

# Lesson Plan: Chief Diplomat

Class: U.S. Government

Unit: Executive Branch

**Unit Essential Question:**

What is the role of the Executive Branch in the Government of the United States of America?

**Guiding Question(s):**

- What types of activities does the President do while acting as the nation's Chief Diplomat?

**Objective(s):**

- Students will be able to describe activities tied to the President's role as Chief Diplomat.
- Students will be able to appraise how successful a President was while acting as Chief Diplomat.

**Teacher Background information:**

As defined in Article II of the Constitution, the President of the United States is the nation's Chief Diplomat. Through this role, they are responsible for carrying out negotiations with foreign leaders and their governments. Some activities include negotiating treaties, trade agreements, speaking with world leaders, and attending international conferences with other world leaders. The framework for the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) III treaty was negotiated between President Clinton and Boris Yeltsin in 1997 but was never put to work as the Russian Duma failed to ratify START II. START III would have been a part of a larger diplomatic chain of treaties between the United States and the Soviet Union (eventually Russia) that aimed to lower tensions at the height of the Cold War. The treaty would have laid out limits to the number of nuclear equipped ICBMs and long range bombers each nation could have deployed around the world.

**Materials needed:**

- [Google Slides presentation](#)
- [Homework worksheets](#) (one per student)
- [Rubric](#)
- [Scenario Cards](#) (one per student)
- Projector and Device capable of casting slideshow to projector
- Timer

**“Do Now”/ Hook/ Opening activity:**

- Ask students “How many of you have heard your parents say ‘no’ to you when you ask them for something you want?”
- “Do we always take “no” as an answer when we hear that?” Ask students to share some of their strategies for negotiating with their parents.
- Shift focus to the lesson for today: “much like the way that you negotiate with your parents, the President of the United States, acting as the nation’s Chief Diplomat, negotiates with other nations.”
- Ask Students to brainstorm ways in which the President could act as the nation’s Chief Diplomat. If students struggle, take over with a miniature lecture that describes some of these roles. Otherwise, discuss each one of the examples as they come. Some examples could include:
  - Negotiating trade agreements
  - Negotiating peace treaties and alliances
  - Calling world leaders or writing them letters
  - Meeting with world leaders at international conferences or the United Nations.

**Activities:**

1. Using the chart on Slide #5, discuss with students the problems posed by the world’s large nuclear arms arsenal left over after the Cold War (Terrorism, nuclear incidents and accidents). Show students the way that arms reduction talks reduced the world’s stockpile. Mention the problems faced in removal of such weapons (expense, need for deterrence).
2. Present to the class the following scenario:
  - a. Following the collapse of the USSR, Cold War tensions subsided and the United States and Russia sought to reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the world. As part of this, the United States and Russia signed into Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties referred to as START. In 1997, President Clinton visited Russia’s President Yeltsin to envision the framework for a third START treaty; however, the final treaty was never negotiated. Today, the class will act out the negotiations and attempt to find a path to agreement for START III.
3. Divide the class in half and assign one side the role of the United States and the other side the role of Russia.
  - a. Within each group, appoint a chief diplomat, secretary of state, and secretary of defence. Remaining students will perform the role of researchers.
4. Give scenario cards to the chief diplomat, secretary of state, and secretary of defence for each side.
5. Instruct students of their roles and the rules for the debate.
6. Allow students 20 minutes to attempt to come to an agreement. Act as moderator for the discussion and keep the debate on track. Only add to the conversation to maintain civility and allow the students to do almost all of the talking. While debate is conducted, take notes of agreed upon points, write them on the board.
7. After 20 minutes, ask students to draw up a memorandum that details the elements that the two sides have agreed to. Give students ten minutes for this exercise.

**Closing:**

Discuss how START II's failure to be ratified by the Russian Duma, much like the ratification required in the US Senate, doomed START III before negotiations really began. Remind students that the President is not actually able to enforce a treaty until the Senate ratifies its legitimacy.

Ask students what skills are most important to international negotiations now that they have acted them out. Ask students if they think that these skills would translate into other activities in which the President acts as Chief Diplomat.

Instruct students that their homework will be to write a paragraph summary of a modern day (last five years) effort by a US President acting in their role as Chief Diplomat. Pass out worksheet/ thought organizer.

Look forward to the next lesson in which students will consider the President's role as Ceremonial Head of State.

**Assessment:**

Score homework assignment according to [rubric](#).

**Modifications:**

- Ensure subtitles are enabled during video playback.
- Use easy to read and enlarged fonts on the worksheets and scenario cards.
- Ensure that each student has access to a copy of their scenario card.

**Resources:**

[Powers of the Presidency Portal from the Clinton Presidential Library](#)

[START III Framework at a Glance](#)