

THE REVOLUTIONARY FORCES OF THE G9 FAMILY AND ALLIES: INTRODUCING A NEW TYPOLOGY OF VIOLENT ACTOR

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Abstract

This research provides a critical assessment of Haiti's contemporary 'gang' crisis through an in-depth analysis of the Revolutionary Forces of the G9 Family and Allies (G9). It questions if G9 truly is a gang, and if not, what is it? And how might we better understand it? Through an application of the Terrorism and Extremism Matrix (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019), this research argues that G9 is not, in fact, a gang, and can instead be more accurately understood under a new typology of *violent hybrid actors*. An assessment of G9's structure, motivations, objectives, capacity for violence, violence rationale, and group visibility, demonstrates that the actor transcends traditional categorisations as it blends characteristics from gangs, organised crime syndicates, and terrorists to act as a hybrid entity. This research additionally illustrates the significance and implications of this reclassification, and how context-specific policy and law enforcement approaches can enable more effective mitigation and disruption measures.

The corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

Abbreviations

ACLED- Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project

CARICOM - Caribbean Community

CNDDR - Commission Nationale de Desarmement, Demantelement et de Réinsertion (National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration)

GI-TOC - Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime

HRW- Human Rights Watch

IHRC- International Human Rights Clinic

IJM- International Justice Mission

IMF- International Monetary Fund

MSF- Medecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders)

NGC- National Gang Centre, US Department of Justice

NIJ- National Institute of Justice

OCHAH- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Haiti

OJJDP- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

RNDDH- Réseau National de Défense des Droits Humains (National Human Rights Defense Network)

UN- United Nations

UNHCR- United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

UNIOH- United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti

UNODC- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

1. Introduction: A Nation Forged in the Fire

Haiti is widely known as the world's first Black Republic and the first— and only— country to have won its independence through a slave rebellion (James, 2010; Deibert, 2017). Forged in the fire of revolution, Haiti was born in 1804. In its two-hundred-year history, Haiti has housed one of the largest UN peacekeeping missions on record, suffered a catastrophic 7.1 magnitude earthquake, witnessed numerous coups, and been the subject of foreign occupation (James, 1989; James, 2010; Deibert, 2017; Gonzalez, 2019). What was once the most profitable colony in the Caribbean, known as the pearl of the Antilles (Deibert, 2017), is now akin to acute poverty. Haiti's tumultuous history makes its association with enduring crises an easy one; poverty, violence, natural disasters, political instability, and corruption have overwhelmingly become the dominant frames of reference for the Caribbean nation (James, 1989; James, 2010; Deibert, 2017). In this sense, crisis seems to be an irremovable characteristic of Haiti. Mainstream media headlines depict a volatile environment, a crippled economy, widespread political corruption, and out-of-control crime (The Guardian, 2024; NBC News, 2024; BBC, 2024; The Telegraph, 2024). But there is another side to Haiti's history, one of a nation that has refused to perish. While the aforementioned features have their place in Haiti's story, alone they present an incomplete image. Haiti's story is unique, complex, and still being written.

However, what is undoubtedly dominating the current chapter of Haiti's story is not natural disasters, coups, nor foreign occupation but rather, violent gangs. While 'gangs' are, critically, not a new feature of the Haitian state, the levels of indiscriminate violence are now being positioned as unprecedented and amounting to record highs (UNIOH, 2024a; Ruryk, 2024; Rivers, 2023). According to estimates by the UN, more than one person was killed every hour in Haiti at the hands of gang violence in the first three months of 2024, representing a 53% increase in gang-related violence compared to the last three months of 2023 (UNIOH, 2024a). Other regions of the country have experienced even sharper increases in violence—notably, the Artibonite department in central Haiti which saw a 70% rise in gang-related fatalities in 2023 compared to the previous year (ACLED, 2024). In the first quarter of 2024, an estimated 2,500 Haitians were killed or injured in gang violence, representing the deadliest toll in recent years (UNIOH, 2024a). Human Rights Watch has documented similarly startling uptakes in violence and harrowing accounts of sexual violence, indiscriminate killings, and other grave abuses (2024). According to the UN, an

estimated 580,000 people have been displaced because of gang violence, over 3,200 homicides were recorded between January and May 2024, and nearly one in two Haitians are facing acute food insecurity (Mohor & Jérôme, 2024; UNOCHA, 2024). According to the UNODC, “virtually every metric of insecurity from homicide, sexual violence and kidnapping to the killing of police and migration out of the country – is trending upward” (2023). Beyond the future of Haitians hanging in the balance, the risk of regional spill-over is also a serious threat (UNODC, 2023).

Particularly prolific across media headlines since its formation in 2020 is the Revolutionary Forces of the G9 Family and Allies (hereafter G9) which was established by Haitian ex-police officer, Jimmy Chérizier, as a “criminal federation of gangs operating [primarily] in Haiti’s capital of Port-au-Prince” (Insight Crime, 2023a). G9, and its federation of gangs, are estimated to control approximately 80% of Haiti’s capital and large parts of the Ouest and Artibonite departments (Mohor & Jérôme, 2024) (see Appendix A). The organisation¹ is an ambitious one; at the forefront of its goals seems to be Prime Minister Ariel Henry’s resignation, with Chérizier going so far as to threaten violent opposition to any foreign intervention in Haiti, although proclaims his overarching intention as aiding Haiti out of its current crisis (Kestler-D’Amours, 2024; Genocide Watch, 2021; Al Jazeera, 2024a). Despite the labelling of Chérizier’s organisation as a ‘gang’ (see e.g. UNIOH, 2023a; UNIOH, 2023b; Insight Crime, 2023a; Insight Crime, 2023b; IHRC, 2021; GI-TOC, 2022; GI-TOC, 2024a; GI-TOC, 2024b) the group exhibits characteristics outside the parameters of those traditionally associated with gangs. Robert Fatton, for example, an expert on Haiti, has remarked that while armed gangs are nothing new in Haiti, gangs today are “different” in that they now act as “forces unto themselves...that can essentially dictate to certain politicians or to many politicians what they ought to do or what they can do” (Fatton, as cited in Kestler-D’Amours, 2024). It has similarly been observed that the gangs now possess a political aspect wherein they are no longer solely criminal in nature but are also seeking a piece of political power (de Alba, as cited in Kestler-D’Amours, 2024).

Such observations beg the question: is G9 a gang? And if not, what is it? This research seeks to answer this question through an in-depth analysis of G9’s structure, motivations, group objectives, capacity for violence, violence rationale, and group visibility. It aims to examine the organisation as a context-specific reflection of its environment and challenges the framing of the group as

¹ Organisation, federation, and enterprise are used interchangeably to denote G9.

a gang. It instead introduces a new typology of violent actor: *violent hybrid actors*. Through the application of the Terrorist and Extremism Matrix (TREM) (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019), this research provides a more nuanced understanding of one of the most significant threats to the Haitian state. It concludes by examining the significance of accurately classifying G9 and the implications for context-specific law enforcement and policy approaches for mitigation and disruption.

2. Theoretical Framework

Defining and Conceptualising Gangs

In 1927, Frederic Thrasher published his *magnum opus* on gangs in Chicago and within it, he characterised gangs as the culmination of urbanisation, migration, and industrialisation. In his research of over 1,300 gangs, Thrasher (1927) found two key consistencies: 1) gangs were discrete, and 2) they were highly localised. Although the literature on gangs has expanded considerably since Thrasher's publication, it remains an obscure discipline where few certainties exist. Consequently, there is no exact definition of a 'gang', and conceptions vary significantly between sources and regions. Terminology is often used interchangeably; the terms "street gang", "youth gang", and "criminal street gang" all denote an element of criminality, though there is little to differentiate between them (NGC, n.d.; Petersen, 2000). While exact parameters of "gang activity" remain largely elusive, research on the phenomenon - based predominantly in the Global North - has demonstrated that street gangs "are consistently found to be at the nexus of serious crime and violence" (Decker et al, 2012, p. 371) with members accounting for disproportionate rates of affiliation with criminal acts. The UNODC (2004) emphasises the lack of an internationally agreed definition and while most gangs have "*three or more members*" and commit multiple "*serious criminal offences*", they do not always have "*defined roles*", "*continuity of membership*" or "*a developed structure*". Felson (2006) has further observed that gang membership is often espoused through recognised signs, symbols, and clothing to denote membership status. A number of states in America use the following definition which encompasses the notions above:

[A]ny ongoing organization, association or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, having as one of its primary activities the commission of one or more of the criminal acts [...], having a common name or common identifying sign or symbol, and whose

members individually or collectively engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal gang activity (NIJ, 2011, para. 6).

Additionally, the type of crime gang members are most often associated with, in the United States, is larceny/theft (38%), aggravated assault (33%), burglary (30%), and motor vehicle theft (30%) (OJJDP, n.d.). Yet, it should be noted that law enforcement agencies “neither regularly nor reliably record local offences as gang-related” (NGC, n.d., para. 12), therefore assessing trends in gang-related crimes is not possible on a national scale. Even without exact parameters for what constitutes a ‘gang’, with these basic typologies in mind, G9s divergence from these activities represents something beyond what could be considered the norm.

Applying a Global South Lens

In this context, it is crucial to recognize that much of the scholarship on gangs remains rooted in Global North experiences, despite the markedly different realities of the Global South. Our limited understanding of violent actors in Latin America, for example, can partially be exemplified by major gaps in the existing literature; despite gangs being a consistent feature of Latin America through the mid-1900s, it was not until 1988 when the first in-depth investigation into the phenomenon was initiated by Deborah Levenson. Following Levenson’s research, a foundational ‘first wave’ of literature on gangs in Latin America emerged wherein two key conclusions can be drawn: 1) there are contextual, but not always causal links between gangs and poverty, and 2) that there are significant variations between gangs in one region to another (Levenson, 1988; Leeds, 1996; DeCesare, 1998; Kruijt & Koonings, 1999). In this sense, applying a methodological one-size-fits-all approach from one region to another obscures the complexity of the threat and hinders effective responses. For instance, a prototypical gang in the Global North causing food shortages threatening 5,000,000 people (or just under half a country’s population) (UN, 2024), internal displacement affecting 60% of the nation (GI-TOC, 2024a), inflation exceeding 40% (IMF, 2024), gasoline shortages, destruction of infrastructure, prison breaks, and attacks on critical infrastructure (GI-TOC, 2024a) would be just about inconceivable, and yet, in Haiti, it is very much a reality.

Despite a growing body of research showing that Violent Criminal Enterprises (VCEs) —including organised crime groups, gangs, terrorists, and extremists operate distinctly in the Global South, dominant conceptual frameworks remain derived from the Global North (Pereda, 2022). Analysing VCEs through this lens is an ill-advised undertaking, but it is equally ill-advised to dismiss these

conditions as mere outliers due their convergence from dominant conceptualisations. For example, gangs in the Global South have been observed to provide security and essential services in the absence of state institutions (O'Donnell, 1993); a phenomenon termed 'governance voids' by Kruijt and Koonings (1999). In Latin America specifically, the emergence of gangs as localised forms of sovereign power has led to debates about the extent to which gangs can be considered as constituting parallel powers to state authorities (Rodgers & Baird, 2015). In Trinidad and Tobago, gang leaders are recognised as 'community leaders' by the government for providing security and social services within their territories— something that has allowed the gangs to expand and consolidate their legitimacy among the population (Beharry, 2024). The trend extends to Haiti where the country's gangs have been known to operate critical social services, such as schools and medical clinics, in the place of an absent government (Isaac & Morland, 2023). Such dynamics are largely absent in the Global North and therefore highlight the need to approach Global South contexts through distinct analytical frameworks tailored to their specific realities.

The Issue of Conflation

Indeed, a significant issue relating to modern gangs in not just Haiti but Latin America more broadly, is the widespread conflation between violent groups— namely gangs and organised crime syndicates. While there is little doubt that links can exist between gangs and organised crime groups, it is important to maintain that these are in no way predetermined nor consistently demonstrated and, in many cases, are purely assumed (Rodgers & Baird, 2015). Perhaps even more significant than the conflation itself is the fact that even where links do exist between gangs and organised crime, the connection remains "opaque and complex" (Rodgers & Baird, 2015), and vary considerably. The blurring of VCEs in recent decades has led to conflation and misidentification which often can increase lethality but has also resulted in less effective interdiction and mitigation attempts by states and law enforcement (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019; Archutowski, 2019; Kelshall, David & Harron, 2024). It has been argued that gang-oriented policing that intends to respond to conflict but does not *understand* the conflict can instead serve to create and perpetuate community divisions and reproduce criminality (Flores, 2021). The blurring of VCEs has been positioned as the result of a focus on the outputs of violent activity rather than a critical analysis of the violence, motivation, leadership structure, and organisational culture of each group (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019). Fundamentally, not all VCEs have political or economic objectives, and not all have clear leaders or

power structures; therefore, distinguishing between VCEs can be useful in conceptualising how to engage with them from a law enforcement and policy perspective (Cozine et al., 2014).

Mardsen and Schmid (2011) have similarly observed that conflating tactics, motives, and forms of violent organisations can make comparisons more complex and reduce analytical utility. When VCEs are understood in broad brush terms, there arises a danger of failing to recognise changes and evolutions; culminating in a lack of understanding of the impending threat. Miller (2019) makes this argument in relation to terrorism: “While the nature of terrorism remains enduring, several elements are working together to alter its character, including how terrorist groups recruit individuals and then use them to carry out attacks” (p. 63). As a result of these shifts, lines between terrorism, extremism, and lone actors are becoming increasingly blurry and, as Miller (2019) argues, these dichotomies are now insufficient; “if scholars fail to capture the real divisions between categories, research that relies on those typologies will lead to flawed results... as these distinctions may no longer be valid” (p. 63). While Miller’s argument pertains to the evolving nature of terrorism, a similar line of logic can be applied to violent actors more broadly, and the central point remains: we must understand how categories and typologies of violent actors are evolving to understand their subsequent impacts.

Methodological Approach to Conflation

To address the issue of conflation and aid in developing a more nuanced understanding of VCEs, Kelshall and Archutowski (2019) developed a framework that does precisely this (see Appendix B). The approach was inspired by Charles Handy’s (1995) *Gods of Management: The Changing Work of Organisation* wherein Handy identifies four unique management styles that indicate the culture of an organisation. Each form of management was inspired by and named after a particular Greek God—Zeus, Apollo, Athena, and Dionysius—each representing a specific set of characteristics that determine their actions and decisions (Handy, 1995). Handy (1995,) notes that “the management of organisations is not a precise science but more of a creative and political process, owing much to the prevailing culture and tradition in that place at that time” (p. 5). Therefore, it can be argued that the management of organisations can evolve from one God to another, representing adaptations to their environment. With this in mind, it is important to understand that the definitions of each God are not exclusive, but can, in some circumstances, overlap or coexist.

Through an analysis of 128 case studies over multiple years, Handy's framework was interpreted by Kelshall and Archutowski (2019) to clearly represent five distinct categories of VCEs (or 'Gods of Violence') which could be distinguished across six key areas: control systems, power structures, organisational structure, routines and rituals, symbols, and stories. The VCEs in the study were categorised as terrorists, organised crime syndicates, gangs, violent transnational social movements (VTSMs) (see Kelshall, 2019) and hybrid violent actors. The hybrid actors were established as those which blurred across the boundaries of each typology and crossed multiple segments (Kelshall et al., 2024). The TREX framework demonstrates how the essential characteristics of each VCE are fundamentally different, and it highlights how each actors' motivations, uses of violences, and structures differ significantly to inform their actions (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019; Kelshall, et al., 2024).

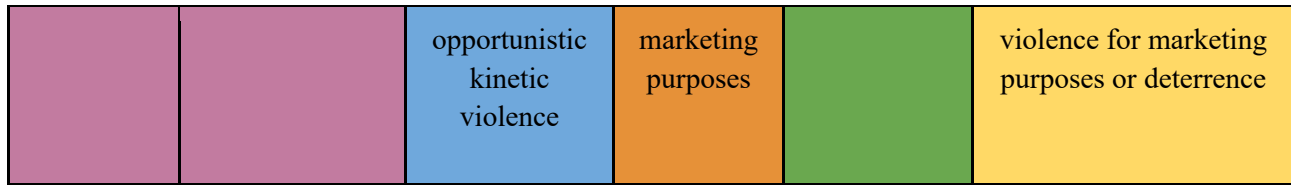
This research applies the TREX framework to analyse a single case study—G9—to explore a conceptual issue as outlined above. Its methodological approach is to apply a simplified version of the TREX framework to demonstrate the fact that not only is G9 not a gang, but rather it is a hybrid actor that *blends* characteristics from gangs, terrorists, and organised crime groups, essentially traversing multiple VCE segments. The original TREX matrix has been reduced to a version (see Table 1) that focuses on the distinctions between gangs, organised crime syndicates, terrorists, and hybrid violent actors; it has also reduced the characteristics of each group to those deemed most significant for this case study. This reduction was necessary due to the limited scope of this research, as well as to emphasise the most significant overlaps of the most critical characteristics, enabling clearer understanding of how G9 operates at the intersections of each of these VCEs. By concentrating on these key distinctions, the reduced matrix allows for more precise analysis and concentrated framework for context-specific mitigation and intervention.

This research includes primary and secondary sources, including analysis of direct quotes from Chérizier, data from government and UN reports, and media accounts to provide a comprehensive understanding of G9's operations, organisational structure, and the socio-political context in which it exists. In doing so, this study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on non-state violent actors, challenging traditional categorisations and highlighting the complexities involved in understanding groups like G9 within contemporary security frameworks.

Table 1

Reduced TREX Framework

	Characteristic	Gangs	Organised Crime	Terrorists	Hybrid Violent Actors
Control System	Structure	Managed	Centralised	Small insular command group	One core; organisation is used as a platform for several non-state actors that may or may not be directly associated with the organisation
	Motivation	Power projection focused	Reputation focused	Goal and mission focused	Goal oriented and profit maximisation; motivations may vary by factions
Power Structure	Group Objective	Prestige	Territory for profit	Political or ideological objective	Territory for profit, sometimes mixed with political or ideological objective; objectives vary by factions
Routines and Rituals	Capacity for Violence	Unpredictable	Disciplined	Controlled and mission-focused	Can be disciplined but some factions may resort to unpredictability
Symbols	Violence Rationale	Violence to show power	Violence for market expansion and protection	Violence to attract media attention to cause	Deterrence and expansion but can also be to show power and attract media attention
	Group Visibility	Territorial tagging, colours, and	Kinetic turf-based violence for	Not visible	Some factions are more visible than others. Kinetic turf-based



Note. Adapted from Kelshall & Archutowski (2019)

3. Haiti's Evolution of Political Violence & The Emergence of G9

The Path to the Present

The history of the Haitian nation is inextricably intertwined with conflict and revolutionary violence; depicting a “story full of war and revolution, the rise and fall of kings and countries, the end of empires and the birth of new nations; but also, a tragic one of debt and dependency” (Beckett, 2019, p. 1). As mapping Haiti’s history from inception to modern day is beyond the scope of this research, this paper instead narrows the scope of analysis to begin in the 1950s as the instigating era of the contemporary systemic threat.

Former Haitian President Francois “Papa Doc” Duvalier, whose dictatorship lasted longer than any other in Haiti’s history (1957-1971), has largely been credited with initiating the phenomenon of political leaders weaponising armed groups to act as personal militias in Haiti (James, 2010; GI-TOC, 2022). However, the repressive tactic pre-dated Duvalier’s regime and was in fact borrowed from African states in their trajectory towards independence from colonialism in the mid-1900s (de Heredia, 2018; Raleigh, 2016). The dynamics can be observed across many African states whose post-colonial leaders mimicked (see Naipaul, 1967) the use of violent armed groups from their colonial rulers as one of the key agents of political violence (Raleigh, 2016). The use of such groups became particularly common in the trajectory of decolonisation and the path to independence in African nations which created the conditions for militias to act as private forces for political elites with the perpetration of violence incentivised by institutions (Raleigh, 2016; Tapscott, 2019). In these contexts, the militias “operate as private armies for political elites” (Raleigh, 2016, p. 284), such as the Janjaweed in Sudan and the Young Patriots in Ivory Coast.

The pattern traversed to Haiti wherein after a failed coup attempt in 1958, Duvalier assembled his own weaponised armed groups in the form of what came to be known as the *tontons macoutes*, meaning ‘bogeymen’ in Haitian Creole (James, 2010). Duvalier’s *macoutes* inflicted repressive tactics to eliminate

political enemies, purposefully leverage a climate of terror, targeted categories of individuals formerly considered ‘innocents’ (women, children, and the elderly), recruited disenfranchised individuals, and deployed tools of social control, including extortion and torture (James, 2010; Trouillot, 1990; GI-TOC, 2022). As Trouillot (1990) observed, “Duvalierist violence recognised as legitimate targets *all* individuals who had a relationship with a political subject, regardless of the nature of that relationship...infants were raped and killed for offenses against the state committed by cousins twice removed, or even by former neighbours” (p. 168). In essence, Duvalier brought violent manipulation and the corruption of cultural norms to unprecedented level in what has been argued to amount to the normalisation of Haitian state-sponsored violence (Trouillot, 1990; James, 2010). The impact was so significant that Achille Mbembe termed the spread of such forms of repression into other states as a lapse into “*tonton macoutism*” (2001, p. 83).

Duvalier’s rule ended when he died in 1971, which led to his son, Jean-Claude inheriting the Presidency until he was removed in 1986. Jean-Claude Duvalier’s regime mirrored that of his father, and was characterised by corruption, authoritarianism, and violent repression. Following the Duvalier regimes, turbulence has continued to overwhelm Haiti’s political sphere; coups, contested elections, fraud, corruption, and mass protests have continued to plague the country (GI-TOC, 2022). Critically, what has also remained a consistent characteristic is the use of informal armed groups by political parties to intimidate political opponents and disrupt electoral processes (GI-TOC, 2022). Such groups of “mobile sovereigns” (James, 2010, p. 68) have perpetrated civilian massacres, violently targeted uprisings, and conducted politically motivated assassinations (GI-TOC, 2022). It is important to note that the use of violent groups for political aims, such as the *tontons macoutes*, did not originate with Duvalier as they are well documented in states with a history of colonisation. He did, however, import the trend to Haiti and engrave the normalisation of extreme levels of political violence into the subconscious of the nation. Thus, it must be through this lens that we evaluate Haiti’s current conditions. In many ways, Haiti’s contemporary ‘gang crisis’ can be traced back to the historic formation and deployment of militias for political gain by leaders.

The Formation and Expansion of G9

Perhaps predictably, the use of violent groups resembling Duvalier’s *macoutes* under the apparatus of the Haitian state has transcended the present. Many position Chérizier’s relationship with then-Haitian President Jovenel Moïse

(2017-2021) as the foundation for the emergence of G9 (Insight Crime, 2023a; GI-TOC, 2022). Prior to founding G9, Chérizier was discharged from the national police service in 2018, following extensive links to a wide range of massacres, attacks on civilians, and human rights violations (HRW, 2022; IHRC, 2021; Insight Crime, 2023b). The most prolific of which ultimately culminated in his dismissal from the service; the 2018 La Saline massacre was the country's worst episode of killings in over a decade and saw the death of upwards of 70 civilians, including women and children, whose bodies were dismembered and burned in the streets, in addition to the rape of 11 women, and the destruction of 150 homes (IHRC, 2021). Even after his dismissal from the police service and having a warrant issued for his arrest, Chérizier—along with his Delmas 6 gang with whom he had longstanding ties—continued to receive funding, weapons, uniforms, and vehicles from the Moïse regime (Insight Crime, 2023a). At this time, mass protests were sweeping across the capital as Haitians demanded that Moïse resign amid rising violence, economic crisis, extensive corruption, and political scandal (Insight Crime, 2023a; Associated Press, 2019). Chérizier's subsequent announcement of his G9 federation, bringing together nine smaller gangs under the umbrella of G9, appeared geared towards supporting the Moïse regime, in alignment with past political figures using armed groups to repress opponents and maintain control (Insight Crime, 2023a; GI-TOC, 2022; IHRC, 2021). Allegations contended that Moïse “allowed the G9 and its affiliated gangs to gain power in Port-au-Prince by granting impunity to cause harm in opposition-dominated neighbourhoods” (GI-TOC, 2022, p. 10).

When President Moïse was assassinated in July of 2021, his recently appointed Prime Minister, Ariel Henry, assumed the Presidency under an agreement with the opposition that he would step down in February of 2024 to allow for national elections (Al Jazeera, 2024a; Morland, 2024). Following Henry's ascension to President, Chérizier urged Haitians to protest Henry's Presidency and accused opposition leaders and the police service of conspiring to kill Moïse (Morland, 2024). The loss of its core sponsor, did not, however, seem to have a quantifiable impact on G9; the federation instead leveraged the instability in the aftermath of Moïse's assassination to expand its territory and take over key infrastructure, including the nation's largest oil terminal (Insight Crime, 2023a). To further his cause—namely, the removal of Moïse—Chérizier instigated repressive tactics, such as the blockade of the oil terminal, looting, and the burning of homes, to force Henry's resignation (Morland, 2024). At this point, in 2022, state insecurity in Haiti was distressingly clear and grievances about the growing uncertainty of elections, widespread violence and rape, the destruction of homes, and food

insecurity proliferated the country (Morland, 2024; GI-TOC, 2022). Chérizier's grievances, more specifically, are also well-documented through his speeches: "If Ariel Henry doesn't resign, if the international community continues to support him, we'll be heading straight for a civil war that will lead to genocide" and "[e]ither Haiti becomes a paradise or a hell for all of us. It's out of the question for a small group of rich people living in big hotels to decide the fate of people living in working-class neighbourhoods" (Al Jazeera, 2024a, para. 8).

Chérizier's maintenance of links, even after Moïse's death, to the ruling *Tèt Kale* (PHTK) party (Insight Crime, 2023a), also follows the historical patterns of collaboration between political elites and armed groups. In the quid pro quo arrangement, state officials and members of the PHTK have been accused of awarding members of G9 immunity from police and law enforcement in exchange for the group securing votes on behalf of the party and quelling civil unrest (RNDDH, 2020; Insight Crime, 2023a). Similarities can thus be observed between Duvalier's *tontons macoutes* and G9, making the emergence of an enterprise such as G9 significantly more contextualised. This said, it is critical to maintain that many of G9's characteristics nonetheless lay outside the parameters of the groups that precede it; it is instead a force in and of itself, as will be illustrated in the following sections.

Beyond a Gang: The Need for a New Typology

While Haiti's current crisis has ties to the historic use of armed groups for political aims, the contemporary phenomenon as embodied by G9 and G-Pep², has become its own threat. The federations constitute an organising force for young Haitians; they are heavily armed with military-grade equipment (often surpassing that of the national police); and are driven by profit, power, and political goals (GI-TOC, 2022). In contrast to traditional gangs whose activities tend to focus on crime such as narcotics trafficking, larceny, theft, and assault (OJJDP, n.d.), the following section explores the range of activities undertaken by G9 wherein the group's activities far surpass the normative framework of gang activity. Specifically, the key activities of the enterprise can be categorised under three main areas: 1) electoral services, 2) economic profit, and 3) politically motivated violence.

² G9's main rival, G-Pep was also formed in 2020 as an alliance of gangs which acts as the opposition's party weapon to counter the influence of G9 (Insight Crime, 2023a; GI-TOC, 2022; GI-TOC, 2024b), further demonstrating the tendency of political elites to deploy armed groups for political gain.

Table 2

G9 Overview of Activity

Electoral Services	Campaigning— including the distribution of pamphlets in their territories in support of their affiliated candidates (GI-TOC, 2022).
	Voter intimidation— door-to-door lobbying among the inhabitants in their territories, including forcing people to vote for a particular candidate through intimidation (GI-TOC, 2022).
	Bribery— giving money/ donations to voters on behalf of candidates (GI-TOC, 2022).
	Vandalism —including ballot stuffing in favour of their candidates and destroying polling stations in areas where their candidates are polling poorly (GI-TOC, 2022).
	Fundraising—raising money for their affiliated candidates’ campaigns through extortion (GI-TOC, 2022).
	Disruption— organising protests against opponents and suppressing those of opponents (GI-TOC, 2022).
Economic Profit	Kidnappings and ransoms— kidnapping victims and releasing once ransom terms are met (GI-TOC, 2024; Insight Crime, 2023b; IHRC, 2021; HRW, 2023).
	Raiding and looting—stealing food, fuel, and other supplies (GI-TOC, 2024; IHRC, 2021; HRW, 2023).
	Extortion— taking mandatory ‘protection payments’ from businesses, vendors, and public transportation drives. This

	<p>can also include the taking over of public services, such as customs, public markets, distribution networks, and exits and entrances to key areas, and charging for their use (GI-TOC, 2022; GI-TOC, 2024b; Insight Crime, 2023b; IHRC, 2021; HRW, 2023).</p>
<p>Politically Motivated Violence</p>	<p>Assassinations and mass violence— used to repress uprisings or to achieve political objectives over decades in Haiti³. Large-scale attacks on communities, politicians and journalists, high levels of violence, mass kidnappings and large-scale forced displacements.⁴ (GI-TOC, 2022; GI-TOC, 2024b; Insight Crime, 2023b; IHRC, 2021; HRW, 2023).</p>
	<p>Country locks—referring to violent mass protests, roadblocks, and strikes over the past few years to force the resignation of President Moïse prior to his assassination (GI-TOC, 2024b; IHRC, 2021).</p>

With the above in mind, it becomes increasingly evident that G9 does not operate within typical gang parameters and therefore does not fit clearly into any predefined typology. As such, the need for an introduction of a new typology of violent actor that more accurately captures the essence of G9 is apparent. The following section outlines such a typology— a hybrid violent actor— and demonstrates how G9 best fits into this categorisation. This new classification will not only enhance our understanding of G9 but also provide a more effective framework for developing targeted strategies to address the threat it poses.

³ For example, in 2020, G9 was alleged to have killed an estimated 145 civilians in Cité Soleil and raping multiple women “in efforts to claim areas held by rivals with ties to Moïse’s political opponents” (IHRC, 2021, p.4). The organisation was similarly accused of carrying out an armed attack in Bel-Air under instruction from the Moïse administration, killing 24 people and setting fire to homes, after protests in the area escalated into a nationwide shutdown (IHRC, 2021).

⁴ Many of which, under Article 7 of the Rome Statute, constitute crimes against humanity as committed as “part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population that is carried out pursuant to a state or organisational policy” (IHRC, 2021, p. 5).

4. Introducing a New Typology of Violent Actor

As indicated in Section 2, the Terrorist and Extremist Matrix (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019) demonstrates the essentialisms of five violent actor (gangs, organised crime, VTSMs, terrorists, and hybrid actors) to illustrate that the intrinsic qualities of each are profoundly different. While it is acknowledged that reality tends to be messier and blurrier, the TREX matrix nevertheless discerns some common patterns across different types of violent enterprises. The adapted framework used in this research considers four VCEs—gangs, organised crime syndicates, terrorists, and hybrid actors—across four core areas: control systems, power structures, routines and rituals, and symbols. This research focuses on the hybrid violent actor as an amalgamation of various traits from the other VCEs to demonstrate how G9 can be best understood as a hybrid actor (see Table 1).

Control Systems

Structure

The control system of the hybrid violent actor is characterised as having one centralised core, an element borrowed from terrorist groups which tend to have a small insular command group as well as organised crime syndicates that exhibit centralised command structures (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019). G9 exhibits a structure that extends beyond a typical gang's managed system and instead applies a centralised core evidenced through Chérizier's chief leadership role, in conjunction with other senior members of his Delmas 6 gang, including James Alexander, Christ Roy Chery, Micanor Altès, and Matias Saintil (RNDDH, 2020; Insight Crime, 2023a). Little is known about the specifics of the other affiliates of the enterprise, although it is alleged that many occupying high ranks within G9 are former (or serving) law enforcement officers, members of the PHTK's political base, former military personnel, and deportees (RNDDH, 2020; GI-TOC, 2022). It has even been argued that part of G9's notoriety can be attributed to the diversity of its membership, allowing it strong footholds in a range of arenas (Coto, 2022). G9 additionally acts as a platform for several non-state actors illustrated by its connections with other non-state groups, G-Pep for instance, with whom G9 currently collaborates, but is not "directly associated" (Insight Crime, 2023a; GI-TOC, 2022; GI-TOC, 2024b).

Motivation

The motivations of hybrid actors are identified as goal-oriented and driven by profit maximisation (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019), which can similarly be observed within G9. Chérizier remains goal-oriented in his pursuit of forcing the removal of President Henry from office and “freeing Haiti” (Al Jazeera, 2024d) which has been both consistently stated and outwardly pursued through a range of tactics seeking to weaken the state and delegitimise Henry’s regime (Insight Crime, 2023a; Al Jazeera, 2024a; Morland, 2024; GI-TOC, 2022; GI-TOC, 2024a). Chérizier even depicts himself as a revolutionary, likening himself to figures such as Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Fidel Castro (Louis & Siemaszko, 2024), contending in an interview with Al Jazeera that his G9 is “fighting for another society... another Haiti that is not only for the 5 percent of the people who keep all the wealth, but a new Haiti where everyone can have food and clean water, so they can have a decent house to live, another Haiti where we don’t have to leave the country” (Al Jazeera, 2022). In the same interview, following a meeting between CARICOM leaders on how to counter Haiti’s ‘gang crisis’, Chérizier was quoted as proclaiming that “We’re not going to recognise the decisions that CARICOM takes...I’m going to say to the traditional politicians that are sitting down with CARICOM, since they went with their families abroad, we who stayed in Haiti have to take the decisions...It’s not just people with guns who’ve damaged the country but the politicians too”, later adding that he opposes plans to establish a transitional council composed of representatives of all of Haiti’s political parties (Al Jazeera, 2024b). He further told reporters “Now our fight will enter another phase – to overthrow the whole system, the system that is five percent of people who control 95 percent of the country’s wealth” (Al Jazeera, 2024b). Chérizier even stated that he would “put guns in the hands of every child if we have to” (Coto, 2022, para. 3) in order to achieve his goals. These excerpts from interviews provide deeply revealing insights into how Chérizier views not only himself but also the central motivators behind G9’s actions and activities.

In this respect, while Chérizier’s assertions of occupying a role as a community leader aiming to fill the spaces left by an inept state and fighting an unequal and corrupt system are consistent (Al Jazeera, 2024b), his actions, however, may be interpreted otherwise. In a 2022 interview, Chérizier told the Associated Press that he was “inspired” (Coto, 2022, para. 4) by Duvalier and his leadership, along with Duvalier naming himself President-for-life. Similarly, his unwavering rejection of international assistance/intervention in Haiti, including threatening civil war in the event of an international mission to the country (Al Jazeera, 2024a), indicates that a strong motivator for the G9 leader is the maintenance of

power. This suggests that as much as Chérizier does seek to have President Henry removed from government and to initiate change in Haiti, another, perhaps equal, motivator for the G9 leader is his own maintenance and consolidation of power.

In terms of the hybrid violent actor's pursuit of profit maximisation (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019), this can also be observed in G9 through its economic profit activities (see Table 2), including but not limited to extortion and kidnappings for ransoms (GI-TOC, 2024b; Insight Crime, 2023b; IHRC, 2021; HRW, 2023). In 2023 alone, over 2,400 people in Haiti were kidnapped, constituting a 119% increase compared to 2022 (UNIOH, 2024b). The organisation additionally conducts electoral services (see Table 2) in exchange for payment by political elites (GI-TOC, 2022). Profit maximisation tactics by G9 further extend to other illicit activities, such as weapon smuggling and drug trafficking (Kestler-D'Amours, 2024). Based on findings from a 2020 report conducted by the CNDDR, it is estimated that there could be approximately 500,000 weapons in the country, with the "vast majority in circulation believed to be illegal" (CNDDR, 2020; UNODC, 2023, p. 16).

Traditional gangs, on the other hand, have a specified focus on power projection (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019), and would not have the capacity to engage in profit maximisation and goal-oriented action to the extent that G9 does. In this sense, G9's dedicated focus on its goals and profit is indicative of its overlap with terrorists and organised crime groups. This is especially inconsistent with gangs largely because gangs are simply not equipped with the structure, discipline, nor capacity to carry out such pursuits. The political backing and reach afforded to G9 to support the pursuit of its goals is not something that gangs would be anticipated to possess, nor would we expect to observe prototypical gangs benefiting from near-absolute immunity from law enforcement.

Power Structure

Group Objective

The objectives of hybrid actors are identified as using territory for profit the way organised crime syndicates do and pursuing political and/or ideological objectives similar to terrorists (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019). When applied to G9, seeking territory for profit can be observed through its 'protection payment' scheme where "public institutions and private sector groups operating [in G9's territory] are routinely forced to pay protection money to allow them to operate" (GI-TOC, 2022, p. 15). The enterprise additionally profits from "customs, public

markets, vendors, and public-transport stations” (GI-TOC, 2022, p. 14) in the territories it controls. It has even been reported that G9 “has taken complete control of public services such as electricity and water provision in exchange for payment” (Insight Crime, 2023a, para. 2).

The pursuit of a political objective, a pivotal aspect to VCEs in the Global South (Pereda, 2022, p. 620), can also be evidenced through Chérizier’s endeavour to force President Henry’s resignation (Insight Crime, 2023a; Al Jazeera, 2024a; GI-TOC, 2024a). To accomplish this, Chérizier has deployed several mechanisms aimed at “reinforc[ing] instability” (Paarlberg, 2022, p. 3) and weakening state institutions to delegitimise President Henry. These mechanisms include calling for an armed overthrow of the President (Morland, 2024), threats of civil war (Al Jazeera, 2024a), assaults on two of the nation’s largest prisons leading to the escape of thousands of inmates (Al Jazeera, 2024c), and forcing the closure of the national airport, schools, universities, and businesses (Al Jazeera, 2024d).

With the above in mind, G9s objectives can be more accurately understood under the bracket of hybrid groups, which are focused on territory for profit and political and/or ideological objectives (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019). Gangs, and its members, however, seek the establishment of a reputation of power and prestige in their respective territories (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019) which can give members a sense of individual power (Capozzoli & McVey, 2000; Brantingham et al., 2012), an element less actively pursued by G9.

Routines and Rituals

Capacity for Violence

With respect to G9’s capacity for violence, hybrid actors demonstrate discipline in their application of violence, like organised crime and terrorists, although some factions may still result to unpredictable uses of violence (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019). This can be observed clearly in G9’s truce with G-Pep — *viv ansanm*, meaning “live together” in Haitian Creole— which, since February 2024, has “taken root [as] criminal groups have got used to working together in the coalition... even though sporadic conflicts have occurred between them” (GI-TOC, 2024a, p. 6). This demonstrates that while G9 generally embodies a disciplined approach to violence in relation to its coalition with G-Pep, some degree of unpredictability remains, likely due to G9 and G-Pep’s past rivalry. The two federations previously conducted intense attacks against one another to

gain territory, particularly in Cité Soleil which acted as a “battleground” (Roper, 2024, para. 6; Mistler-Ferguson, 2022) for the conflict (see Appendix A). Moreover, the truce acts as a force multiplier in the region as two of the most significant threats have concentrated their efforts on a shared goal, rather than expending resources fighting one another, illustrating a controlled and disciplined approach typically observed within organised crime syndicates and terrorist groups.

Disciplined applications of violence can further be observed through G9’s increasingly coordinated use of violence where perpetrations of attacks are predominantly enacted to serve a strategic aim (GI-TOC, 2024a; GI-TOC, 2024b)—like terrorists (controlled and mission-focused)— rather than as gratuitous violence, typically associated with gangs (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019). G9’s strategic shift in its uses of violence has been well-documented through “systematically targeting key public and private institutions” and “mov[ing] from a strategy of maximum pressure, marked by daily, simultaneous attacks on multiple points of the city to more punctuated targets” (GI-TOC, 2024a, p. 6) indicating a transition to more strategic objectives. Such a shift invariably requires a level of discipline and restraint that is instrumental within hybrid organisations, as widespread unpredictability is simply incompatible with achieving strategic goals.

Symbols

Violence Rationale

The rationale behind applications of violence for hybrid actors has been identified as threefold, in the form of deterrence, expansion, and the attraction of media attention; fusing market expansion rationales from organised crime syndicates and violence to attract media attention from terrorists (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019). In contrast to gangs, whose violence rationale is purely to show power (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019), G9’s strategic use of violence deviates from this as its rationale for violence aligns more clearly with that of hybrid actors. G9’s affinity for deterrence and expansion is broad, and quantifiable in its offensive and defensive attacks to maintain (and expand) its territory, particularly against G-Pep before the *viv ansanm* coalition (Mistler-Ferguson, 2022). Outbreaks of fighting in July 2022 were so intense that thousands were trapped by the violence, “unable to leave their homes and with no access to water, electricity, healthcare, or functioning toilets” (MSF, 2022, para. 1).

G9, and particularly Chérizier, have featured often, and consistently, in the media since 2020, evidenced by 3,700,000 search results for “G9 gang”; 1,160,000 results for “G9 Haiti”; and 352,000 results for “Jimmy Chérizier” (see Appendix C). Additionally, on YouTube, a 2024 interview with Chérizier, by Sky News has amassed 3,200,000 views and an interview with Al Jazeera in 2021 has 1,700,000 views and one in 2023 has 1,200,000 views (see Appendix C). Chérizier has featured in seemingly countless interviews with a range of reporters and news agencies, described by one source as “welcom[ing] a succession of foreign reporters to his gangland domain” (Phillips & Taylor, 2024, para. 5). This characteristic is incompatible with traditional gang leaders who extend considerable effort to remain unknown; they blur/cover their faces in photos, avoid direct media engagement, and use aliases in an effort to conceal their identity from law enforcement, and occasionally, from opposition gangs (see Appendix D) (Harron, 2022). In perhaps the most prolific instance of engaging online platforms to gain attention, Chérizier took to social media in 2020 to introduce his G9 federation and to name its core members (RNDDH, 2020). The social media/online activity of Chérizier is entirely opposite to that which is typically observed with gang members as he not only makes no effort to conceal his identity, nor that of his enterprise, but rather engages in activity that suggests he *wants* to be known.

Group Visibility

Hybrid actors demonstrate a range of visibility across factions (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019), which is consistent with G9. Testimonies depict a diverse profile of affiliates wherein some are seen as “effective protectors, particularly against attacks by rival gangs...they are also seen as de facto authorities capable of maintaining a semblance of organised daily life” (GI-TOC, 2024a, p. 6). These members of G9, however, do not tend to feature in the media (GI-TOC, 2024a) and remain clandestine, similar to most terrorists (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019). Although, there are a number of well-known G9 affiliates who, according to a 2020 report by the Haitian Réseau National de Défense des Droits Humains (National Human Rights Defense Network) are highly visible within the political sphere as they “participate in high-level meetings, are consulted by state authorities and their advice is taken into account” (p. 22), demonstrating the group’s hybrid nature. For instance, under the recommendation of G9, Frantz Iderice, reportedly the relative of high-ranking G9 member Iscar Andrice, was appointed in June 2020 as the head of Caisse d'Assistance Social (CAS) (RNDDH, 2020). This demonstrates a spectrum of visibility across factions,

consistent with hybrid actors (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019). Furthermore, G9's involvement in high-level political consultations and its visible role in Haiti's socio-political landscape marks a significant divergence from conventional gang behaviour, revealing the hybrid nature of its operations.

It was further observed by Kelshall and Archutowski (2019) that hybrid actors may occasionally be visible in the context of kinetic turf-based violence for marketing or expansion purposes, in alignment with organised crime groups, which can be evidenced, largely prior to the *viv ansanm* coalition, in confrontations between G9 and G-Pep. Large parts of the capital city of Port au Prince, namely in Cité Soleil, lower Delmas, and Carrefour, were routinely affected by spells of “skirmishes and fighting” (Ives, 2022, para. 4) as G9 sought to expand its territory into neighbourhoods traditionally controlled by G-Pep (Mistler-Ferguso, 2022). Gangs, however, only tend to exert visibility through territorial tagging and opportunistic violence (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019) — an aspect, which again, presents inconsistencies when compared to G9s group visibility.

5. Significance and Implications: Surpassing Semantics

While the above section demonstrates why G9 can be better understood as a violent hybrid actor, the following section illustrates the significance and implications of this classification and how context-specific policy and law enforcement approaches that incorporate accurate classification can enable the development of more effective mitigation and disruption measures. Such understandings can aid in designing approaches that are not only reactive but also proactive, aimed towards addressing the underlying structures that support and promote the existence and growth of hybrid violent actors.

The Significance of Proper Classification

First and foremost, the significance of conceptualising G9 as a violent hybrid actor, rather than as a gang, can aid in the inclusion of specific measures focused on the essentialisms of the enterprise that would otherwise remain concealed under inaccurate labelling. As law enforcement and policy approaches to violent crime differ significantly based on the type of actor being targeted, the accurate classification of actors is of critical importance. For instance, while counterterrorism tactics may emphasise the interdiction of ideological networks, anti-gang tactics may instead focus on community-based engagement initiatives and the disruption of illicit markets. In G9's labelling as a gang, its motivations

and intentions are likely to be viewed in parallel with typical gangs as power projection and the commission of criminal acts (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019; NIJ, 2011). Whereas, as demonstrated, G9's true intentions extend far beyond this, and the principal way to disrupt the enterprise is to impair its ability to actualise its intentions (Archutowski, 2019). In this sense, if mitigation attempts are focused on disrupting G9's criminal acts, they neglect its political and economic pursuits that continue to weaken the state and delegitimise the Haitian government. More broadly speaking, as observed by Crenshaw (2000), governments and policymakers often assume that violent non-state actors can be "decisively defeated through a forceful and punitive response" (p. 416), however, such responses can reinforce the beliefs that underpin the violent activity of VCEs as they fail to address the core motivations and intentions.

Thus far, the approach to combating G9 has largely disregarded the intricacies of the enterprise; efforts have been predominantly limited to ambivalent sanctions to freeze assets and impose arms embargos (Global Affairs Canada, 2024; UN, 2023; Humanitarian Outcomes, 2023) which has had little impact evidenced by the continued expansion and strengthening of G9 (GI-TOC, 2022; GI-TOC, 2024b). As mitigation measures have thus far proved ineffective, evidenced by the group's continued expansion and progressing lethality, a UN Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission to Haiti headed by Kenya (UN, 2023) was approved in 2023 following pleas from President Henry for international support (Mérancourt & Coletta, 2024). The mandate of the deployment is to "assist Haitian police in securing key infrastructure and fighting criminal groups, which control nearly all the country's capital and are responsible for widespread abuses" (Cottrino, 2024, para. 3), although details outlining a coherent methodology to accomplish these aims remains ambiguous. At its conception, the MSS had a maximum force capacity of 2,500 officers (with Kenya pledging 1,000 officers), a one-year timeline, and was to be financed by a trust fund to which UN countries may contribute (Mérancourt & Coletta, 2024). As of June 2024, an estimated 400 officers were deployed to Haiti, significantly below the maximum force mandate (Institute for Security Studies, 2024). As the groups in Haiti continue to function with increasing lethality, and the MSS faces ongoing logistical and financial obstacles, it risks falling into the same patterns as past missions— exacerbating the crisis rather than alleviating it. The MSS illustrates that poorly tailored responses which oversimplify the motivations of violent actors can consequently solidify their resolve, increase their lethality, and incite further violence (Ginges, 1997; Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019; Kelshall et al.,

2024). It is in this light that the importance of context-specific approaches emerges.

The Importance of Context-Specific Policy and Law Enforcement Approaches

The scholarship and research underscoring the necessity of context-specific approaches to conflict are extensive, yet practical applications of these methods remain largely elusive. Perhaps even more damaging is the tendency to view situations such as Haiti's as a 'breakdown' of a system, rather than "as the emergence of another, alternative system for profit, power, and even protection" (Keen, 2008, p. 15). Fundamentally, Haiti's conditions that have facilitated the rise and emergence of G9 are not the result of an isolated systemic breakdown; the system in question is indeed functioning the way it was crafted, designed, and intended to. This reality is paramount, combined with the fact that the state is a primary actor in the levels of contemporary criminal violence, cannot be forsaken. The incentive of some actors to prolong the insecurity and conflict for an array of reasons, including but not limited to suppressing dissent, personal and political profit, and derailing democracy (Keen, 2008) must all be accounted for when designing appropriate mitigation methods.

The truth remains that the extreme degrees of state-sponsored violence in Haiti are highly impactful:

[M]urder committed by a felon is not the same as one perpetrated by a police or military officer; an extortion ring run by gang members is not the same as one composed of a group of police officers; and a drug dealing operation that is covered up by businessmen is not the same as one that is protected by police chiefs or politicians (Cruz, 2016, p. 377).

The penetration of criminality and criminal groups into critical government junctions facilitates an advanced form of state dysfunction which becomes characterised by the presence of criminal actors (Miklaucic & Brewer, 2013). This can then result in state actors integrating criminal activity into state structures, and subsequently contributing to undermining government functionality and legitimacy (Miklaucic & Naím, 2013). Even more critically, because many Latin American states have traditionally depended on armed groups to cement their authority, law enforcement institutions have failed to increase their capacity to keep pace with such groups and to protect themselves from infiltration (Cruz, 2016). The result, as is the current case in Haiti, is law

enforcement agencies and institutions that are entirely ill-equipped to mitigate or disrupt violent hybrid actors.

While it is beyond the capacity of this research to provide overarching strategies for mitigating the impacts of G9, the solution will invariably rely on nuanced, flexible, and multidisciplinary responses (Zambri 2014; Manwaring, 2005; Crenshaw, 2000). Solely law enforcement-based approaches, such as the Kenyan-led UN MSS, cannot rectify the multitude of insecurities in Haiti. The battle against G9 must be accurately contextualised with an understanding of the actor as intertwined with state institutions and a byproduct of Haiti's historical trajectory, instead of a mere gang. In this light, mitigation efforts that view G9 as a hybrid actor and extend beyond purely targeting the immediate violence inflicted by the organisation can be developed and will have a higher likelihood of creating change. Such efforts should begin with institutional reform and the dismantling of the very structures that facilitate, encourage, promote, and benefit from violence and insecurity (Zambri 2014). Strategies to combat Haiti's violent crisis may also benefit from measures such as establishing a transitional government composed of Haitians who do not have links to corruption, criminal enterprises, or human rights violations (HRW, 2024) to support the state in rebuilding its justice system and prioritising accountability (HRW, 2024). Other measures including anti-corruption reform, targeted aid, youth opportunity programs, and tactics tailored towards addressing the influx of illegal arms and ammunition into the country, as well as capacity-building exercises with law enforcement agencies, would equip Haiti to deal with contemporary threats. Ultimately, only through such holistic and context-aware approaches can Haiti endeavour to dismantle the pervasive influence of G9.

6. Conclusion

Haiti's story continues to unfold in complex and intricate ways wherein its legacy remains one of resilience and defiance. The rise of violent hybrid actors like G9, however, represents a new and perilous chapter in Haiti's story as violence, displacement, and socio-economic turmoil continue to torment the Caribbean nation. Originating with Duvalier's *tontons macoutes*, the use of violent enterprises has been a consistent tool for maintaining power and suppressing opposition in Haiti (James, 2010; GI-TOC, 2022). In recent years, however, the emergence of G9 has come to represent a metamorphosis of the trend.

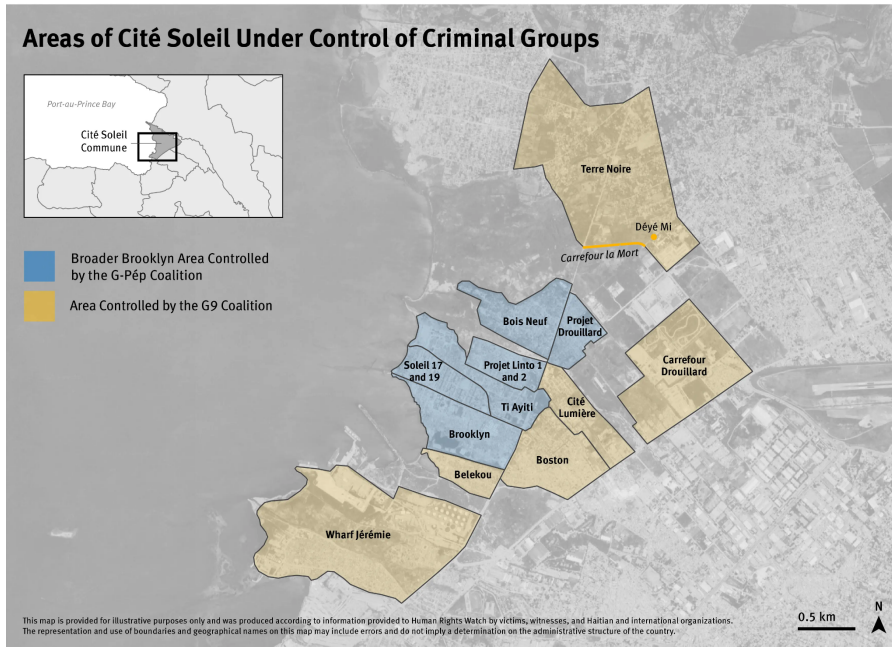
Thus far, national and international responses have been unsuccessful in containing and constraining the influence of the actor due to a seeming insistence

on conceiving G9 as a gang, despite it demonstrating many characteristics outside the normative gang parameters. Instead, through the application of the Terrorism and Extremism Matrix (Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019), this research offers a more nuanced understanding of G9 and argues that it can be better conceived as a violent hybrid actor based on a critical analysis of its structure, motivation, group objectives, capacity for violence, violence rationale, and group visibility, as an enterprise that blends elements of gangs, organised crime syndicates, and terrorist groups. As demonstrated, G9 defies conventional gang categorisation as a hybrid actor with aspirations that surpass mere criminality, extending to dictating politics in ways that are unprecedented in Haiti's history (Fatton, as cited in Kestler-D'Amours, 2024; de Alba, as cited in Kestler-D'Amours, 2024). This evolution underscores the need for a reframing of what constitutes a gang, especially in contexts like Haiti, where post-coloniality creates fertile ground for hybrid entities to thrive.

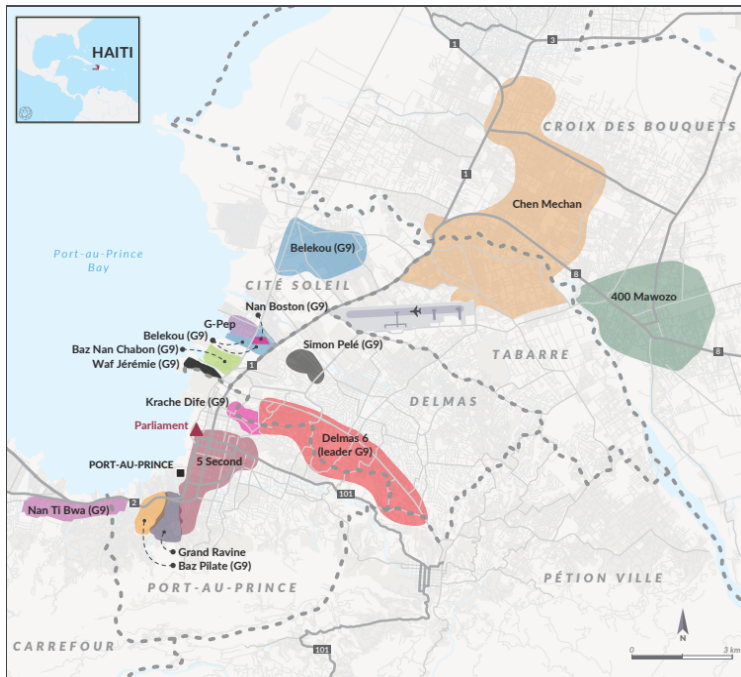
The reclassification proposed in this research has significant implications for law enforcement and policy responses, suggesting that strategies tailored to traditional gangs may be inadequate to address the multifaceted threats posed by G9. In contrast, approaches that incorporate an appreciation of the true nature, intention, and motivation of G9 are crucial for devising effective interventions. The failure to accurately classify G9 as a hybrid actor risks further perpetuating ineffective approaches and exacerbating the crisis (Ginges, 1997; Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019; Kelshall et al., 2024). As Haiti navigates this challenging period, a more nuanced, context-specific approach is necessary to inform policies that can mitigate the violence and support the nation in overcoming yet another formidable challenge in its storied history. As globalisation has created a new security environment where the barriers between domestic, national, and international issues have blurred (Cozine et al., 2014, p. 132), joint interoperability approaches have become increasingly imperative. Furthermore, what also emerges as a reality is that Haiti will need regional, and likely even international support, in designing and implementing strategies to correct its course. The approach, however, must be Haitian-led; Haiti must be at the forefront of rebuilding itself in its own image, free from neocolonial influence as argued in postcolonial scholarship (Fanon, 1961). The enduring implications of Haiti's colonial past cannot be disregarded as colonial violence continues to be revisited, reproduced, and reinterpreted. Haiti's future, as such, remains hinged on recognising and responding to the hybrid threats posed by G9 through joint interoperability with precision and context-specific understandings rooted in the nation's unique historical and socio-political contexts.

Appendix A

G9-controlled Territory



Note. Human Rights Watch, 2023



Note. GI-TOC, 2022

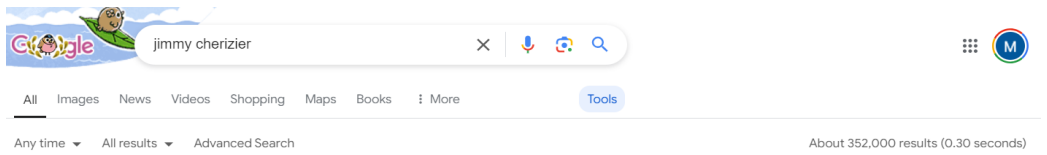
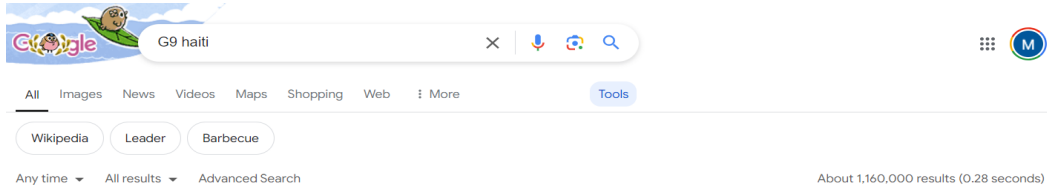
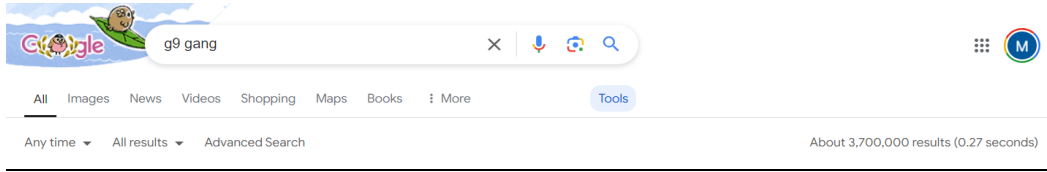
Appendix B

TREX Framework

	Characteristic	Gangs	Organized Crime	Terrorists	VISM	Hybrid organizations
Control Systems	Control system	Managed	Centralised	Small insular command group	Polycentric and reticulate nodes	One core. The organization is used as a platform for several non-state actors that may or may not be directly associated with the organization
	Motivation	Power projection focused	Reputation focused	Goal and mission focused	Dominance-focused	Goal oriented and profit maximization. Motivations may vary by factions of the same group
	Leadership style	Join	Consult	Tell	Sell	Delegate
	Motivations for individual enlistment	Survival	Delegated	Radicalised	Self-Actualized	Hired by specialization
	Technological adoption	In person/direct	Technology heavy	Limited or no electronic interaction with members (planning)	Multiple virtual interactions (forums, chat rooms, threads, comment sections, facebook groups, independent media sources)	Can range from low technology to high technology
	Nature of engagement with group	Contracting	Employees	Disciplined non-state actors	Initiative to actualise doctrine	Hired by specialization or non state actors use organization as a platform
Power Structures	Group Objectives	Prestige	Territory for Profit	Political or ideological objective	Identity-based objective (Not necessarily Territorial)	Territory for profit, sometimes mixed with a political or ideological objective. Objectives may vary by faction of the same group
	Directional impetus	Consent-based (members)	Strategy led (plan of action)	Leader led	Doctrine led (code of beliefs)	Strategy led
	Power structures	Local leaders	Trust and loyalty based authority with proximity to the centre of power	Directors with formal delineated authority	Dispersed polycentric and segmentary nodes of power	A core based on trust and loyalty (can include local leaders), and a weak relationship with employees that are contracted for specific endeavours
Organizational Structure	Reach	Local	Multinational (more than 3) (Global=everywhere)	National	Transnational	National or multinational
	Organizational Structure	Conglomerates	Power emanates from the center	Hierarchical	Amorphously networked	Amorphously networked. The organization may be a platform for action for various actors with different interests
	Group configuration	De-centralized	Centralized	Esoteric (small groups with in-owledge)	Esoteric (outward facing and no-owledge sharing)	Small core, but rest of the structure is decentralized. Factions do not necessarily adhere to the commands of the core
	Structural environment	Thrive in spaces between	Require stability for economic success	Advanced democracies more resilient and better able to resist violent political terrorist actors	Advanced democracies more likely to have vtism because of freedom of speech and assembly (fundamental freedoms)	Require a certain degree stability for economic success but also high levels of corruption
	Organization Growth	Existential existence (here and now)	Branch or chapter creation	Franchising	Fission/fusion/re-creation/rebranding	The organization is used as a platform for various & reliance non state actors. Violence is used for market expansion
Routines and Rituals	Method of Enlistment	Initiation	Induction	Radicalisers (process of education)	TAGs (messengers and amplifiers)	Hired by specialization
	Rituals	Image Projection	Brand-focused	Clandestine	Exhibitionist	Brand-focused. Members or freelance employees may use group's name and symbols
	Circumstances of engagement	Selected	Hired by specialization	Recruited by group process	Not weeded out (received by identity)	Hired by specialization
	Capacity for violence	Unpredictability	Disciplined	Controlled and mission focused	Reduced inhibitions welcomed/consistently violent across interactions	Can be disciplined but some factions may resort to unpredictability
	Mental health determined inhibitions	Situationally dependent	Rational	Reduced inhibitions not desired	Reduced inhibitions an asset	Rational (core) and situationally dependent
	Rational conduct	Follow expectations	Follows Membership rules	Follows orders	Follows doctrine	Opportunistic
	Loyalty	Opportunistic	Corporate loyalty (to ensure that profit continues)	Loyalty to Group and political cause	Segmentary loyalty to identity	Corporate loyalty (core members) and opportunistic (freelance employees)
	Drivers of Kinetic Action	Capability	Kinetic action for Profit	Kinetic violence for strategic gain	Soft violence for dominance over cultural enemies	Kinetic action for Profit (market expansion), protection, and deterrence
	Radicalisation	Referral based radicalization	Recruitment by specialisation	Radicalization rarely occurs in virtual space	Radicalization/self actualization occurs in virtual space	Recruitment by specialisation
	Violence Rationale	Violence to show power	Violence for market expansion and protection	Violence to attract media attention	Violence to attract identity affinity or dominance	Deterrence and expansion but can also be to show power and attract media attention
Symbols	Group Visibility	Territorial Tagging, colours and opportunistic kinetic violence	Kinetic/turf based violence for Marketing purposes	Not Visible	Public displays of identity via soft violence	Some factions may be more visible than others. Kinetic/turf based violence for Marketing purposes or deterrence
Stories	External communication	Bragging	Minimal social media	Social media used to highlight strategic aims and claims to success	Social media used to deepen tribal bonds and build community	Social media is used to address the population. Other types of communication, such as leaflets and physical advertisement can also be used.

Note. Kelshall & Archutowski, 2019

Appendix C



Haiti gang leader 'Barbecue' says he will consider ceasefire
 3.2M views · 4 months ago
 Sky News
 Head of one of the most powerful and notorious gangs in Port-au-Prince, Jimmy Cherizier, also known as 'Barbecue' has spoken ...



Haiti's most powerful gang leader talks to Al Jazeera
 1.7M views · 2 years ago
 Al Jazeera English
 Al Jazeera has spoken exclusively to Haiti's most powerful gang leader. Armed groups now run large parts of the country and ...



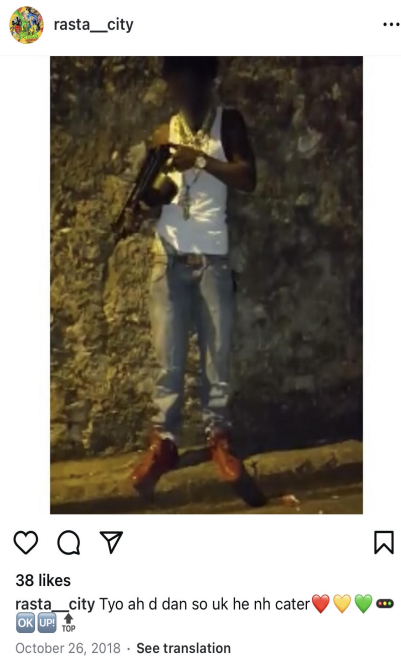
The politicians are the criminals, says Haiti gang boss | Al Jazeera Newsfeed
 1.2M views · 1 year ago
 Al Jazeera English
 Gangs in Haiti have taken over most of its capital city and one of their most powerful leaders is Jimmy 'Barbecue' Cherizier.

Appendix D

Gang Member Social Media/ Online Activity



Note. @rasta_uncle, 2020



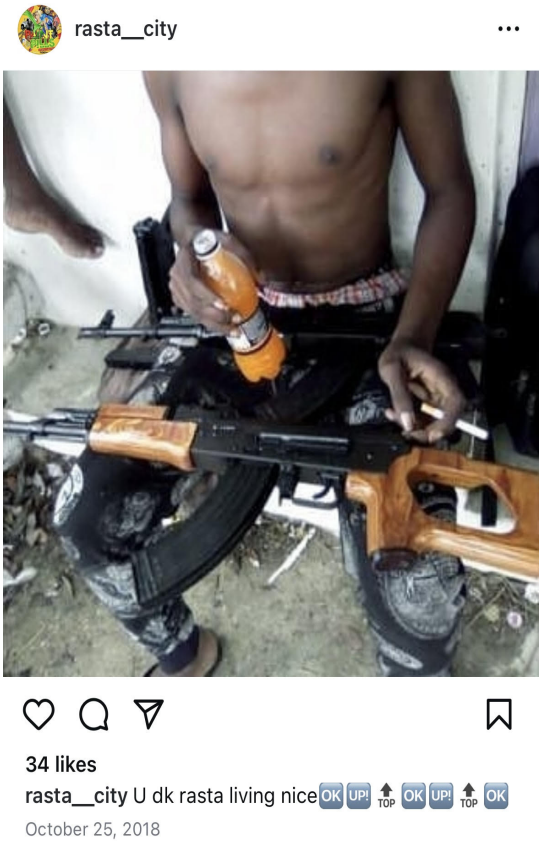
Note. @rasta__city, 2018



Note. @rasta_uncle, 2020



Note. @rasta__city, 2018



Note. @rasta__city, 2018

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