

Haiti - neocolonial intervention, grass roots resistance

written by Stephen Sefton
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A Sri Lankan peacekeeper from the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) patrols the slum of Martissant in the southern hills of Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince.

From the 2004 coup d'état against President Jean Bertrand Aristide until 2017, Haiti was occupied militarily initially by US and Canadian troops and subsequently by a multinational force of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), always under the clear direction of the governments of the United States and its allies, mainly Canada and France. For the North American and European elites, the political crisis in Haiti since the 2017 departure of MINUSTAH from Haiti presented a dilemma. They always had a presence of administrative and political intervention in the form of the Integrated United Nations Office in Haiti (BINUH for its acronym in French). But they needed another mechanism of armed intervention in order to suppress the growing popular resistance to the country's neocolonial subjugation under the corrupt Haitian de facto authorities.

A new form of intervention

These puppets of their Western masters have held on to power for over a decade via grotesquely rigged elections, the abuse of the Constitution of the Republic, and the violent repression of popular protest. In response, grassroots political opposition and the population's defensive armed resistance have grown progressively. Now, in order to prevent a democratic and people-based resolution of the crisis in Haiti, the US ruling elite have engineered the approval by the United Nations Security Council of a Multinational Security Support Mission to Haiti, authorized to use armed force in support of the de facto regime of Prime Minister Ariel Henry. In fact, the procedure used to create this mission may well be repeated in the future to facilitate other interventions in the region.

It amounts to another modality to be added to the imperialist intervention toolbox, which already includes lawfare, unilateral coercive measures, soft and not so soft coups, diverse varieties of direct military intervention, and the abuse of international financial institutions for political purposes. As [Jemima Pierre has explained](#) to us, this new modality of intervention follows the script outlined in the Global Fragility

Act approved in the US Congress in 2019 by both political parties during the presidency of Donald Trump. The Act makes clear that the United States should adapt its neocolonial interventions to more indirect means such that the role of the US government will be to provide resources, advice, support and guidance to other key actors.

Unlike the failed coup attempt in Nicaragua in 2018, this modality exploits US dominance so that the United Nations approves operations to achieve Western interventionist objectives. Their capacity for pressure and extortion will also be used to directly co-opt various local allies as protagonists of US and allied governments' regional neocolonial policies. So now the government of an East African country, Kenya, has been co-opted as its main accomplice to lead the Multinational Security Support Mission to Haiti along with contributions from Caribbean countries such as Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana, the Bahamas, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Guatemala, and Suriname, in addition to Peru, Italy, Spain and another African country, Senegal.

Nicaragua and Haiti, the common history

In the same way that the United States invaded and occupied Nicaragua in the last century, Haiti also suffered from US military occupation from 1915 to 1934. And in the same way that they left behind the National Guard in Nicaragua, they left behind the Haitian Gendarmerie in Haiti. And also, in the same way that the United States ordered the murder of Benjamin Zeledón and Augusto C. Sandino, they murdered in the most cowardly way Charlemagne Peralte, the national hero of the resistance to the Yankee occupation of Haiti. For decades, both countries suffered under criminal regimes totally at the service of US neocolonial rule. While the 1979 triumph of the Sandinista Popular Revolution liberated Nicaragua from the US neocolonial system, at the same time it convinced Western elites not to allow something similar in other countries in the region.

So when a progressive and nationalist political force and its leader Jean Bertrand

Aristide won the presidential elections in Haiti in 1991, it lasted only nine months before falling victim to a coup d'état promoted by the United States. While in Nicaragua, the United States imposed neoliberalism during the 17 years between 1990 and 2006 through the submissive governments of Violeta Chamorro, Arnaldo Alemán and Enrique Bolaños, in Haiti, the terms of neocolonial submission to the Washington Consensus were imposed, with all its structural adjustment apparatus, by force, with direct military occupation lasting until the year 2000, when Jean Bertrand Aristide and his Fanmi Lavalas party won the elections for a second time. That second term of President Aristide's elected government ended in 2004 with another coup, his kidnapping and involuntary dispatch to the Central African Republic, and subsequent forced exile in South Africa.

Elections under neocolonialism

The last elections in Haiti, with a high level of participation of around 60%, were the elections under the MINUSTAH occupation in 2006, won by René Préval. The process had been postponed four times since 2005. The subsequent elections of 2010 and 2015 were also chaotic processes with rigged results based, in both cases, on a voter turnout of less than 23%. With the Fanmi Lavalas party excluded from the process, Michel Martelly was awarded victory in the 2010 elections, and Jovenal Moïse, from the same party, was made the winner of the elections scheduled for 2015, but which finally took place in November 2016. Due to the absence of elections in 2020, President Moïse ruled by decree from January 2020 onwards in a situation of chronic constitutional crisis leading to the absence of a national legislature from April of that same year.

On July 7, 2021, a group of Colombian mercenaries assassinated President Moïse with the possible complicity of one or more of the members of his own ruling circle. The United States and its allies intervened directly to impose Ariel Henry as de facto prime minister. Right now, Haiti has no legitimate government and neither does it

have a legislature. In fact, the country is run by the governments of several foreign countries designated as the Core Group, coordinated by the United States. Following the guidelines of this Core Group, Ariel Henry requested an armed intervention by the United Nations, which has now been achieved with the approval of the Multinational Security Support Mission. As Kim Ives, a veteran of solidarity with Haiti, has commented, it is as if a puppet were to make a request for support to its puppet master.

The new intervention

The spurious pretext for the approval of this new neocolonial armed intervention in Haiti has been the increase in armed violence and organized crime in the country. The consensus manipulated by the United States and its allies attributes this phenomenon exclusively to the activity of criminal gangs, especially in the capital Port-au-Prince. This false version of the situation omits two facts of fundamental importance. First, the criminal gangs are controlled mainly by the same Haitian elites who collaborate politically with the United States and its allies. It was during an internal dispute between these local elites that the assassination of Jovenal Moïse occurred in 2021. The criminal groups in Haiti fulfill a political function applying terrorism against the grassroots opposition to the de facto government and to foreign intervention.

Secondly, several popular forces have taken up arms to protect their communities precisely from armed attacks on the population by criminal gangs controlled by local elites, often in collusion with the corrupt Haitian police. In reality, the approval of this new armed intervention means increasing the forces of anti-democratic repression of the de facto government in Haiti and its American and European owners in order to suppress broadly based political opposition in the country and annihilate its capacity for armed resistance in self-defense. A large group of Haitian popular organizations explained this reality in an open letter to the leaders of the

African Union last August, where they wrote:

“We have received with astonishment the surprising news that a brotherly country like Kenya has agreed to lead an American-UN occupation force disguised under the label of “multinational force” against Haiti in order to continue deceiving national and international public opinion better, thus trying to hide the Machiavellian side of this criminal initiative. It should be noted that in order to prepare national and international public opinion for the acceptance of this felony, armed gangs have been mobilized nationwide with the aim of creating total chaos capable of justifying the US-UN occupation of our country. Thus, armed gangs are authorized to collectively rape girls and young women, massacre, kidnap and terrorize the defenseless population on a daily basis.”

This assertion confirms a report in January of this year in which the National Network for the Defense of Human Rights in Haiti commented that “it has strong reasons to believe that the accelerated deterioration of the security situation in the country, after a few days of calm, intends to justify and obtain from the international community the deployment of a foreign military force in Haiti.....” This cynical, sadistic manipulation has been a crucial component of the pressure from the United States and its allies for precisely this kind of intervention. It has been disappointing that the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, in the declaration of its Seventh Summit in January of this year, endorsed this type of imperialist maneuver to force an illegal intervention in the internal affairs of a country in the region.

In healthy contrast to the regrettable declaration of the CELAC summit, the government of Cuba has insisted in a statement issued after the recent decision of the United Nations Security Council on Haiti that “We defend the legitimate rights of its people to find a peaceful and sustainable way out of the enormous challenges they face, based on full respect for their sovereignty. The main pending task of the international community with Haiti is not to send a military contingent. That sister

Caribbean nation, to which the international community owes an enormous moral debt, needs more financial resources for its development. It urgently requires more and better international assistance and cooperation, not only for its reconstruction, but also to advance the sustainable development of the country.”

Cuba’s rational and sensible argument concurs fully with the call of the group of Haitian popular organizations to the African Union in August, where they observe, “We want to conclude by reminding you of the urgent need to offer us your concrete solidarity in this situation of extreme menace. We want to maintain the firm conviction that you will continue to take a clear position against the criminal project of an occupation of Haiti.”

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