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International relations among Tom Thumbs: Taiwan as provider of aid Central America

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*Francisco Javier Haro Navejas**

Resumen

Este trabajo analiza la ayuda oficial para el desarrollo proveniente de Taiwan con destino a América Central. Tiene tres objetivos fundamentales:

Primero, existe un gran vacío bibliográfico sobre el tópico de estas páginas, empezar a llenarlo es una necesidad académica. Algunos intelectuales sienten que deben inclinarse ya sea hacia Beijing o Taipei, por lo cual se busca un análisis lo más cercano a la objetividad posible.

Segundo, la mayoría de las investigaciones en relaciones internacionales han sido enfocadas a temas relacionados con el poder en sí mismo o solamente con elementos relacionados con el poder duro. La ayuda oficial para el desarrollo es al mismo tiempo poder duro y poder suave, por lo mismo el trabajo trata de iluminar los lados oscuros de las relaciones internacionales desde una perspectiva teórica, donde las interacciones ayudan a construir identidades y la cooperación es una variable esencial de la política mundial.

Finalmente, se verá que las acciones taiwanesas económico-cooperativas ayudan al progreso de las partes pobres de América Central y a la creación de mercados internos con fuertes lazos con el mercado mundial, profundizando la integración eco-

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nómica, lo mismo regional que internacional. La ayuda taiwanesa y de otros países, sobre todo a través de la transmisión de conocimientos, podría ser de gran ayuda para remontar grandes problemas. La ayuda es vital debido a que algunos de los problemas están siendo exportados principalmente a México y Estados Unidos bajo la forma, solamente para dar un ejemplo, de los *Mara Salvatrucha*.

Abstract

This paper analyzes the Official Development Aid (AOD) that has as its source Taiwan and as its destination Central America. It has three basic aims:

Firstly, there is a huge bibliographic vacuum on the topic of these pages. Beginning filling it is an academic need. Even some intellectuals feel that they should lean against either Beijing or Taipei, that if they write on Taiwan they should defend or attack one of the contending parties. Here it is seen that a study close to objectivity is possible.

Secondly, most of the research in International Relations has been focused on topics related with power itself or with just elements related with hard power. AOD is both hard and soft power, therefore this paper shades light to the dark side partially viewing international relations from a theoretical perspective were interactions help to construct identities and cooperation is an essential variable of world politics.

Finally, it will be seen below that the Taiwanese cooperative-economic actions are helpful to the progress of poor parts of the Central American region and are helpful to create domestic markets with strong links with the world market deepening the economic integration both regional and global. Aid from Taiwan and some other countries, mainly through the transmission of know how, could be of assistance in surmounting huge troubles. Aid is vital because some of Central American's problems are being exported mainly to México and the United States under the form, just to give an example, of Mara Salvatrucha gangs source of violence and drug trafficking. It is not meaningless to stress that Taiwanese ODA is by far not enough and is very small in the international context.

Keywords: Taiwan Central America Official Development Aid Identities Socialization

Central America as part of the Pacific Rim: success and disappointments

With the sole exception of Belize, Central America is an important part of the Pacific, regardless of not being part of regional major international organizations such as the Asia Pacific Economic Forum (APEC). Because of its strategic location this region has been the setting of many social processes whose source at times is located over its borders. Many countries have taken their disputes into Central American soil and have tried to solve their conflicts there in many ways, either in violent or in pacific forms. This was true especially during the Cold War. Those who have competed down there have given almost nothing that could lead the region into a path of progress and development.

Because of its human and natural resources, problems and situation, Central America is essential both to American continent and as well to East Asia, where some governments do care for Central American nations for very pragmatic reasons. Almost nobody pays attention to this part of the planet. As part of the Pacific Rim, any situation there will be important to many places. One government that pays close attention and that has activities in the region is the one of Taiwan, which is the focus of this paper. Taiwanese presence in the isthmus encompasses almost very human activity, among the most important are: immigration, foreign direct investment and aid.

The Taiwanese global experience of providing aid is full of disappointments like the one suffered in Indonesia, where Taiwan focused its assistance to the victims of the tsunami of December 2004 hoping to be included in collective relief activities, event that never happened. Countries do not only help for the sake of helping the needed. Most of the time governments, Taiwanese included, provide assistance expecting some political profit in return. On the opposite side, it is possible to see that if there is a success in the global political agenda it can be found in Central America.¹

The Taiwanese government offers and gives aid for two main reasons:

1. It is a way of achieving a successful international socialization

2. It is a mean to be seen as a peer by other countries.

Taiwanese cooperative-economic actions are helpful to the progress of poor parts of the Central American region and are helpful to create domestic markets with strong links with the world market deepening the economic integration both regional and global. Aid from Taiwan and some other countries, mainly through the transmission of know how, could be of assistance in surmounting huge trouble. Aid is vital because some of Central American's are being exported mainly to México and to the United States.

The goals and components of this paper are:

- a. Sketch the context and rationale of international aid.
- b. Comparative analysis of Taiwan and Central America shed light on how to solve problems.
- c. Present the interests Taiwan has in Central America.
- d. Picture what Taiwan does to provide aid and the different forms of its financial assistance.
- e. Foresee the perspectives related with regional economic integration.

The activities of Taiwan, mainly those related with aid, in the region are studied here with the purpose of understand its role in the isthmus and present a first evaluation of its influence on the domestic social processes.

This paper is not related with economic activities of Taiwanese citizens and their enterprises that could or could not be involved in labor malpractices or engaged in frankly inhuman treatments against local citizens; it deals solely with official development aid.² Well aware of the political and economic interests involved, the author does not offer a moral approach to the topic. It is a first academic outcome that should be contrasted with evaluations *in situ* that could cover, among other aspects, the real benefits and impacts of Taiwanese aid.

The aid's raison d'être: security against integration

In order to achieve their own goals during the Cold War years some international actors, mainly USA government, transmitted the image that Central America's problems were product of the Soviet intervention and its assistance to different political groups, some of them *guerrilla* organizations. Foreign actors did put aside

the colossal domestic problems, such as poverty, corruption and dictatorships. Because of this the region became a scenario of disputes between Washington and Moscow.³

The Central American countries are prey of many countries: They are poor and there is a lack of institutions to protect them from attacks and interventions of foreign powers. At the dawn of the millennium some aspects are no different as they were in the last century. Central America is still seen as a mere tool to help foreign nations to strive for their purposes and achieve them thanks to what they do in this part of the planet, sometimes benefiting Central Americans in a very restricted way. The process cooperation-intervention has many up-and-downs and many dark sides, mainly “external actors” compel the Central Americans to adopt “their conception of the negotiation, the type of society to build and the democracy to establish”.⁴

A less dark side of the relation between Central America and other countries is aid, but not always. Aid is about money, influence, power, national interest, security, trade and investment. Governments all over the world blame each other of using aid to obtain their egotistic goals. As a result, many times aid fails to accomplish its original objectives: being an instrument to develop economies and mitigate poverty.⁵ For example, United States uses aid more to achieve its interests -political, commercial and military- but not to ease the sufferings of the recipients.⁶

Aid is always attached to issues not directly connected to the apparent purpose of it; this is a rule where maybe none a single country is an exception. Donors seek that aid, for instance, helps to build institutions; for that reason they have been linking aid with economic integration and democracy, among other issues.⁷

The best alternative, especially to the benefit of poor countries, could be to change the *raison d'être* of aid flows. Aids could be represented as follows: national (American) military security + foreign aid = national (American) military security. What means that aid has been just an accessory to the so called important international issues and is only a sort of a philanthropic mean to a realist end. Equation should be: international aid + domestic institutional changes = regional development that should lead to regional integration that could build regional comprehensive security. Mitigate problems is not the solution, solve them is.

Since the late 1980s the international system as a whole has been experimenting dramatic changes. Because of the decline of some powers, Soviet Union and the emergence of some others, European Union, the pieces of the Rubik cube of international power are being re-arranged to make them fit and give shape to a new era.

Some actors are prepared, or at least they declare they are equipped to assume new and more active roles. As they get ready to appear in new scenarios, backstage nervousness rules. Everywhere, especially in international media, but also in academic journals, is being written that countries must be ready for the transformations.⁸

Identity and socialization, two engines of international politics

The base of a country's strive for power lies on the construction of an identity that gives a country and its domestic actors, i.e. government and business(wo)man, the tools to be part of complex, both formal and informal, institutional and non-institutional, processes of socialization. Inside the framework of socialization, in order to achieve power and/or economic benefits actors accept, brake, bend and change the rules of the game, both in the conflict and cooperative side.

When countries engage in ODA, as donors or as recipients, they are part of a socialization process where, beyond material profits, they mutually (re)shape their identities and cooperate to accomplish individual and common goals, as well as general and specific objectives in world where cooperation can help to face conflicts.

This theoretical framework is the essential academic tool to partially grasp the Taiwanese ODA in Central America, which must be seen as part of the multidimensional political situation that is lived in the Taiwan Strait. Amidst the turbulent relation both Taipei and Beijing "have intensified their competition in regional international organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean".⁹

Most of the dimensions are related with identity and socialization, some of the most important dimensions are:

1. It is a dispute over ideological and identity hegemony.
2. Two so-called Chinese identities are at stake.¹⁰
3. The balance of power in the region.

4. The growing of Japanese in military matters and the amendment of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution.
5. The American and Japanese support of Taiwan.
6. The economic competition-integration China and Taiwan.
7. The fighting for diplomatic recognition.
8. Belonging to some international organizations such as World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Forum Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).
9. One of them, Taiwan, does not belong to the United Nations Organization system and is trying to get in through a small door, the World Health Organization (WHO).
10. The battle over cultural and historical issues.
11. China is a receptor of AID, Taiwan is a donor.¹¹
12. The support of the Chinese government to the ways that take back the Guomindang to power, even with the Cuban assistance.

Taiwan and Central America, from a comparative perspective

Taiwan and Central American seem to be cursed for many factors, such as geography, nature and culture, not to mention dictators and corruption. The comparative study opens new sceneries that could help find answers on how and why countries (not) achieve economic development. These two regions have been conditioned by war and political games for many decades, especially during the Cold War, nonetheless failure is avoidable and well used aid can help to gain strengthen.

Why a small island such as Taiwan with a negative environment has succeeded in many fields? Is it a problem of dimensions? Are aggressive or intrusive neighbors an obstacle to the economic growth? Dictatorships obstruct economic accomplishment? Does democracy encourages economic progress? The socio-economic indicators shown below in Table 1 will help to find out how to answer those questions.

Area dimensions does not seem to be a problem, Taiwan is bigger than Belize and El Salvador, but smaller than Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. The countries with bigger area, Honduras, 112, 090 sq. km. and Nicaragua, 129, 494 sq. km., are two of the poorest of the region, specially the first one. It does not matter big or small, Taiwan is in better

economic shape than all of them. Regarding natural resources, the East Asian island has strived very hard with nature that did not offer many things as it did in the America continent. The real problems had to do with man-made situations. Because a vicious relation with the world market, the local elites were not able to break the situation imposed by Spain to its colonies: Concentration in one or two products. Taiwanese did not take the one-way-path of agriculture. When they walked on it they tried to improve agriculture techniques, which they exported to foreign countries, including Central America.

Not only in the intellectual tradition of European Illustration but also in the Chinese intellectual tradition, the ethnic and linguistic diversity are perceived as almost not surmountable obstacles to development. All the countries compared here, no exceptions at all, have very convoluted ethnic situation. None of them is mono-ethnic, quite the opposite. In these countries people not even closely related by language or genetics share a space and construct their societies. Because of this ethnic complexities and geopolitics at different historic stages peoples of these countries have suffered the burden of colonialism, both domestic and international. At the domestic Central American level the self called whites have dominated the *other*, mainly the also so called indigenous and black people. Sometimes even Mestizo people have been in the low part of the social equation. At the international level, colonial powers chronologically represented by Spain, Great Britain and the United States sometimes have forged alliances with part of the local elites. It is true that the distribution of power and wealth has not been fully democratic, but is also true that, pretensions aside, those who are in power are less white than before. Maya and Miskito, just to mention only two groups, are in the bottom of social structure, they have been tool of different political and armed factions without being masters of their own destiny. On behalf of defending their traditions and/or behalf letting them access to modernity they are in the middle of the mestizo's fights.

Situation in Taiwan in some ways has not been quite dissimilar to that lived in Central America. What can be called *strictu sensu* Taiwanese people have endured hardships to a different extents with Portugal, Netherlands, Japan, all of them international colonial powers. The Han colonialism, which can be considered both domestic and international, on the whole has been very aggressive. The Guomindang regime failed to rule the Mainland and was finally defeated by the Chinese Communist

Party in September 1949, when they flee to Taiwan with impossible dream of recovering what they were unable to defend neither against the Japanese invaders nor against Chinese masses under Mao Zedong leadership. Having in mind the goal of governing the island and its people, mainlanders used iron fist to literally squash the locals. They were looking for imposing a vertical Confucian-Han-cultural-hegemony and political dominance to assure a strong base of power.

Violence has been present both in East Asia and Central America for quite a long time. Ignited by the trap that some countries did set up in their quest for world and regional hegemony, physis presence of foreign armies, lack of democracy and poverty, violence was always at hand. With the solely exception of Costa Rica, assuming their monopoly on violence, states were war machines against their peoples not only in the Central American region but also in Taiwan. There are three big differences:

1. Society, civil society as it called today, had a strongest response in Central America. Its reactions were organized, pacific, violent, urban, rural, political and religious.
2. Central American politician's behavior has not substantially changed. They do have conduct patterns just as their colleagues form all over the world, like the rampant corruption even in the jewel of the region, Costa Rica. Political scandals are not alien to Taiwanese political system either. Nonetheless Central American politicians live in the past, changes are slow and there is no significant political relay. Politicians are almost the same as before, political environment is rotten.
3. Central American elites have been unable to construct successful economies. The main reason of their failure is their inability to leave the colonial economic model and their lack of commitment with a regional economy.

Violence and armed conflict are always a more than a ghost in Central America and Taiwan. That is the reason they spend relatively huge sums of money. In terms of percentage of their GDP, the richest and the poorest spend more: Taiwan, 2.7 and Belize, 2. Is the instable military situation strong reason to have a meager economy? By far, Taiwan has spent more and still is

spending more in military issues, almost \$ 8 thousand million American dollars a year. It is followed by Guatemala, 201.9 million; Salvador, 157 million, Panama, 147 million; Honduras, 100.6 million; Costa Rica, 64.2 million; Nicaragua, 32.8 million; and Belize, 18 million. These figures picture a reality of international conflicts, drug trafficking, migration, *guerrilla*, strong army bureaucracies, corruption, American intromission, neglected economies. In this picture is also possible to appreciate politic and economic incapability of Central American elites. Among some other weakness they have not built institutions to allow the economic development. Military expenditure is a handicap, but it does not lead to failure, even when the spending is as significant as it is in Taiwan.

Table 1
Socio-economic indicators in a comparative perspective
Central America countries and Taiwan

Country	Belize	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua	Taiwan	Panamá
ISSUE								
Area (sq. km)	22,966	51,100	21,040	108,890	112,090	129,494	35,980	78,200
Land boundaries	386 km	639	545	1,687	1,520	1,231		555
Border countries	Guatemala, México	Nicaragua, Panama	Guatemala, Honduras	Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico	Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua	Costa Rica, Honduras	Near China, Japan and South Korea	Colombia and Costa Rica
Natural resources	Timber, fish, hydropower	Hydropower, coffee	Hydropower, geothermal power, petroleum	Petroleum, nickel, rare woods, fish, chicle, hydropower	Timber, gold, silver, cooper, lead, zinc, iron ore, antimony, coal, fish, hydropower	Gold, silver, copper, tungsten, lead, zinc, timber, fish	Coal, natural gas, limestone, marble, and asbestos	Copper, mahogany forests, shrimp, hydropower
Population	279,457	4,016,173	6,704,932	14,655,189	6,975,204	5,465,100	22,749,838	3,039,150
Net migration rate	0	0.5/1,000	-3.67/1,000	-1.63/1000	-1.95/1000	-1.19/1000	0	-0.86/1000
Life expectancy at birth	67.49	76.84	71.22	65.14	65.6	70.33	77.06	71.94
Ethnic groups	Mestizo, Creole, Maya, Garifuna	Mestizo, Black, Natives, Chinese	Mestizo, natives	Mestizo, K'che, Kaqchikel, Q'eqchi, Mam	Mestizo, natives, black	Mestizo, black, natives	Hakka, Han, Shaya, Hoklo	Mestizo, natives, Chinese
Languages	English, Spanish, Mayan, Garifuna, Creole	Spanish, Chinese	Spanish, Nahua	Spanish, Mayan, Garifuna, xinca	Spanish, native languages	Spanish, Miskito, English	Han, Min	Spanish, English
Religion	Catholics, Protestants	Catholic, Evangelical, Jehovah's Witnesses	Catholics, Evangelicals, Catholics, Evangelicals	Catholics, Protestant	Catholic, Protestant	Catholic, Evangelical, Moravian, Episcopal	Taoism, Buddhism, Christianity	Catholic, Protestant

Government	Parliamentary democracy	Democratic Republic	Democratic Republic	Democratic Republic	Democratic Republic	Democratic Republic	Democratic Republic
Executive power	Chief of State: Queen Elizabeth II Head of Government: Prime Minister, Said Wilbert Musa	Chief of state and Head of Government: President Abel Pacheco	Chief of State and Head of Government: Oscar Jose Rafael Berger	Chief of State and Head of Government: Ricardo Maduro Bolanos	Chief of State and Head of Government: Enrique Bolanos	Chief of State: Chen Shui-bian Head of Government: Premier Frank Hsieh	Chief of State and Head of Government: Martin Torrijos
Elections	NONE with the exception of the House of Representatives elected by direct vote	Popular and direct vote for president, vice-president and Congress	Popular and direct vote for presidency and congress	President by direct popular vote and congress by proportional number of votes	President elected by universal and direct vote Congress elected by proportional vote	Popular and direct vote for president, vice-president and Congress	Popular and direct vote for president, vice-president and Congress
Legislative power	Bicameral National Assembly appointed by the Governor General	Unicameral	Unicameral	Unicameral	Unicameral	Unicameral	Unicameral
Judicial power	Supreme Court	Supreme Court elected by the congress	Congress elects the Constitutional Court	Supreme Court elected by the Congress	Congress elects the Supreme Court	Negotiation President and Legislative	Supreme Court of Justice

Main political parties	People's United Party, United Democratic Party	Authentic Member from Heredia, Citizen Action Party, Costa Rican Renovation Party, Democratic Party, National Democratic Alliance, General Union Party, Homeland First	Christian Democratic Party, Democratic convergence, Democratic Party, Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, Liberal Democratic Party, Electric Industry Union, Federation of the	Authentic Integral Development, Democratic Union, Grand National Alliance, Green Party, Christian Party, National Revolutionary Unity, Republican Front, Movement for Guatemalan Unity, Patriot Party	Christian Democratic Party, Democratic Unification Party, Liberal Party, National Innovation and Unity Party, United Confederation of Honduran Workers	Alliance for the Republic, Central American Unionist Party, Christian Alternative Party, Conservative Party, Sandinista Liberation Front, Sandinista Renovation Movement	Alliance for the Republic, Central American Unionist Party, Christian Alternative Party, Conservative Party, Sandinista Liberation Front, Sandinista Renovation Movement	Kuomintang, People First Party, Taiwan Solidarity Union, New Party	Democratic Change, Democratic Revolutionary Party, National Liberal Party, Panamehista Party, Solidarity Party
NGO	Council of Churches, evangelical Association of Churches, Chamber of commerce, National Trade Union Congress, Civil Society Steering Committee, Society for the Promotion of Education and Research	Authentic Confederation of Democratic Workers, Chamber of Coffee Growers, Confederated Union Workers, Confederation of Democratic Workers	Construction Industry, National Association of Small Enterprise, Salvadoran Industrial Association, Salvadoran Workers Central	Agrarian Owners Group, Alliance Impunity, Committee for Campesino Unity, Coordinating Committee	Committee for the Defense of Human Rights, confederation of Honduran Workers, Council of Private Enterprise, National Association of Honduran Campesinos, National Union of Campesinos	National Workers Front, National Association of Educators, Workers Central, Superior Council of Private Enterprise, Autonomous Nicaraguan Workers	National Workers Front, National Association of Educators, Workers Central, Superior Council of Private Enterprise, Autonomous Nicaraguan Workers	Democratic Pacific Union, World United Formosans, Taiwan Physicians Association Taiwan Physicians Association, Asia Foundation	Chamber of Commerce, Association of Business Executives, Industrialists Society, National council of Private Enterprise, National Civic Crusade
GDP (ppp)	\$1.778 billion	\$37.97 billion	\$32.35	\$59.47 billion	\$18.79 billion	\$12.34 billion	\$528.6 billion	\$20.57 billion	
GDP real growth (%)	3.5	3.9	1.8	2.6	4.2	4	3.2	6%	
GDP per capita (ppp)	\$6,500	\$9,600	\$4,900	\$4,200	\$2,800	\$2,300	\$23,400	\$6,900	

Televisions	2	20	5	26	11	3	29	38
Broadcast stations	41,000	525,000	600,000	1,323 million	570,000	320,000	NA	510,000
TV sets	2, 613	10,826	4,084	20,360	1,944	7,094	NA	7,129
Internet hosts	30,000	800,000	550,000	400,000	168,600	90,000	8,83 million	120,000
Telephones								
Main lines in use	33, 300	1.132	752,600	846,000	322,500	171,600	13,355 million	386,900
Mobiles	60,400	528.047	1,149,800	1,577,100	326,500	202,800	25,089,600	834,000
Military Expenditures in dollars	\$18 million	\$64.2	\$157 million	\$201.9 million	\$100.6 million	\$32.8 million	\$7,611.7 million	\$147 million
Per cent of GDP	2	0.4	1.1	0.8	1.4%	0.7%	2.7	1.1

SOURCE: With information from <http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/5-gp/yearbook/P189.htm> and www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/

In 56 years a lot of social, cultural and economic features have changed. Due to economic development, growing political awareness of people, permanent conflicts with Beijing, higher level of education and generations born in the island, new identities have been in construction, one of them is neither Han-mainlander nor old Taiwanese-islander. In Central America, as it was pointed out above, elites are less white than they want; in Taiwan they are less Chinese as some of them want.

Is the distribution of power and wealth in Taiwan more democratic than in Central America? Society is wealthier, even more if we compare it with Central America where the highest GDP per capita is found in Costa Rica, \$ 9,600 American dollars, really below to that of Taiwan, \$ 23, 400 American dollars. Economic situation is even worst when poverty is measured in Central America, particularly in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua; it is not a lot better in Panama, El Salvador, Belize and Costa Rica.

The political spectrum in the Central American side of the Pacific Rim seems to be richer, but political systems are less efficient and opaque than in the Asian side. Sometimes Central American politicians seem to be more past oriented, meanwhile their Taiwanese counterparts seem to be future oriented. In the isthmus persists a *hacendado* mentality, the strong sentiment of belonging to and ownership of a small territory, which is the consequence of inability and failure in constructing a federation. Another inherence of the Nineteenth century is the weak laicism that reigns in the region, which has crystallized in the strong influence of institutional Catholicism on the state. Christian parties are an important component of the political life, what is not the situation in the island where religious life is also diverse and in permanent flow. The mixture of religion and politics also has been part of the political expressions in less institutionalized ways mainly in Nicaragua and Guatemala, where the low clergy was politically active trough the *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* organizational political framework of the Theology of Liberation.

Left tendencies, that are absent in the mainstream political participation in Taiwan, are part of the *political status quo* in the isthmus. They are not only booming, but in some countries like Nicaragua, Salvador and Guatemala these political expressions are inside a cesspool of political scandals related with corruption, political cannibalism and even sex. Once upon a time important part of Central American history and viable political alternative,

political expressions linked with trade unions and popular organizations has missed its compass like if they only had ideas to violent fight.

The countries that have been compared here have links and common points. What is clear is that outcomes could not be so different. History has been ruthless. Vicinity with China, Soviet Union and USA —or their intromission— and many domestic problems can be used as a multipurpose excuse to conceal economic collapse. Even culture, religion or traditions are used as versatile argument to explain, paradoxically, both triumph and malfunction. Sometimes it is undemanding to explain social and economic processes from different theoretical and ideological perspectives: elites are deficient in ideas, blame the past or somebody else for their failures.

Since the Sixteenth century, Central American economies should be in good shape. They could have technology, capital and markets. They did produce for subsistence, but mainly produced for the world economy. In its sin they carried their penitence: having raw materials as the focus of the economic activities was a terrible mistake. Throughout centuries the pace of changes of technological transformation was slow, but suddenly, at the end of the Nineteenth century and at the beginning of the Twentieth century, not to mention the nineties of the last century, changes were faster than the light. The *hacendado* mentality expected to have a secure market for their products forever.

On the opposite side, we have Taiwan. For most of its history, Taiwanese economy was one devoted to poorly feed the islanders, situation that began to change just four decades ago when the economy was oriented to strength the domestic market and to take for assault the international market.

These countries can not depend on natural resources anymore; they should look for options beyond the traditional sectors. At the long run, benefits from agricultural activities will fewer than ever. Energy is a problem, they have no oil, only Guatemala and Taiwan extract and process, but these two countries have a very low production below their consumption, mainly the second one. Oil consumption means, in Central American situation, backward industries and, in Taiwan, fast growth.

Bureaucracies, at both rims of the Pacific Basin, have played a crucial role, sometimes to avoid progress and attack political enemies, as most Central American governments and Taiwanese

Nationalists (before 1949) did and sometimes to push forward the economy, as Nationalists did after 1960.

They are not absent, but similarities are very hard to find. On the surface, all the economies are modern. In different grades, all of them have left agriculture behind as their main activity. Guatemala is the most agricultural country, with just 22.7% of its GDP from this sector; on the opposite side it is possible to find Taiwan, which obtains only 1.8% of its GDP from agriculture. The less agriculture oriented countries are Honduras, 12.7%, El Salvador, 9.2%; Costa Rica, 8.5%. All these economies have services as the strongest sector. The top of the list is Panama, 79.8% of its GDP comes from services. From this perspective, the less modern economies are Costa Rica, 61.8%; El Salvador, 59.7%; Guatemala, 57.9%; Honduras, 54.3%; and Nicaragua, 54.5%. On the surface, it is surprising that Belize, 67.3%; Costa Rica, 61.8%; and Taiwan, 67.9% are close with almost the same percentage of their GDP coming from services.

Percentages are important, but figures must be studied from different angles. Taiwan, it has to be recalled, has an area smaller than Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Panama and Costa Rica; and bigger than Belize and El Salvador. There is an enormous gap, maybe wider than the one that exists between Taiwan and Central America in the Pacific, in their GDP. Taiwanese GDP reaches the amazing amount of \$ 528.6 billion American dollars (parity purchase power-ppp), Belize's GDP is around 1.8 billion dollars (ppp). The best economic performances are those from Guatemala, \$59.47 billion (ppp) and Panama, \$20.57 (ppp). On this realm, as in many others, nothing in Central America compares to Taiwan.

The comparative analysis is very illuminating when it arrives at the telecommunication sector, the way to reach a post-modern age. Central America is a region that partially reminds the world of fifty or sixty years ago. With the sole exception of Guatemala, in Central America radio rules. At this point of the research, it is possible to establish that most people listen radio for two reasons: It is less expensive and electric infrastructure is poor, either way people do not have a TV set. Guatemala's exception should be product of government's efforts to keep people away from guerrillas thanks to television influence.

At the same time, Central America tends to be part of the future. More and more persons use mobile phones to be in touch for filial and business purposes. Societies in this region are

becoming more and more wireless, what could be a positive factor to strength the economy and improve the political system. Again, there is no comparison, in Taiwan there are more phones than citizens.

Foreign policy, trade and aid: Central America through Taiwan's eyes

Trade with Latin American countries is not as strong and important as it is with United States and East Asia. The strongest trade ties are with some of the biggest economies of the region, two of them share with Taipei a very important institutional framework, APEC: Mexico, in the rank 25 of Taiwan's trade; Brazil, 27; and Chile, 34. Central American and Caribbean countries are quite below: Costa Rica is the number 72; Guatemala is in the 75; Honduras 88; and Nicaragua 89. Right in the bottom is Nevis, 238. Among the Central Americans Panama has the highest rank, the number 64.¹²

In the context of Central America, Panama is important for the trade figures and for the institutional framework they have achieved. Under the presidencies of Chen Shui-bian, Taiwan, and Mireya Moscoso, Panama, both countries signed a free trade agreement on August 21st, 2003.¹³

Because diplomacy is Taiwan's Achilles heel, its government works incessantly to obtain world recognition. One of its favorite tactics is to convince some countries from Africa, Asia and America to present proposals asking the General Assembly of the United Nations to accept Taiwan's membership. On this battle field there are no Taiwanese victories yet.

If there is a region where Taiwanese's diplomacy has been relatively successful, that region is Latina America, where it has total relations with more than ten countries, particularly in Central America. Interest on this area is obvious: Get diplomatic recognition, weakness sometimes make those countries perfect partners. Officially Taiwan "hopes to strengthen its cooperation with international organizations. By expanding the benefits of international cooperation, Taiwan hopes to reduce wealth differentials in the region [Latin America and the Caribbean] and raise the overall standard of living."¹⁴

Money appears to be on the top of priorities and debates, but it can not be denied that politics is very important in the relation Taiwan-Central America, democracy is the most important

concept used in the diplomatic vocabulary. Actually, politics and ideology were the issues that cemented the relations back in the seventies and still are. The problem is that there is always the danger of walking in the wild side. Ríos¹⁵ points out that Taiwan helps Central America with soft credits and technical assistance, but its image has been seriously damaged because of different illegal activities. Accusations, denied by Taiwanese officials, that Taipei pours money to support political campaigns have made public. Allegedly this situation has been present in Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Guatemala.

Some limitations -windy politicians and courtship from Beijing- have produced some defeats, especially in the Caribbean region where fight is fierce and money has spoken out many times. Taipei affirms that in exchange of \$ 122 millions dollars Dominica has “traded out” its sovereignty, recognized only one China, the People’s Republic of China. Taiwan has faced a similar set back with Grenada, country that has chosen Beijing instead of Taipei, whose government claimed on 1 January 2005, that Grenada’s Prime Minister “has been lured by Beijing”. Taiwan asserts that the decision has been made “of not participating in a meaningless game of ‘dollar diplomacy’ with China and will never let Grenada waver between the two sides of the Strait [of Taiwan] in order to seek profits.”¹⁶

One more problem arises when people from the countries involved consider that Taiwanese aid shows favoritism, also some consider that it does not help to improve the countries independence in the region. The perception is that Taipei only cares about UN votes; its main concern is not related with local needs. In some places, like Nevis, there are people that see Taiwan defending those who oppressed this island and get all the money that comes from the East. According to a Nevisian professor, his country should support Taiwan in its fight to be part of the UN, but getting benefits from it. His idea is everything but philanthropic, he considers his government must sale its vote. In exchange of more money and an independent Nevis, Taiwan could get two votes, the one from Nevis y the one from St. Kitts.¹⁷

Taipei conducts its international actions through trade. Having a specialized office in every main country and city of the world is the way Taiwan is in contact with the international system and community. Its few embassies, all of them are in small and poor countries of Africa, Asia and America. The exception is the Vatican State; it has its very specific political

dynamics and weight. The place of Central America in the Taiwanese diplomacy is very important because there are embassies in many countries, such as Costa Rica, El Salvador, Panama, Nicaragua and Honduras.

Taiwan has economic relations with almost every economy on Earth, focusing its interest in countries such as United States, Canada, Germany and Japan. Its material situation is well beyond survival. Economically speaking, it does not need the diplomatic recognition to foster its growth or to increase its international trade. Because of two reasons, government tries to change the situation:

- a. The first one is very pragmatic, the diplomats representing Taipei have to deal with hostile officials of ministers of foreign affairs that many times ignore the real situation of Taiwan and because their countries have established diplomatic relations with Beijing they seem to act as its protectors.
- b. Fulfilling all its aspirations and reaching all its aims mean that Taiwan needs to be a *real* and *normal* country, recognized by and in the international system. Taiwanese constitution states that foreign policy “cultivate[s] good-neighborliness with other nations and respect[s] treaties and the United Nations Chart”.¹⁸ The question to answer is how Taipei implements its foreign policy.

Just behind trade, aid is the answer because it is the most important tool to move around the globe with relative success.

Teach a country to fish...

The clash between Beijing and Taipei is held in many scenarios, one of them is Central America, where the dispute is concentrated on diplomatic recognition, natural resources, markets, ideology and transmission of values. One of the tactics used by Taiwan is the official development aid (ODA). The arena of ODA is one where many countries and international organizations contend as part of more general tactics and radical changes of strategy.

On one side, Japan and the World Bank, as main donors and lenders, are transforming their priorities and are making moves in order to stop giving money to China and are deleting this country from their list of needed nations. Chinese government

expects that in 2008 their country would not receive official aid from the Japanese government.

On the other side, China, not blissful with the new situation, is adjusting itself to the changing context and its identity is changing deeply. Therefore is giving money to the Asian Development Fund and to the African Development Fund. Even more, on April 8th Wen Jiabao, Chinese Premier, signed an agreement with Cambodia to aid with USD \$ 600 millions to build infrastructure and government new offices, also Beijing will help to restore historical landmarks. Like its peers, in the past Beijing gave aid to improve industries that could benefit its economy, i.e. garments sectors.

Sooner or later, China will be part of the exclusive club of donors, which Taiwan already belongs to. Taipei uses this membership to confront its neighborhood across the Strait considering that aid, mainly American, helped to the development of the island. Chen Shui-bian, president of Taiwan, has kept the aid comparing it with the American aid to Taiwan fifty years ago. The politician argues that “American international assistance allowed Taiwan to overcome many difficulties and stand up. Now, we are standing tall and have the opportunity to repay the global economy.”¹⁹

ODA carries two heavy burdens: ideology and politics. From the Taiwanese perspective, aid is to help those who are considered friendly countries. The Taiwan International Cooperation (TIC) and Development Fund (ICDF), that was founded in October 1989, are the instruments to materialize the aid and its “purpose is to strengthen international cooperation and enhance foreign relations by promoting economic development, social progress and the welfare of the people of partner nations”.²⁰ The cooperation experience goes back more than 50 years ago when Taiwan began sending missions to Asia and few years later to Africa.

ICDF states that the whole technical cooperation operation they implement supports the ROC'S diplomatic objectives, but it pursues the benefit of the host countries. Sometimes aid is a disguised way to interfere in international and domestic issues, also helps donors to achieve prestige, transmit culture, change behaviors, obtain recognition and provides a path for the exports and imports of the visitor as well as those of the guest. Taiwan's ODA fits in a general perspective where trade is the main vehicle of interaction with other countries and also it helps its national firms to succeed abroad, therefore the ICDF in some ways belongs

to the Department of Economic and Trade Affairs. Officially, this Department has three sections:

1. The first one has as its main goals encourage national economy and trade diplomacy.
2. The second one is to coordinate international funding and development projects under ICDF management.
3. The last one, among other tasks, is in charge of “overseeing the operations of international technical cooperation administered by ICDF.”²¹

Aid does not impose harsh conditions on the guest: Taiwan claims that there are no conditions at all. What is manifest is that ODA is part of a global framework to open markets, sustain development, gain support for its diplomatic cause and transmit certain values, both economical and political. From this perspective, it is possible to expect that because of history and economic development the Taiwan experience could be more useful in small countries that encompass family-groups oriented societies and authoritarian political systems, where even with many shortcomings, or because of them, is possible to develop small and medium size enterprises.

Accordingly to the general framework, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has the *Regulations Governing Subsidies for Encouraging Business Entrepreneurs to Invest in Countries Having Diplomatic Relations with the ROC* “in order to stimulate investment by Taiwanese entrepreneurs in countries with diplomatic ties with Taiwan.”²²

Taiwan cooperates with Central American nations through projects of investment, lending and technical mission, all of them provide know-how and are the means to share experiences: Most are bilateral, Taiwan and different governments; few are multilateral, between Taiwan and international organizations. The main bilateral projects could be seen in Table 2.

Bilateral cooperation: creating export economies

Bilateral agreements are four in Belize, five in Costa Rica, three in El Salvador, two in Guatemala, five in Honduras, four in Nicaragua and four in Panama; altogether, there are 27, plus seven technical missions, one in every country and each one of them manages several projects.

The two oldest cooperation projects are with Costa Rica and Honduras and the most recent are with Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Taiwanese bilateral cooperation since 1991 has been to:

- a. Promote exports.
- b. Substitute imports.
- c. Improve technology.
- d. Raise living standards.
- e. Develop agriculture techniques.
- f. Increase knowledge.
- g. Strengthen the relation school-industry.
- h. Discover and use new crops.
- i. Encourage the marketing of local products.
- j. Advance in the modernization of highways.
- k. Help people who have suffered form natural disasters.
- l. Attract investment, mainly foreign.
- m. Adopt new techniques, seeds and fruits.
- n. Support more commercial activities.

The allocation of resources and the focus on some projects have followed some “principles and methods” of the Taiwanese bilateral cooperation:

1. Market Feasibility. The project product must be demanded in the market. Goals are to form production marketing teams and to provide training to farmers.
2. Small Farm Holder Financing. ICDF has small farmers financing programs to provide them with funds to improve their business. Farmers are taught basics on how to manage loans.

In association with the Democratic Pacific Union, the bilateral cooperation seems to be limitless. Taiwan supports different projects, some of them not implemented yet, that on the surface seem not of economic nature. One of the most ambitious initiatives of the Taiwanese is to partially finance the preservation of Antigua, former capital of Guatemala.

Table 2

**Bilateral cooperation Taiwan-Central America
Investing and lending projects, 1991-2004**

Country	Project name	Sign date	Borrower	Main objectives	Status	Cooperating organizations	Cost	Lending amount by taiwan
Belize	National Housing Construction Project	22-5-1995	Ministry of Finance, Belize	Constructing houses	Complete	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Export-Import Bank, Taiwan	US \$ 5, 000, 000	US \$ 5, 000, 000
	Southern Highway Rehabilitation Project	9-27-1997	Government	Improve physical and social environment, minimization of flooding, minimization of maintenance	Complete on 26-9-2000	Taiwan CDF with Caribbean Development Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank	US \$ 32, 400, 00	US \$ 10, 000, 000
	Small Farm Financing Scheme	5-3-2000	Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology (BEST)	Facilitate credit to diversify production and improve productivity	Progress	Taiwan International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF) and, first, Belize Marketing Board. Administration was transferred to BEST		US \$ 150, 000

	Tourism Development Project	18-9-2001	Government	Improve access to Mayan sites and help to conserving them	Not complete yet	Ministry of Works, Transport and banana Industries and the Ministry of Tourism. NGOs have been part of the project	US \$ 14, 000, 000	US \$ 3, 000, 000
Costa Rica	Credit for Small farmers	8-2-1993	Central Bank of Costa Rica	Finance small farmers and industries	Complete	Foreign Affairs and the Import-Export Bank with the Central Bank of Costa Rica	US \$ 15, 000, 000	US \$ 15, 000, 000
	Public Highway Project from Naranja to Florencia	15-5-1996	Government	Improve roads to increase exports of non-traditional products to new markets	Contract of the civil work was signed in may 2002	Taiwan ICDF and Costa Rica Ministry of Public Works and Transportation	US \$ 50, 000, 000	US \$ 35, 000, 000
	Expansion of the Port's Terminal	13-12-1997	Port Administration Board of the Atlantic Coast	Provide equipment and increase length of piers	Completed in December 2003	Taiwan ICDF and Port Administration Board of the Atlantic Coast	US \$ 15, 000, 000	US \$ 16, 224, 000

	Guava Pulp Processing Manufacturing Plant	4-12-2004	Association of Small Guava	Increase value added to raw materials using new equipment. Aid about 28, 000 persons	The Association faces problems with markets and can not repay	National Board of Production in Taiwan and the Association	US \$ 100, 000
	Costa Rica Processing zone	31-7-1991	BES Engineering Corporation	Encourage Taiwanese investment in a new industrial zone	On progress	Taiwan ICDF and BES Engineering Corporation	US \$ 9, 000, 000
	Housing solidarity Reconstruction Program	16-8-1999	The Ministry of Finance	Benefit 1, 406 families affected by Hurricane Mitch	The loan has been used	Taiwan ICDF and el Salvador Vice-Ministry of House and Urban Development	US \$4, 000, 000
El Salvador	Program for Environmental Pollution Control in Critical Areas	14-11-2001	The government	Implement management systems to prevent and control pollution	Under implementation	ICDF and Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources	US \$ 7, 682, 000
	Modernization of the Technical Education Project	NA	Ministry of Education	Achieve higher quality by improving the curricula and linking it to the industry	Final stage of the negotiation	Taiwan ICDF and the Federal government of El Salvador	US \$ 8, 000, 000

Guatemala	Rio Polochic Region Recovery Program	22-6-1999	Ministry of Finance	Provide infrastructure to make easier the access to schools, hospitals, water and bridges.	The program has been implemented	ICDF and the Social Investment fund	US \$ 4, 80, 000	US \$ 4, 000, 000
	Technical Education Project	9-8-2002	Ministry of Public Finance	Provide skilled workers and improve quality of education	It is being implemented	ICDF and Peace National Fund	US \$ 10, 000, 000	US \$ 8, 000, 000
Honduras	Intensive Road Maintenance and Improvement Project	11-10-1991	Central Bank of Honduras	In order to develop the economy aid will improve the road system	Already completed	ICDF and the Central Bank	US \$ 20, 000, 000	US \$ 20, 000, 000
	Quimistán Valley Irrigation Project	3/3/1997	Ministry of finance	Achieve food security, save foreign currency by increasing export and implementing programs of import substitution	Under implementation	ICDF, the General Directorate of Irrigation and Drainage and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock	US \$ 16, 657, 000	US \$ 10, 7000, 00

Nicaragua	Housing solidarity Reconstruction Program	23-3-1999	Ministry of Finance	Help the victims of the Hurricane Mitch	Reconstruction has been implemented	ICDF and the Vice-Ministry of Housing	US \$ 8, 460, 000	US \$ 6, 000, 000
	Small Farmholders Financing Scheme-Rice Productions Program	17-7-2000	Small holders	Train farmers in advanced techniques	Under implementation	Taiwan Technical Mission and small farm holders	US \$ 50, 000	US \$ 20, 000
	Small Farmholders Financing Scheme-Tilapia Raising	24-10-2000	Fishermen	Aid fishermen to improve their productivity	Under implementation	Technical Mission and fishermen	US \$ 150, 000	US \$ 150, 000
	Housing Solidarity Reconstruction Program PHASE I	7-12-98	Government	Aid to build people to the victims of the Hurricane Mitch	In 19 communities were built 838 "housing units"	ICDF, Technical Secretariat of the Presidency, Ministry of Agriculture and the Organization of American States	US \$ 6, 000, 000	US \$ 6, 000, 000
	Small Farmholders Financing Scheme	21-12-2004	Federación Nacional de Cooperativas Agropecuarias y Agroindustriales, R.L.	Train people to improve rice production	Under implementation	ICDF and the Federación Nacional de Cooperativas de Consumo	US \$ 187, 000	US \$ 161, 000

	Housing Solidarity Reconstruction Program PHASE II	2-2-2001	Ministry Of Finance and Public Credit	Build 1, 500 more houses for the victims of the Hurricane Mitch	It is being implemented	ICDF and the Technical Secretariat of the Presidency. With the financial contribution of the people and local governments	US \$ 6, 442, 000	US \$ 4, 800, 000
	Agricultural Production Reactivation II	25-2-2004	Ministry of Finance	Create strategies to achieve commercial development	It is being implemented	ICDF, Institute of Rural Development and the Inter-American Bank	US \$ 68, 000, 000	US \$ 5, 000, 000
Panama	Fort Davis Park Development Project	9-10-1996	Sino-Panamanian Investments Corporation	Transform a former American army base in a processing zone to attract investors not only from Taiwan but form all over the world	Project has been completed	ICDF and the Sino-Panamanian Investments Corporation	US \$ 8, 000, 000	US \$ 7, 000, 000

	Re-lending Project for SMEs	17-3-1998	Ministry of Finance and Public Credit	Help small and medium size enterprises that have credit problems	Under implementation	ICDF and the Technical Secretariat of the Presidency	US \$ 10, 000, 000	US \$ 10, 000, 000
	Small fishermen financing Scheme-Fishing Boat Program	1-12-2000	Fishermen, both individual and organized	Provide and upgrade equipments	It is being implemented	Taiwan Technical Mission and fishermen	US \$ 100, 000	US \$ 100, 000
	Technical and Vocational Education	NA	The Ministry of Education	Train better teachers and more skilled workers	It is being negotiated	ICDF and the Ministry of Education	US \$ 12, 000, 000	US \$ 9, 000, 000

Notes: Countries were arranged by the author in alphabetical order and projects chronologically.

NA= Not available

Source: www.icdf.org.tw

Transmission of know how: Technical missions in Central America

Other aspect of the cooperation is the one implemented with the technical missions, aid that is even less expensive and in the long run locals get more from it. Officially, the goal is “to help host countries achieve self-reliance” transmitting the “experience and technology” of the Taiwanese economic development. Taiwanese missions follow some principles:

1. Effectiveness and efficiency. Projects must be self-sustainable and efficient. Their goal is that income of one project should finance another.
2. Project Oriented. In order to get concrete benefits and because of scarce resources every project must carefully planned.
3. Accountability. Managers are key pieces of the missions, whose role is to be in charge of the team, solve problems with a very rational approach.
4. Human Resources Development. Taiwanese Staff permanently improves their knowledge. (The main projects are shown in table 3)

Almost 50 Taiwanese citizens are working in these missions, 12 of them in Honduras. This mission is the one with more staff; while Belize and Costa Rica have only six members each one. This type of cooperation has deeper linkage with the population, mainly with young people.

Essential aims of the technical missions are the transmission of know-how to:

- a. Develop new crops.
- b. Train students
- c. Change feeding habits.
- d. Strength local economies to successfully face macroeconomic up and downs
- e. Learn new technologies.
- f. Diversify economic activities.
- g. Work in agricultural activities all the year long not just in seasonal tasks.

- h. Update technologies.
- i. Use greenhouses.
- j. Work in teams to increase productivity.
- k. Achieve more marketing of their products.
- l. Improve the management of their economic activities.

In Central America there are two main international financing institutions: The Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), created more than four decades ago, in 1961, and based in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Taiwan has worked with it in infrastructure projects as well as in agriculture related projects. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is the second one. Older than the CABEI, established in 1959, the IDB has been partner of the Taiwanese CDF in projects focusing in constructing infrastructure and aiding small and medium size enterprises, both in South and Central America. <http://www.oas.org/>

There are two main concerns of the Taiwanese institutions in this region. Firstly, they are aware that small and medium size enterprises have faced many gigantic difficulties,

from civil wars to economic crisis that sometimes were solved with no the best solutions; secondly, infrastructure as it exists will not help to the development of Central American economies.

With the general goal of create market economies, Taipei and the banks have tried to finance small and medium size enterprises. Taiwan works with governments, but knows that the solution is to be found somewhere else, more in the private sector that needs breathe in the form of credits to take off. With governments and regional banks, Taiwan has been cooperative to improve national roads, a primary solution to make economic exchanges faster and cheaper, one of the first steps to improve productivity.

Table 3
Bilateral technical mission projects, 1991-2007

Country	Project name	Enacted/ place	Schedule	Aims and yearly goals	Product	Outcome	Institutions involved
Belize	Seed Rice Production and Technology Transfer Project	1-1-1991 Cayo	January 2004- December 2005	Develop paddy field and dry field rice growing Meet domestic demands Train Belizeans	Rice	14, 638 kg. of Taichung Hsien # 10 rice were produced 9, 136 kg # 80 were produced Five new rice species were discovered Accumulated income US\$ 18816.45 and yearly income US\$ 76807.05 25 students are trained	Farmers and schools

Vegetable and Crop Production and Extension Project	Various places	January 2004-December 2005	<p>Train students</p> <p>Promote vegetables for domestic and international consumption</p> <p>Teach new techniques</p> <p>Regulation of supply and demand to increase income and to reduce flow of foreign currency</p>	<p>Watermelon, chili pepper, guava, passion fruit. Wax apple, onion, tomato</p>	<p>Accumulated income US\$ 1678.68 and yearly income 7541.71</p> <p>“Excellent” performance in some schools in Orange</p>	<p>Schools in Orange Walk district</p> <p>Ministry of Agriculture</p>
Food Processing Project	Various places	January 2004-December 2005	<p>Develop dehydrated and processed food industry</p> <p>Provide technology</p> <p>Fight for the market in Miami</p> <p>Increase value to the products</p> <p>Increase income</p> <p>Recycle wasted material</p>	<p>Papaya, pineapple, mango, star fruit, soybean milk, star fruit, banana chip</p>	<p>Trained students</p> <p>Visitors from Corzal to learn</p> <p>Seminars and workshops</p>	<p>Belize Agricultural College.</p> <p>Ministry of Agriculture, Fishery, and Corporations,</p> <p>Cassava Bread Company</p>

Costa Rica	Fruit Tree Floriculture Project	9-1-1972 San José	From January 2004 to December 2006	<p>Attract tourism</p> <p>Develop food processing facilities and industries</p> <p>Research and develop varieties of fruit and flowers</p> <p>Improve marketing and sales</p> <p>Equipment acquisition</p> <p>Develop new products</p>	<p>Wild orchid</p> <p>Rambutan</p> <p>Apple</p>	<p>Seminars on non-traditional fruits</p> <p>Assistance to producer on marketing</p> <p>2,500 bottles of wax apple wine were produced</p> <p>A station produced 8,000 citrus stocks</p> <p>Jicaral and Canjelito teams traded 21,070 kg. of guava</p> <p>Three flower exhibitions were organized</p>	Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Agriculture and farmers
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Atlantic Fisheries Project	Pocora	January 2004-December 2006	<p>Train fishermen</p> <p>Engine and navigation specialists</p> <p>Improve techniques</p> <p>Increase size of catches</p> <p>Unify production and marketing</p> <p>Raise income</p> <p>Increase utilization of migratory pelagic fish species</p> <p>Attract investment</p>	Tilapia	<p>Construction of ponds and introduction of fishes</p> <p>Improve facilities</p> <p>Attracting tourism</p> <p>Improve of cold storage and transportation</p> <p>Over 17, 575 kg. of fish have been caught in one season</p> <p>20 farmers have been trained in simple long-line fishing and use of GPS</p>	<p>Costa Rican Fisheries Administration, fishermen, Tilapia</p> <p>Cooperative, University of Costa Rica,</p> <p>Costa Rican Vocational Training Bureau</p>
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El Salvador	Vegetable Production Extension Project	Zapotitán, Nueva Concepción, Azzuchillo, Chalatenango, Usulután, Morazán, San Miguel, Sonsonete, La Libertad and Chaltenango	January 2001-December 2004	<p>Improve quality and quantity of production</p> <p>Increase income</p> <p>Improve techniques and management</p> <p>Organize marketing teams</p> <p>Use greenhouses</p>	<p>Papaya, tomato, tomato green pepper, watermelon</p>	<p>Extension of more productive land has been increased</p> <p>More students and farmers are trained</p> <p>More institutions are involved in the project</p> <p>Vegetables have a market value of US\$ 306, 3077</p>	Central Institute of Agricultural Technology, department of Agriculture's Experiment Station
	Fruit Tree Improvement Project	January 2002-December 2004	San Salvador, Morazan, La Paz and San Miguel	<p>Propagate tropical fruits and seed</p> <p>Train experts and students</p> <p>Management</p>	Taiwanese tropical fruits, papaya, guava, passion fruit, star fruit	<p>Use of new techniques</p> <p>Farmers and technicians are being trained</p>	Department of Agriculture, Basic Seeds Center of National Agricultural Techniques Center, Agency of National Agricultural techniques Institute of Agricultural Technology

	Aquaculture Project	January 2002-December 2004	Santa Cruz Porriño, Chimaltenango	<p>Improving technology of breeding and fingerings</p> <p>Reproduction of larvae and fingerings</p> <p>Increase productivity</p> <p>Train people to manage and marketing</p> <p>Cultivate other products: salt shrimp</p> <p>Increase production</p>	Tilapia, shrimp	<p>Income from shrimp is US\$ 5, 005,84</p> <p>Los Cobanos Marine Culture Center is operational</p> <p>Four cooperatives harvested marine shrimps worth US\$ 32, 280</p> <p>Freshwater harvest in two cooperatives and two private farms are worth US \$ 12, 500</p>	Department of Fishery, Central Institute of Agricultural technology, fishermen organized and private
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	Production and Marketing Assistant Project on Agricultural Production for Export	January 2004- December 2006	NA	<p>Extend cultivation of fruits and vegetables</p> <p>Build a processing plant and a shipping depot</p> <p>Start exports</p> <p>Establish marketing teams</p> <p>Propagate tropical fruits</p>	Guava, star fruit, Persa limes, litchi, papaya		Department of Agriculture, Empresa Calima Agrícola, S.A., Brasil Co.
Guatemala	Bamboo Cultivation and Utilization Project	January 2004- December 2006	Purulha, Guatemala, Totonicapán, Suchitepequez	<p>Cut housing costs by providing bamboo houses</p> <p>Increase interest in bamboo</p> <p>Assist in water and soil conservation policies</p>	Bamboo	<p>14 have been teaching on the use of bamboo</p> <p>5329 seed of bamboo were produced in the first season</p> <p>Bamboo crafts have been displayed in fair</p> <p>Build house with bamboo and local materials</p>	Vocational Training Bureau

	Aquaculture Technology Improvement Project	January 2004-December 2006	Chimaltenango	Improve tilapia breeding and processing	Tilapia	42, 000 fingerlings were produced	Chimaltenango Food Processing Factory, University of San Carlos
Honduras	Crop Production Project	January 2004-December 2006	Comoyagua	Extension of crops: rice, vegetables and fruits	Papaya, rice, guava	Student training program Farmers training program La Tabacalera farm produced 1.3 million seed a year	Ministry of Agriculture, Pompiro Ortega Agricultural School

	Hog Raising Project	January 2004-December 2006	Quimistán, Omnita	Build piggeries and slaughter center	Pigs	<p>176 pigs are being used as breeders and 482 were sold to farmers</p> <p>Training courses have been offer 600 superior breeder hogs and 3, 600 piglets were produced</p> <p>Established channels of direct sales and trademarks</p>	Ministry of Agriculture, Quimistán Agricultural School, Universidad de San Pedro Sula
	Aquaculture Project	January 2004-December 2006	Quimistán and Omonita	Open tilapia stations	Tilapia	<p>The harvest has been of more than 30 thousand lbs</p>	Fishermen Cooperative of Agua Azul, Cooperativa Lobo de Mar and cooperative Pito Solo

Nicaragua	Oil seed and Rice Production	January 2004-December 2007	Chinadega, Grenada, Esteli, Jinotega, Chontales	Purification of oil, breed new varieties, new seeds and more assistance	Ride, black bean	402, 500 lbs of rice oil were sold 859, 810 lbs of rice were cultivated in Sebaco	Institute for Agricultural Technology, Omar Torrijos Cooperative
	Horticultural Crop Production Improvement Project	January 2004-December 2006	Tipitapa Prison Managua City	Assist correctional facilities Improve of vegetable and seed varieties and production Improve income and nutrition of the prisoners	Tomato, pumpkin, cucumber, passion fruit, sweet pepper	Registered name registration of green pepper and tomato at the Department of Agriculture Extended the cultivation of some species of tomato Trained and assisted prisoners Established secure production and sales with supermarkets, buyers, shippers and markets	Government of Managua and prison authorities

Panama	Fruit and Vegetable Project	January 2003-December 2004	"Underprivileged and remote areas"	Test vegetable strains, heat and disease resistance. Provide assistance to export	Rice, Chinese yam, taro	This mission cultivated 2.6 hectares that include stocks of guava, jujube and Carambola Assisted different teams in issues related to cultivation and marketing Went to some exhibitions	Department of Agriculture and Livestock, schools, farmers and Department of Education
	Fishing Village Development Project	January 2004-December 2004	Los Santos Province, Isla Bastimientos and Isla Popa	Upgrade technologies and techniques Implement new techniques	Non traditional inshore species: grouper and red snapper	Six farmers got loans Some courses were offered to the fishermen Caught of fish has been growing Fishermen committees have been established	Fishermen cooperatives

Food Processing Project	Panama	January 2003-December 2004	<p>Improve instructional standards</p> <p>Open a factory for training and assistance to local manufacturers</p> <p>Train 300 persons</p> <p>Help farmers to process food</p>	<p>Noni, star fruit, sweet potato, papaya, pineapple, mango</p>	<p>Power supply system was re-arranged, Water supply and waste water discharge system are being repaired to meet hygiene requirements.</p> <p>Training programs are being instituted</p>	Panama Agricultural College and farmers
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Notes: Countries were arranged by the author in alphabetical order.
 NA= Not available
 Source: www.icdf.org.tw

Perspectives

The presence of Taiwan in Central America is positive and could be even more positive in the future. Taiwanese, as essential component of the economies of the region, are helping to their economic integrative competition both domestic and international, not only in the context of North America but in the context of the Pacific Rim.

Taiwanese cooperation efforts are quite comprehensive, both in actors they work with and in issues cooperative activity covers. Cooperation work is performed with governments, multilateral regional financing system, cooperatives and individuals. It is related with agriculture and industry, as well as with domestic and international markets. Taiwanese cooperation has been conceived to be a complete and an integrative process that covers theory, education and practice.

Taiwanese cooperation rationale has some fundamental basis:

1. Obtain diplomatic recognition.
2. Open markets to its investors.
3. Help create infrastructure to its investors.
4. Increase its presence in the region.

Taiwan faces one incommensurable problem that sometimes is a dead end street: If can not get international diplomatic recognition, its possibilities to cooperate, therefore to exert positive influence on domestic economic processes, are reduced to zero. This situation leads to another problem, in order to obtain diplomatic recognition Taipei must resort to the so called dollar diplomacy, process where it will be in contact with many greedy and corrupt politicians, hence the helper will support the most vicious and older political practices in Central America. Instead of helping the improvement of social conditions the overall situation will remain the same and maybe worst.

The ideal, not possible now, is to let aid get rid of the heavy saddle that ideology and politics present, allowing poor countries take advantage of the money, expertise and technology that donors provide. In our case of study, countries are forced to select between supporting Taiwan and the policy of one China to support Beijing. In making the decision money counts, but also the governments in small countries consider the international situation: The

politics of the triangle United States, China and Taiwan. The benefits of the ODA seem to be the less important issue.

It has been shown what Taiwan does in Central America, how it does and what its objectives are. Summarizing the main points of the paper, it can be assert that Taiwan has been promoting:

1. Upsurge of jobs.
2. Modernization of economy through introduction of new technology.
3. Adoption of new and more profitable activities.
4. Creation of new productive chain, both in vertical and horizontal directions.
5. Incorporation of some traditionally poor villages to the world economy thanks to the export of some non-traditional products.
6. Formation of an export sector.
7. Shift from agriculture and fishing to trade and investment.
8. Strengthening of tourism.
9. Education is being linked to the economic process; also its quality is better.
10. Reduction of poverty in some places has taken place.

Without mention the benefits Taiwan gets in Central America (increasing its trade, obtaining raw materials, access to markets, profiting form transfers technologies, among other advantages), cooperation coming from East Asia is helping to economically integrate the isthmus, which will help stop the export of problems to the north.

Well beyond the positive economic of Taiwanese aid, what is a very important side of cooperation, we have the social and political impacts of aid. On the long run a non-political cooperative support make people independent, not subject to traditional and patrimonial corporative practices. Aid constructs the path to a different distribution of political power; make people more active, eager of political participation that let them find solution to their problems and achieve satisfaction to their demands.

Beyond tangible aspects, Taiwan represents the melting of many myths that pretend explain failure-success from a culturalist perspective. Taiwanese experience proves that there is no fatal-culture destiny, there are only inefficient institutions product of wrong policies and corrupt politicians. With many limitations Taiwan is part of the international political and institutional process of socialization where is constructing a cooperative identity for itself and for some other actors. Socialization trough AOD not only contributes to strengthen the discursive side of its foreign policy but also is a strong support to its companies that in the medium-term use some of the achievements of aid.

Notas

¹ This paper is part of the project headed by Imtiaz Hussain, Universidad Iberoamericana, *Indigenous Groups, Globalization and Puebla Panama Plan: Marriage or Miscarriage*, conducted for CONACYT with the number 39667 S.

² Africa gives few interesting cases to study Taiwan's aid practice, see Ian Taylor, "Taiwan's Foreign Policy and Africa: The Limitations of Dollar diplomacy" in *Journal of Contemporary China*, vol. 11, # 30 (2002), 125-140.

³ There are many aspects that can be written regarding Taiwan malpractices, but it is not easy to find many analyses yet. One author have pointed out that businesses and government from the island have tried to improve the "sweatshop" conditions of their *maquiladoras* without significant changes, also that in the government documents on economics related with trade and investment abroad "[T]here is little touch of social justice and humanity" and that "[I]t is very disappointing to see that Taipei's rescue measures for South Asia in the aftermath of the regional financial crisis since 1997 is just as conservative as, if not more so than, the IMF-designed policies." Chen Jie, "Human Dimensions of Taiwan-Southeast Asia Economic Interdependence: A Preliminary Observation" in Samuel C.Y. Ku (ed.), *Southeast Asia in the New Century: An Asian Perspective*, (Taiwan, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, National Sun Yat-sen University, 2002), 100,107.

⁴ Imtiaz Hussain, "¿Nuevas ropas para el emperador? El TLCCA-EU y lo que nos espera" *Perfiles Latinoamericanos*, no. 23, (2003), pp 69-98.

⁵ Marie-Odette Colin, "Papel de los actores externos en los procesos de transición democrática en Centroamérica" in Ileana Cid Capetillo, ed., *Compilación de lecturas para la discusión de las relaciones internacionales contemporáneas*, (México, FCPyS-UNAM, 1998), 128.

⁶ E.K. Hawkins, *Los principios de la ayuda al desarrollo*, (Madrid: Penguin-Alianza, 1974).

⁷ Robert F. Zimmerman, *Dollars, Diplomacy & Dependency. Dilemmas of U.S. Economic AID*, (Boulder, CO:Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993). Also J.F. Torres, *New Directions for Development in Third World Countries. The Failure of US Foreign Policy*, (Aldershot: Avebury, 1993).

⁸ OECD, *Development and Democracy: Aid Policies in Latin America*, OECD, Paris, 1992 and World Bank, *Assessing Aid. What Works, What Doesn't and Why*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Also Inge Kaul, Isabelle Grunberg and Marc A. Stern, eds.,

Global Public Goods. International Cooperation in the 21st Century, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁹ James F. Hoge, Jr., "A Global Power Shift in the Making. Is the United Ready?" in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 86, no. 4, (2004), 2-7.

¹⁰ He Li, "Rivalry between Taiwan and PRC in Latin America" in *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, vol. 10, # 2, 2005, 86.

¹¹ Cheng-feng Shih, *Ethnic Identity and National Identity. Mainlanders and Taiwan-China Relations*, <www.isanet.org/noarchive/shih.html> and Francisco Haro, "Constructing Chinese Identity" in Imtiaz Hussain, ed.), *Tyranny of Soft Touches: Interculturalism, Multiculturalism, & 21st Century International Relations*, (México: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2004), 73-94.

¹² The assert is true, but is also true that China gives aid to different countries and ODA is an arena of competition with Taiwan, Richard C. Lin, "Complementary Measures to Foreign Aid: Taiwan and the PRC under Diplomacy Rivalry" in *Contemporary Economic Policy*, vol. 19, # 3, 2001, 360-638.

¹³ the Bureau of Foreign Trade, Taiwanese Government, <[http:// cus93.trade.gov.tw/english/FSCE/FSC0011E.ASP](http://cus93.trade.gov.tw/english/FSCE/FSC0011E.ASP)> 2005.

¹⁴ The agreement in can be read at <[www.sice.oas.org/ Trade/ PanRC/ PANRC_e.asp](http://www.sice.oas.org/Trade/PanRC/PANRC_e.asp)> <[www.sice.oas.org/ Trade/ PanRC/ PANRC_e.asp](http://www.sice.oas.org/Trade/PanRC/PANRC_e.asp)>

¹⁵ International Cooperation and Development Fund, *Annual Report, 2003*, (Taipei: ICDF, 2004).

¹⁶ Ríos, Xulio, *Taiwán, el problema de China*, Catarata, Madrid, 2005, 139-141.

¹⁷ Taipei version <www.mofa.gov.tw/webapp/fasp?xItem=1600&ctnode=764>. Beijing version <[http:// english.people.com.cn/ 200501/ 21](http://english.people.com.cn/200501/21)>.

¹⁸ Everson W. Hull, "Does Taiwan Care about Interest of Nevis?" in *Caribbean Net News*, 12 April 12 2005, <[www.caribbeanetnews.com/ 2005/ 04/ 12/ hull.shtml](http://www.caribbeanetnews.com/2005/04/12/hull.shtml)> <[http:// www.caribbeanetnews.com/ 2005/ 04/ 12/ hull.shtml](http://www.caribbeanetnews.com/2005/04/12/hull.shtml)>

¹⁹ <[www.mofa.gov.tw/webapp/ ct?xItem=11353&ctNode=284](http://www.mofa.gov.tw/webapp/ct?xItem=11353&ctNode=284)>

²⁰ <[www.roc-taiwan.be/ press/ 20000927/ 2000092701.html](http://www.roc-taiwan.be/press/20000927/2000092701.html)>

²¹ Information regarding aid can be found at <www.icdf.org.tw>

²² <[www.mofa.gov.tw.webapp/ ct.asp?xItem=11346&ctNode=285](http://www.mofa.gov.tw/webapp/ct.asp?xItem=11346&ctNode=285)>

²³ *Taiwan Yearbook, 2004*, <[www.gio.gov.tw/ taiwan-website/ 5-gp/ yearbook/ P113.htm](http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/5-gp/yearbook/P113.htm)>

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