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War Games 1 Personal Reflection

In the context of India, the concept of “War Games” seemed misplaced and unnatural. When I thought of the great mother country, an emphasis on nonviolence and “unity in diversity” came to mind. Never did I expect to simulate war – quite the contrary. But despite this country’s reputation, my research made the call for war clear. Critical resources and fiscal allocations needed to be disputed over in order for progress toward sustainability to be achieved.

I was placed in the Water Sector and was assigned the role of researching International Policy and Negotiations. Initially, being a behavioral neuroscience major, I felt unqualified because I had no background in engineering. Therefore, the news that I was researching a topic less science-intensive was received with great relief. Despite not having the strongest background in international affairs, I trusted myself. I knew that I could do sufficient research and be prepared to present relevant information.

Just after a few searches, I was able to find solid information. Drives for international policy became clear – the source waters of the basin were in India. This meant that neighboring countries feared for potential droughts during times of war since India controlled the water supply. The most relevant information that I found was that of the Interlinking of Rivers Project; this was a project that intended to link the 37 rivers of India by canals, large dams, and reservoirs. However, it was controversial due to its

potential for international conflict by reducing water that could flow to bordering countries (i.e. Bangladesh). This became an important topic of conversation later, during the sector negotiations and amendment process.

When I met with my group, I noticed that despite having such specific and individual topics, our information tended to overlap. It all came together nicely and we all agreed upon our goals. We wanted to limit agriculture's water usage, hold industries responsible for emissions, and develop renewable energy sources to fuel water production. After our presentation, I felt like this war game was not just about what one knew, but how well one could defend just a few facts. As a group, we had to involve our audience by playing on emotions using current events, such as the death toll due to the water shortage. We needed to show how our plans could have a significant impact on many lives. Dams would provide much needed drinking water and reduce persistent flooding; these simple facts were enough to provide a strong case for my sector. With the professionals having such strong backgrounds in water, I knew that I had to simply trust my limited knowledge and accept their input. Working as a group, this confident mentality became unified and we all took on the role of water sector with great sincerity.

I shied away from other roles, like the presenter, because I did not feel confident enough in my knowledge. However, I do not regret my decision of my role. I learned that I am quite capable during debates as I truly fell into my role as a negotiator during the policy initiative and amendment process. I researched something that was valuable and relevant – the Interlinking of Rivers Project. I studied it enough to understand various individual pros and cons, but I also learned more with each sector's amendments. It did not cross my mind that the reservoirs could be used as recreational areas to increase

profits, which was suggested by the industry sector. However, some of my research was validated, such as the ability of the project to harness 4,000 mw of hydropower, which was approved by the energy sector.

During the negotiation process, I learned how intertwined and interdependent all the sectors were and how imminent solutions were needed. With India being a country in such a desperate state, allocations were scarce while needs were high. While working with the other sectors during our individual meetings and during the entire group meeting, I realized how two goals could be accomplished through compromise. One cannot always accomplish their goal in its entirety, but by being persuasive and thinking outside of the box, much can get done. For example, during the dam amendments, the large dams were replaced with small, hydropower dams on divergent canals. The use of smaller dams could mitigate personal aversions toward how dams disrupt ecosystems. Though our power and reservoir goals were not completely realized, most of our plan was followed through and all other sectors were satisfied.

With my research of the dynamics of such a project, the complications with international relations and how it could really benefit the country, I felt valued. I knew potential suggestions to concerns about water harnessing during drought. The reservoirs were capable of carrying the water when monsoons brought an abundance of rain. In the drier seasons, the reservoirs could be used as a source of water. I learned to trust my abilities and to trust my common sense. I usually feel as though other people understand the nuances of concepts better than I do, so I avoid talking as to not make a fool of myself. Now, I feel completely capable.