Haiti: Peace-Keeping as the Path to Peace, State-Building, and Democracy

Haiti has a long history with international intervention headed by multilateral organizations such as the United Nations (UN). Besides that, the country is strongly dependent on overseas aid, resources, and specialized human capital. When setting out its relationship with the international community it is possible to realize how successive leaders that ruled the country were not capable of providing fundamental rights and basic living conditions for the overall population. More than that, sectors such as healthcare, economy, sanitation, well-being, food safety, and others have not been able to meet societal demands. Haiti's fragile governance is challenged everyday by weak domestic institutions and corruption that hinder its capacity. To provide a conceptual framework is an effort to examine the relation between peace-keeping, state-building, and democracy promotion. The article also highlights the trajectory of foreign intervention according to Haiti's political events in the last fifteen years. The period marks the beginning and the end of UN missions in Haiti. Finally, an analysis will be made remarking current political events after years of foreign intervention in the country.

The Conceptual Framework behind the UN's Peace-keeping Approach

Following the end of the Cold War, practitioners saw key changes in peace-keeping operations. The International Community recognized that even internal state conflicts and instability in some countries could threaten the path to regional peace. To Leininger (2006, p. 467), "UN peacekeeping has been in a state of continuous reform throughout the past decade". They evolved from missions composed purely of a military component to a combination of military and civilian employers. At the same time, "state-building and democracy promotion increasingly became instruments to build peace", they are both used in peace-keeping operations, especially in Haiti.

The UN Charter (Art. 2, § 4) says that "all members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state". This principle is subject to two exceptions: the right of self-defense (Art. 51) and the UN Security Council's mandate to impose coercive measures with the intention of maintaining peace (Art. 39 and 42). In short, UN peace-keeping was created to assist states in conserving peace.

In its early days, UN peace-keeping involved mainly military components to help with the resolution of interstate conflicts primarily. When internal conflicts began to arise "the UN started to provide technical and humanitarian assistance, civil and administrative support with civilian functions, in particular police functions" (Leininger, 2006, p. 469). Then, UN peace-keeping started to comprise larger objectives and functions, with lesser military options, and more socio-economic and political aims, with the major goal of fostering peace. It became more political. At the same time, state-building and democracy promotion assumed their place as instruments of UN peace-keeping. While state-building can be defined as the organization of state infrastructure, democracy promotion is an instrument used to establish a precise type of government. Therefore, democracy is seen as an important element for the creation and maintenance of peace. Its procedural dimension entails a form of governance focused on resolving social conflicts through peaceful manners to minimize the vulnerability to internal violent conflicts.

Nonetheless, democracy requires a minimum of state infrastructure without which state-building and democracy

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promotion may not be enough means to build internal peace. According to Barma (2017), an international intervention can create incentives for certain privileged groups or local elites to generate new kinds of patrimonialism and non-sustainable political economies. Which means, even though foreign missions try to restore peace, state capacity and legitimacy, sometimes this cannot be achieved, because of local realities. It is a formula whose results are country-specific and may lead to unexpected outcomes.

From a state-building view, multilateral organizations assume that as soon as countries surpass their violent conflicts, they are eligible to solve social, economic, and political problems with external assistance. This can involve actions such as building state institutions while following pre-established technical prescriptions and steps, holding 'free and fair' elections and strengthening the rule of law. Cevheri (2019, p. 1920) argues that this apparently neutral approach refrains from openly espousing a certain model of democracy: liberal democracy. The UN, for example, "accepts that all models of democracy differ from each other, but they still have a common ground – the freely expressed will of the people – upon which each model is founded". With this in mind, it is important to introduce the context in which different missions took place in Haiti, and their mandates, based on the liberal democracy model, encouraged by the UN.

Haitian Democracy in the Face of Foreign Intervention

In Haiti, the democratization process involved the participation of local institutions, prominent domestic leaders and international aid. In the early 1990s, the country experienced its transition to a formal democratic regime, but democratic consolidation has followed a turbulent path, with successive efforts employed by UN peace-keeping missions.

According to Moreira (2016), it is only after the death of François Duvalier (Papa Doc), in 1971, and the departure, in 1987, of Jean-Claude Duvalier (Baby Doc), from the country's leadership, that a series of changes in the political configuration in the country began, albeit with characteristics inherited from the previous regime. The country's streets were taken by protesters with the destruction of the paramilitary presidential guard Tonton Macoutes' headquarters as well as Duvalier's residences.

In 1987, the massacre of Haitian citizens by the military postponed the general elections for the first time. The next year, Leslie Manigat was elected president in an electoral process handled by a military junta. In March 1990, Justice Minister Ertha Pascal Trouillot assumed the presidency with a commitment to hold free elections, but as the government could not ensure the safety of voters, officials and others involved in the conduct of the elections, because of violence, the plea was postponed (Keesing's, 01/09/1990). Even so, in December 1990, presidential elections took place and Jean-Bertrand Aristide, representative of the National Front for Democracy and Change, defeated ten other candidates. This brief experience in democracy had an abrupt end in September 1991. The ruling classes and the military felt threatened not only by the proposed reforms of Aristide but also by the widespread popular mobilization that pressed for their approval. Throughout the 1990s, Haitians lived between a series of governments that were overthrown by military coups and countercoups. The elections, however, remained constant (Moreira, 2016).

The Organization of American States (OAS) took a leading role in several of the political crises that emerged in the first half of the 1990s. When the situation escalated to higher levels of violence, other actors took the lead to restore peace and democracy. To sum up, since 1993, five UN peace-keeping missions were deployed in the country. A record number, since no other country in the world has had as many missions of this kind as Haiti. The first one was the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH). It was created with the purpose of assisting in the process for the implementation of the Governors Island Agreement, a document that encompassed the facilitation of a political dialogue between parliamentary representatives and the government of General Cédras, supported by the UN and the OAS. Furthermore, the mandate was later revised to require the presence of the UN in Haiti to assist the government in preserving a stable atmosphere, professionalizing the armed forces, and creating a separate police force, and providing an environment conducive to free and fair elections (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2003).

After claims of violations of human rights against Cédras, the Security Council imposed an embargo and international

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sanctions (importation of medical products and food items were excluded from the sanctions). In 1995, General Cédras resigned and left Haiti. Aristide, who had left the country after the coup, returned and the next day the embargo was lifted. UNMIH assisted the new government in maintaining a secure and stable environment for Haitians, helped create a national civil police and oversaw, together with the OAS, the 1995 parliamentary and local elections. With its mission concluded, UNMIH was replaced by the United Nations Support Mission in Haiti (UNSMIH) in 1996 (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2003). The UNSMIH kept the previous mandate of the UNMIH but was designed to train the newly created national civil police and to coordinate activities promoting institution-building, reconciliation of national agents and economic recovery. It was established for a mandate of six months, but ended being extended two times, and finally expired on 1997.

In the same year began the mandate of the United Nations Transition Mission in Haiti (UNTMIH). As well as UNMIH and UNSMIH, the UNTMIH was concentrated on genuine state-building measures by supporting the formation, training, and monitoring of the Haitian National Police (HNP), being finalized in November 1997. The same mandate was assigned for the United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH), established in March 2000 (United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d.).

On 1 June 2004 the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) began its mandate through Resolution 1542, approved by the UN Security Council. This mission succeeded a Multinational Interim Force (MIF) authorized by the Security Council in February 2004 after President Bertrand Aristide departed the country for exile in the aftermath of an armed conflict. It is the most famous and long-lasting UN mission in Haiti. The Security Council approved its creation with the argument that the turbulent social, political, and economic situation of the country constituted a threat to international peace and security with the potential for a massive outflow of Haitians citizens to other Caribbean states.

The focus remained on training and supporting the local police, but this time, with an emphasis on the restoration and maintenance of the rule of the law, with more democratic policing. Thereby, democracy started to be addressed differently throughout the mission's mandate with the Security Council resolutions being concentrated on the need to support elections. At the same time, democratic governance and institutional development were the main principles that guided the activities of the mission (Leininger, 2006).

From a democracy promotion point of view, major steps were taken to guarantee the running of elections. MINUSTAH was responsible for securing the environment for parliamentary, presidential and local elections. Whereas, the OAS assisted the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) in designing, organizing, and holding elections. Despite all the efforts, problems relative to the electoral processes remained constant, such as disrespecting the electoral calendar, not guaranteeing the secrecy of the vote, not using trustable instruments of counting and tabulation of results, and the existence of several campaigns to demobilize voters (Moreira, 2016). More than ten years after the first UN peace-keeping mission in Haiti, peace is still far from becoming a reality, but nowadays the government has the necessary instruments to dissuade uprisings and violence.

Current Events

Since MINUSTAH began to operate, Haiti faced a devastating earthquake on 12 January 2010; a cholera outbreak in October 2010, a hurricane in October 2016, and seventeen electoral processes to choose a new president, senate, and chamber of deputies.

In 2016, with the proximity of the elections to choose a new president, episodes of violence escalated, leaving the country immersed in a political crisis. In 2017, the Security Council approved the formation of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), determining that "the military component of MINUSTAH shall gradually draw down during the final six-month period, fully withdrawing from Haiti by 15 October 2017" (United Nations, Resolution 2350, 2017). The new mission was created in order to assist the national government in developing the Haiti National Police, strengthening the county's rule of law institutions, and promoting and protecting human rights. The MINUJUSTH mandate lasted for two years with an extension of six months, until 15 October 2019, after the security council members of the UN approved the creation of a special political mission in the country.

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They argued that despite improvements in the areas of human rights and security, the political situation remained fragile, with a political landscape fragmented and polarized between the government and its opposition (United Nations, Security Council, 13764).

According to Norris et al (2015, p. 11), since the contests of October 2015, which were conducted in an atmosphere of chaos, violence, and intimidation, there were "widespread complaints of fraud by party officials. The outcome has been stalemating and a leadership crisis deepening conflict and the risks of fragility". This affirmation is supported by a study made by the Igarapé Institute (2015, 2016), which surveyed Haitian citizens about their faith in democracy and their personal experiences within the electoral processes. In general, key findings of the report included that attitudes of voting and democracy appeared to be adversely affected by the experiences and perception of fraud and voter intimidation. People who had experienced or witnessed intimidation or fraud at the polls were much less likely to endorse the idea that voting is important in a democracy. Also, the institute measured that a considerable majority, about 86% of those surveyed, believed that the country was heading in the wrong direction, with only 11% of respondents confident that they had free and fair electoral processes. Nonetheless, political violence has diminished since then, and some of the difficulties still facing the country include: the widely contested budget of 2017-2018, indirect elections, disagreements over the reestablishment of the Armed Forces of Haiti, corruption, weakness of institutions and negligible improvement in the living conditions of Haitians.

In the first half of 2019, a series of turbulent political events took place. Just to mention one, the physician Jean Michel Lapin replaced Haiti's Prime Minister, Jean Henry Céant, after the Lower Chamber of Deputies fired him, answering popular appeals in the streets and scandals of corruption. With elections scheduled to occur in October, just after the end of MINUJUSTH's mandate, other forms of protests began to emerge in Haiti, with the aim to fight for a better political scenario. The 'petrochallengers', a movement led by local and expatriate's youth Haitians, armed with smartphones, are wielding social media to speak out against impunity and demand more transparency from political leaders. The group is inspired, through social media, by movements such as the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street and Y'en Marre (PRI, 04/29/2019).

Finally, as has been shown, the country now faces challenges that have a different nature from those of the first UN's peace-keeping missions. In the beginning, it was imperative for those missions to re-establish peace after the landslide of gang and paramilitary groups that menaced citizens and controlled local politics. To do so, state-building and democracy were mandatory. Now, with the reestablishment of the rule of law and the consolidation of a large police corps, the main challenge remains in the political arena, above all, to build a trustful electoral process. The country's political context is rapidly changing, with renewed movements arising, following the spirit of the time. Simultaneously, problems such as corruption scandals and weak institutions remain persistent challenges on the Haitian political horizon.

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