

Balance of Power After World War II

Student Handout

Historical Context

Though the United States and the Soviet Union were **allies** during World War II, relations soon **soured** after the war as both countries tried to rebuild Europe in their own **political image**: the United States helped set up **capitalistic democracies** and the Soviet Union established **communism** in the countries of eastern Europe. The Soviet Union had suffered greatly during the war and wanted to make sure its neighboring countries would never again be a threat. The U.S. had been reluctantly drawn into the war after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and wanted to make sure that America and its allies were protected from any further **aggression** by any country. This need for **national security** led to the formation of the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** and the **Warsaw Pact**.

Vocabulary

allies
soured
political image
capitalistic democracies
communism
aggression
national security
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
Warsaw Pact

Map Activity

To do this activity, you will need a blank outline map and access to the “Balance of Power After World War II” digital map. Turn on the layers of the digital map as indicated in the following instructions, fill in your map, and answer the questions as directed.

1. Look carefully at the outline map. This might not be a map you’ve seen before or are used to. To orient yourself to this map, complete the following:
 - a. Locate the center point of this map and label it.
 - b. Label the hemisphere that the map shows.
 - c. Label the Soviet Union, Canada, the United States, and Europe.
2. From your previous study of the end of World War II, identify the countries that were dominant after the war.

3. What political systems did the Soviet Union and the United States have at this time? What relationship did these two countries have with each other during the war? Answer in the space below:

4. Now look at the “Balance of Power After World War II” digital map with all the layers except the “Title/legend,” “Rivers/lakes,” and “Nations” layers turned off.
5. On your map, outline or color the countries that originally belonged to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in one color.
6. Next, turn on the layer for the NATO member nations and check the accuracy of your shadings on your outline map.
7. Use another color to outline or color the Warsaw Pact members as of 1955.
8. After that, turn on the “Warsaw Pact members” layer and check the accuracy on your outline map.
9. Use a third color to outline or color the nations that joined NATO as of 1955.
10. Next, turn on the “NATO members by 1955” layer and check the accuracy on your outline map. Also turn on the “Non-aligned nations” layer to show the nations that were neither members of NATO or the Warsaw Pact. Outline or color those countries a different color.
11. Discuss the following questions in a small group:
 - a. Turn on the “Communist Control” inset map and check the dates when many of these countries came under communist control. Describe the cause-and-effect relationship you see between these countries falling under Soviet control and the formation of NATO.

 - b. Speculate why the Soviet Union organized the Warsaw Pact after the formation of NATO.

Assessment

Based on what you've learned from the map, write a paragraph explaining why tensions between former allies the United States and the Soviet Union developed after World War II. Explain why the NATO and Warsaw Pact alliances formed.