Why Do Only Some Chairs Act as Successful Mediators? Trust in Chairs of Global Climate Negotiations

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Trust in the chairs of global negotiations is a decisive factor facilitating successful outcomes. When negotiators trust the chair, they allow her to go beyond her formal procedural role by acting as a mediator, fostering the reaching of agreement. Negotiating parties must consent to a chair assuming substantive mediation functions. They cede parts of their control over the process to the chair when they are confident that the chair is competent and acts in good faith and everyone's interest. In this article, we develop a detailed conceptualization of trust in chairs of global negotiations and demonstrate its impact in two cases of United Nations negotiations that aimed to deliver a universal deal on climate change: the failed 2009 round in Copenhagen, and the 2015 round that culminated in the adoption of the Paris Agreement.

Introduction

Trust in the chairs of global negotiations is a decisive factor facilitating successful outcomes. When negotiators trust the chair, they allow her to go beyond her formal procedural role by acting as a mediator, fostering the reaching of agreement. Trust defines a psychological state of willingness "to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another" (Rousseau et al. 1998, 395). Negotiating parties must consent to a chair assuming substantive mediation functions. They cede parts of their control over the process to the chair when they are confident that the chair is competent and acts in good faith and everyone's interest. In this article, we develop a detailed conceptualization of trust in chairs of global negotiations and demonstrate its impact in two cases of United Nations (UN) negotiations that aimed to deliver a universal deal on climate change: the failed 2009 round in Copenhagen, and the 2015 round that culminated in the adoption of the Paris Agreement.

Global agreements are becoming increasingly necessary to address collective action problems in an interconnected world. However, negotiations represent a tremendous challenge: bringing together up to 195 sovereign states with vastly divergent interests and ideologies to take decisions on complex and interlinked issues by consensus often results in deadlock (Narlikar 2010). Understanding the factors that determine success or failure is imperative for addressing many daunting threats, including climate change and biodiversity loss. Yet, the sheer number of actors, issues, and interests in global negotiations interacting on various levels precludes a "monopoly on explanations" (Zartman 1994, 7). Rather, a complex set of conjunctural explanations is at play. Trust in chairs of global negotiations is therefore one of a set of factors that jointly deliver successful outcomes.

Across different global negotiations in areas as diverse as trade liberalization, climate change, and disarmament, negotiating parties grant very similar procedural functions to chairs. Sometimes they award chairs mediation tasks, which are not part of their formal role description, while at other times they withhold these responsibilities. Surprisingly, there has been little work that investigates why this is the case. This article investigates when, why, and how chairs of global negotiations are permitted to intervene as mediators, thereby expediting the process and facilitating the reaching of agreement.

In a comparative qualitative case study design, we find divergent chair attributes and activities that generated different levels of trust in the respective chairs, which in turn determined their leeway to act as a mediator. Thanks to the trust that parties granted them, the French chairs in 2015 were able to implement methods such as closed-door meetings during the final stages of the negotiations and were permitted to table their own compromise proposals. Similar attempts by the Danish chairs were vehemently rejected due to a lack of trust. The empirical analysis is based on thirty-one expert interviews, written testimonies by diplomats, primary sources from the negotiations, and secondary sources analyzing various aspects of the two negotiation rounds. We systematically tested all individual elements of our conceptualization in a qualitative manner.

Although trust in the chair is anecdotally recognized as important, there is little practical understanding of what exactly trust is, how it can be built, and how it affects the negotiation process. We aim to contribute to this nascent research strand by developing a differentiated mechanism of trust in chairs as an intervening variable that links chairs' attributes and activities to their ability to act as a mediator, which in turn is one of the decisive aspects leading to negotiation success. The next section provides an overview of the negotiation and mediation literature and situates our study in the recent "behavioral turn" in International Relations (IR) research. This is followed by the development of a differentiated conceptualization of the mechanism of trust in

chairs, which is empirically tested in the subsequent section. We conclude by reflecting on the implications of the specific cases studied, and of our findings more generally for both theory and practice.

Global Negotiations, Chairs, and Mediation

Arguably, global negotiations "have become the most prominent method by which states address joint problems, resolve disagreements, and formulate common norms in world politics" (Tallberg 2010, 241). Covering issues as diverse as trade liberalization, climate change, and disarmament, understanding the conditions that lead to their success or failure is a key concern for 21st-century IR scholars. Yet, such negotiations are defined by their complexity along all dimensions and resist simple causal explanations (Zartman 1994). This article contributes a piece to the puzzle by zooming into the details of a single crucial factor, namely trust in the chair so that she can successfully mediate the negotiations.

The preferences of the most powerful actors, and particularly the United States, constitute an important piece of the explanatory puzzle (Steinberg 2002; Davenport 2006; Christoff 2010). Game-theoretic and rational-choice approaches to global negotiation use these preferences to deduce key players' strategic interactions (Brams, Doherty, and Weidner 1994; DeCanio and Fremstad 2013). Constructivists, on the other hand, explain varying levels of success, as seen for example between the ozone and climate regimes, as a consequence of norms (Hoffmann 2012) or argumentation (Bell 1988; Grobe 2010). Psychological insights have been used to explain, for example, how group dynamics can affect the reaching of consensus in global negotiations (Rubin and Swap 1994) or how key negotiators' level of empathy can hold the key to negotiation failure or success (Holmes and Yarhi-Milo 2017).

It is to this latter strand of theorizing that we contribute, and more broadly to the new wave of IR scholarship that recognizes the importance of zooming down to analyze individuals and the micro-processes that underpin their decision-making (Holmes 2015, 2018; Hafner-Burton et al. 2017; Kertzer 2017; Stein 2017; Wheeler 2018). By focusing on the practices of global negotiations, this article contributes to the growing recognition in IR research that the analysis of the ways in which broader structures are enacted by individuals can provide insights that help account for variance in high-level structural theories (Adler and Pouliot 2011; Solomon and Steele 2017).

Conflict resolution and negotiation analysis offer rich insights on contextual and process factors that influence the outcomes of global negotiations. Contextual factors are external to the negotiation process. This category includes scholarship on "turning points" (Crump and Druckman 2016)—critical events that precipitate a change in the course of the negotiations—and the "hurting stalemate" (Zartman 2000) that can provoke parties into reaching agreement. Process factors are internal to the negotiations and research suggests they are more significant for explaining negotiation outcomes than context (Irmer and Druckman 2009). Importantly, process is more easily subject to manipulation than context by those wishing to improve international cooperation.

Process factors include the development of "focal points" (Druckman and Rosoux 2016)—salient reference points shared by all parties—that can facilitate the reaching of agreement, or the negotiation "mode" pursued, which can be either distributive (zero-sum and positional) or integrative (positive-sum and interest-based). An integrative mode is more successful in breaking deadlocks and delivering better-quality outcomes (Irmer and Druckman 2009; Odell 2009). The performance of the chair is an additional factor that can both facilitate the reaching of agreement and improve the quality of negotiation output (Depledge 2005, 2007; Odell 2005, 2009; Davenport, Wagner, and Spence 2012; Monheim 2015; Chasek and Wagner 2016). These works acknowledge the importance of trust in the chair without explaining what trust is, where it comes from, or how it affects negotiation processes and outcomes. This article contributes to filling that gap.

The literature on global negotiations tends to overlook the important point that the chair's formal powers are procedural and limited. Chairs have the power to open and close sessions, ensure adherence to the rules of procedure, rule on points of order, propose closing the speakers' list on a particular point of debate or imposing time limits per speaker, and announce decisions (United Nations 1973, 1974; UNFCCC 1996). Those formal tasks do not include more substantive mediating tasks; they are purely procedural. It is through informal mediation practices not formally outlined in the rules of procedure that chairs are able to exert greater influence (Odell 2005, 429). Crucially, these mediation practices are subject to all parties' consent.

Rational-choice scholars conceptualize a principal-agent relationship whereby the negotiating parties delegate powers to the chair (Tallberg 2006; Tallberg 2010; Blavoukos and Bourantonis 2011a, 2011b). Chairs are expected to make use of their "intervention repertoire" (Blavoukos and Bourantonis 2011b, 654) to increase the efficiency of the negotiations and facilitate the reaching of agreement. Those studies assume all chairs' full access to the intervention repertoire and do not question when and why parties (do not) delegate mediation tasks to the chair.

The mediation literature indicates that the nature of the dispute, the parties, and the environment in which the negotiation unfolds can determine whether parties delegate to a mediator (Bercovitch and Houston 1996; Beardsley 2011); by contrast, in global negotiations, the same parties negotiate the same issues in the same institutional setting. Most employ a format whereby a chair is selected from among the negotiating states on a rotational basis for a fixed period of time. Considerable variation arises in the nature of the chair—her attributes and relationships with the parties—and the strategies she pursues to manage the process. Therefore, to analyze the mediation of global negotiations, understanding the nature of the chair and the strategies pursued is central.

Given the voluntary nature of mediation, there is remarkably little work that investigates why some actors would be more acceptable as mediators to the negotiating parties than others (see Greig and Regan 2008 for a notable exception). What is clear is that "[m]ediation is a voluntary process. This means that mediators cannot mediate unless they are perceived as reasonable, acceptable, knowledgeable and *able to secure the trust and cooperation* of the disputants" (Bercovitch and Houston 1996, 25, emphasis added). Trust is frequently cited as important, although it is not clear what this means in theory or in practice. In the next section, we develop a framework for analyzing trust in chairs of global negotiations. We argue that the chair's characteristics and the activities and behaviors in which she engages determine her trustworthiness in the eyes of the parties, and that trust in the chair is the precondition for accepting her as a mediator, necessary (but not sufficient) for bringing the negotiations to a successful conclusion.

Trust and Informal Mediation in Global Negotiations

When a chair is trusted, she will be accepted by the parties to act as a mediator, over and above her formal procedural role. Parties will be more willing to permit informal mediation practices that can expedite the process and facilitate the reaching of consensus. Given the size and complexity of global negotiations, a trusted chair can make the difference between success and failure, and have an impact on the quality of any outcome reached. This causal mechanism is summarized in Figure 1.

Trust is a complex phenomenon that has received attention from multiple disciplines, including psychology, sociology, economics, political science, and anthropology (Gambetta 1988). We employ a cross-disciplinary definition of trust as "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another" (Rousseau et al. 1998, 395). When parties trust the chair, they are more willing to accept vulnerability by ceding control over parts of the process and allowing the chair to intervene as a mediator.

Trust is simultaneously conceptualized as a rationalist risk calculation (Bianco 1994; Kydd 2005) ("*cognitive trust*") and as an intersubjective relational variable (Weinhardt 2015) ("*affectual trust*") based on the observation that political decision-makers are both rational actors pursuing national interests and individuals subject to human psychology (Mercer 2005). On the one hand, negotiators are agents in a two-level game, mandated to act in the best interest of their national governments. On the other hand, they are professional diplomats who spend considerable time working together on the same problems. The continuous nature of many global negotiations allows for the development of positive relationships between colleagues, even when they represent different interests (Iklé 1999, 343; Chasek 2001, 34). While the representation of national interests assumes a rational-choice perspective, the perpetual interaction in the different negotiation meetings supposes a constructivist perspective of socialization (Johnston 2001).

We draw on theory from organizational behavior and psychology, particularly Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's (1995) model of trust between individuals within an organization, by applying their three principal components of trustworthiness: ability, integrity, and benevolence. Like organizations, global negotiations can be considered "complex social systems" (Kramer 1999, 570). The regular and sustained nature of the interaction at summits and various intersessional meetings suggests this literature could provide untapped potential. This section first discusses how chairs gain trust through their attributes, activities, and behaviors, which shape negotiating parties' perceptions of the chair's ability, integrity, and benevolence. It then differentiates the functions of a trusted chair, which are the informal mediation practices and willing acceptance of decisions that can mold the negotiation output.

Trust in Chairs: Perceptions of Ability, Integrity, and Benevolence

Negotiating parties' trust in the chair depends on the latter's perceived trustworthiness, which derives in turn from her attributes, activities, and behaviors. Similar to Bianco's (1994) model of trust in legislators, they reason from a chair's "observed actions and attributes to form judgements about her unobserved…goals" (Bianco 1994, 3). This is the main focus of this study. Characteristics of the negotiating parties also matter. An overview of the main negotiating groups in climate negotiations and their respective

preferences on the various issues under negotiation are provided in supplementary online Appendix 1. Differences in individual negotiators' propensity to trust cause certain people to be more trusting than others (Rotter 1967; Rathbun 2012). While we consider this an important determinant of trust, it does not form part of this analysis because an individual negotiator's propensity to trust explains her baseline level of trust in chairs without explaining why she would trust one specific chair over another (Schoorman, Mayer, and Davis 2016). Trust also depends on the level of risk inherent in the situation (Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman 1995) and past experience plays a role since trust is dynamic and varies over time (Lewicki and Bunker 1996). Delegates' historical experiences with chairs form "a basis for initially calibrating and then updating trust-related expectations" (Kramer 1999, 576). Trust requires time and experience to build up, and its loss can be sudden, dramatic, and difficult to recover (Kramer 1999, 593).

Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's (1995) preeminent model of trustworthiness assumes three principal components: ability, integrity, and benevolence. *Ability* refers to "that group of skills, competencies and characteristics that enable a party to have influence within some specific domain" (Mayer et al. 1995, 717). Parties will trust a chair when they believe she can perform the role assigned to her. *Integrity* refers to "the trustor's perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable" (Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman 1995, 719). Both ability and integrity correspond with a rationalist conception of trust whereby actors make risk calculations in specific situations of uncertainty based on their assessment of the trustee. *Benevolence*, on the other hand, supposes a constructivist perspective since it refers to "the perception of a positive orientation of the trustee toward the trustor" (Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman 1995, 719). This distinction can be compared to Hoffman's (2002) conceptualization of fiduciary trust in IR, since it goes beyond a calculative approach to risk to incorporate positive expectations that the trustee will "do the right thing." Common in the trust literature is the recognition that trust involves both a cognitive and an affective component (Lewis and Weigert 1985; McAllister 1995; Young and Daniel 2003); benevolence falls into the affective component.

Cognitive trust is a cost-benefit calculation based on information available on the chair's trustworthiness. Parties will trust a chair when they believe she can and will perform the role as they intended. We consider various indicators of chair *ability* that are based on chairs' attributes, activities, and behaviors. First, the hosting and chairing of a global summit requires a considerable investment of financial, logistical, human, and diplomatic resources. Second, a comprehensive understanding of both the substantive issues under negotiation and the multilateral process is necessary to perform the role well. Competent chairing and mastery of the rules of procedure are a requirement of the role.

With regards *integrity*, impartiality is the "cardinal principle" (UNFCCC 2017) of chairing global negotiations and is formally codified in the rules of procedure. Further informal expectations pertain to principles of procedural justice. Due to the vastly different capacities between delegations from developed and developing countries, parties insist on transparency and inclusiveness in the process to ensure fair participation by all (Albin 2001; Depledge 2005). The expectation is that the intergovernmental process will be party-driven, that is to say, the chair should merely facilitate the will of the parties rather than trying to impose her own preferences.
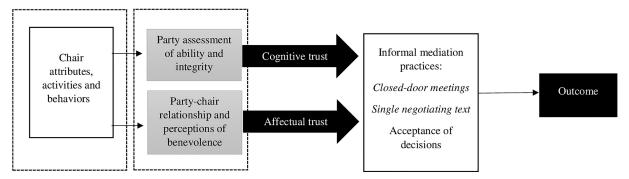
Figure 1. Causal mechanism of trust and informal mediation

Affectual trust is an intersubjective concept that corresponds with a constructivist conceptualization of trust, which emerges over time through social interaction between trustor and trustee (McAllister 1995, 29; Rousseau et al. 1998, 399; Weinhardt 2015, 29). Since negotiations officially take place during a short summit, establishing affectual trust requires the chair to invest time and effort beforehand into building relationships, for example through travel diplomacy (Odell 2009, 289). Chairs with certain personality traits are more likely to build positive relationships with parties, in particular those who demonstrate empathy, good listening skills, modesty, approachability, and good humor (Monheim 2015, 12). Other indicators of affectual trust include chair behaviors that are perceived to be personally chosen (as opposed to role-prescribed) and which go beyond self-interest, demonstrating care and *benevolence* (Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman 1995, 719; McAllister 1995, 29). Table 1 gives an overview of cognitive and affectual trust, and the attributes, activities, and behaviors of chairs that generate each kind of trust.

Functions of the Trusted Chair: Informal Mediation Practices and Acceptance of Decisions

Trust in the chair gives rise to a number of behavioral consequences that are relevant for the mediation of global negotiations. First, trust leads to reduced monitoring by the parties and, as a result, greater efficiency (McAllister 1995; Colquitt, Scott, and LePine 2007). Legitimacy and efficiency are a fundamental trade-off in global negotiations: with so many negotiating parties and issues, progress in fully transparent and inclusive settings is "practically impossible" (Monheim 2015, 178). In public settings, parties do not move from their stated positions; substantive convergence only occurs in *closed-door meetings* with a smaller number of parties. These reduce the complexity of the negotiations and the risks of exchanging information, allowing parties to freely explore possible solutions (Depledge 2005, 113). Yet, such meetings are subject to the parties' consent. This mediation practice allows the trusted chair to expedite the process and move the parties closer to consensus, particularly as the negotiations enter their final stages.

Second, trust is a prerequisite for the delegation of important tasks (Colquitt, Scott, and LePine 2007; Schoorman, Mayer, and Davis 2016). The most important task assigned to a chair is the responsibility for drafting a *"single negotiating text"*: a document that brings together negotiating parties' positions and puts forward compromise proposals to reduce complexity, give momentum to the process, and move towards consensus (Odell 2005, 436). Negotiating parties are

reluctant to propose compromise text themselves for fear of undermining their perceived commitment to their stated positions and so delegate this task to the chair (Odell 2009, 278). This is significant since the text, if accepted, "will be the most prominent focal point and thus may well influence the distribution of gains in the final deal" (Odell 2005, 441). Such a text may take one of two forms: a "compilation text" made up of parties' proposals expressed as different bracketed options is more likely to be accepted, yet it does not inject the same momentum as the "chair's text," which uses the chair's judgment to draft compromise proposals but which runs a risk of being rejected or even backfiring (Odell 2005, 436–40). Compilation texts come closer to a chair's procedural role since they do not include mediation efforts, while a chair's text is the manifestation of the chair's active engagement in shaping the negotiation process.

The formal mandate does not preclude any chair from making proposals to expedite the process or move parties towards consensus. However, we expect that when parties trust a chair to act as a mediator, they will be more willing to accept her proposals than when she is distrusted. Existing scholarship in organizational behavior (Tyler and Degoey 1996; Colquitt, Scott, and LePine 2007) and diplomacy (Kaufmann 1996) explicitly links trust to the voluntary acceptance of decisions: "[I]f the chairman is trusted, his decisions will be respected more easily than if he is distrusted" (Kaufmann 1996, 62). Proposals may be procedural or substantive. Procedural proposals are generally intended to suggest the next steps and way forward, whereas substantive proposals often involve potential compromises. Only those proposals that are accepted by all may pass.

If the chair drafts the final package deal, the output of the negotiations hinges upon delegates' decision to accept or reject the proposal. Given the number of parties, positions, and possible outcomes, combined with the ever-changing nature of the game as complex and interrelated topics are discussed simultaneously, it is virtually impossible for delegations to make accurate utility calculations in global negotiations (Odell 2005, 430). Assuming the chair's proposal does not cross their red lines, delegations' decision to accept or reject is based on "satisficing" (Simon 1944), with trust in the chair as an acceptability threshold. That is to say, if the chair's proposal does not cross parties' red lines, trust may be used as a decision-making heuristic (Lewicki and Brinsfield 2011).

Case Selection and Methodology

We employ a two-case qualitative comparative research design to analyze trust as the intervening factor in a causal

Table 1. Cognitive and affectual trust

	Cognitive trust	Affectual trust
Pertains to:	*Rational, cost-benefit calculation based on chair's perceived ability and integrity in the role*	*Social orientation based on the quality and duration of the relationship and the chair's perceived benevolence*
Indicators:	***Ability*** 1. The chair invests sufficient resources in the role. 2. The chair demonstrates competence and expertise on negotiation substance and process. 3. The chair demonstrates competence in chairing ability. ***Integrity*** 1. The chair is perceived to be impartial. 2. The chair oversees a process that is perceived to be transparent, inclusive, and party-driven.	***Benevolence*** 1. The chair invests time and effort before the summit in building relationships. 2. The chair has desirable personality traits for relationship-building. 3. The chair's behavior is perceived to be personally chosen rather than role-prescribed, demonstrating care and concern.

mechanism linking parties' perceptions of the chair's ability, integrity, and benevolence to the granting of informal mediation practices and acceptance of decisions as developed in the previous section. Comparing the chairpersonships of two climate negotiation rounds allows us to hold relatively constant (or render more challenging) alternative explanations for trust and mediation. Existing literature as well as media coverage suggest differences between the attributes, activities, and behaviors of the Danish and French chairs, which we further investigate in our empirical analysis. We probe whether this difference in the first step of the mechanism led to varying levels of trust, the concept that is central to our argument. Subsequently, we follow the effects of (dis)trust for the chairpersonships' ability to successfully mediate the negotiations to a conclusion.

The case pair is taken from the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which is the principal global body on climate change with 195 parties. The 1997 Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC imposed legally binding emission reduction targets for developed countries only. The Protocol's commitment period was due to expire in 2012, so in 2007 preparations were launched for a global agreement to be adopted in 2009 at the Fifteenth Conference of the Parties (COP15) in Copenhagen (Christoff 2008). COP15 did not reach an agreement. In 2011, a new process was launched to achieve a global deal in Paris in 2015 at the Twenty-first Conference of the Parties (COP21), which resulted in the adoption of the Paris Agreement on climate change.

In line with the conjunctural nature of causality in global negotiations, the conference chairs were one part of a complex set of levers that explains the different negotiation results in 2009 and 2015. Nonetheless, our qualitative methodology allows us to focus our analysis on the details of the chairs' roles in contributing to the negotiation output. A qualitative analysis of primary and secondary documents and semi-structured interviews enabled us to specifically investigate this factor while taking into consideration complementary explanations, some of which are outlined below.

Contextual factors changed between COP15 and COP21. The world's two geopolitical and economic powerhouses and top-two greenhouse gas (GHG) emitters, the United States and China, underwent a rapprochement. Their bilateral declaration on climate change released in November 2014 was a major turning point. Favorable economic and technological conditions such as the dramatic and unexpected fall in the price of renewable energy created a more

conducive environment for climate commitments. In 2014, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its fifth report, articulating a more alarming assessment of the severity of the threats posed by climate change (IPCC 2014).

Within the UNFCCC process, the United States and the European Union (EU) both learned from mistakes made at Copenhagen and conducted extensive diplomacy in the lead-up to Paris to better understand the contours of an agreement that would be acceptable to all and intensively engaged in persuasive outreach to other parties (Biedenkopf and Walker 2016). The United States used its political clout during the conference to avoid potential spoilers. The formation of the "High-Ambition Coalition" during the months leading up to Paris both helped to overcome the divisive dynamics between developed and developing countries that had plagued Copenhagen and provided momentum for delivering an ambitious outcome (Oberthür and Groen 2018, 720). In 2013, "Intended Nationally Determined Contributions" (INDCs) were proposed; this focal point shifted the climate paradigm from centralized target-setting for individual countries, which dominated Copenhagen, to a more flexible approach whereby each country sets its own targets in line with its national circumstances (Falkner 2016). Despite these more favorable conditions, our detailed empirical analysis makes the case for a trusted chair as one of several necessary ingredients for success.

Our research design holds a number of factors constant to support our central theoretical claim: that perceived trustworthiness determines parties' acceptance of the chair as a mediator. Case selection rules out several alternative explanations for the occurrence of mediation. Both the nature of the parties and the issue under negotiation remained the same, namely, a global agreement on climate change. Furthermore, the institutional environment of the UNFCCC with the consensus decision rule was held constant. What varied dramatically were the attributes of the respective chairs and the strategies they pursued, which led to very different levels of trust afforded to them by the parties.

Alternative explanations for varying levels of trust either remained constant or became more challenging in the French context. The level of risk remained unchanged from COP15 to COP21, which were two attempts to negotiate a global agreement on climate change. However, the negative experience of Copenhagen could have made negotiators less trusting of chairs in general and could have diminished their perceptions of the trustworthiness of European

chairs, thus making it harder for the French Presidency to win trust. This research design suggests that the attributes, activities, and behaviors of the two chairpersonships were responsible for their varying levels of trust, and that this is what explains the variation in successful mediation.

Data on the chairpersonships' behaviors and activities were collected from a variety of sources to allow for verification and triangulation. Thirty-one in-depth, semi-structured expert interviews were conducted, mostly with climate negotiators. An initial snowball approach of interviewing Brussels-based negotiators was later complemented with interviews conducted during participation at climate negotiations to avoid a Eurocentric bias and ensure a balanced geographical distribution of interviewees. Two interviews were conducted with members of the Danish Presidency, and a further two with members of the French Presidency. Many of the individuals discussed in the cases and all the interviewees are still professionally active, therefore we are not able to provide further information on participants than listed in supplementary online Appendix 2.

In order to prevent the omission of important variables and to avoid interview bias, interviewees were asked deliberately open questions about the activities of the Presidencies and their perceptions thereof. A number of insider accounts provided further insights into the strategy and motivations of the Presidencies, including an analysis conducted by a Danish journalist closely involved with the Presidency published in the *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook* (Meilstrup 2010), an analysis conducted by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ourbak 2017), and the memoir of COP21 President Laurent Fabius (Fabius 2016). Other primary sources, including UNFCCC documents and secondary sources including the in-depth coverage provided by the Earth Negotiations Bulletin, were consulted to substantiate these accounts. Both summits have been subject to academic analyses (Dimitrov 2010, 2016; Monheim 2015; Brun 2016), which provided further input. Of particular importance was Monheim's (2015) research on the Danish Presidency, which draws on fifty-five expert interviews.

The following section first provides an overview of each case, before systematically analyzing the attributes, activities, and behaviors of each Presidency that give rise to perceptions of ability, integrity, and benevolence. The results, supported by interview data on negotiator perceptions, indicate low trust in the Danish Presidency and high trust in the French Presidency. The empirical analysis then proceeds to demonstrate how this variance in trust translated into the Presidencies' acceptance or rejection as a mediator and follows the effects on the respective negotiation processes and outcomes.

The Copenhagen and Paris Climate Summits

The UN system of Presidency rotation between different geographical regions was due to assign the COP15 Presidency to Brazil, on behalf of Latin America. Denmark's lead negotiator, Thomas Becker, suggested to Climate Minister Connie Hedegaard that they instead offer to host the conference. Denmark lobbied in the UNFCCC and Becker struck a deal with the Brazilians and other developing countries: as a small country with a history of consensus-building and environmental protection, he argued, Denmark was a legitimate choice. In return they would oversee a process that was not biased towards developed countries and which would lead to a legally binding agreement with strong financial assistance for developing countries (Meilstrup 2010, 114–16).

During preparations for the summit, two competing factions emerged within the Danish Presidency: Hedegaard's team in the Climate Ministry, and Prime Minister Lars Rasmussen's office, led by Bo Lidegaard. While Hedegaard's team remained faithful to the party-driven UN negotiations, Lidegaard and his team pursued a more streamlined approach that bypassed the formal negotiations, which were making insufficient progress. An official meeting in October 2009 failed to make progress in reducing the 2,000 bracketed options in the 200-page negotiation text and doubts emerged over their ability to deliver a legal treaty in time for the summit (Monheim 2015, 35). Tensions between the two competing factions came to a head after the Bangkok meeting, leading to the "resignation" of lead negotiator Thomas Becker on October 16.

The COP began in December and throughout the first week the formal negotiations remained deadlocked; by the start of the high-level segment, which convened leaders and ministers, negotiators could only agree to forward the entire bracket-ridden package (Monheim 2015, 39). At this point, Hedegaard was replaced by Rasmussen as COP President. Without any workable text, the Presidency assembled a group of twenty-eight leaders who then attempted to draft an agreement line-by-line (Meilstrup 2010, 131). An agreement was finally negotiated behind closed doors between US President Obama and the leaders of the BASIC countries (Brazil, South Africa, India, and China). The summit ended in failure when a handful of countries opposed the adoption of the agreement in the final plenary.

The French bid to host COP21 was accepted in late 2013, and in September 2014 an interministerial team was assembled bringing together the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry for Environment under a single roof under the leadership of Laurence Tubiana. To avoid division and competition, the lead was given to Foreign Affairs and the role of COP President fell to then-Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius. Formal UN negotiations continued in the subsidiary body tasked with gradually reducing the number of bracketed options in the text. These negotiations suffered a setback in October 2015, when the co-chairs released a streamlined draft text that was criticized by developing countries and resulted in the reinsertion of proposals and an increase in the number of brackets.

On November 13, 2015, two weeks before the opening of the summit, Paris suffered deadly terror attacks. They did not prevent the summit from going ahead with extra security measures. Compared to the Copenhagen summit, negotiations proceeded smoothly and at the end of the first week the co-chairs of the subsidiary body handed over responsibility for the text to the French Presidency, albeit with a large number of bracketed options remaining. The French Presidency and a team of ministerial facilitators worked to reduce the divergences. On December 9, they released a draft text before announcing the final version on December 12, 2015. After a tense final few hours, the Paris Agreement was adopted. In the remainder of this section we compare the Danish and French Presidencies' attributes, activities, and behaviors that influenced perceptions of their trustworthiness and the differing levels of trust in each case.

Ability

Data collected to assess perceptions of the Presidencies' abilities were grouped around three indicators: sufficient time and resource investment in the role; demonstration of competence and expertise on negotiation substance and process; and demonstration of chairing competence. On the

first of these indicators, both Presidencies performed well, beginning their preparations well ahead of time and investing tremendous financial, human, logistical, and diplomatic resources in the respective summits. The investment of the Danish Presidency was the largest ever seen at that time, although this was later exceeded by the French Presidency's efforts (Meilstrup 2010, 118; interviews 1, 18). Yet two notable differences appear. First, the Copenhagen summit was plagued with logistical oversights, including the accreditation of more than 40,000 participants to a venue with a capacity of 15,000. This led to many delegates queueing for hours in sub-zero temperatures to enter the conference, including the Chinese Minister for Environment who was denied entry for two days (Dimitrov 2010, 796). Second, the vast global reach of the French diplomatic network allowed for an unprecedented level of diplomatic outreach that very few other countries could aspire to (interviews 8, 9, 11).

On the substance and process expertise indicator, more obvious disparities emerge. For the Danish Presidency, considerable substance and process expertise existed within the Climate Ministry, and in particular in Thomas Becker (Monheim 2015, 94). However, the Ministry and its approach were sidelined, and Becker resigned shortly before the summit. Decisions fell instead to Lidegaard in the Prime Minister's office. Although Lidegaard mastered the substance of the negotiations, his process expertise was low (Monheim 2015, 96). Coming from a G20 background, he was unfamiliar with the UN negotiation process based on consensus decision-making. An official from the Danish Presidency reports that Lidegaard lost China's trust during a bilateral meeting in which he presented a proposed text. Lidegaard had been planning to trade concessions, but the Chinese representative opened the meeting by saying, "[the document] is so bad and unbalanced that we didn't even photocopy it" (interview 28). Delegates' perceptions of the Danish Presidency's process and substance expertise were overwhelmingly low: 95 percent of Monheim's (2015, 68) respondents perceived the Danish Presidency to have low ability to manage the negotiations. In contrast, interviewees roundly praised the abilities of the large and highly skilled team of diplomats and officials in the French Presidency (interviews 1, 2, 6, 18) led by Tubiana—an experienced veteran of climate negotiations with a thorough understanding of the UNFCCC process.

The final indicator—the competence of the conference chair—varies dramatically across the two cases. Rasmussen had only been in office for six months and had no prior multilateral experience. When chairing, he was "absolutely lost" (Monheim 2015, 93), having neglected to familiarize himself with the rules of procedure. He committed shocking procedural errors, even calling for a vote on the final proposal (Meilstrup 2010, 133). Fabius, on the other hand, was an experienced and skilled politician who performed his role expertly. Although new to climate negotiations, he quickly mastered the substance (interviews 1, 11), and already benefitted from extensive multilateral and process experience owing to his previous position as French Prime Minister with a seat on the UN Security Council (interviews 1, 3). On ability, significant differences can be noted between the Danish and the French Presidencies, with the case of COP21 exposing a higher level of ability on all three indicators.

Integrity

Data collected to assess perceptions of the Presidencies' integrity were grouped around two indicators: impartiality and a transparent, inclusive, and party-driven process. The activities of one faction of the Danish Presidency in the run-up to the COP proved catastrophic for delegates' perceptions of their integrity. Shortly after Becker's departure, Rasmussen signaled that the Danish Presidency would be pursuing a "politically" binding agreement at COP15 rather than a "legally" binding agreement, which could then be turned into a legal document at COP16 the following year (Meilstrup 2010, 125). This broke the earlier promise made to Brazil and developing countries and would likely have dented perceptions of the Danes' integrity, yet this proved to be a minor incident in comparison with what followed.

Lidegaard "disdained" (Monheim 2015, 96) the inefficient UN system and instead held bilateral consultations in secret with a small number of developed countries and developing country allies (interview 28) in an effort to streamline the process. He was convinced of the need to have the United States on board and prioritized Denmark's relationship with them (interview 29; Monheim 2015, 38). Accustomed to G20 power politics, Lidegaard believed that the United States and its allies could "beat China into submission" (interview 28) and that the rest of the developing countries would ultimately accept any deal (interview 29). In July 2009, Rasmussen met powerful leaders at the G8 summit and discovered that they shared his and Lidegaard's frustrations with the UN process and supported Lidegaard's approach (Monheim 2015, 34). In New York in September, Rasmussen received an informal mandate from the UN Secretary-General to start bilaterally testing a compromise proposal devised by the Danes (Meilstrup 2010, 124).

One week before the opening of the summit, the Presidency had convened a secret meeting of twenty to thirty countries to discuss their compromise text. Despite protest from Hedegaard, who feared a leak, they distributed a copy of the text in advance at the behest of the United States, China, and Russia (Meilstrup 2010, 127–8). On the second day of the two-week summit, a version of the compromise proposal that the Danes had been preparing was leaked to the British newspaper *The Guardian*. This came to be known as the "Danish text." Impartiality was severely undermined by the composition of the group of countries with which the Danes had been consulting and by the US bias contained within the version of the text that was leaked (Meilstrup 2010, 128). The fact that it was written by the Danish Presidency without the knowledge or consent of the majority of parties contradicted the transparent, inclusive, and party-driven nature of the process.

Learning from the mistakes of its Danish predecessors, the French Presidency took steps to encourage perceptions of impartiality, transparency, and inclusiveness (Ourbak 2017, 12–13). It went to great lengths to distance itself from the EU and present itself as neutral (interviews 1, 7, 14). By aligning itself with the outgoing Peruvian Presidency of COP20, it attempted to overcome automatic perceptions of bias that accompany developed-country Presidencies (interviews 1, 11, 12, 19; Ourbak 2017, 18). It crafted perceptions of transparency and inclusiveness through consistent and well-managed communication (interview 18), including the mantra of "no surprises" (interviews 2, 7, 20). During the summit itself, the French Presidency expelled impressions that it was favoring any one group of countries by making itself available around-the-clock to any party that wished to consult with it through a system of closed-door bilaterals called "confessionals" (interviews 1, 2, 8, 18), which was designed to build trust (Ourbak 2017, 17).

On integrity, a stark divide exists between the Danish and French Presidencies on both indicators. Of those

interviewed by Monheim, 97.5 percent perceived the Danish process to be lacking in transparency and inclusiveness (Monheim 2015, 65), whereas interviewees overwhelmingly perceived the process led by the French Presidency to be transparent and inclusive (interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 13, 14, 19, 21, 22). The French Presidency's impartiality was not brought into question despite being an EU member state.

Benevolence

Data collected to assess the parties' perceptions of the Presidencies' benevolence are grouped around three indicators: time and effort invested before the summit in building relationships; personality traits conducive to relationship-building; and the degree to which behavior is perceived to be motivated by goodwill rather than self-interest.

Certain factions of the Danish Presidency invested time and resources in building up a network of contacts and personal relationships. Hedegaard was well known and respected (interview 28) and Becker—having spent many years working in climate negotiations—was "renowned as one of the few diplomats from any of the developed countries who had warm relations with colleagues from developing countries" (Meilstrup 2010, 127). During preparations for the COP they built relationships through extensive travel diplomacy, consulting with all major countries and negotiating groups (Meilstrup 2010, 118) and through a series of informal consultations known as the "Greenland Dialogue." These meetings assembled twenty to thirty climate ministers from developed and developing countries as a forum for constructive discussion and to encourage participants to "engage as human beings" (interview 28).

However, Becker was the Presidency's main point of contact for developing countries, in particular for African countries (Monheim 2015, 94) and for the radical Latin American negotiating group known as ALBA (interview 29); when he departed, many important relationships were also lost. Lidegaard was virtually unknown to most delegates (Monheim 2015, 95). Rasmussen, far from cultivating perceptions of care and concern, came across as unfriendly and rude (interview 29; Monheim 2015, 93). In a dramatic incident on the final day, Rasmussen refused to recognize countries wishing to raise points of order. Venezuelan lead negotiator Claudia Salerno was "so offended" (Friedman 2010) that she began banging her nameplate on her desk, followed by other countries. In the process, the ring she was wearing became trapped, causing her hand to bleed. Monheim refrains from using verbatim quotes of the "harsh words" (Monheim 2015, 93) spoken by negotiators about Rasmussen.

The French Presidency benefited from vast human and diplomatic resources that allowed it to invest in relationship-building. French climate diplomacy was high-level and unprecedented in scale: Fabius, Tubiana and even President François Hollande travelled extensively in the run-up to COP21, with Fabius completing on average one round-the-world trip every month (Ourbak 2017, 9; interview 11). Four "roaming ambassadors" were selected not on their knowledge of climate change, but rather on their knowledge of people and local areas, in a conscious bid to build relationships: "It was the *human* part that we had to build up…the *human* contact, knowing people is a vital part. You can't do this just by saying 'I'll read the submission then I'll write a paper on it'" (interview 20, emphasis in original). The French Presidency sent representatives throughout the year to UNFCCC meetings and also across other relevant international fora with the express purpose of building

"trusting relationships" (Ourbak 2017, 9) whereby French officials "knew the negotiators and could go and talk to them" (interview 20). They arranged dinners for various negotiating groups with the express purpose of getting to know people (interview 20). Their outreach behavior came across as self-chosen rather than role-prescribed: a negotiator from the Least Developed Countries explained that the Presidency's engagement was perceived "not as an obligation, but a conviction" (interview 19).

The French Presidency employed several tactics to build positive working relationships with individuals that it felt could pose problems and instead bring them into the fold. Interviewees praised the "stroke of genius" (interview 24) decision to appoint individuals that had acquired a reputation for being "difficult" as facilitators leading negotiations on specific issues (interviews 1, 2, 13, 18, 21, 24). Claudia Salerno—the Venezuelan lead negotiator—was given the important task of facilitating the treaty preamble and was "all smiles" (interviews 2, 20). Another strong personality was Joyce Mxatato-Diseko, the South African diplomat leading the G77 + China group, who was "holding a very hard line" (interview 1). The South African Presidency of COP17 employed a negotiation method known as "Indaba," which was also employed by the French in Paris to "pay homage" (Ourbak 2017, 19) to South Africa. Interviewees did not credit this technique with achieving any substantial progress, but rather as a tactic to bring South Africa into the fold (interviews 1, 2, 8).

Finally, Tubiana and Fabius were great assets. Through many years in the process, Tubiana had become well known and appreciated among delegates for her sincerity and commitment to the cause, and for her modest and empathetic nature (interviews 2, 6). Fabius's status allowed him personal access to powerful heads of state and foreign ministers (interviews 6, 20, 31), and throughout the year he developed first-name relationships with ministers (interview 1). The Chinese lead negotiator recalled that he and Fabius "had conversations almost every day during the COP. Our cooperation in the preparation for COP 21 meant the two of us became good friends" (Zenhua 2018). An experienced delegate assessed that parties personally trusted Tubiana and Fabius because their personalities "exuded a strange combination of paternal and maternal caring throughout the process. They were extremely well liked as individuals, because they came across as genuine, sincere, respectful" (interview 18).

To summarize, whereas certain factions of the Danish Presidency began by promoting perceptions of trustworthiness, their later activities and behaviors served to undermine this, particularly through a perceived lack of integrity. In contrast, the activities and behaviors of the French Presidency conform to all components of trustworthiness. We conclude that the Danish Presidency had low trust and the French Presidency high trust. The following section demonstrates how trust led to the acceptance of the French Presidency as a mediator and the rejection of the Danish Presidency in this role, and follows the effects of the presence/absence of successful mediation on the negotiation process and outcome.

Trust and Informal Mediation

The Danish and French Presidencies both attempted to mediate the negotiations beyond their procedural role through closed-door meetings and drafting a single negotiating text, yet while the French were permitted to engage in these informal mediation practices, the Danes' efforts were

vehemently rebuffed. This, in turn, facilitated the reaching of agreement in France and, through its drafting of the single negotiating text, allowed the French Presidency to influence the shape of the final agreement in line with its own preferences.

Closed-Door Meetings

Both the Danish and French Presidencies attempted to limit complexity by working in non-transparent and non-inclusive small groups, yet they did this at different stages of the process and with different levels of trust. Whereas the Danish Presidency did so early in the process, the French Presidency did so only at the end of the negotiations, after accumulating high levels of trust. In the Danish case, parties limited any attempts by the Danish Presidency to work in closed-door settings and ensured that all further activity remained in the hands of the parties.

The secretive and exclusive nature of the Danes' bilateral consultations in the run-up to the summit undermined trust. Parties then "slammed the door. They said, 'OK everything has to happen in the negotiations themselves in a transparent and inclusive manner,' and Denmark didn't have any space to come up with something" (interview 9). After the Danish Presidency reneged on its promise to Brazil by announcing that it would no longer pursue a legally binding agreement, it lost the trust of the powerful BASIC negotiating group. These countries were said to be offended and "decided to answer this move by implacably sticking to the rules" (Monheim 2015, 116). Parties would not allow the Danish Presidency to go beyond its formal procedural functions to mediate the negotiations. When the Danish Presidency asked for a mandate to form a closed-door "Friends of the Chair" to resolve the impasse, parties refused, citing a lack of transparency (Meilstrup 2010, 131). Several conference days thereafter were lost to procedural wrangling as developing countries continued to block any movement towards closed-door settings (Dimitrov 2010, 809).

In contrast, during the final days of the Paris summit it had become apparent that work was behind schedule and so Fabius made an audacious proposal: he asked negotiators to continue working on their mandates, but behind closed doors (interview 31). The French Presidency was able to persuade negotiators to put efficiency over transparency and during the final two days of the conference all business was conducted in private sessions and through consultations held by the French Presidency (Dimitrov 2016, 6). This was highly unusual practice in the UNFCCC, but it was effective: many difficult issues were resolved behind closed doors in small meetings between a handful of relevant parties, mediated by the French (interviews 24, 31; Dimitrov 2016, 5–6). It allowed for a reduction of complexity and for greater flexibility as parties could negotiate candidly. It was through this "behind-the-scenes team of the French Presidency working with specific delegations" (interview 18) that the text of the Paris Agreement was crafted. The French Presidency did not share the results of these meetings, and key breakthroughs were kept secret until the very end (Dimitrov 2016, 6). Nevertheless, interviewees overwhelmingly perceived the process to be transparent and inclusive (interviews 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 13, 14, 19, 21, 22). By creating an "atmosphere of transparency" (interview 2) and an "atmosphere of trust" (interview 6), the French Presidency was able to mediate the final stage of the negotiations behind closed doors, which was critical for achieving key substantive breakthroughs in the available timeframe.

Single-Negotiating Text

The decision on whether to delegate the single negotiating text to the Presidency marked a clear turning point in each case that changed the direction of the negotiations. When the Danish Presidency announced its intention at the beginning of the second week to table a compromise proposal, it was met with an "explosion" (Monheim 2015, 39) of protest from parties who rejected the tabling of the Presidency's proposal without even seeing it, citing a lack of "trust between the host country and parties" (ENB 2009). A seasoned negotiator reported that the proposal was "a good balance and a realistic scenario. But it was too late. Nobody trusted the Danes anymore" (interview 27). A member of the Danish Presidency speculated that "[the parties] probably would have accepted the text" (interview 29) if they had been able to table it. Drafting responsibility was then transferred to the group of twenty-eight leaders, and then finally to the leaders of the US/BASIC group.

At the end of the first week of COP21, negotiators readily delegated the drafting of the text to the French Presidency, which took over from the co-chairs of the subsidiary body. Two texts were available as a basis from which to continue working: a low-risk compilation text composed of all parties' proposals; and a higher-risk "bridging text" containing compromise language put forward by the French Presidency and the individuals it had selected as facilitators. Exceptionally, the parties agreed to work with the French Presidency's bridging text:

> At that moment it could have gone two ways: it could have been rejected, which would have been usual practice in UNFCCC, or it could be approved but that would mean there was a very strong confidence in the way things were run by the Presidency and by the facilitators. And the approval of that method was the result of that meeting. So that was a very important moment at the COP. (Interview 9)

This turning point moved the negotiations closer to consensus and added momentum. It is uncertain whether the necessary progress could have been made in time had the lengthy compilation text instead been used as the basis of work in the second week. The same mediation practice, drafting the single negotiating text, was accepted in the case of COP21 but rejected in the case of COP15, with (lack of) trust in the respective Presidency explicitly cited as the reason in both cases.

Once the French Presidency took over responsibility for drafting the text, it ensured that the origins and evolution of successive versions were clear to parties (interviews 6, 14) and that parties could see their proposals represented in the text (interview 14), thus reinforcing perceptions of a party-driven process, even though it held the pen. This allowed it to consistently push for greater ambition, selecting the more ambitious of two options whenever possible (interviews 2, 9, 13). When crafting the final wording, the safer option would have been to propose a less ambitious text which would still have been accepted "because no one wanted to go back empty-handed" (interview 1), yet the French Presidency decided to put forward an agreement that was located at the most ambitious end of the zone of possible agreement. While respecting all parties' red lines, the French Presidency "had a choice between a high equilibrium and a low equilibrium" (interview 2) and rather than putting forward a lowest-common-denominator outcome it put forward the highest level of ambition available to it. Yet, power to draft text does not mean that one's text will be accepted:

"[I]f you don't have their trust, they won't buy your deal" (interview 1).

Acceptance of Decisions

Both procedural and substantive proposals were rebuffed by negotiators in the Danish case and accepted in the French case, with repercussions for the respective negotiation processes and outcomes. With regards to procedural proposals, Rasmussen's lack of understanding of UN procedures led to delegates affording him "no indulgence" (Monheim 2015, 129), whereas Fabius carried out his procedural role expertly (interviews 1, 9) and faced very little resistance (interviews 6, 7). Specifically, we identify two turning points that affected the speed and efficiency of the negotiations.

Procedural delays cost the Danish Presidency an entire 24 hours during the second week of the summit as parties spent their time in conflict over the Presidency's proposed way forward rather than engaging on substantive matters (Monheim 2015, 39–40). The delay in the negotiations pushed back the closing plenary—where the agreement was due to be adopted—from Friday to Saturday. As heads of state and government had already made their travel arrangements for the Friday, they were not able to attend the final plenary. Without this procedural delay, the presence of Obama and his peers employing their persuasive rhetoric to sell the compromise may have been enough to change the dynamics in the room and reach an agreement (Monheim 2015, 113).

Whereas the Danes lost a day to procedural debate, the French gained an extra day at the start of the summit through their innovative proposal to bypass procedural discussions and launch substantive work early. On Saturday, November 28, 2015 they convened a meeting for lead negotiators in which they presented their proposed organization of work and requested that parties bypass the procedural debate that usually accompanies the division of issues into contact groups at the start of the conference so that work might begin without any delay (interview 9). This was a novel and quite radical idea within the UNFCCC. Parties accepted and the result was that the opening plenary took place on the evening of Sunday, November 29—before the official opening of the COP—and established the contact groups so that technical negotiations could begin immediately on the morning of Monday, November 30 (ENB 2015), saving a full day that would otherwise have been spent on procedure at the expense of substance.

During the morning of the final day, the French Presidency convened a plenary meeting and announced to delegates that the final text was ready. The response was an ecstatic ten-minute standing ovation. Fabius recalls that "the applause came from everywhere, even though none of the states knew the exact substance of the text. They all…had enough trust in our team and in me, to consider that the agreement would garner their support" (Fabius 2016, 37). Interviewees also suggested that delegates "would have accepted the Paris Agreement by acclamation without even seeing it" (interview 2). However, after presenting the text as a take-it-or-leave-it proposal, disaster loomed when US Secretary of State John Kerry telephoned Fabius to inform him that the United States could not accept the text because of a change of wording that would have required approval from a hostile US Senate: "Developed countries *should* continue taking the lead by undertaking economy-wide absolute emissions reduction targets" had been replaced with the legally binding "*shall*" (Fabius 2016, 36). The French Presidency insisted that the change was an unintentional mistake on the part of an overworked Secretariat, and proposed a procedural solution to a substantive problem: presenting the change as a typographical error allowed the French Presidency to amend the wording without reopening the session. However, the developing country bloc of the G77 + China would not accept changing the wording back to the softer commitment for developed countries.

The live transmission halted, the podium remained empty, and tension began to mount. The Chinese delegation was called to act as additional mediators (Zenhua 2018). Fabius recounts entering the small room where the negotiations were taking place. He refers to their affectual trust: "'Over these many months' I told them, 'we have come to know each other, we have worked together, and we respect one another. I trust you and I believe you trust me.'" (Fabius 2016, 36). Whether or not Fabius's account is accurate, the newly assembled delegates in plenary accepted the French Presidency's explanation of a typographical error by the Secretariat without complaint (interview 10). This allowed the French Presidency to revert back to the "should" wording without reopening the session and the negotiations could proceed to the adoption of the agreement. According to Fabius, it was "the trust acquired over all those months of preparation" (Fabius 2016, 37) that allowed the Presidency to overcome this last-minute hurdle.

The two closing plenaries paint very different pictures of the respective COP Presidents trying to pass the final texts. Rasmussen was met with a room "full of sharks" (Monheim 2015, 117) and in particular a "prepared and coordinated" (Monheim 2015, 45) attack from the ALBA group. Most criticism was directed toward the process followed rather than the substance of the agreement (Dimitrov 2010, 811; Monheim 2015, 45). The opposing parties were Bolivia, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Cuba from the ALBA coalition, and Sudan. In Paris, Nicaragua threatened to block consensus on the final deal, but "thanks to the political capital and trust that the COP21 President enjoyed" (Ourbak 2017, 16), he was able to work with allies including the G77 + China chair from South Africa to persuade Nicaragua to withhold its objections until after the agreement had been passed (interviews 8, 20). One can imagine a reverse counterfactual in Copenhagen in which Thomas Becker had not left the Presidency and could leverage his warm relations and personal influence with African countries and the ALBA bloc to convince them not to block the consensus.

Conclusions

This article demonstrates that trust is the precondition for the negotiating parties to allow chairs of global negotiations to informally mediate over and above their formal procedural functions. In global negotiations that operate by consensus, a single voice of dissent is enough to shut down any entrepreneurial activity that goes beyond chairs' formal mandate. Outcomes of complex negotiations are determined by a combination of factors acting jointly and a trusted chair informally mediating the process is one such factor. When a chair is not permitted to mediate, the herculean task of finding a consensus under such challenging conditions becomes practically impossible.

Several factors made agreement on a global climate deal more likely in 2015 than in 2009. Nonetheless, agreement in Paris was far from a foregone conclusion. Even at the start of the final week of the conference, many doubted that an agreement could be reached (Balakrishnan 2018). The trust-building activities of the French hosts should not be underestimated. The independent contribution of the

French Presidency was twofold: first, actively mediating to avoid negotiation deadlock or derailment and ensure that a deal was reached; and second, raising the level of ambition of the outcome in line with its own policy preferences.

Given the consensus rule in global negotiations whereby any state can object to the inclusion of elements it dislikes, the most likely outcome is a lowest-common-denominator agreement of little substance (Dimitrov 2010, 809) that lacks "teeth" (Zartman 1994, 6). Furthermore, all else being equal, we would assume that the outcome would be aligned with the preferences of the most powerful negotiating parties (Steinberg 2002). In the case of climate negotiations, a lowest-common-denominator agreement was aligned with US and Chinese preferences for a minimalistic outcome that does not impose restrictive emission limits or a strict temperature reduction goal (Oberthür and Groen 2018, 716–17). Although the level of ambition of the Paris Agreement is subject to debate (Bang, Hovi, and Skodvin 2016; Clémençon 2016), there is consensus that it represents considerably more than a lowest-common-denominator outcome. The Paris Agreement binds all countries to set progressively more ambitious GHG reduction targets every five years, comply with common accounting and verification rules and expose the (non)achievement of their targets to international scrutiny. It commits the entire international community to achieving carbon neutrality by the second half of the century and sets an aspirational goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C, exceeding most expectations.

Both the Danish and French Presidencies' preferences were for an ambitious outcome (Meilstrup 2010; Monheim 2015; Fabius 2016; Ourbak 2017). In addition to normative convictions and the desire for a strong political legacy, as EU member states that were already subject to strict regulations it was in their interest to achieve a deal that bound other countries to ambitious climate mitigation. The distrusted Danish Presidency was not accepted as a mediator and responsibility for the single negotiating text was taken out of its hands. The French Presidency, in contrast, was trusted to draft the compromise text and in so doing shape the final outcome. It consistently located the landing zone at the most ambitious end of what was politically feasible, and the acceptance of its proposal constituted the adoption of the Paris Agreement. As one seasoned negotiator speculated: "I don't think you could have had an ambitious agreement without the parties' trust in the Presidency" (interview 2).

Theoretically, these findings contribute to the debate in the mediation literature between those scholars who advocate impartiality (Young 1967; Carnevale 1992) and those who rather emphasize the chair's ability to leverage their resources and interests to achieve an agreement between the parties (Touval and Zartman 1985; Kydd 2003; Favretto 2009). Our results strongly support chair impartiality in the case of global negotiations operating by consensus. Whereas a mediator might be able to use their leverage when negotiations take place between a small number of parties, it is not possible to apply pressure in this way to 195 parties who each wield a veto. Rather, it is essential to retain the trust of all parties. The Danish case demonstrates that the lack of perceived impartiality on the part of the chair is the surest way to lose this trust.

Working relationships become significant in the context of continuous negotiations taking place at regular intervals. The behavioral turn in IR and insights from organizational behavior offer potential for explaining the outcomes of global negotiations. National interests will always be a primary consideration in the analysis of international affairs, yet this does not preclude a human element. When

unlocking the puzzle of complex negotiations, it is important to consider all the relevant pieces and not to dismiss practitioners' observations that "at the end of the day it is people who represent countries. So the trust between those people is a key" (Monheim 2015, 120). We advocate further research that transgresses traditional IR paradigms and seeks to combine sound theoretical insights with analysis that reflects the reality experienced by practitioners on the ground.

Practically, the implication of these findings is that the trust-building activities and behaviors of chairs matter in global negotiations. Although it is but one of many necessary ingredients for success, this micro-factor represents low-hanging fruit compared to geopolitical or economic macro-factors beyond the reach of those wishing to promote greater multilateral cooperation. Further research in this area and dissemination of findings, for example in the form of training manuals or workshops for chairs, could deliver significant benefits.

Supplementary Information

Supplementary information is available at the *International Studies Quarterly* data archive.

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