

Lesson Plan

Europe

Length

Two 45-minute periods

Grade Level

High School

Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to describe the political, societal, economic, and geopolitical systems that characterize Europe.
- Students will understand how global powers wield influence on countries in the region.

Worksheets

Homework

- Students will read the section entitled *Modern History* from Europe and complete the worksheet below.

Class One

1. **(5 minutes) Debrief Homework:** Have students share their homework responses in small groups.
2. **(10 minutes) Warm Up:** Give students the attached blank map of Europe. Have students work in small groups to label as many countries, cities, geographical landmarks, etc., as possible. When students have finished, show this [map](#) labeled with European country names and ask students the following questions to activate prior knowledge.
 - *Referencing the map, what comes to mind when you think of Europe? What do you associate with the region in terms of language, food, religion, climate, government, etc.?*
 - *What major historical events have taken place in the region?*
 - *What major current events are currently taking place in the region?*
 - *What questions do you have about Europe?*
3. **(20 minutes) Group Work:** Have students use their assigned section from *Regions of the World: Europe* to complete the corresponding section of the attached worksheet. When finished, students will share and write down other students' takeaways to complete their worksheets. Assign students to the following groups based on sections from *Regions of the World: Europe*.
 - People and Society
 - Politics
 - Economics
 - Geopolitics
4. **(10 minutes) Discussion:** Lead a discussion that highlights positive trends in the region as well as some of the challenges that the region faces. Use the following questions as guidance.
 - What are some positive trends seen in European countries?
 - How are European countries working to improve the quality of life of their citizens?
 - What are the greatest challenges that Europe faces?
 - How are governments responding to these challenges?
 - Transition the class to tomorrow's topic by asking students to consider the significant role that regional organizations such as NATO and the European Union play in Europe.

Homework

- Have students use notes from class and *NATO Expands its Mandate following the Cold War* to briefly respond to the following: What benefits do regional organizations such as NATO and the European Union bring to European countries? What challenges? How and why did the role of NATO shift after 1991?

Class Two

1. **(5 minutes) Debrief Homework:** Have students share their reflections from last night's homework in groups.
2. **(10 minutes) Worksheet:** Have students read the [Tensions with Russia](#) section from the "What is NATO?" CFR Backgrounder and address the following questions on the worksheet below.
 - *What benefits do countries gain by joining NATO?*
 - *How has NATO membership expanded since 1991?*
 - *Why does Russia feel threatened by NATO expansion?*
 - *How has Russia responded to the perceived threat of NATO expansion?*
 - *In what ways does NATO unify Europe? In what ways does it divide Europe?*
3. **(15 minutes) NATO Expansion:** Emphasize the ways that NATO both unifies and divides Europe. Considering the risks associated with NATO membership, ask students whether or not they would join NATO as a non-NATO member country in Europe. Have students stand on either side of the classroom depending on their response. Once in position, ask students to explain their response. Use the following questions to guide discussions:
 - *Who might benefit from your proposed plan of action? Who might suffer?*
 - *What are the pros and cons of NATO membership?*
 - *How do nuclear weapons raise the stakes of a NATO alliance?*
 - *How is NATO different from other regional organizations in Europe?*
4. **(15 minutes) Discussion:** Have students read the section [U.S.-Russia Relations Deteriorate in a Post-Cold War Era](#). Use the following questions to discuss how U.S.-Russia relations are influenced by European geopolitics.
 - *What factors have contributed to the deteriorating relationship between the United States and Russia?*
 - *What role does NATO play in U.S.-Russia relations?*
 - *How should the U.S. respond to Russian tensions over NATO?*
 - Prepare students for homework by explaining that tensions over NATO are considered to be a main cause of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Have students begin to read the [Defending Ukraine](#) mini-simulation independently or with a partner.

Homework

- Have students read the CFR Education mini-simulation [Defending Ukraine](#) and write a brief response about how the United States should respond to the situation based on the policies presented.