

## Introduction

The United States emerged from World War II as a world power. Its factories and land had not been damaged, and its economy was stronger than ever. Americans looked forward to a peaceful and prosperous future. Some wanted the country to return to a position of isolation. To do so, however, would have cut off the United States from trading with other countries. Equally important, the United States realized that all countries needed to work together to ensure that the weapons of mass destruction developed during the war would not be used again. The nations of the world needed to cooperate with one another to establish world peace.

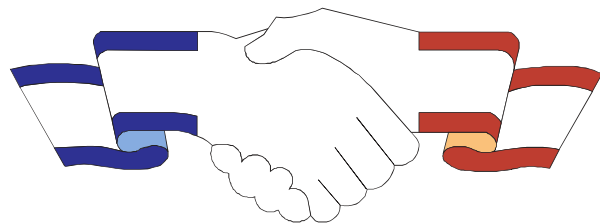
## United Nations

In 1945 the former Allied Powers and 50 other nations established the **United Nations (UN)**. The organization worked to solve postwar problems. Today it continues to work for peace in the world and to solve world problems. The *UN* has six major branches with special duties, as shown on the diagram on the following page.

The UN also has other agencies: the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development promotes world trade; United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) tries to promote understanding between people of different nations; and the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) distributes food, clothing, and health supplies to poorer, war-torn countries; and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

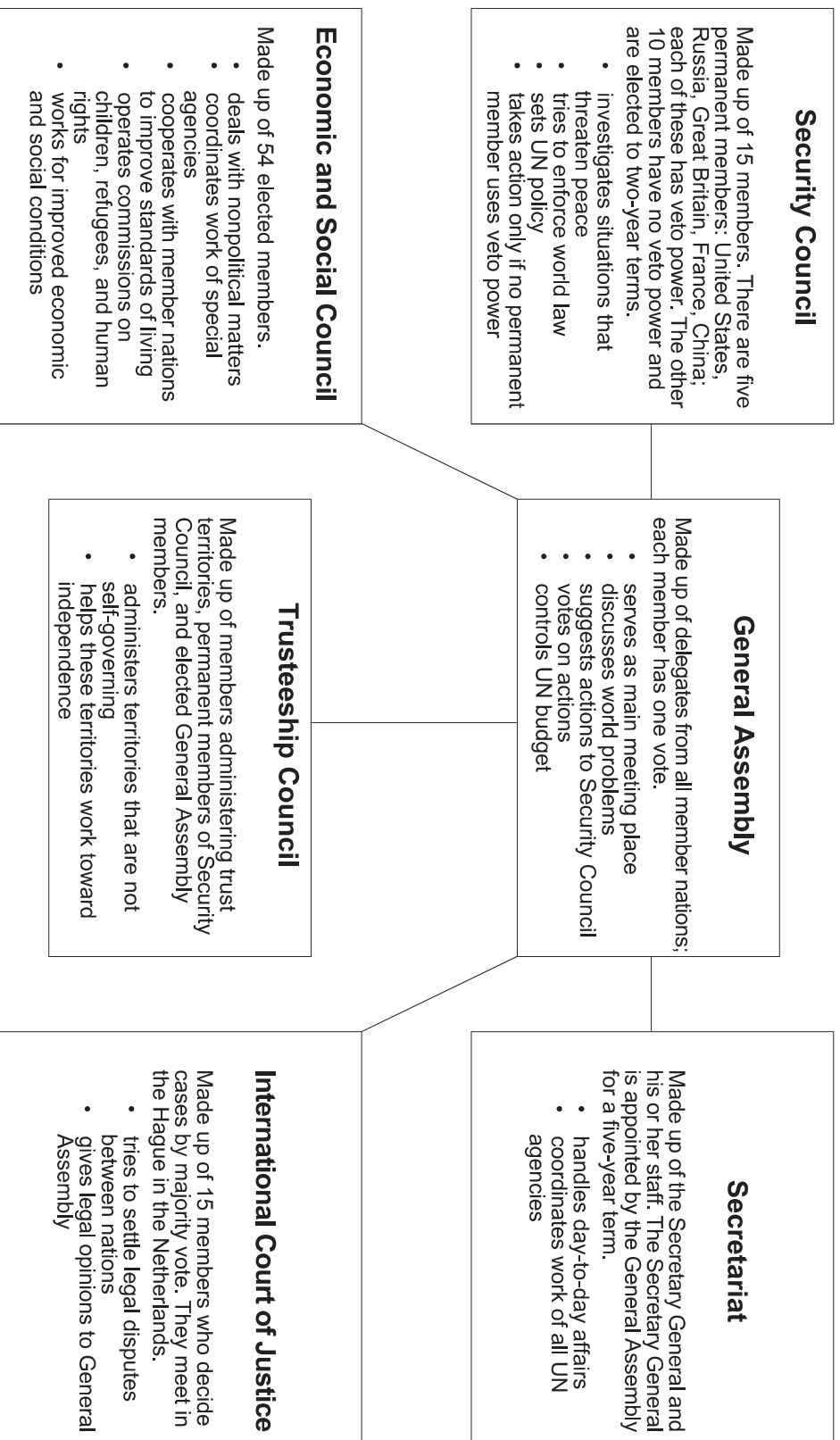
## The Strength of the UN

The greatest strength of the UN is its desire to help keep the peace between nations. The organization brings member nations together so they can try to solve their problems without going to war. Its special agencies have shared important health and agricultural ideas and aided poor countries.



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# The United Nations

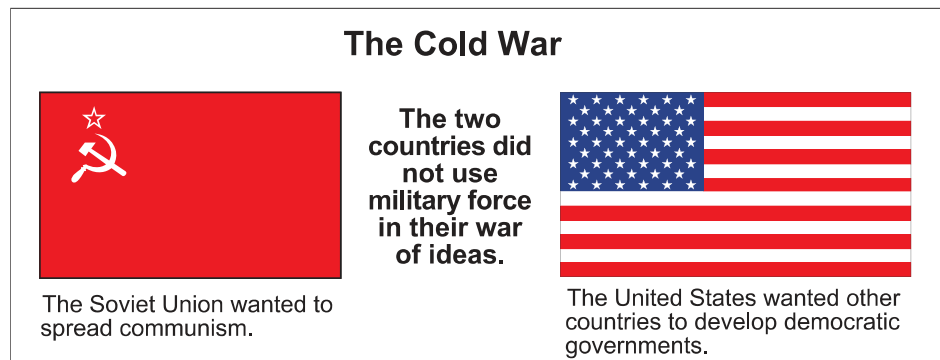


## Checks and Balances of the UN

One aspect of the UN is the **veto** power of the five permanent members that sit on the Security Council. A *veto* is a vote against something. Any UN action can be stopped if only one permanent member uses its veto. Because of this, some consider the power of veto a weakness of the UN.

## Beginning of the Cold War

At the end of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union were the two most powerful countries in the world. Their wartime alliance, however, ended. The two countries began a struggle to influence other countries. They did this partly to better their trade relations with those countries. The Soviet Union also wanted to spread communism; the United States wanted other countries to develop democratic governments. The two nations did not use military force against one another in this war. Instead, this was a war of *ideas*. This battle between the United States and the Soviet Union is called the **Cold War**.



## Atomic Energy Controls

The growing differences between the United States and the Soviet Union became clear at the United Nations. The United States was the only nation with the atomic bomb. Other countries wanted their own atomic bomb. The United States, however, wanted to use atomic energy for world good. The United States was also afraid of what other countries would do if they had atomic bombs.

The United States proposed a plan to set up a world agency to control and inspect atomic energy plants everywhere. In return, the United States would destroy its atomic bombs. Russia vetoed the plan but demanded that the United States destroy its atomic bombs anyway. The United States refused.

## Broken Agreements

The Allied Powers agreed on plans to handle the problems of the defeated nations such as Poland and Germany. Soon after the war, the Soviet Union began to break these agreements. For example, the Soviet Union broke its promise to allow for democratic elections in territories it had occupied after the war. The Soviet Union felt justified in staying in Eastern Europe. They had suffered more than 20 million deaths and much damage. They felt open to attack from the west and needed friendly neighbors—Communist countries they could control.

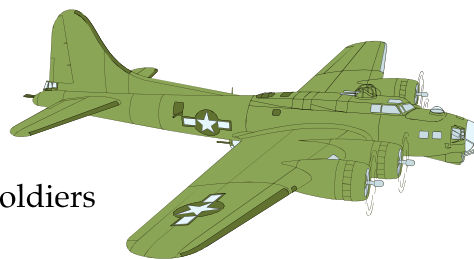
## The Iron Curtain

*Joseph Stalin*, the leader of the Soviet Union, wanted to control the countries around the Soviet Union. He felt that the Soviet Union would be safer with Communist neighbors. At the end of the war, Soviet soldiers occupied seven Eastern European countries. The soldiers would not allow those countries to hold free elections. The Soviets stayed in control and, one by one, the nations became Communist. Prime Minister *Winston Churchill* of Great Britain warned that the Russians were dividing Europe with an **Iron Curtain**, or an imaginary line separating Communist and non-Communist countries that could not be crossed. See map of *Iron Curtain* countries on following page.

After the war, Germany was split into a Communist and non-Communist country. The Allies divided Germany and its capital city, Berlin, into four zones. The zones would be governed by the Allies until the Germans held free elections. The Soviet Union controlled East Germany and East Berlin. The United States, France, and Great Britain controlled West Germany and West Berlin.

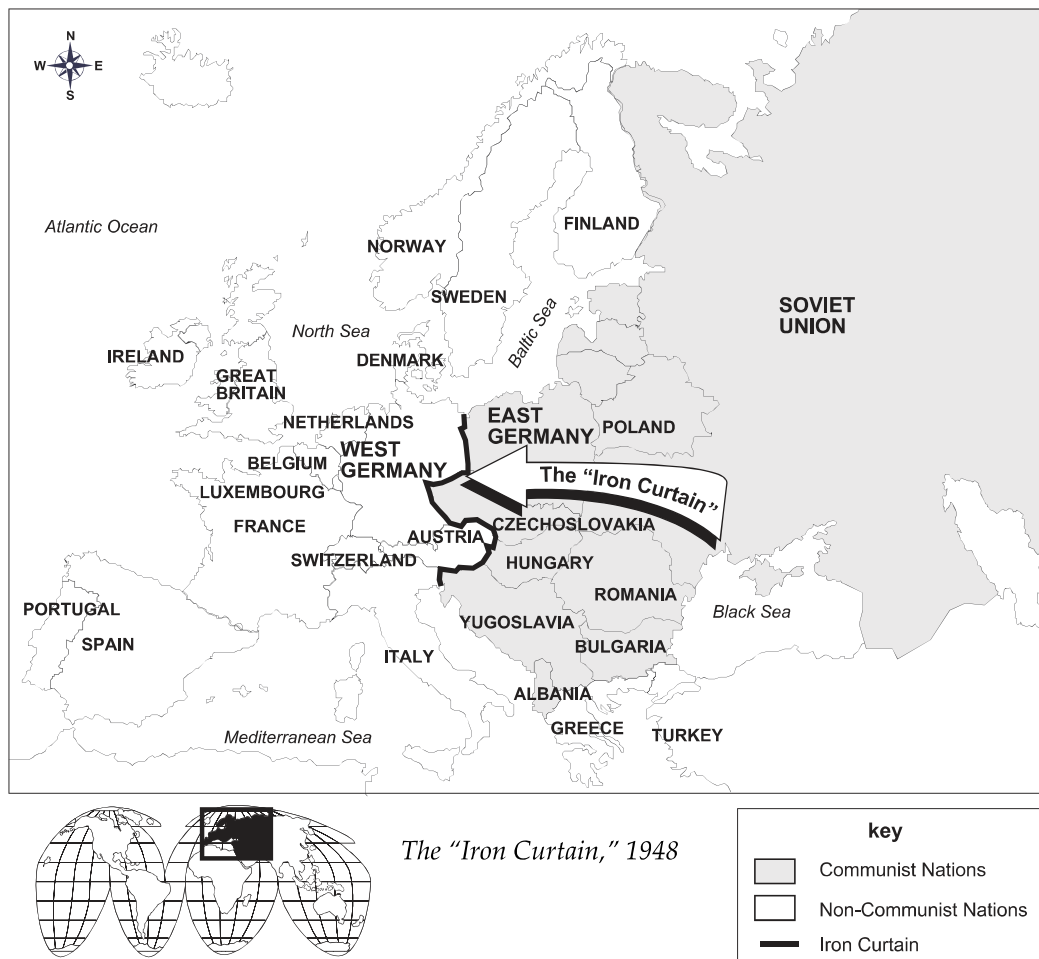
## Berlin Airlift

The Soviets wanted East Germany to have a Communist government. They also wanted to take over all of Berlin. In 1948 Stalin decided to force the three other Allies out of Berlin. Soviet soldiers placed a blockade at the border of East





Germany and around West Berlin. The Soviet Union did not allow food or supplies to enter West Berlin. Starting in June of 1948, the United States decided to airlift, or fly in, supplies to break the blockade around West Berlin. The **Berlin Airlift** lasted almost a year before Stalin lifted the blockade.





*The conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union developed gradually. Each side tried to win over other countries to their way of government. Both the United States and the Soviet Union built many nuclear weapons, which they used to threaten each other. The Cold War lasted from the end of World War II until 1989, when Soviet Communism ended and the Berlin Wall was torn down.*

Courtesy of the J. N. "Ding" Darling Foundation

## The Truman Doctrine

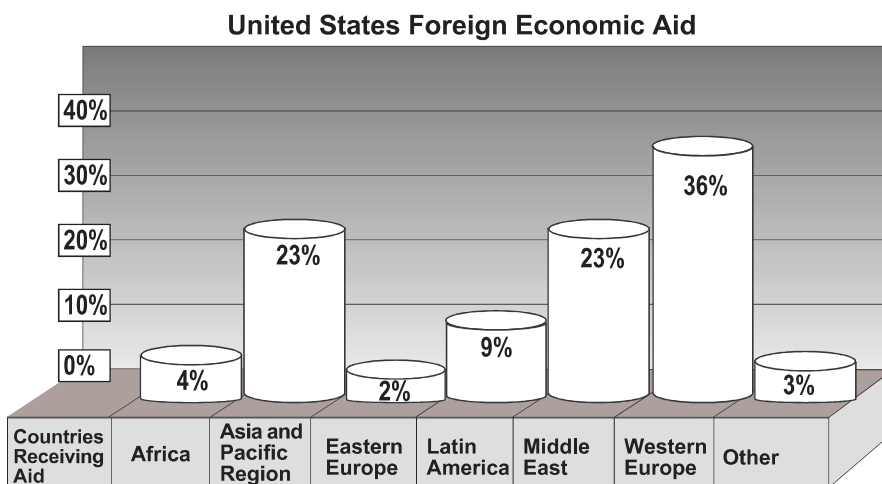
Stalin wanted to spread communism around the world. He tried to set up Communist governments in Greece and Turkey. President *Harry S Truman* feared that if Greece became Communist, then Turkey would also fall behind the Iron Curtain. In early 1947, President Truman acted quickly to send both countries military and economic aid. The aid helped weaken the power of the Communists there. His effort to keep Greece and Turkey free was called the **Truman Doctrine**. The *Truman Doctrine* led to the *containment policy* against the Soviet Union. It was an attempt to stop the spread of communism around the world.



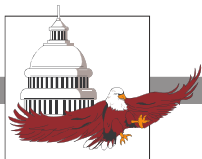
*President Harry S Truman*

## The Marshall Plan

Americans feared that Communists would try to set up Communist governments in the war-torn countries of Europe, including West Germany. The United States government believed that by helping European countries, it could stop the spread of communism. In June of 1947, United States Secretary of State *George Marshall* announced a plan to send economic aid to Europe. Congress approved \$5.3 billion to help rebuild Europe. The *European Recovery Program* (ERP), which became known as the **Marshall Plan**, lasted until 1951. The total cost was \$12 billion, but it helped Europe to rebuild and remain an American ally.



Total for 1945-1965 = \$65.6 Billion Dollars



In the following years, the United States offered economic and technical aid to the poor, free nations of the world. Billions of dollars went to promote better lives for poor people and stop the spread of communism.

### Tensions Increase

At the end of World War II, only the United States had an atomic bomb. In September of 1949, however, the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb. The British arrested a scientist who confessed to giving important secrets about the bomb to the Russians.



In the same year, the Chinese Communists forced the non-Communist Chinese out of China. The head of the non-Communist government was a World War II American ally. The Chinese Communists, friends of Russia, now controlled China. Communist China, too, soon exploded its own atomic bomb.

Tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union continued to grow in the postwar period. While their conflicts remained a *Cold War*, people feared that the tensions would lead to a nuclear war.

### NATO and Other Anti-Communist Alliances

The United States developed a system of alliances, or agreements, to halt the spread of communism. The first alliance was the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** set up in 1949 between the United States and 11 Western European countries. Members of NATO promise to help each other if an enemy attacks.

The United States joined into other major alliances to protect regions of the world. In 1954 the United States and other world military powers set up the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) to protect Southeast Asia against Communist takeover. In the 1960s, the United States renewed the Organization of American States (OAS), an alliance between the United States and Latin America since 1889. For almost 50 years, the United States continued to work to prevent the spread of communism in the world.

## Summary

After World War II, the United Nations was formed to help keep peace in the world. However, increasing tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States led them into a Cold War. The Soviet Union wanted to spread communism to other nations. The United States wanted to block the spread of communism. Consequently, the United States offered aid to war-torn and poor countries to help them resist communism. The United States also entered into alliances to protect other countries against Soviet and Communist aggression.