

# NATIONAL INTEREST AND THE TOOLS OF FOREIGN POLICY

*A Lesson Plan for Teachers*



**CLOSE UP<sup>®</sup>**  
WASHINGTON DC

# NATIONAL INTEREST AND THE TOOLS OF FOREIGN POLICY

**Overview:** Students will examine the broad outlines of foreign policy making; they will consider the types of interests that shape foreign policy goals and the tools available to policy-makers for pursuing those goals.

**Central Question:** What do we want American foreign policy to accomplish in the world and what means should we use to achieve our aims?

## Instructional Outline of Procedures and Major Objectives:

*Students will:*

1. Undertake an **initial consideration of the central question** of the lesson (see “Central Question” above).
2. **Take and explain initial positions** on a series of general foreign policy propositions and **formulate an initial list of general foreign policy aims**<sup>1</sup> (see Step 2c of procedures and Attachment 1).
3. **Apply foreign policy aims** to standard categories of national interest (Attachment 2A).
4. **Apply national interest reasoning and use tools of foreign policy** (Attachment 2B) to address selected current foreign policy cases (Attachment 3).
5. **Reflect on questions related to the central question:** In light of questions of practicality and national values, **appraise tools of foreign policy** and **assess potential approaches to the formulation of national interest** (see step 5 of procedures).

## Materials:

Prepared for posting

- Take-a-Position prompts (see procedure 2a)
- Roles and Goals (Attachment 1)
- National Interest Chart (Attachment 2A)
- Tools of foreign policy (Attachment 2B)

Printed handouts

- National Interest Chart and Tools of Foreign Policy (Attachments 2A and 2B printed on one sheet; copies for everyone)
- Foreign Policy Case Studies (Attachment 3 printed double-side with Questions to Consider on the back; copies for everyone)

## Common Core Standards (Grades 9-12)

**ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1 and SL.11-12.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades [9–12] topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

**ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats...in order to address a question or solve a problem.

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<sup>1</sup> “Aims” and “Goals” are used interchangeably in this section of this lesson. They are used here in their aspirational sense not in their strategic sense. A more technically correct term to describe the general foreign policy aims students are asked to identify in this step would be “foreign policy interests.” However, to avoid confusion between a foreign policy interest and national interests (which the students will be examining in the next step) “goal” will serve as the stipulated word.

## Instructional Procedures

(Total time: 75 minutes)

- **Introduction: Consider the central question** ..... (3 minutes)
  - a) Conduct a quick think-pair-share on the question, “*When someone says ‘foreign policy’ what do you think of?*” Take and record four or five responses.
  - b) Explain that the purpose of this lesson is not so much to *define* what foreign policy is but rather to figure out *what we want foreign policy to accomplish* and some of the *means we might consider using* to accomplish it.
  - c) While introducing the agenda and main purposes of the lesson, post or reveal the central question:  
*What do we want American foreign policy to accomplish in the world and what means should we use to achieve our aims?*
  - d) Taking no responses to the question at this stage; make sure students understand that this session will look at this question and related concerns from the U.S. point of view but that the concepts presented are applicable to all nations as they work out their foreign policy commitments and choices.
- **Take-A-Position on foreign policy prompts; generate a list of foreign policy aims** ..... (12 minutes)
  - a) Explain that the first step in preparing to take on the question of the aims and means of our foreign policy will be to take a survey of the class’s positions on a set of possible foreign policy choices.
  - b) Using an appropriate ESR<sup>2</sup> structure, ask students to indicate positions as you reveal and read each posted statement listed below one at a time.

1. The U.S. should support people who rise up to fight for democracy against dictators and repressive regimes in their countries.
2. American foreign policy should be focused on international relief efforts and humanitarian aid in troubled regions.
3. The US should push poor countries to change their policies to ones that will encourage foreign investment in profitable industries.
4. The U.S. should be less involved and intrusive in the affairs of other countries and let the nations in troubled regions work out their own solutions.
5. To protect American workers we should make it more difficult for countries that promote cheap labor and poor working conditions to sell their products in our country.
6. The US should let the European Union bear a greater share of the burden of global security and encourage them to take greater responsibility for maintaining security in regions troubled by civil unrest, terrorist groups, and regional warfare.
7. American foreign policy makers should not look to the United Nations or any other international organization for consensus on when to intervene in international problems and trouble spots; we should decide and act on our own when we believe our interests are involved.
8. The U.S. should support and respect international institutions, international law, and collective international action.

<sup>2</sup> Every Student Responds: Students all respond simultaneously to a prompt. Suggested ESR structures for this activity are (1) “Red Card-Green Card”: each student has a red card and a green card; green cards are held up to indicate agreement while red cards are held up to indicate disagreement; (2) “Fist-Palm”: students hold up fist to indicate agreement (‘right on’) versus palm (‘whoa’) to indicate disagreement.

- c) For the first 3-4 statements, take two quick opposing responses before moving on. As you proceed to the later statements in the series, begin asking students to explain the series of positions they have taken. (*"James, I noticed you agreed with 3 and 4 and now you've switched to disagree on 5; is there a general view you have about the aims for our foreign policy that would tie together these three positions you've taken?"*) Prompt responding students to try to articulate what goal they hope to achieve by the series of position they take. As you probe for what students hope to achieve through the positions they take...
  1. On a blank flip chart headed "Aims of foreign policy" begin recording responses that sound like general aims or goals. (*"I think we have a responsibility to promote freedom."* *"We have to protect ourselves from people who hate us."* *"We need to pay more attention to our own problems and let other countries take care of themselves."* *"As the richest nation on earth we have to take the lead on dealing with human suffering in the world."* *"We need to promote free markets and democracy."*)
  2. As you continue to take responses and read/reveal further prompts, silently reveal a prepared flip chart identifying possible goals/roles for foreign policy (**Attachment 1: Foreign Policy Aims: Possible Goals & Roles**).
  3. If no student responses (or very few) sound like general goals to be recorded, suggest students use the goals/roles list to help them formulate general foreign policy goals that reflect their sequence of positions taken. Star items students mention or ask them to put the ones they agree with in their own words.
  4. After the class has generated a list of general aims, conclude this segment and transition to the next step.
- **Connect foreign policy aims to standard categories of national interests.....** (15 minutes)
  - a) Explain that our list of general aims should help in our next step as we determine what national interests should guide our foreign policy.
  - b) Reveal the National Interest Breakdown Chart (see **Attachment 2A**) and explain that one way to begin figuring out national interest is to break all the various things that might be essential to the survival and wellbeing of the nation into three main categories: (1) interests related to our security as a nation; (2) interests related to our economic health as a nation; (3) interests related to the core values and beliefs that define our nation—our national ideology.<sup>3</sup> Our aim in this step is to see how the general goals we identified in the last step fit with various standard ideas of what national interest is or should be.
  - c) Distribute handout copies of the breakdown chart (**Attachment 2: National Interest and Tools of Foreign Policy Charts**) and instruct students to review the chart independently for a few silent minutes to get a general idea of what is in each category. (Explain that they will be looking at the Tools of Foreign Policy on the bottom of the sheet a little later.) Circulate and help students with difficult words or phrases. Allow three minutes and reassure the students that the details will become clearer once they begin working together to figure out which goal fits into which category.
  - d) Divide students into groups of four or five (with facilitators<sup>4</sup>) and ask them to work to place each of the goals recorded (or starred) into one of the three categories. Allow seven minutes.
  - e) Ask students to look at their goals and the categories of interest they align with; instruct facilitators to begin a three-minute discussion of the following question:
 

*Of course all three categories of interests come into play in developing national interest, but which one of the three would you advocate as the most important basis for formulating foreign policy?*
  - f) Optional: Inform students that they may modify, remove, or add items in the category they select.

<sup>3</sup> If students seem unclear about "ideology" try: "A more or less coherent and/or consistent social and political worldview." If this seems too complex, try: "A consistent set of beliefs about how the world is or should be." If this doesn't clear the mist, go back to the context in which the word appears: "A set of core values and beliefs about how the world should work."

<sup>4</sup> For those unfamiliar with student-facilitation, see Attachment X, Guidelines for Student-Facilitators and Student-led Discussion.

- g) Post three stations (Security, Economic, Ideological). Release students from the small groups and ask them to go the station they *most* feel should be the foundation for foreign policy (no middle spaces). Take one defense of each position represented.
- **Apply national interest reasoning, tools of foreign policy to current foreign policy cases....** (30 minutes)
  - a) With students remaining in their groups from “3f” above, turn students’ attention to the Tools of Foreign Policy at the bottom of the handout (**Attachment 2: National Interest and Tools of Foreign Policy Charts**); explain that now that we have identified our various positions and ideas about national interests and the general goals of foreign policies, our next step is to look at the tools that foreign policy makers may use to pursue national interests.
  - b) Distribute the case study sheets with all three scenarios to every student (**Attachment 3**, front side and back side)<sup>5</sup>. Assign each group to one of the scenarios. (It may turn out that not all three forms of national interest are represented; this is fine since larger groups may be divided to allow working groups no larger than seven members and multiple groups may be assigned to any scenario(s) as needed.)
  - c) Instruct facilitators to allow their group to read the assigned case and then hold a discussion on the questions on the back of the sheet.
  - d) Ask each group to choose a member to present its case and recommendations.
    - 1. As each group begins its turn, have all students take a moment to read the case. Ask the selected presenter to remind everyone of the group’s idea of National Interest and then tell the whole group what answers they arrived at for each discussion question.
    - 2. Optional: Role-play the president. Have each group brief and make recommendations to the president (you). The groups need to give convincing arguments about why the president should accept their recommendations for how to address the problem. Encourage students from other groups to ask questions about each presenting group’s recommendations.
- **Reflection .....** (15 minutes)  
 With students remaining in groups have them discuss the following questions (posted or in handouts):
  - Based on your work in this lesson and your own values, are there any tools of foreign policy listed that you would not use under any circumstances? Are there any tools you believe are currently used too little or too hesitantly? Are there any you believe are currently used too much or too quickly? Or does the answer depend too much on circumstances? Explain your answers to one another.
  - In this lesson, you were assigned to select one category of national interest as the basis of for formulating foreign policy, yet each category had several items; would it be legitimate to take the items separately regardless of category and place them in a prioritized list of most to least important or do you think that would make a nations foreign policy incoherent or unprincipled?

As an optional homework reflection, students could be asked to prepare a persuasive essay advocating a course of action for one of the case study issues:

- Outline a course of action you believe the U.S. should follow, including tools of foreign policy to be employed, regarding one of the three scenarios.
- Defend you proposed action on what you believe to be an appropriate set of national interest priorities.
- Defend your proposed set of national interest priorities.

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<sup>5</sup>For those unfamiliar with student-facilitation, see the attachment labeled “Guidelines for Student-Facilitators and Student-led Discussion” at the end of the lesson plan.

# HANDOUT 1: ROLES AND GOALS

## FOREIGN POLICY AIMS: POSSIBLE GOALS & ROLES

Keep our nation and people safe from enemies

Protect our allies from enemies and domestic terror

Promote U.S. economic prosperity

Encourage international free trade

Protect the poor and weak from exploitation and human rights abuses

Protect our military and security interests around the world

Protect the global environment

Advance human rights around the world

Cooperate in maintaining international laws governing the behavior of nations

Maintain our status as the most militarily powerful nation

Promote capitalism and free markets

Protect our economy from unfair trade

Maintain international peace

Promote democracy and political freedom

# HANDOUT 2: NATIONAL INTEREST AND TOOLS OF FOREIGN POLICY CHARTS

## National Interest Breakdown Chart: A Partial List

Things that may be essential to the survival and wellbeing of the nation as a whole.

Security Interests include such things as:	Economic Interests include such things as:	Ideological Interests Include such things as:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protecting national borders</li> <li>• ensuring the safety of citizens from harm by foreign enemies</li> <li>• protecting allies</li> <li>• protecting areas of military importance (military supply routes, allies that host military bases, etc.)</li> <li>• protecting bases and sources of national power</li> <li>• preventing foreign intrusions into your national territorial regions</li> <li>• maintaining military power and capacity to project power where and as needed to protect national sovereignty and security interests</li> <li>• maintaining knowledge regarding potential threats to national security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protecting and/or promoting an adequate standard of living for domestic citizens</li> <li>• protecting and/or promoting adequate levels of domestic employment</li> <li>• ensuring economic development and growth</li> <li>• establishing trade relations with other nations</li> <li>• protecting economic investment abroad and at home</li> <li>• protecting the means and routes of trade</li> <li>• protecting the competitiveness of key domestic industries</li> <li>• maintaining economic power to ensure economic self-determination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protecting and/or promoting a just/moral way of life</li> <li>• protecting and/or promoting a just/moral system of politics, law, and government</li> <li>• protecting and/or promoting a just/moral economic system</li> <li>• protecting and/or promoting the cultural and/or religious values of a nation or a people</li> <li>• advancing and protecting a universal conception of freedom, justice, progress and/or human dignity</li> </ul>

## Tools of Foreign Policy

### Tools of Intelligence and Information:

- Information and intelligence gathering
- Dissemination of information, analysis, and ideas
- Dissemination of propaganda and misinformation

### Tools of Diplomacy:

- Cultural and scientific exchanges
- Offering diplomatic recognition. Expelling/recalling diplomats. Holding or withdrawing from diplomatic exchanges and discussions
- Joining or withdrawing from negotiations, treaties, summit meetings
- Offering or joining alliances, membership in international and regional organizations
- Suspending or withdrawing from alliances, membership in international and regional organizations

### Tools of aid, economic development, and trade:

- Provision or withholding of humanitarian aid, technical/engineering/scientific/professional assistance

- Economic and trade relations inducements, development aid, trade treaties, creation of trade zones, help in attracting investments
- Economic and trade sanctions, tariffs, quotas, restrictions on investment, trade restrictions, bans on specific imports, general import bans, seizure of bank accounts and financial assets

### Tools of military influence, power, or force

- Joining or offering military alliances or security pacts, provision of military foreign aid or military technical assistance and training. Withdrawing from military alliances or security pacts, suspending or ending military foreign aid, or military technical assistance and training
- Secret paramilitary operations, assassinations (e.g. Navy Seals, drone strikes, etc.)
- Military buildups, mobilizations, troop movements, test weapons firings, shows of strength
- Blockades, armed intervention
- War



# HANDOUT 3: FOREIGN POLICY CASE STUDIES

## FOREIGN POLICY CASE STUDIES

- 1. The crisis in Syria:** The current crisis in Syria began on March 15, 2011 with nationwide demonstrations demanding an end to nearly 50 years of Ba’ath Party rule and the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad, the current leader who inherited his father’s one-party regime. In April 2011, al-Assad ordered the Syrian Army to put down the uprising; the army opened fire on demonstrators. Al-Assad’s action sparked armed rebellion and some rebel groups received military aid from foreign countries. Reports circulated of up to 28,000 civilians missing; allegedly, many of those missing were forcibly abducted by government troops or security forces. Also alleged by multiple sources was widespread torture in state prisons where tens of thousands of protesters were incarcerated. The United Nations has labeled the conflict with the legal definition of civil war and in January 2013 put the death toll at over 60,000. Meanwhile, some rebel groups have also been accused of human rights abuses and in February, 2013 an unidentified rebel group exploded three car bombs in the capital killing dozens of civilians. Assad’s use of violence has been condemned by the Arab League, United States, European Union, and Arab Gulf States. The US and its NATO allies have insisted that al-Assad’s regime must go and al-Assad himself must step down. Russia and China have consistently blocked any United Nations resolutions that would impose sanctions on Syria to force al-Assad out. Al-Assad along with his domestic and foreign supporters claim that al-Assad’s removal from power would not only fail to end the civil war but would in fact make it even worse as Syrian factions long hostile to one another would fight to fill the vacuum left in the absence of Ba’ath Party rule.
- 2. Cuban-U.S. relations:** The commercial, economic, and financial embargo that the U.S. imposed on Cuba in the wake of the island’s successful 1962 Communist revolution against the anti-communist dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista was supposed to undermine the totalitarian rule of Fidel Castro and, according to the U.S. State Department, “promote a peaceful transition to a stable, democratic government and respect for human rights in Cuba”; in the 50 years since, the embargo has failed to achieve its intended goal. The communist government of Cuba under the leadership of Fidel Castro and his designated successor, brother Raul Castro, is a one-party regime that denies basic political freedoms and rights to Cuban citizens. Cuba imposes tightly restricted avenues for political expression; political dissent is quickly silenced and often harshly punished. Political parties opposed to Castro’s Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) are outlawed by the Cuban constitution—would-be organizers and leaders of parties other than the PCC are imprisoned as criminals. Although the Cuban government has helped the tiny Caribbean nation achieve one of the highest rates of literacy in the world and has established health care and advanced medical research surpassing all other Caribbean nations, Cubans enjoy no guarantees of freedom of the press or freedom of association and they can be dismissed from their jobs if they express dissident political views. However, the United Nations has denounced the U.S. embargo on Cuba; all other countries have established normal relations with Cuba. Some foreign policy experts say it is time for the U.S. to end the embargo and negotiate normal trade agreements; others say we must not reward a communist dictator with the benefits of trade with the U.S.
- 3. The use of drones:** The Obama administration has taken credit for successful attacks on al-Qaeda hideouts and bases and killing individual leaders of terrorist cells in Somalia, Yemen and especially Pakistan—successes achieved through stepping up the use of Reaper and Predator drones. Drones are used for these operations because they are unmanned aerial weapons that are operated remotely and can strike with great accuracy but little or no warning for the targets. But a 2012 report by legal experts at Stanford and New York University harshly criticizes the drone program for its affect on non-combatant civilians. Under international law, nations at war must take great precautions to make sure that civilians are not killed. According to the numbers in the 2012 report, U.S. precautions to prevent the killing of civilians are failing. The report claims that over the past eight years more than 345 strikes have hit Pakistan’s tribal areas, but barely 2 percent of the strike victims were known militants. Contrary to the report, the Obama administration claims that civilian casualties and deaths are rare and that the drone program has been a success. Outgoing Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta argues that the military has been “very successful at going after the leadership” of al Qaeda. While supporters of the drone program assert that it is necessary to allow the U.S. to take out threats to our security without risking the lives of military personnel, opponents say that the drone program sets a bad precedent for extra-judicial killings and violence against civilians—unintended though it may be—at a time when many nations are building up their own arsenals of unmanned weapons.

**Read your group’s assigned scenario then discuss the questions on the back.**



## FOREIGN POLICY CASE STUDIES (QUESTIONS AND SOURCES)

### Questions to consider:

1. What issues involving U.S. interests were raised in the case study you read?
  2. Imagine that you could make U.S. foreign policy recommendations to the President; what would you say to explain your idea of National Interest and how it relates to this case? What goal would you recommend the President pursue in addressing the issues raised in the case you read?
  3. Looking at the Tools of Foreign Policy, what tools do you think would be most effective in achieving your goal? What tools would you recommend the President use in addressing the issues in this case?
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### ADDITIONAL SOURCES:

#### “The crisis in Syria”

“Syria — Uprising and Civil War,” *New York Times, Times Topics* (nytimes.com/pages/topics), “World” section.

<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/syria/index.html>

“Car Bomb in Damascus Kills Dozens, Opposition Says,” by Anne Barnard and Rick Gladstone in *New York Times* ([nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com)), February 21, 2013.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/22/world/middleeast/car-bomb-in-damascus-kills-dozens-opposition-says.html?pagewanted=all>

#### “Cuban-U.S. relations”

“U.S.-Cuba Relations,” *U.S. State Department Archive* ([2001-2009.state.gov](http://2001-2009.state.gov)) Fact Sheet, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, May 1, 2001. <http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/2001/2558.htm>

“U.N. urges end to U.S. Cuba embargo for 21st year,” by Louis Charbonneau in *Reuters News Service* ([www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com)), November 13, 2012.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/13/us-cuba-embargo-un-idUSBRE8AC11820121113>

#### “Use of drones”

“New Stanford/NYU study documents the civilian terror from Obama’s drones,” by Glenn Greenwald in *The Guardian* ([guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk)), September 25, 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/sep/25/study-obama-drone-deaths>

*Living Under Drones: Death, Injury, and Trauma to Civilians from US Drone Practices in Pakistan*, Report by the International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic (Stanford Law School) and the Global Justice Clinic (NYU School of Law), September, 2012.

(PDF copy available at [http:// livingunderdrones.org/](http://livingunderdrones.org/) )

“Predator Drones and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs),” *New York Times, Times Topics* (nytimes.com/pages/topics), [http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/u/unmanned\\_aerial\\_vehicles/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/u/unmanned_aerial_vehicles/index.html)

# BACKGROUND FOR TEACHER: GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT FACILITATION

## Guidelines for Student-Facilitators and Student-led Discussion

Close Up uses a student-facilitation structure for small-group discussions and activities. As part of our commitment to helping students develop the skills and capacities for successful participation in the processes of democracy, during most cooperative learning activities we systematically distribute and rotate opportunities to lead discussion and facilitate group activities among our students over the course of our programs.

To insure that students chosen or appointed to these leadership opportunities clearly understand their role, we establish the expectations and norms in the first session of our program (such as that facilitators help each member of the group contribute to a shared goal rather than act as the boss who directs every action of the group and its individual members; facilitators elicit the ideas of others and contribute some of their own rather than trying to lead the group to accept the facilitator's own ideas). We also post/handout a list of facilitation guidelines that selected facilitators can refer to in each activity:

### **Facilitator is responsible to insure that...**

1. The group understands the task(s) at hand;
2. All members of the group are heard;
3. Group discussion/work is not dominated by just a few members;
4. The group stays on-task and makes steady progress to complete its work on time.

For Close Up students we add an additional guideline point: "Facilitator is responsible for making sure that group work follows the workshop's rules." A central element of our instructional method involves having each workshop (class) of students establish the rules that will inform their collective work and discussions. Thus this additional guideline can be added in classes that follow this practice or a similar one.

Facilitators are empowered to lead their group with as little intervention as possible. The expectation is established that the facilitator is to seek help or guidance from the teacher when it is needed and that the teacher will monitor group progress in order to provide guidance when it appears necessary.

Teacher guidance to the group is conducted through the facilitator as needed to help the facilitator maintain the guidelines and lead the group in accomplishing the task. Informational or instructional intervention is similarly conducted on an as-needed basis. Often, the facilitator is provided printed discussion prompts, activity instructions, or group-specific tasks to share with the group.

The overall intent is to provide sufficient scaffolding to allow groups to function as autonomously as possible through the leadership of the student-facilitators.