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Haiti Reborn?



Sources: Capire

Sabine Manigat explains the recent broad mobilizations in Haiti that demand a profound change of system

Haiti is "an object of regional concern," a well-known national political scientist reportedly said. Violence and massacres, multiplication of armed gangs, economic crisis bordering on the humanitarian crisis... A case that merits international treatment. With such a "signage sheet" what is really happening in the country is hidden from public opinion: a citizen and popular mobilization that since July 2018 has become permanent, although it has taken the most diverse expressions, such as marches, *sit-ins*, petitions, legal demands, and not only occupation and blockade of streets. By isolating and absolutizing only the "spectacular" demonstrations (such as tire burnings and repressions with tear gas),

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the political substance is hidden and an entire social protest movement at the national level is criminalized.

Indeed, what we have today is a multifaceted social movement that is the corollary of the gradual collapse of the state in Haiti. What previous social movements brought were social demands for an exclusive, closed state, insensitive to the general interest. The interventions we experienced in Haiti's recent past have transformed the situation from the point of view of both historical evolution and the evolution of forms of mobilization. Faced with the persistence of the majorities to participate in the election of their leaders and the protection of natural disasters and political vicissitudes – whose development escapes this space – there are the national oligarchies, supported by the dominant powers in Haiti, starting with the United States.

These oligarchies are trying to restore the traditional levers of Duvalierist dictatorial power that served for almost 30 years in Haiti, from 1957 to 1986. Many of us analyze the political party PHTK [*Parti Haitien Tet Kale – Haitian Calf Head Party*] [1] imposed by an electoral selection in 2011, barely a year after the earthquake. It is an attempt to restore a kind of neo-Duvalierism of the twenty-first century, that is, using legal, electoral and communication apparatuses instead of mere military repression. From this moment and for about eight years, there is a kind of shock of society.

Faced with the impotence of traditional politicians, who fail to confront this new power or who agree with it, a social movement is beginning to be built whose objective is now more radical: to change the system.

Este sistema ya no puede, no podemos con este sistema. Dicho proceso ha sido largo y tortuoso, porque la sociedad civil haitiana no tiene una tradición organizativa fuerte. Tiene una larga tradición de movilización, de sublevamiento, pero poca práctica organizativa. Las organizaciones políticas son jóvenes y todavía endebles. Asimismo, tenemos hoy un movimiento social potente en su reivindicación, que realmente rechaza cualquier recomposición parcial de un Estado que, por lo demás, ya no existe en ninguna de sus características institucionales.

Desde [principios del 2020, el Estado está totalmente destruido](#) en sus instituciones –sin parlamento, sin sistema judicial, sin autoridades municipales y locales– y atacado en sus fundamentos mismos, con una administración pública paralizada. La policía está debilitada, gangrenada por la delincuencia y politizada. Ante este panorama se alza un movimiento social que dice «hay que hacer otra cosa», pero ¿qué? Y ¿cómo?

The answers have to be seen not from the partisan point of view, but from a real analysis of the power of a movement that comes out of civil society and joins the progressive political forces that, it must be recognized, are still under construction. The Popular Patriotic Front [*Front Patriotique Populaire*] is an example of this, perhaps the most advanced. The Roots Party of the Popular Camp [*Rasin Kan Pep La*] and the Socialist Alternative [*Alternativ Sosyalis*] are other such formations.

Challenges of the mobilizations

That civic movement has spearheaded what has ended up shaping itself as a national agreement with two main objectives (and many others). One is the recovery of the sovereignty of this country, because in the decomposition of that state intervene in the first place the imperialist forces and what has been called the international community, which does not want to know of political paths that move away from dependence. So the first demands are "stop the intervention" and "stop the guardianship (which says or does not say its name)". We now want to rebuild our state sovereignly.

We are talking about basic demands, such as education, health and sanitation. They are basic, but they are precisely the essence of what builds citizenship, and what was missing to cement the nation. Just to mention an illustration of this, the national budget reserves only 16% for education and... 4.3% for health! The priority, today, is to recompose a state structure that allows to provide services to the whole of this society. We are not only talking about legitimacy: we all know that the current power is not legitimate, but neither is it *capable* of recomposing a minimum of general management of society, of the economy, of the basics that constitute us. We want to rebuild the institutions and sit down to discuss the type of state and society we want. It is very different from the rush to reorder the authorities of formal institutions into a structure that society has already said it no longer wants. We have the *capacity*, but we want the *possibility* of putting together a project that is, first of all, in favour of the majority. It is an ambitious project for what has been the trajectory of the social movement in Haiti.

We are an important and diverse political actor, which is thriving because it is on the side of these majority demands: unions, professionals, women's organizations, peasant organizations.

The second objective is to get out of oblivion and silence. From time to time, the mainstream press talks about violence and humanitarian needs, but there is no talk of the citizen resistance that has put that country on its feet, although economically and politically isolated. What we need is an active solidarity, which respects political spaces

and actors, and which is capable of accompanying the Haitian people where they need, and not where foreign interests say that they want to be in command. It is, in the end, to avoid guardianship. The Haitian people no longer want to be protected by any power, however well-intentioned.

Note:

1. The name Tèt Kale [*Parti Haïtien Tèt Kale – PHTK*], which means "bald head" in *Haitian Creole*, pays homage to Michel Martelly, former president of Haiti, known for his bald head. Michel was president from 2011 to 2016, when an electoral crisis broke out in the country.

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Source: <https://capiremov.org/es/experiencias-es/haiti-renacer/>

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