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THE HAITIAN CRISIS

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THE CENTRE FOR SECURITY STUDIES

THE HAITIAN CRISIS

This report contains analyses of the different dimensions of the ongoing Haitian Crisis. They detail the deteriorating social, political and economic situation in Haiti following the assassination of President Moïse on July 7, 2021. The report contains a detailed summary of the assassination itself, the investigations and political chaos that followed. The impacts of COVID-19, gang-violence and foreign interventions are also analyzed.

This report is a product of the Centre for Security Studies, Jindal School of International Affairs and was formulated after a discussion held on October 9, 2021



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The History of the Haitian Crisis

Atri Patel

The purpose of this report is to understand the socio-cultural, political, and geological circumstances which the country of Haiti has faced since Independence and how such issues forced the country in the recent 2021 crisis. The country has suffered from numerous inevitable calamities, political upheaval, social crisis resulting in large scale instability, i.e., crisis in the nation across the passage of time. Such historical instability has given rise to an agitated youth which took up violent paths to protest Haiti's ongoing problems. Further, the political landscape was shaken when the President was murdered and a high magnitude earthquake destabilized the fragile supply chain, resulting in another crisis for the country.

Haitian Crisis

In the current world order, the world has been shifting from bipolar to multipolar geopolitical field. The superpowers or the developed countries talk about various kinds of interests. But the small-scale countries are largely ignored in global politics. For example, recent developments in Haiti, with a population nearing 11.5 million, has not been covered and hence little is known about the same. Understanding the current Haitian crisis requires understanding its historical roots.

Haiti is a country located between Cuba, Jamaica, and the Bahamas. It shares a border with the Dominican Republic on Hispaniola Island.¹ The country was a center for slave trade and was considered for plantation and agriculture in colonial era. Haiti's independence struggle began as a slave rebellion it later became the first independent state in Latin America and the Caribbean during the colonial era. It was also the first black-led republic after it threw off French colonisers in 19th century. Since then, the country has suffered cycles of violence, invasion and repression as well as natural disasters, such as the 2010 earthquake that killed nearly 3 lakh people on the Island.

The Haitian crisis was triggered in 2019, emerging again in headlines in 2021 following a political crisis and a 7.2 magnitude earthquake Earthquakes in 1994, 2010 and 2021 have added to all the

¹ Lawless, R., 2021. Haiti. *Britannica*, [online] Available at: <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Haiti>> [Accessed 14 October 2021].

misery that Haitian population is facing due to political crises. The original natives of the Hispaniola island (Haiti and Dominican Republic) were the Taino tribe. The island has a history of colonisation by various colonial powers. Since Christopher Columbus' arrival 1492 the island was a Spanish colony till 1697. The original natives were treated with cruelty as laborers and slaves.² The Spanish colonisers also exploited the gold reserves on the island. Soon after evidence of profitability, the French outcompeted the Spanish for control of the island. The French-Spanish rivalry had a grave impact on the residents of the island. Haiti witnessed its first ever revolution to free itself between 1789-1804. Via this revolution, Haiti became an independent nation after 300 years as it successfully freed itself from French colonisers. Yet, the country paid a heavy price to achieve independence as its economic lifeline, agriculture was destroyed. The infrastructure was also completely devastated. Such chaos resulted in a pseudo-peace and triggered a civil war in the nation which ended with Haiti being in billions of dollars of deficit. The country was able to pay the debt back only by 1947. Post-Independence political struggle was also a serious concern for the interest of the nation. The tug-of-war for power between Henri Christopher and Alexandre Petion divided the nation in South Haiti and North Haiti. The partition of the country came with differences in economic as well as social stability. In the South, the average Haitian was an isolated, poor, free and relatively inferior layman, whereas in the North, the average Haitian was a resentful but comparatively prosperous resident, but still a labourer at best.³

Moreover, the Americans, the French, and others, tried to gain a dominant hand in internal politics. This resulted in huge scale corruption and exploitation of local citizens. One such example is when the President Sam in 1915 was killed and his body parts were showcased in rallies by the protesters. Such violence was a good excuse for US troops to enter the nation. The agitation among the Haitian population was fueled by the PARSLEY massacre where the neighbouring Dominican force killed nearly 30,000 Haitian civilians residing near the border area.⁴ Since then, the country has experienced a series of elections, with most elected members being exiled and re-elected. The country had a free election in 2004, which was also not free from bloodshed. The country was cursed with severe natural calamities, which devastated agricultural cultivation. Famine, drought and lack of proper governing system have resulted in a lot suffering and death among the Haitian people. There is no accurate data

² "Political And Economic History Of Haiti". 2021. *San Jose State University, Department Of Economics*.
<https://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/haiti.htm>.

³ Reuters. 2021. "Haiti's History Of Violence And Disasters" <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/haitis-history-violence-rebellion-2021-07-23/>.

⁴ Davis, Nick. 2012. "The Massacre That Marked Haiti-Dominican Republic Ties". *BBC News*, 2012.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-19880967>.

on the human and social loss in Haiti through the various crises it has faced.⁵

Compared with the political history of Haiti, which faced several crises, the economic history of the nation is simple. The nation's economy was purely based on farming and tourism. Due to increasing violence and political instability, the tourism sector was totally ruptured, and agriculture was badly affected. Hence, the violent political situation of the nation dragged the economy down. The 2010 earthquake hit densely populated sites of Haiti, and severely affected its population, nearly 80 % of whom survives on the threshold of poverty. The 7.0 magnitude earthquake left thousands killed and several others homeless.⁶ Such natural disasters are all too often followed by violence, gang-based massacres, and human rights abuses. A subsequent cholera outbreak killed nearly 10,000, as lack of medical supplies, food, and water shortage further deteriorated the situation.

Nearly 75 percent of the Haitian population is below the age of 40 and at least 50 percent below the age of 25. Although the youth is a vital resource of a nation, they are unemployed, poor and uneducated. Unstable social life and chaotic governance has frustrated the young population, who often display their anger through violence. The recent condition of the nation threatens to plunge the already troubled nation into a deeper crisis. The recent political instability, pandemic and earthquake have resulted in mass-migrations out of the country.⁷ The ongoing Haitian crisis is a product of a toxic combination of colonialism, neoliberalism, resource exploitation and climate change. The environmental degradation, resulting in natural calamities like drought and hurricane dates to French colonial rule when the land and forests were abused rendering large swaths of the nation barren and infertile. The United States interference, as discussed above, has still not ended. With nearly two decades of occupation, frequent interference with its internal as well as external policies, the US has also backed the unpopular president, triggering the frustration of the Haitian population. The country already has a track record of not having a peaceful transition of power and hence, the killing of the President has pushed Haiti into bloodshed with riots and gang wars. The capital city of Port-Au-Prince has no police or law enforcement agencies and is governed at the mercy of prominent war lords.⁸ \$20 billion worth of oil has been extracted from Haiti by American corporations, creating no jobs for the locals. The country finds itself in an unpredictable situation. There is a power struggle by

⁵ Reuters. 2021. "Haiti's History Of Violence And Disasters", , 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/haitis-history-violence-rebellion-2021-07-23/>.

⁶ Henley, John. 2010. "Haiti: A Long Descent To Hell". *The Guardian*, , 2010. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/14/haiti-history-earthquake-disaster>.

⁷ The Concern. 2021. "TIMELINE: HAITI'S HISTORY AND CURRENT CRISIS, EXPLAINED", , 2021. <https://www.concernusa.org/story/timeline-haiti-history/>.

⁸ Ibid

two contenders for being Prime Minister, with gang violence being in the background. Such a condition is an alarm for a deeper crisis that the country is set to face.

Conclusion

The country of Haiti has been under power struggle since the start of the 15th century. After been exploited by various colonial powers, the country has also experienced series of internal disturbance, which were an outcome of indefinite power struggle, ranging from the time of President Sam to the as recent as the assassination of President Moise in 2021. Such unstable government has resulted in further chaos in the country. Political instabilities are compounded by natural calamities in the form of drought, earthquake, and famines. The economy as well as medical infrastructure have completely collapsed. The economy, backed by agriculture and tourism, has been severely impacted by the crisis. The medical infrastructure is ill-equipped to address the spread of cholera and COVID-19. These crises have generated anger and violent responses among the Haitian citizens, especially the youth. As a result, Haiti is set to face one of the most serious crises of all time.

Political Chaos: Moïse's Assassination

Femi Ann Varghese

On July 7, 2021, the world woke up to the news of the assassination of Jovenel Moïse, the President of Haiti. He was elected to the office in February 2017 and was supposed to remain in office until February 2022. However, on July 7, 2021, he was assassinated by a group of foreign assassins, mostly ex-servicemen who served in the National Army of Colombia. Initial investigations revealed that the conspiracy for the assassination has international roots but increasing evidence also shows the involvement of Haitian nationals. The investigation is still underway. This presentation discussed the political conditions during his tenure, the planning process, and the assassination, who the suspects are, and the current political climate of Haiti.

Moïse's Presidency

Moïse was preceded by President Michel Martelly and the interim President Jocelerme Privert. Michel Martelly chose Moïse as his successor and the presidential candidate of his center-right political party, Haitian Tèt Kale Party. In the elections held in November 2015, Moïse received 32.8% of the total votes. As per the election laws of Haiti, to be declared elected, the candidate must get more than 50% of the total votes cast, that is a simple majority, in the elections. If not, a second run-off election will happen where the two candidates which secured the highest number of votes in the first election will compete, so that one of them can attain a simple majority. Pointing out to the discrepancy between the election results and exit polls, where Moïse received only around 6% of the votes, Moïse's political opponents claimed that the election was rigged. Widespread protests and violence followed. This resulted in the postponement of the run-off election and later, the whole election itself was nulled⁹.

As President Martelly's term of office came to an end in February 2016, special elections were held within the Parliament. Subsequently, Jocelerme Privert was appointed as the interim President. He was to hold office until the next President was democratically elected. Fresh elections to the office of the President happened in November 2016. In the first round itself, Moïse received 55.67% of the

⁹ Charles, Jacqueline. 2015. *Célestin disputes Haiti election results; supporters protest*. November 6. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/haiti/article43531653.html>.

total votes cast thereby fulfilling the criterion of attaining a simple majority by beating out 26 other candidates¹⁰. Thus, Moïse was appointed President.

If the political conditions until the assumption of office of the President by Moïse were bad, during his tenure, they became worse. Moïse faced several challenges to his mandate from the opposition politicians and from the public. There were widespread violent anti-government protests, especially after the tax hikes and rising fuel prices. Many of Moïse's policies served his private interests. He tried to reform the constitution to remove certain checks and balances in order to strengthen his presidency. A Senate report also accused Moïse of embezzling funds from a Venezuela-based Petrocaribe oil program. The protests and violence caused Haiti to enter a countrywide lockdown by 2019 during which calls for his resignation mounted. Moïse postponed the legislative elections originally scheduled to happen on October 2021 to September 2021 on the ground of insecurity. From 2020 onwards, he began to rule by decree¹¹.

Towards the end of 2020 a constitutional crisis occurred over the differences of opinion over the span of his office. Since the original date for the election was supposed to be in November 2015, many especially the political opposition claimed that his office ends in February 2021. However, Moïse and his supporters claimed that since the election happened on November 2016, he could rule till February 2022. In February 2021 around the time when everyone claimed that his office would come to an end there was a coup attempt to establish a parallel government and an attempt on his life. However, Moïse acted swiftly and foiled their plans¹².

Planning for the Assassination

According to ongoing investigations, the planning for Moïse's assassination began in Florida around mid-May 2021 during a meeting dedicating to overthrowing Moïse. The meeting was attended by Christian Emmanuel Sanon, a Haitian American doctor and pastor, Walter Veintemilla and Antonio Intriago. Walter Veintemilla owns the Worldwide Investment Development Group, which along with Christine Emmanuel Sanon raised funds for the assassination. Antonio Intriago is the owner of CTU

¹⁰ 2016. *Haiti presidential election 'won by Jovenel Moïse'*. November 29. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-38140316>.

¹¹ Danticat, Edwidge. 2021. *The Assassination of Haiti's President*. July 14. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-assassination-of-haitis-president>.

¹² Angelo, Paul J., and David Gevarter. 2021. *The Assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse: What to Know*. July 14. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/assassination-haitian-president-jovenel-moise-what-know>.

security. Both the companies were based in Florida. During the meeting, Sanon introduced his initiative called “The Dawn of New Haiti,” an economic stimulus which he plans to implement once he becomes the president after the assassination of President Moïse. The three reached an agreement wherein Sanon will be protected by CTU security until he becomes the next president in return for funds by selling assets in Haiti once he becomes the President.

The CTU security company hired ex Colombian servicemen of the National Army of Colombia on the pretext that they will be providing security for someone important. However, only a few of them knew about the actual assassination plan. After the assassination occurred, the United States identified a few of the assassins as having received training from the US Department of Defense¹³. Two Haitian Americans were also hired. After being caught they claimed that they had been hired as translators and that they were not aware of the assassination plans. The assassins reached Haiti in smaller groups at different times. Few Haitian nationals involved in the conspiracy provided local support through the arrangement for arms and other equipment necessary for the assassination. They also provided accommodation in a building close to the President's private residence¹⁴.

The Assassination

The assassins' plan was to enter Moïse's private residence at Port-au-Prince at night under the pretense that they were agents of the US Drug Enforcement Administration who had an arrest warrant for the President. Videos taken by the neighbors and the First Lady's testimony provides evidence for what occurred. The assassins entered Moïse's compound at around 1:00 AM. They dressed up as agents from the Drug Enforcement Administration. Subsequently, they disarmed Moïse's security with little to no resistance from them which warrants further investigation. The president was shot at least 12 times and he died on spot. The First Lady Martine Moïse who was present with the president at that time also suffered from multiple shots on arms and thighs and injury on her abdomen. Yet, she survived. Their daughter hid in her brother's bathroom and escaped unharmed. Their two maids were tied up, but they were not attacked¹⁵. After the attacks, the assassins searched through files in the

¹³ Lemaire, Sandra, Jeff Seldin, and Jorge Agobian. 2021. *Pentagon: Some Colombians Arrested in Moïse Assassination Probe Received US Military Training*. July 15. Accessed October 6, 2021. voanews.com/a/usa_pentagon-some-colombians-arrested-moise-assassination-probe-received-us-military-training/6208303.html.

¹⁴ Boburg, Shawn. 2021. *Records reveal how Haitian American held in assassination probe financed a 'personal security' team*. July 15. Accessed October 6, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2021/07/15/haiti-president-sanon-security-team/>.

¹⁵ March, Leonardo. 2021. *Preliminary Trauma Report*. July 13. Accessed October 7, 2021. <https://haitiantimes.com/2021/07/13/preliminary-trauma-report/>.

house and robbed the house¹⁶, possibly to deviate attention from the original intention of the assassination and portray it as a robbery gone wrong.

The Manhunt

The Haitian national police searched for and engaged the assassins within the next 24 hours. Following intense gunfights, four of the suspects were killed and twenty of them were arrested. Some policemen were taken hostage and the police surrounded the building where they were hiding. The angry civilians joined the search for the culprits. They found two of the mercenaries hiding in the bushes. Eleven of the assassins broke into Taiwan's embassy that was situated close to the late President's house. When Taiwan waived extraterritoriality, the police entered the compound and arrested them without any resistance from their side.¹⁷ Investigations are underway to unearth the conspirators and the real intentions. It has been proved that the assassins were in it for purely monetary motivations.

Suspects

The assassins including 18 Colombians and two Haitian Americans were arrested. Colombian officials say that most of them were misled into the assassination and that themselves were victims and that, only four of them had prior knowledge about the conspiracy. Some members of Moïse's security detail and the Haitian police are also suspected to be involved in the assassination plot, especially since they escaped unharmed. Other suspects include Christian Emmanuel Sanon, Antonio Intriago, and Walter Veintemilla. Gilbert Dragon, the leader of a former rebel group named National Revolutionary Front for the Liberation and Reconstruction of Haiti; Senator John Joel Joseph, who participated in meetings and helped arrange weapons; John Felix Badio, a former employee of the Ministry of Justice and public security and also the government's anti-corruption department; Rudolphe Jaar, a businessman and drug trafficker - he attended a meeting with other suspects regarding the mission; Wendell Coq Thelot, a former Supreme Court judge – the assassins claimed

¹⁶ Robles, Frances. 2021. *They Thought I Was Dead': Haitian President's Widow Recounts Assassination*. July 30. Accessed October 7, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/30/world/americas/haiti-assassination-martine-moise-interview.html>.

¹⁷ 2021. *Haiti president's assassination: What we know so far*. September 14. Accessed October 7 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-57762246>.

that meetings were held in her house¹⁸. Recently Ariel Henry, the present interim Prime Minister, was also named as a suspect.

Funeral

The funeral of the late President was conducted on July 23, 2021, in his family compound near Cap Haitien. Many hoped that the assassination of the president will bring the Haitian people together. Unfortunately, that was not the case as violence erupted between the supporters and opponents of Moïse. The funeral happened amidst a tense atmosphere, as protestors tried to prevent mourners from attending the event. The mourners staged a protest against Haitian officials and politicians ultimately leading to firing of gunshots and tear gas.¹⁹

The Aftermath of the Assassination

The government's immediate response was to close the Toussaint Louverture International Airport. Upon hearing rumors that the US was giving out free visas for the Haitian nationals, many approached the US embassy to seek asylum in the US out of increased sense of insecurity caused by the assassination of Moïse. The Dominican Republic shut down all international transport with Haiti and closed the land borders to prevent the entry of Haitian refugees²⁰. Many states expressed the condolences, while the US and Colombia offered to send some of their senior officials to help with the case.

Naturally, the power tussle over succession to the offices of both the President and the Prime Ministers began immediately. After some initial friction, Ariel Henry assumed office as the interim Prime Minister. There was also a political tug of war between Moïse's allies and opponents. His supporters claimed that his assassination was ordered by the ruling elite as well as the business elite out of fear that Moïse is undermining their privileges while his opponents state that it was because of

¹⁸ Esposito, Anthony. 2021. *Haiti since the assassination of President Moïse*. Edited by Daniel Wallis. August 14. Accessed October 7, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/haiti-one-month-without-assassinated-president-jovenel-moise-2021-08-06/>.

¹⁹ 2021. *Jovenel Moïse: Unrest mars funeral of assassinated Haitian leader*. July 23. Accessed October 7, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-57915760>.

²⁰ 2021. *Haiti - DR : Luis Abinader closes the border with Haiti and convenes the military commanders*. July 7. Accessed October 7, 2021. <https://www.icihaiti.com/en/news-34164-haiti-dr-luis-abinader-closes-the-border-with-haiti-and-convenes-the-military-commanders.html>.

Moïse's poor consensus-building skills, tendency towards autocracy, and hostility towards areas that were hostile to his administration. Gang violence and racial violence have also increased. Ariel Henry has not asserted his control over the government yet, and gangs filled the gap that was left by a weak government. Kidnapping for ransom has become a common sight. There is increased emigration from Haiti to neighboring countries owing to insecurity, poverty, and hunger.

Succession Troubles

For the appointment of the new President in such an eventuality, the Haitian Constitution has prescribed two methods – the National Assembly will elect another president or the Council of Ministers under the leadership of the Prime Minister may exercise the executive power until the election of another president.²¹ The first option is not possible because the assembly is essentially defunct following the delay in the legislative elections, so the second option is being followed.

There was little confusion regarding the appointment of the Prime Minister. Claude Joseph was the acting Prime Minister at the time of Moïse's death. The complication emerged as a few days before his death, Moïse chose Ariel Henry to replace Claude Joseph. But Henry was not officially sworn into the office. Henry initially stopped his contention to the office stating that he wants to avoid a conflict that could worsen the situation in the country and gave way to Claude Joseph.²² Some of the Senators and a dozen political parties supported Joseph Lambert, a Senator, for President.²³ Claude Joseph asserted that he did not want any power struggle on this behalf.²⁴

On July 17, a 'core group' consisting of a group of prominent ambassadors to Haiti from Brazil, the European Union, France, Germany, Spain, and the United States, and also the representatives to Haiti from the Organization of American States expressed their support for Ariel Henry to form the government as Prime Minister. On July 19, Claude Joseph told the media that he would relinquish

²¹ Bojarski, Sam. 2021. *Line of succession unclear following Haiti President Moïse assassination*. July 7. Accessed October 7, 2021. <https://haitiantimes.com/2021/07/07/line-of-succession-unclear-following-moise-assassination/>.

²² Méheut, Constant, Catherine Porter, Natalie Kitroeff, and Michael Crowley. 2021. *Fears of political tumult grow in the wake of the assassination*. July 8. Accessed October 7, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/08/world/americas/fears-of-political-tumult-grow-in-the-wake-of-the-assassination.html>.

²³ Méheut, Constant. 2021. *The leader of Haiti's Senate is among those vying for power*. July 11. Accessed October 8, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/11/world/americas/joseph-lambert-senate-president.html>.

²⁴ 2021. *Haiti senators nominate Joseph Lambert as president*. July 10. Accessed October 7, 2021. <https://www.dw.com/en/haiti-senators-nominate-joseph-lambert-as-president/a-58222978>.

power. Ariel Henry was sworn in as the Prime Minister on July 20.²⁵

Recent Developments

On August 11, the local media reported that Haiti's election had been postponed to November 7, 2021. On August 14, an earthquake and heavy storm accompanied by landslides and floods wreaked havoc in the country killing and displacing thousands.²⁶ This event deepened the social, economic, and political crisis Haiti was facing.

In mid-September, Joseph Lambert tried to become President. He invited the local media to the Parliament to live broadcast his swearing-in ceremony. A gunfight broke out preventing him from entering the Parliament building. The move drew criticism from the international community led by the US. They presented a united front and warned the Senator against taking over the presidency without broader national consensus²⁷.

In an interesting turn of events, Haiti's chief prosecutor, Bedford Claude issued police summons to Prime Minister Ariel Henry upon receiving evidence that he had contacted one of the suspects in the hours that followed the assassination of Moïse. Henry quickly removed the prosecutor from his post. The investigation is now in the hands of a judge. Haitian law does not permit judicial officials to prosecute senior civil servants without the permission of the country's leader – who is now is Ariel Henry.²⁸

Conclusion

As time passes, leads grow cold, suspects vanish, irregularities crop up in the evidence. Evidence tampering is also a possibility. Suspects who are part of the ruling elite are using their political power to obstruct the investigation process. The investigation is degrading into a political power struggle between competing factions as they are using Moïse's assassination as a political tool to attack their

²⁵ Esposito, Anthony. 2021. *Haiti since the assassination of President Moïse*. Edited by Daniel Wallis. August 14. Accessed October 7, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/haiti-one-month-without-assassinated-president-jovenel-moise-2021-08-06/>.

²⁶ Esposito, Anthony. 2021. *Haiti since the assassination of President Moïse*. Edited by Daniel Wallis. August 14. Accessed October 7, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/haiti-one-month-without-assassinated-president-jovenel-moise-2021-08-06/>.

²⁷ Wyss, Jim. 2021. *Cabinet Defection, Senate Chief's Power Play Deepen Haiti Crisis*. September 16. Accessed October 7, 2021. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-09-15/cabinet-defection-senate-chief-s-power-play-deepen-haiti-crisis>.

²⁸ 2021. *Haiti PM sacks justice minister amid murder inquiry*. September 16. Accessed October 7, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-58571315>.

opponents. The whole incident has also displayed the influence foreign countries have in dictating the course of Haitian domestic politics, an argument often raised by Moïse when he was in power.

Discussion

Prof. Pankaj Jha: What is the best possible next step in Haiti's politics?

Femi Ann Varghese: Considering its present situation, Haiti's condition can be improved only by a legitimate government that is democratically elected. However, because of the increased gang violence and influence, and poor law and order situation, exacerbated by the damages caused by natural disasters, it is too insecure to conduct credible elections. Even if elections are held as per the schedule, it may not be free and fair. Even the voter turnout may be very low. Consequently, the elected government may lack legitimacy. Alternatively, a government led by leaders who are not democratically elected may tend to become more authoritarian. Military intervention too may not produce desirable results. During his tenure, Moïse has raised public opinion against foreign dependence. Therefore, chances are high that people might rebel. Besides, a foreign military intervention may not appear attractive to other countries as they have little or nothing to gain from it in Haiti. In my opinion, the best next step could be establishing a transitional government which could bring about the much-needed reforms and addressing the many pressing problems.

Prof. Pankaj Jha: What political future does the US prefer for Haiti?

Femi Ann Varghese: The actions of the White House indicate that the US is on the side of democracy. It is visible when the US backed Ariel Henry to become the Prime Minister and when it retributed Joseph Lambert as he tried to swear in as the President. The US wants any decisive action on the political front to be based on broader national consensus. It has urged and expressed its support for free and fair elections to take place in Haiti.

Atri Patel: Had Moïse been alive, would the political situation in Haiti become any different?

Femi Ann Varghese: Haiti's witnessed severe political crisis and violence during the tenure of Moïse. There was also social and economic crisis in Haiti which was still reeling from the devastating earthquakes of 2010. Evidently, during Moïse's presidency, Haiti's condition changed from bad to worse. Moïse's death and inability of Henry to exert control over Haiti have made Haiti weaker than before. Insecurity among its citizens is widespread with many people leaving the country seeking asylum in other countries. In short, to say that Haiti's situation has worsened is completely incorrect as since Moïse assumed office, Haiti has been a failing state.

Impact of COVID-19 on the Haitian Crisis

Ishita Joshi

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all sectors of society across the world. No country has been able to escape from its adverse effects. Although, the magnitude of adversity has varied from country to country.

Economy

Haiti is one of the poorest countries among Latin American and Caribbean countries²⁹. The Haitian economy was expected to contract by 1% per capita in 2019 even before the pandemic. The government's order to shutter firms exacerbated the economic situation. Communities with quarantines, company closures, and reduction in remittances, which are vital to Haiti's economy. Although these measures were taken to reduce the spread of COVID-19, the pandemic's woes made the situation worse for Haitians. The pandemic led to the closure of various international borders halting the international markets and reducing trade as countries adopted policies of protectionism. Economy of Latin American countries are highly dependent on trade of raw materials which was affected due to disruptions caused by the pandemic³⁰. Haitians rely highly on informal economy for functioning which is based on community markets and local trade. COVID-19 reduced this local trade because of curfews³¹. The Haitian government is also economically weak and after introducing curfews, and closures they had no means to provide economic support or aid to their employees, workers and labourers.

²⁹ Jake Johnston and Kira Paulemon, "COVID-19 in Haiti — The Current Response and Challenges," *Center for Economic and Policy Research*, March 27, 2020, https://www.cepr.net/covid-19-in-haiti-the-current-response-and-challenges/?_cf_chl_jschl_tk=_pmd_8vU0Oqa7o7n8jCBmP8sh.ADUZ5fiGbDJbt_enwy6Lyc-1634485225-0-gqNtZGzNAnujcnBsZQkl.

³⁰ Østebø, Peder, and Vegard Bye. "COVID-19 in Latin America: Challenges, Responses, and Consequences." *Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)*, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25733>.

³¹ Jake Johnston and Kira Paulemon, "COVID-19 in Haiti — The Current Response and Challenges,"

Assassination of Jovenel Moise

The assassination of the Haitian president Jovenel Moise unleashed hurdles in an already disturbed society in Haiti. The absence of a strong government and incapable handling of COVID-19 has worsened the political climate. An immense toll was placed on the already battered Haitian health care system. To add to the political instability, Haiti's international relations were impacted as well. According to Article 42³² of the United States constitution, US has led deportation flights of Haitian immigrants. There is no surprise considering the popularity of anti-immigration views in the US. This move is morally questionable on humanitarian grounds. But an official government response or retaliation by Haiti is highly unlikely given their positions in the international sphere. Haiti cannot afford any rivalry with a country like United States, especially when Haiti needs humanitarian and economic aid from the US. The failure of the Haitian state to respond properly to the crisis is linked to a history of foreign dominance, occupation, and exploitation, as well as decades of foreign assistance programmes that have weakened the state's capability.

Insecurity and Covid-19

The insecurity³³ and the chaotic political climate in Haiti worsened impacting healthcare and the COVID-19 response. Incidents of kidnappings and killings of doctors and nurses along with destruction of hospital property by violent gangs increased rapidly.³⁴ These incidents have led to strikes and protests by medical officials and workers asking for better protection and safety. Lack of job and employment opportunities has increased criminal activities like kidnapping for ransom to get money.

Healthcare and Covid-19

The healthcare system of Haiti was already incapable to handle a pandemic before insecurity and

³² Ricker, Tom. "Huge increase in removals of people from Haiti part of the Title 42 nightmare" Quixote Center. October 23, 2020. <https://www.quixote.org/huge-increase-in-removals-of-people-from-haiti-part-of-the-title-42-nightmare/>

³³ "The World Bank in Haiti" *The World Bank*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/haiti/overview#1>

³⁴ Mark Stevenson, "Gangs Abduct 2 Doctors in Haiti, Including a Needed Surgeon," *Associated Press*. August 19, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/caribbean-haiti-gangs-7e3768c0facf523ec085ab592fd1c47c>.

other factors destroyed it even further. The healthcare system is insufficient for its population of 11 million. They have approximately 124 ICU beds and 64 ventilators which is nowhere enough to handle a pandemic. The lack of medical supplies and protective measures have also led to doctors refusing to work exacerbating the negative impacts of Covid-19. In many areas of Haiti healthcare is highly dependent on funding from international organisations rather than the government. This creates a highly fragmented medical system based on the various sources of funding.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that Covid-19 has affected almost all sectors of society including economy, healthcare, politics as well as human rights of the citizens. Despite some international aid, Haiti is nowhere near at improving its worst affected areas. Natural disasters including earthquake and hurricanes have added to the problems. Haiti has been in constant turmoil due to one crisis after another that continues to affect its resources, and capability to handle not only Covid-19 but all other sectors that are inter-related. There are also discrepancies when understanding Covid-19 and its impact in Haiti. Statistics are inaccurate and investigations have been inadequate, as much focus has been on Haiti's political situation after the assassination of the president.

Civil Unrest in Haiti

Palak Minda

This paper centre around the civil unrest faced by the Haitian people. It elaborately discusses how the government, socio-economic situation, natural disasters as well as the gang violence which persists in Haiti led to the current humanitarian crisis experienced by the people. It focuses on Jovenel Moïse's regime and the incidents which took place post his accession as the President.

Reasons behind the unrest and crime in the nation

Haiti is one of the poorest nations of the world.³⁵ Even today, the repercussions of the Duvalier dictatorship is being faced by the country. It has been more than 30 years of fall of that regime, yet the nation is struggling to make ends meet. Widespread poverty, corrupt institutions, underdevelopment, authoritarianism, corruption, human rights abuses remain prevalent issues in the country.³⁶ While the nation was overcoming the t2010 earthquake, the 2016 hurricane Matthew, and a cholera epidemic, President Jovenel Moïse came to power under the shadow of suspected embezzlement and fraud. This led to a large scale outrage by the already suffering public.³⁷

Further, the revenue generation strategy of the government in 2017-18 sparked extensive protests on the streets of Haiti. The approved policy agenda of May 2017 aimed at reconstructing government buildings and institutions in Port-au-Prince, including the presidential palace since these got destroyed in 2010 earthquake. For such development, fuel subsidies provided by the government were ended leading to an increase in fuel prices by at least 20%. Further, in September 2017, the government increased numerous taxes in the 2018 budget to raise the government revenue. Consequently, several local and national transportation unions conducted strikes leading to a withdrawal of a proposed

³⁵ "Hurricane Matthew: Haiti Storm Disaster Kills Hundreds." BBC News. BBC, October 7, 2016. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-37582009>.

³⁶ Morales, Maureen Taft. "Haiti's Political and Economic Conditions." *Congressional Research Service*, 2019.

³⁷ "Haiti Development Bill: Aiding the Political and Economic Situation." *BORGEN*, 9 Sept. 2021, <https://www.borgenmagazine.com/haitis-political-and-economic-situation/>.

increase in transport related tax. By end 2017, hundreds of people had taken to the street protesting against fraud, embezzlement, corruption and the new revenue policy. The people wanted the regime to direct their focus towards strengthening the health care and education system of the region through the funds accumulated rather than redeveloping buildings during this time of crisis.³⁸

In November 2017, a detailed report of embezzlement and fraud against numerous current and former Haitian officials was issued. Owing to public pressure and dissatisfaction, Moïse fired some high-ranking officers connected to the scandal. Further, proposal of rise in fuel prices in 2018 led to another series of protests.³⁹ When asked, a civilian claimed “We’re fighting against a system where we can’t eat and we don’t get paid. That’s why we’ve taken to the streets.” He further stated that “The president [Moïse] isn’t working for us. He’s no friend of the people – only of the bourgeoisie and businessmen, while we live in poverty.”⁴⁰ The previous humanitarian crisis owing to the earthquake and the hurricane further deteriorated owing to this economic, social and security crisis in the region. Prolonged period of unrest and protests led to an eight month lockdown, resulting in a complete shutdown of socio-economic activities in the country.⁴¹ A direct consequence of such roadblocks was a halt in the humanitarian assistance provided to the people. The unrest between September and October 2019 led to numerous deaths. However, since the supply chain got disrupted owing to the roadblocks, proper medical aid was not provided to the injured or the people in general. Health care facilities had become scarce. The lockdown further led to a shutdown of economic activities and degraded the market, leading to the devaluation of the currency and a massive hike in food prices. Earning livelihood in this already poor nation became close to impossible. Since schools were shut due to the lockdown, the education sector also deteriorated. Furthermore, kidnappings and violence by gangs increased during this time, as gangs took advantage of the socio-economic and political situation to accumulate more power.⁴² Gang violence further delayed food, medicine, fuel supply and humanitarian assistance to the areas.⁴³ State-linked gang related crimes increased by 200% from 2019

³⁸ Morales, Maureen Taft. “Haiti’s Political and Economic Conditions.” *Congressional Research Service*, 2019.

³⁹ Morales, Maureen Taft. “Haiti’s Political and Economic Conditions.” *Congressional Research Service*, 2019.

⁴⁰ Beaumont, Peter. “Guns, Gangs and Foreign Meddling: How Life in Haiti Went from Bad to Worse.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 19 July 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jul/19/guns-gangs-and-bad-aid-haitis-crisis-reaches-full-throttle>.

⁴¹ “Haiti: Civil Unrest (MDRHT017) Dref Final Report - Haiti.” *ReliefWeb*, 17 Apr. 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/haiti-civil-unrest-mdrht017-dref-final-report>.

⁴² “Haiti: Civil Unrest (MDRHT017) Dref Final Report - Haiti.” *ReliefWeb*, 17 Apr. 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/haiti-civil-unrest-mdrht017-dref-final-report>.

to 2020. Murders had tremendously increased leading to large migration out of the country.⁴⁴

Amidst this, Moïse kept gaining more power. Legislative elections had been postponed indefinitely by the electoral council of Haiti in October 2019. Since the mandate expired in January 2020, Moïse's government was ruling by decree from then onwards. Further, he passed several decrees to remove judges from their position. This was in violation of Haiti's constitution. He went against the mandate of the constitution and appointed new individuals to fill these positions. Moïse also wished to draft a new constitution for the nation so as to bring reforms in the system. He claimed that such changes were a prerequisite for the growth of Haiti as a nation. He stated that removal of the position of the Prime Minister was of much importance since such individuals were not directly elected therefore, giving them so much power was not appropriate. Under the Constitution, the president is not empowered to take such a step.⁴⁵ Moreover, the new draft of the constitution aimed to give excessive powers to the executive. Some of these reforms also defined some forms of street protests as "terrorism."⁴⁶

Opposition regarding the tenure of the President

Owing to the Moïse's policies, the people of Haiti protested, asking for the President to step down. The people claimed that Moïse had to give up his position as his tenure officially ended in 2020. He won the election in November 2016 and took office on 7 February 2017. According to Article 134 (1) of the Constitution of Haiti, "the duration of the presidential mandate is five years. This period begins and ends on the February 7 following the date of elections." Further, Article 134(2) states that, "in case the vote cannot take place before February 7, the elected president takes office immediately after the vote is confirmed and his mandate is expected to begin on February 7 in the year of the election". This led to immense confusion regarding the end date of his tenure as a President. Civilians claimed that his term ended in 2020 while, the Superior Council of Judicial Power, Haitian Bar Federation,

⁴³ "ACAPS Briefing Note: Haiti: Gang Violence (14 July 2021) - Haiti." *ReliefWeb*, 15 July 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/acaps-briefing-note-haiti-gang-violence-14-july-2021>.

⁴⁴ Herlinger, Chris. "Haiti's Civil Unrest Reaches Chaotic, Disruptive Point." *Global Sisters Report*, 2 Dec. 2019, <https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/world/ministry/news/haitis-civil-unrest-reaches-chaotic-disruptive-point>.

⁴⁵ Joseph, Ralph Thomassaint. "What Is Happening in Haiti, Where Political Crisis Persists?" *Politics News / Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 28 Feb. 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/28/what-is-happening-in-haiti-political-crisis-persists>.

⁴⁶ Cheatham, Amelia. "Haiti's Protests: Images Reflect Latest Power Struggle." *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations, 3 May 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/article/haitis-protests-images-reflect-latest-power-struggle>.

and Quisqueya University have said that Moïse's term ended in February 2021⁴⁷. The COVID-19 situation in conjunction with the ongoing humanitarian crisis drove the country to a point of irretrievable damage especially to its institutions and systems.⁴⁸

Assassination of the President

President Moïse was assassinated in his own house on the 7th of July 2021. It is alleged that a group of foreign mercenaries are behind this murder. The said group supposedly comprised of two Haitian Americans and 26 Colombians. The Haitian Americans confessed to the interrogators that they were hired on the internet. They had no clue about the assassination plan and believed that their job was to interpret the Spanish language of the Colombians since the Haitian officials only spoke French and Creole. They claimed that they had an arrest warrant against the president.⁴⁹

Further, the Colombians were identified as former soldiers. The family of the Colombians stated that they believed that the individuals were appointed "to provide security" to Haiti. Moreover, on July 11, the police believed that they had caught a "key suspect" in the case. They announced the same as Police chief Léon Charles stated that Christian Emmanuel Sanon, a Haitian national had appointed these 26 Columbian men out of the 28 member hit squad through CTU, a Maimi based company which is managed by Tony Intriago, a Venezuelan national. One of the 26 men claimed that they received a call from Emmanuel Sanon exactly when the police came to arrest them. The police also believed that Mr. Sanon came to Haiti with the "political motives" of being its next president. It was presumed that he manipulated the Colombians as well as the Haitian Americans to fulfil the task. It was further seen that Mr. Sanon was in possession of extensive ammunition, numerous weapons as well as a Drug Enforcement Administration cap. The police chief claimed that "The initial mission that was given to these assailants was to protect the individual named Emmanuel Sanon, but afterwards the mission changed." However, it is still unclear whether the appointed individuals were kept in the loop about the change or not. So far, approximately 44 people have been arrested under

⁴⁷ Joseph, Ralph Thomassaint. "What Is Happening in Haiti, Where Political Crisis Persists?" *Politics News / Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 28 Feb. 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/28/what-is-happening-in-haiti-political-crisis-persists>.

⁴⁸ "ACAPS Briefing Note: Haiti: Gang Violence (14 July 2021) - Haiti." *ReliefWeb*, 15 July 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/acaps-briefing-note-haiti-gang-violence-14-july-2021>.

⁴⁹ "Haiti President's Assassination: What We Know so Far." *BBC News*, BBC, 14 Sept. 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-57762246>.

charges of being involved in the assassination and numerous other are being sought. Joseph Felix Badio, former employee in the anti-corruption unit of the Justice Ministry is also suspected however, he has been on a run since.⁵⁰

How gangs became strong and how they are important

After the President's death, the gangs of Haiti gained excessive power and control. Slowly and steadily these gangs kept increasing their power as the people protested against Moise's regime in 2019-20. Now, everything in the nation happens with the consent of these gangs.

Although immense humanitarian assistance is required by the people, nothing reached them owing to the surging gang violence. Taming the gangs is of utmost necessity for Haiti's smooth functioning. Previously, most of these gangs were financed by the political parties and their allies for effective control of the nation. The former election minister claimed "That's what keeps the gangs alive." He further stated "And that's why it's so hard to control them. You have to follow the money." However, post Moise's assassination, these gangs became more organised and powerful than ever. They indulge in crimes and murder to gain the funds required to carry out their activities. Civilians are used as human shields for their protection. But since most of the areas are under the effective control of these gangs, they would play a massive role in the upcoming elections as 60% of the electorate are residents of gang-controlled areas⁵¹

Gangs have begun blocking roads in numerous localities. This halted the delivery of food and first aid to people who are already going through immense poverty and a hunger crisis. Food for the Poor (FFTP), a facilitator of humanitarian assistance has been helping the civilians of Haiti for the past 35 years. Despite the earthquake, the hurricane and the president's assassination, they are trying to aid the people in one way or another. Owing to a complete shutdown of the southern routes of the country, they are unable to complete their food deliveries to more than 400 centres making the situation worse than what it already is. President Raine of FFTP stated "We have multiple examples of drivers being shot at and trucks being stopped." Gangs are willing to go to any extent to stop the aid. Raine further claimed that providing aid is a difficult in Haiti given its socio-economic and

⁵⁰ "Haiti President's Assassination: What We Know so Far." *BBC News*, BBC, 14 Sept. 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-57762246>.

⁵¹ Wyss, Jim. "Gangs Now Run Haiti, Filling a Vacuum Left by Years of Collapse." *Bloomberg.com*, Bloomberg, 2 Sept. 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-09-02/gangs-now-run-haiti-filling-a-vacuum-left-by-years-of-collapse>.

political situation and throwing gangs into the mix simply makes it beyond impossible.⁵² However, to bring an end to this gang violence would need massive funding and employment. The deteriorating economic situation of Haiti has worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, gangs have become the biggest employers in the nation. Therefore, ending the gang violence would require creating alternative job options for the civilians.⁵³

Conclusion

The Haitian people have been subjected to extreme exploitation by the state as well as the non-state actors. Lacombe, a farmer from Haiti said, “the poverty, the earthquake, the pandemic, the storms, the murder of the president and the gang violence all seem surreal.”⁵⁴ In my opinion, at this point of crisis, the only way ahead could be to first hold democratic elections to form a fully functional government. Then the regime would have to slowly create job opportunities for the people through external financial support and simultaneously eradicate the gang violence. However, this would require the state actors to completely cut down their dependency on such gangs. In absence of such a measure, Haiti would continue to suffer at the hands of stakeholders whose decisions are solely to fulfil their own selfish needs.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Foreign Interventions in Haiti

Pradyumn Singh Mephawat

When Haiti overthrew French authority in the 19th century, it became the first independent state of the colonial era in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the first Black-led republic. In 1915, US made the foreign intervention in Haiti to save the alleged disruption of Panama Canal. Intervention was justified under the pretence of German plans for Haiti during World War I, but by 1930, the US was under pressure to grant the island country autonomy. It happened because of US attempting to modernise the island, drawing the criticism of the native people.

Further in 1934, President Franklin Roosevelt withdrew US forces under the good neighbour policy, ensuring that continued political and financial influence over Haiti. Before the occupation, the Haitian government was largely controlled by a small elite. It appeared that the US was prioritising their interests while the US was pursuing its own interests as they saw Haiti as a potential naval base. Under the occupation, Haitian economy saw some stability. For instance, in 1922, a \$16 million US loan was secured to consolidate Haiti's foreign debts and their financial situation quickly recovered by efficient duty collection and settlement of obligations owed to US institutions.⁵⁵ Major infrastructure such as port facilities, roads, bridges, lighthouses, and harbours were also built. The US-made an enormous effort to provide contemporary health care to the Haitians, many of whom had never previously encountered trained doctors and nurses.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, education was mostly ignored under the occupation.

1994 Military intervention

In 1990, Haiti saw a watershed moment when Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected president. He pledged a change in Haiti's circumstances and simultaneously also challenged the country's elites. However, in 1991, a military coup demolished the Haitian hopes by sending Aristide to exile and rejecting his policies. Back in the US, Congressional Black Caucus urged President Clinton to intervene in Haitian fiasco and a diplomatic meeting with the junta coup commanders was set up. They, on the other hand, turned it down, causing Clinton to issue a military orders. On September

⁵⁵ Best, Jr. R, 'The U.S. Occupation Of Haiti, 1915-1934' (*Everycrsreport.com*)

https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/19940526_94-459_944aec5979ade3ff37b1abb7f44ed2aab96d4383.pdf

⁵⁶ Riley D, 'Democracy By Force: The Impact Of US Military Intervention On Democracy In Postcold War Haiti' (Stockholmes Universitet)

19th, the US military arrived in Haiti and stationed a regiment of roughly 20,000 soldiers.⁵⁷ The vast majority of the forces were provided by the US, Caribbean countries also agreeing to participate in UN-mandated operation. This resulted in a UN-sanctioned intervention instead of US military intervention. On March 31, 1995, the operation concluded with the handover of leadership to United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH), and on February 7, 1996, a peaceful election was held in which president Aristides was restored to office under the operation Uphold Democracy.⁵⁸ Aristide returned to a country that had changed dramatically. The economy was in shambles, infrastructure had been mostly destroyed by military pillage, and the country was a hotbed of corruption and anarchy. He was now obliged to appease powerful US actors as well as the still powerful paramilitaries. Many committed random acts of crime to undermine Aristide's new administration in favour of the plutocracy. In 1996, Aristide stepped down amicably, marking Haiti's first peaceful transition from one democratically elected government to another. Despite worldwide concerns about a return to Haitian dictatorship, Rene Préval (President) upheld the constitution and held new presidential elections in late 2000, before quietly stepping down in early 2001. In essence, the 1994 US intervention was the outcome of an internal political conflict inside the US: one big US polyarchal coalition sought to reinstate Aristide, while another significant coalition wanted to safeguard Haiti's plutocracy, which had grown vulnerable due to Haitian democracy. Thus, the US intervention was indecisive and contradictory.

2004 military intervention

The old Haitian aristocracy was shocked by the results of the May 2000 parliamentary elections, which saw Jean Bertrand Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas (FL) win a landslide victory, giving the party control of both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies (CD).⁵⁹ The elections were supervised by OAS, which found no anomalies and reported a 65 percent voter turnout. Given that Aristide and his former Prime Minister René Préval had dominated elections for the previous decade, Aristide's victory was unsurprising and legitimate. The US embassy in Haiti immediately removed OAS

⁵⁷ United Nations. 2010. "Our History." *United Nations Peacekeeping*. 2010. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/ourhistory>.

⁵⁸ "UNITED NATIONS MISSION in HAITI (UNMIH) - Background (Full Text)." n.d. Peacekeeping.un.org. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/past/unmihbackgr2.html>.

⁵⁹ "Timeline of Haitian Politics." 2010. Haiti Support Group. January 26, 2010. <https://haitisupportgroup.org/timeline-haitian-politics/>.

monitor (June Leon Manus) on June 16th for five days. When he came back his stance changed on the elections, and he announced that elections were not conducted properly. FL earned a resounding victory in the presidential elections in November, as expected. CD, on the other hand, boycotted the event, claiming that it was rigged. President Aristide promptly attempted power sharing deals to appease the elite menace undermining his legitimacy, but they were all flatly rejected. CD made it clear that they would not work with FL and would instead focus solely on delegitimizing Aristide's government. In December 2001, 33 gunmen led by former Haitian police chief Guy Philippe attempted but failed to attack the national penitentiary in Port-au-Prince. The US ambassador landed in the presidential palace on the night of February 28, 2004, with the UN's help. Aristide was given an ultimatum by US paramilitaries: leave the nation and resign, or he and many other Haitians will be slaughtered, and the country would be thrown into civil war. This left Aristide with no choice but to flee to the Central African Republic, where he was forced to submit to French administration.

Meanwhile, world powers intervened in Haiti, forming an interim government and refinancing the country. The UN's MINUSTAH mission was established to occupy and re-stabilize the nation, with the majority of the military coming from Latin America, led by Brazil. MINUSTAH's main purpose was to organise "free and fair elections," which took place in February 2006. The re-election of René Préval was a win for Haitian democracy. Despite reclaiming the presidency, Préval's 2006 government had relatively limited liberties, comparable to Aristide's after he was returned as president in 1994. The economy was once again in shambles because of prior sanctions and turmoil under Aristide, and Préval had little choice but to work with both the UN and the US as a result of MINUSTAH's occupation. The intervention was justified as a way to protect Haiti's plutocratic hierarchy in the twenty-first century, most likely to promote the interests of prominent US political actors in Haiti.

The Present Scenario

Michel Martelly's election as president in 2011 was marred by suspicions of US involvement. After postponing presidential elections twice and ruling by decree for more than a year, he eventually stepped down. Later, fraud suspicions against Martelly's successor, Jovenel Moïse, caused official election to be postponed until early 2017, leaving a political vacuum. In addition, Moïse's killing on 7 July 2021 has driven Haiti into anarchy, and the US was blamed for the plot. Months of unrest, economic hardships, and the COVID-19 epidemic had already wreaked havoc on the country. Following Moïse's death, a call was made for US intervention. However, for a variety of reasons, US

intervention at this time would be a disastrous decision. First, their previous occupation had proved that Haitians would not benefit from US intervention, which would end up filling the coffers of US banks through the creation of a client state.⁶⁰

Furthermore, even after the US marines were withdrawn in 1934, their presence in the black republic remained prominent in several ways. The United States and its allies have continually undercut Haiti's governments by funnelling aid to their own relief agencies and non-governmental organisations. As a result, another US military intervention will only perpetuate the cycle. Under Aristide, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) halted initiatives aimed at "strengthening the country's police, judiciary, and elections machinery," instead channelling the money to private organisations and US-based aid groups, according to a post-coup annual report from 2004.⁶¹

When Ariel Henry was appointed as the next PM, Moïse was slain a day later. However, he has yet to be confirmed for the position, and the country currently lacks a president, a functioning legislature, and an unelected acting prime minister who has declared a "state of siege" equivalent to martial law. The current situation adds to Haiti's lengthy history of grief, upheaval, and mismanagement as it has experienced numerous hurdles in its 217 years as an independent state. In conclusion, the remedy must be developed domestically. In this circumstance, the US English-speaking corporate elite is unlikely to find a solution. It must come from Haitians who have a say since they will be the ones who bear the brunt of the consequences.

⁶⁰ Katz, Jonathan M. n.d. "U.S. Intervention in Haiti Would Be a Disaster—Again." *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/07/13/haiti-moise-invasion-washington-revolution-occupation-black-republic/>.

⁶¹ Metayer, Guy, "The Influence of Corporate Interests on USAID's Development Agenda: The Case of Haiti" (2012). FIU Electronic Theses and Dissertations. 609. <https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/etd/609>