

The Mussoorie Protocol

It was midnight on the 20th of June, 2015. The second climate war game about international policy was to start in nine hours. The cool Mussoorie breeze kept me awake as I waited for all the teams to turn in their presentations, but the internet wasn't working and representatives from the US, UN, India, SAARC and China queued to hand over their presentations in thumb-drives. As moderator, I had to summarize the essential policies various teams were proposing in 8 slides. Each presentation had an average of 20 slides and sieving through them with a fine comb to pick out the most important snippets of information proved challenging. I got a headstart with my content by looking at the presentations from 2014, but the topics assigned to us this year were more complex. I worked on the slides till my eyes pleaded for mercy and went to sleep around 3am.

I woke up at 7 am to the sound of an alarm blaring in my ears. I met Kara and Lindsey at breakfast and asked for their suggestions to my slides as I added the final touches. With a glass of ice-coffee in my hand, I headed into the conference room and sat at the moderator desk. Professor Ganguly set the tone for the day by announcing that it was the year 2020 and the future was grim. The President of the United States, Hillary Clinton wanted international climate policies to secure the future of the world. After that, the moderator team declared the war games open and called the first team to the stage. Each team presented for 20 mins and answered questions for an additional 5 mins. SAARC spoke about how climate hazards combined with population growth led to emigration and caused strain on various sectors. They asked for international support for local agreements and stressed regional cooperation such as

a Nepal-Bhutan nexus on hydroelectricity. They had difficulties in working around India because it constituted 80% of the economic activity of the region. I also had the unenviable task of timing the presentations and felt uncomfortable interrupting a good presentation but assumed my role seriously for the war game.

The next team to present was USA. They spoke about the education system of India and the fact that there are a hundred thousand Indian students studying in the US and the cultural exchange programs between the two countries, an example being this dialogue. They pointed out the refugee crisis that would result from climate change and promised humanitarian aid. They were also willing to negotiate about the current emission and energy policies like Clean Air Act, Kyoto Protocol and PACE. Team India began their presentation by speaking about ancient history and moved on to modern policies. The goal of economic growth and poverty eradication superseded a green India. Team UN delivered a presentation on climate change awareness as a global issue and advocated for better education as a means of tackling the crisis. But they listed several agreements which lacked tooth to be effective. Finally, China presented a huge economic powerhouse just beginning to implement sustainable development practices as part of a five year plan, but border disputes with India clouded a bigger trade route agreement between the countries.

Then my chance came to present the moderator slides and after summarizing what each team had said, I noted that most of them agreed on a more inclusive energy dialogue, water sharing and sustainable development. At the same time, the main thorns of contention were refugee crisis, border disputes and international agreements. Setting the tone of the negotiations, I made suggestions for each team and then we dispersed for lunch break.

The teams met with one another and negotiated for 10 mins each. I heard alarming things as I sat through the meetings such as China asking the US to spend its debt repayment money on renewable energy sources and the US agreeing to inspection of its facilities by a UN watchdog. Having read about the political scenarios in both countries, I knew that they would actively refuse such measures. It also reminded of how little all of us knew about the interests of the stakeholders and the difficulty in assuming the roles we were assigned. There was a series of presentations by the teams listing the measures they had agreed upon and I had to make a list of collated points on the fly. In the recess before the final round of joint negotiations began, Prof. Ganguly met with each team and corrected some of the radical views.

I awkwardly sat in the middle of the room next to the projector as my list of points showed on the screen. The teams assembled and discussed the issues amidst an overtone of seriousness. They added amendments to the main points in a round-robin way and I constantly kept editing the list. To ensure clarity, I color coded the points so everyone could make out where all teams stood in agreement, disagreed with a particular amendment or disagreed with the issue as a whole. Amidst the heated debate, I felt pleased that most teams had negotiated around what I had suggested earlier in the day in my moderator presentation such as Reducing Emissions, Sustainable Development for China and SAARC region and expanding the US-India Energy Dialogue. These points became the cornerstones of the final policy. As the day drew to a close, Dr. Iacono chaired an insightful reflection session in which she made all of us think about the sacrifices we could make for a sustainable future of the world. At the end, we concluded: "It would still not be enough!"