

CIV4777

June 18, 2015

Dr. Auroop Ganguly

Pedro Falcon

War Game #1 Reflection

Policy-making is like driving a car. The science and engineering can be as close to perfect as they can be, and yet this is not nearly as important as the human factor in driving. Similarly -when it comes to policy- the science, facts and predictions are there, speaking the truth and yet this makes no difference if the policy makers choose to ignore them or to exploit a specific sector for their own interests. This War-Game was an eye opening experience from which I learned everything that has to happen before an international agreement between countries is signed. However, the expectations and the journey to the knowledge I ended up acquiring are definitely something worth reflecting on.

At first, when I heard that we were going to have to participate in two War Games in this Dialogue I was skeptic. The word *game* just simply did not make sense to me; I initially expected this activity to be, in a way, simple and trivial. To my surprise, the first war game proved to be a challenging and informative activity from which I learned many things.

Preparing for the War Game was interesting to say the least. Everything was confusing in the beginning; I did not comprehend why we were separated into five different sectors. "What does this mean?" I kept asking myself, but after the professor elaborated and explained what each sector had to do everything was a bit less confusing. I

also did not know anyone in my team except for Nick Ireland, however, I was confident that we would all do a great work and concentrate our efforts on doing our best.

So once the ground rules were set and the countdown for the first war game started I decided to begin doing my research. I thought that being part of the water sector would make things easy; “there must be an endless amount of resources” we thought as a team, and indeed, this turned out to be true. What was not true was our initial speculation of how difficult doing our research would be. What began as a crystal clear comprehension of our sector quickly evolved into a sea of confusing data, problems and connections with other sectors.

The complexity of the water sector overwhelmed us, it turned out that our sector had, for the most part, a direct bilateral relationship with every other sector in the War Game – they all depended on water as much as water depended on them. The activities we did in the Dialogue started to make more sense after our research and an example of this is our visit to Dharavi. After analyzing our visit to the slum, I understood that Dharavi is a real life example of how water directly affects the healthcare and industry sectors. The pollution in the river, and the lack of drinking water and toilets makes Dharavi a health hazard for its inhabitants; diarrhea, water related diseases and dehydration are the main reasons why people die in slums like this.

Similarly, the videos we watched in the academic sessions about the river and the scarcity of water in the world proved to be valuable and powerful insights that helped us have stronger arguments and to be better prepared. However, what was most surprising to me was what I read in a website that Lindsey Bressler sent me a day before the first War Game. This UN website contained information that did not only help me fully understand

the link water had with every other sector, but also how water is more than just something related to infrastructure. I learned from this website that water is also gender equality, especially in developing countries like India where the task of collecting and transporting water has been assigned to the women. This got me really excited when special guest Nandini gave us a lecture in Kolkata about that same topic – it made climate change feel more real in the sense that it linked its effect with much more than just the temperature, precipitation and water.

So doing the research was challenging and choosing the information we thought we needed was confusing but I think my team and I did a good job. As for the negotiation itself, I thought it was going to be smooth and quick, but the complexity and interests that each sector had certainly complicated things. Sorting out our priorities and taking into consideration the interests of our stakeholders helped us become more assertive and better negotiators; we decided what we were willing to give up and what was open to negotiations. Personally, I believe that presenting the changes we made to our initial goals helped me understand better our sector, helped the other teams comprehend the intimate link their sectors had with mine and, on a personal note, was also a source of satisfaction when people told me that I did a great job presenting.

This war game definitely set a standard that had to be exceeded in the next war game on, both, a group and personal way. I learned what to expect in the next war games, how to be better prepared and how to leverage things more efficiently. But above all, it was a great way of not studying or understanding policy-making, but to experience it.