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Examples of Policy Writing

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We intend these samples—in most cases, taken from Ford School student writing—to be considered in conjunction with our Memo Writing Memo, which provides an explanation of each of the sections exemplified below. With the exception of Recommendations/Strategy, each section includes two examples, the latter being more effective than the former. We have provided a short explanation after the first examples, in brackets and italics, to explain in what way s these first examples are deficient. Note that citations have been removed from these examples for the purposes of simplification. In an academic setting, all claims, data, and arguments that are not your own must be cited.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#1 [140 words]

To: Executive Director, World Health Organization
From: Joseph Sample, Policy Analyst
Date: February 5, 2009
Re: Counterfeit Drugs in India

Everyone is familiar with the fight to counter the illegal trafficking of drugs across international borders. But not many are aware that there is actually another kind of drug trafficking that, while not as widespread, is just as pernicious. This is the trafficking and sale of counterfeit drugs, that is, fake drugs made to resemble bona-fide prescription drugs sold on the marketplace.

The problem is especially prevalent in the developing world. Trafficking in counterfeit drugs has become one of India's fastest-growing crimes. More than 30 percent of medicines on sale in Africa, Asia, and Latin America are fakes. Between 60 to 80 percent of all fake drugs come from China or India. Within this memo you will find a discussion of some of the causes and contributing factors of the counterfeit drug trade, an outline of the major stakeholders, and recommendations.

[First three sentences state the obvious and should be cut. Next three sentences give facts or background information that doesn't belong in an executive summary (and the data on Africa, Asia, and Latin America is likely not relevant). Last sentence fails to state specifically what the memo will recommend. Wordiness throughout.]

#2 [62 words]

You have asked me for policy recommendations concerning the recent surge in counterfeit drugs in India. This memo explores some of the causes and contributing factors of the counterfeit drug trade in India, outlines the major stakeholders, and concludes by

recommending that the international community impose stricter standards on India, as well as work with NGOs to find alternative means of procuring cheap drugs.

BACKGROUND

#1

To: Sidney Morris, CPF Senior Analyst

From: Heather Traveler, CPF Intern

Date: July 5, 2004

Subject: Should the US reduce its scrutiny of human rights abuses of other countries?

Background [161 words]

In the almost three years since September 11, 2001, the U.S.-led War on Terror has changed the face of warfare and the debate on international human rights. The role of the U.S. has shifted from third-party superpower, the world's exemplar, to a country struggling to meet its own global human rights guidelines and recommendations. Ongoing reports of possible human rights violations by U.S. coalition forces in Afghanistan and Iraq have now culminated in undeniable evidence of human rights abuses committed by U.S. personnel in the Abu Ghraib prison against Iraqi prisoners. According to a recent report by Amnesty International, the prisoners in Abu Ghraib are reported to have suffered torture and degrading treatment at the hands of U.S. interrogators. These methods are in direct violation of the Geneva Accords and lead many in the international human rights watch community to ask, "In light of the ongoing War on Terror, should the U.S. reduce its scrutiny of other countries' human rights record?"

[Almost all of the information here is interpretation, very little facts. And the paragraph eventually works its way toward a conclusion—the last sentence—with which the memo was meant to begin. This works more like an Introduction to a paper or essay than a discussion of background. Instead, the author might have explained the Human Rights Reports issued by the US State Dept each year: What kinds of abuses does it concentrate on? Which countries are called out year after year? Are all countries included in the report? Who has objected to the Reports and on what grounds?]

#2a

To: Chen Deming, Minister of Commerce, People's Republic of China

From: Director-General, Department of International Trade and Economic Affairs

Date: December 1, 2008

Subject: Should China expand its trade with Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) with the aim of increasing oil imports from the region?

Background [141 words]

With an increasingly industrialized economy and improved living standards, China's demand for crude oil is growing at a rapid pace. China has become the world's second largest oil consumer behind only the United States. It is projected that China's oil consumption will grow at 7.5 percent per year, and will double by 2030. With limited domestic supply, China has increasingly relied on foreign oil. In 2008, China imported a total of 200.67 million tons

of oil, about 51 percent of the total world oil supply, to meet insatiable domestic demand. Fifty percent of this imported oil came from the Middle East.

Holding at least 10 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, Africa has become an important alternative source of oil supply for China. SSA countries, including Angola, Sudan, Nigeria, and Congo, in total have contributed one-third of China's oil imports.

#2b

China's Strategic Interests (*Same as 2a, with analysis added—if you have no room for a background section*) [262 words]

With an increasingly industrialized economy and improved living standards, China's demand for crude oil is growing at a rapid pace. China has become the world's second largest oil consumer behind only the United States. It is projected that China's oil consumption will grow at 7.5 percent per year, and will double by 2030. With limited domestic supply, China has increasingly relied on foreign oil. In 2008 China imported a total of 200.67 million tons of oil, about 51 percent of the total oil supply, to meet insatiable domestic demand. Fifty percent of imported oil came from the Middle East, a region laden with geopolitical instability. This leaves China vulnerable to market fluctuation and susceptible to international oil conflicts. It is hence important to diversify our energy sources and secure oil supply globally.

Holding at least 10 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, Africa has become an important alternative source of oil supply for China. SSA countries, including Angola, Sudan, Nigeria, and Congo, in total have contributed one-third of China's oil imports. Moreover, several factors make oil from SSA more appealing to China: 1) Most SSA countries operate on the basis of production sharing agreements (PSAs), which offer more favorable contracts. 2) Most oil producing countries in SSA don't belong to OPEC and are thus not subject to the strict limits on output that OPEC imposes on its members. 3) One-third of the world's new oil discovery since 2000 has taken place in Africa. As the last unexplored region, Africa has huge potential to become China's most promising oil supplier in the future.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

#1

To: Executive Director, European Confederation of Managers (CEC)

From: CEC Analyst

Subject: ETUC position on cross-border health care [187 words]

Since its founding in 1973, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has been committed to operating at a "cross-border level" with EU institutions. ETUC represents 36 countries across Europe. Article 138 of the EC Treaty requires ETUC consultation by the European Commission on all social policy. ETUC's effective demonstrations convinced Parliament to vote for changes on the 2006 Services Directive to protect workers' rights and job conditions. Funding comes from affiliate fees and the EU to support trainings and negotiations. ETUC sustains 12 European Industry Federations (i.e. engineering,

communications, sciences). ETUC facilitates dialogue across sectors, while sub-committees handle unique industry issues. ETUC maintains a strong partnership with the International Trade Union Confederation, which mobilizes trade unions globally and upholds coalitions with ILO, UN, and WTO.

While ETUC supports the free movement of workers throughout the EU, it does not support the cross-border health care Directive in its current state. ETUC fears that full reimbursement for cross-border care will jeopardize European solidarity. ETUC believes that cross-border care will open opportunities for higher income individuals to “shop” for care, thus creating consumers out of patients and health care disparities.

[This analysis does not sufficiently inhabit the role—no mention is made of the CEC or its interest in the activity of the ETUC. Should the CEC be concerned about ETUC on this issue? Will ETUC be aggressive on this issue? The writer should reverse the order of the paragraphs and conclude the new first paragraph by answering whether ETUC will be aggressive on this issue. The new second paragraph then needs to interpret and explain the significance of the many facts offered here. What kinds of conclusions can you draw about these facts that pertain to the current situation?]

#2

To: Sunil Dattia, Monsanto India Public Affairs Director

From: Monsanto Analyst

Subject: Navdanya and its opposition to Food Security Act [226 words]

Vandana Shiva, founder of Navdanya, has already stated publicly her opposition to the Food Security Act, rallying her supporters around hot-button issues like food sovereignty, globalization, and the health concerns of fertilizers, pesticides, and GMOs. Shiva’s grassroots support is widespread. In addition to the more than 500,000 trained farmers throughout 5,000 villages in 14 states and the direct membership of more than 70,000 families, Navdanya maintains active partnerships with numerous citizens’ organizations, scientists, and IOs. Navdanya will utilize its membership and alliances to organize public demonstrations, seminars, and campaigns to disseminate Shiva’s arguments throughout rural, nonprofit, and academic circles. Shiva organized and participated in demonstrations by 500,000 farmers in Bangalore in 1993, many subsequent anti-WTO protests, and numerous local protests, hunger strikes, and women’s sit-ins.

As a rhetorical tactic, Shiva combines powerful images and themes with science-based claims. She frequently draws attention to the occurrence of approximately 200,000 farmer suicides, while simultaneously attributing them to Monsanto’s effect on input prices and challenging the scientific basis of increased yield and drought tolerance claims.

In the longer term, Navdanya may pose a more significant challenge to the Act in the courts. Navdanya has succeeded in having patents revoked, including our 2004 loss over NapHal wheat. We should therefore expect legal challenges to GMOs, perhaps cases brought against the government on the constitutional basis of the Act’s implementation scheme.

OPTIONS

To: Secretary David Johnson, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

From: Policy Analyst

Date: June 16, 2009

Subject: Subject: Reconsidering U.S. Counternarcotics Policy Options in Afghanistan

Option 1: Interdiction [128 words]

While the Bush administration devoted resources primarily to eradication, the Obama Administration has signaled that eradication efforts will be phased out and that new priority will be placed on the intensification of interdiction efforts aimed at high level, insurgency-linked traffickers. Interdiction entails depriving drug trafficking organizations of their market access and international terrorist groups of financial support from drugs. This includes interdiction of the trade, mainly destruction of the product, including raids on opium bazaars, police seizures of drugs found in vehicles or in storage, and destruction of heroin or morphine laboratories. Supporters of this option argue that it has been moderately successful in the past, in other contexts, and that the Afghan army, with U.S. help, is developing the tools and know-how to implement the policy effectively.

[Wastes space in beginning repeating information already established previously in the memo. Fails to speak in specific detail about the application of this approach to this unique context. Does not offer any cons of the approach.]

Option 2: Focusing on alternative livelihood development [151 words]

Alternative development policy is meant to reduce the dependence on opium production by offering economic alternatives to the cultivation of the opium poppy for the Afghanistan people. Short-term policies include improvements to livestock health, cash-for-work opportunities to rehabilitate rural infrastructure, and the provision of seed, fertilizer, and other inputs to spur the production of high-value vegetables, animal fodder, and other crops that have short cultivation cycles, while long-term programs entail establishing the foundation for sustained job creation and economic growth.

However, in the past such programs in Afghanistan have met with little success, due primarily to poor planning and failure to consult with the local population. For example, a simplistic crop substitution program such as the 2008-09 wheat-for-opium program failed since wheat is far less labor-intensive than opium poppy, thereby wheat agriculture employed only about 12 % of the population that otherwise would have been employed in opium production and cultivation.

[The advantages of this policy are not sufficiently explained—the purpose of the policy is spelled out, not why we have good hope to think that it will work.]

RECOMMENDATIONS / STRATEGY

#1

To: Secretary David Johnson, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs

From: Policy Analyst

Date: June 16, 2009

Subject: Subject: Reconsidering U.S. Counternarcotics Policy Options in Afghanistan

For a variety of reasons, a strategy dependent on interdiction will not be successful. Interdiction tends to target the lowest level traders rather than opium industry moguls, resulting in a significant vertical integration of the opium industry and increasing demands of protection services that the Taliban may be able to provide. The local strongmen making large profits from drugs would escape interdiction due to the connection with the local government, while the poor peasants who can barely make ends meet would face devastation of their business. Therefore, in the absence of alternative livelihood options, interdiction does not increase the likelihood that farmers will discontinue opium poppy cultivation.

Developing a successful alternative livelihood program is a necessity. Following are steps that the U.S. State Department should take to do so:

- Put less emphasis on eradication and interdiction until the Afghanistan security situation is stable and large-scale economic development alternatives become available to the population.

- Advise U.S. military to refrain from interdiction operations and, if necessary, leave them to Afghan counternarcotics units. This will improve the Afghan government's law-enforcement capacity and help prevent antipathy toward the U.S. presence.

- Expand the FY 2012 alternative livelihood programs and avoid simplistic crop substitution programs. The U.S. State Department should help USAID develop labor-intensive and high-value crops, while also building the necessary rural infrastructure.

#2

To: Shell Executives, Nigeria

From: Analyst

Subject: Strategy to rescue Shell image after repeated oil spills in the region

[Note: the following is an excerpt from a very brief strategy memo, in which an executive summary and strategy were all that were allowed—no background, options, or analysis. Notice how the author, first explains the step, adds some detail as to implementation, then explains why the step is necessary.]

First, we will hire an international environmental NGO, with ties to the delta, as a third party auditor of our drilling practices. The auditors will assess the conditions of all operational pipelines and the causes of every oil spill in the last year. Engaging a group that the public expects to challenge our every move will allay misgivings about our motives and prove our full commitment to addressing past failings.

The auditing organization will combine their expertise with community input to establish effective protocol and structure for oil spill Quick Response Teams (QRTs). Each team will combine skilled and unskilled laborers, engineers and scientists. At least 50 percent of QRT members will be natives of the Niger delta. These QRT hiring practices will address poverty, while creating a sense of shared destiny, which should increase community acceptance of our work. Shell will also provide top-notch industry training to QRT members, which will give them opportunities for growth inside and outside the company. To build trust, we must be representative of the community rather than another example of white foreign power.

The main challenge of this strategy is sustaining a community engagement in setting and assessing goals for the program. Thus, the auditing organization should evaluate our community engagement practices as thoroughly as our QRTs. Shell should also hold monthly stakeholder meetings, facilitated by the auditors, for residents to voice complaints.

COUNTERARGUMENTS

#1

To: Executive Director, People for the Freedom of All (PFA)

From: Analyst

Subject: Should PFA advocate in support of same-sex marriage?

Argument/Thesis

Same-sex marriage is the most important domestic civil rights issue in the U.S. today. The mission of our organization is to ensure equal civil rights for all people; therefore, we must vocally support same-sex marriage for homosexuals, no matter the cost. We can take action to limit the fall-out among our members who disagree with our stance on this issue by holding membership seminars and forums across the country to inform our members of the statistical evidence and ethical reasoning that underlie our position.

Counterargument

Opponents of same-sex marriage offer several arguments. Many argue from a religious standpoint, claiming that same-sex marriage subverts God's will and defies God's purpose for creating human sexuality. Second, they contend that this is not a civil rights issue because rights are frequently reserved for persons who meet certain criteria, and they counter with their own civil rights argument: children, they argue, have a right to be raised by a man and a woman, "citing evidence that having dual-sex parents benefits a child".

[This counterargument fails to argue against the thesis. Analyst must instead explain the political reasons that PFA should not advocate for same-sex marriage (even if in principle they support it).]

#2

To: Washtenaw County Criminal Justice Collaborative Council

From: Political Consultant

Subject: How should we frame our campaign on behalf of the jail/courthouse upgrade millage?

Argument/Thesis

To gain support for the new jail millage, we must emphasize the dangers inherent in overcrowding, and our innovative efforts to address these through treatment. We should ignore our opponents' arguments about cost and point instead to the overwhelming support voiced by the law enforcement and mental health communities.

Counterargument and Rebuttal

Some within our organization may oppose this strategy, arguing that our opponents will go straight for the price tag on the millage: 0.75 mills, which is two to three times higher than the earlier unsuccessful proposals.. Making fiscal responsibility our primary argument could silence them: our \$314 million budget includes operating costs for 20 years, which prevents future deficits, and the capital cost -- \$48 million -- is quite low. The Ann Arbor Chamber of Commerce's endorsement demonstrates that our plan is fiscally sound. Opponents simply cannot come up with a responsible alternative that is less expensive.

On balance, however, this approach is too risky. People want to vote for something they like, not something responsible but expensive. So whenever the cost comes up, we should change the subject and talk about the proposal's benefits instead.

CONCLUSION

From memo on Haitian efforts to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic:

The progress that Haiti has made through open dialogue and acting quickly should be applauded. Our infection numbers seem minute compared to many countries in the East. However, we should not become complacent, instead continued efforts to ensure that this disease is halted and reversed should be made.

[Clichés (“we should not become complacent”) and passive, awkward constructions (“should be applauded”, “should be made”) rob this conclusion of any force, newness, or authority.]

From Counterfeit Drugs Memo [see Executive Summary section above]:

As the fake-drug sector continues to grow in speed and sophistication, the global situation will get worse before it gets better. Russia's counterfeit drug industry is growing rapidly. The same is true in Argentina and Brazil. Unfortunately, many observers believe it may take large-scale casualties for real action on this issue to occur. As one British drug-security expert has explained, "Action against al Qaeda really only took off after September 11." The world cannot afford to wait for such a similar calamity. WHO must act now.