“POLITICAL DECAY AND STATE COLLAPSE: UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENTS IN HAITI SURROUNDING THE OVERTHROW OF JEAN-BERTRAND ARISTIDE”

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INTRODUCTION

On February 29, 2004, the day that Jean-Bertrand Aristide was forced from office as Haiti's President, U.S. President George W. Bush commented on the Haitian crisis for the first time since it had begun to gain momentum earlier in the month. In doing so he expressed hope that Mr. Aristide's departure would mark "the beginning of a new chapter in the country's history." (ABC, 2004, Feb. 29) There is little doubt that Mr. Bush was expecting (or at least hoping) that this would prove to be a more positive chapter in Haiti's history than earlier ones. However, following Mr. Aristide's overthrow, in spite of the presence in the country of an on-going UN peace stabilization force numbering around 9,000 troops, most would conclude that in light of the continuing high level of societal violence and political instability leading to four postponements of scheduled elections (finally carried out in February 2006), at least the first few pages of this new chapter in Haiti's history have proven to be even more trouble filled than those that characterized the Aristide era. Following the latest elections, it remains to be seen whether the situation in Haiti will stabilize or if the country has indeed entered a long-term period of persistent crisis such as engulfed Liberia, Somalia, Angola, and Sierra Leone during the decade of the 1990s.

Two scholars in particular have offered theoretical explanations that can usefully shed light on the processes that led ultimately in 2004, not only to the fall of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, but also to the collapse of the Haitian state: Samuel Huntington's theory of "political decay" (1965) and I. William Zartman's concept of "state collapse" (1995). I propose that, taken together, these two formulations are very helpful in making sense both of the violence that occurred in Haiti leading up to the fall of Aristide and the total collapse of state legitimacy that followed in the wake of his overthrow and flight into exile in 2004.

Huntington advances the possibility of "political decay" as a sobering counterpoint to the notion that political development is a unidirectional, positive phenomenon, arguing that "[a] theory of political development needs to be mated to a theory of political decay." (1965, p, 393) Specifically, Huntington links "political decay" to the inability of the state to deal effectively with the demands of new social groups that have gained power as a result of social mobilization, a process wherein he argues that "the equality of political participation...[grows]... more rapidly than... the 'art of associating together.' " (1965, p. 396)

Given its long-term history of lack of democratic development– Robert Pastor (1997) refers to it as "predemocratic"– Haiti might not appear to be an especially good fit for Huntington's theory. However, it is plausible to argue that just such a mobilization of previously neglected social groups (in this case the vast majority of Haitians), is precisely what happened following the election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide to the Haitian presidency in 1990. Moreover, this was not only a political mobilization, but one that resulted in the dominance of the Lavalas movement/political party throughout the 1990s and into the first years of the new decade. Significantly, it was also one that was strenuously and continually resisted by the Haitian elite, as well as by influential forces in the United States and France.

In elections held in December 1990, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a Roman Catholic parish priest, an exponent of liberation theology and anti-Americanism, situated on the left of the

political spectrum, emerged as the populist champion of Haiti's poor. He swept to victory as the country's president with a phenomenal two-thirds of the popular vote in what has been conceded by all as a "free and fair" election (Stotzky, 1997). He was reelected in late 2000 to a second, non-consecutive, presidential term which began in 2001.

Aristide was viewed by Haiti's impoverished masses as a political savior; however, his populist political ideology and fiery rhetoric were deeply troubling to the Haitian elite and to the United States alike (von Hippel, 2000; Jefferies, 2001;Weiner, 2004, Mar. 1). And, in February 2004, one could make a plausible argument that it was this combination of domestic and international opposition that undermined his political program and ended the second term of his presidency with a resignation and flight into exile that was triggered by a military insurgency mounted against him.

The explanation Aristide gives to the events leading to his overthrow follows very closely to what one would expect based on Huntington's theory of political decay:

> Together...a small minority in Haiti with their allies in foreign countries...said no to elections, because they knew that once they respect the will of the people in a democratic way through free, fair democratic elections, then they will not be able to continue to live in a country where they don't pay tax, where they still have a wall of apartheid, where they continue to consider the coup as if there were not human beings and so and so. (Jean Bertrand Aristide as quoted by Amy Goldman and cited in Engler and Fenton, 2005, p. 20)

Aristide is not alone in reaching this conclusion. According to Peter Hallward, "[f]rom the beginning, the simple presence of the Lavalas government had terrified a large portion of the dominant class." Hallward goes on to quote Robert Fatton who had observed that " '[a]mong the Haitian elite... hatred for Aristide was absolutely incredible, an obsession.' " (Hallward, 2004) Lucson Pierre-Charles levels essentially the same charge against the intransigent Haitian elite and expands further on the implications of Aristide's fall from power: "The ouster of Jean-Bertrand Aristide was orchestrated by and for the ruling minority....Since Aristide's forced departure, the vast majority of Haitians have been marginalized and left with no credible figure to represent their interests." (Pierre-Charles, 2004)

Political pressures resulting from demands arising from previously unrepresented interests, opposed by the dominant elite (in this case leading to an armed insurrection initiated against the democratically elected president), can be seen as a major accelerant in a more general process of "state collapse" that was already well underway in Haiti. As explained by Zartman, state collapse (also referred to as "state failure"–see Estey, et al., 1998) is a relatively new phenomenon and he develops the concept in the context of post-colonial Africa. According to Zartman, "[s]tate collapse is a deeper phenomenon than mere rebellion, coup, or riot. It refers to a situation where the structure, authority (legitimate power), law, and political order have fallen apart and must be reconstituted in some form, old or new." (1995, p. 1) Again, Haiti may not seem to be a good fit for Zartman's formulation, in that it has been independent for 200 years, as opposed to countries in Africa, where independence largely followed World War II.

Nevertheless, the process leading to the collapse of the Haitian state in 2004 has striking parallels to those outlined by Zartman in the environment of post-colonial Africa.

Zartman maintains that state collapse is not a sudden occurrence, resulting from a single event. Rather, he argues, state collapse is "a long-term degenerative disease." (1995, p. 8) State collapse marks the culmination of a series of debilitating crises, each of which further erodes the power and legitimacy of the state to perform its key functions. These key functions are identified by Ali Mazrui as

> First, sovereign control over territory; second, sovereign oversight and supervision (though not necessarily ownership) of the nation's resources; third, effective and national revenue extraction from people, goods, and services; fourth, capacity to build and maintain an adequate national infrastructure (roads, postal services, telephone system, railways, and the like); fifth, capacity to render social services such as sanitation, education, housing, fire brigades, hospitals and clinics, and immunization facilities; and sixth, capacity for governance and maintenance of law and order. (1995, p. 11)

As the central government becomes increasingly weakened, these crucial state functions are no longer being performed, and in turn pass into the hands of regional "warlords and gang leaders" in a process where power, such as it is, gravitates to the periphery (Zartman, 1995, p. 8, see also Gros, 1996; Rotberg, 2002).

BACKGROUND

Haiti may well lay claim to the be world's oldest failing state, as it is possible to trace the origins of state collapse in Haiti back in time literally two hundred years to circumstances surrounding its independence. In any case, few would argue with the assertion that its history has been marked more by crisis than by stability– certainly any stability brought about by other than dictatorial governments.

In understanding the ultimate collapse of the Haitian state following the overthrow of Aristide, an appreciation of its history is essential. Haiti is significantly less developed and a great deal poorer than most countries in the hemisphere, and although its independence dates from 1804, it has had literally no experience with democratic governance. In fact, quite the opposite is the case, as it has experienced virtually uninterrupted dictatorial rule, both domestic and foreign, the latter in the form of a lengthy United States military occupation beginning in1915 and not ending until 1934 (Schmidt, 1971; also see Abbott, 1988). Thus, with respect to Haiti, we have to appreciate that its political problems are those associated with the very *establishment* of democracy, as opposed to those connected to its *restoration*, as has been the case elsewhere in the hemisphere (see Diamond, et al., 1989; Karl and Schmitter, 1991).

Zartman does not deal specifically with possible external contributions to state collapse, however, in the case of Haiti these are undeniably important, both in the long-term process of state collapse and in the specific episode of political violence in 2004 that forced the resignation of President Aristide. While France, the ex-colonial ruler, continued to play a role in Haitian

politics (including in the fall of Aristide), increasingly it was the United States that provided the dominant outside influence in Haitian political affairs.

From the outset the reality of an independent Haiti did not sit well with the international community and hence its legitimacy was challenged; at the time of its independence numerous economic and political obstacles to success were placed in Haiti's path. In that Haitian independence in 1804 emerged at the end of a successful thirteen-year long slave revolt, fears of a similar slave rebellion in the Southern states, coupled with a *rapproachment* with France, in 1806 turned an initial supportive U.S. policy toward Haitian independence into a trade embargo that led to Haiti's isolation from the world economic system. The United States finally extended diplomatic recognition to the Haitian government in the 1860s as a result of its own Civil War which was fought largely over the issue of slavery (Abbott, 1988; Farmer, 2004). France extended diplomatic recognition to the Haitian government in1825, only after the Haitian government agreed to pay compensation in the amount of 150 million francs (later reduced to 90 million) to French slave-holders for their "lost property." At the time this amounted to nearly "ten year's of total revenue for Haiti" and marked the beginning of Haitian international indebtedness which Hallward (2004) cites as leading to latter instances of "gunboat collections" by great powers.

The 20th century would see a dramatic increase in U.S. involvement in Haitian affairs. Few, however, would argue that the overall results of this attention were beneficial to Haiti. During the same period that Europe was colonizing Africa (see Hochschild, 1998), the United States also came of age as a world power. And it was, as geography largely dictated, an area close to home– the Caribbean Basin– that first captured the attention of American imperial thinkers. Further, within the Caribbean, Haiti's strategic position in relation to the Atlantic approaches to a possible inter-oceanic canal, its acute political and financial instability, combined with German interest in acquiring a coaling station on the island, led in 1915 to a U.S. military intervention and occupation of the country that lasted formally until 1934 (Plummer, 1988), with full financial autonomy not restored to Haiti until 1952 (Abbott, 1988).

This intervention and occupation could well be seen as the first major international response to a "failure" of the Haitian state. Indeed the circumstances leading to the 1915 intervention are chillingly similar to those surrounding the February 2004 insurrection against Aristide (see Hrab, 2004). It is, however, impossible here to deal in any sustained way with the American occupation of Haiti which, over a twenty-year period, resulted in between 5,000 and 15,000 Haitian deaths (Hallward, 2004). At best, a summary judgment is that whatever benefits attributed to the occupation in areas of creating economic infrastructure and improving health, were at least off-set by the importation of American-style racism and a refusal on the part of the Americans to give any substantive meaning to the concept of democracy. As a result, the occupation served to strengthen the position of the Haitian elite in relation to the mass of black Haitians (Bellegarde-Smith, 2004; also see Nicholls, 1996; Schmidt, 1971; Millspaugh,1931).

This social, economic, and political divide continues to bedevil the country to this day, as it was the Haitian elite that refused to come to terms with its loss of political power following the mobilization of Haiti's poor that led to Aristide's electoral victories (see Dupuy, 2004). Another

legacy of dubious value stemming from the American intervention was the Haitian army (organized by the Marine Corps as a constabulary force), which quickly took up an unintended role in Haitian politics (McCrocklin, 1956). As evidenced by the February 2004 insurgency against Aristide, that role-- protector of the interests of the Haitian elite-- can be seen to have persisted even after the abolishment of the Army by President Aristide following his restoration to power by the United States in 1994.

While it would be unfair to lay blame for the brutal and bizarre Duvalier dictatorship that began in 1957 at the feet of the United States, American policy certainly set the stage for it, and there is no question that the U.S. supported the Duvaliers (both father and son) at various times during the course of the Cold War (Danner, 1993, Nov. 4). The nearly thirty years of Duvalier family rule, characterized by extraordinary greed, combined with brutal political repression carried out by the feared *tontons macoutes*, proved no less than catastrophic for Haiti (Fauriol, 1988, Wilentz, 1989). The dictatorship led to some of the most talented members of Haitian society (the mulatto elite) being forced into exile and to the political neutering of the Army; significant wealth was transferred out of the country as well (Maingot, 1986-87). The result was that in 1986, when Haiti was finally rid of the Duvaliers, the country was gripped by poverty, illness, and misery, with a huge gap existing between the few who were very rich and the vast majority who were very poor (Hector, 1988). Extreme societal poverty has important political implications. As argued by Robert Fatton Jr., '[s]carcity has meant that those holding political power have used any means available to maintain their position of privilege and authority." (2006, p. 17) As for the Haitian state under the Duvaliers, it had become a tyrannical kleptocracy, lacking in moral authority, and as such, provided a very uncertain foundation upon which to build democratic structures.

The transition from the Duvalier dictatorship to democratic government in Haiti proceeded neither quickly nor easily. A transitional government wrote a new Constitution that sought to place limits on executive power, and, under the guidance of an electoral council, elections were scheduled for the Fall of 1987. An election annulment and two coups d'etat preceded the December 1990 elections that were won decisively by Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who had entered the race late and garnered just over two-thirds of the vote in a multi-candidate field (Nelson and Soderlund, 1992; Bellegarde-Smith, 2004).

Aristide's victory was immediately challenged by Roger Lafontant, the ex-head of Duvalier's *tonton macoutes*, who staged an unsuccessful coup attempt. However, Aristide's good fortune was not to last. In September 1991, with just over six months of his five year presidential term served, he was overthrown in a coup d'etat, this time led by head of the Haitian Army, General Raoul Cédras, who had been appointed to the post by Aristide (Soderlund, 2001).

The three-year period of military dictatorship under Lt. General Raoul Cédras, lasting from September 1991 to September 1994, was marked by serious human rights abuses on the part of the de facto Haitian military government as well as by a crucial disconnect between the "rhetorical" and "operational" dimensions of U.S. foreign policy. While this was more evident under the first Bush administration, neither did the Clinton administration fare especially well in

the eyes of analysts (see Morely and McGillion, 1997), although in the fall of 1994 Mr. Clinton did finally succeed in ridding Haiti of the generals and restoring President Aristide to power.

In terms of understanding Haiti's ultimate political collapse, it is significant to note that little further progress was made on Haiti's path toward democratic stability following Aristide's restoration to the presidency; the country's problems not only persisted, but in fact grew worse over time. It has been claimed that the extent to which initially President Aristide was forced to make compromises with what were seen to be his "radical" positions favouring Haiti's poor majority to ensure his restoration (agreeing to the neo-liberal agenda–privatization and IMF "conditionalities"), weakened him domestically (Fatton, 1997, pp. 146-148). As well, the partisan debates in the United States in 1993 and 1994 regarding Aristide's character and suitability to rule, certainly appeared to have weakened any firm commitment on the part of the Clinton administration to the elected and now restored Haitian president, who was increasingly perceived to be part of the problem (Pastor, 1997, pp. 131-132; see also Stotzky, 1997; von Hippel, 2000; Soderlund, 2003).

There is also the question of how much U.S. and other international aid actually went to the Aristide government, rather than to funding the occupation itself or going to groups actually opposed to him (Engler and Fenton, 2005). In particular, Walt Bogdanish and Jenny Nordberg note that former U.S. Ambassador to Haiti, Brian Curran, charged the International Republican Institute (IRI), a non-profit pro-democracy group that received U.S. government funding, of counseling "the opposition to stand firm and not work with Mr. Aristide, as a way to cripple his government and drive him from power." (2006, Jan. 29, p. I1)

Beginning under the Lavalas government of René Préval (1996-2001), and continuing during Aristide's second term, there was a freeze in foreign aid to Haiti, not only from United States, but from the European Union. This further weakened the Haitian government which was critically dependent on foreign assistance for money to run its programs (Farmer, 2004). Finally, Dan Coughlin and Andrew Reding maintain that the United States protected members of the anti-Aristide paramilitary group FRAPH from being brought to justice and also failed to disarm the Haitian Army after it has been disbanded by President Aristide in 1995 (Coughlin, 1999; Reding, 1996; also see Shamsie, 2004). Whatever the case, it was former members of these groups, most notably Guy Philippe and Louis-Jodel Chamblain, who returned to Haiti from the Dominican Republic in the middle of the February 2004 to play key leadership roles in the insurgency that ultimately forced Aristide's resignation.

It is now clear that during the six years between the restoration of Aristide in 1994 and his reelection to the presidency in 2000 not enough was done to ensure that democracy would not only survive in Haiti, but grow. For failures to move forward under the first Préval administration, Fatton places considerable blame on Aristide, arguing that the former President "maintained his hegemonic presence; he was the power behind Préval's throne. The result was permanent crisis and paralysis, the country suffering from increasing corruption, crime and poverty." (2006, p. 20) In fact, consensus is that neither had democracy put down firm roots, nor had the elected governments (both Aristide's and René Préval's) moved very far in solving the

country's serious economic and social problems (Gros, 1997; Rotberg, 1997; Rotberg, 2003; Donais, 2005).

THE OVERTHROW OF PRESIDENT ARISTIDE

One might have hoped that Mr. Aristide's second five-year presidential term beginning in 2001 would have served to consolidate the modest democratic gains that had been made in Haiti and move the country forward. Not only did this not happen, it exacerbated political divisions in ways that would imperil the fragile democratic practices that were struggling to survive. Aristide's political opponents became increasingly emboldened and, following Huntington's formulation of political decay, the fragmented opposition to his rule turned overtly violent.

The situation in Haiti had deteriorated to the point where in toward the end of February 2004 armed gangs controlled well over half the country and were moving to attack the capital, a situation identified by Zartman as characteristic of states on a trajectory toward collapse (1965, p. 10). At this point, Aristide called upon the international community to support his beleaguered government; France and the United States, however, reiterated their refusal to intervene until a "political solution" has been reached, which by this point entailed Aristide's resignation from the presidency. With Aristide deprived of international support, a decentralized armed insurgency controlling the countryside and poised to launch an offensive on the capital, ultimately provided the catalyst in forcing his departure from the country on the last day of February, 2004. Significantly for Haiti, the events of February 2004 resulted not only in the fall of Aristide, but in what Robert Pastor has called "an absolutely failed state– no institutions, no rule of law, no spirit of compromise, no security." (as quoted in Polgreen and Weiner, 2004, Mar. 3, p. A6)

The crisis that ended Aristide's presidency came to a boil early in February 2004 had deep roots-- both domestic and international. On the domestic side the armed insurgency did not develop without warning as Haitian politics was turning increasingly violent, with opponents of Aristide employing tactics of confrontation and the government responding to these with repression. Similar situations in Africa led Zartman to pose an intriguing question: In the long process of state failure, "[d]id the state collapse because it had turned into an evil or tyrannical institution, in which the necessary balance between coercive and rewarding functions was disrupted in favor of coercion?" (1995, p. 7)

While never reaching a magnitude of repression approaching tyrannical, Aristide's anti-democratic tendencies had become evident early in his second term (Rotberg, 2003). For example, in October 2003, Alexandre Trudeau described Haiti as "back-sliding," with Aristide's "grip of power" becoming "more authoritarian."

> Opposition radio stations have been firebombed by Aristide partisans. A corrupt police force has been involved in mounting human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrests and summary executions. For the hundreds of thousands who lined the streets of Port-au-Prince on October 15, 1994, to greet

Aristide on his return, the promise of democracy and a break with the country's violent past has vanished. (2003, Oct. 27, pp. 31-32)

By mid-December 2003, there were reports of wide-spread rioting directed against Aristide, led by university students who were calling for his resignation. In street battles, President Aristide was supported by the so-called *chimères,* " 'thugs mostly recruited from the slums." Opposed to Aristide, the student cause was supported by a self-described voodoo-inspired "Cannibal Army" screaming "for revenge against Aristide." (Warren, 2003, Dec. 13, p. A14) Significant for later events, Haiti's UN-trained police force was reported as ineffective in controlling the violence, an indication that the state had lost control of its own agents, cited by Zartman as an important marker of state collapse.

Conditions in Haiti did indeed continue to deteriorate. In early January 2004, Peter Goodspeed reported that "the Caribbean's first independent state ... is threatening to collapse in a whirlpool of despair brought on by decades of poverty, violence, political instability and environmental degradation." (Goodspeed, 2004, Jan. 10, p. A13). At the end of the first week of February the first loss of government control of territory was reported, yet another key indicator of impending state collapse. The paramilitary "Cannibal Army" had taken over Gonaïves, Haiti's fourth largest city, capturing the police station and burning the mayor's house, in what was described as "one of the bloodiest confrontations in escalating tensions between the government of the poorest country in the Americas and its opponents." (Trujillo, 2004, Feb. 7, p. A14) About a week following the start of the insurgency, with the death toll climbing to nearly fifty, there were reports of Aristide's supporters mounting a counter offensive in Gonaïves. By this time, however, large portions of the northern part of the country had been captured by insurgents and remained outside of governmental control.

As February progressed the situation for Aristide continued to worsen. In mid-month, with the Haitian police force in disarray and without an army to defend his government, the Haitian President called upon the international community for assistance to put down the insurgency. While the United States did send more Marines to Haiti to guard its Embassy, it refused to send troops to help Aristide's government, holding out instead for what was called a "political solution" to Haiti's problems[1] (Stevenson, 2004, Feb. 18). With most of the north of the country, including Cap-Haïtien, under the control of insurgent forces, whose main leader was the just-returned former Cap-Haïtien Police Chief, Guy Philippe (McParland, 2004, Feb. 17), Aristide's political opponents (the Haitian elite) continued to press for the president's resignation, in addition to the political reforms contained in the internationally brokered compromise to end the crisis (Warren, 2004, Feb. 23).

With insurgent groups, led by amalgam of former Aristide supporters, ex-military, and paramilitary personnel of various stripes controlling the countryside and ready to strike at Port-au-Prince, the Bush administration continued to play hardball with Aristide, offering him protection only if he left the country, and then, only if he took advantage of the offer immediately. Following a night of negotiations with U.S. officials, Mr. Aristide departed Haiti early in the morning of Sunday, February 29, 2004 on a U.S.-chartered aircraft, (Polgreen and Weiner, 2004, Mar. 1). It was only after Aristide had left the country that U.S., French, and

Canadian troops attempted to restore order in Haiti, a country, where over the preceding three weeks, order had been allowed to vanish (Marquis, 2004, Mar. 1; Wucker, 2004).

CONCLUSION

It was a combination of an armed insurgency and lack of international support to defeat it that ended Jean-Bertrand Aristide's presidency and brought with it, perhaps unexpectedly, the collapse of the Haitian state.[2] In their investigation of connections between the domestic and international factors in play, Ives Engler and Anthony Fenton ask the intriguing question: "Was Haiti a 'failed state' or did the world fail to protect the hemisphere's poorest country from the world's most powerful?" (2005, p. 46)

The answer to whether there was an international conspiracy, entered into by France, the United States, and Canada to withhold support from Aristide in order to effect a "regime change" in Haiti remains unclear.[3] Engler and Fenton maintain that just such a conspiracy did in fact exist and claim that it began with the "Ottawa Initiative on Haiti" held on January 31-February 1, 2003, which they describe as "a dry run at the trusteeship that was to come." (2005, p. 42) France was reportedly unhappy that Aristide was pressing for repayment (with 5% interest), in the amount of $21 billion (US) for the 90 million francs that Haiti had to pay France following independence as compensation to slave owners in order to secure French diplomatic recognition (Hallward, 2004). Engler and Fenton argue that the international community in general was unhappy with Aristide as he "was perceived as a barrier to a complete implementation of the neoliberal agenda." (2005, p. 96) While their charge that "with George W. Bush's inauguration in 2001, Aristide's days were numbered" (Engler and Fenton, 2005, p. 36) may overstate the case, as the February 2004 insurrection gained momentum, only the most oblivious would not conclude the Bush administration had given up on Aristide. Moreover, if not actually forcing him out of office (Aristide claims that he was kidnapped), the U.S. administration certainly failed to support Aristide and his democratically elected government against his foes at a time of extreme need (Marquis, 2004, Mar. 1).

However, that the U.S. policy of "non-intervention" was designed to result in a regime change, as suggested by Engler and Fenton, while certainly possible, at this time remains a matter of speculation. Few would argue that the United States did not have its "hands full" internationally with military commitments in Afghanistan and Iraq, so that its policy towards Haiti could legitimately be seen as resulting from fear of over commitment, rather than stemming from a deliberate attempt to let the violence escalate in order to get rid of Aristide.

There remains, however, the troubling question of who organized and financed the insurgency. Engler and Fenton report that representatives of the U.S. government-funded International Republican Institute (IRI) along with Paul Arcelin, a Haitian-born professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal and self-described " 'intellectual author' and 'political leader' " of the insurrection, met with Guy Philippe in Santo Domingo in December 2003 (Engler and Fenton, 2005, p. 27; pp. 44-45; pp. 61-62). Exactly what transpired at this meeting is not reported. What is clear, however, is that the ex-Haitian Army troops led by Guy Philippe and Louis-Jodel Chamblain from mid-February 2004 onward, were certainly well-armed, well-

dressed, and had new (non-military) vehicles for transportation. While not large-scale in terms of numbers, the insurgency was no "rag-tag" operation– and someone was providing funding for it. It will be interesting to see where the money trail ultimately leads.

In the final analysis, it was France, not the United States, that was first reported pulling the plug on Aristide's international support, calling for his resignation on February 25 (ABC, 2004, Feb. 25; also see Hallward, 2004). Soon thereafter, the U.S. began to hedge on its earlier position of support for the Haitian President, first telling Aristide that he should consider his options "carefully" (NBC, 2004, Feb. 26), then raising questions as to whether it was possible for him to continue to rule "effectively" (ABC, 2004, Feb. 26), and finally taking what was described as a "more aggressive stance" on Haiti's leadership (CBS, 2004, Feb. 28). The result of the insurgency, combined with the lack of a timely international intervention, was that by the end of February 2004 Aristide was gone. His departure, however, was not to be without extremely high (perhaps unanticipated) costs.

These costs turned out to be highest for Haiti, but neither did the United States escape without negative consequences. President Bush maintained a very low profile during the insurgency, not appearing on American television news until the day Aristide left Haiti (Soderlund, in press). Clearly, the American President wanted to distance himself and the United States from events in Haiti. He largely succeeded in doing the former, but he failed in the latter as the reputation of the United States did not emerge from the melt-down of Haitian democracy unscathed. This is especially the case in the Caribbean, where political leaders voiced their displeasure with U.S. actions and withheld recognition of the appointed interim Haitian government of Gerard Latortue, which was never able to gain legitimacy (Wilentz, 2004).

The implications of the U.S. non-intervention policy, not only for the survival of democratic government in Haiti, but for the very legitimacy of the Haitian state, began to crystallized only after Aristide had left the country. With the benefit of hindsight, criticism of U.S. policy focused not only on the consequences of the United States not having done enough to help Haiti following the1994 intervention and restoration of Aristide, but on its failure to support democracy in the hemisphere when it had come under challenge in 2004. Finally, it became apparent that in the absence of a Haitian army and at best a largely discredited and demoralized 4,000-5,000 strong police force rendered ineffective by the insurgency mounted by an odd assortment of armed groups, only an on-going presence of international peace-enforcers would keep Haiti from falling into a situation where "war lords and gang leaders" of one stripe or another would actually wield effective power on the ground, a situation referred to by Zartman as characteristic of a truly "collapsed state."

It is not surprising that it was only after Aristide had left Haiti did it become clear that legitimate democratic government had departed with him. As Zartman has pointed out, in the long process involved in state failure (likened to a "slippery slope"), it is difficult to come to a clear understanding of exactly when the ultimate collapse of the state might occur (1995, p. 9). Unfortunately for Haiti, with the overthrow of Aristide in 2004, a "tipping point" in the process of state collapse finally had been reached. Events leading to the overthrow of Aristide moved very quickly, and my opinion is that the Bush administration did not see state failure as the

ultimate outcome. This time, however, the time-honoured process of replacing one president with another, failed to reestablish the legitimacy of the state as a governing institution. Indeed, in April 2004, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan made the disquieting observation that "conditions in Haiti now were actually worse that before foreign involvement began, ...[claiming that]... '[o]ur task will not be easy...the situation looks more daunting today that it did a decade ago.' " (as quoted in Marquis, 2004, Apr. 30, p. A9; also see Wilentz, 2004) In response to these circumstances, Riordan Roett called for " 'a good, old fashioned trusteeship' " for Haiti, claiming that what is needed is " 'a multilateral force with a 25-year mandate to rebuild the country year by year. Every thing's been destroyed. It's a failed state, a failed nation.' " (as quoted in Bachelet, 2004)

On June 1, 2004, a UN, Chapter VII peacekeeping force led by Brazil arrived in Haiti, with responsibilities to support the transitional government in disarming all groups holding weapons, to reestablish the rule of law and to protect the human rights of Haitian citizens (United Nations, 2004).This has not been an easy mandate. A study carried out by the University of Miami's Center for the Study of Human Rights in November of 2004, painted a grim picture of life in Haiti under occupation:

> After ten months under an interim government backed by the United States, Canada, and France and buttressed by a United Nations force, Haiti's people churn inside a hurricane of violence. Gunfire crackles, once bustling streets are abandoned to cadavers, and whole neighborhoods are cut off from the outside world. Nightmarish fear now accompanies Haiti's poorest in their struggles to survive in destitution. Gangs, police, irregular soldiers, and even UN peacekeepers bring fear. There has been no investment in dialogue to end the violence. (Griffin 2004, p.1; see also Donais, 2005, Ēlie, 2006, Feb. 23)

Pro-Aristide slums in Port-au-Prince remained totally out of the control of the Haitian Police or UN peacekeepers, with political killings and kidnapping for ransom commonplace (Jacobs, 2005, Mar. 22; Associated Press, 2006, Jan. 7).

Elections were finally held in February 2006 and given prior dire predictions for large-scale violence, the election itself appeared to run well and was generally portrayed as a "major accomplishment." (Thompson, 2006, Feb. 12, p. 10) Not so, however, with the tally of votes which turned the election into a nightmare. Eventually the blank ballots, which were a source of dispute, were distributed among all candidates according to the percentage of the vote they had garnered— a process that gave Mr. Préval just over 51% of the vote and a first ballot presidential victory (Guyler Delva and Loney, 2006, Feb. 16). Mr. Préval was inaugurated as Haiti's president on May 14, 2006.

What can we take from the outcome of the 2006 election? First and foremost, it verified beyond any doubt that the political mobilization of Haiti's impoverished masses is a reality. Mr. Préval and his version of the party (Lespwa), based in the Lavalas Movement, continue to enjoy overwhelming support among Haiti's poor majority. It is obvious that given the huge size of this marginalized, but now mobilized population, any future "free and fair" elections will likely produce similar outcomes. As a consequence, the Haitian elite and major international actors

will have to accept the reality that any government that is freely elected in Haiti without Lavalas participation will lack democratic legitimacy (Haiti Information Project, 2004; Concannon, 2005).

In view of the outcome of the 2006 elections (which in truth, under the circumstances, was about as positive as could be expected), let us reevaluate the strategy of non-support for the Aristide government followed by the U.S. and France which led to the President's ouster two years earlier. In so doing it is hard to disagree with Naomi Klein's observation that "[t]urning Haiti over to this underworld gang out of concern for Aristide's lack of 'good governance' is like escaping an annoying date by accepting a lift home from Charles Manson." (2005, August 1) As with all political leaders, Aristide had weaknesses as well as strengths, and as these became evident during his time in office, they were identified by his opponents, given visibility in the U.S. Congress, and amplified in media coverage (von Hipple, 2000; Soderlund, 2006). It is questionable, however, whether Aristide's rule was "so bad" as to justify the direful consequences for Haiti that have followed his overthrow. Let us bear in mind that Aristide's second term would have been coming to an end, and new elections would have been held at the end of 2005, two months earlier than they were eventually held in February 2006.

Haitian society remains deeply divided socially, economically, and politically; as well, during the two years between his ouster and the election of René Préval, the country had become even more conditioned to the use of violence to attain political ends. Given Aristide's unquestioned base of mobilized political support (obviously still continuing following his ouster in 2004), it is extremely doubtful whether his weaknesses were serious enough to have justified the catastrophic effects on societal stability and democratic governance— the creation of "an absolutely failed state"– that followed in the wake of his removal from office.

NOTES

1. In 1990, the embattled Liberian President Samuel Doe likewise called upon the United States to send troops to support his government against an insurgency mounted by warlord Charles Taylor. As the case in Haiti in 2004, the United States did land Marines, but only to evacuate American and other foreign nationals. The ensuing Liberian Civil War which continued until 2001, spread in to neighbouring Sierra Leone as well, causing large numbers of casualties, huge refugee populations, and widespread economic devastation in both countries. (see Soderlund and Briggs, (in progress)

2. Why the possible (if not predictable) outcome of "state collapse" in Haiti was not foreseen by American decision-makers is indeed puzzling. Seemingly nothing was learned from the many horrific instances of state collapse in Africa in the 1990s, which were often precipitated by the same type of violent overthrow of governments as occurred in Haiti (e.g., Liberia, Somalia, Burundi, Zaire, and Sierra Leone). Under the circumstances, a reasonable policy seems to have been to exert pressure on Aristide's political opponents to accept the reform package on the table, with Aristide continuing to hold the presidency until the normal expiration of his term in 2005.

3. Robert Fatton Jr. does not support a "conspiracy theory" regarding Aristide's overthrow, claiming instead that the overthrow occurred as a response to evolving circumstances: "once the armed insurgency began and chaos engulfed the country, the Bush Administration seized the opportunity to force Aristide's exit." (2006, p. 21) Walt Bogdanish and Jenny Nordberg present evidence that there was indeed a split within the Bush Administration with respect to support for Aristide. Secretary of State Colin Powell believed that U.S. policy was one of supporting Aristide "until the last few days of his presidency." However, Otto Reich, who served under Powell in the State Department, confirmed that " '[t]here was a change in policy that was perhaps not well perceived by some people in the embassy.... We wanted to change, to give the Haitians an opportunity to choose a democratic leader....' " (as quoted in Bogdanish and Nordberg, 2006, Jan 29, p. I10) In light of CIA support for FRAPH in the early 1990s, that there were conflicting U.S. policies in place regarding in Haiti comes as no surprise. Although Bogdanish and Nordberg present no evidence that the United States, either directly or through the IRI, actively supported the armed insurrection against Aristide, it is clear that a very different version of the official policy of support for the Aristide government was communicated to Mr. Aristide's political opponents. This no doubt contributed to their intransigence in negotiating a reform package with the Haitian president that might have spared Haiti the disastrous consequences of Aristide's forced resignation.

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