

Fundamental Root of the Crisis in Haiti

Marjorie Calixte-Hallworth, Ph.D.*

*Independent Researcher, Tennessee, United States. Email: Marjorie.Hallworth@waldenu.edu**

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AN ESSAY ON CURRENT SITUATION

Historian Mary Renda posits in her publication titled "Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of US Imperialism 1915-1940" that the 1915 United States occupation of Haiti should not be regarded as a mere spectacle but rather as a significant domain in which the United States' imperial character was shaped.

During the summer of 1915, the U.S. Marines invaded and colonized Haiti. At the start of the occupation, the United States confiscated \$500,000 worth of Haitian government gold from the Banque Nationale, conveyed the funds to New York, and deposited them at National City Bank. Afterward, the United States rewrote the Haitian constitution to allow foreign land ownership, which had been outlawed since the Haitian Revolution, to prevent foreign control of the sovereign state. The most significant task of the U.S. Marines was counterinsurgency. Engaging in a campaign across the countryside to crush the peasant rebellion against the occupation, the U.S. Marines employed aerial bombardment methods for the first time. Engaging in aerial attacks on Haitian villages, which resulted in over 15,000 fatalities and numerous individuals being severely injured. Survivors who persisted were subjected to torture and compelled to work in labor camps.

The United States decreed how Haitian taxes would be spent on education, decided which programs best suited Haiti's children, and determined that some teachers merited preferential treatment. The United States disbanded what remained of Haiti's old revolutionary army and established a new armed force to fight those who resisted their presence and to ensure that the countryside was effectively occupied, as well as to instill fear among the Haitian population, a legacy that persists to this day.

In 1934, the United States departed from the nation following significant grassroots demonstrations by the Haitian population. However, the United States maintained political and economic involvement in Haitian affairs. One of the most infamous instances involved the U.S. backing of the oppressive regime led by Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier and Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier.

Following the downfall of the Duvalier regime in 1990, despite millions of dollars of expenditure by the United States to endorse, a former World Bank executive, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a Catholic priest, was elected president in a resounding victory. During the initial democratic elections, the United States made an unsuccessful attempt to hinder the rise of the widely supported President. Nonetheless, a faction of military commanders, supported by the Haitian elites and the CIA, executed a coup d'état on September 30, 1991, just 8 months after Aristide took office.

In 1994, to fulfill his own agenda, President Bill Clinton was compelled to repatriate Aristide to Haiti following his three-year exile. Nevertheless, Aristide had become a captive of the US neoliberal agenda. The Clinton administration dismantled Haitian rice farming, which had served as a crucial source of income for farmers to finance their children's education. This had dire repercussions for the rural population, given that Haiti's economy is predominantly agricultural, with approximately 70% to 80% of its populace engaged in farming.

In 2010, former President Bill Clinton issued an apology to the Haitian people, acknowledging his wrongdoing with the following statement: "It may have been good for some of my farmers in Arkansas, but it has not worked," he explained. "I have to live every day with the consequences of the lost capacity to produce a rice crop in Haiti to feed those people because of what I did".

Aristide secured a second term in office and served as the elected president from 2001 to 2004. The administration of George W. Bush, however, extended its offensive against Haiti into a comprehensive and incapacitating endeavor. The governing body acted expeditiously to induce economic, social, and political disintegration in Haiti while also providing weaponry to the Duvalierist rebels and consolidating the small and divided political opposition in the country. President Aristide, on the other hand, disclosed the outcomes of a restitution commission established by the government on April 7, 2003. Per the commission's decision, it was determined that France is liable to pay a sum of \$21 billion to Haiti, which represents the present-day monetary worth of the funds that were coerced by France from Haiti subsequent to the latter's attainment of independence.

On February 29, 2004, President Aristide and his wife, Mildred, were abducted from their residence by American soldiers and subsequently transported to the Central African Republic. On the second day following the coup, President Bush contacted French President Jacques Chirac via telephone to express his appreciation for the "outstanding French American collaboration in Haiti" and to extend gratitude to France for its intervention. The 2004 coup d'état was carried out and resolved with UN approval. The strategy for the 2004 intervention and occupation was formulated in advance during a meeting in Canada known as the "Ottawa Initiative on Haiti."

Meanwhile, following the request of the United States and France, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed a resolution allowing the immediate deployment of a Multinational Interim Force to secure and stabilize Port-au-Prince and other areas in the country. Put simply, the UN decided to dispatch a "peacekeeping" mission to Haiti. Resolution 1529 was approved under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, enabling UN forces to engage in military action via land, air, and sea without the need for consent from the conflicting parties. The resolution authorized the multinational force to "take all necessary measures to fulfill its mandate."

On June 1, 2004, the transition of authority from U.S. forces to the United Nations established the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) with the so-called aim of promoting peace and security. Reflecting a disturbing resemblance to the initial U.S. presence in Haiti, MINUSTAH soldiers engaged in various violent acts against the Haitian population, such as shootings and rapes, as outlined in my article published elsewhere titled "UN Peacekeepers or UN Child Predators." MINUSTAH soldiers were implicated in introducing cholera into the country, resulting in an official death toll of up to 30,000 and nearly a million people infected.

What truly cemented this role was the establishment and implementation of the Core Group, comprising about nine rotating international career ambassadors led by various countries such as the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Brazil, Spain, the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, the United Nations, the European Union, and the Apostolic Nuncio. Established as part of the 2004 UN resolution, the Core Group brought foreign soldiers and technocrats to the country. Remarkably, the group has never had a Haitian representative. The Core Group aims to supervise Haiti's governance by coordinating the different branches and elements of the United Nations mission in Haiti.

In the wake of President Jovenel Moïse's assassination, the Biden administration dispatched a delegation to Haiti to engage with Joseph, who was the interim prime minister. Henry, who was appointed by Moïse to replace Joseph, but Henry had not yet taken the oath of office, and Joseph Lambert, who had been appointed by Haiti's 10 remaining senators to serve as interim president until new elections. Amidst the conflicting assertions of authority, Washington made a decision, and the US delegation marginalized Lambert and persuaded Joseph and Henry to reach an agreement on Haiti's governance. The UN representative in Haiti tweeted that Ariel would become the new prime minister and Claude Joseph should resign, which ultimately showcased the significant influence of the United States. Amidst the decision-making process of the international community, Haiti's civil society organizations were disregarded despite their efforts to address the political crisis in the country. These groups firmly opposed the foreign-imposed interim government and have condemned the international community's actions as clearly colonial.

The number of US invasions in Haiti is incalculable. Over the course of the past three years, the United States has had four distinct ambassadors stationed in Haiti, who presently serve as chargé d'affaires.

In September 2021, Daniel Foote, the former special envoy to Haiti, officially resigned from his position and emphasized in his resignation letter that “what Haitians really want, and need is the opportunity to chart their own course, without international puppeteering and favored candidates but with genuine support for that course. I do not believe that Haiti can enjoy stability until her citizens have the dignity of truly choosing their own leaders fairly and acceptably”.

To quote Robinson, it is arduous to identify an instance of systematic human affliction in Haiti's 2-century chronicles where the United States did not play a direct, collateral, or instigative role.

Haitians have been protesting against foreign backing of the illegitimate and corrupt de facto government, increasing inflation and fuel costs, illegal weapons distribution, and a sharp increase in violence. As a response, the United States and its allies have persisted in advocating for foreign military intervention in the country. In a significant move, Èzili Dantò's Haitian Lawyers Leadership Network and Evel Fanfan's Actions of Organizations Motivated for a Haiti Ruled by Law (AUMOHD) filed a lawsuit on November 6, 2023, against the unelected Ariel Henry's de facto government. The lawsuit alleges that the government's request for foreign troops to deploy to Haiti is a direct violation of the Haiti Constitution and its sovereignty.

Back in January 2023, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) endorsed the proposal for a foreign force. In July, U.S. Secretary of State Blinken, Vice President Kamala Harris, and U.S. Representative Hakeem Jeffries successfully persuaded the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to change its stance from supporting Haitian authority to advocating for intervention. While they are engaged in meetings pertaining to foreign intervention in Haiti, according to a report published by the United Nations in 2023, the primary origin of firearms and ammunition in Haiti is the United States.

On February 26, 2024, Henry traveled to Kenya to meet with President William Ruto to lobby for the United Nations-backed deployment of 1,000 Kenyan police officers in Haiti, which a court in the East African country ruled unconstitutional. According to reports, there has been no official notification regarding Henry's return date to Haiti following his trip to Kenya. As a result, his whereabouts remained unknown for several days until he unexpectedly landed in Puerto Rico on Tuesday, March 5, 2024. Initially, his target was the Dominican Republic; however, the government closed its airspace and claimed that his plane lacked the appropriate flight plan, which was, in my view, to publicly humiliate him.

At the time of writing, the unelected prime minister Ariel Henry has announced his resignation, which is quite ironic that the prime minister, who was never elected by the people, has now announced his resignation without ever having a mandate to lead.

The Haitian Revolution resulted in the establishment of the First Independent Black Nation in the Western Hemisphere. Former slaves successfully overcame Napoleon's army and achieved the liberation of France's highly prized colony. Originating from the fight nation against slavery, the Haitian people made a firm commitment to maintain their independence and reject any form of subjugation. Nevertheless, the counterinsurgency led by Western powers against Haiti has sought to bring an end to a revolutionary endeavor in contemporary history.

Declarations

Competing Interests Statement

The author declares no competing financial, professional, or personal interests.

Consent for publication

The author declares that he consented to the publication of this study.

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