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War Game II Individual Reflection

To compete in the Climate Change Policy War Game, I had to step into my familiar arena of policy and act on behalf of an unfamiliar entity, the South Asian Alliance for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) minus its largest member country, India. Though I had previous knowledge of the seven countries besides India which compose SAARC, which includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, I found that discovering the complexities of their relationships to one another and to SAARC as well as their needs and desires on a world stage to be a multi-faceted and exhausting task. Henceforth, when referencing the seven countries my teammates and I were chosen to represent, I will use the term SAARC; India was represented at the negotiations as a separate entity. However, both teams remained thoughtfully aware of their commitments to one another as well as of the intimate ties between the two entities.

As I was responsible for understanding and advocating international agreements between SAARC and other international entities, the approach I took in conducting my research was as such: I digested as much information as possible about existing international agreements and international partnerships and compared this information to the needs officially expressed by SAARC in the action plans released following SAARC summits. As my teammates were tasked with contextualizing these needs in depth, I was tasked with convincing the other diplomatic teams, who would be present for the Climate Change Policy War Game, to support the international agreements and form the partnerships I felt would be the most supported by the governments we were selected to represent.

Devastation is what likely awaits the countries of SAARC should climate change be permitted to continue unabated. As small, poor, developing countries situated in delicate environmental locations, it is strongly within SAARC's interests to call for a limit on global warming and global emissions. As such, I chose to echo

the sentiment of the SAARC Ministerial Summit in calling for the other political bodies present to apply pressure on all countries to submit emissions mitigation proposals in line with the Cancun Agreements. These agreements propose that global warming be limited to less than 2° above pre-Industrial temperatures, with emissions being limited accordingly. Our support of this measure is linked closely to its recognition that developing countries have the right to emissions levels that would allow for development and improved quality of life. We also sought to establish partnerships with each team to fund research and innovation in sustainable development for SAARC. These partnerships would be modeled upon the EU-ASEAN SUSTAIN model. The reason for this being that I identified developmental needs expressed by SAARC that were shared by the countries of Southeast Asia and that were being met within their respective countries due to the partnership.

The aforementioned explanation of our policy and partnership proposals serves as an example of the SAARC representatives to attempt to provide accurate of our stakeholders' opinions. The greatest disappointment of the Climate Change Policy war game, in my opinion as well as of the rest of the SAARC advisory team, was the inability of teams to accurately represent the interests of the entities they were chosen to represent. International negotiations inherently bring a set of challenges related to the relatively smaller set of shared interests as compared to the relatively larger set of individual interests. Preexisting biases brought an added set of difficulties that consumed large amounts of time and effort. Additionally, inadequate research of the economic basis of proposals lead to demands being brought to the debate floor that would never be mentioned in an actual international climate policy debate.

Problematic biases aside, the Climate Change Policy War Game accurately reflected certain issues that have arisen during meetings between the nations of the world as they have attempted to address climate change issues. The initiative we proposed which asked countries to limit emissions on a per-capita basis with a curve to reflect the needs of developing nations failed as it was perceived by the United States as an economic hindrance not worth the shared benefit of a more

stable global climate. To put it simply, the stakeholders of the United States, or any country, do not always feel responsible for the safety of the citizens of other countries. The devastation of increased flooding and droughts in SAARC countries is ultimately not a high priority for countries not directly affected. This rationality is the exact cause of many political impasses in key international negotiations on climate change. The challenge of creating a shared sense of responsibility is actively being addressed by activists and scientists across the planet. The rejection of our emissions proposal, although a failure and disappointment for our team, exemplified the difference between the two war games. At the Climate Science War Game, the shared goal of improving the nation of India was very strong as compared to individual interests and, thusly, many of the proposals agreed upon in the negotiations period were passed in the voting stage, albeit with a few amendments. At the Climate Change Policy War Game, the shared interest of limiting and addressing the threat of climate change was ultimately not strong enough to overcome many of the differences in individual differences between the entities represented. The frustration felt by our team in pleading for fair emissions standards echoed the same frustration which is felt by all underrepresented countries of the world when they are tasked with influencing leading world powers to respect the interests of the citizens of the underrepresented countries. However, the joy we derived from our success in establishing partnerships with each entity to help fund much needed research and development in our member countries is proof that developing nations must continue to make their voices heard in the global dialogue, no matter the difficulty of the challenges associated with doing so.

The Climate Change Policy War Game allowed me to garner a newfound respect for the challenges faced by smaller, less-powerful countries in international negotiations. The voices of the underrepresented are quieter than I could have ever imagined. One realization occurred to me upon completion of the war game, which has the potential to greatly impact my life, was the importance of contextualization in diplomacy. The failures in contextualization have already been mentioned in this reflection. However, it was the post-war-game activity that allowed me to draft an

understandable analogy that explains my thoughts on the subject. In the activity, we were asked to formulate a thoughtful response to a personal question. After doing so, we recited our response to our partners. Then, we were instructed to find a new partner, and to explain to them the response of the first partner. Then, each person was asked to speak about the answer of the person they had not spoken to directly. These secondhand explanations to the group were awkward and lacking in nuance. The analogy between this activity: the way the responses were presented at various stages of the activity represents varying levels of context possessed by diplomats. The person who formulated the response has complete context; they are able to draw upon their wealth of life experiences and emotions to provide a response. Their original partner, who repeats the response at the next stage of the activity, has moderate context. Although it is not their answer, they are able to observe the body language and vocal inflection with which the answer was first presented, and they are able to make up for some of the deficiencies in human language. The last person to hear the answer represents a diplomat with the least context; having nothing more than a few sentences recounted secondhand at their disposal to interpret the original meaning of the answer, they are ill equipped to explain the intricacies of the answer to the group. Similarly, a diplomat who is not well aware of the context of an issue, both to the country or entity they represent as well as the context of the issue to the world, is ill equipped to engage in debate on the issue.