

Lesson Plan

Conflict: NATO

Length

two 45-minute periods

Grade Level

High School

Learning Objectives

- Students will discuss the role that NATO plays in a post-Cold War world.
- Students will consider how the United States should respond to recent Russian aggressions in Ukraine.

[NATO: The World's Largest Alliance](#)

[Defending Ukraine](#)

[CFR Backgrounder: What is NATO?](#)

[Ukraine: Conflict at the Crossroads of Europe and Russia](#)

[Guided Reading Handout](#)

[Presentation](#)

Homework Due

1. Students will complete Part 1 of the guided reading handout.

Class One

1. **(5 Minutes) Debrief:** Have students discuss key takeaways from Part 1 of the guided reading handout. In particular, ask them: *What is NATO? Why was it created? How has it evolved over time?*
2. **(20 Minutes) Read:** Students will use the CFR Backgrounder: [What Is NATO?](#) to complete Part 2 of the guided reading handout with a partner.
 - Students will SKIP the sections entitled NATO's Structure, and Sharing the Burden.
 - Students should consider: *Does NATO still serve a purpose in the post-Cold War world? What benefits does the organization provide? What challenges does it face?*
3. **(15 Minutes) Discuss NATO, Afghanistan, and Collective Defense:** Review the key points of the final three sections of CFR Backgrounder. Consider the following questions as a class: *Is maintaining NATO as a collective defense organization a worthy goal? Considering its role in places like Afghanistan, does having an international organization like NATO promote security? Should NATO be used as an instrument for intervention related to humanitarian concerns, security, or regional stability? Is NATO needed to maintain international order*

Homework

Students will read CFR Backgrounder [Ukraine: Conflict at the Crossroads of Europe and Russia](#) (3,000 words/ 6 pages).

Class Two

1. **(10 Minutes) Homework Debrief:** *CFR Backgrounder: Ukraine: Conflict at the Crossroads of Europe and*

Russia

- The following questions may be used to support the debrief: *Why is Ukraine a geopolitical flash point? What are Russia's interests in Ukraine? Why did Russia launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022? What is U.S. policy in Ukraine?*
- 2. **(25 Minutes) Defending Ukraine Mini Simulation**
 - **(10 minutes) Building a Defense:** Divide the class into three groups and assign each group one of the following policy options:
 - Group #1: *Provide full direct defense to Ukraine, including by committing U.S. ground troops along with naval forces to Ukraine and calling on NATO allies to do the same.*
 - Group #2: *Provide limited direct defense to Ukraine, including by declaring a no-fly zone over some or all of Ukraine's airspace*
 - Group #3: *Continue providing indirect defense, including by supplying Ukraine with arms, intelligence, and financial assistance.*
 - Have groups work together to think through why their assigned policy option might be the best option for the United States. Students can use the following questions to guide their discussion: Who benefits from this policy? Who suffers? Would this policy stabilize or destabilize the situation? What would the United States gain?
 - **(15 minutes) Debate:** For this step, the teacher (or a student) will serve as president and ask each group to defend their assigned policy option.
 - First, each group will get 1 minute to describe their policy option and provide supporting points.
 - Next, the president will lead an open debate where all groups will be able to discuss the policy options. Students should both speak in support of their position and thoughtfully critique other options. Depending on time, the president may allow each group to give a closing statement. The president should then make their decision and announce it to the class.
- 3. **(10 Minutes) Debrief:** Use the following questions to debrief as a class: *What role should the United States play in defending Ukraine? Should the United States leverage NATO allies to help defend Ukraine? What potential threat does the war in Ukraine have on the security of Europe? In what ways has the idea of collective defense as embodied by NATO been good for Europe? How has the growth of NATO been a contentious issue?*

Homework

In a brief written response, students will reflect upon the role of NATO in a post-Cold War world. They should consider the following: *Is NATO still needed to promote international stability and security? Why or why not? Has NATO been effective in maintaining security in the post-Cold War world?*

Vocabulary

alliance

an official partnership between two or more parties based on cooperation in pursuit of a common goal, generally involving security or defense.

arms control agreement

an agreement between two or more countries to limit or reduce the number or capabilities of weapons and related systems. A nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union was a defining element of the Cold War.

bilateral

an agreement undertaken between two entities, generally countries.

communism

a political and economic system in which private property is eliminated in favor of common, public ownership of the means of production (such as factories), natural resources, and more, leading to the creation of a stateless, classless society.

multilateral

undertaken among three or more entities, usually countries. The term frequently describes organizations such as the United Nations (UN).