

Reflection on the Second War Game

We entered the second War Game as ‘seasoned professionals’, ready to take on whatever came at us. I was a member of Team USA, focusing on Prehistoric and Historic India. Instead of focusing on the links between the prehistoric United States, which has yet to exist, and prehistoric India, I chose to focus on the significance of prehistoric and historic India. We hoped to use this history to convince the Indian government of the importance of striving for climate change adaptation and mitigation as they develop as a nation.

My research delved into the Indus Valley civilization, which flourished in an advantageous climate and was brought to its knees by droughts. The droughts are not solely to blame for the decline of the civilization, but they were so disastrous due to vulnerabilities and the society’s failure to adapt. The Indus Valley civilization is seen by many as the precursor to the India that exists today, so I chose to focus on its decline as a case study to establish the importance of being proactive in the face of climate change.

Culturally, rivers have been known as ‘life-bestowing, life-nurturing, and life protecting divine mothers’, and this value extends beyond the spiritual aspects of life. Enacting legislation to protect water rights, regulate water accessibility, and ensure an end to the mistreatment of India’s water supply, will be a difficult task for the government. However, we believed that highlighting the cultural importance of water could be a productive way to convince the Indian public to embrace these policies, and chose to embrace that through our presentation.

While conducting my research, I realized that I was no longer directly focusing on U.S.-India relations. However, if our strategy is to convince the Indian government to

focus their resources on a problem that the U.S. significantly contributed to the creation of, it's important for us to understand the Indian context. How can we persuade a country to do something for us, if we do not understand what that change could mean for their country, society, and livelihoods?

During the War Games, our team focused mainly on U.S.-India relations. We understood the importance of U.S.-China, U.S.-SAARC, and U.S.-United Nations relationships, but we decided to focus mainly on the main topic of the summit, to set our egos and other complications aside, and really accomplish something. Our strategy for negotiations, as a country that did not ratify the Kyoto Protocol, was to establish another climate change protocol, with more realistic (in reality, less stringent) regulations and the inclusion of setting limits for China and India. Although we were able to agree on the establishment of a future protocol summit, we did not manage to convince our fellow summit members to commit to any terms of the protocol. This was a major disappointment for our team.

Our negotiations went smoothly with our fellow delegates, until we hit a snag with the United Nations representatives. As they agreed to the establishment of a future protocol summit, they brought up the idea of increasing U.S. funding to the U.N. Though not an unreasonable request, the way in which it was presented did not inspire goodwill in some of the hearts of the U.S. delegations. This was a lesson in negotiation for myself, as I saw personalities clash over an issue whose resolution should not have to take into account the temperaments of strategists. I could imagine how difficult it must be in real-life negotiations, with clashes between bigger egos that often have a significant amount of power.

As the War Games came to a close, the groups learned to compromise, or at least accept a certain level of disagreement. Each team made sure that their voice was heard this time around, so there were no surprise indignations to derail the negotiation process.

If there was anything I could do to change the war game process, it would be to make it a bit more structured. I think they could improve with the appointment of a specified speaker, or at least the enforcement of the team members' positions. Although I think that the War Games went well with the level of informality that went on, it would be interesting to see if the dynamics of the process would change with more organization. I thought our moderator, Tricia, did especially well with organizing the questions to the U.S. team. She foresaw the chaos that could ensue, and made sure that each team had their voice heard.

Another lesson from these War Games is the importance of communication. It's difficult to have your voice heard, especially if the person next to you is speaking louder. People can grow incredibly frustrated and feel increasingly helpless or useless when they are unable to speak their mind. I am quickly starting to realize, in real life and in the War Games, proper communication is essential if you want to accomplish anything. In a region with countless languages and dialects, communications between fellow countrymen can be difficult, let alone with people from other places.

I'm sad to see these War Games come to an end, but I hope to take these lessons moving forward. If I am ever able to participate in such a negotiation in real life, which I hope to one day, I know I'll look back to these War Games, and cannot wait to see how they differ.