Lesson on NATO: Its Past, Present, and Future
by Paul Dickler for FPRI

Grade Level:

High School

Time:

Three to four classroom periods.

Standards:

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: Thematic Strand Index:

- Standard #2: Time, Continuity and Change
- Standard #6: Power, Authority and Governance
- Standard #9: Global Connections

U.S. History Standards: Era 9 Standard 2, and Era 10 Standard 1

Common Core State Standards for English Lang. Arts & Literacy in History/Social Science, 6-12

Key Ideas and Details

- RH/SS.2—determine and summarize central ideas and themes
- RH/SS.3—analyze text related individuals, events or ideas

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- RH/SS.9—analyze and/or compare primary/secondary sources

Comprehension and Collaboration

- SL.1—prepare and participate effectively in a range of conversations.
- SL.2—integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

- SL.4—present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Objectives:

1. Analyze the factors leading to the creation of NATO.
2. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of NATO throughout its history.
3. Assess the present state of affairs for NATO.
4. Evaluate the future of NATO.

Procedures:

1. Ice Breaker/ Anticipatory Set: Ask students to name the present members of NATO. Make a list on the board and date when they joined.
2. Background: Have your students carefully listen to Ron Granieri's FPRI Primer on NATO. The text is included below. Have the students read the other NATO information below

and investigate the websites listed in this lesson. Instruct the students to focus on how NATO arose, its successes and failures, and current news about NATO.

3. ROLE PLAYING: To create a role-playing activity, have each student select a NATO member from a list you provide. You may choose to include all, many, or just a few members.
4. Ask each student to become "an expert" on the country assigned. This means knowing when it joined and why, successes and failures from this country's perspective, and any current information about this country and NATO today.
5. After students have completed their research either in class or at home (or both), arrange the classroom to enable students to have a clear view of each other. This could be a curved panel, or fan shape, or something similar. Either the teacher or a pre-selected student, will serve as the moderator who will pose questions and perhaps interrogate each country's representative.

This lesson may conclude in three classroom periods or it may take a fourth to delve into future issues and wrap up.

Note: Obviously, only some issues for which NATO has been involved, can be explored in this format.

Grading can be based on the student research, class participation and prepared comments by the student for class discussion.

ROLE PLAYING QUESTIONS:

1. WHY DID YOUR COUNTRY JOIN NATO?
2. OVERALL, HAS YOUR COUNTRY BEEN PLEASED WITH THIS ALLIANCE? REASONS?
3. FROM YOUR COUNTRY'S PERSPECTIVE, WHAT HAS BEEN NATO'S GREATEST TRIUMPH?
4. FROM YOUR COUNTRY'S PERSPECTIVE, WHAT HAS BEEN NATO'S GREATEST FAILURE?
5. HOW MUCH SUPPORT FOR NATO IS THERE IN YOUR COUNTRY TODAY?
6. DOES YOUR COUNTRY ANTICIPATE LEAVING NATO? IF SO, UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES?
7. PRESIDENT TRUMP HAS RECENTLY ATTACKED NATO. WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR COUNTRY'S RESPONSE?

(LESSON INFORMATION)

LIST OF NATO COUNTRIES:

Member states by date of membership

Date[13]	Country	Enlargement	Notes
24 August 1949	Belgium	Founders	
	Canada		
	Denmark		Denmark's NATO membership includes the Faroe Islands and Greenland.

	France		France withdrew from the integrated military command in 1966 to pursue an independent defense system but returned to full participation on 3 April 2009.
	Iceland		Iceland, the sole member that does not have its own standing army, joined on the condition that it would not be expected to establish one. However, its strategic geographic position in the Atlantic made it an invaluable member. It has a Coast Guard and has recently contributed a voluntary peacekeeping force, trained in Norway for NATO.
	Italy		
	Luxembourg		
	Netherlands		
	Norway		
	Portugal		
	United Kingdom		
	United States		
18 February 1952	Greece	First	Greece withdrew its forces from NATO's military command structure from 1974 to 1980 as a result of Greco-Turkish tensions following the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus.
	Turkey		
6 May 1955	Germany	Second	Commonly known as West Germany when it joined; it later reunited with Saarland in 1957 and with the Berlin territoriesand East Germany on 3 October 1990. East Germany was a member of the rival Warsaw Pact 1956–1990.
30 May 1982	Spain	Third	
12 March 1999	Czech Republic	Fourth	Member of the rival Warsaw Pact 1955–1991 as part of Czechoslovakia.
	Hungary		Member of the rival Warsaw Pact 1955–1991.

	Poland		Member of the rival Warsaw Pact 1955–1990.
29 March 2004	Bulgaria	Fifth	Member of the rival Warsaw Pact 1955–1991.
	Estonia		Member of the rival Warsaw Pact 1955–1991 as part of the Soviet Union.
	Latvia		Member of the rival Warsaw Pact 1955–1991 as part of the Soviet Union.
	Lithuania		Member of the rival Warsaw Pact 1955–1990 as part of the Soviet Union.
	Romania		Member of the rival Warsaw Pact 1955–1991.
	Slovakia		Member of the rival Warsaw Pact 1955–1991 as part of Czechoslovakia.
	Slovenia		Previously part of Yugoslavia 1945–1991 (Non-aligned)
1 April 2009	Albania	Sixth	Member of the rival Warsaw Pact 1955–1968.
	Croatia		Previously part of Yugoslavia 1945–1991 (Non-aligned)
5 June 2017	Montenegro	Seventh	Previously part of Yugoslavia 1945–2006 (Non-aligned)

Military personnel *(2015)*

Country	Active personnel	Reserve personnel	Total
Albania	8,500	14,000	22,500
Belgium	24,500	100,500	125,000
Bulgaria	35,000	302,500	337,500
Canada	68,000	27,000	95,000
Croatia	14,506	180,000	198,000
Czech Republic	21,057	2,359	23,416
Denmark	19,911	63,000	82,911
Estonia	6,425	12,000	18,425
France	222,215	100,000	322,215
Germany	180,676	145,000	325,676
Greece	180,000	280,000	460,000
Hungary	29,700	8,400	38,100

Country	Active personnel	Reserve personnel	Total
Iceland	0	0	0[a]
Italy	180,000	41,867	220,867
Latvia	6,000	11,000	17,000
Lithuania	18,750	4,750	23,500
Luxembourg	1,057	278	1,335
Montenegro	1,950	400	2,350
Netherlands	47,660	57,200	104,860
Norway	26,200	56,200	82,400
Poland	120,000	515,000	635,000
Portugal	44,900	210,930	255,830
Romania	73,350	79,900	153,250
Slovakia	16,000		16,000
Slovenia	7,300	1,500	8,801
Spain	123,000	16,200	139,200
Turkey	920,473	429,000	1,349,473
United Kingdom	205,851	181,720	387,571
United States	1,469,532	990,000	2,459,532
NATO	3,673,000	3,745,000	8,420,000

[a] Iceland has no armed forces.
[b] 2015 data.
Wickipedia updated July, 2018.

NATO: An FPRI Primer
By Ron Granieri

Article II, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution grants the President the power to negotiate alliances with the "Advice and Consent of the Senate."

Presidents made limited use of that power in the first century and a half of American history, following the precedent set by the first President. In his **Farewell Address**, George Washington declared: "It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world." Washington believed that the most sensible course for the young Republic to preserve its own independence and freedom was to stay out of any alliances, and especially to steer clear of any connection to the ongoing

geopolitical contest among the great powers of Europe. Following Washington's example, his successors relied on trade agreements and isolationist proclamations such as the **Monroe Doctrine** and **Roosevelt Corollary** to keep American forces on this side of the Atlantic, and Europeans out.

Even participation in the First World War could not overcome this ingrained reluctance to make permanent alliances. President Woodrow Wilson tried to link the United States to its European partners in the **League of Nations**, but failed to convince the Senate to endorse the plan in the **Treaty of Versailles**.

That all changed in April 1949, when the U.S. joined ten European partners and Canada in creating the most important treaty of our time: the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO**).

To understand NATO's place in American history and current geopolitics requires a look back, and a look forward.

As the World War II partnership with the Soviet Union gave way to the bi-polar global confrontation known as the Cold War, the United States, which had already begun providing economic assistance to Europe with the **Marshall Plan,** encouraged Europeans to provide for their common defense against the Soviet threat. In 1948, **Great Britain** and **France** joined **Belgium**, **the Netherlands**, and **Luxembourg** to form the **Brussels Pact**, pledging to defend one another should they be attacked.

Even as they signed that agreement, however, European leaders such as **British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin** also sought a clear security guarantee from the United States. **President Harry Truman** and **Secretary of State Dean Acheson** agreed that such a guarantee would serve both American and European interests in maintaining the stability and security of the West. A year of negotiations and increasing tensions with the Soviets led in April 1949 to the **NATO Treaty**, which included the original members of the Brussels Pact, along with **Canada, Portugal, Iceland, Italy, Denmark,** and **Norway**.

Linking North America and Europe against any possible Soviet threats, NATO became the centerpiece of transatlantic cooperation during the Cold War.

The keystone of the NATO treaty is **Article V**, in which the treaty members agreed "that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all."

NATO was initially just an American promise to come to the defense of Western Europe after a Soviet attack. Over time, however, NATO developed formal permanent structures, introducing an integrated military command with permanently stationed troops along the **Iron Curtain**, and affirming its political role as a forum for coordinating work on **arms control** and the **reduction of international tensions**.

As a result, NATO today has a two-headed structure. The military side is led by the **Supreme Allied Commander** (an American General or Admiral), with subordinate commanders for each region. The political organization became the **NATO Council and NATO Parliamentary Assembly** and is represented by a **Secretary General** (a

European diplomat). Though originally housed in **Paris**, NATO headquarters has been outside of **Brussels** since 1966, and recently moved into a newly constructed complex.

NATO also gradually added more members to its original twelve, including **Greece** and **Turkey** in 1952, **West Germany** in 1955, and **Spain** in 1982. After the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet-led **Warsaw Pact**, some analysts suggested NATO should simply disband as well, since its mission of defending Western Europe from Soviet invasion had become moot. Over the course of the 1990s, however, American and European leaders agreed NATO could still play an important role in maintaining **European-American ties** as well as encouraging **democratic development and security—not just in Europe, but around the world**. Thus, the alliance continued to expand to **twenty-nine members**, adding **thirteen Central and Eastern European** former members of the Communist bloc, and has also extended its activities to include operations in locations as diverse as the former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan, as well as anti-piracy operations in the Indian Ocean.

NATO expansion has not been without controversy. While adding Central and Eastern European states has encouraged democracy and regional cooperation, it has also alienated **Russia**, whose relationship with NATO remains complicated by historical resentments and contemporary disagreements. Russia even intervened in **Georgia** and **Ukraine** to discourage them from joining the Alliance. Debates about overseas deployments and relative levels of defense spending—an issue NATO hands refer to as "burden sharing"—have also raised the question of whether a military alliance conceived in the Cold War has a future at all.

The discussion about NATO's future has become especially controversial lately, and this is not necessarily a bad thing. Any alliance of sovereign and independent democracies must be open to debate and be able to adapt to changing circumstances. By helping to preserve the security and freedom of its members for nearly seventy years, NATO has provided a framework within which the democracies of the West could carry on that debate. Whatever shape it takes in the future, NATO has served its purpose very well and remains one of the greatest accomplishments of modern American foreign policy.

NATO: Who's In, Who's Out, Who's Down
by Ron Granieri

Last week's summit of NATO leaders has already inspired a great deal of serious analysis and criticism, and has provided an important opportunity to think about the Alliance's history and purpose.

As part of FPRI's ongoing coverage of NATO, we have also devoted the latest in our series of FPRI Video Primers to the Alliance, which we hope will provide the basis for broader public understanding and enrich discussions of NATO going forward. Famously devoted, in the semi-facetious words of its first Secretary General Lord Ismay, to the goals of keeping "the Americans in, the Russians out, and the Germans down,"

NATO successfully linked the United States to the democracies of Western Europe and provided a security guarantee against possible Soviet aggression. NATO also built a framework within which Germany could contribute to Western security and proceed on a path of economic and political development that has transformed its relationship with its neighbors. The Alliance succeeded in maintaining both European security and transatlantic solidarity through the Cold War, accomplishing its primary mission and making it perhaps the most successful alliance in history.

Better historical understanding of NATO offers reasons for both concern and hope. This is not the first NATO crisis, and it probably will not be the last. U.S. President Donald Trump's ongoing criticism of Alliance members for failing to spend more on their defenses, focusing especially on Germany's persistent underspending, reached a crescendo over those two days in Belgium. Although his grasp of the details surrounding the issue remains shaky—NATO members have committed to raising their individual national defense budgets to two percent of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2024, and this has nothing to do with membership dues or anything that the Europeans specifically owe the United States—President Trump is not wrong to raise the question of how NATO members should share the burden of their common defense strategy. He is also not the first American official to complain about the European willingness to rely on American hard power to maintain the Alliance. Any discussion of the future of the Alliance has to be honest on those points.

As far back as 1956, the United States actively intervened (economically and diplomatically) against the actions of their closest allies, Britain and France, in Suez. During a few tense weeks that fall, Washington actively made common cause with Moscow against Anglo-French efforts to topple the Nasser government in Egypt. More importantly, however, after the French and British troops withdrew, President Dwight Eisenhower quickly pivoted to restore harmony within the Alliance. Indeed, the very first NATO summit in December 1957 was called both to present an image of unity to the broader public and to provide a forum within which NATO countries could work out their differences.

In the more than six decades since that first summit, NATO members have argued about how to organize their common defense, how to negotiate with the Soviets about nuclear weapons, and how to manage their economic relations with Russia. The current debate over gas pipelines is itself an echo of a similar controversy in the early 1980s, when the United States tried (and failed) to stop Britain and West Germany in particular from helping the Soviets build their first pipelines to supply Western Europe.

At each moment of disagreement, informed observers wrung their hands about the possible breakup of the Alliance and the dire consequences that would follow. Thankfully, NATO survived each of those crises, providing a stable basis for managing the end of the Cold War and continuing to play its vital role as a transatlantic link between Europe and north America.

Does that mean there is nothing to worry about today? Certainly not. Past success in calming disagreements should provide reason to hope that wisdom will prevail in managing current upheavals, but should not encourage complacency. Created in an era when its members agreed broadly on the need to stand together in defense of the West against a common threat, the Alliance today faces a much more fluid international situation and must confront significant questions about its purpose and the sacrifices each member is willing to make to keep the Alliance alive.

NATO is an alliance of sovereign states, committed to maintaining mutual security, but also to serving the interests of its members. If it is to be true to its stated commitment to freedom and democratic development, it must be open to vigorous and respectful debate among its members. Those members, in turn, must be willing to provide and maintain the resources necessary for the Alliance to thrive.

No matter how successful any organization has been, future success is never guaranteed. The greatest lesson we can learn from NATO's past is that if allies remember what bound them together in the first place they can manage their differences in service of the common good.

Ron Granieri is an FPRI Templeton Fellow, the Executive Director of FPRI's Center for the Study of America and the West, Editor of the Center's E-publication The American Review of Books, Blogs, and Bull, and Host of Geopolitics with Granieri, a monthly series of events for FPRI Members.

Modifications:

Teachers can choose to limit the scope of this lesson. You can select specific issues that you wish to be addressed. You can also limit the lesson to just the relationship between the United States and a few NATO members. Research can also be assigned entirely as homework and may be given over several days, thereby inserting other lessons in between the first day of the lesson and the remaining days.

Extensions:

The lesson can be expanded to include additional historical issues concerning NATO. OR…
A debate could occur with one of the following topic resolutions:

Resolved-- that there is no longer a need for The North Atlantic Treaty Organization.
Resolved—that NATO is vital for the security of democracies in Europe.
Resolved—that the United States should return to its pre-World War II foreign policy which shunned all alliances.

References:

FPRI:

NATO: An FPRI Primer.

ORBIS: FPRI's Journal of Foreign Affairs. Numerous articles throughout its publishing history concerning NATO.

NATO Homepage. https://www.nato.int and https://www.archives.nato.int

NATO: United States Department of State. https://history.state.gov

NATO on The History Channel. https://www.history.com

NATO: United States National Archives. Https://www.archives.gov

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