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Climate Policy War Game Reflection

When I started preparing for the Climate Policy War Game, it was very obvious to me that it would proceed quite differently than the first one had. For one thing, I had friends this time. Unlike with the first War Game, I knew everyone on Team China very well—in fact, many of them were the same people who were on Team Water with me— and so I felt very confident about working with them. That being said, I knew things would be different this time around because, unlike when I represented the water sector, I was now the bad guy. China is a country that has a bit of a reputation for being isolationist and uncooperative, so the task of representing them in a negotiation activity was quite daunting to me. Adding to this was the fact that, although I like to consider myself multi-faceted in my interests, negotiations and policy-making are far from my areas of expertise.

That being said, I had little trouble preparing for the War Game. As we determined that our focus would be on the four main topics of emissions, natural resources, population movement, and humanitarian aid and hazards, I found the research process to be fairly straightforward. My assignment was climate policy, so I learned about Chinese policies and initiatives regarding those issues (the South-to-North Water Diversion Project, the Five Year Plans, the "Memorandum of Understanding on Strengthening Cooperation on Trans-Border Rivers," etc.). Feeling confident about my

research and my negotiation skills from the last War Game, I volunteered to be team leader for section 2, with Pedro by my side as technical lead. The other members of Team China fell into their positions without difficulty: eloquent Catherine offered to be team leader for section 1, persuasive Nick Ireland offered to reclaim his role as negotiator, and well-spoken Chynna offered to take on the role of team representative. I felt that everyone was 'pulling their weight,' so to speak; each member seemed very well-informed on his or her specific subject matter. Our team really worked together effortlessly; the process of preparing the presentation was a collaborative effort, and we effectively worked through all of the minor disagreements about final policy recommendations. Together we decided to work with India and the other S.A.A.R.C. countries to reduce income inequality and population growth through education reform, and to call upon the United States and developed nations in general to reduce their emissions and invest in sustainable development and alternative energy technology. We, as China, also wanted to invest in the development of South Asian countries to economically elevate the region as a whole, but as the U.S. owes us a staggering $1.27 trillion, we insisted on a payback plan and—to incentivize them—a 5% reduction in their debt on the condition that it gets invested in alternative energy technology.

Something that proved to be a major difficulty for me in the execution of the negotiation process was to actually assume my role and undertake the viewpoints of China as a nation. For one thing, I did not feel entirely prepared to do so. My research was focused in China's climate policy, and though I also learned about the research my teammates conducted, I did not feel that the knowledge I gained gave me the tools necessary to infer what China's stance would be on all of the topics presented. My lack of

understanding of the Chinese mindset was evident in our offer to reduce the U.S.'s debt to us by 5%, on the condition that they invested that money in renewable energy sources. Apparently, this was not a very Chinese thing to do. Our team did what we could to adapt to the Chinese mindset and, after a brief but fruitful discussion with Professor Ganguly, we modified this recommendation to require that the U.S. invest that money in specifically Chinese energy development. As we heard from the press after producing this amendment, this was a very Chinese thing to do.

Alternatively, I definitely found it difficult to keep my own ideas about what would be beneficial separate from the policy initiatives that I presented. I knew that I was meant to be representing the desires of China, but it was just so counterintuitive to take stances that went against my own beliefs. Our team pushed for the damming of the Brahmaputra River which, despite bringing water to parched northern China, could have potentially devastating effects on northern India and the other S.A.A.R.C. countries as a result. It was difficult to stand firm on an initiative whose implementation could be detrimental to millions of people, but as it was definitely in China's best interests I could not concede to Team India. The whole thing was definitely a learning experience. After all, as Dr. Iacono said, to be uncomfortable is to learn.

Overall, though I found both War Games to be beneficial experiences for me, there were aspects of their execution that I struggled with. For one thing, I did not feel entirely qualified to be discussing the complex and large-scale problems with which we dealt (national debt, free-trade agreements, river damming, etc.). I did as much research as time allowed and participated to the best of my ability, but there were definitely times when I felt my face growing red as I spoke of global issues that I really knew little about.

In the same vein, it was hard to know if the issues we presented were relevant to the overall premise (the relevance of the national debt issue was questioned, for example). I suppose that there is always to be some uncertainty in discussions of this nature—even in the real world—so these issues of mine are not necessarily negative ones, just areas where I personally would have liked to feel more comfortable. That being said, I feel that the exercise, and this course as a whole, has gifted me some global awareness that I previously lacked, and for that I am grateful.