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War Game #2 Reflection

It's intriguing how even though the premise of these war games was fairly similar, the outcomes and lessons that I learned were completely different from those of the first war games.

Preparations for these war games were completely different from the last war games. Due to Wi-Fi connectivity not being consistent, we certainly had a lot less time to gather information and put together our presentation. On top of this, our group certainly had to overcome some setbacks since both Zamir and Rachi were on the hiking trip and they were not able to come back until the day before the war games. But despite all of these difficulties which were out of our control, I was extremely proud of the work our group put forth. Though we were not able to dedicate as much time as a full group to these games, the time we did spend brought forth quality productivity and work. Everyone had varying opinions, offered up strong beliefs, and brought different strengths for the assignment. I was deeply appreciative for Zamir's knowledge of the various SAARC countries, Sydney's presentation skills, Nick's strong opinions for policies, and Rachi's artistic touch for the presentation. I, personally, feel like I was able to contribute valuable input when it came to discussing the energy and environmental problems that each of the SAARC countries faced. Though it was challenging to represent 7 countries at the same time, I felt our team was able to discuss enough to find the common goals each country had such that we knew what our exact incentives and goals were by the time the war games were ready to start. Just like how our varying countries were divided and needed a common goal, that is exactly what

we as a group needed to do. We allowed our differences to bring strength to our group rather than break us apart.

The outcome of these war games was more realistic in my opinion as the policy logistics and outcomes looked completely different from the previous games. Amongst the groups, negotiations were harder to accomplish, distrust was present, and opinions were stubborn. Looking at the itemized sheet of policies, it looks like we were not able to reach a consensus on more things this time around. As infuriating as this was, it seemed to be more realistic to what modern day policy making looks like. We all clearly came into these war games with clear goals and strong feelings about what our stakeholders wanted. We all did a better job assuming the roles of our countries and putting their interests forth instead of our own. I feel that it is valuable to note that although there was a lot of tension and miscommunication amongst the groups, I do not feel that that was present within the groups. For SAARC, we had common goals in place before we began such that once the negotiation process had started, we were able to stay on the same page while our priorities changed during the discussion. This was very valuable as any shortcomings that occurred during the war games did not come from miscommunication within the groups, but rather strong differences amongst the countries. As a member of SAARC, I was infuriated that the United States was not willing to agree to a cap and trade agreement based upon per capita carbon emissions. But had the United States agreed to our request, I would have thought that they were misrepresenting their country and their goals. Even though we were able to get less done, I felt that this was a fairer simulation because we actually stood by the opinions of our stakeholders, rather than blindly passing initiatives due to fatigue and frustration like last time. I would have liked to have passed stronger initiatives but it should have been through persuasion and compromise, not through apathy or surrendering.

While I feel that these war games were more accurate in many ways, the simulation still had its major flaws. One of the greatest shortcomings was perhaps the initiatives we all brought forth. It may have been due to a lack of time but some of the policies we all brought forth did not seem to entirely line up with the beliefs of our countries. For example, our group seemed to minimize the tensions between India and Pakistan when it came to discussing an transnational railroad through the two countries. We wanted to help Pakistan and Afghanistan economically but we did not fully think through the religious or political tensions that existed. Our group also failed to think about the communist undertones that exist within China. Though their programs for funding sustainable research and education were great for surface value, SAARC should have hesitated more about the political implications this could have had further down the road. The money could have had strong strings attached that we did not consider. I also questioned some of the incentives brought forward by other groups. The fact that China's strongest policy that they were pushing was for education for women seemed a little odd. I found it an honorable goal to have, but I questioned if it actually lined up as a strong priority for China at this time. Perhaps had we dedicated more time to in-depth research, we could have proposed incentives that lined up more with our countries and less so with our own goals. I believe all of our groups did a good job given the circumstances, but by no means were we true experts of our countries.

I found this whole experience to be very eye-opening for me as to what role I want to play to help combat climate change. Walking into these war games, I was heavily considering switching to political science with an emphasis in environmental science. Then we did the reflection with Dr. Iacono afterwards. When we were asked to represent each other on our views of mitigating climate change, something clicked for me. As I stood inside the circle as one of the people who was never represented, I thought about how flawed our political system can be. Even

though we may work really hard, there will always be minorities misrepresented, voices never accurately heard. I have a deep respect for political science majors and the work that politicians do but I realize that is not the type of work that I want to do. I always knew that I wanted to be an advocate for environmental science but I was never really sure for which part, the policy side or the scientific side. Being misrepresented hits a nerve for me. I value taking the time to listen to people and to hear their stories. If I care about the environment so much, I should take the time to hear its story first hand. As a marine biologist, I can now see myself pursuing a masters and possibly doctorate in marine biology. In doing so, I can listen to the environment's story, listen to the cries few hear, and hopefully represent them fairly in advocacy for better plans for a more sustainable future.