

Joanna Sullivan
War Game 1 Individual Reflection
Energy Sector

Prior to coming on this dialogue, I had some serious apprehension in regards to the climate war games. I have never been one for public speaking and tend to find it difficult to verbally articulate my thoughts, especially when the stakes are high in terms of negotiations and debates. I participated in Model United Nations in high school, but my lack of confidence was always a major inhibiting factor during conferences, where I more often than not sat back and let the MUN elites fight for their gavels. So based on past experience, you could understand why I might be dreading this daylong negotiation.

Despite my lack of enthusiasm for the game itself, when I was assigned to research engineering adaptation for resilient cities in regards to the energy sector, I was thrilled. As a civil engineer, I find the different prospects of adaptation really interesting, and was especially excited to look more into adaptation as it related to the energy sector.

When thinking about ways to adapt to climate hazards prior to beginning my research, I first thought about the immense quantity of energy natural disasters contain. I was curious if there were any existing methods for harnessing power from events such as earthquakes, monsoons, or tsunamis that could also be used for resilience. When I looked more into it, I found some research on technology that consists of a carpet-like material which when laid on the sea floor captures energy from large waves, meanwhile dampening their effects. I was fascinated that not only could this synthetic ocean floor collect much of the wave's energy but at the same time could protect coastlines from extreme weather. Research findings such as this fueled my war game motivation, but I still felt overwhelmed with the idea of actively participating in the game.

When our team began divvying up roles and responsibilities, I shied away from the presenter role. Despite positive insights from teammates that I would do well in this position, I chose a different responsibility due to the fear that my presentation would be inadequate and I would let them down. I instead gravitated towards the role of technical leader and found myself learning a lot from my other group members in this position. Although I came into the process with an interest in science and engineering, I came out with much more exposure to the policy side of climate change, including a wider knowledge of international negotiations regarding climate.

During the war game itself I saw a major shift in myself. I found myself asking questions, giving insights, and actively participating in the discussion. The game seemed to give me more confidence and I attribute some of this to my true interest in the material. Discussing environmental topics such as GMOs, commercialized farming, dam construction, and desalinization was something I was incredibly passionate about. Although this had positive effects for my confidence in participation, I realized that I was not effectively representing my sector. I was letting my personal environmentalist views take the reins rather than thinking on behalf of the energy team.

I think this focus on personal beliefs is what was the most challenging part of the war game for me. However I also believe that this is what taught me the most. I have always been against nuclear energy, dams, and GMOs: the three main policy components we decided upon and which I supported during the game. Though I never would have fought to defend nuclear energy in real life, in the context of the war game it made sense as the most feasible option to reduce emissions. I despise the negative effects of dams on ecosystems and disagree with their extreme proliferation throughout the United States,

however I saw this as a good means for India to increase their power supply while cutting down on emissions. I do not trust GMOs or the companies who control the seed industry, but I understand the urgent need for a stable food supply for India's growing population. The war game taught me the intricacies of negotiation, how despite a delegate's personal beliefs, implementation of solutions must be feasible and appealing to all parties involved. It also raised the question of what environmentalism is in regards to climate change. I realized that due to the dire situation we are now facing globally, extreme options, although they may be far from perfect in terms of environmental consequences, may be necessary on the large scale in when it comes to reducing emissions and satisfying global needs. Overall, I felt as though I gained a lot from the war game process. I have newfound confidence in my abilities, a better grasp on how negotiations progress, and a new perspective on what is needed to make realistic change.