Towards a New Climate Alliance: The Cartagena Dialogue
Teaching Guide

DURATION
30 mins preparation
60-90 min discussion
Optional: 30 minutes post-case reading

CONTEXT
Non-fiction case based on a real-life example

BEST FOR
Participants and practitioners after understanding fundamentals of negotiation to explore the importance of leveraging informal problem-solving processes.

TEACHING
Interactive case discussion with small group work

TOPICS
diplomacy, process management, coalitions, interest based negotiations

CONTENT
Describes the circumstances around which the Cartagena Dialogue was formed after the failed Copenhagen COP. Introduces concepts like coalition building, informal versus formal settings, and the importance of postponing commitment when trying to understand interests and brainstorming options.

OTHERS
Can be taught together with the case "Bad COP and not much Hopenhagen," which studies the importance of the formal processes; there is also a joint version that integrates both cases into one.

1) One page overview

This case describes the story of a group of climate negotiators who in the aftermath of a failed climate summit decide to create a new alliance that cuts across traditional divides. The case focusses on how the main actors design the norms around the alliance: the group meets in secret, it doesn't have a stable membership, participants always show up as individuals (not as country representatives), the group promotes learning rather than agreement, they brainstorm potential ideas, but never writes them down as joint positions, instead advancing them within their own delegations. The case invites a discussion of how the way by which groups discuss, and the procedural expectations define what type of negotiations will materialize. In addition, the case discusses how the ideas of an informal group of connected actors ultimately make their way into the formal process. There are several ways: the group initially works by reshaping the positions of the various delegations they are a member of, but over time ends up strategizing more explicitly: They propose text to strategic actors (such as the facilitators of formal processes), they coordinate their interventions during COPs, and they begin blocking positions in their groups, when they don't serve its purpose. This latter part lends itself for a discussion of transferring ideas from informal into formal processes and more broadly, it allows for a discussion of principles of effective diplomacy, specifically, the process of creating relationships across divides to pre-negotiate ideas

in informal spaces as a useful means to influence outcomes (rather than understanding diplomacy as just showing up at summits and coordinating positions).

The group ended up playing an important role in the aftermath of the disastrous Copenhagen COP to drive towards an ambitious international climate agreement by circumventing several shortcomings of the formal UN process, including the tendency to engage negotiators in formal settings, with strict norms on how to communicate; the strong formalized division between countries into diametrically opposed camps that doesn't surface nuanced shared interests across subcamps; and the ensuing tendency that negotiators focus their energy on defending the positions of their country or coalition rather than engaging in creative problem solving.

2) Summary of the exercise

A. Content & Logistics overview

Detailed Content overview

"Towards a New Climate Alliance: The Cartagena Dialogue" narrates the creation of the Cartagena Dialogue, an informal forum envisioned in the backdrop of the Copenhagen Conference of the Parties (COP), widely regarded as a huge diplomatic disaster. The Copenhagen COP was expected to produce a new global climate pact. But poor process management by the Danish Presidency, together with deep divisions between developed and developing countries, led to a disastrous conclusion with shouting matches in the plenary and no formal adoption of the Treaty. Many participants, including Heads of State, noted that the multilateral process had been harmed as a result of the chaos, and suddenly the future of the multilateral climate regime was in question.

Unbeknownst to many, a small group of low- to mid-ranking delegates had met in the last days of the Copenhagen COP to break out of hostile dynamics. Hostilities had been particularly pronounced between developed and developing countries, led by the US on one side and the so-called "BASIC" group (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) on the other. The negotiators who came together tended to represent more moderate and often less powerful countries in these two camps, including the UK, Sweden, Switzerland, Australia (and others) on the developed country side and the Marshall Islands, Colombia, Mexico (and others) on the developing country side. Their goal during their small room meeting in the midst of chaos at the Copenhagen COP was to develop collaborative proposals that could salvage a result. They failed; but reported that conversations in that small room felt different.

After the Copenhagen COP, the small group of negotiators decided to gather and build a new alliance predicated on such trusted, open conversations. Part I of this case follows the journey of those designing the new alliance. It places the reader in the shoes of the Colombian negotiator Andrea Guerrero Garcia and lays out:

- The main **shortcomings** the group aimed to address; Specifically:
  the lack of substantive progress in face of divisions; the inability to understand one another

across entrenched camps, strong positionality, deeply entrenched distrust and divisions as well as strong norms not to step out of one's traditional alliances;

- several **challenges** they faced in addressing those shortcomings; Specifically:
Having no mandate to create such a forum, potential members, especially developing country negotiators, being scared of being tainted as "collaborators" with the enemy, lack of resources, lack of political support, as well as;

- multiple **aspects they had to consider** when deciding on the format and norms of the Dialogue; Specifically:
Who to invite, whether to become a formal group or not, how to balance secrecy with confidentiality.

By surfacing the dilemmas and presenting them to the reader, the case prompts reflection on how structuring a negotiation process can impact substantive decisions.

Part II provides the real-world resolution to the questions posed by Part I. It describes how the group thought about these issues, what steps they took, what the group ultimately became—the Cartagena Dialogue—and how it changed negotiation outcomes. Part II recalls several decisions made during the staging of the Dialogue, aimed at strengthening relationships between participants, fostering adequate procedures for open exchange, and delaying commitment to a specific solution.

In terms of creating a different process, the following aspects became critical:

- the group prioritized the invitation of negotiators whose personalities evoked trust and the willingness to engage;

- meetings would be held in very informal settings and included activities that were designed to help people see the people in each other (rather than the representatives). For example, the Colombian delegation (setting the example for subsequent hosts), purposely crafted an amicable atmosphere of the setting to cultivate personal ties by sharing their culture through inaugural dance performances and giving people traditional clothes to wear to dinners;

- people were invited to share their interests and constraints under the promise of secrecy, and participants lists were never shared;

- there would never be any joint statements or positions and indeed the goal was never to agree but to develop ideas that people could take home to their ministries.

In terms of strategizing to get its ideas into the process, the following steps became important:

- Members would coordinate behind the scenes to block positions of coalitions they were members of (e.g., the G77+China) to ensure that the opportunity to later present their bridging proposals would remain possible. (It is a norm that individual countries are only allowed to speak up on issues with their own positions if there is no coordinated group position of a group they are a member of; e.g., Colombia could only have its own position if there wasn't a coordinated position by G77+China of which Colombia is a member);

- Members would coordinate their interventions whereby in negotiations people from different groups (e.g., the EU, the Alliance of Small Island States, Australia) would take turns right after

each other to support each other's proposals, indicating to the facilitator an opportunity for consensus;

- Members would inform each other of outcomes of formal meetings and allow for quick information flow;
- Members would identify allies, such as the respective Presidencies (the entity in charge of getting to an outcome) and thus remained particularly interested in potential bridging proposals across divides.

Part II also describes some challenges and unintended consequences of the Cartagena Dialogue, including how the informality of the setting made it easier to be ignored and for knowledge to be lost, as well as the formation of a powerful counter-coalition that would mobilize around lost influence. In addition, certain countries and negotiators felt excluded. Surfacing these downsides also prompts a reflection on what could have been done differently.

Logistics overview

This exercise requires a low to moderate amount of logistical support. Students will need access to the two parts of the case and clear instructions to read the first part before class and the second part after. Debriefing in-class should take the full class period and will require at least the standard amount of pre-class prep.

B. Learning Objectives

This case illustrates the critical influence of the negotiation *process*, including the norms and expectations of how people engage, on the type of negotiation dynamics that are likely to unfold. The case discussion will train important analytical capacities for negotiation analysis and develop a set of specific skills.

Analytical capacities

Participants will:

Appreciate the difference between positional bargaining and interest-based bargaining and understand the important role that the negotiation process can play in encouraging interest-based or positional bargaining.

- Understand aspects of processes that can incentivize or disincentivize positional bargaining versus an open exchange of information and a collaborative engaging in option generation, such as:
  o Whether people are engaged as individuals or as representatives of organizations.
  o Whether people are expected to commit to an outcome that is being discussed or whether they are engaging in discussing hypotheticals that might form the basis of an agreement later.
  o Whether the process separates the stage of "option invention" from the stage of "commitment."
  o Whether people have sufficiently strong personal relationships and trust to feel secure to share their interests.

o Whether mandates of parties focus on positions and outcome achievements, or on interests and exploration.

Appreciate the importance of being strategic and creative in devising context-specific mechanisms to transfer options, ideas, or knowledge from informal process into the formal negotiations.

Skills:

Participants will be able to:

- Structure effective negotiation environments and manage communication and procedures with an eye on:
  - o Delaying and separating the commitment stage with task invention, to favor environments for interest sharing and creative brainstorming.
  - o Strengthening relationships and trust between parties to facilitate willingness to share interests.
- Devise strategies for transferring ideas and proposals from informal forums to formal ones, that are context-specific those the formal negotiation structures.

C. Where does this fit in a negotiation syllabus?

This case is generally very accessible, even for those without prior training. However, it works best at the midpoint of an introductory course on negotiation or in an advanced course. Ideally, students are knowledgeable on basic concepts, especially regarding positional versus interest-based negotiations and the differences between value creating and value claiming negotiations. It can be helpful if participants are familiar with multi-party dynamics. This case serves as a helpful "bridge" from fundamental to more complicated multiparty concepts.

3) How to run and debrief the exercise

A. Logistics overview

This exercise takes a minimum of 90 minutes to run in total:

Individual preparation: 30-60 minutes

Participants are asked to read the first part of the case and reflect on the questions outlined at the end of document (asking students to develop ideas on how to design the new forum) in preparation for small group discussions. Instructors may consider having students individually or in groups submit their plans for the new forum as a short assignment.

Running the session: 60-90 minutes

Ideally, the session will involve small group discussions and moderated class-wide discussion. For these discussions, the moderator can decide to divide the group into groups that discuss the same questions or up to four teams, each of which addresses a different question. For details, see below. There should

be available space to allow these teams to gather separately. The instructor may consider recording the groups' reports back on a whiteboard or projector.

Optional: Post-session reading: 30-60 minutes

Participants are invited to read the second part of the case to learn more about the choices and strategies that the creators of the Dialogue adopted to empower this forum.

B. Draft schedule

Interactive discussion: Recap the background & setting the stage	10-15 minutes
Small group work or interactive discussion: develop actionable ideas for what the group should become in the long-run	10 minutes
Full group discussion: Discuss actionable ideas in light of opportunities and risks as well as its implications for how to design the coalition	10 minutes
Optional: Small group work or interactive discussion: How to structure the first meeting	10 minutes
Lecture/Full group discussion: Revealing the actual choices and discussing them	20 minutes
Lecture/Full group discussion: Cementing the learning, generalize the learning	10 minutes

C. Suggested detailed lesson plan for debriefing

The following is a suggestion for structuring the session. Naturally the facilitator might wish to deviate. The following guide is written to complement the available teaching slides.

1) Interactive discussion: Recap the background & setting the stage

The introduction has two objectives: first, help recall the context and development of the case, and second, have clarity on the strategic goals the groups tried to pursue by creating the Cartagena Dialogue as well as appreciating the constraints.

The main idea of surfacing those goals is to center participants around a common understanding of what the groups set out to do so that their subsequent discussion to provide advice for achieving those goals is targeted. The instructor can guide the group to summarize the case, and then allow discussion on the identification of the strategic goals at the outset, and the most salient constraints.

2) Small group work or interactive discussion: develop actionable for what the group should become in the long-run

Participants are instructed to develop concrete suggestions to the small group of negotiators on how they should think about creating this new forum. The purpose of this breakout room is to encourage participants to reflect on different decisions that had to be made regarding invitations and membership of the forum, what level of formality was required, what outcomes should come out of the Dialogue, and

what rules, norms and procedures should be established. Depending on the time, the instructor can decide to assign all or half of the following questions to each group:

- *Membership*
Guiding Questions: Who should be invited? How to think about who to invite and about the membership? (These questions should help participants reflect on how the selection of the participants influences the type of conversations and the level of dissent within the group).

- *Level of formality*
Guiding Questions: Should they aim to create a formal negotiating group? At what level should people meet? (These questions should help participants reflect how the level of formality can affect the way individuals engage in the conversation and how they are perceived by external parties).

- *Outcomes:*
Guiding Questions: What should happen at meetings going forward and with the outcome of these meetings? (These questions should help participants reflect on how the predefined nature of the outcome influences how freely the negotiators discuss and how able are they to delay commitment).

- *Rules, norms, and procedures:*
Guiding Questions: What rules, norms and procedures should be set for meeting going forward? (These questions should help participants reflect on what norms and procedures would allow this forum to maintain and preserve its objectives over time).

3) Full group discussion: Discuss actionable ideas in light of opportunities and risks as well as its implications for how to design the coalition

The purpose of this debrief is to collect the answers of the teams and induce reasoning about the risks and opportunities of the various possible choices. Teams will report back on their discussions, and the instructor can record the answers.

It might be useful to structure the answers about whether the group should be formal or informal along a spectrum of risks and opportunities for each and to lead a discussion on what the implications are for who should be invited, what norms should guide deliberations, and how to transfer ideas to the process.

	FORMAL	INFORMAL
Opportunities	*Example:* More "power" in process …	*Example:* Move beyond "positional" negotiations …
Risks	*Example:* Let politics back in …	*Example:* No "power" at formal table …
How (rules, norms, expectations…)?	*Example:* People show up with authority to commit …	*Example:* People show up as individuals …

- *Setting*

  Guiding Question: What considerations should the prioritize when determining the setting for the inaugural meeting? (These questions should help participants reflect on what considerations in the setting can help negotiators feel comfortable and help strengthen relations).

- *Agreement*

  Guiding Questions: What should the ministers do? What should they agree on? What form should that agreement take? (These questions should help participants reflect on what the priorities of the discussion should be, for example, substantive, procedural or principled).

- *Mandate*

  Guiding Questions: What mandate should be minister need to pass on to technical negotiators? (These questions should help participants reflect how the mandate given by the Ministers to their technical negotiators can shape the reach and future of the forum).

5) Full group discussion: Revealing the actual choices and discussing them

This final discussion has three purposes:

- First, contrast the actual choices of the forum with the suggestions that emerged from the small groups;
- Second, analyze the actual choices taken by the Cartagena Dialogue members in the light of the negotiation theory; and
- Third, discuss possible strategies for transferring the ideas into the formal process.

Firstly, the instructors can record answers of the second discussion on the whiteboard or flipchart. Later, the instructor will present the actual choices of the Dialogue and contrast them with the suggestions. In this part, the instructor can base the explanations on negotiation theory to highlight how these choices constituted "process interventions". For example, the Dialogue leaders set up a format that was based on strong relationship and under the promise of secrecy they allow people to engage as individuals with specific knowledge about a country, rather than representatives of a country invited to defend its interests. Moreover, the process expectations to stay in the background of the official negotiations and to only develop ideas, never agree, supported the crafting of a forum that make possible the separation of the stages of options generation and commitment. Indeed, it was not possible for members to commit to anything discussed as the forum was never designed to agree on a position; Noone would ever be held to what was discussed in the room. Thirdly, the instructor will initiate an open discussion with the participants about ideas on how to strategize the transferring of the ideas into de formal negotiation process. Some of the options include strategic voting, blocking positions in coalitions, inviting each other to critical meetings, identifying allies in need of bridging proposals like the Presidency) etc.

6) Lecture/Full group discussion: Cementing the learning, generalize the learning

The purpose of this section is to summarize the learnings of the session and to highlight the main takeaways to the participants. Some of these takeaways could emphasize 1) how the process defines substance, 2) the importance of separating commitment from the stage of invention and deliberately creating spaces that allow for learning and invention.

D. Typical challenges and discussion points:

1) Inclusion and exclusion:

A common discussion that emerges from this case is how inclusive and diverse does the Cartagena Dialogue needs to be or not to be to fulfil its strategic goal. As is described in part 2 of the case, there are benefits and downsides to both options. A small, cohesive group of participants who share similar personalities has the advantage of existing interpersonal relationships and trust and can galvanize around a common specific objectives and goal. The main work is to develop ideas that embody this joint goal whilst addressing the divergent legitimate interests. However, this comes at the cost of sometimes avoid important contentious topics and the ideas holding less credibility as they have been developed in an exclusive process. This group in fact was be perceived from the outside as exclusionary; the instructor also may wish to note that the degree of inclusivity interacts with the decisions about the governance of the group. Being an informal forum of people that meet on occasion mandates fewer needs to be representative in comparison to the hypothetical scenario of creating a more formal group that has as a part of its DNA to cut across traditional divides. The latter comes with higher scrutiny and requirements of being inclusive even to voices that counter the group's interests.

Moreover, within a formal group that includes all, the tensions and contentions of the formal process are more likely to emerge. If the informal process manages to establish procedures and settings that allow participants to learn from each other and build trust, this diverse group can in theory become very compelling to achieve progress. Nonetheless, it is much more challenging to engage negotiators as individuals when they represent the ends of highly polarized scenarios and situations of great distrust, such as the ones experienced after Copenhagen COP. This is especially true, since larger countries or very powerful parties often have strong foreign policy norms to not allow their negotiators to join such informal fora. Hence, the politicization that the Cartagena Dialogue aimed to prevent would be more likely to creep back in.

2) What can be achieved by such fora?

Often a discussion ensues, whether such informal fora are a panacea. They are not; and the Cartagena Dialogue was not. First, as is outlined in Part 2 of the case, the Cartagena Dialogue was much more effective on aspects of the regime that we at least in part integrative. Many report that discussions on the financial aspects (which are distributive in nature) were much less fruitful. Those issues often required the political trading of issues across various negotiation areas. This would have required higher level involvement. Second, Cartagena was one building block within a whole host of important initiatives that were launched after Copenhagen and ended in the successful adoption of the Paris Agreement. For instance, the High Ambition Coalition, was a network to capture similar aspirations but met at a more political level; notably it included the US. The Groundswell Initiative was a network of people in business, religion, academics, and others that worked together to create the necessary bottom-up pressure; the Mexican Presidency right after Copenhagen and the French Presidency before Paris staged a diplomatic effort to ensure that all countries' voices are included. In short: the Cartagena Dialogue was effective as it was flanked by many other important initiatives that helped reshape the relationship ecosystem.

4) Additional Resources & Appendix

Additional Resources

For literature assessing various forms of informal problem-solving

- Kelman HC. The problem-solving workshop in conflict resolution. In: In R.L. Merritt (Ed.), Communication in international politics. Urbana: University of Illinois Press; 1972. pp. 168-204.

- Susskind, Lawrence E., Abram Chayes, and Janet Martinez. "Parallel informal negotiation: A new kind of international dialogue." *Negotiation Journal* 12 (1996): 19-29.

- Susskind, Lawrence E., and Danya Rumore. "Using Devising Seminars to Advance Collaborative Problem Solving in Complicated Public Policy Disputes." *Negotiation Journal* 31, no. 3 (July 2015): 223–35. https://doi.org/10.1111/nejo.12092.

For more information about the Cartagena Dialogue

- Blaxekjær, Lau Øfjord. "Diplomatic Learning and Trust. How the Cartagena Dialogue Brought UN Climate Negotiation Back on Track and Helped Deliver the Paris Agreement." In *Coalitions in the Climate Change Negotiations*, edited by Carola Klöck, Paula Castro, Florian Weiler, and Lau Øfjord Blaxekjær, 91–112. Routledge Research in Global Environmental Governance. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2021.

For background on the Copenhagen backdrop and the problems associated with formal negotiations in the UNFCCC

- Dannecker, Anselm, Monica Giannone, and Leah Kessler. "Bad COP and not much Hopenhagen." *Negotiation and Conflict Resolution Collaboratory Climate negotiation case and simulation series*. Negotiation and Conflict Resolution Collaboratory, Center for Public Leadership, Harvard Kennedy School (2024).

- Depledge, Joanna. "The Opposite of Learning: Ossification in the Climate Change Regime." *Global Environmental Politics* 6, no. 1 (February 1, 2006): 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1162/glep.2006.6.1.1.

Detailed elaboration of learning objectives

The distinction between interest-based and positional bargaining is foundational for the field of negotiations. Positional bargaining can be effective in certain rare situations (one-shot, single-issue zero-sum negotiations) but often, parties are motivated to misrepresent their interests or exaggerate their needs as tactics. In multiparty, multi-issue, and iterative negotiations, parties are better off aiming to create value before claiming value. For such negotiations parties need to accurately depict and share their interests and brainstorm creative options for mutual gain.

Frequently, in complex multiparty negotiations, such as the international climate negotiations, highly structured and formal procedures can foster positional bargaining. The adoption of positional bargaining in non-zero-sum negotiations generates suboptimal outcomes by not exploring the full range of

possibilities. For that reason, the designers of the negotiation environments, as well as participants, must find ways to influence or circumvent procedural norms to promote creative problem-solving.

For example, the climate agreements negotiated under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) uphold specific procedures that reinforce positional bargaining. Negotiators engaged as representatives of their countries usually receive strict mandates that specify domestically agreed positions and pre-defined acceptable outcomes (rather than mandates that incentivize the exploration of interests and ideas). The main objective of the COPs is to reach consensus agreements that materialize the commitment of all parties. Frequently this is interpreted as unanimity by participants. The climate negotiations process has strong embedded procedural expectations of commitment, whereby groups at different levels are constructed with the pure purpose to get to an agreement. Thus, negotiations tend to become a test of will, where holding out is incentivized. Agreements tend to reflect compromise by powerful parties rather than being the result of creative resolution differences.

Additionally, highly structured blocks have been formed following divisions, such as developing versus developed countries. Congregating large number of countries into one block brings considerable political advantages, especially for smaller or developing states who have more power acting as a group than they would on their own; however, it also obscures the very wide and diverse set of interests that coexist within coalitions. For that reason, these strongly defined blocks have created mistrust and hindered candid conversations across groups.

Finally, the capacity to learn from each other's concerns is inhibited by highly formalized customary procedures, such as seating delegates across huge tables and offering them less than a minute to communicate the positions of their countries. Consequently, parties frequently engage by stating minimal acceptable outcomes and red lines, trying to identify whether there are compromise options that respect as many red lines as possible.

Other negotiation processes, often of less formal nature, can engage negotiators as individuals, asking them to share the unique information they hold about their interests, the interests of their principals and of their constituencies. In informal settings, commitment, that is, the expectation to settle or agree, can be delayed or altogether avoided. It often provide spaces for negotiators to learn from the other sides and where proposals, not commitments, can be explored. In such settings, parties can creatively brainstorm new angles of the problem and come up with alternative options to fulfill more interests of the parties. Such informal spaces usually require trust, strong relationships and adequate norms to protect the space.

The Cartagena Dialogue is an example of the design of an alternative informal space that can inform the highly formal UNFCCC regime. The forum was constructed on a basis of trust originating in the relationships between negotiators. The communication, procedures, and norms were centered predicated on "not agreeing" but on learning and exploring: no joint statements were ever produced. Confidentiality and openness were emphasized. Moreover, many decisions regarding the ambiance of the setting, such as the welcoming dinner, strengthened the trust and relationships among participants.

The ultimate objective of informal forums remains to achieve better outcomes within the formal process. For that reason, participants of informal processes need to agree on tailored and context-specific mechanisms to transfer their ideas and options into the formal negotiations. In the case of the

Cartagena Dialogue, the mechanism they coordinated to influence the subsequent COPs, was bring the solutions "back home" to inform the negotiation plans of their respective delegations and move forward the agreed objective by the strategic use the formal procedures such as synchronized voting or strategically blocked positions.