



The School for Ethics and Global Leadership

Speechwriting Case Study ETHICS AND LEADERSHIP

This is a hypothetical exercise. Some facts, events, and characters are real. Others are not.

It is late April 2017 and Hillary Clinton has finished her first 100 days in office.

The new president has laid out an ambitious policy agenda to address some of the nation's key challenges: job creation, childcare, student debt, and the growing opiate epidemic. One of her signature campaign pledges, to reform the nation's immigration system, remains a priority but faces numerous roadblocks from Congress and the public.

Although Clinton narrowly won election in November, polls indicate that many Americans still do not trust her—especially Trump supporters who continue to dog her with calls of “Crooked Hillary” and “Lock her up.” This trust deficit is further complicated by growing anxiety among the American people about national security. Since the election, violence in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere in the Middle East has escalated. There is great pressure on the United States to do *something*. Assad's chlorine bombs, the Islamic State's torments, and Russian jets kill dozens of Syrians each day. Hundreds of thousands remain internally displaced. The number of Syrians seeking refuge in neighboring countries, Europe, and the United States has reached an all time high.

But what the United States can – and should – do remains unclear. In the United States the fear of an ISIS-generated terrorist attack continues to haunt many Americans. Calls for stricter immigration laws and the closing of the border—especially for Muslims from the Middle East—come from former Trump allies. Others are demanding the United States accept more Syrian refugees, calling it the nation's moral responsibility. With the decade-long Iraq war not far from memory, the question of whether to intervene militarily is an equally controversial one.

Thus far the Clinton Administration has taken a wait-and-see approach. As the conflict has escalated, however, it is becoming clear that President Clinton needs to act.

With equal numbers of Americans opposing and supporting U.S. military action, and the country split over whether to admit more refugees, no decision she makes will win unanimous approval. Critics are everywhere: on the nightly news, in Congress, within state governments, and the American people. And political advisors are reminding her that the midterm Congressional elections are right around the corner. With a divided nation, President Clinton needs to sell her plan and garner support.

Speech Assignment

➤ *You are a speechwriting team for Hillary Clinton. Write a 2-3 minute speech, to be delivered by President Clinton as follows:*

Scenario One: Going against her campaign promise, President Clinton decides to double the number of Syrian refugees admitted into the United States (from 60,000 to 120,000). Though this decision plays well with her liberal base and many European nations, many Americans call this another betrayal of trust and a security risk too great for the country to bear. Meanwhile, local government officials are concerned about their ability safely and effectively to process and check the backgrounds of tens of thousands of additional applicants, and to integrate them into local populations. Write a speech, to be delivered in front of the National Governors' Association's annual meeting, that defends this decision.

Scenario Two: Going against another campaign promise, President Clinton decides to put American ground troops into Syria. As the violence escalates on the ground, local fighters are ill equipped to continue alone.



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Casualties are mounting, ethnic divides are increasing, the humanitarian crisis is increasingly unbearable, and the tables are turning in favor of the Assad regime. Russia, meanwhile, with its aggressive posture in Syria, is emerging as the most potent influence in the region. Write a speech, to be delivered from the Oval Office and aired on all major networks in prime time, that announces and defends this decision. The speech should assure the American people that this is a necessary action and that it will not lead to another extended military engagement. It should also send a clear message to Russian President Vladimir Putin that the United States intends to preserve its status as a peace-builder in the region and will not tolerate Russian military adventurism.

Scenario Three: Another terrorist attack has rattled the nation. A small group of self-proclaimed jihadists plant an IED that kills 10 and injures dozens at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, where the Declaration of Independence was signed and the Constitutional Convention was held (and where the Democratic convention was held that nominated Hillary Clinton last summer). Investigators have determined that three of the five terrorists involved were American citizens who had immigrated from Syria, Iraq, and Jordan in recent years. The two others had entered the country from Turkey and Bulgaria on tourist visas and simply stayed in the United States without permission. Based on these developments, and the worsening conditions in Syria, President Clinton decides to propose a middle course – an escalation of U.S. air attacks in Syria combined with diplomatic efforts to create safe spaces for refugees trying to flee the conflict. She will also propose far tougher vetting procedures for all immigrants (not just refugees) seeking entry into the United States.