

# *Post-World War II Europe; NATO and the Warsaw Pact*

## Lesson Plan

**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Curriculum Focus:** World History

**Lesson Duration:** Two class periods

### ***Student Objectives***

- Understand the political atmosphere of post-World War II Europe and the U.S. foreign policy strategy of containment.
- Research critical events that occurred prior to the formation of NATO.
- Identify the countries that formed the Warsaw Pact and NATO.

### ***Materials***

- Video on *unitedstreaming: Commander in Chief: Bill Clinton*  
Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

Selected clips that support this lesson plan:

- Pros and Cons of NATO's Air War on Bosnia's Serb Army
- Clinton Lobbies for NATO Military Intervention after Negotiations Fail
- Textbooks, encyclopedias, and other print and Internet resources
- A map of post-World War II Europe

### ***Procedures***

1. So students can understand the function of NATO, they must be familiar with key points in the organization's history. You may either distribute these key points (reviewed in steps 3 and 4) to your students or display them on an overhead projector.
2. Begin by polling the class to see how many students know what NATO stands for. (It's the acronym for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.) Discuss what students already know about the organization.
3. Explain that NATO was formed in 1949 in response to the threat of Soviet invasion of Western Europe after World War II. NATO was, and still is, a European defense coalition, an alliance of countries pledged to ensure the freedom and security of all member countries. Using a map, explain to the class how the former Soviet Union, or USSR, occupied Eastern European nations as its army moved toward Berlin in 1945 to bring an end to Nazi rule of Germany. After the war

ended, Great Britain and the United States demanded that Soviet leader Joseph Stalin pull his troops out of Eastern Europe. Fearing another attack by Germany, Stalin kept his troops in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, where Communist governments were imposed.

4. Explain that many people believed then that the USSR was determined to impose Communism on the entire world. The Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe seemed to give support to this suspicion. American foreign policy under President Truman and later presidential administrations was shaped to counterbalance the possibility of a Soviet takeover in Europe and Communist revolution elsewhere. This effort to stop Soviet expansion and the spread of Communism was called the policy of containment.
5. Briefly introduce the following four terms to the class. Explain that these terms represent dramatic ideas and events that occurred after World War II and set the stage for the formation of the NATO alliance in 1949.
  - The Truman Doctrine
  - The Marshall Plan
  - Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech
  - The Berlin airlift
6. Divide the class into small research groups. Explain that they will write a brief summary of each term above, describing it and its historical significance, and explaining briefly how each term related to the policy of containment.
7. Review the students' responses in a classroom discussion. Student answers may vary, but they should include the following information for each point:
  - **The Truman Doctrine (1947)** was proposed by President Harry Truman after World War II to prevent Communism from spreading to Greece and Turkey. The doctrine gave financial support (\$400 million) to both countries to reduce the threat of Communist insurrection.
  - **The Marshall Plan (1947)**, approved by the U.S. Congress, allotted \$7 billion to Western European nations to try to prevent the rise of Communist parties there. The plan helped establish close ties between Western Europe and the U.S.
  - **British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech (1946)** illustrated the division within Europe. Following World War II, Europe was divided into two political and economic systems. The Soviet Union occupied East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria, imposing Communist rule. Britain, France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Belgium, along with allies Canada and the U.S., opposed the spread of Communism in Europe. In his speech, Churchill outlined the ideological conflict between Soviet Communism and democratic capitalism: "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent."
  - **The Berlin airlift (1948)** responded to the Soviet attempt to cut off supplies to democratic West Berlin. The allies responded by flying in food and medicine to West Berlin for 321 days, in spite of the Soviet land blockade.
8. Moderate a class discussion on how each of the events set the stage for NATO's formation. Students should understand that the U.S. and Western Europe felt insecure about the

Communist presence in Eastern Europe and needed a foreign policy strategy that was stronger than containment.

9. Explain that 12 nations signed the original North Atlantic Treaty in 1949, which created the strategic alliance called NATO. Those nations were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Britain, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the U.S.
10. Using a map, show students how in 1955, following the admittance of democratic West Germany into NATO, the U.S.S.R. forced its Eastern European puppet states to sign the Warsaw Pact (signed in Warsaw, Poland) to form a counter alliance. Seven European Communist nations joined the U.S.S.R. in the Warsaw Pact: Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. NATO stood guard over Western Europe for more than 40 years, until the Berlin Wall came down and Germany was reunited in 1989.

### **Assessment**

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- **3 points:** Summary and description of terms includes accurate information, historical significance, and clear and complete explanation using precise language.
- **2 points:** Summary and description of terms includes mostly accurate information, some historical significance, and an explanation using some clear language.
- **1 point:** Summary and description of terms does not include accurate information or historical significance, and the explanation fails to use clear language.

### **Vocabulary**

#### **alliance**

*Definition:* A military or political friendship between two or more nations, usually based on a common goal such as defense

*Context:* The NATO alliance provides its members with a level of security, since an attack on one nation is regarded as an attack on all of the member nations.

#### **arms race**

*Definition:* The competition between the Soviet Union and the United States in the area of military weapons systems, especially nuclear weapons

*Context:* The arms race started with the development of the atomic bomb and continued until treaties led to the destruction of nuclear weapons on both sides.

#### **blockade**

*Definition:* The use of military troops or ships to prevent the flow of goods and people, usually to achieve a military aim

*Context:* The Soviets constructed a blockade around Berlin to prevent goods and people from moving to the democratically controlled West

#### **Cold War**

*Definition:* A time of political and military rivalry between nations that falls short of actual war. The U.S. and the Soviet Union were engaged in a Cold War from 1945 to 1991.

*Context:* The Cold War existed because the U.S., the Soviet Union, and their respective allies held conflicting ideologies.

## ***Academic Standards***

### **Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)**

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit link:  
<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- History – United States History: Understands domestic policies in the post-World War II period; World History: Understands how post-World War II reconstruction occurred, new international power relations took shape, and colonial empires broke up, Understands the search for community, stability, and peace in an interdependent world
- Language Arts – Writing: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process, Gathers and uses information for research purposes

### **The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)**

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Power, Authority, and Governance
- Civic Ideals and Practices
- Global Connections

---

## **Support Materials**

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>

