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In Dependence: Haiti in the Period of Neoliberalism

By McKenzie Kelly

Abstract: Haiti is often considered to be one of the least developed and unstable countries in the world today. However, many scholars have failed to look into the cause of Haiti's lack of development in comparison to other countries in similar situations. While some have addressed the colonial history of Haiti, and others have discussed the role of neoliberalism in Haiti's development, this paper aims to connect the two ideas. The current predicament that Haiti finds itself in did not occur in a vacuum, but instead was the result of colonial and post-colonial foreign policy, the shift to neoliberal policies following World War II, and the development and involvement of NGOs.

Oftentimes, individuals raised in an economically stable, healthy, and educated home desire to help others achieve what they consider a normal standard of living. In 2017, the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Lumos estimated that over one third of Haiti's 752 orphanages are funded by foreign charities and NGOs. It is further estimated that 70 million U.S. dollars are given to Haitian orphanages, with 92 percent coming from the United States alone.¹ In July of 2017, *The Guardian*, published an article discussing the findings of the NGO Lumos, an organization that works to end the institutionalization of children, particularly victims of the orphanage crisis in Haiti. More alarming than the 752 orphanages in a country that is only 27,560 square kilometers² in size, was the fact that nearly 80 percent of the children in these facilities are not orphans at all; 80 percent of the population of the orphanages in Haiti have at least one living parent.³ The harsh

¹ Naomi Larsson, "Charities and voluntourism fueling 'orphanage crisis' in Haiti says NGO," *Guardian*, July 14, 2017.

² "The World Factbook: Haiti," Central Intelligence Agency, last modified March 14, 2018, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html>.

³ Larsson, "Charities and voluntourism."

reality is that many parents simply cannot care for their children and the only option is to surrender them to the care of foreign charities. This tragic crisis begs the question: why is it that Haitian parents feel compelled to hand the very future of their nation, their own children, to foreign organizations? What brought about Haiti's heartbreaking dependence on foreign aid?

The present condition of Haiti is the consequence of a series of events, beginning with Spanish colonization, followed by French overlordship, the Haitian Revolution, and later the neoliberal era. Like all of the modern Caribbean nations, Haiti is a former European colony. The Haitian people were able to overthrow the colonial government in the first successful slave revolt of 1804. However, development as a government was hindered by lack of recognition from the rest of the world. As Haiti continued to struggle into the twentieth-century, the economic superpowers of the world adopted a new ideology called neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is a more liberal manifestation of free-market capitalism. In practice, neoliberalism serves as a tool for powerful developed nations to maintain dominion over the global economy. Half a century of neoliberal policies led to an overwhelming amount of Western involvement in all aspects of Haitian life, including government, the economy, and society. The goal of this article is to illustrate how the pattern of Western involvement and interference within the country of Haiti through colonial and neoliberal policies has led to the dependency relationships we see today between Haiti and developed countries.

Historians have not focused on Haiti's story until fairly recently. As part of the remnant colonial legacy of the Caribbean, Western or Eurocentric histories did not deem the story of Haiti to be noteworthy. The successful slave revolt that resulted in Haitian independence was seen as a blemish on the history of not only the French Empire, but all other imperial nations whose colonial holdings were lost in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As scholar Oliver Gliedt accounts, most early twentieth-century contributions to the field came from three groups: Haitian historians who worked to establish a national conscience; French scholars, who merely treated Haitian history as a small part of the larger French imperial narrative; and lastly Afro-American scholars who utilized the only slave-led revolt as a means of bolstering esteem amongst beleaguered black populations in pre-

civil rights era America.⁴ It was not until 2008, with Steeve Coupeau's *History of Haiti*, that scholars began to focus their attention on the precedence Haiti's history set for social, economic, and cultural development for countries with a colonial past.

Many scholars saw Haiti as a country in need of assistance and did not connect this aid to the growing inability to develop independently. It was not until the 1990s that scholars began to question the true purpose of NGOs' involvement within developing countries. In 1997, William Fischer wrote "Doing Good? The Politics and Antipolitics of NGO Practices," which would become the foundation for the study of the relationship between development and neoliberalism.

More recently scholars have focused on the effects of neoliberalism and the involvement of Western powers in the development of Haiti. More particularly, the dangers of NGO aid within the country itself and the cycle dependency on aid of the Haitian people. This has particularly been the case since Mark Schuller's landmark work in 2007, "Seeing Like a 'Failed' NGO: Globalization's Impacts on State and Civil Society in Haiti."⁵ Schuller focused on the inability of the Haitian government to provide basic infrastructure within its borders and the amount of services that NGOs have provided to fill this gap. However, little has been done in explaining the correlation between the colonial history of Haiti and the more modern neoliberal policies being imposed on the country by global economic powers. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the link between the two, and further understand how the current state of Haiti was impacted by the involvement of the West since its independence.

In Colonial Shackles: 1492-1804

Haiti was the first portion of the Americas that Christopher Columbus discovered in 1492. Hispaniola, as the island that houses both the Dominican Republic and Haiti was named, became a source of colonial pride. First claimed as a Spanish territory, Haiti was often referred to as the "Pearl of Antilles." Hispaniola

⁴ Oliver Gliech, "Recent Books on Haitian History," *Iberoamericana* 4, no. 16 (2004): 187.

⁵ Mark Schuller, "Seeing Like a 'Failed' NGO: Globalization's Impacts on State and Civil Society in Haiti," *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 30, no. 1 (2007): 67-89.

provided its protector with invaluable sugar and coffee plantations.⁶ As the wealth of the Spanish Kingdom grew on the backs of the native people, the native population was decimated through disease, slave labor, and systematic killing. The population was so greatly depleted that it is estimated that between 12 to 20 million indigenous people were killed after Columbus declared Hispaniola as a Spanish Territory and by 1507, following the Ovando Massacre, only 60,000 indigenous people remained.⁷ In order to maintain a workforce for the plantations, the Spanish government began bringing in slaves from Sub-Saharan Africa at a rate of 33,000 annually; this forced migration served to repopulate the island for its colonial masters.⁸ The wealth and value of the colony grew to the point that it became invaluable to its monarch. Despite its economic success, the overwhelming majority of the colony's wealth was transported back to Spain, and very little remained on the island.

In 1697, King Louis XIV of France gained a small portion of the island, located on the western portion of Hispaniola, as a result of the Treaty of Ryswick. This would officially begin the division of the island into two separate entities, Saint-Domingue and Santo Domingo; the former being the French territory and the latter being the Spanish Territory.⁹ It is at this point in history that the distinction between the Haitian and Dominican identities begins. Once the French took over their portion of the territory on Hispaniola, they divided the territory into three separate areas to support the growth and maintenance of plantation culture and economy. Due to the thousands of slaves that were imported from Africa to work on the plantations, Saint-Domingue became the most profitable colony in the French Empire. With “over 40 percent of all European sugar and 75 percent of all European coffee as well as much of France’s eighteenth-century wealth and glory coming from the slave labor in the plantations,” the Pearl of the Antilles was an invaluable resource for the French government. To maintain control, colonial authorities encouraged the use of “othering” and perpetuated internal divisions to keep slave workers

⁶ Steeve Coupeau, *The History of Haiti* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2008), 18.

⁷ Steeve Coupeau, *The History of Haiti*, 18.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

in check, while maintaining a hegemonic power structure in favor of colonial elites.¹⁰ The black population was divided by status, with the freed Mulattos holding a higher status than that of the enslaved *noir* population. Mulatto people were allowed to own slaves and benefited from many of the same rights as the French colonizers. The clear division between Mulatto and slave allowed the colonizers to exert tremendous influence on culture and society within the colony, leading to greater control and power. According to Steeve Coupeau:

Many researchers of sugar plantations believe in the inextricable links between production, capital concentration, and coercive labor practices. The introduction of slavery to meet labor-intensive process in the sugarcane production was important because it constituted a matrix of the practice of power that remained entrenched in Haitian society after independence.¹¹

This integral portion of society is what led to the struggle of the Haitian people to develop a functional government following their independence.

The colony of Saint-Domingue declared its independence on January 1, 1804, after a long and bloody battle against the French military. They declared themselves Haiti, the true original, indigenous name. The Haitian revolution against the French occupation was the first successful slave revolt and led to the first independent nation in Latin America and the Caribbean.¹² However, the success of the former slave colony was short lived. The once prosperous colony struggled economically and politically. Upon independence, the country was not formally recognized by any of its former trading partners: the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. Haiti was also sanctioned with

¹⁰ Timothy Alexander Guzman, "Haiti's Struggle for Freedom: US Imperialism, MINUSTAH and the Overthrow of Jean-Bertrand Aristide," *Centre for Research on Globalization*, December 27, 2012, <https://www.globalresearch.ca/haitis-struggle-for-freedom-us-imperialism-minustah-and-the-overthrow-of-jean-bertrand-aristide/5316972>

¹¹ Coupeau, *The History of Haiti*, 18.

¹² *Ibid.*

embargos on their extremely profitable cash crops.¹³ Without formal recognition, the newfound nation of Haiti struggled to survive. Furthermore, the final act of economic aggression against the newborn Haitian government was the reparation that Haiti was required to pay to the French government in the amount of 90 million francs, or 17 billion euros in today's economy.¹⁴ This reparation agreement, enforced by the same three nations who refused to formally recognize Haiti, required the Haitian people to pay for the damages that the French Navy suffered during the Haitian Revolution from 1791–1804. This crippling debt forced upon the Haitian government would not be paid off until 1947.¹⁵

The Illusion of Independence

The following one hundred years were tumultuous. In 1806, the then ruler of Haiti that led the nation into and through the revolution against France, Emperor Jean-Jacques Dessalines, was assassinated.¹⁶ The assassination plunged the country into civil war, resulting in a split between the northern and southern portions of the country. The north was ruled by Henri Christophe, while the southern portion was controlled by Alexandre Pètion.¹⁷ From 1807 until 1820 Haiti remained split. However, in 1820, Christophe committed suicide in response to an imminent military coup against his rule. Instead of the south regaining control of the entire island, the ambiguity left behind by the death of Christophe allowed a young political leader, Jean-Pierre Boyer to reunify the country in 1820 and become president.¹⁸

Following the civil war and division of the country, Jean-Pierre Boyer was then able to lead Haiti into a position of power, invading Santo Domingo (the Dominican Republic) with little resistance, after it declared independence from Spain in 1822.¹⁹

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Mats Lundahl, "Peasants and Poverty: A Study of Haiti," in *Poverty in Haiti: Essays on Underdevelopment and Post Disaster Prospects* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd. 2015), 14.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (New York: Henry Holt LLC, 2012), 50.

¹⁷ Ibid., 58.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 104.

However, due to economic hardship, French reparations, and a large earthquake that hit the island in 1842, Boyer was ousted in 1843.²⁰ The weakness of the Haitian government allowed the Dominicans on the island to revolt and reassert their independence in 1844.²¹

In the aftermath of Boyer's decline, Haiti descended into a period of political chaos.²² After three years, and four weak presidents who proved unable to solidify their grasp on power, General Faustin Soulouque (1782-1867) rose to power and subsequently declared himself Emperor Faustin I in 1849. His reign lasted until 1858 when he fled the country in the face of an overwhelming uprising against his autocratic rule. Following Soulouque's flight, the monarchy was abolished, and Haiti came under the military rule of one of the rebellion's foremost leaders, General Fabre Geffrard, a period during which the nation remained relatively stable. In 1867, a constitutional government would be established, with limited success.

From the 1870s until the occupation by the United States in 1915, the Haitian government cycled through the same pattern of valid elections, followed by an uprising, a temporary president, and new elections. Overall, twenty-two presidents served the country of Haiti between 1858 and 1915. The reparations being paid to the French government that crippled the once booming economy of Haiti, and the continuous lack of infrastructure development from natural disasters caused the repetitive turn-over of presidents throughout the first century of the country's independence. This inconsistency and fluctuation of governing style further contributed to the ability for outside forces to manipulate and control Haiti.

Though it is not widely acknowledged or discussed amongst those in the developed world, the United States occupied both portions of the island formerly known as Hispaniola from 1916 to 1924.²³ The United States once again occupied the Dominican Republic in the 1960s. It was this involvement by the United States that led to the terror caused by corrupt military

²⁰ Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*, 110.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*, 128.

²³ Abby Philips, "The Bloody Origins of the Dominican Republic's ethnic 'cleansing' of Haitians," *Washington Post*, June 17, 2015, The Bloody Origins of the Dominican Republic's ethnic 'cleansing' of Haitians

leaders trained by the United States.²⁴ These leaders in turn massacred an estimated 15,000 Haitian people on the border of Haiti and the Dominican Republic in 1937.²⁵ This was done to “whiten the nation,” like the Americans had originally wanted.²⁶ This destroyed the bilingual and peaceful bicultural societies on the borderland of the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

“What we do know—through diplomatic correspondence and oral histories—is that the operation lasted several weeks and had been planned at least a year in advance. Men, women, and children who were black and deemed Haitian were arrested and taken to secluded areas of the Dominican countryside and murdered, mostly by machete to evade recriminations of a premeditated, large-scale operation by the army. The killings, the Dominican government would later argue, were a defensive reaction by “patriotic” farmers protecting their lands from Haitian “cattle rustlers.”²⁷

Unlike other massacres, this one began with violence and proceeded with ideology. It is important to note that this massacre goes by different names in each of the cultures which shows the ideological distinctions between both groups and their perspectives on the killings. In the Dominican Republic, the massacre is known as *El Corte* (The Cutting) or *El Desalojo* (The Eviction). While in the Creole language of Haiti, the massacre is referred to as *Temwayaj Kout Kouto* (Testimonies of the Knife Blow or Witness to Massacre). More recently in modern studies this atrocity is referred to as the “Parsley Massacre.”²⁸

In the case of the Parsley massacre, or as some would call it genocide, violence occurred first and was then followed by racist ideology. However, the victims of the tragedy were not of either Haitian or Dominican descent instead, like most borderland

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Edward Paulino, “Dominican Republic: Bearing Witness to a Modern Genocide,” *Berkeley Review of Latin American Studies*, January 2016, 51.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Paulino, “Dominican Republic,” 52.

²⁸ Ibid., 53.

residents, a mixture of the two. In wiping out the thousands of people living in the borderland region of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the government of the Dominican Republic succeeded in implementing a nationalized discriminatory ideology against the Haitian people.²⁹

The post-colonial ideology of ethnic separation, first enforced by France and Spain, and then later by the United States during the early twentieth-century ensured social turmoil on the island. Along with the ongoing economic difficulties faced by the Haitian government, neoliberalism has also encouraged ethnographic conflict between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Ethnic cleansing is still occurring today. The mass exclusion of Haitian people from the Dominican Republic has now been vindicated by law. According to Ruling 168–13, those of Haitian descent are denied citizenship unless they have been able to reapply for valid papers; this also bars any Dominican born person of Haitian descent from automatic citizenship as well.³⁰ “In 1937, Haitians and their Dominican-born descendants were excluded from the Dominican border by the knife; today, they are excluded from the nation by the judicial pen. Ruling 168–13—or *La Sentencia*—was (and is) discriminatory, despite the subsequent 169–14 Regularization Law that was created to soften the effects of the ruling.”³¹

Building upon the damaging effects of its colonial foundation, the country of Haiti would need to jump through another hurdle for its survival: neoliberalism. Following the Second World War, Haiti, along with the rest of the world, regrouped and reorganized. As the world reemerged from the ashes of global crisis, a new world order was needed to rebuild global markets. Following the Brenton Woods Convention of 1944, this dilemma was addressed with the creation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, otherwise known as the World Bank. The set of economic policies that these institutions promote, centering on reform for developing countries, have become known as the Washington Consensus. If neoliberalism is the ideology, the Washington Consensus is the instrument for its distribution

²⁹ Edward Paulino, “Dominican Republic,” 53.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

throughout the developing world today. In order to fully layout the transformation and development that Haiti underwent, one must first describe the context and significance of the Washington Consensus and neoliberalism on the world.

Neoliberalism, the Washington Consensus, and NGOs

Following the Second World War and the rise of communism, the Western powers, particularly the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, needed a way to restart the global economy. Government driven capitalism had the possibility of leading to the reawakening of fascism, as seen in the previous two world wars, and communism was seen as the root of all evil.³² A figurative compromise was made; instead of returning to a state led capitalist market, the private sector would be primary party to the market with the promotion of deregulation of free trade. The distinction of the primary focus on the private sector is important. While no economic system is perfect, the growth and development of institutions such as the IMF and World Bank in conjunction with NGOs is what led to the impotence of developing countries to build capacity.

Neoliberalism is not unlike capitalism in the sense that it creates a gap between the wealthy and impoverished; this gap only widens with time.³³ Neoliberalism also allows for large scale marginalization and inequality. This is reflected on a global scale; wealthy countries remain wealthy and impoverished developing countries remain that way, rarely moving upward. While developed countries prospered over the course of the Cold War, developing countries progressed slowly, often moving forward only to be setback as policies changed to service developed countries' hunger for resources and labor. Haiti itself is a notable example of this trend. As will be explained further, the 1954 Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE) *Food for Work* program caused Haitian dependency on the United States

³² Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 535-558.

³³ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 182.

and, in turn, allowed the United States to have economic control of Haiti's natural resources.³⁴

In an attempt to remedy the seemingly constant struggle of developing nations, a new plan, known as the Washington Consensus, was put in place to “aid” the development of states that were increasingly lagging behind. The term Washington Consensus was coined in 1989 by British economist John Williamson as a result of its three main economic institutions being housed in Washington D.C. Those economic institutions were the IMF, the World Bank, and the United States Treasury Department.³⁵ The main goals of the Washington Consensus were policy prescriptions, or changes, particularly in the economic policy of a country. The Consensus outlined ten changes that were deemed “necessary” for developing countries to become prosperous and on par with developed states.³⁶ These policy changes were mainly centered around trade, fiscal policy, tax reform, and privatization. In short, the Washington Consensus was the biggest international push for the implementation of neoliberalism.

The economic policy changes required by the Washington Consensus to receive aid ultimately allowed for developed countries to take advantage of the developing countries that agreed to the new style of privatized global market. Emergence into the global market in the age of globalization was a culture shock for those states not previously exposed. As technology developed, the need for natural resources and oil grew. However, those states who were resource rich found themselves to be cash poor, due to the economic strength of international private organizations and the inability to manufacture finished products domestically.³⁷ This allowed for developed states to house private organizations that could purchase natural and unrefined resources, manufacture those products in the home country or abroad using cheap labor, and sell the finished product back to the developing states for a higher profit than they originally purchased the resources for.³⁸ Some

³⁴ Mark Schuller, *Killing with Kindness: Haiti, International AID, and NGOs* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 8.

³⁵ Judt, *Postwar*, 537.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Peter Dicken, *The Global Shift: Transforming the world economy*, (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 395-419.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

countries, particularly in South America, attempted to part ways with Western states and curtail the influence of neoliberalism within their economies. However, this ended in economic sanctions against those countries and caused numerous development setbacks within those states. This is true of the economic crisis in Venezuela. During the 1970s, specifically in 1976, the Venezuelan government officially turned away from private, foreign oil companies and nationalized all petroleum. The following three decades were marred by one economic crisis after another. This resulted in a trend of unequal aid from developed countries and the IMF from 1970 onward.³⁹ Since 2000, the United States has continually placed economic sanctions on the Venezuelan Government, resulting in economic and social turmoil.

The development of neoliberalism and rise of the Washington Consensus have led to developing states becoming dependent on developed states for access to aid to survive. This catch-22 style dilemma has only become worse through the involvement of NGOs. During the 1990s, the number of NGOs increased drastically from an estimated six thousand, to an estimated sixty thousand by the year 1998.⁴⁰ NGOs are often characterized by “doing good” and more often are depicted as representing the most marginalized groups in society, namely the poor, women, and children. Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated that the responsibility of NGOs was to “hold states’ feet to the fire.”⁴¹ However, this has limited the ability of the state to carry out any of its necessary duties and responsibilities to its people as described in the *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights*. In some cases, NGO involvement has penetrated the innermost workings of developing nations, including healthcare, education, and foreign policy development.⁴² It is the combination of neoliberal practices and the ultimatums that come with the acceptance of aid that have led to the destruction of the state of Haiti.

³⁹ Michael Walton, “Neoliberalism in Latin America: Good, Bad, or Incomplete?,” *Latin American Research Review* 39, no.3 (2004): 174.

⁴⁰ Schuller, *Killing with Kindness*, 8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² William F. Fisher, “Doing Good? The Politics and Antipolitics of NGO Practices,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26, (1997): 439-464.

Catastrophic Convergence: Neoliberalism, NGOs, and Poverty in Haiti

As globalization has grown stronger, NGOs involvement and reach has grown along with it, creating a commensalism⁴³ style relationship between the two. Like so many other ideologies, neoliberalism was aided by globalization, using NGOs as a vessel. As stated by Gramsci, “civil society is the sphere where the states’ ideological work is done, consequently serving to promote the hegemony of bourgeois interests.”⁴⁴ NGOs, often from “Western” countries, encourage “new policy agenda” by supporting local NGOs that pursue policies based on “neoliberal economics and liberal democratic theory.”⁴⁵ NGOs and civil society as a whole became a tool for neoliberal governments to demonstrate the failures of socialist systems and explain how neoliberalism could assist in the development of the “Third World.”⁴⁶

NGOs are often thought of as apolitical peacekeepers who are put in place “for good.” They are described as a non-profit voluntary force that is separate from the market and the state and this has allowed the imagined identity of NGOs to be separate from politics.⁴⁷ However, when taking the Foucault approach⁴⁸ to neoliberal globalization, in which politics is a power structured relationship used to control, political involvement is inescapable for NGOs.⁴⁹ While the term “non-governmental” suggests that the organization is not tied to any government, NGOs are irrevocably tied to their home government. This is important to remember in

⁴³ *Commensalism* is a term often used in biology used to describe a type of relationship in which one organism benefits from the other, while the benefactor is unharmed/unhindered.

⁴⁴ Schuller, “Failed,” 68.

⁴⁵ Fisher, “Doing Good?,” 444.

⁴⁶ Schuller, “Failed,” 69.

⁴⁷ Fisher, “Doing Good?,” 446.

⁴⁸ Michel Foucault was a French philosopher, who focused on the relationship between social control, knowledge, and power. The Foucault approach, is a way of detailing neoliberalism as a way to manipulate and control a group of people. In this case, the control developed states exert over developing nations.

⁴⁹ Collin Gordon, “Governmental Rationality: An Introduction,” in *The Foucault Effect*, 1-51, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 37-38.

understanding the role of groups such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Haiti.⁵⁰

NGOs fall under a multitude of categories including, but not limited to: environmental, charitable, educational, religious, human rights, and research. However, the main term that NGOs have been affiliated with is social welfare and supplying the people with what the state cannot or will not provide in some cases.⁵¹ It has been said that “for every ministry, there is also a parallel NGO that executes the program.”⁵² While many supporters of NGOs would say that they are providing an invaluable and necessary service to the people of Haiti, is that actually the case or has NGOs created dependency in order to fuel the neoliberal agenda?

Modern Haiti

In 2005, Transparency International⁵³ concluded that Haiti was the most underdeveloped state in the world, ranking Haiti as first on the world’s most corrupt country list. Following this statement, Haiti was declared a “fragile state” and was considered unable to govern itself.⁵⁴ This analysis came after decades of NGO involvement in nearly every aspect of the state government and infrastructure.

The push for neoliberal policies in Haiti came about long before the term Washington Consensus was coined. The Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE) is one of the oldest NGOs working in Haiti. CARE came into operation in 1954, after Hurricane Hazel had decimated most of the country’s cash crops.⁵⁵ In a deal with then president Jean Claude Duvalier, CARE created a program called *Food for Work*. This program encouraged farmers from the countryside to migrate to the capital of Port-au-Prince to boost the growing industries and development,

⁵⁰ Fisher, “Doing Good?,” 451.

⁵¹ William Fisher, “Doing Good?,” 447.

⁵² Francois Pierre-Louis, “Earthquakes, Nongovernmental Organizations, and Governance in Haiti,” in *Journal of Black Studies* 42, no. 2 (2011): 193.

⁵³ *Transparency International* is a “global anti-corruption” NGO.

⁵⁴ Schuller, “Failed,” 69.

⁵⁵ Francois Pierre-Louis, “Earthquakes, Nongovernmental Organizations, and Governance in Haiti,” 196.

such as roads and a water system, in the city.⁵⁶ The result was catastrophic. Since the food that was dumped on the market was much cheaper than homegrown goods, more people abandoned their farm lands for work in the city. However, CARE could not provide enough jobs to the masses. This mass exodus from the countryside caused the 1980 refugee crisis, in which those who could not find work in Port-au-Prince fled by boat to the U.S. and other Caribbean islands in order to seek out a sustainable living.⁵⁷

Following the Haitian refugee crisis during the 1980s, more NGOs flooded the scene, in hopes of aiding the failing state that could not sustain itself. After the ousting of a series of corrupt presidents and puppets, the Haitian people elected Rene Preval in 1996, who was only the second president to have served a full term in Haiti's near two-hundred year history. The election of Preval showed stability and the possibility of development in Haiti, so the international community poured in an unprecedented amount of international aid, an estimated \$1.8 billion from 1995–1999.⁵⁸ Unfortunately, this brief abundance of wealth provided by NGOs did not last long. The increase in money provided created an imbalance of imports and exports in Haiti. In an attempt to rectify this imbalance, as well as a \$54 million bail out for the 1998 debt crisis in Haiti, the IMF instituted austerity measures.⁵⁹ However, Haiti was unable to meet demands. The IMF followed with a freeze of all international funds to the state of Haiti, though donations to NGOs continued to remain high. This ultimately led to NGOs circumventing the measures and providing continual “aid” to the people of Haiti. This “aid” was accomplished through assisting in the removal of import tariffs and undermining local agricultural production through dumping of U.S. agricultural surplus onto the market. Deepening dependency, NGOs funded private schools, undermining the possible development of public schools and adult literacy programs already being provided by the state.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Pierre-Louis, “Earthquakes, Nongovernmental Organizations, and Governance in Haiti,” 196.

⁵⁸ Schuller, “Failed,” 72.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 72-73.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 73.

Undeterred by the lack of success that NGOs had provided to the country of Haiti over the past four decades, neoliberal governments and their NGO counterparts continued to promote aid work being done in Haiti. In an almost colonial sense, the developed states wanted to create a protectorate of Haiti for its own good. As per form, foreign powers (USAID and the European Union) opposed Haitian elected president Aristide, who both preceded (but was exiled) and succeeded Preval in 2001 and helped to form the “Civil Society Initiative” (ISC). This illegitimate “representation” of civil society in Haiti focused on bourgeois interests and business elites, which worked to promote neoliberal policy within the country.⁶¹ However, in a counter to the ISC, the Group of 184 was created. This group included women’s organizations, labour unions, and the impoverished, along with human rights groups to form an opposition to neoliberal policies and practices. While these groups outwardly opposed each other on ideological grounds, they were all still funded by USAID. From 2000 to 2004, USAID provided \$107 million to NGOs operating in Haiti, on both sides of the conflict.⁶² This represents the control and power dynamic and ultimately dependency of Haiti on the U.S. and its aid.

Even when it appears as though Haiti is attempting to reject neoliberal intervention in its affairs, Haiti is actually a puppet used to create conflict, drawing attention away from the puppeteer, the U.S. For its part, the U.S. exerts control over the island nation with the goal of instituting Western ideologies of nation-states. As seen previously, USAID is the main donor to NGOs working in Haiti. The amount of aid has increased year to year, allowing NGOs to apply for grants to “aid” in every Haitian government sector, including health care and education, continuously supporting the dependency of Haiti on the aid provided by developed nations. This ongoing dependency ultimately led to a \$245 million-dollar aid investment in NGOs operating in Haiti provided by USAID in 2007. This investment was the largest amount of aid given to a single country in one year.⁶³

⁶¹ Schuller, “Failed,” 72-74.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Pierre-Louis, “Earthquakes, Nongovernmental Organizations, and Governance in Haiti,” 193.

The brief period between 2007 and the earthquake in 2010 was a relatively calm and prosperous time for Haiti, marked by economic growth in the tourism industry and the export of agricultural goods. However, this façade was unmasked by the severity of the damage that the ensuing 2010 earthquake caused. As Haiti expert Mark Schuller wrote:

The earthquake also exposed the weakness of the state. In addition to not having authority over the camps and the aid distribution—as only 1 percent of emergency aid passed through the government—the state had no ability to prevent the disaster or coordinate relief efforts. The government had been weakened since the mid-1990s by donors’ policies of giving their aid directly to NGOs. Even before the earthquake, more than 80 percent of the health clinics and 90 percent of the schools were private, run by individuals, missions, or NGOs. Some NGOs—particularly large distribution agencies like World Vision, CARE or Catholic Relief Services—became parallel states, even marking off territory to people coming into their area. Many in Haiti scoff at this “cutting the cake” approach, wherein Haiti is sliced up and given to NGOs, ceding near-sovereign control to these NGO ‘fiefdoms.’⁶⁴

The 2010 earthquake destroyed much of the infrastructure that was being developed from the previous decade; cholera, famine, typhoid, and corruption, like the ever-faithful hammer, fell upon the Haitian state. Rather than acknowledging their role in undermining the solidification of the Haitian state, and thereby amplifying the damage dealt to the nation by the 2010 earthquake, NGOs and governments used these images of devastation, destruction, and desperation to “reinforce the image of Haiti being hopelessly beyond the pale.”⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Schuller, *Killing with Kindness*, 7.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 5.

In 2011, the Secretary of Homeland Security for the United States granted any Haitian nationals living within the United States, who were not U.S. citizens, Temporary Protected Status (TPS). The terms for TPS in the United States for immigrants from another country are: an ongoing armed conflict, an environmental disaster or epidemic, or other extraordinary temporary situations within the applicants' home country.⁶⁶ The Haiti has continued to meet the second condition for nearly a decade. Haiti has yet to be able to pull itself out of social and economic turmoil since the earthquake and is still heavily dependent on international aid for the simplest of services such as education, healthcare, and food. The TPS status for immigrants from Haiti has been renewed once and is set to expire on July 22, 2019 unless the United States government renews the TPS.⁶⁷

Conclusion

The historical context in which the birth of Haiti took place is relevant, because it is essential to understanding the strange and unusual situation surrounding the foundation of Haiti as an independent state. The inability to successfully trade and develop, along with the lack of recognition from other governments crippled the Haitian government. Though Haiti had brief periods of economic success during the following two centuries, Haiti was never fully able to prosper. As Jean-Germain Gros puts it, Haiti was “conceived in blood, ostracized in its early years as an aberration and a threat to the old-world order, and [is] ranked dead last in every social index among American countries in the late twentieth-century.”⁶⁸

The following seven years after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti have been marked by further aid and NGO involvement in the country, to the extent that a medical NGO Medicine Sans Frontiers,⁶⁹ known for emergency care only, has had to establish an

⁶⁶ “Temporary Protected Status,” United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status>, 2018.

⁶⁷ “Temporary Protected Status.”

⁶⁸ Alex Dupuy, et. al., review of *Haiti: The Political Economy and Sociology of Decay and Renewal*, by Jean-Germain Gros, *Latin American Research Review* 35, no. 3 (2000): 211-226.

⁶⁹ Medicine Sans Frontiers, is also known as Doctors without Borders.

almost permanent presence in the country to assist in the development of a healthcare program. USAID has committed \$4.6 billion over the past six years and has stated it will continue to provide monetary support to Haiti to aid in capacity building.⁷⁰ While Haiti has been mending physically from the damage the earthquake caused, is the nation truly recovering well enough to stand on its own two feet economically? Or, will Haiti's misfortunes once again become an opportunity for parties who desire to push neoliberal policies on developing countries to dig their claws in more deeply? The course of history has shown that the so called "development" of the "Third World" has been nothing but the institution of neoliberal agendas to benefit developed countries. Unfortunately, in a society that revolves around the dependency on aid provided by foreign NGOs, Haiti is left with little choice in the course of its own "development."

⁷⁰ "Haiti Statistics," United States Agency for International Development, last modified January 12, 2016, <https://www.usaid.gov/haiti>.

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In Dependence



