**Confrontation of the Superpowers** *(page 631)*

After World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union soon became rivals. U.S. leaders still feared communism, and Stalin still feared the capitalist West. Between 1945 and 1949, the two superpowers (countries whose military power is combined with political influence) began to oppose each other. The

Soviet government was not willing to give up its control of Eastern Europe. American leaders were not willing to give up the power and prestige the United States had gained throughout the world.

The United States and Great Britain believed that the nations of Eastern Europe should freely determine their own governments. Stalin opposed their plans. The Soviet army had freed Eastern Europe from the Nazis, and it stayed in these countries after the war.

Greece was another area of disagreement between the superpowers. In 1946, the Communist People’s Liberation Army fought anticommunist forces for control of Greece. Great Britain supported the anticommunist forces. However, economic problems in Britain forced the British to withdraw their aid from Greece. U.S. President Harry Truman responded to the British withdrawal by issuing the Truman Doctrine. The Truman Doctrine stated that the United States would provide money to countries (such as Greece) that were threatened by Communist expansion. By 1947, the split in Europe between the

United States and the Soviet Union had become a fact of life. The United States adopted a **policy of containment** to keep communism within its existing boundaries and prevent further Soviet aggression.

The European Recovery Program followed the Truman Doctrine in June 1947. It is better known as the Marshall Plan. The goal of the program was to rebuild the prosperity and stability of Europe. It included $13 billion in aid for Europe’s economic recovery. The Marshall Plan was based on the belief that

Communist aggression was successful in countries that had economic problems.

The Marshall Plan was not meant to shut out the Soviet Union or its Eastern European **satellite states** (states that are economically and politically dependent on a larger, more powerful state). But they refused to participate. The Soviets saw the Marshall Plan as an attempt to buy the support of countries. In 1949, the Soviet Union responded to the Marshall Plan by founding the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) to help the Eastern European states. COMECON largely failed, however, because the Soviet Union was unable to provide much financial aid. Germany was also an area of disagreement between the Soviets and the West. At the end of the war, the Allied Powers had divided Germany into four zones. Each zone was occupied by one of the Allies (the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France). Berlin was also divided into four zones. By 1948, Great Britain, France, and the United States were making plans to unify the three Western sections of Germany into a West German state. The Soviets were against this plan. They tried to prevent it by blockading the three Western zones of Berlin. Food and supplies could not get through to the 2.5 million people in these zones. To keep these people alive, the Western powers started the Berlin Air Lift. Supplies were flown in by American and British airplanes. More than 200,000 flights carried 2.3 million tons of supplies. The Soviets finally gave in and lifted the blockade in May 1949.

In September 1949, the Federal Republic of Germany (or West Germany) was created. Its capital was Bonn. Less than a month later, a separate East German state, the German Democratic Republic, was set up by the Soviets. East Berlin was its capital.

**The Spread of the Cold War** *(page 633)*

In 1949, Chinese Communists took control of the government of China. This added to U.S. fears about the spread of communism. The Soviet Union also exploded its first atomic bomb in 1949. The United States and the Soviet Union were soon involved in an **arms race,** in which both countries built up their armies and weapons. In the early 1950s, the Soviet Union and the United States developed the even more deadly hydrogen bomb. By the mid-1950s, both nations had intercontinental ballistic missiles that could send bombs anywhere. Both sides believed that they needed arsenals of nuclear weapons to prevent war. They believed that neither side would launch a nuclear attack, because the other side would be able to strike back with its nuclear weapons.

In 1957, the Soviets sent *Sputnik I,* the first human-made space satellite, to orbit the earth. Americans began to fear that the Soviet Union had a huge lead in building missiles. The need for security during the Cold War led to the formation of new military alliances. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was formed in April 1949. Belgium, Luxembourg, France, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Italy, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, and Iceland signed a treaty with the United States and Canada. All of these nations agreed to help each other if any of them was attacked. A few years later, West Germany, Turkey, and Greece joined NATO. In 1955, the Soviet Union formed an alliance with Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. This alliance was known as the Warsaw Pact. To stop Soviet aggression in the East, the United States, Great Britain, France, Pakistan, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand formed the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization.

**The Cuban Missile Crisis** *(page 635)*

The Cold War intensified during the administration of U.S. President John F. Kennedy. In 1959, Fidel Castro overthrew the Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista and set up a Communist government in Cuba. President Kennedy approved a secret plan for Cuban exiles to invade Cuba in the hope of causing a revolt against Castro. The invasion, called the Bay of Pigs, was a disaster. Many of the exiles were killed or captured. After the Bay of Pigs, the Soviet Union sent arms and military advisers to Cuba. In 1962, Khrushchev began to place nuclear missiles in Cuba. The missiles were meant to counteract U.S. nuclear weapons that had been placed in Turkey within range of the Soviet Union. The United States was not willing to allow nuclear weapons so close to the U.S. mainland. In October 1962, Kennedy found out that Soviet ships carrying missiles were heading to Cuba. He tried to stop them by blockading Cuba. This gave the two sides time to find a peaceful solution. Khrushchev agreed to stop the ships and remove

Soviet missiles from Cuba if Kennedy pledged not to invade Cuba. Kennedy quickly agreed.

The Cuban missile crisis had brought the world close to nuclear war. The realization that the world might have been destroyed had a profound influence on both sides. A hotline communications system between Moscow and Washington, D.C. was installed in 1963. The two superpowers could now communicate quickly in times of crisis.

**Vietnam and the Domino Theory** *(page 635)*

By 1963, the United States had been drawn into a new conflict—the Vietnam War. In 1964, under President Lyndon B. Johnson, more and more U.S. troops were sent to Vietnam. Their purpose was to keep the Communist government of North Vietnam from gaining control of South Vietnam. The United States saw the conflict in terms of a **domino theory.** According to this theory, if the Communists were able to gain control of South Vietnam, other countries in Asia would also fall (like dominoes) to communism.

The United States failed to defeat the determined North Vietnamese. The large number of American troops sent to Vietnam soon produced an antiwar movement in the United States, especially among college students. Richard Nixon was elected president by pledging to stop the war. But ending the war was not easy. Finally, in 1973, President Nixon reached an agreement with the North Vietnamese that allowed the United States to withdraw its troops. Within two years, Communist armies from the North had reunited Vietnam. The domino theory turned out to be wrong. New nations in Southeast Asia were able to avoid Communist governments. A split between Communist China and the Soviet Union put an end to the idea that there was single form of communism directed by Moscow. Under President Nixon, American relations with China were reestablished. The Vietnam War showed that there were limits to American power. By the end of the war, a new era in American- Soviet relations had begun.