**16.1 New Powers Emerge**

EQ: Why did the United States see the Soviet Union as a threat after World War II? How did the United States respond?

**Explore**

**Keeping the Peace**

**How were the United Nations and Israel established?**

**The United Nations**

Before the [Yalta Conference](https://app.discoveryeducation.com/techbook2:common/533437f6-05cb-4772-a181-a79c585b3697), during the fall of 1944, diplomats from the Big Three and China met at Dumbarton Oaks, a mansion in Washington, DC, to outline a new international organization to replace the League of Nations. The goal of this organization would be to provide a forum for nations to solve problems diplomatically and avoid future world wars. In Washington, the delegates proposed a structure and purpose for the organization, which would eventually become the United Nations (UN). They agreed that this organization would include five components:

* General Assembly of all member nations
* Security Council
* International Court of Justice
* Economic and Social Council (UNESCO)
* Secretariat

The Security Council’s main responsibility would be to maintain international security and peace. The United States, Soviet Union, China, France, and United Kingdom would be permanent members. Today, these are referred to as the P5. As planned at Dumbarton Oaks, the remaining six seats of the Security Council would be elected to two-year terms. The delegates at Dumbarton Oaks did not agree on the procedures and voting rights of the Security Council.

The General Assembly could give advice to the Security Council, but it could not address any issues the Security Council was currently considering and could not take any actions. Its main purpose was to promote international understanding. The International Court of Justice would adjudicate, or act as judge, over disputes raised by UN member nations. The Secretariat would manage UN business. As the United Nations developed, UNESCO became one of many specialized bodies within the organization, along with the World Trade Organization, the World Health Organization, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and more than 20 others.

In Yalta, the leaders of the Big Three worked out a compromise. The five permanent members of the Security Council—the United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Soviet Union, and China—each would have the power to veto any potential decision. That meant the five would have to be unanimous to accomplish anything. This was an important point for Stalin. The veto power assured Stalin that the communist Soviet Union would not be constantly outvoted by the United States and its Western European allies.

Even though political differences created a divide between communist nations and democratic nations, many of these nations agreed to unite and form an international organization called the United Nations. Despite the increasing tension between global powers exhibited at Yalta, the conference also created opportunities for international cooperation.

A few months later, representatives of 50 nations attended the conference to formally establish the United Nations. On June 26, 1945, the delegates of all 50 nations accepted the UN charter and the five permanent members of the Security Council approved it. The charter became effective on October 24, 1945, and the United Nations was established. It held its first meeting on January 10, 1946, with 51 nations in attendance.

**The Establishment of Israel**

After the United Nations was established, it was able to demonstrate its influence almost immediately. The United Nations resolved global conflicts, helped support independence movements, and provided supplies to countries in need. One important project of the United Nations was the creation of an independent state for Jewish people in the Middle East.

For centuries, Jews in Europe had suffered from persecution and anti-Semitism. During the late 1800s, some Jews in Europe began a movement to form a Jewish national state in Palestine, on land east of the Mediterranean Sea. This was the biblical land of Israel, the site of the ancient Jewish kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The movement to form a Jewish state was called Zionism, after Zion, the name of one of the hills of ancient Jerusalem.

When Nazi Germany began to take over parts of Europe, thousands of Jews fled Nazi persecution and went to Palestine. The flood of Jewish immigration and the continued European influence in Arab affairs caused many Arabs living in Palestine to revolt against the British, who controlled Palestine at the time. Because of this, the British began to limit Jewish immigration into Palestine. Despite the protest of many Jews, the restriction was not lifted during World War II.

The United Kingdom presented the Jewish homeland issue to the United Nations in 1947. Later that year, the UN General Assembly decided to divide Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. The Palestinian Jews accepted this plan, but the Arabs did not, and fighting broke out between the two sides. The Jewish Israelis declared independence on May 14, 1948, and quickly received recognition from the United States and the Soviet Union. The neighboring Arab countries did not recognize Israel and invaded. The Israeli military held off the Arabs, but the region has been the site of numerous wars and other struggles for power in the years since.

**Containment**

**What policies did the United States adopt in response to the communist threat?**

In 1946, Churchill criticized the Soviet Union for creating an [iron curtain](https://app.discoveryeducation.com/techbook2:common/47c0647a-e948-4f20-ae1a-3aa6268dab3f) of communist nations. This wall of countries protected the Soviet Union from invasion by Western Europe or other noncommunist countries. Both Churchill and U.S. leaders feared that Stalin would not stop with the iron curtain, but would attempt to spread communism to other Western European and Asian countries.

**The Domino Theory**

The U.S. government operated on the theory that if one country became communist, it could influence its neighbors to become communist. This was called the domino theory because it pictured a series of countries “falling” to communism one by one, knocking each other over like a line of dominos.

The domino theory suggested that the world was in danger of being overrun by communism. The response the United States developed to this danger was the policy of [containment](https://app.discoveryeducation.com/techbook2:common/f0efbf73-c126-4983-bbad-c7c9f843a70f). The idea of containment was not to challenge communism where it already existed, but to prevent its spread.

Advisors to President Truman were convinced that the Soviet Union would avoid all-out war. They thought that the Soviet Union would become increasingly bold in attempting to expand until it perceived a serious threat. In 1947, President Truman announced that the United States would send economic and military aid wherever it was needed to stop the spread of totalitarian governments. The United States would help “free peoples” and anticommunist governments respond to external and internal threats. The United States would also support anticommunist revolts or rebellions against existing communist governments. This became known as the Truman Doctrine. Under this doctrine, the United States adopted an aggressive diplomatic mission all around the world.

**The Truman Doctrine in Action**

The Truman Doctrine was developed in response to communist threats in Greece and Turkey. By the spring of 1947, Greece had been divided by civil war for close to a year. A communist rebel army controlled northern Greece and appeared close to overthrowing the Greek monarchy. In Turkey, the Soviets threatened to encroach on the country’s territory in Southeastern Europe.

The United Kingdom had been supporting the governments of both Greece and Turkey, but by 1947 it could no longer afford the increasing military burden. The United States feared that if the communist revolutions succeeded, Greece and Turkey could fall under Soviet domination. President Truman argued that the United States had to step in to help drive back the communist rebels, and Congress voted to give $400 million to support Greece and Turkey. By 1949, the communists in Greece were defeated, and the monarchy was restored. Turkey also resisted a communist takeover.

**The Marshall Plan Helps Recovery**

**What was the Marshall Plan?**

[Containment](https://app.discoveryeducation.com/techbook2:common/f0efbf73-c126-4983-bbad-c7c9f843a70f) was not just a military policy. The United States wanted to contain Soviet expansion by developing the market-based economies of Western and Southern Europe. World War II destroyed much of Europe’s economy. Unemployment and poverty levels were high. The United States worried that Europeans would turn to communism as a solution to their problems.

In a 1947 speech, Secretary of State George Marshall suggested that the United States offer more than $13 billion in aid to Europe to help it recover from the devastation of World War II. Marshall hoped that the aid would rebuild Europe’s economy in the image of the United States and prevent the further spread of communism. This program became known as the [Marshall Plan](https://app.discoveryeducation.com/techbook2:common/b2a27605-7d30-490a-8f38-c840b25b7c5d).

Most countries of Western and Southern Europe participated in the program. From 1948 to 1951, the United States sent aid to Europe. Much of the aid was in the form of food, machines, and other American products. This aid helped redevelop European economies and made communism less attractive to Western and Southern Europeans. Countries under Soviet influence were invited to join the program, and many accepted. However, the Soviets feared the Marshall Plan would extend the influence of the United States in Eastern Europe, and they pressured Eastern European countries to withdraw from the plan.

Both containment and the Marshall Plan effectively prevented the spread of communism in many parts of Europe. Containment offered military support to countries under communist threat, while the Marshall Plan helped Western and Southern Europe return to prewar prosperity. Communism remained contained in Eastern Europe, but the Cold War was just beginning.

**Divided Europe**

**How did the superpowers compete for Eastern Europe?**

When World War II ended, two separate Allied forces occupied Europe. American, British, and French troops occupied Western Europe and West Germany, including part of Berlin, the former German capital. The Soviet Union occupied Eastern Europe and East Germany, including the other part of Berlin. In theory, each side would occupy the different countries and help them transition to independent governments.

Instead, the Soviet Union pressed the countries of Eastern Europe to adopt communist governments based on the Soviet model. It did this by supporting each country’s Communist Party. The communists seized power, often through violent means. In some countries, such as Poland, Soviet officials even served in government. One by one, the countries under Soviet occupation adopted constitutions, governments, and economies that mirrored those of the Soviet Union. These countries backed the Soviet Union in all of its international affairs, providing the Soviet Union with a new group of allies.

These new Soviet satellite governments in Eastern Europe alarmed the United States and its allies. However, Western European countries, such as France and Great Britain, were powerless to stand up to the Soviet Union because they were recovering from World War II. The United States was one of the only countries that had the strength to oppose the Soviet Union.

**The Berlin Airlift**

In 1948, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States united their parts of occupied Germany into a unified West Germany. The Soviets responded by blockading roads to West Berlin, which was located deep inside Soviet-controlled East Germany. West Berlin had been experiencing a period of prosperity with the help the [Marshall Plan](https://app.discoveryeducation.com/techbook2:common/b2a27605-7d30-490a-8f38-c840b25b7c5d). Prosperous West Berlin was a sharp contrast to East Berlin, a city that suffered under Soviet control.

The Soviet [blockade](https://app.discoveryeducation.com/techbook2:common/028ef519-d8a4-451b-b5cd-f7184cb8ef40) cut off West Berlin from food and supply shipments from the West. At the same time, Soviets pressured the city to join the rest of East Germany and become communist. However, the American, British, and French forces were not willing to lose the city. The Allies devised a plan to break the blockade while avoiding direct conflict with the Soviets. The U.S. Air Force began to fly planes filled with supplies into West Berlin. This peaceful action, known as the Berlin Airlift, was justified as humanitarian. The Soviets were afraid to interfere because they did not want to be perceived as antihumanitarian. For 11 tense months, the Allies kept West Berlin supplied by air until the Soviet Union ended the blockade in June 1949.

**Two Alliances**

During the Berlin crisis, 12 noncommunist nations from North America and Europe joined together to establish NATO, or the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization](https://app.discoveryeducation.com/techbook2:common/86277fe7-025b-4816-9f22-adaeaba79dc7). NATO is a collective security alliance that still exists today. Each member state promises to defend the others against attack. Originally, members of NATO hoped their alliance would deter the Soviet Union from trying to expand its influence into Western Europe.

In response, the Soviet Union created the [Warsaw Pact](https://app.discoveryeducation.com/techbook2:common/c74c165c-849a-4b52-b99d-3437eef6ac59) in 1955. This was also an alliance of collective security. The Warsaw Pact included the Soviet Union and its satellite states, which by then included East Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and the Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. Yugoslavia, though a communist state, remained independent of Soviet control.

NATO and Warsaw Pact troops held their own military exercises and maneuvers, which served to deter each side from invading the other’s territory. However, the Cold War soon expanded beyond Europe.