

Direct Military Intervention and Stability in the United States' Backyard, 1965-1995

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## Abstract

The United States foreign policy of stabilization through direct military intervention has stirred considerable controversy with regards to both its ethics and effectiveness, not least following the recent failures to stabilize the political systems of Afghanistan and Iraq in the aftermath of intervention. Putting normative questions aside, the focus of this work is to analyze the effectiveness of modern United States stabilization operations from a historical perspective by examining Central America and the Caribbean, the geopolitical region in which the United States has maintained its longest and most direct sphere of influence. Accordingly, beginning with their independence from colonial powers, the respective histories of the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Panama, and Haiti are traced through three major periods of modernization and development: the state-building period, the nation-building period, and the stabilization period. Through this historical analysis, the study aims not only to assess the effectiveness of modern United States military interventions in the region but also to attain a deeper understanding of the historical factors that influence political stability in a broader sense. Although the interventions in the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Panama produced the desired results of increasing political stability, the Haitian intervention ultimately failed to have the same effect, as the country returned to its pattern of instability just years after the withdrawal of intervening forces. The explanation for this difference in outcomes, however, does not lie in any anomalous variation in the Haitian stabilization operation but can instead be attributed to structural setbacks that Haiti experienced during its state-building and nation-building periods in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Introduction**

The Allied victory in World War II and the emergence of the United States and the Soviet Union as global superpowers marked the beginning of a bipolar world system that would last nearly half a century. In preparation for inevitable conflict, the United States military retained a strong presence in the defeated Axis countries while the government committed significant resources to the reconstruction of their war-torn infrastructures and economies. In an unprecedented feat of modern political engineering, the United States' interventions in post-war Germany and Japan succeeded in bringing stability to former enemy states whose militaries had capitulated and whose regimes had collapsed. Moreover, through the interventions, the occupying forces managed to restructure German and Japanese governing institutions and cultivate a lasting democratic political culture in both of their citizenries. The result has been the ascension of both countries to positions of powerful regional actors as well as their development of close alliances with the United States that would last not only throughout the Cold War but to the present day. Nonetheless, over the decades, the international opinion of the United States' strategy of stabilization through military intervention has been considerably tarnished. Most recently, the prolonged occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq by United States forces have decidedly failed to reproduce the results attained in Germany and Japan after the Second World War. Moreover, the foreign policy of intervention has received much criticism not only for its questionable efficacy but also on normative grounds, as no such operation can be executed without undermining the sovereignty of independent states for the ends of increasing local and regional political stability. The aim of this study, however, is not to discuss the ethics of United States foreign policy but to examine the gears of modern stabilization operations and better understand the reasons for their mixed record of success and failure, a topic that continues to stir controversy as it remains an area of contention in the academic literature.

Focusing on the geopolitical region in which the United States has historically maintained the longest period of hegemony and has experienced the least competition from rival powers in directly exerting its influence on smaller states, this two-part study first and foremost seeks to determine whether or not United States military intervention in Central America and the Caribbean has been successful in establishing stable regimes. Secondly, based on the results, the study aims to make a deeper analysis of the process of stabilization in order to determine why military intervention has been successful in stabilizing some countries but not others. With

regards to the first question, I hypothesize that, contrary to recent experiences in the Middle East, there does exist a positive correlation between United States military intervention and political stability in Central America and the Caribbean. Furthermore, I hypothesize that differences in the outcomes of stabilization operations are not due to variables pertaining to the interventions themselves but are rooted in underlying variations in the historical development of countries since their emergence as modern, independent states.

This work begins by reviewing the literature pertinent to United States foreign policy, the subject of stabilization through military intervention, as well as historical accounts of Central America and the Caribbean. The literature review serves as the foundation for the subsequent theoretical framework, to which an original contribution is hoped to be made by reanalyzing previous approaches to studying United States foreign policy and stabilization operations. The theoretical framework serves to justify the conceptualization and operationalization of key terms and presents the variables that are taken into consideration for conducting an analysis of the findings. Next, a section is dedicated to outlining the methodology of the study's research design, explaining the approaches to data analysis utilized, as well as providing an explanation of the figures included at the end of each case study. Then, the four cases selected for the study—the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Panama, and Haiti—are examined before a review of the findings is presented in the discussion. The work concludes with a summary of the implications and limitations of the study as well as suggestions for future research in the field.

## **Literature Review**

To ensure the validity of information and minimize the possibility of bias, particularly with regards to historical accounts, this work draws on a variety of sources that include United States government and military reports, scholarly research, as well as independent databases. A large literature exists on United States foreign policy analysis as well as on United States–Latin American relations specifically. Although it is evident that military intervention has long held a central position in United States foreign policy throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there remains an ongoing debate regarding the discrepancy between the rhetorical and practical objectives of military interventions. Due to the high degree of emphasis put on democratization in the diplomatic discourse of the United States, modern military interventions are commonly framed—and later assessed—as missions to promote the spread of democratic government. Indeed, the recent interventions codenamed Operation Enduring Freedom–Afghanistan in 2001 and

Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 were no exceptions to the United States' rhetorical objective of democratization through military intervention. This rhetorical objective serves as the criteria for assessing the outcomes of United States military interventions by Pei and Kasper (2003), who conclude that only the interventions in Japan, Germany, Panama, and Grenada resulted in successful democratization efforts. However, in his account of United States foreign policy towards Latin America, Dietz (1984) challenges this framework by dividing the history of United States–Latin American relations into two historical periods. The first he refers to as the period of territorial expansion, which began with the conquest of land in the Mexican–American War and ended with the acquisition of the United States' first overseas territories after the Spanish–American War. He describes the second period as that of the defense of U.S. hegemony, during which the United States' first concern was protecting its investments abroad and later shifted to opposing foreign influences in the region. Thus, in practice, democratic governments in Central America and the Caribbean during the Cold War era were only supported by the United States if they did not challenge its regional hegemony and stayed well outside the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. This realist interpretation of United States foreign policy is furthered by Brands (1987), who investigates factors that prompt United States military interventions by comparing the cases of the Dominican Republic and Grenada with that of Lebanon. His conclusion is that, despite frequently being justified by rhetorical objectives like protecting endangered citizens abroad or supporting local factions in the host country's fight for freedom, United States military interventions are most likely to occur in “a country and a region of chronic or at least protracted instability—in a place where the military and diplomatic costs of intervention are likely to be outweighed by its probable broad impact” (Brands 1987, 623).

Indeed, there is a considerable overlap in the literature related to United States foreign policy and stabilization operations in a broader sense. However, existing studies related to the field of stabilization theory frequently focus on variables pertinent to the stabilization operations themselves while failing to address the historical roots of instability of the countries in question. For instance, linking stability with democratization, Przeworski et al. (1996) reject the traditionally realist claims “that dictatorships are better at generating economic development in poor countries and that once countries have developed, their dictatorial regimes will give way to democracy” (Przeworski et al. 1996, 12). Nonetheless, their conclusions are drawn from a study that tracks the survival and death of political regimes in 135 countries observed annually

between the years 1950 and 1990, disregarding the early patterns of development in post-colonial countries and their respective formations of modern political systems. Furthermore, Taylor (2011) argues that in cases of post-conflict stabilization operations, no factor is more important than an understanding of the domestic context. She expands by explaining that understanding the domestic context entails expertise of the country's demographic and economic makeup, the history of the recent conflict and the objectives of combatant groups, as well as the time and resources available for conducting state-building operations in that particular country. Despite addressing the importance of understanding the history of the recent conflict, the author overlooks the importance of attaining a deeper understanding of the country's historical experience with state-building operations as well as the underlying patterns of instability in the country prior to the immediate conflict.

There also exists a broad literature related to political stability in the Latin American context. For example, Kling (1956) focuses on determining the root causes of what he deems to be a recurring issue in the region. He explains that "chronic political instability is a function of the contradiction between the realities of a colonial economy and the political requirements of legal sovereignty among the Latin American states" (Kling 1956, 34). Another commonly identified source of political instability in Latin America has been a tendency toward highly politicized militaries. Putnam (1967) examines this variable further and affirms that traditions of political militarism do indeed play an important role in accounting for domestic military interventions in the region. However, he goes on to explain that this phenomenon is countered in countries with high levels of social mobilization, which is positively correlated with civilian rule. Finally, Rueschemeyer et al. (1992) assess the social and economic evolution of the Central American and Caribbean region from the colonial era to determine what factors have led to the development of democratic and autocratic systems of government. They conclude that late political modernization, economic dependency, and racial polarization demonstrate a tendency to impede democratic development. Nonetheless, while all these authors do examine the historical and structural sources of political instability in the region, they do not go so far as to assess the effects of modern United States stabilization operations. Therefore, this work aims to fill a gap in the existing literature by analyzing the effectiveness of United States stabilization operations in Central America and the Caribbean from a deeper historical perspective, that is, from the end of the colonial period to the that of modern military interventions.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This work follows the interpretation of United States foreign policy that views the objectives of military interventions as first and foremost practical, prioritizing the assurance of regional stability favorable to United States interests over rhetorical objectives like democratization. The realist nature of United States foreign policy towards Central America and the Caribbean became increasingly clear as the Cold War progressed, beginning with the CIA's covertly orchestrated coup against Guatemala's democratically-elected, but left-leaning, President Jacobo Arbenz in 1954 as well as the United States' support of right-wing dictatorships throughout the region. Moreover, when faced with a decision about how to respond to the assassination of the anti-communist Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo in 1961, President Kennedy responded that "there are three possibilities in descending order of preference: a decent democratic regime, a continuation of the Trujillo regime, or a Castro regime. We ought to aim for the first, but we really can't renounce the second until we are sure we can avoid the third" (Yates 2015, 14). This realist approach would set a precedent for President Johnson's decision to intervene in the Dominican Civil War four years later as it would for President Reagan's to intervene in Grenada in 1983. For this reason, this work aims to change the criteria through which modern United States military interventions are commonly assessed in the existing literature by shifting the focus from outcomes in democratization to outcomes in stabilization, the latter reflecting the practical objectives of United States military interventions.

At this point it also becomes necessary to address the concepts of 'state-building,' 'nation-building,' 'stabilization,' and 'democratization,' as the terms have often come to be used interchangeably—and thus, indistinguishably—in the literature pertinent to the field of political engineering. For the purposes of this study, state-building refers to the creation of the fundamental structures and institutions of a modern, independent state. In the Dominican Republic, Panama, and Haiti, the process of state-building took place when the countries were de facto protectorates under prolonged United States military occupation at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Grenada experienced a similar process as an associated statehood of Great Britain, during which time the British government prepared it to transition from a dependent colony to a sovereign state. Secondly, nation-building refers to the process of creating a national identity and further modernizing state structures, resulting in the formation of a modern nation-state. In all four cases, though to varying degrees, this period was characterized by dictatorial regimes with



nationalist ideologies, an increase in militarism, as well as economic and social development through populist reforms. Lastly, stabilization operations must be distinguished from democratization operations in that the primary policy objective of the first is to increase political stability, no matter the resulting regime type. Nonetheless, all modern United States military interventions in Central America and the Caribbean have sought to amend instability with the promotion of democratic government, as United States foreign policy views stable democracies preferable to stable dictatorships, so long as they are agreeable to United States national interests at the given time.

Furthermore, in this study, regime stability will be operationalized by observing the nature of transitions of power. For example, regular transitions of power such as victory in elections or inheritance of leadership will be identified as indicators of political stability, whereas irregular transitions of power such as military coups or forced resignations will be identified as indicators of political instability. Finally, the success or failure of the intervention in each country will be assessed based on a comparison of each country's political stability in the decade before intervention to its political stability in the decade after intervention. Regarding the explanation of the success or failure of an intervention, a set of variables common to all four cases will be analyzed in an effort to discover an explanatory pattern of variation. This set of variables includes: the temporal structures of the intervention and stabilization operation; the unilateral or multilateral nature of the intervention; the presence or absence of economic aid; as well as the presence or absence of regime change, constitutional reform, and military reform during the intervention. If no explanation can be drawn from an analysis of the variables related to intervention, the preceding periods of state-building and nation-building will be reassessed for explanatory variation.

By treating the policy of direct military intervention as the independent variable, the first part of this study aims to test its effects on the dependent variable of regime stability. Once the effects of direct military intervention on regime stability have been established, the second part of this study will seek to find variations in either the military interventions themselves or in each country's respective historical development in order to identify the factors that account for the United States' success or failure in establishing stable regimes. The principal reason that the examination is limited to direct military intervention in the post-World War II period is that the interventions in Germany and Japan set a precedent for the continuation of stabilization

operations following the achievement of initial military goals. Indeed, every military intervention in Central America and the Caribbean in the post-World War II period has been followed by a stabilization operation in which the United States committed time and resources to the ends of establishing stable regimes, whereas prior interventions commonly ended after the achievement of primary military objectives, such as the ousting of an unfavorable head of state or the collection of unpaid loans. For similar reasons, this study excludes cases of covert regime change operations conducted by the CIA, like the overthrow of Guatemalan President Arbenz in 1954, as these operations were not intended to establish regime stability but to achieve narrow and short-term objectives when direct military intervention was not a realizable option.

### **Methodology**

According to this framework, only the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Panama, and Haiti meet the criteria of Central American and Caribbean countries that experienced direct United States military intervention in the post-World War II period. To avoid jeopardizing the internal validity of this study through selection bias or by omitting potential explanatory variables, as advised by Mahoney (2000) and Gerring (2004), all four cases in the population are included in this small-N qualitative research design. Secondly, following Lieberson (1991) and Rueschemeyer (2003), to determine causality given the small universe of cases available and the relatively narrow scope of inference, this study will be conducted in the research tradition of comparative historical analysis. Following this methodology, the history of each country will be traced from its independence to the state-building period, then to the nation-building period, and finally to the period of modern United States military intervention. Due to limitations of space, the historical analysis for each country is centered around these three periods and any intermediate developments can only be addressed superficially. Then, in an effort to determine any change in stability following the United States intervention, each country will be examined on a timeline that begins a decade before the commencement of the intervention and ends a decade after the completion of the subsequent stabilization operation. The period of a decade is chosen in order to provide enough time for the treatment of the interventions to take effect yet to simultaneously avoid allowing so much time that changes in stability could be caused by confounding variables not pertinent to the interventions themselves.

Visual timelines are attached as figures following the historical analysis of each case. Above each timeline, blue flags represent regular transitions of power while irregular transitions

are represented by red flags. Similarly, stable constitutions are represented by blue horizontal bars above the timeline whereas unstable, short-lived constitutions are represented by red bars. Below the timeline, blue horizontal bars represent interventions and stabilization operations while red bars represent periods of instability, such as conflicts or civil wars. Lastly, nation-building periods are represented by grey horizontal bars below the timeline whereas black bars are used to represent state-building periods. The fifth and final figure presents the results of the study's first research question as well as a comparison of the variables analyzed for the second part of the study.

## **Findings**

### **I- The Dominican Republic**

The Dominican Republic initially gained its independence from Spain in 1821 but was invaded and conquered by Haiti the following year. It was not until 1844 that, under the leadership of Juan Pablo Duarte and with the financial support of Venezuela, the occupying Haitian forces were defeated and Dominican sovereignty was restored (Library of Congress, 2001). Nonetheless, a weak post-colonial economy and the lack of state structures resulted in an unstable rule of the elites, in which power changed hands whenever one military strongman overthrew another. In the early 1860s, an unpopular plan to reintegrate the country into the Spanish Empire resulted in one such forceful transition of power, only to be repeated a few years later following negotiations to sign a treaty that would have annexed the Dominican Republic to the United States (Fearon & Laitin, 2006).

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Dominican leaders tried to remedy the lack of economic development by taking out loans from the United States. However, their inability to pay off the accumulating debts resulted in the United States interventions of 1903 and 1905, during which time the United States military took control of the Dominican customs house to assure that 55 percent of revenues would be collected for the purpose of paying off debts (Fearon & Laitin, 2006). As it became apparent that individual interventions were ineffective in resolving the country's chronic instability, the United States intervened again in 1916 and occupied the country until 1924. At this time, the United States oversaw the country's public expenditures and replaced the existing army with a constabulary force. Led by military governor Rear Admiral Harry S. Knapp, "programs were enacted in education, health, sanitation, agriculture, and communications; highways were built; and other public works were created. In addition, other

programs crucial to strengthening state structures and a market economy were implemented, including both a census and a cadastral survey” (Library of Congress 2001, 38). In 1921, United States representatives passed a withdrawal proposal in the form of the Harding Plan, which “called for Dominican approval of all acts of the military government, approval of a \$2.5-million loan for public works and other expenses, the acceptance of United States officers for the constabulary—now known as the National Guard—and the holding of elections under United States supervision” (Library of Congress 2001, 38).

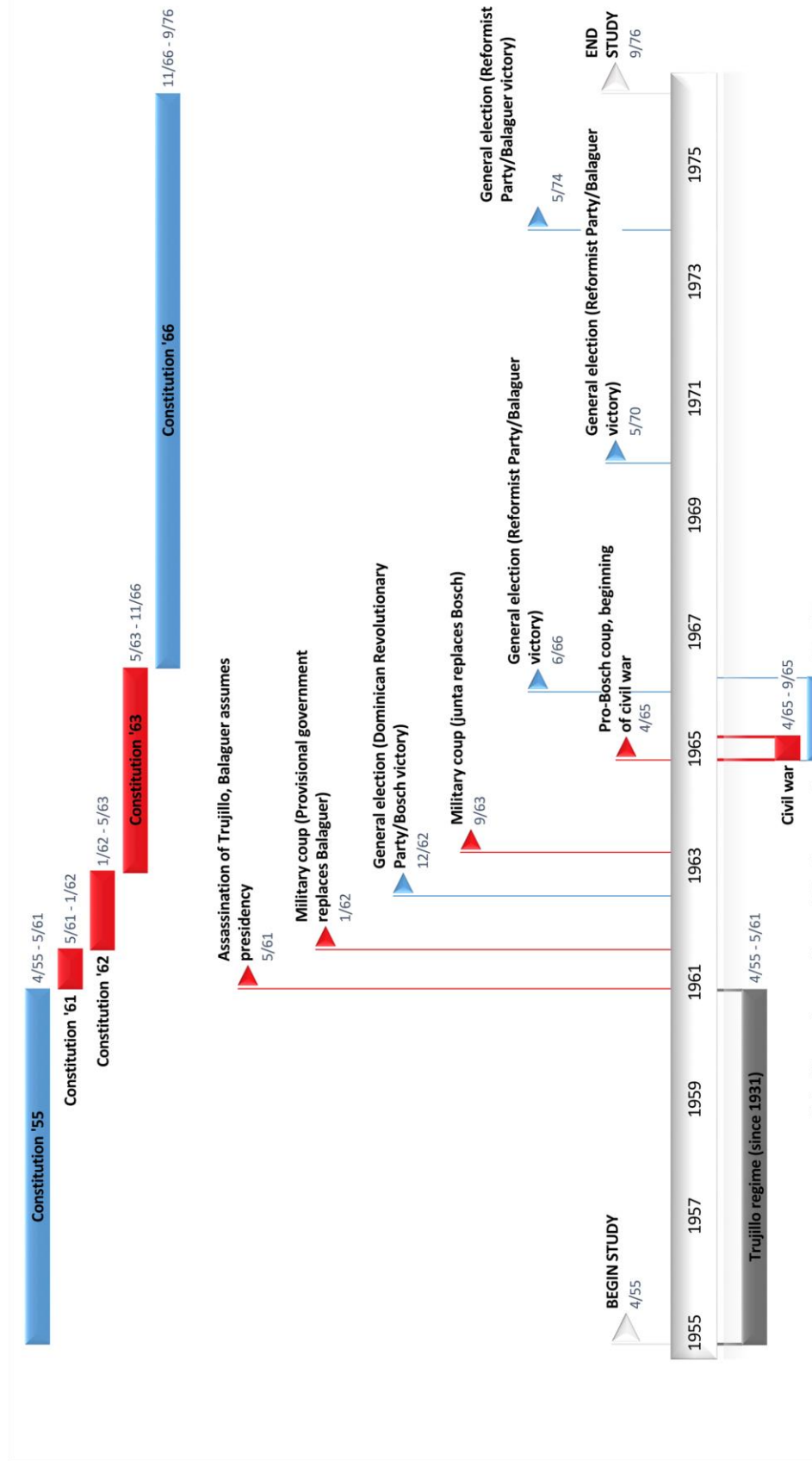
Despite the advances in political and economic development, the eight years of military occupation did much to foster resentment towards the United States among the Dominican people. Capitalizing on the emergence of nationalist sentiments, Rafael Trujillo, himself the commander-in-chief of the National Guard, won the presidency in the elections of 1930. He was quick to rebuild the Dominican military, “which grew from around 2,200 in 1932 to 9,100 in 1948 to 18,000 in 1958” (Library of Congress 2001, 40). Trujillo appealed to traditional Hispanic and Roman Catholic values and propagated a fierce anti-Haitian rhetoric, which ultimately led to the massacre of some 5,000 to 12,000 Haitians along the Dominican Republic’s eastern border in 1937 (Library of Congress, 2001). As his Dominican Party effectively controlled the state apparatus, Trujillo had a free hand in manipulating the country’s finances. An economic protectionist, he ended United States administration of Dominican customs in 1941, retired the national debt in 1947, and introduced a national currency to replace the dollar that same year (Library of Congress, 2001). At this time, “almost 80 percent of the country’s industrial production was controlled by him; and nearly 60 percent of the country’s labor force depended directly or indirectly on him, 45 percent employed by his firms and another 15 percent working for the state” (Library of Congress 2001, 42). Aware that the only threat to his regime could come from the United States, Trujillo made occasional efforts to appease the governing administrations. He presented himself as a firm anti-communist and made shows of liberalizing the country’s political system by introducing a new constitution, expanding suffrage to women, and removing his brother from the nominal presidency in favor of the intellectual Joaquín Balaguer in 1960 (Library of Congress, 2001).

Nonetheless, Trujillo’s assassination in May 1961 brought a sudden end to his oppressive yet stable regime. In the onset of chaos, Balaguer assumed power and introduced a new constitution but was shortly replaced by a provisional government following a military coup in

January 1962. During its rule, the provisional government introduced its own constitution and called for elections in December of that year. The elections were won by Juan Bosch and his leftist Dominican Revolutionary Party, which proceeded to introduce yet another constitution in May 1963 (Fearon & Laitin, 2006). In September of that year, however, a second military coup overthrew Bosch, this time replacing him with a military junta (Lowenthal, 1973). Nonetheless, the junta failed to solidify its rule, and pro-Bosch factions—calling themselves Constitutionals—staged another coup in April 1965, thus beginning the Dominican Civil War (Fearon & Laitin, 2006). Fearful that Bosch’s faction might receive Cuban support, the United States military intervened with an OAS contingent that same month, effectively ending the conflict by September 1965. During the subsequent stabilization operation, the United States oversaw elections in June 1966 that resulted in a victory for Balaguer and his right-wing Reformist Party, which introduced a new constitution in November of the following year. The intervening forces were also charged with restoring garbage collection, electricity, and water in Santo Domingo as well as making sure that economic assistance from USAID was properly administered for “a massive civil relief and food distribution program” (Yates 2015, 135). In the end, no military reform was undertaken, and the last intervening forces left the country by September 1966 (Yates, 2015).

Balaguer’s rule was an authoritarian one, and his manipulation of the political system led Bosch and the Dominican Revolutionary Party, which represented the main opposition, to boycott the May 1970 elections. This flawed democratic process continued, and the May 1974 elections resulted in another term in office for Balaguer. It wasn’t until 1978 that diplomatic pressure from the Carter administration convinced Balaguer to allow for free and competitive elections, which were won by Antonio Guzmán of the opposition (Conaghan & Espinal, 1990). In May 2016, Dominicans voted in the tenth uninterrupted election cycle since Guzmán’s victory in 1978. The current president is Danilo Medina of the Dominican Liberation Party, which was formed in 1973 after splitting from Bosch’s Dominican Revolutionary Party (International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2018).

Figure 1 - Dominican Republic timeline (decade before intervention/stabilization, intervention/stabilization, decade after stabilization operation)



## **II- Grenada**

In 1967, the British government formally granted Grenada the status of ‘associated statehood,’ making the island an autonomous protectorate of Great Britain in preparation for its transition from a colonial territory to a sovereign state in 1974. Remaining in the Commonwealth of Nations, Grenada inherited a two-party parliamentary system under a constitutional monarchy from Great Britain, with a governor-general appointed to represent the queen after the country’s independence. During this time, Eric Gairy and the Grenada United Labour Party won two election cycles under British oversight and remained in power after also winning the first independent elections in December 1976 (Kinzer, 2007). However, with the British gone, Gairy’s rule became increasingly authoritarian. For example, “laws such as the Essential Services Act of 1978 prohibited workers from striking; the Public Order Act of 1978 prohibited opposite political parties from using loud speakers without police protection; and the Newspaper Act of 1975 made it illegal for material to be published contrary to Gairy’s government... Furthermore, Gairy terrorized the people through the use of his ‘Mongoose Gang’ and ‘Night Ambush Squad’ to suppress any internal dissent” (Davis 1994, 94).

Growing opposition finally manifested itself in March 1979, when a group of sixty insurgents seized control of the army barracks in the capital of St. George’s while Gairy was on a visit to the United Nations in New York City (Kinzer, 2007). The insurgency was led by Maurice Bishop, leader of the Marxist-Leninist New Jewel Movement. Allying the new People’s Revolutionary Government with those of Cuba and Nicaragua, Bishop’s first priority was to rebuild an army with additional support from the Cuban military (Sharpe, 1993). Moreover, through its propaganda machine and Bishop’s own charisma, the regime began to shape a national identity among the Grenadian people that was to be centered around the revolutionary ideals of black power, socialism, and anti-imperialism. Accordingly, once established, the People’s Revolutionary Government “expanded workers’ cooperatives and introduced social reforms such as free secondary education, a free milk program for children, adult literacy programs, increased trade union rights, equal pay for equal work, promotion of non-traditional work for women, and public health care” (Sharpe 1993, 50). Economic advancements at this time included the construction of roads, development of the agriculture and fishing industries, as well as a decrease in the unemployment rate (Kinzer, 2007). Despite these reforms, however, Bishop’s government also “abolished Parliament and the constitution, muzzled the opposition

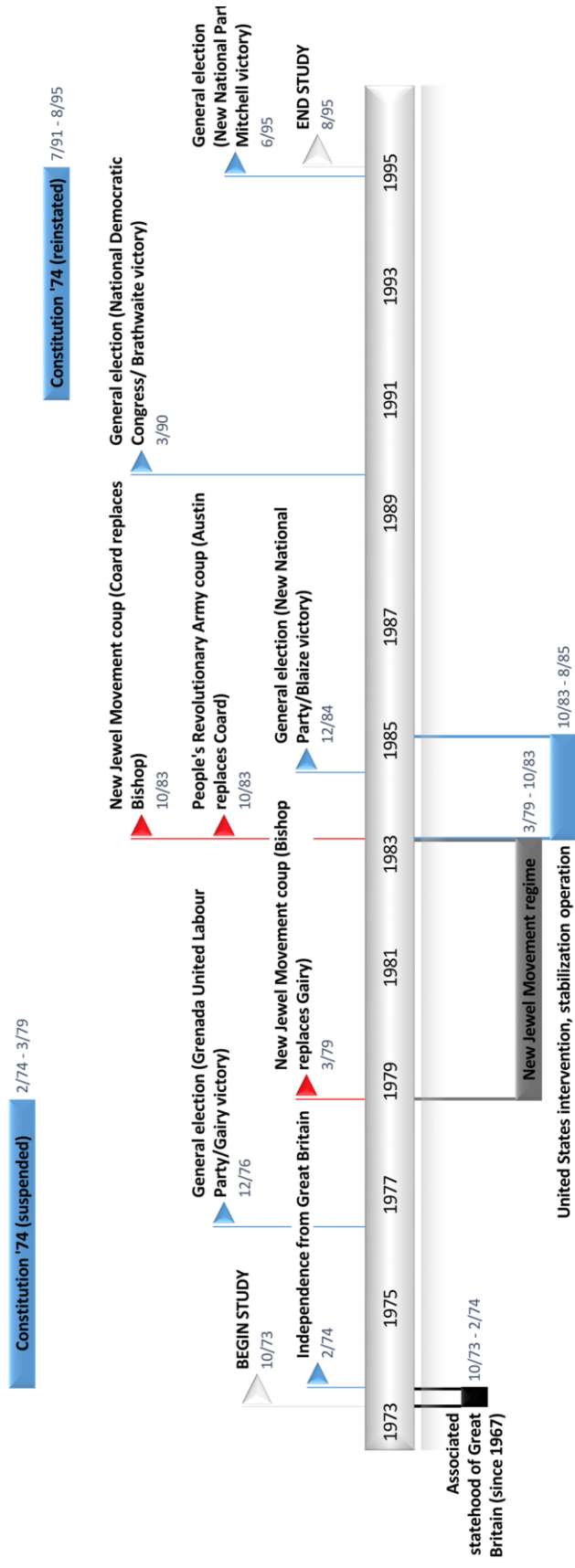
press and drew up a watch list of potential enemies to be kept under surveillance” (Kinzer 2007, 225).

The regime under Bishop was stable until the New Jewel Movement split in 1983 on ideological lines. Pushing for more radical reforms, the splintered faction led by Bernard Coard overthrew and executed Bishop in October of that year. A few days later, however, Coard himself was deposed by Austin Hudson, general of the People’s Revolutionary Army. Hudson immediately imposed a four-day total curfew, warning that any violators caught outside their homes would be shot on sight (Kinzer, 2007). Alarmed by the deteriorating situation and able to use the safety of 600 American medical students at St. George’s University as a pretext, the Reagan administration sent the United States military to intervene with support from the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). In a matter of days, the People’s Revolutionary Army was defeated and the students were evacuated, but the United States military maintained its presence in a stabilization operation that would last until August 1985 (Negrete, 1993). After the army was disbanded and replaced by a civilian police force, the “United States Agency for International Development (USAID) repaired war damage, upgraded Grenada’s infrastructure, laid the foundation for overseas investment, and completed [an] airport the Cubans had started” (Sharpe 1993, 52). A particular focus of the stabilization operation was the development of Grenada’s tourism industry through the implementation of a construction plan that would increase the number of hotel rooms in the country from 325 in 1984 to 2,000 over a period of ten years (Sharpe, 1993). Meanwhile, new elections were set for December 1984.

The dissolution of the New Jewel Movement resulted in the formation of new political parties to compete in the general elections, which were won by Herbert Blaize and the center-right New National Party. In March 1990, general elections were held again, and power was transferred to Nicholas Brathwaite and the center-left National Democratic Congress. During his term in office, Brathwaite reinstated the constitution that had previously been suspended under the New Jewel Movement regime. Nonetheless, Brathwaite was succeeded as prime minister by Keith Mitchell in the next general elections of June 1995, which were won by the New National Party (Welles, 2006). In March 2018, Mitchell, still leading the New National Party, returned to the office of prime minister after the fifth uninterrupted election cycle since his party’s initial victory in 1995 (International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2018).



Figure 2- Grenada timeline (decade before intervention/stabilization, decade after stabilization operation)



### **III- Panama**

Like the Dominican Republic, Panama gained its independence from the Spanish Empire in 1821 as a department of what was then Gran Colombia. In 1903, the United States supported a Panamanian secessionist movement and became the first to recognize the country's independence. Under the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty of 1904, the United States was granted the "use, occupation, and control of a sixteen-kilometer-wide strip of territory and extensions of three nautical miles into the sea from each terminal for the construction, maintenance, operation, sanitation, and protection of an isthmian canal" (Library of Congress 1989, 23). The same year, a constitution modeled after that of the United States was ratified. The document established a system of checks and balances through separation of powers and called for direct elections for the presidency and legislature. Moreover, it provided the United States with the right to intervene in the country's domestic affairs "to guarantee Panamanian sovereignty and preserve order" (Library of Congress 1989, 24). As construction in the Canal Zone ensued, the Panamanian military was disbanded and replaced with a national police force to ensure political stability. The United States military occupation of Panama was formally ended upon the canal's completion in 1914, even though the Canal Zone itself remained under United States administration.

Panama's economy developed little in the decades after the United States occupation, and political participation was largely limited to a small group of economic elites in the capital. Despite establishing the country's state structures and institutions during its occupation, the United States was unable to consolidate stability, as irregular transitions of power proved to be the norm throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the post-World War II period, growing frustrations regarding United States administration of the Canal Zone led to massive riots in 1964. Four years later, the intensifying wave of nationalism combined with a general dissatisfaction with ineffective and unstable governments resulted in the overthrow of democratically-elected President Arnulfo Arias by the National Guard, the domestic security force which had evolved from the national police created by the United States during the construction of the canal. Omar Torrijos, commander of National Guard, won the new regime broad popular support by distancing himself from the Panamanian Marxist left while simultaneously implementing a populist program of economic and social development. In 1969, he introduced a plan to redistribute 700,000 hectares of land within three years to 61,300 families (Library of Congress, 1989). Moreover, as the rural areas of the country remained

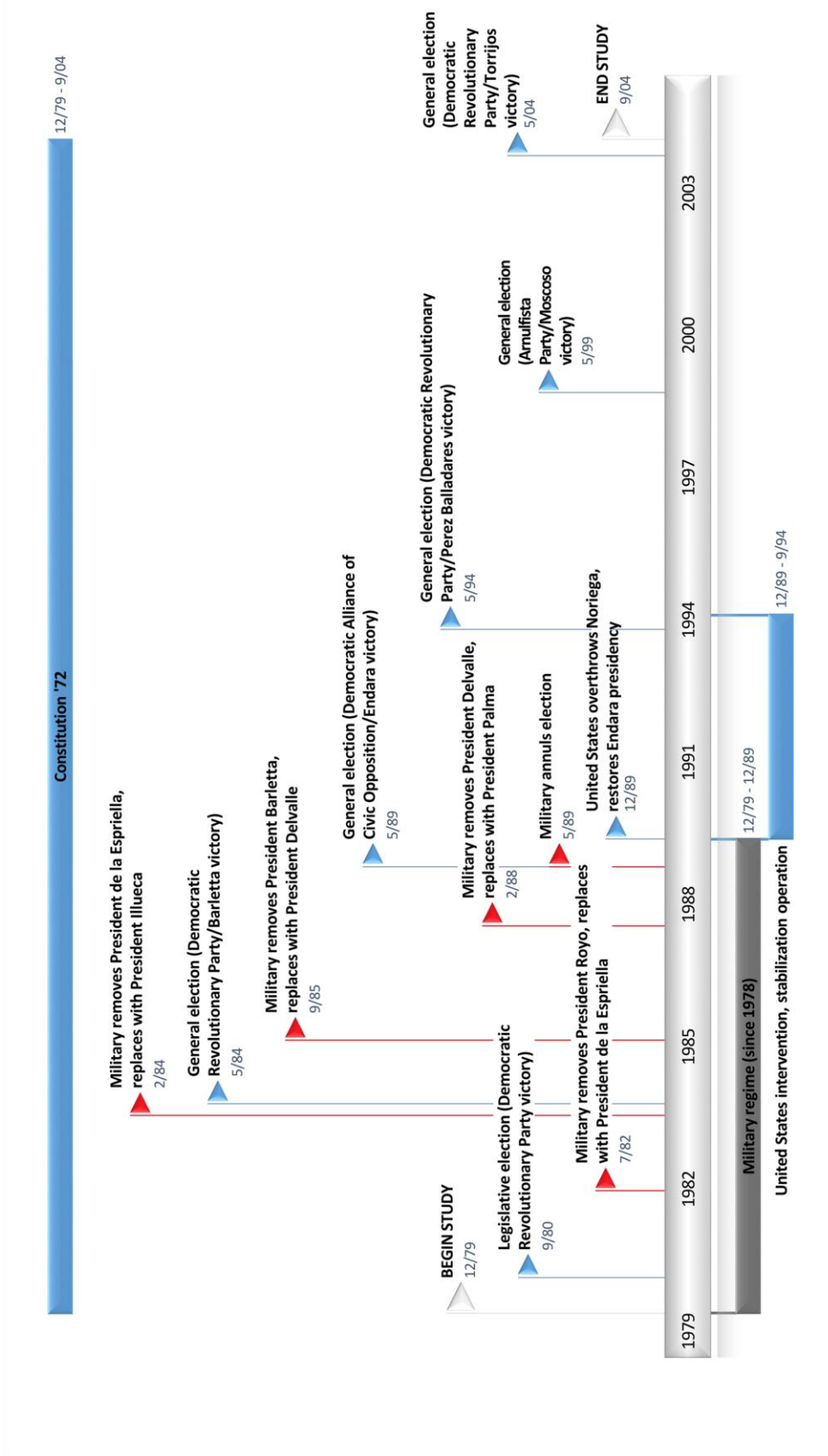
disproportionately underdeveloped, new schools emphasizing vocational training were established throughout the countryside. An integrated medical system was also introduced which called for the expansion of hospitals and clinics in the provincial cities. The regime also promoted urban housing and office construction in Panama City, projects which were funded by “increased personal and corporate taxes and increased efficiency in tax collection” (Library of Congress 1989, 47). In 1970, Torrijos declared that, “having finished with the oligarchy, the Panamanian has his own worth with no importance to his origin, his cradle, or where he was born” (Library of Congress 1989, 45). The cornerstone of the regime’s national project, however, was the Torrijos-Carter Treaty of 1977, by which control of the Canal Zone would be transferred to the Panamanian government in the year 2000. In order to gain the Carter administration’s support for the treaty, Torrijos agreed to begin the process of democratizing Panama’s political system. This meant, above all, amending the 1972 constitution through which the regime had banned political parties. Thus, “after the 1978 amendments took effect, Torrijos gave up his position as head of government but retained control of the National Guard and continued to play an important role in the government’s decision-making process... In October 1978, the National assembly elected a thirty-eight-year-old lawyer and former education minister, Aristides Royo, to the presidency and Ricardo de la Espriella to the vice presidency, each for a six-year term” (Library of Congress 1989, 58). In July 1981, one year after the first legislative elections resulted in a victory for the pro-military Democratic Revolutionary Party, Torrijos was killed in an airplane crash in western Panama.

Torrijos was succeeded by Manuel Noriega as commander of the National Guard, which he expanded and renamed the Panamanian Defense Forces. Noriega’s vision was for the new military to play a more active role in politics, the result of which would be a period of severe instability and corruption. In July 1982, the military removed President Royo and replaced him with Vice President de la Espriella. In February 1984, de la Espriella was replaced by President Jorge Illueca (Furlong, 1993). Nonetheless, in the elections of May 1984, Illueca lost to Nicolás Ardito Barletta of the Democratic Revolutionary Party. Barletta remained in office for one year before being replaced with Eric Arturo Delvalle in September 1985, who in turn was replaced by Manuel Solís Palma in February 1988 (Gandasegui Jr., 1993). The elections of May 1989 resulted in a victory for Guillermo Endara and the Democratic Alliance of Civil Opposition. In the end, it was the regime’s annulment of the elections, combined with a series of confrontations

between the United States military and Noriega's Panamanian Defense Forces in the Canal Zone, as well as emerging evidence that Noriega was personally involved in the international drug trade, that led to a unilateral military intervention by the United States in December 1989 (Kinzer, 2007).

On the first day of the invasion, Endara was sworn in as president of Panama in the Canal Zone. Once Noriega had been captured, he was extradited to the United States, put on trial, and sentenced to 40 years of incarceration on charges of drug trafficking (Kinzer, 2007). The military was disbanded and replaced by a civil security apparatus called the Panamanian Public Forces. Moreover, the constitution was amended to prevent the future creation of a standing military (Millett, 1990). As Panama's cash reserves were only \$70 million dollars in 1989, the United States government provided \$200 million of emergency assistance to rebuild the infrastructure and economy (Millett, 1990). Elections were held in May 1994 and resulted in Endara's succession by Ernesto Pérez Balladères of the Democratic Revolutionary Party. The United States ended its stabilization operation and withdrew its remaining forces in September of that year (Kinzer, 2007). The next elections were held in May 1999 and resulted in another transfer of power, this time to President Mireya Moscoso of the populist Arnulfista Party, named in honor of Arnulfo Arias who was ousted by Torrijos in 1968. The Democratic Revolutionary Party returned to power in the next elections of May 2004, when Martín Torrijos, the former dictator's son, won the presidency. Since 2004, Panama has experienced two uninterrupted election cycles, the last of which took place in 2014 and resulted in a victory for President Juan Carlos Varela of the old Arnulfista—now rebranded as the Panameñista—Party (International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2018).

Figure 3- Panama timeline (decade before intervention, intervention/stabilization, decade after stabilization operation)



#### **IV- Haiti**

Haiti gained its independence from France in 1804, making it the first independent country in Latin America and the only country to ever win its sovereignty through a successful slave revolt. Nonetheless, it would not receive official recognition from France until 1825 nor from the United States until 1862, one year before President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation ended slavery during the American Civil War (Torgman, 2009). Moreover, the widespread massacre of Haiti's white minority following independence left the country without a technically skilled or educated class. In 1822, Haitian forces unified the island of Hispaniola by invading and conquering the neighboring Dominican Republic, which eventually regained its independence in 1844 (Library of Congress, 2001). From that period to 1915, Haiti was plagued by chronic political instability that resulted in "22 changes of government and 102 revolts, civil wars, and various other impromptu revolutions" (Torgman 2009, 3). Moreover, "between 1849 and 1915, the United States Navy sent warships to Haiti on twenty-six occasions to extract debt payments from reluctant Haitian governments and to prevent the British, French, and Germans from gaining a greater foothold" (Library of Congress 2001, 280).

Finally, in September 1915, the United States military announced complete political and administrative control of Haiti. A treaty known as the Haitian-American Convention "decreed that United States citizens would collect customs and oversee all government outlays, approve all debt requests, advise the treasury, direct public works and health programs, and launch an agricultural training campaign. Article 10 decreed that the United States would create and head a new constabulary" (Library of Congress 2001, 280). Apart from amending Haiti's constitution to allow white foreigners to own land, the occupying forces also "attempted to improve the country's infrastructure by building roads, bridges, wharves, lighthouses, and irrigation systems. They tried to improve health conditions by upgrading the sanitation system and providing clean water. They brought in United States physicians to create a public health program that included the establishment of hospitals, clinics, and training schools for doctors and nurses and mounted campaigns against syphilis, yaws, malaria, and hookworm. They tried to modernize agriculture by creating an agricultural-technical system, the Service Technique, with the help of United States agricultural experts. They sought to professionalize the security forces by replacing the constabulary, or gendarmerie, with a National Guard. They attempted to stabilize the Haitian currency, the gourde, by linking it to the dollar" (Library of Congress 2001, 281-282). During

the occupation, the United States military showed overt prejudice towards the country's black majority, not least by installing a series of light-skinned mulatto presidents and excluding black Haitians from commanding positions in the Garde d'Haïti, which evolved from the National Guard and would serve as the precursor to the Haitian army. Before the occupation ended in 1934, President Hoover appointed an investigatory commission to assess the state of the country. The commission concluded that "the social forces that created [instability] remained—poverty, ignorance, and a lack of a tradition or desire for orderly free government" (Library of Congress 2001, 283).

The discriminatory nature of the United States occupation resulted in the formation of anti-American and anti-Western sentiments in Haiti. In the years following the United States withdrawal, the influence of the Roman Catholic Church decreased significantly, as many Haitians began exploring their African roots and openly practicing voodoo. Moreover, Haitian Creole replaced French as the common language of most citizens. A general feeling of resentment towards whites was furthered in 1937, when Dominican forces under the Trujillo regime massacred some 5,000 to 12,000 Haitians in a disputed area on the Haitian-Dominican border that the United States had incorporated into Haiti during its occupation but failed to secure upon its withdrawal (Library of Congress, 2001). These factors, along with a series of unstable governments dominated by the mulatto elite, created a political environment that led to the election of the black nationalist and pro-voodoo presidential candidate François Duvalier in 1957.

In 1961, Duvalier extended his presidency another six years. In 1964, through a national plebiscite, Haitian voters approved a constitutional amendment that made Duvalier president for life. He also created a private paramilitary organization, the Volunteers for National Security—or Tonton Macoute, as they were commonly called—who killed between 30,000 and 60,000 citizens under his command (Library of Congress, 2001). The extreme political oppression and violence of the Duvalier regime created a considerable brain drain in Haitian society, as many educated and talented citizens were either exiled or emigrating from the country. Despite Duvalier's growing international reputation as a ruthless dictator and megalomaniac, he did manage to secure economic aid from the United States by firmly remaining outside the communist camp. Nonetheless, despite the foreign assistance, under Duvalier "the economy stagnated as a result of neglect and the diversion of as much as 10 million dollars a year from the

treasury” (Library of Congress 2001, 290). True to his nationalist ideology, however, Duvalier did manage to create a black urban middle class by purging the army and the Catholic Church of the mulatto elite, effectively creating two channels of upward mobility for black men. In 1971, François Duvalier died in his sleep of natural causes, and power was inherited by his nineteen-year-old son, Juan-Claude Duvalier.

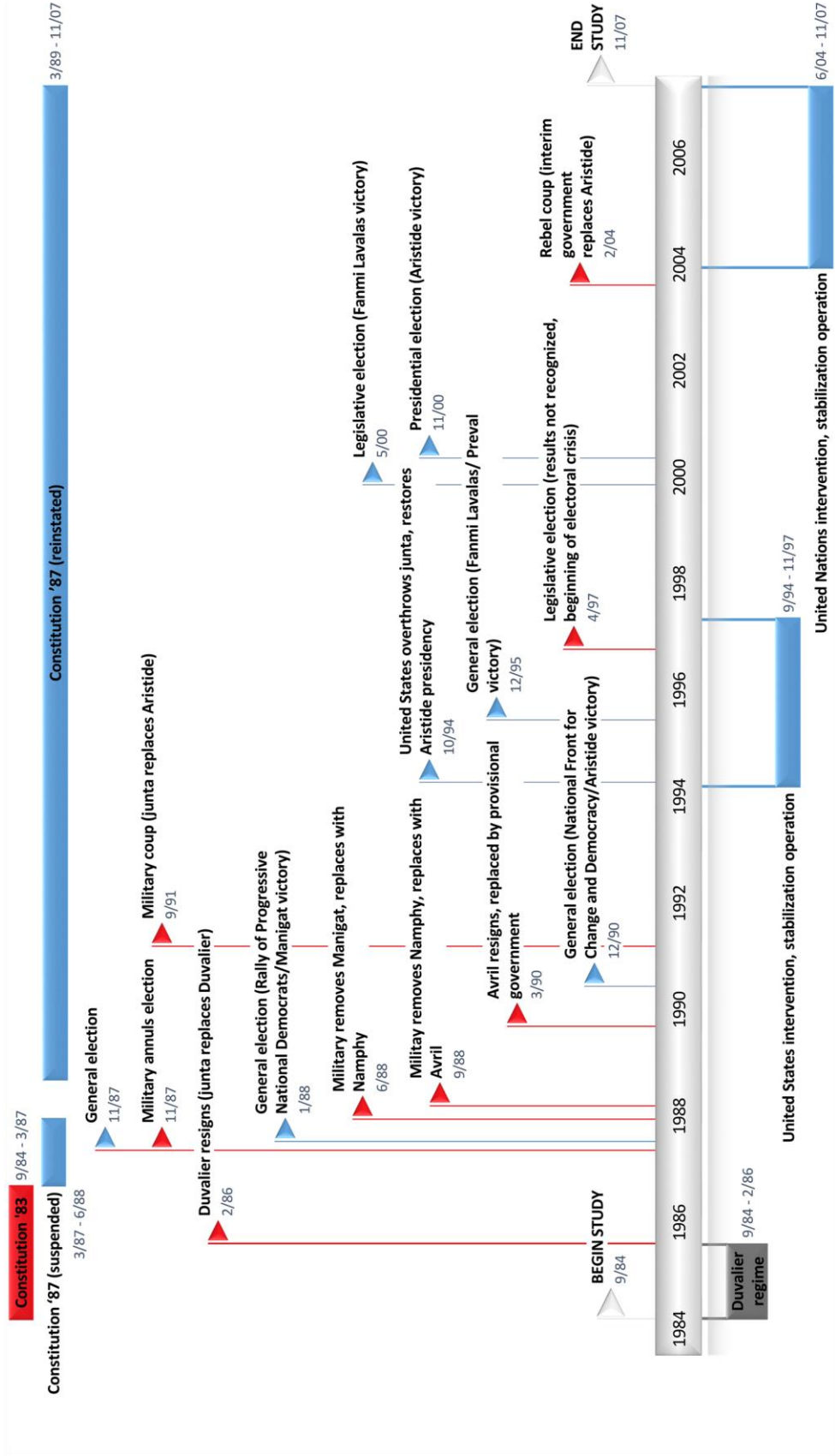
Although stable through the coercive security apparatus, the young and inexperienced dictator’s regime soon became associated with increasing levels of corruption, and by the beginning of the 1980s what had been a period of prolonged stagnation had turned into a period of steady economic decline. Indeed, “based on all economic indicators, Haiti fell to the bottom of the group of least-developed nations. Bad governance, combined with a series of natural disasters, increased discontent and misery. By 1986 nearly half of all Haitians were unemployed, and many more were underemployed. Many people were not getting enough to eat and were dying of treatable diseases” (Library of Congress 2001, 292). Under pressure from the United States and his own military, Duvalier stepped down and fled to France in February 1986. He was replaced by a military junta that introduced the country’s 24<sup>th</sup> constitution, established a semi-presidential system of government, and called for elections in November of the following year (Torgman, 2009). On polling day, however, the military killed 150 people as they were waiting in line to cast their ballots, and the elections were annulled before a winner could be announced. The violence continued, and after its first year in power the military junta had killed more civilians than had Jean-Claude Duvalier’s regime in fifteen years. Elections were held again in January 1988, but this time only 4 percent of the eligible electorate showed up to the polls (Torgman, 2009). The result was a victory for Leslie Manigat and the center-left Rally of Progressive National Democrats. Manigat, however, was removed by the military in June 1988 and replaced by General Henri Namphy, who suspended the constitution but was himself replaced by Prosper Avril in September 1988 (Torgman, 2009). Avril reinstated the constitution in 1989 but his resignation in March 1990 left the presidency vacated, and power was assumed by a provisional government that called for elections in December 1990. The elections were won by the Catholic priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide and his National Front for Change and Democracy. Nonetheless, Aristide’s presidency lasted only until September of the following year, when he was deposed in a coup and replaced by a military junta (Beardslee, 1996).



Under the military junta, the political situation in Haiti continued to deteriorate. News that the military had already killed some 5,000 people prompted the United Nations to authorize the United States military to intervene with support from Poland and Argentina in September 1994 (Beardslee, 1996). The following month, Aristide's presidency was restored, and the international community pledged an emergency economic aid package of \$1.2 billion (Library of Congress, 2001). Moreover, the Haitian military was disbanded and replaced by a civilian police force. The United States military remained in the country for a period of six months before the subsequent stabilization operation was taken over by a much smaller United Nations peacekeeping mission that would remain in the country until November 1997 (Library of Congress, 2001). In the general elections of December 1995, René Préval of Aristide's new center-left party Fanmi Lavalas was elected president. However, instability returned to the country when the government refused to recognize the results of the legislative elections of April 1997 due to allegations of fraud and low voter turnout (Torgman, 2009). The elections were repeated in May 2000, resulting in Fanmi Lavalas' continued control of the legislature. Moreover, the presidential elections of that November returned Aristide to power. Once again, however, Aristide's term was cut short by a coup in February 2004, this time on the part of a group of rebel paramilitary organizations who replaced Aristide with an interim government. That June, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti was established under the command of the Brazilian Army.

Today, the United Nations peacekeeping operation is still present in Haiti. Approximately "four out of five Haitians live on less than \$2 a day, about half the population is illiterate, and about only one out of five Haitians is employed" (Torgman 2009, 13). Elections were held in 2016, and the current president is Jovenel Moïse of the center-right Haitian Tèt Kale Party. Voter turnout was 18 percent (International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2018). In November 2017, President Moïse remobilized the Armed Forces of Haiti.

Figure 4- Haiti timeline (decade before intervention/stabilization, decade after stabilization operation)



## V- Discussion

In all four cases, the United States military intervened during periods of severe political instability. In the cases of the Dominican Republic and Haiti, the instability was the result of prolonged power struggles that followed the collapse of authoritarian yet stable personalistic regimes. In the cases of Grenada and Panama, the United States intervention toppled existing military regimes that were themselves becoming increasingly unstable. The duration of the interventions ranged from about a year and a half in the Dominican Republic to almost five years in Panama. Panama also stands out for being the only country in which the United States acted unilaterally, as it had the support of an allied contingent in the remaining three interventions. In all three cases except that of the Dominican Republic, where no military reform took place, the United States disbanded the indigenous militaries and replaced them with civilian police forces. The Dominican Republic, however, did introduce a new constitution under the United States intervention, whereas Panama's constitution was only amended while Grenada and Haiti undertook no constitutional reforms. All four countries received economic aid in the post-conflict phases of the interventions, and all four countries experienced regime change with United States oversight. In the decade after the withdrawal of the United States military, Grenada and Panama fully transitioned into the stable democracies they are today. The Dominican Republic also emerged stable after the intervention, although its democratic system was initially flawed and took longer to develop than in the cases of Grenada and Panama. In Haiti, stability did temporarily improve after the intervention, but its flawed democratic system soon receded to the pattern of electoral crises and violent coups that had plagued the country throughout much of its history.

As shown in Figure 5.1, modern military interventions have been successful in stabilizing three out of four countries in Central America and the Caribbean, but the United States' failure to reproduce the same results in Haiti remains problematic. Moreover, Figure 5.2 shows that after comparing the variables related to the interventions and stabilization operations themselves, no deterministic variation can be identified. For this reason, further attention should be paid to the respective state-building and nation-building periods of each country in the search for explanatory variables. During the first period, all four countries underwent a process of political and economic modernization as either protectorates of the United States or—in the case of Grenada—Great Britain. However, in the case of Haiti, the United States was also responsible

for creating a racially polarized society that excluded a majority of the population from participating in government or military institutions. Furthermore, during the second period, all four countries experienced authoritarian regimes that strongly promoted ideologies centered around forms of nationalism and militarism. However, in the cases of the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Panama, these authoritarian regimes also introduced a number of populist reforms that resulted in both economic and social development. In Haiti, on the other hand, the regime perpetuated economic and social stagnation to such a degree that, upon its collapse, Haitian society was among the poorest and least educated in the Western Hemisphere. Such severe underdevelopment has made it difficult for relatively brief interventions to produce lasting effects in the country. Only time will tell if the United Nations' current stabilization operation, which has been in effect since 2004, will be enough for Haiti to sufficiently modernize its institutional structures, economic system, and civic culture so that political stability can finally take hold.

Figure 5.1- Analysis of change in stability

Country	Less Stable	No Change	More Stable
Dominican Republic			✓
Grenada			✓
Panama			✓
Haiti		✓	

Figure 5.2- Analysis of variables related to state-building period, nation-building period, and intervention/stabilization operation

Country	State-building period	Nation-building period	Length of intervention and stabilization operation	Unilateral vs. multilateral	Military reform	Constitutional reform	Economic aid	Regime change	Resulting regime	More stability
Dominican Republic	Political and economic development	Nationalism, militarism, development	1 year, 5 months	Multilateral (US + OAS)	No	New constitution	Yes	Yes	Flawed democracy	Yes
Grenada	Political and economic development	Nationalism, militarism, development	1 year, 10 months	Multilateral (US + OECS)	Disbanded, replaced by civilian police force	No	Yes	Yes	Democracy	Yes
Panama	Political and economic development	Nationalism, militarism, development	4 years, 9 months	Unilateral	Disbanded, replaced by civilian police force	Amendment	Yes	Yes	Democracy	Yes
Haiti	Political and economic development, social polarization	Nationalism, militarism, stagnation	3 years, 2 months	Multilateral (US + UN)	Disbanded, replaced by civilian police force	No	Yes	Yes	Flawed democracy, rebel coup	No

## **Conclusion**

This study finds that, in three out of four cases, modern United States military interventions in Central America and the Caribbean were effective in establishing stable regimes. Moreover, in the cases where political stability was successfully increased through intervention, the resulting regimes were not only democratic but also long-lasting, as the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Panama all continue down their democratic paths today. Nonetheless, within a decade of the United States intervention, Haiti's political system regressed to its previous pattern of electoral crises and irregular transitions of power. When compared with the three successful cases, no significant variation in the United States stabilization operation in Haiti explains the country's seemingly anomalous return to instability. A deeper historical analysis is thus required to uncover key structural setbacks in the country's state-building and nation-building periods. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these setbacks had proven so significant a handicap that the country emerged from the Duvalier dictatorship as the least socially and economically developed in the region.

The case of Haiti as compared with those of the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Panama could shed light on the cases of other countries with shared histories of recurring political instability. For instance, the relatively recent decolonization of Africa has resulted in patterns of post-colonial development similar to those previously observable in Central America and the Caribbean, with chronic political instability accounting for the continued formation of new states in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Moreover, in the Middle East, ongoing tensions between proponents of political modernization and traditional society have led to the collapse of regimes and governing institutions, resulting in the emergence of failed states whose political systems will have to be rebuilt from the foundations if regional stability is ever to be made attainable. In such regions, the examination of respective state-building and nation-building periods might reveal underlying structural explanations to contemporary social, economic, and political issues. In this regard, following this study's framework, an understanding of the local history from independence is crucial for any possible stabilization operations to be conducted with the desired outcomes. Of course, the limitation of this study to one region of the world does inhibit the generalizability of its findings. For this reason, this study's framework could be applied to future studies of other regions where instability has proven to be a chronic issue.

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