

## COVID 19 and Taiwan's Medical Aid to Honduras: The Last Latin American Frontier for the Republic 2020-2021

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### ARTICLE INFORMATION

#### Publication information

#### Research article

#### HOW TO CITE

Azis, A., & Basen, J. (2022). COVID 19 and Taiwan's Medical Aid to Honduras: The Last Latin American Frontier for the Republic 2020-2021. *Journal of International Conference Proceedings*, 5(2), 588-598.

#### DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.32535/jicp.v5i2.1731>

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Received: 1 July 2022

Accepted: 15 July 2022

Published: 2 August 2022

### ABSTRACT

Republic of China (Taiwan) has a long history of foreign aid policy/programs towards Honduras, one of their most consistent and strategic allies in the Central American region. As shifts in Taiwan's foreign policy gradually increased participation of civil actors and number of development projects in Honduras, the arrival of COVID-19 pandemic brought changes to the said aid programs. As a result, Taiwan's foreign aid program to Honduras changed from development projects to the transfer of medical equipment; masks, ventilators, thermal imager, and test kits from Taiwan to Honduras. As per objective of foreign aid in Taiwan's white paper on foreign aid policy, foreign aid is utilized to ensure closeness with Taiwan's diplomatic allies, including Honduras. This study hence is aimed to extensively explore the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on Taiwan's aid to Honduras through qualitative-descriptive means. In the end, uncertainty lingers around the future of Taiwan's diplomatic relations with Honduras and subsequent foreign aid policy limited by their inability to produce vaccines, perhaps showing the weakness of Taiwan's previous shift to value-based aid approaches in times of crisis compared to material aid.

**Keywords:** Covid 19, Foreign/Medical Aid, Honduras, Taiwan, Vaccines

## **INTRODUCTION**

Being one of the remaining countries to formally recognize the status of Taiwan (or Republic of China) as a state, Honduras has always a place in the hearts of Taiwan's decision makers and elected leaders. This was seen after the election of Tsai Ing-wen, where her governance had spurred changes into the nature of Taiwan's relations with its remaining allies, especially those in Latin America and the Pacific Islands. Foreign aid became their primary arsenal in keeping these countries' recognition of Taiwan in check and prevent them from renouncing their recognition in favor of People's Republic of China (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2009: 6).

There were indeed changes in Taiwan's foreign aid program in recent years. Most importantly, as implied within Taiwan's New Southbound Policy, was the growing diversification of aid beyond that of just economic and development aid. Moreover, the actors involved were also diversified to include those from the private sectors, although they were still within the government's larger framework (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2009: 7-8). This diversification created flexibility for these actors to lend their specialties within the larger government foreign aid program and helped enhance cultural and intellectual closeness (civil society) between other countries and Taiwan. Hence, in most academic papers/journals, this phenomenon is often quoted as a "shift" in Taiwan's foreign aid policy (Lin et al, 2017: 482).

In regards to Honduras, the aid history between Taiwan and Honduras has been complex ever since the establishment of their diplomatic relations in 1941. After the defeat of the ROC by the People's Republic of China and the subsequent relocation to Taiwan in 1949, Honduras, like most UN member states at the time, maintained formal diplomatic relations with Republic of China whilst rejecting the membership of People's Republic of China in the UN. However, interaction between both countries at this stage was minimal at best. The shift of diplomatic relation between Honduras and Taiwan came after UN Resolution 2758 in 1971, which compelled the majority of the UN to recognize People's Republic of China (American Society for International Law, 1972; 563). Left with only 35 state recognitions at first, Republic of China (later would simply become Taiwan)'s decision makers were confronted by a sudden crisis that Taiwan was losing its recognition as a state. This number would dwindle even further, with only 14 states and the Holy See recognizing Taiwan as a state as of 2021 (Ramos, 2021).

Honduras was one of the 35 countries to reject UN Resolution 2758 and kept their diplomatic relations with Taiwan intact. As such, Honduras, a small Latin American country far away from Taiwan, became one of Taiwan's most important allies in circumventing the diplomatic blockade enacted by PRC through its One China Policy. This implication is reflected in the growing amount of foreign aid sent by Taiwan to Honduras from 2010 to 2019; Honduras had the biggest amount of development projects led by Taiwan's ICDF (International Cooperation Development Fund) in the period with a total of 29 projects (out of 62 projects assigned to the Central America Region) (Maggiorelli, 2019: 196-197).

However large the Official Development Assistance (ODA) projects Taiwan's ICDF has in Honduras, all of which would soon pale in comparison to the crisis that has haunted the world since. With the start of the COVID pandemic and a global shortage of medical equipment and other assortments, it's become the priority of both Honduras and Taiwan to readily equip their population in facing the pandemic. One of the most successful countries in the world in the containment of the COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan has the opportunity to become a major player through its abundant medical equipment and advanced technology. (Lao, 2020: 21).

One major weakness of Taiwan's opportunity, in spite of its advanced technology, is the inability to produce vaccines. Having to compete with China whose foreign aid encompass medical aid (including vaccines), Taiwan falls short in only providing masks, ventilators, and experts to their allies. This, and the woe of Chinese vaccine aid, has caused several countries, including Honduras, to recently threaten renouncing their diplomatic recognition in favor of PRC (Reuters, 2021). As a consequence, Taiwan's decision makers struggle to fulfill the demand of Honduras' medical needs and that of other allies.

A major factor in Taiwan's decision makers is the current diplomatic rivalry between Taiwan and People's Republic of China in the Latin American region. With the region being Taiwan's last major stronghold in foreign diplomatic recognition, a loss of recognition even from one state in the region will be a major setback in Taiwan's foreign policy. Hence, the threat of renouncement of diplomatic recognition by Honduras will have to be taken seriously as it will benefit PRC's attempts of diplomatic isolation on Taiwan.

Nonetheless, this article is created in response of the current pandemic and Taiwan's foreign aid (with heavy emphasis on medical aid) policies. Especially in relation to Honduras, being one of the last countries to recognize Taiwan's sovereignty and a major recipient of ICDF's aid. This paper will analyze the quantity of aid (especially medical aid) given by Taiwan to Honduras in this period and its effect on Honduras' policies and public opinion on Taiwan. If Honduras were to renounce their recognition of Taiwan in favor of PRC, it would have fatal consequences on the future of Taiwan's foreign aid programs and their grave diplomatic situation. All in all, Taiwan and their decision makers are facing its final frontier in Latin America through its foreign aid program to Honduras.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The theory used in this article has a basis in Carol Lancaster's 2008 book on foreign aid titled *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, and Domestic Politics*. According to Lancaster, the definition of foreign aid revolves around "voluntary transfer of public resources from a government to another government, NGO (Non-Governmental Organization), or International Organization (ex. World Bank or other regional organizations), with at least 25% of the transfer/element be a grant and that the purpose should be to better human condition in recipient countries". From Lancaster's foreign aid definition, it's already defined that foreign aid has to be in the form of public resources (handled by government) and that it should consist of at least 25% grant (Lancaster, 2008: 9). These public resources may be in the form of financial aid (grants or concessional loans), material aid (ex. Food aid and medical aid), and forms of debt relief. Additionally, the goal should already be clear (as in being officially stated) in bettering human condition in recipient countries.

There are 4 domestic factors that influence a country's foreign aid policy according to Lancaster's book. These 4 factors are (1) ideas, (2) institution, (3) interest, and (4) organization (Lancaster, 2008: 18-23). The first factor, ideas, is related to the people within the country itself. It's the worldwide perception that pushes the country to enact their foreign aid policies on other, perceived less developed nations. It affects the policies (primarily foreign aid policies) and how it's being conducted by the state. Ideas are also the shared value and norm of the people of the state, which mean that ideas affect policy-making indirectly through their citizens (Lancaster, 2008: 19). This also influences the objective of a foreign aid policy; whether to influence their

norms or values through aid policies (by exposing recipient states to aid programs that are influenced by the state's norm and value) or to improve the state's image in recipient countries. For the next factor, institution refers to the political institution within a state. Institutions affect a state's foreign aid policy through their decision-making capabilities and mandate within the governing state. In accordance to Lancaster's book, there are three aspects that influence a state's foreign aid policy; state wide-election (may be overlooked in an authoritarian/totalitarian state), local government/leaders' role, and the government's governance system (Lancaster, 2008: 20). Foreign aid policies, especially in case of democratic states, is heavily influenced by election between competing parties who hold different approaches. For example, in the case of the United States, competing Democratic and Republican parties often brought differences to their aid policy once they're elected. Democratic Party, being on the left-center spectrum, always favors the leftist approach on aid policies; more restricted form (grants and state-state transfer of public resources) of aid as to not glorify the kindness of state (Doherty et al, 2020: 640-641). On the other hand, Republican Party, being on the right-center spectrum, favors a wider aid approach (right-wing approach) by expanding the definition of aid to include education and commercial aid approaches. When either of these parties is elected, the aid policy of the United States would change accordingly (Doherty et al, 2020: 644).

While governance system influences a country's aid policies through the creation of aid policies itself. Creating these policies involves negotiation between governing parties in a government, therefore allowing them to influence the final aid policy. Finally, the involvement of local governments or leaders is critical in ensuing the commencement of the agreed aid policies. Leaders might also affect the creation of aid policy, given differing ideologies and ideas in regards to aid.

Moving to the third factor, interest here represents the public's interest in creating the stated aid policies. Especially considering that the very definition of aid itself involves a transfer of *public resources*, which means that foreign aid does have to deal with the public in general. Here, interest groups are divided on their involvement and interests with the creation of foreign aid policies. Especially in regards to recipient countries, where interest groups are often involved in accordance to their value, norm, or even commercial interests (Lancaster, 2008: 21).

The last factor is organization. Organization here refers to the organization within a state that handles the commencement of foreign aid policies (Lancaster, 2008: 23). Organization can also refer to other organization (ex. non-government organizations) that helps the state conducting their foreign aid policy to recipient countries. However, for the most part, organization within Lancaster's book revolves around state-appointed organization that oversees the handling of foreign aid.

Moreover, this article will also involve the concept of medical aid. Medical aid is a variation of foreign aid that focuses on the health of people in recipient countries. Uniquely, medical aid has unique attributes that allows it to be considered an expansion of public services (Lancaster, 2008: 11). Medical aid is the product of changing world priorities in the aftermath of Cold War; beforehand, medical aid was only involved as an "emergency-only" aid to be given after the occurrence of conflict or devastation in recipient countries. Contemporarily, medical aid has become the norm as vaccines, medical equipment (ex. Ventilator), and masks are in short supply in the face of the COVID 19 pandemic (Gauttam et al, 2021: 320). Within this article, medical aid will be elaborated as one of the prioritized aids given by Taiwan to Honduras.

Consequently, this article will explain the nature of Taiwan's foreign aid to Honduras through the theory of foreign aid and medical aid concept. This article seeks to explore the motives of Taiwan's aid to Honduras and the way it affects Honduras' foreign policy towards Taiwan, whose interest lies in keeping Honduras' recognition of Taiwan intact. Medical aid plays a role in its significance in the period of COVID 19 pandemic that affects the foreign aid policy of Taiwan to Honduras.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

Additionally, this article utilizes qualitative method to better describe the motives of Taiwan's foreign aid to Honduras and subsequent effects on Honduras' foreign policy in relation to its recognition of Taiwan as a state. Limited quantitative methods will be used to calculate the amount of foreign aid (esp. medical aid) and present a full picture of Taiwan's foreign aid policy towards Honduras.

## **RESULTS**

In analyzing Taiwan's foreign aid to Honduras, it's important to get into detail about Taiwan's general foreign aid policy through Lancaster's four factors that influence the creation of foreign policy. In Taiwan's case, being a democratic state, parties within governing system will play a more important role in shaping Taiwan's foreign policy. Noting this, there are two main parties with significant ideas on how foreign aid policy should be conducted; DPP (Democratic Progressive Party/Center-Left) and Kuomintang (Center-Right). This will be explained in detail in the institution factor.

Firstly, ideas, Taiwan in the past had experienced great difficulties in maintaining a stable state and struggled to build their economy after their relocation from the Chinese mainland. During this period of struggle (1950-1970s), Taiwan was a major recipient of United States' aid and was one of the primary recipients, alongside Japan and South Korea, of the Marshall Plan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2009: 3). Such aid was crucial in helping Taiwan to develop their domestic and commercial industries and played a major part in making Taiwan a developed country.

This experience is reflected in Taiwan's ideas on foreign policy as written in their white paper (official paper) on foreign aid. Taiwan's foreign policy is shaped to help other countries develop economically as Taiwan had done previously through the help of foreign aid (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2009: 9). This idea is further exemplified with the white paper's five goals Taiwan seeks to achieve through their foreign policy. Those five goals are; (1) promoting friendly relations with Taiwan's diplomatic allies (the context of which refers to the 14 states that recognize Taiwan as a state), (2) conducting Taiwan's responsibility as part of the international community, (3) helping to establish human security in recipient states (human security refers to the safety of people from hunger, starvation, and disease), (4) helping other countries to develop through aid by giving back what the international community had given to Taiwan (in essence, returning the favor through aid that Taiwan had received previously), and (5) envisioning humanity's development (in this, Taiwan views that aid has to result in a development for recipient states, whether through material or financial aid) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2009: 2).

Second factor will reflect the influence of political institution within Taiwan on their foreign aid policy. Taiwan holds statewide election every four years to determine the country's leadership (consisting of a president and vice president). Similar to the United States, Taiwan has two major competing parties, the incumbent Democratic Progressive Party (or DPP) and Kuomintang (JP, 2016). In regards to aid policy, DPP, in spite of being center-left, holds a more expansive (right-wing) belief of aid and whose policies involve commercialized (ex. Scholarships and cultural) sectors in their foreign aid program (Lin et al, 2017: 470). In comparison, Kuomintang, despite being a conservative party, holds a more traditional outlook in terms of foreign aid; reflected in their policies through forms of financial aid and rigid development projects. Leaders, like Tsai Ing-wen, also influence the state's foreign aid program. Tsai Ing-wen's brainchild foreign policy, New Southbound Policy (NSP), affected Taiwan's foreign aid program by allowing a shift from traditional material and financial aid to embrace value-added education and cultural aid programs. In this particular shift, civil actors, including NGOs and local entrepreneurs, were finally able to have a wider influence on Taiwan's aid program through increased levels of participation and more flexible approach, in spite of still being under the government's wider framework (Lin et al 2017: 471).

Moving to the third factor, public interest on Taiwan's foreign aid program vary according to their involvement and contributions. Commercial interest, as seen through heavy contribution made by Taiwan-based companies on foreign aid, is reflected through numerous technical cooperation programs ICDF provide to recipient countries. In Honduras, one of such technical cooperation programs is the current Honduras Pig Breeding and Reproduction Project (2018 – current), which aims to improve the availability of Honduras pork industry through cooperation with ICDF and other Taiwan-based agricultural companies. In this project, Taiwan provides workshops and training centers to Honduran ranchers on pig breeding (ICDF, 2018). Furthermore, Taiwan also provides the technology and equipment necessary to help the progress of Honduran ranchers and improve the quantity and quality of pig breeding in Honduras. Additionally, NGOs in Taiwan have become an interest group (overseeing and helping to execute Taiwan's foreign aid program) due to their importance in Taiwan foreign aid program. Example, in Honduras, Taiwan's Mobile Medical Mission program was executed in coordination with International Healthcare Cooperation Strategic Alliance (ICHSA) – Taiwan-based NGO (comprised of 37 domestic hospitals) that focuses on improving the quality of healthcare services domestically and abroad (ICDF, 2018).

Last but not least, the aid organization in Taiwan is mostly centered on the ICDF (International Cooperation Development Fund) as the main coordinator of Taiwan foreign aid program (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2009: 3). Most of Taiwan's foreign aid program is conducted through ICDF given their primary executive mandate on foreign aid policy. However, ICDF isn't the only aid-concerned organization in Taiwan due to recent shift in Taiwan's foreign aid policy. The heavier involvement of civil actors has brought changes with the founding of Taiwan AID (Taiwan Alliance in International Development), which consists exclusively of NGOs, both local and international ones, and aims to provide feedback and coordination on Taiwan's civil actors involvement on foreign aid (Taiwan AID, 2020). Still, Taiwan AID doesn't have the mandate that the ICDF has on foreign aid execution and is currently operating under the coordination of ICDF. Therefore, in this last fourth factor, Taiwan has two primary foreign aid organizations; the government backed ICDF and the independent - NGO exclusive Taiwan AID.

## **DISCUSSION**

After identifying the four domestic factors of Taiwan's foreign aid policy, it's prudent to devolve more specifically in the case of Honduras, one of the last states to formally recognize Taiwan's independence. Historically, Taiwan's aid on Honduras mostly comprised of technical cooperation missions than financial aid; Honduras from 2010 to 2019 has over 29 Taiwan-based development projects been executed within the state's borders (Maggiorelli, 2019: 192). Of these projects, 6 are lending and investment programs, 15 are technical cooperation programs under the direction of ICDF and related Taiwan NGOs, 7 are humanitarian assistance programs, and 1 is Taiwan's scholarship program to Honduras students. The total value of Taiwan's aid programs to Honduras alone reached up to 50 million USD (from a total 152 million USD assigned to Central America as a whole). This doesn't include Taiwan's financial aid programs, which added a total of 27 million USD (as grants) to Taiwan's overall aid value to Honduras up until the end of 2019. Total sum value of Taiwan's foreign aid to Honduras from 2010 – 2019 is 77 million USD, the biggest recipient of Taiwan aid value in the Central American region (Maggiorelli, 2019: 201).

In 2020, with the advent of COVID-19 pandemic, Honduras suffered especially through a lack of medical experts, pandemic preparation, mask shortages, and lack of ventilators. This was further accompanied by a lack of available vaccines, which resulted in COVID-19 infecting nearly 242,000 in 2021, from a total population of 9.7 million people (a staggering infection rate of 3%) (Despacho de Comunicaciones y Strategia, 2021). This, combined with Taiwan's experience in handling the COVID-19 pandemic, led to Taiwan modifying their aid approach on Honduras to include a large sum of medical aid. In April 2020, this change in foreign aid approach was noticeable through Taiwan's first aid batch of masks and COVID-19 test kits to Honduras (prioritized over other Central American countries) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2020: 4-6). The complete list of medical aid given by Taiwan to Honduras is within the table below.

**Figure 1.1 Taiwan's Medical Aid Quantity to Honduras**

<b>Taiwan Medical Aid Honduras April - October 2020</b>	
<i>N95 Masks/ Surgery Masks</i>	120.000+
<i>Ventilator</i>	"Handful" – Less than 30 units
<i>COVID-19 Test Kits</i>	10.000 – 20.000 Antibody Test Kits (Liao, 2020)
<i>Assorted Equipment/Other Medical Equipment</i>	84 thermal devices, "one batch" of HCQ (Hydroxychloroquine) Tablets, "one batch" of protective gowns, "one batch" of isolation gowns, "one batch" of PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) test kits, "numerous" quantities of rapid test kits, "numerous" quantities of forehead thermometer, "various" quantity of thermal imaging cameras, and "one batch" of temperature measurements stations.

*Source: Taiwan News, ICDF, Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Republic of China*

Given this aid development, Taiwan has also increased its mask commitments to Honduras alongside other diplomatic allies to over 10 million masks – to be given after production has satisfied emergency demands domestically and in other countries. Additionally, Taiwan has been responsible for the training of Honduras' domestic medical personnel in the three-year period of 2017 – 2020. This training, supervised by Taiwan's ICHSA, included pandemic prevention, detection, as well as emergency assistance, which gave Honduras time and some more preparation (although proven to be insufficient) in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2019: 4).

Adding to the list of medical material aid and medical training preparation provided by Taiwan to Honduras, Taiwan also provided help in creating Honduras' own Entry Quarantine System (EQS) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2020: 5). This system helps to track foreign entries to a state's border and determine their health condition if in need of further actions. Taiwan's help in this creation is by giving Honduras their source code (essentially their system's structure) and providing Honduras with supervision in manning such system.

ICDF's program also has included newer lending and investment program while adapting to the conditions created by the COVID-19 Pandemic. This program is titled "Credit to Finance Public Sector Operations–Subproject: Emergency Development Policies Operation for COVID-19 in the Republic of Honduras" that seeks to enhance macroeconomic stability and Honduran capacity to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic (ICDF, 2021). Included within the program was provisions for the prevention, dictation, and treatment of the general population and vulnerable groups affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although this program isn't included within the general spectrum of medical aid given by Taiwan to Honduras, it's prudent to include it since it provides the funding required for Honduras to act upon the COVID-19 pandemic. This program, in essence, provides Honduran government and hospitals the financial capability in handling COVID patients alongside donated Taiwanese medical equipment as listed above (ICDF, 2021).

One critical outlook on Taiwan's medical aid to Honduras up until the end of 2020 is the lack of vaccines given in these aid programs, a critical aspect in curbing the pandemic. Without the vaccines, Taiwan's medical aid program pales in comparison to that of its rival, the People's Republic of China. Although Taiwan has been able to acquire a total of 20 million doses of vaccine from other countries (mainly the United States/United Kingdom), their stocks are barely enough to vaccinate their own citizens, much less packing them into aid programs to their diplomatic allies (CDC Taiwan, 2021). In comparison, People's Republic of China has production rate up to 2 billion doses per year of Sinovac vaccine (China's own indigenous vaccine) in April 2021, with a predicted total production amounting to 3.5 billion doses by the end of 2021 (Reuters, 2021). Consequently, Taiwan is faced with a dilemma to give away their doses of vaccines to their diplomatic allies and risk being incapable of vaccinating their own population.

On the other hand, Honduras, in spite of being the biggest recipient of ICDF's medical aid program in Central America, has reacted negatively to Taiwan's foreign aid program, claiming what they need the most is vaccine to safeguard their citizens. On multiple occasions in May 2021, Honduran president, Juan Orlando Hernandez, has threatened to renounce their recognition of Taiwan as a state in favor of China's in order to receive Chinese vaccines (Reuters, 2021). This pressure is exacerbated by a large Honduran public support to switch diplomatic recognition if there's no vaccine included in the aid package given by Taiwan (Greene, 2021).

The diplomatic pressure on Taiwan doesn't only come from Honduras, but also Paraguay, Nicaragua, and even Guatemala; these countries' recognition of Taiwan has led them being unable to receive Sinovac/Sinopharm vaccine doses from People's Republic of China (Harrison, 2021). The main consensus among those countries is similar to Honduras; either vaccines being included in Taiwan's medical aid package or face grave diplomatic consequences. With only 14 states currently recognize Taiwan's sovereignty as a state, Taiwan can't afford to lose one state's recognition, much less 4 states' recognition as a result of them not being capable of supplying vaccines (Taylor, 2019).



In an unprecedented act, perhaps as a result of their diplomatic allies' pressure, Taiwan's DPP has declared a promise of 300.000 doses of COVID vaccine (taken from their stock of foreign made vaccines) as foreign aid to both Honduras and Paraguay, two countries in need of vaccines the most, in June 2021 (Deutsche Welle, 2021). This promise of aid may come as a solution to the current diplomatic crisis due to the lack of vaccines in Taiwan's aid programs. DPP also assures Taiwan's diplomatic allies that they will give a fair amount of their vaccine stocks with their diplomatic allies in Latin America in the future and increase the amount of medical equipment given in their foreign aid programs.

Nonetheless, there's no guarantee that this solution may be effective in maintaining Honduras' recognition of Taiwan in the foreseeable future. Due to the very limited amount of vaccines available in Taiwan and their reliance on US built vaccines, it's certain that the amount given by Taiwan to Honduras will never match the quantity China's able to provide for their own diplomatic allies. Taiwan's current medical aid program to Honduras has exposed a key weakness of their own foreign aid shift in 2016. The shift to value-added aid programs, such as scholarships and cultural interaction with Taiwan-based NGOs, may be effective in building a shared identity between recipient countries and giving countries (Lin et al, 2017: 488). However, in Honduras-Taiwan's case, the shared identity's benefits (supposedly created through numerous ICDF cooperation and aid programs) is nullified in the face of the Honduran public need of vaccine. Material aid, in this scenario, is a far more effective weapon in maintaining Honduras' recognition of Taiwan. Yet, due to domestic vaccine shortages and various other factors, Taiwan is unable to provide the kind of material aid critical (vaccine) to the COVID situation in Honduras (Taiwan Huanqiu, 2021). This creates uncertainty for the future of Taiwan-Honduras diplomatic relations and continuation of ICDF's programs in Honduras, in spite of being the biggest ICDF aid recipient in Central America.

## **CONCLUSION**

Taiwan's foreign aid program to Honduras has a long-shared history given Honduras's continuous recognition of Taiwan's sovereignty since 1941. In 2019, the ten-year data approximates Honduras to be the largest state recipient of Taiwan aid in Central America with a total of 77 million USD spent. The involvement of ICDF in Honduras during this period was extensive, as nearly 50 percent of all aid projects (29 out of 62) are conducted in Honduras. This resulted in contemporarily strong relation between Honduras and Taiwan and kept their recognition of Taiwan sovereignty secure.

With the fallout of COVID 19 pandemic, the world suffered through numerous shortages of medical personnel, experts, and equipment. Honduras, being Taiwan's most strategic ally in Central America, received extensive quantities of Taiwan's foreign aid in the form of medical aid. This aid comprised of masks, thermal imager, ventilators, HQC tablets, and COVID 19 test kits of varying origins. The key weakness of this foreign aid being the lack of vaccines, as Taiwan had to prioritize the health of their citizens given the limited quantity of vaccines available.

Due to the desperate COVID-19 situation in Honduras and the lack of vaccines, both the government and the public are reacting rather negatively to Taiwan's aid programs. As such, Honduran government threatened to renounce their recognition of Taiwan in order to receive Chinese-made vaccines that are easily available. Such threats were deemed serious by Taiwan's decision makers, which forced the DPP to hastily make promises of future vaccines aid within Taiwan's current aid program to Honduras.

Although the diplomatic threat between Honduras and Taiwan seems to have been averted, there's no certainty that Honduras will be able to consistently recognize Taiwan as a state in the foreseeable future. This is due to the exposed weakness of Taiwan's nature of foreign policy, which focuses more on the shared identities through cooperation and consequent development policies. The importance of material aid (ex. Vaccines) in times of crisis is unable to be replaced, and even though Taiwan has already 29 existing projects in Honduras, this pales in comparison to the offers of vaccines aid those other countries (especially Taiwan's diplomatic rival People's Republic of China) offer. Additionally, due to Taiwan being unable to produce vaccines and current domestic shortages, the continuity of Honduras' recognition of Taiwan is left uncertain in the last diplomatic frontier for the diplomatically isolated Taiwan.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was supported independently without any financial support from foreign or domestic actors.

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