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War Game 2 Reflection

When I first began research, I didn't even know which countries were in SAARC or what SAARC stood for. Although I felt I had a strong understanding of India, I didn't know the first thing about the countries surrounding it. As I began to explore more, I realized that the SAARC countries, although close geographically, are vastly different in most other areas. It was extremely difficult to see how the needs of the Maldives could correspond with the needs of Afghanistan. Moreover, it was a challenge to combine the policy goals of such different countries into one agenda. Not only were there conflicting alliances like Pakistan's relationship with China and Nepal's close relationship with India, but there were internal conflicts within SAARC that made forming a singular policy very difficult.

Despite differences in population, urbanization, industrial activity and political ties, we found that the overarching similarity between the SAARC countries was their developing economies. The developing nature of these countries effected their energy consumption, production and emissions and gave us a platform for our negotiations. This created some difficulty however, because I felt that I didn't have a strong enough background in economics or politics to make informed decisions about what our countries would really do. The political goals of a country are incredibly intricate and influenced by so many factors, and we simply didn't have the time or ability to fully understand the priorities of our countries fully enough to negotiate realistically.

Throughout the war game, I found myself frustrated because I don't think we really embodied our respective countries. Although we had a lot of knowledge of climate change policies, sustainable energy sources, and emissions reductions solutions, I think everyone, including myself, had a hard time really assuming the role of a delegate of our countries. In the future, I think we need to do more background research into the economic backgrounds and political platforms of our countries in order to realistically represent a country. For example, as SAARC, I think we oversimplified the goals of our diverse countries in order to create a more simple and understandable agenda. Personally, I feel that China would not have focused on women's education at a climate conference, and I don't think that the United States would have suggested an emissions cap based purely on GDP. In these cases, I think we let our personal beliefs cloud

our delegate responsibilities which made it difficult for me to feel like we were creating viable solutions.

Additionally, I was frustrated by the vagueness of pure policy agreements. In the first war game, although I didn't personally agree with the outcome, I think we had a better grasp of some of the biggest issues and we created more tangible policy agreements like the dam project, increased infrastructure, and research funding in energy and healthcare. In contrast, in this war game, the nature of international agreements is much less defined and we didn't specify consequences, the level of emissions caps, or timelines for reductions. While we made some progress, I feel that this conference resulted in more empty promises like the ones that occurred before in the Bali and Cancun Agreements. I don't think I am cut out for international negotiations or politics because the lack of consensus and concrete results.

As the war game ended, I was extremely relieved. I was frustrated by our oversimplifications, personal bias, and lack of results, and I didn't feel like I had gained much from the experience. However, the reflection with Dr. Iacono was really valuable. I realized that despite months of research, we still would never have been able to create a good solution. Diplomats and world leaders who have dedicated their lives to global climate change policy haven't been able to reach a consensus, so expecting us to achieve one was unrealistic. The reflection reminded me that the process was about understanding the difficulties and extreme complexities that exist in climate change policy negotiations. Additionally, I really enjoyed that Dr. Iacono brought things back to a personal level, since we had spent the whole day emphasizing larger policy goals. It really made me re-evaluate my beliefs in light of what we had discussed that day as well as the rest of the trip.

Seeing firsthand the effects of climate change on India, I am much more personally aware of my contributions to the problem. For one, my energy consumption and resulting carbon footprint are significantly higher than necessary. I am not nearly as conscious as I could be about using energy responsibly, and I have fallen into the American pattern of overconsumption. Yet, upon reflecting, I still struggle between social responsibility and an aversion to compromising my comfortable lifestyle. I remember someone mentioning that if there was anything we were

willing to give up, we already would have done so. This truth made me uncomfortable. I realized that I like to think I can give up a lot, however I haven't made much progress in actually cutting back. I sincerely feel that being immersed in climate change studies and its effects for the past six weeks has alerted me to the urgency of changing my actions.