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Haiti on the Brink: Crises, OAS Intervention Proposals, and the International Protectorate Debate

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Executive Summary

Haiti is experiencing a severe collapse of governance characterized by extreme violence, a failing state structure, and a humanitarian crisis. With no elected government since early 2023 and more than 85% of Port-au-Prince controlled by gangs, the nation's institutions have fallen apart. The Haitian National Police are greatly underfunded, and over 1 million people are displaced, facing cholera outbreaks and famine-level food shortages. This crisis, rooted in decades of political instability and unsuccessful foreign interventions, now threatens regional stability in the Caribbean.

In response, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has suggested that the Organization of American States (OAS) organize a regional security mission, pressuring the OAS to act or risk losing U.S. funding. The current UN-backed Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission, led by Kenya, has proven ineffective, underfunded, and short-staffed. Rubio's proposal aims to revive the OAS as a regional security player, despite its historical inactivity, ideological divisions among members, and lack of operational capacity.

A more radical alternative being considered is establishing an international protectorate over Haiti, drawing from previous UN transitional administrations in Kosovo, East Timor, and Bosnia. These cases offer insights into rebuilding failed states via direct international control or hybrid oversight. Nevertheless, adopting such models in Haiti would face substantial legal, diplomatic, and political obstacles, including nationalist resistance and possible opposition from countries like China and Russia in the UN Security Council.

An intervention led by the OAS gains regional legitimacy and has the potential to rally neighboring countries such as Jamaica and The Bahamas, which have already committed support. Nonetheless, the OAS faces challenges due to its limited military infrastructure and internal political divisions, complicating efforts for effective coordination and execution.

An international protectorate would entail major governance reforms and enhanced security measures. However, it might undermine Haitian sovereignty, demand extensive and continuous international involvement, and encounter opposition both domestically and abroad. The paper advocates for a hybrid strategy: a UN-led multinational force commanded by the OAS with wide participation from Caribbean and Latin American nations. This approach would blend regional ownership with international logistical and financial backing. Additionally, it proposes

appointing an international envoy or commissioner to oversee governance reforms in collaboration with Haitian authorities, akin to the Bosnia model. Specific benchmarks should direct the transition toward re-establishing full Haitian sovereignty.

The primary takeaway is that Haiti's crisis demands decisive, multilateral efforts. Without robust involvement, the country will face ongoing instability with significant regional consequences. An international response—guided by lessons from previous interventions and endorsed by Haiti—will be crucial to help Haiti recover, stabilize, and establish a foundation for lasting peace and democratic revival.

Background: Haiti's Current Crisis: Governance Collapse, Gang Violence, and Humanitarian Emergency

Haiti is experiencing a profound state collapse, characterized by the breakdown of governance, rampant gang violence, and an escalating humanitarian catastrophe. The country currently has no elected government officials, following the expiration of the last ten senators' terms in January 2023. This has resulted in the absence of a functioning parliament or constitutional leadership. The assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021 decimated what remained of the executive branch, and no elections have been held since 2016. An unelected transitional government struggles to establish authority, but its legitimacy is limited, and its capacity is weak. The result is a governance vacuum—described by observers as the collapse of Haiti's institutional architecture—in which the rule of law has evaporated.

Armed gangs have exploited this power vacuum, seizing control of much of the country. By late 2024, according to Insight Crime, criminal groups were estimated to control 85% of Port-au-Prince and its surroundings, effectively ruling large swaths of the capital. They have rapidly expanded into other regions, including key agricultural areas such as the Artibonite Valley. More than 200 gangs operate across Haiti, many wielding military-grade weapons and enjoying ties to political or economic elites. Turf wars and predatory violence by these groups have made daily life extremely perilous. In 2024 alone, gangs killed at least 5,601 people and kidnapped nearly 1,500 others – a staggering toll more than double the previous year's fatalities. Massacres of civilians, brutal rapes used as terror tactics, and brazen attacks on churches and public gatherings are now commonplace. The Haitian National Police and justice system, under-resourced and often infiltrated by criminal interests, have been unable to stem the chaos. Courts have largely ceased to function in gang-dominated areas, and impunity for violent crime is nearly total. With only about 12,000 police and 1,000 military personnel for a population of 12 million, the Haitian state's security forces are overwhelmed and outgunned.

This security collapse has spawned a dire humanitarian crisis. Turf battles and gang blockades have displaced over 1 million Haitians from their homes, with many now living in squalid informal camps. In these makeshift shelters, overcrowding and the breakdown of infrastructure have fueled the resurgence of cholera and other diseases. By early 2025, health officials reported nearly 1,300 suspected cholera cases and 19 deaths in just one month, concentrated in crowded

displacement camps lacking clean water and sanitation. Overall, 6 million people – almost half of Haiti's population – are in need of humanitarian assistance, with about 4 million facing acute food insecurity. Malnutrition has reached crisis levels: UNICEF estimates that 2.85 million children (one-quarter of Haitian children) are suffering high levels of food insecurity, and over one million children are at emergency levels, at risk of famine. Essential services have crumbled; less than half of health facilities in the capital are fully operational, and two out of three major public hospitals are out of commission. The education system has likewise been disrupted by violence and instability, with many schools closed or under threat.

Haiti's current turmoil has deep historical roots. Chronic political instability, foreign interventions, and institutional fragility mark the country's modern history. Decades of dictatorial rule under the Duvaliers (1957–1986) were followed by a faltering transition to democracy, characterized by coups and armed rebellions. In the 1990s and 2000s, international forces intervened repeatedly—a U.S.-led mission in 1994 restored an elected president after a military coup, and a United Nations stabilization mission (MINUSTAH) was deployed from 2004 to 2017 to quell an armed revolt and support Haiti's government. While these missions achieved temporary success in reducing violence, they did not establish sustainable Haitian security institutions or robust governance. In some cases, they also caused unintended harm, as with the UN troops, whose improper sanitation introduced a deadly cholera epidemic in 2010. Frequent natural disasters (from the 2010 earthquake to repeated hurricanes) have further strained Haiti's capacity and compounded the government's failures. The net result is a cycle where international interventions bring momentary stability or aid, only to be followed by relapses into turmoil once external support diminishes. This historical context underscores the depth of Haiti's governance crisis and the challenges of finding a lasting solution.

Secretary Rubio's Call for an OAS-Led Intervention

Amid Haiti's worsening collapse, the United States has been reevaluating its policy and urging regional partners to assume a larger role. In May 2025, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio put forward a striking proposal: he argued that the Organization of American States (OAS) – the hemispheric political body – should take the lead in organizing a multinational security intervention in Haiti, and he hinted that continued U.S. funding for the OAS may hinge on this effort. Rubio voiced open frustration at the OAS's inaction, pointedly asking, "Why do we have an OAS, if the OAS can't put together a mission to handle the most critical region in our hemisphere?". Testifying before U.S. lawmakers, he proposed that the OAS assemble a regional security mission – effectively a coalition of Latin American and Caribbean states – to help Haitian authorities regain control from the gangs. Rubio emphasized that Haiti's crisis, unfolding in the heart of the Americas, demands a "regional solution" rather than relying predominantly on outside actors, such as Kenya.

This proposal emerged as the current U.N.-backed security effort in Haiti struggled. In late 2023, the U.N. Security Council authorized a Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission, led by Kenya, to strengthen

the Haitian police. However, by mid-2025, the mission remained critically under-resourced, with only 416 of the promised 2,500 personnel deployed, and a significant lack of funding and equipment. It had made minimal progress in reversing the rise of gang violence. U.S. officials expressed frustration with the prevailing situation. In a May 2025 special OAS meeting on Haiti, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Caribbean Affairs Barbara Feinstein bluntly stated that "much more can and should be done," echoing Rubio's call for a robust regional response. She emphasized that the United States – by far the most significant financial contributor to the OAS – cannot continue to bear such a disproportionate burden in Haiti's security efforts. Indeed, Washington had already frozen certain funds it had previously pledged for the U.N. mission, implicitly urging others to step up.

Rubio's underlying message was clear: the U.S. expects the OAS to justify its existence by acting decisively on Haiti's crisis, and U.S. contributions to the OAS might be reconsidered if it remains passive. Former OAS Secretary-General Luis Almagro responded cautiously, acknowledging that the Kenya-led mission was struggling and that "a new structure for the mission" was needed. Following Rubio's proposal, discussions began on whether the OAS could coordinate a Caribbean-led or Latin American-led security force to deploy to Haiti. Such a mission might involve troops or police from willing OAS member states – for example, neighboring Caribbean nations or Latin American countries that have previously contributed to peacekeeping in Haiti.

Conceptually, this would revive the OAS's role as a regional peace and security actor, a role it has rarely played in recent decades. The OAS did help coordinate multinational forces in the Dominican Republic in 1965, but since then, it has primarily focused on diplomacy and election monitoring. Rubio's proposal thus represents an attempt to resurrect the inter-American security framework to fill the void in Haiti, under the banner of "regional ownership." Critics, however, have pointed out significant challenges and contradictions in relying on the OAS. For one, the OAS lacks any standing military force or established mechanism for security operations. Unlike the United Nations, the OAS does not have a peacekeeping department, logistics infrastructure for deploying troops, or a unified command structure for field missions. Any OAS-led intervention would essentially have to be built from the ground up, likely relying on a coalition of the willing among member states.

Moreover, the OAS is a politically divided body. Ideological splits among its members could impede consensus on a Haiti mission. Several governments in the hemisphere – including Mexico, Brazil, and others – have traditionally opposed foreign military interventions on principle and may view a new Haiti mission as serving U.S. interests. These states prefer approaches focused on development and strengthening governance rather than armed intervention. Reaching an agreement within the OAS's Permanent Council or General Assembly to sanction a security force might therefore prove difficult. Even if approved, it remains uncertain whether major Latin American countries would contribute personnel.

Another complication is Haiti's own stance. The de facto Haitian authorities under the transitional council have repeatedly pleaded

for international help against the gangs, even requesting U.N. peacekeepers. They would likely welcome an OAS initiative if it brought tangible relief. However, Haiti's long history with foreign interventions has made parts of its society deeply distrustful of American-led or foreign-imposed solutions. An OAS mission might be more politically palatable if it were led by Haiti's fellow Caribbean states or Latin American neighbors, rather than by Western powers. Indeed, some Caribbean Community (CARICOM) members like Jamaica and The Bahamas have already offered to send police or troops to Haiti as part of a multinational force. A coordinated OAS plan could harness those regional contributions, potentially alongside Latin American forces, such as countries like Brazil, which led the U.N. mission in the 2000s.

In short, Rubio's proposal links the future of U.S. support for hemispheric institutions to urgent action on Haiti. It reflects Washington's effort to "multilateralize" the response and share the burden at a time when direct U.S. or U.N. intervention faces political obstacles. The gambit has put the OAS in the spotlight, challenging it to overcome its capacity gaps and political rifts to confront a security meltdown in one of its member states. Whether the OAS can rise to this occasion remains uncertain, and that uncertainty has reopened debate about even more far-reaching solutions – including the possibility of an international protectorate for Haiti.

Considering an International Protectorate: Lessons from Kosovo, East Timor, and Bosnia

Given Haiti's extreme dysfunction, some experts and Haitian stakeholders have floated a more radical option: placing the country under some form of international protectorate or trusteeship. This would entail a temporary suspension of full Haitian sovereignty and the establishment of an international authority to govern or oversee Haiti's reconstruction until it can self-govern effectively. While unprecedented in the Americas in modern times, this concept draws on examples of post-conflict international administrations elsewhere – notably Kosovo, East Timor, and Bosnia – which offer lessons on what a Haiti protectorate might entail and how viable it might be.

In the case of Kosovo, an international protectorate was effectively established in 1999 after a NATO intervention halted ethnic conflict in the Serbian province. The United Nations created the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) with an open-ended mandate to administer the territory and build new institutions.

Under UNMIK, Kosovo had no domestic government beyond consultative bodies; the UN mission exercised all executive, legislative, and judicial powers were exercised by the UN mission for several years. A NATO-led peacekeeping force (KFOR) provided security. This international governance lasted nearly a decade: Kosovo only declared independence in 2008, after UNMIK had overseen the creation of a local government and legal system.

The Kosovo example shows that full-scale international administration is possible when there is broad international consensus. It achieved its core aim of preventing further war and establishing self-governance for the Kosovar Albanians, albeit at the cost of

sidelining Serbian sovereignty claims. A challenge in Kosovo's case was the contested final status—even today, Kosovo's sovereignty is not recognized by some major powers, partly due to the way it emerged from a UN protectorate without Serbia's consent. For Haiti, Kosovo's experience suggests that an international authority could, in theory, restore order and reboot institutions. However, unlike Kosovo, Haiti is an existing sovereign state with a recognized government (albeit a weak one). Imposing a Kosovo-style UN administration on Haiti would require either the Haitian government's invitation or a forceful Chapter VII mandate—and would carry the baggage of appearing to override national sovereignty in a country that is highly sensitive to foreign domination.
East Timor offers another instructive case. After a 1999 referendum in which East Timorese voted for independence from Indonesia, violent chaos erupted, prompting international intervention. The United Nations stepped in with the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), which governed East Timor as a caretaker state authority from 1999 to 2002. Much like Kosovo, UN officials assumed full administrative control, overseeing everything from policing to public services, essentially acting as the government during the transition period. International peacekeepers, initially a coalition led by Australia (INTERFET) and later a UN force, enforced security.

East Timor's transition is often cited as a relative success in international state-building: by 2002, UNTAET had organized elections, established a new constitution, and trained local civil servants, allowing the new nation (Timor-Leste) to emerge as an independent state. The East Timor model demonstrates that with sufficient international will, even a devastated territory can be guided to stability and self-rule. Key factors included the unified international mandate, the clear goal of building a fully sovereign state, and the receptiveness of the Timorese, who broadly welcomed UN administration after years of occupation.

For Haiti, a comparable UN trusteeship might consist of empowering a UN mission to make executive decisions – for example, reorganizing the national police, reforming courts, managing finances, and coordinating development – until Haitian institutions are deemed competent to take back control. The East Timor experience suggests that intensive international supervision for a limited period can yield positive results, but it requires enormous resources and trust between the local population and the international administrators.

Bosnia and Herzegovina represents a slightly different model of international oversight. After the Bosnian War (1992–1995), the Dayton Peace Accords established Bosnia as a sovereign state, but under the watch of a powerful Office of the High Representative (OHR). The High Representative, backed by major world powers, was given authority to oversee civilian implementation of the peace agreement – including the extraordinary "Bonn Powers" to impose laws and remove elected officials who obstruct. In effect, Bosnia became a de facto international protectorate in the late 1990s and early 2000s, though it retained formal independence.

NATO deployed a large peacekeeping force (IFOR and later SFOR) to provide security. Over time, Bosnia's own institutions have

taken on more responsibility, but to this day the OHR remains in place (albeit with reduced influence) to safeguard the state's functionality. The Bosnia model demonstrates a more hybrid approach: rather than direct administration by foreigners, it set up an empowered international overseer with veto power over local decisions. This was viable because Bosnia's warring factions agreed to it in a peace deal, and it was backed by a UN mandate.

For Haiti, one could imagine a similar arrangement – for instance, an international High Commissioner for Haiti supported by a multinational force, who could guide the Haitian government, veto corrupt appointments, and ensure that benchmarks in security and governance are met before full sovereignty is restored. This would preserve the veneer of Haitian authority while providing an external check to prevent backsliding. However, Bosnia's lesson is also cautionary: the protectorate-like oversight had to last far longer than anticipated (nearly 30 years and counting) because local political dysfunction persisted. External control can create dependency and political resentment even as it stabilizes a country.

Establishing an international protectorate over Haiti would be politically sensitive and legally intricate. Unlike Kosovo or East Timor, Haiti is not emerging from a civil war with decisive winners or losers who are willing to accept foreign administration. It is a member of both the UN and OAS, possessing a (nominal) government that would need to consent to any such arrangement—effectively acknowledging its own failure.

Haitian public opinion is not easily gauged, but past episodes provide some insight. In 2004, after a rebellion ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the idea of a protectorate was floated in policy circles. Surprisingly, some Haitian civil society leaders and intellectuals expressed openness to the concept out of sheer exasperation. One Haitian businessman noted in 2004, during a previous crisis in that "people are more interested in better living conditions than in the abstract concept of sovereignty" when daily life is unbearable, estimating that perhaps 65–70% of the public might support a temporary protectorate at that time. He and others pointed out that one of Haiti's only prolonged periods of stability occurred during the U.S. occupation of 1915–1934—an era now oddly recalled by some as a period of relative order and infrastructural development. This underscores that public sentiment in crisis can shift towards favoring external control if it promises basic security and services. Yet, there is also a strong nationalist undercurrent in Haiti due to its proud history as the first Black republic and its trauma with foreign meddling. Any whiff of "neo-colonialism" could provoke backlash or armed resistance from factions that feel threatened by an international takeover.

A Haiti protectorate would face both support and opposition. Advocates argue that Haiti's situation – a "failed state" scenario with no functioning institutions and rampant violence – is precisely the kind of emergency that warrants trusteeship to save lives and rebuild. They contend that sovereignty has effectively collapsed, making international stewardship a lesser evil than allowing chaos to reign. Indeed, the concept of UN trusteeship was revived after the Cold War for situations like East

Timor and Kosovo, based on the premise that global norms compel action to prevent humanitarian disasters.

On the other hand, geopolitical rivals and regional politics could impede this path. In the UN Security Council, China and Russia have so far opposed creating a formal UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti, let alone a full administrative trusteeship – partly on the principle of non-interference and partly due to a lack of strategic interest. Convincing them, or bypassing them through the General Assembly or a coalition of willing states, would be necessary to authorize an international administration. Within the Americas, some Latin American and Caribbean nations might bristle at a perceived foreign takeover of a Latin American country's sovereignty, recalling the ugly legacy of protectorates and occupations. Therefore, any international administration would need to be carefully framed as a multilateral, time-bound effort with Haiti's consent, focusing on restoring democracy and human rights, rather than as a colonial usurpation.

In evaluating these historical cases, an international protectorate in Haiti could take various forms—from direct UN governance (as in Kosovo/East Timor) to a supervisory role over Haitian institutions (as in Bosnia). Each approach requires a substantial commitment of troops, police, and civilian experts, along with billions in aid sustained over years. The examples also show mixed results: initial stability is possible, but long-term success depends on developing legitimate local leadership and tackling underlying social divisions. Haiti's situation shares some traits with those earlier cases (e.g., total institutional collapse) but also differs significantly, especially since there is no peace agreement or clear end to conflict, as Haiti's violence is more dispersed and criminal in nature. This makes the entry point for a protectorate more complicated; there is no single rebel army to defeat or agreement to enforce, but rather widespread lawlessness to gradually address.

Pros and Cons: OAS Intervention vs. International Protectorate

With these options and the newer proposal from Secretary of State Rubio, both policymakers and Haitians are considering two broad strategies to rescue Haiti: an OAS-led regional intervention versus an international protectorate model (likely UN-led). Each has unique advantages and disadvantages that need careful evaluation.

Pros and Cons of an OAS-Led Regional Intervention

Pros – OAS/Regional Mission:

- Regional Legitimacy: An OAS-sanctioned force could carry greater political acceptability in the hemisphere, appearing as a collective Latin American-Caribbean effort rather than an imposed American solution. This might ease nationalist sensitivities in Haiti and frame the mission as neighbors helping neighbor, consistent with the principle of regional solidarity.
- Shared Burden: It would distribute the financial and military burden among multiple countries. The United States, while likely providing significant funding and logistical support, would not be acting alone – reducing the perception of a unilateral American intervention. U.S. officials have explicitly tied ongoing U.S. funding of OAS to members stepping up in Haiti, signaling

that resources will be available if the OAS leads.

- Hemispheric Security Interests: Haiti's chaos has spillover effects (refugee flows, arms and drug trafficking) that directly affect neighboring states like the Dominican Republic, The Bahamas, and Jamaica. A regional mission allows those most affected to take the lead in restoring stability, potentially bringing more immediate political willnto the table. For example, Caribbean states have already offered personnel for Haiti's security – an OAS framework could formalize and expand such contributions
- Diplomatic Precedent: The OAS has a mandate (under its Charter and the Inter-American Democratic Charter) to address threats to democracy and security in the Americas. While dormant in this role for decades, invoking the OAS for Haiti could revive regional mechanisms and set a precedent for collective action in crises. Rubio's argument – "The OAS is uniquely positioned... as a vehicle for coordinated, concrete action"– reflects the view that the hemisphere should police its own problems, which resonates with notions of Latin American agency.

Cons – OAS/Regional Mission:

- Lack of Capacity: The OAS has no standing forces or mission support structure. It would attempt something it hasn't done in over half a century. The practical challenges of mounting a complex security operation – from unified command to logistics, intelligence, and rules of engagement – are enormous for an organization not designed for military interventions. Member states would need to contribute forces and assets under an ad hoc arrangement, which could lead to coordination problems or an ineffective patchwork force.
- Political Division: As noted, the OAS is divided ideologically. Achieving consensus for action in Haiti might be hindered by members who suspect this is a U.S.-driven agenda or who oppose intervention. Several influential members (Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, and others) have historically been lukewarm toward interventions, favoring sovereignty and non-interference doctrines. They may either vote against an OAS mission or demand such restrictive terms that the mission becomes ineffective. Any perception that an OAS force is a "fig leaf" for U.S. influence (recalling the 1965 Dominican Republic intervention) could undermine the effort regionally.
- Resource Constraints: Many Latin American and Caribbean countries have limited military/policing resources and pressing domestic security needs of their own. Sustaining a multi-thousand-strong deployment in Haiti, potentially for years, would strain their capacities. Without robust funding from the U.S. and international sources, an OAS mission could quickly falter. Indeed, the current Kenya-led mission is hampered by a lack of funds – a purely regional force might face similar shortfalls unless external donors step in.
- Uncertain Effectiveness: There is no guarantee an OAS-led force could succeed where previous efforts struggled. Gangs in Haiti are deeply entrenched; dislodging them may require intense combat in urban slums, with risks of civilian casualties. Latin American forces (aside from a few with

past UN experience in Haiti) may not be prepared for this kind of asymmetric warfare on foreign soil. A token or half-hearted deployment could even backfire, emboldening gangs if it fails to make progress. In short, without clear rules of engagement, sufficient troops, and a long-term commitment, an OAS mission might not substantially improve security, yet would still bear the political costs if things go wrong.

Pros and Cons of an International Protectorate in Haiti

Pros – International Protectorate:

- Comprehensive State-Building: An international protectorate (e.g., UN trusteeship or mandate) would enable a full-scale reconstruction of Haiti's governing capacity. With international administrators in charge, Haiti could essentially reset its institutions: purging corrupt officials, rebuilding the police and courts with vetted personnel, and enforcing the rule of law impartially. The experiences of Kosovo and East Timor demonstrate that external governance can jump-start institutional development in ways that short missions cannot. This approach goes beyond piecemeal training; it would directly manage ministries and security forces until they meet benchmarks, offering a far more hands-on solution to Haiti's institutional collapse.
- Superior Security Capability: A UN-backed protectorate would likely include a robust Chapter VII peacekeeping force or a multinational military contingent that surpasses what a regional mission could assemble. Previous UN operations in Haiti featured up to 9,000 peacekeepers; a new intervention may necessitate equal or greater numbers to genuinely secure the country. With broad international participation, funding, and heavy equipment (such as armored vehicles and air support), this force could more effectively confront heavily armed gangs. It could also better coordinate with international naval assets to combat arms and drug trafficking by sea. Essentially, the firepower and logistics available under a UN-led operation would likely exceed those of an OAS-only force.
- A Unified Mandate: A trusteeship-style mission could address not just security but also humanitarian relief and economic recovery within a unified framework. Instead of having separate efforts for security, development, and political mediation, an international administration can integrate these into one strategy. For example, while troops stabilize hotspots, civilian administrators can simultaneously restore basic services, and humanitarian agencies can operate under the protectorate's security umbrella. This unity of command and purpose could lead to faster improvements in daily life for Haitians, fostering public confidence. It also means accountability would be clearer—the international authority can be assessed on overall progress rather than the fragmented responsibility of current efforts.
- Precedent of Success (with caveats): There are precedents where international administrations succeeded in preventing state failure: East Timor emerged independent and relatively stable; Bosnia, though still divided, remains at peace with functioning basic institutions; Kosovo has not seen a return to mass violence since UNMIK began. These

suggest that, under the right conditions, international governance can halt a descent into chaos. For Haiti, long termed the "Republic of NGOs" due to parallel foreign-led services, a formal protectorate might streamline and legitimize what is informally already a heavy international involvement. Some Haitian voices have argued that Haiti was effectively already under foreign tutelage (via donor conditions and aid agencies), so it would be more honest and potentially more effective to formalize that tutelage until the house is set in order.

Cons – International Protectorate:

- Sovereignty and National Pride: Placing Haiti under international control is inherently seen as an assault on sovereignty and national dignity. Haiti, which won its independence through a slave revolution, has a uniquely proud identity; foreign occupation is a deeply sensitive subject. Even if many citizens are fed up with local rulers and gangs, an extended trusteeship risks igniting nationalist backlash. Militant groups or opportunistic politicians could rally resistance under the banner of patriotism, complicating the mission. The longer the international administration lasts, the more it could breed resentment as an occupying force. Past incidents (like the UN's cholera outbreak and peacekeeper abuses) would fuel distrust, with critics saying Haiti is "everybody's colony" under a protectorate.
- Political Feasibility: Gaining the necessary international authorization is a significant hurdle. A UN trusteeship would require Security Council approval or a similar high-level consensus. Currently, key UN members have opposed even a standard peacekeeping mission in Haiti, making something as intrusive as a trusteeship even harder to advocate. Without UNSC approval, a coalition of nations could theoretically establish a protectorate through an agreement with Haiti's government, but this would lack the global legitimacy of a UN mandate and could be contested as illegal. It also relies on the Haitian government's consent—essentially asking Haiti's leaders to give up their own authority. Even if Alix Didier Fils-Aimé, the interim Prime Minister (or its successor council) were to agree out of desperation, other Haitian political factions might argue that it's an illegitimate capitulation. In summary, the diplomatic and legal complexities are immense.
- Resource and Commitment Drain: Running a country is a colossal task. The international community would have to commit thousands of personnel (administrators, judges, police mentors, etc.) and sustain funding potentially amounting to billions of dollars annually for possibly a decade or more. Donor fatigue is a genuine risk. Haiti's problems—poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation—are deeply rooted and will not be fixed overnight. Critics worry that a neo-trusteeship could become a quasi-permanent crutch, with no clear exit as new problems arise (Bosnia's protracted OHR presence is a case in point). If international attention shifts or major powers face crises elsewhere, Haiti's protectorate could be neglected and underfunded, stagnating without having achieved its goals. The open-ended nature of state-building makes this a daunting commitment that

many nations are reluctant to sign onto, especially given past nation-building fatigue in places like Afghanistan.

- Local Exclusion and Dependency: By design, a protectorate minimizes local political agency – which may be necessary at first, but can also stunt the development of responsible local leadership.
- There is a risk of creating a dependency mentality where Haitian actors defer all hard decisions to the foreign administrators. Genuine democracy cannot grow under an international caretaker if local stakeholders disengage or lack incentives to build grassroots support. Furthermore, external rulers might lack nuanced understanding of Haiti's social fabric, potentially making missteps in governance. For example, imposing certain reforms too quickly or aligning with the wrong local elites could generate friction. Haiti's complex culture and history of external exploitation mean an outside authority would need to navigate with extreme care to avoid reinforcing narratives of imperialism or inadvertently favoring one group over another. The emotional and social toll of essentially being told "you cannot govern yourselves" could be high, and reversing that narrative later (when handing back power) might be challenging.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations: Choosing a Path Forward for Haiti

Haiti's continued descent toward total institutional and societal collapse demands an urgent and decisive response. The analysis above weighs two bold strategies – an OAS-led regional security intervention and an international protectorate – each of which could mark a turning point. Ultimately, the preferred course of action may need to borrow elements from both, forging a hybrid approach that maximizes effectiveness while minimizing political pitfalls.

On balance, a multilateral intervention under U.N. auspices – but with strong leadership and participation from Haiti's neighbors – emerges as the most promising path. In practical terms, this could mean an initial deployment of a robust multinational force (backed by a U.N. Security Council mandate if possible) to regain control of critical areas from gangs, coupled with the appointment of an empowered international envoy or commission to oversee Haiti's governance and reconstruction. The OAS can play a crucial role in this by rallying regional political support, contributing troops and police from willing member states, and helping legitimize the effort as a regional mission rather than a neo-colonial dictate. In fact, Secretary Rubio's pressure on the OAS may bear fruit if it results in commitments of personnel and funds from Latin America and the Caribbean, integrated into the larger U.N.-supported operation. Such burden-sharing would answer the call for a "hemispheric solution" while still leveraging the operational strengths of the U.N. system (logistics, peacekeeping experience, and global funding mechanisms).

At the same time, the international community should incorporate the lessons of past protectorates without necessarily declaring a formal trusteeship. This means giving the international mission a broad state-building mandate: not only to train Haiti's police, but to help run its courts, prisons, and even key ministries until

Haitian capacity is restored. A temporary joint administration framework could be established – for example, an international commissioner working alongside a Haitian transitional authority – to make binding decisions on governance reforms, anti-corruption measures, and election preparations. By drawing on Bosnia's model of an overseer with override powers, the plan could prevent Haiti's corrupt or criminal elements from spoiling the recovery process, while still involving Haitian officials so that sovereignty can gradually be returned. Clear benchmarks (e.g., a reduction in violence, re-establishment of functioning municipalities, and credible election infrastructure) should be set for progress, with an understanding that the international role will recede as those benchmarks are met. In essence, Haiti might enter a period of "guardianship" – not outright annexation of sovereignty, but a consensual, time-bound partnership in which international actors are deeply embedded in running the country until stability is achieved.

This recommended course acknowledges that neither the OAS nor the U.N. acting alone is likely to succeed. A purely OAS mission risks being too divided and under-resourced, while a classic U.N. peacekeeping operation without regional buy-in could lack legitimacy and political will. A fusion approach – a U.N.-backed multinational force with OAS leadership and Haitian consent – offers a compromise. It aligns with the reality that the crisis in Haiti is multifaceted: it is a security emergency, a humanitarian disaster, and a failure of governance all at once. Tackling these requires multifaceted engagement. Security operations must be paired with massive humanitarian relief (to win hearts and minds and alleviate suffering) and with political facilitation to nurture a new generation of Haitian leaders untainted by corruption or violence. The OAS and U.N. together can marry their strengths – the OAS's regional legitimacy and diplomatic clout with the U.N.'s resources and experience in nation-building – to underpin this comprehensive strategy.

Above all, the international response must center the aspirations of the Haitian people. Haitians have endured unfathomable hardship: terrorized by gangs, starved of basic needs, and betrayed by leaders. Any intervention should operate with transparency and maintain constant communication with Haitian civil society, religious groups, and community leaders to ensure it addresses real needs and does not impose alien values. The endgame should be a Haiti that can govern itself, with a democratically elected government, professional security forces, and resilient institutions that serve the public. Achieving that will likely require several years of intensive international involvement and billions in aid, but the alternative is Haiti's collapse into a permanent failed state – an outcome that the world, and Haiti's neighbors in particular, have a vested interest in preventing.

Haiti's crisis has reached a point where bold action is no longer optional but essential. A carefully balanced combination of regional efforts and international leadership emerges as the best course ahead. By tying OAS funding to concrete actions, Secretary Rubio has awakened a dormant system; by examining cases like Kosovo, East Timor, and Bosnia, the international community has valuable models to follow. It's time to turn these lessons into action. Haiti's proud

history began with defying the odds to achieve independence; today, restoring Haiti's future will demand a remarkable partnership between Haitians and the international community to pull the country out of chaos and set it on a path toward stability and hope.

Author

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