The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
(NATO)

BACKGROUND

The nations of Europe struggled to rebuild their economies and ensure their securities after WWII, and Secretary of State George Marshall proposed a program of large-scale economic aid to Europe. The European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan) facilitated European economic integration and promoted the idea of shared interests and cooperation between the U.S. and Europe. In 1947-1948, a series of events such as the civil war in Greece, a coup sponsored by the Soviet Union in Czechoslovakia, and the Berlin Crisis caused the nations of Western Europe to become concerned about their physical and political security and the U.S. to become more closely involved with Europe.

At this juncture, Western European countries were willing to consider a collective security solution, and the Brussels Treaty was signed in March 1948 in order to provide collective defense. At the same time, the Truman Administration increased military spending and suggested that the U.S. seek a security treaty with Western Europe. The U.S. negotiators felt there was more to be gained from enlarging the new treaty to include the countries of the North Atlantic, including Canada, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Ireland, and Portugal. The result of these extensive negotiations was the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949.

During the Cold War, the primary purpose of NATO was to unify and strengthen the Western Allies’ military response to a possible invasion by the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies. NATO forces were equipped with American battlefield and nuclear weapons under a dual-control system (allowed both the country hosting the weapons and the U.S. to veto their use). A nuclear stalemate between two sides continued through the construction of the Berlin wall (1960s), Détente (1970s), the resurgence of Cold War tensions in the 1980s after the

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1 The Office of the Historian Editors, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

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After the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, Western leaders intensely debated the direction of the alliance. NATO found a new purpose – defending Muslims in the Balkans – and after 9/11, helping the U.S. fight terrorists in Afghanistan, Iraq, Africa and elsewhere. Today, the alliance faces a new set of challenges. Some analysts warn of a Cold War redux, and political discord in NATO countries. The alliance has responded by reinforcing defenses in Europe, but political rifts between members have thrown NATO unity into question.³ The rise of nationalism and authoritarianism especially in Turkey, Hungary, and Poland, members’ failure to spend enough on defense, and President Trump’s pressure highlight the need to make real progress within the alliance.⁴

LET’S THINK ABOUT IT

Your SWAC leader will prompt you with questions concerning the same idea: It is possible that Trump could one day decide to pull the U.S. out of NATO. What are the main reasons that NATO has been criticized by the U.S. and what changes does NATO need to embrace? Express your thoughts and contribute to discussion with your fellow peers!

(room to write your thoughts)

² David G. Haglund, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*
³ Jonathan Master, *The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)*
⁴ The Editorial Board, “Why NATO Matters”
This lesson plan is meant as an aid for the Faculty Sponsor, President, or Vice-President to lead their respective SWAC chapter in the discussion of this two weeks’ focus: NATO.

Kahoot! INTRODUCTORY QUIZ

Kahoot! is an online Quiz platform. This small five-question quiz is to test the student’s prior knowledge of NATO and introduce them to the discussion to come. The quiz does not require the proctor to have a Kahoot account in order to start. Students will use an electronic device in order to answer. The link is below; click START NOW and select Classic mode. After the Game PIN is generated, students will be able to join the session by accessing kahoot.it on their computer or mobile device. Begin the quiz once all students have joined! This activity shouldn’t take more than 10 minutes.

LINK: https://play.kahoot.it/#/k/f1494df7-dfb2-48b5-a5d0-11863978a466

LESSON HANDOUT

Now is when the handouts should be passed out to students. This handout will cover the views of NATO from different countries and the brief assessment of NATO. It is recommended that the handout be read aloud as a group instead of individually. Take some time after the document has been read to cover the material with the students and make sure that its been generally understood. Ask questions to students; get them to summarize what they’ve read and make sure that the students are engaged and understanding. The reading shouldn’t take more than 20 minutes.
VIDEO RESOURCES

We have two video resources below that will go over in more detail the current event portion of the handout and expand upon it. Following each link we’ve included a description of the video and possible questions that you can ask students to see what they’ve gained from watching the clips. Each video clip is between 3 and 6 minutes; coupled with questions this segment should take no more than 20 minutes.

- **NATO, RUSSIA DRILL THEIR MILITARY FORCES AMID RAISED TENSIONS**
  https://www.rferl.org/a/29487179.html

  NATO jets have simulated flight interceptions to deter Russia plans from entering alliance airspace. Meanwhile, Russia is conducting massive military exercises across its central and eastern regions, and it is twice as many as the biggest Soviet maneuvers of the Cold War era. Do you think that the growing military tension can trigger NATO to have a new Cold War-style arms race with Russia?

- **WHERE ARE THE WORLD’S NUCLEAR WEAPONS STORED?**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTSTddC4O2c

  Russia and NATO control the overwhelming majority of the world’s nuclear weapons. Express your thoughts on the US plans to expand its missile defense shield in Europe.
DISCUSSION

- What values do you think NATO has in spite of its limitations?

- What would be the consequences if president Trump withdraws the U.S from NATO?

- Do you agree that NATO is a defender of democracy even though it has been criticized as overlooking the authoritarian character of certain NATO allies?
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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Norma Eisen and James Kirchick, “Yes, Russia is a threat to NATO. So are the alliance’s anti-democratic members.”, (July 14, 2018), Retrieved November 13, 2018, From Brookings: https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2018/07/14/yes-russia-is-a-threat-to-nato-so-are-the-alliances-anti-democratic-members/

