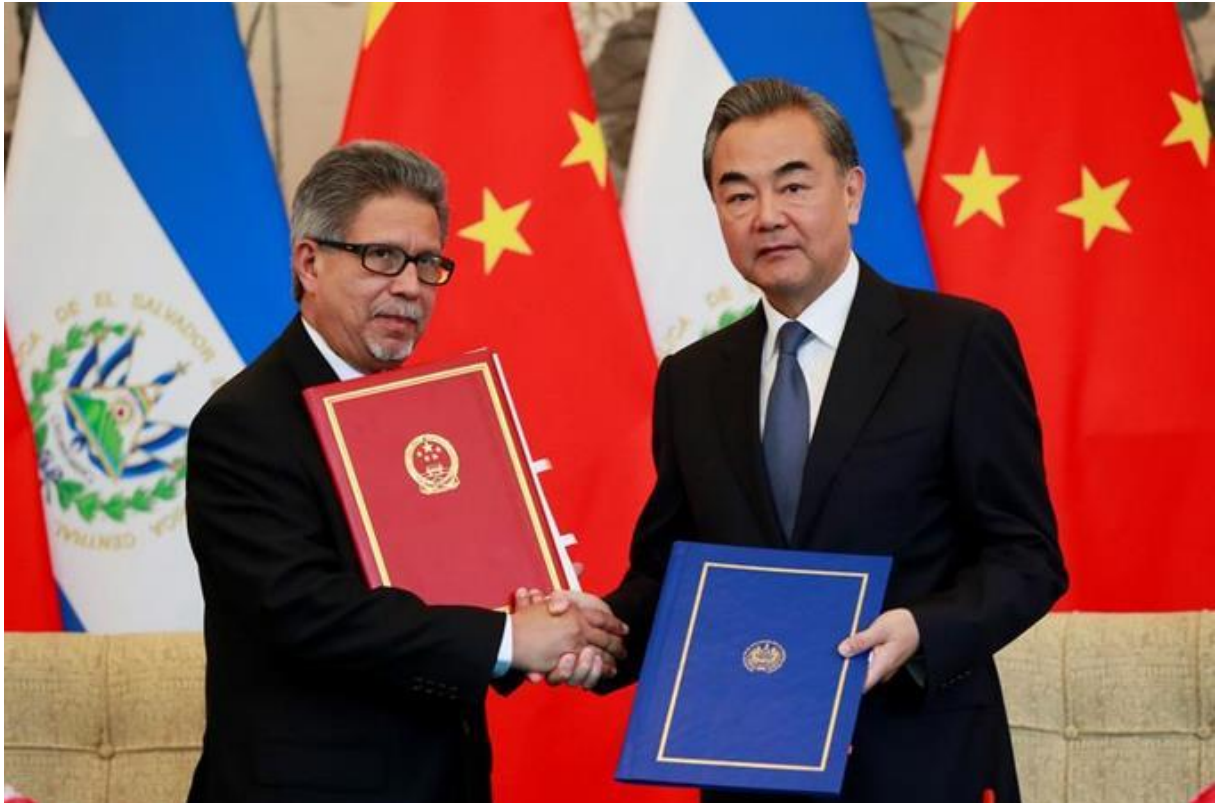




MA Thesis

International Relations – European Union Studies

The EU's human rights conditionality, in Honduras, challenged by China's increasing influence in Central America



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1. Introduction

With the signing of the Association Agreement between the European Union and the Central American Integration System¹ (which contains the member states Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and the Dominican Republic), on the 29th of June 2012, during the Meeting of the Presidents Ceremony² in Honduras, a new era emerged for the relations between the European Union and the Republics of Central America. The agreement comprised three pillars: *trade* (economics), *political dialogue* (diplomacy) and *cooperation* (normative politics). The Association Agreement between the two supranational blocks did not negate individual relationships between the European Union and the SICA-member states. Prior to the EU-SICA Association Agreement, the European Union was an actor in the development of the regional integration of Central America, which implies that the European Union also exercised influence upon the policies of the republics of Central America. One of the main interests of the European Union is the upholding of human rights, which is one of the conditions for anyone who desires to receive aid from Brussels. This is part of the normative power of the European Union, which uses the strength of its internal market as an economic incentive. The Republic of Honduras, which contains around 9,3 million inhabitants, and borders two main waters (the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean) that are relevant for maritime trade, agreed to adhere to the human rights conditionality of the European Union – both individually as well as part of the Central American Integration System.

The Conditionality of the European Union, however, face competition from another block: China. The increasing interest of China in Central America implies that the republics of Central America have an alternative when it comes to economic investments. China does not have a conditionality relating to human rights, neither does China prioritise human rights when relating to their financial investments. When it comes to Honduras, China proposed the construction of a trans-pacific railway to connect the Pacific Ocean with the Caribbean Sea: this enables cargo from China to be transported from the Bay of Fonseca into the Caribbean ports, which makes it accessible to the trans-Atlantic trade. This project increases the diplomatic influence of China in Honduras, which conflicts with the interests of the European Union. Honduras, being the receptive nation of both EU aid as well as investments from China, has to decide how it relate to both pressures. Honduras faces the challenge of both

¹ In Spanish: SICA; Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana.

² A common ceremony in which the Heads of State of the SICA-Member States come together.

retaining support from the European Union, as well as securing the Chinese investments in their infrastructure – which would boost its economy and international importance as the future maritime hub between Asia and the West – which would also be an alternative to the Panama Canal which is supervised by the United States. There is much politics as well as diplomatic interests involved in this case.

For this thesis, the situation in Honduras will be analysed prior to China's involvement and after the increase of China's involvement. The focus will not that much be on individual projects, but on the attitude of Honduras as a state in relationship to the normative power of the European Union. The attitude of Honduras refers, in this context, to the actions of Honduras' state actors (relating to their internal and to some extent, their foreign policies) as response to the demands from the European Union. Primary sources, legislative acts (of Honduras) as well as publications from the European Union are used to reflect on the relationship between the European Union and Honduras when it relates to human rights. The purpose is to display whether a change in attitude occurred due to China's influence, and how it changed and why. Additional statistics will be used to show the influence of the normative power of the European Union on Honduras. Secondary sources are used to reveal the context of the development. No interviews nor fieldwork will be conducted due to feasibility issues. This thesis will add to the debate concerning the normative power of the European Union.³ Eurosceptics criticize the functioning of the European Union⁴ as well as whether the European Union should intervene⁵ or even interfere in the regional developments outside of Europe.⁶ This criticism of the European Union also influences the functioning of the European Union when it comes to [common] EU-foreign policies.⁷ This thesis discusses the regional development of Central America, by focussing on one the member states of the Central American Integration System, to analyse the effects of EU-conditionality on a single nation (in this case, Honduras). This thesis will not so much answer whether the involvement of the European Union in Honduras is legitimate; but will, rather, analyse its effects. This thesis will add to future analysis of foreign policy of the European Union as well as the relationship between Central America (as part of Latin America) and the European Union.⁸ The theory of

³ Sasse, G. (2005). EU conditionality and minority rights: Translating the Copenhagen criterion into policy.

⁴ Sasse, G. (2009). Tracing the construction and effects of EU conditionality. *Minority Rights in Central and Eastern Europe*, 17-31.

⁵ Hobolt, S. B. (2018). *The Crisis of Legitimacy of European Institutions*. *Europe's Crises*, John Wiley and Sons, New Jersey, 243-268.

⁶ Holmes, M. (Ed.). (2016). *The Eurosceptical Reader*. Springer.

⁷ Pardo, S., & Gordon, N. (2018). Euroscepticism as an instrument of foreign policy. *Middle East Critique*, 27(4), 399-412.

⁸ Sultana, T. (2016). THE EUROPEAN UNION'S RELATIONS WITH LATIN AMERICA. *Journal of European Studies*, 32(2), N/a.

social-constructivism is used due to its focus on human agency in shaping collective concepts, political institutions and society in general.⁹ This theory does not consider the condition of any phenomena to be a fatality of human nature. This thesis does not discuss human nature, nor does it perceive the situation of Central America (in relationship to the European Union) to be inherent to the nature of human relationships in international relations. Rather, this thesis perceives the regional development in both Europe¹⁰ and Central America to be the result of historical processes and political engagements of interest groups who strive to secure their aims (in an harmonious manner).¹¹

This thesis, focuses on how Honduras responds to the tension between the interests of China that conflicts with the foreign policy of the European Union to Central America. The research question, therefore, is *How has China affected Honduras's relation with the European Union?*

The hypothesis is that the Republic of Honduras adheres to the conditionality of the EU based on the economic need of the country to cooperate with the other SICA-member states as well as the need for export to the EU's single market (which would not be possible without compliance with the EU's conditions). At the same time, the Republic of Honduras also gets along with China due to China's lower standards. The Republic of Honduras 'cheats' it's way by. For reasons of expediency, Honduras on one hand finances projects that enable human rights and at the same time allowing Chinese actors to operate freely within the country. In the second scenario, they 'turn a blind eye' to the exploitation by both Chinese as well as domestic actors. The rival hypothesis is that the Republic of Honduras slowly, but surely, moves away from the conditionality of the EU to adhere more to the *lack of human rights demands* from China. The Central American Integration System, despite receiving conditionality from the European Union, is a separate regional project with its own interests. Honduras, being one of the members of the Central American Integration System, has the leverage of having both a Pacific as well as a Caribbean shore which enables the country to function as an intercontinental hub between Asia on one hand and the Caribbean, South America, Africa and Europe on the other. This leverage grants the country an advantage in the foreign policy of the Central American Integration System, which means that the conditionality of the European Union will only remain relevant if the European Union grants

⁹ Christiansen, T., Jørgensen, K., & Wiener, A. (2001). *The social construction of Europe*. London: SAGE.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Drake, H. (2012). A Political Sociology of the European Union: Reassessing Constructivism. *Jcms-Journal Of Common Market Studies*, 50(4), 685-686.

better financial advantages than China. The main hypothesis, that the Republic of Honduras is cheating on the European Union with diplomatic investments from China, is favoured by the fact that the Republic of Honduras is slow in achieving its goals [with China]. In addition, the Republic of Honduras – as part of the regional integration project SICA, has to adhere to the human rights conditionality of the European Union to be on good terms with its fellow SICA-member states. Any friction towards the EU would undermine the well-functioning of the Central American Integration System as a whole, and that will backfire on all individual SICA-member states. The political instability, as well as the weak institutions within the nation, implies that Honduras has no ‘firm ability’ to openly say ‘no’ to the European Union – so diplomatic cheating is the only way out.

To better construct the overview of the analysis, the thesis is divided in two parts: the responsiveness of Honduras prior to the rise of China and the responsiveness of China after the rise of China. This thesis takes the perspective of social constructivism as its guiding theory. This thesis will analyse the attitude of Honduras towards the human rights conditionality of the European Union, before as well as after China’s increasing influence. The main actor in this research is the Republic of Honduras. The second actor is the European Union. The motives of China are left out for the feasibility of this research. For this reason, the following primary sources are used:

- EU Press releases concerning Honduras and Central America
- NATLEX: Honduras
- Online publication of legislation of Honduras [that relates to human rights and EU conditionality]
- Reports, by international organisations, concerning the human rights conditions in Honduras
- Publications by the Central American Integration System concerning EU conditionality [in Honduras].

The secondary sources, about EU-Latin America relations, derive from the scholarly world. No press releases by popular mainstream media are used in this thesis as primary sources, due to the fact that each media enterprise has its own agenda that is politically coloured. Furthermore, to add mainstream media sources would make this research too broad. All the sources are found online or through the Catalogues of Leiden University. The sources are in English (and some in Spanish).

2. Honduras prior to China's involvement

This chapter discusses Honduras' responsiveness prior to China's increasing involvement in Central America. Some of Honduras' history is explained to give understanding of how Honduras ended up the way it did. This is important knowledge for the later chapters.

2.1 Historical context of EU-Honduras relations

Honduras became a constituent of the Spanish Empire in 1570 as part of the Captaincy General of Guatemala.¹² During the mid-18th Century, under King Charles III, Honduras was reformed into the Intendancy of Comayagua (or Province of Honduras), administered by a royal governor, supervised by the Governor¹³ of the Kingdom of Guatemala. During this time, Honduras did not have a 'Honduran' population. Honduras, as part of the Spanish Empire, was considered an extension of the Crown of Castile (one of the two royal administrations that formed 'Spain'). Due to the fact that Honduras was a province of the Kingdom of Guatemala, it was part of the Guatemalan people.¹⁴ The agriculture industry as well as the academics of Honduras in the (late) 18th century was shaped by the local scientific economic society (Spanish: *Sociedades Económicas de Amigos del País*).¹⁵ There were similar institutions throughout the Spanish empire.¹⁶ This institution enabled the economy of Honduras to remain coherent with the rest of Central America. Economic reforms occurred during the governorship of José de Bustamante y Guerra (1759-1825), which granted subsidies to miners and farmers.¹⁷ These reforms made the Kingdom of Guatemala thrive during the Latin American independence wars,¹⁸ and this economic boom boosted the relevance of Honduras as the main Spanish province with commercial activities in both the Caribbean as well as mainland North America. With a population around 130 thousand

¹² A Captaincy General was a constituent kingdom of the Crown of Castile, governed by a maritime politician on behalf of the Spanish king. The Spanish overseas territories in the Americas consisted out of autonomous kingdoms administered by the Spanish navy.

¹³ Or *Captain General*.

¹⁴ It is not proper to speak of a Guatemalan nation for this time period, due to the fact that the Spanish Empire contained many ethnicities that could be considered nations. Spain itself was not a unified country, but a gathering of several kingdoms under two administrations (Castile & Leon and Aragon), of which the American kingdoms (including Guatemala) belonged to the Crown of Castile. Even though Honduras was known to sailors and traders as a separate place geographically, politically and economically Honduras was Guatemala and its population were called Guatemalan [Spaniards]. Even at independence, in 1821, there was no 'Honduran' identity yet. The Guatemalans referred to themselves as Central Americans since then. It is after 1838, when the federal state of Honduras separated from the United States of Central America, that *Hondurans* as a term became a political reality.

¹⁵ LAS SOCIEDADES ECONÓMICAS DE AMIGOS DEL PAÍS Y LA PROPAGACIÓN DE LAS CIENCIAS ÚTILES EN ESPAÑA E HISPANOAMÉRICA DURANTE LA ÉPOCA DE LA ILUSTRACIÓN. (2016). In Horst Pietschmann.: Acomodos políticos, mentalidades y vías de cambio: México en el marco de la monarquía hispana (p. 91). Ciudad de México: El Colegio de México.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Hawkins, T. (2004). José de Bustamante and Central American independence colonial administration in an age of imperial crisis (Atlantic crossings). Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

¹⁸ Ibid.

(1801), Honduras functioned as the export province of Central America towards Europe, both as an international hub for commerce from China¹⁹ as well as the local production of tobacco and native spices. After the independence of Guatemala, in 1821, Honduras became a federal state of the United Provinces of Central America and [the same in] the United States of Central America. The disintegration of the United States of Central America led to the independence of Honduras in 1838. After independence, Honduras' population decreased from 200,000 (1826) to 173,365 (1838)²⁰ and the country's economy collapsed – this led to decades of social strife and political instability.²¹ From this time on, trade between [independent] Honduras and China faded away, but it left some marks in Honduras pottery.²² At the end of the 19th century, Honduras, at the time governed by a coalition of landowners, granted land to fruit companies from the United States, which led to the exploitation of the economy by the United States.²³ Due to this, the Honduras became known as a 'Banana Republic'.²⁴ After the Second World War, Honduras faced multiple constitutional crises and local armed conflicts.²⁵ Honduras became one the poorest countries on the Western Hemisphere²⁶ since its separation from Spain and this implied that its diplomatic relevance was almost non-existent, except for the United States (since 1830)²⁷ and Spain (since 1894).²⁸ Spain remained the main diplomatic partner of Honduras in Europe.²⁹ As of today, Honduras has few diplomatic relations and most relations were developed after the end of the Cold War.³⁰ The involvement of the European Community, in Honduras, began with the San José Dialogue of September 1984,³¹ which was followed by a ministerial summit in 1985 in Luxemburg.³² The main purpose was to dissolve the political instability of Central America,

¹⁹ This includes commerce from tributary states of the Qing Dynasty.

²⁰ Molina Chocano, G. (1977). ESTRUCTURA PRODUCTIVA E HISTORIA DEMOGRAFICA (ECONOMIA Y DESARROLLO DE LA POBLACION EN HONDURAS). Anuario De Estudios Centroamericanos, 3, 161.

²¹ Lara, J. (2019). US Travel Writer E. G. Squier and the Construction of Racialised Geographies in Nineteenth Century Honduras. Bulletin of Latin American Research, 38(2), 121-135.

²² Heine-Geldern, R. (1960). Chinese influences in Mexico and Central America: The Tajin style of Mexico and the marble vases from Honduras ; Chinese influence in the pottery of Mexico, Central America, and Colombia ; Representations of the Asiatic tiger in the art of the Chavin culture: A proof of early contacts between China and Peru. San José: A. Lehmann.

²³ Livingstone, G. (2009). *America's Backyard : The United States and Latin America From the Monroe Doctrine to the War on Terror*. London: Zed Books.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Molina Chocano, G. (1990). Honduras: Economic Crisis, Elections and the Political System [1980-1990]. Revista Mexicana De Sociología, 52(4), 301-314.

²⁶ Burrell, J. L., & Moodie, E. (2015). The Post-Cold War Anthropology of Central America. Annual Review of Anthropology, 44, 381-400.

²⁷ Griffith, W. (1960). The Historiography of Central America since 1830. Hispanic American Historical Review, 40(1), 548.

²⁸ OFICINA DE INFORMACIÓN DIPLOMÁTICA (2019) Honduras; Republica de Honduras. Link retrieved from: http://www.exteriores.gob.es/Documents/FichasPais/HONDURAS_FICHA%20PAIS.pdf (date last visited 2nd of May 2019).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² European Commission (2019) The San José dialogue.

which was a reason for tensions in East-West relationships.³³ The relationships between the European Community and Central America, during the San José Dialogue, was not a direct relationship, but a ‘loose’ one due to the fact that Spain was not a part of the European Community yet: and Spain was the main country with diplomatic ties to Central American states.³⁴ After the admission of Spain to the European Community dialogue with Central America continued due to the increased relevance of Central America to the European Community: Spain’s economy was closely tied to trade with its former colonies, which meant that Spain’s trade relations with Honduras became relevant for the economic and foreign interests of the European Community.

2.2 Cold War relationships with the European Community

Inspired by the Monroe doctrine, the United States longed to keep imperialistic influences [from Europe] out of the Western Hemisphere.³⁵ The United States aimed at being the sole leader over Latin America.³⁶ After the Second world War, the United States feared a socialist revolution in Central America, which would have been a disaster for its capitalistic hegemony in the Western World.³⁷ The European Coal and Steel Community was mainly focussed on constructing a continental economy to prevent military conflict between France and Germany. The European Community kept itself out of meddling in the affairs in Central America to avoid repercussions from the United States. At the time, the European Community, which consisted out of only states from Western Europe, also combatted the ‘Red danger’ at its own eastern borders. The United States, the main ally of the European Community through NATO, aimed to support capitalist friendly regimes in Central America. The European Community, being an influential part of the capitalist world, traded with Central America. Prior to 1984, however, there was no normative power on the part of the European Community concerning Central America, even though human rights was one of the pillars of European integration post World War II which the European Community aimed to promote (besides the promotion of democracy and the rule of law) to their trading partners.

A turning point came in the [United States’ loss of] the Vietnam War, which turned public opinion against the normative power of the United States as a promoter of democracy and liberty. The injury of the image of the United States as an anti-imperialist superpower, gave

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Bingham, H. (2011). LATIN AMERICA AND THE MONROE DOCTRINE. *Yale Review*, 99(3), 17-30.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Sabet, S. (2013). US Foreign Policy in Latin America. University of British Columbia. Accessed May, 12, 2017.

space for the European Community to fill the gap that the United States left open. There was another reason for the European Community to extend its foreign relations as a political block to Central America (and elsewhere): the European Community sought to develop their own security policies separate from the United States to not be too dependent upon the United States military. The United States, besides being an economic zone, is also a nation state with a military apparatus to vindicate its national interests. This makes it obvious that when the United States operated in Central America it was an 'America first' attitude in which the interests of the United States came first and the interests of the Central American republics second. The European Community, on the other hand, lacked a military apparatus and a sense of nationhood. This made it easier for the European Community to reach out to Central America with a more 'impartial' attitude than the United States. The European Community was geographically distant and also politically hesitant due to the fact that the European Community worked through compromise. The United States, on the other hand, had both geographical closeness as well as a single-minded attitude when it came to its policies to the Central American republics. This made the United States' interest in Central America more related to economic exploitation and military security (against criminal immigration to the United States and drug trafficking). The interests of the European Community in Central America was not purely economical, because when it came to economics Africa was a closer economic region with whom the European Community (apart from Spain's admission to the Community) had better diplomatic and economic relations due to the imperialist past of the 19th century. The interests of the European Community in Central America was more related to the normative ideals of the European Community as well as the secure partners for the established European Single Market. Even though the European Community was still in the shadows of NATO, a movement towards autonomy from NATO was emerging.

When the Cold War ended, the European Community reformed itself into a political and economic union. At the same time, Central America also aimed to form a political unity. Prior to the involvement of the European Community in Central America, Mexico and the United States initiated the formation of a Central American Court of Justice at the beginning of the 20th century. This attempt turned into a failure due to lack of effective institutional reforms and the lack of impartiality of the judges. The Court existed between 1907 and 1917. In 1951, the Central American states agreed to a common market, formalised in the *Organización de Estados Centroamericanos* (ODECA), which was suspended 1978 due to a military conflict between El Salvador and Honduras in 1969. Based on the experience of the European

Community, the states of Central America revived their integration project, which led to the formation of the Central American Integration System on the 13th of December 1991. The Treaty of Maastricht, in 1992, brought the European Union into existence. From that point on, the European Union related to Central America as a regional block – besides maintaining individual interactions with its members states. From this history, it is obvious that Honduras is relevant [to the West] mainly as part of a region and not as much as an individual republic. The investments of the European Union in Honduras, therefore, as the result of EU-investment in the regional development of Central America and it cannot be separated from this.

2.3 EU aid to Honduras as part of a region

From 1993 onwards, the European Union enforced its human rights conditionality in Honduras – this simply implies that Honduras agrees to uphold and secure the human rights of its own citizens. Failure to comply with this would lead to sanctions from the European Union as well as a potential withdrawal from EU-involvement in Honduras. The human rights conditionality of the European Union also implies an obligation, on behalf of Honduras, to secure the rule of law and democracy within their territory. During the early collaboration between Honduras and the European Union, the issue of rights of indigenous peoples also became part of the political agenda in international relations.³⁸ Honduras, being part of the Central American Integration System, and therefore (inter)dependent for their economy on having peaceful relations with its fellow SICA-member states, as well as having the hegemony of the United States nearby, is compelled to comply with the conditionality of the European Union. Despite the presence of the European Union, in Honduras, the country still faces human rights violations such as femicide which is related to violence against women.³⁹ The military coup of 2009 also diminished the power of civil society organisation when it came to combatting gender-based violence.⁴⁰ It must be noted that prior to the 2009 coup, Honduras was primarily under the supervision of the United States when it came to human rights, also because Honduras ratified human rights conventions with other international organisations besides the European Union.⁴¹ The Human Rights Watch explains

³⁸ Siegfried Wiessner. (1999). Rights and Status of Indigenous Peoples: A Global Comparative and International Legal Analysis. *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 12, 57-407.

³⁹ Menjivar, C., & Drysdal Walsh, S. (2017). The architecture of femicide: the state, inequalities, and everyday gender violence in Honduras.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

that impunity for human rights abuses are still the norm in Honduras.⁴² During 2009, the CAFTA-DR Treaty came into force, which is a Free Trade Agreement between Central America, the United States and the Dominican Republic.⁴³ This trade agreement revealed the need for Central America to have a trade agreement with the European Union due to the violations of human rights that was not well addressed in the Treaty.⁴⁴ In addition, there was resistance to the CAFTA-DR due to vagueness concerning institutional responsibility.⁴⁵ In addition, for Honduras – which is considered a developing nation – there was a conflict of interest with the United States due to the exploitative economic relationship between Honduras and the United States, as is evident in the commodity chain of textile.⁴⁶ After the coup of 2009, the EU emphasised the need for stable democracies, which aims to protect the human rights of the population.⁴⁷ It became clear that states in Latin America, including Honduras, had to practise their agreed alignment with the EU's value of human rights to remain on good terms with the European Union.⁴⁸ The European Union even suspended aid to Honduras, temporarily, after the coup of 2009.⁴⁹ The Human rights violations, in Honduras, also include the violation of child rights, which included the practise of child marriage [that occurs informally in the nation].⁵⁰ When it comes to child marriage, Honduras, just as the rest of Latin America, is lagging behind in their commitment to end child marriage.⁵¹ Besides, child marriage and femicide (women dying due to domestic violence),⁵² there is also much gang related violence in Honduras which leads to a wave of refugees.⁵³ Many of these

⁴² Human Rights Watch (2019) *Honduras*. Link retrieved from: <https://www.hrw.org/americas/honduras> (date last visited: 10th of May 2019).

⁴³ Morazán Iriás, J., & Negre, M. (2009). *Análisis del impacto del CAFTA en Honduras y recomendaciones para las negociaciones de un acuerdo de asociación con la Unión Europea* : Informe de la Consultoría para el Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos de Honduras. Tegucigalpa: Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos de Honduras.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Bair, J., & Peters, E. D. (2006). Global commodity chains and endogenous growth: export dynamism and development in Mexico and Honduras. *World Development*, 34(2), 203-221.

⁴⁷ Sanahuja, J. (2010). Among values and interests. The relations between Latin America and the European Union following the coup in Honduras. *Nueva Sociedad: Democracia Y Política En América Latina*, (226), Nueva Sociedad: democracia y política en América Latina, March 2010, Issue 226.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ The Associated Press. (2009). Honduras: Europe Suspends Aid. (Foreign Desk) (WORLD BRIEFING THE AMERICAS) (Brief article). *The New York Times*, p. A7.

⁵⁰ Barr, H. (2017, July 13th) Time to Get Serious about Child Marriage in Latin America: Honduras Leads the Way, Passes Law Making Practice Illegal. Link retrieved from: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/07/13/time-get-serious-about-child-marriage-latin-america> (date last visited 10th of May 2019).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Cockburn, J., Decaluwé, B., Fofana, I., & Robichaud, V. (2008). Trade, Growth, and Gender in Developing Countries: A Comparison of Ghana, Honduras, Senegal, and Uganda. *Gender Aspects of the Trade and Poverty Nexus: A Macro-Micro Approach*, 111-63.

⁵³ Human Rights Watch (2016, March 31st) Closed Doors: Mexico's Failure to Protect Central American Refugee and Migrant Children. Link retrieved from: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/03/31/closed-doors/mexicos-failure-protect-central-american-refugee-and-migrant-children> (last visited on the 10th of May 2019).

refugees flee through Mexico, however those refugees, of whom thousands are minors, are not well protected by Mexico [despite its agreements to do so]. Sending back refugees is dangerous too, because human traffickers also take advantage of institutional corruption [which includes the failure of Honduras' institutions to tackle the problem] to avoid prosecution by the law; in the case of sexual violence on refugees.⁵⁴ In addition, the 'War on Drugs' of the United States also contributes to the human rights violations in Honduras due to the repressive measures of the United States towards Central American states that produce misplaced results.

2.4 Conclusion

Honduras, despite pledging to protect human rights and to reform its institutions to secure the human rights of both their own citizens as well as foreigners within their territory, failed when it comes to meeting the human rights standards of the European Union. During the aid of the European Union to Honduras, the United States remained a dominant economy due to investments of American firms in Honduras – both those American firms as well as the institutions of Honduras violated the workers rights. The unbalanced relationship with the United States hindered Honduras in complying successfully with its agreement with the European Union. This, however, does not excuse Honduras' failure to materialise their commitment. Honduras also suffers from internal division when it comes to forming consistent policies concerning human rights, as well as their foreign relations. Nevertheless, the European Union remained a firm normative power in Honduras that compels Honduras to comply with its norms on the pain of economic sanctions.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

3. Honduras after China's increasing involvement

This chapter discusses Honduras' responsiveness after China's increasing presence in Central America.

3.1 China vs EU demands

During the Obama Administration (2008-2016), the focus of US-foreign policy shifted towards inclusion rather than patriotic exploitation. During the early Obama Administration, the War on Drugs as well as the War on Terror continued, but this left the issue of human rights in Honduras unsolved. The focus of the European Union remained the same. However, the European Union also suffered financially due to the Euro crisis and the following Refugee Crisis that emerged in 2014, due to the Syrian Civil War. The institutional capacity of the European Union turns towards resolving these domestic issues as well as a rising conflict in Eastern Europe concerning Ukraine. Despite all of this, the normative stance of the European Union towards Honduras remained the same: compliance with human rights, the rule of law and democracy remained non-negotiable. During this time, another option emerged: China.

China seeks to increase its economic and diplomatic relevance in Latin America. One way China aims to achieve this is through economic investments in local infrastructure. These investments are not charity: they aim to service China's interests to have an alternative route to the trans-Atlantic trade. China, contrary to the European Union, is a nation-state, with a military apparatus and a single diplomatic institution. This means that China, just as the United States, operate based on national interests. The European Union, on the other hand, operates based on shared political compromise with shared humanitarian values as their basis. This implies that China's first priority is the maximisation of their core financial interests on behalf of the Chinese people and Chinese firms,⁵⁵ while the first priority of the European Union is to secure its normative power by the promotion of its humanitarian values. The European Union has economic and financial incentives to entice states to comply with its values.⁵⁶ China, on the other hand, does not function as a normative power neither does China seek to promote any values: China simply wants trade that benefits China. This single-mindedness of China makes China's decision-making process easier then it comes to foreign relations with Latin America. The European Union, on the other hand, has to resolve domestic

⁵⁵ Narins, T. (2018). Chinese Trade in Latin America Compared to the European Union and the United States: The Case of Technology-Intensive Exports. *The Professional Geographer*, 70(2), 219-229.

⁵⁶ Caballero, J. (2016). Normative Europe: Changing Values and Attitudes in Central America. In *The EU and World Regionalism* (pp. 151-168). Routledge.

interests concerning each state, in harmony with their humanitarian values, before making decisions. This makes China a potential alternative for Honduras when it comes to financial and economical aid.

3.2 Human rights conditionality

While the European Union demands the protection of human rights, China simply wants to secure their enterprise(s) in Honduras. The European Union has diplomatic missions throughout Central America to both supervise as well as support their aid to the receiving states. China, on the other hand, when it comes to Honduras, works primarily through the business world and seldom through direct diplomacy. There is no diplomatic mission, from China, towards Honduras. This due to the controversy between Taiwan and China (also known as the People's Republic of China), the latter claims the former as an extension of itself. Due to this, nations with diplomatic relationships with Taiwan are often excluded from having diplomatic relations with China at the same time.⁵⁷ Taiwan, officially named the Republic of China, is the 'alternative China' that has investments in Honduras. Taiwan, contrary to China, has a record of improved human rights. This implies that Taiwanese investments form no threat to the human rights conditionality of the European Union. Honduras, due to its adherence to human rights, involves itself diplomatically with Taiwan instead of China, because Taiwan and the European Union are relatively speaking on the same page when it comes to human rights, the promotion of democracy and the rule of law. For Honduras to formally accept China's presence on its soil, it would imply that Taiwan's presence needs to cease or else Honduras would be involved in a ethno-historical conflict between the two Chinas.

3.3 Institutional reforms

The institutions of Honduras have, despite much aid from the European Union, not improved to the point of solving the problem. Since 2009, there has been extrajudicial executions as well as attacks on the free press. There is, however, slow improvement in the function of institutions. The problem of human rights, nevertheless, is shifted around instead of eliminated. The institutions of Honduras derives from the 19th century formation of the United States of Central America, which have long-held traditions. Reformation of Honduras, as a nation, would require the rethinking of Honduran nationhood and their national historical

⁵⁷ Sullivan, J. (2019). (2014) China and Taiwan in Central America: Engaging Foreign Publics in Diplomacy, written by Colin R. Alexander. *International Journal of Taiwan Studies*, 2(1), 191-193.

narrative – which has known much economic stagnation and institutional collapses until this day. The normative power of the European Union, therefore, is also a challenge for Honduran society as a whole.

3.4 Diplomatic tension

The People's Republic of China has diplomatic relations with El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama and The Dominican Republic. These are all SICA-member states. Honduras, Guatemala, Belize and Nicaragua are the other four member states that do not have relations with China directly due to their involvement with Taiwan. This situation causes tension for Honduras when it comes to regional projects that includes Chinese money. While the four pro-China member states have their reasons for being involved with China (El Salvador due to its isolated location at the Pacific Ocean, Costa Rica and Panama due to their connection between the Pacific and the West-Caribbean – including the Panama Canal, The Dominican Republic due to its relative stability in the Caribbean), the other four member states benefit from China's influence by using the Central American Integration System as a mediator. As a mediator the Central American Integration System will be 'responsible' if China's influence disrupts the human rights in the individual member states. In this case, Honduras can always shift the blame to other SICA member states. This, however, will not sit well with the European Union who also maintains individual relationships with the SICA-member states. The growing influence of China does not only bring diplomatic tension between Honduras and the European Union, but also between Honduras and its fellow SICA-member states.

3.5 Conclusion

In order to bypass conflicts related to human rights, Honduras trades with China by using Taiwan as an unofficial mediator. By doing this, Honduras wins both the favour of the European Union as well as the access to the Chinese market, of which Taiwan is an unofficial part. Since Honduras got involved with the 'two Chinas' this diversion from the conflict has been going on. After the increase of China's influence, Honduras also seeks to gain access to China via the Central American Integration System.

4. Analysis

This analysis will be divided into subsections so the reader can process the explanation concerning why and how China affected the responsiveness of Honduras to EU conditionality.

4.1 The role of the United States

When examining the responsiveness of Honduras towards EU conditionality it is important to recognise one major player in the region: the United States. The United States, as shown in Chapter two, was not a huge political and economic player during the Spanish era of Honduras. However, since separating from Spain the role of the United States in Honduras became constant: the United States remained an important political and economic actor in the nation. As mentioned before, the United States adhered to the Monroe doctrine that wanted to reduce the influence of European kingdoms from the Western hemisphere. According to this logic, it is obvious why the US administration sought for quick diplomatic relations when Central America became independent. However, due to the size of the region, the interest of the United States fell primarily on Honduras due to its geographic closeness to the US ports at the Mississippi River. This geographical closeness of Honduras made the country excellent for bilateral trade. Furthermore, Honduras also granted the United States access to the economies of the then new Spanish republics of Central America. During this time, the Spanish empire still had Cuba and Puerto Rico, and other European powers still had influence over the Caribbean Islands. This made Honduras the right candidate for the enactment of the Monroe Doctrine.⁵⁸

The United States, however, was not on equal terms with Honduras. This was also not likely nor desirable: The United States was a federation of English-speaking Republics that functioned as an economic block while Honduras was a relative isolated impoverished Spanish republic. The relationship between both nations was therefore ‘doomed’ to fall on the terms of the United States. The main card of power that Honduras held was its agricultural fertile land that was suitable for fruit, vegetable and spice exports. Apart from the United States the other main diplomatic actor for Honduras was Spain itself, with whom the Honduran elites shared both ancestry as well as economic ties. The reason why the United States remained a constant actor was due to the reducing influence of the Republic of Mexico.⁵⁹ The United States first annexed Texas and later half of Mexico’s territory, which was in the North. This led to a stronger reduction of Mexico’s economic relevance upon Central America. For

⁵⁸ Bingham, H. (2011). LATIN AMERICA AND THE MONROE DOCTRINE. *Yale Review*, 99(3), 17-30.

⁵⁹ Mexico was the former vice-regal center of Spain and after independence the alternative Spanish speaking power in the Caribbean, besides Spanish Cuba.

most of the 19th century, therefore, the inexperienced Republic of Honduras depended on the political conditionality that came from the United States – which was mainly powered by economics and to a lesser degree by the need of Americans to remain free from the grip of the British Empire. This is also why Honduras became militarily co-dependent on the United States too: it was the only security against a possible reconquest by Spain or an economical conquest by the British Empire (who also sought to increase its presence in Central America after the departure of Spain). After the Two World Wars, the rise of nationalism throughout Latin America brought ideological conflicts between the nations of Central America, which had nothing else but the faded heritage of the Spanish Empire. This combined with the Cold War Era, gave rise to public questions concerning the legitimacy of the elites in Central America (who were mostly the descendants of the same Spanish cartels that governed under the Spanish kings). The fabrication of national identities based on a thin history after 1830 brought tension between the nations in Central America as well as tension internally between the nationals and their leaders. For Honduras, the tensions gave place for a stronger presence of the United States due to the fact that the United States needed to have stable republics in Central America to secure US trade. The conditionality from the United States was mainly on the level of preserving continuous trade with the United States with the maintenance of a stable government in Honduras.

4.2 Cold War alignment with the United States

During this time, China was a relatively absent actor in Honduras due to the fact that China was perceived as a communist danger by the United States – this was another reason why the United States strengthened its grip on Honduras (to keep communism and left-wing movements out). The ‘Communist’ victory in Cuba was another threat that provoked US presence in Central America. The constant presence of the United States in Honduras was not an occupation of the nation, as happened to Cuba, the Philippines and Puerto Rico after the Spanish-American war. Honduras remained an independent nation with its free choice in diplomacy. The options of Honduras’ diplomacy, however, were restrained by Honduras’ co-dependent relationship with the United States as well as due to the friction between Honduras and its neighbours. The co-dependent relationship of Honduras with the United States was on one hand a benefit in securing the independence of Honduras and it was a deterrent against civil war. On the other hand, that same asymmetrical relationship with the United States hindered the nation from building its own future after its separation from Spain. The responsiveness of Honduras to the United States, therefore, was an economic and diplomatic necessity: a conflict with the main economic zone in the Western hemisphere would not work out in the best interest of Honduras. However, after the Cold War Era, Honduras developed a regional sentiment in which the nation longed to partner with its neighbours in Central America. This urge for partnership served several purposes:

- **Securing trade partners nearby:** for every economy it is logical and practical to trade with other economies that are geographically close to its own borders. This reduces trade costs and

it harmonises trade. Forming an economic zone with its neighbours also promotes the optimal allocation of resources.

- **Harmonising diplomatic relations:** forming an economic zone with its neighbours also implied deeper political co-operation. This was a better alternative than having regional conflicts resulting in military conflict.
- **Nation building:** Honduras had the need to validate its own national identity. Validating ones national pride does not happen easily when one is overshadowed by a foreign power. A Coalition with its neighbours, who share both the same language as well as the same (regional) history, would add to the identity of the nation in a more productive manner. In this case, Honduras would operate as Honduras together with others who also defined their national identities.
- **An alternative to the hegemony of the United States:** a regional integration of Central America would lead to another role for Honduras in both international relations as well as in the world's economy. Together Honduras would stand stronger with its neighbours than on its own.

4.3 Resistance to US hegemony and the embracement of Western Europe

The constant presence of the United States therefore decreased over time, due to the regional development that occurred in Central America. For the United States it was also easier to deal with a whole region than to negotiate with individual states (who often had conflicting relationships with their neighbours). The rise of regionalism, however, also challenged both the Monroe Doctrine as well as the foreign policies of the United States, which themselves began to show characteristics of imperial politics. The foreign policies of the United States caused resistance and resentment in many places, also in Honduras. It was after the Cold War, when Western Europe was unified as a region that Central America followed in the footsteps of Western Europe. The increasing presence of the European Union in Honduras, therefore, cannot be seen separate from the resistance that came from within the Central America against the hegemony of the United States. One way to put this is to say that there was a demand for an alternative to the United States and the European Union offered an alternative. The alternative of the European Union did not erase nor oppose the continual presence of the United States in Central America. What the emergence of the European Union in Central America accomplished was that US foreign policy, relating to Central America, had to adapt to the fact that all over the world political-economical regions were formed that challenged the hegemony of the United States. The European Union was not a military power neither did it possess a unified defence force. Therefore, the military presence of the United States in Honduras remained relevant, but it shifted towards the fight of international crime that affected the United States. The presence of the European Union in Honduras took the form of economic power, as well as a normative power when it comes to societal and political values.

The normative power, of the European Union, forced Honduras to take a stance: Honduras had to account for its normative culture as well as how they relate to human rights, the rule of law and democracy. This, in combination with EU aid to the regional development of the Central American Integration System, also revealed that Honduras had to accept that the nation could not operate completely according to its own wishes. Honduras had to comply with the normative conditions of the European Union, as well as with the normative expectations of the Central American regional development, while also complying with International law.

In this context it was an obvious choice for Honduras: complying with the European Union would boost both the regional development of Central America, as well as strengthening the international position of Honduras as well as granting Honduras a better place in the world's economy. The United States would remain a constant *in the background* when it came to trade and when it came to combatting international crime that affected the Western hemisphere. In this scenario, Honduras would be stronger as part of the Central American integration and it would regain more of its economic independence from the United States.

4.4 Honduras' chronic dysfunction

The problem with Honduras was in its compliance externally, Honduras agreed with the demands from the European Union. However, as shown in 2009, the country violated both human rights and the function of democracy in the nation. In response, the European Union suspended aid to Honduras.⁶⁰ The impact of the suspension was effective: Honduras complied with the promotion and maintenance of democracy the next year. Since 2014, the involvement of the European Union in Honduras involves **€235 million** of aid that concentrates on improving food security and **€120 million** of aid to deal with the effects of climate change.⁶¹ Prior to this, in 2007, the European Union provided **€223 million** for

- Improved management of forests
- The promotion of (national) social cohesion
- Improvements to the rule of law
- Improvements to citizens' security

In addition, the European Union also invested **€9 million** for Non-governmental organisations that would contribute to the well-functioning of Honduras.⁶² This implies that from 2007 until

⁶⁰ Vogel, T. (2009, 20th of July) EU suspends aid to Honduras: collapse of talks aimed at re-instating Manuel Zelaya triggers halt to release of aid. Link retrieved from: <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-suspends-aid-to-honduras/> (date last visited 10th of June 2019).

⁶¹ European Commission (2018, 15th of June) EU and Honduras agree on combatting illegal logging. Link retrieved from: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/countries/honduras_en (date last visited 10th of June 2019).

⁶² Ibid.

2018, Honduras received €587 million in EU aid to assist with conforming to EU conditionality. A report on human rights from the EU in 2018 however, revealed that Honduras still has a long way to go. The European Union is also concerned with the suppression of LGBTQ rights in Honduras, which the European Union considers to be part of human rights. There has been improvements in the forest conservation as well as in diplomatic relations in the region.⁶³ The main focus of the European Union, concerning Honduras, now remains on:

- Supporting the rule of law
- Increasing the access of Honduran citizens to legal support
- Combatting internal political and judicial corruption
- Protecting Human Rights Defenders (this includes Non-Governmental Organisations)
- Promoting Gender Equality (improving LGBTQ-rights)

In general, the European Union wants to make Honduras into a beneficial country for the EU-Central America relations. Other reports by human rights watchers revealed that violations of human rights are still occurring on a mass scale in Honduras. An example of this is police brutality and a lack of an independent justice system.⁶⁴ Another example is the suppression of the rights of indigenous people and conflicts concerning land ownership.⁶⁵ As mentioned before, the United States became a constant actor in the background: the United States stopped its aid to Honduras due to the continual migration crisis from Honduras towards the United States despite giving **\$144 million** to Honduras in humanitarian aid in the years 2016 and 2017 only.⁶⁶ Overall, in the past decade the United States spent almost \$1 billion⁶⁷ in aid to Honduras, , this in comparison to the €0,5 billion that the European Union invested in Honduras in the same period. What this reveals is that Honduras suffers from a chronic institutional dysfunction in which the country became dependent on foreign aid to keep itself

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch (2019) Honduras: Events of 2018. Link retrieved from: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/honduras> (date last visited 10th of June 2019).

⁶⁵ Amnesty International (2019) Honduras 2017/2018. Link retrieved from: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/americas/honduras/report-honduras/> (date last visited 10th of June 2019).

⁶⁶ Hayes, C. (2019) US cutting off humanitarian aid to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Link retrieved from: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2019/03/30/united-states-cuts-aid-guatemala-honduras-el-salvador-migrant-crisis/3320401002/> (date last visited 10th of June 2019).

⁶⁷ US Aid (2019) US AID HONDURAS. Link retrieved from: https://explorer.usaid.gov/cd/HND?fiscal_year=2006&measure=Obligations (date last visited 10th of June 2019).

from falling apart. The aid cuts from the United States offers more opportunities for Honduras to receive developmental aid from China.⁶⁸

4.5 EU interests concerning Honduras

From the perspective of the European Union, Honduras is an important partner in securing EU normative power in Latin America. Honduras is also a constituent of the regional integration of Central America – where the European Union has invested billions. It is therefore, relevant as well as important for the European Union to remain consistent in their aid to Honduras. Consistency and transparency are what will strengthen EU normative power, therefore it is not wise for the European Union to suddenly stop giving aid to Honduras without a proper reason. The 2009 aid cuts were effective due to the dependence of Honduras on foreign aid. Now that the US aid has fallen away, Honduras will become more dependent on EU aid for the well-functioning of their nation. This is a win-win situation for the European Union: the normative strength of the European Union will increase in Honduras, which will also give the European Union an upper hand in the external relations of Honduras. Honduras, on the other hand, is free from the economic leverage previously held by the United States due to them no longer receiving US aid. Furthermore, this can also be a sign of trouble for the European Union. A country which has failed, over time, to show any promising signs of sufficient development, despite receiving much aid from two major economic blocks, reveals a deep-rooted dysfunction that requires more than repeated cash injections to overcome.⁶⁹ Honduras relied on both US as EU aid. Now that Honduras will rely mainly on EU aid, the pressure on the European Union will increase to either invest more in Honduras or to make sure the current investments are managed responsibly. On the other hand, the void that came into being due to the departure of US aid also offers Honduras the option to seek aid from China who, unlike the EU, shows no preference to human rights. However, China is not transparent about its investments in Honduras neither about what China will receive in return for that aid. For the United States, the aid to Honduras had a clear objective: the prevention of mass migration of Honduran refugees and criminals into the United States. The primary concern for the European Union is the extension and growth of the EU economy as well as the enforcement of the EU's normative power. For Honduras, however, EU conditionality will remain a dominant constant due to Honduras' need to comply with the regional programs of

⁶⁸ Vieiro, M. (2012) Chinese (Un)official Development Aid. Link retrieved from: <https://www.americasquarterly.org/Vieiro> (date last visited 10th of June 2019).

⁶⁹ Chayes, S. (2017). *When corruption is the operating system: the case of Honduras* (p. 16). Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

the Central American Integration System. Without EU aid and without the support of the Central American Integration System, Honduras would become an isolated impoverished country which is neither politically reliable nor diplomatically trustworthy.

4.6 China's emerging role as an alternative to the EU

Honduras has no history of a steady relationship with China; this was also not possible due to Honduras' support for Taiwan (as described in chapter 3). It is therefore no option for Honduras to throw away EU conditionality and to rely on China, who would require a withdrawal of Taiwanese diplomacy from Honduras in return. China however, still approached Honduras despite its support for Taiwan. This reveals that China is, to some extent, willing to compromise on the Taiwan issue. However, this does not negate the fact that Honduras is involved both in the China-Taiwan controversy, as well as the controversy concerning its own chronic human rights problems and EU normative power. On one hand, Honduras can take advantage of the situation by integrating further with the Central American Integration System and conforming more to EU standards. This will make Honduras less likely to return to any dependency on US aid, providing a boost for the nation, both politically and economically. On the other hand, a nation that lacks sufficient self-reflection, persistence and the consistent will-power to heal its own wounds, will continue to face the same issues even with more involvement from the European Union. In this light, Chinese influence will only complicate issues further for Honduras (which it already does greatly!). Unlike the United States, China does not have any immediate interests concerning Honduras. China is in another continent, facing different geographical and political challenges. The problems of Honduras are separated by the Pacific Ocean, while the United States shares both a landmass as well as a body of water (the Caribbean Sea) with Honduras. In addition, China does not have a shared history with Honduras like Europe (mainly Spain) and its neighbours in Central America does. The only historical link between Honduras and China goes back to the Sino-Spanish trade during the Qing dynasty.

The interest of China in Honduras therefore is not 'natural' nor logical. The interest of China is mainly based on China's foreign policy in which it seeks to extend the relevance of the Chinese economy.

4.7 Honduras' 'failure'

Apart from the information above, what also must be considered is that China is not considered part of the 'enemy' anymore by the Western world since the Cold War is over. This means that Honduras does not 'need' the capitalistic back-up from the United States. It is

possible for Honduras to be both involved with China and the European Union. However, when it comes to political values concerning human rights this becomes a complicated matter. What it comes down to is the condition of Honduras itself. It is one thing to claim that Honduras never fully acted in an independent manner due to the constant presence of the United States. However, this constant presence of the United States cannot account for the internal dysfunction that lasted throughout generations. What this analysis also reveals, therefore, is that Honduras had a lack of effective responsiveness to international pressure even before the European Union became an actor in the country. This lack of effective responsiveness stems from the weak institutional formation of the country, combined with semi-aristocratic cartel politics that cause unnecessary instability in the decision-making process of the nation. This ineffective decision-making internally reflects into unstable foreign politics. This is also why Honduras always remained overshadowed by foreign powers: Mexico (shortly after independence), the United States and now the European Union. This research, as mentioned in the introduction, uses social constructivism as its guideline. In line with social constructivism, it can be stated that Honduras failed – ever since its independence – to socially construct its own place in international relations. This failure, as mentioned earlier, comes from internal corruption. Due to this failure, the place of Honduras has always been constructed by foreign powers that used Honduras for their self-interest. This does not mean that Honduras does not have agency: it is an independent nation, with territorial sovereignty, that decides its own national as well as foreign policies as the *Republic of Honduras*. Honduras, as a member of international organisations, has its own agenda and satisfies its own interests. However, it is often not clear how Honduras gives shape to these interests and agendas. What is clear, is that Honduras remains responsive to EU conditionality for the sake of its own national economy as well as its international credibility (damage control). To be in good graces with the European Union means to have access to diplomatic platform, the European market, a better standing within international politics and a better role in the Central American Integration System (which also relies on EU aid). The fact also that Honduras cannot make up its mind between either Taiwan or China also reveals a failure in their foreign policies to have a coherent and consistent approach concerning their interests as a nation. Without a proper defined foreign policy there is no chance for Honduras to improve its diplomatic relations as well as resolving its internal turmoil. The reason why this paragraph phrases this as a failure is due to the following:

- **Honduras is a unitary republic:** the nation is not divided into federal states nor separate constituent republics. Countries with constituent parts often have a more difficult time managing their foreign policy due to the fact that all constituents need to agree. Honduras also does not possess an enormous territory; therefore the population is mainly concentrated around the capital (Tegucigalpa) and the urban centres at the Caribbean shores. For this reason, administrative differences cannot be the reason why Honduras' institutions are failing both domestically as well as internationally.
- **Honduras has less multicultural conflicts:** countries with multiple nations (or ethnicities) inside of them, or which have a high percentage of foreign migrants with diverse cultures can lead to societal dysfunction within that territory. Honduras is mainly Roman Catholic, as are its surrounding countries. At present, there is minimal conflict based on cultural diversity. There are indigenous peoples, mestizos, afro-Hondurans and white Hondurans that have to share the territory together. It is not a surprise that conflict may emerge between those ethnic groups; however, those ethnic groups have been there together for centuries and they share the same language. Therefore, Honduras ought to have knowledge of their own people as well as the sub-groups that make up the Honduran nation.
- **Honduras possesses industrial and commercial potential:** Honduras is not a desert or a wasteland. It is a territory that borders two bodies of water that contain commercial activities. The territory also has (rain) forests, agricultural lands and maritime ports for both import and export.
- **Honduras has a common historical identity with its neighbours:** this has been mentioned before in this thesis. This, however, implies that Honduras should be able to relate in a constructive and peaceful manner with its neighbours.
- **Honduras has been independent for almost two centuries:** this granted the nation enough time to figure out its place in international relations. This has also been enough time to develop its attitude and to learn from mistakes made by previous leaders.

The bullet points above imply that Honduras has all the ability to, and can in all possibility, turn into a prosperous, stable and influential country - an independent regional territory. The fact that China sees economic potential in the nation is good news. This all means that the main reason Honduras is in the state it is till this day is internal error.

4.8 China's effect on Honduras' responsiveness to the European Union

In this part of the analysis, the focus will be on why China had an effect on Honduras' responsiveness to EU conditionality and how it did not affect that same phenomenon. First, it is important to note what China's influence (economic investments in Latin America, providing business loans, corporative agreements) did not do:

- **China's influence did not offer an alternative trade zone apart from the European Union:** There is no agreement in Central America that the region would become part of a Free Trade Area nor an economic zone with China. This means that the market of China is still centred around China and it does not include other states in its zone. China also does not partake in regional integration with states, because China itself is both a region as well as a state. Honduras, thereby, remains dependent on the economic zone of Central America as well as the connection between Central America and the European Union. It would also be economically illogical for China to form an economic zone with states far removed from its geographical borders.
- **China's influence did not disconnect the issues of human rights from the Latin American corporations:** apart from China and the European Union, human rights are an issue in many Latin American states. Due to the fact that Latin America trades with other economic blocks, who often do adhere to human rights or put it on the agenda, Latin American corporations are compelled to take the matter of human rights seriously. Therefore, it is not as if China's influence means that Latin American corporations (or states) can dump the whole human rights issue because they have an alternative market to the United States and the EU. In addition, Latin American states signed international treaties in which they vowed themselves to uphold human rights, the rule of law and the promotion of democracy.⁷⁰ This means that even if China would provide itself as the alternative economic block, Latin American states as well as Latin American corporations cannot simply cooperate with it, even if it means less strain in regard to other tenets of EU conditionality. In addition, a formal break from any human rights conditionality would cause international uproar which could lead to potential civil unrest in Latin America due to resistance by the population. In the case

⁷⁰ Tayar, V. (2018). The European Union and Latin America: The configuration of interregional and transatlantic cooperation. Portuguese Journal of Social Science, 17(2), 199-211.

of Honduras, a breach of any human rights clause would backfire with disastrous consequences.

- **China's influence did not overrule nor undermine EU normative power:** as mentioned in the previous bullet points, due to geographic and historical ties, Honduras is bound to comply with EU conditionality as well as with the values that the EU aims to promote worldwide. In the case of Honduras, due to dependence on EU aid, any further violation of EU conditionality would have instant negative effects on the nation. Due to the fact that China is less directly involved and China does not have such strict requirements as the European Union, China does not hold such a big sway on the affairs of Honduras (the European Union does!).
- **China's influence did not bring any lasting solutions for Honduras:** until now there is neither a China-based demonstrative project that improved the economy nor is there a distinct Honduran foreign policy. There are, however, EU projects in Honduras that showed some signs of improvement, despite the chronic institutional dysfunction of Honduras.
- **China's influence did not enforce any (international) policy on Honduras:** Honduras is not part of some alternative China-centred political alliance. If this were the case, Honduras would have placed themselves in a contentious situation in which one political alliance (Central American Integration System, in which the European Union is involved) contradicts another alliance (with China). Such an agreement, with China, would also stir up a reaction from the United States that seeks to maintain its dominant economic influence in the Caribbean and Central America. For the United States to allow China to 'take-over' the markets in Central America, is to allow China to dismantle the existing trade agreements between the United States and Central America (which co-exist with the EU-agreements with Central America). The United States already warned Honduras about seeking ties with China.⁷¹

So, China's influence is more on the corporate level, impacting individual corporations and businessmen that seek to take advantage of China's desire for economic expansion into Latin America. The reason why a direct diplomatic tie is hindered is due to the China-Taiwan controversy. As explained in chapter three, Honduras' involvement with Taiwan is a tool to

⁷¹ Efe-Epa (2018, 25th of August) US ambassador to Honduras warns against seeking ties with China. Link retrieved from: <https://www.efe.com/efe/english/world/us-ambassador-to-honduras-warns-against-seeking-ties-with-china/50000262-3729409> (date last visited 15th of June 2019).

retain access to trade with Asia, without having to become involved in the conflict between the United States and China concerning economic territory. This was an effective way to deal with the bipolar tensions (between Capitalism and Communism) during the Cold War Era. Now, with the Cold War long behind, Honduras has the option to seek ties with China via the Central American Integration System: this option is available due to the fact that both Costa Rica, Panama, The Dominican Republic and El Salvador (members states of the Central American Integration System) do have direct relations with China. However, such an approach to China might make Honduras dependent upon El Salvador (the nearest member state with ties to China) for China's investments (in case China comes with projects). This would be a further surrender of Honduras' sovereignty. Another option is to give up Honduras' relationship with Taiwan to establish a direct relationship with China. However, a break with Taiwan would also endanger the existing economic ties and diplomatic relationships [in Asia] that Honduras relies upon. In any case, China's influence offers both opportunities, but those opportunities also bring difficulties for Honduras.

5. Conclusion

Based on the research conducted, the answer to the research question: *How has China affected Honduras's relation with the European Union?* Is: the rise of China, in Central America, complicated the responsiveness of Honduras to EU conditionality. On one hand, Honduras has more options in which the nation can withdraw from the grip of EU normative power. However, this withdrawal will also imply more uncertainty for the already unstable nation. On the other hand, Honduras becomes involved in a foreign political dispute (China-Taiwan) which would only cause more tension on the administration of Honduras. In both cases, EU conditionality remains a present constant in Honduras and Honduras remains responsive to EU conditionality. However, Honduras will need to examine its motives as well as its own national well-being to make sound decisions concerning what China has to offer. What this research also revealed is that Honduras, ever since it lost its position as Spain's export province in the Caribbean, it never developed a stable political and economic identity for itself as a sovereign nation. This also contributes to the complicated situation Honduras is in now. Responsiveness to the EU conditionality will therefore not fade away any time soon. In the future, more research will be required to observe any further developments within Honduras in regards to its human rights issues as well as its relationship with the European Union.

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