

*Chapter Outline***The Cold War**

► *What were the major threats to world peace during the Cold War?*

**Decolonization and Nation Building**

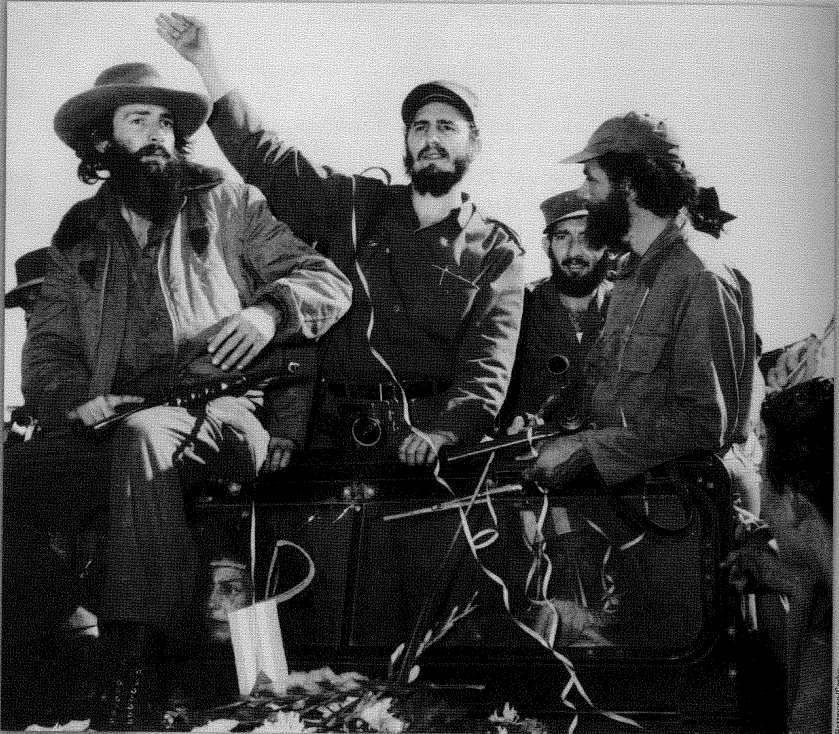
► *How were the experiences of Asia, Africa, and Latin America similar in this period?*

**Beyond a Bipolar World**

► *How did the rivalry between the Cold War superpowers affect the rest of the world?*

**Conclusion**

- **ENVIRONMENT + TECHNOLOGY** The Green Revolution
- **DIVERSITY + DOMINANCE** Race and the Struggle for Justice in South Africa



**Fidel Castro Arrives in Havana** Castro and his supporters overthrew a brutal dictatorship and began the revolutionary transformation of Cuba that led to a confrontation with the United States.

## The Cold War and Decolonization, 1945–1975

On January 1, 1959, the thirty-two-year-old Fidel Castro entered Havana, Cuba, after having successfully defeated the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista (ful-HEHN-see-oh bah-TEES-tah). Castro had initiated his revolution in 1953 with an attack on a military barracks, but the attack failed. At his trial, Castro put on a spirited defense that he later published as *History Will Absolve Me*. He proclaimed his objectives as the restoration of Cuban democracy and an ambitious program of social and economic reforms designed to ameliorate the effects of underdevelopment.

On September 26, 1960, Castro addressed the United Nations General Assembly. Relations between the Castro government and the United States were already heading toward confrontation as a result of Castro's policies. In his speech, Castro offered a broad internationalist and anti-imperialist criticism of the world's developed nations and of the United Nations. He criticized the role of the United Nations in the Congo, suggesting that it had supported Colonel Mobutu Sese Seko, a client of imperialism, rather than Patrice Lumumba, identified by the United States as a dangerous radical. He also strongly supported the independence struggle of the Algerians against the French.

In this speech, Castro outlined an ambitious program of new revolutionary reforms in Cuba, claiming that the United States had supported the Batista dictatorship to protect American investors. Once back in Cuba, Castro pressed ahead with economic reforms that included concentrating power in the hands of his closest allies and nationalizing most American investments. Cuba became a flash point in the Cold War when the United States tried and failed to overthrow Castro in 1961. Castro declared himself to be a socialist and forged an economic and military alliance with the Soviet Union that led in 1962 to the Cuban missile crisis.

The intensity of the Cold War, with its accompanying threat of nuclear destruction, obscured a postwar phenomenon of more enduring importance. The colonial empires were overthrown, and Western power and influence declined in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The leaders who headed these new nations were sometimes able to use Cold War antagonisms to their own advantage when they sought economic or military assistance. Some, like Castro, became frontline participants in this struggle, but most focused on nation building.

Each former colony had its own history and followed its own route to independence. Thus these new nations had difficulty finding a collective voice in a world increasingly oriented toward two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Some former colonies sided openly with one or the other, while others banded together in a posture of neutrality. All spoke with one voice about their need for economic and technical assistance and the obligation of the wealthy nations to satisfy those needs.

The Cold War military rivalry led to extraordinary advances in weaponry and associated technologies, but many new nations faced basic problems of educating their citizens, nurturing industry, and escaping the economic constraints imposed by their former imperialist masters. The environment suffered severe pressures from oil exploration and transport to support the growing economies of the wealthy nations and from deforestation and urbanization in poor regions. Neither rich nor poor nations fully anticipated the ultimate costs that would be associated with these environmental changes.

## THE COLD WAR

For more than a century, political and economic leaders in the industrialized West had viewed socialism as a threat to free markets and private property. The Russian Revolution as well as the destabilizing economic effects of the Great Depression heightened these fears. The wartime alliance between the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union had therefore succeeded despite these antagonisms and fears. With the defeat of Germany, however, growing Soviet assertiveness in Europe and communist insurgencies in China and elsewhere confirmed to Western leaders the threat of worldwide revolution.

Western leaders identified the Soviet Union as the sponsor of world revolution and as a military power capable of launching a war as destructive and terrible as the one recently ended. As early as 1946 Great Britain's wartime leader, Winston Churchill, said in a speech in Missouri, "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. . . . I am convinced there is nothing they [the communists] so much admire as strength, and there is nothing for which they have less respect than weakness, especially military weakness." The phrase "**iron curtain**" became a watchword of the **Cold War**, the state of political tension and military rivalry then beginning between the United States and its allies and the Soviet Union and its allies.

Each side viewed every action by its rival a direct threat. Fearful of growing Soviet power, the United States and the nations of western Europe established a military alliance in 1949, the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**. Soviet leaders, struggling to recover from the terrible losses sustained in the war against the Axis, responded by creating their own military alliance, the **Warsaw Pact**, in 1955. The distrust and suspicion of the two alliances would now play out on a worldwide stage.

### The United Nations

In 1944 representatives from the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and China drafted proposals that led to a treaty called the United Nations Charter, ratified on October 24, 1945. Like the earlier League of Nations, the **United Nations** had two main bodies: the General Assembly, with representatives from all member states; and the Security Council, with five permanent members—China (the anticommunist Chinese government based in Taiwan until 1971), France, Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union—and seven rotating members. A full-time bureaucracy headed by a Secretary General carried out the organization's day-to-day business and directed agencies focused on specialized international problems—for example, UNICEF (United Nations Children's Emergency Fund), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) (see Environment and Technology: The Green Revolution). Unlike the League of Nations, which required unanimous agreement in both deliberative bodies, the United Nations operated by majority vote, except that the five permanent members of the Security Council had veto power in that chamber.

All signatories to the United Nations Charter renounced war and territorial conquest. Nevertheless, peacekeeping, the sole preserve of the Security Council, became a vexing problem as permanent members exercised their vetoes to protect their allies and interests. Throughout the Cold War the United Nations was seldom able to forestall or quell international conflicts, though from time to time it sent observers or peacekeeping forces to monitor truces or other international agreements.

## CHRONOLOGY

	Cold War	Decolonization
1945	1947–1948 Soviet blockade of Berlin	1947 Partition of India
	1949 NATO formed	1949 Dutch withdraw from Indonesia
1950	1950–1953 Korean War	
	1952 United States detonates first hydrogen bomb	
	1954 Jacobo Arbenz overthrown in Guatemala, supported by CIA	1954 CIA intervention in Guatemala; defeat at Dienbienphu ends French hold on Vietnam
1955	1955 Warsaw Pact created	1955 Bandung Conference
	1956 Soviet Union suppresses Hungarian revolt	1957 Ghana becomes first British colony in Africa to gain independence
	1957 Soviet Union launches first artificial satellite into earth orbit	1959 Triumph of Fidel Castro's revolution in Cuba
1960	1961 East Germany builds Berlin Wall	1960 Shootings in Sharpeville intensify South African struggle against apartheid; Nigeria becomes independent
	1961 Bay of Pigs (Cuba)	1962 Algeria wins independence
	1962 Cuban missile crisis	
	1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty	
1970	1975 Helsinki Accords; end of Vietnam War	1971 Bangladesh secedes from Pakistan

**iron curtain** Winston Churchill's term for the Cold War division between the Soviet-dominated East and the U.S.-dominated West.

**Cold War** The ideological struggle between communism (Soviet Union) and capitalism (United States) for world influence. The Cold War came to an end when the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991.

**North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** Organization formed in 1949 as a military alliance of western European and North American states against the Soviet Union and its east European allies.

**Warsaw Pact** The 1955 treaty binding the Soviet Union and countries of eastern Europe in an alliance against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

**United Nations** International organization founded in 1945 to promote world peace and cooperation. It replaced the League of Nations.

The decolonization of Africa and Asia greatly swelled the size of the General Assembly but not the Security Council. Many newly independent countries looked to the United Nations for material assistance and access to a wider political world. While the rivalry of the Security Council's permanent members stymied actions that even indirectly touched on Cold War concerns, the General Assembly became an arena for debates over issues like decolonization and development.

In the early years of the United Nations, General Assembly resolutions carried great weight. An example is a 1947 resolution that sought to divide Palestine into sovereign Jewish and Arab states. Gradually, though, the flood of new members produced a voting majority concerned more with poverty, racial discrimination, and the struggle against imperialism than with the Cold War. As a result, Western powers increasingly disregarded the General Assembly, allowing new countries to have their say but effectively preventing any collective action contrary to their interests.

### Capitalism and Communism

In July 1944, with Allied victory inevitable, economic specialists representing over forty countries met at Bretton Woods, a New Hampshire resort, to devise a new international monetary system. The signatories eventually agreed to fix exchange rates and to create the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. The IMF used currency reserves from member nations to finance temporary trade deficits, while the **World Bank** provided funds for reconstructing Europe and helping needy countries after the war.

The Soviet Union attended the Bretton Woods Conference and signed the agreements that went into effect in 1946. But growing hostility between the Soviet Union and the United States and Britain undermined cooperation. While the United States held reserves of gold and the rest of the world held reserves of dollars to maintain the stability of the monetary system, the Soviet Union established a closed monetary system for itself and for allied communist regimes in eastern Europe. In Western countries, supply and demand determined production priorities and prices; in the Soviet command economy, government agencies allocated resources, labor, and goods and even set prices according to governmental priorities, irrespective of market forces.

**World Bank** A specialized agency of the United Nations that makes loans to countries for economic development, trade promotion, and debt consolidation. Its formal name is the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

## ENVIRONMENT + TECHNOLOGY

## The Green Revolution

Concern about world food supplies appeared with the serious shortages caused by the devastation and trade disruptions of World War II. Feeding the world's fast-growing population also provided an immediate challenge to long-established agricultural practices. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Ford Foundation took leading roles in fostering crop research and agricultural education. In 1966 the International Rice Research Institute (established in 1960-1962) began distributing seeds for an improved rice variety known as IR-8. Crop yields from this and other new varieties, along with improved farming techniques, were initially so impressive, especially in Asia, that a hoped-for new era in agriculture was called the Green Revolution.

After the successful introduction of new rice strains, scientists developed new varieties of corn and wheat. Building on twenty years of Rockefeller-funded research in Mexico, the Centro Internacional de Mejoramiento de Maíz y Trigo (International Center for the Improvement of Maize and Wheat) was established in 1966. This organization distributed new varieties of wheat that were resistant to disease and responsive to fertilizer. By 1970 other centers for research on tropical agriculture were established.

Despite these advances, experts believed that the success of the Green Revolution required a more comprehensive effort that would mobilize government, foundation, and private-

**Miracle Rice** New strains of so-called miracle rice made many nations in South and Southeast Asia self-sufficient in food production. Genetically altered rice is now planted in the Ivory Coast and other African nations.



Alamy/DIC/US/Alamy/Highly/Getty Images

Many leaders of newly independent states, having won their nation's independence from European colonial powers, preferred the Soviet Union's socialist example to the capitalism of their former masters. Thus, the relative success of economies patterned on Eastern or Western models became part of the Cold War argument. Each side trumpeted economic successes measured by industrial output, changes in per capita income, and productivity gains.

sector resources. The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research brought together World Bank expertise, private foundations, international organizations, and national foreign aid agencies to undertake worldwide support of efforts to increase food productivity and improve natural resource management. Soon 25 percent of U.S. development assistance and 30 percent of World Bank lending went to agriculture. The combination of innovation and investment led to approximately 2 percent per year in increased productivity in the 1970s.

Early optimism about these innovations is now muted. Although crop yields often improved as a result of new seeds, improved fertilizers, and irrigation, these improvements were too expensive for poor farmers to employ. While both Asian and Latin American agriculture became much more productive, small farmers were often sacrificed. Africa was little affected by these changes, and only today, as Africa faces deepening cycles of famine, is an international effort under way to introduce reforms. Where the Green Revolution's innovations have been the most successful, dependence on patented, costly seed varieties, chemical fertilizers, and irrigation has promoted agricultural consolidation and rewarded large investors. This has meant in practice that, as agricultural production has risen, land has been increasingly concentrated in the hands of the rich and the rural poor have been forced to become laborers or migrate to cities.



May Day Parade in Red Square, 9th May 1987 (cotton photo/Moscow, Russia) © Metropix/The Bridgeman Art Library

**May Day Parade 1967** At the height of the Cold War the annual May Day celebration in Moscow became a demonstration of Soviet military might.

**Marshall Plan** U.S. program to support the reconstruction of western Europe after World War II. By 1961 more than \$20 billion in economic aid had been dispersed.

**European Economic Community (Common Market)** An organization promoting economic unity in Europe, formed in 1957 by consolidation of earlier, more limited, agreements. With the addition of many new nations it became the European Union (EU) in 1993.

ments sought a greater role in economic management than was common in the United States. In Great Britain, for example, the Labour Party government of the early 1950s nationalized coal, steel, railroads, and health care. Similarly, the French government nationalized public utilities; the auto, banking, and insurance industries; and parts of the mining industry. These steps provided large infusions of capital for rebuilding and acquiring new technologies and enhanced economic planning.

In 1948 European nations initiated a process of economic cooperation and integration with the creation of the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC). They began by cooperating on coal and steel production. Located in disputed border areas, these industries had previously been flash points that led to war. With success in these areas, some OEEC countries lowered tariffs to encourage trade. Then in 1957 France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg signed a treaty creating the **European Economic Community**, also known as the **Common Market**. By the 1970s this economic alliance had nearly overtaken the United States in industrial production. Then between 1973 and 1995, Great Britain, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, and Austria joined the alliance, renamed the European Union (EU) in 1993 to reflect growing political integration.

The resulting prosperity brought dramatic changes to the societies of western Europe. Wages increased and social welfare benefits expanded. Governments increased spending on health care, unemployment benefits, old-age pensions, public housing, and grants to poor families, with richer nations like Germany subsidizing the mounting prosperity of poorer nations like Ireland, Spain, Portugal, and Greece. The combination of economic growth and income redistribution raised living standards and fueled demand for consumer goods, leading to the development of a mass consumer society. These benefits would be threatened by the growing health-care and retirement needs of Europe's rapidly aging populations after 2000 (see Chapter 32).

The Soviet experience was dramatically different. The rapid growth of the Soviet state after 1917 had challenged traditional Western assumptions about economic development and social policy. From the 1920s the Soviet state relied on bureaucratic agencies and political processes to determine the production, distribution, and price of goods. The government regulated and administered nearly every area of the society, including housing, medical services, retail shops, factories, and the land. Despite many problems, the Soviet state achieved a dramatic expansion in basic industrial production.

As in western Europe, the economies of the Soviet Union and its eastern European allies were devastated at the end of the Second World War, but they took a different path to reconstruction.

During World War II the U.S. economy escaped the lingering effects of the Great Depression (see Chapter 30) as increased military spending and the military draft raised employment and wages. During the war, U.S. factories were converted from the production of consumer goods to weapons. With peace, the pent-up demand for consumer goods led to a period of rapid economic growth and prosperity. Europe, still rebuilding from the destruction of the war, at first lagged behind.

World War II had heavily damaged the economy of western Europe. Bombs had flattened cities and destroyed railroads, port facilities, and communication networks. Populations had lost their savings and struggled to find employment. Seeking to forestall the radicalization of European politics and the potential expansion of Soviet influence, the United States decided to financially support the reconstruction of Europe. The **Marshall Plan** and other aid programs provided more than \$20 billion to Europe by 1961 (about 155 billion in 2013). European determination backed by American aid spurred recovery, and by 1963 the resurgent European economies had doubled their total 1940 output.

Given that public funds played a significant role in this process, recovering western European govern-

The Soviet command economy had enormous natural resources, a large population, and abundant energy at its disposal. It also benefited from the state's large investments in technical and scientific education and heavy industries during the 1930s and war years.

As a result, recovery was rapid at first, creating the structural basis for modernization and growth. However, as industrial production throughout the world refocused on consumer goods such as television sets and automobiles rather than coal and steel, the inefficiencies of bureaucratic control became obvious. By the 1970s the economic gap with the West had widened. Soviet industry failed to meet domestic demand for clothing, housing, food, automobiles, and consumer electronics, while Soviet agricultural production failed to meet even domestic needs. More significant still, the Soviet Union fell behind the West in civilian sector technological innovation.

### West Versus East in Europe and Korea

In Germany, Austria, and Japan, the end of the war meant foreign military occupation and governments controlled by the victors. The Soviet Union initially seemed willing to accept governments in neighboring states that included a mix of parties as long as they were not hostile to local communist groups or to the Soviets. In the nations of central and eastern Europe, many remembered the Soviets as enemies of the fascists and were eager to support local communist parties. As relations between the Soviets and the West worsened in the late 1940s, communists gained a series of political victories across eastern Europe. Western leaders saw the emergence of communist regimes in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Albania as a sign of growing Soviet aggressiveness.

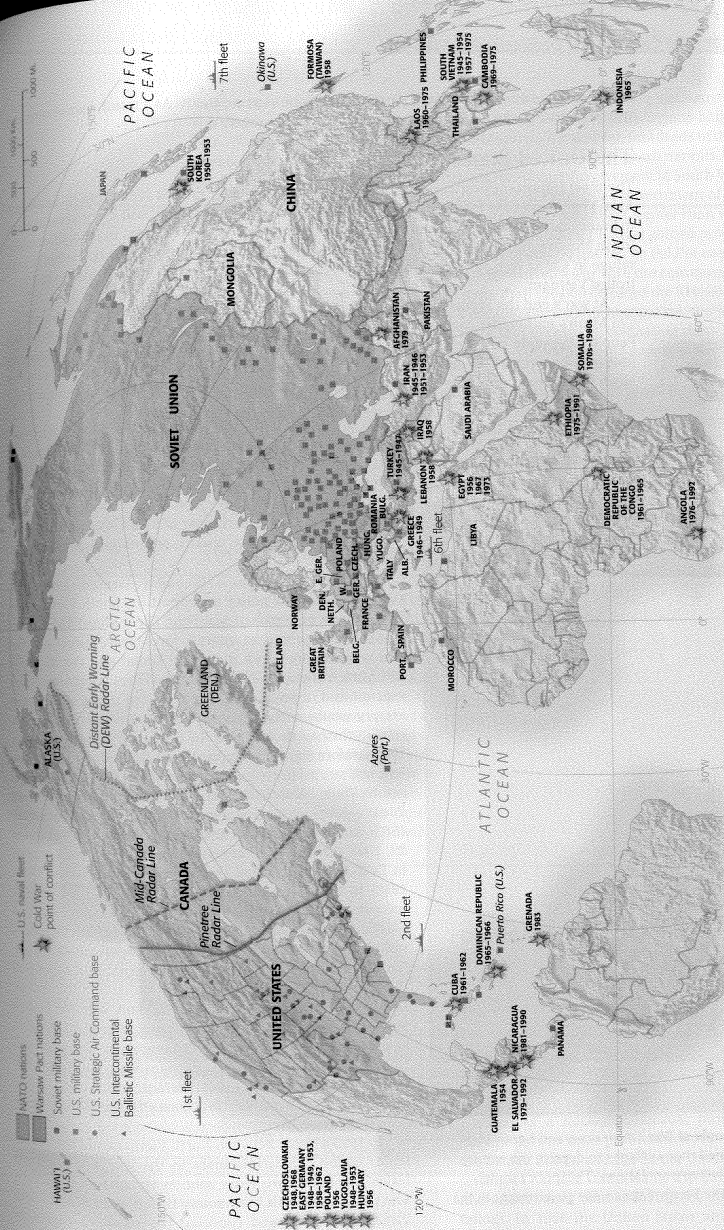
By 1948 the United States viewed the Soviet Union as an adversary and threat. While the United States had seemed amenable to the Soviet desire for access to the Mediterranean through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits at war's end, by 1947 it acted to strengthen Turkey and Greece to resist Soviet military pressure and local communist subversion. This decision to hold the line against further Soviet expansion led to the admission of Turkey and Greece to NATO and to the decision to allow West Germany to rearm (see Map 31.1). The Soviets created the Warsaw Pact in 1955 as a strategic counterweight to NATO.

Increased hostility did not lead to a direct military confrontation between the two powerful alliances. But the Soviet Union did test Western resolve, first by blockading the British, French, and American zones of Berlin (located in Soviet-controlled East Germany) in 1947–1948 and then in 1961 by building the Berlin Wall to prevent East Germans from fleeing to West Berlin.

In turn, the West tested the East by encouraging divisions within the Warsaw Pact. This policy contributed to an armed anti-Soviet revolt in Hungary that Soviet troops crushed in 1956. Then, in 1968, Soviet troops repressed a peaceful democratic reform effort in Czechoslovakia, making clear that, like the West, it would defend its sphere of influence. By failing to support either of these challenges to Soviet control, the West effectively accepted the political and ideological boundaries established by the Cold War. In 1968 Leonid Brezhnev, general secretary of the Soviet Union (1964–1982), asserted that all communist countries would be defended if they “fell to ‘bourgeois forces,’” meaning, in effect, that any country in communist eastern Europe would be invaded if it decided to embrace western-style democracy and capitalism.

By the end of the Second World War, Soviet troops controlled the Korean peninsula north of the thirty-eighth parallel, while American troops controlled the south. When these two powers could not reach an agreement to hold countrywide elections, a communist North Korea and a noncommunist South Korea emerged as independent states in 1948. Two years later North Korea invaded South Korea. The United Nations Security Council, in the absence of the Soviet delegation, condemned the invasion and called on its members to come to the defense of South Korea. In the ensuing **Korean War**, which lasted until 1953, the United States was the primary military ally of South Korea. Victories by American and South Korean forces forced North Korean forces north until the People's Republic of China entered the war in support of North Korea's communist regime.

Because the United States feared that launching attacks into China might prompt China's ally, the Soviet Union, to retaliate, the conflict remained limited to the Korean peninsula. When the contending armies eventually reached a stalemate along the thirty-eighth parallel, the two



**MAP 31.1 Cold War Confrontation** A polar projection is shown on this map because Soviet and U.S. strategists planned to attack one another by missile in the polar region; hence the Canadian-American radar lines. © Cengage Learning

**Korean War** Conflict that began with North Korea's invasion of South Korea and that came to involve the United Nations (primarily the United States) allying with South Korea and the People's Republic of China allying with North Korea.

sides agreed to a truce but could not agree to a formal peace treaty. As a result, fear of renewed warfare between the two Koreas has lingered until the present.

## The United States and Vietnam

The most important postwar communist movement arose in French Indochina in Southeast Asia. The Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh (**hoe chee min**) (1890–1969) had spent several years in France during World War I and helped form the French Communist Party. In 1930, after training in Moscow, he returned to Vietnam to found the Indochina Communist Party. Forced to take refuge in China during World War II, Ho cooperated with the United States while Japan controlled Vietnam.

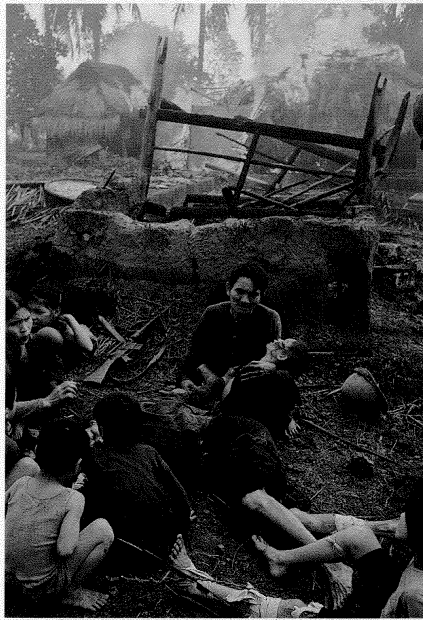
At war's end the French government was determined to keep its colonial possessions. Ho Chi Minh's nationalist coalition, called the Viet Minh, fought the French with help from the People's Republic of China. After a brutal struggle, the French stronghold of Dienbienphu (**dee-yen-bee-yen-FOO**) fell in 1954, marking the end of France's colonial enterprise. Ho's Viet Minh government took over in the north, and a noncommunist nationalist government ruled in the south.

Under President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953–1961), the United States provided limited support to the French but ultimately decided not to prop up French colonial rule in Vietnam, perceiving that the European colonial empires were doomed (see Chapter 32). After winning independence, communist North Vietnam supported a communist guerrilla movement—the Viet Cong—against the noncommunist government of South Vietnam. At issue was the ideological and economic orientation of an independent Vietnam.

As President John F. Kennedy (served 1961–1963) changed American policy to support the South Vietnamese government of President Ngo Dinh Diem (**dee-YEM**), North Vietnam committed its military forces more directly to the war with support from the Soviet Union and the Republic of China. Although he knew that the Diem government was corrupt and unpopular, Kennedy feared that a communist victory would encourage communist movements throughout Southeast Asia and alter the Cold War balance of power. He therefore significantly increased the number of American military advisers and also encouraged South Vietnamese military officers to overthrow their government. After Diem was overthrown and assassinated in early November 1963, American military involvement grew. On November 22, 1963 the unrelated assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas, Texas elevated Lyndon B. Johnson (served 1963–1969) to the American presidency. He gained congressional support for an unlimited U.S. military deployment that eventually reached 500,000 troops. Because South Vietnam's new rulers proved to be as corrupt and unpopular as the earlier Diem government, many South Vietnamese supported the Viet Cong and Hanoi's drive for national reunification. Despite battlefield success in the **Vietnam War**, the United States failed to achieve a comprehensive victory. In the massive 1968 Tet Offensive, the Viet Cong guerrillas and their North Vietnamese allies gained significant military credibility while suffering significant losses. With a clear victory now unlikely, the antiwar movement in the United States grew in strength (see below).

In 1973 a treaty between North Vietnam and the United States ended U.S. involvement in the war and promised future elections. Two years later, in violation of the treaty, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops overran the South Vietnamese army and captured the southern capital of

**Vietnam War** Conflict pitting North Vietnam and South Vietnamese communist guerrillas against the South Vietnamese government, aided after 1961 by the United States.



Dana Stone/Black Star

**The Vietnamese People at War** American and South Vietnamese troops burned many villages to deprive the enemy of refuges among civilian populations. This policy undermined support for the South Vietnamese government in the countryside.

Saigon, renaming it Ho Chi Minh City. They then united the two Vietnams in a single state ruled from the north. Over a million Vietnamese and 58,000 Americans had died during the war. As the victors imposed a new economic and political order, hundreds of thousands of refugees from South Vietnam left for the United States and other Western nations.

While the United States had rationalized its military involvement in South Vietnam as part of its global confrontation with communism, the communist-led government of a newly reunited Vietnam soon found itself at war with its communist neighbors, rather than with U.S. allies in the region. In 1975 communist revolutionaries (the Khmer Rouge) gained power in Cambodia, Vietnam's western neighbor. Not only did this brutal regime led by Pol Pot execute more than 1 million of their fellow citizens, but they also provoked a war with the communist government of Vietnam in 1978. A Vietnamese force of more than 150,000 defeated the Khmer Rouge and set up an occupation government that lasted a decade. During this occupation, the Vietnamese found themselves facing a resilient guerrilla force that eventually compelled them to withdraw. The Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia also led the Vietnamese into a two-month-long war with the Republic of China, which favored the Cambodians.

President Johnson began his administration committed to a broad program of social reforms and civil rights initiatives, called the Great Society, and was instrumental in passing major civil rights legislation that responded to the heroic campaign for voting rights and integration led by Martin Luther King, Jr. As the commitment of U.S. troops in Vietnam grew, a massive antiwar movement applied the tactics of the civil rights movement to end the war. Growing economic problems and a rising tide of antiwar rallies, soon international in character, undermined support for Johnson, who declined to seek reelection.

## The Race for Nuclear Supremacy

The terrible devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atomic weapons (see Chapter 30) framed the strategic decisions in the Korean and Vietnamese Wars. The Soviet Union had exploded its first nuclear device in 1949. The United States claimed a new advantage when it exploded a more powerful hydrogen bomb in 1952, but the Soviet Union followed suit less than a year later. As a result, the United States took care not to directly challenge the Soviet Union or China (a nuclear power from 1964) during the Korean or Vietnamese conflicts. But while the Cold War rivals avoided a direct confrontation, the use of threats and the proliferation of small conflicts frightened a world deeply scarred by two world wars.

In 1954 President Eisenhower warned Soviet leaders against attacking western Europe. In response to such an attack, he said, the United States would reduce the Soviet Union to "a smoking, radiating ruin at the end of two hours." A few years later the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev (**KROOSH-chef**) made an equally stark promise: "We will bury you." He was referring to economic competition, but Americans interpreted the statement to mean literal burial. Rhetoric aside, both men—and their successors—had the capacity to deliver on their threats, and everyone in the world knew that all-out war with nuclear weapons would produce the greatest global devastation in human history.

The Soviet Union's deployment of nuclear missiles to Cuba in 1962 pushed the two sides to the brink of war. Reacting to U.S. efforts to overthrow the Cuban government, Khrushchev and Fidel Castro decided that the deployment of nuclear weapons in Cuba would force the United States to accept the island's status quo. When the missiles were discovered, the United States declared a naval blockade and prepared to invade Cuba, forcing Khrushchev to remove the missiles. As frightening as the **Cuban missile crisis** was, the fact that the superpowers chose diplomacy over war gave reason to hope that nuclear weapons might be contained.

Fear of a nuclear holocaust produced an international effort to limit proliferation. In 1963 Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union agreed to ban the testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, in space, and under water, thus reducing the danger of radioactive fallout. In 1968 the United States and the Soviet Union

**Cuban missile crisis** Brink-of-war confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union over the latter's placement of nuclear-armed missiles in Cuba.

## SECTION REVIEW

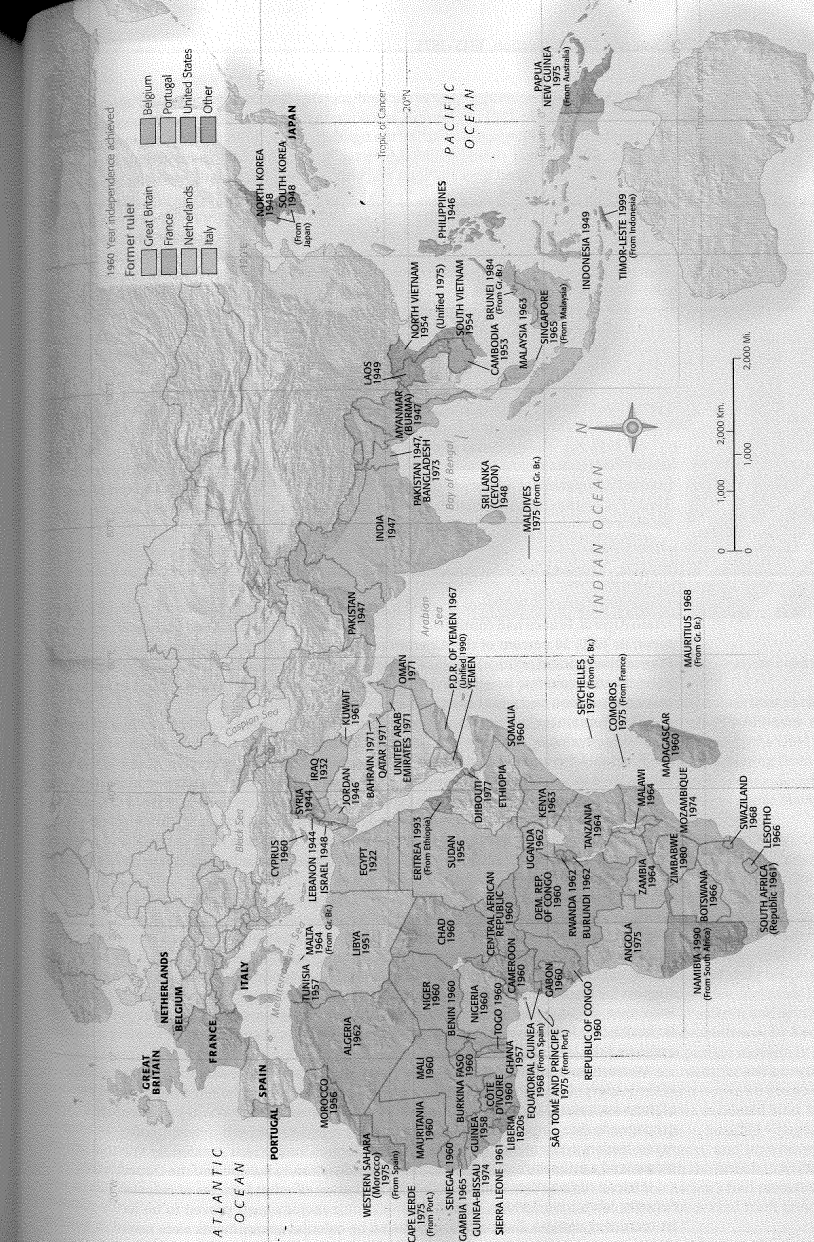
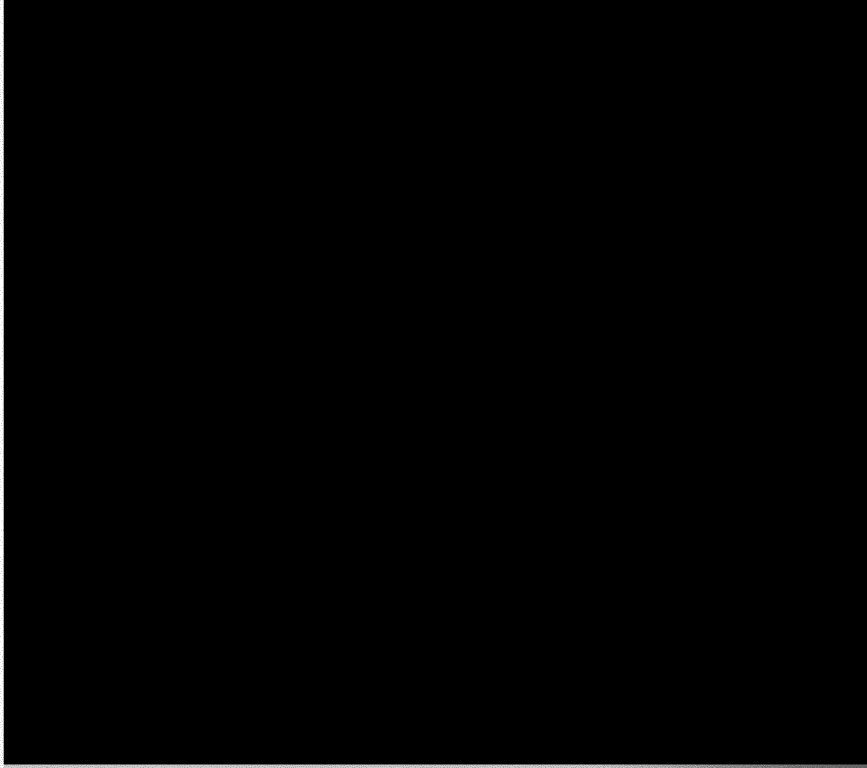
- The United Nations was created to manage international disputes and facilitate decolonization and development.
- The United States developed the Marshall Plan to aid European recovery from the devastation of World War II.
- The Cold War was a confrontation between two military alliances, NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and two distinct economic systems, capitalism and communism.
- The United States and the Soviet Union avoided a direct conflict, but the Cold War led to wars in Korea and Vietnam.
- The development of nuclear weapons made the Cold War a threat to the survival of the human race and led to nonproliferation treaties.

together proposed a world treaty against further proliferation, leading ultimately to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) signed by 137 countries. Not until 1972, however, did the two superpowers begin the arduous and extremely slow process of negotiating weapons limits.

The atomic powers France and Britain were economically unable to keep up with the Soviet-American arms race. Instead, they led the European states in an effort to relax tensions. Between 1972 and 1975 the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) brought delegates from thirty-seven European states, the United States, and Canada to Helsinki. The Soviet Union's chief objective was European acceptance of the political boundaries of the Warsaw Pact nations as a condition for broad cooperation. In the end, the **Helsinki Accords** affirmed these boundaries and also called for economic, social, and governmental contacts and for cooperation in humanitarian fields between the rival alliances.

**Helsinki Accords** Political and human rights agreement signed in Helsinki, Finland, by the Soviet Union and western European countries.

Space exploration was another offshoot of the nuclear arms race. The contest to build larger and more accurate missiles prompted the superpowers to prove their skills in rocketry by launching space satellites. The Soviet Union placed a small *Sputnik* satellite into orbit around the earth in October 1957, and the United States responded with its own satellite three months later. The space race was on, a contest in which accomplishments in space were understood to signify equivalent achievements in the military sphere. In 1969, when Neil A. Armstrong and Edwin E. ("Buzz") Aldrin became the first humans to walk on the moon, America had demonstrated its technological superiority.



**MAP 31.2** Decolonization, 1947–1990 Independence was achieved a decade or so earlier in South and Southeast Asia than in Africa. © Cengage Learning