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War Game #1 Reflection

This first set of war games was an eye-opening experience for me. From forcing me to study a new point of view to working on a team and witnessing policy-making firsthand, I feel that I gleaned quite a bit from this project.

Walking into the war games, I felt fairly prepared and felt that I understood what to expect. I had taken classes like Legal Argumentation, along with Argumentation and Debate so I thought I had an understanding on what policy negotiation and prioritizing agendas looked like. Though this was somewhat true, these war games took what I had learned in the classroom and implemented all of it in a very applicable format. Being part of the industry sector in addition to all of this made this realistic scenario take a challenging twist for me. Previously in class, I was able to choose my topic and choose the stance I planned to defend. As a marine biology major, it is easy to view industry as the enemy, the greedy pig that does more harm than good. I had to cast my judgements aside and conduct research in order to advocate for the very sector I tended to blame for most of the environmental troubles I had witnessed. The media is very quick to discuss the role that industry has on climate change but my research forced me to look at the other side of the coin and think about the role climate change would have on industry. As I researched the intersection between climate change science and industry, it became clear that because most of the businesses in India are in the unofficial sector, they are therefore very vulnerable to climate change, due to the lack of enforcement for building codes and worker rights. Small businesses like those found in Dharavi or startups that are in the humbler parts of

town are very likely to face the greatest threats with temperature extremes, floods, and droughts. I came to realize that though the industry sector may be one of the largest contributors to climate change, they also stand to gain quite a bit from developing sustainable practices. This in turn would allow them to continue to help India become more of an industrial leader in the world. Our team decided to take this stance and after much collaboration, we felt prepared for our first war games.

Preparing the slides for the war games and negotiating with the sectors ended up being two completely different challenges. While our group was fairly prepared, we were all recent experts on our subjects. Due to time constraints, I felt that we certainly struggled to keep the same goals in mind through the course of the war games. While we all agreed that we wanted industry to play a greater role in encouraging sustainability, we all had different desires on how that would play out; whether it be self-regulation for carbon emissions or encouraging the commercialization of farms. At points I felt that we were not all on the same page such as instances where someone would ask antagonizing questions during the presentations when I felt we should be encouraging unity. But as our discussions progressed and we broke for lunch, our sector was able to regroup and respect the goals we were each trying to pursue.

The actual logistics and discussion of the war games surprised me to a great extent. I found the whole experience to be physically taxing as our negotiations began after lunch. During the negotiation period, it seemed vital to both discuss our priorities while also trying to be reasonable with other teams so that they could trust us as allies. The discussions and negotiations were heated as I witnessed my peers get behind some very strong and controversial topics such as dams, collective farms, and nuclear power. Though I was surprised to see my friends support such strong endeavors, the real shock came after the war games when I found out that most of

what I had seen was a façade as most of my friends did not actually support the causes they were advocating for. For example, I was getting quite frustrated with Thurston and his advocacy for dams only to realize after the fact that he actually hates dams. I learned two very strong lessons from this. The first is that I, in retrospect, clearly got too emotionally invested in our negotiations. While passion is not a bad thing, at points it certainly clouded my judgement and I may have been advocating for my own personal beliefs rather than for the objectives for my sector. The second lesson I began to consider was how much this all mirrored actual panel discussions that seek to adapt to and mitigate climate change. How often are there passionate lobbyists fighting for a cause that they themselves don't truly believe in? It's a sobering thought to think that some confident politicians may be setting aside their moral judgements just to be able to better serve their sector. While I find these tactics reasonable, I can't help but wonder how often the desire to help the common good has been squashed by large sector preferences. I also ponder to what extent all this is healthy versus exploitative.

Looking back on the war games, I am very grateful for the experiences that the project offered us. The problems and weaknesses that each sector brought up have stuck with me. Now as we have traveled to new states, I can't help but think about the infrastructure weaknesses that exist in villages. I notice the degradation of roads, the value in social entrepreneurship to put in solar panels on village rooftops, and the health problems that slums face. After our discussion on irrigation and water needs, I found the trip to the farm to be much more enlightening and I found greater significance in Professor Rao's work. Moving forward, I find myself pondering what role I wish to play as we as a society seek to minimize our contribution to and the impacts caused by climate change. In some ways, I feel that I witness two major groups on opposite ends of the spectrum. Respectfully, I see a lot of talented scientists that have brilliant work but fail to

effectively communicate it to the public. On the opposite end, I see many influential politicians and lobbyists, like what we posed as that day, who are very convincing but know little to nothing about the topic that they are defending. I can see myself playing a strong role in advocacy but I wonder where on the knowledge spectrum about climate change I should place myself. I am very eager to begin work on the next war games as I may take on new roles and responsibilities.

Hopefully through experimentation and trial and error, I can discern what my true passions and strengths are. I find great comfort, though, that climate change is such an interdisciplinary issue that no matter what role I choose, I still can play an important part in helping our world prevent and prepare for climate change. We all have a valuable part to play in this issue and it truly will take all of our brilliant minds to tackle this problem.