

Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna

DOTTORATO DI RICERCA IN  
SCIENZE POLITICHE E SOCIALI

Ciclo 34

**Settore Concorsuale:** 14/A2 - SCIENZA POLITICA

**Settore Scientifico Disciplinare:** SPS/04 - SCIENZA POLITICA

SPEED, LEGISLATURES AND INTERNATIONAL TREATIES: EVIDENCE FROM  
MERCOSUR

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**Esame finale anno 2022**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The last years have offered me new challenges and experiences, good and bad ones. In every single moment, I had the support of Alexandre, Carmem, Milton, Roberson and Simony. I cannot thank them enough for not giving up on following this path together and for making me remember that good things happen, even when the lights are off. They have put a lot of effort so I could have a good education and conditions to make some of my dreams real. Also, I could not think of better company to spend the stay-at-home months.

Many friends should be thanked for their help, but a special mention goes to Flávia, Jean, Lucas and Marina, who kept believing on me, even when I, myself, lacked believing. They are true inspirations of friendship. While listening to all my doubts they helped more than they can realise.

The experience of moving abroad again was challenging and I am in debt to all those who paid the enormous emotional price of the distance, so I could fulfil my dream. I am truly grateful to those who helped me seeing the wonders of Italy. I should also mention Ana and Sara, as well as Giuseppe and Rita, for the wonderful company in my first year in Forlì.

I am extremely grateful to all the colleagues in my PhD programme. I thank them for the laughs and the moments spent together. Special thanks go for Anna and Giulia. Their friendship and kindness are priceless. The company in and out the PhD lab make every day happier to spend some hours with amazing people.

I would also like to thank professors Michele Sapignoli and Sabrina Ragone, for their supervision whilst letting me free to run my project and learn from my own mistakes. I extend my appreciation to my committee members for their evaluation, as well as to professors Andrea Pedrazzani and Camilo Burian for accepting the role of external reviewers. Furthermore, I appreciate the coordination of professor Daniela Giannetti since I started the course.

Thanks are also due to professors Karina Mariano and Flavia de Campos, for their incredible support when applying to the PhD and for the learning since

my early years at the university. I am also grateful to professors Alex Lehr and Massimo Ventrucci for their help with statistics and to all other professors with whom I learned. Also, I must thank professors Adrian Albala and Camilo Burian for their guidance, even if my fieldwork faced limitations imposed by the pandemic. Both were always available to discuss my doubts and to suggest refinements in the research design. Furthermore, although I could not go to Paraguay and Argentina, I thank Gustavo Rojas, Emanuel Porcelli and Fernando Masi for their willingness to host me as a visiting student. On this subject, I appreciate the work of the BACCN in Paraguay for assisting me in collecting the data online and I extend the greetings to the personnel in the other national parliaments.

For the last years, I have worked with several colleagues outside of the University of Bologna and I cannot forget the *Observatório de Regionalismo* (Regionalism Observatory, ODR) and the *Núcleo de Estudos e Análises Internacionais* (Center of International Studies and Analyses, NEAI). I had great opportunities to discuss my research, to write for the teams and to engage in cutting-edge discussions with them. Although I cannot mention them all here, I am grateful to several members from both groups, and I hope to have contributed to their research as well. I am also indebted to those who helped me in learning how to code in R, opening new research fields to me.

I mention my gratitude to the reviewers, including the anonymous, in scientific events and journals. They added valuable contributions to improve this investigation.

I thank the staff at the University of Bologna who assisted in creating a research-friendly environment for international students.

Furthermore, this work was supported by the scholarship financed by the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the University of Bologna.

On this topic, I would like to thank the Italian working class, which has funded this research, even if in most cases the workers do not have access to academia's results.

Last, but not least, I also thank everyone who stand daily against eurocentrism, imperialism, and colonialism in all its forms.

“You can’t stop the change any more than you can stop the suns from setting.”

(Lucas 1999)

## ABSTRACT

What causes faster or slower procedures in the parliaments when considering international treaties? This question motivates the current research, which aims to understand how the nature of coalitions influence the duration of the legislative processes. For this, the analysis covers all the treaties signed by Mercosur between 1991 and 2021 and the internalisation processes in four member states (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay). It observes how long each parliament took to approve the treaties and which was the effect of political and economic variables. A mixed-methods approach was adopted for the empirical research, combining Survival Analysis, Qualitative Comparative Analysis and Process Tracing. While the quantitative work investigates all the cases, the qualitative study illuminates the enlargement of Mercosur, with in-depth analysis of the Paraguayan approval of the Venezuelan and Bolivian accessions. This study provides important insights into the role of national legislatures in the Latin American regionalism, concluding that the government-opposition cleavage drives the parliamentarians' behaviour on the topic of regional integration. The study also contributes to the field Mercosur studies with the characterisation of the treaties ratified domestically, by undertaking a longitudinal analysis at the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bloc.

Keywords: Coalitions; Foreign Policy Analysis; Mercosur; Parliaments; Regionalism.

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|          |  |
|----------|--|
| AIC      | Akaike information criterion   |
| ALBA-TCP | Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America - People's Trade Treaty |
| ANR-PC   | National Republican Association - Colorado Party                           |
| AP       | Country Forward  |
| AP       | Pacific Alliance   |
| CAN      | Andean Community   |
| CCM      | Mercosur Trade Commission  |
| CELAC    | Community of Latin American and Caribbean States                           |
| CMC      | Common Market Council  |
| ECLAC    | United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean     |
| ENP      | Effective Number of Parties  |
| ESA      | Enhanced Standard Analysis   |
| FG       | Guasú Front  |
| FOCEM    | Mercosur Structural Convergence Fund                                       |
| FPA      | Foreign Policy Analysis  |
| GDP      | Gross domestic product   |
| GMC      | Common Market Group  |
| MAS      | Movement for Socialism   |
| Mercosur | Southern Common Market   |
| MPQ      | Beloved Fatherland Movement  |
| MSPY     | We are Paraguay Political Movement   |
| OAS      | Organisation of American States  |
| PDP      | Progresive Democratic Party  |
| PEN      | National Encounter Party   |
| PJ       | Justicialist Party   |
| PLRA     | Authentic Radical Liberal Party  |
| PPQ      | Beloved Fatherland Party   |



|        |                                    |
|--------|------------------------------------|
| PPS    | Party for a Country of Solidarity  |
| QCA    | Qualitative Comparative Analysis   |
| UNACE  | National Union of Ethical Citizens |
| Unasur | Union of South American Nations    |
| WB     | World Bank                         |

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## INTRODUCTION

To begin with, the research is dedicated to investigating the ratification of *Mercado Común del Sur* (Southern Common Market, Mercosur) treaties. In general, the ratification of an international treaty is performed according to the following steps: after signed by an Executive official, it is referred to the national legislature, where it should pass by committees and the floor; if approved, the head of government ratifies it and, finally, the treaty enters into force. Of course, these procedures have to be accomplished by each party that consented with the treaty. Given this basic workflow, the study focuses on the legislative phase of the domestic ratification, aiming to understand why the duration of the legislative procedures vary.

The motivation for this research comes from an empirical problem when analysing the time that each bill stayed in the parliaments, i.e., the guiding puzzle is that members of this regional organisation ratify the same treaties with distinct speeds, as seen in Figure 1. Thus, we emphasise a niche in legislative studies that works with the duration of political processes and not with the fact of being approved or rejected. In view of that, we consider domestic and international variables as possible explanations to determine if the parliamentarians shorten or prolong the procedures.

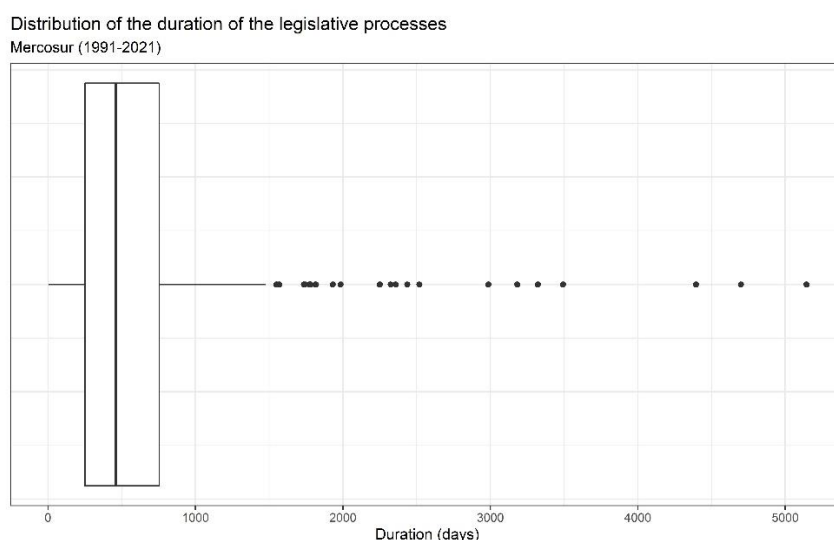


Figure 1. Duration of the legislative procedures.  
Source: Own work based on Paraguay (2020a)

Perotti (2007) affirms that two situations of veto may occur, because each member can block a Mercosur decision and, internally, can veto or delay the transposition to the domestic legal order. Therefore, even if presidents and ministers have more interest in pushing the judicial framework of integration, they need domestic support in their parliaments to implement these policies. In this sense, the deepening of South American integration depends on the foreign policy practiced by the governments, but also on how the issue is processed by other domestic institutions. As a consequence, the internalisation of rules and treaties is framed in an intergovernmental structure that depends on Executive and Legislative branches willingness to ratify (Cárdenas and Scotti 2013). Thus, domestic ratification is important for political and legal reasons, but this topic has been understudied. For this reason, there is increasing concern to go beyond studying signature of treaties and analyse how they enter into force (Haftel and Thompson 2013).

For the purpose of this research, treaties, protocols and agreements are considered synonyms. They can be defined as legal written instruments from the international law celebrated between international actors, creating binding duties and rights for the parties (United Nations Treaty Collection 2021). International

actors can commit in several topics and produce agreements bilaterally or in different organisations. Corrêa (2010) argues that judicial and legislative harmonisation is essential to advance in economic and political topics. Thus, the treaties within the bloc constitute legal sources of Mercosur, establishing the long-term goals of the bloc (Pennetta 2009). They are in a different category than the Common Market Council (CMC) decisions, Common Market Group (GMC) resolutions and Mercosur Trade Commission (CCM) directives, which are the quotidian normative production, executing what is outlined by the treaties. Usually, as they have a greater impact, the treaties need to be enacted by national parliaments, while the other rules do not. This is the reason for why the universe we are looking at is the treaties and not the remaining legal production of Mercosur.

In what concerns the agreements, the judicial sources of Mercosur are the Treaty of Asunción and its appendices, as well as the agreements celebrated by the organisation – the derived law (Pennetta 2009; Mercosur 1994; Basso 2000). According to communitarian law, these agreements have a superior status over the ordinary normative production emitted by CMC, GMC and CCM (Rocha 2011). This structure implies in respecting the legal orders of each member.

Considering that the literature debates if parliaments abdicate of their functions in foreign policy, one of the mechanisms to study this is the ratification of treaties. Even if Executive branches agree and sign the treaties, when they submit to the legislatures, legislators can resist approving or agreeing with the Executive, offering a quick approval. The opposition may indicate that the government do not have domestic support in certain policy fields and this resistance might either represent an opposition to the integration process as a whole or to specific issue areas. For this reason, the research is structured to analyse all the Mercosur agreements, but we also sample a specific category, of accession of new members, aiming to detect variations according to the content of the treaties. Even though Mercosur has relatively few members, this variation in the legislative speed is wide and impulses to search for cross-case explanations. Gardini affirms that

There is a first gap between what is declared by politicians or reported in the media and what is actually being discussed and agreed upon at the technical level. There is a second gap too between what has been agreed upon at the technical level and what is in fact applied or in force in practice. (Gardini 2011, 684)

In the current research, the decision to analyse the internalisation of Mercosur law in four countries is anchored on the membership status of the states. Figure 2 below depicts the two categories of membership in Mercosur: State Part and Associated State. The basic difference between them is that the associated states do not compose the common external tariff of the bloc and do not have the obligation to sign and enforce every Mercosur decision. Despite that, they integrate the free trade area, enjoying the benefits of circulation of people and goods. Chile was integrated as Associated State in 1996, Peru in 2003, Colombia and Ecuador in 2004, Guyana and Suriname in 2015. Moreover, Bolivia became Associated in 1997 and Venezuela in 2004, with posterior change in their status. Given that, all countries in South America are part of Mercosur, despite having different membership categories.



Figure 2. Map of Mercosur membership  
Source: Own work based on Mercosur (2021)

The Executive branch has been widely analysed in Mercosur studies, legitimising a form of conducting the bloc, without shedding light on legislatures and political parties (Ramos, Vaschetto, and Capdevila 2015). Because of the current status of studies about parliaments and foreign affairs in Latin America, the decision to perform this study is a way to assess their importance in international politics.

International law supposes consent to create obligations and rights from a treaty (Tomuschat 2011). As already mentioned, although particularities might apply, after signing at the international level, these instruments need to be ratified at the domestic level, passing by the national legislatures to become laws

(Rezek 2011). Thus, international agreements demand a double approval: first, when they are negotiated and signed; followed by the internal ratification. Pennetta (2009) highlights the intergovernmental aspect of Mercosur, demanding consensus on every decision not only to sign a new act, but also in the ratification phase. Regarding this last point, the very same agreement needs to be ratified by at least two parties (more if it is a multilateral agreement). Nonetheless, empirical evidence shows that the internalisation is not the same in different states, with a difference in the time taken by each part to approve it. The reasons for that can vary and are the object of the current research.

In Mercosur, every State needs to approve so the rule may enter into force (Fernández Reyes 2019; Ventura, Onuki, and Medeiros 2012). In this scenario, the veto power allows national governments to prevent the simultaneous effectivity of an agreement. Although it is mandatory to incorporate what is decided at the Mercosur level, there are no deadlines specifying when and how it should be done, which becomes a recurrent discussion between its members (Coral 2013). In view of that, this study contributes not by analysing what has been approved, but by paying attention to the difficulty or ease to pass the bills through the legislatures, which demonstrates how the conflicts reflect the interbranch dynamics. Schneider and Urpelainen (2013, 13) point out that:

International institutions can only be effective, however, when states agree to implement the treaty provisions domestically and comply with regulations. Ratification of the treaty is therefore a crucial step toward active participation in international institutions.

Thus, domestic ratification is what defines the success or failure of an agreement, formalising foreign policy and the regional relations (Goldstein et al. 2000). Because of that, the primacy of Mercosur norms and the judicial entry into force of Mercosur law have been a permanent issue, clashing with national decisions (Jimenez 2010; Kleinheisterkamp 2000; K. L. P. Mariano and Menezes 2021).

Even though there are studies that examined specific and more salient bills



(Araujo 2018), we find that is necessary to perform a longitudinal research encompassing all the Mercosur agreements throughout its 3 decades of existence and comparing the member States. There are few studies which have gathered data to perform a statistical testing of the hypotheses. Although there are studies about other regions (Golub 2008; Golub and Steunenbergh 2007; Klüver and Sagarzazu 2013), there is a gap to validate their findings in other contexts, as Mercosur for instance. That is to say, there is a need to go beyond individual case studies. Thus, new research could explain how the “when” affects legislative performance. Almond (1963) argues that globalised systems follow similar patterns independently of their geographical area. According to the principles of comparative politics (Sartori 1971; Lijphart 1971), it is possible to compare the States Parties, as they are the same geopolitical units and the comparison is performed across the same period, from 1991 to 2021. For this reason, the effort to build concepts that are valid across time and space are empirically tested in this sample, still demanding further research to test in other situations.

That said, the data collection performed for this research led to an original dataset. Considering the existence of International Relations studies that focused on case studies, it is a contribution to offer an overview of how this object evolved in the past decades. The comparative dataset covers four parliaments through 30 years, focusing specifically on the Mercosur law production. Although Political Science works have analysed legislative approvals, the frame on foreign policy and, more precisely, on Mercosur gives originality to this research and the parliamentary behaviour on this topic. Therefore, the data collected can be used for future studies.

The dependent variable (time interval between submission and approval) is important to understand which is the role played by the national legislatures in the international relations, as treaties ratification is one of their functions to operate in this level. If they delay an approval, this will have an impact on the execution of foreign policy. Furthermore, it also contributes to coalition studies as a way to test if the legislative behaviour differs when dealing with international politics. That is, although there is a large body of literature about

parliaments and coalitions, how do parliamentarians act when dealing with regional integration? Is the chance of approving or rejecting, in a fast or slow speed, different because of the content of the bills? As integration can be a niche in politics and for the constituents, we take this into account and aggregate to the studies by looking on how long legislators took to consent with this legislation. Therefore, the thesis is about legislative behaviour on a specific policy field, i.e., foreign policy. This approach allows the study to emphasise party unity, individual MPs, nature of coalitions, Executive-Legislative relations, among other variables that are considered in this research. Binder (2004) affirms that timing and sequence are important to assess legislative success and several events, as crises, might influence the outcomes.

In view of what has been said, the main research question that guides this research is: Why did some Mercosur agreements take a shorter time than others when passing in the national legislatures?

To address this puzzle, the current research focusses on agreements that are produced by regional organisations, selecting Mercosur member states to perform the comparison and understand what causes the wide variation in the time for approving international agreements. The empirical analysis is conducted by studying the duration of legislative approvals of the Mercosurian treaties from 1991 to 2021 in four states: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. They composed the bloc from the beginning, allowing us to perform a longitudinal comparison. Institutionally, they are reasonably similar presidential democracies with bicameral parliaments (Jones 2012), but they present different socioeconomic and political conditions that create variation among the cases. To sum up, the case selection includes every Mercosur agreement approved by the parliaments of these countries.

The central argument tested is if variables at the domestic level determines the legislative behaviour regarding foreign policy. Considering that foreign policy, and regional integration, are strongly led by the government, we assume that when the government has internal support, it could easily and rapidly approve the treaties. The elements that are considered as explanatory factors are essentially economic conditions and the nature of coalitions (measured by

ideology, number of parties, president's party size and coalition size), which are modelled in conjunction with control variables. Given this, we connect the discussion on legislative delay with the interbranch relations, including the issue of bargaining, shedding light on the operation of the coalitions.

Being part of the same bloc enables the comparison as all of them operate under the same institutional umbrella and approve the same treaties. Studying regional organisations offers the advantage of comparing a more homogenous environment in which foreign policy is developed (Axline 1971). In the current research, we start from the point that all the agreements have been negotiated and signed, observing the ratification process, which is reasonably similar among the four countries. In other words, the homogenisation allows comparison of similar patterns, but with different behaviours.

In the following chapters, we advance on the possible causes that answer the research question, and a few auxiliary questions help us to structure the research design: How do coalitions influence the voting of international agreements? How does the Legislative branch behave in a context of economic crisis and during economic stability? What type of institutional, political or economic factors define the stands of legislators in favour or against the accession of new Member States? This last question is addressed in the last chapter, when we deepen the analysis in two approvals about the enlargement of the bloc.

We evaluate the duration of the legislative procedures using a large-N research design. In principle, it does not allow us to scrutinise each case in great detail, nor does it allow us to look at all aspects of treaties ratification. However, the research is designed to encompass 3 methods: Survival Analysis; Qualitative Comparative Analysis; and Process Tracing. Therefore, the empirical part of the thesis goes from the general to the specific, by gradually reducing the number of observations, but also the category of the agreements, allowing us to look at particularities of specific cases. The proposal is to advance by using new empirical data at the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mercosur, as well as in applying a combination of methods. Hence, the thesis not only offers innovation in data collection, but also in the methodology to test hypotheses and understand how legislators decide about Mercosurian treaties. The “combined strategy should

allow the investigator to consider both structural factors and factors reflecting historical processes and human agency” (Ragin 1989).

The chapter that is dedicated to analyse all the agreements offers the advantage to determine general trends and the impact of each variable in the temporal length of the procedures, enabling to make inferences to the whole population of agreements approved up to now. Therefore, statistics offer the possibility to know what is typical at a large number of points during the last 30 years. In addition, this chapter is compensated with the QCA, that encompasses the approval of the Protocols regarding the enlargement process. That is, we select a specific category of treaties that received major attention and that constitute watersheds in the history of the bloc. Moreover, we include a case study chapter, giving us the opportunity to analyse in depth two approvals of Mercosur treaties – a comparison between a typical and a deviant case (C. Q. Schneider and Wagemann 2012). Both took place in the Paraguayan congress and are about the accession of Venezuela and Bolivia. While the latter produced a fast approval, the former is an outlier that took more than 6 years to be concluded and represents how a parliament can block the integration process.

Arguing for large-N studies, it has been defended that Latin America needs a more comprehensive foreign policy analysis, to explain its patterns. Hey (1997) says that the scholarship should not be restricted to specific case studies, but aggregate the several factors that affect foreign policy. A similar line is proposed by Giacalone (2015), defending more comparative studies in Latin America. In other words, to define which are the determinant factors of Latin American foreign policy, more rigorous methodological and empirical designs are needed (Rodrigues, Urdinez, and de Oliveira 2019). The effort from this scholarship not only explains patterns, but also changes in foreign policies through time (Merke, Reynoso, and Schenoni 2020). Comparing foreign policies presumes studying what influences national actors to take decisions regarding international environment (J. N. Rosenau 1968; Hudson 2013).

Bearing this in mind, the thesis’ scope is clearly delimited to cover Mercosur states. However, our aim is that the findings will be generalisable to equivalent cases, sharing institutional and political characteristics regarding the ratification

processes and the type of treaties. For instance, the agreements celebrated by the Andean Community or the Pacific Alliance. Therefore, the results from this thesis can explain what causes a short or long duration in the parliamentary phase of incorporating international treaties.

It is important to note that longer durations are not bad per se. They can be cases when a topic of regional integration gains projection in the public opinion or different sectors debate strategies of international projection, among other discussions that might occur about positive and negative impacts of an agreement in the society.

The relevance of this study is to understand the legislative behaviour in foreign policy, by examining treaties ratification, which is a frequent task of national legislatures. Although foreign policy is usually conducted by Executive branches, the parliaments may act on this field by approving and legitimising the signed treaties. Shorter or longer times to reach an agreement may indicate agreement or resistance to the government's policy, affecting time horizons.

Following this introduction, which presented the object and the research puzzle, the thesis is structured in four chapters. The thesis begins by summarising the state of the art and the relation with the relevant literature about legislatures and foreign policy, as well as places this research under the theoretical framework of Liberalism. The second chapter introduces the data collection and the data analysis techniques conducted to test the hypotheses. It then goes to a chapter dedicated to the findings from the Survival Analysis and the Qualitative Comparative Analysis. The final chapter deals with a comparative Process Tracing on how the Paraguayan Congress approved the enlargement of Mercosur. The remaining part of the thesis offers the conclusion of the study and poses additional questions for future work.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In this chapter, we present the state of the art about the research topic, specifying which the open debates in the area are and how the proposed investigation can contribute to the literature. The chapter is composed of four sections, covering Liberalism, Legislatures and international affairs, Political parties and coalitions, and Regionalism. Therefore, not only it presents a theory that guides this study, but also brings an up-to-date literature review about the object, which is parliaments and how they act in the international arena. Moreover, it explains how we derive our hypotheses from the literature on coalitions and from the Regionalism studies.

Kaarbo (2015) indicates that International Relations scholars are increasingly juxtaposing domestic decision-making aspects to international phenomena. That said, it is important to remember that foreign policy “constitutes an intersection area, as it is both a public policy developed from within the state and the main input of international politics” (Amorim Neto and Malamud 2015, 2). This is heavily associated with the subfield of Foreign Policy Analysis, which “has foreign policy processes or behaviors as the explicit explanandum and domestic and decision-making factors as the starting place for explanations. FPA research does not, by definition, ignore external factors” (Kaarbo 2015, 191). Throughout its development, Foreign Policy Analysis was divided between single-country case studies, which explained specific foreign policies, and comparative analysis, searching for general patterns. The question behind it is to understand whether it is possible to generalise what is internal to each state. Building a theory that allows scholars to compare foreign policies has been largely defended in the past decades (J. N. Rosenau 2006; Fearon 1998).

As mentioned, the literature suggests several constraints of foreign policy, either domestic or international. Regarding the large range of domestic

constraints, some of them are prioritised in the current analysis, to determine the variables selected for the dissertation. That said, being in the field of Foreign Policy Analysis, the proposal is to build a middle-range theory that answers the puzzle about legislative behaviour concerning treaties ratification, assuming the limitations in generalising to all foreign policies across time and space. This works under the combination of Political Science and International Relations (Milner 1998).

First, to clarify the terms employed here, Fabbrini (2013) argues that parliament and congress are two distinct types of legislatures. The first depends on the ability of forming a government, while the second exists according to a fix mandate, independently of the government. Moreover, the congressional model is based on the checks and balances system to equilibrate the Executive branch. In the Mercosur members, all the countries are formed on the congressional model. On the other hand, Fasone (2019) sustains that, in presidential systems, congresses correspond to parliaments. In other words, despite the differences in the government, they are equivalent in what concerns being legislative bodies. In this thesis, parliaments and congresses are employed interchangeably.

The sections below are structured to cover four topics: Liberalism; Legislatures and international affairs; Political parties and coalitions; and Regionalism. Therefore, the literature review is dedicated to explaining the theoretical framework that is consistent to answer the research question proposed here, as well as the state of the art about the research topic, i.e., the role of parliaments in foreign affairs. In addition to that, there is a section about coalitions and political parties, as they compose one of the explanatory axes that is tested in our research. Also, the literature on Regionalism is used because of the nature of the agreements, directly involved in this topic. Throughout the chapter, we elaborate the hypotheses and which concepts they are testing.

## 1.1. *Liberalism*

To study the legislative speed and, more specifically, the Mercosur agreements, a theory is needed to connect domestic and international politics. We find that Liberalism and Liberal Intergovernmentalism suits the gap for explaining how the internal level may restrain the international decisions.

In International Relations, Liberalism -usually opposed to Realism<sup>1</sup> (Snyder 2004)- emphasises the individual and takes its rationality and autonomy for granted. The interests are perceived as key motivation for actors (Andreatta 2017; Doyle 1986). Herz and Hoffmann (2004) mention the premise of rationality as the basic feature of Liberalism. Furthermore, as Nogueira and Messari (2005) show, trade, democracy and institutions are basilar concepts for liberals. As our research largely builds on institutions, they are observed as means to foster interstate cooperation, ordering a stable international system. This tradition, therefore, assumes that actors act collectively. In regard of Regionalism theories, the liberal scholarship is seen also in Functionalism and Neofunctionalism (Mitrany 1990; Etzioni 2004; Haas 2004).

Moreover, Battistella (2014, 150) indicates that Liberalism is commonly and negatively seen as an ideological perspective, due to the implementation of liberal thought after the Cold War. However, this approach bases itself in the idea that internal actors and structures influence State interests and their external behaviours. In view of this, the State is an important actor of the international relations, but it is shaped and constrained by being pressured to perform what domestic groups cannot achieve by themselves. This perspective assumes that the State is not an unitarian actor, yet it is constantly channelling interests between the international and domestic spheres.

For this reason, the conception of national interest is flawed, because it does not exist per se, but it mirrors a plethora of different goals (Contrera 2015; Sanchez 2015). Given this, Foreign Policy Analysis is necessary to interpret the decision-making process, associating international affairs to domestic politics.

<sup>1</sup> Realists focuses on the State as a unified actor (Morgenthau 2003).



The states are characterised as rational actors, according to the theories of rational choice. In this approach, they calculate the utility and advantages of the possibilities, choosing the one maximising its gains in the known circumstances. Within a rational-choice perspective, party competition and legislative decision-making are seen as results of the rational thinking and behaviour of actors, i.e., rational choices are taken by rational individuals (Diermeier 2014).

Consequently, this point of view understands that every actor, to the best of their knowledge, has a list of preferences, including its potential drawbacks. Shapiro (2017) claims that rational choice allows scholars to understand political behaviour if they understand what actors are trying to maximise, that is to say, which are their aimed objectives. Tsebelis affirm that rationality is “an optimal correspondence between ends and means” (Tsebelis 1990, 18). To enable comparisons, the author emphasises the interchangeability of actors in this approach as long as rationality are understood within a given context, i.e., outlining which are the institutions in the situation in which the actor is.

As Diermeier (2014, 33) shows, one of the rational choice theories is institutionalism, in which one can “Deduce the behaviour that arises within the institutional setting given the behavioural postulate, and characterize the outcome that results from the behaviour”. The assumptions can be compared to empirical data to test to which extent actors’ behaviour is shaped and constrained by the institutions. That said, when looking to specific events, one needs to analyse which are the consequences of the contexts that embed the legislators. The internal organisation of each congress and each government may influence the outcomes. One possible example is the gatekeeping prerogatives of committees.

Moreover, one perspective in rational choice institutionalism “takes institutions as exogenous constraints, or as an exogenously given game form” (Shepsle 2008, 24), i.e., as behaviour-constraint. On the other hand, if actors are the parts which constitute institutions, they can only exist if actors ensue the rules. Also, according to Shepsle, institutions can be structured or unstructured, the latter having less indicators grounding the analysis. For instance, voting a bill in the floor is a formal and structured rule, while negotiating deadlines to

wait a convenient political moment is an informal and unstructured arrangement. Yet, both exist in the legislatures' world.

One of the axes of our analysis is the Intergovernmental approach, considered by Battistella (2014) the third version of contemporary Liberalism. In this perspective, regionalism occurs due to rational choices made by rational national politicians who pursue economic interests and manipulate institutions, with convergent interests to influential economic producers. The overall process of integration is stimulated by grand bargains (interstate commitments), which may be irregular on time, depending on the bargaining power of important governments. However, it is important to notice that different issues may experience different impacts (Moravcsik 2018). That is to say, an agreement that receives major attention from the governments will be better explained by Liberal Intergovernmentalism rather than agreements in which they are not greatly interested.

Regarding rationality, a basic assumption of Liberal Intergovernmentalism

is that states are purposive and at least boundedly rational. Rationalism is an individualist or agency assumption: actors calculate the utility of alternative courses of action and choose the one that satisfies (or maximizes) their utility under the circumstances. Collective outcomes are explained as the result of the aggregation of and interaction among individual actions based on relatively (but never perfectly) efficient pursuit of these preferences – albeit subject to cognitive limitations, the presence or absence of information, uncertainty about the future, and the availability of reliable theories of cause and effect. Agreement to cooperate, or to establish international institutions, is explained as a collective outcome of interdependent (strategically) rational state choices realized through intergovernmental negotiation (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig 2019, 65)

In this context, Moravcsik (1999) advocates that international negotiations occur in three stages. First, the formulation of state preferences, followed by interstate bargaining and, finally, the choice for the institutionalisation of the reached agreement. This framework can be applied to the current research, emphasising the last stage, when, *post-factum*, parliaments decide on the possibilities to enter into force.

For Moravcsik (1999), national preferences are an ordered set of national objectives, grounded in material or ideal incentives, independent of any particular international negotiation and placed on future outcomes. Given this, States develop strategies and bargain one with another to accomplish these preferences, given the available means. Assuming that civil society seeks to influence international negotiations through the State, decision-makers respond to constraints derived from the economic interests of powerful domestic constituents. Ergo, national preferences reflect objectives of those domestic groups which influence the State apparatus and that are concerned about their positions in the market. Therefore, “Societal ideas, interests, and institutions influence state behavior by shaping state preferences, that is, the fundamental social purposes underlying the strategic calculations of governments” (Moravcsik 1997, 513). Giving up State sovereign rights, thus, is a mechanism to achieve multilaterally these objectives. Simply stated, the national interest is a political construction fostered by domestic actors and conditioned by international preferences.

In addition, negotiations are coordination games among heterogeneous preferences of each part, with distributional consequences, in which potential agreements are identified and one is selected. The configuration of domestically determined national preferences defines a bargaining space of potentially ratifiable agreements. Under the Intergovernmental theory, state preferences and their relative power are the decisive determinants for interstate bargaining. Unmistakably, asymmetrical configurations present distributional conflicts within and among States, but governments accept to delegate and pool sovereignty in international institutions in order to commit and control one another to secure the agreements, being this the cause of regional integration. Consequently, international relations and, more specifically, regionalism are seen as a mechanism to secure commercial advantages for producer groups. This liberal point of view also states that international cooperation may provide two levels of political legitimation and institutional support for governments.

Bargains are “about the distribution of costs and benefits among domestic groups and about domestic opinion divided on the best way of relating to the

external environment” (Evans 1993, 397). For this reason, the negotiation of international agreements presumes not only international disputes, but also domestic constraints. This directly affects the internal ratification. This framework assumes that reactions are expected, although they can be uncertain due to misinformation about other actors’ preferences.

It is known that domestic political actors and institutions affect the formulation of preferences regarding international agreements (Rosendorff 2015). Under this reasoning, when negotiating and signing an agreement political leaders calculate the impact it will have before its constituencies and the likelihood to be implemented. In view of that, to operationalise the Intergovernmentalism approach, a Liberal general theory of International Relations, we apply the two-level games model. Posited in the work of Putnam (1988), it affirms that domestic and international politics are entangled and each one determines the other, an assumption applicable to our sample.

Revisiting its formulation, which underscores institutions, it can be defined as based on the notion that Executive officials mediate national and international pressures, for the reason that they are presented to both realms. In other words, the interaction between both spheres occurs through the State and, more precisely, the Executive branch. Nonetheless, neither the State nor the Executive should be taken as unitary actors, as they are also multifaceted bodies and pressured by a plethora of other actors, that is, when they negotiate at each level, they are surrounded by other State and non-State, individual and collective agents, including the Legislative branch. Synthetizing,

The politics of many international negotiations can usefully be conceived as a two-level game. At the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests by pressuring the government to adopt favourable policies, and politicians seek power by constructing coalitions among those groups. At the international level, national governments seek to maximize their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures, while minimizing the adverse consequences of foreign developments. Neither of the two games can be ignored by central decision-makers, so long as their countries remain interdependent, yet sovereign. (Putnam 1988, 434)

In view of what has been said, the domestic level is consulted prior to the signature of agreements, in order to confirm which the interests of relevant social sectors are, their disposition to ratify and execute the agreement and the conditions to bargain with the Executive, which represents these preferences at the international arena. Therefore, the negotiations in the international arena are constrained by the domestic environment, as much as the negotiations and acts depend on how the national arena will react to the agreement. Thus, the concept of win-set is defined as all possible international outcomes that can be approved at the domestic instance. When the win-sets of all the parts involved in the negotiations overlap, an agreement is possible. Undoubtedly, the size of the win-set in each country for each bill may change according to the supporting coalition and the interests involved.

When playing at two levels, decision-makers respond to opposition groups in multiple fronts and “the effect of domestic politics is contingent upon leaders’ choices of alternative political strategies that, in turn, have sharply divergent effects on foreign policy” (Hagan 1995, 121). In his opinion, the author argues that the domestic political processes alter the willingness of governments to commit to decisions at the international level.

Bearing in mind that internal variables constrain how much foreign policy may advance (Tokatlian and Merke 2014), some of them are selected as more determinant. Among the domestic factors that affect foreign policy, Mintz and DeRouen (2010) points out that economic conditions, economic interests, public opinion and electoral cycles influence the decision-making of the outcome. It is true that from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, there was growing trade flows in global scale, influencing the policy-making (Milner 1999; Henisz and Mansfield 2006). Trade is a “political justification for regionalism and inciting internal actors within member states to support or oppose regional integration” (Ramanzini Júnior and Luciano 2020, 1499).

The political and economic liberalisation and reforms that characterised the 1990s (after authoritarian regimes) were incentives to stimulate a greater participation of parliaments in the international relations, insofar as legislators are pressured by domestic actors to alter the external scenario, in order to satisfy

their private interests, whereas there are distributional disputes on the gains originated from the international relations (Lima 2000; Hofmann and Martill 2021; Milner and Kubota 2005; Sanchez 2015). Thus, representing other societal interests in the international arena, the phenomenon of legislatures and foreign policy is a reflect of globalisation, democratisation and the involvement of more groups interested in influencing the course of this specific public policy, i.e., the changes in the economic system fostered the rapprochement between domestic actors and international affairs.

## *1.2. Legislatures and International Affairs*

Treaty ratification is a topic that historically requested legislative approval, confirming the Executive decision (Fleming 1930; Myers 1917). This behaviour fits the typical role of parliaments regarding policies, i.e., all policies are subjected to accountability, including foreign policy, in a scenario in which the domestic and the international level are more entangled and multiple actions are responsive to both spheres (Tokatlian and Merke 2014). Pinheiro and Milani (2012) indicate that, from the end of the Cold War onwards, foreign policy action had room for many non-traditional actors (out of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs), allowing a plurality of interests to complexly influence the decision-making process. Moreover, they reiterate that foreign policy is accountable to the government's performance. In their perspective, wider participation regarding the international conduct of a country reflects the politicisation that bridges foreign policy to the political arena.

Under this reasoning, as in other fields, international agreements are the instruments to materialise policies (Diniz 2012). It should be noted that the approach towards Legislative and International Relations does not mean that congresses are the main actors in international affairs. In the words of Diniz

(2009), accepting that an actor is secondary does not implicate that it is irrelevant. As Malamud and Stavridis (2011, 101) affirm, albeit the Executive branch actors (mainly, Presidency and Ministry of Foreign Affairs) remain as the central agents in the international systems, parliamentary institutions participate in the international relations and the foreign policy with expanding role.

In addition, the episodes in which congresses stood a solid position on international matters seem to be exceptions to the pattern of not being active in this field, due to the focus on local policies. Nonetheless, when national legislatures or referenda reject a treaty, this might have strong impact in international relations. To mention some examples: France and Netherlands rejected the Constitutional Treaty of the European Union; Denmark rejected the Maastricht Treaty; and France rejected the Treaty establishing the European Defence Community.

Doubtless, it is crucial to observe the institutional relations between the Executive and the Legislative in order to determine which their weight is in this arrangement. For Cheibub, Elikins and Ginsburg (2013), to understand the relationship between Legislative and Executive branches is essential to analyse beyond the presidential versus parliamentary distinction and shed light on the constitutions. They demonstrate that there is heterogeneity in the constitutions within these typical groups, not enabling the conceptualisation of Executive and Legislative attributions by just being presidential, semi-presidential or parliamentary forms of government. They propose that geographical area and the historical period are clearer indicators of the constitutional structure and the division of functions between the branches.

It is worth evoking that the parliamentary role is foreseen in the constitutions, as we can see quoted below. However, there are differences on how each constitution perceives international law and the legislative role (Fontoura 2000; Rocha 2011; Cárdenas and Scotti 2013).

The Argentinian Constitution states that:

Congress is empowered: [...]

To regulate trade with foreign nations, and of the provinces among themselves. [...]

To approve or reject treaties concluded with other nations and international organizations, and concordats with the Holy See. Treaties and concordats have a higher hierarchy than laws. [...]

In order to attain constitutional hierarchy, the other treaties and conventions on human rights shall require the vote of two-thirds of all the members of each House, after their approval by Congress. [...]

To approve treaties of integration which delegate powers and jurisdiction to supranational organizations under reciprocal and equal conditions, and which respect the democratic order and human rights. The rules derived therefrom have a higher hierarchy than laws.

The approval of these treaties with Latin American States shall require the absolute majority of all the members of each House. [...]

The President of the Nation has the following powers:

He concludes and signs treaties, concordats and other agreements required for the maintenance of good relations with international organizations and foreign powers, he receives their ministers and admits their consuls (Argentina 1994)

Moreover, the Constitution of Brazil specifies that:

It is exclusively the competence of the National Congress:

I - to decide conclusively on international treaties, agreements or acts which result in charges or commitments that go against the national property [...]

The President of the Republic shall have the exclusive power to: [...]

conclude international treaties, conventions and acts, *ad referendum* of the National Congress (Brasil 2010)

In Brazil, after a treaty is signed by an Executive official, it should be sent to the Legislative to be approved or rejected. Camino and Menck (2018) specify that there is no legal deadline for the Executive branch to submit an international agreement to the Congress. Despite that, the usual time for an agreement to be sent from a palace to another is 2 to 3 years. This piece of information is relevant to consider a possible relationship between the time taken for referring the bill and the period that is actually under legislative consideration.



After Stroessner's dictatorship, the Constitution of Paraguay reduced the margins of authoritarianism, attenuating the powers of the Presidency. Bearing this in mind, it states that:

Los tratados internacionales válidamente celebrados, aprobados por ley del Congreso, y cuyos instrumentos de ratificación fueran canjeados o depositados, forman parte del ordenamiento legal interno [...]

La República del Paraguay, en condiciones de igualdad con otros Estados, admite un orden jurídico supranacional que garantice la vigencia de los derechos humanos, de la paz, de la justicia, de la cooperación y del desarrollo, en lo político, económico, social y cultural.

Dichas decisiones sólo podrán adoptarse por mayoría absoluta de cada Cámara del Congreso. [...]

Son deberes y atribuciones del Congreso: [...] aprobar o rechazar los tratados y demás acuerdos internacionales suscritos por el Poder Ejecutivo

Son deberes y atribuciones de quien ejerce la presidencia de la República: [...] dirigir el manejo de las relaciones exteriores de la República. En caso de agresión externa, y previa autorización del Congreso, declarar el Estado de Defensa Nacional o concertar la paz; negociar y firmar tratados internacionales; recibir a los jefes de misiones diplomáticas de los países extranjeros y admitir a sus cónsules; y designar embajadores, con acuerdo del Senado (Paraguay 1992, 42, 44, 65, 81, 82)

In Uruguay, the carta magna affirms that:

A la Asamblea General compete: [...]

Decretar la guerra y aprobar o reprobado por mayoría absoluta de votos del total de componentes de cada Cámara, los tratados de paz, alianza, comercio y las convenciones o contratos de cualquier naturaleza que celebre el Poder Ejecutivo con potencias extranjeras. [...]

Al Presidente de la República, actuando con el Ministro o Ministros respectivos, o con el Consejo de Ministros, corresponde: [...]

Concluir y suscribir tratados, necesitando para ratificarlos la aprobación del Poder Legislativo. (Uruguay 1967)

In view of the above, it can be seen that the constitutions establish specific roles for the Executive and the Legislative, regarding foreign affairs and, namely, the deliberation about international agreements. Even if there are minor differences when comparing each constitution, the Executive is entitled to negotiate and sign treaties with its international counterparts and the national

parliaments are in charge of the approval of these decisions, which gives them a significant power to alter the international relations or – as it is discussed here – the velocity of the implementation of changes.

It is also relevant to observe the relationship between political parties and international relations, as far as these are the groups that aggregate the representatives in the parliaments. From Merle's (1978) point of view, the disputes among political parties aim to conquer and exert power. Therefore, being national institutions and responding to national constituents, they focus on the gains at the domestic level and incorporate different policies in their strategies.

Merle (1976) also clarifies that internal and external realms can be used to justify political actions, placing them as constraint variables. In this perspective, foreign policy can be an instrument in the game of domestic politics. Given that, the political parties tend to emphasise domestic politics to the detriment of foreign policy (Merle 1978, 83). Even if the interest for international relations is secondary, foreign policy is part of the manoeuvres in politics, as far as it can reach a public opinion or can be used to criticise or support a government. In these games, the opposition parties' main goal is to highlight governmental failures and policy flaws, while governing parties aim to defend themselves from the criticisms. Consequently, it is understood that foreign affairs are placed as part of the internal project of disputing power.

The literature discusses that there is a distance between international affairs and domestic societies (Kleinberg and Fordham 2018) and, about that, Owen affirms that

Day-to-day foreign policy is mostly the province of elites. Ordinary citizens have good reason for ignoring relations with other nations. Since relations with most nations have little perceptible impact on the individual citizen, the expected payoff to each is not worth the time investment. This collective-action problem means that normal foreign policy is delegated to representatives (Owen 1994, 100)

Different theories exist in the literature regarding the legislative behaviour. Simply stated, the general trend of discussion is if parliaments have divergent

attitudes when dealing with domestic policy and with foreign policy. On this topic, Wildavsky (1966) proposed the two presidencies theory, explaining that the legislative success of the president depends on dealing with domestic or international affairs. In foreign policy, the Executive branch has a wider power because it does not have problems with congressional support. In the author's perspective, this happens for the discrete resources, which characterise presidential action in this field, and for not having a clear opponent with power to challenge it. However, in several Latin American countries, a similarity in the voting pattern for domestic and foreign affairs has been detected (Feliú and Onuki 2014). Despite differences between domestic and foreign policies being true, this fact does not eliminate competition, which hinders the deliberation of international affairs.

Nonetheless, even though the contemporary international system – with democratisation and economic globalisation at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century that spurred the engagement of more actors – remains Executive-centred, parliaments are increasingly active actors (Šabič 2008). According to Malamud and Stavridis (2011, 101), parliaments may act in the international arena through three ways: “1) by influencing foreign policy through national parliaments; 2) by conducting parallel diplomatic relations, known as parliamentary diplomacy; and 3) by establishing and empowering parliaments as representative bodies of international, often regional, organizations”. However, affecting the Executive's conducting of foreign policy, the one which is studied here, does not necessarily convey a challenge between both powers, as they can also cooperate and support each other's demands (Malamud and Stavridis 2011).

Moreover, when specifying the individual level, one can note that not all congresspeople act on the same way, existing a class of salient players in the process, called foreign policy entrepreneurs (Carter and Scott 2004; Marsh and Lantis 2018). They are called so because they are more assertive than the average, challenging the government's foreign policy, pushing personal initiatives and driving their peers, according to partisan strategies. Despite that, even parliamentarians who are not interested in foreign policy are part of the

domestic political disputes. When the treaty is to be ratified in the parliament, other variables will affect their preferences and decisions.

In accord over the debate elaborated by Lima and Santos (2001), when referring to the division of duties on foreign affairs between Legislative and Executive, delegation does not necessarily imply in abdication. The centralisation of decisions in the Executive branch results in the fact that the external credibility of the country rests largely on the decisions taken by Executive officials at the international level, risking the parliament to destabilise this same credibility if an agreement suffers internal opposition. If the ratification faces obstacles and is not consensual, the external credibility of the commitment would be compromised (L. Martin 2000). This is the reason why the Executive officials should take the legislators' preferences into account, anticipating possible reactions in the parliamentary arena (Haftel and Thompson 2013).

Usually, the time, plus the uncertainty, dedicated to domestically ratify international agreements is pointed as a disadvantage that threatens the image of the government. In other terms, the dispersion of power and the creation of more veto points might weaken the perspective of a unified State (Hagan et al. 2001). More specifically, Lima (2000) stresses that congresses tend to suffer criticisms as being bodies that delay the results originating from the agreements, that is to say, the dilatory manoeuvres would prevent the positive balance of foreign affairs, enhancing the argument in favour of concentrating power in the Executive realm. This idea rests on the assumption that the system works based mainly on elections, that is, politicians act looking forward to satisfying their electorate and seeking re-elections. In this same line, Oliveira (2003) summarises benefits and drawbacks of having more parliaments that are active in international affairs.

As the voting strategies are part of the reaction of the Legislative on Foreign Policy and the relation with the Executive power, when an international act is under congressional deliberation, legislators have a plethora of legal mechanisms to influence the procedures, favouring or not the subject (Lindsay 1994). For this reason, as stated by Putnam (1988) and Lima (2000), political

dynamics, i.e., disputes for power must be taken into consideration in the analysis.

The process to approve or reject international treaties takes time and each legislature may have different speeds to have a final say on the topic. The reasons for that are unclear, but a handful of studies have started to analyse this relationship, yet without a comprehensive framework to interpret this indicator of legislative performance (Hiroi and Rennó 2018). Time might reveal “the salience of the issue or some strategic behaviour of its proponents” (Borghetto and Giuliani 2012, 25). Therefore, the failure or the success of bills is not only related to the final vote, but also when and how long it took to reach a decision.

Lantis (2006, 43) concludes that four variables might affect the ratifiability of an agreement: executive strategies; type of electoral system and executive-legislative relations; interest group pressure; and public support. However, he highlights that the interbranch political conditions are decisive for the outcome, playing down the role of domestic constituents’ influence.

The delay can be on purpose to do a political bargain (Manow and Burkhart 2008; Patty 2016). For instance, opposition parties could obstruct a bill that is of interest of the situation, in order to negotiate their interests. This perspective is related to a “proactive” parliament, instead of a “passive” one, i.e., to what extent the legislators exercise their capabilities or not (Arter 2006).

Delaying the parliamentary process, either towards a rejection or to a late approval, is a strategy composed of a series of tactics. It is worth noting that filibustering serves to someone’s gain (Koger 2010). Thus, some techniques to postpone a decision could be listed: prolonged speeches; adjournment of sessions; absence from the voting moment (empty quorum); requesting roll call votes; and others. In fact, to manage agenda and how its time is occupied with discourses, the legislators’ behaviour is influenced by the parties’ decisions, more than other aspects (Giannetti and Pedrazzani 2016). In the floor, time is scarce due to a plethora of reasons and parties aim to use the podium to express their opinions about the policies (Giannetti, Pinto, and Pedrazzani 2016; G. W. Cox and McCubbins 2011). In the moment of voting, parliamentarians may

announce their positions if their constituencies signalise a preference (Box-Steffensmeier, Arnold, and Zorn 1997).

Another factor that might influence the relationship with electoral districts is geographical location. That is, if the project is closely related to a province, as the building of a new international bridge between bordering countries, specific interests arise, because the bridge will directly affect that territory. This happens because when deliberating about international treaties, parliamentarians assume mainly the function of scrutiny, as well as representing local interests towards the integration process (Kinski 2020).

The literature has highlighted that, in either single-party majority, multi-party majority or minority forms of government, members of parliament vote driven by government-opposition interests and not along the left-right dimension, expecting not only to manifest their choices, but also their favourable or adverse relation to the government (Hix and Noury 2016; Alemán et al. 2018). Magar and Moraes (2008) affirm that having a majority in the parliament favours the rate of success of the government, reducing the time to approve a bill. Moreover, minority governments may negotiate with other parties to have their agenda approved. Indeed, in presidential democracies

Because the two institutions have the ability to check each other's policy actions (without bringing down the government), a foreign policy initiative involving major commitment normally requires that the separate institutions must work together if substantively meaningful action is to be taken. (Hagan et al. 2001, 172)

In view of that, considering that the nature of coalitions might determine the political procedures to deliberate about Mercosur agreements, three hypotheses are formulated based on coalitions. To test if the parliamentarians vote driven by the government-opposition cleavage, the first is:

H1a: Majority coalitions have faster deliberations.

In regard of coalitions, Däubler (2008) indicates that a higher number of parties and greater ideological distance between them may delay the approval. This has been elaborated to include not only parties' seat share, but also partisan polarisation – as more ideologically heterogeneous and polarised legislatures

would hamper the approvals (Binder 2004). Moreover, Hiroi (2008) suggests that this is based on the functional assumption that members of the coalition would have cohesion and similar preferences about the topic. The impact of not having legislative support could entail in blocking a country's foreign policy, because the government could not execute what was agreed in the international level (Krutz and Peake 2009). For this reason, delays affect not only the internal scenario, but also send diplomatic signals to foreign partners.

Ribeiro and Pinheiro (2016) indicate that ideology, number of parties and the size of coalition are variables that influence the legislative support received by the government when dealing with foreign policy bills. This research is complemented by Ribeiro (2019), who points out national differences of the polarisation about international affairs. However, he argues that government-opposition and left-right cleavages are the main determinants for the legislative behaviour. In addition to that, the management of the coalition, which includes the partisan bargaining between the parties in the Executive and Legislative branches, was pointed out as a defining factor for the law-making process (Hiroi and Renno 2014). On this topic, conflicts might arise between the coalition and the opposition, but also within the coalition. For this reason, Hiroi and Renno (2014) maintaining the consistency of the coalition is a form to prevent legislative obstructionism.

It has also been discussed whether the duration of proposals represents the agenda power of the actors. The priority given to each bill affects its chance of success (Masuyama 2000). Binder (2004) suggests that the presidential support could also have impact on the parliament's decision, depending on the existing conditions. In the current research, the fact that all the four countries are presidential multiparty systems presupposes that disputes will arise. Even when the president has majority in both chambers, the coalitions might be heterogeneous, when composed by more than one party.

Therefore, to test if fewer parties in the coalitions reduces the polarisation and the obstacles to approve a bill, two other hypotheses are formulated below. This is thought in regard of multi-party coalitions that are heterogeneous, but we

test if the president's party controls the majority of the coalition, it would give stronger support to the government.

H1b: The larger the president's party is, faster the approvals are.

H1c: Coalitions with fewer parties have faster approvals.

In addition, the pace of each bill is subject to specific procedures, as budgetary laws, and to the fact that some require in-depth scrutiny and others do not (L. W. Martin and Vanberg 2004). Of course, each legislature has its own rules to manage time and several administrative procedures. For instance, in the Brazilian case, obstruction mechanisms are available both in the floor and in the committees' phases, which offers a plethora of chances to slow down the process (Hiroi and Rennó 2018). Thus, the overall length can be prolonged because of specific actions before the final vote.

On the other hand, long durations could not mean political conflicts, but inertia. In this perspective, the non-decision would not represent an intentional obstruction, as could be the consequence of a busy agenda. Hiroi and Rennó (2018) condenses three scenarios for a delay: indifference; legislative engagement; or political conflict, which could take place within the ruling coalition or between government and opposition parties. They are not independent from one another, allowing the possibility of having more than one explanation for the bill duration.

To raise a debate that assists to understand why, in our population, some legislatures take more time than others when deliberating, we can follow the line proposed by Oliveira (2003). For him, according to multiple factors, the congressional assertiveness may act as a pendulum, depending on temporal cycles. This pattern has been widely studied in the United States case, which has a fluctuating attitude towards the Presidency, being assertive, to a larger or smaller extent, in certain periods. Notwithstanding, American studies can be conceptually applied to other cases, as the non-US presidential democracies in Mercosur.

Therefore, not only the institutional outputs at the congress level but inputs and throughputs should be studied in Foreign Policy Analysis, including political parties as collective structures that can frame legislative decision, as well as



individual politicians. This is especially true when considering the foreign policy as a partisan process (Merle 1978). In other words, legislators may support or oppose an initiative depending on their position within the domestic political chessboard and/or their ideological stances, factors that can also be affected by issue areas, procedural dynamics and timing (Carter and Scott 2012; Potter 1980; Auerswald and Maltzman 2003). Another significant aspect is that committees are central for political parties being influential, as they may exert influence on the congressional works (Curry 2019; Uslander and Zittel 2011).

Another component of this is the congressional avenues of influence, following the classification proposed by Rosati and Scott (2011). The parliament may exert influence in foreign policy by legislative or non-legislative paths. The first option is related to treaties, appointments and legislative procedures, for instance. Another action is non-legislative, employing informal advice, hearings and public opinion, for example. Besides that, one of the main contributions from their work is the two-dimensional classification of the congressional behaviour according to activity and assertiveness. In this model, a congress can be greater or lesser active, i.e., may have different degrees of activity concerning foreign policy. In addition, the legislative body can support or oppose the Head of State. Thus, four types for the parliamentary engagement with foreign policy are thought: competitive; strategic; supportive; and disengaged. The first one classifies a congress that is active in foreign policy and assertive when challenging the president. A strategic congress refers to less activity, but defiance toward the Executive. Different from a supportive congress, which is active and supports the Presidency. Finally, a disengaged congress, which is more deferent, has less activity and more considerable support (Rosati and Scott 2011, 310–11).

Another theory of legislative behaviour is proposed by Henehan (2000), affirming that critical issues cause changes in the parliaments. Even though this theory was based in the US Congress, the author argues that is replicable to other States. This explanation is appropriated to explain long-term patterns, clarifying that salient issues transform parliamentarians' behaviour.

For Lewin (1991), ideologies and parties help individuals to determine their votes, reducing the costs of information. This is a consequence of politicians being vote-maximisers, in this perspective expecting to be re-elected in a political business cycle. However, despite this pragmatic individualist stand, political actors need to pass legislations in order to support their electoral campaigns by satisfying constituents' sectorial interests. In this regard, Binderkrantz draws our attention to the fact that

In present-day parliaments, a wide range of interest groups seek access to members of parliament (MPs), utilize institutional channels of parliamentary access, and launch lobbying campaigns to impress their views on legislators. While the groups and causes represented by organized interests are diverse, they are united by a common goal to affect the legislative process and ultimately to leave their fingerprints on the legislation adopted. (Binderkrantz 2014, 526)

Therefore, groups' and individuals' interests and influence pressures legislators.

In view of the above, we can summarise what has been discussed as causes of the delay: indifference regarding international politics; interest and willingness to directly affect foreign affairs; salience of the issue; pressure from electoral districts; electoral cycle; the Executive position regarding the matter; political bargaining; and ideology.

Furthermore, it has been discussed whether being "fast" or "slow" is an indicator of the institutional dynamics, as the parliamentary autonomy (Chaisty 2014). On one hand, having high speed could be an example of an efficient legislature that is able to find a consensus among its members. On the other hand, a fast approval could be a signal of weak democratic consolidation, with an intervention of the Executive branch. In addition to that, this can be related to the public discussion on improving decision-making efficiency, as society may demand faster decisions to implement policies and perceive its results.

As Rivas (2006) stated, most of Mercosur rules do not face problems in their internalisation to the national judicial orders, either by the Executive or by the Legislative. As well, Diniz (2012) draws our attention to, even if the majority of

international treaties are approved by the Legislative without major issues, researchers should also note the indexes of rejection (when legislators disagree on what is proposed by the Executive) and of non-approval, i.e., a category in which the documents do not receive a decision and remain in the congress on an indefinite basis. That is to say, a high index of approval does not necessarily signify convergence between their political approaches (Auerswald and Maltzman 2003). In this perspective, in spite of not being quantitatively relevant, non-approvals indicate that members of the congress do not automatically approve the agreements but take time to come up with a conclusion and this period may be rationally used as a bargain instrument before the Presidency. Even if posteriorly they are legislated, the possibility of rejecting and the demands for other gains in exchange of votes are part of the political game analysed.

As seen in some of the records, parliaments not always simply ratify what is proposed by the presidents, but they may react using its attributed powers, leading to broader participation of the legislatures in the other instances, as far as parliaments are considered as potential veto players, within the checks and balances principle, which explains the role that they have in our object. An additional aspect is the veto player theory, pioneered by Tsebelis' contribution. In his perspective, a veto player is an individual or collective actor needed to take a political decision (Tsebelis 1997). They can be either institutional (constitutionally established) or partisan (members of a government coalition) players. He highlights the importance of the number of veto players, the convergence among the actors and the cohesion in collective actors. In addition to that, Tsebelis (2011) indicates that the Executive-Legislative relations influence the veto power. This is seen in two dimensions, according to him: ideological distance between the two branches; and institutional procedures to set the legislative agenda. In view of that, the veto conditions are a reflex of both the party system and the institutional environment.

According to Diermeier (2014, 46), "One of the attractive features of this approach is that it imposes a common structure on political institutions that facilitates comparative analysis". Following this line, a higher number of veto

players, politically distant from one another, limit the size of a win-set, that is, which policy outcome is acceptable to the players, even if it does not reach their ideal preference (Clark, Golder, and Golder 2013; Mansfield, Milner, and Pevehouse 2007).

Shugart (2008) points out that, despite divergence of preferences between the branches, democratic presidents are checked by congresses, but they do not circumvent the legislative functions, seeking to establish a functional agreement with the members of congress. For instance, negotiating positions in the cabinet to have success in the Executive agenda.

Diniz (2005) also remarks that pulling a project is a risk indicator of decision-making paralysis and the difficulty faced by the Executive branch to approve its bills. In addition, she rises a debate about the preferences of the Executive to have some bills positively deliberated, i.e., if submitting to the parliament necessarily means that it has the intention to receive a favourable vote or if it considers acceptable not reaching approval. In her study, this is a reflection of Executive priorities in the legislative agenda. As the interbranch relations are characterised by constant negotiations, the resources should be mobilised in a clever way not to “waste” a voting. The composition of the parliament affects the extent to which the Executive can influence the legislature (Alemán and Calvo 2010).

While our analysis is concentrated on the legislative process, it is relevant to shed light on how the Executive branch submits treaties to the parliament. According to Camino and Menck (2018; 2019), in Brazil, the National Congress spends less time to approve international agreements, compared to the time taken by the Presidency to refer the bills to the Legislative. In other terms, in this perspective, the Legislative branch is not the main responsible, in average, for delays in ratifying international agreements. This happens because the Executive does not have a legal obligation to submit them, making this process discretionary to its interests.

Considering the variation in time from treaty to treaty, an internal logic appears from the Executive strategy towards the Congress. Therefore, even if most treaties are approved, this does not imply that the Congress is automatically

approving them, but that the Presidency is facing legislators as veto players that might reject the treaties. Given that, it develops a strategy to select the best moment to send them. As an example, this is seen in both the Venezuelan and the Bolivian accessions to Mercosur in Brazil. However, the submission processes, from the Planalto to the Congress, are more difficult to trace, because they are less transparent, do not have rules determining their procedures and depend on domestic political interests.

Overall, this literature contradicts the conception that the Legislative branch abdicates or delegates its functions on foreign policy, being a realm exclusively conducted by the Executive. Thereby, the accumulated work about Executive and foreign policy allows expanding research on other actors, in order to understand better the complexity of a social and political phenomenon with the involvement of a plethora of actors.

### *1.3. Political parties and coalitions*

It is noteworthy to highlight that political parties are instances of political organisation and preference aggregation (Saalfeld and Strøm 2014). It is through these groups that legislators and other political individuals are elected. They are collective actors and might constrain individuals' behaviour. Therefore,

parties promote decisional efficiency in the chamber and allow legislators to influence policy. They also organize opposition to the incumbent government. By providing voters with choices over policies and personnel, they offer a mechanism by which partisan governments can be held accountable for their actions (Saalfeld and Strøm 2014, 372)

That said, parties are one of the main references not only for the governmental and political structuration, but also in relation to the public opinion and constituencies. Considering that they are the units that organise the

congressional works and the Executive-Legislative relationships, this justifies the attention given to parties.

When aggregated, parties form coalitions, determining how politics and policies may perform. As shown above, the nature of coalitions determines the speed for ratifying international agreements, and this is the reason for covering the state of art about coalitions in this section. For Diermeier (2014), coalitions are crucial phenomena in multiparty systems, enabling a comparative perspective across legislatures. The classical definition of Gamson (1961) indicates that when parties decide to take part in a coalition, they assess the risks and benefits of investing their resources, which are unequally distributed. In other terms, there is a trade-off to maximise their gains, according to their position in the system.

Coalitions in Latin America have been largely studied in the last decades (Mainwaring 1990; Cintra 2004; Clerici 2015b; 2015a; 2016; Nicolau 2004; Figueiredo, Salles, and Vieira 2009; Ianoni 2017; Carey 2003; Cheibub, Przeworski, and Saiegh 2004; Albala 2013; Calvo and Leiras 2012; Varetto 2014; Jones, Hwang, and Micozzi 2009; Borges 2015; Calvo and Sagarzazu 2016). Albala and Reniu (2018) define coalitions as the junction of two or more political parties that agree to form a cabinet. The concept of political coalition can also be defined as coordination among actors that implicates in costs and share of functions among the participants to reach a common goal, with compromises and risks for each one of the parts (Clerici et al. 2016). The main benefit is to avoid transaction costs at every bill that is voted, i.e., the members of a coalition commit to vote together independently of their individual preferences (Saalfeld and Strøm 2014).

Actors can form coalitions either for willing to be with the winners or for having similar preferences in policies (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2005). That is to say, there is a rationale in taking part of a long coalition to participate in the winning side, even if this contradicts some beliefs. These approaches offer insights to understand the ideological convergence or divergence within coalitions, that is, if parties and legislators are connected to the same objectives in policies. Assuming that “coalition governance is the norm in contemporary

representative democracies” (L. W. Martin and Vanberg 2014, 437), the cooperating partners accommodate mixed interests to perform joint actions, while having separate backgrounds, accountabilities and relations with interest groups and constituencies. Therefore, there is a mutual pressure to unify the coalition before target audiences, as well as to distinguish each part of the coalition to obtain electoral gains.

In a government, a coalition happens when the winning party does not reach the majority to support the government in approving laws. In other words, controlling a coalition is almost a prerequisite to have legislative success. Moreover, Albala (2017b) provides a definition of coalition cabinets, considering that it

supposes the presence of distinct political forces that can count on the support of all their congressional party members. A coalition government is, above all, the result of a negotiation between two or more parties that have converged to form an agreement (whether public or not) about ensuring mutual commitment on a broad range of topics at different levels (mostly at the executive and legislative levels). Last but not least, coalition members are supposed to be responsible and accountable to both the president and the parties that form their legislative basis. (Albala 2017b, 8)

According to the author’s considerations, scholars studying coalitions should bear in mind the particularities of presidentialism (the dominant regime type in America): having direct elections to the head of government, which offers legitimacy; and having constitutionally fixed dates to inaugurate and end the terms, with predictable elections. In addition to that, Albala (2017a) suggests specificities for being bicameral. This implies in having two rounds of negotiation as both chambers are veto players and might be incongruent, with a wider possibility of gridlocking. That is to say, the central government does not have automatic majorities in neither chamber, as each of these institutions is elected by direct vote. To sum up, bicameralism opens the bargaining process. Even if some differences in electoral and partisan systems occur among our cases, the general framework remains the same across them and in most of democratic Latin American governments in the last decades.

Bearing in mind that Latin American countries tend to have a multiparty presidentialism (Albala 2020), a seminal study in the area of coalitions is the work of Abranches (2018). A handful of factors contribute to the need of coalitions, as electoral fragmentation and heterogeneity, as well as open list system. In the perspective of Abranches (2018, 77), coalition is a previous agreement which establishes that political parties will support the Executive branch projects, with conditions negotiated in a later moment.

The number of parties in the system alters the ability for the head of government to create a trustworthy coalition (Mainwaring and Shugart 2002). Among all the parties composing the legislature, the president's party is one of the most important. If it controls a larger share of seats, it increases the possibility of having bills approved. On the other hand, being minoritarian (or being highly fragmented) hampers the legislative success of the government.

Furthermore, Albala (2017a) indicates that some States do not have intermediate elections for legislatures or Executive officials and this is an aspect that contributes to a longer survival of the coalitions. In the four countries that we study in this dissertation, this is not a homogeneous feature. In all the cases, there are some kind of intermediate elections. In Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, there are local elections in years different than the years in which general elections (for the national government and legislature) are carried out. In Argentina, legislative elections are held every two years, altering the interbranch relationship.

Within the scope of coalitions' studies, it is necessary here to clarify cohesiveness and discipline. According to Carey (2002, 9), cohesiveness "refers to the degree to which the members of a group share similar preferences", while discipline concerns "the degree to which group leaders are able to elicit unified voting on the part of the group, regardless of member preferences". Moreover, as Kam (2014, 399) writes "Party cohesion is the degree to which members of a party are observed to work together in pursuance of the party's goals" and "Party discipline refers to party cohesion that is generated and sustained by the actions of party leaders".



Bearing this in mind, the same concepts can be applied also to the single parties' realities, as the *Asociación Nacional Republicana* (National Republican Association – Colorado Party, ANR-PC) in Paraguay, which is fractioned. From a certain point of view, this is expected for parties that have a larger share of seats in the parliament. That is because having more legislators mean having more plurality of ideas and perspectives that may not be convergent in all issues. Despite that, Alemán and Calvo (2010) argue that governmental unity is the most relevant aspect to dominate the agenda in congresses. In the same line, Hix, Noury and Roland (2005) examine that ideological closeness is not the single determinant of cohesiveness in voting.

According to Carey (2002), presidentialism is expected to present fractioned and undisciplined political parties, causing obstacles for the Executive branch legislative success. Indeed, differences in the political systems of each case can be observed. The Uruguayan political parties are very structured and ideologically cohesive, which, however, does not eliminate internal factions (Ramos 2013; Burian 2015). Indeed, despite a strong history of partisan tradition (Lanzaro 2018), recent research pointed out that the cohesion and discipline in Uruguay is gradually giving room to partisan fragmentation (Chasquetti 2016; Caetano, Nieto, and Selios 2020; Chasquetti 2013).

On the other hand, in Paraguay, intra-partisan struggles are particularly present, including within the ANR-PC, the largest party in that country – a one-party dominant system (Zovatto et al. 2018; Ribeiro 2012; L. R. D. Recalde 2017). For Argentina, Ramos (2013) notes that the main parties tend to follow the political leader of the moment, with less orderly internal bureaucracies. This feature fosters polarisation. Also, in regard of Argentina from 2001 to 2014, Ribeiro and Urdinez (2017) verify the two presidents thesis, concluding that international affairs are received in a better way in the Congress than domestic policies. According to their study, this relation is affected by popular approval of the government, coalition size, economic performance and use of urgency decrees.

For Brazil, Limongi and Figueiredo (1998) write that the Executive branch has a strong influence in the legislative process because of its agenda power and

the organisation of the parties in the parliament. Following Limongi and Figueiredo's article, the existing system allows the president to have the means to have members of parliament cooperating, by offering benefits, if they vote tightly, that can assist them in their electoral careers. Sanctions, as well, could be granted by the Executive in case of undisciplined voting. These mechanisms are particularly relevant in a country where coalition governments have been the rule, because of the high level of fragmentation in several parties. Having said that, being a multiparty system does not impede to having work done and to form coalitions, despite ideological differences.

#### 1.4. *Regionalism*

Moving from the domestic to the international sphere, regional trade blocs, as Mercosur and others in various areas across the globe are susceptible to celebrate agreements, needing to ratify them. One of the assumptions in this research is that these agreements are the result of rational negotiations among a myriad of actors that influences the inputs, throughputs and outputs of these processes.

Herz and Hoffmann (2004) argue that international organisations are permanent and institutionalised forms of cooperation, with bureaucracies and headquarters to sustain their structures. Easing negotiations, these multilateral arrangements favour the accomplishment of agreements and reduce the costs of controlling other actors. They legitimise certain practices and ideas in the system, also being actors by their own in accordance to International Law. In the case of Mercosur, it gained its legal personality through the Protocol of Ouro Preto, signed on December 1994. According to the same authors, most organisations do not have supranational powers, as they are dependent of the States to have their authority. Even throughout the different phases of Mercosur,

the regulation of Mercosur law was a constant difficulty to be overcome (Gazzola 2017; K. L. P. Mariano and Menezes 2021).

Still according to Herz and Hoffmann (2004), a region may be defined in several ways, as by economic, political and cultural characteristics, but it is at all times related to a territory, continuous or not. In view of this, the integration can be carried on by state or non-state actors and might, or not, produce regional organisations, which institutionalise the regional integration. In addition, they can be issue-specific or deal with several thematic areas, as is the case of Mercosur.

As explained by Pennetta and Tino (2016), Latin America experienced three waves of regional integration processes. For these authors, the success and failure of the several experiences is directly related to the political and economic conditions in the involved countries, including the hyper-presidentialism (Pennetta and Tino 2016, 433). More specifically, Mercosur was born in the second wave of integration (open regionalism), aiming to liberalise trade as a mechanism to participate in global economy (Quiliconi and Espinoza 2017). Throughout the decades, this regional scheme expanded to all South America, either with full members or associated members.

Costoya (2011) identified that the reconfiguration of 21<sup>st</sup> century neoliberalism, particularly after the 2005 Summit of the Americas held in Mar del Plata – which symbolised a watershed for the Washington Consensus – caused the creation of several regional trade blocs in these years, as ALBA-TCP, Unasur, AP and CELAC. Later, Prosur was also founded. All these institutions complement existing ones as Mercosur, CAN and OAS. However, they can also be disputing projects, insofar as they represent divergent interests from each government (Perrotta and Porcelli 2016). These coexisting projects are related to economic, political and social pressures -responding to the desire or hesitation towards market liberalisation-, either from domestic societies or from external powers, including the United States (Tussie 2009; Flandes and Wehner 2015).

Therefore, the trajectory of South American regionalism is strongly linked to each change in the national governments (K. P. Mariano 2011; Malamud 2003; K. L. P. Mariano and Menezes 2021). Moreover, this very same aspect is

the reason for the instability of Mercosur and its difficulties to consolidate itself as a customs union. Therefore, despite its potential, recurrent intraregional tensions prevent achieving long-term goals (Grabendorff 2007). In this perspective, regional integration advances by short term political alliances.

The stability of presidential regimes has been discussed by Linz (1990). Historically, Mercosur was led by the political wills of presidents, opposed to bureaucracy and professional diplomacy (Malamud 2015). For this reason, the episodes of advancement or pitfall in the bloc have a personal involvement of the heads of government, which is backed by their legal capabilities – as veto power. Malamud (2015, 121) affirms that “Latin American democratic presidents concentrate enough power to either prevail over or circumvent veto players such as the cabinet and congress, other potential veto actors such as national bureaucracies, and regional institutions”. Malamud (2005) and Decresci and Mariano (2021) have further supported the centrality of presidents in the regional integration decision-making process.

Literature has shown that the institutional checks and balances in presidential systems do not constrain the determinations of the presidents (Rose-Ackerman, Desierto, and Volosin 2011; Zinzi 2019; Nolte 2016). However, it has been discussed that real presidentialism characteristics should be taken into account without looking only to the stereotype of presidentialism (Cheibub, Elkins, and Ginsburg 2011).

Not only about the Executive officials, but also when discussing about the parliamentarians, it is important to take into account their ideology and how this shapes the regional integration. It has been argued that left-wing politicians prioritise regionalism in their foreign policies as a strategy of socioeconomic development (Jenne, Schenoni, and Urdinez 2017). Nevertheless, this does not exclude the reality that right-wing governments also participate in regional schemes, but preferring some mechanisms to others. This scholarship is linked to the discussion about the impacts of the Pink Tide<sup>2</sup>, suggesting that the

<sup>2</sup> Term used to classify the election of several governments from the left-wing political spectrum in Latin America during the 2000s, in countries as Argentina (Néstor and

ideological proximity stimulated region-wide cooperation and founded new projects in Latin America (Gratius and Gomes Saraiva 2013; Nolte and Wehner 2013; Sanahuja 2011; Saraiva and Briceño Ruiz 2009; Brenner and Hershberg 2013; Boniface 2011; Lima 2014; Malamud 2009; Ayerbe 2008; Dabène 2007; Christensen 2007; Rojas 2009; Riggirozzi and Grugel 2015; Vagnoux 2013).

In this regard, Veiga and Ríos (2007) suggest that the Pink Tide is accompanied by an economic nationalism, focusing on the solution of social inequalities. Roughly speaking, the different goals expected from the integration and a clear political component differentiate the 21<sup>st</sup> century regionalism to the one practiced during the 1990s. This approach on development included broadening the thematic agendas with Latin American counterparts. It is commonly understood that the economic drawbacks caused by neoliberalism in the previous decade ushered the election of these governments, as well as the projects to change the economic strategy.

Despite the ideological component, the regional integration also reflects a pragmatic strategy of economic development in this period (K. L. P. Mariano, Romero, and Ribeiro 2015) and the enlargement of Mercosur is considered part of the post-liberal regionalism, as Caracas proposed adaptations to the bloc (Briceño Ruiz 2006). Actually, Mercosur itself was founded during the open regionalism in 1991, but got a new impetus from 2003 onwards, following these standards of the post-liberal regionalism. Beyond trade, it has incorporated a multi-dimensional agenda, including security and protection of democracy (Fuccille, Luciano, and Bressan 2021).

Coming to the contemporaneity, current Mercosur faces a new reality, as this progressist phase of regionalism ended when several leftist presidents stepped down from office during the 2010s (Benzi and Narea 2018; K. P. Mariano, Bressan, and Luciano 2021; K. L. P. Mariano and Menezes 2021). New

Cristina Kirchner), Bolivia (Evo Morales), Brazil (Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff), Chile (Michelle Bachelet), Ecuador (Rafael Correa), Nicaragua (Daniel Ortega), Paraguay (Fernando Lugo), Uruguay (Tabaré Vázquez and José Mujica) and Venezuela (Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro), among others.

right-wing governments redirected foreign policy priorities, by approaching non-Mercosur partners (Burian and Nilson 2021; Junqueira, Neves, and Souza 2020). Although some institutions remained, some aspects of the integration did not last after this phase. Therefore, regional integration is not a linear process, but has advancements and setbacks in different topics. Certainly, Mercosur is not an exception to it, as some characteristics of past phases are preserved nowadays, while others have vanished.

During these 30 years, there were efforts to balance the distribution of power among the members, reducing the weight of Brazil in the negotiations - reality that differs from other organisations as the African Union (Cason 2010; Luis Leandro Schenoni 2018; Grabendorff 2002). This happens because Brazilian leadership is not consensual among Latin American and South American states, creating internal divergences (Onuki, Mouron, and Urdinez 2016; Vanbiervliet 2014; Mello 2002; Bressan 2016). Moreover, the strong intergovernmental structure is a strategy to preserve the members' autonomy, preventing the advancement of supranational or non-Executive bodies and rules (Mares 2012; Jerabek 2016). More specifically: "the internalization process is only carried out after the approval of the national executive body, centered on the figure of the President. This means that institutional changes in the Mercosur are limited to the political will of the Presidents" (Luciano and Campos 2021, 113). This is important given the strong legislative powers of presidents, allowing them to approve a considerable share of their initiatives in the parliaments (Figueiredo and Limongi 2000).

In view of what has been said, the scholarship that advances the idea that the alignment between the Executive branches fosters regional integration can be summarised in the assumption that political proximity with neighbouring States conveys a faster deliberation. Although it is not a hypothesis, we look into this aspect in the case studies chapter.

Placing the explanatory power in the relationship between governments and not so much in the domestic disputes, it tests the so-called "hyper-presidentialism", focusing on the heads of government as those who lead the decisions. The hyper-presidentialism relates to the paradigm of the rational

actor: “The nation or government, conceived as a rational, unitary decisionmaker, is the agent. This actor has one set of specified goals” (G. T. Allison 1971, 32).

The drawback of emphasising the individual as equal to the government is the limitation to generalise from one case to another. That is because the explanation relies on having one president or another. In view of that, this is not included in the variables for the Survival Analysis nor in the conditions for the Qualitative Comparative Analysis. Instead, the relationship between governments/presidents is analysed in the case studies, to see if the proximity between them affects the legislative processes.

The second hypothesis observes if the ideology of the government affects the willingness to approve regional agreements, testing the perspective that leftist governments favour regional integration as development project and the absence of ideological convergence paralyses the integration (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2004). Several authors (Merke and Reynoso 2016; Milner and Judkins 2004; Burian and Silva 2015) identified that left-wing presidents defend a protectionist economy, as well as strengthening relationships with Global South partners. Moreover, Klemi and Menezes (2016) argue that the deepening of Mercosur happened because of the ideological convergence among leftist governments. Burian and Irazabal (2018) identified that leftist parties have preference for South/Latin American integration. This also relies on the perspective that ideology explains the polarisation in foreign policy-related topics and how parliamentarians vote (Onuki, Ribeiro, and Oliveira 2009). Therefore:

H2: Governments from the left-wing spectrum approve the bills faster.

In parallel, it has been said that economic actions have distributional consequences within States and, for this reason, legislators are pressured by their constituents to have a specific stand on international trade matters, contrasting to war affairs (Raunio 2014; L. L. Martin 2005). Lee (1988) points out that legislators may understand foreign policy as legislating in favour of immediate constituents’ interests, which reflects the decentralisation of diplomacy in

democratic systems. Lee stresses that a changing agenda of foreign policy, both in the national and systemic levels, impacts on parliamentary reaction.

When ratifying international treaties, interdependence and power relations count to determine if a state will challenge major powers or embrace the decision (C. J. Schneider and Urpelainen 2013). Regional organisations can be a source of development, providing public goods and enlarged markets (Malamud 2019). Mercosur, as other organisations, was founded with the aim to boost intraregional trade, however the results have been unequal (Malamud and Gardini 2012), as evidenced in Figure 3 and Figure 4<sup>3</sup>.

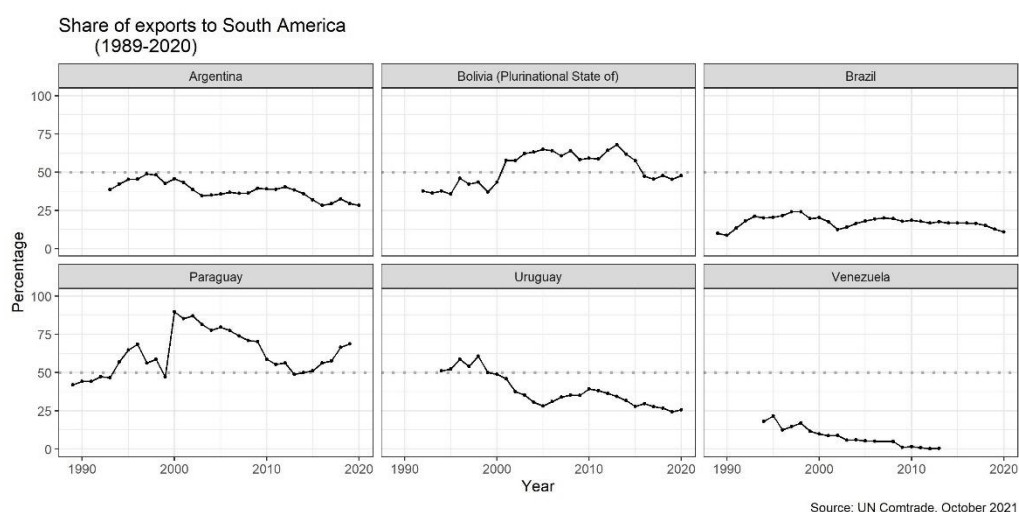


Figure 3. Exports from Mercosur states to South America  
Source: Own work based on UN Comtrade (2020)

<sup>3</sup> In these two plots, it is shown the trade with all the South American partners, even before they entered Mercosur. In addition to that, we also included Bolivia and Venezuela in the visualisation, although they acceded to the bloc later on.



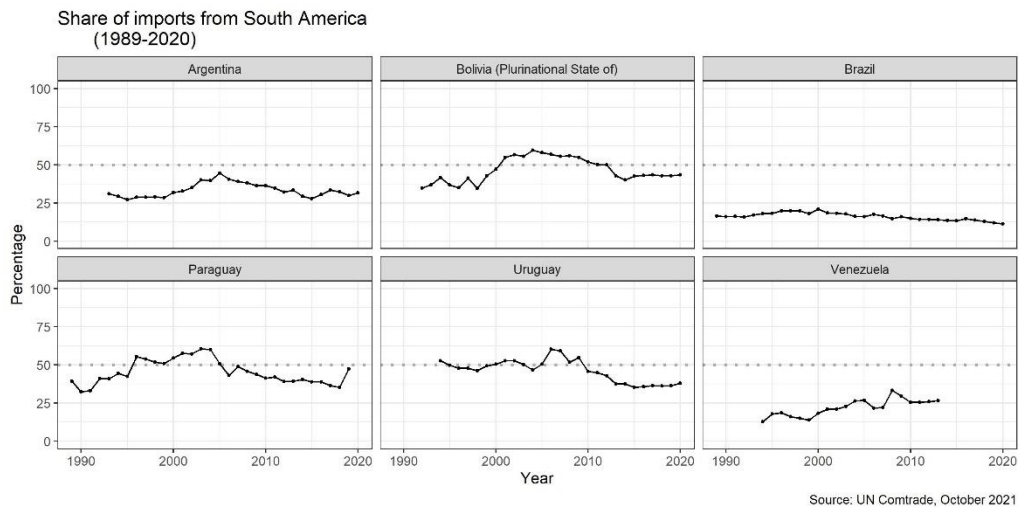


Figure 4. Imports of Mercosur states from South America  
Source: Own work based on UN Comtrade (2020)

Several approaches theorised that as actors are part of the integration and have more trade, it would boost the willingness to be even more integrated – the spill-over effect in Neofunctionalist terms (Schmitter 2005; Gavin and de Lombaerde 2005). That said, the more benefited actors are, more they will want to receive and participate in the process.

Doctor (2013) identified that the members that have a larger share of trade within the bloc, as Paraguay, seek for short and medium-term benefits from the Mercosur membership. On the other hand, those, as Brazil, that present stronger extra-regional economic ties look to improve their position in the international system, using Mercosur as a launching pad. To sum up, the relevance of Mercosur to each member depends on how much they gain from it.

In view of that, contextual conditions interfere in the capability of approval of international agreements and, to operationalise this perspective on regionalism, we observe the economic interaction within the bloc, measured by foreign trade. To test if the speed is affected by the exports and imports of each member state and by how much is commercialised with the regional partners, we formulate the following hypothesis:

H3a: Larger trade with Mercosur partners leads to faster approvals.

The theoretical expectation is that the more intertwined a member is, more incentives will have to be more integrated by approving faster the agreements (Mansfield, Milner, and Pevehouse 2008). Economic sectors benefited from the integration would pressure the legislators to create more legal basis for it.

In addition, considering that in episodes of economic crisis and instabilities, actors might push for changes in the status quo, aiming to have better distribution of the gains, economic indicators are also observed. Following the assumption of benefits derived from the integration, when economy is performing positively or, at least, in the average, domestic actors would favour to continue in the bloc and accepting more treaties, instead of pursuing extra-bloc relations. Therefore, another hypothesis is drawn:

H3b: Stable economic situation influences a rapid approval.

Having discussed the hypotheses, in the chapter that follows, it will be discussed the operationalisation of the concepts and the data collection, before proceeding to the empirical analysis.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODS

The second chapter has been divided into four parts. The first three deal with the methods used in this investigation and the fourth introduces the data collection and how it is distributed.

Considering that this research fits an explanatory study, our aim is to answer a why-question, as a form to explain why there is the difference in our empirical phenomena. In regard of the research procedures, having in mind that the suitability of chosen methods is related to its answerability to the research question, a mixed-methods approach proved to be more appropriate to test our hypotheses (Aguilera and Chevalier 2021; Schoonenboom and Johnson 2017; Curini and Damonte 2021). Qualitative and quantitative techniques have been articulated in a sequential strategy to, first, produce the inference and, second, to enhance the inference. Thus, with this integrated approach the qualitative section complements the quantitative part and vice-versa. The research design was structured to detect the main findings, select relevant observations and, finally, analyse specific cases. For this reason, the statistics guide the following steps, while the cases interpretation assists in comprehending the quantitative findings.

Tayfur (1994) emphasises that there are several determinants in foreign policy, including domestic factors. In view of that, he suggests different ways to study FPA, including case studies and longitudinal comparisons. Thus, we approach our research problem by combining both approaches, as a way to validate the findings and offer more insights about the object. In this way, it is possible to test the hypotheses with large and small N.

As mentioned in the introduction, this thesis employs three different methods: Survival Analysis; Qualitative Comparative Analysis; and Process Tracing. Recognising that in-depth case studies unveil details and allows the

emergence of knowledge and theory, we have a chapter dedicated to test our hypotheses in comparative case studies (della Porta 2008). Nonetheless, to enable the generalisability of our findings, to explore them through time and to summarise complex political processes, we also adopt formal logical and statistical techniques (Bueno de Mesquita 2002; Jackman 1985). On the one hand, this controls for the biases inherent to each method, while reinforcing the causal inference and improving the conceptual definitions (Aguilera and Chevalier 2021, 378). On the other hand, there is an additional effort to theorise and standardise concepts that are compatible with both quantitative and qualitative techniques.

To this end, as a comparative study, we select the same output in all the four legislatures and across 30 years (Arter 2006; Almond 1956). The decision was to investigate the time for approving Mercosur agreements, from the day it was received in the Congress to the day it was approved. This longitudinal perspective offers the possibility of investigating general forces that explain the duration. The findings will allow us to interpret the legislative performance in South America and the role played by national legislatures in fostering or blocking the regional integration. About the case selection, the decision not to include other legal productions was to build a reasonably uniform population, but still having diversity among the cases (Ragin 2000; Rohlfing 2012).

Bearing in mind the size of the N, importance is given to the possibility of generalisation from our population of cases to the large population of analogous cases, i.e., parliaments approving international treaties. Although particularities of each State and each trade bloc or international organisation must be borne in mind, the general framework can be internationally expanded to other cases.

Regarding the sources, the investigation is extensively documental, preliminarily having as primary sources the documents produced by regional and national Executive and Legislative bodies, data available in their websites. To complement the online search, a field research was proposed in the work schedule, with the aim of deepening the data collection and of interviewing relevant political actors, aspiring to reach a nuanced understanding of interests that are not present in publicly available documents. Nonetheless, the Covid-19

pandemic prevented the execution of this task.

Taken together, these coherent methodological approaches allow us to reflect better on domestic and international phenomena, a strategy that amplifies the possibilities in the research design.

### 2.1. *Survival Analysis*

The statistical technique known as Survival Analysis or Event History Analysis is “used in many different settings where one is interested in the occurrence of events” (Aalen, Borgan, and Gjessing 2008, 1). Therefore, it is not restricted to Political Science, but has other applications, as in Health Sciences – field from where the term “survival” comes. The method, based on counting process, can calculate the chance of a person to survive or die from an illness, given certain variables as receiving a drug or having preconditions. This can be adapted to our field when we run the regression having the length of the approvals as the outcome. When a bill “dies” means that the existence as a bill has ended, that is, it was approved, which is what we are looking for. This can also be understood as a transition between states, from alive to dead, from under deliberation to approved (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004).

It has been widely used in recent legislative research (Hiroi and Rennó 2018; Chaisty 2014; Haftel and Thompson 2013; C. J. Schneider and Urpelainen 2013; Woon and Anderson 2012; Klüver and Sagarzazu 2013; Hiroi and Renno 2014). This indicates its suitability to understand lengthy durations. Despite that, above all, the method is adequate to answer our research question and to explain the variation in our dependent variable. Considering that it was defined as time, this measurement enables to assess either approvals or rejections, focusing on explaining what determines longer or shorter durations with testable hypotheses. More specifically, the priority was to explain duration and not rejecting or approving. We were particularly interested in analysing outliers, cases when there was undefinition about foreign policy or there was an extreme fast

approval. Thus, Survival Analysis allows to interpret the hazard of being concluded within certain time.

An advantage of Survival Analysis is the possibility to include censored data, i.e., observations that have not reached the event/outcome by the time of this study (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004). In practical terms, when the data was collected some bills were still under congressional deliberation. For this reason, it was not possible to determine the total duration of the procedures because we did not know the date it would be approved. However, we know that it occurred later than the censored date.

Therefore, in the dataset, these cases were coded as 0, indicating that they have not “died”, but they are taken into account in the analysis together with the cases coded as 1, which we know the start and end dates. We have established 24 August 2021 as a fictitious date of approval, allowing to calculate the other variables and understand which would be the conditions if the processes came to an end on that date. This decision allows us to include the cases in the study and analyse what happened up to now, with the existent information. Of course, this scenario is possible to be modified with future changes.

Unlike other statistics, Survival Analysis not only focus on the outcome (the fact that parliaments approved Mercosur treaties), but also on how long it took to reach this outcome (Mills 2012). It calculates the probability of an event (which can be a patient’s death or the approval of a bill in the parliament) based on the regression of covariates that help to discover causality. This is represented in survival curves and hazard rates. The first “gives the expected proportion of individuals for which the event has not yet happened by time  $t$ ” (Aalen, Borgan, and Gjessing 2008, 5). On the other hand, the hazard rates calculate the probability of having the event, considering the observations that survived until certain point. For this reason, the survival curve decreases over time, while the hazard rate increases over time.

There are several models in Survival Analysis, but the one that is routinely applied is the Cox proportional hazards model (D. R. Cox 1972). Considering that the function of time does not have to be specified in Cox’s model, it is considered as a semi-parametric model. In other words, the scholar does not need

to choose a probability distribution. Another contribution from it is “to propose an estimation method called partial likelihood, which bears many similarities to ordinary maximum likelihood estimation” (P. D. Allison 2014, 3). One of its assumptions is that the effects of covariates, factors or indicators are fixed at all points in time (Broström 2012).

As date is a crucial aspect in this method (Mills 2012), we chose to work with days as counting measure. This allows for a more precise capture of the duration, between the start and the end of the processes. Another aspect is tied data, that is, if different observations take place at the same time. In our population, there are few occurrences like that, and, for this reason, the Breslow’s approximation was used when modelling (Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004).

It has been discussed whether the duration of processes is determined only by the initial conditions when the observations starts or for unexpected events that might occur during the process, i.e., before it finishes (Warwick 1992). For this reason, we have calculated, for some variables, the mean of the yearly-recorded measurements, accounting for cross-time differences.

## *2.2. Qualitative Comparative Analysis*

Different from the Survival Analysis, QCA is a combinatorial method, that is, it does not look to each variable individually, but it measures the presence of conjunctions (Ragin 1989). Therefore, opposing to the correlational conception of causation (Rohlfing 2012), QCA is a set-theoretic method, which can be defined as follows:

Set-theoretic methods are approaches to analyzing social reality in which (a) the data consists of set membership scores; (b) relations between social phenomena are modelled in terms of set relations; and (c) the results point to sufficient and necessary conditions and emphasize causal complexity in terms of INUS and SUIN causes (C. Q. Schneider and Wagemann 2012, 6).

What defines the membership into a set are the qualitative properties of the case. Therefore, it is, or it is not part of the set, which is defined qualitatively, even if the conceptualisation relies on quantitative measuring. For instance, Mercosur is a set that gets together States that are member of this specific regional bloc. Argentina, thus, is a member of this set, while Canada is not. On the other hand, if the set refers to States that belong to any trade bloc, both Argentina and Canada would be part of the set.

To assess how much a case belongs to a set, the calibration is the technique used to express the membership, between 0 (not a member) and 1 (full member). In calibrating, three thresholds are of utmost importance: 0, 0.5 and 1. The 0 establishes which cases are fully out of the set, while the 1 indicates that from that point the cases are complete part of the set. That said, the 0.5, at the middle, represents ambiguity, i.e., when one cannot define if the case belongs or not to the set. These values are manipulable defining the boundaries of the concept (C. Q. Schneider and Wagemann 2012). They might rely on a quantitative measurement, but the anchors establish the qualitative contrast between being in or out the set. For example, counting how many years it took for a parliament to approve a bill is a continuous variable. However, stating what is fast or not is a qualitative attribute to the value, creating a set.

Broadly speaking, QCA has two main variants: crisp sets and fuzzy sets. The latter is employed in this research, allowing us to calculate partial set membership for every observation, presenting more precise empirical information.

In set-theoretic methods, two relations are essential to interpret the conditions: necessity and sufficiency. For Schneider and Wagemann (2012, 57) “a condition can be considered sufficient if, whenever it is present across cases, the outcome is also present in these cases”. The condition is, thereby, a subset of the outcome. Regarding the necessity, “a condition X is necessary if, whenever the outcome Y is present, the condition is also present” (C. Q. Schneider and Wagemann 2012, 69). In this case, the outcome is a subset of the condition.

Most frequently, an observation does not belong to a single condition. Therefore, the combinations compose a conjuncture for the occurrence or not of



the outcome. Following that, the so-called truth table emerges, indicating if the combinations are sufficient for the outcome of interest. In view of that, each row in the table is a set of observations that allow scholars to perform analyses of configurations. The rows do not represent individual cases but all possible logical-AND conjunctions between the conditions (C. Q. Schneider and Wagemann 2012). The number of conditions, through the formula  $2^k$ , being  $k$  the number of conditions, directly determines the size of the truth table. Each empirical observation belongs to a single row, as it cannot be member of more than one combination of conditions.

Being a comparative approach, the truth table can be logically minimised through Boolean algebra, in order to express the information in an equivalent yet more parsimonious way. The result is the solution formula, aggregating the similarities among the observations that lead to the outcome of interest.

The solution of this data analysis technique offers multiple causes as explanations, allowing scholars to integrate distinct levels of analysis. When comparing similarities in some characteristics and differences in others, the model indicates that with the occurrence of certain conditions, the outcome is more probable to happen. The comparison allows some degree of generalisability, insofar as the outcome is expected to happen if the same causal mechanism is triggered, under the scope conditions.

The steps mentioned above were conducted with RStudio, a computer-assisted data analysis software that contains packages specifically suited for running QCA (Oana and Schneider 2018; Dusa 2019b).

### *2.3. Process Tracing*

With cases representative of the macro level, it was decided to adopt process-tracing in two observations, which are reconstructed to better analyse causal mechanisms through in-depth case-based research (Tilly 2001). The

comparison is composed of two cases, which are the Paraguayan approvals of Venezuelan and Bolivian accessions, i.e., treaties that belonged to the same category and passed through the same parliament. In addition, the timeframe is almost continuous: 2007-2013 (Venezuela) and 2015-2016 (Bolivia). They differ precisely in the dependent variable, as one took 286 days and the other 2359 days, which is a variation in the Y (Rohlfing 2012). For this reason, the accession of Bolivia is a typical case and the accession of Venezuela is a deviant case, following the results from the QCA that creates this categorisation (Beach and Pedersen 2016b).

The comparative analysis with small N enables the observation of characteristics that are not available in the longitudinal study (della Porta 2008). Under this logic, the narratives explain complex social configurations, by describing new evidence (Kreuzer 2019). Beach and Pedersen (2019) argue that the process-tracing method empirically details how a causal mechanism operates, explaining how an outcome is produced. That said, it explains what happens between a cause and a result, by observing the fingerprints left. Indeed, “tracing mechanisms in a case also sheds light on how a given theoretical cause (or set of causes) produces an outcome” (Beach and Pedersen 2016a, 302).

Moreover, Collier (2011, 824) defines it as “an analytical tool for drawing descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence – often understood as part of a temporal sequence of events or phenomena”. Another definition is offered by Bennet and Checkel (2015, 6), indicating that this technique examines intermediate steps, allowing scholars to draw inferences about how the process and the outcome took place, employing a handful of material to explore the sequence of facts, bearing in mind a mechanistic perspective.

Following Beach and Pedersen’s (2016a) methodological guidelines, the aim of case-based research is not to purely describe the phenomena in a temporal sequence, but to shed light on why specific social processes take place. The purpose is to develop narrative structures that unpack the causal mechanisms of action (Machamer, Darden, and Craver 2000). For the current research, we apply the theory-testing type of process-tracing, considered more appropriate, given

the fact that we review theoretical aspects of Political Science and International Relations, intending to contribute to these areas of study.

For the Process Tracing, to understand the outcomes produced in each parliament, the most straightforward indicator are the votes, which are accurate to quantify individual positions concerning the project of enlargement and legislators' relation with the government. Therefore, summing to the variables used in the two other methods, they not only prove the existence of the outcomes, but also show political parties' and legislators' behaviours, which is raw material for our analysis, using multiple sources of evidence. However, votes are not available for every session, as some sessions had symbolic votes and not roll-call ones.

Because of that, the speeches delivered during plenary or committee sessions (commonly available in the format of transcriptions or meetings minutes), formal procedures and actors' background that may have affected their decisions complement them. These sources of evidence are stable, i.e., have not changed over time (considering the temporal distance to the earlier events) and cover the entire duration, with different individuals. However, the documentation can also be incomplete and reflect the bias of authors (Yin 2013). Although the research is not based on discourse analysis, this source is going to be employed while interpreting the statements addressed by legislators to their peers at the parliaments. The advantage of this type of evidence is to shed light on actions and beliefs that characterised the studied phenomena.

Keeping in mind discourses as data, for Dunn and Neumann (2016, 2), "Language does not explain the world as much as it produces it", i.e., discourses play a role to tot up a meaningful point of view to the world, representing how people think about reality. As well, it can be a representation of how they orally select and transmit what they want other individuals to believe that is their opinion. In this perspective, discourses can be a mode to interfere actively and act in reality. To synthesize:

Discourse analysis entails an examination of how and why things appear the way they do, and how certain actions become possible. [...] In general, discourse analysts tend to interrogate the ways in which specific systems of meaning-

production have been generated, circulated, internalized, and/or resisted. Often attention is focused on continuity, change, or rupture within specific discourses (Dunn and Neumann 2016, 4)

Given the fact that discourse can be evidence of particular processes and considering the importance of language in this section, the study should note which type of language is employed and not detaching from the context in which is embedded. Moreover, whether oral statements or written documents, it is vital to situate who speaks, to whom is speaking, under what circumstances and for what reason, due to the risk of bias (Beach and Pedersen 2019). As a further matter, mapping the stability and consistency of the speeches' arguments across the research backs up to identify trends in South American politics and the legislative reaction towards the enlargement of Mercosur.

All these observable manifestations, in tandem, enable the study of causal relations. The usage of institutional documents poses the risk of having distorted content, with a bias that favours political interests. Engaging in an interpretative paradigm, one can use indirect variables that can demonstrate it as if an actor had means, motives and opportunities to influence a process. For Beach and Pedersen (2016a), an indirect observation can be practically useful when empirical data is not available to assess a concept.

#### 2.4. *Data*

The original dataset used in this research is primarily based in the official repository of Mercosur treaties (Paraguay 2020a). In March and August 2021, we have checked all the 164 entries, identifying which have been approved by the national parliaments. Thus, the period runs from 1991 to 2021, completing three decades of regional integration, as a way to assess what has been approved so far and which is the disposition of the national actors to ratify the integration.

As the focus is on legislative procedures, ratification by executive decree or

other administrative measures was not considered. Therefore, in the data collection stage, for each agreement there were five possible scenarios: being ratified by the four states or by only three, two or one of them. The last option is that the agreement was not enforced by any member and, for this reason, was not included in the dataset. Given the fact that the current research is concerned with legislative processes, if the treaties are in force or pending or if they were rescinded, was not a matter of attention. As long as they passed by a national parliament, they integrated the dataset.

In the repository, the national law of each country that approved each treaty was specified. This information has allowed us to refer to the webpages of the parliaments (Argentina 2020; Brasil 2020; Paraguay 2020b; Uruguay 2020) to extract two dates: when the bill entered in the Legislative, submitted by the Executive; and when it was approved by the legislators. Despite that, 19 observations were not located in the online consultation to the Central Archives of the Paraguayan Congress and 1 from the Uruguayan General Assembly. Thus, they are classified as missing data.

Having the treaties as unit of analysis allows us to focus on the circumstances and in the institutions (congresses), instead of focusing on individuals or partisan groups. Even though the micro and the meso-levels are considered relevant, deciding to focus on the macro is a possibility to find general patterns that apply to the Legislative branch in general.

To sum up, the dataset is composed of 300 observations, referring to 118 treaties. Regarding the status, there are 278 approvals, 18 bills that are still under deliberation and 4 cases that were withdrawn by the Executive. Dividing by country, Argentina has 61 cases, Brazil has 83, Paraguay has 80 and, finally, Uruguay has 76 cases as summarised in Table 1. There is a handful of reasons for these differences. First and foremost, not every agreement has been ratified by all the four members. Therefore, the Presidencies might not have submitted the bills yet. Secondly, a few cases are specific to one country. For instance, Mercosur bodies celebrated agreements to establish their headquarters that need to be ratified only by the country where the offices are located. Thirdly, related to the first cause, each member state has its own rules for foreign treaties

ratification, deciding or not to refer to the legislature. Particularities on each legal framework may consider that one rule is already internalised with no need to ratify it again (Consejo del Mercado Común 2000). This is the case, for instance, of the Protocol of Accession of Bolivia. Argentina incorporated the 2012 version and, for this reason, the 2015 version has not passed.

Table 1. Distribution of agreements by country

| <b>country</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>%</b> |
|----------------|----------|----------|
| Argentina      | 61       | 20.3     |
| Brazil         | 83       | 27.7     |
| Paraguay       | 80       | 26.7     |
| Uruguay        | 76       | 25.3     |

Source: Own work

The already mentioned dates of submission and approval are basic information to build several other variables. Due to the fact that many observations lasted more than a year, and the economic and political indexes are yearly, we have decided to calculate the mean according to the period in which the bills stayed in the congresses.

On economic topics, we collected seven indicators: GDP, GDP growth, GDP per capita, unemployment, inflation, official exchange rate and foreign direct investment. The source of the first four is the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (CEPAL 2020). The other three were consulted in the World Bank (WB) website (World Bank 2020). For all the indexes, from 1991 onwards, we have calculated the mean and the standard deviation. These indicators allowed the research to compare the mean for each bill against the general mean and assess if it was more than one standard deviation above or below the general mean. This measure was employed to assess if the country was facing economic instability.

As one of our interests is to measure the impact of the size of coalitions, we

look to the composition of the studied governments. In regard of political indexes, the Database of Political Institutions (Cruz, Keefer, and Scartascini 2021) was consulted because it offers information of the four analysed countries since the foundation of Mercosur. With this data, we could calculate the size of coalition in relation to the total number of seats in the parliament, as well as the president's party share, how long the president's party has been in power, the political ideology of the head of State and the number of parties in the coalition. Following that, we have imported the database on varieties of democracy (V-Dem 2020), from which we used the variables regarding measures of polyarchy and legislative party cohesion. In addition to that, another database from the University of Gothenburg provided the effective number of legislative parties (QoG Institute 2020; Laakso and Taagepera 1979). Finally, we have imported the measurement of Executive constraints (Center for Systemic Peace 2020).

Last, our original dataset is composed of a third section dedicated to within region interdependence. The intra-region trade flows (exports plus imports) from the member state to the Mercosur countries was measured in percentage to the total of the state to all the world, that is, how large was the Mercosur share of the country's foreign trade (Comtrade 2020). It is important to highlight that as Mercosur enlarged and included more countries, we have also expanded the selection, to assess the actual size of within-Mercosur trade. We have also collected the amount of the Mercosur Structural Convergence Fund (FOCEM) for each member (FOCEM 2020).

Having several sources strengthens the dataset, insofar as it is not dependent of a unique knowledge, risking being biased.

#### 2.4.1. *Descriptive statistics*

Before running the analyses, we dedicate this section to visualise the data and contextualise the observations in a longitudinal perspective. Excluding missing values, the summary of the main variables is depicted in Table 2. In

addition, Table 3 indicates the correlation among selected variables. Although the figures indicate low linear correlation, the length of the process has the highest correlation (-0.295) with the president's party share of seats in the parliament, indicating that as the party grows, the time reduces. There is also a negative correlation with trade performed with Mercosur (-0.270), suggesting that more trade leads to shorter periods. Conversely, positive correlations are seen with the number of parties in the coalition (0.281) and the effective number of parties (0.261), presupposing that more parties would increase the duration.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

| Statistic           | N   | Mean        | St. Dev.    | Min        | Pctl(25)   | Pctl(75)      | Max           |
|---------------------|-----|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|---------------|---------------|
| timesubm            | 300 | 719.600     | 838.772     | 0          | 167.5      | 906.5         | 4,788         |
| sinceasu            | 300 | 4,637.123   | 2,576.123   | 0          | 2,621      | 5,939         | 10,481        |
| mean_gdp            | 289 | 578,908.800 | 786,893.800 | 15,444.470 | 29,019.130 | 1,384,414.000 | 2,390,544.000 |
| mean_gdpgrowth      | 289 | 3.336       | 3.084       | -10.894    | 1.478      | 5.529         | 10.579        |
| mean_gdppercapita   | 289 | 8,313.604   | 2,903.456   | 3,392.666  | 5,289.211  | 10,351.120    | 14,617.540    |
| mean_unemployment   | 257 | 8.715       | 3.185       | 4.850      | 6.393      | 9.465         | 19.700        |
| mean_inflation      | 231 | 30.889      | 148.267     | 2.592      | 5.514      | 9.921         | 1,356.425     |
| mean_prespartyshare | 297 | 37.791      | 15.512      | 2.500      | 20.408     | 50.505        | 67.606        |
| mean_prtyin         | 297 | 12.660      | 16.668      | 1.000      | 3.500      | 10.000        | 54.000        |
| mean_execrlc        | 297 | 2.040       | 0.953       | 1.000      | 1.000      | 3.000         | 3.000         |
| mean_sizecoal       | 297 | 55.426      | 12.550      | 33.852     | 47.732     | 56.971        | 94.949        |
| mean_numbpcoal      | 297 | 3.070       | 3.022       | 1.000      | 1.000      | 5.000         | 14.000        |
| mean_polyarchy      | 289 | 0.782       | 0.122       | 0.424      | 0.642      | 0.873         | 0.912         |
| mean_legpartycoh    | 289 | 0.318       | 1.166       | -1.461     | -0.920     | 0.991         | 2.153         |
| mean_enp            | 265 | 4.689       | 2.856       | 1.890      | 2.650      | 7.110         | 13.271        |
| mean_constraint     | 279 | 6.445       | 0.632       | 3.000      | 6.000      | 7.000         | 7.000         |
| mean_trade          | 287 | 36.776      | 15.415      | 8.650      | 17.793     | 47.070        | 73.640        |
| length              | 300 | 644.273     | 683.079     | 1          | 251        | 753.5         | 5,144         |

Source: Own work



Table 3. Correlation matrix

|                       |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |        |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| timesubm              | 1      | 0.108  | -0.172 | 0.108  | 0.099  | 0.210  | 0.100  | -0.077 | -0.116 | -0.016 | -0.138 | 0.198  | 0.010  |
| sinceasu              | 0.108  | 1      | -0.034 | -0.017 | 0.314  | 0.012  | -0.220 | -0.096 | 0.118  | 0.149  | 0.012  | 0.111  | 0.044  |
| mean_gdp              | -0.172 | -0.034 | 1      | -0.564 | 0.477  | -0.833 | -0.493 | 0.476  | 0.930  | 0.548  | 0.981  | -0.898 | 0.275  |
| mean_gdpgrowth        | 0.108  | -0.017 | -0.564 | 1      | -0.208 | 0.471  | 0.243  | -0.440 | -0.552 | -0.146 | -0.385 | 0.507  | -0.220 |
| mean_gdppercapita     | 0.099  | 0.314  | 0.477  | -0.208 | 1      | -0.269 | -0.736 | 0.314  | 0.422  | 0.912  | 0.432  | -0.629 | 0.194  |
| mean_prespartystshare | 0.210  | 0.012  | -0.833 | 0.471  | -0.269 | 1      | 0.465  | -0.169 | -0.852 | -0.415 | -0.849 | 0.733  | -0.295 |
| mean_prtyn            | 0.100  | -0.220 | -0.493 | 0.243  | 0.465  | 0.465  | 1      | -0.333 | -0.467 | -0.787 | -0.426 | 0.696  | -0.268 |
| mean_sizecoal         | -0.077 | -0.096 | 0.476  | -0.440 | -0.169 | -0.169 | -0.333 | 1      | 0.462  | 0.293  | 0.398  | -0.519 | 0.159  |
| mean_numbrpartcoal    | -0.116 | 0.118  | 0.930  | -0.552 | -0.852 | -0.852 | -0.467 | 0.462  | 1      | 0.441  | 0.943  | -0.788 | 0.281  |
| mean_polyarchy        | -0.016 | 0.149  | 0.548  | -0.146 | -0.415 | -0.415 | -0.787 | 0.293  | 0.441  | 1      | 0.492  | -0.681 | 0.177  |
| mean_enp              | -0.138 | 0.012  | 0.981  | -0.585 | -0.849 | -0.849 | -0.426 | 0.398  | 0.943  | 0.492  | 1      | -0.850 | 0.261  |
| mean_trade            | 0.198  | 0.111  | -0.898 | 0.507  | -0.629 | 0.733  | 0.696  | -0.519 | -0.788 | -0.681 | -0.850 | 1      | -0.270 |
| length                | 0.010  | 0.044  | 0.275  | -0.220 | 0.194  | -0.295 | -0.268 | 0.159  | 0.281  | 0.177  | 0.261  | -0.270 | 1      |

Source: Own work

First, regarding the dependent variable, which is continuous, the minimum value is 1 day, while the maximum is 5144 days (approximately 14 years), as see in Figure 5. The median is 459 days and the mean is 644 days. Moreover, the coefficient of variation is 106%. This measure indicates how much the data points are spread. As we can see in the other variables, the dataset is skewed – consequence of comparing 4 countries with different realities through a long time scope.

Bearing these figures in mind, we have decided to establish 500 days as the threshold to determine whether the parliamentary procedures were fast or not, which is a central concept for the QCA section. This measure places approximately 50% below the threshold and 50% above it.

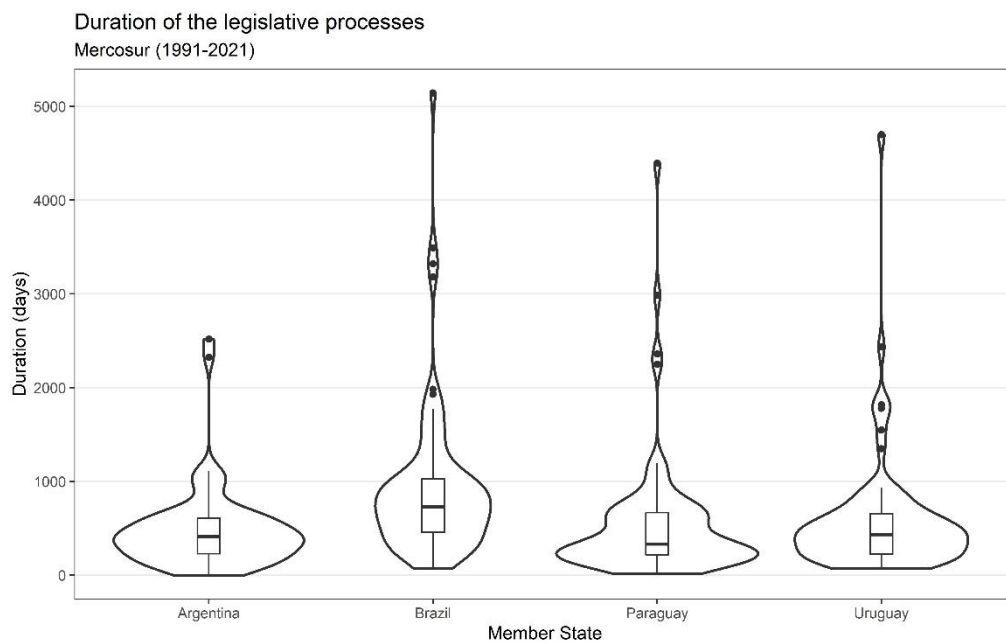


Figure 5. Distribution of the time for approving Mercosur treaties by countries  
Source: Own work based on Argentina (2020), Brazil (2020), Paraguay (2020b) and Uruguay (2020)

Furthermore, through Figure 6, we observe the age of the agreements, subtracting the date of foundation of Mercosur (26 March 1991) from their signatures. Therefore, the most recent case is 10481 days (28 years), while the oldest is 0 year, as it is the Treaty of Asuncion. The median of this variable is

4648 days and the mean is 4637 days. Given that the thesis covers three decades of Mercosur, this indicates that the average age of the treaties is 12 years. Therefore, this indicates a peak of treaties signed in 2003, year of the Buenos Aires Consensus (*Folha de S. Paulo* 2003), that fostered the regional integration and included more topics in the Mercosur agenda.

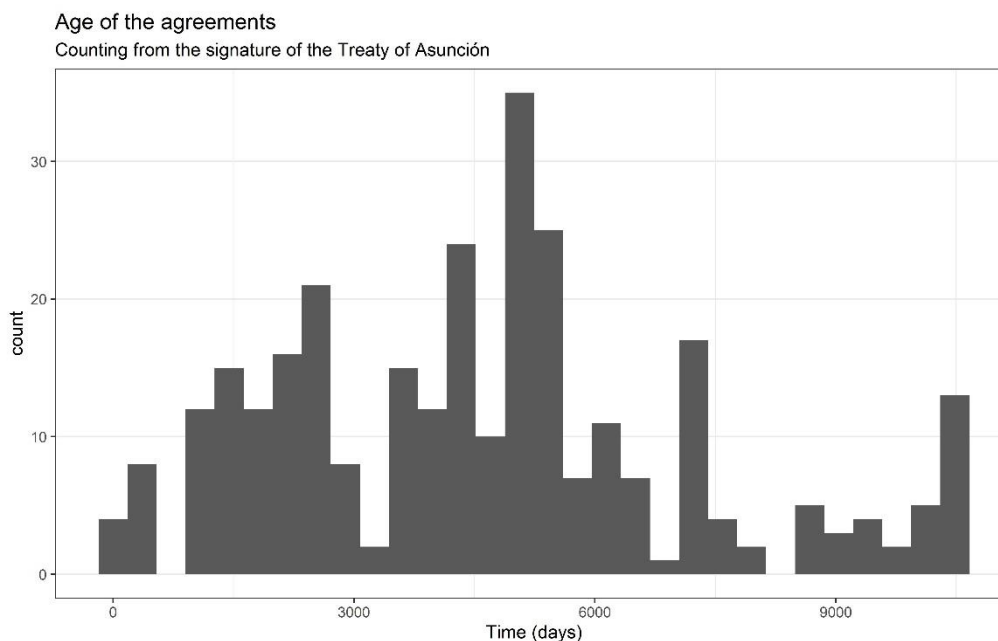


Figure 6. Distribution of the age of the Mercosur agreements  
Source: Own work based on Paraguay (2020a)

In addition to their signature, two other dates deserve attention: the entrance in the parliaments and the approval. They can be seen in Figure 7 and Figure 8 below. Because of the speed of the legislative deliberation, the peak of approvals occurs later than the peak of submissions. Yet, in both histograms, one can detect a significant legal production in the 2000s, period in which governments' discourses prioritised Latin American integration. From what we can see in the plot, this was reflected in translating the regionalism into laws.

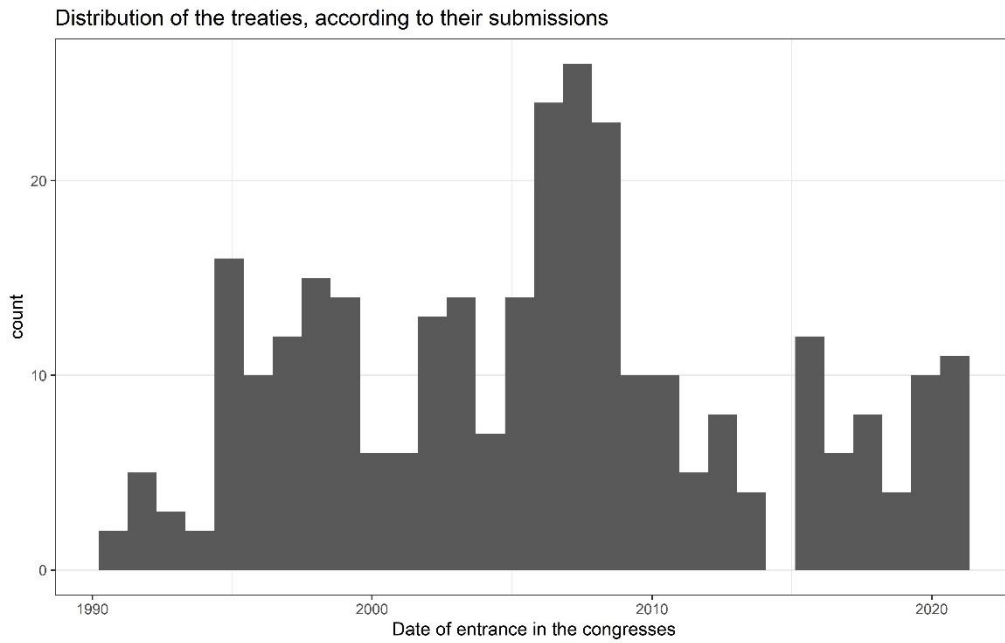


Figure 7. Year of submission of Mercosur agreements to the parliaments  
 Source: Own work based on Argentina (2020), Brazil (2020), Paraguay (2020b) and Uruguay (2020)

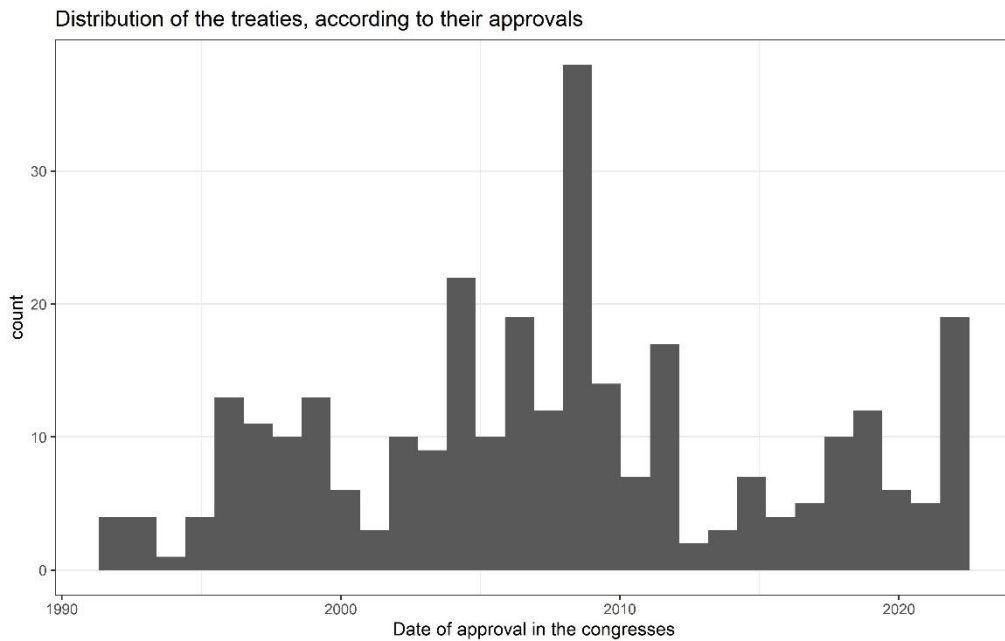


Figure 8. Year of approval of the Mercosur agreements  
 Source: Own work based on Argentina (2020), Brazil (2020), Paraguay (2020b) and Uruguay (2020)

Figure 9 shows when the Executive branches submitted the treaties to

Congress, i.e., how long they remained in the Executive since the day they were signed, preventing legislators from starting their work. Regarding the amplitude, while the maximum is 4788 days (13 years), the minimum is 0, that is, it was submitted on the same day of signature. The median is 401 and the mean is 719. The coefficient of variation is 116%.

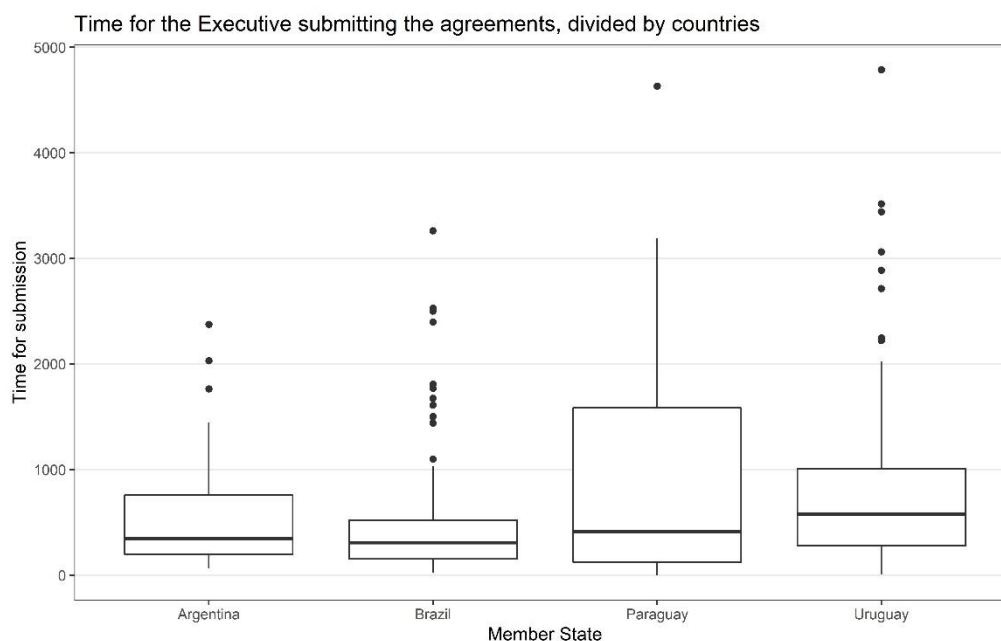


Figure 9. Time since the signature until parliaments receive the agreements  
 Source: Own work based on Argentina (2020), Brazil (2020), Paraguay (2020b) and Uruguay (2020)

In Figure 10, Mercosur agreements are distributed in 9 categories, that were manually coded by the author, following the title of each agreement. The number of categories was decided based on the rule of Sturges. In view of that, one may see which categories received most attention from the South American legislators. The three categories are justice, education and foreign trade. This allows us to examine if certain policy areas experience expedite processes while others demand more time. Again, a few considerations must be added to this. What is depicted here depends on what was actually negotiated by Mercosur and what was submitted to the congresses.

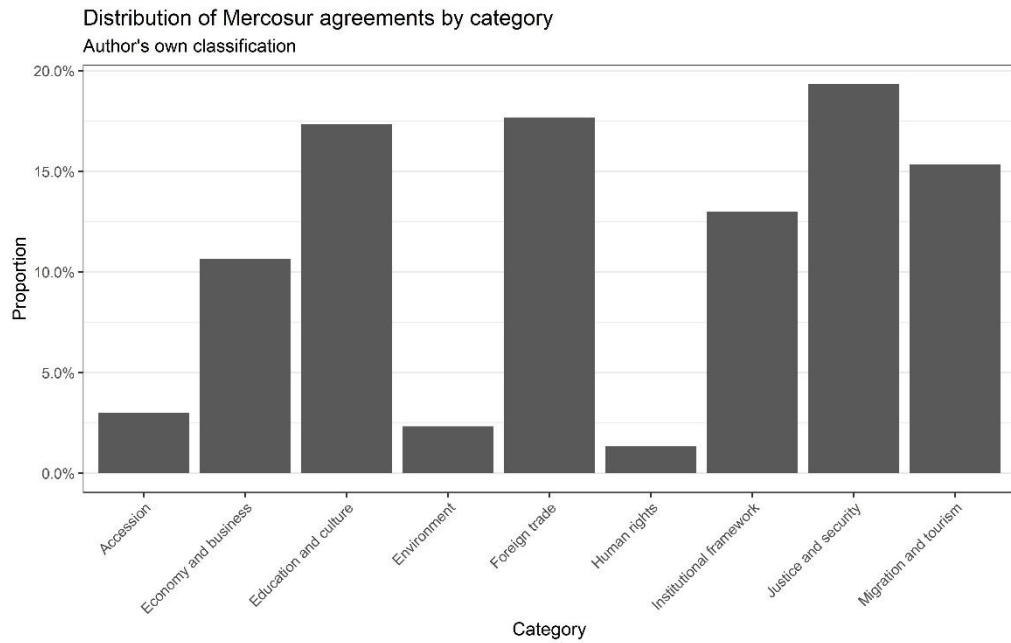


Figure 10. Agreements categories  
Source: Own work based on Paraguay (2020a)

In view of the above, Figure 11 summarises the average speed of approval, separating by categories. There is a wide variation from the averages of “Economy and business” and “Institutional framework”.

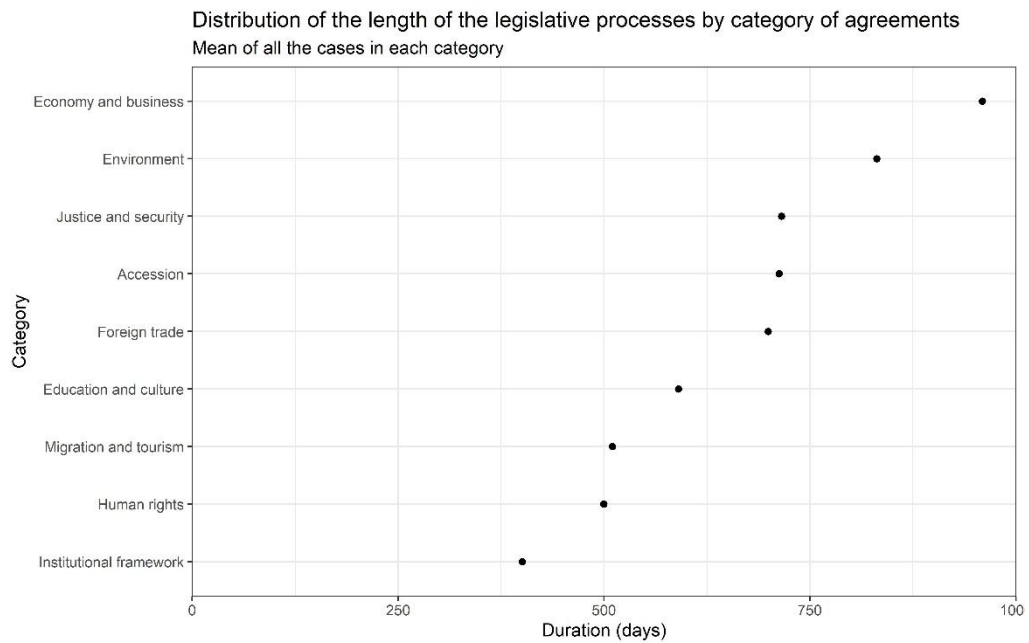


Figure 11. Average duration of the procedures divided by categories  
Source: Own work based on Paraguay (2020a)

As seen further below, coalitions are perceived as one of the main determinants in this analysis. Because of this, here we present the distribution of coalitions sizes (Figure 12), the effective number of parties (Figure 13), the number of parties in the coalition (Figure 14) and president's party share in the parliament (Figure 15), divided by countries and against the length of the processes. It is worth noting that each point represents the mean of the yearly values during the time in which the bill was in congress. For instance, if a bill stayed in congress from 2000 to 2002, we take the values for 2000, 2001 and 2002 and extract the mean. This decision allows detecting temporal variations.

The scatter plot depicting the size of coalitions demonstrates that three members have periods with coalitions larger and smaller than 50%, which is the threshold to indicate having majority and legislative support towards the Presidency. Uruguay, instead, presents only coalitions larger than 50%. Moreover, only Argentina and Uruguay have extreme cases around 90% of the legislators in favour of the government. Overall, it ranges from 33.85% to 94.95%, with the median at 52.53% and the mean at 55.43%. The coefficient of variation is 22%. These last figures show that most cases have a pro-government coalition.

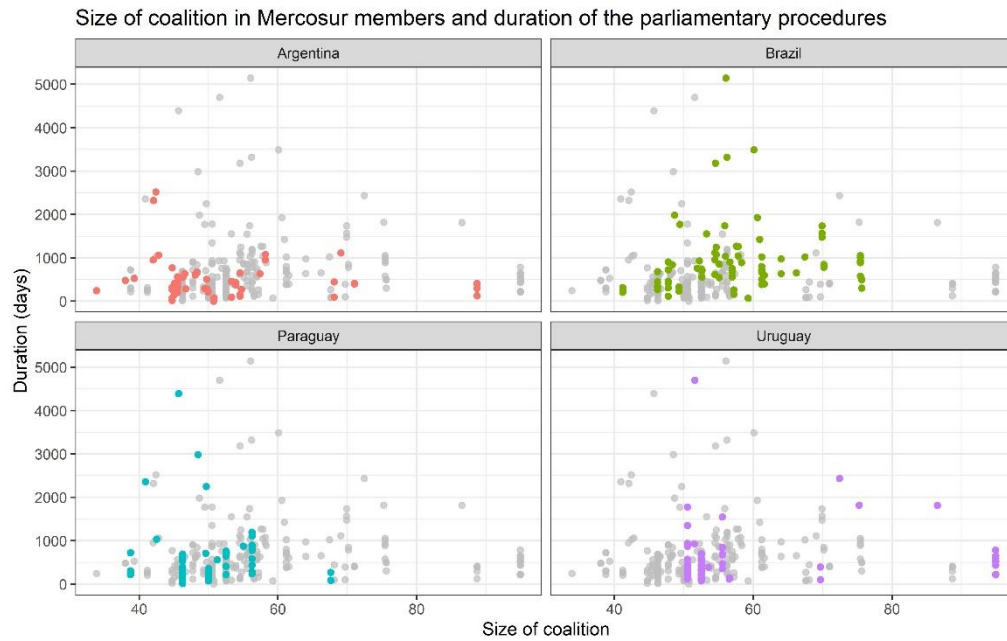


Figure 12. Average coalitions size in the parliaments  
 Source: Own work based on Cruz, Keefer and Scartascini (2021)

In this research, to bypass the partisan fragmentation issue, we employ the effective number of parties (ENP), which “is a measure that captures both the number and the size of parties in a country” (Clark, Golder, and Golder 2013). When observing the ENP, there is a striking difference between Brazil and the others. While Uruguay has a maximum of 3.33 parties, Paraguay 3.43 and Argentina of 5.81, Brazil ranges from 7.11 to 13.27. The coefficient of variation is 60%. This implies that the Brazilian party system is more fragmented than the neighbouring ones, assumption that is supported by the following statistics.



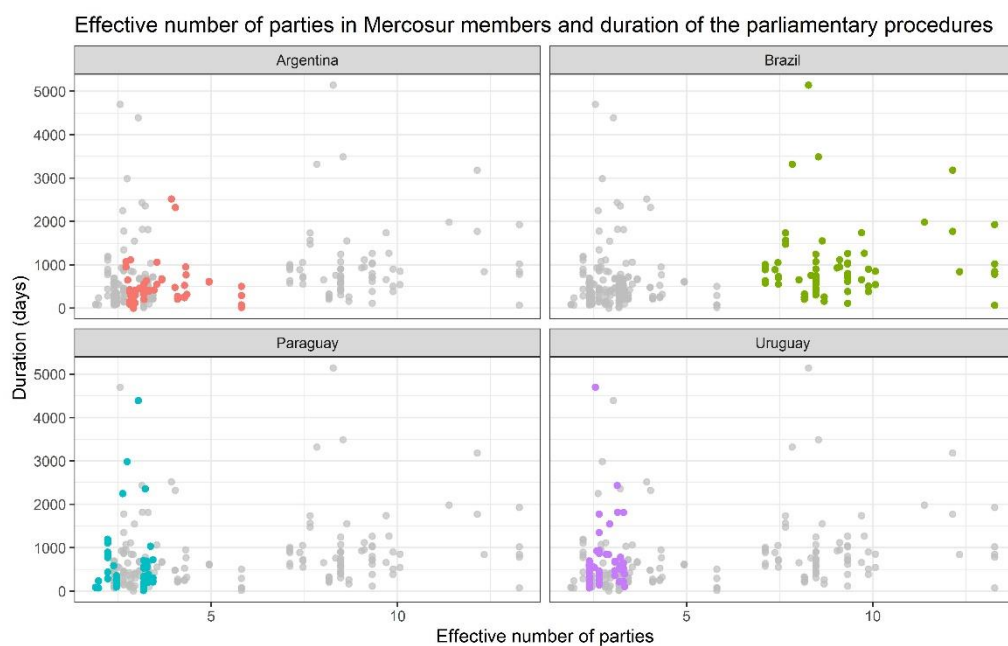


Figure 13. Average of the effective number of parliamentary parties  
Source: Own work based on QoG Institute (2020)

The next plot provides information on the number of political parties that composed the coalitions. Once more, Brazil tends to a multiparty system, reaching a maximum of 14 parties sponsoring the government. This contrasts with the other States that had 5 or few parties in the ruling alliance. Here, the median is 1 and the mean is 3.07. The coefficient of variation is 98%.

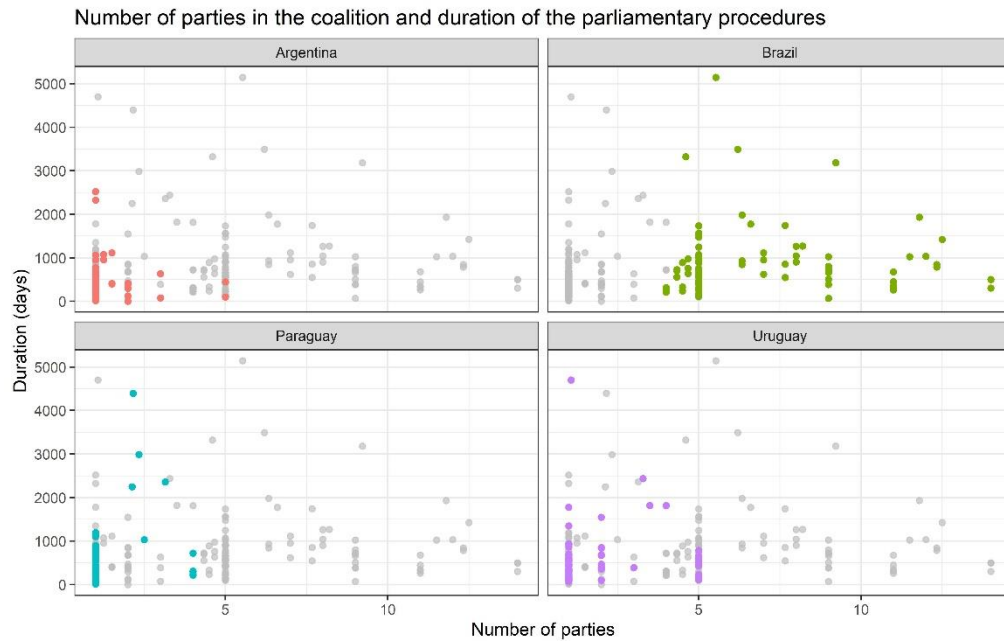


Figure 14. Average of the number of parties in the coalitions  
 Source: Own work based on Cruz, Keefer and Scartascini (2021)

Reinforcing what has been said, the plot below illustrates, in percentage, how many seats the president's party had in the parliament. In general, the values range from 2.5% to 67.61%, with a median of 45.91% and a mean of 37.79%. The coefficient of variation is 41%. About Brazil, the plots demonstrate that the president does not have the same control of the coalition and the Legislative branch as in the others.

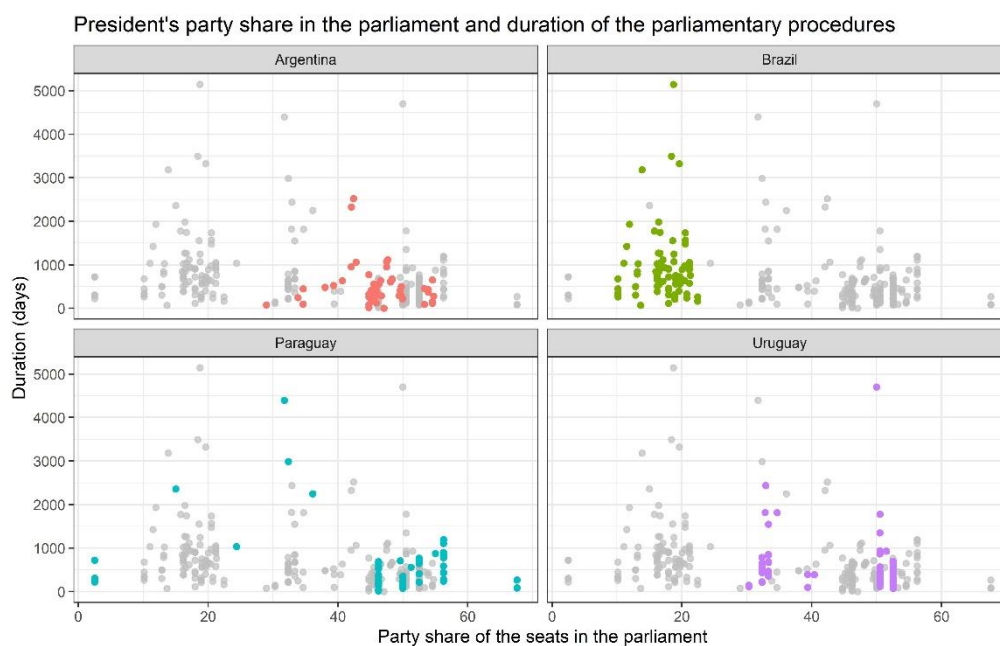


Figure 15. Average of the president's party share in the parliament  
 Source: Own work based on Cruz, Keefer and Scartascini (2021)

Moreover, regarding the ideology of the Head of State, we have extracted the categorisation from the Database of Political Institutions as well. They aggregate political ideologies in left, right and centre. Although it is not flawless, this index is used here because it has information for most of our cases. There were 140 cases with leftist presidents (coded as 3) and 125 observations with rightist ones (coded as 1).

The Figure 16 represents how much of the total of exports and imports were exchanged with Mercosur members. The intention here is to assess what is the economic importance of the bloc to the country deliberating on the agreements. In this topic, one can separate the two larger economies (Argentina and Brazil) from Paraguay and Uruguay. While the former group tends not to have the majority of their trade with Mercosur, the latter has Mercosur occupying a larger share in their balances. When observing all the cases, the minimum is 8.65% and the maximum is 73.64%. The median is 37.67% and the mean is 36.78%. The coefficient of variation is 41%.

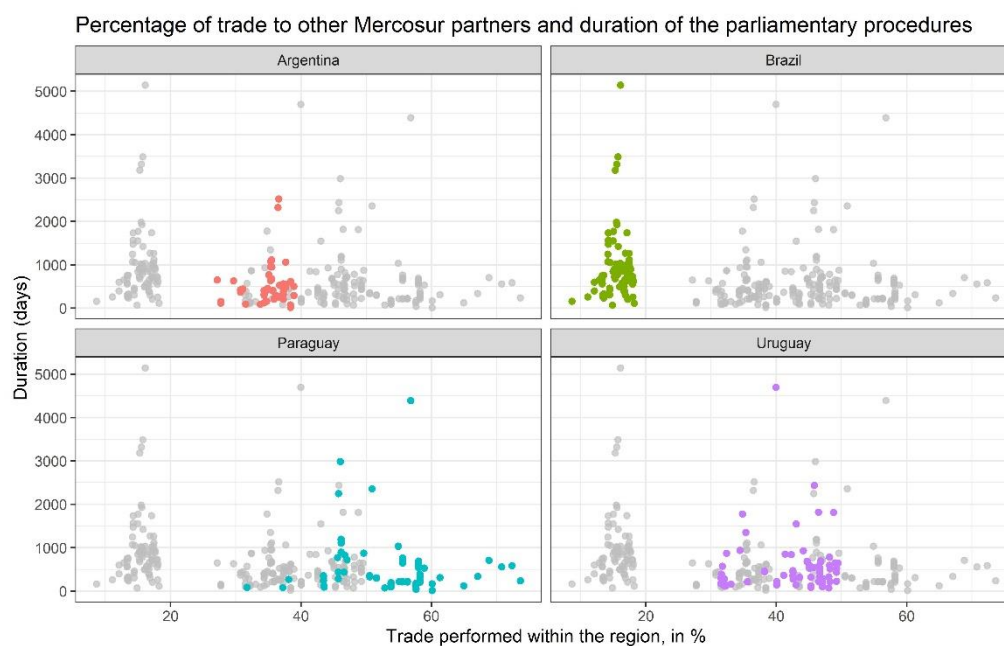


Figure 16. International trade within the region  
Source: Own work based on UN Comtrade (2020)

Concerning macroeconomic conditions, we have calculated the mean and the standard deviation of each of the seven indicators, dividing by country. If the result (mean during the years in which the bill was in parliament) was one standard deviation above or below the mean – according to the indicator – we have considered that the case faced an unstable economic situation. Using this measure, we have detected 99 observations with instability at least in one indicator, while 201 had a performance within the deviations.

## CHAPTER 3

### FINDINGS

Chapter Three is concerned with the implementation of the Survival Analysis and the Qualitative Comparative Analysis. The first approaching a broad understanding of Mercosur agreements and the second focused on the cases of enlargement of Venezuela and Bolivia. Thus, it analyses the results of these two processes, pointing out to variables that are analysed in more detail in the Process Tracing chapter.

#### *3.1. The effect of domestic variables in the duration of legislative procedures*

In the current section, a survival analysis is applied to our cases, looking for a general pattern that explains the legislative behaviour in our population.

First, regarding data manipulation, the variable about ideology of the government has been recoded as a categorical binary variable. Now, 1 indicates that a government is leftist, while 0 is rightist or centrist.

In Figure 17, we present a Kaplan-Meier curve, which estimates the survivor function and illustrates the distribution of our data. It plots how many observations were at risk in a certain moment, that is, how many agreements have not been concluded at that point. This non-parametric technique indicates that half of the observations are concluded by 500 days after entering in the legislature, while the other 50% are in a shallower line. The marks indicate censored observations.

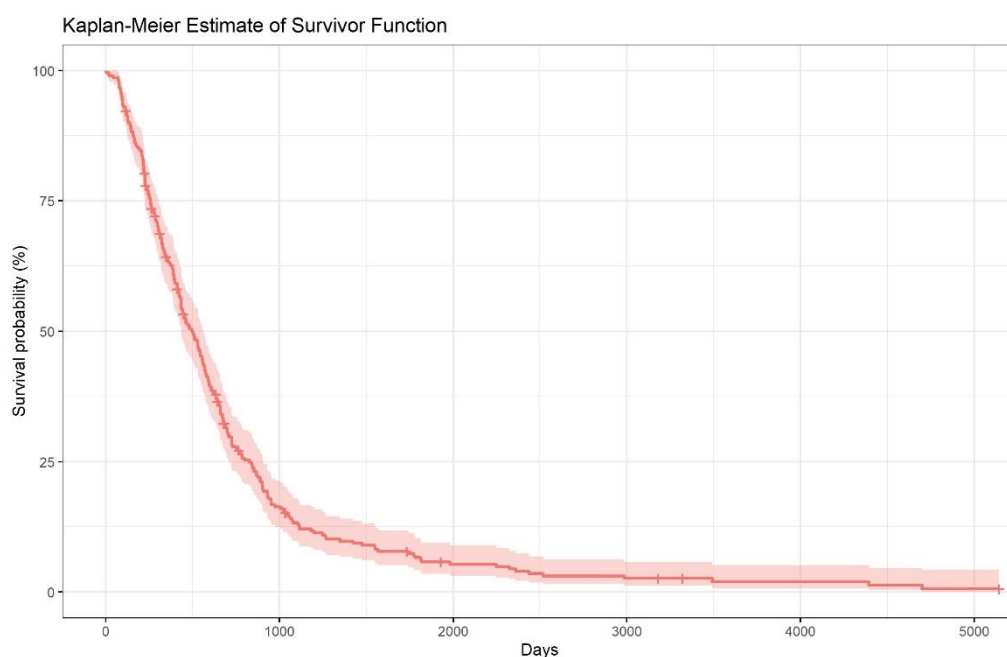


Figure 17. Kaplan-Meier estimator  
Source: Own work

In order to find a model to isolate the variables and infer what is more decisive, we have elaborated four models to test our hypotheses, controlling for other confounders. The first model includes 8 variables that directly respond to our hypotheses, which are: intra-Mercosur trade, in %; GDP; GDP growth; GDP per capita; coalition size (percentage of seats in the lower chamber); president's party share (percentage of seats in the lower chamber); number of parties in the coalition; and if the government is leftist or not. There are six additional variables that were included to assess if they influence the output, beyond the original independent variables.

Model 2 adds two control variables about political system characteristics, given the priority mentioned in the literature about parties. One of them indicates how long the party of the head of government has been in power. If it has won repeated elections, the party might have consolidated its foreign policy long-term goals and the Executive-Legislative relationship, because probably it has electoral and institutional support. The other variable is the effective number of parliamentary parties, which measures not only the fragmentation within the coalition, but in the legislature. Thus, it includes the opposition parties, indicating how much homogenous or heterogeneous the party system is and the

initial expectation is that fewer parties will fasten the approval, because there would be less diverging opinions and veto points, while more parties represent more bargaining interests.

The third model focus on evaluating timing, adding two measurements: how long the Executive took to refer the bill to the congress and the age of the treaty, counting the days since 26 March 1991. The first addresses if the agreement was “shelved”, waiting for a convenient moment to be deliberated by the parliamentarians. Waiting a longer period to start the legislative procedures might indicate that the subject was sensitive and susceptible to rejection and, when it was referred, the discussions emerged. The second measures if newer or older agreements have different considerations in the parliament. The intention is to analyse if the parliamentarians fastened the ratification in the beginning of the integration process, when everything related to Mercosur was new, or if the consolidation of the integration showed its benefits and they speeded up after some years.

Finally, the fourth model controls the category of each agreement. One of the indicators presents if the agreement is foundational or not, while the other variable indicates the thematic categories. The foundational ones are more important and, as such, are more susceptible to discussions and opposition.

The coefficients and the standard errors (in brackets) for all the models are reported in Table 4. Due to missing data, particularly for the most recent cases, three models have 285 observations, while one model has 261 data points. To interpret these findings, we should note that a positive coefficient indicates a higher risk of “death”, that is, a higher probability of being concluded and approved in the parliament. On the other hand, a negative sign suggests a lower risk of “death”, by having a longer process until is finished. Further below we see that positive coefficients increase the hazard rate, meaning that more units are likely to “die”. In other words, it impacts on speeding up the legislative process.

Table 4. Results for the Cox regression

| Results                             |                       |                          |                         |                       |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Dependent variable:</i>          |                       |                          |                         |                       |
| Duration                            |                       |                          |                         |                       |
| Cox                                 |                       |                          |                         |                       |
| <i>prop. hazards</i>                |                       |                          |                         |                       |
|                                     | (1)                   | (2)                      | (3)                     | (4)                   |
| Intra-Mercosur trade                | -0.021<br>(0.013)     | -0.045***<br>(0.015)     | -0.014<br>(0.012)       | -0.017<br>(0.013)     |
| GDP                                 | -0.00000<br>(0.00000) | -0.00000***<br>(0.00000) | -0.00000*<br>(0.00000)  | -0.00000<br>(0.00000) |
| GDP growth                          | 0.070**<br>(0.029)    | 0.049<br>(0.032)         | 0.050*<br>(0.028)       | 0.076**<br>(0.030)    |
| GDP per capita                      | -0.0001<br>(0.00005)  | -0.0001**<br>(0.00005)   | -0.0001<br>(0.00004)    | -0.0001<br>(0.00005)  |
| Size of the coalition               | 0.0005<br>(0.007)     | 0.011<br>(0.008)         | -0.019**<br>(0.009)     | -0.002<br>(0.008)     |
| President's party share             | 0.030***<br>(0.010)   | 0.034***<br>(0.010)      | 0.053***<br>(0.011)     | 0.024**<br>(0.011)    |
| Number of parties in the coalition  | 0.085<br>(0.086)      | 0.038<br>(0.097)         | 0.272***<br>(0.096)     | 0.055<br>(0.096)      |
| Left-wing (1=Yes)                   | 0.076<br>(0.270)      | 0.345<br>(0.288)         | 0.245<br>(0.267)        | -0.039<br>(0.285)     |
| Number of years of the ruling party |                       | 0.020***<br>(0.006)      |                         |                       |
| Effective number of parties         |                       | 0.263**<br>(0.132)       |                         |                       |
| Time for submission                 |                       |                          | -0.0002***<br>(0.0001)  |                       |
| Time since the Treaty of Asuncion   |                       |                          | -0.0001***<br>(0.00004) |                       |
| Foundational (1=Yes)                |                       |                          |                         | 0.243<br>(0.185)      |
| Category: Economy and Business      |                       |                          |                         | -0.644<br>(0.443)     |
| Category: Education and culture     |                       |                          |                         | -0.027<br>(0.428)     |
| Category: Environment               |                       |                          |                         | -0.113<br>(0.550)     |
| Category: Foreign trade             |                       |                          |                         | -0.191<br>(0.414)     |
| Category: Human rights              |                       |                          |                         | -0.072<br>(0.656)     |
| Category: Institutional framework   |                       |                          |                         | 0.310<br>(0.439)      |
| Category: Justice and security      |                       |                          |                         | -0.246<br>(0.424)     |
| Category: Migration and tourism     |                       |                          |                         | 0.126<br>(0.431)      |
| Observations                        | 285                   | 261                      | 285                     | 285                   |
| R <sup>2</sup>                      | 0.169                 | 0.237                    | 0.221                   | 0.214                 |
| Max. Possible R <sup>2</sup>        | 1.000                 | 1.000                    | 1.000                   | 1.000                 |
| Log Likelihood                      | -1,260.166            | -1,147.538               | -1,251.077              | -1,252.307            |
| Wald Test                           | 23.490*** (df = 8)    | 73.980*** (df = 10)      | 44.800*** (df = 10)     | 38.590*** (df = 17)   |
| LR Test                             | 52.857*** (df = 8)    | 70.489*** (df = 10)      | 71.035*** (df = 10)     | 68.575*** (df = 17)   |
| Score (Logrank) Test                | 54.601*** (df = 8)    | 77.509*** (df = 10)      | 74.956*** (df = 10)     | 69.615*** (df = 17)   |

Note: \* p<0.1; \*\* p<0.05; \*\*\* p<0.01

Source: Own work



In view of the above, almost every variable has the same sign across the different Cox models. The exceptions are the coalition size and the ideology of the government. For the coalition, it is positive; pointing to a faster approval in models 1 and 2, but its coefficient is negative in models 3 and 4. The ideology (left wing) is positive in models 1, 2 and 3, and negative in the fourth model.

To compare the four models and evaluate the most robust, we employ the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC). This measurement is calculated using the number of independent variables and the maximum likelihood of each model. The lower the AIC score (AICc), the better a model is. Thus, below they are distributed according to this score. The results also include the number of parameters (K), the difference between each model and the one positioned first (Delta\_AICc), the proportional predictive power hold by the model (AICcWt), the sum of AICc weights (Cum.Wt) and the log-likelihood (LL).

From Table 5, we can see that Model 2 best fits our data, which indicates that it has the better explanation for the variation in the observations. It has the lowest AIC score, carries 100% of the total explanation found in this set of models and has a large distance from the following model (cox3). As shown in Table 4, the test statistics are significant and allows us to reject the null hypothesis, concluding that at least one of the explanatory variables is not 0 and contributes to explain the duration of the event.

Table 5. Akaike Information Criterion

| <i>Modnames</i> | <i>K</i> | <i>AICc</i> | <i>Delta_AICc</i> | <i>ModelLik</i> | <i>AICcWt</i> | <i>LL</i> | <i>Cum.Wt</i> |
|-----------------|----------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|
| cox2            | 10       | 2315.96     | 0.00              | 1.00            | 1.00          | -1147.54  | 1             |
| cox3            | 10       | 2522.96     | 207.00            | 0.00            | 0.00          | -1251.08  | 1             |
| cox1            | 8        | 2536.85     | 220.90            | 0.00            | 0.00          | -1260.17  | 1             |
| cox4            | 17       | 2540.91     | 224.95            | 0.00            | 0.00          | -1252.31  | 1             |

Source: Own work

Given this, as seen in Table 6, Model 2 has six variables with significant p-

values, being president's party share the most significant in this model. Therefore, GDP growth, coalition size, number of parties in the coalition and ideology of the government do not find statistical significance in the selected model.

In Survival Analysis, we shall read the exponentiated coefficients, which are known as hazard ratios, because they represent “the multiplicative effects on the hazard” (Mills 2012, 30). There is no intercept term, because it is incorporated in the baseline hazard. Thus, on the one hand, a value above 1 indicates a higher chance of approval, i.e., a faster process. On the other hand, a value below 1 indicates a lower probability of approval, lengthening the legislative procedure. Finally, a value of 1 suggests that there is no relationship between the hazard and the variable. If, considering the confidence interval, the coefficient includes 1, the significance is not robust, because there is margin to produce the opposite effect. Mills clarifies that:

A hazard rate at a given time interval is the probability of the given event (e.g. status=1) occurring in that time period, given that the subject survived through all of the prior time intervals. A hazard ratio is the estimate of the ratio of the hazard rate in one group (e.g. sex=male) to the hazard rate in another group (e.g. sex=female). To interpret the hazard ratio for a continuous covariate, such as age, the hazard ratio is the ratio of the hazard rate given a one unit increase in the covariate to the hazard rate without such an increase. (Mills 2012, 12)

In other words, it gives the conditional probability that a case will experience the event, based on that it has not happened at that time. Moreover, the coefficients increase or decrease this probability.

Table 6. Results for the Cox regression – Model 2

**Results - Model 2**

| <i>Predictors</i>         | <b>Surv(length, cause)</b> |                   |             |              |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|
|                           | <i>Estimates</i>           | <i>std. Error</i> | <i>CI</i>   | <i>p</i>     |
| factor(mean_execrlc)1     | 1.41                       | 0.41              | 0.80 – 2.48 | 0.232        |
| mean_enp                  | 1.30                       | 0.17              | 1.00 – 1.69 | <b>0.047</b> |
| mean_gdp                  | 1.00                       | 0.00              | 1.00 – 1.00 | <b>0.005</b> |
| mean_gdpgrowth            | 1.05                       | 0.03              | 0.99 – 1.12 | 0.127        |
| mean_gdppercapita         | 1.00                       | 0.00              | 1.00 – 1.00 | <b>0.025</b> |
| mean_numbpactcoal         | 1.04                       | 0.10              | 0.86 – 1.26 | 0.694        |
| mean_prespartyshare       | 1.03                       | 0.01              | 1.01 – 1.06 | <b>0.001</b> |
| mean_prtyin               | 1.02                       | 0.01              | 1.01 – 1.03 | <b>0.001</b> |
| mean_sizecoal             | 1.01                       | 0.01              | 1.00 – 1.03 | 0.174        |
| mean_trade                | 0.96                       | 0.01              | 0.93 – 0.99 | <b>0.003</b> |
| Observations              | 261                        |                   |             |              |
| R <sup>2</sup> Nagelkerke | 0.237                      |                   |             |              |
| AIC                       | 2315.075                   |                   |             |              |
| log-Likelihood            | -1147.538                  |                   |             |              |

Source: Own work

The Nagelkerke R<sup>2</sup> indicates that 23.7% of the variance in the dependent variable are explained by the set of independent variables in this model. This measure of explanatory power suggests that, although limited to do forecasting, the model is sufficient to understand better the phenomena. The indicator is low, confirming that the data is noisily distributed and has a high-variability, but the p-value of the coefficients indicate that there is a significant trend predicted by the model. Thus, outliers that are scattered throughout the dataset can influence the results. The amount of unexplainable variation is considered below, in the qualitative section of the thesis.

Bearing this in mind, analysing every result we can observe that every 1% of more trade implicates in a 4% decrease in the chance of finishing the

legislative procedures. In other words, the more within-Mercosur trade a country has, it suggests the length of time it takes to get legislation adopted increases.

Looking together to the three economic indicators (GDP, GDP growth and GDP per capita), because the hypothesis mentions economic stability in general. While 1% more in GDP growth suggests 5% more chance of being approved, 1 dollar less in GDP per capita reduces 1% the hazard and GDP is fixed at 1. The hazard ratios are very close to 1 and the confidence intervals allow them to go below and above this threshold, which reduces the significance of the findings. In view of that, these economic indexes do not have major impact on the legislative velocity.

The coalition size also falls in the interval around 1, but the estimator indicates a 1% probability of accelerating the process every 1% more in the coalition size. In regard of the president's party, every 1% in the share of parliamentary seats it is 3.4% more probable to conclude the process. That is to say, when a single party has a larger control of the coalition, it fastens the procedures, even when considering the confidence interval between 1.0145 and 1.0554, which gives very strong evidence of its impact.

Concerning the number of parties that compose the coalition, the estimator points out that every additional party in the coalition, there are 3% more chance of accelerating the process. Despite that, there is a wide interval that includes values below 1. It is important to notice that it has the lowest p-value in the model, providing almost no evidence.

The ideology of the president's party has one of the larger impacts on this model, but with little evidence of its significance. If leftist, there is a 41% higher risk of finishing the process. Nonetheless, the confidence interval adverts for a wider variation, from 0.8 to 2.4.

About the control variables, there is strong evidence that every additional year that the incumbent party has been in power gives 2% more risk of shortening it. Finally, we find moderate evidence that each effective party in the system gives 30% chance of reducing the procedures, that is, fragmented systems accelerate the ratification of Mercosur agreements.

Figure 18 provides the hazard rate, with confidence interval, produced by

the selected model. There is a steep curve in the first two years, which includes 72% of the cases, followed by a shallower line. This indicates that, according to the predicted values, most agreements should be approved in a relatively short period, while a minority is expected to take longer.

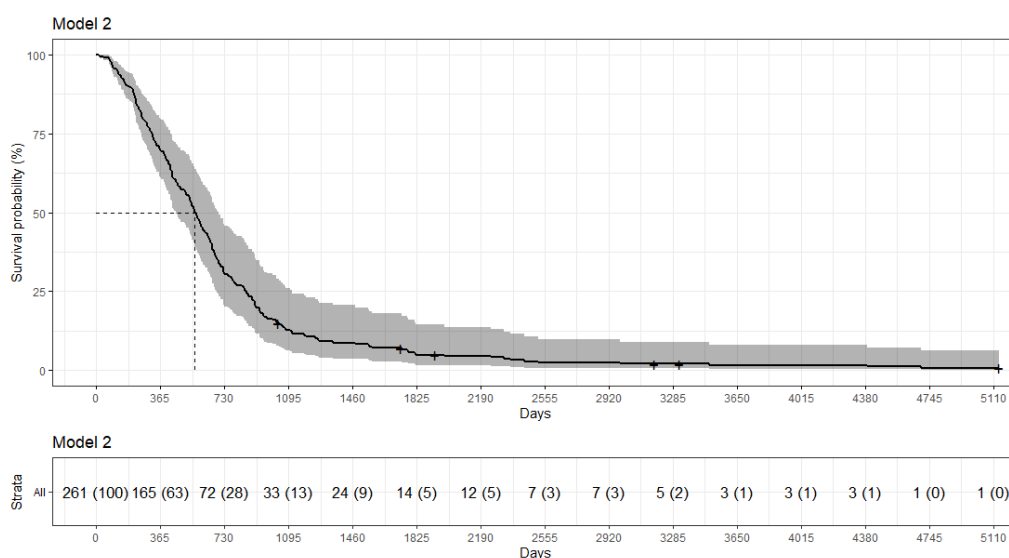


Figure 18. Model 2  
Source: Own work

As shown in Figure 19, there are two variables (trade and GDP per capita) that prolong the legislative procedures, producing a longer approval. The first is significant at the 0.01 level and the second at the 0.05 level. Contrary to the expectations, when a member state has deeper trade relationships with the bloc, there is a reduction in the chance of ratifying international agreements. Thus, although the economic interaction is high, it suggests that there are fewer incentives to accelerate the procedures. This finding contradicts our expectation in H3a that more trade with Mercosur partners would speed up the parliamentarians' work.

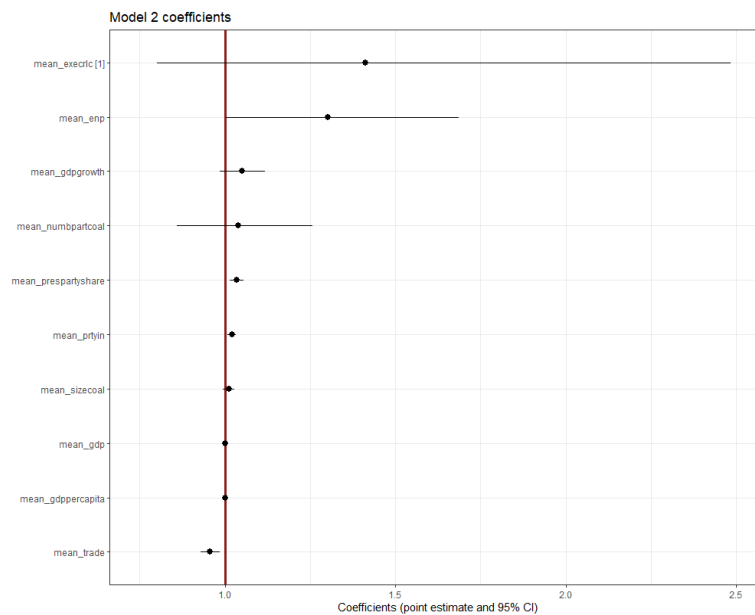


Figure 19. Model 2 coefficients  
Source: Own work

There are seven variables that suggest shortening the process: belonging to a left-wing party; effective number of parties; GDP growth; number of parties in the coalition; president's party share of seats; time the incumbent party has been in power; and coalition size. We should have in mind that ideology, GDP growth, number of parties in the coalition and coalition size were estimated with a confidence interval that includes 1, reducing the reliability of these coefficients.

After testing in the regression analysis, we proceeded to a closer inspection of variables of interest, including visual comparison of data distribution. For the plots below, the continuous variables were adjusted to a categorical format and the N here is the same used for the Kaplan-Meier estimator.

Regarding H3b, the economic situation was measured by three indicators (GDP, GDP growth and GDP per capita). As mentioned above, the results are uncertain and, in this sample, they do not have great impact on the hazard rate. While GDP growth suggests that better economic contexts reduce the durations, GDP per capita indicates the opposite. Therefore, a more detailed analysis is needed, with a special focus on each productive sector and the impact on the subnational level (Araujo 2018).

According to these data, we found six variables increasing the chance of

been concluded in the parliament. President's party share of seats is the most significant in the model, while how long the president's party has been in office and the effective number of parliamentary parties are significant at 0.01 and 0.05 levels, respectively. The coalition size, the number of parties in the coalition and the ideology of the government do not show statistical significance. Therefore, from the variables regarding the incumbent party we can infer that when a party is consolidated in power, it prioritises a fast approval of Mercosur agreements, as seen in Figure 20 and Figure 21. This finding confirms what was hypothesised in H1b, as literature pointed out that when a single party has larger control of the parliament, it would allow expediting the approvals, without major oppositions.

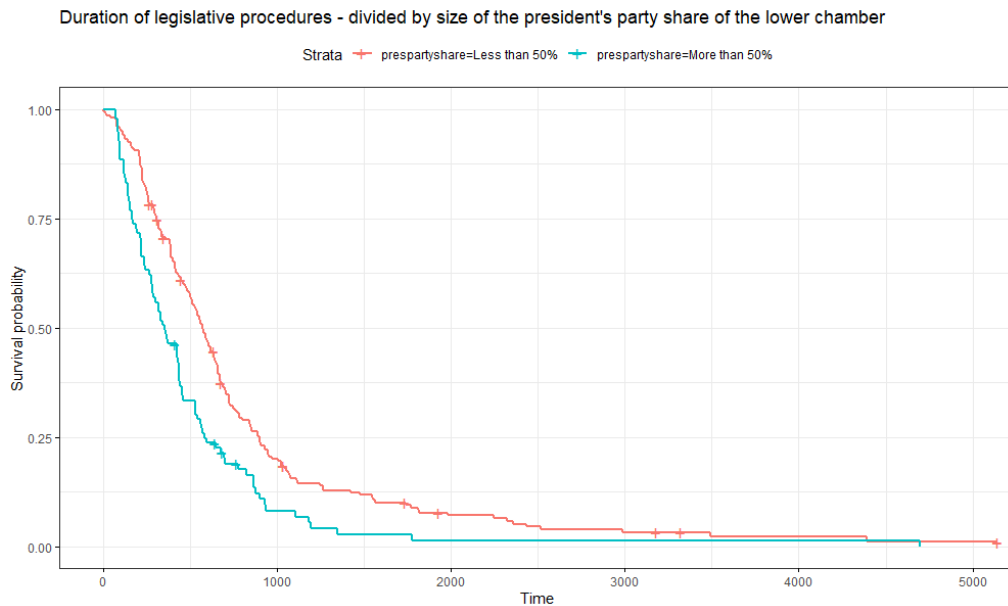


Figure 20. Survival probability and president's party share  
Source: Own work

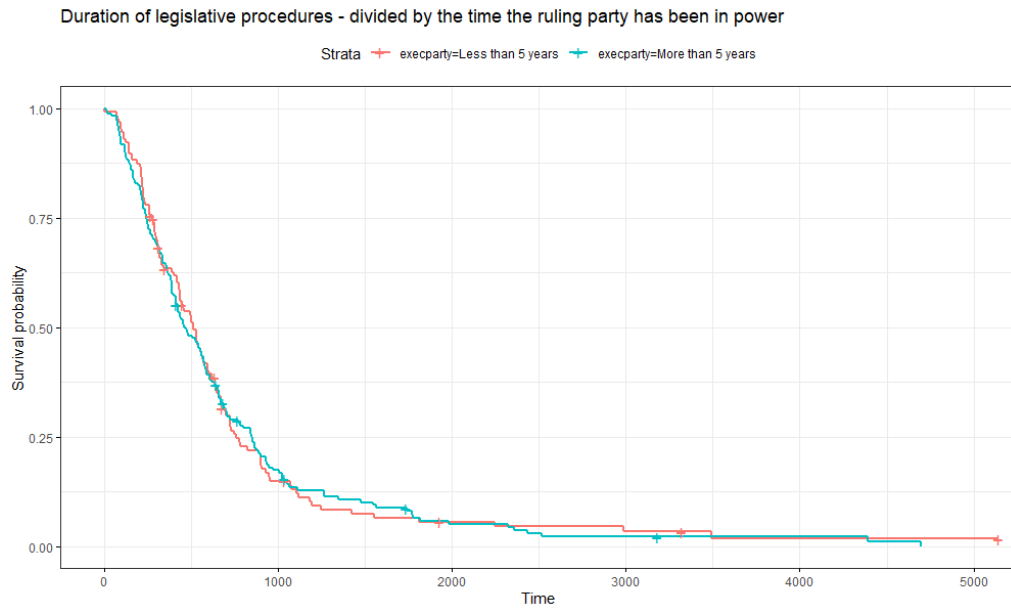


Figure 21. Survival probability and how long the incumbent party has been in office  
Source: Own work

Regarding the coalition size, Figure 22 shows mixed effects. The exponentiated coefficient falls around 1 and, for this reason, it is difficult to establish a conclusion based on this piece of information. Nevertheless, although with less robust results, it also indicates that a larger coalition reduces the periods in parliament, supporting the expectation of H1a.



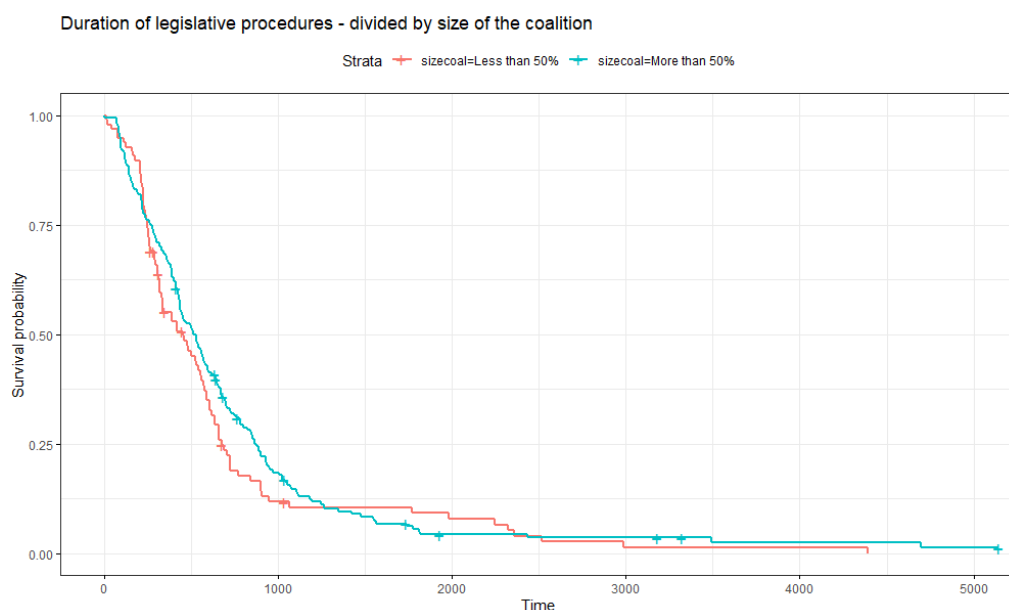


Figure 22. Survival probability and the coalition size  
Source: Own work

The finding from effective number of parties contradicts the idea that a more fragmented system results in longer procedures. A similar finding is seen from the number of parties in the coalition, demonstrating that heterogeneous coalitions shorten the ratification. However, it presents the highest p-value in the model, reducing its significance. This goes against the statement in H1c, when we suggested that fewer parties would shorten the duration.

The ideology of the government, if leftist or not, supports H2, because it was theorised that left-wing administrations would favour the regional integration by approving the bills. The findings detect that when the government belongs to a left-wing party, there is a higher chance of having a fast outcome.

To conclude this section, we plot the survival curves distributed by the four member states of Mercosur, to investigate visually possible clusters. What stands out from Figure 23 is that Brazilian observations have a longer duration. From the plot, it can be seen that, roughly speaking, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay have close curves.

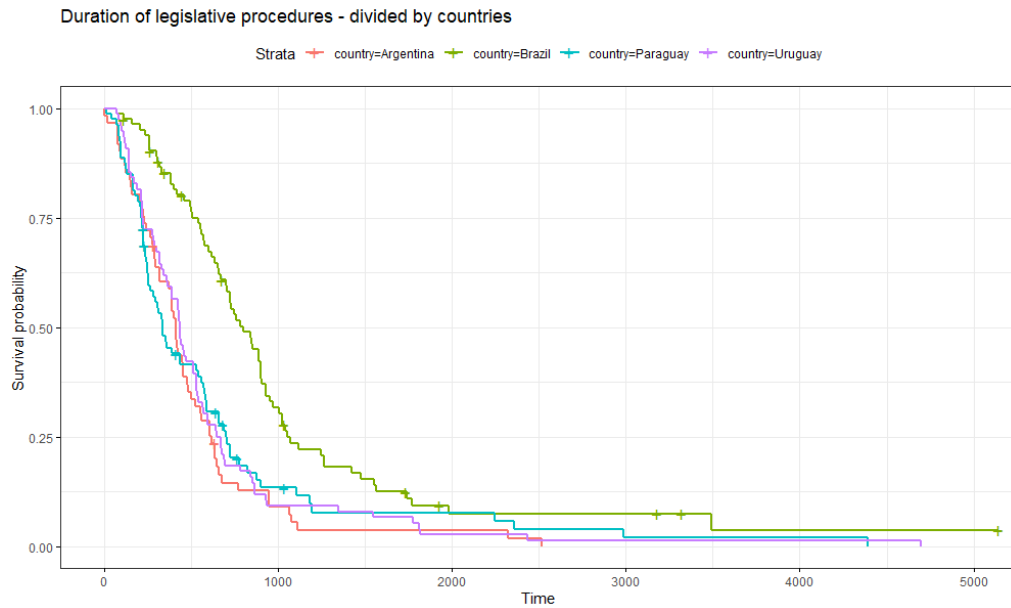


Figure 23. Survival probability and Mercosur member states  
Source: Own work

Regarding the reliability of the model, the dataset size poses limitations and we tested every model for the proportional hazards assumption of a Cox regression, and the test suggested that this assumption has been violated, as shown in Table 7. That is to say, the effect of each covariate is not constant over time, but fluctuates at different periods. If we rely on the p-values for this specification test, the model is not robust. It is expected that the p-values would be higher than 0.05 to indicate proportionality.

Table 7. KM test for proportionality

|                      | chisq    | df | p      |
|----------------------|----------|----|--------|
| mean_trade           | 3.98E+00 | 1  | 0.046  |
| mean_gdp             | 8.30E+00 | 1  | 0.004  |
| mean_gdpgrowth       | 9.09E-05 | 1  | 0.9924 |
| mean_gdppercapita    | 1.33E+00 | 1  | 0.2481 |
| mean_sizecoal        | 3.11E+00 | 1  | 0.0777 |
| mean_prespartyshare  | 4.64E+00 | 1  | 0.0312 |
| mean_numbpactcoal    | 7.70E+00 | 1  | 0.0055 |
| factor(mean_execrlc) | 9.04E-01 | 1  | 0.3417 |
| mean_prtyin          | 6.24E-01 | 1  | 0.4296 |
| mean_enp             | 6.82E+00 | 1  | 0.009  |
| GLOBAL               | 1.89E+01 | 10 | 0.0421 |

Source: Own work

In view of that, there is uncertainty about biased results, due to the violation of the proportional hazards assumption (Box-Steffensmeier and Zorn 2001). The efforts to transform the model were not satisfactory and the decision was to maintain the current model, because it fits the data better, when comparing predicted and observed values, as shown in Figure 24. The orange line depicts the Cox regression and the blue line shows the Kaplan-Meier estimator, which works to show the data distribution. In addition to that, the Cox model is the simplest in Survival Analysis. The principle of parsimony is followed before incorporating complexity to the model.

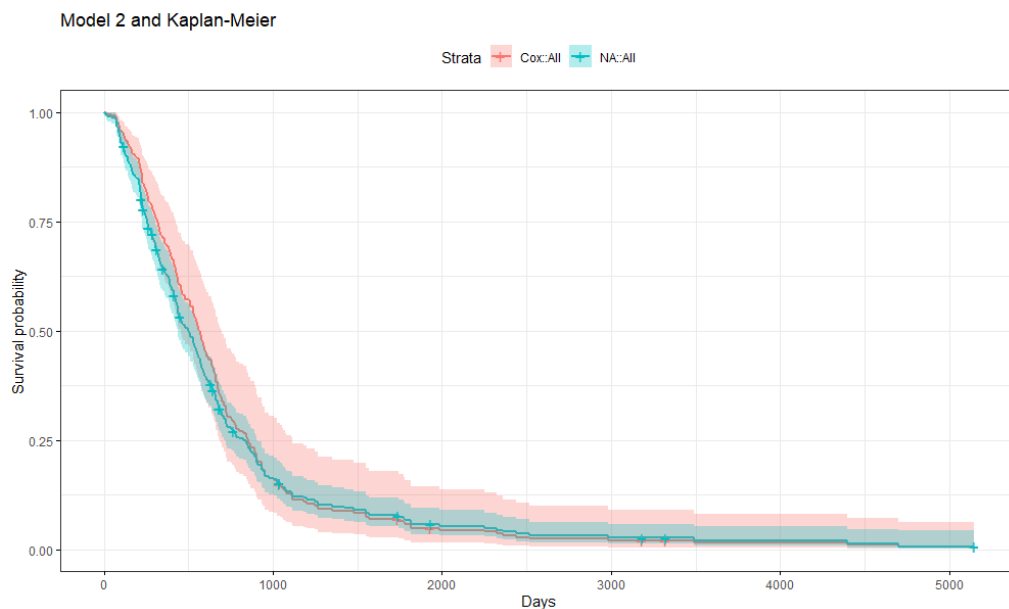


Figure 24. Survival curves for Model 2 and Kaplan-Meier estimator  
Source: Own work

Thus, the analysis has room for improvement with more flexible models, which may give different results, but the Cox regression offered satisfactory results to respond to this research aims.

### *3.2. Conditions for approving the enlargement of Mercosur*

In this section, we run the Qualitative Comparative Analysis, demonstrating the decisions in the process and the findings that contribute to the dissertation (Wagemann and Schneider 2015; Medina et al. 2017). This research was designed so the QCA can be an intermediate technique between the Survival Analysis and the Process Tracing. Therefore, this section reduces the number of cases to 9, focusing on a specific category of agreements, but still covering the four member states, from 2006 to 2021.

We have selected the protocols of accession to apply the QCA, understanding which conditions were present in the approval of these agreements that allowed the enlargement of the bloc. The emphasis is on what produces a fast decision in the congress, understanding fast as less than 500 days. This threshold was established based on the distribution of all the cases, as both the mean and the median are around this value. In the 9 cases, there is a wide variation regarding the duration of the legislative procedures, ranging from 20 to 2359 days. From this sample, 8 were approved and 1 is a censored observation. The deliberation of the Protocol of Accession of Bolivia in the Brazilian congress has not been concluded in 2021.

In addition to that, these observations are important as they refer to a special class of agreements. That is, although there are differences from the other treaties, they are an interesting object in itself. With two episodes of enlargement in 30 years of history, these are rare events and constitute watersheds, in the sense that ratifying a new member promotes major changes in the organisation. A full member has the same rights as the previously existing members and may influence every other decision in the bloc. Due to this political and public relevance, the decision is to investigate these cases of incorporation of new members.

The enlargement of Mercosur has been the object of several studies (Coelho 2015; Sloboda 2015; Insaurralde 2014; Feliu and Amorim 2011; Souza and Bahia 2011; Santos and Vilarouca 2011; Attanasio 2016; Galarza 2013; Jorge de Oliveira 2013; Claros 2016). However, in most of them, the relationships of

causality are somehow fragile, because were case studies tracking the specificities of the processes, without generalising to a broader scenario.

Hence, this research attempts to refine the analysis, providing a more consistent methodological solution by mixing methods. In the previous section, all the legislative approvals have been analysed, in order to find a pattern applicable in heterogeneous scenarios. Through both regression and QCA models, the most relevant variables have been systematically identified.

The six conditions (M, P, N, R, T and E) chosen for this analysis derive from the hypotheses tested in this thesis, acknowledging the QCA limitations for hypothesis testing. M means a majoritarian government. P represents the president's party share of seats in the legislature, considering that a majoritarian president's party would produce faster outcomes. N represents the number of parties in the coalition, assuming that fewer parties should produce the outcome. R indicates if the head of government belongs to a right-wing party. T portrays if the trade with Mercosur partners is stable, according to the historical average, as a positive trade relation should be connected with a fast decision. Finally, E is about the economic conditions, with the expectation that stable or positive changes would fasten the approvals.

Having more conditions would, on one hand, increase complexity and this could lead to more empirical challenges in calculating set relations and dealing with logical remainders. Au contraire, having few conditions could lead to issues of omitted variable bias. In view of that, this research design fits the common standards of QCA (Rihoux et al. 2013).

Throughout the data analysis, we present several plots and tables, aiming to offer better visualisation of the patterns identified here. In QCA, the visual tools have been receiving growing attention to improve the communication of the findings (Rubinson 2019). As explained previously, the data were measured with different techniques and several sources and, finally, calibrated to this research (de Block and Vis 2019). We must add that there are no cases with fuzzy-set scores of 0.5, meaning that we were able to attribute a set membership to every case.

The outcome is FAST and it was created from the variable "length" that

counts how many days each legislature took to approve the treaty since it was submitted. The three qualitative anchors were: 1825 days as 0; 500 days as 0.5; and 0 days as 1. Given that, 500 days is the chosen threshold to define if a process was fast or slow. Below, Figure 25 shows the calibration correspondence.

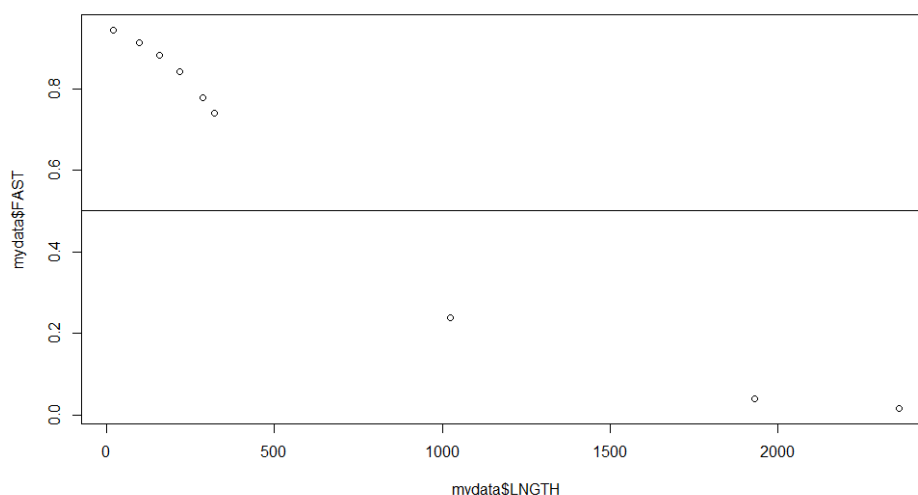


Figure 25. Calibration of LENGTH in FAST  
Source: Own work

Regarding the conditions, M was calibrated having 49.99% as the 0.5 threshold, while 0% and 100% as 0 and 1, respectively. This condition indicates if the president's party had control of the congress or not. P indicates the president's party share and it was calibrated with the same anchors. The number of parties was calibrated into N, having 3 parties as 0, 2 parties as 0.5 and 1 party as 1. The ideology of the president is represented in R, indicating if the administration was rightist or not. Therefore, 3 became 0, 2.1 was turned into 0.5, while 1 remained as 1. Furthermore, T shows if there was a positive trade relationship with Mercosur partners. If it was one standard deviation below the historical average, it was calibrated as 0. The economic scenario in E follows the same criteria, having 0 if it was a period of instability and 1 if it followed the historical pattern.

In Figure 26, Figure 27, Figure 28, Figure 29, Figure 30 and Figure 31 we can observe the distribution of the cases versus the outcome. In a first analysis,

44.44% has both M and FAST, 44.44% has P and FAST, 66.67% has N and FAST, 11.11% has R and FAST, 55.56% has T and FAST and 44.44% has E and FAST.

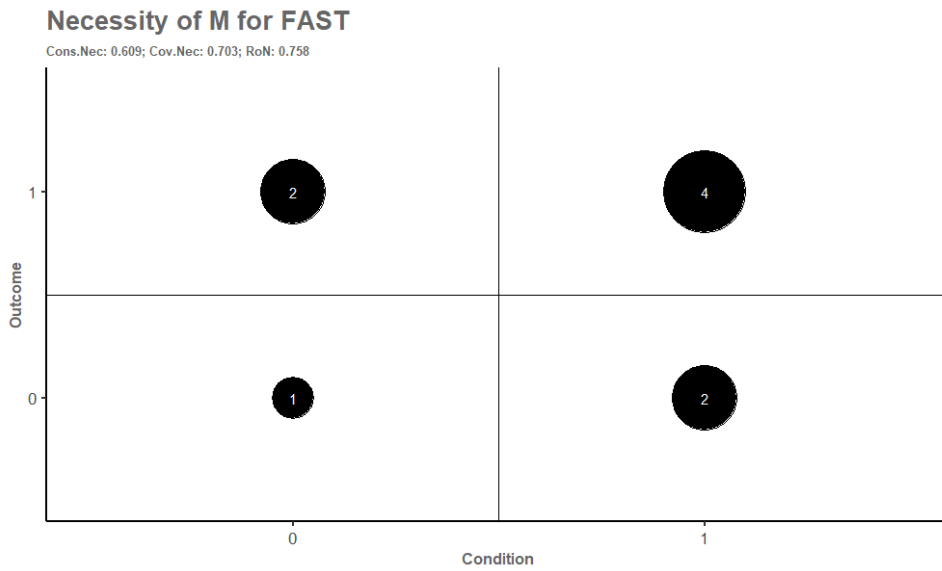


Figure 26. Necessity of M for FAST  
 Source: Own work

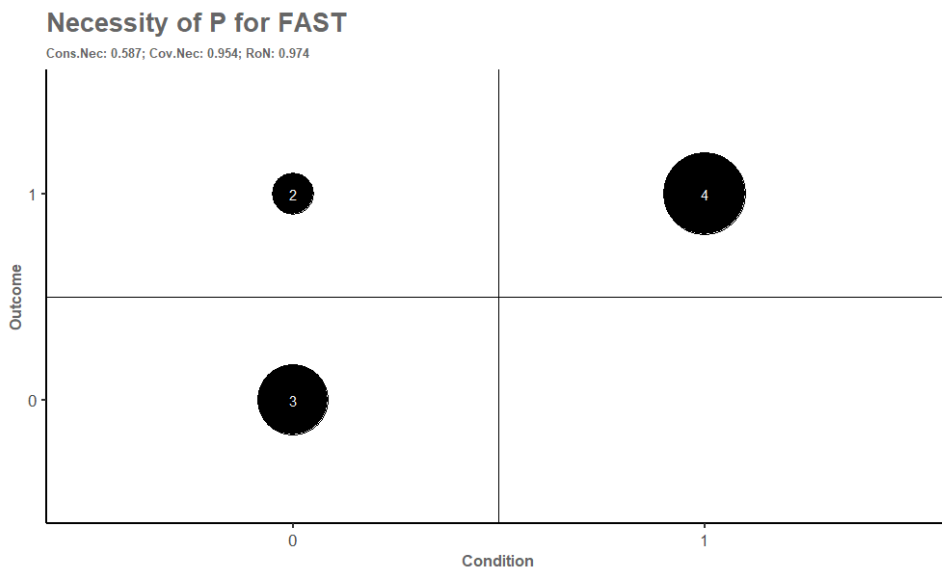


Figure 27. Necessity of P for FAST  
 Source: Own work

### Necessity of N for FAST

Cons.Nec: 0.948; Cov.Nec: 0.892; RoN: 0.841

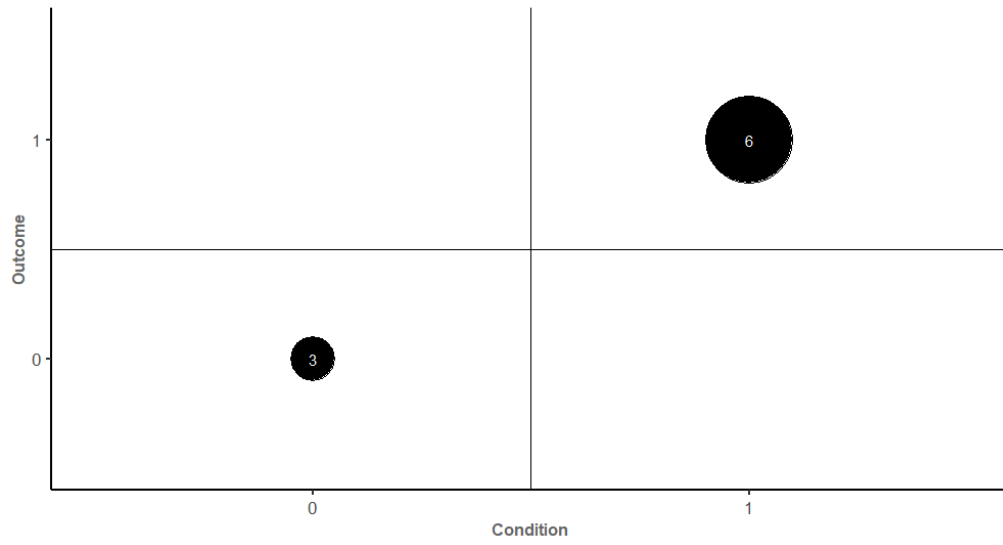


Figure 28. Necessity of N for FAST  
Source: Own work

### Necessity of R for FAST

Cons.Nec: 0.210; Cov.Nec: 0.517; RoN: 0.865

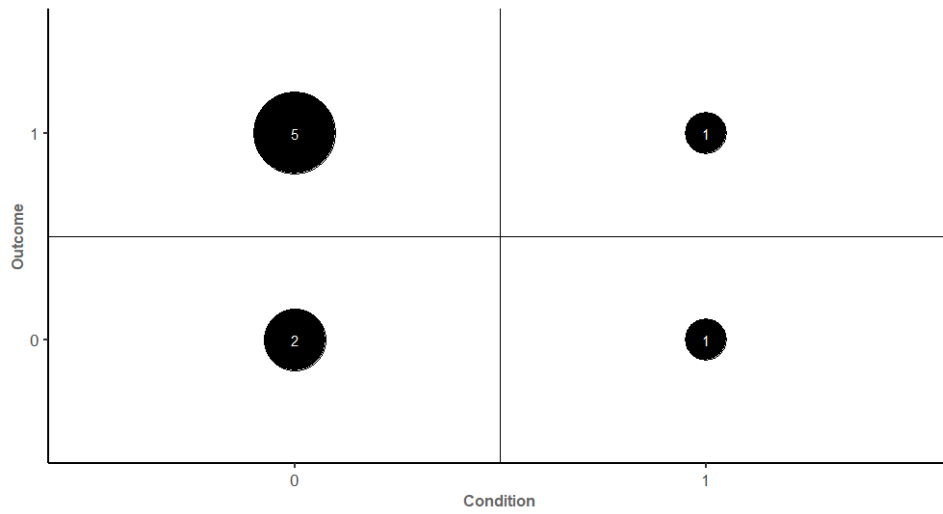


Figure 29. Necessity of R for FAST  
Source: Own work



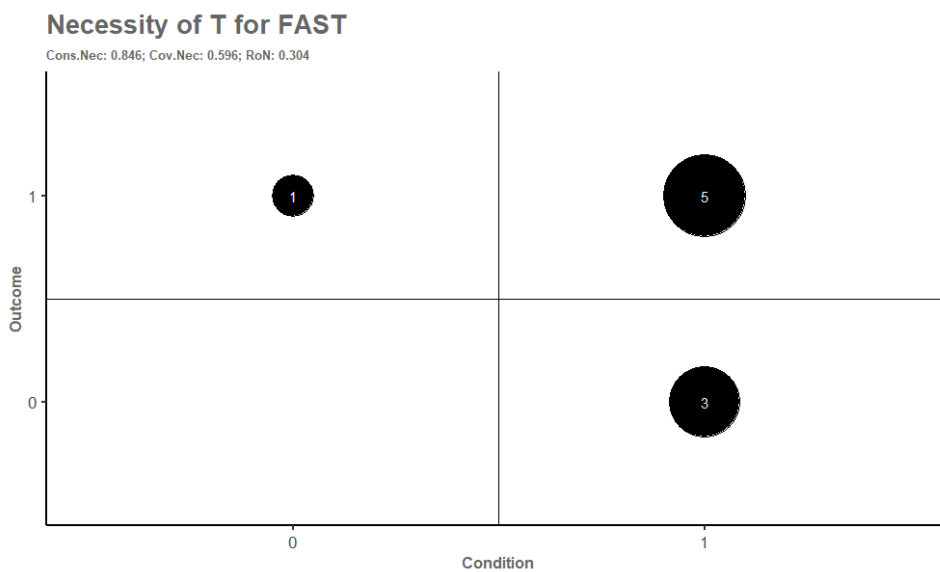


Figure 30. Necessity of T for FAST  
 Source: Own work

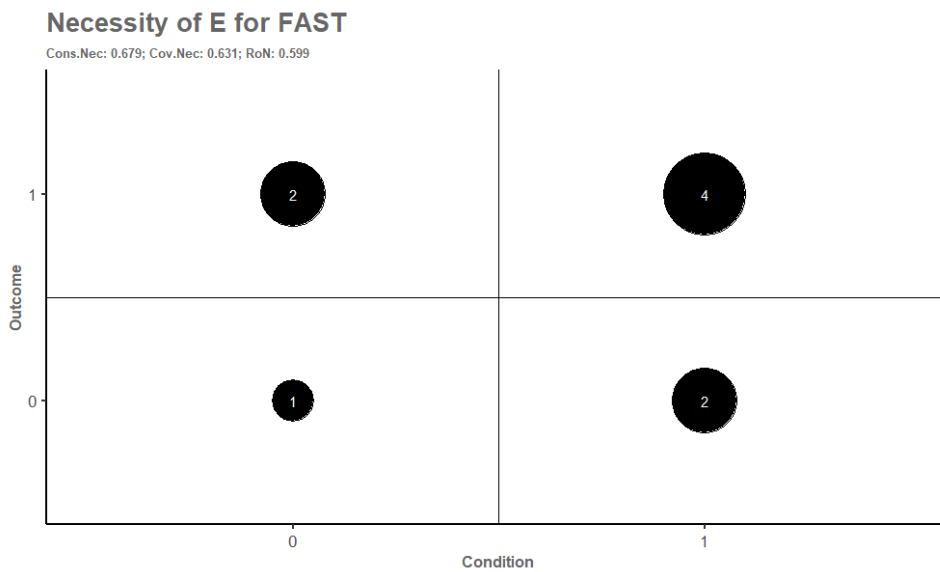


Figure 31. Necessity of E for FAST  
 Source: Own work

According to Table 8, the parameters of fit<sup>4</sup> obtained suggest that N is a

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed interpretation of the parameters of fit in QCA, see Schneider and Wagemann (2012).

necessary condition, because it meets the following criteria: consistency of necessity above 0.9; coverage of necessity higher than 0.5; and relevance of necessity above 0.5.

**Table 8. Analysis of Necessity for single conditions**

|    | Cons.Nec | Cov.Nec | RoN   |
|----|----------|---------|-------|
| M  | 0.609    | 0.703   | 0.758 |
| P  | 0.587    | 0.954   | 0.974 |
| N  | 0.948    | 0.892   | 0.841 |
| R  | 0.210    | 0.517   | 0.865 |
| T  | 0.846    | 0.596   | 0.304 |
| E  | 0.679    | 0.631   | 0.599 |
| ~M | 0.613    | 0.763   | 0.820 |
| ~P | 0.612    | 0.582   | 0.583 |
| ~N | 0.110    | 0.182   | 0.682 |
| ~R | 0.865    | 0.686   | 0.506 |
| ~T | 0.229    | 0.917   | 0.986 |
| ~E | 0.390    | 0.657   | 0.841 |

Source: Own work

Table 9 indicates the analysis of sufficiency for the presence of the outcome, having P, N and ~M as sufficient.

**Table 9. Analysis of Sufficiency for single conditions**

|    | Cons.Suf | Cov.Suf | PRI   |
|----|----------|---------|-------|
| M  | 0.703    | 0.609   | 0.601 |
| P  | 0.954    | 0.587   | 0.932 |
| N  | 0.892    | 0.948   | 0.872 |
| R  | 0.517    | 0.210   | 0.345 |
| T  | 0.596    | 0.846   | 0.527 |
| E  | 0.631    | 0.679   | 0.549 |
| ~M | 0.763    | 0.613   | 0.673 |
| ~P | 0.582    | 0.612   | 0.470 |
| ~N | 0.182    | 0.110   | 0.000 |
| ~R | 0.686    | 0.865   | 0.630 |
| ~T | 0.917    | 0.229   | 0.872 |
| ~E | 0.657    | 0.390   | 0.592 |

Source: Own work

The truth table is presented in Table 10. We have established two cut-offs to define if the output is 1 or not: “PRI” (proportional reduction in inconsistency) was set at 0.5, as it avoids simultaneous membership in both the outcome and

the negation of the outcome; for “incl” (sufficiency inclusion score), we have set 0.9 (Greckhamer et al. 2018). In the software, we have tested other thresholds to determine if the configurations were sufficient or not. When comparing the resulting formulas, this not only had more strict empirical criteria, but also generated solutions that are more theoretically interesting for the analysis. Furthermore, we employ the Enhanced Standard Analysis (ESA) (Oana, Schneider, and Thomann 2021). The choice for the ESA is based in a strategy to deal with logical remainders, excluding the untenable assumptions and contradictory assumptions from the minimisation. Using possible simplifying assumptions is a counterfactual thinking, that is, there is no empirical evidence about a configuration, but if cases like that exist, the solution would be as shown. In view of that, every viable alternative was included to generate the solution formula.

It is apparent from the 64 rows, that the output has been in 5 of them, covering 6 observations. Other 3 configurations, with 3 cases, did not reach the chosen cut-offs. In regard of contradictory rows, there are 37 rows that go against the analysis of necessity, and, because of that, they are ruled out. Finally, 19 rows do not have empirical evidence from our data frame.

Table 10. Truth Table

| MPNRTEOUTn | incl        | PRI             |
|------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 12         | 0 0 1 0 1 1 | 1 2 0.990 0.985 |
| 60         | 1 1 1 0 1 1 | 1 10.988 0.980  |
| 64         | 1 1 1 1 1 1 | 1 10.980 0.954  |
| 59         | 1 1 1 0 1 0 | 1 10.978 0.962  |
| 57         | 1 1 1 0 0 0 | 1 10.978 0.957  |
| 4          | 0 0 0 0 1 1 | 0 10.437 0      |
| 36         | 1 0 0 0 1 1 | 0 10.418 0      |
| 39         | 1 0 0 1 1 0 | 0 10.386 0      |
| 1          | 0 0 0 0 0 0 | 0 0             |
| 2          | 0 0 0 0 0 1 | 0 0             |
| 3          | 0 0 0 0 1 0 | 0 0             |
| 5          | 0 0 0 1 0 0 | 0 0             |
| 6          | 0 0 0 1 0 1 | 0 0             |
| 7          | 0 0 0 1 1 0 | 0 0             |
| 8          | 0 0 0 1 1 1 | 0 0             |
| 17         | 0 1 0 0 0 0 | 0 0             |
| 18         | 0 1 0 0 0 1 | 0 0             |
| 19         | 0 1 0 0 1 0 | 0 0             |
| 20         | 0 1 0 0 1 1 | 0 0             |
| 21         | 0 1 0 1 0 0 | 0 0             |
| 22         | 0 1 0 1 0 1 | 0 0             |
| 23         | 0 1 0 1 1 0 | 0 0             |
| 24         | 0 1 0 1 1 1 | 0 0             |
| 25         | 0 1 1 0 0 0 | 0 0             |
| 26         | 0 1 1 0 0 1 | 0 0             |
| 27         | 0 1 1 0 1 0 | 0 0             |
| 28         | 0 1 1 0 1 1 | 0 0             |
| 29         | 0 1 1 1 0 0 | 0 0             |
| 30         | 0 1 1 1 0 1 | 0 0             |
| 31         | 0 1 1 1 1 0 | 0 0             |
| 32         | 0 1 1 1 1 1 | 0 0             |
| 33         | 1 0 0 0 0 0 | 0 0             |
| 34         | 1 0 0 0 0 1 | 0 0             |
| 35         | 1 0 0 0 1 0 | 0 0             |
| 37         | 1 0 0 1 0 0 | 0 0             |
| 38         | 1 0 0 1 0 1 | 0 0             |
| 40         | 1 0 0 1 1 1 | 0 0             |
| 49         | 1 1 0 0 0 0 | 0 0             |
| 50         | 1 1 0 0 0 1 | 0 0             |
| 51         | 1 1 0 0 1 0 | 0 0             |
| 52         | 1 1 0 0 1 1 | 0 0             |
| 53         | 1 1 0 1 0 0 | 0 0             |
| 54         | 1 1 0 1 0 1 | 0 0             |
| 55         | 1 1 0 1 1 0 | 0 0             |
| 56         | 1 1 0 1 1 1 | 0 0             |
| 9          | 0 0 1 0 0 0 | ? 0             |
| 10         | 0 0 1 0 0 1 | ? 0             |
| 11         | 0 0 1 0 1 0 | ? 0             |
| 13         | 0 0 1 1 0 0 | ? 0             |
| 14         | 0 0 1 1 0 1 | ? 0             |
| 15         | 0 0 1 1 1 0 | ? 0             |
| 16         | 0 0 1 1 1 1 | ? 0             |
| 41         | 1 0 1 0 0 0 | ? 0             |
| 42         | 1 0 1 0 0 1 | ? 0             |
| 43         | 1 0 1 0 1 0 | ? 0             |
| 44         | 1 0 1 0 1 1 | ? 0             |
| 45         | 1 0 1 1 0 0 | ? 0             |
| 46         | 1 0 1 1 0 1 | ? 0             |
| 47         | 1 0 1 1 1 0 | ? 0             |
| 48         | 1 0 1 1 1 1 | ? 0             |
| 58         | 1 1 1 0 0 1 | ? 0             |
| 61         | 1 1 1 1 0 0 | ? 0             |
| 62         | 1 1 1 1 0 1 | ? 0             |
| 63         | 1 1 1 1 1 0 | ? 0             |

Source: Own work

The truth table can be logically minimised in solution formulas. By employing the Enhanced Standard Analysis, the three alternatives are: conservative (Table 11), most parsimonious (Table 12) and intermediate (Table 13). There is an ongoing debate in which is the best solution formula generated by the software (Dusa 2019a) and here we work with the most parsimonious solution, which is equal to the intermediate solution.

We find the most parsimonious minimisation more insightful to the current analysis. Furthermore, as seen in the next section, the case of Bolivian accession in Paraguay is covered by the solution. On the other hand, the Venezuelan accession is not included in this solution formula, because it has not produced the outcome. Therefore, we can compare alternative paths to reach or not the outcome.

Table 11. Enhanced Conservative solution

|                        | inclS | PRI   | covS  | covU  |
|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| M* P* N* ~ R* ~ E      | 0.986 | 0.979 | 0.234 | 0.175 |
| M* P* N* T* E          | 0.991 | 0.986 | 0.382 | 0.103 |
| ~ M* ~ P* N* ~ R* T* E | 0.990 | 0.985 | 0.336 | 0.057 |
| Solution               | 0.995 | 0.993 | 0.614 |       |

Source: Own work

Table 12. Enhanced Most Parsimonious solution

|          | inclS | PRI   | covS  | covU  |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| M* N     | 0.994 | 0.992 | 0.557 | 0.053 |
| ~ P* N   | 0.994 | 0.992 | 0.561 | 0.057 |
| Solution | 0.995 | 0.993 | 0.614 |       |

Source: Own work

Table 13. Enhanced Intermediate solution

|          | inclS | PRI   | covS  | covU  |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| M* N     | 0.994 | 0.992 | 0.557 | 0.053 |
| ~ P* N   | 0.994 | 0.992 | 0.561 | 0.057 |
| Solution | 0.995 | 0.993 | 0.614 |       |

Source: Own work

The most parsimonious solution formula can also be visualised in Figure 32.

This radar chart presents the two terms and how they are related to the conditions.

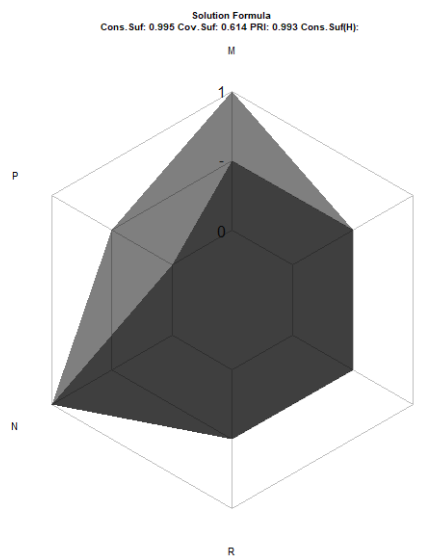


Figure 32. Most parsimonious solution  
Source: Own work

On the one hand, M, P and N are present in both conservative and most parsimonious solutions, while R, T and E can be seen only in the conservative. Analysing each condition individually, we see R in its negated form, indicating that a left-wing government is sufficient for the outcome, which corresponds to our theoretical expectation formulated in H2. Thus, the discourse pro-integration is seen in practice with a fast approval of the enlargement. Indeed, only two cases had a membership higher than 0.5 in R: the accession of Bolivia in the parliaments of Paraguay and Brazil.

Furthermore, T is present in two terms. This indicates that having good trade with the bloc is sufficient for a quick approval in the legislature, supporting H3a that suggested that the increment of the trade relationships would lead to fostering the legal integration. In fact, only one case was coded as 0, the Bolivian incorporation in the parliament of Uruguay. Therefore, the presence of T suggests the economic interest for more integration, as these sectors would benefit from good trade. If this is true, the parliamentarians are pressured by domestic preferences to consolidate the integration, giving more weight for the

economy.

E, instead, appears in different formats, which makes findings inconclusive to test H3b. It is present in two terms, but negative in the third. This reflects a division in the economic scenario of the cases, as the two processes in Uruguay and the Bolivian incorporation in Brazil have a membership lower than 0.5. Therefore, when experiencing a good economic situation, this not only can create incentives to increase the relation with Mercosur, but also when there is an economic instability; Mercosur can be an alternative to respond to that.

On the other hand, M, P and N are the conditions presents in all the solutions. Apart from N, they also have mixed effects. M is positive in all the situations, apart from one term in the conservative solution. When it is present, it supports H1a, because when the coalition controls more than half of the legislature, it has better conditions to approve bills.

P indicates the president's party size. There are solution terms with and without the negated form, but in the most parsimonious solution, it appears as  $\sim P$ . Therefore, when the party does not control the legislature alone is a sufficient condition for producing the outcome. This can be either in a larger coalition or with votes from the opposition, which is further analysed in the combinatorial part of QCA.

N is presented in every solution term, because it was calculated as a necessary condition for the analysis. Therefore, having few parties composing the coalition creates a more favourable condition for having the outcome, which converges with H1c.

To sum up, the sufficiency of conditions has different results when compared to the Survival Analysis. On one hand, the findings concerning M and R converge with the findings from the regression. In addition, the mixed results about E also reflect what was seen in the Cox model. On the other hand, P and T contradicts the statistical parts, as well as N, but the coefficient about the number of parties was not robust. Nonetheless, there are two considerations to be made about this. First, up to now, we have been looking to individual conditions and not to the combination of conditions, which are the actual results from the QCA. Second, given that the QCA is operating with a specific category

of treaties, these contradictions with the regression are not problematic. In one case, they represent a pattern taken from different scenarios, while here we seek to understand the processes regarding specifically the enlargement. Further research can be performed with other categories, as education, migration and free trade agreements.

In view of that, focusing on the most parsimonious solution, each of the two terms is analysed to understand how the combination of conditions can explain the outcome of interest. The first term ( $M*N$ ) indicates that to approve the accession of a new member state to Mercosur, the government must have a majoritarian coalition (more than 50%) with few parties (up to 2), independently of the other four conditions. This path covers four cases: the Venezuelan incorporation and the two protocols of Bolivia in the Uruguayan parliament; and the Bolivian accession in the Paraguayan parliament. Therefore, it supports H1a and H1c, emphasising more homogeneous coalition.

The second ( $\sim P*N$ ) covers two approvals: the Venezuelan and the Bolivian protocols in the Argentinian congress. Therefore, it is clustered in a specific country, while the other covered two different countries. This term comprises few parties in the coalition and a president's party that does not control more than 50% of the legislature, i.e., it must negotiate with other parties to approve its bills.

Having that said, it is worth remembering that when reading a QCA solution, one should note what is "missing". In other words, in the paths that a condition does not explicitly appear, in neither of the two forms, the empirics can have either R or  $\sim R$ , T or  $\sim T$ , E or  $\sim E$  and so forth. In view of that, they neither confirm nor falsify the hypotheses.

Moreover, for the negation of the outcome, a truth table has also been produced and minimised (Table 14). As above, we produced the most parsimonious solution. It covers three cases that have not produced the outcome: the ongoing Brazilian ratification of the Bolivian accession (1930 days); the Brazilian approval of Venezuela (1023 days); and the Paraguayan approval of Venezuela (2359 days). For this reason, as the table shows, the formula is based in a single empirical configuration, which is  $\sim N$ . Therefore, the context needed



for not having a fast approval is a heterogeneous coalition, with 3 or more parties.

Table 14. Most parsimonious solution for the negation of the outcome

|          | inclS | PRI   | covS  | covU |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| ~ N      | 0.915 | 0.896 | 0.829 |      |
| Solution | 0.915 | 0.896 | 0.829 |      |

Source: Own work

In view of the above, the path to ~Y was unanticipated by the Survival Analysis, as more parties were expected to increase the chance of approval. Despite that, understanding how the enlargement passes in the legislatures favours to comprehend the dynamics of these particular treaties.

Focusing on our population, we have selected a sample of observations to study in-depth (C. Q. Schneider and Rohlfing 2013). The decision was to investigate the two observations regarding the protocols of accession in Paraguay. Undoubtedly, the non-experimental analysis might be clustered as the focus will be in a single category and is a within-country comparison. However, there is enough variation in these traceable events to make the analysis worth.

The decision for selecting the Paraguayan cases is that one was a fast process, while the other took longer time. Differently, in Argentina and in Uruguay, the observations were quick, while the two episodes in Brazil took more time. Therefore, following the classification commonly used by Set-Theoretic Multi-Methods Research, we have one typical case (membership in the solution and the outcome) and one individually irrelevant (cases that are neither member of the outcome nor of the sufficient solution). The typical is the approval of the Bolivian entrance, while the irrelevant is the ratification of the Venezuelan entrance. In a comparative research design, this allows investigation of cases with fast approvals as well as those with slower processes, determining what influences their results and infer causal properties of the mechanism (Oana, Schneider, and Thomann 2021). The aim is to identify the mechanism connecting X to Y and the possibilities of generalising it to several cases and the

next chapter is dedicated to the within-case analyses.

## CHAPTER 4

### ACCESSION OF VENEZUELA AND BOLIVIA

The structure of this chapter takes the form of five sections. The first two are dedicated to the incorporation of Venezuela, explaining the scenario in which the negotiations took place and how the Protocol was approved in other member states. Furthermore, one section explains how it was internalised in the congress of Paraguay. Following that, two sections perform a similar analysis on the entrance of Bolivia, again focusing on the process in Paraguay. Finally, the last section compares both cases, discussing the legislative behaviour regarding the enlargement of Mercosur.

The major limitation of this study is the restricted access to evidence for conducting the Process Tracing. On the one hand, it was not possible to interview parliamentarians nor their advisors, neither was possible to visit the Paraguayan archives, because of the restrictions imposed by the pandemic. On the other hand, the voting records and the discourses available online were included in this chapter.

#### 4.1. *Context of the Venezuelan accession*

Caracas requested the incorporation to Mercosur in December 2005. In the following year, in July, the Protocol of Accession was signed, demonstrating the political convergence among the presidents. However, despite this alignment among the Executive branches, the parliaments did not have the same partisan composition, obstructing the ratification. Given that, the Pink Tide occurred mainly at the Executive level, but not in the Legislative level, which is

understandable as far as presidential elections are based in a winner-takes-all principle, while the legislatures are formed by several parties, representing the minorities. Moreover, this convergence at the beginning of the process - in 2006 - is not seen at the end of the acceding period – 2013 -, i.e., the scenario has changed and the conditions to facilitate the approval were modified too (Briceño Ruiz 2010). This fact is closely related to the change of actors' expectations towards the enlargement, rationale seen also in the Bolivian case.

In the context of the Pink Tide, the commodities boom in their economies, the closeness between South American partners and the revival of regional integration, with new initiatives, were favourable conditions that paved the way to enlarge Mercosur (Attanasio 2016; Saraiva 2020; Letícia Pinheiro and Lima 2018). Fifteen years after its foundation, the agenda of Mercosur changed from a market-oriented one to include political and social issues, symbolised by the IV Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata, in 2005. In other words, a new dimension was incorporated to the bloc, as an effort to compensate the impact of neoliberal economic policies (Revelez 2013; Vázquez and Briceño Ruiz 2009). This was in line with the electoral projects of new left-leaning governments and social movements not to only boost free trade, but also to promote human development by reducing inequalities. Deepening regional integration and identity was one of the strategies to achieve this goal.

Nevertheless, despite taking into account that ideological convergence facilitates policy convergence, it is important to note differences within the Pink Tide, as their political, economic and social projects fill a wide and diverse range (Zanatta 2017; Planas 2007). Despite the variations across countries, this reorientation included concerns about asymmetries within the bloc, either in economic and developmental terms, either in the political aspect. In the latter, redistributing power from the Brasilia-Buenos Aires axis was relevant for Paraguay and Uruguay and the incorporation of Venezuela and Bolivia reflects this distributive aim (Castillo 2011). Their condition as small states foster an autonomist foreign policy to cope with the international constraints (Burian and Míguez 2021). This reflects an unequal power distribution among Mercosur states. While Brazil dominates the scenario, backed by its size (Luis L Schenoni

et al. 2022), it historically struggled to build a leadership, with followers that agree with the Brazilian foreign policy (Luján and Burian 2018).

From the Venezuelan perspective, integrating Mercosur was an opportunity to foster an alternative foreign policy, favouring a multipolar system. During Chávez government, the diplomatic rhetoric against the Global North defended Latin American cooperation (Laredo et al. 2006). Furthermore, they could reduce the economic dependence from United States and Colombia, by approaching South American markets. Given this, in the 2000s, both Venezuela and Mercosur were rising powers and there was the perception that Caracas could receive economic benefits as well as political ones (Rios and Maduro 2007; Gardini 2011). Plus, it was understood that Chávez could shape the path of Mercosur, adapting towards Venezuela goals (Magnoli 2007). Despite that, the potential advantages for Mercosur, including the geopolitical expansion towards the Andes and the Caribbean, could not overcome the internal fractions (Barbosa 2008; Briceño Ruiz 2009; Arellano 2013).

Attanasio (2016) highlights that, in 2005, after decades of cooperation, Uruguay and Argentina had a diplomatic dispute about the construction of pulp mills, by the Finnish Botnia, in their bordering river, between Fray Bentos and Gualaguaychú, which was one of the larger foreign investments in Uruguay (Neves 2008). This is an element that represents the Uruguayan intention to recalibrate the distribution of power within Mercosur. In parallel, Paraguay was developing initiatives with Latin American countries, despite their alliance with Washington. Given that, an enlarged Mercosur was a foremost arrangement to bring closer Asuncion and regional partners, without being tied in the historic pendulum between Argentina and Brazil (Melo 2009; Kfuri and Lamas 2008; Baer and Birch 1987). Moreover, Venezuela's diplomacy towards the Caribbean exhibited economic, political and social enterprises that could reduce disparities (Benzi and Zapata 2013; González Urrutia 2006). Being the smallest states in Mercosur, Paraguay and Uruguay would possibly benefit from a similar strategy in South America. It is expected that a new member increases the economic growth (Walz 1998; Ghazalian 2013; Casella 1996).

On the other hand, for Brasilia, inserting Caracas in Mercosur was also a mechanism to limit Venezuelan influence and projects to become a regional leader, position disputed by Brazil as well (Gehre 2010; Arce and Silva 2012). For Argentina, despite favouring this constraining, the Kirchner administration also had solid bounds with the Palace of Miraflores (Attanasio 2016). Given that, for economic and political reasons, the four Executive branches had a major interest in endorsing the incorporation of Venezuela into Mercosur, strengthening the position of the bloc in the world scenario and market. However, the Legislative behaviour in Brazil and Paraguay proved divergent positions in this topic.

In parallel to the enlargements, Mercosur faced the issue of suspensions, ruled in presidential or ministerial summits. In five years, this sanction was applied three times to Member States. The first occurrence was in 2012 when Paraguay was suspended by Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, due to the rupture of the democratic institutions in that country. Following the established in the Protocol of Ushuaia, a temporary suspension was decided to respond to the impeachment process that unseated Fernando Lugo. In 2013, with general elections, the suspension was lifted. As discussed below, this episode decisively reverberated to have Venezuela entering Mercosur (Lafer 2013; Gomes and Winter 2013; Trindade 2021).

Although the region is typically characterised by strong presidents, they can be politically challenged, especially when they hold minority governments (Hochstetler 2006; Martínez 2015). This evidences the institutional support that surrounds the head of government, allowing or disallowing him or her to conduct politics. Even though in a first glance, in a presidential regime, parliaments cannot seize the Head of State, the crises in Honduras (2009), Paraguay (2012), Brazil (2016) and Venezuela (2019)<sup>5</sup> proved differently. In this regard,

<sup>5</sup> Even though Juan Guaidó was not sworn into office, his attempt to challenge president Nicolás Maduro demonstrates the legislative effort to seize Miraflores Palace, insofar as he was president of the National Assembly of Venezuela, parliamentary body that

Hochstetler (2008) affirms that, since the redemocratisation in the 1970s, impeachment has been a political instrument – carried on by civilians – to replace presidents, ending their constitutional terms earlier. In addition to the congressional procedures, popular protests are also seen as a mechanism to remove a president, disrupting the stability that characterises presidential regimes. A few historic examples that illustrate are Fernando de la Rúa (renounced in Argentina in 2001), Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada (renounced in Bolivia in 2003), Fernando Collor de Mello (impeached in Brazil in 1992) and Carlos Andrés Pérez (impeached in Venezuela in 1993).

The two other suspensions in Mercosur history were targeted to Venezuela in 2016 and 2017, in a complicated political context that isolated Nicolás Maduro’s government. Although the focus of the current study is on the accession, knowing the current situation is also relevant. Firstly, the other four Member States halted Caracas’ membership because this country had not incorporated all the regional rules into its national judicial order. In the other occasion, as the same as in the Paraguayan case, the democratic clause was applied, following the election of the Constituent National Assembly. Up to 2022, both suspensions are valid, and Venezuela does not have its full rights in the trade bloc, despite still being a member.

Given this context, the controversies with the Venezuelan participation resulted that the enlargement of the bloc was not interesting anymore. This might explain the differences of why the entrance of Caracas was a priority in Mercosur and pushed for a major debate about the integration, while the incorporation of La Paz does not see the same protagonism. That said, after Venezuela, there was no requests for full membership, as the actors perceived as not fruitful been part of the bloc in that condition. The same was seen in the European Union, when reached a “saturation” in the amount of Member States and halted further enlargements.

disputes the Legislative branch with the Constituent National Assembly, elected in 2017.

The Protocol on Democratic Commitment, signed on 1998 and commonly known as Protocol of Ushuaia, does not define clearly the concept of democracy, neither when the sanctions should be applied, as discussed by Monte and Anastasia (2017). They advocate that this vagueness is strategic to be read according to the political and economic interests of each government. Furthermore, Trindade (2021) also argues that the democratic clause was intentionally formulated to be a highly flexible instrument. For this reason, on each occasion, the legal text was interpreted in a different way and with different applications.

Different conceptions of democracy were applied in each case. Hence, the Paraguayan membership halt was convenient to let Venezuela become member, while the Venezuelan suspension isolated a political opponent and enabled the other States to carry a liberal project in the bloc. In the same line, not sanctioning some episodes (namely, the coup attempt in Paraguay in 1996, the assassination of the Paraguayan vice-president in 1999, the Argentinian presidential instability in 2001-2002, the deposition of the Brazilian president in 2016 and the resignation of the Bolivian president in 2019) is also strategic to the communitarian project.

#### 4.1.1. *Protocol of Venezuela in the Paraguayan Congress*

As shown by Díaz (2014), the Protocol of Accession of Venezuela to Mercosur was submitted four times to the Paraguayan Congress until it was approved. According to the QCA, the corresponding combination in the truth table is 0 0 0 0 1 1. Thus, considering these four times as a single process, the duration was 2359 days (more than 6 years). Remembering that we have calculated the mean over 7 years, the first condition (M) is 0 because the coalition was 40.9% of the legislature. The president's party (P) had 15% of the



seats. There was a mean of 3.14 parties composing the coalition (N). The ideology was calculated as 2.42, meaning left-wing. T indicates 1, because the trade with the bloc was 50.88%. E, representing the economic scenario, is 1 because there was no abnormal instability in the economic indicators.

However, this data needs to be analysed year by year, as there are important changes from 2007 to 2013, covering four governments. Table 15 provides detailed information regarding economic and political indicators from Paraguay during the period in which the parliament legislated about the two accessions studied here.

Table 15. Descriptive statistics of Paraguay during the accessions

| year | sizecoal | numbpartcoal | prespartyshare | presideol | enpp | gdp      | gdpgrowth | gdppercapita | unemployment | inflation | change  | fdi       | trade |
|------|----------|--------------|----------------|-----------|------|----------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|---------|-----------|-------|
| 2007 | 46.25    | 1            | 46.25          | 1         | 3.18 | 22990.70 | 5.40      | 3832.80      | 5.60         | 8.13      | 5032.71 | 105000000 | 60.13 |
| 2008 | 46.25    | 1            | 46.25          | 1         | 3.43 | 24452.70 | 6.40      | 4021.00      | 5.70         | 10.15     | 4363.29 | 337856000 | 56.30 |
| 2009 | 38.75    | 4            | 2.50           | 3         | 3.43 | 24389.70 | -0.30     | 3956.80      | 6.30         | 2.59      | 4966.68 | 26913000  | 55.02 |
| 2010 | 38.75    | 4            | 2.50           | 3         | 3.43 | 27107.60 | 11.10     | 4338.60      | 5.70         | 4.65      | 4758.43 | 555544000 | 48.14 |
| 2011 | 38.75    | 4            | 2.50           | 3         | 3.43 | 28259.40 | 4.20      | 4461.60      | 5.50         | 8.25      | 4193.80 | 463994000 | 47.22 |
| 2012 | 38.75    | 4            | 2.50           | 3         | 3.43 | 28107.20 | -0.50     | 4377.00      | 4.60         | 3.68      | 4421.66 | 727144000 | 45.81 |
| 2013 | 38.75    | 4            | 2.50           | 3         | 2.22 | 30473.10 | 8.40      | 4680.80      | 5.00         | 2.68      | 4303.88 | 312567000 | 43.59 |
| 2014 | 56.25    | 1            | 56.25          | 1         | 2.22 | 31954.40 | 4.90      | 4841.90      | 6.00         | 5.03      | 4462.19 | 549690000 | 44.70 |
| 2015 | 56.25    | 1            | 56.25          | 1         | 2.22 | 32938.70 | 3.10      | 4924.50      | 5.40         | 3.13      | 5204.92 | 480469114 | 44.45 |
| 2016 | 56.25    | 1            | 56.25          | 1         | 2.22 | 34359.30 | 4.30      | 5069.30      | 6.00         | 4.09      | 5670.54 | 492762511 | 46.97 |

Source: Own work

The first two bills were sent to the legislators but rapidly withdrawn, as far as it was realised that there was not enough support to approve it and the risk of rejection was highly considerable. Accurately describing, the first attempt – tracked with file number 70402 (Paraguay 2007a) – to approve the Venezuelan admission was on 4 July 2007, when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remitted the Protocol of Accession, signed by the then president Nicanor Duarte Frutos (ANR-PC), to be considered by the parliament. The signature itself might be considered as a sign of rapprochement between Frutos and the other presidents, as his government’s foreign policy pragmatically approached the Pink Tide (Heduvan 2020; Kfuri and Lamas 2008). It follows the position taken in Mar del Plata in 2005, when Frutos stood together with the Mercosurian presidents against Washington’s position (Heduvan 2019). At that moment, Paraguay maintained its bargaining power in Mercosur, because of its characteristics (Lemgruber 2007).

President Frutos was elected in 2003 with 37.14% of the votes, the lowest vote that a Paraguayan president won since the 1980s. This happened due to the emergency of the *Unión Nacional de Ciudadanos Éticos* (National Union of Ethical Citizens, UNACE) in the Paraguayan context (L. D. Recalde 2012). Observing the domestic support, 11 department governors were affiliated to the ANR-PC as well. This means 65% of the total number of departments in the country. Despite the ANR-PC being the major political force in the Congress, the presidency held by Duarte Frutos did not have support in the upper chamber, as 35.56% of the senators were *colorados*, increasing the need of forming coalitions and negotiating with other parties. On the other hand, in the lower chamber, 46.25% of the deputies belong to the same party as the president.

That said, during a session in the floor on 5 July 2007 (Paraguay 2007b), senator Alfredo Ratti (MPQ) discoursed against Chávez, affirming that he was conducting a centralising process of decision-making powers. This characterisation intended to affirm undemocratic procedures in the Palace of Miraflores, including the then recent conflicts with national private-owned communication media, as well as with the Paraguayan and Brazilian congresses, that had not approved the Venezuelan admission to Mercosur at that time and

received a 3-month “deadline” from Chávez to have it deliberated. The senator also stood against Mercosur in its formulation, as an asymmetric bloc that does not take into account the disequilibrium between its partners and special needs of Paraguay in face of larger neighbouring countries. Senator Alfonso González Núñez (ANR-PC) criticised president Chávez, as well. In his opinion, the Congress is an independent sovereign institution and, for this reason, should not receive commands from foreign mandataries.

Contrariwise, senator Domingo Laino (*Partido Liberal Radical Auténtico* or Authentic Radical Liberal Party, PLRA) saw the enlargement as an opportunity of complementing both Venezuelan and Paraguayan markets, as well as to strengthen the regional bloc. For instance, one is an oil and gas producer, while the other is an agriculture-centred economy.

In the same year, on 27 September, it received a favourable report in the committee on Economy, Cooperativism, Development and Latin American Economic Integration. Nevertheless, precisely one week later, another report was signed in this committee by a liberal senator, against the accession. Therefore, the Protocol went through a single committee in the Chamber of Senators. Despite these debates in 2007, there was no action during 2008 and, lastly, it was withdrawn on 13 August 2009 by the Palace of the López. At that point in time, Duarte had already finished his term and Lugo had been elected.

In view of the above, even though there were favourable conditions to approve, which were the positive trade with Mercosur and the ideological proximity between the governments, the bill has not passed. The reason for that can be inferred from domestic political scenario, as the fragmentation of the party system, not offering majority to the government. Thus, a complex topic of regional integration did not have margin of manoeuvre to be negotiated with opposition sectors.

Heduvan (2020) highlights that from 2007 onwards, Frutos was focused on domestic politics and internal disputes in his party. For this reason, foreign policy was not his focus, differing from his first years ahead of the government. In view of that, this explains the initial impetus of signing the protocol and submitting it to the parliament, but not putting effort for its approval. That is to

say, the bill was not prioritised any longer by the Executive. In addition to that, the hesitation towards the incorporation of Venezuela may be read as a cautious movement of Paraguayan diplomacy to distance itself from the traditional partners – Argentina and Brazil (Kfuri and Lamas 2008).

A representative of the Pink Tide movement, Fernando Lugo's centre-left government (*Frente Guasú* or Guasú Front, FG) was a minority coalition. He was elected with 40.9% of the votes, with Federico Franco (PLRA) as his running mate. Regarding the departments, the FG did not elect any governor, yet the PLRA won in 7 departments (41% of the total), with the main opposition party, ANR-PC, remaining with the majority in the country. Lugo's party and his vice-president's party had 36.25% of support in the lower chamber and 31.11% in the upper chamber. However, the majority of this bench was not directly associated with the president's party but with the vice-president Franco. The reason for that is that the FG elected only 2 deputies and every other deputy and senator was affiliated to the PLRA. These figures are crucially relevant because the vice-president turned against the president in 2012, begetting a severe political crisis. Being a minority government and an instable coalition, it was forced to build legislative supports issue by issue.

Nonetheless, despite the change in the Presidency in 2008, ANR-PC remained as the largest minority in the Congress, occupying 36% of the seats. Furthermore, this legislature is more diverse – in terms of number of parties – comparing to the one elected in 2003. This pattern continued in 2013 elections. Considering the influence of the private sector, including those related to agriculture, and transnational companies, some political parties represent these interests (López 2010). During Lugo's government, the president lacked the support from these sectors, while facing the fragmentation of his legislative coalition.

In view of that, although Lugo focused his foreign policy in the cooperation with Latin American states, he had to face the domestic opposition. Aiming to reduce the asymmetries, his strategy was to support other states in the region to decrease the dependence from Brasilia and Buenos Aires. Thus, the Venezuelan accession would assist in the distribution of power within Mercosur.

On 22 November 2010, the Chamber of Senators received once more the Protocol (Paraguay 2010). It was sent to five committees. This number of committees is higher than what is observed in other legislatures and can be interpreted as a mechanism of hindering the administrative procedures, with more veto players. On 1 December 2010, the bill passed through one committee. This was the only procedure in the Paraguayan congress in this second time that Asuncion deliberated about the incorporation of Caracas. It received one report for the approval and another against.

On 9 December, the bill was again withdrawn by an Executive decision. A significant contrast on the partisan composition of both chambers of the Congress and the political basis of the president characterised this context. Therefore, the lack of legislative majority, the balance between president and vice-president and the strength of the opposition (particularly the ANR-PC) created conditions to obstruct the president's initiatives.

Insaurralde (2014, 170) points out that the ruling coalition negotiated with the UNACE to have favourable votes in exchange of nominating deputy Gustavo Mussi (UNACE) to the Judicial Council. Despite that, it was unsuccessful to attract positive votes to the enlargement. Moreover, during the administration, the PLRA showed internal factions, in favour or against Lugo. It is noteworthy that the sector aligned to the vice-president Franco was critical to the president Lugo, as shown by Insaurralde (2014). This further supports the idea that the bill was withdrawn because there was no expectation of having enough positive votes.

On 22 June 2012, president Lugo was impeached and, subsequently, Asuncion was suspended from Mercosur, because the other Member States had a consensus that a violation of the democratic clause, provided in the Protocol of Ushuaia, had been committed. Furthermore, on 31 July 2012, the acceding country formally became a full member State of Mercosur<sup>6</sup>. That is, before the

<sup>6</sup> With Asuncion suspended, the other members understood that there was no need to have the Paraguayan approval and, therefore, Venezuela could formally enter without the ratification of the remnant member.

impeachment, Venezuela did not participate in Mercosur with its full rights (with voice and vote), due to the political impasse posed by Asuncion, and with the suspension Venezuela was able to enter the bloc.

The suspension triggered the need of the new government to seek for international legitimacy and economic alternatives from non-Mercosur states. For example, Franco approached the Pacific Alliance (Heduvan 2020; Trindade 2021).

It was in this scenario which, for the third time, the Congress of Paraguay decided about Venezuela’s accession to the bloc. Differently than the unfinished processes in previous years, in 2012, it was conclusively resolved. It was rejected, aiming to invalidate the resolution that approved Caracas’ entry and to assertively oppose to it. The bill was referred to the Congress on 31 July 2012 and received a conclusion a month later (Paraguay 2012a).

As seen in Figure 33, against Caracas, 31 senators voted “No” (68.89%), while three voted “Yes” (6.67%) – in favour of the enlargement. There were 11 senators absent (24.44%) from the session.

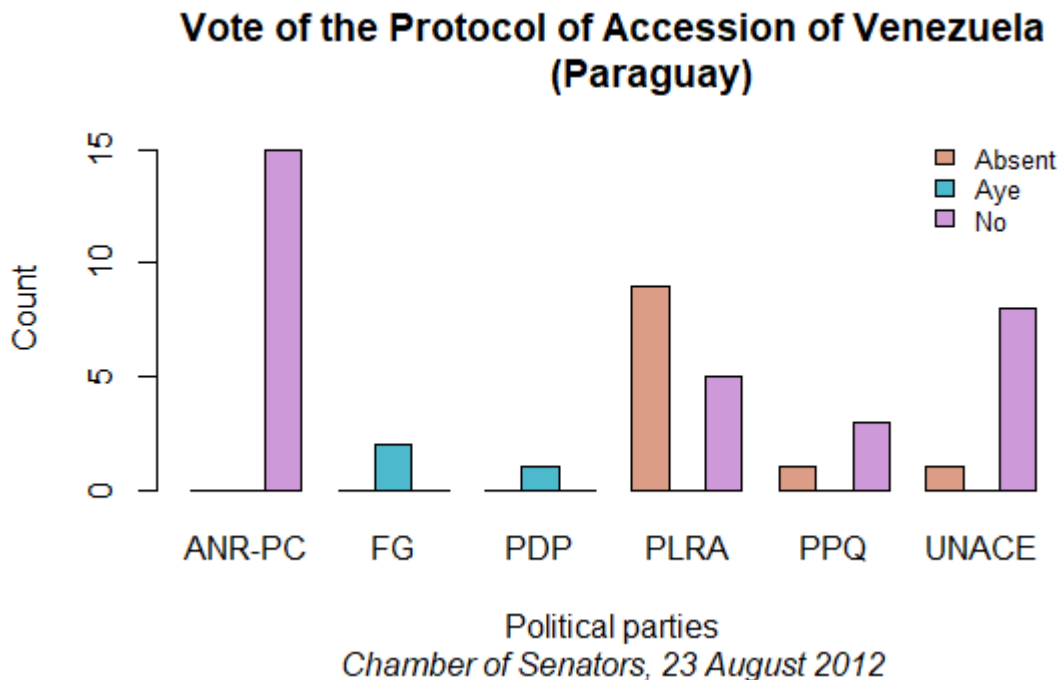


Figure 33. Vote in the Senate (3<sup>rd</sup> time)  
Source: Own work based on Paraguay (2020b)

During the debates on 23 August 2012 (Paraguay 2012b), Hugo Estigarribia (ANR-PC) defended a political change in Caracas to be turned into a “democratic” country, so Paraguay could approve a democracy into Mercosur. This statement symbolises the opposition directed to the Venezuelan government at the moment and the political conflict between both forces, institutionalised in Paraguay and Venezuela. Senator Marcelo Duarte (PPQ) argued that the incorporation done by Buenos Aires, Brasilia and Montevideo was irregular and unlawfully disregarded the Protocol of Accession itself, because it did not have the Paraguayan ratification.

Senator Carlos Filizzola (PPS) summed up:

por lo que escucho y por lo que ya conozco de la posición de partidos políticos o de bancadas o hasta posiciones personales, hay una mayoría aquí en la Cámara en contra del ingreso de Venezuela al Mercosur, y esto no es de ahora es una cuestión que se da desde hace tiempo, desde que se planteó el ingreso de Venezuela al Mercosur. (Paraguay 2012b, 20)

This piece of information is relevant inasmuch as it makes clear that the position against the enlargement was taken long before the formal procedure – after all, the Protocol existed since 2006 and political actors had the opportunity to give a thought about it in the two other submissions. Furthermore, Filizzola indicates that discussions were made out of the floor and shaped decisions of individuals and groups, not only on partisan lines. His speech was favourable to the accession of Venezuela. In his opinion, strengthening Mercosur is a way to foster the Paraguayan position in the international system, due to its economic characteristics.

In the period when Federico Franco (PLRA) was in charge of the Presidency, there was a closer alignment between Executive and Legislative, converging a critical position against Mercosur and Venezuela. His party was the second main political force in the Congress, with almost the same number of legislators as the ANR-PC. Thus, although Franco did not control a legislative majority, the rightist ideological proximity favoured a cooperation with other parties, such as the ANR-PC. Considering the diplomatic tensions with



Mercosur, the opposition to Chávez's government and the domestic economic interests to foster relationships with other markets, it was possible to have a fast decision, but for the rejection of the bill.

Finally, the Protocol was submitted a fourth time (file number S-131056), after the suspension from Mercosur was lifted. It entered the Paraguayan Congress on 5 December 2013 (Paraguay 2013b), seven years and five months after the document was initially signed in Caracas. The entire process took approximately three weeks, being published on 27 December 2013 and finishing the long-lasting impasse.

In this occasion, Horacio Cartes was the president. Affiliated to the ANR-PC and elected with 45% of the votes, the president's party held the majority of the parliament. However, as can be seen from the Figure 34, analysing by chamber, in the Senate the 2013 elections did not guarantee more than 50% for the ANR-PC. It still was the largest political force among the senators. The historical opposition party, PLRA, was the second bench in the Legislative. The FG held 11% of the seats in the upper chamber, while only 1% in the lower chamber. Studies suggested that Paraguay usually has three main parties, being ANR-PC and PLRA always the leading forces, while the third political party varies in time (L. D. Recalde 2012; Ribeiro, Burian, and Urdinez 2021; López 2010). In the 1990s, the domestic reforms in Paraguay allowed a multi-party system in the legislative arena. That is, although the Executive branch remained largely controlled by the ANR-PC, the Congress saw the election of new political groups, creating, to a certain extent, an institutional opposition (Molinas, Liñán, and Saiegh 2004).

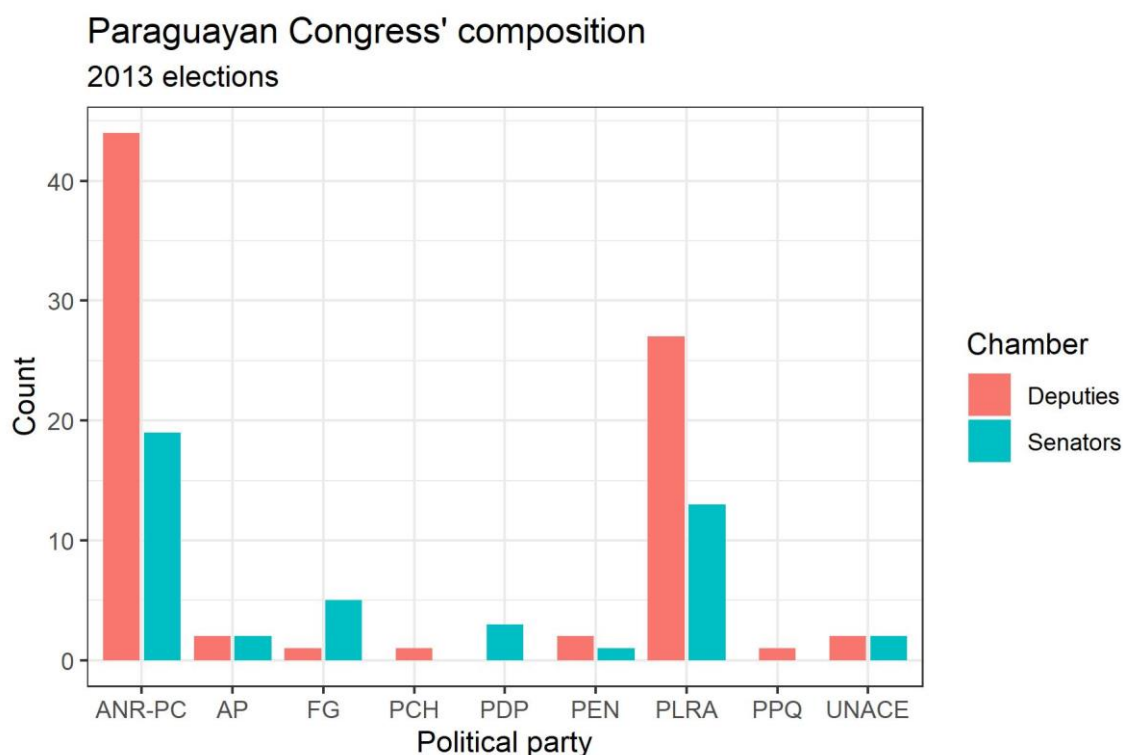


Figure 34. Number of senators and deputies divided by parties  
Source: Own work based on Paraguay (2013a)

Following the suspension between 2012 and 2013, Cartes' government accomplished the objective of reintegrating Asuncion to Mercosur and to the international society (Heduvan 2020; Trindade 2021). Bearing this in mind, the Paraguayan diplomacy was not seeking to create a new conflict on the Bolivian accession as it happened with the Venezuelan case. The approval by Paraguay can be understood by the international context and the political and economic motivations to be reinserted in Mercosur. After the controversial rule of Federico Franco, president Horacio Cartes (ANR-PC) was elected in 2013 and faced a regional context of political isolation, with Venezuela and Nicolás Maduro already being part of Mercosur. With this in mind, Asuncion realised that it could not challenge Caracas alone and the previous reluctance implicates in the isolation of Paraguay before South American partners.

Therefore, despite ideological divergences with the other Mercosur members, the regional and domestic scenarios contributed to the positive outcome. Heduvan (2020) points out that the government realised that being out

of Mercosur meant to be out of the benefits offered by the bloc, as trade negotiations with extra-regional partners, for instance. In addition to the foreign policy, the domestic political scenario also favoured a fast approval, with a more cohesive system – as seen with fewer effective parties and fewer parties in the coalition. In addition, being a right-wing government also favoured the relationship with the legislators.

In the last time in this parliament, the agreement passed through the Chamber of Senators and the Chamber of Deputies, including three committees. In a debate about the bill on 10 December 2013 (Paraguay 2013c), senator Desirée Masi (PDP) criticised the deliberation about the Protocol of Caracas, after it was rejected by the very same parliament and Paraguay being sanctioned. Although this perspective was issued from the minority group, these arguments are recurrent in several speeches, that is, suspending Asunción to integrate Caracas was unfair and that Paraguay “deserved more” to concede its approval to Venezuela. Senator Carlos Amarilla Cañete (PLRA) discoursed that legalising Venezuela in Mercosur would be a manner for the Paraguayan congress to ratify the suspension, accepting the so-called violation of International Law. Also concerning this topic, senator Emilia Alfaro de Franco (PLRA) criticised president Cartes for having double standards when not respecting the previous decision of rejecting the Venezuelan incorporation and adopting a new stand in the Paraguayan foreign policy, in favour of reintegrating into Mercosur and agreeing with decisions taken during the suspension.

On the other hand, senator Juan Carlos Galaverna Delvalle (ANR-PC) mentioned that his party had a meeting to recommend the approval of the Protocol of Accession, despite the previous resistance to the incorporation of Caracas in other occasions. He posed arguments in favour of the economic opportunities provided by Mercosur to trade not only with regional partners but also to reach agreements with extra-bloc markets. In addition, justified the change in the colorado position because of modifications in the geopolitics in these years, yet without clarifying how this relates to the criticisms to Maduro.

In this context, the Protocol was approved in the Chamber of Senators. As seen in Figure 35<sup>7</sup>, For the approval, voted 29 senators (64.4%), while 10 voted against (22.2%). Furthermore, there was 1 abstention (2.2%) and 5 senators were absent (11.1%).

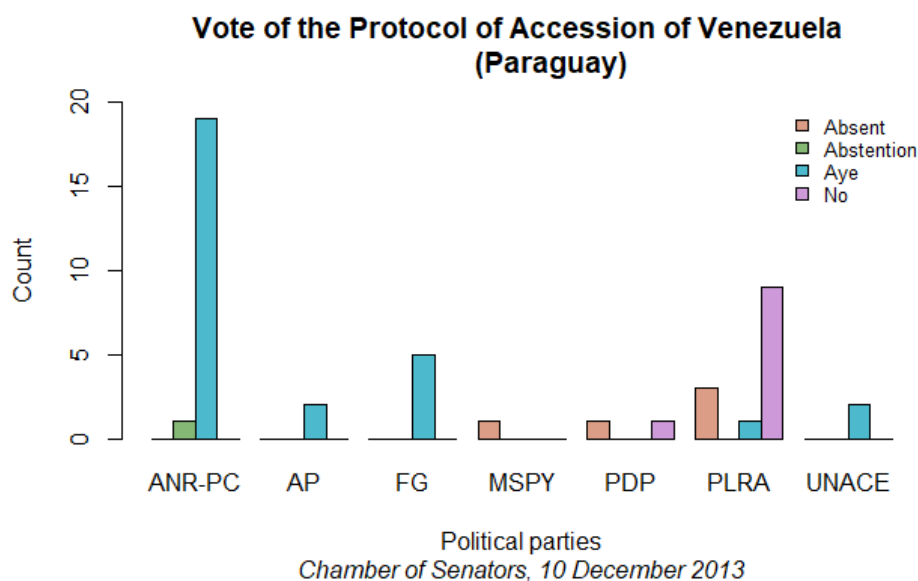


Figure 35. Vote in the Senate (4<sup>th</sup> time)  
Source: Own work based on Paraguay (2020b)

Continuing in the procedures of the Chamber of Deputies, it was forwarded to two committees. In the following day, the lower chamber approved the Protocol, which was promulgated as the law 5145, on 24 December.

When observing this 7-year process, the pendular behaviour of the parties in government (namely, ANR-PC and PLRA) can be explained by the government's foreign policy on what concerns Mercosur and the particular topic of enlargement. When the president stood differently from the partners (position that reached its peak on the suspension of Paraguay and incorporation of Venezuela) the parliamentarians supported it by voting against Caracas. On the other hand, after the suspension and realising the negative impact of international isolation, the new government seeks an approximation to Mercosur and the

<sup>7</sup> MSPY was formerly known as PEN.

legislature supports this movement. This relates to the historical “fear” of being isolated as during the Strooesner’s dictatorship and the benefits of the democratisation promoted by Mercosur, as well as to the predominance of the Presidency in leading foreign affairs (Kfuri and Lamas 2008; Mora 2003).

Therefore, this pendulum indicates that, for the larger parties, ideology was not determinant on those cases. Instead, other variables motivated voting for or against the enlargement of Mercosur, including the fragmentation within the coalition. As the accessions attracted strong opinions about the regional integration, the Paraguayan international strategy and economy, the relationship with the Presidency and the opportunities for Paraguay played a role in how legislators shaped its preferences.

#### *4.2. Context of the Bolivian accession*

Elected in 2006, Evo Morales was the Bolivian president who stayed longer in the office. The 14 years of his administration contrast with a history of political instability in the Andean country. During his period, Bolivia experienced economic growth and social development (Miranda 2019; Blanchard 2021). At the beginning of the government, Morales nationalised oil and gas, strengthening the state presence in the economy. Despite that, the private sector was favoured with the rise of people’s income, stimulated by cash transfer schemes.

Costoya (2011) highlighted that Morales administration executed its development policies to be both market-oriented and solidarity-oriented. This can be seen at the domestic level, but at the international level as well. The belonging to regional organisations is a piece of evidence of this strategy. La Paz participated in the ALBA-TCP, grounded in the relations between Havana and Caracas, but also in the Andean Community, along Bogotá and Lima. On top of

that, seeking the full membership in Mercosur without leaving other organisations composes a tactic to bridge Latin American subregions and profit from relationships with different partners. In Costoya's terms, the Bolivian government negotiated "a changing cartography of trade regimes" (Costoya 2011, 82). Therefore, in sum, Bolivia opposed to some free trade policies – as the agreement with the United States –, but favoured others – the entrance in Mercosur for example.

Due to its position in the regional scenario, the Bolivian diplomacy took advantage of the possibilities. Overall, its foreign policy guidelines can be summarised in the following way:

Especially since the return to democracy, statesmen have sought to turn a geopolitical liability into a future potential. In every manner possible, Bolivian foreign policy has endeavored to capitalize on the country's geopolitical legacy "as the heart of South America" and become the natural nexus for regional cooperation and integration. Bolivia's location and participation in the major trading groups of the region favored such a pivotal role (Morales 2003, 241)

With ALBA, Bolivia sent a sign to its partners, including Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela, securing political, social and economic benefits. Regarding CAN, despite the institution having a neoliberal tune in the 2000s, Bolivia has not left the Andean arrangement (conversely, Venezuela left in 2005, before entering in Mercosur), as far as it was a relevant trade bloc and a forum to discuss the border issues and access to the Pacific Ocean. Moreover, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, CAN experienced changes in its institutional design, proposing a lighter arrangement. Allowing bilateral trade agreements and the multiple membership were mechanisms to cope with the new phase of regionalism at that time (Claros 2016; Briceño Ruiz 2020). This has been classified as double membership, reflecting the overlapping regionalism existent in Latin America (Adrianzén 2014).

Undoubtedly, this is a trace of the so called post-liberal period in Latin America, represented by the MAS in Bolivia. Most of what has been done in these years was challenged when Morales was unseated in 2019. Ziccardi (2020)

claims that the electoral process in 2019 has weakened Morales' popularity, as he questioned the result of the 2016 plebiscite with the decision to be candidate for his fourth term as president, after 13 years at the Quemado Palace. The Organisation of American States' statement was that the election was frauded to favour the re-election of Morales. However, the OAS received questionings to their interpretation of the Bolivian elections, as if they were trying to manipulate the results, by not recognising the results. That is, OAS impacted national politics by affirming and legitimising the discourse of a frauded poll, causing instability (Ziccardi 2020).

Bearing this context in mind, Attanasio (2016) sharply describes that one of the consequences of the Venezuelan inclusion was creating precedents for the Bolivian entrance to Mercosur. Bolivia started the accession negotiations to become a full member state in 2006, a year later than Venezuela. La Paz, as Santiago, has been associated member and participating in Mercosur since 1996, i.e., 15 years before adhering to the bloc as a full member. This contrasts to Venezuela, which became associated member shortly before requesting the full membership, a polarising watershed in the bloc's history.

One of the main differences in the accession of Bolivia is that it produced two protocols, one signed in 2012 and another in 2015. The Bolivian incorporation to the trade bloc was firstly approved by the Heads of State on 7 December 2012, in the city of Brasilia, while Paraguay was suspended from the bloc. Because Asuncion was not integrating Mercosur decisions by the time of the first Protocol, the preamble in 2012 only stated Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Venezuela and Bolivia as contracting parties, i.e., without Paraguay. The latter was mentioned as suspended in a considering-clause.

Nevertheless, Paraguayan authorities questioned the adhesion signed without their consent. For this reason, in 2015 – with Paraguay again as a full member – Mercosur elaborated a new Protocol of Accession. The article 13 of this Protocol accepts the existence of two agreements and accepts previous ratifications. Thus, socio-institutional context is characterised by the experience that Asuncion suffered, as well as a new context in South America, with a change in the ideology of governments, leaning to the right.

Argentina approved the 2012 version, while Brazil and Paraguay deliberated on the 2015 agreement. Uruguay, instead, passed both. Despite not being a case analysed in this research, the Venezuelan unicameral parliament had to approve the incorporation of Bolivia, since Caracas was by that time a member with full rights and duties in Mercosur. It was the first country to agree to the Bolivian Protocol of Accession, ratifying it on 17 June 2013. As we can see, the Venezuelans passed the first Protocol, before the second agreement was signed on 17 July 2015 in Brasilia, during a Heads of State summit.

Another relevant piece of information from the 2012 Protocol is that it was signed by the presidents of Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Bolivia. However, the Venezuelan part was Rafael Ramírez, minister of Oil and Mines. This happened because president Chávez had to be submitted to a surgery in Cuba. Due to his absence for health reasons, the then vice-president and minister of Foreign Affairs Nicolás Maduro was the incumbent president in Caracas and had not attended the summit in Brazil. Therefore, Ramírez headed the delegation in the first time that Venezuela was participating as a member with full rights in the bloc (*BBC News* 2012). Sending the minister of Oil and Mines was a gesture that placed the sector of energy and exploration as a Venezuelan priority to the relationship with Mercosur and Bolivia.

#### 4.2.1. *Protocol of Bolivia in the Paraguayan Congress*

In view of this contextualisation, the second case explored is the Paraguayan approval of the accession of Bolivia to Mercosur, which lasted 286 days, from 31 July 2015 to 12 June 2016. Thus, it is a case that reached the outcome of what we consider a fast legislative process. About the dates, it is also important to point out that it was quickly forwarded from the Presidency to the Parliament, in 2 weeks.

Thus, the truth table row for this case is 1 1 1 1 1 1. This corresponds to a majoritarian (M) right-wing government (R), which has few parties composing



the coalition (N) and the president's party controlling more than half of the legislature (P). Also, the country had good trade relation with Mercosur partners (T) and a stable economic situation (E).

In Paraguay, considering that ANR-PC was the ruling party since 2013, Cartes still was the president, repeating the political indicators seen in the last process of the Venezuelan accession. Therefore, his single-party coalition had more support from the legislature and, as a right-wing government, was aligned with most of the Paraguayan political actors. Regarding the economic situation, it was not perceived as an economic fragility, as stable values were seen in 4 indicators, while 3 others had a positive variation (more than a standard deviation above the average): FDI, GDP and GDP per capita. This pattern evidence indicates that during these years, Paraguay did not face an abnormal economy, but experienced a relatively good moment.

As mentioned above, the economic interest of having benefits with Mercosur pressures for fostering the integration with bloc, by ratifying the agreements. When analysing the Paraguayan trade pattern with the bloc between 2007 and 2016, there is a decline in the dependence, reaching the lowest point in 2013. That is to say, it follows the period of delaying the Protocol of Caracas and the suspension. After being suspended, there was a slow recovery of the foreign trade with Mercosur. Being a small country, Paraguay is susceptible to exogenous influences from major powers (Heduvan 2020). In other terms, a possible explanation for the existence of the outcome is that Paraguay was not only politically isolated, but also suffered an economic impact from being distant from the regional partners. When there was an improvement of the relationship, domestic sectors demanded a faster ratification of the accession.

In what concerns the trade interdependence, 45.71% of its exports and imports was commercialized with Mercosur partners, corresponding to the historical average and recovering the commerce with the bloc, as seen in Figure 36.

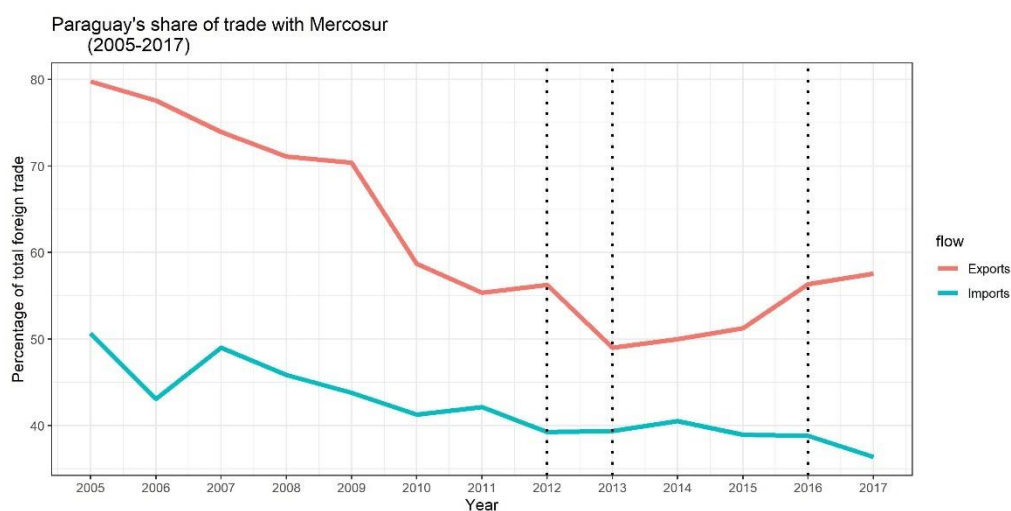


Figure 36. Paraguay-Mercosur trade  
 Source: Own work based on UN Comtrade (2020)

Paraguay approved the entrance of La Paz under the law 5615. In the online congressional archives, the file number is S-151197 (Paraguay 2015). The Executive branch forwarded the bill to the Chamber of Senators in July 2015 with the message 291.

With an ordinary process, in August the bill was sent to three committees. Seven months later, on 16 March 2016, a favourable report was issued in the committee on Foreign Relations and International Affairs. On the same day, the committee on Constitutional Affairs, National Defence and Public Force also issued a report for the approval. The document was signed by seven senators, including Fernando Lugo, former president by the time of Venezuelan accession. Soon after, on 30 March 2016, the committee on Legislation, Coding, Justice and Labour issued the third favourable report. Finally, the Protocol was congressionally legislated on the Chamber of Senators' floor on 31 March 2016. On this period, the Chamber of Senators was chaired by Mario Abdo Benítez (ANR-PC), who later become president of Paraguay, succeeding Cartes.

In the lower house, the proceeding lasted for nearly three months. On 21 April 2016 the bill entered in the Chamber of Deputies, being forwarded to two committees. In the following week, the committee on Foreign Relations approved the Protocol. Nonetheless, according to the records, the committee on

Constitutional Affairs had not discussed the Protocol. Therefore, after passing in the first committee, it was sent to the floor. On 12 May 2016, it was approved by the Chamber of Deputies.

During this session, the accession was debated by the members of congress (Paraguay 2016). Generally speaking, the discourses were favourable to the incorporation of La Paz, as exemplified by deputy José María Ibañez (ANR-PC), who supported the strategic partnership with Bolivia. He stood for the physical integration of markets and cooperation in energy production. Also, deputy Olga Ferreira de López (PPQ) agreed to the enlargement, yet criticised the recent history of Mercosur, about the suspension in 2012. Given that, the speeches indicate that these political facts were not overcome, but a position was found to go through it and approve this Mercosur decision. In spite of the debate in the lower chamber, neither senators nor deputies amply discussed the bill, according to the records, a fact that can be interpreted as those decisions were made out of the floor and ratified there. In the following month, the bill was promulgated as law by the Executive.

Without a roll-call vote to analyse this sequence evidence, we employ the committees' reports on this bill to enable the comparison, observing that every party endorsed the reports in favour of the accession of Bolivia in the bloc, as shown in Figure 37. Although the high number of ANR-PC parliamentarians signing the reports stands out from the graph, this is explained by the share of seats controlled by the party and because it supported the government.

## Accession of Bolivia in the Paraguayan Congress (2015-2016)

Committees' reports

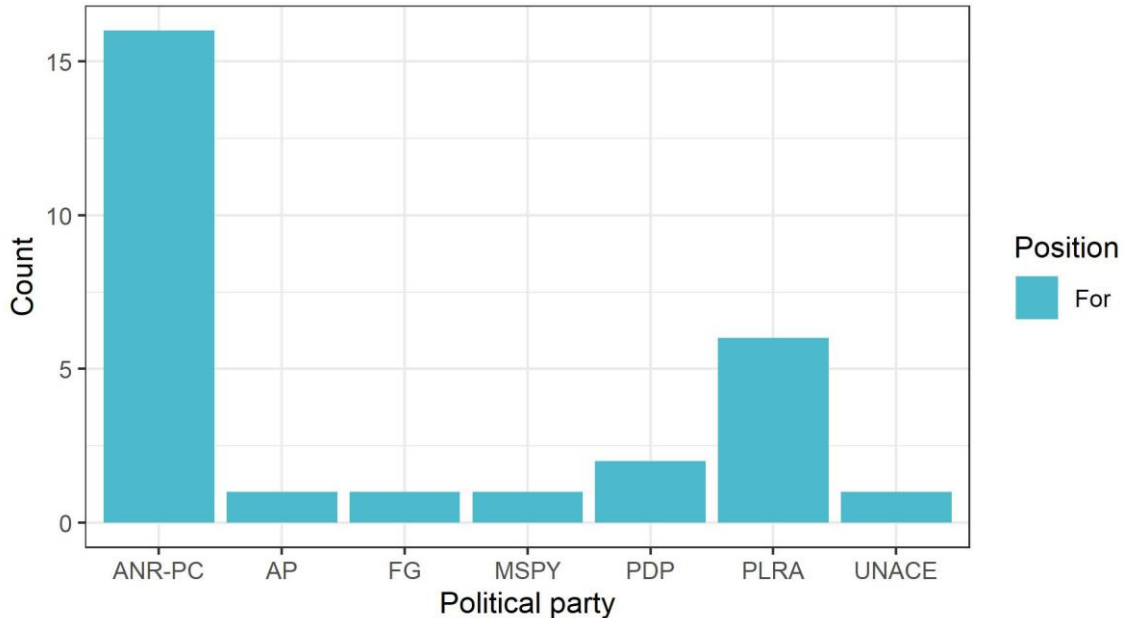


Figure 37. Vote of the Protocol of Bolivia  
Source: Own work based on Paraguay (2020b)

In view of the above and following Process Tracing practices, we elaborate a mechanism that summarises the phenomenon and explains how each part is connected to the others. Moreover, the causal mechanism is expected to be generalisable to functionally equivalent cases, explaining why the episode of Venezuelan incorporation did not reach the outcome, i.e., a fast approval.

The trigger, which puts into action the process, is the achievement of an international action sought by the government. Here, it corresponds to the signature of the Protocol of Accession of Bolivia, which was negotiated to fit Paraguayan requirements in 2015. Furthermore, the scope condition on which the trigger is embedded is the proximity between the government and the regional partners in the bloc. Moreover, the QCA anticipated which conditions are necessary and sufficient for producing Y. That is, being a majority government and having few political parties. Both conditions are seen in this case.

Considering that the agreement must be ratified, the step 1 of the mechanism is the submission to national consideration. In our case, sending the bill to the Chamber of Senators. Indeed, it was quickly referred to the Congress, demonstrating the willingness of approving it and the confidence that it would be approved. The second step is the legislative deliberation, with government legislators speeding up the process. In the consideration of the enlargement, this is represented by few discussions in the sessions and by a fast move from one committee to another. With this phase concluded, the outcome was reached, that is, the Protocol was approved.

Having that said, the case of Venezuela was not approved in a fast pace, because there was some estrangement between the heads of state in the bloc, in what concerns the scope condition. Furthermore, about the trigger, although the Protocol was signed by president Frutos, it was not a clear priority for the government's foreign policy. Regarding the first step, the submission to the Congress also faced problems, having been received four times by the legislators. And in the second step, in several moments the government did not have support in the congress, with a strong opposition debating and postponing the decision. Finally, as unveiled in the QCA, a more fragmented party system led to the longer time for being approved. To sum up, the Venezuelan accession is a deviant case and does not fit the causal mechanism.

#### *4.3. Comparison between Venezuelan and Bolivian protocols of accession*

Given the fact that this was the same legislature which voted the fourth process regarding the Venezuelan accession, it is possible to compare the legislative behaviour. In other terms, the actors remain stable in both processes, the bill is in the same field (accession of new member states to the regional bloc), but there are a handful of differences in the context. First, the Paraguayan foreign policy and its situation in the bloc changed after the suspension. Secondly, the neighbouring partners – Argentina and Brazil – had new governments, closer to

Palace of the López. Lastly, Bolivia was somehow different than Venezuela, in regard of the politicisation of the society. In other words, it was not a polemic process, because the Andean country was not perceived negatively. Plus, Caracas was being increasingly isolated in South America, under Maduro's administration.

Heduvan (2020; 2019) stresses that historically Paraguay was constrained by two goals: diminishing its vulnerabilities, because of geographical and economic reasons; as well as to limit its dependency of a single power. Nonetheless, it is permanently under the volatility of the external environment, in the region or in the international system (Scheldrup 2014; Long 2017). Therefore, after reentering Mercosur, Paraguay was benefited by recovering the relationship with its neighbours, but also favoured the enlargement as a mechanism to distribute power within the bloc.

In view of the above, the case of Bolivia represents how the political conditions favour a fast approval, with the Legislative branch agreeing with the Executive about regional integration. On the other hand, there are exceptional cases, as the Venezuelan accession, "that demonstrated how Congress can exercise its veto power on an essential topic of Paraguay's foreign policy agenda" (Ribeiro, Burian, and Lyra 2020, 13).

By including the notion of temporality, we assume that actors can transform the processes and intentionally make temporal structures (Grzymala-Busse 2011). When comparing the partisan behaviour, there are three different patterns to understand how their positions evolved in a 3-year span. Initially, the FG has not changed its position, that is, to be in favour of the enlargement. Therefore, we can infer that this party follows its ideological cohesiveness, in spite of alterations in the context. Moreover, the ANR-PC sustained its stand favourable to the accession of Venezuela and Bolivia in the final processes. However, an imperative element to be borne in mind is that this political force changed its position about the entrance of Venezuela throughout time. For this reason, we can conclude that this party votes in a disciplined form but does not have ideological coherence. Their main determinant is the interaction with the government, within the domestic political game. In 2013 and 2015-2016, the

ANR-PC was ruling the Executive branch and its legislative bench took its position accordingly.

Differently, two parties – PDP and UNACE – modified their position from one occasion to another. They were against the Venezuelan accession, but in favour of the Bolivian incorporation. The change in the international and regional context are explanations of these cases. Finally, the PLRA was against Venezuela acceding, but in favour of the incorporation of Bolivia. Yet, this happened when the party was in the opposition, that is, it voted not only regarding new member States, but also in relation to the decision of the Paraguayan government. In 2010 and 2012, when the PLRA was the government, their members decided following the governmental position.

In view of that, this observation indicates that a homogenous coalition, that is majoritarian and rightist, can achieve a fast result. Nonetheless, in both Bolivian and Venezuelan accessions, the domestic variables play a role, but the international context and foreign policy guidelines also affect the legislative behaviour. This is important to include an additional variable to the understanding of legislatures and foreign affairs. Although it was not included neither in the Survival Analysis nor in the QCA, the Process Tracing revealed the importance of the international scenario at the domestic level.

It can be therefore assumed, from this case, that a majoritarian government, formed by a large president's party, provides conditions for a faster approval. Confirming previous studies (Chaisty 2014; Däubler 2008; Manow and Burkhart 2008; Magar and Moraes 2008; Bond, Fleisher, and Krutz 2009; Hiroi and Renno 2014), parliamentarians are guided by the government-opposition cleavage and the parties aligned to the government are expected to support the presidential bills. Nonetheless, contrary to the expectations, in this and other observations, right-wing governments are present producing faster ratifications. Even though left-wing parties have pro-Latin America and pro-regionalism discourses, while right-wing parties tend to be more favourable to integrate and trade with the Global North, the accomplishment of ratifying Mercosur agreements is carried out by rightist presidents.

In the case of Paraguay, this is represented by the presidency of Cartes and his legislative shield composed by ANR-PC. That is to say, a traditional political party that ensured a strong basis to approve the president's foreign policy. This combination has been seen in other periods in Paraguay, as in the 1990s, but also in Argentina when Carlos Menem was the president and had a coalition largely composed by the PJ. Therefore, it is not a situation widespread across Mercosur, but it may happen and explain a certain number of observations.

Having said that, the Bolivian protocol in Paraguay supports almost every hypothesis in this research. It presented a majoritarian coalition (H1a), a large president's party (H1b), a single-party coalition (H1c), positive within-Mercosur trade (H3a) and stable economic scenario (H3b). The only exception is H2, that expected a leftist government to approve faster. In this case, it was a right-wing government. Nonetheless, it should be noted that Paraguay had only one left-wing president, i.e., it is difficult to find this variable in that political culture. Furthermore, president Cartes had to deal with the suspension from Mercosur and its reintegration, which altered the ideological perspective about the bloc.

When observing the Venezuelan protocol, again it partly supports our hypotheses. Considering that this approval took long time, we expected to see the inverse of what was stated in the hypotheses. About H1a and H1b, there was a minoritarian coalition during most of the process and it was approved only with a majoritarian coalition. H1c suggested that fewer parties would approve faster, and in this case, we see that the initial government had only one party, but was minoritarian. The following had four parties integrating the government and was unsuccessful in approving it. Finally, it was approved with a single-party coalition. Concerning H2, it falsifies our hypothesis, because it was a right-wing government that approved the protocol. Regarding H3a, the trade performed with Mercosur did not fall below our threshold (one standard deviation), but was shelved in a period of decrease and approved when it began to increase. About H3b, it was not detected a severe economic instability in this period.

Thus, these findings contribute to the QCA solution suggesting that homogeneous majoritarian coalitions have better conditions to produce a fast approval, while a heterogeneous coalition would hamper the approval. When



comparing to what was predicted in the Survival Analysis, again we can see the unexpected result about the ideology. The Cox model suggested that left-wing increases the chances of been approved, however includes the opposite in the confidence interval, which actually happens in the case study. The other divergences from the regression are number of parties and foreign trade. The predictions indicated that more parties and less trade would offer more chance to conclude the procedures. In the case study, we saw the opposite. On the other hand, there was a convergence between both analyses in coalition size, president's party size and economic conditions.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this concluding chapter, we offer a summation of the key findings discussed throughout the thesis, and a few final reflections for further studies. The current research analysed how long national parliaments take to approve international treaties. The selection for a regional organisation as Mercosur allowed to sample similar agreements in four member states, framing observations that are comparable among themselves. The comparison included 118 Mercosur treaties and how long it took to the parliamentarians to approve them, aiming to understand the factors that altered the velocity of the procedures. From these cases, we expect to have contributed understanding how parliaments act in international politics and which are the drivers to speed up or slow down the legislative procedures.

A limitation of this study is that the measurement of the explanatory variables could be improved. Relying on external datasets did not allow the customisation of the data for this research. For instance, coalition size was calculated taking into account only the lower chamber, even if the four countries are bicameral. In addition to that, the thesis did not incorporate variables as lobby, campaign finance, electoral calendar and electoral district. The reason for that is that the literature does not indicate these as the principal factors to explain legislatures and foreign affairs, but further modelling work could determine their relevance. That said, the following conclusions can be drawn from the present study.

The study was structured in three steps to combine techniques, taking advantages from both a longitudinal perspective and an in-depth analysis.

Therefore, the scope of observations changes in each analysis. Starting from agreements of different categories, we focused on the ratification of the enlargement of Mercosur and, finally, on the Paraguayan approval of two accessions. These changes explain why there are minor differences in the findings of each chapter. When we included more data, the results explain trends applicable to different political and economic scenarios. Conversely, when we emphasised specific cases, we detailed those processes. A similar work could be done with other treaties, to understand how the independent variables affected the duration.

Table 16 shows the summary of hypotheses and results:

Table 16. Hypotheses testing

| Independent variable           | Hypothesis | Shorter duration of legislative procedures |                                  |                 |
|--------------------------------|------------|--|----------------------------------|-----------------|
|                                |            | Method                                     |                                  |                 |
|                                |            | Survival Analysis                          | Qualitative Comparative Analysis | Process Tracing |
| Majoritarian coalition         | H1a        | Supported                                  | Supported                        | Supported       |
| Large president's party        | H1b        | Supported                                  | Not supported                    | Supported       |
| Fewer parties in the coalition | H1c        | Not supported                              | Supported                        | Supported       |
| Ideology (left-wing)           | H2         | Supported                                  | Supported                        | Not supported   |
| Within-Mercosur trade          | H3a        | Not supported                              | Supported                        | Supported       |
| Stable economy                 | H3b        | Partly supported                           | Partly supported                 | Supported       |

Source: Own work

Analysing each hypothesis, the results of every method supported H1a, which stated that the larger the coalition is, faster the approvals are. H1b suggested that when the president's party plays a larger role in the coalition and in the congress, it should accelerate the procedures. Although the Survival Analysis and the Process Tracing confirmed it, the QCA solution explicitly pointed out to the opposite, which could be a coalition composed of more parties. About the number of parties in the coalition, tested in H1c, the two qualitative approaches affirmed its validity, while the Cox model suggested that fewer parties should decrease the chance of approving.

That said, these three hypotheses analyse the impact of the nature of coalitions in the legislative speed. About the size, it was confirmed that larger coalitions help to approve fast. The two other expectations have different

conclusions across the research. The president's party was not sufficient in the QCA, but this applies to two Argentinian cases. Therefore, we can assume that, overall, when the party has more seats, it expedites the procedures. Finally, regarding the number of parties, the qualitative part confirmed the expectations that a homogeneous coalition would favour the approval, but this was falsified in the Survival Analysis. The relatively limited sample and the presence of outliers, as Brazilian cases that present multi-party coalitions, might explain this difference.

The following hypothesis tests if the ideology of the government affects the legislative speed. From the literature, we expected that left-wing governments would favour the integration, by ratifying the agreements and executing this guideline of their foreign policy. This was confirmed in the Survival Analysis and in the Qualitative Comparative Analysis, but not in the Process Tracing. Despite that, this does not falsify the hypothesis, because the case studies were concentrated on a specific country in a short period of time. Because of that, the general conclusion of the study supports H2.

The last two sub-hypotheses covered economic variables: the trade with Mercosur partners and indicators of economic (un)stability. Both QCA and Process Tracing supported H3a, indicating that more trade relationship with the bloc would accelerate the parliamentary procedures. Nonetheless, the Cox model predicted that more trade decreases the chance of being approved. When examining the data distribution, we see that after 1500 days, the cases with trade larger than 50% are faster. Thus, this tail in the curve can be an explanation for the negative coefficient. Moreover, the economic indicators in H3b showed little effect in the duration, making finds inconclusive, even if there is a tendency that good economic performance eases the approval of the treaties. In view of that, a thorough analysis is needed to check how this influences the legislative behaviour, possibly by looking to the impact of Mercosur policies at the subnational level and on specific productive sectors.

In view of the above, emphasising the findings from the Survival Analysis, because it is the core of the current research, this study has found that generally political variables have a greater impact on the duration of legislative

procedures. The most significant findings to emerge are the coalition size, president's party size, the ideology of the government and the within-Mercosur trade. In other words, we predict that a left-wing majoritarian coalition, with a large share of the president's party and with a good relationship with neighbouring partners may produce a fast approval. This point reinforces the argument advanced in earlier chapters.

It is important to highlight that the generalisability of the results is constrained by some particularities of each case, making difficult to produce a general parliamentary behaviour about Mercosur. However, this does not eliminate the need to produce generalisations in this field of studies. Furthermore, the case studies unveiled the relevance of international scenario and the proximity between presidents as variables that influence the ratification. In Social Sciences, it is not possible to control for every variable, leading to limitations in the inference from data, which opens room for alternative explanations not considered a priori (Schettini, Cunha, and Leitão Araújo 2018). The detailed case studies revealed new aspects to consider in future research.

Further research work incorporating Latin American international dynamics into the regression model would be worthwhile, because this element played an important role in the two cases described. Moreover, the study should be repeated isolating each member state, to assess if the effect of the covariates is different because of particularities in the national party systems. This is important because in this study there is a certain degree of heterogeneity among the states, as the fragmented party system in Brazil.

Two possible progressions of this work can be made to elucidate what causes shorter or longer processes. First, to incorporate the ordinary Mercosur law production into the dataset, in order to have a larger sample in more different scenarios. This would increase the analysis to reach every rule produced by the bloc, independently of its content or importance. The second option is to compare the Mercosur treaties with other international treaties signed by the states, either bilateral or multilateral. Therefore, the results would not be restricted to Mercosur reality and topics, but they would involve agreements with different partners. This could answer if the parliamentary treatment to Mercosur

is equal to other foreign policy topics. An issue that was mentioned, but not tested in this study was comparing foreign and domestic policies. That is, if the duration with Mercosur treaties is similar to the consideration of bills about other policies.

Given these recommendations to provide more definitive evidence, the purpose of this investigation to examine why some Mercosur agreements took shorter time than others when passing in the national legislatures has been accomplished. All things considered, the relevance of domestic politics is supported by the current findings, affirming the importance of having a legislative shield to approve the government bills.

Taken together, the results of this study strengthen the idea that parliaments do not manifest interest on foreign policy and are guided mainly by the government-opposition cleavage. This provides insights on the centrality of the Executive branch to decide the proper moment to push for the approval of an international treaty. Nonetheless, this does not rule out the existence of the veto power of legislatures, as seen in several cases that took years to approve, crossing more than one government. Although this investigation and the literature demonstrated the activity of parliamentarians in international politics, it is important to acknowledge their focus on domestic issues. If this is true, Mercosur and foreign policy share little space in their agenda. That being the case, the variables in this research explain the ratification, but not every effect, as non-measurable behaviour might influence the output.

Therefore, the findings of this investigation complement those of earlier studies on legislatures and international affairs, extending our knowledge on the reality of Latin America. Moreover, the thesis has provided a deeper insight into the field of treaties ratification in Mercosur, documenting and explaining how the South American bloc interacts with national institutions and how the parliaments react to the regional integration.

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