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War Game 1 Reflection

For this war game I was the negotiator for team agriculture. I felt that this role was suited to my experience as a debater in High School and that the sector was one that was interesting but also in which I didn't have a very deep knowledge. From the beginning, I approached this war game with the understanding that the more knowledge I could obtain, the better prepared I would be during the whole process, and especially the negotiations. At our first meeting, my group agreed with this sentiment, and we resolved to do some independent research and to meet back up to discuss our goals for the war game. For the research I read up on agriculture in India as much as I could, and explored other sectors to better prepare myself in general. My personal focus was on international treaties and negotiations. In this area, I felt there was insufficient content for it to really be beneficial to my team in the context of the war game.

Based on the research that I conducted, I came to the conclusion that water was essential to agriculture and that the key to reducing water use was to improve efficiency of irrigation. Additionally, the primary goal of agriculture is to produce sufficient food for the country. Thus, increasing yields and reducing waste and inefficiency would be extremely beneficial for food security and sustainability. With this in mind, I met back up with my group to hammer out the plan for the war game.

Before meeting formally for a second time, my group decided who exactly would fill each role based on their strengths. We were still relatively unclear on what the roles and expectations were but after reading the descriptions for each role, we reached a reasonable assignment where everyone was happy. As I mentioned earlier, I was chosen to be the negotiator which was exciting because it seemed like it could be an interesting role to play. Our next meeting was focused upon our goals for the war game. This included the goals which I suggested, in addition to a few that we were uncertain about. The first of this latter group was genetically modified organisms, or GMO's, the role of which we were a bit unclear. We did find a bit of evidence that they had been used in the past to a small extent. Additionally, after seeing the success of the Amul collective, we decided that it would be a good idea to support collectives. We believed that this would help to increase efficiencies and yield while retaining the integrity of small farms. Near the end of this meeting a couple group members commented about how knowledgeable I seemed to be about agriculture. We decided that I would be the main person answering questions, as I was apparently good at conveying a sense of deep knowledge of our sector. I thought this was an interesting observation as I have never considered myself to be a particularly good speaker, but my group members seemed to think I was.

Between that meeting and the war game, our preparations were mainly about the presentation and strategies for the war game. We made sure to share the knowledge that we had obtained through research. I found that all of my group members added insights of their own and provided valuable resources for the presentation. In terms of strategy, we decided to focus upon pushing our goals forward and including as many as possible. In this way, if we dropped some of the minor goals, we could use them as bargaining chips. Initially, GMO's also filled this role as they were a relatively minor part of our agenda.

The war game itself overturned our expectations as our carefully laid plans were swept aside. Personally, I felt that some of the other groups, especially healthcare, were acting in a manner inconsistent with my expectations. In that instance, I felt that foreign direct investment was not sufficient to improve the Indian healthcare system and that more systemic changes were necessary. This is especially true in the area of climate change as private hospitals may not be able to have the same sort of role in disaster relief as public resources. Nonetheless, I felt that, as a member of the agricultural sector, it would not be advantageous to point this out. Additionally, as long as the healthcare sector was willing to work to us to advance our agenda, we wouldn't have any problems with supporting them. This was a fairly cynical attitude but I have a feeling it accurately reflects an attitude that would be common during these types of negotiations. It reminded me of pork barrel spending in Congress, where unrelated projects could be added to a bill to entice congressmen to support it. In the same way, we were willing to support basically any project that didn't conflict with our goals as long as we got something in return.

I thought that the war game itself went extremely well and each of our group members had a valuable role to play. One idea that I found somewhat challenging was the amount of compromise that was required even among my group in order to come to a consensus. Ideally, I would be able to control the agenda of my group, however, I had to resist my urge to micromanage. Instead, decision-making had to happen at the team level which I think properly simulated a negotiation process.

Unfortunately, I felt that there were a number of factors that diminished the overall effect or learning process of the war games. Overall, I felt that individuals had a hard time adopting their roles completely, even within my own group. This meant that they would act in a way that might actually be detrimental to them or they just didn't worry too much about the impacts of the

negotiations on their stakeholders. Additionally, I found it far too easy to compromise and to simply agree on every point. This made the entire process less beneficial, at least in my mind, because it denied us a chance to explore a topic in the context of debate. The main controversy that did happen, between commercial and collective farming, was eventually settled by a vague compromise. This served to create a large disconnect between the negotiations process and the actual proposals. Basically, it lowered the overall enthusiasm as the negotiations seemed rather pointless. This was exacerbated by the overall atmosphere during the war game. The organizational structure had been well thought out, but it wasn't adhered to and thus group discussions sometimes turned into team discussions or devolved into a shouting match. This problem increased as the war game continued so that by the end there were very few people who were actually participating. I still found the war game to be a fun and educational experience, but it was clear that not everyone else did, and their lack of enthusiasm was rather disappointing.