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*Latin American Integration: An Exploration on the Prospects
of Latin American Countries Forming a Functioning
Organization Along the European Union Model*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Brotherhood. A term that often comes up when discussing Latin America. Adequately, the reasons behind using this particular term seem evident; many of the countries communicate in Spanish or in another Latin-rooted language, and possess close cultural traits. In addition, the different pasts of these countries are intertwined, and an aspiration for political likeness can be found throughout the latest centuries of Latin American history. In fact, Latin America may be regarded as one of the most homogeneous larger land areas in the world.

The European Union, despite being formed of heterogeneous countries, is a success story with no equivalent in the recent world history. The EU, created under the 1992 Maastricht Treaty that established the European Union and the present form of its institutions, is a peculiar case of a regional organization. There exists no other organization that sets up such close connections between its member states, sometimes even overruling the legislation of those particular nations. How does such an arrangement work in an area such as Europe? Adequately, the continent is highly dispersed between countries: languages, histories and cultures are very different across the continent. The political scene is a mix of monarchies, presidential systems, semi-presidential systems (political competences shared between the president and the prime minister) and parliamentary republics (the president has very limited political competences). (Wikipedia, n.d.)

As a Guatemalan contact of mine pointed out, after a couple of years of living in Europe: *“I have always wondered how it is so easy to go from one European country to the other, though I need to show my passport to even go to Mexico”*.¹ Her statement sparked my interest, and I was eager to learn more in order to answer her thought. Proposing a regional organization for Latin America, with the example of the European achievements, sounds like a beneficial project to undertake. Yet the reality might manifest serious obstacles: whereas Latin America would be from

¹Diaz Rodriguez, 2018

a certain point of view an ideal launching area for a fully integrated regional organization, it's also a zone that represents itself as a chaos.

From the Mayas, Aztecs and Incas who built cities even 5000 years ago, to the Portuguese, French, British, Basque and Viking visitors.² From Christopher Columbus arriving to Bahamas on October 12, 1492³, to the Spanish conquistadors in the Americas from the same year 1492 and for a few decades onwards. From Simon Bolívar marching to New Granada with an army of 4000 men to scare away the Spaniards in 1819⁴, to Fidel Castro gaining power in Cuba in 1959 and wanting to export his socialist revolution to all Latin American countries. All these events and many more have happened before we arrive at the year 2018.

Presenting an attempt to build a Latin American Union as extensive as the EU as a newfound idea would be totally misleading information. In fact, the dream of uniting these countries goes all the way back to Simon Bolívar, José de San Martín and other leaders thriving for *La Patria Grande*, a Union of Latin American nations even bigger in cooperation than the EU. It all started after Bolívar marched to New Granada: he continued his way to what is now Colombia, declaring the creation of a Republic of Gran Colombia.⁵ This union was to comprise Colombia, Nicaragua/Panama, Venezuela and Ecuador. Despite the great motivation, *La Patria Grande* never ended up becoming reality.

In 1994, Hugo Chavez of Venezuela and Fidel Castro of Cuba encountered each other several times with the aim of bringing the Bolivarian dream finally into reality. (Dominguez, 2015) An organization, ALBA⁶, was created. By no means is ALBA the only Latin American organization striving for regional integration, since there have also been fifteen others that have seen the daylight with the same endeavour. To put it simply, there is no such organization in Latin America that could be compared to the European Union, yet efforts to advance these aspirations for unity have been made through summits and meetings.

² Valtonen, P. (2001). *Latinalaisen Amerikan Historia*. University Press Finland. Helsinki. p. 44

³ *Ibid.*, p. 45

⁴ Rohter, L. (2010). *Brazil on the Rise*. Palgrave Macmillan, p. 175

⁵ Valtonen, *Latinalaisen Amerikan Historia*, p. 175

⁶The Bolivarian Alliance of the Peoples of Our America

2018 is a year considered as a turning point for the whole complex of countries forming the area. (Bousquet, 2018) At the end of April 2018, sad news for Latin American cooperation came into surface, when one of the most important regional organizations, UNASUR⁷, faces trouble: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru withdrew their memberships. According to the international politics expert Mariano de Alba, *“The collapse of UNASUR has a lot to do with Venezuela. The crisis in Venezuela exacerbated the differences between its member countries, and in 2017 the majority of them had a very critical position to what was happening and the government’s behavior.”* (Hernández, 2018) Even if the withdrawal is regarded as temporary, the whole organization has been under turmoil during the recent years, and will most likely not come back to a functioning state anymore. This is highly the consequence of the shift in power dynamics, where traditionally left-wing Latin American countries have moved towards a right-wing rule. (Paraguasu, 2018)

In 2018, the crises in Venezuela and Nicaragua are deepening, and massive inflows of refugees are fleeing to neighboring countries, in order to escape authoritarianism. Thousands of Central Americans, on their side, bolt their countries’ violence to enter the United States; the US President Donald Trump has firmly prohibited such a caravan of people from stepping on the US soil. Commodity boom has come to its end, and it can be distinguished in the on-going economic and political turbulence. (Binetti & Raderstorf, 2018) Latin Americans are feeling more and more anti-establishment every passing day.

Latin American elections were widespread in 2018. A continuing, even if still moderate, shift towards the right was to be perceived, in a traditionally very leftist Latin America. An extreme right wing candidate Jair Bolsonaro won the Brazilian elections, spreading worry with his highly populist and military-oriented political agenda. Nicolás Maduro, a socialist Venezuelan dictator, was re-elected. Mexico encountered violent general elections in July while electing the center-left candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador. Costa Rica chose a new President, the center-left Carlos Alvarado, and a new Legislative Assembly. Paraguay went for the right, electing Mario Abdo Benítez in April. Colombia held parliamentary elections, and the guerrilla group FARC was

⁷The Union of South American Nations

guaranteed 10 out of 166 of the seats in the Parliament as a sign of bringing about the peace agreement. In Cuba, Miguel Diaz-Canel took office as the new President, when Raul Castro refused to present himself again as a candidate.

All in all, Latin American elections in 2018 were seeking a way out of a very corruptive system and of those players who were involved in corruption schemes. Latin America is usually known to be very much torn towards ideologies, but 2018 elections showcased that people voted from a practical perspective, in order to tackle some of the most pointing problems of their country, such as poverty, security and crime. Furthermore, voters wanted to shake things up in the political area (especially in Brazil, where people voted for Bolsonaro because of a disappointment of decades of PT, the Workers' Party, in power).

In Peru, the ex-President Alberto Fujimori was granted a pardon that did not satisfy everyone. Mercosur and the European Union are finally coming up with a trade agreement. Guatemala is following the US example and moved its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Bolivia abandoned a term-limit on presidency, slipping towards authoritarianism. Despite the fact that Argentina holds the G-20 presidency for the year (Strauss & Talvi, 2018), economy all over Latin America stands poor, unemployment is growing and wages remain low. (Blair, 2017)

As 2018 has been an eventful year for Latin America, analyzing the possibilities and the obstructions of a Latin American Union is important. All in all, brotherhood means solidarity. A concept that is very well rooted into socialism, and that therefore should be one of the strengths of Latin American countries. Unfortunately, solidarity at an institutional level has a tendency on failing to succeed, with the recent example of the disputes under UNASUR. What will be required from Latin American countries in order for them to show solidarity, to be able to sacrifice, to be open for more extensive opportunities? I will discuss and analyze my findings in three separate chapters: from the cultural and social, political, and economic perspective.

As an initial idea, I would consider a Latin American Union as an organization that would greatly benefit countries taking part in it, in the same way as former USSR countries could benefit from joining the EU. This is where I will start untangling my research on the factors that hinder

the establishment of a regional organization, alike the EU, in Latin America, and what should be taken into consideration if such an organization sees the daylight. After all, I must also discuss whether such a creation presents itself as beneficial for the possible future member states, or whether there's no necessity to call for action.

2. METHODS

“It’s not enough to know Cuba from the outside. It’s necessary to also know Cuba from the inside. You have to come by yourself, see and find out. To talk with people.”⁸

As Pauliina Raento put it, being truthful to the objects of study remains an important factor in social sciences, let it be people, infrastructures, traditions, etc. That is why getting any results closest to the truth demands a perspective from experts, for example from those who have living experience. Hence, a trip across the pond came to my mind when I first decided on conducting my research concerning Latin America. Honestly speaking, one of the biggest motivators of mine for writing a thesis on such a topic was the huge interest that I have for the Latin American culture in general. However, due to timing and financial issues, the trip was to be postponed into the future.

Furthermore, having finished my undergraduate studies in sociology, I’ve been molded into the mindset of a researcher that goes out of the office in order to conduct interviews, both in qualitative and quantitative researches. Thus, I wasn’t ready to solely stick with data retrieved from different written and auditive documents. Luckily, having previously made Latin American friends provided me a way of getting in touch with reality outside of academic and news material. Written documents, news articles, books and documentaries nevertheless remained by far the largest provider of information, with the informal interviews generating a small support for the research already conducted. I often found my contacts slipping into the conversation a little piece of knowledge I had just learned before while going through my own material. However, they also often offered me something to investigate further on.

As with any research on social sciences, it is detrimental to remember that there is a need to take precautions once retrieving data from ethnographic research. Interviewees are people with their own opinions, and they are influenced by their environment, the media, and the culture that they grew up in, amongst other factors. They might also exaggerate their sayings in order to

⁸A direct translation from Finnish. Raento, P. (2011). Kuuba: Maa, Kansa ja Yhteiskunta. Gaudeamus Helsinki University Press. Helsinki, p. 14

provide a better or a more dramatic image of the issue discussed. Furthermore, they might spread information they themselves have heard from an unreliable source. In order to ensure that my research and analysis stays neutral, it is inevitable for me to also be critical of the sources, especially when the source is an indiscriminate person (meaning that the person is a citizen who might not have any academic or professional background in international relations, or politics in general).

Moreover, I was trying to gather my written sources from known reliable sources, such as books and articles written by experts or broadcasting companies such as the BBC. Despite trying to be careful with what kind of origins of information I was using, I sometimes had to rely on web pages such as a company's own web page. In that case, I compared the information presented on their page to the content of another similar page that wrote on the same topic, and only used information that was found on many different web pages (for instance, regarding the languages spoken in Latin America that I will present in the chapter about Culture and Society).

The reliability of sources comes down to the source being as neutral as possible. When using Telesur, I tried avoiding topics that can turn out partial under their direction. I anyway wanted to apply a Latin American source that was written in English, and a safe subject from Telesur was one written on Peronism. Otherwise, Telesur has its headquarters in Venezuela, making the newsletter somehow disputable at the moment. Furthermore, not having enough skills in Spanish or Portuguese, I was left with material written in English. This obviously limited the available sources and material for my research.

As a scientific approach, I decided to observe and understand happenings, rather than trying to explain them. This epistemological approach falls under post-positivism. In international relations such a methodology translates into trying to understand how different ideas, cultural factors and norms influence the political reality of a particular entity, or of various entities forming a group. One may wonder what the need for comparing two completely different blocks of countries was meant to achieve. My intention is therefore not to compare *per se*, but to explore and make propositions. Even if I'm often providing single examples from countries, the main goal is to form a generalization of the whole of Latin America, which is surely not effortless.

As for my personal working conditions, I was lucky enough to stay highly motivated throughout the research. I was aiming at reviewing all material before starting to write, which in the end turned out not to be the most functional way. I was researching and writing simultaneously, including analysis after the whole chapter was written. Moreover, as the year was full of events, I had to do quite a bunch of open paragraphs, which I concluded after a new circumstance appeared (especially with the election of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil). All together, I terminated the bibliographical research around the end of November 2018, in order to put a limit for my sources and to concentrate on reviewing the material, and most importantly on analyzing it.

3. CULTURE & SOCIETY

Culture

"Culture is the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterizes a society or a group. It includes creative expressions, community practices and material or built forms."

-United Nations Population Fund⁹

Society

"The community of people living in a particular country or region and having shared customs, laws, and organizations."

-The Oxford Dictionary¹⁰

"[...] it is clear that the challenge of Europe or the European Union is constantly to manage its heterogeneity."

-Johannes Hahn, an EU Commissioner¹¹

The world is becoming extremely interconnected, and no nation should stay isolated from the process of multiplying international political relations, from the increasing individual movement from one country to another (let it be for work, for traveling, or for fleeing from conflict-ridden areas), from the ever-growing role of technologies and the communication it provides us, as well as from the booming international trade and markets. This process is known under the term *globalization*.

⁹"The UN World Commission on Culture and Development Report", 2004

¹⁰"Society", n.d.

¹¹Hahn, 2016

Even if Latin American countries are by no means identical, they are still culturally closer to one another than European countries are to each other on their side. When launching my research, I concluded an additional hypothesis that a Latin American Union would work especially based on cultural grounds, since the nations share more cultural traits than social, political and economic similarities. Nevertheless, I was soon encountered with a dilemma: does homogeneity benefit a union, or is diversity the actual provider of strength? Are Latin American countries as homogenous culturally as they seem to be at first sight?

To avoid any confusion, it seems necessary to list out the countries that are considered as belonging to a block called *Latin America*; Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guatemala, Guiana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela, as well as entities belonging to a motherland: Guadeloupe, Martinique, Puerto Rico, Saint-Barthélemy and Saint-Martin. (“List of Countries”, n.d.) While Central American countries and the Caribbean islands geographically belong to North America, South America is the large southern continent that starts downwards from the frontier of Panama and Colombia.

On this chapter of the dissertation I will focus on the cultural and social aspects that play a role in the possibility of creating a Latin American Union: which traditions, societal and cultural facts, habits and aspirations contribute to either enabling or blocking a possible regional integration.

3.1. Language

“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”

-Nelson Mandela¹²

¹²“Nelson Mandela”, n.d.

Crossing the border from Bolivia to Paraguay, Chile, Peru or Argentina won't change much language-wise, and heading to Brazil will only slightly complicate the communication. Whilst proceeding to change scenery in Europe doesn't guarantee an understanding of the neighbor language: to give a few examples, one may consider travelling from Poland to Germany, from Sweden to Finland, or from Greece to Bulgaria.

Moreover, there are 24 official languages in the European Union, and an additional 200 are used in total. ("The Official Languages", n.d.) Evidently this calculation does not include European countries outside of the Union, which would further on increase the number. With the previous calculation in mind, we come to the realization that in the vast area of Latin America there are only 5 official languages: Spanish in the majority of countries, Portuguese (Brazil), English (Guiana and the Falkland Islands), French (Haiti and the French Guiana), and Dutch (Suriname, Aruba and the Dutch Antilles). ("The Facts", n.d.) In addition to these 5 official languages, some hundreds of indigenous languages are spoken, mainly in Brazil, yet they do not possess an official language status. Cuba is the only Latin American state that speaks only Spanish.¹³

In order to illustrate the advantage of using fewer languages in a regional organization, let's take a glimpse on the reality of the EU. The European Parliament's Introduction to their interpretation services states that: *"For a meeting with 24 active and passive languages, 72 interpreters would be needed for a full interpreting team."* ("Interpreting in the European Parliament", n.d.) Around 330 interpreters are working as staff for the Union, and even a greater number of interpreters are hired as external accredited interpreters. Clearly, the translation services human resources for such a multilingual organization are considerable, and the EU is perceived as being one of the most wide-reaching interpreting services provider in the whole world. Therefore the variety of languages is also, even though a very minor, burden to the Union's budget.

More than from the financial point of view, the wide range of languages poses other threats. Even if disposing a multitude of languages and cultures brings in different ideas and attitudes, it's no secret that working in one's native language has its advantages: the difficulty of cheating someone over a linguistic misunderstanding, the speed of meetings and decisions, easiness of

¹³ Raento, Kuuba: Maa, Kansa ja Yhteiskunta, p. 11

personal relations between the diplomats, and overall having a clearer picture of the topic being under discussion. That's why anglophone, germanophone and francophone countries are always one step ahead on the EU meetings, since their native languages are being used during the sessions, and in the everyday life of EU institutions. (Stein-Smith, 2017) Thus, an organization reaching from Patagonia (the south of Argentina) all the way to the Mexican-American border, and primarily using Spanish, would give many of the participants an equal take on Latin American Union affairs. Anyhow, Brazil as the most powerful country could be protesting against using Spanish as the main language in the organization. So, even in the Latin American Union the demand for interpreters stays tuned in, even if the role would be weaker compared to the interpretation services of the EU. The role of indigenous languages would probably appear as a dilemma to resolve, in case indigenous people of Latin America felt unrepresented in the Union.

3.2. Population

Brazil, for instance, is an ethnic mix that has been formed into its present form throughout centuries via immigration, slave trade and colonization.¹⁴ The structure of the Latin American population in general is very influenced by the indigenous, since even nowadays they make up 8 % of the population of the region (42 million people). (Ijjasz-Vasquez & Freire, 2018) Most of them live in Mexico, Bolivia, Peru and Guatemala. For a true Union to work, everyone should be included, especially larger minorities. This is unfortunately not the case within the EU: the only indigenous people of the EU, the Sami people, don't possess an official status under the Union. In practise, there is no representative of the Sami in the Parliament or in the Commission, even though this group's habitat spreads along two European Union member states' territories (Sweden and Finland). ("Saamelaiset tavoittelevat virallista asemaa", 2007)

Even with a large share of the population being indigenous in Latin America, there seems to be no relief in the indigenous question. The most well-known example is the battle of the Kayapó people over the Belo Monte dam. (Windh, 2011) This indigenous group has been protesting over

¹⁴ Strumia, F. (2013). *Supranational Citizenship and the Challenge of Diversity: Immigrants, Citizens and Member States in the EU*. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, p. 201

the construction of a dam that would reach over regions where Amazon flows, destroying the habitat of the group and that of other indigenous groups living in the area. In 1989, the Kayapó organized a 5-day media event as a cry for international help. As a result, the World Bank backed off from loaning the necessary sum for the project. However, the former Brazilian president, Dilma Rousseff, brought the project back into agenda, and even with the Kayapó continuing to protest, the dam is awaited to be ready in 2019.

Latin America, in a context of a creation of a Latin American Union, needs to pay attention to the wishes of the indigenous groups. The Sami are only 75 000 - 100 000 all together, which is a tiny portion of people compared to the mass of Latin American indigenous peoples. (“Usein kysyttjä kysymyksiä”, n.d.) The problem lies in the attitude especially of political leaders. They might see indigenous people as a group apart, formed of people who are not interested in politics, thus should not be taken seriously. Even if indigenous people don't manifest attentiveness on economic issues, due to their preoccupation with living off of the nature, concerns that touch their scope of interest should still be accommodated into the political plan of a Union. And better yet, an indigenous representative or representatives should be appointed, a spokesman or -men with a rotating tribe background.

As pointed out before, Latin America reaches along two continents: South America and North America. This leaves us with the conclusion that the countries are located pretty uniformly along the two continents, since the Caribbean islands are also perceived as a part of the North American continent. Keeping the geographic location of Latin American countries in mind serves as a reminder on which of them are the most connected to the US, for instance. Argentina as the furthest country from the United States is more drawn towards anti-Americanism than, for example, Mexico that even holds a NAFTA membership alongside the US and Canada. (Bondarenko, 2018)

As to the term itself, *Latin American*, it is not always clear who shares such an identity. In general, it is considered that being Latin American comes from the mix of the very word itself: Latin origins (Spanish, Portuguese or French since these languages derive from Latin) shuffled together with being geographically from the Americas (South America and North America). This

obviously means that countries or land areas that have an official language other than these three Latin languages are bound to not be regarded as being Latin American. I have nevertheless counted these countries in the term since it facilitates the naming of the group all together.

Why is the term *Latin American* so important in regards of a Union? Well, let's take a look on how the feeling of being European has affected the functioning of the EU. Not surprisingly, in the 2013 Eurobarometer survey, only 33 % of Brits, and 44 % of Greek people identified themselves as European. (Eurobarometer, 2013) The British case went on all the way to Brexit in 2016, which demonstrates well the danger of how not feeling like a part of a group can shake an organization. With the Greek case, there is a huge disappointment towards the European help mechanisms and the German bank loans in the event of the Greek debt crisis. On the other side of the spectrum, the percentages of Luxembourg (77 %), Croatia (70 %) and Belgium (67 %) indicate that the more citizens are open to the EU and the more the country is invested into regional integrity, the more they also feel like a part of it. How to therefore make sure that such a feeling of belongingness stays relevant in Latin America, and that skepticism wouldn't complicate the running of a Union? The Brexit case stays in our minds as a worrying example.

Brazil is a particular case, since being a vast country with a different language from the others around, not all Brazilians view themselves as Latin American or as a Latino/Latina. Even if Brazil is lacking some advances in the social sphere (huge wealth gap in terms of standards of living, violence), its economic improvement has been significant and it acquired the membership of the BRICS. Portugal and Spain decided on each of their colonial territories in 1494.¹⁵ Being the only Portuguese colony, Brazil didn't split up through the process of decolonization. This results into the massive territory that Brazil holds up until today, an area of 8.5 million km².

Other than language, Brazil is therefore different from other Latin American nations also in terms of history. Further on, whereas the other countries passed to independence through revolutions, Brazil developed through monarchy. Pedro First, the son of the King of Portugal, decided to stay in Brazil at the end of the 19th century when Latin American countries started gaining independence, and declared Brazil as an independent state under his crown.

¹⁵ Bakewell, P. (2004). *A History of Latin America*, Second Edition. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, p. 322

Thus, what is the threat of Brazilians not feeling like Latin Americans? Well, having the most powerful, largest and the most well-known Latin American country pushing for national interests rather than for regional unity, a Latin American Union would be bound to fail from the start. Already once Hugo Chávez took office in Venezuela in 1999, and became a charismatic figure for the masses, Brazil got worried over losing the spotlight and the position as the leader of Latin America.¹⁶ Chávez, from his side, was suspicious over Brazil in terms of its differing language and culture compared to most other Latin American nations.¹⁷ So, one of the leading personalities of Latin American unification, Hugo Chávez, shares my worry of Brazilian sentiment for being isolated.

On a positive note, Latin Americans normally get along quite well. Paraguayans look up to Brazil, almost engaging into a voluntary imperialism, meaning they would follow Brazilian direction if given a chance.¹⁸ I would connect Brazil as the Latin American Germany, a country that has been given the role of a leader and that every other country looks up to. This can also be dangerous, since Brazil is not very fond of regional unity unless it's under its own leadership. But, like with real brothers, there can be no one commander. A terrain for a mutually built regional union could thus be a solution where no country can lead all alone. Having Brazil in a Latin American Union can either bring the country closer to the remaining of the block, or serve as an escalation for superior feelings.

The Caribbean states seem to play together on paper, with organizations created, including CARICOM for Caribbean Community. Nonetheless, Caribbean organizations tend to divide islands between the Greater Antilles (West Caribbeans) and the Lesser Antilles (the smaller islands of the East). Plus, even these two areas are not as integrated as it may seem; Caribbean States are not similar, even if many of them belong to the British Commonwealth. Further on, Michael Burke argues that Caribbean people in general are historically pushed to have relationships with each other through trade and travel by boat; travelers would hop from one island to another, forcing

¹⁶ Rohter, Brazil on the rise, p. 242

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 43

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 243

islanders to coordinate together. But in reality, Jamaica for instance doesn't really have interest in the Lesser Antilles, Burke adds. Instead of cooperating, with his words, "*Jamaicans have tended to look to North America and Europe.*" (Burke, 2015).

Cuba has been keen on regional unity through socialism, with Fidel Castro bringing his revolution to other Latin American countries, but can the same be said for the other islands? Caribbean states are surely already under the influence of more powerful states, not the least of them the UK. Yet in the end, could they survive without this influence? I will present my opinion on Latin American countries staying under the power of other nations in the next chapter on Politics. But for now, my conclusion on the Caribbean islands is that they should take on two different paths in parallel in order to elevate the chances of development. In practice, these two paths would comprise firstly of staying under the power of bigger states, such as the UK and the US, for taking notes and achieving help for development. Secondly, the other path marks a membership of all the islands in a mutually beneficial Latin American Union, where they could have an equal role in regional affairs, and where they could also try their foot in deciding according to their own rights and interests. The very basic argument of equal share of say, at least reflected with the different sizes of populations in the region, opts for reducing any possible discrimination between the member states on institutional grounds.

3.3. "United in Diversity" - Discrimination and Racism

The motto of the European Union was employed for the first time in 2000. ("The EU Motto", n.d.) It clearly shows the ambitious goal of the Union: culturally distinctive nations cooperating under a political and economic Union, the EU. However, the reality might be somewhat different, and showcases that contributing into extreme neutrality might turn into a ticking bomb.

In order to illustrate my argument, I will have to point towards the case of Brexit. The UK deciding on leaving the EU in 2016, under the Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon (Hunt & Wheeler, 2018), was for a great part motivated by wanting to close the borders for and to the kingdom. Soon

after the British voted to leave the Union, Polish immigrants living in the UK were facing racist attacks in forms of graffiti appearing on their property, and of having to listen to racist chanting. (“Polish media in UK shocked”, 2016) Therefore this section of racists in the UK comes off to show that even an ethnicity very similar to theirs (Christian, white, European), wasn’t enough to form a feeling of brotherhood and that of solidarity.

With the Polish-British confrontation in mind, the other case to tackle on is how much European nations truly admire and respect each other. The average Greek feels like Germany betrayed them during the Greek debt chaos and with the lended money. The average Finn complains about Greece for driving itself to a situation where Finnish tax money goes into saving another country’s mess. Many European countries were feeling hopeless when Romania joined the Union in 2007, with the free movement allowing a bigger flow of Romanian gypsies to move towards other EU member states. (Kvarnkullen & Jakobson, 2015) What kind of racism and discriminative attitudes lie behind the coulisses of Latin American countries, which could eventually lead to problems in a Union?

There are a few extents to scrutinize when considering possible discrimination as a blockage for the smooth functioning of a Latin American Union. Firstly, Latin Americans are generally referring to their ancestors’ homelands, the same way as Americans distinguish themselves between Greek Americans, African Americans and Irish-Ethiopian-German-Swedish Americans, whatever the mix. My Argentinian contact¹⁹ would proudly tell me of being of Italian and Spanish heritage (honoring their Italian roots put into action through traditional Saturday’s pasta nights), and a Costa Rican contact²⁰ would often bring up his Prussian side of the family, and how it made him feel connected to Chileans who also had German blood running through their veins.

In contrast, Europeans seem to have forgotten that such a thing as ethnic “pure blood” rarely, if ever, exists. In fact, Europe has always been a meeting place and a melting spot for different ethnicities. Medieval Hungary, for instance, nation now so hostile towards the refugees,

¹⁹Molins, 2018

²⁰Hoepker Jiménez, 2018.

was located on the road of international traders, pilgrims and other nomads. This made this central European country a true multicultural hub.²¹ It was truly like Cuba back in the day, when Havana and Santiago served as huge international port towns through which Western products stopped by on their way to further lands.²² Both these countries having been so open in the past should give us hope for regional cooperation; that Hungary will transform into a country that plays by the rules of the EU and abides by mutual agreements, and that Cuba turns into a post-socialist state ready to cooperate with other Latin American states.

So, Latin Americans are aware of having mixed ethnic backgrounds, which might make it more manageable when integrating nations: like the Costa Rican finding people with German ancestors from every Latin American country, he is subconsciously open to accept the possibility of Latin America being culturally united. Brazilians are likewise proud to be mixed.²³ There's a great feeling of supposed tolerance, although in reality even the new president Jair Bolsonaro has been openly racist towards ethnic minorities.

Having touched the topic of Latin American heritage, another question remains: how do the different Latin American nations' citizens get along with each other? Being culturally similar, do they feel more connected, thus less prone for xenophobia, towards other Latin Americans? Or does the mix of ethnic ancestry along Latin America provide for a feeling of superiority between ethnicities?

Starting off with the negative racist behavior found amongst Latin Americans. The massive immigration flows from Venezuela to neighboring countries under the current dictatorship has left Venezuelans overwhelmed. One of those who left in search for freedom in Peru, Jaqueline Torres, is grateful for the support she has gotten from Peruvians, although she underlined that discrimination on the streets and in buses has pushed her to stay isolated. (Hannula, 2018) However, her experiences, especially on arrival to Ecuador before passing on to Peru, were more

²¹ Berend, N. Urbanczyk, P. Wiszewski, P. (2013). Central Europe in the High Middle Ages: Bohemia, Hungary and Poland, c.900-c.1300. Cambridge University Press, p. 233

²² Raento, Kuuba: Maa, Kansa ja Yhteiskunta, p. 11

²³ Rohter, Brazil on the rise, p. 16

than desirable: regular Ecuadorian workers supplied their time to help incoming refugees by distributing food, blankets, snacks, etc.

Moving on with the positive. As Torres was calling out the welcoming Peruvians, other Venezuelan refugees have also pointed towards the kindness of other Latin Americans on the journey of immigrating to other countries. Latin Americans take pride in helping their brothers. The Costa Rican contact of mine highlighted that whenever a dictatorship is going on in Latin America, people fleeing are taken in to other countries. (Hoepker Jiménez, 2018) He explained that in the current context of the Nicaraguan authoritarian regime, Nicaraguans flee to the neighboring Costa Rica. Costa Rica offers these refugees help with paperwork, Costa Rican universities give them scholarships, and regular Costa Rican citizens offer Nicaraguans work in their own businesses. According to him, the situation between the two countries has been hostile because of the Nicaraguan leader Daniel Ortega, thus Costa Ricans are eager to help those escaping his regime. And in the end, showing solidarity will benefit all; as my contact put it, once the situation calms down and Nicaraguans may return to their country, they will hold sweet memories of Costa Rica and its citizens. Therefore all the effort to help is contributing into bettering the relationship between the two countries. Furthermore, the case of the Migrant Caravan to the US from smaller Central American countries shows us Mexican solidarity towards their Latin brothers: once the caravan reached Mexico, Mexicans were offering the newcomers help to be able to reach their final destination.

From 2015 all the way until 2018, an estimated 1,6 million Venezuelans have left their country in search for peace, reports IOM. (Hannula, 2018) The adapted principle of Venezuelans only needing an identity card in order to cross the border and to move along Latin America is vanishing, as Peru and Ecuador are starting to demand a passport from refugees. From my point of view, Peru and Ecuador requiring a passport in the current situation doesn't represent normal circumstances. Therefore there is no need to doubt that the countries wouldn't like to apply free movement in a LAU. A crisis in a country is always an extreme situation that shouldn't be taken to reflect the possibilities of applying a policy. In a normal situation, Latin American countries would most likely be more open to opening the borders all over the region.

Secondly, referring again to Brexit and adding the element of the rise of extreme right-wing parties in Europe, the Old Continent is going through a tremendous fear of “the others” (see above the case of Hungary). Even more than for the fear of Poles, a greater number of Brits voting to leave the EU were reluctant on taking in Muslim refugees and economic immigrants. All the same, the European case can’t be compared to the Latin American one, since there are no true recent immigration flows to Latin American countries. Immigration would nowadays normally occur between the Latin American countries (such as in times of dictatorships, as discussed above), and emigration takes place to other continents (like the famous case of Latinos reaching towards the US, and many others deciding to move to the European homelands such as to Spain). The influx of recent immigrants hasn’t fully found its way towards Latin America, though with Europe creating stricter border controls and with the racism immigrants are facing in Europe, things are slowly changing. (Henaio, 2010)

Therefore we have no experimental evidence on how Latin Americans would view a larger number of new-comers with a very different ethnic background to theirs. The immigrants in Latin America are mostly Arab, Spanish and Portuguese that started arriving in the late 19th century; Italians a few decades later; and Japanese predominantly from 1930 until 1970. (McCahon, n.d.) From these immigrant groups, Middle Easterners have been able to integrate due to their economic and social success in life, and Southern Europeans with the cultural easiness of adapting to life. However, Japanese have been considered as the “others”. Thus, if a Latin American Union was to be formed and put into operation like the European Union, it could attract people from all corners of the world to benefit from the free movement inside the block, for the prosperity that a Union provides, etc. Latin America seems to be capable of discriminating other nationalities from outside the area, resulting in a possible dilemma with an open Latin America coming to face problems such as the Brits did with immigration.

So, does xenophobia affect the operation of a Union? From my personal way of looking at it, on one hand, an assumed discrimination between Bolivia and Honduras won’t be enough to collapse a whole Union. We have seen with the case of Greece and Germany, amongst others, that the will to stay together outweighs the benefits of staying isolated from the EU. That is why Grexit

(the Greek withdrawal from the Eurozone) was not taken under a referendum. (“Grexit is not an option”, 2017)

On the other hand, in case immigration towards Latin American countries would boom especially after a creation of a Union, there lies a bigger threat of xenophobia affecting the functioning of an organization. Brazil just voted for an extreme right-wing candidate to take on the presidential position, meaning that many of the voters see no problem in his racist opinions. One needs to search no further than to Brexit to observe the consequences of immigration and racism for the EU. Adding salt to the British wounds and providing the rest of the world with an example, the case of Brexit has turned onto its head: in a recent poll, 45 % of Brits consider the positive vote on leaving the EU wrong, opposed to 42 % still agreeing on the vote. (Edwards, 2018)

All in all, as Latin American countries are already connected through their ancestries, we may hypothetically believe that such discrimination as between the EU countries wouldn’t occur. Furthermore, that the fear of the other (Muslim refugees, Asians reaching over to the markets, etc.) could potentially be a reason for a country to leave a Latin American Union (comparing to Brexit). Nevertheless, even with minor fear of Latin American xenophobia on affecting a Union, tensions exists, and possible nationalism presents itself as one of the greatest threats for a possible full Latin American integration.

Discussing nationalism, it needs to be emphasized that if Europe seems to be the hub of nationalists, Latin America doesn’t quite follow the same path on nationalist aspirations. In the EU, the leading Polish party PiS has been vocal on their nationalistic goals; listening to what Brussels commands is only a recommendation for the politicians of the party. Polish interests will always come first for them, even if it translates into breaking the rules of the Union. Nationalism does however exist in Latin America too, under a different form. These are the words of a Venezuelan contact²⁴ of mine: *“The Bolivarians say that in South America we were a united continent until the Europeans arrived (Chavistas hate Columbus). Chavez liked very much to highlight our indigenous origins. He used it as an argument for the union of countries.”* Thus,

²⁴Rodríguez, 2018

Latin American nationalism is a leftist ideology that strives for the unity of Latin Americans against the rest of the world. According to my Venezuelan contact, the British colonization differed highly from the Spanish one, since Brits started their own communities whereas Spaniards mixed with the indigenous. This further emphasized the promotion of ancestors in terms of a pursuit for a regional identity.

As a result, the beginning of a patriotic tendency obviously rises from colonization, and from the attempt of getting out of the grip of the metropolis. However, even if having been colonized and under greater powers, a strong patriotism (as we understand the term) doesn't really flow through the region. Whereas Latin Americans will support their national football team until death, in other aspects of life nationalism is not as visible. One could argue that this lack of patriotism has also slowed down the development of Latin American nations; allowing a country to sink into the dominance of Western countries accompanies a weaker chance on fighting for your own nation. As nationalism has been quite a threat for the EU, the lack of nationalistic feelings in Latin America seems promising in case a LAU is to be formed. Latin American countries with seemingly similar cultures that do not require a high level of patriotism were also molded to this similarity in the very beginning of when Spanish conquistadors first arrived to the lands, via the dominance of the Catholic Church.

3.4. Religion

“Every great advance in knowledge has extended the sphere of order and correspondingly restricted the sphere of apparent disorder in the world, till now we are ready to anticipate that even in regions where chance and confusion appear still to reign, a fuller knowledge would everywhere reduce the seeming chaos to cosmos. Thus the keener minds, still pressing forward to a deeper solution of the mysteries of the universe, come to reject the religious theory of nature as inadequate, and to revert in a measure to the older standpoint of magic by postulating explicitly, what in magic had only been implicitly assumed, to wit, an inflexible regularity in the order of natural events, which, if carefully observed, enables us to foresee their course with certainty and

to act accordingly. In short, religion, regarded as an explanation of nature, is displaced by science.”

-Sir James Frazer in the Golden Bough²⁵

How much does religion play a role in a regional union? Observing the EU, Catholics make up the biggest group of those who declare faith in a god. A Christian God is also believed in for example in Lutheran, Anglican, Calvinist, Presbyterian as well as in Greek and Russian Orthodox churches, all found within the EU region. The basis of the beliefs remains the same, even though the churches are not entirely similar.

A recent EuroPulse survey on the EU believers announces the numerical data: 42 % Catholic, 8 % Protestant, 3 % Muslim, 1 % Jewish, 1 % Buddhist, 8 % Other, and 38 % Atheist. Catholic countries seem to be the most religious ones, since 73 % of Italians declare being religious, followed by Poland with 71 % of the population. (Holmes, 2017)

In any case, as a study by the Pew Research Center declares, the more a nation is wealthy, the less it is religious (with the exception of the US). (Noack, 2015) That's why many European countries, such as Sweden and the Netherlands, are famous for having a majority atheist population. In Latin America, people still value religion as an important part of their life. The level of income has a significant impact on the religiousness of a person: the less they make, the more likely they are to be religious. This correlates with the fact that Latin America is still under development, which in turn goes to the core explanation of why religion plays an important part in the creation of a LAU. The explanation lies in a simple observation: developing countries have a harder task to create a functioning organization, since they're occupied with individual national development, and not a regional one.

In Latin America, the Spanish- and Portuguese- brought Catholicism is surely the dominant religion. Spaniards believed that the Christian God is superior to any others, and imposed their faith onto the new populations.²⁶ 40 % of the global Catholic population lives in Latin America,

²⁵Frazer, 1890

²⁶ Raento, Kuuba: Maa, Kansa ja Yhteiskunta, p. 186

accounting for 425 million believers. (“Religion in Latin America”, 2014) Yet being a part of the New World and with a history of African slaves, Latin America is also a melting pot for beliefs. Afro-American religions, the religions of the offspring of the African slaves mixed with Christianity, have their place in the society. These religions are known under the term *syncretism*.²⁷ In Brazil, for instance, these faiths possess their own clergy and places of worship and they have the status of a religion.²⁸ We may acknowledge the level of tolerance towards minority religions.

Evangelical Protestantism has been gaining foothold over Latin America, 19 % of Latin Americans identifying themselves as Protestants.²⁹ Protestantism is usually associated with being more liberal than Catholicism, which in this case isn't the truth. Actually, Protestants in Latin America are more conservative than Catholics; they oppose homosexuality, abortion, extramarital sex, divorce and alcohol; they also pray more and practice religion in a more serious way. (“Religion in Latin America”, 2014) In other news, Argentina (since 2010), Uruguay (since 2013), Brazil (since 2013) and Colombia (since 2016) allow same-sex marriage, compared to 16 European nations that have legalized same-sex marriage. (Tang, 2018) Even such a small detail, as four Latin American countries giving judicial status to gay marriage, is a proof on how religion is giving way to new preoccupations. In Brazil, the Church is not exactly strict, and the state is completely separated from it.³⁰

The Catholic Church has been losing influence since the end of the 19th century and its popularity has continually been decreasing.³¹ During the 20th century, as much as 90 % of Latin Americans were Catholic, a percentage nowadays below 70 %. (Paulson, 2014) The religiously unaffiliated by now make up 8 % of the population. The highest Catholic support resides in Paraguay, where 89 % of the population is Catholic. On the contrary, in Uruguay a strong secularization has led to a current 42 % of a Catholic population. 37 % of Uruguayans are moreover religiously unaffiliated.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 155

²⁸ Rohter, Brazil on the rise, p. 46

²⁹ Ibid., p. 47

³⁰ Rohter, Brazil on the rise, p. 47

³¹ Valtonen, Latinalaisen Amerikan Historia, p. 194

Even when Cuba fell under socialism in the middle of the 20th century, and the common spiritual world consisted of a mix of socialism and atheism, the Catholic Church was not put to death. It could continue its functions, and the clergy was guaranteed a continuation of their position. The principal idea was that religion was the personal affair of the individual. Nevertheless, freedom of religion only became official in 1991.³²

Shall we thus consider that religion serves as a blockage for cooperation? On the long run, there is no clear evidence for such a claim. Even if institutionalized religions and radical religious movements have been a source of conflict in the present, the past and the future, the EU itself hasn't stopped working, despite the fact that around half of its citizens are religious. Especially once all religions by now more or less believe in the same basic values, gods and teachings (such as Catholics and Protestants), no major conflicts should occur. There are additional social matters weighing in more than religion does.

3.5. Social hierarchies

As Latin American countries are categorized under the term “developing nations”, one key feature pops up: demographic stability. One of the measures for a country to achieve social and economic stability is through a somewhat fixed number of a population. Developed countries are those in which the birth rate is rather equal to the death rate, or even lower. Underdeveloped countries have a high mortality rate, a high birth rate and a growing population. Developing countries, such as Latin American nations, are awaited to achieve the peak of population growth in the coming years, first starting from decreasing the mortality rate and then continuing to decreasing the birth rate. This, in turn, will result in a trend towards a stabilization of the population.

According to a CIA³³ memorandum from 1976, family planning programs and agricultural improvements were needed in order to help Latin America with the growing necessity for food

³² Raento, Kuuba: Maa, Kansa ja Yhteiskunta, p. 194

³³The US Central Intelligence Agency.

supplies. (“Population growth”, 1976) CIA foresaw a troubled time for Latin America for the following 25 years, until the turn of the millenium. Still, even nowadays, Latin America has a tendency towards increasing its population, meaning that they have yet to achieve a demographic stability. In these circumstances, it seems difficult to set up a full-scale regional organization that demands from its member states to be developed enough to deal with other nations as a block and at the international arena.

If we consider states themselves as having to achieve a certain level of development in order for a LAU to be launched effectively, there certainly still is a lot to work on. One of the main obstacles is social injustice that spreads along Latin America. People are divided according to their gender, wealth, and skin colour. People in many countries, such as Brazil, Argentina and Guatemala, are classified according to their societal position. The wealth gap inside countries can be enormous, with a very wealthy minority elite, a somewhat succeeding middle class (this class is nowadays growing in many countries) and a great number of citizens living under the poverty line (that can be even more than 1/4th of the population). This social imbalance is the main problem of, for instance, the otherwise powerful Brazil, says Larry Rohter.³⁴ In Europe, such a visible minority elite that controls everything doesn’t exist.

Simon Reeve, a well-known British traveller, on a voyage to Colombia in 2017, observed how the society has changed after a peace agreement between the Colombian State and the guerrilla army FARC in 2016. (BBC, 2017) FARC was created in the 1960’s as a support for poor rural people. At that time, the system was what Reeve called “medieval”, with landlords owning land and employing poorer workers. Moreover, once FARC began its quest of bringing justice to the poor, the leaders of the country started building roads, schools and hospitals so that peasants wouldn’t back up the movement. What followed of the FARC taking over land was a 50 year long conflict between the State, paramilitary groups and the guerrilla movement itself.

With over 200.000 casualties over the years of conflict, with terrorism from both the paramilitary groups and the FARC, with cocaine financing fighting, Colombia was on the brink of becoming a failed state. A relief came in 2012, when peace negotiations started: the Colombian

³⁴ Rohter, Brazil on the rise, p. 13

State and the FARC signed a peace agreement, which was initially turned down by a referendum since the agreement didn't punish the FARC enough, according to citizens. A new deal was drafted and signed in 2016, and peace was declared.

Colombia as an example shows us how an overall development inside the country is possible after peace has been settled. Some of the Colombian cities are now booming with progress. Foreign tourists have finally discovered Colombia, and the money these tourists spend is crucial for the advancement of the country. Yet a peace in Colombia is not certain: the state hasn't fulfilled its promises on helping former FARC guerrilla fighters by giving them an opportunity to cultivate other products instead of coca leaves. Unless it does so, peace and therefore improvement are not guaranteed.

There are social turbulences in every Latin American country, but talking specifically of Colombia shows how far behind the society is compared to Western standards. Because of the guerilla during the last decades, Colombia is home to the most internally displaced people in the world, as a result of people moving from countryside to the cities to escape the conflict. Another trouble comes in the form of social classes: Colombia has a system of six *strata*, and Colombians are placed on the scale according to where they live, which results into knowing the social status and income of the other just by knowing where they live in. This knowledge in turn creates segregation, when people immediately choose whether they want to spend time with one if one comes from a poorer background. In a political union where free movement is guaranteed, there is no place for a caste system that blocks people from freely moving around, let alone to another country. Imagining a great influx of persons from another part of Latin America coming to live in Colombia, the *strata* system would become absurd.

Latin culture is filled with machismo. Being a macho man is regarded as acceptable, even desirable. Reflecting again on the Colombian society, the only way for a woman to climb the social ladder of six *strata* is by outer beauty, which allows her to find a rich husband. That's why many Colombian women have turned into plastic surgery. Women are used to harassment and domestic violence. The society is ruled by men, and women are made to accompany men and to look pretty. Obviously, such an attitude leaves us with half of the population silenced. When one part of a

nation's own population is only following the other part, it will be a hard task to participate in a LAU where everyone should be involved, no matter their nationality, gender or ethnicity.

Socialism in Latin America brought hope for social justice. ALBA, the organization created by Venezuela and Cuba, funded projects to end hunger and to encourage education. However, the socialist dream turned out to be a hoax that only benefited the elite minority of the states in the end. Many companies in Latin America belong to the state (like the oil company Petrobras in Brazil), and are managed by politicians. Whether these sorts of personal interests may come between regional cooperation is a complex question. Normally national companies and their function would not disrupt a regional or an international organization, unless corruption is in question. So, instead of adapting socialist regimes, Latin America should seek integration elsewhere. And what a better way of reaching for regional unity than by bringing countries together via music.

3.6. Singing Together for Unity

Lugano, Switzerland, 1956. The first ever European Grand Prix was organized, an event nowadays known under the term Eurovision Song Contest. ("The Eurovision History", n.d.) It was a decade following the Second World War, and Europe was still devastated from that said war. The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the first form of a European Union, was formed a few years earlier, and a will for bringing countries of the continent closer together to cooperate was strong. Europe was divided by political projections, and countries were struggling with the aftermath of the war. A new trend brought by television enabled for a new platform of diffusion. Music and performance was a way for nations to enjoy a shared moment and to focus on matters that unify them, rather than on everything that had formerly been dividing them.

Albeit the whole competition being politically and geographically influenced, even in 2018, the Eurovision Song Contest is an appreciated happening. The competition isn't solely focused on European countries anymore, since countries such as Georgia and Australia have joined the race. Israel won the competition in 2018, meaning that the 2019 occasion will be organized

outside of the European soil. Despite all the changes occurring, the event stays as a remarkable moment for primarily European countries to come together for the length of the buzz of the competition. It serves as a platform for countries to present their own culture to the others and showing how similar the nations and their people are in the end.

From 1972 to 2000, an Eurovision spin-off was held between Ibero-American countries, meaning that countries taking part in the Iberoamerican Television Organization (OTI) were able to participate. (“Festival OTI”, 2016) Contesters were awaited to either be Spanish or Portuguese speaking countries, or to have a large minority of Spanish or Portuguese speakers within their territory, or to have some ties to Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries. All songs were to be performed in one of the two languages. This event, known by the name OTI Festival, was a landmark in Iberian identity and unification.

In spite of a few relaunching attempts, the OTI Festival was buried in 2000. Unfortunately, one might say. Seen how well European nations get together annually to celebrate the gift of music, Latin American countries could aspire for building up their own musical competition. European countries, as well as the US and Canada, could be left out from the new model. Such a happening could also serve as a window to the other cultures of a LAU: a low-income Bolivian not having the means to travel around has the opportunity to apprehend more on how life goes on and about in Ecuador, what makes the two countries similar and what can be different. Culture and music are international spheres of interest, therefore a simple way of making people feel connected.

4. POLITICS

“UNASUR is a wonderful opportunity we have today to consolidate South America as a zone of democratic peace...that is our armour against barbarism...it is the most reliable guarantee that providence can give us so that we can assure the continuity of our republics and South American independence.”

-Hugo Chávez in 2011, the president of Venezuela 1999-2013³⁵

Big words on democracy from Chávez, who is often considered as being of great influence on Venezuela falling under a dictatorship with Nicolás Maduro. And even bigger words in relation to UNASUR, a regional organization that recently failed when multiple states withdrew their memberships. I will develop on UNASUR in sub-chapter 4.2. Latin American countries are often seen as politically troubled. Corruption, dictatorships as well as a political battle between the right wing and socialism are only some of the factors that contribute into making the countries politically fluctuating. Hence, in this second part of the dissertation, I will present and analyze the potential Latin American Union scheme from a political point of view. I will furthermore analyze what exactly are the attributes already existing in Latin American regional organizations that could work for a full EU-like union, and what they are lacking that hasn't brought them close to the EU model just yet.

As for the European Union, it took the Union a few decades to come to its recent form in 1993 (“Perustietoa Euroopan unionista”, 2018). Nowadays, instead of being a purely economic union, the EU has spread its wings to cover topics such as common policies, judicature, health and environment. The EU countries form a block and countries belonging to the Union are often referred to together in international politics and economics.

³⁵“Chavez: UNASUR is our armour”, 2018

Instead of pan-Americanism, anti-Americanism remains strong in Latin America. Pan-Americanism aspires for a sense of common identity along the two American continents, a very noble idea that has however been replaced by anti-Americanism. Anti-Americanism has been fuelled by different socialist governments and heads of states in Latin America; the US should stay out of Latin America and stop imposing its power over the area. This sort of aspiration has been used as well in efforts for regional integration. It could be a key point in bringing Latin American countries, as a block, from under the power of other states, to becoming a dominant player in world politics.

4.1. Corruption

Talking of Latin America with people usually brings up three stereotypical points: drug traffic, Latin dances, and corruption. Regarding corruption, I could have easily put the topic under any of the other chapters as well (Society and Culture, Economy), since it presents itself in all aspects of life. Corruption is something that is rooted in the Latin American culture, and according to my Argentine contact, *“It isn't the government's fault only. People around you do things that aren't morally right every day. Even one is forced to in order to go about one's day, because the system won't allow otherwise.”* (Molins, 2018) Thus, politicians are not to be blamed all alone, since the cause of the problem lies in the society itself. A civil servant at the social security bureau will ask a citizen for a sum of cash in order to speed up their services, a small business owner will play their way around taxes, and bribing politicians to get permits and using unregistered workers are common phenomena.

With all the elections sweeping over Latin America in 2018, corruption has become the center of attention. Let's take the example of Brazilian presidential elections of October 2018. Although the right-wing winner Jair Bolsonaro from the Brazilian Social Liberal Party has openly made degrading comments on women, sexual minorities and dark-skinned people, his success lies in supporting tougher measures on cutting off violence. Additionally, he hasn't sunk into a bigger corruption scandal. (Pires, 2018) This seemed appealing, especially since one of the left-wing candidates, the former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, is at the moment doing his time in

prison for corrupt practices. The citizens of Latin American countries have woken up to oppose corrupt governments, through mainly public demonstrations. Courts are equally taking a bigger role in condemning criminal behavior of government officials. Brazil is not the only case this year. (Petersen, 2018)

The United Nations' International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) created an anti-corruption task force in the country, following the multimillionaire corruption scandal of the former president and vice president, Otto Pérez Molina and Roxana Baldetti. In Peru two former presidents have been under the spotlight for corruption, Pedro Pablo Kuczynski and Ollanta Humala. El Salvador is equally condemning its former president Elías Antonio Saca for corruption.

In Mexico, power switched from Enrique Peña Nieto to Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador at the end of the year 2018, and corruption is well on display: President Lopez Obrador promised to re-open the case of Ayotzinapa, a case of 43 missing students, after 4 years of the happening. (Melesio, 2018) These 43 students were making their way towards a protest in Mexico City, when they were stopped on the road, and the rest is history. Body parts have been found after the incident. For the case being truly tackled with only 4 years later shows how strongly the culture of corruption and impunity holds onto Mexico. Mexican citizens are hugely disappointed in Peña Nieto, and hopeful with the newly elected Lopez Obrador. However, even if the Ayotzinapa case will come to a conclusion, there are many more cases that will rest unsolved, due to the hard access to justice in Mexico.

According to German Petersen (Petersen, 2018), the switch in the mindset of citizens is truly the reason for political candidates being able to brag about their non involvement in bribes. During his research, it was concluded that with the demand of the citizens, judicial and legislative branches started condemning such crimes after 2016 (such as Lula going to jail in 2018 because of his taking part in the corruption scandal of bribed deals around the state-owned oil company Petrobras). If such an improvement in punishing wrong-doers is truly going to take place, and more importantly, if accountability will stay as a permanent trend, a creation of a Latin American Union would be an easier task than ever before.

Therefore, corruption is surely an issue to be tackled, otherwise it could affect the operation of a Latin American Union. Yet, the EU is nowhere near of being clean as a whistle. According to the EU Anti-Corruption Report of 2014, all of the EU member states suffer a degree of corruption, with the intensity and the forms of corruption differing from one nation to the other. (Anti-Corruption Report, n.d.) Corruption within the EU affects the organization financially; an estimated 210 billion euros are being lost annually to corrupt behavior. In addition, Europeans are concerned with the phenomenon; 76 % of Europeans, according to an Eurobarometer survey, view corruption as a widely spread practice, and 56 % see the practice as having boomed in their home country over the last 3 years' time.

Moreover, fifteen members of the Council of Europe (the leading human rights organization of Europe) had participated in a corruption scheme where they were given money and luxury gifts in order to back up the government of Azerbaijan; this back-up came into form through not criticizing the autocratic government and its human rights violations. (Rankin, 2018) One of the core members that faced a 10-year ban on any senior positions was the Council President Pedro Agramunt, whose national party (the Spanish conservatives) has also sunk deeply into corruption scandals. (Rankin & Jones, 2018)

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index of 2017 indicates that on a global scale, Europe is doing quite well what it comes to corruption. (Teffer, 2017) However, for instance, Bulgaria is the 71st of all 180 countries studied on the corruption scale, and also countries such as Hungary, Greece, Italy and Croatia are low on the scale, even though many of the countries have bettered their score. Denmark holds the second place as the most corruption-free nation. While Finland is holding the 3rd position alongside Norway and Switzerland, it has also dropped points over the recent revelation of the prime minister Juha Sipilä. He has been allegedly accused of threatening the domestic media to not cover any news on his personal interests over a mining site. This site, Talvivaara, was under a budget discussion, and Sipilä allegedly led the offer towards a construction company of his own relatives. (Pohjanpalo, 2016)

Has corrupt behavior found in EU member states, and even in the EU institutions themselves, affected the organization? Accountability is one of the fundamental principles that the EU promotes. For instance, the European Central Bank is accountable to other institutions and branches of the EU; “*The ECB shall send an annual report on the activities of the European System of Central Banks (ESCB) and on the monetary policy to the EP³⁶, the Commission, the Council, and the European Council.*” (Jancic, 2017, p. 149) Recognizing the value of accountability, Latin American countries are taking baby steps towards the direction of admitting the liability of their governments. Leaders are more closely monitored for their behavior, and need to showcase their ability for both in being reliable statesmen as well as in giving example to the citizens of correct behavior. Eventually this could lead to a diminished need for corrupt behavior in everyday situations. Trustworthiness is immensely important, especially in a possible Latin American Union, where a Jamaican citizen would have to trust a Chilean politician to strive for the common good of the bloc, and not to be influenced solely by personal financial interests.

As my Costa Rican contact stated it, centralizing power in Latin America seems dangerous. (Hoepker Jiménez, 2018) Following his words, corruption surely is one of the biggest possible blockers of a LAU to be created. But to tackle corruption, governments should be smaller, so that they are more efficient and reachable. With one government taking care of national matters, a corruption scandal is prone to be seen before the news even cover it. Within a country, especially a small one like Costa Rica, people know each other and many families have politicians as their friends. This brings in more accountability from the government, since mouth-to-mouth news spread easily. Evidently, Brussels brings Europeans on the brink of questioning whether their wishes are actually being fulfilled. Europe has done a lot in order to highlight the importance of accountability, whether it’s connected to democracy, finance or citizens’ rights. There are regular reports and audits carried out in order to guarantee EU accountability. In Latin America, however, a region often dwelling in corruption scandals, such an accountability with a centralized government for all could be a harder task to accomplish. The fear of centralization correlates with the fear of loss of autonomy. And the fear of loss of autonomy and “playing to one’s own pockets” has been a blockage for the current and past regional organizations.

³⁶The European Parliament

4.2. The Existing and Past Organizations

Having mentioned that there are 16 regional organizations already existing in Latin America, and that there's an attempt on bringing the countries closer together, let's take a look at what kind of agreements have been made under these organizations. (Glickhouse, 2012)

- ACS, the Association of Caribbean States, was created in order to bring the somewhat isolated Caribbean countries into a trade agreement.
- ALADI, the Latin American Integration Association, has envisaged the creation of a common market by trade regulations, regional tariffs that allow for a lower tariff inside the region, and trade agreements between the 14 member countries.
- APEC, The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, is an international organization that allows member states to open up a dialogue on cooperation in terms of trade, investment and business. This organization includes countries that border the Pacific Ocean, thus not only Latin American states.
- CAN is building up social and political integration, foreign relations, economy, and environmental issues in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.
- CARICOM, the Caribbean Community, includes 15 members that aim for a free trade block. They provide a common external tariff, as well as free movement of people, goods and services.
- CELAC is regarded as a forum for dialogue where social issues are taken under discussion. It was created as a result of a long plan for regional unification, peace-keeping and overall development (Paz Rada, 2018), as late as 2011 to outrule the US-dominated OAS. Its goal is *“to advance social welfare, the quality of life, economic growth, and to promote independent and sustainable development.”* (O’Boyle, 2015) Sounds very similar to the EU, yet has not established any important institutions, and it lacks resources and motivation of the member countries. The whole organization is based on annual *ad hoc* meetings between leaders where they set up action plans that are never actually put into action. Nevertheless, one of the milestones was the US accepting the Cuban president as a player in the organization; this acceptance was one of the first steps towards a better diplomatic

relationship between the 2 countries. Another particularity was Mexico joining CELAC, although the country usually sides with the US policies.

- MERCOSUR, the Southern Common Market, is the most well-known Latin American regional organization. It includes Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, with a few other associate members and observers.
- OAS, the Organization of American States, is the organization that brings up the most protest from the member states, since it's led by the Americans ever since 1948.
- OEI, The Organization of Ibero-American States, is also not exclusively Latin American, since it includes Spain, Portugal and Equatorial Guinea. The target of OEI is to promote culture, education and science between the members, in the same manner as UNESCO under the United Nations.
- OECS is a minor organization to deal with integration in Eastern Caribbean States.
- Pacific Alliance tries to help the free movement of people, goods, capitals and services between Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru, and to further the creation of a trade block. A cooperation with Asia as a trading block is one of the essential tasks.
- Rio Group was an answer to the OAS during the Cold War.
- SELA, the Latin American and the Caribbean Economic System, was created for integration and economic purposes, and enjoys the membership of 27 nations.
- SICA has the same agenda with the previously mentioned.
- South American Parliament, with the support of the Bank of the South, has been funding projects to deepen the regional trade and overall development.
- The South American Defense Council is created for security policy in the region.

After untangling the messy structure of the existing regional organizations, there is still a question of the utility of all those established organizations. As one may notice, most of the existing organizations are heavily pointed towards economic cooperation, and none of them include all Latin American states. There are many that grant cooperation between only a few countries. Most of them are also rather weak in terms of influence, except for Mercosur. We may take a closer look on the last two organizations not yet mentioned.

UNASUR is the closest that Latin America has ever been to an EU-like regional arrangement, with the desire to have a single currency, a parliament and a common passport. Created in 2008 by the Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, UNASUR was firstly created, not surprisingly, to fight the US-led OAS and its influence over Latin America. (Burgess, 2018) The goal was also to accommodate the different Latin American regimes in one big organization over political, economic and social matters, alike the EU. The organization envisaged a collective defense project, and it included all South American states.

UNASUR was close to achieving the political model offered by the EU, where various institutions determine how member states should run their everyday life. UNASUR has twelve Councils, similarly to the Council of the European Union. Different Council issues reach from defense and infrastructure to elections, economy and global drug problems. (“Union of South American Nations”, n.d.)

A huge disappointment accompanies the recent news of UNASUR splitting up after fundamental troubles. Bruno Binetti, a researcher of Inter-American Dialogue, and Ben Raderstorf, a program associate of the same organization, bash the operability of UNASUR. (Binetti & Raderstorf, 2018) According to them, despite a few successes at the very beginning of the creation of UNASUR in 2008, the remaining time until the withdrawal decision in April 2018 has been more or less negative. Created at the brink of the world-wide financial crisis generated by the despair of the American financial services firm Lehman Brothers, UNASUR was down to a rough start. Internal political problems offered no help for regional integration either: Lula ended up in prison over a corruption scandal, and Venezuela has slid into chaos after the passing away of Hugo Chávez. UNASUR has not had the motivation to intervene in the Venezuelan crisis.

The failure to take action in the Venezuelan crisis illustrates how a fully integrated regional union should not have to deal with a defense project. Nigel Jones (Jones, 2016) argues that the force behind creating a Union in Europe, lying behind the will to never see an armed conflict bursting out again on its soil, has never reached its promises. He explains that even with such a noble wish, it hasn't been the EU that has kept war relatively away from the European Union

ground, but rather it has been NATO. He goes even further to argue that the EU was pushing Ukraine to split in the Ukrainian crisis, and that the failure in EU diplomacy helped Yugoslavia to fall into a civil war. The EU in itself hasn't preserved peace, but rather globalization overall. Defense might therefore be a quite daring project to insert into a Latin American Union, since it requires a great amount of extra effort in order for the Union to work out. The will for such a design is most likely connected to anti-Americanism and a creation of Latin American defense forces against NATO.

Additionally, national aspirations came upon too strong for Latin American nations to leave aside their fundamental national interests and accommodate the interests of other states in compromise. Very few of my Latin American contacts had heard of the specifics of what UNASUR is dealing with, which clearly shows how inefficient and little-known organization it turned out to be. My contact from Argentina viewed the organization as concentrating on topics that have no importance or utility, and pretending to be interested in any other matter than economics (and the leaders' own pockets). (Molins, 2018) UNASUR not possessing enough resources, the focus goes rather to gathering the said resources than to handling issues the organization was set up to deal with.

Binetti and Raderstorf regard UNASUR as “[...] *a platform for speeches and photo ops without any meaningful work* [...]”. (Binetti & Raderstorf, 2018) They go on to add that with Latin American integration attempts failing yet again, the block is about to face severe issues: both extra- and intra- regional trade will face troubles when countries don't cooperate, and there will be no mutual agreement on human rights, democracy and other burning issues that have led for example Venezuela to shatter down. The writers propose leaving national interests aside as a solution, and a few prime countries to lead the others into the field of cooperation and solidarity.

ALBA is the last organization to tackle. It was founded in 2004 by the Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez. However, the idea for such an organization could already be traced back to the Bolivarian dream. (Hirst, n.d.) The beginning of Latin American independence was apt for the endeavor of winning the battle against the rule of those more powerful. In 2004, the Bolivarian dream was revisited when ALBA was created. Almost without a surprise, the organization was

aimed at fighting against US influence; this time Chávez proposed a Latin American solution for the planned US-based Free Trade Area of the Americas. With ALBA, Chávez brought forward a plan of Petrocaribe, an accord that positioned Venezuela as an oil supplier to 17 different Caribbean and Central American nations at very affordable prices and low interest rates. The ambition of a powerful block of countries rich on energy was one step closer. SUCRE, an electronic currency for all member states was adopted, in order to facilitate trade between member states and obviously, to get rid of exchanging to the US dollar.

So, to acquire membership in ALBA, countries are obliged to abide by socialism, and to leave capitalism. Effectively, the goal of the organization is an international revolution and the collapse of the US; transforming it to what can be referred as a new type of a 21st century socialism that takes into account globalization and the speed of spreading of information and ideas it allows. (Hirst, n.d.) Basically ALBA set up an ideology of a strong leader (Chávez), which resembles a dictatorship. In a 2017 meeting, the leaders of Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Venezuela gathered together and one of the focus points was contributed into praising Chávez. (“Alba summit begins”, 2017)

Albeit the socialist base of ALBA, the organization has proved on being much more operational than UNASUR. Regular summits, project agreements and cooperation accords have been concluded, so much so that a part of the organizational goal has been achieved: ALBA, as a block of countries, has taken over some of the power imposed by the OAS, and often votes as a block in international institutions.

UNASUR has been extremely criticized for not providing action taken over the Venezuelan crisis. On the contrary, the official statement of UNASUR was in favor of the election of the president Nicolás Maduro. The organization lost out on employing external election monitors, such as the EU and the OAS. (Sabatini, 2015) Such an unwillingness for external help derives from the initial idea of Lula, according to which Latin America should handle their own issues. Now it has been transformed into silence in the case of wrong-doings of allies. So in the end UNASUR gives

us a clear picture on why Latin American integration hasn't been fruitful: the political division acts out very strong.

4.3. Socialism in Latin America

Socialism

“any of various economic and political theories advocating collective or governmental ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goods.”

-Merriam-Webster Dictionary³⁷

Communism

“a final stage of society in Marxist theory in which the state has withered away and economic goods are distributed equitably”

-Merriam-Webster Dictionary³⁸

One cannot understand the dynamics of Latin America without learning about socialism there. Different Latin American states have experimented with socialism, and all of these experimentations have, to some degree, failed. Instead of using the term communism, explained above, I will employ the term socialism, since it reaches a broader meaning. Latin American socialist regimes are often connected to dictatorships, providing for powerful statesmen and for poverty of the regular citizen.

Aside socialist dictatorships in Venezuela and Nicaragua, there are additional Latin American countries under a socialist regime. Bolivia, for example, is led by Evo Morales since 2006. The most visible attempt for keeping power in Morales' hands remains in a new court rule that enables Morales being re-elected for as many terms as necessary. (Newman, 2010) Lula of Brazil, although moderate in terms of taking action, had a dream of a united leftist Latin America.

³⁷“Socialism”, n.d.

³⁸“Communism”, n.d.

Touching the topic of Lula's leftist dream, socialism is additionally also the heart of many attempts of regional unification. Socialism and the leftist trend go into the core of anti-Americanism, even though in reality the US is, for example, financing the Venezuelan government through buying their oil. Even though socialism has, in a few countries along the region, been a catalyst for a better health system, education, and cultural participation, critics see mainly the negative sides of such a regime.

Fergus Hodgson expresses his point of view on why socialism has failed Latin American countries to reach their full potential. (Hodgson, 2018) According to him, a socialist regime has brought Cuba into extreme poverty because of regulations on property rights, Venezuela into economic chaos, and a moral downgrade into Argentina. He adds that dictatorships (Venezuela and Nicaragua most recently) and violations on basic human rights such as on freedom of speech and of association have been brought by socialist traditions. Furthermore, the massive migration flows from Venezuela towards other countries are a proof of why socialism doesn't work.

Cuba itself is such an exception of a nation that it won't much shake things around. Or the least, it should not be considered as a blocking country for Latin American integration. Cuba is incredibly anti-democratic ever since the 1959 revolution and socialist takeover, with for example constitutional restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.³⁹ Mass organizations and religious communities form the basis of the Cuban society, and they are basically the only paths for people to take part in the society.⁴⁰ In Cuban socialism, the media is owned by the state and elections are far from Western-style free elections. In fact, the government is always composed of communists (PCC and their youth organization UJC).⁴¹ While the French L'Assemblée Nationale represents the lower house of the French Parliament, the Cuban National Assembly of People's Power (Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular) comprehends 600 amateur representatives. These 600 hold the legislative powers.⁴² There is no real professionalism in the

³⁹ Raento, Kuuba: Maa, Kansa ja Yhteiskunta, p. 58

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 57

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 75

⁴² Ibid., p. 76

government, since only the president and the secretary hold a professional background. Something very disconnected to the European Union that values professionalism.

Argentina trusts in Peronism, a political combination of socialism, liberalism and populism. This doctrine was founded by the former president Juan Perón, who came forward with a political model under which social justice, political sovereignty and economic independence would be fulfilled. (“What is Peronism?”, 2014) So, from a *socialist* way of looking at it, Peronism allows the state to “coordinate society”, and to distribute wealth for the benefit of all. Yet the famous marxist class conflict belief has been left out of Peronist ideology, since Perón put faith in social collaboration. From the *liberalist side*, Peronism thrives for a national state capitalism, against imperialism. For a Latin American Union, this will could mean a tremendous challenge regarding common currency: countries nationalizing their banking and investments correlate to a closed society in terms of economic cooperation. And finally in connection to *populism*, the plan was to increase wages and to create better working conditions.

On a more realistic note, though, when Perón first came into power in 1952, Latin America was feeling rebellious. The desire to achieve economic independence over foreign influence and the domination of domestic elites was prevailing. Such a motivation for crushing the existing social structures could also foresee the same motivation for a monetary union, if it was driven by, for instance, anti-American sentiments.

Even though Peronists have been popular ever since Perón first took office, the political party has its critics. The Argentinian contact of mine votes so that Peronists wouldn't get into the government: “[...] (Peronists) ignore the corruption. Others are entangled in the net of corruption and benefit economically from it. The worst of it is that it divides people in two sides. It creates an internal enemy. This has crushed society.” (Molins, 2018)

And he is not alone in being critical. Veronica Herrera claims that Peronism creates an uncompetitive party system, since they're always in front. (Herrera, 2007) Perón also admired Mussolini, which leaves wondering if social justice truly was his intention, or if he was playing to his own pockets all along. Nowadays Peronism is still alive and well, but has lost its dominance: conservatism and the Church have gained the power Peronists have lost.

So in the end, could Peronism allow Argentina to smoothly work towards a LAU, or would it block any such attempt? On the one hand, Peronists are very nationalistic, which translates into an unwillingness of solidarity with neighbors and other countries in the block. On the other hand, as mentioned before, the anti-American feeling can also be used for a cooperation boost amongst Latin American nations. And finally, Perón envisaged a model similar to the Nordic welfare states. While many countries and their citizens don't necessarily support such a model in their own countries, it goes without saying that Nordic countries have obtained a high standard of living through social justice and liberal economy. If Peronism ended up working as it was intended to, without corruption scandals and without any connection to socialism, Argentina could become very developed and become one of the leading members of a LAU alongside Brazil, just like Germany and France in the EU. But, as my Costa Rican acquaintance is to confirm my remark on many countries not willing to sacrifice in order to get benefits, Costa Ricans appreciate socialism and welfare state as long as it gives them free education and health care. Another thing is when it comes to paying taxes that allow for these benefits: the idea of a welfare state doesn't seem so appealing anymore. (Hoepker Jiménez)

A glimpse of hope for a future LAU: from EU member states, only Sweden and Ireland have not lived through a fascist, communist, nazi or military dictatorship within living memory. (Hodgson, 2018) This alone means that once dictatorships in Latin America were to fall, the EU demonstrates that it would not, in the end, be such an obstacle for people to aspire for new forms of cooperation. On the contrary, people being released under such a regime would most likely be more than willing to follow new winds of change.

4.4. Dictatorships

Dictatorship

“Form of government in which one person or a small group possesses absolute power without effective constitutional limitations”

-Encyclopaedia Britannica⁴³

There are two dictatorships in Latin America at this very moment: in Venezuela under Nicolás Maduro, and in Nicaragua where power has been taken over by the couple Daniel Ortega and Rosario Murillo. Cuba is often used as an example to describe a long-term dictatorship, where Fidel Castro, and later on his brother Raul Castro, governed for decades. However, the reign of Raul Castro ended in 2018, and Miguel Diaz-Canel was nominated as a new president. Hence a new era for Cuba begun.

In Venezuela, the present situation has had detrimental consequences, when a shortage on commodities (such as food and medicines) has driven Venezuelans to what is known as a *Maduro diet*. An unwilling diet, obviously. (Casey & Neuman, 2018) Citizens of Venezuela have to go as far as buying rotten meat from the market in order to feed their families (“Venezuela crisis”, 2018), showing how the situation has culminated. Prices started rising around the time of Hugo Chávez’s death in 2013. In August 2018 the situation was so critical that the currency of Venezuela, bolívar, lost 5 zeros from its value. The inflation has promoted illegal business since it made legal affairs difficult to conduct. This in turn has had an impact on the increasing levels of violence. In addition, violence continues on a state level as well, when all those opposing Maduro become enemies.

In Nicaragua, the National Sandinista Revolution of 1979 marked an end for the Somoza Dictatorship, and was regarded as a victory amongst leftists world-wide. Ortega was one of the members of a newly created Junta of National Reconstruction. He has ever since been more or less in power either as a president or as a leader of his party FSLN. Ironically enough, this guerrilla

⁴³“Dictatorship”, n.d.

fighter who used to fight against a former dictator in the 70's started sliding into the same mindset himself. He has centralized all power into his own hands and into those of his wife. It was in April 2018 that the trouble truly began, after a retirement reform that was highly protested by the citizens. (Huhta, 2018) In order to calm down the unrest, armed forces have been employed to use violence against the protestors. Only two months later, in June 2018, the number of deceased unarmed protestors from various manifestations was as high as 350. (Mikkonen, 2018)

The only recognized dictatorship in Europe at the moment is Belarus, which is nowhere near of fulfilling the criteria of becoming a European Union member, nor does the country have the will for joining the Union. The EU could not function without democratic member states, in order for European solidarity to take full effect instead of one nation's leader playing to their own pockets. In a 2017 survey conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit, less than half of EU countries are truly "full democracies". More than half are what they called as "flawed democracies". In any case, none of the EU countries fell into the two last categories ("hybrid regime" or "authoritarian regime"). The position that a country held on the ranking was calculated out of their result in electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation, and political culture. (Matamoros, 2018)

The seemingly similar Latin American nations show again their differences: Nicaragua having a new dictatorship every now and then, with a neighboring Costa Rica having one of the longest-standing democracies in the area. Regardless, an authoritarian nation would present a very ill-fit for regional integration. An authoritarian leader will hardly make compromises regarding their own power. Leaving national interests behind would be challenging when national interests translate into their personal interests.

A glimpse of hope between the serious talk on authoritarian regimes: Uruguay is one of the most developed Latin American countries, and unlike the usually corrupt politicians, the former president brought in hope for the whole region. José Mujica, a former guerrilla fighter, and a decade-long prisoner of the military dictatorship, opted for real empathy during his term in office 2010-2015. (Kanninen, 2014) He was running laws that often contradicted with the verdicts of the Catholic Church, donated 90 % of his paycheck to charity, preferred to live on his little countryside

accommodation and give out the presidential palace to serve as a homeless shelter, as well as legalized abortion. Uruguay was also the first country in the world to legalize the recreational use of cannabis.

Peru experienced a dictatorship from 1990 until 2000, under Alberto Fujimori. (Zarate & Casey, 2018) He was jailed for 25 years at the turn of the millenium, over human rights abuses during his term in office. These abuses included killings, forced sterilizations, kidnappings, stealing of state money, etc. Fujimori was pardoned in December 2017 on medical reasons by the then President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, fiercely opposed by Peruvians who still had his authoritarian regime in memory. Later on, Fujimori was put back into jail. This alone shows, from my viewpoint, that Latin Americans are willing to act to overthrow authoritarians. And from another interesting point of view, Fujimori was from a right-wing party.

4.5. The Right on the Rise

So, to continue, most regional integration attempts, as well as most major authoritarian regimes in Latin America, have been left-wing projects. Socialism has an important position in politics, and unity is one of the desires of socialist regimes. After the Cold War, countries were opting for the left to get rid of military leaders. (Encarnación, 2018) But today they want to challenge the leftist predominance. Now that the right wing is, again, gaining more and more popularity in the region, not the least in Brazil, the time has come to wonder whether this phenomenon, alongside with the huge right-wing and left-wing divisions, are of trouble for a possible LAU.

In 2005, 75 % of South Americans were ruled under a leftist government, a phenomenon known as the Pink Tide. This huge proportion contributed to the fact that UNASUR failed. It is rare that Latin American countries would withdraw their membership from regional organizations that aim for international reconnaissance as a Latin American block. (Hodgson, 2018) The break-up was highly influenced by the split between the right and the left, especially because of the Venezuelan crisis and nations taking differing sides on the matter.

After decades, right-wing and conservatism is coming back to the scene. Brazil with Jair Bolsonaro and Michel Temer before him taking office, Argentina with Mauricio Macri, and Chile with Sebastián Piñera. In Chile, voters were thriving for a moderate option, instead of the left that had turned more or less radical. (Encarnación, 2018) Both Piñera and Macri are former businessmen, just like Donald Trump won his seat as the head of the state by having gained name in business before.

For a LAU, such a turn of political events seems hopeless: these new far-right leaders are pursuing a domestic-based political agenda. They oppose globalization, open borders, immigration and multilateral organizations. (Hodgson, 2018) All that would be needed in order to create a regional organization. Relations to abroad and within the region need a moderate stepping stone, and neutral amicable relationships are of necessity.

4.6. International Relations

The European Union has developed a somewhat appreciated network of foreign relations. The superpower of our time, the United States, has realized the importance of the EU, albeit as their closest trading and investment partner (Shapiro, 2016), or with the military ties created through NATO. India, a BRICS country, has a neutral relationship with the EU and strong relations with individual EU countries, such as Germany and India's former metropolis, the UK. (Kumar, 2016)

There is a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in the EU that concentrates mostly on conflict prevention and crisis management, through strengthening the military and civilian capabilities of the Union. Overall, foreign trade is being negotiated in the Commission and foreign policy in the Council. ("Common Foreign and Security Policy", 2016) In addition, Federica Mogherini has been nominated the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and her occupation includes being in charge of international EU projects, as well

as representing the EU internationally (i.e. in the United Nations' meetings). ("Federica Mogherini", n.d.)

The US has always held power over Latin America, to the extent in which multiple Latin American organizations have been formed to fight against the US influence over Latin American domestic affairs (see above). Lula of Brazil tied "cordial and constructive relations" with the US.⁴⁴ The US is obviously aware of their affluence: the recent concern lies over their lost influence due to power relations inside Latin America. Furthermore, oblivion of smaller, less powerful Latin American states, opposed to the emerging powers the US has been taking control over traditionally, has kicked the US in the head. (Sabatini, 2012) Despite the protest of Latin Americans, the US continues to employ their influence over the region. With Latin American countries developing (increased democracy, rise in the movement of people and the growth in economy), the US Council on Foreign Relations decided to establish an Independent Task Force.⁴⁵ According to the US government, Americans should give Latin America aid in relation with poverty and inequality reduction, the guarantee of public security, migration policies, and energy security.

In 1962, the US placed an embargo on Cuba after the Cuban Missile Crisis. It was the US attempt to block Cuba from developing its economy.⁴⁶ This embargo practically closed Cuban borders for trade and travel. The embargo equally tightened the relations of Western nations, when European countries, Canada and Mexico opposed to the US stopping Cuba from joining any financial or political international institution.⁴⁷ Within the socialist brotherhood, this was enough to reinforce the anti-American feeling around Latin America. In 2009, President Barack Obama finally loosened traveling restrictions⁴⁸, and a new era in the US-Latin American relations emerged.

⁴⁴ Rohter, Brazil on the rise, p. 231

⁴⁵ Sweig, J. E. Hill, J. T. Barshefsky, C. O'Neil. (2008). S. K. U.S. - Latin America Relations: A New Direction for A New Reality. Council on Foreign Relations Press, p. xi

⁴⁶ Raento, Kuuba: Maa, Kansa ja Yhteiskunta, p. 61

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 68

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 71

If Latin America wants to be taken seriously as a united group of countries in the international arena, they would need to reduce the influence other powers (or another power) have over them. As a very clear example, there are a few Latin American countries still under the British Crown, like Barbados, Grenada and Belize. (“Monarchies in the Americas”, n.d.) The head of these Commonwealth states is Elizabeth II, and the Queen is represented in the countries by a Governor-General. Such countries could be compared to for instance Moldova, which is still very much influenced by Russia, hasn’t had the chance to develop its economy, and is, as a result, the poorest country in Europe. Moldova would have to greatly step up its game in order to join the EU. Therefore, weaker states in Latin America are faced with the danger of being left out; yet, there are many weak states along the region, complicating this scene further on. The EU is a very independent player in international politics, and solid and strong national backgrounds are needed for the Union to work out properly and stand up for the EU interests all together.

How far does the willingness of Latin American leaders to work together go? Juan Manuel Santos, the president of Colombia, is an avid opposant of Nicolás Maduro of Venezuela. Maduro went as far as claiming Santos being behind his assassination attempt in summer 2018. The attempt occurred during a public speech Maduro was giving, when a drone full of explosives went off. (Smith & Armario, 2018) It didn’t take Maduro long to blame the attack on Santos and on the far right. In addition to the clear division between the left and the right parties, the incident demonstrates the bad relationship between the two leaders. How, in these hostile circumstances, would it be possible to come together and decide on regulations that are applicable along the region.

4.7. Common Policies

According to International Human Rights principles, in case of violation of fundamental human rights, outsiders could intervene in the affairs of other states. Interestingly enough, UNASUR hasn't even mentioned these principles of human rights in its founding treaty. (Sabatini, 2015) The whole quest of trying to reduce the US influence in Latin America led to UNASUR deciding that member states have the right to defend their own sovereignty. The organization promises to rather support electorates than voters. UNASUR is not ready to be taken seriously as a regional union, since human rights, conflict mediation and democracy have been secondary issues for the organization. In 2015, a Venezuelan opposition leader, Leopoldo Lopez, was put to prison for 13 years and 9 months over false accusations. Human Rights Watch criticized the sentence, yet UNASUR regarded to the decision as one made by the authorities of a member state and thus as a decision to be trusted. UNASUR completely closed its eyes to reality over agreements made over national sovereignty. (Sabatini, 2015)

The EU has set out goals for its operation, and they are as follows: preservation of peace, of European values and of the well-being of its citizens; free movement along the EU territory; sustainable development which frames economic prosperity in the midst of preserving the nature; social inclusion of the citizens; development of sciences and technologies; cooperation between member states of the Union; respect for the multitude of languages and cultures; the common currency and integrated market. ("Perustietoa Euroopan unionista", n.d.)

Overall, the EU now acts as one big block in international affairs. It has a tremendous role in diplomacy and an even bigger role as an example of a region that abides by basic human rights, principles of a constitutional state, democracy, security, well-being and prosperity. The EU is a recognized charitable actor, one of the leading giver of humanitarian aid world-wide.

Comparing Latin America to the US, there is obviously no real assimilation point, since the US is a federal state, compared to independent Latin American nations. However, free

movement in the United States gives us a launch for the big question: why is there no free movement between Latin American states? This was, indeed, the initial query that a Guatemalan friend of mine was wondering about, when she gave me the idea on the whole thesis topic. There seems to be no evident answer for the question. In the EU, goods, capital, services and people can pretty much freely move from one country to another. Living, working and traveling in another EU country doesn't require passports, border controls or visas (though living in some countries still requires a registration, showing that even the EU doesn't have as open borders as it manifests). After having studied Latin America, I would connect the closed borders to the phenomenon of staying alerted; especially trading drugs is more difficult when borders stay closed. However, Mercosur countries' citizens are able to cross the border of the other member states freely, and there has been no perceivable problem regarding free movement.

Nevertheless, we encounter socialism yet again: how to provide freedom of movement in a region filled with socialist regimes? In Cuba, freedom of movement inside the country is restricted.⁴⁹ And as I've put forward earlier, it's not the only restricted area in the country: expression and assembly of the citizens are limited, and the Council of State has control over the judiciary. A mono party system is on place. According to Freedom House, Cuba scores 6.5 out of 7 in freedom, 7 out of 7 in political rights, and 6 out of 7 in civil liberties, with 7 being at the end of the spectrum for the least free. ("Freedom in the World", 2018) In countries filled with corruption, human rights violations and overall going-around-the-law, how to set up a common judicial system in a LAU?

4.8. Judicial Branch

All EU member states abide by the Copenhagen Criteria, which were formulated in 1993. In order for a country to acquire membership, it must fulfill three categories of criteria: political, economic and administrative capacity. ("Accession Criteria", n.d.) Along the first category, a

⁴⁹ Raento, Kuuba: Maa, Kansa ja Yhteiskunta, p. 13

country must have stable institutions that guarantee democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the respect for and protection of minorities. The second category emphasizes that a country should have an operational and competent market economy. Within the third category it is stated that a member state needs to be able to implement an *acquis* (for example treaties or international agreements that the EU has signed, that set out common rights and obligations which are binding on all members).

Democracy, accountability and transparency resonate on every EU ground: all decisions shall be taken in the open and as close to the citizens as possible. (“*Perustietoa Euroopan unionista*”, n.d.) Citizens are equally given the chance to give out their opinions and recommendations on the EU work and politics, through for instance citizens’ initiatives and reclamations. Furthermore, the European Parliament is elected through direct elections, and national parliaments cooperate with different EU organs, meaning that a representative democracy is guaranteed. Democracy in Latin America surely leaves space for improvement, not the least with the debatable re-election of Maduro in Venezuela in 2018.

The basic rights of the citizens of the European Union have been confirmed in the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon and more precisely in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. These include, amongst others, the dignity of a human being and the right to life; freedom of movement, religion, speech, etc.; equality between genders; anti-discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity, age, religious views, sexual orientation or disability; the right to vote and present oneself as a candidate on EU elections.

On an institutional level, the EU trusts in democracy, citizen participation, tolerance, solidarity, and in a constitutional state. That is why the European Union has what is called a legal personality, meaning legal rights and duties alike citizens have them, set forward in the Treaty of Lisbon. (“*Court of Justice Presentation*”, n.d.) Thus, the EU law, better known as the Community Law, is being applied. This legal system provides an extra set of rules for EU citizens and firms that might overrule national legal systems in various situations. (“*Legal Order-Community Law*”, 2007)

To apply this legal system, the EU has set up the Court of Justice of the European Union, consisting of the Court of Justice and the General Court. This institution monitors that the Community Law is being applied accordingly in the EU countries, as well as ensures that any EU action is legal. For example, national courts are under the Court of Justice of the EU, and are ordered to apply Community Law. The most important areas of European Union Law being applied are free movement and equal treatment of EU citizens despite their nationality. Furthermore, to adopt new laws, the European Commission proposes a new law, and the EU Parliament and the EU Council will give their consent. This means that a LAU needs to also set up a well organized structure of political institutions and organs, in order to adapt a common legal system.

There is no going around the fact that Latin America is a violent region. Drug cartels and their quest for power, inequality and corruption motivate people to either take matters on their own hands or to hire a professional to eliminate enemies. For example, the deeply rooted machismo results into a high rate of femicides. Adequately, 14 out of the 25 countries with the top ratings of femicides are situated in Latin America. (“The Long Road to Justice”, 2017) On average, 12 women were killed within the region on gender basis in 2016.

The European Union has signed the Istanbul Convention, the 2011 Council of Europe’s Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. In Latin America, such a convention, within the OAS, came into force already in 1994: The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará) “*defines violence against women, establishes that women have the right to live a life free of violence and that violence against women constitutes a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms*”. (“About the Belém do Pará”, n.d.) The Convention aimed at creating tools and mechanisms for protecting the basic human rights of women, and for cutting off violence directed at them.

16 countries in Latin America have set a specialized set of legislation concerning femicide, yet the practice continues in reality. A culture so acceptable on machismo translates into impunity towards crimes committed on gender basis. UN Women has been offering support for national state institutions and civil society organizations, and the UN is financing a National Citizen Observatory on Femicide. Despite the efforts, crimes against women continue. If in Europe 0.4 out of 100 000 women end up suffering a femicide annually, in Honduras the ratio is 15 out of 100 000. (Burba & Buna, 2017)

Unfortunately national courts are not exactly neutral; as an example, socialist militants possess positions in the judiciary, meaning that they will conceivably go around the law to protect their leftist allies. (Sabatini, 2015) During the recent Venezuelan crisis, activists protesting are being arrested, yet ally countries to Maduro don't condemn the happenings, showing how hard dealing with different ideologies might turn out to be, especially when it comes down to punishing wrong-doers under an extra-national law. In Brazil, knowing the right people may help to get away from the law; resulting in a sort of a pride once an individual reaches impunity, since it's a sign of social status and wealth. People getting away from judicial responsibility often belong to the professional field of business, politics, law enforcement, education, religion or sports.⁵⁰ This obviously creates distrust of the judicial system itself: "*Many Brazilians thus see the law as an instrument of power and coercion, and not of justice*".⁵¹

To continue with what features make a LAU difficult to be formed in a judicial context, another factor is the overall lack of trustworthiness in, and of, Latin American countries. Firstly, people go to vote, yet they have no trust in the people they are voting for. Secondly, the international community doesn't trust Latin America, mainly in economic terms; the desire to cooperate with or invest in Latin American countries is low. Latin American countries are lacking accountability, transparency and overall trust. On the contrary, European states have a better reputation on being trustworthy, and this facilitates the operation of the EU.

⁵⁰ Rohter, Brazil on the rise, p. 43

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 41

Legal instruments against corrupt behavior are needed all over Latin America, for the sake of domestic trust-building, as well as for regional and international trustworthiness. Latin Americans are worried about having to deal with corrupt governments, which has been evident in the recent elections sweeping over Latin America, where candidates linked to corruption have been receiving critics. Brazil, in order to tackle corruption, initiated a change: in 2010, a legislation known as Clean Record Law, *Lei da Ficha Limpa*, was passed. (Glickhouse & Leme, 2014) Its objective lies in blocking corrupt candidates from entering government positions. In practice, the legislation prohibits those candidates from taking on such positions for eight years, in case they've been formerly entangled in a corruption scandal (or another serious crime) and lost their political positions over it, or have resigned to avoid being impeached.

The law concerns any candidate presenting themselves for president, governor, senator and federal or state representative. Within the new law applied, in 2012 municipal elections, it was found that 1200 candidates were ineligible to present themselves to office. However, due to the long process of candidates appealing the decisions, courts had the time to run judgments only after the elections, resulting on only 300 candidates having been blocked from entering their desired positions.

In this context, it seems quite improbable that Latin American countries would be willing to engage in a reciprocity with countries that are known for their weak legal culture, or going even further, all Latin American countries not having put in place a trusted judicial institution. How to form a regional court that would not adapt the same weaknesses as national courts have, such as repetitive impunity and longeur of decisions? And how to make citizens of different countries trust the system, so far that the Latin American Court could put in place legislations overruling national laws?

4.9. Political Chaos

Latin America is a region of political chaos. Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, Peru and Suriname went through guerrilla warfare only in the 1980's⁵², and around the same time Guatemala with Peru, Brazil, Argentina and Bolivia switched from a military government to a civil government. The EU had the advantage of admitting new members every now and then, taking approximately a decade for a new set of countries joining in. This facilitated taking in former USSR states, and Croatia and Slovenia as former Yugoslavian states. In my opinion, the backlash for a LAU would be it being formed in the 21st century: all countries would want to join a LAU immediately, thus not giving time for the Union to figure out its smooth operation with fewer members.

Things have certainly developed in a few years. Alain Touraine, a French sociologist, studied Latin America in the 1980's. (Le Bot, 1990) He emphasized the importance of the state, rather than that of social movements. He saw the state as the main agent of social transformation. Furthermore, he claimed that Latin American social movements are symbolic, and not a seed for change. Interestingly enough, 2015-2016 protests over Brazil were a powerful sign of the will of the people to impeach the then President Dilma Rousseff: in my opinion, Touraine's findings are outdated, and the people have now more and more power on their hands.

The European Union has well assembled together some sort of an idealism of working together as a solidary group of nations, and transnationalism works out to a certain degree. One may thus assume that the EU has brought idealism into reality. As I see it, the EU has been able to bring all sorts of idealism into reality, but nowadays not in a way that the organization initially intended. The very proof of this tendency is the increasing support the European extreme right-wing parties are receiving: idealism (this time of quite far-fetched thoughts on topics such as immigration, and the overall conservatism) has once again shown that it doesn't always necessarily apply to facts, but rather onto a single idea or a belief. However, the EU, with the help of all of the thousands of expert personnel it employs, has its feet steadily on the ground without trying to reach

⁵² Bakewell, A History of Latin America, p. 221

for the skies. How could this “idealism of transnationalism brought into reality” be applied in a Latin American Union?

First of all, countries are in a need to attain a certain level of development in order to be competent together and as a block on the international scene. To stay hopeful, European countries have developed in a different pace as well, something that is quite clear in the functioning of the EU.⁵³ Yet again, even if centralizing power in the EU works out sufficiently, the same might not be true for Latin America.

The division between left wing and right wing supporters that tear citizens apart even inside one country, the widely spread corruption, and human rights violations. Not the best recipe for launching a LAU. The same goes for elections. When Mexico was voting earlier this year, it was in turbulent circumstances. With Mexicans being fed up with the President Enrique Peña Nieto over economy, corruption, crime and impunity, the campaigning turned violent. (“Mexico election”, 2018) More than 130 candidates and political workers were killed in a few months. If a LAU wants to resemble to the EU, violence in politics has no place. Thus far we may come to a conclusion that politically, Latin America as a whole still has a long way to go before forming a Union.

⁵³ Strumia, *Supranational Citizenship and the Challenge of Diversity: Immigrants, Citizens and Member States in the EU*, p. 201

5. ECONOMY

“By this Treaty, the High Contracting Parties establish among themselves a EUROPEAN COAL AND STEEL COMMUNITY, founded upon a common market, common objectives and common institutions.”

-Treaty of Paris, 1951, Article 1⁵⁴

“Mercosur was paralyzed, for a long time, with things that were not part of its original mandate, which was commerce.”

-Aloysio Nunes, Brazil’s Foreign Minister at the time of writing⁵⁵

The first form of the European Union was created in the aftermath of the Second World War, for obvious reasons; to avoid any new conflicts from happening. On April 18, 1951, Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands signed a treaty in order to establish the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The preamble of the Treaty announces, for instance, that the leaders of the 6 founding states are: “[...] *CONSCIOUS of the fact that Europe can be built only by concrete actions which create a real solidarity and by the establishment of common bases for economic development; [...]*” (“Treaty Establishing”, 1951) It was by no accident that economic cooperation was chosen as the first step for European integration: the core aspiration was for the member states to become economically dependent of each other and thus wanting to stay away from conflicts. (“Perustietoa Euroopan unionista”, n.d.)

Latin America surely has to become economically competent if they want to form a union that is able to compete on the international trade scene. There are emerging trade blocks world-widely. Latin America, with only one single economic power, needs to develop the national

⁵⁴“Treaty Establishing the European Coal and Steel Community”, 1951

⁵⁵“Brazil Admits Venezuela”, 2017

economy of all countries in order to respond to the power of those other trade blocks. Fortunately, Latin American economy has been growing since the 1990's.⁵⁶

The UN has set up a body, ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), to observe economical problems in Latin America.⁵⁷ Whether the body has been providing any actual results by auditing can be questionable. All Latin American countries except for Peru (and Cuba because of the US embargo) have been clients of the IMF.⁵⁸ UNASUR has been criticized for its only actual sphere of interest laying in economy, when the organization is supposed to be an EU-like regional community, at least on paper. In this part of the thesis I will analyze and present a possible LAU from an economic viewpoint. Bearing in mind all the hassle generated from dealing with international economic organizations, and from creating regional economic organizations, Latin America has a long way to go to achieve the economic branch in a LAU. Nevertheless, a rather long way has already been wandered; a lot has changed in a century.

5.1. Latin America Rising from Mono-economies

For a long time, Latin American countries were only producing primary products, and often one country was producing only an array of a few of those said products. Since the 1850's until the turn of the century and the Great Depression of the 1930's, Latin American countries were strictly mono-productive.⁵⁹ Without a doubt, their economies could not benefit from such an arrangement. As Latin American countries were producing and exporting the same primary products, they didn't need each other for trade. In other words, a regional economic unity was not an exigency.

Cuba is one of the wildest examples, which shows the difficulties of mono-production and dependency. As a member of COMECON, the Soviet trading organization where each partisan would only produce the best suited product for themselves, Cuba was much of a mono-agricultural

⁵⁶ Bakewell, A History of Latin America, p. 223

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 217

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 222

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 209

state, producing sugar. The USSR was thus buying sugar from Cuba, which made Cuba dependent on the Soviet economic relations. At the times of the USSR, Cuba didn't see the point of accelerating towards a more diverse production, but the shock came once the Soviet bloc fell in 1991.⁶⁰ At that historical moment, 80 % of Cuban international trade crashed down in only a couple of years, creating shortage on all commodities. The new era was a disastrous time for Cubans, and soon the role left by the USSR was replaced by dependent relations with Brazilian and Venezuelan energy, as well as with Western capital investments.

So, starting from the Great Depression that started in 1929, Latin American economies saw a steady growth. Such a growth didn't last for long, though, and in the 1980's Latin America was forced to stay in the shadow of world markets, following a bigger economic crisis. (Rodríguez, n.d.) In the 1980's, prices of primary products were fluctuating.⁶¹ As a result, the growth not only stopped but turned into recession. For the most part, the economic problems were generated through poor politics and social struggles, born ever since the independence of Latin American countries.

The European Union is the world's largest exporter of assembled goods and services, making up 16.5 % of world trade. ("Trade", n.d.) Furthermore, the EU holds the largest import market of manufactured products in over 100 countries. ("Perustietoa Euroopan unionista, n.d.) Latin American trade has always been oriented towards exporting rather than importing.⁶² Nowadays, the 3 largest economies, Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, produce over 80 % of the Latin American manufactured products. ("Mexico Leads Manufacturing", 2015) The products are mostly from automotive and metallic sectors.

Democratic opening and institutions, economic policies that stabilise the situation, the overall growth of economy and the increase in economic opportunities have been of benefit for

⁶⁰ Raento, Kuuba: Maa, Kansa ja Yhteiskunta, p. 37

⁶¹ Bakewell, A History of Latin America, p. 220

⁶² Ibid., p. 207

many Latin American countries.⁶³ They've been able to better serve their citizens, however they're not fully ready to compete in the international markets (not including Brazil).

The threat towards Latin American economies becoming fully globally competent can be traced back to international competition and international economic policies. Latin America not being economically proficient to being considered as an advanced economy, their economies are highly vulnerable to protectionist tactics other countries are putting in place. How will Latin America be able to increase its trade and long-term economic plans, as well as prosperity in general, when countries of the world are closing up their economies and putting up restrictions? Such a game is truly connected to "everyone saving themselves", in which most Latin American countries don't have the ability to participate in since they're lacking the basic economic stability and trade needed.

In a region filled with incredible natural scenery (such as Patagonia in Argentina and Chile), historical cities (for example Salvador in Brazil), tasty food, warm climate, friendly locals, cultural specialities, and whatever one may think of, Latin America could use tourism development to its advantage. While in the past Latin American countries were avoided for their violent reputation, tourists are starting to find their way to the region. Hence, developing tourism and promoting travel would greatly serve Latin America to accelerate its overall development. In Cuba, the 1994 economic boosting project was highly connected to improving tourism: the overall tourism was taken under healing, and collaboration with companies abroad was directed towards topics related to tourism and industries.⁶⁴ Another way of attracting tourists could be through ameliorating international trading relations.

⁶³ Sweig & Hill & Barshefsky & O'Neil, S. K. U.S. - Latin America Relations: A New Direction for A New Reality, p. 3

⁶⁴ Raento, Kuuba: Maa, Kansa ja Yhteiskunta, p. 67

5.2. International trade

Socialism and a traditional mono-agriculture can be singled out as the main reasons for Latin America having for long stayed out of the world markets, and for the poverty as its outcome. The Fraser Institute of Canada ranks countries such as Venezuela and Bolivia as the “least free” countries in economic freedom and in ease of doing business. (“Freedom in the World”, 2018) There is a serious lack of international investment in Latin American states, for the reasons stated above. On the contrary, as I pointed out earlier, the EU is the biggest trader worldwide. The EU trade is decided in the European Commission, not in national governments, although the Commission works in coordination with the domestic authorities, as well as with the European Parliament.

Latin American major exports include agricultural products and natural resources (copper, iron, petroleum, etc.). These are often not sufficient enough to spark the interest of other countries to do business with Latin America. In fact, foreign capital flows were sharply decreasing in the second half of the 20th century: 34,6 billion dollars from 1979 to 1982, followed by only 6,5 billion dollars from 1983 to 1986.⁶⁵ Nowadays the situation is fortunately better, yet not exactly favorable.

We may argue that Latin America got stagnated into the wrong economic policies after the 1930s, and these policies were later on hard to change. In addition, political turbulence, illegal drug traffic and organized crime evolving around the phenomenon have not helped the situation and trustworthiness in the eyes of foreigners. Additionally, Cuba set a public image for Latin America, when the US-led embargo prohibited foreign subsidiaries of American companies to arrange sales with Cuba in 1992. (Canler, 2001)

Latin America is surely facing economic challenges: a need to increase economic growth while contributing to global issues such as sustainable development. International investors need to start trusting Latin America, which could be facilitated by a LAU: lower risks for investors instead of investing in one developing country alone.

⁶⁵ Bakewell, A History of Latin America, p. 220

Along with the idea of Antoni Esteveordal, Latin America should pay more attention to Asian trade; as Asia is the world's fastest growing region in terms of trade, it could help Latin America to truly open its democracy to the rest of the world. This, obviously, if the region wants to keep up with globalization and the increasing movement of people, capital, services and goods. (Myers, 2017)

Other than Mercosur and other regional organizations, Latin American countries have set up friendly, bilateral economic relations. For instance, Cuba made a trade agreement with Brazil under Lula in 2008. Brazil lending Cuba so that they could buy medicine and food supplies was of great aid for Cuban infrastructure.⁶⁶ According to my Costa Rican contact, Costa Rica, Panama, Chile and Colombia (and to some extent Canada) are very similar; they used to be allies during the Cold War. (Hoepker Jiménez) These 4 Cs, plus Panama, are known for having friendly relations. However, Colombia's population far overreaches that of Panama's or Costa Rica's. That's why a small concern of Colombia overruling stays in the air: all the capital and power of votes being in Colombia could make the fellow citizens of smaller countries feel threatened. Would for instance a small state such as Honduras become an extension of more populous states, when a LAU is launched?

5.3. The curious case of financial solidarity

Coming into terms with subsidizing others, economic solidarity is one of the key points of a functional regional union. In the European Union, member states are either net contributors or net receivers, a division that often feeds populist right-wing aspirations. Who benefits from the Union financially, and who ends up paying for the others a greater share than the others do?

Financial solidarity goes all the way to the heart of nationalism. According to my Costa Rican contact, it would make no sense to “*send money to them* (Nicaraguans in particular) *when*

⁶⁶ Raento, Kuuba: Maa, Kansa ja Yhteiskunta, p. 71

we ourselves struggle with poverty". (Hoepker Jiménez) So, in his eyes, even the wealthiest Latin American countries, such as Costa Rica, are not ready to help others financially. In his words, *"it is easier to help others when you have stabilized your own home, otherwise you create more problems and in the end you can't help the others like planned."* This statement brings us back to Latin America not being developed enough in domestic terms to form a union that would be taken seriously on the international arena.

Nonetheless, likewise Latin America, European countries are not equally wealthy. Let's take, for instance, the numerical data from 2016; the GDP of the EU summed to 14 800 billion euros. ("Share of Member States", 2017). The contribution of countries to this number was not equal: Germany (21.1 %), the UK (16 %) and France (15 %) contributed into making up over half of the GDP. 11 countries (Malta, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Slovakia and Hungary) all contributed individually less than 1 % of the GDP.

As between EU countries, Latin American countries are on different levels in development. For instance, Costa Rica has been imitating European countries and adapted a political model of social justice and social programs. While citizens are contributing a large share of their salary into taxes, the standard of living has been growing and the life expectancy is as high as 80 years. On the contrary, in the neighboring Nicaragua, the country is in a constant turmoil and under a new dictatorship every few years. This results into Nicaragua having the same size of territory, population and resources as Costa Rica but only third the trade. (Hoepker Jiménez)

So, as I see it, reluctance for paying member fees that would later on be distributed to member countries can come to block the creation of a Latin American Union. In the EU, the fellow Finn would like to throw out those member states that make domestic tax payers financially support the troubled states (for instance, Greece with the debt crisis).

In the EU, most countries belong to the Eurozone, which is a monetary union using a uniform currency, the euro. The euro offers the benefit of abandoning transfer costs, creating a stable currency that is strong against fluctuating rates, and making life easier for travelers and expats in another EU country. The EU and euro also attract international business and trade.

So as I see it, adapting a common currency would greatly benefit Latin American countries. It would be a backup support for vulnerable national economies, help Latin America open up economically, attract foreign investors and international trade, and be a reminder of a similar identity, as long as citizens of the member states are willing to contribute to such solidarity and realize the benefits of a common currency.

A Bank of the South was one of the greatest plans of Hugo Chávez. Such an institution was to be the major funding for projects inside the block, without external aid such as the IMF. (Klonsky, 2007) Chávez was correspondingly involved in creating a single currency. The attempt was this time under ALBA, more specifically in the form of ALBA Bank; *SUCRE* was proposed as a currency for transactions between socialist governments. *SUCRE* was, however, never a success story, and nowadays it serves as a reserve for member countries' respected currencies. In Mercosur, a common currency has also been under discussions, but has never been put forward.

5.4. Mercosur

MERCOSUR was created in 1991 under the Treaty of Asunción, and on the basis of economic cooperation. (Felter & Renwick, 2018) It is by far the most successful of Latin American organizations. The organization was created in a similar manner to the ECSC, since the bloc's ultimate goal is a common market, which includes a common tariff, as well as free circulation of goods, people, services and factors of production within the members' territories. In practice, customs duties were abandoned, a common external tariff was set (35 %), and a common external trade policy was adopted. All citizens of the member states have a Mercosur stamp on their passports, similar to the uniform EU passport amongst EU member states. Even the birth of Mercosur was similar to the post-war creation of ECSC: Mercosur came to the aid of Argentina and Brazil. These two countries had been in competition over regional power, with highly worsened diplomatic relations. As a matter of fact, the first step of Mercosur operating was Argentina and Brazil deciding on tariff free trade. (Bakewell, 2004, p. 224) On another end, Hugo

Chávez of Venezuela was against free trade, since it was, according to him, a means of bringing countries closer to capitalism. (Felter & Renwick, 2018)

The institutional level of Mercosur consists of a Common Market Council (the highest decision-maker), a Common Market Group (macroeconomic policies), a Trade Commission, a Parlasur (a Parliament for advices), and of a Structural Convergence Fund (regional infrastructure projects). (Felter & Renwick, 2018) Similar to the Copenhagen Criteria, an Ushuaia Protocol on Democratic Commitment in 1998 set up rules for the exclusivity of democratic institutions. In fact, any disobedience to this rule was a reason enough for suspension. Such temporary suspension from the organization happened to Paraguay in 2012, over a suspected forceful removal of the sitting president from his position.

The problem comes from the fact that whereas Mercosur is perceived as contributing to Latin American integration, there are very few states holding a membership in the organization. Hence, an Argentinian might argue that Latin America already has a policy of free movement, even though this policy is very limited. The members of Mercosur comprise of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. Venezuela was a member, but failed in achieving the member requirements and was later on suspended. The fact that Mercosur is composed of only four states, including Brazil and Argentina, comes off as beneficial for the member states: in 2014, 93 % of Latin American GDP (this GDP calculation including Mexico that benefits from being a part of NAFTA alongside the US and Canada) are represented by Mercosur and Pacific Alliance. (Ferreiro, 2015)

Mercosur is seemingly a success story in Latin America that even the US supported once it was being created. (Bakewell, 2004, p. 224) In addition to the four full members, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru and Suriname hold an associate member status, which allows them to have tariff reductions. Being only associated does not guarantee them full voting rights though, or direct access to Mercosur markets. However, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru are members of a similar organization, an already mentioned Pacific Alliance, which is nevertheless not as powerful as Mercosur. Thus, adding these two trade blocks together could turn out beneficial for all Latin America, and push regional integration further. Besides, Pacific Alliance is trying to

negotiate increased trade between China and Latin America, which could surely be of a boost for Latin American economy. (Myers, 2017)

The organization having been the best one to work out just yet, Mercosur has equally been strongly criticized. For instance, Mercosur has a protectionist attitude. This clearly does not help integration in the whole area of Latin America. Furthermore, Mercosur hasn't been able to negotiate any actual trade deal, the greatest example being the long-lasting negotiations on a trade deal with the European Union. Moreover, Mercosur having suspended Venezuela in 2016, and Paraguay for a year in 2012, presents itself as a highly vulnerable organization. (Felter & Renwick, 2018) It has also been said that since Mercosur was first created for Brazilian and Argentinian needs, the whole goal of the organization is to protect these countries' industries in the face of globalization.

Turbulence inside Mercosur has been on-going since the beginning. The will of Chávez for an area that doesn't provide free trade was clearly a shift towards politics inside the organization. Mercosur was designed to only deal with economic matters, and Chávez tried to bring in a trace of Anti-Americanism and his proper political project. Despite the Venezuelan attempt, Argentina and Brazil are sticking with the idea of concentrating on economics and business rather than mutual politics. And those are eventually the countries that matter the most in terms of trade. ("Brazil Admits Venezuela", 2017)

Mercosur countries together form one of the largest economic blocks in the world, with around 2.9 trillion dollars in GDP. (Felter & Renwick, 2018) Internal trade used to be worth 4 billion dollars in 1990, yet 10 years later, in 2000, it had boomed to over 40 billion dollars. Now, a total economic mismanagement and decreasing commodity prices have led Mercosur countries in trouble. Argentina is famous for coming to IMF for help multiple times, and Brazil's economy has been stagnating.

The Argentinian president Mauricio Macri has been putting forward the idea of a more open Latin American economy. Within the same pattern, the new Brazilian president, Jair Bolsonaro, is aiming for a reconfiguration of Mercosur. As a part of his domestic economic plans,

he wants to allow Mercosur countries for more flexible trade outside Mercosur area. (Felter & Renwick, 2018) This means that unlike the EU, the members could negotiate on individual external tariffs. So, all in all, the goal seems to be making Mercosur more open to trade, something especially Brazil has been lacking on. On a global scale, the Brazilian economy has been extremely closed.

The US perceives Mercosur as an obstruction for increasing trade towards South America, since even with the support from the US, Mercosur has not been interested in dealing with it. The reality is that the trouble inside Mercosur has contributed to the loss of international credibility. Mercosur is not taken as seriously as it should be, due to internal problems and trade restrictions.

In 1993, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela agreed on the creation of a free trade area called CAN. (Glickhouse, 2012) Peru joined in 2006. Associate members comprise Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, and observer countries include Mexico, Panama and Spain. The area offers the member states a common external tariff, a no-visa zone and a common Andean passport. Even if CAN has created a total of 14 institutions, such as an Andean Parliament and a Court of Justice, the organization has never achieved much success and has not been able to reach the EU-style integrity level. Mercosur members are not allowed to join CAN, since there is no permission to join other free trade areas outside of the block. (Felter & Renwick, 2018) This division is detrimental for a possible LAU.

Therefore, a solution will not be easily achieved. Transferring the operation of Mercosur into a LAU as an economic branch does not seem doable. Mercosur has failed on many organizational levels, has a restricted membership acquirement, a paralyzing protectionism and crippling rules for member states. Therefore the economic division of a LAU needs to be completely refigured and built from scratch. For such a development, Brazil as the most powerful state should take the lead.

Alongside inequality in social structures, the other alarming problem of Brazil lies in the exploitation of natural resources, such as petroleum, ethanol and hydropower.⁶⁷ As a part of Brazil

⁶⁷ Rohter, Brazil on the rise, p. 13

finally reaching the status of a developed country, a sort of an epiphany regarding both national problems should take place.

For the second half of the 20th century Brazil was an IMF debtor, but very rapidly moved to be a creditor at the end of the century. The fast economical development granted the country a membership in the BRICS organization.⁶⁸ The BRICS include the emerging economies that are considerable by their size and potential: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Another trophy from the prompt development is naturally Brazil's national economy growing: it holds the 10th biggest economy in the world, and exports with more than 200 billion dollars annually.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, what Brazil is claiming in financial development it is losing in providing its citizens with an easy-going life.

5.5. Public Service and Infrastructure

As with various cases, the weakness of Latin American infrastructure can be traced back to colonization. The British conquer of the US enabled the Great North to develop functional social programs and to unfold a stable economy, through starting from zero. Spaniards mixing with the local population, the story was to go to another direction. My Venezuelan contact believes that this difference of launching colonial projects highly contributes to the developmental difference between the North and the South. (Rodríguez, 2018)

In a region with historically weak institutions, the US has set an agenda of helping out in ameliorating the working of Latin American public institutions. It foresees in doing so through international organizations, such as the World Bank, Inter American Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund.⁷⁰ Alongside weak institutions, the overall Latin American infrastructure leaves a desire for fast development.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 140

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 141

⁷⁰ Sweig & Hill & Barshefsky & O'Neil, S. K. U.S. - Latin America Relations: A New Direction for A New Reality, p. 4

Because of the few decade-long economic growth, Latin American nations have started witnessing a trend of urbanization. Residential placement tends to be illogical and unequal in cities. And as urbanization takes place, the Latin American middle class is growing. This means a direct need for better services, better situated services, and urban structure. Building up on infrastructure will be of a focal point on bringing all countries close to being able to enter a LAU.

Public service, for starters, is very inefficient, in terms of both quality and services. Long waiting lines are surely a problem in most EU countries as well, but Latin American public service is also very much corrupt, and even the private sector is often quite unorganized. Messy transportation and utility systems complicate life, and as a result people prefer driving their cars causing high levels of pollution. (“South America: Resources”, n.d.) Education systems don’t work since the poorest people don’t get educated. Fiscal sustainability in itself is threatened greatly by unfunded pension spending. The police should be reinforced to behave well and in a professional way.

In case domestic government functions do not operate smoothly, a harsh path for a LAU can be awaited. Transporting national poor public service habits into a large regional organization would be a start of a disastrous project. Or, at least these weak practices need to be balanced with a strong plan for crisis management.

5.6. Crisis management

The European Union has lately been involved in many crises; the global recession after 2008-2009, the refugee flows from Syria and other parts of Middle East and Africa, Brexit, many countries’ debt and financial crisis, rising populist governments around Europe, just to name a few of the biggest occurrences around the block. In order to tackle such evolvments, the Union needs a stable system, a clear vision, and operating tools. And the arrangement should be double-ended: both a stable economic system, financial vision and tools for achieving the best outcome, as well as a stable political system, ideological vision and tools for achieving the best outcome. Thus far, the EU comes out as a winner, as a block that has somehow survived the threats.

Nevertheless, Ashoka Mody argues that the Eurozone was created wrongly; accepting members on political grounds and forgetting about creating shared responsibility and finance policies together. (Vihriälä, 2018) For the Eurozone to fully work and to be more competent on fighting against crises, public expenditure and taxes should equally be decided in a centralized collaboration. This in general would mean less autonomy to countries, but more equality and solidarity, thus more tools to prevent crises all together.

If the EU has been through crises, it is no secret that Latin America holds a special place as risky countries. The constant turbulence from political ideologies, crime, violence and the big role of the military forces offer a great potential for a crisis to occur. With the latest Venezuelan case, there is another type of crisis happening in the neighboring countries: Brazil and Colombia find themselves in trouble with Venezuelan refugees. Most of those fleeing escape the poverty that was generated through Maduro's dictatorship. The economy in the country is on artificial respiration. Therefore a crisis in one country easily spreads its wings all around the region. Additionally, the drowning Venezuelan economy is already having an impact on the trustworthiness of the whole region: international traders are afraid of partaking in regional matters because of the Venezuelan instability. ("Brazil Admits Venezuela", 2017)

Latin America is very inflation-bound, and the IMF has been in the help of pretty much all Latin American nations. Whereas Greece's inflation rate history states that "*Inflation Rate in Greece averaged 8.38 percent from 1960 until 2018, reaching an all time high of 33.70 percent in January of 1974 and a record low of -2.90 percent in November of 2013.*", the same story for Argentina points out that "*Inflation Rate in Argentina averaged 198.63 percent from 1944 until 2018, reaching an all time high of 20262.80 percent in March of 1990 and a record low of -7 percent in February of 1954.*". ("Greece Inflation Rate" / "Argentina Inflation Rate", n.d.)

As an extreme example, Venezuelan infographics tell us that "*Inflation Rate in Venezuela averaged 3268.55 percent from 1973 until 2018, reaching an all time high of 833997 percent in October of 2018 and a record low of 3.22 percent in February of 1973.*" ("Venezuela Inflation Rate", n.d.) This is what is generally referred to as hyperinflation, where the currency is worth

pretty much nothing. The root for the crisis lies in Maduro printing out money to compensate with oil devaluation, quickly leading into a catastrophe.

Clearly, Argentinian and Venezuelan economies are much more unstable and present a danger of instability for a LAU where all members should be able to contribute financially to the functioning of the Union. With the Greek debt crisis in mind, the inflation never reached the unbelievable scores of what for example Argentina and Venezuela have experienced. Still, it was a hard task for the EU, for the European Central Bank and private banks to ease the Greek way out of the crisis. The Union was holding its breath in front of the Greek drama, and in front of all other debt and financial crisis in Ireland, Portugal and Spain. And the drama put the solidarity of the Union to an enormous test.

6. CONCLUSION

Latin America forming a regional union alike the European Union could greatly benefit the countries belonging to it. So, I have confirmed my initial hypothesis that there are true perks of intertwining Latin America together. Throughout this dissertation, I have brought up the most pressing issues to address. These include factors from the cultural, social, political and economic sphere.

Thus, even if a LAU could benefit the countries, I have encountered that such an organizational creation has its obstacles. Therefore, new questions have arisen throughout the dissertation on whether the project is, in reality, doable. We have observed through past examples of regional organizations, and through domestic policies and cultural patterns, that there is no easy way for Latin America to truly come together.

As a conclusion, it is important to go back to what obstacles, in terms of a functioning union, the region is facing. Why do people feel hopeless about such an organization being created? One of the biggest problems is evidently the massive internal problems that Latin American states have yet to deal with; Latin American countries, justly, belong under the term of *developing nations*. These domestic issues, such as corruption, could highly influence a Latin American Union. Furthermore, Latin American countries are both domestically and internationally lacking trustworthiness. Even abroad, these nations are seen as a social and political chaos.

The problem lies also in a need of a powerful leadership. Chávez and Lula were powerful leaders that were able to bring Latin America together, without bringing their countries to a full-on dictatorship. Nowadays there are no such leaders in the region. The sentiment of not necessarily wanting to contribute into helping the others stays prominent; why would an Uruguayan want to help Bolivians when Uruguay itself has to manage a heavy load of national problems? Why would they want to get involved with Brazilians when there is evidence of the whole Brazilian state system being corrupt? Wouldn't it be better to distance oneself from all the trouble happening

around? As seen with UNASUR, Latin American countries do not want to give up their sovereignty. Additionally, the differences in population and wealth between the countries are associated with the most powerful ones overruling, such as Brazil and Mexico. Solidarity has not yet reached an ideological level in the region.

There are many reasons for Latin America to stick together. Firstly, the countries in the block are in an urgent necessity of opening up economically and climbing up the trade ladder, in order to be internationally competent. And what an easy way to reach the goal through a common market area that handles external business together. Secondly, political turbulences -such as the widespread corruption and extremist leaders - could be easier tackled when countries cooperate together and prepare legislations to combat such issues. Thirdly, the EU is by no means a perfect organization, yet has been working well for decades, under different forms and member states. The Union has brought about wealth and prosperity. However, when being anxious over Latin America not being developed enough to form a Union, one may take a look on the EU; there are great wealth differences inside the EU, and many of the especially newcomers have greatly benefited from the Union. This tactic could work for a Latin American Union as well; rising from the oblivion with the help of the team. And as a final note, Latin America has a strong cultural basis where countries share a rather similar heritage and traditions, a feature that enables the region to become closer in a more simplified manner, in a world that is going through globalization and where the fear of the other is prevailing.

As the best technique for a Latin American Union to work out, despite all those matters hindering its rather painless performance, a LAU should not imitate the EU to the core. Instead, it should adapt a unique way of integrating Latin American countries together. In practice, Mercosur itself could already be enough, meaning that the membership would need to be extended to all countries that somehow fulfill entry requirements. All in all, economy is what the EU is mostly fascinated about anyway, and the same can be said about Latin American organizations.

From another viewpoint, all spheres of EU functions should be integrated in a LAU. That is why Latin American countries could try to form a regional union taking note of the functioning of the OAS, even if they didn't want to take part in the OAS directly. The OAS has been able to

bring on an institutional, diplomatic and normative organization. Whereas UNASUR was more about talking than actually taking action, the OAS has brought to table binding agreements to follow, also on areas other than economics.

Considering the importance of the possible Latin American influence in world affairs, the region is poorly studied, especially in the Western academic world of International Relations. There is obviously a lot to research even in Latin American integration, as the topic is immense. After the present research and with the findings in hand, I would direct myself next into studying how to perfect the smaller Latin American organizations, in order for them to become competitive. In the end, should Latin America leave the dream of a huge regional union behind, and focus on the already existing ones?

Brotherhood. When one country is in trouble, the others help them. This can be either achieved by welcoming refugees and giving them opportunities, or by giving material or humanitarian help. Latin America needs stability in order for a LAU to work out, and one tool of finding that stability is by showing solidarity towards those escaping an authoritarian regime. With extreme rulers climbing to power, now, more than ever, Latin America is finding itself in circumstances where playing together seems both risky, but also unavoidable.



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