




>> Fourteen-year-old Mary Ann Vecchio kneels over the body of Kent State student Jeffrey Miller, age 20. Also killed were Allison Krause, 19; William Schroeder, 19; and Sandra Scheuer, 20.

 **Interactive Flipped Video**

>> **Objectives**

Assess Nixon's new approach to the war, and explain why protests continued.

Explain what led to the Paris Peace Accords and why South Vietnam eventually fell to the communists.

Evaluate the impact of the Vietnam War on the United States.

>> **Key Terms**

- Vietnamization
- My Lai
- Pentagon Papers
- Paris Peace Accords
- War Powers Act
- Roy P. Benavidez

As a result, Richard Nixon promised "peace with honor" and an end to a war that had fractured American society. Nixon did indeed withdraw American troops, and the Vietnam War finally ended. But the impact of the war endured. As the nation recovered from war, Americans reexamined the struggle against communism, the power of the presidency, and America's role in the world.

The War's End and Effects

Attempts to Withdraw from Vietnam

Nixon's defenders argued that he was a hard-working patriot with a new vision for America. His critics charged that he was a deceitful politician bent on acquiring power and punishing his enemies. There were elements of truth to both views. But defenders and critics alike agreed that Richard Nixon was a determined man with abundant political talent. From his first day in office, the new President realized that ending the Vietnam War was the key to everything else he hoped to achieve.

Peace Talks Stall Though formal peace talks between the warring parties had begun in May 1968, the talks bogged down from the outset due to disagreements and a lack of compromise. When Richard Nixon took office in January 1969, his peace delegation firmly believed they could break the impasse. The Americans and South Vietnamese wanted all communist troops out of South Vietnam.

They also wanted prisoners of war (POWs) returned. Meanwhile the North Vietnamese demanded an immediate American withdrawal from Vietnam and the formation of a coalition government in South

Vietnam that would include representatives from the Vietcong. Still hoping to win the war in the field, North Vietnam refused to budge from its initial position. And South Vietnam refused to sign any agreement that compromised its security.

Vietnamization President Nixon refused to accept the North Vietnamese peace terms. He was committed to a policy of "peace with honor" and believed that there were still military options.

He continued a gradual pullout of American troops, and expressed faith in the ability of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) to assume the burden of war. He called his approach **Vietnamization**—U.S. forces would withdraw as ARVN troops assumed more combat duties. The hope was that with continued American aid behind the front lines, the ARVN would fight its own battles to secure South Vietnam.

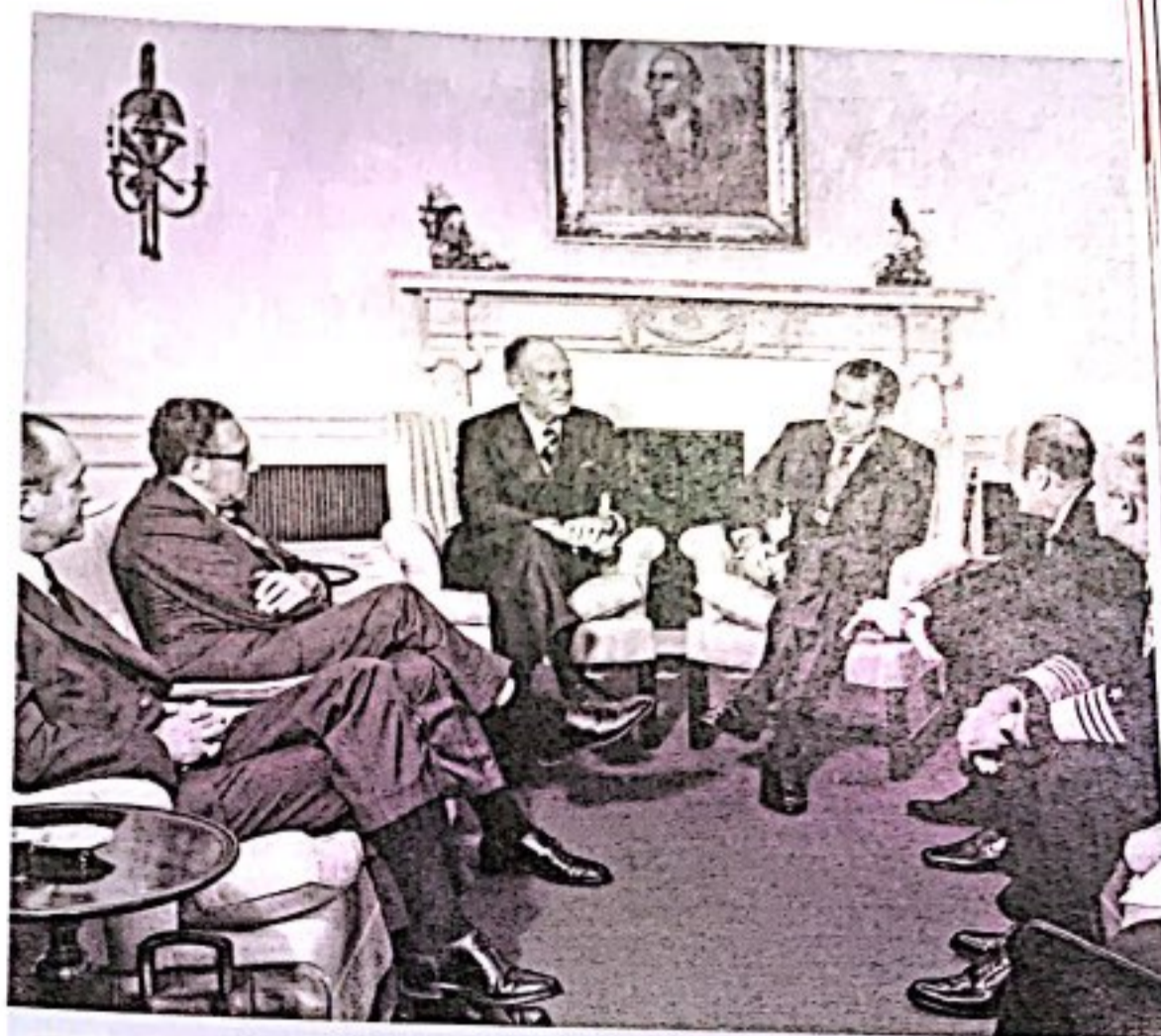
To reduce the flow of communist supplies to the Vietcong, Nixon ordered the secret bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Cambodia. This was a controversial move because it widened the scope of the war and helped to undermine the neutral government in Cambodia. In the end, neither Vietnamization nor secret bombings dramatically improved South Vietnam's chances of winning a war against the communists.

2 GENERATE EXPLANATIONS Explain why you think the bombings in Cambodia were kept secret.


Events Intensify the Antiwar Movement

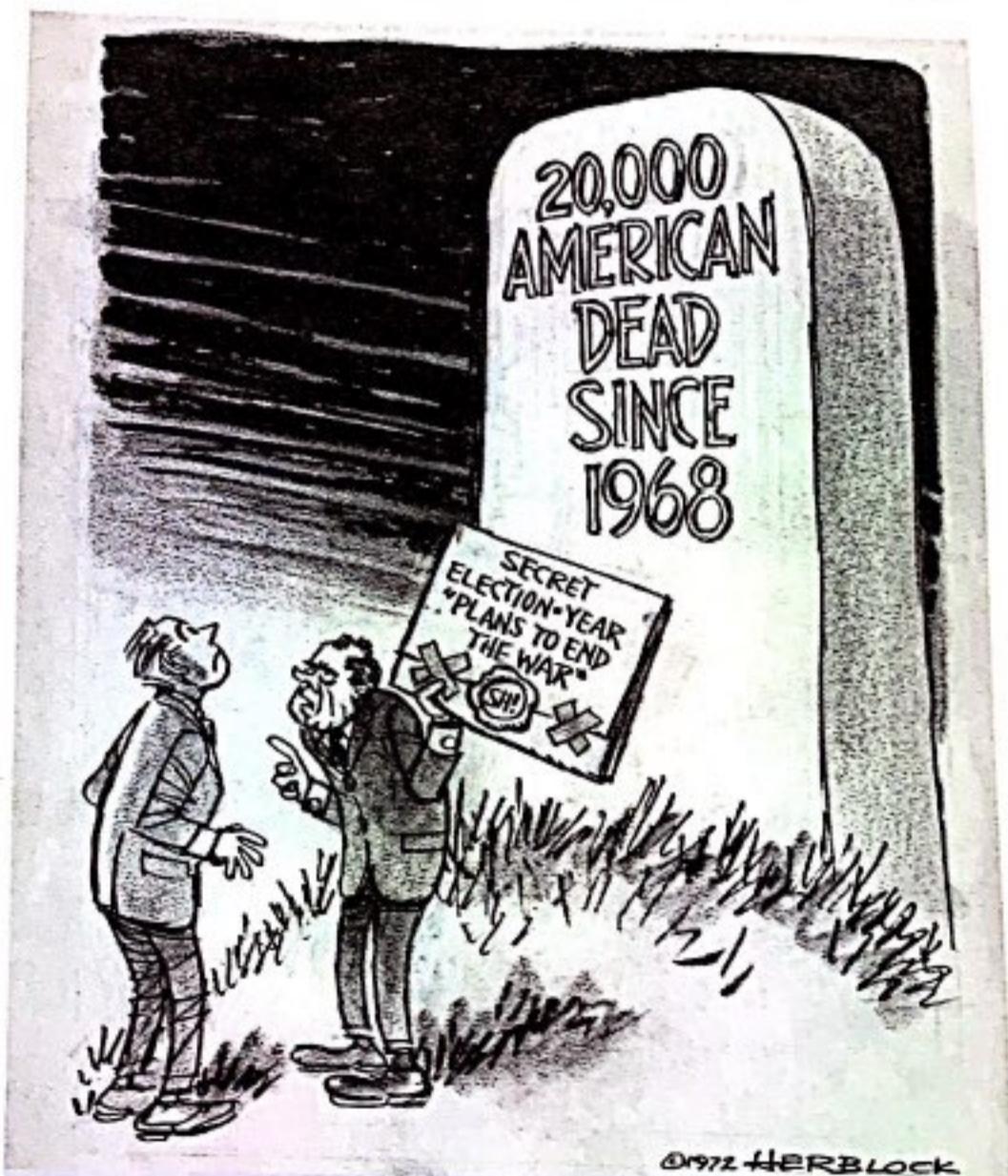
Nixon inherited two things from Lyndon Johnson: an unpopular war and a vocal American opposition to it. The new President wanted "peace with honor," security for America's ally South Vietnam, and international respect for U.S. foreign policy. Antiwar activists wanted the war ended and American troops out of Vietnam—on any terms. Nixon found it increasingly difficult to achieve his goals and satisfy the snowballing antiwar movement.

The War Widens into Cambodia More than a year into office, Nixon had grown impatient with the snail's pace of the peace negotiations. In 1970, he attempted to break the stalemate by ordering a ground attack on North Vietnamese Army and Vietcong bases in Cambodia. Nixon also hoped to aid the pro-American Cambodian government in its fight against the Khmer Rouge, a communist movement supported by North Vietnam.



>> President Nixon meets with his defense team in January 1971.

 **Interactive Timeline**



>> **Analyze Political Cartoons** What is the cartoon saying about the consequences of Nixon's lack of follow-through on a 1968 campaign promise?

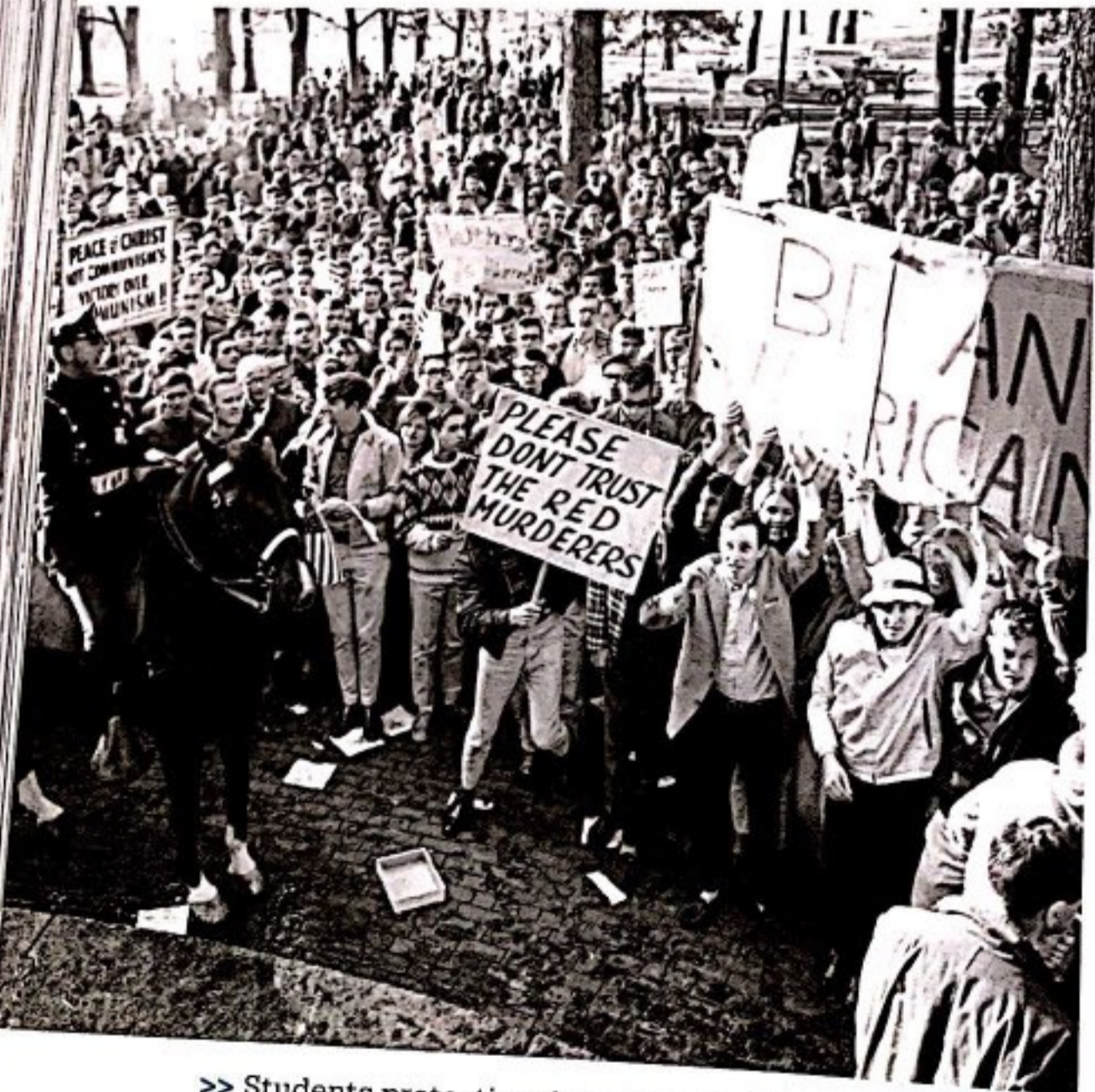
On the evening of April 30, Nixon addressed the American people, informing them of his decision to carry the war into Cambodia. He stressed that the war had become a measure of how committed the United States was to preserving freedom around the world:

If, when the chips are down, the world's most powerful nation, the United States of America, acts like a pitiful, helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations . . . throughout the world.

—President Richard Nixon, 1970

The next morning, U.S. and ARVN forces crossed the border into Cambodia. These soldiers captured large stockpiles of weapons and supplies, but they did not break the stalemate. North Vietnam remained determined to have peace on its terms or no peace at all.

The Kent State Killings The Cambodian incursion had a profound impact on the peace movement at home. It stirred antiwar activists, who argued that Nixon had



>> Students protesting American involvement in Vietnam are heckled by opposing students, many of whom carry anti-communist signs.

place. The protests erupted with protests. Several college campuses prompted the police and National Guard to step in to preserve order.

On two campuses, confrontations between students and armed authorities led to deaths. Five days after Nixon's speech, demonstrators at Kent State University in Ohio threw rocks and bottles at members of the National Guard. When one guardsman threw a tear gas canister, he heard a sniper's shot, he fired his rifle. The shot prompted other National Guardsmen to discharge a volley of gunfire into a group of protesters, killing four youths. The Kent State killings led to demonstrations on other campuses. At Jackson State University, a historically African American college in Mississippi, a confrontation between students and police ended with two students dead.

College demonstrations against the war sometimes prompted counterprotests by Americans who supported the President. In response to a May 8, 1970, antiwar rally in downtown New York City, construction workers staged a counter-demonstration, carrying American flags and chanting "All the Way USA."

Believing that some anti-war demonstrators had spit on the American flag, they pushed into the crowd and started hitting the antiwar protesters. The clash drew national attention. Days later, thousands of construction workers, businessmen, secretaries, and housewives marched peacefully through Manhattan's streets in support of Nixon and the war effort. One man expressed his feelings about the march:

I'm very proud to be an American, and I know my boy that was killed in Vietnam would be here today if he was alive, marching with us. . . . I know he died for the right cause, because in his letters he wrote to me he knew what he was fighting for: to keep America free. . . .

—Robert Geary, May 20, 1970

As the fighting continued in Vietnam, the American home front became its own physical and emotional battlefield.

The My Lai Massacre In 1971, two events increased the pressure on Nixon to pull U.S. troops out of Vietnam. The first event had roots in a U.S. action in South Vietnam three years earlier.

for enemies. The presence came upon the village of **My Lai**. By this point in the war, many American troops had been injured and killed by Vietcong fighters posing as civilians. It was a recipe for disaster at My Lai, where Lieutenant William Calley's unit began shooting and killing unarmed civilians. During the assault, U.S. soldiers killed between four and five hundred Vietnamese.

Lt. Calley later maintained that he was following orders, but many of the soldiers present did not participate in the massacre. At least one risked his own life to stop it. The tragedy was made even worse by an inadequate military investigation of the incident. *Life* magazine eventually published disturbing photos taken during the event, and in March 1971, a military court convicted Lt. Calley of his participation in the attack. News of the My Lai massacre, the coverup, and Calley's trial shocked many Americans and added fuel to the burning antiwar fire.

The Pentagon Papers On the heels of My Lai came the 1971 publication of the **Pentagon Papers** in *The New York Times*. The papers were a classified government history of America's involvement in Vietnam. The study was leaked to *The Times* by one of its coauthors, Daniel Ellsberg. Nixon tried to block the full publication, but in *New York Times v. United States*, the Supreme Court ruled against the administration. The study revealed that American leaders involved the United States in Vietnam without fully informing the American people and occasionally even lied to Congress. Along with the invasion of Cambodia, the killings on college campuses, and the My Lai Massacre, the Pentagon Papers turned even more Americans against the war.

2 CHECK UNDERSTANDING Why did the Nixon administration try to stop publication of the Pentagon Papers?

The Vietnam War Ends

The failings of Vietnamization and growing dissent at home forced President Nixon to search for some final way out of the conflict. A 1971 public-opinion poll revealed that two thirds of Americans favored withdrawing American troops, even if it meant a communist takeover of South Vietnam. Sensitive to the public mood, Congress pressed Nixon to bring the troops home. Many believed that to win reelection in 1972, he had to end the war.

American Troops Withdraw from Vietnam In October 1972, the United States and North Vietnam



>> A photographer captured the terrible scene in the village of My Lai where American troops killed civilians.



>> U.S. troops wait to return home after completing their tours in Vietnam. **Hypothesize** What difficulties might be faced by soldiers returning from duty?

 **Interactive Gallery**

came to terms on a peace settlement. One year later, with lasting peace almost at hand, Nixon easily defeated the antiwar Democrat George McGovern for reelection. But Nixon's triumph was short-lived. The Vietnamese peace fell apart when North Vietnam refused to sign the agreement. Talks broke off, but renewed American bombing in North Vietnam finally induced the North Vietnamese to resume negotiations.

At last, in January 1973, the United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the Vietcong signed the **Paris Peace Accords**. The parties agreed to a cease-fire and a U.S. troop withdrawal from South Vietnam. POWs would be exchanged, but North Vietnamese troops would remain in South Vietnam. The National Liberation Front (Vietcong) would become a legitimate political party in South Vietnam, and South Vietnam's noncommunist government would remain in power pending a political settlement. With the war ended, the last American troops came home. Among the returning soldiers were more than 550 POWs, most of whom were pilots shot down during the war.

The Fall of Saigon For the United States, the war in Vietnam was over. For the Vietnamese, however, it continued. Neither North nor South Vietnam honored the cease-fire or worked toward a diplomatic settlement of their differences. In the spring of 1975, minor fighting

Without American aid and ground support, the ARVN was no match for the Soviet-supplied North Vietnamese Army. By the end of April, the communists had taken Saigon. After decades of fighting and millions of deaths, Vietnam was unified under one flag

? RECALL Did the Paris Peace Accords bring an end to fighting in Vietnam? Explain.

Effects of the Vietnam War

More than 58,000 American soldiers gave their lives serving their country in Vietnam; another 300,000 were wounded. Although figures are not exact, the Vietnamese death toll most likely exceeded 2 million. The Paris Peace, however, did not mean the end of pain and hardship. The end of the war created other problems in Southeast Asia. The war also affected American attitudes toward world affairs.

Southeast Asia After the War Many foreign-policy experts in the United States had predicted that if North Vietnam won the Vietnamese civil war, communism

HUMAN COST OF THE VIETNAM WAR

SERVICE UNIT

- 38,224 ARMY
- 14,844 MARINE CORPS
- 2,586 AIR FORCE
- 2,559 NAVY
- 7 COAST GUARD

FATALITY CATEGORY

- 40,934 KILLED IN ACTION
- 9,107 ACCIDENTAL
- 5,299 FROM WOUNDS
- 2,880 OTHER

58,220 AMERICANS KILLED OR MISSING

VIETNAM WAR DEATHS (THOUSANDS)

- AMERICAN SOLDIERS: 58,220
- SOUTH VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS: 200,000–250,000
- NORTH VIETNAMESE SOLDIERS: 900,000
- VIETNAMESE CIVILIANS: 1,000,000–2,000,000
- CAMBODIAN CIVILIANS: 500,000
- LAOTIAN CIVILIANS: 200,000

Source: National Archives Military Records

>> Analyze Data Compare the total number of civilian casualties to the number of military casualties. What do the totals tell you about the effects of modern warfare on civilian populations?

In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge unleashed a genocide on the population, killing everyone who had ties to the West or previous Cambodian governments. Between 1975 and 1979, upwards of 2 million Cambodians were executed or died in labor camps.

In an expanded sense, however, many American foreign-policy strategists misjudged the spread of communism. They concluded it was a monolithic global movement controlled by Moscow and Beijing. However, as the war's aftermath would attest, communist movements in Southeast Asia were nationalistic and intolerant of outside influences. In 1978, Vietnam invaded Cambodia and installed a pro-Vietnamese government. China supported the ousted Khmer Rouge. For more than ten years that followed, the U.S. supported a coalition of anti-communist Cambodian opposition groups that included the Khmer Rouge.



>> A veteran and his son visit the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. On this wall are the names of all military personnel who lost their lives in the war.

American Veterans Return Home The war and the peace divided Americans. Some argued that the United States should never have entered the war and that their leaders had lied to them. Others countered that the war was part of an ongoing struggle against communism and that in the end, the United States betrayed South Vietnam. An unfortunate result of the controversy was that the nation never fully expressed its appreciation to the returning veterans.

Overwhelmingly, the 2.5 million enlisted men who served in Vietnam did so with honor and distinction. Yet, unlike the soldiers that returned to the United States after World Wars I and II—the famed Doughboys and G.I. Joes—few Vietnam vets enjoyed the warmth and adulation of victory parades. In addition to the indifference that some veterans encountered, some also suffered from physical and psychological ailments for years when they returned home.

Not until almost a decade after the end of the war did Americans begin to fully honor the courage and sacrifice of these veterans. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, dedicated in Washington, D.C., in 1982, stands as an eloquent testament to the men and women who served and died in Vietnam.

Individuals of all races and genders served their country during the Vietnam War. There were countless actions of heroism and sacrifice, some of which were singled out for the Congressional Medal of Honor. For example, Army Sergeant Peter C. Lemon fought off numerous enemy assaults even after being seriously wounded three times. Marine Sergeant Rodney M. Davis was one of an astounding number of soldiers who

gave his life to save the lives of others by diving on a live grenade and absorbing the explosion. Green Beret Sergeant **Roy P. Benavidez** was also decorated for his bravery in combat. Despite terrible injuries, he rescued the lives of at least eight men. For his outstanding gallantry, he was awarded the nation's highest military award: the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Sergeant Benavidez' gallant choice to join voluntarily his comrades who were in critical straits, to expose himself constantly to withering enemy fire, and his refusal to be stopped despite numerous severe wounds, saved the lives of at least eight men. His fearless personal leadership, tenacious devotion to duty, and extremely valorous actions in the face of overwhelming odds were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service, and reflect the utmost