

## **Uncorrected Transcript: Check against Video for Quotes**

### **QI Panel:**

#### **A U.S.-Kenyan Rescue in Haiti and its Implications for American Foreign Policy**

May 21, 2024

12:00-1:00 PM EST

#### **Sarang Shidore 1:12**

Welcome all to a Quincy Institute webinar on the crisis in Haiti, and the planned U.S.- Kenyan intervention. The Quincy Institute is a foreign policy think tank based in Washington DC that researchers and advocates for a grand strategy of restraint. We believe that it is in the US national interest to pull back on as international interventionist tendencies, and emphasize diplomacy and economic engagement as also combatting existential global threats such as climate change. I'm serving shadow a director of our new global sub program here at the Quincy Institute, welcoming you all, the global sub program aims to achieve a new bargain between the United States and the diverse predominantly unaligned matter region of the global south by not repeating the errors of the past, and forging new partnerships for the future. Why violence is in Gulf Haiti in recent months, with gangs controlling much of the country. In response, Washington is supporting a Kenyan led armed intervention in Haiti, which comes in the backdrop of largely failed international interventions of the past, with Kenyan President William Ruto, visiting the United States and coming to Washington, where he will be received by President Biden at a state dinner. This will be the first state visit by an African leader to the White House since 2008. What are the benefits and risks of the US Kenya security relationship? Will this new intervention succeed where others have largely failed? And more generally, how should the US respond to instability in failed and failing states?

To discuss all this and more, I'm joined by three excellent panelists today. First off, is Samar Al-Bulushi, who is a non resident fellow here at the Quincy Institute and assistant professor of anthropology at the University of California Irvine. Her book War-Making as World-Making: Kenya, the United States and the War on Terror focuses on the US Kenya security relationship. She's a former contributing editor at Africa is a country and has published in many public outlets on topics ranging from the International Criminal Court to the militarization of US policy in Africa. Jake Johnston is a senior research associate at the Center for Economic and Policy Research in Washington DC. His research focuses on economic policy in Latin America, the International Monetary Fund, and US foreign policy. His book, eight state led panic disaster capitalism, and the battle to control Haiti is just out and covers a foreign aid and intervention is held to destabilize Haiti. He is the lead author for CPRS Haiti relief and reconstruction watch blog. And as published in the New York Times, the nation, the intercept, Lamond, diplomatic, Boston review and many other outlets. Last but not the least, is Ambassador Daniel Foote. He is an American diplomat and career member of the Senior Foreign Service, who was the United States State Special Envoy for Haiti from July to September 2021. He formerly served as a United Nations ambassador to Zambia, as well as the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law and enforcement foot also

## **Uncorrected Transcript: Check against Video for Quotes**

served as the coordinating director at the US Embassy in Kabul, managing all US civilian foreign assistance, and law enforcement activities in Afghanistan. Welcome to all and I'm going to start out with you Ambassador Foote and try to first maybe outline what's happening at this time in Haiti, because we are getting a lot of reports some of them are quite dire. In terms of the law and order situation in Haiti, the fact that the gangs have control many parts of the country apparently have broken into a jail, released many inmates recently. So what is the situation like in Haiti at the moment? Are we in a situation where the gangs are truly in charge of the country? Or are we in a situation where it's sort of a mixed bag where gangs control parts, parts of it and who's who's providing governance in the country at the moment?

### **Ambassador Daniel Foote 6:01**

Thank you very much. And good afternoon. Haiti was a failed state has been a failed state, just about since the assassination of President Jovenel. Moise, almost three years ago. And in that time, the gangs have gathered increasing power, increasing weaponry, there's an article in The New York Times today about how they have modern military grade rifles from Belgian one of these, these gangs, and they have a voice at the table, they are in charge of large swaths of quarter prints and major choke points throughout the country. Nobody's in charge of the rest of it, frankly. And by enabling the gangs to get stronger at this point, any path forward is going to have to take the gangs into account and what you're seeing now, the people are having difficulty getting food, hospitals can't get diesel to run their generators. So they have Madison's blood, everything they need. So the healthcare system has largely collapsed education system collapse long ago, the police are Valient, but they're way way over man overmatched by the gangs, and they have no leadership and, and, frankly, they're not in a position to do anything. And at this point, we think the Kenyans will be coming in imminently to lead a multinational security support mission in Haiti, under the auspices of the United Nations.

### **Sarang Shidore 7:52**

Sounds like a very dire situation, indeed, Jake Johnston, if you want to add something to what Ambassador Foote said, but also tell us how we got here, sort of starting from the more recent developments in Haiti, how did we end up in such a difficult and dire state? I believe you're muted, Jake.

### **Jake Johnston 8:16**

Sorry about that. Yeah. Thanks for having me. And I appreciate the comments from from Ambassador Foote you know, I would use a slightly different term, right, rather than a failed state. You know, I use the term in aid state, because I think, you know, the connotation and the implications of the term a failed state, you know, perpetuates this idea that foreign intervention is, has to happen that he can't govern itself, right. And I think the reality is that the international community, the United States, the UN and others, have played a tremendous role in destabilizing Haiti and collapsing that state, right. And so the state that is collapsing is a state that was not built to actually provide for the Haitian people, right. And that's in so many ways is

## **Uncorrected Transcript: Check against Video for Quotes**

the root cause of the violence and the insecurity and the instability that we see today. But this is the most unequal country in the hemisphere, one of the most unequal countries in the world where a small group of elite, control the economy, control the political environment and have done so for a very long time. That status quo is not sustainable. It will continue to generate these these bouts of instability time and time again, and the way to stop that and perpetuate that system is through intervention, right? It's through force. And so this is the pattern that we've seen repeatedly throughout history. And I think, you know, unfortunately, it's the pattern that we see continuing today in many ways.

### **Sarang Shidore 9:35**

I'm going to bring in Samar to the conversation from the East African side, specifically from the Kenyan side. As we just mentioned, Kenyan President Ruto is in town. And Kenya is going to be the lead actor in this plan intervention in Haiti, so Samar the Haiti deployment is not a unifying issue. Is it in Kenya there are divisions at home There has been a code challenge. There's been opposition criticism. So why is President Ruto pushing so hard for this mission despite the domestic divisions that are visible on the issue? And how is he defining Kenyan interests in all of this?

### **Samar Al-Bulushi 10:22**

Thanks for that question Sarang. And thanks for the opportunity to be here with you all. So I think that both the visit itself by a president Ruto to Washington this week, and the fact that Kenya will be leading this multinational support mission to Haiti, represents the culmination of years of time and energy that the Kenyan government has put in to two things one, cultivating a very strong security partnership with United States and that extends back over the last 20 years. Plus, we could go even back as early as 1998 in the aftermath of the al Qaeda attacks in Nairobi in Dar Salam when the US then sought out Kenya as a key security ally. And more recently, the Uhuru Kenyatta administration, Ruto, his predecessor was, I think, very discerning in seeing that Kenya has an opportunity to present itself as a leader on the global stage on questions of security. Now, we saw that in the years after Kenya decided to invade Somalia, and to take up what some would describe as a leadership role in Somalia. And we've seen that in the form of a lot of funds that have been spent to cultivate a very positive image of the Kenyan security forces, specifically, and this they they've had to do in part because of negative coverage of the Kenyan military's role in Somalia. They were known to be active and actually colluding with the Somali militant group al Shabaab. And as a result, the Kenyan government has expended considerable time and funds to promote the Kenyan military, as I mentioned, and to clean up its image you could say, Now, as far as the Haiti deployment is concerned, I'm glad that you mentioned the fact that there has been considerable opposition within Kenya itself, because that matters when it comes to talk about the Kenya us relationship being one between Democratic partners, right, I think we're going to see a lot of invocation of the language of democracy in relation to these two governments. And this is how, one of the ways in which Kenya distinguishes itself on the global stage by presenting itself as a democracy.

## **Uncorrected Transcript: Check against Video for Quotes**

But when you account for the fact that there has been considerable opposition, which the Kenyan government has effectively discounted, right, there was zero public consultation about the decision to leave this mission to Haiti. And I think a lot of Kenyans are frustrated about that fact. And these are voices that should be taken seriously precisely because Kenyans have their own concerns at the stage, right, Kenya itself is facing many of its own problems. And to the point that both of the previous speakers have just been making about this language of failed states. I think what's perhaps the most troubling about this decision for Kenya to lead the way is that in order for Kenya to be recognized and received by the United States, as a world leader, it has to distinguish itself from countries like Haiti, it specifically has to say, we are not like them, you know, like the failed states over there, we have our act together, right. And in distinguishing themselves, they are creating divisions between the very people who they claim to be in solidarity with. So at the same time, we've seen indications of Pan African solidarity, to suggest that these are not colonizers who are coming in, but instead, people who are in solidarity with the Haitians, that they relate to the challenges that they faced. And yet there's an inherent contradiction that is built in to the very intervention, right? And that the invocations of Pan African solidarity function effectively to mask the forms of power that are at work in this intervention.

### **Sarang Shidore 14:28**

Democratic partnership, and going in as democracies into a state that is failed or an aid state, depending on how we define it. This kind of language, of course, we have heard before, Ambassador foot US special envoy to Haiti in 2021. And you've been observing the diplomatic scenario quite closely. Do you see any scenario in which foreign intervention would be a good thing Oh would be justifiable. Would you also see a scenario? Any scenario in which US troops being inserted into Haiti as they have before? Or would actually help? Can you can you tell us as to Are there any any any positive scenarios in your mind here on on these interventions.

### **Ambassador Daniel Foote 15:18**

So I have been theoretically opposed to any intervention and 100% oppose any political intervention. Since I was in Haiti 12 years ago, when I lived there, there's the number two at the embassy at this point, because the US the UN and the other donor countries in Haiti have let the gangs get so strong and let the situation erode to such a level. They need a security intervention of some sort. The Haitian National Police is decimated when I was there. I left in 2012. That's when I completed my tour of the Haiti. At that point, the Haitian National Police, in my opinion, was significantly stronger than the Kenyan National Police and was the most respected institution, that country since 2012, when the current party in charge under President Michel Martelly, started using the police as a political tool. The police has kind of come on down under Jojo Moyes. He installed gang members as political appointees in the police leadership. And so the police went from about 15,012 years ago, I'd say they're lucky if they got 30 504,000 officers left, I knew US visa regime has sucked a ton of police to the US because they're basically the only middle class folks left in the country. The issue is, what's this mission

## **Uncorrected Transcript: Check against Video for Quotes**

supposed to do? Who are they working for? First of all, there's no Haitian leadership. There's no Haitian, legitimate Haitian government, who are they going to work for? I guess they're going to work for the internationally appointed govern meant through which J can talk about to this, this presidential candidate, but that's illegitimate. They're not working for the Haitian people. They're working for government that's been foisted on them. And you may see the Haitian people rise up against the canyons, if they wind up shooting innocent civilians or doing stupid stuff, and fighting that Kenyans may wind up fighting very people were sending them there to protect. Right?

### **Sarang Shidore 17:42**

So would you also say that US troops could be a part of an intervention under the right circumstances?

### **Ambassador Daniel Foote 17:50**

Sorry, I missed that. They're already there. And we're, we're playing a semantics game, the US did not want to lead this mission. When I was special envoy, I requested Special Forces, US special forces troops to go down and help me train the Haitian National Police, which is how we've done it around the world. That's what special events are third of special forces, missions and current Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin swallowed his tongue in terror. He has no interest in going into Haiti. But because the Kenyans don't have the capacity to lead this. The US Army and SOUTHCOM are already in Haiti, setting up camp setting up guard contracts for these guys doing a bunch of the logistics. And if we want it done, right, we gotta lead. We can't expect Kenya, a country that has done a lot in Africa, and a peacekeeping level. But they've never deployed more than 450 troops or police to any individual mission, Samar can correct me if I'm wrong, and they've never led a mission. So now they're taking 1000 Kenyan cops, and they're going to get together with six other countries, none of whom are famous for building security capacity around the world, with a total of 2500 troops. That's way too few. Every time the US is going in with troops, we've gone in with 20,000 Plus and even manoussos, the last UN peacekeeping mission, which I want to say ended in like 2017 at its lowest point had 10,000 troops in Haiti. So 2500 guys trying to take the airport and then take the port, that people need somebody to control the street so they can get bread so that they can deliver crucial goods to people who need it and the highest bills and food, food insecurity and starvation is now becoming a major concern. Hey, I'll stop there.

### **Sarang Shidore 19:55**

But clearly, we are there already. The United States is and This is an important piece of information that perhaps isn't getting the kind of media exposure that that it should. Some are I'm going to come back to Kenya now with you and expand this conversation a little beyond Haiti, because of course, President Ruto is here to talk about Haiti, but not just about Haiti. There is, as you already said, a significant history of us, Kenya, security cooperation in East Africa, perhaps elsewhere. So tell us a little more about it. You You alluded to it a little bit in

## **Uncorrected Transcript: Check against Video for Quotes**

terms of Somalia, but tell us what else has been happening more recently in that security cooperation? And are there any positive aspects to it? Or could there be any positive aspects to such a cooperation given that we do live in a world of challenges?

**Samar Al-Bulushi 20:52**

Absolutely. So the US has been involved in Somalia, in the most recent iteration of military intervention in Somalia since 2006, when the US backed an Ethiopian led invasion of the country. About five years later, the Kenyan military also invaded Somalia. In that case, it was not coordinated with United States, some actually believe that the US was in some ways caught off guard. There had been some talk amongst Kenyan and US officials at the time about whether Kenya should invade. And my understanding is that a number of US officials actively discouraged Kenya from invading at the time. But in the immediate aftermath, they sent about, I think, two or 3000 troops across the border in the immediate aftermath of that invasion in October 2011. But Kenyans realize that they were a little in over their heads. And both, I think in terms of just practicalities on the ground, as well as finances. And it was at that time that Kenya was invited by the African Union to integrate its troops into the African Union Peacekeeping Mission in Somalia known as AMISOM. So Kenya has been active militarily on the ground in Somalia since that time with active cooperation with the United States. Kenya also hosts a military base in Mandla Bay, which is located on the Indian Ocean. And that is a location from which the US has launched drone strikes into Somalia as well as Yemen. And so strategically, Kenya's you know, geo graphical location along the Indian Ocean is of great interest to the United States, particularly at a time when the trade along the Indian Ocean and through the Red Sea has been threatened in in the context of the Gaza genocide, right with the Houthis in Yemen, often stopping the flow of shipments. And so it's particularly in that context that we should be making sense of the recent announcement and the agreement that was reached between the United States and the Somali government. In January, February of this year in which they announced that the US would be building up to five new military bases in Somalia itself, ostensibly to train the Somali National Police and specifically special forces unit within the Somali security apparatus that the US has invested time and money to train over the last 10 years called the 1st Brigade.

Now, I think it's important to be thinking about, again, the kind of geopolitical context in which this announcement was made and to look beyond the claim to be simply supporting the Somali National Police here, because the US obviously has much wider concerns that are at play. Now coming home to Kenya, we also need to account for the role that US trained Kenyan police have played within Kenya itself, targeting primarily members of the Muslim minority population, who have been framed in many cases as alleged, you know, allegedly having ties to al Shabaab. And here I want to flag that some of these US trained police are members of a paramilitary units that have been trained by the CIA, to engage directly in combat and that have established very, very deep lines of communication with US intelligence officials. And I think we can expect generally speaking that the police that are deployed to Kenya it sorry, to Haiti that Kenyan police deployed to Haiti may by and large, be, you know, kind of average police who are not necessarily equipped to handle this kind of scenario. But among them, I think it's safe to

## **Uncorrected Transcript: Check against Video for Quotes**

assume that we'll find potentially actually Members have these kinds of rapid response teams that have been trained by the by the US and by the CIA specifically. So that the US can draw on them right in Haiti and have these lines of communication. So I don't think that we should underestimate entirely the Kenyan capabilities here, because they have been engaged in I think, some very, what some might call sophisticated operations, and I would use the word deadly operations against the Kenyan people. And that's what sadly, we can expect, on the Haitian side of things. And one more thing, I just want to flag and would like to, perhaps unpack with both Jake and the ambassador. And that is this the details of the mandate of this mission? Because to my understanding, there's nothing within the mandate that calls for the explicit protection of Haitian civilians. And here we see a parallel potential parallel, if that's the case, with the Somalia mission, where similarly the mandate was not to protect Somali civilians, the mandate was to protect the externally imposed government.

### **Sarang Shidore 26:07**

Ambassador before Jake, do you want to come in?

### **Ambassador Daniel Foote 26:10**

I just want to weigh in for one second, I believe Samar was alluding to when talking about these sophisticated paramilitary police units, accusations of atrocities carried out by these guys, is that correct?

### **Samar Al-Bulushi 26:27**

That's right

### **Ambassador Daniel Foote 26:37**

I think with the canyons, we've worked with them when I was deputy assistant secretary and International Narcotics and Law Enforcement, I work with the guys in Somalia and Kenya. And I was ambassador to, to Zambia. So I know my way around a little bit. And as I mentioned before, the Kenyan police have been trained for a long time by the United States. And they should be pretty capable. But there's, they're rife with corruption. There have been accusations of massacres and false positives, where they they kill people and put a gun in their hand and stuff. So they're not, you know, an elite police force, despite the fact they'll have some of these commandos in they're going in to teach other countries what to do. They are a country struggling with their own security problems. And they're going to another country where they don't even speak the language.

### **Jake Johnston 27:37**

Yeah, I think you raise another key issue, which is just the lack of clarity and information that not only do we have externally, but that Haitians have over what's happening, right. I mean, they've

## **Uncorrected Transcript: Check against Video for Quotes**

been watching us military planes, you know, land by the half dozen every day for the last couple of weeks, with no real idea of and what's on inside of them. Right. So we can talk about this MSS and Kenyans coming. But the reality is that nobody seems to be able to explain what their actual mission is, what the chain of command is, what the rules of engagement are, are they going to be taking orders from the Haitian police? Are they going to be giving orders to the Haitian police? Are they going to be under the oversight of the UN of the US of Kenya of some other, you know, multinational composition of countries? We don't know these things. It doesn't seem like there's any clear plan. And this gets into the question, why are they arriving this week in Haiti? You know, the situation has been dire we've been talking about this intervention is imminent for a year and a half. They're arriving this week, because Kenyan President Ruto was arriving in DC that has nothing to do with what's happening in Haiti, that's about domestic and international geopolitical interests of Kenya in the US. And, you know, this is exactly what we're talking about where these interventions get hijacked by interests that are not a patient interest, or the names of the population in any country that they're being undertaken under. Right. And so obviously, there's a huge concern about civilian harm, but also about what the long term implications of this are right, as I was describing earlier, you know, what we've often seen are these interventions that basically provide cover for the continuation of a political status quo. You can't address the situation today through force, you know, a lot of the people with with arms right now are children. You know, what is the plan to deal with that? Does the Kenyans have one? Does the US have one? Does the Haitian government have one, and now we have this new transitional government that's been set up, you know, with the support of the international community, ostensibly to lead this and support this mission? In fact, you know, the US and others precondition participating in the Council on accepting the deployment of the Kenyan troops, right. I didn't even have an opportunity to say no, despite many of the groups participating, the council having a long track record of advocating against exactly this kind of an intervention. And so now we're in a situation where it's happening. The council has an accord and agreement where they say, you know, we want to create this National Security Council, we want to oversee this mission. We want to define the support that we're going to get from the international community, make sure it actually does suit Haitian interests.

Now, we can have a debate on the legitimacy The Veterans Presidential Council and if it's even possible for it to do that. But putting all that aside, it doesn't appear that the international community, the US and Kenya are even working with this Presidential Council at this point, right? Because it's not functional. And yet, the MSS is about to deploy and begin operations apparently this week. So we have a lot of these just hypocrisy and contradictions, one of which is, you know, we talked about the Haitian police. We there could have been a lot more done to strengthen the Haitian police a long time ago and continuing right. And we say, oh, we can't do that because of this issue of corruption because of this or that. And yet, the MSS is entirely framed as a mission to support the police. So is that corruption not relevant for the MSS only if we're actually directly giving them support? It makes no sense. Right? If that's an issue, it's an issue on both sides of the coin.

**Sarang Shidore 30:49**



## **Uncorrected Transcript: Check against Video for Quotes**

I want to tell the audience at this point that please keep putting in your questions some of you already have, if you haven't put in your questions in the q&a box, and we will, we will get to them. Some around the US Kenya, I just went on one other point well, outside security in many ways, which is climate change. Kenya is a major partner, the United States on the climate conversation, President Ruto has spoken quite a bit on it. And if we come to Haiti, it is one of the vulnerable countries when it comes to climate change as sea levels rise. And as the world gets warmer, Haiti can expect to see from storms and other phenomena, a more challenging natural environment. So clearly, there are interests here that even going into the security domain that perhaps the US Kenya, and Haiti could could work on. That could be could be productive. And indeed, the entire Caribbean, but just to stay with you somewhere, there was a reference to the UN missions. And indeed there was, there has been a history of that. Rose Silvestri asked this question about what lessons can be drawn from the previous UN intervention in Haiti. But I really want to sort of talk not about Haiti with you so much right now, I'll get the others to weigh in on that. But more broadly on the UN, in terms of the legitimacy of the UN. We have seen Kenya as a major partner of the US in this there is a UNSC Resolution, there have been other actions of the United States and Africa. How is the UN and the UNSC seen in Kenya and the region? What legitimacy does it have, and when it passes resolutions, with 15 countries in the council at any one time, and then there are actions taken as a follow up as a result of that?

### **Samar Al-Bulushi 32:55**

Okay, um, I think I'll start with the kind of shift that we've seen at the UN when it comes to militarized interventionism specifically, and I think it roughly correlates with the rise of the doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect where you saw a shift away from an understanding of military intervention, that's something that's explicitly political, to an understanding of intervention that is, is has moral and ethical connotations, right in the sense that now we have this understanding amongst ourselves as the so called civilized members of the world order, that it is our obligation to intervene in the affairs of other states to save to protect, etc, the vulnerable the victims. And in within Africa specifically, there was a really notable change in the sense that members of the Organization of African Unity which predated the African Union, were very adamant about the principle of non intervention for many years after colonialism ended, there was this commitment to sovereignty and to non intervention. And that suddenly changed in the 1990s. In this very soon after the Rwandan genocide, right, where there was considerable guilt around the the failure to respond and to intervene. And again, this coincided with the rise of the doctrine of responsibility to protect.

So generally speaking within African countries, and with the emergence of the African Union, there's been more of an embrace and a positive association with ideas of intervening in the name of saving and protecting. Now, the UN at the same time, has in this context has abandoned its more traditional approach to what has been called peacekeeping and has embraced what is now more often referred to as peace enforcement, right? And in adopting this enforcement angle, we're seeing much more one Eiland solutions that are being put in place. And it's in this context that UN operations peacekeeping operations, whatever you want to call them have been increasingly losing credibility, right within the countries in question that are the

## **Uncorrected Transcript: Check against Video for Quotes**

targets that have intervention, and more broadly amongst people across the world and across the global south who believe that oftentimes the motivations for the intervening powers are should be questioned, that they're not necessarily doing it for the right reasons. And so it's in that context that you've seen a growing D legitimacy. The second element is the human rights abuses that have come with these interventions and the lack of accountability. So coming back to Jake's questions about lines of authority and lines of accountability. I think this Haitian mission represents a very clear crisis of legitimacy of the UN system, in the sense that they are now actively trying to avoid in meshing themselves, embroiling themselves in another case where they're going to, you know, the finger is going to be pointed at them, everybody's going to be asking, how are you going to hold these troops accountable, and instead, now that's being you know, funneled to the Kenyan government, which will suddenly be tasked with dealing with these kinds of cases? Right. And I think it's very, very unlikely given that Kenya doesn't have the kind of infrastructure that the UN has, nor should it feel accountable in the same way that an international body should feel accountable. It's very unlikely that we'll see concrete efforts to hold them accountable.

### **Sarang Shidore 36:37**

On the same question of the UN and legitimacy Ambassador foot you have been a diplomat for many years in the US Foreign Service. The last major intervention that occurred that was minister had a very bad record, there's been plenty written about. And Jake has written about this as well quite quite eloquently about the abuse that occurred, the sexual abuse that occurred, the epidemics that were introduced by the UN peacekeepers who came from multiple countries. And but minister had international legitimacy, there was a UNSC resolution. They were wearing blue helmets, there was a multinational force, there was a debate around it at the UN. And this intervention, arguably, although not with blue helmets on also has international legitimacy in the sense that there's a UNSC resolution 13 votes, with two abstentions. There's CARICOM support, which I believe the last time the minister did not have CARICOM support, at least in the beginning, that again, multinational troops. So some may say that, hey, there's all this international legitimacy here. Those who support an international law should be happy, but yet something has gone wrong, hesitant and what's the problem?

### **Ambassador Daniel Foote 37:58**

It sure has, the US has choreographed all of this, obviously, the United States had no interest in enabling the Haitians to reach their own political consensus and find a political foundation upon which they can move forward with that sovereign Haitian government. The US has no interest in that. So they have held the ruling party in place. And now they convince CARICOM to let the US put its hand and the CARICOM glove, choose nine people who will then choose the new government for Haiti. It's not legitimate internationally, and it couldn't be less legitimate in Haiti, given the introduction of cholera by the UN, the fact that they really didn't make it better and under President more ease, it kept getting worse. And the UN was his biggest stone just survived. Support it same with Arielle and read the recently the stepdown de facto Prime

## **Uncorrected Transcript: Check against Video for Quotes**

Minister, totally illegitimate, and the Haitians are not going to accept this I don't believe and the gangs are waiting for.

### **Sarang Shidore 39:13**

So international legitimacy is not enough. There has to be a domestic process that is, in many ways rooted in multiple actors.

### **Ambassador Daniel Foote 39:26**

There's 12, almost 12 million Asians in Haiti, we can't choose nine of them and say, Oh, that's a Haitian right process. That's ridiculous.

### **Sarang Shidore 39:36**

Right. Jake Johnston, you have written a book on the drivers that have created domestic challenges in Haiti. You call it the aid industrial complex foreign aid as a means to in many ways destabilize it. There's also a question we have from John Stein Mayer, who wants to know about the Rich elites of Haiti that have played a role in so combining these two themes. Let's stay with this domestic question for a moment and also bring in the fact that we do have, as you mentioned earlier civil society process, the Montana group, there's a proposal, Montana accord, how does foreign aid and the civil society groups here mesh, in where he's at, at the moment? How has foreign aid contribute and contributed? And how has civil society played a constructive role in perhaps creating a better domestic process of consensus?

### **Jake Johnston 40:38**

Yeah, you know, we talk about interventions, and we're talking about this intervention now and previous interventions like these discrete events in time, right? The reality is that intervention is persistent, it is constant, it has been ongoing, right? It's happening every single day, there remains today a un political mission that is extraordinarily political, influential, politically influential, that came after the 2004 coup, and it's been there ever since. And foreign aid is another way, this is another form of intervention, right? Whether it's explicit or not. And it's really not about the success or failures of individual projects. It's about the broader system that it ends up perpetuating, controlling, consolidating, and those dynamics. And so this plays very much into the role of the elite, we can talk about undermining the elite, not working through the elite sanctioning the elite. But when the international community needs to do something, and at they're working with the elite, right, these agencies, when people go into Haiti, the houses they rent, the commodities that they consume, the fuel that they need, the cars that they use, all of these things, end up enriching the very people who have been controlling this system, and we say we want to weaken, right. And so our efforts to intervene on a micro scale have very different implications on a macro scale, right. And so what we've seen over many decades of these policies, is the virtual outsourcing of the nation state, right, where public services are in the hands of private actors, and funded by external actors where security is often in the hands

## **Uncorrected Transcript: Check against Video for Quotes**

of external actors. And not only is that inefficient, does it undermine, you know, state capacity, local capacity, but it also it, it severs the link between the population and its state. And this is a dynamic that has existed in Haiti for a long, long time, I think in many ways, sort of going back to the post revolutionary period and the creation of the Haitian state. And this is what I mean, by the inherently unsustainable status quo that we continue to perpetuate, unless that is changed. And I think that's, that's obviously where the organizing in Haiti where the civil society groups in Haiti, have been advocating, and organizing and tried to come up with an alternative and advocate for that. And unfortunately, right, those efforts are often undermined by this external support, even if it's framed in a way that we want to support Asian voices, we want to build up local civil society.

That's not what happens in practice, right? So US aid money goes to US companies, then they might partner with a local organization, the way they build capacity is to make that organization able to comply with US financial things, like five years of audits and enough overhead and, you know, back to the house sort of support to meet USAID contract requirements, not to actually use their expertise in the community, their knowledge about what their communities need, and to capitalize on those things. And so, you know, one thing, it's easy to look at Haiti and say, oh, you know, here it goes again, right? This, like, the live instability that we see at camp, you know, catch a break or can't do anything, but we need to change or the US needs to change the world needs to change for Haiti to have that space to change, because it is these much broader systems. And it's not just political. It's not just security, its economic to right is the multilateral development bank's that have hampered Haitian economy that have decimated local agriculture, right. And we see this time and again, and so right now, I mean, how can we support Haitian farmers, right? We have a lot of aid programs that try and do it. No one's talking about lifting the tariffs that got slashed, you know, forcefully slashed by development banks in the 90s and late 80s. That's not even part of the conversation right now. We have to have a much more holistic conversation about how to support Haitians building a strong and sovereign state. It's not that there can't be a role for external actors, but it's the external actors that have to change first.

### **Sarang Shidore 44:11**

Yeah. So you make a very eloquent case on foreign aids, toxic influences on Haiti, but you're not making a general case against foreign aid, are you because we do have examples, for example, in Bangladesh, where US AI D and other actors have actually been fairly constructive and dealing with issues like natural disasters, helping the state, which which made made the biggest contributions but nevertheless, the US played a positive role. Also next door, when I look at next door, Dominican Republic, I see a country that in you know, 3040 years ago was much poorer, but with some foreign aid, but with a lot of investment and also the way they have steered their economy are actually doing quite well at the moment so it's literally on the same island next door. Obviously, has a somewhat different colonial past. And, but but also has experienced interventions by the US in the past. So is there something special about Haiti that makes this case a few other countries that makes it particularly bad? Or are you really talking about the whole foreign aid complex uniformly, has been toxic across the globe itself?

## **Uncorrected Transcript: Check against Video for Quotes**

### **Jake Johnston 45:22**

Yeah, look, I think there are aspects of it, which are global in nature, right? A lot of these things are the rules of the game that we've created, right? We make it so that the money has to go to US companies or has to US ship us food. These are laws. Right? I mean, they need to be changed. They don't apply only to Haiti. But I do think our treatment of Haiti has been exceptionally bad for a long time, right. For centuries. One could argue I certainly would. And we look at this recent history in Haiti, too. I mean, you know, I take the comparison to the Dr. But I think we have to just understand the extent to which intervention has shaped Haitian that Haiti more broadly over this period of democratization for the last 35 years, right. So you had the first democratically elected government in 1990. It was overthrown nine months later in a coup with military officials on the CIA payroll, right, a junta that then exterminated leftist political organizers and civil society groups for years. You then had another coup in 2004, after the the administration started asking for reparations for for the ransom that was paid to France for for Haiti's independence. Right. And I think we have to understand that history. You had 2010, and the earthquake were other unlike many other examples around the world where we did partner with the local government to try and build capacity in the aftermath of disaster.

We replaced the Haitian government in the aftermath of disaster, right, that has roots in the historical treatment of Haiti. Right? It very much does. And so right after that you had international committee overturn the results of an election. So we talked about Mangusta. Right. And these histories, and a lot of people will look and say, well, security was better. When minister was there, it got worse when Minister left the problem. Was that Minister left? I disagree, right. I think that that sort of putting things is messing up the causality here, Medusa being there, right, consolidated the power in Haiti, in the hands of the people who are now responsible for the current mess, right. So it wasn't that Minister left, that is the problem. It's that while they were there, they empowered the wrong people. We talked about these concepts of stability, I think the reality everyone wants stability in their lives, right. I mean, I think that's a natural inclination. One person's stability might not be another person's stability. And so when we talk about these interventions, the question we need to be asking is stability. For who, right who are we actually there to provide stability for? And I think the history of intervention has shown that the stability that we're offering is not for the majority of Asian people.

### **Sarang Shidore 47:46**

A summit I want to turn to you now talk a little bit about the US Kenya situation, but going beyond what you already have explained quite at length, about Somalia, about Haiti, about counter terror. You also mentioned the us access to the Indian Ocean. You mentioned the Hootie factor. Clearly Kenya us partnership is some sense trans regional, there is the factors here related to the broader US Africa relationship in which in Washington, we mostly hear about the role of China and Russia, China and Russia are have emerged as major players. And so the United States needs to partner with countries to ensure that their influence China's in Russia is

## **Uncorrected Transcript: Check against Video for Quotes**

limited. Have you seen in your own research, any elements of the China Russia question in the US Kenya relationship? And if so, what forms has it taken?

**Samar Al-Bulushi 48:43**

Sure. So I want to just briefly add on to some of what Jake was talking about, and then I'll get to your question. And please hold me to it. I don't want to forget the questions you post. Just to Jake's point, I think there is a risk in conversations about places like Haiti and Somalia that we pathologize those countries as somehow uniquely failed as somehow uniquely problematic. And what we risk overlooking are the commonalities that are shared across the board. And so this is to Jake's point about a broader structure of power that is at play that, broadly speaking, favors the needs and interests of the political elites, and does very little to address the needs and the interests of the average person. And in this sense, we can see very clear commonalities between Kenya and Haiti. Despite the attempt by the Kenyan government to position itself as somehow better than and more democratic than and more peaceful than Haiti. We can find so many commonalities on the ground with the with the most recent news item being 300,000 people almost 300,000 people displaced by floods in Kenya in recent months, so also to your points are angry. earlier about climate change, also as a universal issue that countries are confronting. That is what is concerning the average Kenyan citizen today, right? Where are those people going to live? How are they going to get their food with rising prices of food with rising prices of fuel? And those basic questions are not being addressed in part because Kenya is dealing with the highest level of debt that it has had in its history. It has multiplied by fivefold since Uhuru Kenyatta came into office in 2013. So these are very real questions, and very shared commonalities across the board that force us to question the tendency to pathologize and exceptionalist states like Kenya and Somalia, sorry, Somalia and Haiti.

So to your point Sarang, about Kenya's position on the Indian Ocean and kind of U.S. concerns about China Russian involvement in Africa more broadly, Kenya is unique in the sense that it has been very clear about positioning itself as a staunch US ally. And we saw that in the case of the UN General Assembly vote where many African states chose to abstain rather than condemn Russia when it invaded Ukraine. And so Kenya was one of the few that voted to condemn Russia. They made their position very clear. And I think we can interpret the Kenyan delegations visit and invitation to the White House this week within that frame as as one of the ways in which Kenya is being rewarded. Right, for standing by the United States for being loyal to the United States. Ruto when he campaigned for the presidency was adamant that we are a strong Kenya is a strong US ally. And I think he was trying to distinguish himself from his predecessor, who was more open to and had welcomed Chinese investments. The Chinese have played a growing role in Kenya and one of the most obvious infrastructural dimensions of that role has been the building of a railway between Nairobi and Mombasa. Now, Ruto, I think precisely because the the economy is suffering, has started to show himself to be more open to talking to the Chinese, as well as the Russians. And so the Kenyans, I think would characterize their positioning today as one of strategic ambiguity in the sense that they don't want to be seen to be taking one side or another. They're playing their cards very carefully, hoping not to alienate one side or another knowing that they need money.

## **Uncorrected Transcript: Check against Video for Quotes**

### **Sarang Shidore 52:31**

Yeah, absolutely. I think that this is a pattern you see across the global south that even when there are close alignments, with the US on one or two or three issues, like Kenya clearly is closer than many on Haiti, on Somalia, on CT. There still remain many equities that practically all global South states want to keep going with, especially China, but also with other global South states. That may be important players in the region, Turkey, perhaps or others. So this is evolving into a more complex world world for sure. Ambassador Foote, I want to ask you a little bit about regional leadership and regional roles in this I mean, you were involved in Latin America and the Caribbean for a long time. You know, it struck me that the last intervention was opposed by CARICOM. At its outset this time around. It's not just that CARICOM is supporting it, but a country like Barbados with Mia Motley, who's known as an internationalist to the boat with her climate. Proposal sweeping proposals on climate change, for example, is contributing. Barbados is going to participate in this intervention. There are also others Bahamas. There's of course African states like Benin, and others, but staying within CARICOM. What is the CARICOM role here? How has it sort of evolved from those days? Or has it? Are there concerns within CARICOM other divisions here going on?

### **Ambassador Daniel Foote 53:52**

I honestly believe that CARICOM has been acting as nothing more than an extension of US foreign policy, which is the same pattern we've always followed in Haiti, which is a security intervention, followed by magic elections that are supposed to fix everything. The elections wind up being illegitimate, the Haitian people don't accept it, and we fall into more chaos. So CARICOM has played its role, they let the US do what it wanted to do without looking like it had done that. Moving forward. If the US wants elections to be the magic pill, the Haitians need to trust the process and trust those elections. The only way you're gonna get there is by including a voice for the 11 million Haitians in this process via a Constituent Assembly or a national dialogue or something like that. The US CARICOM impose government construct one will not work. It's never worked in the past, I was involved in fixing Haiti once. And I can tell you that the US and I know how not to fix Haiti. So to do the same thing that we've done in the past and expect a different result is crazy. Don't blame the Haitians. In the United States, I think we have a sense that it's the poorest country in the hemisphere. And these poor Asians, nothing seems to go their way. They have hurricanes and earthquakes, and they have this voodoo stuff. And maybe they made a deal with the devil to get their independence from France and none. That Haitians are just like you and I. They want a stable place where there's opportunities for their family and prosperity and a future. And by choosing compliant, but corrupt Haitian leaders who answer only to the United States in the international community and that Asian people, we are responsible for Haiti's current situation, and the international community needs to provide resources, but more importantly, they need to provide the space for a Haitian political solution that go in this is your temporary government hold elections. It doesn't work that way. And it never happens. Yeah.

## **Uncorrected Transcript: Check against Video for Quotes**

### **Sarang Shidore 56:22**

Jake, I want to ask you the sort of million dollar question maybe one of them there lots. The question of gangs ambassador for Donald, I'm going to come back to him but Ambassador foot mentioned briefly and tantalizingly, that the gangs have to be a part of the solution. Is it your opinion that so one perspective is the gangs are these bad guys, they have to be routed out zero, some period by the international community, whether through this intervention or a better one. The other perspective could be that the gangs by controlling territory in the capital, and other places are, in fact, actors, whether one likes it or not, and any solution will have to include them in some form, engage them in some form. And we have seen actually, historically criminal gangs take on and this is certainly true in parts of Mexico take on sort of semi governance type responsibilities. El Chapo in Mexico is apparently popular among some sections of the poor people, because he, apparently and supposedly helped poor families, even as he was doing all these other terrible things. So how the gangs emerged as actors that are sort of semi political of governance structures? If so, should we in the US and the international community think of them as inevitable? Engagement Partners, both of us as it may seem?

### **Jake Johnston 57:52**

Yeah, so I'm promising I'm not avoiding the question. But I do want to say one thing about Hades neighbors first, because I think we often overlook this and we focus on the US but deportations enforced repatriations are continuing in Haiti right now, right. So we're talking about sending foreign troops into to provide security and stability. Meanwhile, those various countries, including some CARICOM, countries, who even are contributing troops to that mission, are actively forcibly returning Haitian nationals to the country right now. 30,000 in the last two months. So if our goal if these countries are really interested in stability in Haiti and supporting Asian people, again, you know, they can change some of their own policies to up front, on the armed groups themselves. Right, I think we need to understand a few things that this didn't happen in a vacuum, that this is related to political, social and economic context in the country to the very dynamics I was mentioning earlier about the absence of the state and these communities that have been left totally outside of the public realm for much longer than just the last couple of years. I think the reality is, and again, you can't kill everybody, you're not gonna kill all of the bad people. I don't think that should be a goal in the first place anyway. Right. But it's also just a reality. I think, to a certain extent, there are going to have to be negotiations. This doesn't mean amnesty, this doesn't mean forgetting justice. I think what we also need to consider in this is the communities that have been most victimized by the violence in Haiti. Where are they at the table right now? I think the reality is that it needs to be a much more holistic and broad dialogue that's happening in Haiti. Yes, that can include people who have links to armed groups, which again, are not totally dissociated from the political and economic actors that are sitting around a table right now already. I think we need to recognize that but we also need to make sure and I think we need to at least understand that the victims themselves need to be a part of that conversation. Right. If this is actually about restoring peace about recreating or refounding the nation have at the state of ad right to build something new. Everyone's gonna have to be around the table.



## **Uncorrected Transcript: Check against Video for Quotes**

**Sarang Shidore 59:54**

Yeah, Ambassador Foote clearly the victims have to be those who are suffered have to play a part in this. But coming back to my million dollar question, would you suggest to the US government or international actors here to engage with these gangs? Or would you say we have to first root them out before we can get any system of order going in Haiti.

**Ambassador Daniel Foote 1:00:18**

again, we empowered the rise of the gangs, the US is responsible for them being in charge. In Colombia, we went or they went through a reconciliation and re integration process and the aggrieved Colombians from the FARC. The the military paramilitary group that was in a war for 50 Some years with the government to decide what they wanted, Haitians need to do the same. Do they don't want gang leaders and they're not going to accept them as political actors to start with, but they need to decide, are we going to kill all 40,000 of them? Are we going to put them all in jail? Are we going to put kill some and give some amnesty or we're going to do a guns for for a reintegration and disarmament program that's got to be up to the Haitians. But moving forward, the gangs, if we're going to have a national dialogue, somebody me somebody in Haiti needs to go talk to him and figure out how we can secure the people who are going to talk at this dialogue. So they have at least that voice.

**Sarang Shidore 1:02:08**

On the theme of dialogue, I'm afraid that our dialogue has to end because we are at the top of the hour. So all of you have been fantastic. I really enjoyed the conversation, including the connections that emerged between East Africa and the Caribbean, here organically and I hope that we can maintain this conversation, continue it in other formats in terms of the global sub program and all that we do here in the Quincy Institute. We will be doing many of those these kinds of events in the future. So keep looking out. Thank you all and until next time.