

WWS Case Study 2/01

**Clinton and Coercive Diplomacy: A Study of Haiti**

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This paper looks at the Clinton administration's diplomacy toward Haiti from the time of Clinton's election until September 1994 when the military government of Raoul Cedras finally surrendered power when facing an imminent invasion by the United States. The first section provides a brief historical background of the situation in Haiti. The following two sections outline how Clinton's early attempts to restore democracy failed, and how he was able to succeed only once the threat of an invasion became credible. After that I draw some lessons for international diplomacy from Clinton's experience in Haiti and conclude with some remarks on how Clinton's floundering use of coercive diplomacy in this instance likely affected his credibility throughout his administration.

## **BACKGROUND**

From 1957 until 1986 the Duvaliers, first father and then son, ruled in Haiti. Their rule was oppressive and violent and came to an end in 1986 when "Baby Doc" Duvalier and his family fled to exile in France. In the next four years Haiti saw four different presidents and two failed attempts at elections. In December 1990 Jean Bertrand Aristide, a Catholic priest and vocal opponent of the Duvalier supporters, was elected president in the first free and fair elections in Haiti's history. The United States, in an effort to see democratic rule in Haiti, financed the training of election officials and the printing of voting cards.<sup>1</sup>

Aristide took office on February 7, 1991 after a failed coup attempt by a former member of the Duvalier government.<sup>2</sup> Following his inauguration foreign governments, including the United States, pledged increased aid to Haiti, the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. In the United States the Bush administration was soon impressed with Aristide's commitment to economic reform and his clean up of the government. His rule, however, was short lived. On September 30, 1991, the Aristide-appointed leader of the army, Brigadier-General Rael Cedras,

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<sup>1</sup> "Haiti: Priest-President," *The Economist*, December 22, 1990, p. 50 and Miller, Annetta, "Rallying on the Brink," *Newsweek*, December 17, 1990, p. 38.

led a successful coup against the Aristide government. Aristide fled to Venezuela and Cedras and his supporters named Joseph Nerette, a civilian, as president.

Foreign governments responded harshly to the coup. Bush welcomed Aristide to the Oval Office and denounced the new regime. The Organization of American States (OAS) enacted a voluntary embargo against Haiti. Refugees from Haiti began setting out for the United States in increasing numbers on precarious boats and rafts, creating a policy nightmare for the Bush administration. Unwilling to allow them into the United States, the Bush government tried various methods of dealing with the situation, from housing them temporarily on Guantanamo naval base in Cuba to returning would-be refugees to Haiti, sometimes without even an asylum hearing.

Living conditions for the poor in Haiti deteriorated, at least in part due to the embargo. By early 1992 U.S. officials estimated that 144,000 of the 252,000 jobs existing before the embargo had disappeared. Shortages and high prices were in evidence throughout the country. Because of the hardship and the tide of refugees, in February the Bush administration decided to relax the embargo, a move that Aristide criticized as evidence that the United States was abandoning the fight.<sup>3,4</sup>

Following the easing of the embargo, supporters of both Aristide and Cedras stepped up their lobbying in Washington. The military government appointed Marc Bazin, whom Washington had favored over Aristide in the 1990 elections, as Prime Minister, most likely with the hope that he would be able to get the embargo lifted.<sup>5</sup> By August the United States was calling for meetings between Aristide and Bazin in order to work out a power sharing arrangement. The increasing harm caused to the poor by the embargo, including a shortage of

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<sup>2</sup> "Thwarted," *The Economist*, January 12, 1991, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> "Haiti: Punishing the Victims," *The Economist*, February 8, 1992, p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Masland, Tom, "We Could Turn Our Back," *Newsweek*, United States Edition, February 24, 1992, p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> "Haiti: Still Embargoed," *The Economist*, October 10, 1992, p. 53.

food at relief agencies, caused the United States to consider ending it altogether, a move Aristide opposed.<sup>6</sup>

### **THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION TAKES OVER: SOFT COERCION**

By the end of the Bush administration the Haitian crisis appeared to be relegated to a back burner in American foreign policy. Refugees, taking the hint from Bush's policies, were showing up less frequently and causing fewer headaches for the American leadership. It is possible that Haiti would have been left to find its own way if Bill Clinton had not been elected President in 1992, or if he had not made certain campaign promises on his way to victory.

#### ***Backtracking on a campaign promise***

At the height of the refugee crisis President Bush, in a move counter to at least the spirit of international refugee law, had issued an executive order allowing the Coast Guard to return boat people to Haiti without an asylum hearing. In his campaign and again after his election, Bill Clinton indicated that he would reverse Bush's executive order. In the month leading up to his inauguration, Pentagon reconnaissance flights showed more than one thousand makeshift boats being built in Haiti and it was estimated that up to 100,000 Haitians would flee in them to the United States after Clinton took power. The Pentagon claimed that it would be impossible to prevent all of these boats from reaching the United States if they sailed.<sup>7</sup> On January 14, 1993, in an effort to keep the boats from sailing, Clinton announced that he would temporarily continue Bush's policy regarding Haitians attempting to reach the United States.

#### ***Renewed attention to Haiti***

With the future of the refugee situation uncertain, the campaign-promise controversy focusing attention once again on Haiti, and a new President that needed to take a stand on foreign policy issues, the time was right for increased United States attention to Haitian problems. In the

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<sup>6</sup> "Haiti: Power Sharing?," *The Economist*, August 15, 1992, p. 34 and Robinson, Linda, "When Pressure Fails," *U.S. News and World Report*, June 29, 1992, pp. 49, 51.

<sup>7</sup> Cerio, Gregory, "A Flotilla in Waiting," *Newsweek*, United States Edition, January 4, 1993, p. 7.

weeks before Clinton's inauguration he signaled to the Haitian leaders that the U.S. could not recognize any settlement with that country that did not involve restoring Aristide to power. As the new president was coming to power, Aristide proposed that the UN and OAS send permanent observers to Haiti to monitor human rights and restore confidence. Additionally, he offered to name a member of the opposition as his prime minister and then return to Haiti on a specified date. He also agreed to grant amnesty to the army once a small group of coup leaders was removed.<sup>8</sup>

In February 1993 a group of human-rights observers were allowed into Haiti under a plan brokered by the United Nations. Bazin and Cedras had initially opposed the presence of observers and had insisted on strict conditions, including limiting their movements as they had done with an early group of observers sent by the OAS. They changed their minds when President Clinton and Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney said that tough action would be forthcoming if the observers were not allowed in on reasonable terms. Following the deployment of these personnel, the UN plan called for negotiations to commence regarding Aristide's return to power.<sup>9</sup>

United Nations envoy Dante Caputo led negotiations between Aristide and Cedras, who was the controlling figure in the country despite Mr. Bazin's title of Prime Minister. Caputo was working to reach a compromise whereby Aristide would return to power but guarantee safety to the officers who had orchestrated the coup. By April there was room for hope, as it looked like Cedras might be willing to back down, and governments began discussing possible aid packages to be sent to Haiti following Aristide's return.<sup>10</sup> In late April Aristide agreed to "limited

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<sup>8</sup> "Desperate Voyagers," *The Economist*, January 16, 1993, p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> "Haiti: At Least a Start," *The Economist*, February 20, 1993.

<sup>10</sup> "Hope for Haiti," *The Economist*, April 10, 1993, p. 50.

amnesty" for the military leaders.<sup>11</sup> However, the talks soon broke down as the military leaders refused to agree to an acceptable outcome.

### *A victory for sanctions?*

When diplomacy had failed to produce results by June 16, the United Nations Security Council unanimously voted to impose an embargo on oil and arms shipments to Haiti starting June 23<sup>rd</sup> unless the military authorities made sufficient progress toward an agreement to restore democracy to Haiti before that date arrived. Unlike the OAS embargo, all nations would be covered under the UN embargo and ships would be deployed to cruise off the shores of Haiti to ensure that forbidden materials were not allowed into the country. In addition to the embargo, the Security Council called for all countries to freeze foreign assets held by the Haitian government. Cedras made a last minute attempt to avoid sanctions by agreeing to recognize Aristide, but only if Aristide appointed Cedras as military chief until 1994, something Aristide was not prepared to do.<sup>12</sup> No acceptable deal was proposed and sanctions took effect.

The attitude of Haiti's elite, who had supported the military government, began to change when they were faced with international sanctions. While they disliked Aristide and at times even feared him, the embargo was causing oil to run low and the outside resolve seemed to signal the approaching end for the military leaders.<sup>13</sup> On July 3<sup>rd</sup> Cedras agreed to step down and also to allow UN troops into Haiti to train his military and police forces for their role under a democratic government.<sup>14</sup> Aristide agreed to have Robert Malval, a prominent member of the elite but an Aristide supporter, as Prime Minister and he agreed to grant amnesty to the military leaders. Following the Haitian parliament endorsement of Malval on August 25<sup>th</sup> sanctions were suspended and the Security Council agreed that they would be permanently lifted after Aristide's

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<sup>11</sup> "Talks in Haiti," *Maclean's*, April 26, 1993, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> "Haiti: Cracking Down," *The Economist*, June 19, 1993, p. 48.

<sup>13</sup> Katel, Peter, "Looking Out for Their Own Skin," *Newsweek*, United States Edition, August 30, 1993, p. 43.

<sup>14</sup> "Haiti: Talk Loudly and Carry a Twig," *The Economist*, October 16, 1993, p. 46.

return to Haiti, which was set for October 30.<sup>15</sup> It was also agreed that a UN force would be sent before then to help with the transition.

Well before Aristide's scheduled return date there were signs that the military leaders were not planning to keep their end of the bargain. In September senior Aristide supporters were threatened and even assassinated. Meanwhile in the United States, the October developments in Somalia, where 18 U.S. Army Rangers were killed and their bodies paraded on TV, gave the Clinton Administration cold feet over its agreement to send in 600 soldiers as part of a UN force in Haiti. The Pentagon delayed the sending of American troops and then, when they did reach Haiti on October 11<sup>th</sup>, ordered them to remain aboard their ship, the USS Harlan County. Upon observing armed protestors on the shore the day after their arrival, American leaders ordered the ship to return home, in what became a major embarrassment for the United States and Clinton foreign policy. The UN reimposed sanctions, as it seemed the military did not intend to relinquish power.<sup>16</sup> Haiti's police chief, Michel Francois, insisted on new conditions to the deal the military had agreed to, including senior cabinet posts for his supporters. Robert Malval, the prime minister chosen by Aristide, could not leave his house for fear of assassination.<sup>17</sup>

### ***The situation deteriorates***

As the October 30 deadline came and went the future of Haiti and of Aristide became more uncertain. Claims by the CIA that Aristide was clinically psychotic, based in part on bottles of medicine sent from Haiti that did not even bare his name, were gaining support from members of Congress who were unsure the U.S. should stick by Aristide. Aristide critics had further ammunition in that his own human rights record was far from perfect, although admittedly better than Haiti had known for a long time, including under the military government that replaced Aristide. Clinton sent six U.S. destroyers to enforce the United States embargo, but

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<sup>15</sup> "Haiti: Sanctions Work," *The Economist*, September 4, 1993, p. 41.

<sup>16</sup> "Haiti: Talk Loudly and Carry a Twig," *The Economist*, October 16, 1993, p. 46.

<sup>17</sup> "Waiting for Something Horrid," *The Economist*, October 23, 1993, p. 49.

differences with Congress as well as declarations that he had "no intention of sending our people" to Haiti in the absence of an agreement diminished his show of power.<sup>18</sup>

In the direct aftermath of October, Prime Minister Malval attempted to reopen negotiations with the military leaders. However, after months of being ineffective he resigned his post, leaving the U.S. with no allies inside the government. Aristide began calling for a total blockade by the United Nations, insisting it was the only way to force the military to negotiate.<sup>19</sup> In the face of a rising refugee tide, Clinton stepped up his efforts to force an end to the military regime. In January 1994 he threatened to seek an increased embargo if the military leaders did not step down. While the administration initially held off on carrying out this threat, fearing that widening the embargo would have a severe effect on Haiti's poor (and therefore on the number of boat people), in May 1994 it asked the Security Council to increase the embargo. The Security Council unanimously agreed to impose a complete embargo and freeze foreign assets of Haitian leaders and suspend their visas if the regime was not gone by May 21st.<sup>20</sup>

During this same time, Clinton was coming under fire for a number of his administration's foreign policies, including those in Bosnia, China and Somalia. With upcoming Congressional elections it was important that his administration not been seen as weak on the foreign policy front. Perhaps motivated by this, Clinton began hinting of the possibility of military intervention. However, his belief in the UN sanctions and the number of opponents to intervention in Congress probably lessened the credibility of the military threat. Furthermore, the threat was not in the form of a clear ultimatum and did not spell out when an invasion would occur and exactly what actions were necessary to avoid it. Directly following the UN vote for an embargo, Cedras and his followers snubbed the UN by forcing the election of a new president,

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<sup>18</sup> Tarr, Michael, "Haiti's Bloody Message to Clinton," *U.S. News and World Report*, October 25, 1993, p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> "Cedras Thumbs His Nose," *The Economist*, November 6, 1993, p. 43.

<sup>20</sup> Robinson, Linda, "Tough Guys Don't Blink," *U.S. News & World Report*, May 16, 1994, p. 36.

octogenarian Emile Jonassaint, in an obvious signal that they did not intend to step down by the UN deadline.<sup>21</sup>

As the deadline passed and time slipped by it was once again apparent that the military regime had no intention of stepping down. There was some speculation that the regime would even welcome an outside invasion because the leaders feared for their safety if they abdicated power without outsiders present to protect them.<sup>22</sup> The embargo was not effective in forcing a move since blockade-runners were able to evade Navy ships and overland routes from the Dominican Republic remained open.<sup>23</sup> In June, declaring that "democracy must be restored," Clinton announced a ban on all commercial airline flights to Haiti.<sup>24</sup> The Clinton administration also kept up the pressure in international arenas, sponsoring a UN resolution requiring the resignation of Cedras, his Chief of Staff Philippe Biamby, and Police Chief Michel Francois, and called for an increase in the size of a planned peacekeeping force to 6,000.<sup>25</sup> By this time two UN deadlines had passed by and the military leaders remained in power without apparent fear that the U.S. would back up its demands with the use of force.

Conditions in Haiti continued to deteriorate. Shootings became commonplace throughout the night and bodies of known Aristide supporters often littered the streets in the morning. A new organization, known by the acronym FRAPH, emerged and appeared to be responsible for many of the killings as well as many other crimes and rapes, used to terrorize the population. When reports by U.S. human rights groups documented the use of rape for political reasons, the government forced 100 UN human rights observers to leave the country.<sup>26</sup> As the UN embargo continued problems of food distribution increased since relief agencies were unable to obtain

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<sup>21</sup> "Snubbing the UN," *Maclean's* May 23, 1994, p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> "Cedras Thumbs His Nose," *The Economist*, November 6, 1993, p. 43.

<sup>23</sup> Watson, Russel, "How About Another Bay of Pigs?", *Newsweek*, United States Edition, June 6, 1994, p. 40.

<sup>24</sup> "Isolating Haiti," *Maclean's* June 20, 1994, p. 21.

<sup>25</sup> Robinson, Linda, "Backing into a Corner," *U.S. News and World Report*, June 27, 1994, p. 38.

<sup>26</sup> "Haiti Waits for the Marines," *The Economist*, July 16, 1994, p. 35.

gasoline to power their vehicles.<sup>27</sup> Malnutrition and lack of medical supplies and electricity to run hospitals were contributing to the outbreaks of disease.

On the domestic front Clinton was facing sharp opposition for his continuation of Bush's policy toward Haitian boat people. Aristide publicly denounced the U.S. policy toward Haitian asylum seekers, calling it racist<sup>28</sup>. A hunger strike by leftist Randall Robinson, and protests in which members of Congress were arrested helped convince Clinton to overturn Bush's policy; in May 1994 he announced that all Haitians fleeing their country would be granted an asylum hearing either onboard U.S. ships or in Caribbean nations. Following the implementation of this policy in July, tens of thousands of Haitians took to their boats, quickly filling to capacity all U.S. ships put in place to intercept them, the reopened refugee facility at Guantanamo Naval Base, and other facilities that had been set up on Caribbean islands.<sup>29</sup> The large number of refugees was a serious policy problem for the Clinton administration and made a timely, satisfactory solution to the problems in Haiti essential. While it was always possible to resume direct return of refugees without an asylum hearing, such a move would have severely damaged Clinton's foreign policy credibility, which was already low.

### ***One more try for sanctions***

By July 1994 it was clear that the Clinton administration was forming plans in case an invasion proved necessary to restore democracy to Haiti. Clinton ordered a U.S. Marine Corps amphibious ready group deployed to Haiti to assist in non-combat evacuation if necessary. Besides consisting of a number of ships, the group likely included a few thousand marines and navy personnel, weapons, light armored vehicles, amphibious assault vehicles, and helicopters.<sup>30</sup> The expulsion of UN human rights observers in July increased international support behind

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<sup>27</sup> "Cedras Thumbs His Nose," *The Economist*, November 6, 1993, p. 43.

<sup>28</sup> "Clinton, Under Pressure, Presses Haiti," *U.S. News & World Report*, May 2, 1994, p. 15.

<sup>29</sup> Masland, Tom, "Should We Invade Haiti?," *Newsweek*, United States Edition, July 18, 1994, p. 40.

<sup>30</sup> "Assault Ships Head for Haiti," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, July 16, 1994, p. 4.

intervention.<sup>31</sup> On July 31<sup>st</sup> the United States received approval from the Security Council to use "all necessary means" to oust Haiti's military leaders. Aristide, who had previously been opposed to outside military intervention, admitted that there might not be an alternative.<sup>32</sup> Following the passage of the Security Council resolution, the puppet president declared a state of siege in Haiti, opening the door for even further violence against Aristide supporters and the poor in general.<sup>33</sup>

Not quite ready to exercise the military option, in August the Clinton administration attempted to intensify the embargo. Risking severe criticism, the Clinton administration struck a deal with the fraudulently elected Dominican Republic leaders to allow outside monitoring of the Dominican Republic's border with Haiti.<sup>34</sup> The tougher embargo did not result in abdication by the Haitian military authorities. By this time several international deadlines had come and gone and the military regime was still in power. While the Clinton administration had threatened the use of force and had even obtained international approval for an invasion, it was reluctant to resort to this measure. After the first failure of sanctions, each time they were imposed or intensified it showed the lack of resolve for military intervention on the part of the United States government. It should have been clear by late 1993 that sanctions alone were not going to force the military leaders from power, yet repeatedly sanctions were the policy choice of the Clinton administration, even after threats of military force failed to produce results.

### **CHANGING RESOLVE: A U.S. INVASION APPEARS IMMINENT**

By September military intervention was looking increasingly likely. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and Deputy Secretary of Defense John Deutch met with Caribbean leaders to secure aid for a potential invasion and post-invasion peacekeeping force.<sup>35</sup> After receiving

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<sup>31</sup> "Haiti Waits for the Marines," *The Economist*, July 16, 1994, p. 35.

<sup>32</sup> "USA 'will lead invasion'", *Jane's Defense Weekly*, August 6, 1994, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> "Haiti: Tightening the Stranglehold," *The Economist*, August 6, 1994, p. 35.

<sup>34</sup> "Haiti: Tightening the Stranglehold," *The Economist*, August 6, 1994, p. 35.

<sup>35</sup> O'Donnell, Paul, "New Message," *Newsweek*, United States Edition, September 5, 1994, p. 6.

commitments for a few hundred troops from Caribbean nations, the Pentagon announced that a multinational force would go to Haiti, either peacefully or by force.<sup>36</sup> Twenty thousand U.S. troops were allocated to the invasion plan and U.S. forces underwent easily observable preparations, such as a mock invasion of an island off of Puerto Rico.<sup>37</sup> By mid-September the invasion plan was set and ships and troops were ready to commence the attack.

While the armed forces were ready for an invasion, Congress and the American public were not. Furthermore, they were even less prepared to get involved in an ongoing peacekeeping effort, which Clinton had committed the United States to whether or not there was an invasion. In a Newsweek poll only 34 percent of those surveyed favored U.S. participation in a multinational intervention. There was a general feeling that no vital U.S. interest was at stake in Haiti. There was also criticism that Clinton's main reason for invading would be to avoid looking weak in the face of his repeated threats just weeks before a Congressional election.<sup>38</sup>

### *Eleventh hour peace*<sup>39</sup>

Actions taken by Cedras in early September show that he still did not believe an invasion was imminent. He refused to meet with UN emissaries to discuss his departure and Aristide's return and the military government continued its killing of civilian opponents.<sup>40</sup> However, days prior to the invasion, although the exact time had not yet been made public, Cedras approached former President Jimmy Carter and asked him to help broker a peace deal that would avoid the oncoming military confrontation. This action shows that at last Cedras was convinced that an invasion would occur if he did not give in to the demands of the United States and United Nations. After receiving permission from President Clinton, Jimmy Carter, General Colin Powell, and Senator Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) flew to Haiti for negotiations on September 17, just

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<sup>36</sup> "Tuning Out Clinton's Tough Talk," *U.S. News and World Report*, September 12, 1994, p. 12.

<sup>37</sup> "Is the Clock Finally Ticking in Haiti?", *U.S. News and World Report*, September 19, 1994, p. 12.

<sup>38</sup> Watson, Russell, "Is This Invasion Necessary?", *Newsweek*, September 19, 1994, p. 36.

<sup>39</sup> The information regarding the negotiation is a summary of the account contained in Colin Powell's memoirs, *My American Journey*, Random House, 1995.

thirty-six hours prior to the scheduled launch of the invasion forces, although the negotiators did not know this. The negotiators appealed to the sense of honor of the leaders and bluntly informed them of the strength of the U.S. invasion force they were about to face. Clinton had informed the negotiators that the intervention would occur, it was just a matter of whether or not it would be military in character. They passed this on to the Haitian officials.

Clinton allowed the negotiations to continue beyond the noon deadline on September 18 that he had set for the negotiators to leave Haiti, but he was not willing to change the invasion timetable. Throughout the negotiations the Haitian officials refused to leave office and made counterproposals that were unacceptable to the United States. It was not until after Haitian intelligence learned that American paratroopers would be boarding their aircraft within an hour for the beginning of the invasion that a last minute deal was reached. Showing skillful negotiating powers the U.S. team appealed to President Jonassaint, who was willing to sign the agreement and prevent the military invasion, while allowing the military leaders to save face. The day after the agreement was signed American troops came ashore in Haiti under the command of Lieutenant General Hugh Shelton to help train police and rebuild the Haitian nation. A few weeks later leaders of the Cedras government left the country and Aristide returned on October 15, 1994, as agreed to in Carter-brokered agreement.

### **LESSONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY**

Although ultimately willing to use force in Haiti, Clinton had built his policy hoping that the threat of force would be enough and believing that he would never need to launch an invasion. He attempted to use coercive diplomacy to force the military regime out of power. While he ultimately accomplished his goal without military intervention, he did so with last minute negotiations that succeeded only after his paratroopers were ready to launch. Critics claim that it should not have taken the actual commencement of invasion activity to create a

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<sup>40</sup> "Tuning Out Clinton's Tough Talk," *U.S. News and World Report*, September 12, 1994, p. 12.

high-enough degree of risk to force Haitian leaders to give in to United States demands. Furthermore the willingness to deal for two years and down to the last minute sends a message that an American invasion can be held off for a significantly long period of time after American threats begin. Therefore, while force was ultimately not necessary, the Haitian case can not be seen as successful practice of forceful diplomacy by the Americans.

### ***Coercive diplomacy***

Alexander George, in his book *Bridging the Gap*, outlines six variables that help determine the success or failure of coercive diplomacy.<sup>41</sup> They are: (1) a non-zero sum conflict; (2) an overwhelmingly negative image of war; (3) the ability to offer carrots as well as sticks; (4) an asymmetry of motivation favoring the state employing coercive diplomacy; (5) the opponent's fear of unacceptable punishment for noncompliance; and (6) neither side has any significant misperceptions or miscalculations. By examining these one at a time it is possible to see that Clinton could have come out of the Haitian crisis having successfully flexed his muscle, rather than desperately seeking a last minute peace deal to avoid commencing an unpopular war.

### ***Non-zero sum view of the conflict***

This is the hardest condition to satisfy since it is clear that for Aristide to return to power Cedras had to relinquish (or be forced to relinquish) his claim to authority. However, there were concessions that could have been made to those under Cedras (such as amnesty or the assurance of safety) that would have altered the nature of the zero-sum game. UN observers who were sent in while Cedras was in power were supposed to remain once Aristide returned to ensure that his government respected human rights. However, it is clear that Cedras had a lot to lose by leaving power and a lot to gain by retaining power. This was especially true given the military's ability to profit off the black market that arose under sanctions. However, by reforming the scenario to one of "remain where you are and be crushed or abdicate and live out your days in the south of

France," the zero-sum nature of the game could have been changed. This would have required a clear show of force to convince Cedras and his supporters while they were in power that the status quo was not an option.

*Overwhelming negative image of war*

Haitian police and army members, while well armed, had no experience against an invasion force and could have expected to be crushed in short order if a war had commenced. In his memoirs Powell describes how the faces of the army leaders fell as he described the force that Clinton had amassed for the invasion in 1994. Furthermore, a war would offer no guarantee of safety to Cedras and his followers who would be wanted by the invading force and most likely pursued by angry mobs of the citizens they had oppressed. However, the U.S. experience in Somalia in 1993 showed Cedras that if an intervention landed it might leave in short order if Americans were killed, especially if it were done in a brutal fashion. The Clinton administration would have to credibly commit to not pull out at the first sign of casualties in order to make the possibility of an invasion seem disastrous for Cedras.

*Carrot as well as stick*

At various points in the negotiations the Clinton administration, with Aristide's approval, offered a carrot to Cedras in the form of amnesty. To Haiti as a whole the carrots of resuming normal relations with the outside world, ending the embargo, and millions of dollars in foreign aid were understood consequences of Aristide's return to power. The Clinton administration no doubt hoped that the public would get sick of living under the tyranny and poverty caused by Cedras (which they did) and force him from power (which they did not). The sticks used were obviously the different forms of embargo and the threat of military force.

*Asymmetry of motivation favoring the state employing coercive diplomacy*

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<sup>41</sup> George, Alexander L., *Bridging the Gap*, U.S. Institute of Peace, 1993.

This was clearly not present until the very end. During most of the Cedras government there was no overwhelming motivation to force American action. Haiti was a small country, the American people were not all that concerned about what was happening there, and there was no clear, strategic national interest at stake. Cedras and his followers knew that there was no interest in Congress or the American public for a war in Haiti and that Clinton was not working to mobilize this support.

By September 1994 what had changed was President Clinton's motivation in the matter. By then he was willing to risk involving the United States in an unpopular war rather than admit another foreign policy defeat in his young presidency, especially during an election year. Furthermore, he had repeatedly stated his intention to remove Cedras and restore Aristide by any means necessary. He was clearly motivated to make good on his threats rather than fuel the growing reputation for backing down that he had acquired in dealings with Bosnia over ethnic cleansing and China over human rights. He could have created an earlier and stronger motivation for acting by rallying support in Congress, the United Nations and the American public for his campaign in Haiti, a course of action that could have created momentum and increased the government's desire to bring about the restoration of democracy to Haiti, and thereby the credibility of its threats.

*Opponent's fear of unacceptable punishment for noncompliance*

This element was also missing up until the point that the invasion force was prepared to launch. As described above, it is likely that Cedras knew that if an invasion happened it would be devastating for himself and his followers. However, until very close to the end Clinton gave Cedras no reason to believe that a war was imminent or even probable. The strategy of the Clinton administration for a year and a half was to demand compliance and then slap another round of sanctions on the country if its favored outcome did not come to pass. Furthermore, the Haitian military government was undoubtedly paying close attention to Clinton's foreign policy

initiatives on other fronts. Throughout the crisis ethnic cleansing had been occurring in Bosnia and Croatia, in Europe, the heart of American foreign policy, and the Clinton administration, while threatening action, had as yet done nothing definitive to stop it. And so what that Clinton had vowed democracy in Haiti during his campaign? Had he not also vowed to link trade and human rights to pressure China on the human rights issue and then turned around and granted the country most favored nation trading status without any improvement in their human rights record? If Clinton would not stand firm in China or Europe, why should he stand firm over Haiti?

As noted above, Clinton did little until the summer of 1994 to prepare Congress for a potential invasion and he never spent substantial time preparing the American people. This could also have been read as a sign that military intervention was unlikely. And, Clinton did not even begin threatening war until well into 1994, believing that sanctions would work without the threat of war behind them. Of all the criteria, this is the one that could have been changed in such a way that it would almost certainly have resolved the situation sooner. Early, credible commitment to war might have ended the standoff at the beginning of 1993. After all, Cedras did back down and allow UN observers into the country when Clinton threatened "strong action" in the absence of compliance.

#### *No significant misperceptions or miscalculations*

There were no misperceptions throughout this conflict. For 1993 and half of 1994 Cedras correctly believed that Clinton had no intention of restoring Aristide through an armed intervention. At the last minute in September 1994, Cedras and his staff correctly revised that belief and managed to escape on as good of terms as they had been offered previously.

#### *Discussion*

Clinton's actions in Haiti show both how coercive diplomacy can fail when there is not a credible commitment to use force to achieve outcomes, as well as how it can succeed when the

commitment to back up diplomacy with force is present. Up until September 1994 Clinton was not prepared to use force if sanctions did not work. Because of this, Cedras and his followers lived with the sanctions, prospering off black market trade and bribes, without fear of retribution. During that time poverty in Haiti, already an impoverished country, increased significantly and resentment festered in the population as corruption, looting, killing and raping terrorized the people. The task of ruling the people of Haiti was no doubt more difficult when Aristide returned in 1994 than it would have been had he returned earlier. The implication for the United States of allowing the conflict to drag on was evident in the increased number of forces needed once the intervention finally occurred. The rapid success of coercive diplomacy in 1994, once it was backed up by the credible use of force, signifies that the United States could likely have ended the conflict sooner if it had been ready to act decisively. For the same cost, or less, Clinton could have had a sizable foreign policy victory instead of a blundering outcome.

### ***Leadership***

The Haiti case also provides insight into the importance of leadership in international diplomacy. Clinton focused his energy during the Haitian crisis on Haiti and on the international community while neglecting to cultivate support among the American people and Congress. This ultimately showed in the low level of support for an armed intervention in September 1994. This lack of support, in turn, could have been read by Cedras as evidence that an invasion was not imminent. Kohut and Toth note that in the Persian Gulf Crisis, in which Americans ultimately favored intervention, the initial response of the American public to the use of force was overwhelmingly negative.<sup>42</sup> However, as they note, President Bush invested considerable effort in explaining to Congress and the American people from the beginning what the national interest was in the conflict and that force might be necessary to achieve American objectives. When an intervention was ultimately necessary, Bush could count on Congress and the American

people to rally behind him. However, this situation didn't just exist; Bush helped to create it. The contrasting lack of support for Clinton's initiative in Haiti is a strong argument in favor of spending time cultivating public opinion.

## CONCLUSION

Foreign policy is not a string of unrelated events that can be approached in an *ad hoc* manner as they occur. Just as events in Somalia, China and Europe influenced the perception Cedras had of Clinton's willingness to use force, so the administration's performance in Haiti influenced its ability to conduct foreign policy throughout the remainder of its tenure. Haiti showed the dictators of the world that they could call Clinton's bluff for a long time and then, perhaps, pay no price at all. Stringing the U.S. along by agreeing to a solution, backing out, then attempting to resume negotiations, was a strategy used numerous times by Milosevic in the Kosovo crisis in 1998/99.

The lesson from Haiti and similar instances of foreign policy for leaders should be not to underestimate the adversary. An empty threat will not result in the desired outcome, while a threat backed by a realistic probability of force may achieve success. Furthermore, empty threats undermine the ability of coercive diplomacy to succeed and may ultimately result in more frequent use of force and a higher cost than would have been necessary had the leader had a reputation for backing up words with actions. Haiti proves this point. If Clinton's record in foreign policy had been stronger it is unlikely that he would have had to load aircraft carriers full of army personnel in order to scare the dictator of a poor Caribbean country. If he had been prepared to use force he may have had less need to use it. The point is not that he should have been prepared all along to invade Haiti. Rather, he should not have committed himself publicly to restoring Aristide to power if he was not prepared to see the mission through to the end. By showing a lack of resolve over Haiti, Clinton further impeded his ability to successfully use

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<sup>42</sup> Kohut, Andrew and Robert C. Toth, "Arms and the People," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December, 1994, p. 47.

coercive diplomacy, as the missions in Iraq and Kosovo, where force was ultimately needed, illustrate so well.