

War Game 1 Reflection: Agriculture

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My journey through the first war game was one filled with uncertainty and excitement. The reason I entered the scientific field for undergraduate studies was because I thought that it would be the best avenue for enacting concrete change. Climate change conferences, to me, always ended with more uncertainty and lack of accountability than it started with and headlines in the newspapers always left me with a bitter taste for the political field. Despite my hesitation with the effectiveness of policymaking and political negotiations however, I was eager to navigate through the world of politics that I knew very little of. This reflection is therefore an identification of the challenges, difficulties and questions that I have faced throughout the different phases of the war game.

On Research

As agriculture was the lifeline of India, it was not difficult to identify that it was a national priority to ensure that it continued to prosper especially as it accounted for majority of the people's livelihoods. What I found most challenging during research was filtering all the data that I had come across and determining where it fit in the grand scheme of things. A quick Google search on the topic of climate change and agriculture in India brought about more than 100,000 search results and it became so easy for me to drown in the information. Furthermore, I realized that there were already multiple policies in place in India to help combat the consequences of climate change such as the

NAPCC. Our team then needed to develop strategies that would not only create unique solutions but also focus on the implementation of current and new policies.

On Representation and Strategy

One of the difficulties my group and I had to decide on was an overall strategy. Determining compromises was the most challenging task as we needed to take account of the other sectors in the negotiations process and the stakeholders that we were primarily representing. Like in many areas of the world, farmers in India had very little political power. Being given the chance to be their voice and representing their wants and needs involved understanding them not only as individuals but also as key players in the whole game. During group meetings and strategy sessions, I learned from my group mates the value of diversity in thinking. Because each of us were assigned a different area of expertise, we were able to look at the problem from multiple perspectives and also come up with solutions that were more encompassing than had we done it individually. We understood that although we could not represent each and every farmer and cater to their individual needs, we could still develop solutions that would aid them especially during the coming of climate change. It was through this that we came up with our policies one of which was the collective model of farming involving small farmers working together to decrease the cost of resources and increase the output of product.

On Negotiating and Compromising

The actual war games was a kind of process that I have never been exposed to. I was part of the debate team in high school but the actual politics that came into negotiating was not something I was prepared for. Before coming into the war games, I thought that despite a few areas of divergences, there would be a general consensus to the different

policies given by each sector because these were all made to adapt and mitigate to climate change -the main reason these negotiations were happening in the first place. As someone not always exposed to politics, I was frustrated with our negotiations because we (as a conference) continued to issue vague statements and almost failed to enact concrete solutions. The biggest solutions that did end up on the final list included an increase use of GMOs, further research in nuclear energy and the construction of water dams. By the end of the war games, I wondered how it was that we reached the point where we allowed political agendas to pass through even if we were personally against these issues. I think that in taking the role of a sector, there will always be a degree of acting in self-interest and this is exactly what happened during this war game. It scared me to know how easily I gave up my stance on certain issues (such as GMOs) simply because I was now representing a different group of people whose stakes in the issues were very different from mine. This role-playing exercise truly taught me to widen my scope of thinking and to be more open to political negotiations. More over, it has given me a sense of what it is like to be in a political negotiation where compromises must always be made. With a topic like climate change it is difficult to make compromises because of the sensitivity of the topic which is why it makes me more appreciative of the decisions people in real climate change negotiations make.