americans have long since accepted that Washington was an imperfect man who owned slaves and could in fact tell a lie, Ho’s idealized public image is carefully maintained by government officials to this day.