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Porfirio A. Gonzowitz
CUNY Hunter College

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The Indirect Causes of Haitian Migration into the Dominican Republic During the Late
Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century

by

Porfirio Gonzowitz (Gonzalez)

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Date

Jonathan Rosenberg

Signature

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Date

Daniel Hurewitz

Signature of Second Reader

Wars for independence are bloody and difficult, but never without reason or motive. In the case of the Dominican Republic, the war for independence in 1844 had valid motives. The Dominican Republic sought to take control of the wealth provided by the land that it held and felt that it owned. Upon gaining independence from Haiti and later from Spain, the new Dominican government was tasked with a massive project of modernizing the country and making it economically and politically viable. As Dominican leaders sought to accomplish this goal, their numerous mistakes created problems whose consequences would endure for decades. Those problems included economic instability and social unrest between Dominican citizens and the Haitians who lived there. These mistakes included the offering of concessions to foreign entrepreneurs and corporations. Dominican government officials long believed that progress would not come without foreign capital.¹ The introduction of foreign entities and their capital brought change and a cavalcade of difficulties that remain unresolved even today.

My focus is the migration of Haitians into the country during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The origins of this migration lay in the introduction of foreign production and manufacturing methods to the country, to which Dominican business owners had no access. This lack of access encouraged Dominican growers and producers to find other means with which to meet the demands of production brought about by fierce competition with American and other foreign capitalists. This paper seeks to illuminate what motivated the Haitian migrations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and to offer other reasons that may have driven the Haitians into the Dominican Republic.

¹ Cyrus Vesser, "Concessions as a Modernizing Strategy in the Dominican Republic," *The Business Review* 83, no.4 (2009): 735.

I argue that the failure of the Dominican government to establish a stable economic and political system during the nineteenth century, in conjunction with American exploitation of the Dominican government during this period, led to the poorly controlled mass migrations of Haitians into the Dominican Republic. Moreover, the penetration of the burgeoning Dominican economy by ambitious American corporations in the late nineteenth century created uneven economic competition between Dominican producers and American producers. This economic competition between domestic and foreign producers created a need for a larger labor force to provide an avenue with which the Dominican enterprises could compete against American ones. As a result, they sought cheap, controllable labor which came in the form of the Haitian migrant worker. With the constant increase in production by American corporations on the sugar plantations and the control of vital ports by the same corporations, Dominican enterprises sought more and more workers to offset the economic disparities created by this American domination. This led to the mass migrations we witnessed from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries.

I also argue that it was not just the Dominican government that contributed to the mass migrations. The American government played a role in the mass migrations of Haitians into the Dominican Republic. To examine this issue, I will first provide a brief background on the establishment of the Dominican Republic as an independent nation. The tumultuous nature by which the Dominican Republic was created in the mid-nineteenth century gave rise to political turmoil that prevented the country from creating a stable political and economic foundation on which future presidents and government officials could build. Second, I will provide a brief description of the concessions system established in the Dominican Republic. This helps to explain the unstable economic structure that existed in the country, which enabled American

corporations to exploit it. I include a brief overview of the dictatorship of Ulises Heureaux, a Dominican ruler who crystallized the concessions system. Heureaux's actions set back Dominican economic growth for decades by furthering the economic instability within the country. This overview and analysis is necessary for understanding how the climate for American and foreign exploitation was created.

Third, I will analyze two American concessions (the Santo Domingo Improvement Company and the Clyde Steamship Company), and the way they exploited the Dominican government. I will do this by providing concrete examples of how American exploitation of President Heureaux and his tenuous hold on the country created numerous systemic economic and political problems in the country. The damage caused by those concessionaires was so drastic that it necessitated intervention by the United States in 1905. Lastly, I will discuss the American intervention of 1905 and how it failed to stop the downward spiral created by the concessions system that emerged in the late nineteenth century. The failure of that intervention to halt migration or provide enduring stability suggests how the intervention exacerbated the economic problems caused by the concession system.

Historical Background – A Brief Economic, Cultural and Political History of the Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic endured extremely difficult circumstances to gain its independence. In 1801, the Haitians conquered the Dominican Republic under Toussaint L'Ouverture as a part of the Haitian Revolution against French rule. The Haitians expected that with control of both sides of the island, completed in 1802, they could establish a new independent country and use the wealth of resources to slowly establish a strong economic

foundation for the country. Unfortunately, in 1802, the Haitians were driven out of the eastern side of the island and claimed independence only for Haiti as the French were able to restore their rule in the Dominican Republic.² The French would maintain control of the Dominican Republic up until 1809 when the Spanish would regain control of the eastern portion of the island. The Spanish would remain in control until 1821.

In 1821, the Dominicans attempted to unite with the independence movements initiated by Simon Bolivar, but this was unsuccessful. Bolivar did not expect a Caribbean nation to be part of his mainland South American movement.³ As a result, in 1822, the Dominican Republic merged with Haiti under the rule of Haitian president Jean Pierre Boyer. The union between the two countries was short-lived as the Spanish-speaking Dominicans found themselves too distant in relation and social convention from the Creole-speaking Haitians. The Dominicans also felt that the Haitians were too dismissive of their own experiences and did not understand the full scope of their plight.⁴

By 1844, the Dominicans felt that they needed to separate from Haiti and issued a Declaration of Independence backed by military support since the Haitians were unlikely to peacefully separate.⁵ The Dominicans modeled their Declaration of Independence after the “white” nations, specifically, the Declaration issued by the United States to Great Britain.⁶ William Nelson, a leading historian on the Dominican Republic and its establishment, argues that this move was made to show that the Dominican Republic was a “white nation,” that it was progressive and enlightened, and ultimately to make it easier for them to elicit diplomatic

² “Dominican Republic.” *International Military and Defense Encyclopedia*.

³ Pedro Rivera, “The Making of a Mulatto Community.” *Caribbean Quarterly*, 61, no.4: 101.

⁴ Rivera, “The Making of a Mulatto Community.” 101.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁶ William J. Nelson. “U.S. Diplomatic Recognition of the Dominican Republic in the 19th Century: A Study in Racism.” *Afro-Hispanic Review* 10, no.1: 10.

recognition from the United States, which could help in their economic and political development.

The Dominican Republic made two overtures to the United States to acquire diplomatic recognition. The first was in 1845, when the Dominican Republic sent Dr. Jose Maria Caminero to the United States to meet with Secretary of State John Calhoun to appeal for diplomatic recognition. The Dominicans were denied diplomatic recognition because the account given by John Hogan, a U.S. agent who helped analyze the economic viability of the Dominican Republic, stated that he believed it was extremely likely that the Dominicans would reunite with the Haitians (they did), which would pose a threat to United States' interests on the island.⁷

The Dominican government later tried again to gain diplomatic recognition from the United States under the presidency of Franklin Pierce in 1854 by extolling its capacities as a strong naval and mining base. The Pierce administration assessed whether diplomatic recognition was an option, but the Treaty of 1854 failed due to concerns that “white” Dominicans were not truly white. American officials believed that Dominican roots were African; as a result, there existed a possibility for the Dominicans to enter into an allegiance with Haiti, which meant the United States would be entering treaties with a predominantly black country. This was undesirable at the time.⁸

The overtures made by the Dominican Republic in 1845 to Secretary of State Calhoun and the attempt to create ties with the Pierce Administration in 1854 constituted two more opportunities for the United States to intervene and assist the Dominican Republic. American assistance in modernization was necessary to prevent political and economic instability that would serve as a breeding ground for insurrection and revolution. Instead, the United States

⁷ Nelson, “U.S. Diplomatic Recognition of the Dominican Republic in the 19th Century,” 11.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

refused annexation and recognition on the grounds of race and the fear of assisting a country that had ties to a country that had a “black-led” revolution.

Two parties established themselves in the Dominican Republic at this point, the Red Party and the Blue Party. The Red Party believed economic and political growth could be achieved through a strong association or alliance with a European nation. The Blue Party believed that independence from all nations was necessary to achieve economic and political growth. In 1861, under the guidance of the Partido Rojo (Red Party), the Dominican Republic appealed to Spain to rejoin its empire. The Dominican Republic was re-annexed by Spain under the assumption by Dominican officials that it could only survive under the control and protection of a white and powerful nation.⁹ This annexation did not last because lower-class Dominicans, mostly mulatto, did not want to be aligned with Spain. In 1863, the Dominicans staged a revolt against the Spanish and started what is known as the War of Restoration. The Spanish were removed from power as a result of the war.

The Dominican Republic was independent once again, but now faced the prospect of having to modernize and grow on its own. The revolution of 1863 spawned other revolutions in the Caribbean, specifically in Puerto Rico. Changes in the demographics of the Caribbean were on the horizon as Cuban elites moved into the Dominican Republic in search of wealth which they found on the sugar plantations.¹⁰ The Cubans taught the Dominicans how to make sugar profitable, which opened a new avenue for the Dominicans. Due to the turmoil between 1844 and 1863, the Dominican government was in disarray and its economy was in shambles, leading the Dominicans to turn to dictatorships, which would greatly affect the progress of the country.

⁹ Rivera, “The Making of a Mulatto Community,”103.

¹⁰ Ibid., 103.

The War of Restoration and the governments that followed had a dramatic effect on the growth of the Dominican government. The prior periods of instability and indecisiveness created a situation in which the Dominican people sought and desired stability. The lack of stability had already taken its toll by creating an unstable government and economy, and that instability led the Dominicans to make hasty and misguided decisions in the hopes of rectifying their challenges. Under the rule of Ulises Heureaux, a prominent military officer during the war, the Dominican Republic started down a path that would result in the influx of numerous Haitians into the country.

The Effects of the War of Restoration and the Beginning of the Concession System

The period prior to the annexation of Spain helps explain what led to the ascension of Ulises Heureaux to the presidency. Without the political war fought between the major parties in the Dominican Republic and the military war fought against Spain, Heureaux would never have had the support he used to ascend to the presidency. This period is key for understanding the political instability that plagued the nation and also provides possible motives as to why concessions were created in the first place within an independent nation.

In the period preceding the annexation by Spain, the Dominican Republic was divided into four areas: north, south, east and west. Each area was dominated by a military elite known as a caudillo. Caudillos held large tracts of land and used that land to control armies that would allow them to maintain control over large sections of the Dominican Republic. One such caudillo, Pedro Santana, was responsible for leading the push to get the country annexed by a European power, which ended up being Spain.¹¹ Presidents of the country relied heavily upon

¹¹Emilio Betances, "Social Classes and the Origin of the Modern State: The Dominican Republic, 1844-1930." *Latin American Perspectives* 22, no. 3 (1995): 24, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.wexler.hunter.cuny.edu/stable/2634138>.

Santana because his renown stretched throughout large portions of the country, even though he only held control of the eastern portion of the island. Santana believed that under the guidance of a foreign power (a position espoused by the Red Party), the country would be able to propel itself out of its instability and strengthen its economic base.

At Santana's request, Spain annexed the country in 1861 and lost its foothold almost immediately. Economic conditions remained the same or worsened. The Spanish, immediately upon their arrival, subjected the Dominicans to new taxes and regulations. The discrimination that highlighted the period under Spanish rule returned almost immediately, as the class system that existed earlier, which placed native Dominicans in the lower classes, returned with force. This discrimination extended into the Dominican military.¹² These changes imposed by the Spanish immediately incited rebellion, which started a war to restore Dominican independence. By 1865, the Spanish were removed and the country returned to its prior state under the First Republic.

With the removal of the Spanish came a host of new changes. Prior to the arrival of the Spanish, those who held power in the Dominican Republic were either wealthy landowners or merchants. After the Spanish left, Dominicans no longer sought to place their support in the hands of elites. Dominicans who were in the lower strata of society gained notoriety fighting in the War of Restoration.¹³ While there was no national army to speak of prior to the War of Restoration (presidents relied on the support of the caudillos who organized their armies), the situation now ensured that there would be no national army. Numerous people who rose through the ranks controlled their own smaller armies. At least 100 different generals controlled small armies that now competed with one another to defend the state from outside forces or internal

¹² Betances, "Social Classes and the Origin of the Modern State," 24.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 24.

strife.¹⁴ This situation created an unstable military base and divided power amongst numerous individuals rather than the president and the four strongest caudillos in the country. The income that came into the country was improperly used as numerous groups held sway in the government and many were fighting for control of the country.¹⁵ The lack of military unity made the country weak to outside forces and precluded any sort of military and political unity.

This lack of unity is evident in the divisions between the Blue Party and the Red Party. As mentioned before, the Blue Party, comprised of nationalists who sought to maintain their independence (“*independencia pura y absoluta*”), were also known as the Trinitarios who were a group incarcerated prior to the War of Restoration for opposing the Red Party. The Red Party believed progress could only be achieved with the assistance of an outside force, such as Spain or France.¹⁶ The Blue Party, led by General Gregorio Luperon, successfully led a rebellion against the Red Party and Spain to ensure the independence of the Dominican Republic.

One individual, Ulises Heureaux, gained fame and notoriety for his military service in that war.¹⁷ Heureaux came from a poor background but educated himself in finance and education, and learned the languages of French and English. But Ulises was preparing himself for bigger things in the future. Working under the assumed rule of Luperon, Heureaux gained political power alongside the military power he had built from the War of Restoration.

Eventually, Heureaux began to separate himself from Luperon as he began to feel that the country needed a stronger ruler. In 1880, he began his push for power in earnest by running for

¹⁴ Betances, “Social Classes and the Origin of the Modern State,” 24.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁶ Pedro T. Sanchez, “Posiciones De Principio En La Historia Política Dominicana,” *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 9, no. 2 (1967): 186, doi:10.2307/165092.

¹⁷ Kai P. Schoenhals, “Heureaux, Ulises (1845–1889).” in the *Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture*, edited by Jay Kinsbruner and Erick D. Langer, 2nd ed., vol. 3, Charles Scribner's Sons, (2008), 685. World Scholar: Latin America & the Caribbean, Accessed Sept 12, 2018. <http://worldscholar.tu.galegroup.com/tinyurl/72qiC1>.

the presidential seat in the Dominican Republic. His opponent, Fernando Arturo de Meriño, was backed by the Red Party. Heureaux ran with the support of the Blue Party. He was initially unsuccessful because he presented the image of a ruler who would be extremely strict and dictatorial.¹⁸ The loss of the presidential race in 1880 did not hold back Heureaux for long, as he would run again in 1882 (presidential terms in the Dominican Republic were two years). In his second attempt at the presidency, Heureaux was successful, but only because he began to espouse democratic ideals and stated that he would do everything in his power to defend Dominican independence through the maintenance of democratic institutions. Once he became president, his political stance changed and he engaged in nefarious acts to maintain his power.

As president, he eroded the democratic institutions of the country. He installed officers that supported his decisions and executed his dictatorial orders as he spent lavishly and slowly began to bankrupt the country. He established an indirect electoral system, which allowed him to circumvent the popular vote, through which he could maintain his power. Through these actions, he was able to maintain power in the Dominican Republic from 1883 to 1899. It was during this period that, because of his imprudent spending, he needed to find new revenue streams to keep his regime afloat, while satisfying the public long enough to avoid being removed from power or assassinated.¹⁹

The Concession System. Faced with an unstable economy and a population that was increasingly unhappy with the Dominican government, Heureaux and other Dominican government officials began to seek new means of acquiring wealth. The Dominicans felt that there was no way they could stay afloat without the wealth of other countries providing a revenue stream. As a result, they turned to an idea employed by other Latin American countries

¹⁸ "Biografía de Ulises Heureaux." *Biografías y vidas*, <https://www.biografiasyvidas.com/biografia/h/heureaux.html>

¹⁹ *Biografías y Vidas*, "Biografía de Ulises Heureaux."

to stabilize their economies and increase their wealth, namely, the concession system. In the face of political instability, a dearth of local capital, shallow home markets, inadequate legal systems, costly transport, and reliance on imported technology, Latin American elites developed formal and informal institutions that allowed economic growth and modernization.²⁰ Concessions, in the Dominican case, can be operationally defined as contracts granted by the central government to investors, often foreigners, for a wide range of enterprises, from railroads and steamship lines to sugar plantations and food processing plants.²¹ These concessions allowed the Dominican government to attract foreign capital to boost its own economy, improve its infrastructure cheaply, and get a headstart on creating domestic industries.

When the Dominican government began enacting concessions in the mid-nineteenth century, its intentions were clear. The government sought to modernize and could not do it alone. The country suffered from numerous economic problems that made it difficult to fight off demands by Dominican citizens and officials in the Red Party to seek annexation by an outside country. The country lacked local capital, had a terrible international credit rating, a history of violent regime change, a weak central government with a divided national army, an inability to enforce its laws, and weak property laws that recognized collective landholding and open range livestock grazing.²² The country put itself on the road to modernization by focusing on a cash-crop economy to maximize the use of the land and generate more revenue from the crops that were most profitable (cocoa, sugar, tobacco, coffee) and enacted a concession system to improve infrastructure.²³ Many Dominican citizens and journalists decried the idea of giving their land and control of key industries to foreigners to the point where one editorial, from a Dominican

²⁰ Vesser, "Concessions as a Modernizing Strategy in the Dominican Republic," 735.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 735.

²² *Ibid.*, 737.

²³ Vesser, "Concessions as a Modernizing Strategy in the Dominican Republic," 737.

periodical (in 1882) exclaimed, they should “allow the foreigners to take their soil and their land” so that they could be “infected by their wealth and riches.”²⁴

As a result of these ideals, the Dominican Republic, in the 1870’s, went full bore into the concession market. Heureaux was at the forefront of this movement. Shortly after the War of Restoration, when he slowly began to gain political influence, he endorsed the idea of concessions and began offering them to foreign entities, namely in the United States. The granting of concessions was made legal through the Dominican Constitution. The system was simple: a foreign enterprise would ask the president for a concession, the president would then petition the Congress to allow the concession to occur and the concessionaire would then be asked to pay an annual tax on the concession.²⁵

The concessions were granted through explicit government approval, insulating the concessionaires from the instability that plagued the Dominican Republic. The Dominican government granted approval on the condition that it would not have to manage or deal with any of the problems that arrived with the concessions (issues with locals over land use, extra taxes for land use). By doing this, the government gave up its ability to take over the companies and industries created by the concessions. This action reduced the risk taken by the investors and attracted the foreign capital that the Dominican government badly sought to stabilize its own economy.²⁶

Heureaux knew what he was doing. He understood that by granting these concessions, he was weakening his own domestic production. But he felt that if he did this, other countries would see the success of the foreign capitalists and invest more finances in the country. He

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 737.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 738.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 737.

understood that annual budgets never allotted finances for agricultural, industrial, or infrastructural improvements. This move allowed him to use the money that would have been spent in those areas on himself or the military. He believed that every concession he granted made it easier to attract another foreign investor into the country, but it had the opposite effect. Many groups had no faith in the country and demanded other bankable guarantees before investing.²⁷ The result of this system was an unprecedented amount of government activity revolving around concessions. Concession legislation accounted for more than 20% of the laws created in the thirteen-year period between 1876 and 1889.²⁸

More than a third of the concessions were given to foreign companies. Those that generated the most capital went to the foreigners, including sugar. The largest sugar plantations were held by Italians, Cubans, and Americans under the concessions that reduced export taxes and allowed for free importation of machinery.²⁹ The importation of machinery proved to be one of the most critical changes that encouraged Haitian migration as it created an uneven production and manufacturing competition that the Dominicans could not win. Heureaux believed that with the creation of all of these new foreign industries in the country, new jobs would be created for Dominicans, thereby providing a boost to the Dominican economy. Instead, foreign capitalists brought in sophisticated and advanced machinery to carry out the more difficult tasks of harvesting, processing, and manufacturing, which inhibited new job creation and growth.³⁰ Heureaux was correct in believing that the concessionaires, namely in sugar, cocoa, and tobacco, would encourage the growth of domestic production among Dominican landowners, but their

²⁷ Vesser, "Concessions as a Modernizing Strategy in the Dominican Republic," 739.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 743.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 743.

³⁰ Samuel Martinez, "From Hidden Hand to Heavy Hand: Sugar, the State, and Migrant Labor in Haiti and the Dominican Republic." *Latin American Research Review* 34, no. 1, (1999): 69.

lack of sophisticated machinery warranted a need for more workers to keep up with the foreign production rates. Dominicans refused to do the farm labor due to its lack of good pay and grueling tasks, which meant they needed to find the necessary labor from elsewhere to meet these production demands.³¹

The incorporation of the Haitian migrants. The need for workers became a necessity. Haitians, who at this point were already viewed unfavorably due to the wars fought for independence against them, began migrating into the island from Haiti, in search of work. The Dominican landowners, who needed more workers to compete against the foreign companies took them in. Dominican landowners readily hired them because they were significantly less expensive than Dominican workers, were willing to do untold amounts of labor, and were not subject to any of the labor laws in the Dominican Republic (not because the laws did not exist, but rather because the Dominican government would never protect a Haitian).³² Therefore, one of the first major waves of Haitian migration began, spurred on by the host of concessions granted to foreigners, which pushed Dominican producers and growers to increase their output exponentially to avoid falling apart.

Haitian workers, or braceros, as they are called in the Dominican Republic, became part of the large migrant workforce that was supposed to remain in the country during the growing season and return to their home country at the end of the season. The Haitian bracero was part of a large migrant population. This laborer came over with other migrant workers during the late 1800's. They came from countries like St. Kitt's, Montserrat, and Barbados. Over time, it

³¹ Martinez, "From Hidden Hand to Heavy Hand," 69.

³² Ibid., 64.

became less and less lucrative for workers to come over from distant lands, drastically reducing the migrant worker population, leaving only the Haitian.³³

Braceros arrived in the Dominican Republic, either on their own by sneaking in, or through a recruiter or buscon (finder). Upon arriving in the Dominican Republic, the bracero was taken to a *batey* or as they are commonly known as, sugarcane communities. The bateyes were populated mostly by other Haitian migrant laborers who arrived during the same season. The bateyes initially were watched by armed guards to prevent theft and migration into the interior of the country.

Heureaux now had the workers he needed and could only hope that this would encourage more domestic production. But this would not be the case as beet sugar from Britain caused an economic downturn that left the country scrambling and the Haitian migrants without work. Many Haitians did not return to Haiti out of fear of not making it back into the Dominican Republic. This was because they were unsure if the Dominican government would allow them to return even when prior production levels returned. This initial Haitian migration brought the first of many Dominicans of Haitian descent into the world. These Dominican citizens (citizenship was granted by birth on the soil at this point) would have a difficult time adapting to life in the Dominican Republic.

As mentioned earlier, the Haitian migrations that occurred during this early period have been neglected in most academic writings. The migrations have been simply attributed to the availability of work and left at that. In reality, there were three major factors that contributed to Haitian migration into the Dominican Republic during this period. One, Haitians were in close proximity to the Dominican Republic, and while other groups migrated into the country in the

³³ Martinez, "From Hidden Hand to Heavy Hand," 69.

period preceding the presidency of Ulises Heureaux, such as Cubans and other West Indians, the Haitians were the only ones that moved in consistently and remained. It was easier for Haitians to cross into the eastern portion of the island than for Cubans and other groups to migrate from their respective areas. Secondly, the concession system created a competitive environment that created a demand for Haitian braceros. The concessions given by Heureaux created an uneven playing field for domestic landowners. They lacked the machinery necessary to match the output of their American counterparts. Therefore, they had to find other ways to compete. In this case, it was by allowing Haitians to work on their plantations and remain through the growing seasons. The Haitians worked longer hours willingly, and worked harder knowing that this was their best opportunity to earn a living. Third, the Haitians worked for significantly less pay and could be treated harshly with little to no repercussions. This goes back to the Dominican government ignoring the abuses that occurred on the plantations and also resulted from the lack of an army, local police force, or laws that would have placed a check on these abuses. It can be said that the economic and political instability of this period permitted the Haitian migrations to occur, and the lack of any sort of consistency in governance within the upper levels of the Dominican government allowed them to persist.

Finally, the Dominican government that employed this system, namely Heureaux who made extensive use of it, did not consider the successful implementation of the system. Rather, Heureaux and other Dominican government officials that preceded him employed it haphazardly. Successful uses of the concession system usually had safeguards to protect home industries. For example, in successful cases, domestic concessions were allowed to create monopolies but foreign ones were denied this right. This ensured that the domestic industries had no competition and could grow quickly, whereas the foreign ones could take part in the domestic marketplace

but could not diminish the home industries.³⁴ Though this is just one of many ways to successfully implement a concession system, it may be more accurate to say that safeguards can help, but the concession system as a whole breeds instability and corruption. It did not help that the Dominican government did not create such safeguards and acted carelessly when deciding who to give the concessions to and what the limits of those concessions would be.

At this juncture, a close study of the concessionaires is necessary to better understand the cause of Haitian migration into the Dominican Republic. Most of the concessionaires were American capitalists and their actions were not supervised by the American government. As a result, American concessionaires were able to exploit the vulnerable Dominican government and cause lasting damage to their economy. The interventions in the early twentieth century sought to correct the damage caused by the concession system, but even with these interventions, major problems such as the growing migration and later abuse of Haitians into the Dominican Republic were ignored and permitted to continue.

American Concessions, Political and Economic Turmoil, and the Intervention of 1905

Concessions granted by the Dominican government proved to be damaging to the Dominican state. Though the Dominican government under Heureaux was able to avoid destroying some sectors of the economy, namely the textile sector, vital areas of the economy were controlled by foreigners. Key areas surrounding Dominican infrastructure were handed off to foreigners. Although many concessions went to Dominicans (the ones that are mostly without names), more than 35% of the concessions went to foreigners. “Concessions that involved the

³⁴ Vesser, “Concessions as a Modernizing Strategy in the Dominican Republic,” 732.

most capital—railroads, banks, steamship lines, the telegraph, and sugar plantations—went to foreigners.”³⁵

The most lucrative and vital industries went to people who did not live in the country. Therefore, the capital generated from these industries left the country although the structures remained. The telegraph system, and until 1895, the national bank, were controlled by the French. The railroads, of which there were two, were held by the Dutch. The only steamship company was American and provided service from the Dominican Republic to New York. And finally, the sugar plantations were controlled by the Italians, Cubans, and Americans. The two concessions that proved to be clear examples of the damage caused by the concession system are the ones held by Salvador Ros (the Santo Domingo Improvement Company) and William Clyde (the Clyde Steamship Company).

Each concession brought its own share of headaches as the privileges granted caused damage that was difficult to mitigate or abolish. The most damaging of these concessions was the one given to Salvador Ros, an up-and-coming American businessman in New York City. In 1893, a concession, under the Presidency of Ulises Heureaux, was granted to Ros to construct what is known as the Santo Domingo Improvement Company (SDIC). The SDIC was constructed with the intent of improving the ports of San Pedro de Macoris and to assist in improving the financial situation of the Dominican Republic.³⁶ The contract was given for an investment into the country for a mere \$1,500. The expectation was that the company would help ease the national debt, which was more than four million dollars. To achieve that end, the company would control the customs houses of the country. From the revenues of the customs

³⁵ Vesser, “Concessions as a Modernizing Strategy in the Dominican Republic,” 743.

³⁶ “JIMENES WILL SAIL TO-DAY.” *New York Times* (1857-1922), Sep 01, 1899, <https://search-proquest-com.proxy.wexler.hunter.cuny.edu/docview/95712802?accountid=27495>.

houses, \$15,000 would be paid to the Dominican government weekly. The revenues from the customs houses totaled about \$1.3 million dollars annually, prior to the concession. After the concessions, revenues soared to about \$3.4 million annually.³⁷

The SDIC was able to generate revenue by building new railroads connecting the eastern and western portions of the country, and by taking over roads and railways owned by other foreign concessionaires, namely German and Scottish ones.³⁸ The SDIC owned sugar and banana plantations and assisted other American owners with moving their product from the plantations to the ports. It is safe to say that the SDIC was involved in many of the economic affairs of the Dominican Republic, but this connection would lead to major issues once the Dominican government underwent a change in leadership. Heureaux's actions did not end up helping the country, and it had enduring effects.

One effect was that it bred corruption on the island because, to acquire good concessions, they had to work closely with Heureaux to maintain them. Bad concessions were kept in play because of personal payments made by each of the concessionaires.³⁹ This created a corrupt system since Heureaux was taking money that could have gone to improve the country to empower himself. This led Dominican landowners to have to find ways to improve their own transportation systems because Heureaux was not using any of the money given to improve infrastructure in the areas in which they were working. Another effect was that it ballooned the national debt. Much of the money that was acquired in the customs houses was only going to the SDIC. When matched against annual revenue, the Dominican government was only receiving about 25% of the revenue it should have been acquiring. With Heureaux in power, much of that

³⁷ "JIMENES WILL SAIL TO-DAY." *New York Times*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Vesser, "Concessions as a Modernizing Strategy in the Dominican Republic," 737.

money never made it to the areas that needed it most. Heureaux spent a majority of the revenue that was left over after the concessionaires had taken their share. As a result, the national debt did not decline much in this period. In fact, it increased.

Therefore, the concessions created a cycle by which the country would earn enough money to pay off its national debt, but since 75% of it was going to concessionaires, there was not enough money remaining to do this, leading to more economic instability due to poor credit ratings. The economic instability forced the Dominican government to place undue pressure on the cash crop producers in the country to find ways to generate enough revenue to keep the island's economy afloat since they were the only means by which revenue for the country could grow.

Another major effect was that the concessions bred monopolies. Concessionaires used the privileges granted by the concessions to gain control of production, distribution, and pricing. This left the Dominican government in a difficult position. The country could not compete against the concessionaires' industries, nor could they limit the power of the monopolies since many concessionaires had ways around them. If they tried to impose duties, concessionaires like the Santo Domingo Improvement Company used their control of customs houses to prevent it. They could not nationalize industries because they lacked the capital to buy back the industries and the control that they lost in the concessions they granted. The concessionaires held between 75% and 90% of the income the country generated through its control of the customs houses. The financial capital that was lost and difficult to replace prevented the country from being able to nationalize or buy out any of the concessions. Because of this, the country was at the mercy of the concessionaires.

The death of Heureaux brought massive changes to the Dominican government and its economic system. The system that existed before, which had empowered concessionaires, was now in jeopardy. The new governments saw the concessions as inhibitors to its economic growth; therefore, it was faced with a difficult decision. The Dominican Republic had to find ways to get rid of the concessions. The new Dominican government, under a new regime brought about as the result of a revolution against Heureaux, wanted to end the concession given to the SDIC. Salvador Ros and his associates were unwilling to give up their concession. Unable to reach any agreement in which the SDIC would give up its assets to the Dominican government and restore the revenues to the country, Ros petitioned the United States for assistance. In 1900, William Powell, the customs secretary for the United States, vowed to make Ros whole on his investment and threatened to use naval force to support him.⁴⁰ With their backs against the wall, the Dominican government under Juan Jimenes petitioned the United States for a peaceful end to the concessions. This led to an arbitration hearing between John Carlisle, the American representative, Manuel Galvan, the Dominican representative, and George Gray, an arbitrator from the United States Court of Appeals.⁴¹

The decision that was reached as a result of this arbitration hearing was damaging to the Dominican government. The Dominican Republic was to pay Ros and the SDIC roughly 4.5 million dollars to liquidate the assets of the SDIC and to restore control of the ports and railways built by the SDIC to the Dominican government. The 4.5 million dollars was to be paid over time through American control of the customs receivership in the Dominican Republic.⁴² The

⁴⁰ Vesser, "Concessions as a Modernizing Strategy in the Dominican Republic," 749.

⁴¹ Commission of Arbitration, United States Dominican Republic, 1903. Award of the Commission of Arbitration under the Provisions of the Protocol of January 31, 1903, between the United States of America and the Dominican Republic, for the Settlement of the Claims of the San Domingo Improvement Company of New York and Its Allied Companies. (1904).

⁴² Commission of Arbitration, United States/Dominican Republic.

Dominican Republic could not gain control of the properties of the SDIC until it had paid back at least 1.5 million dollars of the debt to the SDIC, meaning that the primary methods by which they could transport their goods through and out of the country remained out of their hands.⁴³ A portion of the money acquired by Ros had to be turned over to the Europeans to settle the debts there and prevent intervention by European powers.⁴⁴

This action crippled the Dominican Republic and placed more pressure on Dominican landowners to produce more and generate more revenue. This opened up the doors for more Haitian migration into the country to increase output on cacao and sugar plantations. Both sugar and cacao served as the cash crops of the country and generated the most revenue. By 1912, both products represented more than 9 million dollars in revenue for the country.⁴⁵ Unauthorized migration was common even though there were accords established between the Dominican Republic and Haiti to facilitate the migration of workers. This unauthorized migration was carried out in large part by the Dominican military in exchange for money or favors from landowners.⁴⁶ Therefore, the lack of control led to a large wave of migrants entering the country at the behest of the landowners with support from the military situated at the borders (who were there to control the inflow of migrants). The Haitian population within the country now grew exponentially and Dominicans found themselves on the defensive. Dominicans wanted to protect their nation from Haitian domination and began to pass more laws to inhibit their movement into the interior. The Dominican constitution did not reflect this nativist attitude, as

⁴³ Commission of Arbitration, United States/Dominican Republic.

⁴⁴ Ellen D. Tillman. "Militarizing Dollar Diplomacy in the Early Twentieth-Century Dominican Republic: Centralization and Resistance." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 95, no. 2 (2015): 274.

⁴⁵ Charles H. Albrecht, and Frank A. Henry, *Development of the Dominican Republic*. (Govt. Print. Off., 1914), 24.

⁴⁶ Philip Martin, Elizabeth Midgley, and Michael S. Teitelbaum. "Migration and Development: Whither the Dominican Republic and Haiti?" *International Migration Review* 36, no. 2 (2002): 578.

those who were born in the country, even if they were in transit, were guaranteed all the rights afforded to Dominican citizens.⁴⁷

It is in this period that the contemporary issues that persist in the Dominican Republic involving large numbers of Dominicans of Haitian descent begin to emerge. Those workers were supposed to leave at the end of the growing season, but they chose to remain in the country. Landowners did not send them back or remove them from their property out of fear of never getting them back or having to pay officers more money to reacquire them.⁴⁸ Those that remained sought ways to become citizens of the country and found that they could do so through their children, who, by constitutional right, would be Dominican citizens if they were born there. The plight of the Dominican government and its landowners would only be compounded by the fall in sugar prices.

The country was already in a financial crisis and this issue was compounded by external pressures, namely, the fall in sugar prices. Sugar is one of the key industries in the Dominican Republic and was vital in generating revenue for the country. The growth of the beet sugar industry depressed the prices of cane sugar. Beet sugar from Britain became a chief competitor to sugar processed in the Americas, starting in 1899.⁴⁹ Beet sugar was cheaper than cane sugar and cost less to manufacture. As beet sugar became more prevalent and popular, the price of cane sugar sank significantly, causing more economic and political turmoil on the island. This served as one of the reasons that the Dominican government sought to nationalize its ports and railways, and also served as one of the chief reasons for massive political turnover in the country. The turnover in the country is what pushed the country to pressure Ros to liquidate his assets.

⁴⁷ Constitución De La República Dominicana, 1908.

⁴⁸ Martinez, "From Hidden Hand to Heavy Hand," 70.

⁴⁹ Cesar Ayala, *American Sugar Kingdom: The Plantation Economy of the Spanish Caribbean, 1898-1934* (University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 44.

The Steamship Concession. The Clyde Steamship Company was organized by William Clyde in 1875 and was based initially in the northeast. Considering the growing popularity of the West Indies as a vacation destination and as a vital destination for many entrepreneurs and American businessmen, Clyde saw penetration into this area as important and potentially lucrative. William Clyde sent agents to negotiate a partnership with the Dominican government to establish a New York-to-Dominican Republic steamship route. What resulted was far more lucrative. Heureaux, seeking to improve the conditions of the ports of the Dominican Republic and create a connection with the United States, granted a concession to the Clyde Steamship Company. The concession granted by Heureaux allowed the Clyde Steamship Company exclusive access to the sea routes that linked the United States and the West Indies. The Steamship Company acquired privileges and subsidies to expand its steamship fleet and also a connection to territories that other steamship companies could never possess through other means. This strengthened the monopoly held by William Clyde and allowed him to acquire more wealth with which to continue his expansion. Though initially the Steamship concession did not grant Clyde with a port or control of any customs houses, it caused damages that were not financial but political.

Clyde's steamships by the late 1880's were moving constantly between the United States and the Dominican Republic, which began to draw attention from neighboring countries, especially Haiti. Haiti was attempting to protect its sovereignty against foreign countries and the presence of American steamships caused a feeling of insecurity. Haitian warships became a constant presence near the waters of the Dominican Republic. One tense situation was recorded in 1888 when a Clyde steamship was followed and threatened by two Haitian gunboats, the

Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Marcel.⁵⁰ The gunboats on this specific occasion pointed their swivel guns at the steamship, had armed troops in rowboats sent to scout the steamship, and followed the steamship all the way out of Dominican waters.⁵¹ These actions drew the attention of Heureaux and the United States. Heureaux offered assurances that this transgression would not have amounted to anything and it was likely that the Haitian gunboats were protecting the smugglers who were moving weapons between Haiti and the Dominican Republic.⁵² Nonetheless, the actions taken by the Haitian navy signaled that they were not going to allow any foreign power to travel their waters without being warned of the consequences.

The concession given to the Clyde Steamship Company gave the United States a closer look at the political situation within the Dominican Republic. The actions taken by the Haitians, the discovery of the illegal smuggling of weapons occurring at the Haitian/Dominican border, and the nonchalance of Heureaux gave the United States government and the Clyde Steamship Company more than enough evidence of the instability of the country. The lack of revenue coming into the country because of the lack of control over the customs houses created an environment in which domestic businesses had to reach out for other means to build capital and compete against the concessionaires. The lack of political stability in the country did not allow the Dominican government to allocate the resources to inhibit the growth and reach of the concessionaires or to improve the economic situation within the country. This made it difficult to oversee or control the Haitian migrations into the country since more effort and focus was placed by Heureaux on preserving his dictatorship. The Clyde Steamship concession allowed the United States government to get a closer look at the Heureaux dictatorship and assess the

⁵⁰ "HIGH-HANDED HAYTIANS." *New York Times* (1857-1922), December 31, 1888, <https://search-proquest-com.proxy.wexler.hunter.cuny.edu/docview/94594688?accountid=27495>

⁵¹ "HIGH-HANDED HAYTIANS." *New York Times*

⁵² Ibid.

economic and political state of the country. But the steamship concession did not just expose the tenuous grip on the Dominican Republic held by Heureaux. It also laid bare the corruption the country experienced under Heureux, which would give way to even more instability warranting the intervention of 1905 by the United States.

One of the major ports of ingress/egress in the Dominican Republic, the port of San Pedro de Macoris, also considered one of the more profitable ports, was available for sale. Heureaux, in poor financial straits, needed to secure more money to keep himself in power at this time. He offered the port to the Clyde Steamship Company as another concession. The port was in terrible shape since it had fallen into disrepair. At this time, the sugar industry was one of the few sources of income for Heureaux. Therefore, it was vital that this port be made viable for the exportation of sugar. It made sense to offer the concession to the steamship company since they would bring in their own engineers and repair the harbor. What resulted went contrary to Heureaux's plans and provided the final nail in the coffin for the Heureaux dictatorship.

In 1896, Walter Reed, an agent representing the steamship company, had an audience with Heureaux over the transfer of the port. Reed believed that he was acquiring a lucrative port and privileges, which would increase the profits of the steamship company. This meeting occurred only one year after Heureaux had asked for a \$20,000 advance on a renewal of a prior concession in the country due to the "ill will bred by the actions of the steamship company."⁵³ This is most likely a reference to the Haitian gunboat activity off the Dominican coast. The meeting in 1896 turned out to be an announcement to the steamship company that they could bid for the concession, but that it would be available to the highest bidder. Reed did not expect this as he was told that it was an exclusive contract and that there would be no other bidders.⁵⁴ Reed

⁵³ Vesser, "Concessions as a Modernizing Strategy." 747

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 748

did not appreciate the duplicity of Heureaux and chose not to bid or purchase the concession. It turns out the concession was sold to Salvador Ros, which ended up putting the country in financial ruin.

The steamship concession exposed not only the instability of the country under a failing regime, but also the corruption that allowed it to endure for so long. This corruption explains why the country did not properly assess the benefits and consequences of providing concessions to speed up the modernization process. It also sheds some light on why the Haitian migrants who were now in the country faced even more problems. The labor of the Haitian migrants was now relied upon to attempt to keep the country financially solvent, which meant that they would be worked in the fields and in the mills even harder. This also meant that any reform that could provide the migrants an opportunity to remain in the country or gain citizenship was unlikely to occur as it might have granted constitutional rights and privileges that would have prevented them from being abused in the amount of work that they did, the wages they were paid, and how they were treated.

The concessions were a means by which the Dominican Republic could become part of the international economy. The problem that arose as a result of this entry was the “exacerbation of an internal crisis,” namely, the issues that existed between a growing national government in the Dominican Republic and the regional powers within the country that did not want this encroachment. Heureaux’s actions were not only selfish in nature. They were also done under the pretense that the country would be annexed by the United States.⁵⁵ These concessions pushed the Dominican Republic into revolution as the country grew tired of Ulises Heureaux’s

⁵⁵ Tillman, “Militaryizing Dollar Diplomacy,” 272

corrupt practices and wanted an end to his presidency. Heureaux was assassinated and replaced by Jimenes, who also mismanaged the country, which prompted another presidential turnover.

The revolutionaries inherited a 34 million dollar debt, which they could never repay since they had no control over their customs houses and the two million dollars it generated annually.⁵⁶ The country was flooded with Haitian migrant workers, which caused more internal strife and regional issues. But these workers were a necessity since the country had to generate revenue, which prompted the incorporation of more Haitian migrant workers. This exacerbated the social issues that existed between the Haitians and the Dominicans. This turnover prompted one of the most meaningful actions taken in the Dominican Republic, namely, the intervention of 1905. The intervention of 1905 is an instance in which the American government had a chance to improve the status of the country. Through an intervention, the United States government could have become aware of the abuses of the Haitian migrants on the labor front, and ensured the status of those migrants as Dominican citizens if they were born in the country to provide some level of political and economic stability. Sadly, since this intervention was enforced by military agents, not government or financial officers of the United States, it did not come close to achieving these necessary changes.

The American Intervention of 1905. The consequences of regaining control of vital organs of the Dominican economy by the Dominican government became immediately evident at the turn of the century. The country had to make many concessionaires whole, most notably Salvador Ros, a concessionaire who had immense control over the finances of the country. This created tensions with the United States government. The American government had made it clear that it was more than willing to ensure that the debts to concessionaires were paid in full.

⁵⁶ Tillman, "Militarizing Dollar Diplomacy," 272.

In 1900 and 1901, the United States threatened naval action against the Dominican Republic if steps were not taken to settle American and European debts.⁵⁷ Military action was not a desired outcome for the United States against the Dominicans, as they sought to avoid involving themselves in another military intervention as had occurred in Cuba. This had a profound influence on the decision making of American President Theodore Roosevelt when dealing with the Dominican Republic. Roosevelt's approach was to take active measures to prevent military involvement. In his eyes, the intervention needed to focus on building up the country through diplomatic relations to avoid the negative feelings elicited by the Cuban intervention. According to Ellen Tillman, a historian who focuses on the militarization of dollar diplomacy, Roosevelt used the Dominican Republic as a testing ground for diplomatic rather than military intervention.⁵⁸

The intervention in 1905 was the product of the economic and political instability monitored by U.S. agents in the previous five years. This instability was not only caused by the actions of the Dominican government, but also by the actions of the U.S. Navy. Prior to the intervention, the United States had contributed to the turmoil in the country exacerbating its instability. Since 1900, the U.S. Navy was a constant presence in the country, when warships helped push through the Ros deal. Naval officials had been on the island monitoring activity for a while and noting which figures were gaining more political power. These naval officials did not take notice of the Haitian laborers in the country or their impact on the regional issues that strove to tear the country apart. The naval officials supported individuals who would assist in fulfilling their agendas, namely, the acquisition of ports for the United States and helping to establish economic stability in the country. By 1903, William Powell had arranged for the navy

⁵⁷ Tillman, "Militarizing Dollar Diplomacy," 273.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 273.

to assist in protecting the current president of the Dominican Republic, Carlos Morales, and also for the acquisition of control of the customs houses in important ports in the Dominican Republic. The United States had already entrenched itself in the economic and political affairs of the Dominican Republic while doing nothing to improve the economic or social situation in the country.

The task of modernization and development had shifted from the Dominicans to the Americans as soon as the naval threats began. The Dominican Republic at that point was now viewed as a country in need of assistance. This was due to the threat of European intervention that could come as a result of economic vulnerability. The American government felt that it had no choice but to take action to protect its interests on the island and to ensure the stability of the Dominican government to keep the country economically solvent. This concept lends itself to the theory, posited by Tillman, that the Americans were paternalistic as they believed themselves to be the caretakers of the Dominican Republic, which prompted action in 1904.⁵⁹

In 1904, President Roosevelt, after analyzing the major economic issues and conflicts involving American interests in the Dominican Republic, invoked the Roosevelt Corollary, which was an addition to the Monroe Doctrine. The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine claimed to allow the United States to intervene in the affairs of another country in the Americas if there was “evidence of wrongdoing or an impotence which results in the general loosening of the ties of civilized society.”⁶⁰ Under the pretense that the volatility of the Dominican economy would push European countries to call in their debts and possibly take control of vital infrastructures in the country, Roosevelt sought immediate intervention. The intervention was

⁵⁹Tillman, “Militarizing Dollar Diplomacy,” 271.

⁶⁰John W. Blassingame, “The Press and American Intervention in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, 1904-1920.” *Caribbean Studies* 9, no. 2 (1969): 27, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.wexler.hunter.cuny.edu/stable/25612127>.

not to be a military intervention but rather an economic one. The United States would send agents to the Dominican Republic to serve as overseers and enforcers of American policy.

This political action allowed the United States government to take over the customs houses of the Dominican Republic, manage its finances, and settle its foreign debts.⁶¹ The agents that were sent to the Dominican Republic came from the Departments of Navy and War.⁶² Therefore, although the action was not supposed to involve the military, it was supervised by military agents and officials. This choice led to issues that made it even more difficult for the Dominican Republic to establish any form of economic independence after the intervention. Ultimately, it led to another intervention in 1916 that was purely military in nature. The Dominican government did not benefit in this instance; what mattered were the best interests of American capitalists who still had investments in the island and feared massive losses. This had catastrophic economic results as the country went more than thirty years without control over its own finances.⁶³

The lack of support in the United States for Roosevelt's intervention likely contributed to the failure of diplomats and U.S. agents in correcting the ills of the Haitian migrant labor force in the Dominican Republic. There was still widespread anti-black sentiment in the United States and this sentiment led people to have a negative view of Roosevelt's actions. American journalists, for the most part, referred to Dominicans as "naked niggers," people who were unable to learn, and detested work.⁶⁴ They viewed Haitians far worse, namely, as people who displayed anarchy, corruption, and tyranny as national habits.⁶⁵ This reaction decreased the drive

⁶¹ Blassingame, "The Press and American Intervention in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, 1904-1920," 27.

⁶² Tillman. "Militarizing Dollar Diplomacy." 273.

⁶³ Blassingame, "The Press and American Intervention," 27.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁶⁵ Blassingame, "The Press and American Intervention," 28.

of American officers in the Dominican Republic to take the proper measures to ensure the economic and political stability of the country in the future.

As a result of this lack of domestic support and the lack of motivation held by the American officers who were present in the country, the intervention of 1905 was unlikely to take note of the abuse of the Haitian laborer on the plantations. This massive influx of Haitians became a necessity after the importation of American technology into the sugar and cacao fields. Agents did not focus on the major social issues that existed in the Dominican Republic. Rather, the American government focused on the economic situation in the country, specifically noting that American interests that remained on the island needed protection. This is why the focus was on managing Dominican finances rather than correcting human rights abuses and population issues. Americans focused on the weakness of the Dominican economy, such as the constant defaults on its loans and the dangers to the lives of foreign nationals.⁶⁶

In 1905 and the years that followed the intervention, journalists frequently stated that the purpose of this intervention was to bring civility to the Dominican Republic. The journalists were quick to note the calamities and goals of the intervention. America, according to journalists for the *Chicago Tribune*, could spread its freedom from misery, starvation, corruption, disease, and violence.⁶⁷ The actions taken by the American government accomplished none of this as revolutions and economic failures persisted. Migration went unchecked as Haitian populations continued to grow. Motives were made clear after the intervention in the Dominican Republic by the United States was ratified. The American Senate only gave its blessing for the intervention because it felt its interests would be endangered by European governments coming

⁶⁶Ibid., 28.

⁶⁷ *Chicago Tribune*, March 4, 1904, as quoted in John W. Blasingame, "The Press and American Intervention in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, 1904-1920." *Caribbean Studies* 9, no. 2 (1969): <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.wexler.hunter.cuny.edu/stable/25612127>

to collect their debts by force and possibly occupying crucial trade routes in the West Indies.⁶⁸

The effects of the intervention would be felt by the Dominican Republic for years to come as the intervention created more problems with the Haitian migrants, which the Dominican government was not equipped to address.

During the intervention, American entrepreneurs flooded the Dominican Republic to survey the island for resources and areas in which to establish factories and bases. American agents exerted control over the customs houses and the governors of the island. The Dominican Republic held no real control of the government; by this point it was relying on its own domestic industries to generate revenues for the country. The country relied even more on migrant laborers to ensure its ability to compete against foreign entrepreneurs and to generate the wealth the country sorely needed. By 1920, more than 25,000 Haitians occupied the Dominican Republic, making up about 3% of the population. That number doubled to more than 52,000 after the effects of the two American interventions in the country took root. Prior to 1920, in the period from 1899 to 1920, the number of Haitians in the country rose from around 5,000 to more than 20,000.⁶⁹ These numbers show that the population growth went unchecked during these periods and was pushed solely by the economic pressures placed on domestic growers to keep up with American production of sugarcane in the country.

There were numerous unintended consequences of the intervention of 1905 that bear mentioning and contributed to the migration of Haitians into the country. First, the United States support of sugar industries in the south (mostly American-owned) destroyed the finances of the

⁶⁸ "THE SANTO DOMINGO TREATY." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Feb 17, 1905. <https://search-proquest-com.proxy.wexler.hunter.cuny.edu/docview/96572214?accountid=27495>.

⁶⁹ Gérard Pierre Charles. *Capital transnacional y trabajo en el Caribe (in Spanish)*. (México: Plaza y Valdés, 1988). 215.

ports in the north, which dealt in vital crops such as tobacco, inciting rebellions and naval intervention.⁷⁰

Second, the control of customs houses by the American government prompted the presidents of the Dominican Republic to encourage more overland trading in order to circumvent American control.⁷¹ This action led to more strict surveillance of the Haitian/Dominican border and also bred more hatred of Haitians as Dominicans blamed Haitians rather than their own government. Dominican support for this surveillance also led to a major loss of revenue, since whatever money would have come through the customs houses dwindled since more money had to be taken from that revenue to cover the losses from the illegal overland trade. Under the control of U.S. Army Colonel George Colton, an extralegal frontier force established three customs houses along the overland routes at the Haitian/Dominican border to plug these “leaks.”⁷² This extralegal frontier guard created more tensions between the Haitian and Dominican government since this guard also brought with it more surveillance of Haiti on land and at sea, which Haiti resented. It also brought more scrutiny to the interactions between the two countries, prompting the Haitian government to be more defensive in its interactions with the Dominican government.

Finally, the intervention left the country in disarray and created instability even though many of the reports from U.S. agents spoke to the contrary. Morales’ government, which had cooperated with Colton in establishing the border forces and regaining control of vital ports and regions, was being torn apart from within. Morales’ vice president, Ramon Caceres was gaining influence in Morales’ cabinet and had the support of a large portion of the Dominican

⁷⁰ Tillman, “Militarizing Dollar Diplomacy,” 280.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 280.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 281.

population, which led to Morales being removed from power and from the country shortly afterward. Caceres replaced him.

Caceres cooperated with Colton and supported his frontier guard, which oversaw the smuggling of arms and ammunition into the hands of citizens who resisted the control of the central government.⁷³ Caceres, in his attempts to modernize, erased military practices that ensured the loyalty of the troops (mostly paying them off). He was assassinated in 1911, plunging the country into a civil war, which would prompt another intervention.

The intervention of 1905 was supposed to bring stability to the country and provide access to technology for domestic growers to alleviate the pressures of production. This, in turn, would reduce the unrest and territorial disputes between Haitians and Dominicans, leading to a measure of political and social stability. It was intended to reduce foreign debt instead of increase it. It was supposed to make the country financially solvent. The absence of these changes meant that Haitian migration would continue and that those Haitians who were in the country would seek ways to remain there, namely, by giving birth to Haitian children who would have legal entitlement to Dominican citizenship. Therefore, it can be said that the intervention of 1905, rather than decreasing Haitian migration and providing tangible change, encouraged Haitian migration. It enabled domestic growers to keep bringing in workers since their abuses of the workers went unchecked and provided no tangible change, which helped pave the way for a second intervention by Woodrow Wilson in 1916.

⁷³ Tillman, "Militarizing Dollar Diplomacy," 282.

Conclusions

Economic, political, and social instability born out of the wars for independence forced the Dominican government to seek help from foreign businesses and governments, in order to modernize the infrastructure of the Dominican Republic. The decision to seek American help and the methods through which it was executed exacerbated issues such as racial tensions between Dominicans and Haitians. The Dominican government outsourced its economic and political development by providing lopsided concessions to foreign entrepreneurs. These concessions hamstrung the country's finances and government, which initiated an economic competition against foreign businessmen that the Dominicans were ill-equipped to win with their level of technology.

This competition forced Dominican landowners to seek other ways to compete, which prompted the influx of Haitian migrant laborers into the country. Although the landowners now had workers to try to match the production levels of foreign technology and machinery, the country's economy still languished and warranted more assistance.

The American government played a key role in the migration of Haitians into the Dominican Republic because of the many actions it took to protect concessionaires prior to the intervention, which exacerbated political and economic instability. American businessmen took advantage of concessions that were offered in an attempt to either enhance their profits and business opportunities or to vertically integrate their corporations and create strong monopolies in the United States. The concessions were intended to provide a means by which the infrastructure of the Dominican Republic could be improved or established. Instead, many of the key organs of the economy, such as the ports and customs houses, were compromised. Concessionaires took control of vital ports and customs houses, depriving the Dominican

economy of important revenue necessary for the modernization of the country. When the Dominican government attempted to get out from under these concessions, the American government, rather than helping the Dominican government, supported the concessionaires and made them whole, through force if necessary.

The many interactions between the American government and the Dominican government at the turn of the twentieth century did not alleviate the economic and political instability that plagued the fledgling nation. The American Navy played a key role in controlling who was in power in the country and what changes were made in various economic sectors. This involvement eventually led to the intervention of 1905, which was supposed to return the Dominican Republic to a condition of stability. Instead, the intervention was controlled by the American military and created or exacerbated social and economic problems in the country rather than solved them. As a result, the Dominican Republic went through more than three different rulers in the span of eleven years, and a civil war that prompted a more forceful military intervention in 1916.

In the middle of the instability and half-measures were the Haitian migrants who continued to pour into the country. At the end of the nineteenth century, the migrants were permitted into the country, and in other cases shuttled in to assist domestic Dominican landowners in competing against foreign entities. This migration grew as laborers were needed to generate more income for the Dominican economy, which was operating at a deficit.

The Haitian migrants chose to stay rather than return to Haiti. They had children in the Dominican Republic. Those children, according to the Dominican Constitution, were afforded the rights of citizenship, but could not afford the papers that would prove this.⁷⁴ The cost of

⁷⁴ Martinez, "From Hidden Hand to Heavy Hand," 72.

documentation was prohibitively expensive for Haitians and used as a soft measure to prevent them from proving the citizenship they earned. As a result, it is these Dominicans of Haitian descent who were removed throughout the twentieth century and are being removed from the country today. The issues that the Haitians currently endure were brought about by the poor decision-making of the Dominican government in the late nineteenth century, and the greed manifested by the American government.

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