Understanding Haiti's Sovereignty Dilemma in Regional Conceptual Context

By

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> The Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) are deeply concerned by recent reports that a coalition of criminal gangs is threatening to seize power and compel a change in the governance arrangements in Haiti at this time. This is completely unacceptable. CARICOM strongly condemns any attempt to replace the transitional arrangements by force and violence. These arrangements were put in place by Haitian stakeholders to pave the way for free and fair elections by February 07, 2026, and to return Haiti to constitutional authority. Moreover, any further organized violence will only exacerbate the existing humanitarian crisis. The International Organisation on Migration (IOM) reported that in mid-January of this year there were 1,041,000 internally displaced Haitians, some of whom are already risking their lives in attempting to leave by any means necessary. Over the last month alone, close to 60,000 Haitians have been displaced. Increased violence will simply hurt those who are least capable of protecting themselves.
>
> – Statement from the Caribbean Community

Introduction

CARICOM's April 13, 2025, statement, which is captured in the epigraph, seems to validate this writer's earlier proposition that "Haiti is, undoubtedly, the region's most dramatic case of 'challenged sovereignty' because of the combined effects of political instability, economic destitution, out-of-control crime and violence, feuding gangs, and kidnappings." (Griffith, 2024: 97) However, close observers of that venerated but troubled nation state would appreciate that Haiti's sovereignty dilemma has both domestic and international dimensions. In discussing one aspect of the latter dimension, distinguished Haiti expert Robert Faton, Jr. long ago posited: "while domestic social forces have played a fundamental role in Haiti's collapse, the nation's fall cannot be comprehended accurately without an understanding of how it was precipitated by the world system." (Fatton, Jr., 2017: 29). As regards the international aspect, my contention is that Haiti's sovereignty predicament is also a manifestation of sovereignty limitations of CARICOM.

This paper examines this contention by pondering the following question: What does Haiti's contemporary political paralysis and security dilemma suggest about sovereignty capabilities and challenges of CARICOM as a regional institution? In pursuing this question the

opportunity is taken to extend the analysis of Challenged Sovereignty as an analytic construct beyond the state level of analysis to the regional level of analysis, in effect, proposing Challenged Sovereignty 2.0 as an extension of the original construct. This study fits the project's Caribbean Intellectual Contributions theme**,** as Challenged Sovereignty is a conceptual innovation that falls under the rubric of literature in security studies that challenges the traditional Realist approach to security and offers alternative propositions for consideration.[2]

Pursuit of this undertaking requires us first to situate the Haiti case study in the broader theoretical-conceptual discourse on security and sovereignty. As the Challenged Sovereignty concept has its intellectual origins in the Discrete Multidimensional Security Framework that was developed two decades ago, it is important to recall the contours of that Framework before sketching the elements of Challenged Sovereignty. Thereafter attention is turned to the nature and scope of Haiti's contemporary security and sovereignty dilemma, following which it becomes necessary to offer an understanding of CARICOM and its security architecture. Doing this allows us to appreciate the sovereignty limitations of CARICOM, which enables us to extend the Challenged Sovereignty analysis, thereby illustrating the manifestation of Challenged Sovereignty 2.0. Thus, the first stop on this academic journey is the conceptual station.

Conceptual Constructs

Relevant here is the Discrete Multinational Security Framework, which was first outlined two decades ago in Social and Economic Studies as a heuristic device to facilitate explanation and interpretation of structures, patterns, and dynamics involved in the security issue area. It captures several elements, including security categories and dimensions, threat type and arenas, threats and threat intensities, and response instruments. For instance, Figure 1 maps the security categories and dimensions, showing that the Traditional Issues category has military, political,

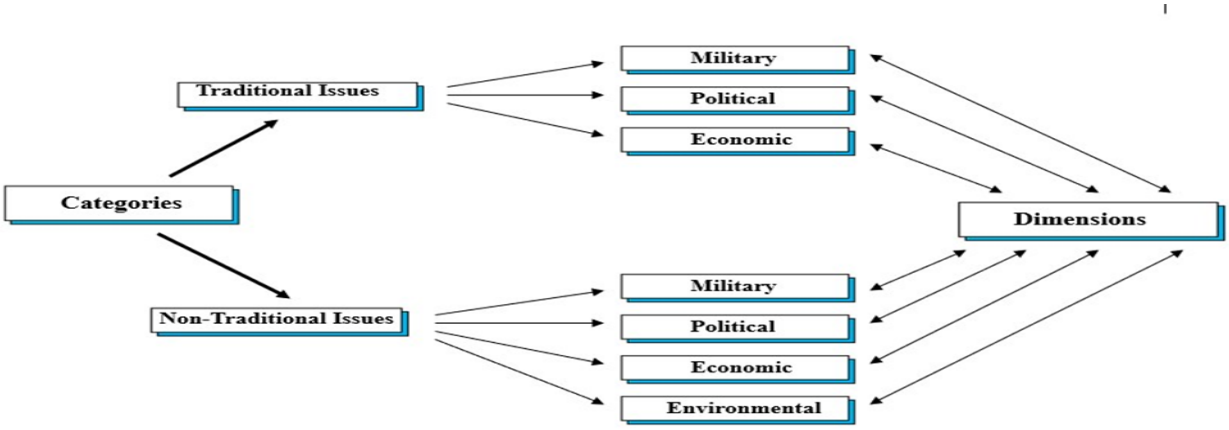
and economic dimensions, while the Non-traditional Issues category accommodates the three dimensions of the former category plus an additional one: environmental. For countries in the Caribbean and other parts of the world—and not only in the Global South—the category of relevance is the Non-traditional one.

Our approach to security views it as *protection and preservation of a people's freedom from external military attack and coercion, from internal subversion, and from the erosion of cherished political, economic, and social values*. As explained in The Quest for Security in the Caribbean, where the definition first was outlined, values include democratic choice and political stability in the political area, sustainable development and free enterprise in the economic domain, and social equality and respect for human rights in the social arena. (Griffith, 1993: 11-12) Because of the multiplicity of concepts and notions in the literature, it is also useful to explain that I consider national defense as pertaining to the protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the national state, largely from threats by foreign state and non-state actors; public security entails the maintenance of internal law and order; and citizen security as relating to the protection of the civil and political rights by people resident within the nation. Consequently, national security encompasses all the other three—national defense, public security, and citizen security.

The Framework, which is portrayed in Figure 2, could be applied in cases where the unit of analysis is an individual state or an aggregate of states, such as sub-regions and regions. In the context of a region (or sub-region) as the unit of analysis—whether the Caribbean or another region—security challenges facing one or a few states within the region do not automatically become challenges of the region. Therefore, the Framework clarifies when challenges within a region become challenges of the region. Importantly, while the Framework was developed to

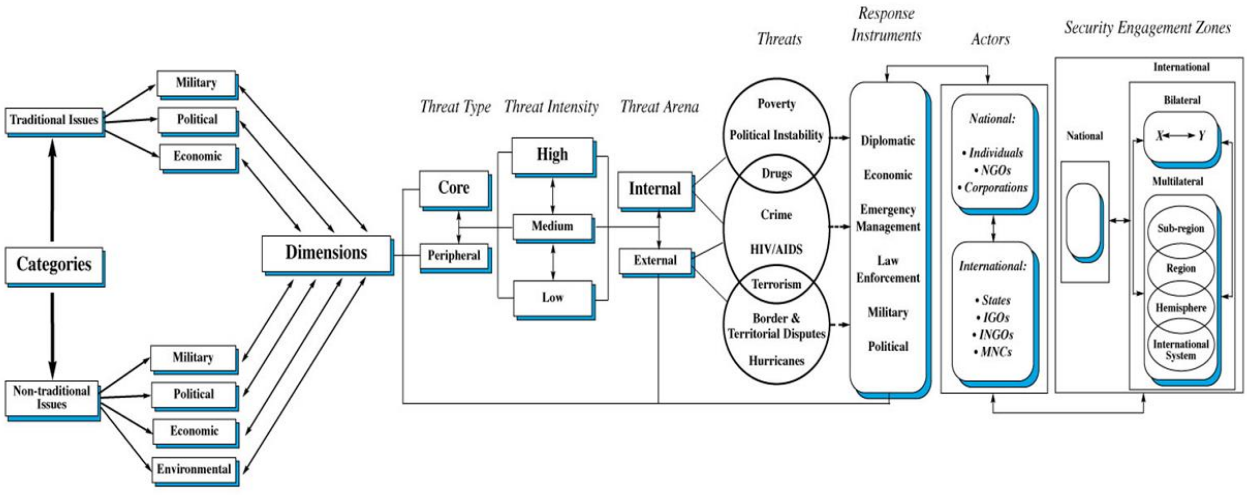
facilitate assessment of the Caribbean, it was not designed only for the Caribbean; it can be used in national and regional security assessments generally. (Griffith, 2004)

Figure 1 Categories and Dimensions of the Discrete Multidimensional Security Framework



Source: Ivelaw Lloyd Griffith, "Understanding Caribbean Security: Back to Basics and Building Blocks," Social and Economic Studies, 53 (1) 2004, 17.

Figure 2 Discrete Multidimensional Security Framework



Source: Ivelaw Lloyd Griffith, "Understanding Caribbean Security: Back to Basics and Building Blocks," Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 53, No. 1 (March) 2004, 26.

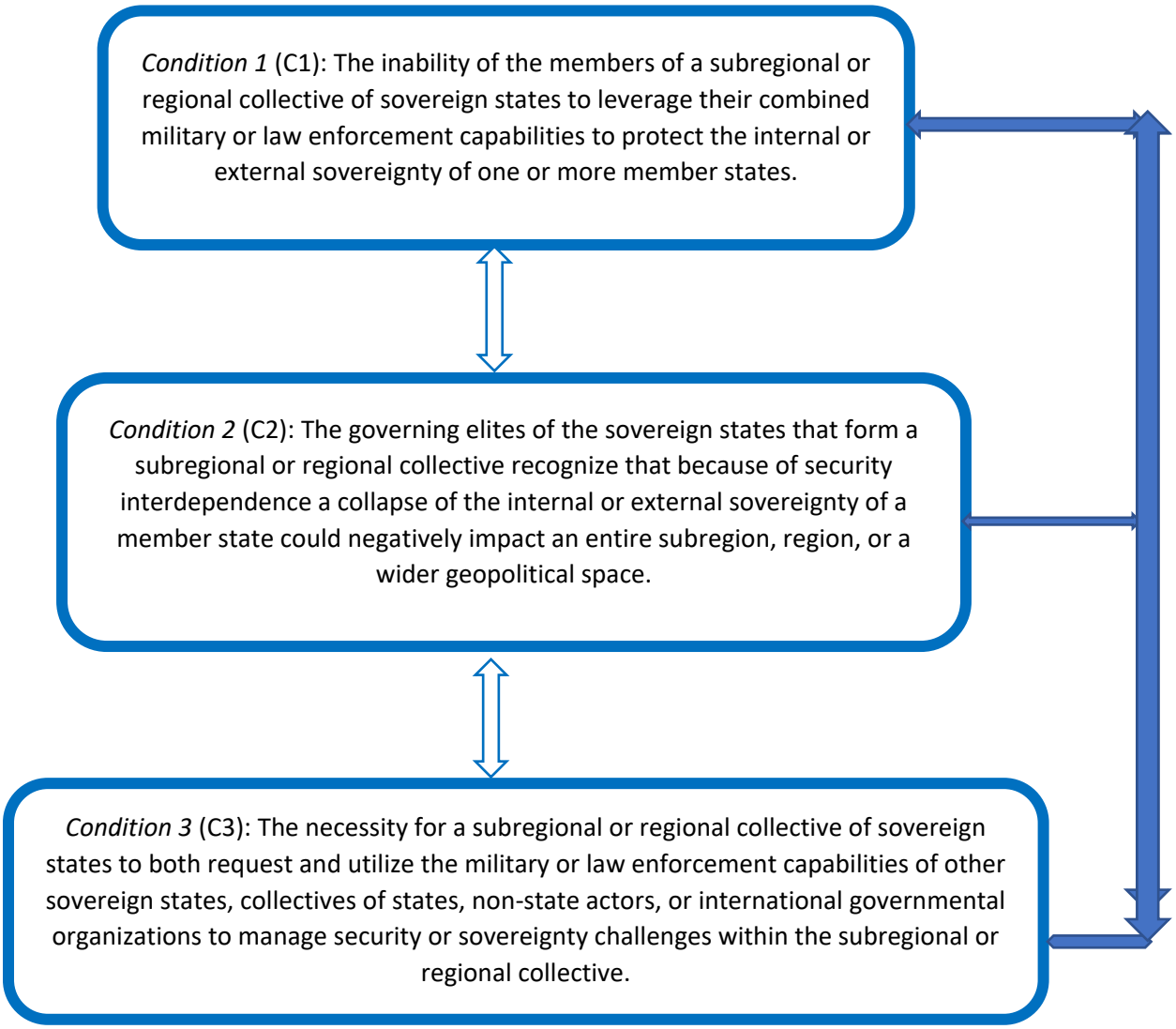
Curious observers are likely to wonder about the relationship between the Framework, on the one hand, and Challenged Sovereignty and Haiti, on the other. The answer is this: Challenged Sovereignty as a conceptual approach is an intellectual progeny of the Framework. The contention was made earlier that Haiti represents the most dramatic expression of Challenged Sovereignty in the Caribbean. This obliges us to explain some relevant elements involved, beginning with the contextual usage of "sovereignty."

Discussions about sovereignty once focused on its international dimension: freedom from outside interference; that no authority is legally above a state except that which a state's leaders voluntarily confer on international bodies. Progressively, though, many scholars and statesmen accepted that a key aspect of sovereignty relates to a nation's internal dynamics. This aspect, called "positive sovereignty," pertains to state power holders not only being free from external interference, but also having the ability to deliver "political goods" to citizens internally. Thus, positive sovereignty pertains to governance, and it entails having the economic, public security, psychological, and other capabilities to articulate and enforce public policy. As Robert Jackson argued in Quasi States, positive sovereignty enables states to take advantage of their independence. A government that is positively sovereign not only is able to enjoy the rights of nonintervention but has the ability to provide "political goods" for society. Positive sovereignty includes having the economic, technical, military, psychological, and other capabilities to declare, implement, and enforce public policy, both domestic and foreign. (Jackson, 1990: 29)

Because sovereignty is a contested concept, it is necessary to specify a working definition. In this respect, sovereignty is used here to mean *the supreme authority of a state over itself, without any interference from foreign entities, unless expressly permitted by the state's authorized officials, that secures its territory and citizens, and possesses the economic, technical, military, and other capabilities to promulgate and execute domestic and foreign policy*. Mindful

of this approach, Challenged Sovereignty is defined as *a condition where the state's vulnerability is exacerbated by internal or external developments that compromise the ability of the supreme authority of the state to promulgate and execute domestic and foreign policy in its own deliberate judgment and on its own terms*. (Griffith, 2024: 31) As Figure 3 shows, Challenged Sovereignty is a function of three conditions.

Figure 3 The Conditions of Challenged Sovereignty



Source: author's design.

All three Conditions are required. Moreover, as was shown when the concept was elaborated, Challenged Sovereignty is a circumstance that develops over time. Indeed, the stage-setting for Challenged Sovereignty could take a decade or more to develop and cut across rule by a single political party, as was shown in relation to the Caribbean with regards to drugs, crime and other problems without passports, to use the notion introduced by former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan. Thus, Challenged Sovereignty is a structural condition and not just a functional one. As such, no single set of political and administrative elites by themselves is necessarily able to appreciably improve the situation. (See Griffith, 2024)

Challenged Sovereignty in the Caribbean has been shown to manifest itself in several ways, notably:

Manifestation 1: Contributing to increased crime and violence that challenge states' monopoly on the use of force in some places, creates climates of fear and insecurity, stresses and stretches military, police, criminal justice and cyber capabilities, and aids the development of unwholesome social values.

Manifestation 2: Enabling criminal entrepreneurs to violate sovereignty by penetrating territory without consent and with impunity and undermining normal internal governance by necessitating the introduction of extreme public security measures such as States of Emergency and other restrictions on civil and political rights.

Manifestation 3: Facilitating sporadic, systemic, and institutionalized corruption, within public security agencies and other governmental entities, in businesses, and in the general society.

Manifestation 4: Fueling the illegal traffic in weapons within and across states and the theft of weapons from private and public security agencies, both of which then contribute to the increased use of weapons in the prosecution of murders and other crimes.

Manifestation 5: Causing skewed allocation of scarce national resources to fight crime and violence often at the expense of health, education, and other social programs that themselves are needed to mitigate the susceptibility to the lure of drug money and criminality.

Manifestation 6: Impacting economic activity because of reduced tourism due to crime and because of fines imposed on private sector entities (notably airlines and shipping companies) because of trafficking or money laundering, or the confiscation of property because of trafficking or money laundering. (Griffith, 2024: 235-237)

With this appreciation of some of the key elements of Challenged Sovereignty, we are now in a position to consider the nature and scope of Haiti's sovereignty dilemma, in both its domestic and international dimensions.

The Quagmire, The Sovereignty Dilemma

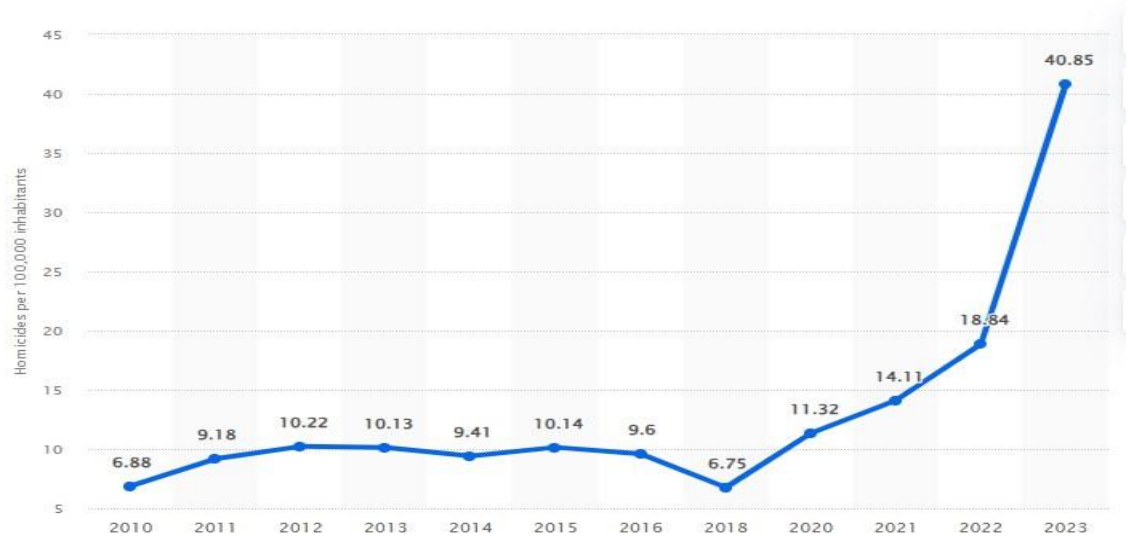
Multiple Volcanoes

Although Haiti has had a long struggle with managing stability and internal and external sovereignty, our focus is on the contemporary crisis, viewed as having its genesis in the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse on July 7, 2021, which precipitated the eruption of multiple political and security volcanos. Even so, the fast pace of events and the domestic and international roller-coasters make analysis of the entire post-assassination landscape infeasible. However, not much analysis of post-assassination developments is needed to convey the severity of the nation's security dilemma.

Haiti is in a security and sovereignty quagmire, whether viewed in national or comparative terms. The crime statistics provide one sobering reflection of this, even if one is considering the homicide numbers. As Figure 4 shows, while the country had an undulating murder rate between 2010 and 2020, it headed north rapidly from 2021, and when homicides are viewed in comparative terms, Haiti has the dubious distinction of topping the rates of all Latin American countries in 2024, as Figure 5 reveals.

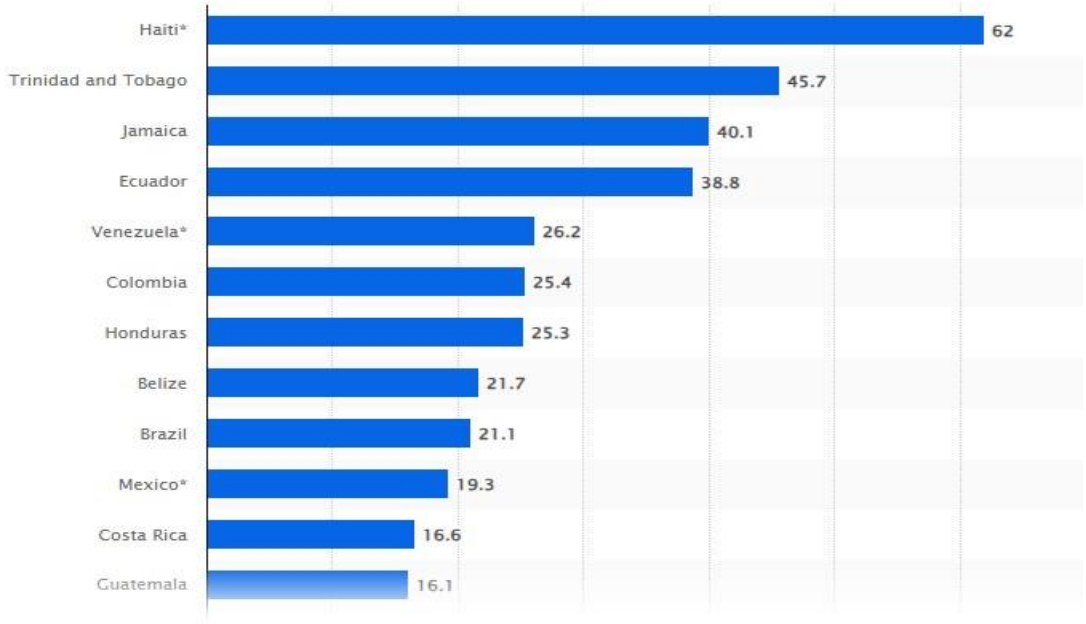
In offering a gloomy assessment in May 2023, noted Haiti expert Georges Fauriol observed that "Haiti is headed towards a catastrophic humanitarian and political crash. With an estimated 90 percent of the Port-au-Prince region under chronic control of gangs, kidnappings remain a lucrative trade (389 recorded incidents in the first quarter of 2023). Societal life—including the operation of schools—is essentially shut down. Haiti is halfway off the cliff." (Fauriol 2023) In offering an assessment towards the end of April 2025, Mark Shaw, director of the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, and Romain Le Cour Grandmaison, head of the Haiti Observatory at the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, noted sadly that "Haiti is grappling with extraordinary violence as gangs have tightened their stranglehold over large portions of the country. Over one million people have been internally displaced — nearly one in ten Haitians. By the end of 2024, at least 5,601 murders had been recorded, an alarming 1,000 more than in 2023, marking a national homicide rate of nearly 48 per 100,000 inhabitants — a grim record for what is the poorest country in Latin America and the Caribbean." (Shaw and Grandmaison, 2025)

Figure 4 Homicide rate in Haiti 2010-2023 (number of homicides per 100,000 inhabitants)



Source: Statista, 2025, https://www.statista.com/statistics/1040687/homicide-rate-haiti/.

Figure 5 Homicide Rates for Latin America and the Caribbean for 2024



Source: Statista, 2025, https://www.statista.com/statistics/947781/homicide-rates-latin-america-caribbean-country/.

Quite perceptively, Shaw and Grandmaison concluded that Haiti's crisis defies traditional definitions of intrastate conflict, noting that while the gangs challenge the authority of the state, they have not taken over the country, although they likely could do so at any time, preferring to operate in parallel to the state, enabled by political instability, corruption, and weak institutions. Moreover, as William O'Neill, the High Commissioner's Designated Expert on Haiti, has remarked: "Human rights violations and abuses have reached a scale and intensity that I have never seen before in Haiti. ... The fear is palpable in people's eyes and in their voices. The capital is almost entirely controlled and surrounded by gangs, making Port-au-Prince a large open-air prison." (United Nations Human Rights, 2025b)

Part of the quagmire is reflected in the fact that, as reported by United Nations Human Rights, 4,239 killings and 1,356 injuries were documented between July 2024 and February 2025. In one massacre alone, 207 people were executed over five days in Cité Soleil. Armed gangs use increasingly powerful weapons, some trafficked from United States of America ports in containers of frozen food or electronics. Notable, too, firearms are central not only to killings, but also kidnappings, sexual assaults, and extortion. Checkpoints set up by gangs on major roads demand "circulation taxes" from anyone trying to pass through. Victims who resist are often shot. Curbing the flood of illegal firearms is critical to stem gang violence. This would entail enforcing the UN arms embargo, including tightening port and border controls, and dismantling trafficking networks. Voluntary disarmament and buy-back schemes is also recommended. Private security firms, some of which have been linked to arms diversion, must face scrutiny and regulation, says United Nations observers. (United Nations Human Rights, 2025a)

The accounts captured above and the six situational reports below will suffice to offer a portrait of the scope and severity of the crisis enveloping Haiti; not just a political crisis, but a sovereignty dilemma.

Situational Report 1: At least 5,601 people were killed in Haiti last year (2024) as a result of gang violence, an increase of over 1,000 on the total killings for 2023, according to figures verified by the UN Human Rights Office. A further 2,212 people were injured and 1,494 kidnapped. "These figures alone cannot capture the absolute horrors being perpetrated in Haiti, but they show the unremitting violence to which people are being subjected," said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk. In one of the most deadly and shocking incidents in 2024, at least 207 people were killed in early December in a massacre orchestrated by the leader of the powerful Wharf Jérémie gang in the Cité Soleil area of Port-au-Prince.

Many of the victims were older people accused of causing the death of the leader's son through alleged voodoo practices. To erase evidence, gang members mutilated and burned most of the bodies, while other bodies were thrown in the sea. The UN Human Rights Office documented 315 lynchings of gang members and people allegedly associated with gangs, on some occasions reportedly facilitated by Haitian police officers, in 2024. In addition, there were 281 cases of alleged summary executions involving specialized police units between 1 January and 31 December 2024. (United Nations Human Rights 2025a)

Situational Report 2: In January 2025, the risks and protection needs of the population remain alarming due to gang violence and self-defense group as well as police operations. The human rights department of BINUH/High Commission for Human Rights in Haiti recorded for the month of January 2025: 429 people killed (including 349 men, 69 women, eight boys and three girls) and 187 others injured. In addition, there were 64 kidnappings. The majority of those killed or injured were in the West department (82%). Nearly half of the kidnappings (45%) took place in the West, and 55% in the Artibonite. The victims killed and injured are mainly members of the population (53%), followed by gang members (46%), and law enforcement officers (1%)." (Reliefweb 2025a)

Situational Report 3: "Dear Director General, the undersigned is hastening to forward to your office the department's emergency security information. Following persistent rumors of the presence of armed individuals in the department's southern coastal zone, the department's intelligence service was able to confirm the veracity of these allegations. Thirty-three (33) heavily armed individuals are based between the towns of Tiburon and Les Anglais. They are targeting the Departmental Directorate of the South and the civil prison in Les Cayes. Our intelligence has provided information on the modus operandi of these criminals. They plan to attack as follows : Storm the police stations in the coastal zone, while others coming from Pestel under the direction of Guy Philippe will do the same from the Camp-Perrin police station in order to reach the city of Les Cayes. Therefore, Mr. Director General, being short of ammunition and weapons, the

Departmental Director requests your assistance at all levels to address this situation, including a temporary withdrawal of the UDMO team based in Gréssier to reinforce the force on site. This information is submitted to you for your convenience."

The warning comes just days after a new UN Human Rights report, presented in Geneva during the 58th session of the Human Rights Council, described Haiti's deteriorating security situation as "unprecedented." "Human rights violations and abuses have reached a scale and intensity that I have never seen before in Haiti," said William O'Neill, the High Commissioner's Designated Expert on Haiti. "The fear is palpable in people's eyes and in their voices. The capital is almost entirely controlled and surrounded by gangs."

The report reveals that over 4,200 people have been killed and 1,300 injured—mostly by gunfire—in just eight months, with more than one million Haitians displaced from their homes. Hospitals have been shuttered, public servants have fled, and state institutions bear the physical scars of gang attacks. Gangs, including the powerful Viv Ansanm coalition, have expanded their control from poor neighborhoods to the heart of Port-au-Prince, launching deadly assaults on civilians and institutions. One of the most violent episodes unfolded in Cité Soleil, where 207 people were executed over a five-day span.

Weapons trafficked primarily through U.S. ports, often hidden in containers of frozen food or electronics, have made these criminal groups increasingly lethal. "These weapons, which are increasingly sophisticated, are not manufactured in Haiti, but consistently flow in from elsewhere," said UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk, calling for an immediate crackdown on illegal arms imports. The UN is urging member states to strictly enforce an arms embargo on Haiti, bolster port and border controls, dismantle trafficking routes, and implement weapons buy-back programs. (McLeod 2025)

Situational Report 4: 30 April 2025: During the first quarter of 2025, the human rights situation in Haiti remained extremely worrying, marked by mass crimes, kidnappings and sexual violence. Between 1 January and 31 March 2025, at least 1,617 people were killed and 580 injured in violence involving gangs, self-defense groups and members of the population, as well as in operations carried out by security forces. At the same time, over the same period, at least 161 kidnappings for ransom were documented, 63% of which took place in the Artibonite department.

The first quarter was marked by the intensification of the activities of criminal groups to expand their territorial influence in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince and its surroundings. The communes of Delmas and Kenscoff were particularly targeted, with the aim of destabilising Pétion-Ville. In addition, these same gangs carried out large-scale attacks against the communes of Mirebalais and Saut d'Eau, in the Centre department, to take control of roads leading to the Dominican Republic, but also to allow the escape of more than 515 inmates from the Mirebalais prison. During the first quarter, the actions of self-defence groups as well as those of unorganized members of the population, carried out within the framework of the movement commonly known

as "Bwa Kalé", remained a major source of human rights violations and resulted in the deaths of at least 189 people accused of belonging to gangs or committing ordinary crimes.

The report expresses concern about the high number of people killed during security force operations. At least 802 people were killed in these operations, about 20% of whom were members of the population that were struck by stray bullets while on the streets or in their homes. In addition, there were 65 cases of summary executions allegedly committed by elements of the police and the government commissioner of Miragoâne. The report also highlights the serious consequences of gang activities on women and children. During this quarter, more than 333 survivors of sexual violence were identified, 96% of whom were victims of rape, often gang rape, perpetrated by gang members. In addition, at least 35 children have been killed and ten others have been injured in gang attacks, police operations or acts of mob justice. Many other children have been trafficked and forced to join gangs.

In the face of these abuses and human rights violations, and despite the continuing dysfunction of the judicial system, authorities have launched several initiatives to combat impunity, with the support of the United Nations. The Transitional Presidential Council and the government have adopted a decree creating specialized judicial units to deal with mass crimes, sexual violence and financial crimes. More than 114 rape cases have also been examined by investigating judges across the country. The fact remains that progress on emblematic cases remains slow, in particular those related to arms trafficking, the assassination of the President of the Republic and the various massacres documented since 2018. (Reliefweb 2025b)

Situational Report 5: For more than two months, the rural areas of Kenscoff and some neighborhoods of Carrefour, two communes in the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince, have been experiencing repeated attacks by criminal gangs. Between 27 January and 27 March 2025, these attacks resulted in serious human rights abuses. At least 262 people were killed (115 members of the population and 147 gang members), and 66 others were injured (59 members of the population and seven gang members). Eight members of the security forces were also killed and injured.

Gang members displayed extreme brutality, aiming to instill fear within the population. They executed men, women, and children inside their homes and shot others on roads and paths as they tried to flee the violence, including an infant. Sexual violence was also committed against at least seven women and young girls during the planning and execution of the attacks. The gangs also ransacked several homes and set fire to more than 190 of them. These attacks forced more than 3,000 people to flee their localities.

With limited human and logistical resources already deployed in several areas across the capital and the Artibonite department, specialized police units, accompanied by the Armed Forces of Haiti (FAd'H) and the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission, arrived in the area on 27 January, about five hours after the start of the attacks. Although this deployment was able to push back the gangs, they resumed their attacks on the localities of Belot, Bois d'Avril, and Godet on the morning

of 3 February. Despite a quick response from security forces this time, the violence had already caused panic and led to further displacement of the population.

The delay in the response of security forces on 27 January to the gang attacks, as well as statements from the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice and Public Security, indicating that the authorities had received information about the preparation of these attacks several days prior to their execution, could highlight a lack of alignment between the national police leadership and the government. Some ministerial instructions issued in response to the attacks could be interpreted in this regard. (United Nations Human Rights, 2025c)

Situational Report 6: May 7, 2025. The collapse of Haiti's government in April last year was a challenge but also an opportunity. An interim government called the Transitional Presidential Council was installed. A UN-brokered, Kenyan-led security mission arrived soon after. But a year later things are worse than ever. "We are approaching a point of no return," María Isabel Salvador, the UN's top official in Haiti, told its Security Council at a meeting on April 21st. Tasked with preparing for elections that in theory will be held in November, the council is now mired in allegations of corruption. The security force of around 1,000 people (less than half the number originally planned) has not been able to stem the chaos. Its funding runs out in September. The council is a "transitional authority that controls nothing", says Claude Joseph, a former prime minister. "It's an unsustainable catastrophe. We could lose Port-au-Prince at any time."

Port-au-Prince, the capital, now sees daily gun battles in which police and civilian vigilantes face off against a gang coalition called Viv Ansanm ("Living Together"). It has seized control of much of the city. The international airport has been all but shut down; the only way in or out is by helicopter, or by a barge that skirts the coast to bypass gang territory to the south. On May 2nd the United States designated Viv Ansanm and a sister organisation as terrorist groups, opening the door to tougher criminal penalties for those who provide them with money and weapons. The collapse of public life is accelerating. Most schools are shut. Cholera is spreading. The Marriott, one of the last functioning hotels, has closed its doors. Gangs have surrounded the offices of Digicel, Haiti's main cellular network, through which most people connect to the internet. "If Digicel goes down, the country goes dark," warns a security expert. The gangs don't need it. Increasingly sophisticated, they use Elon Musk's Starlink satellite system to communicate, organizing themselves to the extent that they have been able to keep control over access to Haiti's ports. They also extort lorry drivers and bus operators moving along many of the country's main roads.

The UN reports that in February and March more than 1,000 people were killed and 60,000 displaced, adding to the 1m, nearly 10% of the population, who have fled their homes in the past two years. Circulating videos show gang members playing football with severed heads, bragging: "We got the dogs." Central Haiti, once relatively peaceful, is fragmenting into fiefs. Mirebalais, a city which lies between Port-au-Prince and the border with the Dominican Republic, is now controlled by gangs. "The country has become a criminal enterprise. It's the wild, wild West," says a foreign official.

Patience is running thin at the UN Security Council. The United States has already committed $600m to the security mission, but is unlikely to offer more. "America cannot continue shouldering such a significant financial burden," said Dorothy Shea, the US ambassador to the UN. Few other

countries want to donate. The council is so desperate that it is exploring deals with private military contractors. It has been talking to Osprey Global Solutions, a firm based in North Carolina. The founder of Blackwater, Erik Prince, visited Haiti in April to negotiate contracts to provide attack drones and training for an anti-gang task force. The council declined to comment.

The Haitian police are overwhelmed; an estimated 12,000 officers police a population that approaches 12m, barely half the UN-recommended ratio. Weak leadership, poor co-ordination with the Kenyan-led force, and calls for the ousting of the police chief point to deep institutional rot. In Canapé-Vert, one of Port-au-Prince's last gang-free pockets, a former policeman known as "Commander Samuel" leads a vigilante group called Du Sang 9 ("New Blood" in Creole). Gangs have thinned its numbers. It is all that stands between them and the prime minister's office. The Economist, 2025.

Multinational Security Support

Efforts to ameliorate the security aspect of the quagmire have involved the establishment of the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission. According to the Congressional Research Service, the research arm of the United States legislature, in July 2023, Kenya announced it would consider leading a multinational force in Haiti and sending up to 1,000 police, provided authorization by the UN Security Council (UNSC) was provided. The United States and CARICOM officials applauded Kenya's initiative, but some observers questioned the human rights record of the Kenyan police and whether they could overcome language and cultural barriers. Others opposed any international security force, arguing that previous foreign interventions in Haiti had failed. Canada, Brazil, and other Western Hemisphere countries, some of which participated in the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH; 2004-2017), declined U.S. requests to lead such a force. MINUSTAH remains controversial in Haiti due to alleged sexual abuse by some of its forces and its inadvertent introduction of cholera into the country.

Nevertheless, in October 2023, the UNSC adopted Resolution 2699 authorizing a non-UN-conducted multinational force, financed by voluntary contributions, to provide security for

critical infrastructure and operational support to the Haitian National Police (HNP) for 12 months. However, political disputes within Haiti, judicial and legislative challenges within Kenya, and funding setbacks internationally caused a delay in deployment until June 2024. Kenya's presidency also needed to pursue a court-ordered bilateral security agreement with Haiti, and it also decided to await the formation of a new provisional government in Haiti. (United States Congressional Service, 2024)

The mission of the MSS was outlined in fulsome fashion in the UN Security Council Resolution—No. 2699 (2023)—that, as noted earlier, authorized the initiative.

> *Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations,*
>
> *1. Authorizes Member States that have notified the Secretary-General of their participation to form and deploy a Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission with a lead country, in close cooperation and coordination with the Government of Haiti, for an initial period of twelve months following the adoption of this resolution, to be reviewed nine months after the adoption of this resolution, on the understanding that the cost of implementing this temporary operation will be borne by voluntary contributions and support from individual Member States and regional organizations, and in strict compliance with international law, including, international human rights law, as applicable, to support the efforts of the Haitian National Police to re-establish security in Haiti and build security conditions conducive to holding free and fair elections, by:*
> *(a) providing operational support to the Haitian National Police, including building its capacity through the planning and conduct of joint security support operations, as it works to counter gangs and improve security conditions in Haiti, characterized by kidnappings, sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants and arms, homicides, extrajudicial killings, and recruitment of children by armed groups and criminal networks; and*
> *(b) providing support, to the Haitian National Police, for the provision of security for critical infrastructure sites and transit locations such as the airport, ports, schools, hospitals and key intersections;*
> *2. Calls on the MSS, through its support to the Haitian National Police outlined in paragraph 1, to help ensure unhindered and safe access to humanitarian aid for the population receiving assistance;*
> *3. Decides that the Multinational Security Support mission, as requested by Haiti in its letter dated 22 September 2023, in coordination with the Haitian National Police, may, to prevent the loss of life and within the limits of its capacities and areas of deployment, adopt urgent temporary measures on an exceptional basis, which are limited in scope, time bound, proportionate and consistent with the objectives set forth in paragraph 1 above, to help the Haitian National Police maintain basic law and order and public safety, including through arrest and detention, as necessary and in full compliance with international law, including international human rights law, as*

applicable; and requests the leadership of the Multinational Security Support mission to update the Security Council any measures that may be adopted on this basis;
4. Calls on Member States and regional organizations to contribute personnel, equipment, and necessary financial and logistic resources based upon the urgent needs of the Multinational Security Support mission and invites contributing Member States to inform in writing the leadership of the Multinational Security Support mission, the Security Council and the Secretary-General of their intent to participate in the mission, and further requests Haiti and the leadership of the Multinational Security Support mission to update regularly the Security Council and the Secretary-General of the progress of deployment of relevant personnel and equipment;
5. Authorizes the Member States participating in the Multinational Security Support mission in Haiti to take all necessary measures to fulfil its mandate, strictly adhering to all international law, including international human rights law, as applicable;
6. Requests the Multinational Security Support mission to take fully into account child protection and the protection of other vulnerable groups as a cross cutting issue throughout its mandate in all the planning and conduct of its operations.[3]
(United Nations Security Council, 2023)

The first contingent of nearly 400 Kenyan officers was finally deployed in June 2024 and established a base near Toussaint Louverture International Airport in Port-au-Prince. However, by November 2024, the MSS comprised about 380 personnel from Kenya, some 25 from Jamaica, and two from Belize. Troops pledged by different countries were slow to arrive, contributing to the mission's shortfall. Months after Kenyan officers were deployed, the MSS was reinforced by the arrival of 24 Jamaican soldiers and police officers from the 250 promised and two Belizean soldiers from the 50 committed. The Bahamas also sent in six military personnel out of the 144 pledged. Thus, it is not unexpected that the MSS was in no position to fulfill its mission. Table 1 provides a portrait of the composition of the initiative in April 2025.

In relation to funding, one Haitian Times report indicated that according to UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, in October 2024, the UN received only $67 million, which was below the $84 million needed for MSS operations. Major contributors included Canada ($45 million), the United States ($15 million), France and Spain ($3 million each), Italy

($360,000), and Turkey ($50,000). Understandably, then, the funding constraints prevented the MSS from completing its deployment target of 2,500 officers and obtaining the logistical and operational materials, particularly maritime and aerial equipment. (Blaise, 2025) In October 2023, Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced $100 million in foreign assistance for the MSS and $100 million in Department of Defense funds for enabling support, and in March 2024, he also indicated that the commitment by the Department of Defense had doubled to $200 million. Moreover, President Biden authorized the transfer of at least $70 million in defense articles and services from U.S. stocks to Haiti—$10 million in March and $60 million in April. U.S. support for the MSS was intended to complement assistance provided to train and equip the HNP. (Congressional Research Service, 2024; Blaise, 2025) According to the April 2025 UN Security Council report, "Funding for the MSS has, however, regularly failed to meet the mission's estimated annual cost of approximately $600 million. The number of deployed personnel has also fallen short of the 2,500 officers envisaged in its Concept of Operations, with approximately 1,000 officers deployed at the time of writing." (United Nations Security Council, 2025)

During the Biden presidency, the United States discussed the possibility of transitioning the MSS into a traditional UN peacekeeping operation (PKO) with Kenya, Haiti, and others at the UNSC. On September 30, 2024, as the expiration of the MSS mandate was fast approached, set to expire, the UNSC adopted Resolution 2751, extending the mandate for another 12 months, to October 2, 2025. One UN Security Council report observes,

> *In October and November 2024, Council members negotiated a draft resolution proposed by the US and then-Council member Ecuador—the Council's co-penholders on Haiti at the time—that would have directed the Secretary-General to initiate planning to transform the MSS mission into a UN peacekeeping operation. The draft resolution, which was ultimately withdrawn, was opposed by China and Russia, which referred to, among other*

issues, the checkered history of past UN peacekeeping operations in Haiti and reiterated their position that the country's political and security conditions were not conducive to a new operation. As a compromise, the Council sent a letter on 29 November 2024 requesting the Secretary-General to provide strategic recommendations on the full range of options for UN support for Haiti.

The Secretary-General responded to the Council's request in a letter dated 24 February [2025]. He noted that transforming the MSS into a peacekeeping operation is not currently a feasible option. Instead, the letter suggested focusing on substantially reducing gangs' territorial control in Port-au-Prince, the Artibonite Department, and over critical infrastructure as a medium-term goal. To achieve this objective, the Secretary-General proposed a two-pronged strategy: the first would focus on enabling the MSS with UN logistical and operational support, and the second would focus on enhancing BINUH's capacity to implement its mandate and take on new responsibilities. (United Nations Security Council, 2025)

Table 1 MSS Composition As of April 15, 2025

Country	**Number Deployed**	**Force Composition**
Bahamas	6	Royal Bahamas Defence Force
Belize	2	Belize Defence Force
El Salvador	78	Salvadoran Air Force
Guatemala	150	Guatemalan army military police
Jamaica	44	20 from Jamaica Defence Force, 4 from Jamaica Constabulary Force, and 20 undesignated
Kenya	797	Kenya Police Force
TOTAL	1,077	

Source: "Multinational Security Support Mission in Haiti," Wikipedia, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multinational_Security_Support_Mission_in_Haiti.

It bears noting that the Trump Administration froze the funds committed by Biden, although they continue to provide logistical support to MSS operations. Indeed, as the April 2025 UN Security Council report noted, "As part of larger cuts to development aid programmes undertaken by the new US administration of President Donald Trump, the US has partially frozen funding to Haiti. During a 21 March [2025] media briefing, Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General Farhan Haq said that the recent US funding freeze was 'having a devastating impact on the overall HIV response, including treatment and prevention' in Haiti." (United Nations Security Council, 2025) Nevertheless, arguing correctly that the crisis in Haiti will extend beyond that part of Hispañiola if the society implodes, Georges Fauriol offers several pathways for engagement by the United States short of troop deployment. (See Fauriol, 2025)

For understandable reasons, CARICOM countries and the CARICOM Secretariat were expected to play crucial advocacy roles both within the region and in international fora, notably in the UNSC. As two Atlantic Council analysts noted, "...just prior to his trip to Nairobi earlier this month to discuss the Kenyan-led Multinational Security Support mission, the Haitian prime minister was in Guyana for CARICOM's annual heads of government meeting. It was also the current chair of CARICOM, Guyanese President Irfaan Ali, who led a leaders' delegation to Jamaica that, alongside US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, announced the plan for a transitional presidential council." (Marczak and Mowla, 2024) They indicated that the meeting placed a spotlight on the Haiti crisis, with Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, and several other Caribbean countries serving as key interlocutors in global coordination efforts over recent years. As well, the point also was made that Caribbean countries will need resources to continue exercising sustained leadership in relation to Haiti, especially since CARICOM

countries also have several pressing issues, including climate change, food security, and energy insecurity.

Obviously, too, CARICOM was a key actor on the security front, although several member states initially were opposed to sending security contingents. (See VOA 2023; The Sun, 2024; St. Vincent Times, 2025) However, the security engagement was minuscule. In order to better understand the reason for this, it is necessary to offer an appreciation of CARICOM as a regional actor and of the security capabilities within that regional collective.

CARICOM as Regional Actor

Now just over five decades in existence, CARICOM was established in July 1973 with the signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas by Prime Ministers Errol Barrow for Barbados, Forbes Burnham of Guyana, Michael Manley of Jamaica and Eric Williams of Trinidad and Tobago. The treaty was later revised, coming into effect in 2002, providing for the creation of the Single Market and Economy.[4] As is noted on the CARICOM website, the collective comprises 21 member countries, 15 of which are member states, with six being Associate Members. The overall population is 16 million individuals, 60 percent of whom are under the age of 30, with the main ethnic groups being Indigenous Peoples and people of African, Indian, European, Chinese, and Javanese descent. The Community is multi-lingual, with English as the major language complemented by French and Dutch. Haiti secured provisional membership in July 1998 and full membership in July 2002.

CARICOM has two principal Organs: the Conference of Heads of Government; and the Community Council of Ministers, the second highest decision making body, with the principal Organs assisted by: the Council for Finance and Planning; the Council for Trade and Economic

Development; the Council for Foreign and Community Relations; and the Council for Human and Social Development. The Secretary-General is the organization's Chief Executive Officer, appointed for five year terms. Since the establishment of CARICOM, several institutions have been formed under its umbrella or with its collaboration.

Table 2 CARICOM Community Institutions

Institution	Abbreviation	Location	Country
Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency	CCREEE	Bridgetown	Barbados
Caricom Development Fund	CDF	Bridgetown	Barbados
Caribbean Telecommunications Union	CTU	Port of Spain	Trinidad and Tobago
Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre	CCCCC	Belmopan	Belize
Caricom Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality[31]	CROSQ	Bridgetown	Barbados
Caribbean Meteorological Organisation	CMO	Port of Spain	Trinidad and Tobago
Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism	CRFM	Belize City	Belize
Caricom Implementation Agency for Crime and Security	IMPACS	Port of Spain	Trinidad and Tobago
Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology	CIMH	Bridgetown	Barbados
Caribbean Examinations Council	CXC	Bridgetown	Barbados
Caribbean Court of Justice	CCtJ/CCJ	Port of Spain	Trinidad and Tobago
Caricom Competition Commission	CCC	Paramaribo	Suriname
Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency	CDEMA	Saint Michael	Barbados
Caribbean Agricultural Health and Food Safety Agency	CAHFSA	Paramaribo	Suriname
Caribbean Aviation Safety and Security Oversight System	CASSOS	Kingston	Jamaica
Caribbean Public Health Agency	CARPHA	Port of Spain	Trinidad and Tobago
Caribbean Centre for Development Administration	CARICAD	Saint Michael	Barbados
Caribbean Agriculture Research and Development Institute	CARDI	Saint Augustine	Trinidad and Tobago
Caribbean Organisation of Tax Administrators	COTA	Georgetown	Guyana

Source: "Caricom Community," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caribbean_Community.

Institutions exist in two categories: Community Institutions and Associate Institutions. The former set, shown in Table 2, are fully funded by the collective, while the second are funded partly by CARICOM and partly by international donor organizations or countries. Each group

exists to provide practical support to CARICOM Member States and foster greater collaboration between them. Moreover, there are also several Functional Cooperation Institutions, namely: the Caribbean Tourism Organization, the Caribbean Council of Legal Education, the Caribbean Export Development Agency, and the Caribbean Regional Information and Translation Institute. As well, there are several Associate Institutions: the Caribbean Congress of Labor, the Caricom Private Sector Organization, the University of the West Indies, University of Guyana, the Caribbean Law Institute, and the Caribbean Development Bank. (CARICOM Secretariat, 2025) As Terri-Ann Gilbert-Roberts shows in her magisterial analysis of regional integration, over the course of the years as the collective has undergone institutional maturation, a Quasi-Cabinet leadership model was introduced in 1999, with Prime Ministers assigned responsibility for various portfolios. The portfolio of relevance to this study is security; it is assigned to Trinidad and Tobago, which is also responsible for energy. (See Gilbert-Roberts, 2013; and CARICOM Secretariat, 2025)

In relation to security, viewed in non-traditional terms and indicated in Figures 1 and 2, the growing threats from drug production and trafficking, crime and violence, arms trafficking, and environmental threats over the years prompted CARICOM to lend more intentionality to security matters. Thus, as Wendy Grenade observed, in 2008 the Conference of Heads of Government "agreed that security should be recognized as the fourth pillar of the Community, given its ever-increasing importance to the Community and its cross-cutting and fundamental nature." (Grenade, 2025; 83) (The other pillars are economic integration, foreign policy coordination, and human and social development.)

An architecture was created to manage the security sector, with policy and operational components. The policy level involved a Council of Ministers with responsibility for National

Security and Law Enforcement that reports to the Heads, with the lead responsibility for crime and security; a Sub-committee of Ministers responsible for National Security and Law Enforcement to focus on resource mobilization, implementation and other urgent matters; a Security Policy Advisory Committee that comprise Permanent Secretaries, Advisors, or other Senior Policy Officials and Chairpersons of the Standing Committees of Heads of Operational Entities; a Coordinating Information Management Authority to advise on appropriate systems and technologies to be used in the regional intelligence and information sharing system and to continue to monitor developments to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

Moreover, there is a Standing Committees of Operational Heads that provide technical advice to the policy and political leaders that involve: Commissioners of Police, Chiefs of Immigration, Chiefs of the Militaries, Comptrollers of Customs, and the Heads of Intelligence and Financial Crime operations. A Standing Committee of Heads of Corrections and Prison Services was also later included. As regards the operational aspect, the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS), which had been established in July 2006 and is shown in Table 2, was mandated to have primary responsibility for the implementation of the regional crime and security agenda. CARICOM IMPACS, which is headquartered in Trinidad and Tobago, has two sub-agencies. The Joint Regional Communications Centre is the central clearing house for the Advanced Passenger Information (API) system and undertakes pre-screening passengers from air and sea vessels. The second is the Regional Intelligence Fusion Centre, which is based in Barbados and provides intelligence support to key stakeholders. (CARICOM IMPACS, 2025)

Despite having a regional security architecture and the existence of the Regional Security System,[5] CARICOM lacks a regional army or police force, which necessitates reliance by the

collective on the security establishments of member states for operational security engagement. Yet, as Table 3 shows, the national security assets of CARICOM countries are minuscule. In terms of economic resources, which constitute a fundamental component of national security capabilities, seven countries have no natural resources, relying on tourism, services, and agriculture for economic sustenance; 12 members have populations below one million, with only Haiti (11.7 million), Jamaica (2.8 million), and Trinidad and Tobago (1.4 million) having populations that exceed one million people.

In the crucial area of security establishments, four countries have no armies, and most of them—notably Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Belize, Haiti, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Suriname—have just token defense forces. Nevertheless, it is not just the small size of the police forces, or the armies where they exist, that matter; there are national security deficits in relation to equipment, intelligence, training, and technology. For all these reasons, force deployments by CARICOM member states to places within the region—whether after hurricanes or other natural disasters, for Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti in 1994, or for Cricket World Cup 2007—necessitated airlift, sealift, and other logistical support by military units from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, or the Netherlands. This partly explains the weak engagement of the CARICOM collective in Haiti's quagmire before the establishment of the MSS and during it.

Table 3 National Security Assets of CARICOM Member States

Country (Independence) [CARICOM m-ship]	**Size (km^2)**	**Population**	**Armed Forces**	**Police Force**	**GDP Per Capita US$**	**Natural Resources**
Antigua-Barbuda (1981) [July 4, 1974]	443	102,634 (2024 est.)	250 (2024)	800 (2019)	21,560 (2023 est.)	None

Bahamas (1973) [July 4, 1983]	13,880	410,862 (2024 est.)	1,700 (2024)	2,749 (2019)	34,750 (2023 est.)	None
Barbados (1966) [August 1, 1973] *	430	304,139 (2024 est.)	610 (2023)	1,528 (2019)	22,673 (2023 est.)	Oil, natural gas
Belize (1981) [May 1, 1974]	22,966	415,789 (2024 est.)	1,500 (2024)	2,350 (2020)	7,988 (2023 est.)	Timber, oil
Dominica (1978) [May 1, 1974]	751	74,661 (2024 est.)	None[1]	500 (2019)	8,954 (2023 est.)	None
Grenada (1974) [May 1, 1974]	344	114,621 (2024 est.)	None[2]	1,013 (2020)	10,464 (2023 est.)	None
Guyana (1966) [August 1, 1974] *	214,970	794,099 (2024 est.)	3,500 (2023)	4,824 (2020)	20,626 (2023 est.)	Gold, diamonds, bauxite, timber, oil, gas, Uranium (not mined)
Haiti (1804) [July 2, 2002]	27,750	11,753,943 (2023 est.)	2,000[3]	5,300 Interpol	1,693 (2020 est.)	Bauxite (no longer mined), gold
Jamaica (1962) [August 1, 1973] *	10,991	2,823,713 (2024 est.)	5,000 (2023)	11,500 (2020)	6,874 (2023 est.)	Bauxite, gypsum
St. Kitts and Nevis (1983) [July 26, 1974]	261	55,133 (2024 est.)	500 (2023)	439 (2019)	22,553 (2023 est.)	None
St. Lucia (1979) [May 1, 1974]	616	168,023 (2024 est.)	None	1,200 (2020)	13,980 (2023 est.)	None
St. Vincent and the Grenadines (1979) [May 1, 1974]	389	100,647 (2024 est.)	None	1,000 (2020)	10,279 (2023 est.)	None
Suriname (1975) [July 4, 1995}	163,820	646,758 (2024 est.)	2,000 (2023)	2,522 (2019)	6,069 (2023 est.)	Bauxite, timber, kaolin, gold, oil
Trinidad and Tobago (1962) [August 1, 1973] *	5,128	1,408,966 (2024 est.)	5,000 (2024)	6,591 (2020)	18,333 (2023 est.)	Oil, liquified natural gas

Notes:

This listing does not include the one non-independent member (Montserrat [May 1, 1974]) and the Associate Members (Anguilla [July 4, 1991], Bermuda [July 2, 2003], British Virgin Islands [July 2, 1991], Caryman Islands [May 16, 2002], Curaçao [July 28, 2024], Martinique [February 20, 2025], and Turks and Caicos [July 2, 1991]).

* = Founding Member of CARICOM

1= Dominica had an army from November 1975 to April 1981, when it was disbanded.
2= Grenada's People's Revolutionary Army was created in March 1979 and disbanded in October 1983, following the U.S. intervention
3= The Haitian military was demobilized between November 1994 and April 1994, following *Operation Restore Democracy* in September 1994. However, in 2015 plans for reestablishment of a defense force were outlined in a White Paper on Security and Defense, a plan was provided to ministers in early 2017, and in March 2018 an army high command was established. Ecuador and Brazil had pledged to assist with training the new army, which will have missions devoted to disaster relief and border security, with the initial 500 troops that have engineering and medical capabilities. However, as of February 2021 it was unclear whether the current budgetary provision was enough to fund the desired capability. Things unraveled afterwards.

Sources: The World Fact Book 2025 for the data on size, population, armed forces, and natural resources, available at https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/; The Regional Security System, https://www.rss.org.bb/; Statista, https://www.statista.com/statistics/802613/gross-domestic-product-gdp-per-capita-latin-america-caribbean/ for the data on per capita GDP; and the secretariat of the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police for the police force data.

The above discussion of the main contours of CARICOM permits us now to examine the sovereignty nexus between CARICOM as a regional collective and Haiti's political paralysis and security dilemma. Our next task, then, is to sketch the parameters of Challenged Sovereignty 2.0.

Challenged Sovereignty 2.0

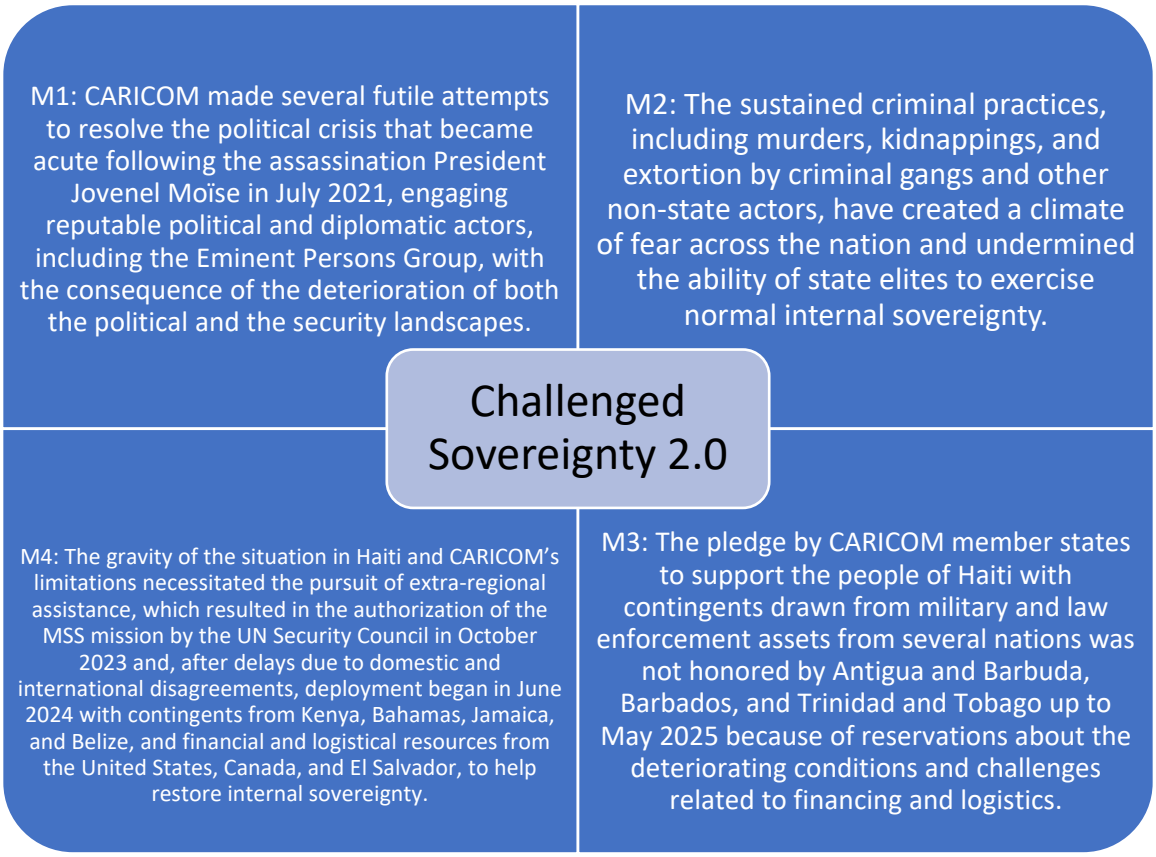
Much as we did in relation to Challenged Sovereignty, it is necessary here to define Challenged Sovereignty 2.0. Thus, Challenged Sovereignty 2.0 is defined as a *circumstance where the security condition of a collective of states is worsened by developments within one or more members of the collective or by external developments that compromise the ability of the collective to design and deliver security policies or projects deemed to be in its interest.*

Three conditions obtain:

- *Condition 1* (C1): The inability of the members of a subregional or regional collective of sovereign states to leverage their combined military or law enforcement capabilities to protect the internal or external sovereignty of one or more member states.
- *Condition 2* (C2): The governing elites of the sovereign states that form a subregional or regional collective recognize that because of security interdependence a collapse of the internal or external sovereignty of a member state could negatively impact an entire subregion, region, or a wider geopolitical space.
- *Condition 3* (C3): The necessity for a subregional or regional collective of sovereign states to both request and utilize the military or law enforcement capabilities of other sovereign states, collectives of states, non-state actors, or international governmental organizations to manage security or sovereignty challenges within the subregional or regional collective.

Thus, the circumstance might be represented as $CS2.0 = \Sigma (C1 + C2 + C3)$, where CS2.0 is Challenged Sovereignty 2.0, C1 is Condition 1, C2 is Condition 2, and C3 is Condition 3. How, one might ask, might we discern the existence of the circumstance? My contention is that the circumstance will present several distinct but interconnected Manifestations. Figure 6 captures the Manifestations in the extant Haiti-CARICOM case. They are not necessarily the only Manifestations; for me they represent the most obvious and poignant ones. It remains now only for us to address the question posed in the Introduction: What does Haiti's contemporary political paralysis and security dilemma suggest about sovereignty capabilities and challenges of CARICOM as a regional institution?

Figure 6 Manifestations of Challenged Sovereignty 2.0



Source: Author creation

CARICOM pursued several notable diplomatic and political initiatives to ameliorate Haiti's contemporary political-security situation, including establishment of an Eminent Persons Group (EPG). The EPG was established by the CARICOM Heads of Government in May 2023, and comprises former prime ministers Bruce Golding of Jamaica, Kenny Anthony of St Lucia, and Perry Christie of The Bahamas.[6] However, it is reasonable to contend that the collective's conflict resolution insufficiency and failed efforts at improving Haiti's internal sovereignty reflect a circumstance of Challenged Sovereignty 2.0 that dramatizes CARICOM's sovereignty shortcomings, revolving around two key factors: capability limitations and institutional character.

The discussion above regarding security limitations will suffice in relation to the first factor. As for the second one, one scholar observed, rightly, that "the institutional framework which was established within the Community only served to reinforce aspects of formal state sovereignty in a symbolic way, without contributing to the attainment of effective community sovereignty, as had been intended." (Gilbert-Roberts, 2013: 89) Grenade's contention also is noteworthy: "Although CARICOM does engage in some aspects of security regionalism, CARICOM is a 'half-way' house and this is a major impediment to security regionalism. While there are regional institutions to promote collective security, this is hampered by CARICOM's minimalist, inter-governmental approach to regionalism. Apart from the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), CARICOM is a community of sovereign independent states. This means, in essence, that there are no supranational institutions to guarantee binding decisions of Member States." (Grenade, 2025: 159)

As might be expected, this Challenged Sovereignty 2.0 circumstance raises several questions that are worthy of future study. For example, what institutional adaptations might CARICOM find expedient to undertake in order to strength its collective sovereignty? What structural and operational modifications in CARICOM's security architecture might enhance the collective's ability to help manage or resolve early-stage threats and thereby foreclose the possibility of them developing to crisis levels, as has been the case in Haiti? At a broader level, what lessons might other small and subordinate states elsewhere in the Global South learn from the CARICOM-Haiti experience?

Conclusion

Haiti's quagmire persists, experiencing what Chelsey Kivland calls a "spiral of sovereignty," as the October 2, 2025, end of the MSS mandate fast approaches.[7] Moreover, Georges Fauriol's

assessment in November 2024 continues to resonate with reality six months later: “The MSS is arguably a missed opportunity, and the question now is whether it can be salvaged. The reality is painful: the Kenyan deployment is nowhere near the number promised and the overall security situation has worsened, with neither the Prince International Airport nor several major port facilities secure from gangs. These gangs’ increased lethality and expanded national presence suggests a move toward cartel-like operational ambition. Calculated levels of violence demonstrate that no neighborhood or community is safe, and their actions are increasingly timed for political effect.” (Fauriol, 2024)

The Haiti dilemma presents what Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once characterized as a “fierce urgency of now.” Several political, diplomatic, journalistic, security, health, and other analysts have been unambiguous about this, some calling attention to the implications for stability and security in the wider Caribbean. In this respect, Georges Fauriol’s lamentation expresses a mixture of caution and danger: “The international community must avoid a scenario in which the TPC suddenly collapses. The fall of Port-au-Prince to increasingly determined gang coalitions and a deepening humanitarian crisis is not wild speculation. Then what? There are severe pressures within Haiti’s fractured political scene to replace what has been, admittedly, a poorly performing transitional governance structure. This might strengthen the argument that what Haiti needs is an iron-fisted presidential leadership.” (Fauriol, 2025) He offers the sobering reminder that the iron-fisted approach has adherents in Haiti and might find resonance elsewhere in the Caribbean and in the United States.

This case study extends the discourse about Challenged Sovereignty beyond the state level of analysis, with Haiti deemed the Caribbean’s most dramatic case, to the regional level of analysis, showing some of the functional sovereignty limitations of CARICOM as a regional

collective. More than this, though, this case study also spotlights the limits of collective security by subordinate states, revealing that while the sovereignty spirit is willing the flesh is weak. Needless to say, although CARICOM has resolved several intra-regional issues over the years, Haiti's contemporary crisis is not the first instance where the institution's dispute resolution or collective sovereignty limitations were on full display before the international community. One notable instance goes back to 2000 and involved the dispute between Guyana and Suriname that developed after the Suriname Defense Force ejected an oil rig owned by the Canadian oil company, CGX, which had been granted an exploration license by Guyana to prospect in its territorial waters, which Suriname claimed to be its maritime space.

Just after midnight on June 3, 2000, the Surinamese navy arrived in the CGX concession area, circled the rig, trained spotlights on the platform, and ordered the rig operators to leave the area within 12 hours, or suffer the consequences. The CGX operators detached the rigs and left the area under naval escort. The result was a crisis that developed near-military confrontation dimensions. Efforts by CARICOM, then chaired by Prime Minister P.J Patterson of Jamaica, to resolve the issue proved futile. As noted elsewhere, "The affair highlighted CARICOM's limitations as a dispute-resolution mechanism. CARICOM tried but failed to resolve the disagreement between two of its members. Guyana then took the matter to arbitration under the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) in February 2004." (Griffith, 2011: 55) The case took several years to resolve, with the UNCLOS Tribunal announcing the Award on September 20, 2007: two-thirds of the disputed zone was awarded to Guyana and one-third to Suriname. (See Ramphal, 2008; and Kaieteur News, 2012)

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Notes

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[2] For a good discussion of Realist and non-Realist propositions, see Buzan, 1991; Griffith, 1993-94; Mearsheimer, 2001; and Williams, 2003.

[3] The rest of the Resolution specifies:

7. Requests Member States participating in the Multinational Security Support mission in Haiti to include dedicated expertise in anti-gang operations, community-oriented policing, children and women's protection, and preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence in a victim-centred manner, and to take necessary action to ensure appropriate conduct and discipline and to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, including vetting of all personnel and other safe hiring practices, encouraging women's representation at all levels of the MSS, and pre-deployment and in-mission awareness training on human rights, child protection, and sexual and gender based violence, and to detect incidents when they occur and ensure a safe survivor- and victim-centred response in cases of such conduct involving their personnel, including through providing safe and accessible complaint mechanisms and timely investigations of all allegations of misconduct, to hold perpetrators accountable, and to repatriate units when there is credible evidence of misconduct, including widespread or systemic sexual exploitation and abuse, by those units;

8. Requests the leadership of the Multinational Security Support mission, in coordination with the government of Haiti and Member States participating in the MSS, to inform the Council, prior to the mission's full deployment, on information including but not limited to the concept of operations developed in consultations and cooperation with the government of Haiti and Member States participating in the MSS, sequencing of deployment, mission goals and end state, rules of engagement, as well as indicative financial needs to be funded by voluntary contributions, and number of personnel to be deployed;

9. Reaffirms that the rules of engagement and any directives on the use of force are to be developed by the leadership of the Multinational Security Support mission in consultation with Haiti and other Member States participating in the MSS and should be in full respect of Haiti's sovereignty and in strict compliance with international law, including, international human rights law, as applicable;

10. Requests the Member States participating in the Multinational Security Support mission in Haiti to ensure the highest standards of transparency, conduct and discipline for their contingents operating in the framework of the Multinational Security Support mission in Haiti, to establish a robust compliance mechanism to prevent, investigate, address and publicly report violations or abuses of human rights related to the Multinational Security Support mission in Haiti;

11. Calls on the Multinational Security Support mission to establish an oversight mechanism to prevent human rights violations or abuses, in particular sexual exploitation and abuse as well as to ensure that the planning and conduct of

operations during deployment will be in accordance with applicable international law;
12. Requests Member States participating in the Multinational Security Support mission in Haiti to adopt appropriate wastewater management and other environmental controls to guard against the introduction and spread of water-borne diseases, in accordance with The World Health Organization Water Quality: Guidelines, Standards, and Health publication on Assessment of Risk and Risk Management for Water-related infectious diseases from 2001, and in cooperation with Haitian authorities, which bear shared responsibility for guarding against water-borne disease;
13. Requests the Multinational Security Support mission to cooperate with BINUH and relevant UN agencies, including but not limited to UNODC and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, to support the efforts of the Haitian National Police to re-establish security in Haiti, including efforts by the Haitian National police to combat illicit trafficking and diversion of arms and related materiel and to enhance management and control of borders and ports;
14. Decides that paragraph 11 of resolution 2653 (2022) shall be replaced by the following:
"Decides that, for an initial period of one year from the date of adoption of this resolution, all Member States shall take the necessary measures to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale, or transfer to Haiti, from or through their territories or by their nationals, or using their flag vessels or aircraft of small arms, light weapons, and ammunition, and further decides that this measure shall not apply to:
a. The supply, sale, or transfer of small arms, light weapons, or ammunition to the UN or a UN-authorized mission or to a security unit that operates under the command of the Government of Haiti, intended to be used by or in coordination with those entities and intended solely to further the objectives of peace and stability in Haiti;
b. Other supplies, sales, or transfers of small arms, light weapons, and ammunition to Haiti as approved in advance by the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2653 (2022) to further the objectives of peace and stability in Haiti;"
15. Calls on all parties in Haiti to cooperate fully with the Multinational Security Support mission in the execution of its mandate and to respect the security and freedom of movement of the Multinational Security Support mission;
16. Requests the Secretary-General to establish a trust fund as a mechanism that can facilitate voluntary contributions to the Multinational Security Support mission to enable and operationalize the mandate;
17. Affirms the Secretary-General may provide logistical support packages to the MSS, when requested by the MSS and MSS donors, subject to the full financial reimbursement to the United Nations through available voluntary contributions, and in full respect of the United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP);
18. Requests the leadership of the Multinational Security Support mission to ensure the highest standards of transparency and conduct, and to report every three months once the MSS is operational on the ground, as a part of regular reporting to the Security Council, through the Secretary-General, on the implementation of the resolution, including but not limited to composition of the mission, measures to ensure appropriate conduct and discipline, and to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse; and on investigations of allegations of misconduct and excessive use of force;
19. Requests the Secretary-General to provide as part of the Secretary General's regular reporting to the Security Council, no later than nine months following adoption of this resolution, recommendations on possible adaptation of the mandate of the Multinational Security Support mission or its transformation as needed;

20. Requests the leadership of the Multinational Security Support mission to develop a strategy for mission conclusion and withdrawal and include information on that matter in regular reporting to the Security Council;
21. Emphasizes the need for Member States, United Nations organs, bodies and agencies, and other international organizations, including international financial institutions, to redouble their efforts to promote the institutional, social, and economic development of Haiti, in particular for the long-term, in order to achieve and sustain stability and combat poverty;
22. Strongly urges the Haitian authorities and other stakeholders to cooperate fully with the good offices of CARICOM and BINUH to reach compromise for the broadest possible consensus as soon as possible;
23. Decides to remain actively seized of the matter.

[4] For the text of the treaty, see https://caricom.org/documents/4906-revised_treaty-text.pdf.
[5] The current members of the RSS are: Antigua and Barbuda (army and police), since 1982; Barbados (army and police), since 1982; Dominica (police), since 1982; Grenada (police), since 1985; Guyana (army and police), since 2022; Saint Kitts and Nevis (army and police), since 1983; Saint Lucia (police), since 1982; and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (police), since 1982. For a useful discussion of the RSS, see Griffith, 1992; Phillips, 2022; and The Regional Security System, https://www.rss.org.bb/.
[6] For a discussion of the initiative, see Jamaica Observer, 2023; and Jamaica Observer, 2025, and for a podcast discussion with Prime Minister Golding on the matter, view Haiti's Crisis - Has the World Turned It's Back?.
[7] For Kivland's thoughtful analysis, see Kivland, 2020.