

Individual Reflection – War Game 2  
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“I don’t know anything about China.”

I hate to admit that this was the very first thought that came into my head after realizing I would be representing China during the second war game. Realistically, I knew *some* things but I have a tendency to exaggerate. (Oops.)

My sub-topic was “Education and Research in India.” Education is something that happens to be very close to my heart; I teach second grade science every Saturday and am even considering teaching as a career. My passion for education stems from my mother; she has been working for the New York City public education system for practically my entire life and constantly inspires me. I began researching this topic about a week after the first war game was over whenever I found some spare time. My research led me to realize how fortunate I am to be receiving an education.

I was shocked to find that many Indian children fail to complete even the fourth grade and that girls are severely neglected in the education system. Literacy is something I constantly underappreciate, having acquired it at such a young age. My lack of appreciation ended after learning that India horrifically contains 39% of the world’s illiterate. My research on the Indian educational system left me burning to improve it.

China’s system is better but still has its fair share of shortcomings. The most disturbing fact I discovered was the high suicidal tendencies of Chinese youth due to the pressure they receive from heavily weighted (and seemingly impossible) exams, as well as their parents. Chinese youth do, however, have 100% literacy across the board with no discrepancy between males and females.

My group met for the first time about a week before the war game. It didn't take very long for us to figure out the positions we should take. I almost always volunteer for the leader position in group settings so I jumped at the opportunity to become the team leader for session one. I enjoy challenges and wanted to see how well I could do a twenty-minute presentation. My group was very encouraging and emphasized how much they loved my past class presentations. (I was extremely lucky to get placed in the same group as such intelligent, diligent, and witty young adults.)

Team China had absolutely no problem adhering to deadlines or working together. Everyone in my group stunned me with their thorough research and their clarity when presenting information to me. Our meetings were both productive and hilarious.

The night before the war game, one could say that Team China was slightly (or more than slightly) stressed. I stayed up probably much later than I should have practicing my presentation and trying to stay within twenty minutes. By the morning, as sleep deprived as I was, felt confident and excited.

I was the last to present during session one of the game. My favorite part of the whole experience was when Dr. Ganguly interrupted the presentation for a "press interjection" involving China's irrevocable hold on Tibet. The presentation was received well (or at least I hope so) and with that, the game was already halfway over!

During the lunch break, my group discussed what our policy priorities were. Our priorities included reducing inequality through education, calling upon developed nations to reduce emissions, investing in India, and creating a US Debt payment plan. The group negotiations with each of the other four entities were incredibly fun; I loved the role-playing

and the thought provoking conversation. After the negotiations were over, Chynna eloquently laid out our priorities to the class.

The part of the day that made me the most uncomfortable was a comment Dr. Iacono made regarding our idea to place quotas in the Indian and Chinese education systems; our idea was created in an attempt to get more women into universities. We said that we got this idea from the American ideal of affirmative action and Dr. Iacono responded by saying that it “didn’t exist.” We were not given a chance to defend our point and felt both extremely demeaned and disoriented. Later on, Dr. Ganguly met with us and helped us become less agitated by her comment. He helped us regain our composure and step into a more “Chinese” voice. (He essentially showed us the importance of being a bully during the game and assuming our roles.) The day’s most difficult task was maintaining our stereotypical Chinese personas.

The rest of the game was an absolute joy. We came back from our meeting with Dr. Ganguly filled with vengeance and excitement. Our voices were loud, outspoken, and pointed. We were unafraid to stand up for our priorities and our make-believe constituents. I only hoped that our team’s designated negotiator and technical leader would have been more vocal during the game. Alina and I were the ones truly representing our team when it was technically neither of our jobs to do so.

I left the war game feeling satisfied and more knowledgeable. I couldn’t be happier with my team or with the country I was given to represent. “I don’t know anything” turned into “I know more than I even thought I would.” The day ended with an unrelenting hope for a better world filled with all the climate policies to come.