

THE HONDURAN COUP D'ÉTAT
and the
Defense of Democracy
in the Americas

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1. Introduction

In 2009 a constitutional crisis took place in Honduras, which culminated in the forced removal of a democratically elected president. Following this coup d'état there was a strong reaction from the international community, and a months long attempt by the inter-American democracy promotion regime to reverse the coup, an attempt that ultimately failed.

The inter-American democracy regime is based on the functions of the Organization of American States (OAS), which is built on multilateral diplomacy as a means of defending democracy throughout the Americas. Key OAS documents have provided the U.S. and Latin American countries with formal diplomatic mechanisms for responding collectively to democratic violations across the Americas, most importantly, the Inter-American Democratic Charter. The charter, which was signed in 2001, was a historic document, given that it obliged every OAS member state to undertake a commitment to promote and defend democracy throughout the hemisphere (Lee 2012; Levitt 2006: 95).

Safeguarding democracy is important for the countries of Latin America, not least because of their century-long history of experiencing coups d'état. This particular history has much to do with the role of the military in Latin American political culture, which has its roots in the hero status that the armed forces earned in the wars of independence in the 19th century. Military officers were “saviors of *la patria*” – the fatherland – and were given special powers in constitutions all over Latin America in order to secure a strong and decisive government. The Latin American military became professionalized through European training missions in the 19th century. This happened before other sectors of society were developed and made military intervention in politics an institutionalized feature in Latin America. The armed forces saw themselves as being obliged to protect their country, as did many civilians. This often led to the military becoming protagonists for change by imposing law and order in society through military coups d'état – *golpes del estado* – sometimes upon an invitation by the elites, sometimes without awaiting an invitation (Smith 2005: 76-79; Maniruzzaman 1992: 749). One may say that Latin American political culture is rooted in military institutions and that it is “*a culture inclined to dramatic solutions, which erase the past*” (Diamint 2011: 17). There are different interpretations of the role of the military in Latin American society. One group believes that the military wants to guarantee stability in society, while another group is convinced that generals are simply acting out of concern of their own interests.

Historically, in Latin America, there have been three periods with especially many military coups d'état. The first period was 1910-1919, which was characterized by oligarchic rule. The oligarchic elite did not know how to deal with the demands of the working class, which in many cases led to the military stepping in to

restore order. The second peak period came in the 1930s when the economic crisis of the Great Depression fostered widespread social dissatisfaction and rebellion among the Latin American people. The militaries came down hard on their citizens, and did not hesitate to arrest and mistreat them. The third period, which was during the 1960s and 1970s, was characterized by the context of the Cold War. The Cuban Revolution of 1959 had frightened the Latin American right wing, including the military, and this led to the occurrence of many “Cold War coups”. The very polarized setting of the Cold War context meant that the coups became more violent than they had been in the earlier years. This is e.g. exemplified by the Chilean coup of 1973, which was exceptionally brutal (Smith 2005: 78-80). In this period dictatorships became the norm and by the mid-1970s there were only four democracies left in Latin America (Smith 2005: 28).

All in all, between 1930 and 1980, Latin America went through no less than 277 changes of government whereof more than a third took place via military coups (Valenzuela 2004: 5). The militaries always declared that they did not intend to stay in power and that they were only preparing the countries for democracy. But they insisted that it was their duty to intervene when they saw it fit, and they reserved the right to decide when and how they would return to the barracks (Smith 2005: 84)

According to Samuel P. Huntington (1991), the period from the 1980s and onwards can be called the third wave of democratization. Beginning in 1978, it swept over developing countries all over the world, and Latin America also began to change from being severely dominated by authoritarian regimes to one where democracy is the norm. This period of democratic growth peaked in the late 1990s when there were no longer any autocratic regimes left in Latin America (Smith 2005: 28,59). It should be mentioned that Central American countries have generally struggled more than South American countries in terms of democratic consolidation and political stability. Honduras did not become democratic until 1998 (Smith 2005: 351). Throughout the third wave of democratization there continued to be episodes of democratic violations, also as late as during the 2000s, when there were attempts of coups d'état in both Ecuador (2000) and Venezuela (2002) (Levitt 2006). Also, a new threat to democracy has emerged in Latin America, which some believe to be even more dangerous than the traditional model of military coups d'état. That is the Hugo Chávez model of “democratic authoritarianism”, which is the emergence of populist, left-wing *caudillos* who, determined to stay in power, gradually undermines democratic principles under the cover of regular elections. Chávez, which has been the president of Venezuela for the last nine years, is violating democratic norms by gradually increasing his power, manipulating elections, keeping a close watch on opposition members and the critical media, and slowly undermining the separation of powers in what has been dubbed a “slow coup”. In Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega and the Sandinistas appear to be moving in the same direction, becoming increasingly authoritarian (Finel 2009; Løvenbalk 2011).

To sum up, the third wave of democratization has brought many truly democratic states in Latin America; however, serious threats to democracy still exist, as has been demonstrated by not only the Honduran coup d'état and the coup attempts in Venezuela and Ecuador, but also by the emerging threat of “democratic authoritarianism” with Venezuela as the clearest example.

When addressing the history of coups d'état in Latin America, one has to mention the role of the U.S., as it has a history of dubious support for coups against democratically elected governments in Latin America, and has even occasionally been the protagonist in coups, like it was in Guatemala in 1954. This was primarily the case during the Cold War, which fueled polarization throughout the Americas and made the U.S. suspicious of leftist governments, and willing to support right-wing authoritarian governments. U.S. military interventions occurred throughout the region during the Cold War era (e.g. Cuba in 1961, Brazil in 1964, Chile in 1973, and Central America in the 1980s). Especially Cuba, as an ally of the Soviet Union, was an important factor in shaping the U.S. mindset and policy in Latin America during the Cold War (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2003: 40, 60; Shifter 2009b). This foreign policy started to change in the late 1970s, under U.S. President Carter, who publicly criticized human rights violations committed by authoritarian governments, even those who were friendly to the U.S. Generally, in the post Cold War period, from the 1990s onwards, there have been signs of positive changes in U.S.-Latin American relations. The Clinton years brought a new U.S. agenda that was less focused on security matters, and more focused on cooperative areas such as trade, drugs, and the environment (Shifter 2009b). During the third wave of democratization, the U.S. has generally supported transitions to democracy in Latin America, which, in combination with the collective democracy promotion regime of the OAS, has created a context of higher costs of coups to potential coup makers and supporters of coups (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2003: 40). Yet, there are still exceptions such as George W. Bush's silent approval of the 2002 coup attempt against Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez. The current U.S. president Barack Obama has proclaimed a new foreign policy towards Latin America, one that does not include the U.S. unilaterally intervening in Latin American affairs. The focus is now to be on multilateral cooperation and equal partnerships between the U.S. and Latin America (O'Neil 2009). Obama will thus avoid using hard power against Latin America, focusing on diplomacy and joint responsibility, i.e. soft power (Nye 2011).

To summarize, even in the present context of democracy promotion and positive democratic development, democratic breakdowns can occur – a threat that has been continuously present in Latin America, and which has been clearly demonstrated by the case of Honduras.

On June 28, 2009, the democratically elected president Manuel Zelaya of the small Central American country Honduras was forcefully removed from office by the Honduran military. Clearly, there are still issues with democracy in Latin America. One might be tempted to believe that with an international environment that is so favorable of democracy, and with the existence of the Inter-American Democratic

Charter, the military can no longer get away with intervening in politics. But unfortunately, as the recent events in Honduras show, this is not the case. The military can still interrupt the democratic order without being stopped by the international democracy promotion regime.

1.1. Motivation

The interest in examining this subject first of all stems from a personal experience. I recently visited Honduras where I worked as a volunteer with a Honduran women's organization. During my trip, I visited fragile social groups and I was blown away by the state of the country. The ouster of President Zelaya plunged Honduras into a state of internal turmoil. The division of the Honduran population is evident; the crime and the murder rates are sky high; there has been a dramatic rise in unemployment. Honduras is the third poorest country in Latin America, with many formidable obstacles, and the post-coup crisis has only made things worse. During my visit I experienced first hand how the Hondurans are becoming increasingly frustrated with the situation. They are frustrated by the lack of assistance, both from their own government, but also from the international community. Several complained about the fact that no one was doing anything to help the country out of the crisis. They felt let down. This made me curious about investigating what have in fact been the international reactions to the coup, and finding out why they ultimately failed. On a less personal note, the motivation stems from the fact that I think that the Honduran coup d'état was generally overlooked in the media, and that it has been quickly forgotten. The fact that, in the 21st century, it is still possible to interrupt the democratic order without being stopped by the international community or being held accountable for ones actions is hard to understand. The subject deserves some investigation.

1.2. Methodology and selection of theory

The purpose of this report is to discuss the reactions to the Honduran coup d'état of 2009, and their influence in order to determine why the Honduran *golpistas* were able to succeed in seeing the coup d'état through, without being stopped by the multilateral organizations of the Americas. The basic questions that guide this report are: Does it matter for democratic interruptions in developing countries what international actors do and say? Can the reactions of external actors affect the outcome of a coup attempt? Who develops democratic norms, and how do these values become influential? Were the reactions to the Honduran coup based on democratic norms or were they rather the result of realpolitik?

The report will look into the reactions of Latin American multilateral organizations versus the inter-American democracy promotion regime of the Organization of American States (OAS), and its most powerful member the U.S. The purpose is to compare and contrast the reactions in order to offer explanations of them. Through this approach I will seek to determine the how and why of the success of the Honduran coup, with success referring to the fact that the coup coalition succeeded in preventing Zelaya from returning to the presidency. The purpose of choosing to look at both Latin American and inter-American reactions is to examine the role of the U.S. in the response of the OAS. The role of the U.S. as a regional hegemon has always affected the U.S.-Latin American relationship, but how much influence does the U.S. have in the OAS?

In the report I discuss the behavior of the organizations and the U.S. by making use of International Relations theory as well as expert contributions on the subject. I have chosen to apply neorealism, constructivism and liberalism, because of their different views on international regimes and cooperation, which I have deemed useful in explaining the reactions to the coup d'état. In applying these different theories, as well as expert contributions, I will seek to explain how and why the Honduran coup d'état was able to succeed without being stopped by the multilateral organizations of the Americas. I wish to examine whether realpolitik triumphed over international cooperation and commitment to democracy.

The structure of the report is as follows:

Chapter 1, the present chapter, introduces the subject by providing background information on the history of coups d'état in Latin America, including the role of the military in Latin American society; the progression of democracy, addressing the most important present challenges to democracy in Latin America; and it provides information on the inter-American democracy promotion regime, and the role of the U.S. in Latin American democratic history.

Chapter 2 delivers background information on the coup d'état; such as the context in which the coup occurred, the immediate and more deep-rooted reasons for the coup, the specific circumstances surrounding the coup; the methodology of the coup; and the aftermath of the coup. It also covers the debate on the coup d'état, i.e. the disagreement between on whether the events in Honduras should be classified as a coup d'état.

Chapter 3 compares the goals and orientations of the Latin American multilateral organizations UNASUR, MERCOSUR, ALBA and the OAS, goes over their reactions to the coup d'état, and, finally, compares and contrasts them.

Chapter 4 is the discussing chapter that seeks to reach an answer to the research question of how and why the coup succeeded without being stopped by the multilateral organizations of the Americas. In order to do this the chapter discusses the reactions to the coup d'état by comparing and contrasting the Latin American organizations' reactions with the reactions of the OAS, including the U.S. Emphasis is put on assessing the influence of the U.S in OAS decisions. The chapter also discusses the influence of the reactions to determine

why the coup was a success. In the discussion I will make use of the International Relations theories of neorealism, constructivism and liberalism, as well as expert commentary on the subject.

Chapter 5 is the concluding chapter, which sums up the findings of the previous chapters, and provides a final answer to the research question.

Chapter 6 addresses aspects that have not been discussed in the report but are still considered interesting in relation to the subject.

This then leads to the following research question:

1.3. Research question

How and why did the Honduran coup d'état of 2009 succeed without being stopped by the multilateral organizations of the Americas?

In order to respond to the research question, the report will seek to shed light on the following sub-questions:

1. *What were the reactions of the multilateral organizations of the Americas to the Honduran coup d'état?*
 - a. *Latin American organizations*
 - i. *UNASUR*
 - ii. *MERCOSUR*
 - iii. *ALBA*
 - b. *The OAS*
 - i. *The U.S. as the most powerful member of the OAS*
2. *How might one explain the reactions to the coup and their differences/similarities?*
3. *Did the foreign reactions influence the outcome of the coup?*

1.4. Demarcation

In this report I have chosen to focus on the reactions of Latin American and inter-American organizations. I have chosen not to include the reactions of international actors such as the European Union and the United Nations, even though they were indeed very active in the international response to the Honduran crisis. The reason for my focus on American relations is, firstly, to ensure that a narrow focus is kept throughout the report, which is necessary when writing a report of limited page numbers, and, secondly, as already

mentioned, an interest in discussing whether the decisions and actions of the OAS is more determined by the powerful U.S. or by the Latin American member states. I have chosen to look at the reactions of MERCOSUR, UNASUR and ALBA, because it is my appraisal that they are the most powerful of multilateral Latin American organizations. The report focuses on the U.S. and Latin America. Canada is not included in the report.

1.5. Source criticism

The amount of debaters who have given their point of view on the Honduran crisis and the international actors' reactions hereto has been overwhelming. Journalists, bloggers, activists, and scholars alike have shared passionate opinions about the matter. While it has been highly interesting to study the debate in all shapes and sizes, I have been careful to steer past of biased sources, referring only to well-backed arguments put forward by scholars and experts.

The literature in this report includes academic inputs from the debate on the Honduran coup and the foreign response, newspaper articles for background information, literature on the inter-American democracy promotion regime and, to some extension, books. Naturally, most of the literature is from the immediate and close aftermath of the coup, when the debate was most active. I have been careful to use literature written by academics from both the U.S. and Latin America, to get a nuanced discussion. For the same reason, I have done my best to include contributions from all over the political spectrum.

2. The Honduran coup d'état

On June 28, 2009, at dawn, soldiers woke up the democratically elected Honduran president Manuel “Mel” Zelaya, and forced him on a plane to Costa Rica and out of the country, only wearing his pajamas. Eight of Zelaya’s cabinet members and the mayor of San Pedro Sula were taken under arrest, a curfew was imposed and TV stations were closed (Cerna 2009: 1243). The Organization of American States (OAS), the United Nations General Assembly, and later the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, determined that what had happened was a coup d’état (U.S. Department of State 2011). Thus happened the first successful coup d’état in Latin America in the new Millennium (Carlsen 2012).

The coup, which was also the first successful coup against a president in Central America since the end of the Cold War (Reuters 2009), was the culmination of a months long constitutional crisis between president Zelaya, the leadership of his own Liberal Party, state institutions, fractions of the Honduran elite, and the military, all of who in the end formed a coup coalition to get rid of Zelaya. The crisis was brought on by Zelaya calling for a non-binding referendum on whether the Hondurans were in favor of including a proposal for a constituent assembly to reform the constitution, by adding a fourth voting urn to the scheduled elections on November 29, 2009. Zelaya’s opponents feared that the reason for Zelaya’s plans to rewrite the constitution was that he wanted to make sure he could be reelected in a plot to become “president for life”. They were certain that he was planning a Communist takeover inspired by Hugo Chávez. Zelaya’s term was to end in January 2010, following the presidential election in November 2009, in which he could not run. He had ordered the military to distribute materials for the referendum, which the head of the military refused, which in turn made Zelaya fire him, seize the voting urns himself, and proceed with organizing the referendum without the approval of either the Honduran Supreme Court or Congress. This became the last straw for Zelaya’s opponents as they got together with the Supreme Court, most of Congress and the military to form a tough coup coalition that removed Zelaya on the day of the planned referendum.

The coup coalition was supported by much of the business and middle classes as well as most of the media. Quickly after Zelaya’s removal, the president of Congress, Roberto Micheletti, was installed as president of the new de facto government, and all of the cabinet members, who did not support the coup, were replaced. The de facto government ended up staying in power until January 2010 (Benjamin 2009; Cerna 2009: 1243; Weisbrot 2009, Legler 2010: 12). These events were the immediate cause of the coup, however, the roots of the coup go much deeper.

The wealthy rancher Zelaya came to power in 2006 as part of the traditional, slightly left-of-center Liberal Party, but during his term he became more and more leftist, taking populist positions, such as reforms targeted for the poor, which increasingly made him become resented by the Honduran elite. Several

measures made by Zelaya made a great deal of Honduran society resent him. In 2008, Zelaya decided to make Honduras a member of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), a coalition of nine Latin American and Caribbean countries directed by Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez with the aim of curtailing U.S. influence in Latin America. Besides Venezuela and Honduras, ALBA consists of leftist countries such as Cuba, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Bolivia. Many emphasize Zelaya's alliance with Chávez as the most important reason for the coup, because many Hondurans feared that Zelaya was trying to turn Honduras into a new Venezuela (Løvenbalk 2010; Pérez-Stable 2009). Many Hondurans were critical of ALBA, and especially the elite did not care for Zelaya's new rhetoric, or his populist reforms concerning social justice. In 2008, Zelaya established a 60 percent rise of the minimum wage, which especially angered those involved in business. The oil deal, which Chávez gave Honduras via Petrocaribe, offering fuel at low prices, angered traditional oil importers, because they would lose profits because of it. Also the fact that Honduras, who has been traditionally very close with the U.S., now had become an ally with Chávez, was a thorn in the side of the Honduran elite (Legler 2010: 11-12; D'Ambrosio 2009; Løvenbalk 2010). The elite's role in the coup is thus repeatedly stressed, and many regard the coup as an expression of the elite's dissatisfaction with Zelaya's policies becoming a threat to their interests in society. They believe that the coup was a reflection of the elite's fear of the power shift that is currently taking place via the rise of the leftist governments in Latin America. It was an attempt by the elite to strike a new balance of power in Latin America, to keep some sort of regional control.

The timing of the coup may also have been significant, i.e. that it happened in the midst of the global financial crisis (Aguilar 2009: 2-3), and *"When business is booming, these democracies accept electoral processes. When the interests of oligarchic sectors are in danger, it is interpreted as an attack on the country and law and order, which to the ruling elite justifies the collaboration of the armed forces to keep democracy functioning"* (Aguilar 2009: 3).

The powerful position of the armed forces in Honduran society, a tendency throughout Central America, should also be mentioned as being significant to the coup taking place. The Honduran military is mentioned in the Honduran constitution, where they are mandated to operate in areas such as communications and education. In Central America *"politics smells of gunpowder"*, and the military has historically been more powerful than the president. In recent years the Honduran military's budgets and responsibilities have even increased (Aguilar 2009: 3)

The general conditions of Honduran society such as crime and insecurity, political polarization, fragile institutions and extreme poverty, were also a part of the underlying explanation for the Honduran crisis (Shifter 2009a).

2.1. The aftermath of the coup d'état

In the aftermath of the coup the de facto government of Micheletti committed serious human rights violations against the Honduran people, documented by the human rights organization Human Rights Watch. Zelaya had the support of a large part of the Honduran people, including the country's social movements and labor unions, which determinedly protested the coup. The coup makers made use of force against demonstrators, leaving many dead and even more injured. They also censored the media, thus violating the Hondurans' right to know what was going on. No one has been held criminally responsible for these crimes, nor for the actual coup d'état (Human Rights Watch 2011).

In spite of most of the opposition boycotting the elections (Carlsen 2012), on November 29, 2009, the Honduran national elections happened as had been scheduled before the coup. Hondurans elected Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo as president. Lobo was sworn in on January 27, 2010, and, as set forth in the Tegucigalpa/San Jose Accord (see chapter 3), he formed a government of national unity and convened an international Truth Commission to look into the events surrounding the coup (New York Times 2011).

Nevertheless, the situation in Honduras is currently that of a crisis of human rights and governance. Besides from the fact that Honduras, one of Latin America's poorest countries, lost more than 200 million U.S. dollars in frozen international aid and loans (Mercopress 2009a), it is plagued by internal turmoil, political assassinations and raging crime rates. Since Lobo came to power, Honduras has become the number one murder country of the world. There is a violent death every 74 minutes in Honduras and the country has a murder rate more than four times higher than Mexico (Carlsen 2012; BBC News 2012).

2.2. The debate concerning the coup

What is a coup d'état? When looking up the term in the dictionary, the definition is a "*sudden, violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group*". However, in the case of Honduras, there has been substantial debate on whether the removal of Zelaya should in fact be classified as a coup d'état. This disagreement can be attributed to the specific circumstances surrounding the coup.

Supporters of the coup argue that the removal of president Zelaya does not constitute a real coup d'état, because Zelaya was the one who violated the law in the first place by going against the Supreme Court's ruling, and because he was trying to violate the constitution to assure that he could be reelected in November. Because of the opponents belief that Zelaya was planning to turn Honduras into a new Venezuela

and hold on to power, true Latin American caudillo style, without any kind of term limit, they argue that the military and the coup coalition were in fact saving the country from communist takeover by forcing him to leave (Shifter 2009d). I.e. the armed forces were acting as saviors of the fatherland, cf. the introduction's historic overview of the military in Latin America.

Opponents of the coup argue that Zelaya was not necessarily trying to secure his own reelection in his attempt to reform the constitution, and that it was indeed a coup d'état. They argue that Zelaya was only trying to amend the constitution so that he could return after sitting out his term - not to run for president again in November (Casas-Zamora 2010; Burbach 2009). Opponents also stress that the proposed referendum was non-binding, and only a poll of the electorate, and that what happened between the Supreme Court and Zelaya is irrelevant to the coup because "*the military is not the arbiter of a constitutional dispute between the various branches of government*" (Weisbrot 2009), and therefore there was no excuse for the military to step in.

To sum up, both sides believed that they were defending democracy. Opponents of the coup argued that there was no excuse for removing a democratically elected president. Proponents argued that the coup coalition had saved Honduras from becoming a "democratic authoritarian regime" with lack of respect for democracy, like Venezuela. If the proponents of the coup are right in their assumptions, one might ask oneself the question of what is least democratic: Accepting the president violating the separation of powers; or removing him to get rid of the risk of a "slow coup"? In the end, the question is: Is it acceptable to forcefully remove a democratically elected president?

In July 2011, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission established under the auspices of the OAS finally concluded that the removal of Zelaya was in fact a coup. It acknowledged that both sides had broken the law, and that Zelaya thus bore responsibility for being removed. It also marked that the Honduran Congress lacked a clear way of resolving conflicts between the president and Congress. But in spite of this, it concluded that Congress had acted beyond its limits by deposing the president. The Micheletti government was therefore illegal (BBC News 2011).

3. The reactions to the Honduran coup d'état

The international community had a strong, universal reaction of non-acceptance to the Honduran coup d'état. The coup was condemned by the United States, all Latin American countries, the OAS, the European Union, the United Nations, the Latin American members of SICA, ALBA, The Rio Group, and each country that is an economic and commercial center such as members of the G-8, G-16 and G-22 (Castro 2009). The coup also led to a worldwide suspension of aid and investment to Honduras (D'Ambrosio 2009).

This chapter goes over the actors that are the focus of this report, namely the Latin American and inter-American multilateral organizations. It goes over the orientations and goals of each organization, and identifies the reactions they had to the Honduran coup d'état. The first section deals with the Latin American organizations UNASUR, MERCOSUR and ALBA, while the second section deals with the Organization of American States (OAS). Due to its important role as a regional hegemon, emphasis is put on the role of the United States as a powerful member of the OAS. At the end of the chapter, the reactions of the different American actors are summarized and compared and contrasted. This chapter is provided as background for making the discussion in chapter 4.

3.1. Latin American multilateral organizations

Regional integration has been one of the most notable elements of Latin American foreign relations in the 21st century. Latin American heads of state have enthusiastically met in numerous summits, in order to promote political, economic and social cooperation, and entering into new agreements with each other.

In the following I look at the reactions of three Latin American organizations, namely UNASUR, MERCOSUR and ALBA. These Latin American organizations have different goals and orientations. UNASUR is primarily an organization with focus on maintaining regional security, MERCOSUR's focus is on trade, with a common economic union as a project, and ALBA is the highly politicized, socialist alternative. The organizations overlap in terms of member states, i.e. the members of MERCOSUR are also founding members UNASUR, and Venezuela, besides being the founding father of ALBA, is also a member of MERCOSUR. In addition, all member countries of these regional blocs, with the exception of Cuba, are also members of the inter-American democracy regime of the OAS.

3.1.1. UNASUR

The Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) is a Brazilian initiative initiated in 2008, which consists of 12 South American member states. It has emerged as one of the Western Hemisphere's leading multilateral bodies, and it is also regarded as a potential rival to the U.S.-influenced OAS (Crandall 2011: 94).

UNASUR is modeled on the European Union and is meant to cover trade, security, and political issues. Its main goal is to uphold peace and order in the region through the South American Defense Council, which serves as a mechanism for maintaining regional security. In 2008, UNASUR successfully prevented an attempt at violent disruption of Evo Morales' government in Bolivia. It demonstrated that it has the diplomatic ability to maintain order in the region, independently of the OAS (Main 2010). Many consider UNASUR to be a useful counterweight to the OAS (Lee 2012), and the creation of UNASUR has also made some question the future of MERCOSUR (Klonsky and Hanson 2009).

UNASUR staunchly rejected the coup in Honduras, and extended its full support for Zelaya, with former Chilean president Michelle Bachelet stating that "*UNASUR condemns the kidnapping of president Zelaya and his ministers (...) and expresses its decision not to recognize any government other than the one that is legal and legitimately elected*" (Reuters 2009). UNASUR also demanded the reestablishment of democratic institutions and the return of Zelaya as president. In addition, UNASUR persistently refused to recognize the November 29th elections under the de facto government. Only Peru and Colombia, the two UNASUR member states that are closest with the U.S., ultimately recognized the elections. The other ten members refused, maintaining that the Honduran election was not legitimate. UNASUR's determination was portrayed in the refusal of several member countries to attend to Sixth Latin America, the Caribbean and European Union Summit in Spain, if Honduran president Porfirio Lobo was invited. As a result of this collective determination, Spain eventually drew back Lobo's invitation (MercoPress 2009b, 2010).

3.1.2. MERCOSUR

MERCOSUR (the Southern Common Market), which is the largest regional trade organization in South America, and the world's fourth largest trading bloc, was founded in 1991 and promotes South American integration, free trade, and movement of goods, people, and currency. The ultimate goal of MERCOSUR is full South American economic integration. In 2004, MERCOSUR joined with the Andean Community to form the South American Community of Nations, bringing wider economic integration to the continent. Unlike previous attempts to establish common markets in Latin America, MERCOSUR has been successful

in increasing the trade between the member countries. MERCOSUR has four full members, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, while Venezuela has been seeking entry into the organization since 2006, and is currently in the process of becoming a full member (MERCOSUR 2012). Additionally, there are five associate members, Chile, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru that do not enjoy the same voting rights or market access as the full members (Klonsky and Hanson 2009).

In order to promote South America's financial independence, MERCOSUR has created a Latin American development bank, the Bank of the South, as an alternative to involvement by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This was the proposal of Chávez, and in the light of Venezuela becoming a full member, some speculate that MERCOSUR's agenda is becoming increasingly politicized. Chávez has made no secret of his desire to expand MERCOSUR's sphere to political affairs (Klonsky and Hanson 2009).

The response of MERCOSUR to the Honduran coup was "*energetic condemnation*", and it also expressed its "*total and full rejection*" of the November 29th elections, which the presidents refused to recognize "*in light of failure to restore President Manuel Zelaya to the position for which he was democratically elected by the Honduran people*". The presidents also stated that the elections "*were undertaken in an unconstitutional, illegitimate and illegal atmosphere*" and represented a strong blow to "*the democratic values of Latin America and the Caribbean*" (MercoPress 2009a).

3.1.3. ALBA

The Venezuela-led organization, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas (ALBA), is a regional bloc that aims for social, political, and economic integration in Latin America and the Caribbean. ALBA is a socialist organization that was created by Venezuela and Cuba in 2004 as an alternative to the U.S.-led Free Trade Area of the Americas, and its member states include Cuba, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua and several Caribbean nations. As mentioned earlier, Honduras was a member of ALBA before the coup, but has since withdrawn from the bloc.

ALBA's main purpose is to alleviate poverty and promote socioeconomic reform through trade agreements that meet each country's needs and also, to curb U.S. influence in the region. Supporters of ALBA see it as an admirable alternative to international lending organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank. Critics of ALBA have faulted it for disrupting the existing Latin American alliances, such as MERCOSUR, and for being a threat to stability in the region.

As MERCOSUR and UNASUR, ALBA was firm and consistent in its condemnation of the coup and its demand for Zelaya's return. It was the ALBA member countries that appeared most determined in the matter

and seemed to drive the region's politics (Shifter 2009c; Llosa 2009). ALBA stated in a declaration shortly after the coup: *"As one single voice, the governments and peoples of the continent are reacting with condemnation to the coup d'état, clearly declaring that in Honduras there is only one president and only one government: that of president Manuel Zelaya (...)"* (ALBA 2009). The ALBA member states also drew back their ambassadors, kept only a minimum of diplomatic representation in Tegucigalpa, and applied economic and trade sanctions against the de facto government. They also stated that ALBA did not recognize any election held under the current Honduran government, nor the result of any such election (Honduras News 2009). In addition, Chávez, who had become close allies with Zelaya, reportedly put the Venezuelan armed forces on alert, threatened with a possible military response to the coup (Shifter 2009a), and suspended Venezuela's Petrocaribe oil subsidies to Honduras (Legler 2010: 14).

A final, yet important remark to the Latin American reactions is that while all member countries of UNASUR, MERCOSUR and ALBA, led by Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela, refused to acknowledge the November elections, Panama, Costa Rica, Colombia, Peru and Mexico recognized the elections as a step toward restoring democracy (New York Times 2010).

3.2. The OAS

The Organization of American States (OAS), which is the world's oldest regional organization, was established in 1948, and includes 35 member states from across the Americas. The organization is based in Washington, and the reason for including the OAS in this report is exactly that: It is U.S.-influenced, contrary to the Latin American organizations mentioned above.

The OAS serves as a body for regional integration and political, economic, and social cooperation, and has taken upon itself the responsibility of preserving democracy in the Americas by means of multilateral diplomacy. Compared to the Latin American organizations, the OAS is more focused on democracy, and one may argue that the ideology is based on the U.S.' idea of democracy. The founding charter of the OAS specifies that representative democracy is both a goal of the organization, as well as a condition to become a member. An important resolution was passed in 1991, Resolution 1080, which created a formal diplomatic mechanism for responding to democratic breakdowns in the Americas. Another important document was the Washington protocol (1997), which gave the OAS the power to suspend a member state in case of an overthrow of its democratic government. The most important document of the OAS is the Inter-American Democratic Charter (2001), which merged the existing mechanisms for safeguarding democracy into one document, declaring that American states not only have a right to democracy, they are also obliged to promote and defend it. The Inter-American Democratic Charter also set benchmarks for representative

democracy, including respect for human rights, periodic, free and fair elections, pluralistic system of political parties and the separation of powers (Lee 2012; Levitt 2006: 94-95). As a result of the inter-American democracy promotion regime, today, a collective, ideological norm of support for democracy and disapproval of authoritarianism, one that has never existed before, is present across the Americas (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2003: 39).

As the Latin American organizations, the OAS reacted to the Honduran coup d'état with unanimous condemnation and, on July 1, 2009, released its proposed "Resolution on the Political Crisis in Honduras", which was to 1) condemn the coup d'état, 2) reaffirm Zelaya as the constitutional president of Honduras and demand his immediate, safe, and unconditional return, 3) declare that no government arising from an unconstitutional interruption will be recognized by the OAS, 4) undertake diplomatic initiatives aimed at restoring democracy and reinstating Zelaya. The OAS also decided on an ultimatum: that should these measures prove unsuccessful within 72 hours, the OAS would invoke Article 21 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter to suspend Honduras' membership (OAS 2009). This happened on July 4, 2009, when Honduras was suspended from the OAS, as the first member state since Cuba's suspension in 1962. After this first unsuccessful attempt at reinstating Zelaya through punitive measures, the OAS began a more encouraging phase of negotiation, continuing its diplomatic efforts to restore democracy and reinstate Zelaya, as had been stated in the Resolution. With support from the U.S., the OAS designated Oscar Arias, Nobel Peace Prize winner and former president of Costa Rica, as mediator in an effort to reach a peaceful, diplomatic resolution of the crisis. Arias proposed a compromise, the Arias Plan, that Zelaya be reinstated as president, but with limited power (Pérez-Stable 2009).

During the next four months, Arias convened several rounds of indirect talks between the two parties, i.e. between representatives of Zelaya and Micheletti, respectively. After months of failed negotiations, on October 30, 2009, an agreement was finally reached, when Zelaya and Micheletti signed the Tegucigalpa/San Jose Accord, also called the Guaymuras Accord. The plan called for restoration of Zelaya as president, but not unconditionally (as had first been the goal in the Resolution of July 1, 2009). The conditions were that there be created a national unity government; establishment of a truth commission under the OAS; amnesty for political crimes committed during and after the coup; and early elections. However, on November 6, 2009, Micheletti contradicted the Accord by announcing that he would form a new government without Zelaya. In response, Zelaya rendered the Accord invalid and broke off his participation in the reconciliation process. And by this, the negotiation process of the OAS had failed. One month later, on November 29, 2009, the Honduran national elections happened as planned, when Hondurans elected Porfirio Lobo as their new president. Zelaya was never reinstated as president, but he returned to Honduras in late May 2011, which led to the OAS accepting Honduras back as a member on June 1, 2011. Only country to vote against its readmission was Ecuador (U.S. Department of State 2011; Cerna 2009: 1243; Legler 2010: 16).

While there had been unanimous agreement in the OAS on the first reaction of condemnation of the coup, there was considerable disagreement on whether or not to recognize the November elections. One group, led by Brazil and Venezuela, held on to their refusal to acknowledge the election without Zelaya returned as president for the remain of his term. Another group, consisting of the U.S., Colombia, and some Central American countries, held that the best solution to the crisis was for the Hondurans to elect a new government in the already planned election. The first group considered elections held under an illegitimate government to be illegitimate, while the second group held that the elections were legitimate (MercoPress 2011).

3.2.1. The United States

This section on the reaction of the U.S. to the Honduran coup d'état is provided as background for the discussion of U.S. influence in the OAS.

Most argue that the U.S. was remarkably reluctant in its reaction to the coup. To begin with, Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stressed the return to order via dialogue and respect for the Inter-American Democratic Charter, but without actually condemning the coup or demanding the reinstatement of Zelaya (Reuters 2009). It would be a few days before Obama actually condemned the coup (Weisbrot 2009). The U.S. used sanctions, suspending over 20 million dollars in aid and military assistance, put on hold anti-narcotics-cooperation and revoked the visas of some high-ranking members of the de facto government (Legler 2010: 15). But the U.S. also chose to keep its ambassador in Tegucigalpa, continue its trade and most of its aid and military cooperation with Honduras, and most importantly, chose to acknowledge the Honduran elections of November 2009 (Boel 2009).

The mixed signals of the U.S. could be due to the fact that there were disputes in Washington between Democrats and Republicans on what was the appropriate response by the U.S. to the coup, which might have pulled Obama in different directions. Some Republicans believed that the U.S. should not push for Zelaya's return to Honduras because of his close alliance with Chávez (Shifter 2009d). As reflected in a discussion between U.S. lawmakers in a debate meeting at the Inter-American Dialogue's Congressional Members Working Group (2009), some believed that the focus of attention on Honduras in the aftermath of the coup should be on the country's next step, while others believed it was necessary to firstly investigate the causes of the coup in order to determine the appropriate U.S. response. It seems clear that the differences in opinion originated in, inter alia, the congressional members' opinion on whether or not the actions of the military in fact should be classified as a coup d'état (cf. the debate in chapter 2.2). Those who believed that it was Zelaya that had broken the law accordingly believed that the U.S. response to the coup and to the de facto

government in the aftermath of the coup was too severe. These were primarily Republicans. Conversely, those who held that Zelaya's ouster was certainly a coup d'état believed that the U.S should not recognize any action taken by the de facto government—including the national election. Some advocated the reinstatement of Zelaya before the elections for it to be considered legitimate; some were against his return; and others believed that it would be best if neither Zelaya nor Micheletti were in power at the time of the election. Even though both sides agreed that it was utterly important that the message coming out of Honduras should be that the U.S. is always on the side of democracy, there were considerable differences in opinion on how best to demonstrate this (Farnan 2009).

Latin American views on the reluctance of the U.S. have also been polarized, with some arguing that it is a reflection of a new, less interventionist U.S, while others are convinced that the U.S. approved of the coup and therefore did nothing to stop it (Hakim 2009).

To sum up, the Honduran coup d'état first led to an unprecedented reaction of united condemnation by all actors; however, the U.S. portrayed some reluctance. The OAS punitive measures and the diplomatic talks failed, and the sanctions applied were not enough to discourage the de facto government. When November came, there was disagreement on whether or not to recognize the elections. The U.S. and a few Latin American states chose to acknowledge the elections. So did the OAS, arguing that it was the best way for Honduras to move on. However, all three Latin American organizations addressed in this report refused to acknowledge the elections, consistently demanding the return of the democratically elected president Zelaya. It then appears that the most significant difference between the reactions of the Latin American organizations and the OAS was that the OAS acknowledged the November elections, while the Latin American organizations did not. The former argued that the elections were vital in restoring democracy in Honduras, while the Latin American organizations argued that acknowledging the elections was a violation of democratic principles.

4. Discussion

On the basis of the preceding chapters I will now make a discussion on the reactions to the Honduran coup d'état, addressing the following questions:

1. How might one explain the reactions to the coup and their differences/similarities?
2. Did the foreign reactions influence the outcome of the coup?

Via a discussion of these questions, I will seek to answer the research question:

How and why did the Honduran coup d'état of 2009 succeed without being stopped by the international actors of the Americas?

This chapter discusses the reactions to the coup d'état by comparing and contrasting the Latin American reactions with the reactions of the OAS, including its most powerful member, the U.S. It both seeks to provide explanations of the initial reactions to the coup, and the reactions to the Honduran elections of November 28, 2009. It places emphasis on the influence of the U.S in OAS decisions by trying to determine its weight. It also discusses the influence of the reactions on the outcome of the coup in addressing the overall research question of why the coup was a success.

The discussion makes use of relevant International Relations theories, as well as expert contributions on the subject. The theories have been chosen due to their usefulness in explaining the reactions to the coup d'état. Neorealism has been chosen because of its focus on national interests and security; liberalism because of its views on international cooperation and institutions; and constructivism because of the importance it attaches to international norms. In the discussion, emphasis is put on the partial validity of the different views and theories, while at the end of the chapter I suggest which theory best explains the reactions. Did realpolitik triumph over international norms and cooperation? Was the concern for national interests of individual states prioritized over the collective commitment to democracy?

Both the Latin American organizations MERCOSUR, UNASUR and ALBA, and the inter-American OAS all had a strong and determined initial reaction to the coup d'état, condemning the actions of the *golpistas* and demanding the return of Zelaya to his post. How might one explain this strong and unified reaction?

One explanation could be that the reaction was based on the collective, ideological norm of support for democracy and disapproval of authoritarianism that is present today across the Americas. According to Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2003: 37-38), international reactions to coups d'état are important for developments in developing countries because they demonstrate the international ideological context, i.e. they demonstrate the international norm of democracy. The inter-American democracy norm has been

promoted by the OAS, and adopted by the Latin American states, which now act accordingly. This argument goes well in line with the systemic constructivist Martha Finnemore's belief that states' interests are defined by international forces, and that "*international norms promoted by international organizations can decisively influence national guidelines*" (Jackson and Sørensen 2007: 170). Constructivist theory attaches great importance to the role of norms in the behavior of states. Neorealists, conversely, would not attach any importance to the American democracy norm, because they believe that international norms are routinely disregarded if it is in the interest of powerful states (Jackson and Sørensen 2007: 172-73). This will be further elaborated later in the chapter.

A shared interest in holding Honduras to its democratic commitment could be another explanation for the unanimous reactions from the individual organizations. This could be explained by liberalist theory as the fact that they were unanimous reflected cooperation and unity between individual states. Liberalists are generally optimistic about human nature, and believe that international organizations are important because they can promote cooperation between states, and enhance the ability of states to hold each other to their commitments (Jackson and Sørensen 2007: 111).

After addressing the similarities in the OAS and the Latin American organizations' reaction to the coup, I now turn to the differences. What I have derived from examining the reactions to the coup is that the most significant difference between the reactions of the Latin American organizations and the OAS was that the OAS acknowledged the November elections, while the Latin American organizations did not. This prepares the ground for a discussion of the U.S.' influence in the OAS and, more specifically, on the decision of acknowledging the elections.

Latin American member states of the OAS have long been suspicious of U.S. intentions in the OAS, and criticized it for being a U.S.-dominated organization. Chávez has even called it a puppet of the U.S. This Latin American critique has been highlighted as the explanation for the recent creation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), that it is an effort to create a counter-balance to the OAS to prevent the U.S. from dominating the regional decisions (Lee 2012; Legler 2010). The U.S. acknowledged the November elections. Below I discuss whether it is reasonable to believe that U.S. influence in the OAS affected the OAS decision to acknowledge the November elections, arguing that there may be some truth in the Latin American critique.

The question basically is whether the Inter-American Democratic Charter is worth something or if it can be disregarded at the will of powerful members of the OAS, such as the U.S. The pessimistic view of neorealism is that international institutions are mere "scraps of paper", which are at the complete mercy of

powerful member states. Liberalists, on the other hand, have an optimistic view on human nature, and believe that international institutions do in fact promote cooperation among states (Jackson and Sørensen 2007: 108).

Many have argued that the U.S. had some of the blame for the coup being successful, because the Obama administration did not do enough to solve the Honduran crisis. The U.S. was remarkably reluctant in its reaction to the coup d'état. As accentuated by co-director of the Centre of Economic and Policy Research in Washington, DC, Mark Weisbrot (2009), in the immediate aftermath of the coup, the U.S. was hesitant to condemn the coup and did not call unambiguously for the unconditional return of Zelaya. Even though it condemned the coup, it could have done much more, e.g. used more hard power by discontinuing all aid and trade, and it is thus debatable whether the U.S. was one hundred percent on the side of democracy in this case.

Even though the coup plotters had no overt international support, they succeeded in holding on to power for six months by not allowing Zelaya to return before the elections in November had been held. Zelaya criticized the U.S. for being too passive, stating that *“the U.S. could stop the coup in a matter of five minutes if they wanted to”*, and that it needed only *“tighten its fist”* to evict the de facto government (MercoPress 2009e). Rafael Alegría, advisor to Zelaya on land reform also called for more U.S. intervention: *“We need people in the United States to pressure President Obama to take stronger measures against the golpista government. We need the United States to freeze the accounts and deny visas to all coup leaders, cut all military and economic ties, condemn the repression and media censorship, and insist on Zelaya’s return”* (Benjamin 2009). The critique was also based on the common belief that Micheletti and his coalition were simply trying to drag out time before the elections, thus receiving legitimacy for the coup, and succeeding in seeing it through. They may have understood Washington’s lukewarm reaction as an encouragement to hold on to power (Hakim 2009; Weisbrot 2009).

Why did the U.S. refrain from applying more punitive measures to get Zelaya reinstated? One explanation could be that the U.S. was content with the situation. Maybe the U.S. was reluctant to clearly demand the unconditional return of Zelaya, because it did not want him to return (Weisbrot 2009). Getting rid of Chávez’ new ally might have been too tempting. Chávez and his anti-Americanism, as well as ALBA’s expanding influence, e.g. via friendships with Iran and Russia (Crandall 2011), are not in the U.S.’ national interest, and maybe the U.S. prioritized its own security over democratic values and commitments. This would be the neorealist view on the matter: that democratic principles were overshadowed by realpolitik (Boel 2009). Contrary to liberalists, neorealists do not believe that international cooperation matters. They see the world as anarchy of sovereign states concerned solely with their own national interests and security, and thus states cooperate only on the basis of their own self-interest, which means that states can never fully trust each other

(Jackson and Sørensen 2007: 94-95, 116). Maybe the U.S. was unwilling to use its influence to prevent the coup from succeeding, because it wanted to maximize its own power in the region. This would be the neorealist Mearsheimer's view, since his theory of offensive realism holds that states always seek hegemony. The goal for a country is always to dominate the system because this is the only way it can be sure that no other state will ever go to war against it (Jackson and Sørensen 2007: 87). Based on these neorealist assumptions it is also reasonable to believe that the U.S.' national interests were determinant in its decision to acknowledge the national elections in November.

Many followers of the crisis have expressed their belief that the U.S. and the OAS underestimated the stubbornness of the Honduran *golpistas*. They should have pushed harder for a resolution before the November elections, and ultimately failed by disregarding democratic values and giving the de facto government legitimacy by recognizing the outcome of the November elections without the reinstatement of Zelaya (e.g. D'Ambrosio 2009; Lisman 2009). Laura Carlsen, director of the Americas Program at CIP Americas, points to the fact that this mistake makes the U.S. an accomplice to the current crisis of human rights and governance in Honduras: *"By choosing not to support a return to democratic order and political healing before presidential elections, the United States helped deliver a serious blow to the Honduran political system and society. The United States has a tremendous responsibility for the disastrous situation (...)"* (Carlsen 2012). Another serious mistake, also accentuated by Carlsen, was that the U.S. allowed this without making sure that the coup plotters were prosecuted for their actions. This decision *"immediately undermined governance, rule of law, and the social compact"* (Carlsen 2012). The decision also undermined the Inter-American Democratic Charter and the democratic values it represents.

Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution and former Costa Rican vice president, Kevin Casas-Zamora, emphasizes the fact that the U.S. sent mixed signals because it went from initially condemning the coup to accepting it, and that the handling of the crisis reflected an inconsistency of U.S. policy towards Latin America. By deciding to acknowledge the elections in November as a means of ending the crisis, *"the U.S. ended up caving in to all the demands of a reactionary elite hell bent on preventing any political or economic change in Honduras"* (Casas-Zamora 2010). Centre of Economic and Policy Research scholar Mark Weisbrot goes even further and argues that during the six months between the coup and the national elections, the Obama administration *"did everything it could (...) to make sure that the coup succeeded"* (Weisbrot 2011). Instead of standing firm on the principles of democracy, the U.S. ended up siding with the coup coalition. The international pressure, he argues, did not come from the U.S., but from the leftist Latin American countries.

These are all highly interesting arguments, which lead to me concluding that the main reason that the Honduran coup d'état was successful was that the OAS and the U.S. recognized the November elections as a way out of the crisis. Based on neorealist assumptions of state behavior I argue that it seems highly likely that the national interests of the U.S., namely preventing Chávez and the ALBA countries from becoming too powerful, were decisive for the OAS acknowledgement of the elections. It could very well be argued that the fact that the OAS, the supposed defender of democracy in the Americas, acknowledged the elections, even though they took place under an illegal de facto government, made the Inter-American Democratic Charter irrelevant. And this is a dangerous precedent to set, especially when dealing with Latin America, considering its history with coups d'état.

However, there are certain specific circumstances that suggest that there were other explanations for the U.S. and the OAS acknowledgement of the elections. One is the unique situation surrounding the coup. The fact that there was substantial disagreement on whether or not the coup was even a "real" coup d'état may have contributed to the OAS and the U.S. acknowledging the November elections. Some believed that Zelaya was the one who has acted illegally, and that the coup thus was legitimate, and furthermore that Zelaya not returning was the best and most democratic solution for Honduras. Hence, in this specific situation, it is debatable whether the U.S. and the OAS reacted in alignment with the democratic norms or not.

Another specific circumstance is that of the serious crisis of human rights and governance that existed under the de facto government. This was the argument put forward by the U.S. and the OAS: That the way forward for Honduras was not to return Zelaya, because it would not relieve the political tension in the country, it might even make it worse. Returning Zelaya only held symbolic value, i.e. represented democratic principles, but the most important thing for Honduras after the coup was a compromise, so the country could find a way out of the crisis via national reconciliation and a return to democratic governance (Pérez-Stable 2009). One of the scholars to agree that this was the best solution for Honduras is the president emeritus of the Inter-American Dialogue, Peter Hakim, who argued that all countries should recognize the elections because, "*the quicker they do so, the sooner and easier it will be for the new Honduran leadership to deal with the country's deep political strains and revive its deteriorated economy*" (Hakim 2010).

A third specific circumstance is the timing of the coup, which might have contributed to the U.S. decision to acknowledge the elections. In 2009, when the coup happened, the Obama administration was facing serious domestic policy challenges. The global economic crisis had taken a severe toll on U.S. society, and Obama was busy dealing with these issues. This might have led the U.S. to look for a quick solution to the crisis.

As a final remark to the argument that I have put forward, suggesting that the national interests of the U.S. were decisive for the OAS acknowledgement of the elections, is that the U.S. was not the only member of the OAS to acknowledge the elections. Even though all of the Latin American organizations included in this report, UNASUR, MERCOSUR and ALBA, refused to acknowledge the elections, it should be noted that Panama, Costa Rica, Colombia, Peru and Mexico chose to recognize the elections as a step toward restoring democracy (New York Times 2010). This may also have been decisive in the OAS' decision to recognize the elections.

With regards to the reaction of the U.S. prior to the November elections, there are also certain circumstances that should be mentioned. The reason that the U.S. did not use more of its power to reinstate Zelaya could also be attributed to Obama's new Latin America policy, i.e. his commitment to multilateral cooperation in relations with Latin America. When taking into consideration this new policy, it becomes difficult to argue that the U.S. did not try to reach a resolution of the crisis. The U.S. did make a great deal of diplomatic efforts via the OAS' Arias Plan. Even though they proved fruitless, it showed a commitment from Obama to follow his words with action. The fact that the U.S. chose Arias as the mediator in the conflict, a very well respected politician in Latin America, shows that the U.S. no longer singlehandedly intervenes, but now emphasizes the inclusion of regional actors (Casas-Zamora in Gwertzman 2009: 1-2). On this background, Obama has referred to the criticism of the U.S. reaction as being hypocritical: *"The same critics who say that the United States has not intervened enough in Honduras are the same people who say we are always intervening and the Yanquis need to get out of Latin America"* (MercoPress 2009e)

This also proves that the U.S. has a difficult role in the hemisphere as, on the one hand, it has to adapt to the new realities of the post-hegemonic era, by backing off and letting the Latin American countries be the principal actors in Latin American affairs, but at the same time there are still expectations that the U.S. step in in events such as the one in Honduras. The U.S. has to be careful when dealing with democracy in Latin America, because there is still very much suspicion among Latin Americans about its motives. In the past, the U.S. has repeatedly failed to condemn coups d'état in Latin America, e.g. in Chile (1973), Brazil (1964), Bolivia (1971, 1978 and 1980), and Venezuela (2002) (Llorente 2009). The fact that the U.S. has a close relationship with the Honduran military, which goes back decades (Benjamin, 2009), may have added further to the suspicion in this case. One year after the coup, Zelaya even accused the U.S. of being behind the coup (Mather 2010); a suspicion that fellow ALBA member Bolivian president Evo Morales shared (La Opinion 2009). Zelaya was certain that the U.S. had staged the coup because of his progressive changes in Honduran society, as well as the fact that *"in the Organization for the American States assembly in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, we managed to revoke the expulsion of Cuba that occurred in 1962"* (Mather 2010). The U.S.?

reaction can thus be explained by the attempt at finding a balance in dealing with Latin America, emphasizing equal partnerships and joint responsibility (Crandall 2011: 93).

Now I turn to the Latin American organizations to try to explain their unified and unwavering reaction. UNASUR, MERCOSUR and ALBA all condemned the coup, applied punitive measures, and most remarkably, consistently demanded that Zelaya be reinstated as president. None of the organizations accepted the elections as a way out of the crisis. Below, I argue that two factors contributed to the strong and consistent reaction of the Latin American actors: The increased regionalism in Latin America and Latin American collective memory with regards to coups d'état.

In recent years, Latin America's capabilities have grown as the region has entered an era of unprecedented progress, both within the economic, political, and diplomatic realm. The Latin American countries, which have been historically influenced by the hemisphere's dominant power, the U.S., are now increasingly looking for solutions among themselves, creating an impressive array of regional organizations that do not include the U.S. – as many that some have spoken of a “post-hegemonic” era in the Americas (Crandall 2011: 84). This increased independence of Latin America is further accentuated by the recent formation of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean Nations (CELAC), which can boast of encompassing *all* countries of the Americas, with exception of the U.S. and Canada (Shifter 2012: 56). This represents an unprecedented shift in the balance of power of the Americas. Latin American countries are reevaluating their interests (Crandall 2011: 88), and as co-director of the Centre of Economic and Policy Research in Washington, DC, Mark Weisbrot (2009) puts it, because of the increased regionalism, Latin America today is “*much more united and much less willing to compromise on fundamental questions of democracy*” than it was before. This argument makes a strong case for liberalism, because of liberals' belief in progress and the value of international institutions in enhancing cooperation between states (Jackson and Sørensen 2007: 108).

Another factor that can explain the strong and unwavering stand of the Latin American organizations is the collective memory of Latin America. In 2009, right after the coup, when Argentinian president Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner stated that she was deeply worried about the Honduran situation, she added: “*It reminds me of the worst years in Latin America's history*” (Reuters 2009). The reaction can be explained by a fear among the Latin American countries that the success of the coup would set a new precedent in the region by encouraging the armed forces in other countries to return to the old, familiar practices of intervening in politics. This is even more likely considering that the coup particularly touched a nerve in those countries that have suffered from severely repressive military rule in the past, such as Brazil and Argentina. The risk is that allowing democratic principles to be broken in another country would set a

precedent. It could end up encouraging a similar event in other Latin American countries (Burbach 2009; Boel 2009). It would pose a serious risk to their national security to allow a military coup to be accepted in the region, risking the return of the military, and undermining democracy in Latin American countries. This argument suggests that they reacted in alignment with neorealism, because their most important concern was that there not be set a precedent that could become a threat to their own national security. Adding further to the risk was the fact that the Honduran coup represented a whole new way of executing a coup, one that is based less on violent overthrow and more on political slight. Referring to Argentina's rejection of the November elections, Argentinian foreign minister Jorge Taiana stated, "*What is at stake is whether we validate or not a new methodology of coups d'état*" (MercoPress 2009c). However, a liberalist might argue that this Latin American fear of the coup setting a precedent in the region was not based on the countries' individual national interests, but were the result of a *shared* interest in ending the crisis in Honduras.

Were the reactions determinants for the success of the coup d'état? According to Barraca (2007: 138), the international response to coups is one of the major explanatory factors that determine whether a coup succeeds or fails. If a foreign actor has influence and is willing to use it to defend democracy, the coup is likely to fail. Contrary, if a foreign actor has influence but is not willing to use it, the coup is likely to succeed.

As portrayed above, in the case of Honduras it is debatable whether the OAS and the U.S. were willing to use their influence to prevent the coup from succeeding, while a lot suggests that the Latin American organizations were willing to go to great length to restore the democratically elected president. The question then is if the Latin American organizations had sufficient influence to reverse the coup? As the events in Honduras show, they did not, given that the coup plotters succeeded in seeing through the coup in spite of their determined rejection.

With regards to the U.S., there is no doubt that it has influence over Honduras; this influence is cemented by the substantial economic assistance it provides each year to the Honduran state as well as by the fact that the U.S. is Honduras' main trading partner. Honduras has traditionally been an ally of the U.S., which in turn has been the largest bilateral donor to Honduras. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that the U.S. had the influence, but not the willingness, to prevent the coup from succeeding. The reactions are thus in alignment with Barraca's theory, which, as mentioned above, states that if a foreign actor has influence but is unwilling to use it, the coup is likely to succeed. This unwillingness of the U.S. can be explained by neorealist theory: that national interests triumphed over the inter-American cooperation and commitment to democratic norms. Hence, in the end, I argue that neorealism makes a stronger case than its contenders: constructivism and liberalism. Barraca's theory thus explains why the coup succeeded: The Latin American multilateral

organizations lacked the influence, while the U.S. lacked the willingness to reverse the coup.

Based on this discussion I argue that the fact that the OAS made a decision that was different from the three Latin American organizations indicates that the U.S. is likely to have had a great deal of influence on the OAS' decision to acknowledge the elections. National interests of the U.S. may have been channeled through the OAS. The OAS' acknowledgement of the elections was significant, because they took place under an illegal de facto government. This could be seen as a violation of the democratic norms put forward in the Inter-American Democratic Charter, and there is thus a danger that this acceptance may set a precedent, and encourage other coups d'état in Latin America.

Other circumstances may also have affected the outcome of the coup. But based on this discussion, I argue that the interests of the U.S. are likely to have weighed the most in the decision to recognize the elections. Because of the threat to its powerful position in the region, coming from the rising influence of Chávez and the ALBA countries, the U.S. was reluctant in its response to the coup and favored the elections as an easy solution to the crisis. However, as is evident in Honduras today, the crisis continues and the elections that took place in a non-democratic setting, and which was boycotted by Zelaya's followers, seem to only have worsened the crisis.

5. Conclusion

This report has addressed the reactions of the OAS, the U.S. and three Latin American multilateral organizations to the Honduran coup d'état, in order to explain how and why the coup was able to succeed. Based on the findings of the report, I put forward three main arguments: First, the coup succeeded because of the OAS' and the U.S.' recognition of the national elections in November; Second, the U.S. influenced the OAS' decision to recognize the elections; and third, the reason for this recognition was based on U.S. national interests and security, i.e. neorealism.

The most significant difference between the reactions of the Latin American organizations and the OAS was that the OAS acknowledged the national elections, while the Latin American organizations did not. It is my argument that the U.S. influenced this decision, and that it was decisive for the outcome of the coup. Instead of promoting the principles of democracy, both the U.S. and the OAS ended up siding with the coup coalition, representing a disregard for the democratic commitments of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

The U.S. condemning the coup per se was a positive and important change from previous times. However, the U.S. was remarkably reluctant in its approach to ending the crisis, and it chose to acknowledge the elections without demanding the return of Zelaya. It is my argument that this reluctance in enforcing democratic principles in Honduras was due to the fact that the U.S. prioritized its own national interests and security over its commitment to protecting democracy. It might have been too tempting to get rid of one of Hugo Chávez' closest allies, because he and the other ALBA countries represent a threat against the U.S.' powerful position in the hemisphere. It seems reasonable to argue that these interests of the US were channeled through the OAS, because it is a U.S.-influenced organization and, according to many Latin Americans, a U.S.-dominated organization. Thus, the U.S. is likely to have influenced the OAS' decision to acknowledge the elections.

Even though most point to the fact that the reactions of the U.S. were based primarily on neorealist power politics, it is important to recognize that there were specific circumstances in the case of Honduras, which could also explain why the U.S. and the OAS acknowledged the elections. Firstly, there was disagreement on whether or not it was a coup. Some argue that the fact that president Zelaya had acted against the will of the Honduran Congress and the Supreme Court was an illegal act and that he was undermining democracy in Honduras by trying to secure his own reelection. Others argue that he was doing no such thing and that there is no excuse for removing a democratically elected president from power. This ambiguity of the coup may have weakened the compliance with the inter-American democratic norms. Secondly, there was a crisis of

human rights and governance under the de facto government, and some feared that returning Zelaya could make the political tension in Honduran worse, which may have been the reason for the U.S. and the OAS favoring a compromise through the elections. Thirdly, the timing of the coup may have influenced the Obama's decision to favor a quick solution to the crisis, since it took place while he was preoccupied with domestic concerns. The U.S.' reluctance to use more of its influence to return Zelaya to the presidency could also be explained by Obama's new Latin America policy, which emphasizes shared responsibility and multilateralism.

A couple of positive conclusions can also be deduced from the Honduran crisis. One is that, initially, there was a strong reaction to the coup from all actors addressed in this report. This suggests certain commitment to defending democracy. Here, the democracy norm is likely to have been decisive, which proves that constructivist theory also has some relevance in the explanation of the reactions. The other positive conclusion is the fact that the Latin American multilateral organizations stood firm on their belief in the values of democracy, which suggests the existence of a stronger, more unified Latin America that is unwilling to compromise on questions of democracy. This can be explained by the shared history of repeated military coups d'état, and by the increased Latin American regionalism, which leads to me suggest that liberalism and its believe in progress and international institutions also has some relevance. However, in the end, these principled reactions did not influence the outcome of the coup.

As mentioned, other circumstances may also have affected the outcome of the coup. But based on this discussion, I argue that the individual national interests of the U.S. are likely to have weighed the most in the decision to recognize the elections. Because of the threat against its powerful position in the region, coming from the rising influence of the socialist, anti-American ALBA countries, the U.S. was reluctant in its response to the coup and favored the elections as an easy solution to the crisis. However, as is evident in Honduras today, the crisis continues and the elections, which were boycotted by Zelaya's followers, seem to only have worsened the crisis.

I find Barraca's theory useful for explaining the success of the coup d'état, and my final conclusion is that the coup was successful because the Latin American organizations lacked the influence, while the U.S. lacked the willingness, to reverse the coup. This unwillingness of the U.S. is well explained by neorealism, because the national interests of the U.S. are likely to have been determinant for its response to the coup.

It is quite remarkable that, in the case of the Honduran coup d'état, the U.S. and the inter-American democracy promotion regime of the OAS were the ones that stood least firm on the values of democracy. Recognizing the elections even though they were not representative of the entire Honduran population, and

took place under an illegal de facto government, which was violating Hondurans' human rights, in my view is a clear violation of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. It may set a precedent, and encourage other coups d'état in Latin America. This is a dangerous precedent to set, as many democracies in the region are still relatively young and fragile, and the military has a tendency of wanting to intervene in politics. In my view, when dealing with Latin America, it is utterly important to be clear on the questions of democracy. Preserving democracy in Latin America is protecting the important steps that the region has taken in its evolution towards democracy, and it is important because it is ultimately the key to the long-term stability of the hemisphere.

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