

Research paper on haiti research paper

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In the 18 - 19th centuries, slavery was a common practice, exercised by the world's powers (Girard 36). Haiti represented a significant slave source for France, which colonized the island and imposed its rule by force as early as 1625, up until 1804, when Haiti gained its independence after a severe bloodshed revolution (Reinhardt 251). After defeating the French colonizers in what is called the most successful slave revolt of all times, Haiti was drastically blocked and boycotted from an economic perspective, having no other option than to make a settlement with France in 1825 (Schuller 149; Farmer 127). The settlement implied a tax of 150 million gold francs paid by Haiti to France as repairs costs for the losses France claimed to have endured as a result of the Haitian revolution. With a poor economy, strangled by both France and United States and a weak gross domestic product, Haiti had to appeal to international loans, paying high interest rates to French or other foreign banks, reaching interest rates as high as 60 - 70% (Girard 71).

In this socio-political and economic context, which forced Haiti to invest its country revenues in its debt towards France, the Caribbean country could not focus investments on the development of its infrastructure or other social area. Faced with the catastrophic earthquake from 2010, Haiti was found unprepared to manage such a calamity. Because of the poorly consolidated infrastructure, buildings and improper land fortifications, the effects of the Haitian earthquake were devastating for the country, stretching out until the present times. Girard (6-7) indicates that an earthquake with the same magnitude as the one in Haiti killed 63 people in San Francisco in 1989, pointing out the poor quality concrete and the shabby

built structures.

People who lost their houses are still dealing with the rubble and the infrastructure is still shuddered even after years from the natural calamity that hit Haiti (Girard 6). All these catastrophic side effects of the earthquake find their echo in the 19th century deal that France imposed on Haiti. Instead of investing in the socio – economic development of the country, the Haitian rulers were forced by the 1825 settlement with France to pay an unscrupulous repairs debt in so that its independence to be officially recognized. 185 years later the cost of its independence would rise even higher for the Caribbean country, which saw the death of hundreds of thousands individuals and the massive destruction of its fable infrastructure (Girard 3).

Although France recognized Haiti's independence in 1825 in exchange of a heavy financial penalty, other great powers of the time, such as United States did not (Girard 61). In the beginning of the 20th century, while Germany was aggressively pursuing its control over the Haitian economy by integrating merchants into the internal Haitian commerce, United States approached the military occupation of Haiti, with the declared purpose of protecting its investments in the country (Schuller 160). In fact, United States was concerned that Germany was threatening its Caribbean resources so that in 1915, taking advantage of a local riot that ended in the killing of the Haitian President Jean Vilburn Guillame Sam, United States sent Marine troops in Haiti. With this movement, US was controlling the country's finances and exercising political governance through pro-American Presidents (Farmer 130). Between 1915 – 1934 when U. S. occupied Haiti,

the Americans changed the country's constitution and applied multiple policies meant to reduce the local power and independence of Haitians. As such, there was introduced a new policy that allowed Haitian territory to be owned by foreigners, the racial segregation the forced labor and the press censorship (Margulies 323).

The effects of the American occupation of Haiti had a significant impact on the Haitian society. In 1919 a riot outburst, focused mostly in the rural areas, where the forced labor was more intensely practices, ending in the violent reprisals conducted by the US Marine, who produced around 15. 000 victims (Farmer 129). As a result of the US occupation the Haitian society saw intense racial discriminations formalized, increased taxes that increased the poverty level or the violation of individual liberties and oppressions, which reflected the slavery period under the French colonizers (Dubois 98). The country could not advance on foreign investments because the new ventures were not encouraged and the new corporations were driven away in the rural areas by the local communities due to the low salaries or the rural population's resistance to expropriation (Dubois 98). The US occupation ended in 1934, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the withdraw of the American troupes from Haiti, but the American influence upon Haiti continued through trained army, puppet regimes and economic affect until Francois Duvalier became the Haitian President in 1957 (Farmer 130). Duvalier ruled Haiti from 1957 until 1971, when he died, imposing a dictatorship reign that produced new hardships on the Haitian society, this time orchestrated not by foreign forces (Schuller 150). Duvalier's reign led to the wave of terror, which started through the encouragement of the

corruption for assuring the support of Haitians' elites, plus the strengthening of the tonton makouts, the President's private army, which acted as a secret service (Schuller 150; Balderston, Gonzalez & Lopez 83). Duvalier established his Life Presidency and eliminated everybody who was against his rule, by expatriating or even killing them (it is estimated that around tens of thousands civilians were murdered for political reasons during his rule; Schuller 150). As a result of Duvalier's dictatorship actions, United States, which formerly supported Haiti financially, retracted its financial aid, which impacted the country's economy, which depended on the American aid (Margulies 141). Duvalier the father, called Papa Doc, because of his doctor profession, propagated a personality cult, which was supported by the rumors of his voodoo practice, discouraging the population to resist any of his dictatorial endeavors, being afraid to oppose a political and voodoo leader (Girard 100).

When he died, in 1971, he transmitted the country's power to his son, Jean Claude Duvalier, or Baby Doc, who initially was appreciated for maintaining a steady climate by not engaging in political events (Balderston, Gonzalez & Lopez 500). Soon, Baby Doc continued his father corrupt political system, misappropriating funds and spending heavily, while leaving the country in poverty. During his time the pig and the rice crises that meant the replacement of these local resources with American ones, led to an increased poverty, hunger and malnutrition across the country (Schuller 150).

Overall, the external difficulties imposed by France and United States and the internal riots that marked the grid interests of the domestic political

leaders favored the foreign manipulation of the country's resources, the corruption and dictatorship at the cost of social development and modernization. Haiti's current situation, wherein the country is severely ravished by the 2010 earthquake is nothing but the sum – up of events that proliferated personal interests over national enforcement and infrastructure consolidation.

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