The new comparative-historical method and its contributions to political science and public administration

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This article seeks to identify the contributions that the new comparative-historical method (CHM) has made to political science and public administration. By showing how recent advances in CHM can generate analytical gains through establishing causal conditions and tests associated with process tracing, we hope this will contribute to strengthening qualitative-based research of these two disciplines in Brazil. To achieve this, the paper begins by dissecting the main elements of this method. Then we review the classic work entitled *Sessenta e quatro: anatomia da crise* (*Sixty-four: anatomy of the crisis*) by Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos in light of the method's precepts. The paper also reviews a number of studies on Argentine foreign policy and highlights the gains that can be generated by the disciplined application of CHM. In the conclusion, the potential and limitations of the method are identified and some considerations are made with regard to the importance of its application to Brazilian political science and public administration.

Keywords: comparative-historical method; process tracing; causal conditions; Brazilian politics; Argentine foreign policy.

O novo método histórico-comparativo e seus aportes à ciência política e à administração pública
Neste manuscrito, procuramos identificar os aportes do novo método histórico-comparativo à ciência política e à administração pública. Tentamos contribuir com o fortalecimento das pesquisas de orientação qualitativa dessas duas disciplinas no Brasil, ao mostrar como os recentes avanços daquele método

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podem gerar ganhos analíticos por meio do estabelecimento mais preciso de condições causais e da utilização dos testes associados ao chamado *process tracing*. Para dar conta desse objetivo, o trabalho, em primeiro lugar, disseca os principais elementos do referido método. Depois, relemos e, por assim dizer, reorganizamos *Sessenta e quatro: anatomia da crise*, livro clássico de Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos, à luz dos preceitos do referido método. Em seguida, também relemos e reorganizamos alguns estudos sobre a política externa argentina sob a mesma luz. Destacamos os ganhos gerados pela aplicação disciplinada do método histórico-comparativo. Na conclusão, identificamos as potencialidades e limitações do método, oferecendo também considerações a respeito da importância que sua aplicação pode ter para a ciência política e a administração pública brasileiras.

Palavras-chave: método histórico-comparativo; mapeamento de processos; condições causais; política brasileira; política externa argentina.

El nuevo método histórico-comparado y sus aportes a la ciencia política y a la administración pública

En este manuscrito, buscamos contribuir al fortalecimiento metodológico de la ciencia política y de la administración pública de orientación cualitativa en Brasil, mostrando cómo los recientes avances del nuevo método histórico-comparativo pueden generar ganancias analíticas a través del establecimiento más preciso de las condiciones causales y el uso de los criterios de evaluación asociados a lo llamado *process tracing*. Para alcanzar este objetivo, el trabajo, en el primer lugar, analiza los principales elementos de este método. Luego leemos y, por así decirlo, reorganizamos *Sessenta e quatro: anatomia da crise*, libro clásico de Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos, a la luz de los preceptos de ese método. En seguida, también releemos y reorganizamos algunos estudios sobre la política exterior argentina bajo la misma luz. Destacamos las ganancias generadas por la aplicación disciplinada del método histórico-comparativo. En la conclusión, identificamos el potencial y las limitaciones del método y ofrecemos consideraciones acerca de la importancia que su aplicación puede tener para la ciencia política y la de administración pública de Brasil.

Palabras-chave: método histórico-comparativo; rastreo de procesos; condiciones causales; política brasileña; política exterior argentina.

The last decade has seen tremendous progress in comparative-historical methods (CHM), progress led by the works of David Collier, Tulia Falleti, Alexander George, Gary Goertz, James Mahoney and Charles Ragin, among others. Although this is a traditional method in the social sciences, these authors have endeavored to give it a degree of unprecedented formalization (Goertz and Mahoney, 2012; Mahoney, Kimball and Koivu, 2009; Mahoney and Vanderpoel, 2015). It is therefore a great opportunity for Brazilian political science and public administration, given that both disciplines are largely qualitative-oriented but rarely supported by solid methodological foundations (Barboza and Godoy, 2014; Cano, 2012; Hocayen-da-Silva et al., 2008; Neiva, 2015; Peci and Fornazin, in press; Soares, 2005).[1] More-

1 We follow Fadul et al.'s (2014:1336) definition of public administration in Brazil: "Public administration research is not restricted to study of the management of governmental organizations and/or actions of the public sector, but

over, advances in CHM have had a certain amount of interaction with quantitative traditions, facilitating greater understanding of the approach and allowing the combination of different "research cultures", to use the expression coined by Goertz and Mahoney (2012).

Inspired by this rich debate, this article discusses the methodological features of a classic book about Brazilian politics and recent works on Argentine foreign policy, trying to understand them through innovations in historical-comparative analysis. Two of our goals are therefore: (1) to emphasize the value of the method for Brazilian political scientists and students of public administration, and (2) to show that historical-comparative analysis has been implicitly used by various authors and that its explicit and systematic adoption can improve the qualitative-oriented works that investigate one or a few national cases.

We review *Sessenta e quatro: anatomia da crise* (*Sixty-four: anatomy of the crisis*) by Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos (1986) and some articles that attempt to identify the causal conditions underlying changes in Argentine foreign policy (AFP). Subsequently, we prioritize causes and conditions based on the principles of CHM.

The choice of the book by Santos stems from the fact that it is a carefully organized case study, conceptually and empirically, that addresses vital aspects of CHM. The work also analyzes an event of Brazilian politics that is well known to political scientists and students of public administration of the country — the article's target audience — in order to maximize persuasiveness. The choice of studies on AFP relates to the desire to capture the attention of internationalists and public policy scholars. Some analysts of Buenos Aires's foreign policy consign the main causes of changes in the AFP to presidents and domestic politics (Malamud, 2005, 2011). Russell and Tokatlian (2003, 2014) claim that AFP toward Brazil and the United States seeks autonomy, as opposed to dependency. This is a debate that will be examined through CHM.

In addition to enabling rich debate among different approaches, CHM's application is also justified because of some emerging issues in the field of public administration. Historical comparisons used for the analysis of cycles of changes in public administration have been advocated by scholars in the field, as shown by Berzelay and Gallego (2010:210), who debate topics discussed by Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003). Understanding these cycles depends on the perception of the policy-making process over time. Falleti's (2005, 2010) studies on the decentralization of public administration and education and health policies in Latin America are other examples of the uses of CHM. Besides these, we also highlight the importance that historical comparison has in investigating institutional change, a vital research agenda for students of public administration. As shown by Mahoney and Thelen (2009), CHM looks at temporal sequences as explanatory conditions for change.

involves concepts and applications related to the State and civil society. From these aspects that shape public space, some topics of interest were structured around the State: roles, strategies, structures, actors, processes, relationships, power and changes arising from crises and reforms". As will be seen below, the new CHM finds ample application in these issues.

The aim of strengthening traditional ties between history and social sciences is at the root of recent CHM advances, ties that had been greatly weakened by the fulminating rise of quantitative methods from the 1970s. CHM seeks to realize this goal through the precise development of concepts, the use of logic, the emphasis on causal mechanisms and processes, historical sequences, and a great concern to the context of political processes and countries. This research program does not abdicate explanatory ambitions. CHM is positivist, as it seeks causal explanations (Cano, 2012:96), and aims at contingent generalizations (George and Bennett 2005:31-32). Moreover, CHM does not exclude the use of quantitative data and methods. On the contrary, in several instances complementarity is possible and desirable (George and Bennett, 2005; Lieberman, 2005; Ragin, 2008; Rao, 2014; Rohlfing, 2008).

It is due to recognition of the relative weakness of qualitative methodological traditions of Brazilian political science and public administration that we propose to apply CHM to Brazilian politics and AFP. The text is divided into four sections. The next addresses the main characteristics of CHM from works by Falleti and Lynch (2009), Mahoney (2008), Mahoney, Kimball and Koivu (2009), Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003), Braumoeller and Goertz (2000), Goertz and Starr (2003) and Levy and Goertz (2007). In the following section, we seek to understand Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos's book in light of CHM precepts. The fourth section attempts to organize some AFP studies in the same light. In the last section, we identify the potential and limitations of this method, offering considerations about the importance that CHM's application has for Brazilian political science and public administration.

1. The comparative-historical method (CHM) applied to social sciences

According to Mahoney and Rueschemeyer (2003:3), the use of CHM dates back to the nineteenth century. The analyses of Karl Marx, John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville can be seen as the first steps in the development of this method. Later, Max Weber and Marc Bloch developed political analysis based on historical processes. However, the method is also notable because of the sociological studies of Barrington Moore, Theda Skocpol and Charles Tilly. Among their main concerns is the delineation of specific historical processes such as revolutions, democratization and the formation of states, and the identification of their main attributes and the explanatory conditions behind their results. CHM is the means to find the causes of a relevant outcome or political phenomenon from the perspective of historical processes. This is one of the most important differences between CHM and quantitative methods based on multivariate regression analysis (MRA): while the first is concerned with the causes of consequences, the second seeks above all to understand the consequences of causes (Mahoney, 2010).

A typical issue of CHM proponents would be as follows: Why did several Latin American countries have revolutionary movements in the 1950s and 1980s but few resulted in success-

ful revolutions? What were the conditions for the success of revolutionary movements in the region over that period? (Wickham-Crowley, 1991). In turn, MRA research would assess the impact of party fragmentation on the stability of parliamentary governments. Note that the answer to the typical CHM question involves a contingent generalization about the region and period. The answer to be given to typical MRA research would most likely draw upon more universal terminology: the more fragmented the party system, the less durable parliamentary democracy is.

Another key difference between CHM and MRA lies in the fact that independent, intervening and dependent variables are not perfectly suited to the first. In place of explanatory variables, explanatory conditions are more akin to the presumption of possibility than determination. Mahoney, Kimball and Koivu (2009) define five types of causes and conditions: (A) necessary but not sufficient, (b) sufficient but not necessary, (c) necessary and sufficient, (d) Suin, and (e) Inus.

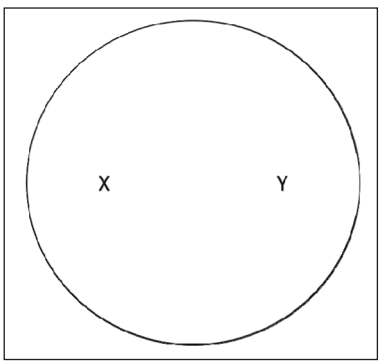
The first step of CHM is to identify the main (or sufficient) causes that interact with the necessary conditions (Levy and Goertz, 2007). To find the necessary conditions concerning the presence or absence of the outcome that is to be explained, "[a] necessary question involves the proposition that the outcome would not have occurred in the absence of it, but also that its presence would not be enough to guarantee the outcome" (Mahoney, Kimball and Koivu, 2009:118). According to these authors, the absence of condition X produces stronger effects than its presence. In addition, Mahoney (2008:6) quotes the classic work of Barrington Moore (1966) in order to exemplify necessary conditions. Moore states: "no bourgeoisie, no democracy". Thus, the bourgeois class is a necessary condition for democracy. Its absence prevents the emergence of democracy. However, this class's presence may or may not mean the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic regime. Therefore, the definition of a condition may also be the following: "If there is no X, then there is no Y". In the language of set theory, X is a necessary condition of Y, if Y is a subset of X (Mahoney, Kimball and Koivu, 2009:118). That is, the necessary conditions are the enablers, so to speak, but not the guarantors of the outcome being explained.

The definition of sufficient conditions is the opposite of necessary conditions, because the former's presence ensures the presence of the outcome that is being explained. It implies that such conditions are rare in the social sciences, because their presence means the existence of the outcome. Therefore, if there is X, then there is Y. X is a sufficient condition of Y, if X is a subset of Y (Mahoney, Kimball and Koivu, 2009:121). That is, while the Y outcome is contained within the necessary condition, the sufficient condition is contained in the outcome.

Turning to necessary *and* sufficient causes, these relate to the conditions that influence the same subset in the same way. According to Mahoney and Vanderpoel (2015), X is a necessary *and* sufficient cause of Y, if the set X is the same for Y. This logic can be better understood with the use of a Venn diagram, as suggested by several authors (Goertz and Mahoney, 2012;

Mahoney, Kimball and Koivu, 2009, Mahoney and Vanderpoel, 2015). As pointed out by Mahoney, Kimball and Koivu (2009), examples of such causes are rare in the social sciences, but can be seen in figure 1.

Figure 1
Venn diagram of a necessary and sufficient cause

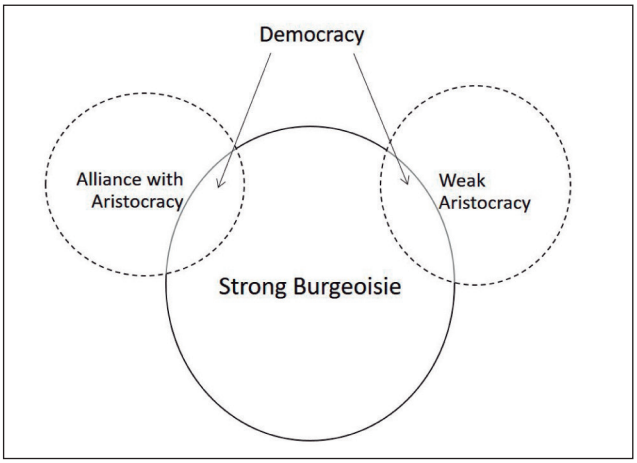


Source: Adapted from Mahoney, Kimball and Koivu (2009).

It should be stressed that necessary, sufficient, and necessary *and* sufficient conditions have a stronger effect on the outcome being explained, and therefore are rarer in the social sciences.

In turn, the conditions most often encountered are called Inus and Suin. Inus stands for "an insufficient but necessary part of a condition which is itself unnecessary but sufficient for the result" (Mahoney, Kimball and Koivu, 2009). That is, an Inus condition is neither necessary nor sufficient. This is the contribution of a factor to a combination of factors that constitute a sufficient cause. Mahoney, Kimball and Koivu (2009) again draw on Moore to exemplify this causal condition. Moore proposed that the historical path leading to democracy depends on a strong bourgeoisie and an aristocracy that either allied itself to the bourgeoisie (as was the case in England) or that was politically weakened (like in France). Thus, a strong bourgeoisie is a necessary condition for the emergence of democracy, while an aristocracy allied to the bourgeoisie or a politically weakened aristocracy would be an Inus. Taking the case of England, it can be said that the sufficient condition for democratization was the class alliance between a strong bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. The aristocracy's propensity towards such an alliance was a necessary part of a sufficient condition for the democratization of the country. A diagrammatic representation of this type of condition can be seen below.

Figure 2
Venn Diagram of an Inus cause



Source: Adapted from Moore (1966).

Suin relates to a cause that is sufficient but not a necessary part of a factor that is insufficient but necessary for an outcome (Mahoney, 2008:7-8). Suin conditions therefore produce indirect effects. The example used by Mahoney, Kimball and Koivu (2009) is from Russett's (1994) book on the causes of war and peace. According to this author, in a dispute between two countries, the fact that one of them is a non-democratic regime is a necessary condition for the outbreak of war. However, non-democratic regimes have many elements, such as fraudulent elections, high levels of repression and broad sectors of society without the right to vote. Each of these elements is a Suin cause of war because they are neither necessary nor sufficient for the outbreak of a warlike conflict. Each element is one of several factors that constitute a non-democratic regime, which in turn is a necessary cause for war (Mahoney, Kimball and Koivu, 2009:126). Thus, fraudulent elections are sufficient for a regime to be non-democratic. A non-democratic regime is necessary for the outbreak of war between two countries. Fraudulent elections, therefore, are a Suin cause of war. Hence, the indirect effect of fraudulent elections on the outbreak of war is clear. Note, also, that fraudulent elections are a part of the subset relevant to non-democratic regimes. Being part of the sub-group is one of the differentiating criteria of Suin conditions.

Now that the main conditions proposed by CHM have been defined, the next stage to address is one of the main instruments for their identification. According to Collier (2011a:824), "process tracing" is an analytical tool to make descriptive and causal inferences from a range of evidence that permits the identification of a temporal sequence of events constituting a phenomenon. This process is therefore critical to the establishment of causal mechanisms (Falleti and Lynch, 2009), a key aspect of CHM.

> Whereas variables are observable attributes of the units of analysis, […] mechanisms are relational concepts. They reside above and outside the units in question, and they explain the link between inputs and outputs. Mechanisms describe the relationships or the actions among the

> units of analysis or in the cases of study. Mechanisms tell us how things happen: how actors relate, how individuals come to believe what they do or what they draw from past experiences, how policies and institutions endure or change, how outcomes that are inefficient become hard to reverse [...]. [Falleti and Lynch, 2009:1147]

Falleti and Lynch also emphasize that outcomes generated by a mechanism fundamentally depend on the context in which it operates. For example, different sequences of the same type of events constitute different contexts, which generate different outcomes, even though the same mechanism is at work in all contexts. Falleti (2005) shows that the processes of decentralization observed in Latin America in the last two decades of the twentieth century led to different results in terms of the extension of power of national and subnational governments, because of the sequence in which effective decentralization was implemented. For example, the process in Argentina began with administrative decentralization, which was followed by fiscal decentralization, ending with political decentralization. Paradoxically, this sequence led to the strengthening of the central executive power and the weakening of subnational governments. In Brazil, the process began with political decentralization, which was followed by administrative decentralization, ending with fiscal decentralization. This sequence led to the expected strengthening of subnational governments and the weakening of the central executive power. In both cases, the same mechanism was at work, feedback, but it led to different results in different contexts.

Since different contexts can cause the same analytical mechanism to generate different outcomes, the same outcome can be derived from different causal conditions in different contexts or paths. This is called "equifinality", a concept that appears in the seminal work of Moore (1966), which states that different historical paths lead to the same result: democracy. Wickham-Crowley (1991) argues that different combinations of factors led to the failure of revolutionary movements in Latin America in the second half of the twentieth century, a common result in several countries in the region. Equifinality is a problem for MRA, as it tends to posit universal causes for social phenomena (George and Bennett, 2005:20).

Returning to the tests associated with process tracing, according to Mahoney (2012), their value lies in the fact that they establish that: (1) an event or specific process has occurred, (2) a different event or process occurred after the initial event or process, and (3) the second event or process was caused by the first. In the following paragraphs, we examine each of the four tests, according to definitions of Van Evera (1997), Collier (2011a) and Mahoney (2012).

The *straw-in-the-wind test* offers neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for the validation of the main hypothesis at stake. Such a test serves to weaken rival hypotheses and strengthen the main hypothesis. This is the weakest test for an initial evaluation of a main hypothesis.

The *hoop test* allows the identification of the necessary but not sufficient conditions for validating a central hypothesis. It eliminates a hypothesis proposed by an author if it does not pass the test. When the main hypothesis does pass the hoop test, competing hypotheses are weakened to some extent. When a hypothesis supported by an analyst fails the hoop test, competing hypotheses are strengthened to some extent.

The *smoking gun test* sets out the sufficient but not necessary conditions for the validation of a particular hypothesis. Passing the test means that the hypothesis has been confirmed;

however, failure does not imply elimination. When the main hypothesis passes the smoking gun test, rival hypotheses weaken to a good measure. When the main hypothesis fails the smoking gun test, rival hypotheses are strengthened to some extent. The expression "smoking gun" is from crime novels: a person found with a smoking revolver may be guilty of the murder, but the suspects who did not carry a weapon cannot be considered innocent. In the words of Mahoney (2012:576), the smoking gun test typically investigates the existence of traces for which a cause or a result is a sufficient condition. If an analyst can clearly show that one or more traces are present, it can be inferred that a cause or result certainly occurred. Smoking gun tests are in turn more powerful than hoop tests.

The *doubly decisive test* establishes the necessary and sufficient conditions for the validation of a hypothesis and simultaneously eliminates rivals. This is the most authoritative test among the four associated with process tracing. Nevertheless, doubly decisive tests are very difficult to find in the social sciences (Bennett, 2010).

Social scientists usually combine hoop and smoking gun tests in order to maximize the conditions for validation and/or the elimination of hypotheses. In this sense, it should be noted that the rules for the application of process tracing are not rigid and are therefore open to interpretation.

In general, the first three tests — straw-in-the-wind, hoop and smoking gun — associated with process tracing serve more to suppress competing hypotheses than to confirm with certainty the validity of a hypothesis. Successful elimination of hypotheses, however, depends on clearly identifying them and how they relate to the hypothesis of interest. According to Zaks (2011:8), the relationship between hypotheses can take three modes: (1) mutual exclusion — validating the hypothesis of interest invalidates others; (2) coincidence — the hypotheses are independent and validation of one may or may not affect the other; and (3) congruency — the hypotheses are linked and validation implies a confirmation of others. Moreover, the mode of relationship between the hypotheses also has to do with theories that derive from the phenomena that they intend to explain. Therefore, caution should be exercised with works that define their competing hypotheses from eclectic or less parsimonious theories, as the hoop test can be harmful to the hypotheses. This is because the relationship modes between hypotheses derived from these theories tend to be types (2) and (3).

Next, we apply the precepts of CHM and process tracing tests to works on Brazilian politics and Argentine foreign policy. This exercise seeks to highlight the types of causal conditions found in the reviewed book and articles, the hypothesis tests implicitly applied by the authors and how to advance the academic debate through the explicit adoption of CHM.

2. Applying CHM to Brazilian politics

We start the exercise with the classic work of Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos (1986) on the collapse of Brazilian democracy in 1964.

One of the first aspects of the book to be highlighted is Santos's concern with the main hypotheses about the coup of March 1964. Firs of all, Santos (1986:18-22) shows that the

so-called "classic paradigm of Brazilian social and political analysis" — these are analyses that examine class conflict inspired by Marxism, emphasize the phenomenon of populism, and stress the role of military interventionism and the conflict between a progressive presidency and a conservative legislature — is flawed. The paradigm is flawed because when diagnosing the military coup staged in 1964, none of the aspects explains why democracy collapsed in this year and not in 1954 or 1961, years where the causes that had allegedly led to the 1964 coup were already amply present. That is, the test suggested by Santos establishes the necessary condition to validate his hypothesis on the fall of democracy in Brazil in 1964, which we will look at in detail. As discussed, if the main hypothesis satisfies that condition, then the rival hypotheses are weakened to some extent; that is, Santos implicitly resorts to what CHM calls a hoop test. However, these are not the only tests conducted by Santos. As we will show, the author makes use of smoking gun tests to demonstrate the core of his thesis, the decision-making paralysis crisis that marked Brazil in the early 1960s.

According to Santos, institutional ruptures in democratic regimes are the consequences of decision-making paralysis crises. Decision-making paralysis, in turn, paves the way for some groups that seek to break the deadlock through violence and illegally changing the rules of the game — a coup, to put it bluntly.

The question that arises is: How was the situation of decision-making paralysis arrived at and how did it unfold? Decision-making paralysis simultaneously stems from processes of preference dispersal, their intensification, and fragmentation of political resources, a situation that stimulates the formation of ad hoc veto coalitions and greatly hinders the formation of stable governing majorities. A position of political equilibrium is thus arrived at in which the political system is characterized by continuous deadlock (Santos 1986:23-36). In political terms, decision-making paralysis is the result of the combined effect of the increase in the number of parties on the left and right that are in opposition to the government, the radicalization of their ideological positions, the decrease in their legislative contingents, and the concomitant increase in party system fragmentation.

Under the circumstances described, cooperation becomes more difficult because, with the decreasing size of the parties, more parties are needed to form a legislative majority and the parties have less incentive to cooperate because of the radicalization of positions. As the proliferation of opposition parties comes, in general, hand in hand with the increase in the number of parties, the two processes can amalgamate under the rubric of fragmentation. The intensification of preferences is in this case synonymous with ideological radicalization. According to Santos, decision-making paralysis is the product of a process of fragmentation cum radicalization. Examples of decision-making paralysis processes that have led to institutional collapse include the French political crisis in the second half of the 1950s, which resulted in the fall of the Fourth Republic, and Chile's political crisis following the election of Salvador Allende in 1970, which ended in the 1973 military coup.

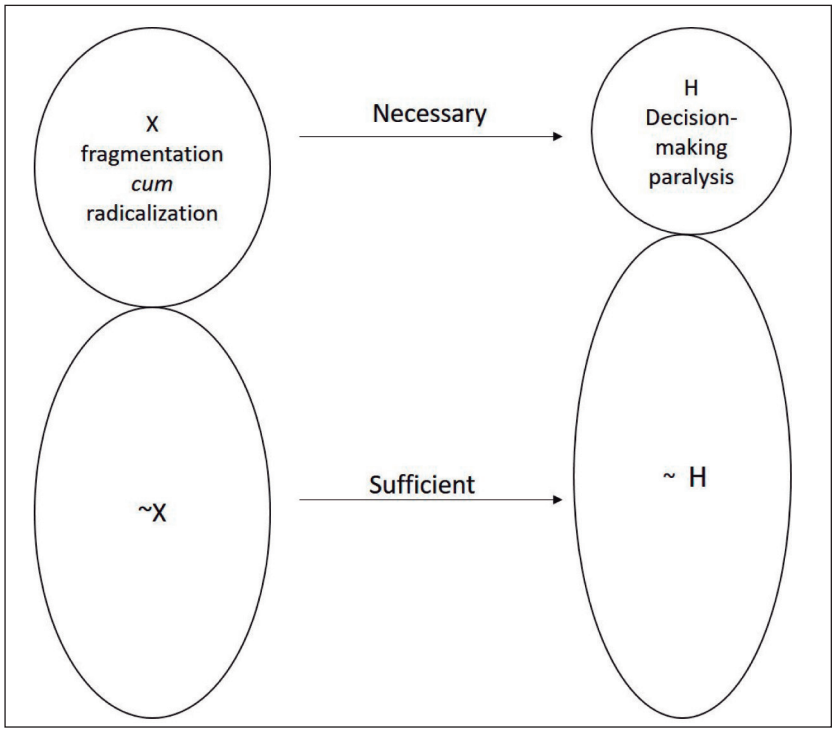
Regarding the process of fragmentation cum radicalization in Brazil, Santos shows that in the legislature of 1946-51, the effective number of parties — a standard measure of fragmentation — was 2.7; in the legislature of 1951-55, 4.1; in 1955-59, 4.6; in 1959-63, 4.5; and in the legislature of 1963-64, 4.6. That is, fragmentation was at its maximum in the year be-

fore the 1964 coup. As for radicalization, Santos displays data showing that, as the legislature fragmented, more seats went to left- and right-wing parties and fewer to the center-left and center-right, causing a situation of increasing ideological polarization (Santos, 1986:76-77).

Note also that the notion of decision-making paralysis crisis fits the definition of the causal mechanism given above, because it offers a map that shows how to go from point A (a particular configuration of the political game) to point B (the collapse of democracy through a coup). It is therefore something broader than the observable attribute of a unit of analysis.

Below, we show a diagram representing the hoop test conducted by Santos, which shows that fragmentation cum radicalization (X) is required to validate the hypothesis about decision-making paralysis (H).

Figure 3
Venn diagram of a hoop test of Santos's hypothesis (1986)



Source: Adapted from Santos (1986).

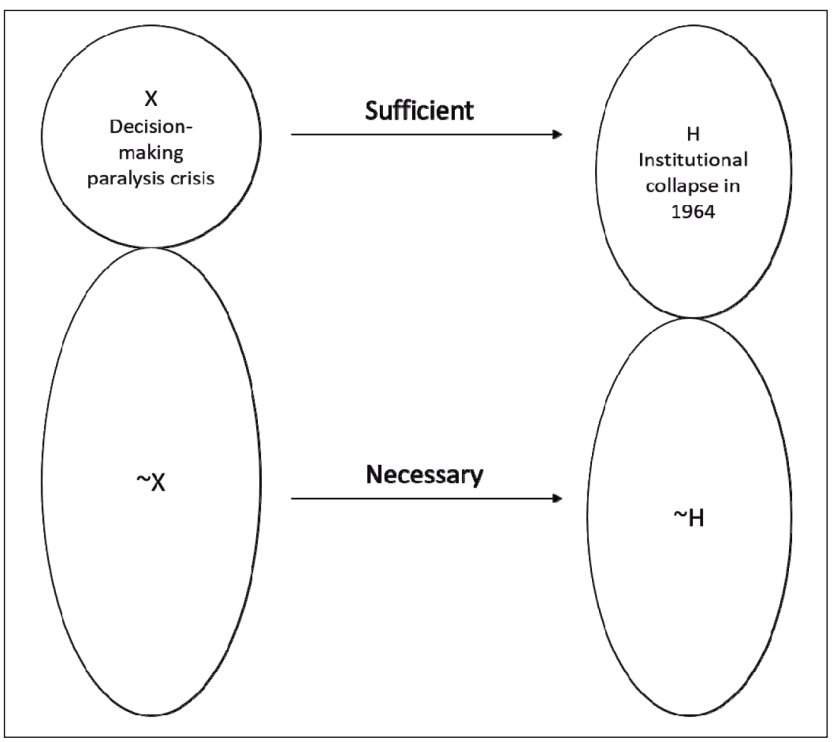
The analytical gain of the theory developed by Santos vis-à-vis the "classic paradigm of Brazilian social and political analysis" is the clear identification of the conditions under which the process of decision-making paralysis occurs, thus allowing one to make accurate predictions about when an institutional rupture would happen. It should be noted that none of the strands of the classic paradigm specify the particular conditions under which a democratic

regime would collapse, and therefore these strands have less analytical capacity to account for the causes of the 1964 coup.

Santos found strong traces of this decision-making paralysis process in Brazil during 1963. In the year before the coup, the approval rate of bills of law fell to 0.07, with similar rates being recorded in preceding years (0.13 in 1959, 0.13 in 1960, 0.15 in 1961 and 0.14 in 1962). Further evidence of decision-making paralysis is the decrease in government stability, which is measured by the turnover rate of cabinet ministers. Governmental instability, if pushed to its logical extreme, means the absence of government. Thus, fewer decisions are taken if ministerial posts are unstable. Under President Dutra, ministerial stability rates were 0.36; under Vargas, 0.32; under Kubitschek, 0.38; and under João Goulart, 0.13 (Santos 1986:121).

All evidence gathered by Santos may be considered as "auxiliary traces" of his hypothesis on the 1964 coup, which is based on the causal mechanism called "crisis of decision -making paralysis". They therefore compose a smoking gun test to establish sufficient conditions for the validity of Santos's hypothesis. This does not imply that the traces are sufficient causes of the collapse of democracy, but rather parts that, when operating together, produce paralysis; that is, they function as an Inus of the outcome, according to CHM. Figure 4 shows a graphical representation of the smoking gun test for the decision-making paralysis crisis (X) as a key factor for the institutional collapse in 1964 (H):

Figure 4
Venn diagram of a smoking gun test applied to Santos (1986)



Source: Adapted from Santos (1986).

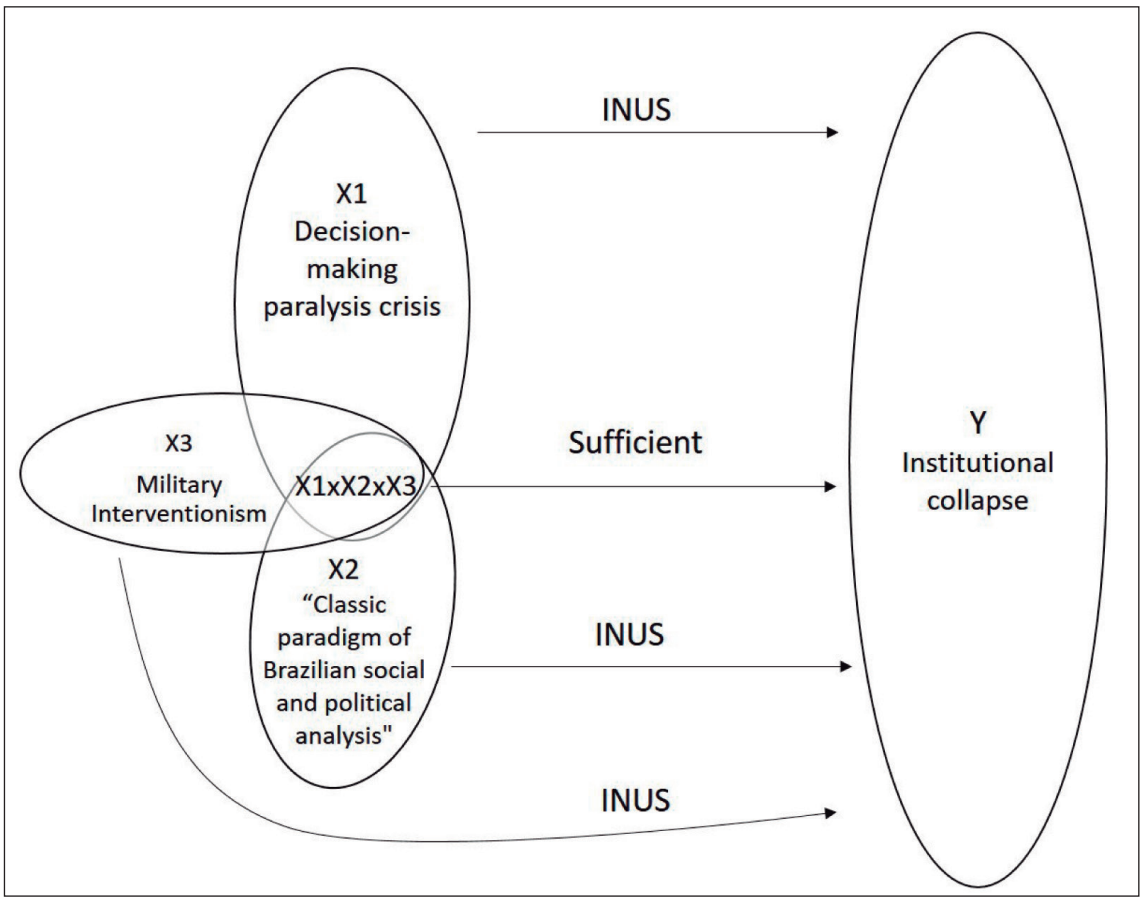
As posited by Mahoney (2012), Santos performed a process tracing analysis that tried to establish that: (1) a specific event or process occurred (the decision-making paralysis crisis in Brazil in the early 1960s); (2) a different event or process took place after the event or initial process (the 1964 institutional breakdown of the democratic regime initiated in 1946); and (3) the second event or process was caused by the first (the decision-making paralysis crisis caused the coup).

Some evidence used by Santos to diagnose a decision-making paralysis crisis can be conceived as a hoop test. In other words, the fragmentation *cum* radicalization process is a necessary condition to generate decision-making paralysis. The high ministerial turnover and diminished legislative output are sufficient conditions for the decision-making paralysis crisis; that is, *they are sufficient conditions for the validation of Santos's hypothesis*. However, the existence of these two conditions does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that decision-making paralysis is a sufficient cause of the coup. The 1964 crisis, for example, could have been constitutionally resolved by the voluntary resignation of President João Goulart or a retreat of the president from implementing the reforms that had so annoyed the socially conservative parties and groups.

It is noteworthy that the smoking gun test is also useful to eliminate hypotheses that are not sufficient for the identification of a sufficient cause. Here there is confusion in the CHM language that requires great care and attention. By this criterion, the hoop test that Santos does apply can be conceived as a smoking gun test of all the hypotheses of the "classic paradigm of Brazilian social and political analysis": if they were present at times when there was and there was not a coup, then the hypotheses are not sufficient in explaining the coup. However, if the conditions established by the classic paradigm were present in the year of the coup, one cannot say that they are *not* necessary to explain the coup. They alone are not sufficient, since they did not lead to institutional rupture in 1954 or 1961; that is, the relationship between Santos's hypothesis and the paradigm is congruent. Moreover, they can even be reconciled: the conditions established by the paradigm are only conducive to the coup when combined with a decision-making paralysis crisis. Here, again, the latter appears as a typical Inus condition. However, it is a more powerful Inus condition than the classic paradigm since it is rarer. That is, the onset of a decision-making paralysis crisis is much more difficult to establish than class struggle, the conflict between a progressive president and a conservative congress, or military interventionism. Figure 5 pictorially represents the Inus conditions, the relationship between them and their sufficient effects on the outcome.

In figure 5, decision-making paralysis crisis (X1), "classic paradigm of Brazilian social and political analysis" (X2) and military interventionism (X3) are Inus conditions for institutional collapse (Y). That is, when they act together (X1xX2xX3) they are sufficient for the occurrence of the outcome. However, note that the decision-making paralysis crisis ellipse area is greater than that of the other two factors, indicating that one is stronger than these. The relationship between the conditions and the outcome are represented in a flowchart below, with types of causal and ontological relationships, as well as Boolean algebra.

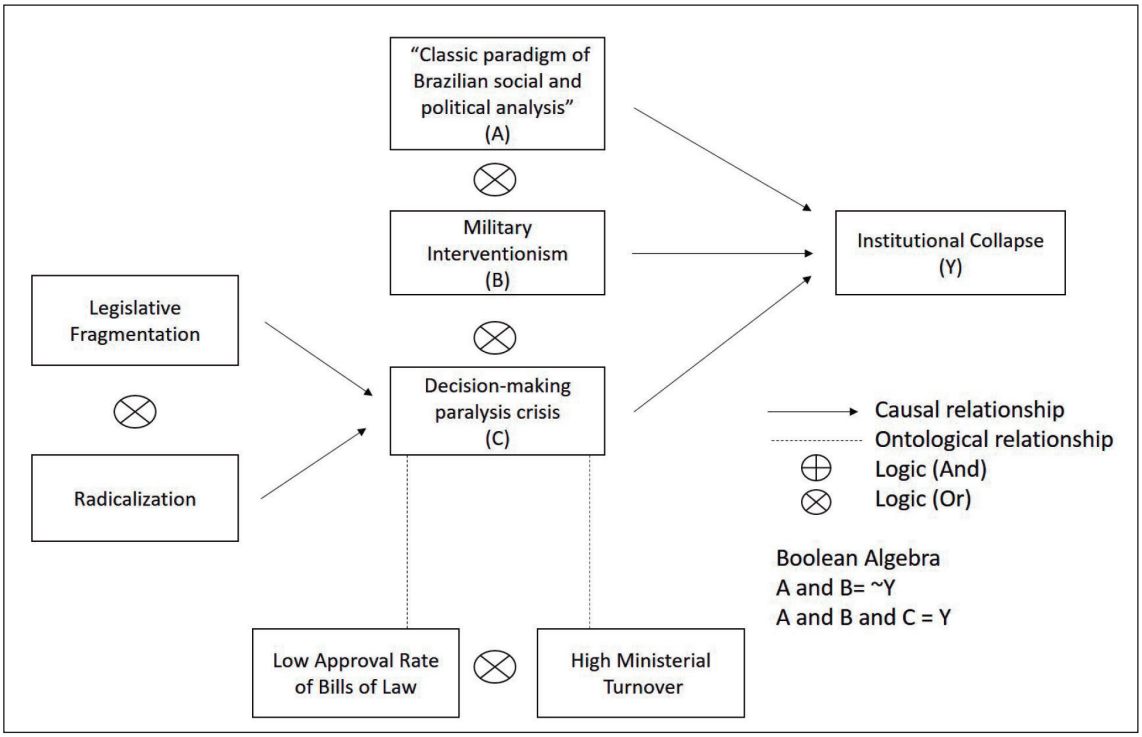
Figure 5
Venn diagram of the explanatory conditions of the 1964 institutional collapse according to Santos (1986) and the "classic paradigm of Brazilian social and political analysis"



Source: Adapted from Santos (1986).

In short, the application of CHM to Santos's work offers an important analytical gain because it allows for a more accurate identification of (1) the causal status of the factors proposed by the author and the "classic paradigm of Brazilian social and political analysis", (2) the type of relationship that exists between these factors and (3) the type of empirical tests used by that author.

Figure 6
Flowchart of Brazilian politics in the early 1960s



Source: Adapted from Santos (1986).

3. Applying CHM to Argentine foreign policy (AFP)

In this section, we review some recent work on AFP. Our main goal is to identify the main causes of changes in the international behavior of Buenos Aires using CHM.

3.1 Argentine foreign policy's explanatory conditions

In order to understand what conditions affect AFP, two important aspects need to be addressed. The first is domestic explanatory variables (Malamud 2011; Russell and Tokatlian, 2014); the second is the relevance of regional and systemic factors in Buenos Aires's search for diplomatic autonomy (Russell and Tokatlian, 2003, 2013).

According to Malamud (2011) and Russell and Tokatlian (2014), AFP can be divided into four distinct periods. The first runs from 1880 to the 1930s and is considered as Argenti-

na's Europeist era, marked by opposition to the United States and estrangement in relation to Latin America. The second period is from the Second World War until the late 1980s, which is characterized by rapprochement and integration with the region — especially economic — and non-alignment with Washington. The third period begins with the end of the Cold War until the rise of the Kirchner presidencies at the beginning of the century, whose main initial feature is the automatic alignment to the U.S., especially during the government of Carlos Menem of the Peronist Party. According to Malamud (2011:91), the great ideological flexibility of this party allowed the recent reversal under the Kirchners, who were also Peronists, toward a foreign policy based on nationalism, populism and opposition to neoliberalism.

The propositions of the three authors mentioned can be translated into the language of CHM as follows: changes at the top of the political system (the presidency), regardless of the maintenance of the same party in power, are conditions for changes in AFP. However, as discussed below, without the permissiveness of systemic and regional factors, such preferences are not sufficient to generate changes. Therefore, despite being the causal factor most frequently highlighted by the scholarly literature, it alone is not able to change the direction of AFP.

What are the other factors relevant to changes in AFP? According to Russell and Tokatlian (2003, 2013), we must consider (1) the relationship between Argentina and the United States, (2) the structure of the international system, (3) regional links, especially with regards to the balance of power in South America; (4) the role of Brazil and its emergence on the regional and world stage, and (5) the material power of Argentina.

By studying the two distinct periods of AFP — the 1990s and the twenty-first century — it appears that changes in the structure of the international system coincided with changes in the incumbent of the Casa Rosada. However, analysis less centered on the domestic environment maintains that the unipolarity that emerged after the Cold War affected the country's preferences through the imposition of a neoliberal model of international relations. However, the redistribution of international power — generated in the twenty-first century by the rise of China and the relative decline of the United States — opened space for the rise of diplomatic activism against U.S. interests by a number of countries. Moreover, at the beginning of this century, the countries of Latin America found themselves pressed to respond to the patent unilateralism of Washington's strategy of combating transnational terrorism. Thus, different ways of searching for autonomy were adopted by AFP, all, according to Russell and Tokatlian (2013), in order to promote national development. Such autonomy would be relative both to the United States and the region.

Regarding the South American region, Argentina adopted a selective stance and, when it could, took actions to balance Brazil. According to Malamud (2011), two examples should be highlighted: the support of Bolivarian Venezuela and the dispute for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Drawing on CHM, we can argue that the actions of Brazil condition APF, but they are not, by themselves, necessary for its change in direction. The same can be said for the changes in the international system. These two factors, because they have a less frequent impact, are only part of the explanation and therefore work as an Inus condition of AFP. That is, Brazilian foreign policy and the structure of the international system are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for changes in AFP.

Another aspect is that Argentina's material power has been decreasing steadily in recent decades. Its effects, however, are not clear. On the one hand, it may to some extent explain alignment with the United States in the 1990s; that is, the loss of power would favor bandwagoning on the global hegemon. On the other, the same loss can lead to a serious resentment of U.S. impositions, which explains the opposition of Buenos Aires to Washington in the twenty-first century. That is, the effect of the loss of material power depends on the context in which it occurs as well as on mechanisms not fully understood so far. Therefore, in light of the literature discussed here, we cannot indicate whether material power plays a decisive role in the changes of AFP, but we believe that it has a necessary role when coupled with the other analyzed factors.

It should, however, be noted that the recent performance of China in the external financing of the Argentine economy has allowed the resumption by Buenos Aires of greater international activism, especially in comparison to the low profile adopted in the early years of the twenty-first century. That is, it can be said that China has also been an Inus condition for AFP.

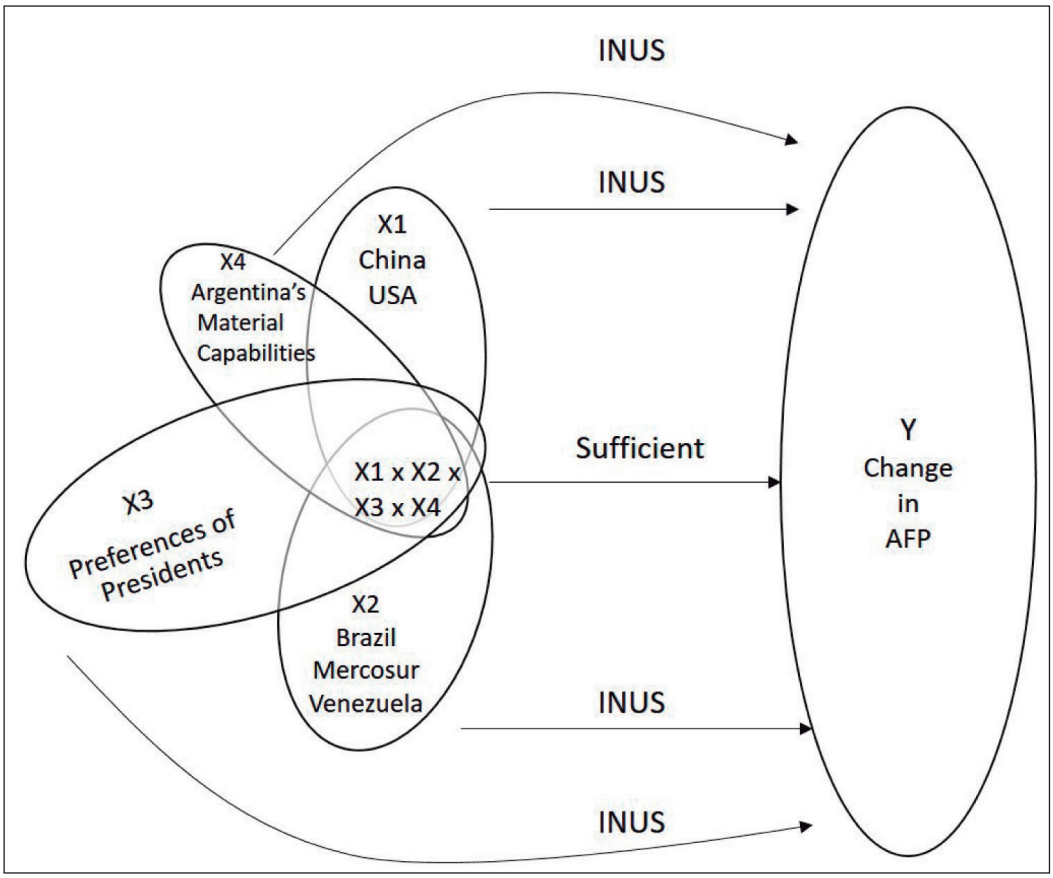
Russell and Tokatlian (2014:131) state that the period from the end of the Cold War to 2001 was marked by the interaction between the external and domestic dimensions. The central role of the United States and the expansion of neoliberal globalization through the Washington consensus are among the listed external factors. Regarding the internal dimension, the two authors emphasize the role of presidents and their beliefs along with the Argentine economic crisis. The intersection of these factors explains the distinct connection with the hegemonic power between 1990 and 2001. That is, U.S. hegemony after the Cold War, especially as regards the international economy, was a condition for change in AFP because it served as a permissive factor of the changes implemented by Carlos Menem. Thus, the main changes in AFP resulted, according to Russell and Tokatlian (2014:131-132), from the recognition by that president of the exhaustion of the Peronist national development model and the acknowledgment that being allied with the key hegemonic power gives Argentina a higher international position than that which would be provided by the material capability of the country.

Applying CHM to the analysis performed by scholars of AFP, we can establish the following: (1) the Inus condition that has more influence over AFP is the preferences of presidents, (2) the structural changes established the range of choices that could be taken by the presidents, (3) given this, neither the structural changes nor the preferences alone manage to explain the changes in AFP; this means that structural changes and presidents' preferences are Inus conditions. Other factors at a regional level, especially Mercosur and Brazil, also impacted AFP and are Inus conditions. That is, the presence of these regional factors led to changes in AFP, but other causal conditions also contributed to cause these changes. Similarly, the material capabilities of Argentina were at play, a factor that enabled other conditions to have greater impact because their role decreased sharply after the Cold War. However, changes in AFP are not caused only by economic decline, because since the end of the Falklands War in 1982 there has also been a much sharper reduction of the country's military power than justified by the fall in Argentina's GDP. Changes in AFP therefore originated from a combination of Inus conditions that together are sufficient to bring about the former.

It should also be noted that the main hypotheses regarding AFP are seen here as congruent and therefore there is some degree of complementarity between the factors listed above. Moreover, it is clear that the authors implicitly carried out straw-in the-wind tests of their hypotheses. This means that the evidence used does not prove the hypotheses, allowing only some weakening of rival hypotheses, in particular, those against the pragmatism of AFP in recent years.

Again, we turn to a Venn diagram to graphically represent the explanatory conditions of AFP. Figure 7 shows the main Inus conditions of AFP, that is, the recent structural conditions (X1), comprised of the United States and China; the most relevant regional conditions (X2), consisting of Brazil, Venezuela and Mercosur; the most important domestic conditions, that is, the preferences of the presidents (X3); and the country's material capability (X4). These factors together (X1xX2xX3xX4) are sufficient to explain the changes in AFP (Y).

Figure 7
Venn diagram of the main explanatory conditions of changes in Argentine foreign policy (AFP)



Source: Adapted Malamud (2005, 2011) and Russell and Tokatlian (2003, 2013, 2014).

The diagram displays the explanatory power of the factors through the areas of ellipses located on the left side of the figure. Thus, the preferences of presidents (X3) is the most important condition. Moreover, it is clear that the sufficient condition, or the subset formed by the intersection of X1, X2, X3 and X4, must be smaller than the outcome, according to the sufficiency definition and the requirements of CHM described in section II of this article.

Finally, the literature indicates that AFP in the twenty-first century is influenced by several factors, but presidential diplomacy stands out as the key condition (Malamud, 2005), which means the prevalence of domestic factors over external ones (*e.g.*, material power, regional threats and the pressures that favor external balancing [Malamud, 2011:88]).

In short, the recent period is then one in which there is "the supremacy of the internal [factors]" (Russell and Tokatlian, 2014:133), where the preferences of presidents have greatly shaped AFP, unlike what happened in prior periods when there was considerable interaction between external and internal dimensions. According to these authors, the systemic changes seen in the twenty-first century (power and wealth redistribution, the absence of effective international rules, the relative decline of the West and the high growth of commodity prices) offered Argentina strategic opportunities and a higher degree of autonomy than in previous periods. These opportunities were apparent to the presidents, who chose to modify AFP and distance themselves from the United States and Europe, approaching China and prioritizing relations with Brazil. According to Malamud (2011:92), during this period, AFP has been characterized by pragmatic relations with Brazil (and Mercosur), relations with Venezuela, which serve to balance the power of Brazil; and relative distancing vis-à-vis the U.S., although Argentina has important interests in Washington and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Moreover, although the diplomacy of the Kirchners contained histrionic rhetoric, they became pragmatic in the search for international financial aid and votes in national elections (Malamud, 2011).

Nevertheless, the preferences of presidents are the most important causal factor of Buenos Aires's international behavior. Although being an Inus condition, it has more salience than others (systemic changes, the role of Brazil and Venezuela, relations with the U.S. and China, and the declining material capabilities of Argentina). Together, these elements allow the identification of the main causes of the phenomenon under study. However, because they have significant effects when acting individually, such elements would be Inus conditions for changes in AFP.

Finally, it should be noted that the works on AFP reviewed here are excellent analyses that rely primarily on empirical material of a historical nature. They are qualitative case studies, but have no major methodological concerns. Thus, the value of applying CHM to AFP analysis resides in giving greater discipline to attempts at empirical corroboration of explanatory propositions. This leads to a more accurate calibration of the language used in conclusions, which also forces authors to consider competing hypotheses in a more systematic way.

4. Final considerations

What is the value of CHM? The first answer is not absolute, but relative to the merits of MRA. The key difference between CHM and MRA is the type of question that each one pursues. While the former addresses the causes of effects, the second seeks to identify the effects of causes (Mahoney, 2010). In practice, this means that for a user of CHM, he or she must be very clear about a historical phenomenon and offer an explanation that is grounded in profound knowledge of the context that generated it. This means, for example, addressing what caused the 1964 coup in Brazil or the ample administrative reform in the United States in 1883, instead of seeking the impact of different systems of government on the durability of democratic constitutions. Hence, different questions require different methods.

However, the second answer to the question has to do with the purpose of methods in general. In their classic work, the MRA advocates King, Keohane and Verba (1994:7) affirm that the greatest benefit generated by methods is to discipline thought. This maxim is also valuable to CHM, especially when considering the lack of methodological foundations that usually characterizes qualitative-oriented works published in Brazil (Cano, 2012; Hocayenda-Silva et al., 2008; Neiva, 2015; Peci and Fornazin, in press; Soares, 2005). The effort to define the nature of the identified causal conditions (necessary, sufficient, necessary and sufficient, Inus and Suin) in research that values historical material is the first step in the pursuit of discipline. The second is to carry out process tracing with the aim of empirically contrasting hypotheses.

Great political scientists like Wanderley Guilherme dos Santos naturally and implicitly follow such steps. However, for the masses of academia such as those in Brazil today, the explicit use of methods such as CHM is imperative for effectively disciplining the thought of young social scientists and students of public administration affiliated with the qualitative research tradition. Such use will also strengthen the latter in the face of quantitative traditions that are increasingly dominant worldwide because of the digital revolution.

It is important to emphasize that the implementation of CHM does not necessarily facilitate academic research. While the easy availability of data on the internet and the proliferation of statistical programs have undoubtedly facilitated research grounded in MRA, CHM advocates should never forget that they have to thoroughly understand the history of the cases being analyzed, which involves much reading, something which our hectic modern world does not offer enough time for.

Another vital aspect of CHM is the strong concern with concept formation, an aspect that Goertz (2006) gives a brilliant account of. While the greatest challenge facing MRA is finding operational indicators for valid and reliable quantification of concepts, CHM is more concerned with the development of causal mechanisms, a highly conceptual effort, as shown by Falleti and Lynch (2009). Again, Santos (1986) shows his excellence by being extremely careful when elaborating the concept of "decision-making paralysis crisis" to explain the 1964 coup in Brazil.

Finally, due consideration to other people's work is of paramount importance for the confrontation of hypotheses through process tracing. This seems obvious, but in Brazilian academia a common practice is to pretend that works that are not to one's liking do not exist. For CHM to flourish, recognizing and interacting with others is a necessary condition, though not sufficient.

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