

WWS Case Study 1/01

The United States and Haiti (1993-1994)

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# **The United States and Haiti (1993-1994)**

*A Case Study in Coercive Diplomacy*

By Paul Robyn

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## **INTRODUCTION**

On September 30, 1991 a military coup in Haiti ousted the freely elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The military junta under control of Lieutenant General Raoul Cedras installed their own leader in place of Aristide. The United States refused to accept the military junta or the newly installed president as legitimate rulers of Haiti. Starting with the Bush administration and continuing through the Clinton administration, the U.S. attempted to force the illegitimate leaders of Haiti out of office so that Aristide could be re-installed. U.S. attempts to force its will on Haiti ran the gamut of diplomatic actions from economic sanctions, to threats, to planning and launching a full-scale invasion of the tiny island. On the afternoon of the 18<sup>th</sup> of September, 1994 the leaders of the military junta in Haiti signed an agreement with the United States agreeing to step down from power—literally only a few hours before paratroopers from the U.S. Army's famed 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division were to invade.

This last-minute agreement allowed the U.S. to achieve its goals through diplomatic means—without the loss of life for either side. It was a clear demonstration of the benefits of coercive diplomacy. Through a series of diplomatic initiatives, threats and pressure applied to the military leaders in Haiti, President Clinton was successful in accomplishing his goal of returning Aristide to office.

Although coercive diplomacy was enough to get the job done, it was just *barely* enough. Because of weak leadership on the part of President Clinton, a series of miscalculations by the leaders in Haiti and the very ambitious nature of Clinton's goal (the removal of the military junta from power and the re-installation of Aristide), it was the knowledge that the invasion force was enroute that finally convinced the military junta to step down.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this case study is to review the actions taken by the Clinton administration as a case study in coercive diplomacy, an analytical framework established by Alexander George. In doing so, I will attempt to explain the factors that led to Clinton's ultimate success as well as the reasons that coercive diplomacy almost failed. The paper is divided into three sections. Section I is a discussion of Alexander George's theory of coercive diplomacy. Section II is a review of the major diplomatic actions between the United States and Haiti from the time of the coup in 1991 through the agreement in September of 1994. Section III is an analysis of these actions, using coercive diplomacy as the lens through which to view them.

## **SECTION I: Coercive Diplomacy**

*General theoretical notes.* Coercive diplomacy is a form of diplomatic interaction that attempts to persuade the opposition to concede to your demands, without having to resort to the use of force. It is an attractive alternative to the use of force because a national leader can accomplish his goals without the costs and bloodshed that accompany

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<sup>1</sup> Carter Center News Release, Fall 1994, [www.cartercenter.org](http://www.cartercenter.org).

traditional military operations.<sup>2</sup> Instead, by making demands, issuing threats for non-compliance and closely coordinating political and military actions to ensure a clear message is being sent to the opposition, national leaders can accomplish their diplomatic goals without military action. Coercive diplomacy is different from the more traditional form of diplomacy known as deterrence. Deterrence is an attempt to keep an opponent from *taking* a particular action, while coercive diplomacy is an attempt to force an opponent to *undo* or stop an action that *has already been taken*.<sup>3</sup>

According to George, there are four different variants of coercive diplomacy with which to engage an opponent.<sup>4</sup> The most stringent form is called the “classic ultimatum.” Under this form, a definite time limit is established for compliance—creating a sense of urgency for conceding to demands. Also, the demands are reinforced by a credible punishment for non-compliance. A second variant is the “tacit ultimatum.” This form of coercive diplomacy is very similar to the classic ultimatum except that an explicit time limit is not established. Instead, the sense of urgency is implicitly created through the words and/or actions taken by the coercing power. The third form of coercive diplomacy is known as the “gradual turning of the screw.” In this variant, a sense of urgency is not established because a time limit for compliance is not established. Instead, the threat of increasing the pressure is conveyed as the result of non-compliance. The fourth and weakest variant of coercive diplomacy is called the “try and see approach.” Here, the coercing power simply makes a demand. No time limit for compliance is given (thus no sense of urgency established), nor is a threat for non-compliance made. Instead, the

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<sup>2</sup> George, Alexander. Forceful Persuasion, U.S. Institute for Peace Press, Washington D.C., 1994, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> George, Alexander and Simons, William. Limits of Coercive Diplomacy, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1971, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 7-8 for all four variants of coercive diplomacy.

leader is willing to make the demand and see if it is met. If not, the door is open to consider further options at that time.

The central task of coercive diplomacy is to “create in the opponent the expectation of costs of sufficient magnitude to erode his motivation to continue what he is doing.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, the coercing power is attempting to convey the message that non-compliance would be more costly than simply complying with the demands. Clear communication and inducements are both critical in helping to convey that message. In coercive diplomacy, it is critical that a leader uses both actions and words to communicate his message. One form of communication is not necessarily better than the other. Rather, the two forms of communication can be used to reinforce each other or to compensate for weaknesses in either form.<sup>6</sup>

Additionally, inducements can be a great tool for a leader using coercive diplomacy. Often, threats are not enough to convince an opposing leader to comply with your demands. By combining a “carrot” (inducement) to the “stick” (threat), a leader can greatly increase the likelihood of convincing his opposition that it is more cost effective to comply with the demands.<sup>7</sup>

*Conditions for success.* Through a series of case studies, George developed a list of conditions that give a good indication of the likelihood of success with coercive diplomacy in a given situation. The list does not constitute a guarantee of success if all conditions are met or of failure if one or more are not met. Instead, they provide a set of factors that create a situation in which coercive diplomacy is either harder or easier to use

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<sup>5</sup> Forceful Persuasion, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

to achieve your goals. Some of these conditions include: clarity of objective, strength of motivation, asymmetry of motivation, sense of urgency, strong leadership, domestic and/or international support, unacceptability of threatened escalation, clarity concerning the terms of settlement.<sup>8</sup>

Most of these conditions are self explanatory, however a few deserve some additional comments to ensure understanding. Strength of motivation is a measure of the motivation that the coercing power has to engage in coercive diplomacy. It measures both the motivation to pursue the objective as well as the willpower to back up the demands that are being made. The leader of the coercing power must be sufficiently motivated to pursue this course of action so that he can convey a clear message of determination to the opposition. If he can't convince the opposition that he is serious about the demands, then their success is doubtful.

Asymmetry of motivation is included as a condition because motivation is a two-way street. Even if the leader of the coercing power is motivated to back up the demands with credible threats and punishments, he may or may not be as motivated as the opposition. The *more* that is demanded of an opponent, the *less* likely for compliance with those demands. So, if at all possible, demands should be as narrowly defined and limited as possible—making it easier for the opposition to comply.

Unacceptability of escalation is a factor that analyzes how costly escalation is to both sides. If both view it as too costly, then success is more likely. If escalating the conflict is easier than meeting the demands or relying solely on diplomacy to solve the problem, then success becomes less likely.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 10.

Finally, clarity of the settlement terms is important because if the coercing power is clear about the terms of settlement, then it creates an open situation that allows dialogue between the two parties. Getting the two parties to discuss the end-state is an important step in bringing coercive diplomacy to a close—and a factor that increases the likelihood of success.

An important note to make regarding the conditions of success is the fact that perceptions are very important. For one of these factors to actually increase the likelihood of success, it must be present in the real sense and it must be *perceived* to be present by the opposition.<sup>9</sup> This is especially true regarding asymmetry of motivation, and the sense of urgency. If the opposition miscalculates and believes that he has more motivation and/or that the coercing power does not possess a sense of urgency, then it is likely that he may believe it more costly to comply. In very simplistic terms, it is important to remember that the success of coercive diplomacy hinges on the coercing power having more motivation to back up its demands than the opposition power has to refuse them. It is vitally important that the opposition perceives the threats that are being made as credible *and* potent, otherwise compliance is not likely.

*Contextual factors affecting coercive diplomacy.* George also noted that there were several contextual factors that effect coercive diplomacy as it is being used. Neither the presence of these factors, nor their absence guarantees success or failure; they simply help paint a picture for the analyst as to whether or not coercive diplomacy is more or less likely to succeed. Some of the variables that George lists are: type of provocation,

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<sup>8</sup> George, Alexander and Simons, William. Limits of Coercive Diplomacy, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Westview Press, Boulder, 1994, pp. 280-285 for the list of these conditions.

magnitude and depth of the conflict of interests, time pressure to achieve objective, unilateral or coalitional action, isolation of adversary and the desired post-crisis relationship.<sup>10</sup>

The type of provocation refers to the action that the coercing power is attempting to stop or undue. It is more difficult to force the opposition to undue an action that has already been taken than to stop an action it is currently doing.

The nature of the conflict of interests involved in the situation can make coercive diplomacy more or less likely to work. For example, if the conflict of interests results in a zero-sum game—meaning that there is a definite winner and a definite loser—then coercive diplomacy is less likely to work. If the situation allows for trade-offs and both sides to gain from the outcome, then coercive diplomacy is more likely to work.

The time pressure to achieve the objective is different than the sense of urgency in the pre-conditions for success because it is external. The sense of urgency is something that the coercing power attempts to create to move the situation along. Time pressure in this case comes from other sources—weather fluctuations, changes in support, opponent's power growing, etc. This pressure can work both ways, either forcing a peaceful solution or by abandoning coercive diplomacy in lieu of military action.

Unilateral coercive diplomacy is more likely to succeed than coalitional. Coalitions are hard to form and even harder to hold together. If the coercing power is relying on allies and coalitions to force a decision, then coercive diplomacy may become difficult. Small cracks in a coalition can send signals of weakness, lack of motivation

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<sup>9</sup> Limits of Coercive Diplomacy, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, p. 288.

<sup>10</sup> Forceful Persuasion, pp. 69-70 for all six variables.

and no sense of urgency to the opposition—all of which would strengthen his resolve to refuse the demands.

The last two factors are simply understood. The more isolated the adversary is, the more likely that coercive diplomacy will work. And, the fewer concerns that the coercing power has about its post-crisis relationship with the opposition, the more options that are open for coercive diplomacy.

## **SECTION II: Timeline of U.S. – Haiti Relations (1993-1994)**

In December of 1990, Haiti held what was widely regarded as the first free and fair elections in that country's history. Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected by a huge majority, receiving approximately two-thirds of the popular vote.<sup>11</sup> However, all was not well. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 1991, a military coup under the leadership of Lieutenant General Raoul Cedras, Brigadier General Phillippe Biamby and Lieutenant Colonel Michel Francois, ousted Aristide.

President Bush called for a restoration of democracy, but made no mention of returning Aristide to power. He worked with the Organization of American States (OAS) to impose a trade embargo on all goods except food and medicine.<sup>12</sup> The aim of the embargo was to put pressure on the leaders of the coup and to deter any other coups from taking place. That was as far as President Bush was willing to go. He put a definitive

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<sup>11</sup> Martin, Curtis. "President Clinton's Haiti Dilemma," Pew Case Studies in International Affairs, Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, 1997, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

limit to American actions regarding Haiti when he stated: “I am disinclined to use American force.”<sup>13</sup>

During the presidential campaign of 1992, Bill Clinton used U.S. policy regarding Haiti as an opportunity to draw some distinctions between himself and George Bush. Clinton promised to strengthen the trade embargo to further pressure the military junta to step down (paving the way for Aristide’s return) and to reverse the current “cruel” policy of returning Haitian refugees to Haiti. Clinton pledged to “turn up the heat and try to restore the elected government and meanwhile let the refugees stay here.”<sup>14</sup> However, mounting evidence that thousands of Haitians were poised to flee for U.S. shores the moment Clinton took office caused the President-elect to reverse course and uphold the Bush policy of repatriation of refugees once he took office.<sup>15</sup> This was the first of several policy flip-flops in U.S. policy towards Haiti.

When Clinton took office he made two critical moves regarding Haiti. First, in March 1993, he appointed Lawrence Pezzullo, former ambassador to Nicaragua, as special envoy to Haiti. He directed him to deliver a “very tough message” to the Haitian leaders.<sup>16</sup> Second, he worked closely with the United Nations and other countries to increase the economic sanctions in place against Haiti.<sup>17</sup>

The combination of these actions appeared to have positive results. Under pressure from business leaders, Cedras agreed to participate in talks sponsored by the OAS and UN. These talks led to the signing of an accord on 3 July 1993. This

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<sup>13</sup> Public Papers of the Presidents: Administration of George Bush, Book II (Washington, D.C., 1991), p. 1247.

<sup>14</sup> Martin, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Wall Street Journal, 19 September 1994, p. A1.

<sup>16</sup> Christian Science Monitor, 7 April 1993, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Martin, p. 3.

agreement provided for the departure and amnesty of the coup leaders, the lifting of sanctions and the return of Aristide on 30 October 1993.<sup>18</sup>

President Clinton referred to this plan as “a comprehensive framework for achievement of our policy objectives in Haiti.”<sup>19</sup> However, the plan was never put into place. It became apparent that the leaders in Haiti were not serious about implementation as deadlines for compliance passed without action. Then, in early October 1993, protestors refused to allow the USS Harlan County, a ship carrying military engineers detailed to help implement the accord, dock in Haiti. The President ordered the ship to return to the States.<sup>20</sup>

In response to the failure of the accord, President Clinton sent several different signals to the military leaders in Haiti. In one press conference he sent them a thinly veiled threat by stating “...we are looking at what our other options are.”<sup>21</sup> At another, he offered a more conciliatory tone by saying: “We have to try and reach another agreement so that the country can go back to normal.”<sup>22</sup>

In early 1994, the administration began looking at other means of dealing with the Haiti problem. Instead of using a bigger “stick” by increasing sanctions, they looked for ways to offer a “carrot” to the junta. In the past, the United States had enjoyed success in removing dictators from power by providing them with inducements to leave—perhaps the same could be accomplished with Cedras and his cronies. A draft agreement was drawn up that would provide amnesty to the coup leaders as well as gradual retirement.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> White House, Letter to Congressional Leaders on Haiti, 13 November 1993.

<sup>20</sup> Martin, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> White House, press conference, 28 October 1993.

<sup>22</sup> White House, press conference, 10 November 1993.

However, the draft never made it to the final stages due to problems in getting all parties to agree to terms.<sup>23</sup>

With the latest failure of policy to produce movement in the situation, the domestic political situation began heating up. Members of the Congressional Black Caucus demanded action to bring the situation to a close.<sup>24</sup> Randall Robinson, an African-American political activist went on a hunger strike protesting Clinton's handling of the Haiti situation—charging that the administration's policy was “cruel, grossly discriminatory and profoundly racist.”<sup>25</sup> Within the administration, there were deep divisions about what the next policy move should be. According to press reports, the Vice President, National Security Advisor, Secretary of State and Ambassador to the UN all called for the use of force to return Aristide to power. At the same time, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of the CIA and the President's special envoy to Haiti all vehemently opposed the use of force.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, public opinion polls showed that the U.S. public was strongly against using force in Haiti.<sup>27</sup>

In response to the growing pressure domestically, President Clinton announced a major shift in policy in early May 1994. First, he put pressure on the leaders in Haiti by warning that “...we cannot afford to discount the prospect of a military option...we've got to do what we can to [end the problem in Haiti].”<sup>28</sup> Then, to signal a clear change in direction to the leaders in Haiti, he replaced the “dove” Pezzullo as special envoy to Haiti

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<sup>23</sup> Martin, p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> New York Times, 15 April 1994, p. A1.

<sup>25</sup> Washington Post, 25 September 1994, p. A1.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Martin, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> CNN, “A Global Forum with President Clinton,” 3 May 1994.

with William H. Gray—a “hawk” who supported using force to resolve the situation. Third, Clinton worked with the UN Security Council to tighten economic sanctions by banning all imports other than humanitarian aid and restricting travel of the members of the junta and their families. Finally, he announced a change in refugee policy—by promising all refugees an asylum hearing instead of immediate repatriation.<sup>29</sup>

Shortly after making these policy changes, the President made an attempt to increase domestic support. In an effort to convince the country that there were important interests at stake, he stated: “First, its in our backyard. Second, we’ve got a million Haitian-Americans. Third, we’ve got several thousand Americans in Haiti. Fourth, we believe drugs are coming through Haiti to the United States. Fifth, we face...the continued possibility of a massive outflow of Haitian migrants to the United States. Sixth, Haiti and Cuba are the only two remaining non-democracies left in our hemisphere.”<sup>30</sup>

Just a few weeks after making these policy changes, the President was forced to change the refugee policy for a third time. Due to an overflow of refugees since the last announced change, Clinton announced that the U.S. would establish “safe havens” in third countries such as Panama and Dominica for the refugees to flee to.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to trying to build domestic support, President Clinton attempted to gain international support. By mid-June, he had convinced most western hemisphere countries to support the use of force if sanctions failed.<sup>32</sup> Buoyed by this support, the administration stepped up its pressure on the Haitian junta. In early July, they suggested

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<sup>29</sup> Martin, p. 6.

<sup>30</sup> White House, press conference, 8 May 1994.

<sup>31</sup> Martin, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

that the military leaders in Haiti get out in six months—or face invasion. This statement was backed by the movement of four warships and 2000 Marines to standby off the coast of Haiti.<sup>33</sup>

The “tough talk” continued for about two weeks in July, then abruptly stopped. To many observers, it had seemed as if the invasion were becoming imminent. Administration officials tried to calm the waters by stating: “Invasion is not imminent...the President wants to keep all options on the table...not ruled out a military option...but an invasion is not imminent.”<sup>34</sup> In another attempt to slow down the process, the administration sought UN approval for an invasion. On 31 July 1994, the UN Security Council passed resolution number 940, which authorized the use of “all necessary means” to remove the military junta and reinstate the Aristide administration. The resolution authorized a U.S. led invasion force, followed by a multi-national peacekeeping force.<sup>35</sup>

After receiving UN backing, Clinton continued to increase the pressure on Cedras and the others in the junta in August. He decided against establishing a deadline, but directed the military to begin drawing up contingency plans for an invasion of the island.<sup>36</sup> To reinforce this action, the administration stepped up its verbal rhetoric. Madeline Albright, U.S. Ambassador to the UN told Cedras: “You have a choice. You can leave voluntarily and soon, or you can depart involuntarily and soon.”<sup>37</sup> On 26 August, President Clinton approved the military’s plans for invasion.

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<sup>33</sup> Houston Chronicle, 7 July 1994, p. A1.

<sup>34</sup> Toronto Star, 31 July 1994, p. E1.

<sup>35</sup> Martin, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Washington Post, 25 September 1994, p. A1.

<sup>37</sup> Martin, p. 6.

The administration kept the verbal pressure up through early September. Secretary of State Warren Christopher warned that the U.S. had “exhausted” all diplomatic efforts and that “there comes a time when we have to use military force.”<sup>38</sup> The Director of the CIA stated that the multi-national force is “going in” and a senior official told the press “we’re about as committed as we can be without actually being on the ground.”<sup>39</sup> Backing up this verbal pressure was the President’s order to begin necessary troop movements to get the invasion force into place. The 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division from the Army and the USS Eisenhower carrier group from the Navy began movement toward Haiti on 10 September.<sup>40</sup>

International support for the invasion continued to grow as the Caribbean Community and Common Market’s 13 member-nations all announced support for the invasion.<sup>41</sup> However, domestic support for military action continued to be a major concern. Congress passed several non-binding resolutions requiring Congressional approval for the use of force—and it was clear that the President did not have the necessary votes.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, public opinion remained solidly against the use of force.<sup>43</sup>

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of September, the President addressed the nation on national television, the first televised policy speech he gave on the situation in Haiti. The purpose was two-fold—to bolster domestic support and to clearly signal his determination to the leaders in Haiti. During the speech, the President again tried to make the case to the

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<sup>38</sup> USA Today, 12 September 1994, p. 1A.

<sup>39</sup> Houston Chronicle, 4 September 1994, p. A28 for both quotes.

<sup>40</sup> USA Today, 12 September 1994, p. 1A.

<sup>41</sup> Houston Chronicle, 4 September 1994, p. A28.

<sup>42</sup> Martin, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

American public that there were true national interests at stake, that the military would not become committed for an indefinite period of time. To Cedras, he said: “Your time is up. Leave now, or we will force you from power.”<sup>44</sup> This was clearly the most serious and direct threat yet made by the President. Although no deadline was explicitly stated, an implicit deadline was clearly established with the tough language and the movement of military forces.

As a last-ditch effort to preclude the use of force, former President Jimmy Carter led a delegation to Haiti to try and resolve the situation diplomatically. Accompanying Carter was former Senator Sam Nunn and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Colin Powell. The delegation arrived on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September and was given until noon on the 18<sup>th</sup> to get out of Haiti. Although they did not know the timing of the invasion, they knew that the invasion was at most a few days away and likely only a few hours.<sup>45</sup>

Although little progress was made, the delegation felt there was a glimmer of hope on Sunday the 18<sup>th</sup> and requested permission to continue the talks after the President’s deadline.<sup>46</sup> The President allowed the delegation to stay, but warned that he would not postpone the invasion. It wasn’t until Brigadier General Biamby stormed into the talks at 4:00 PM Sunday afternoon with the announcement that he had just been informed through an intelligence source at Fort Bragg that the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division was enroute to Haiti, that an agreement was reached.<sup>47</sup>

The final agreement was generous to the Haitian leaders—full of “carrots.” The coup leaders and the army were pardoned from any actions taken in the coup or during

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<sup>44</sup> Martin, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> Carter Center News Release, Fall 1994, [www.cartercenter.org](http://www.cartercenter.org).

<sup>46</sup> Powell, Colin with Persico, Joseph. *My American Journey*, Random House, New York, 1995, p. 600.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 601.

their control, sanctions would be immediately lifted, the Haitian parliament was granted amnesty, the coup leaders would be allowed to keep all of their assets, all in return for the departure of the junta and the reinstatement of the Aristide administration on 15 October 1994.

### **SECTION III: COERCIVE DIPLOMACY IN ACTION**

The variant of coercive diplomacy that best describes the actions President Clinton took in handling the Haiti situation is the “try and see approach,” the weakest of the four variants. His first actions were to tighten economic sanctions and send a “very tough” message to the military leaders. He did not establish a deadline nor did he indicate that there would be additional actions taken by the United States if Haiti failed to comply with our demands. This pattern of action continued throughout most of the crisis—Clinton would initiate an action then wait and see what happened. With the passing of UN resolution 940, there was definitely a change in the tone of diplomatic relations between the nations. Certainly, Clinton began taking a harder line—indicating the willingness to use force, initiating troop movements, addressing the public on national television to discuss the possibility of an invasion of Haiti. By the 16<sup>th</sup> of September, Clinton had clearly created a “tacit ultimatum.” He had made a clear demand and given a deadline—which was implicitly understood by all involved because of the troop movements. However, this was not a change in coercive diplomacy strategy, but merely the natural result of the “try and see approach.” With each successive diplomatic step failing to solve the problem, Clinton was forced to take increasingly harsher measures to

accomplish his policy objectives. The sanctions, the embargo, the “carrots” in the original accord and subsequent draft agreement and the rest of the communications between the countries had not accomplished the mission. Initiating the troop movements and creating the sense of urgency with an implicit deadline were logical steps (and the only ones left) that Clinton took in his “try and see approach.”

The following table lists Alexander George’s conditions for success of using coercive diplomacy in the case of U.S.- Haiti relations from 1993-1994. A ‘+’ indicates that this condition was present and increased the likelihood that coercive diplomacy could resolve the situation. Similarly, a ‘--’ indicates a decreased likelihood of success.

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>RATING</b>
CLARITY OF OBJECTIVE	+
STRENGTH OF MOTIVATION	--
ASSYMETRY OF MOTIVATION	--
SENSE OF URGENCY	+
STRONG LEADERSHIP	--
DOMESTIC/INTL SUPPORT	--
UNACCEPTABILITY OF ESCALATION	+
CLARITY OF SETTLEMENT TERMS	--

It is evident that these conditions did not create an environment that would make coercive diplomacy easily successful. At the very least, Clinton certainly maintained clarity of the overall objective. From his first mention of Haiti on the campaign trail in 1992 through the culmination of events in September 1994, the diplomatic objective

always remained the reinstatement of the Aristide administration. Because of that fact, there was never any doubt within the administration or amongst the leaders in Haiti as to the ultimate aims of U.S. policy. This focus allowed Clinton to try many different approaches to solving the problem—to “try and see” what might work to accomplish his goals. The unbending clarity of the objective had an overall positive effect on the likelihood of success of coercive diplomacy.

I assigned the strength of motivation a ‘--’ in this case. It is certainly true that the President was very motivated to see this problem through to the end. Domestically, he was facing a lot of criticism for his handling of international affairs—for waffling over U.S. policy in the Balkans, to the recall of the USS Harlan County in 1993, to the deaths of the Army Rangers and ultimate U.S. mission failure in Somalia.<sup>48</sup> Because of these failures, Clinton was looking for a foreign policy victory.

Additionally, the “try and see approach” to coercive diplomacy in this case slowly put the President’s credibility on the line. Whether the President was committed to taking all necessary action to resolve the situation from the beginning, or whether the gradual increasing pressure from the “try and see approach” tied his hands—the result was the same—Clinton had to act. This is a clear demonstration of the potential dangers of an incremental approach. If the leader is not willing to see the action through to the end, to take action if necessary, then he risks putting himself in a situation of choosing between decisive action or abandoning all efforts to coerce the opponent. In this case, with each passing month, as Clinton increased the pressure on the military junta through his actions and words, he was committing himself to bringing the situation to a close one-way or the other. He could not afford another failure—for his own political future and

that of the members of the Democratic party in the upcoming 1994 midterm elections, just months away, so he really had no alternative but to take action.

However, despite this strong level of motivation, the leaders in Haiti *perceived* his level of motivation to be weak. This misperception was due to confusing signals from the Clinton administration. The recall of the USS Harlan County, the three reversals of U.S. policy concerning Haitian refugees, the absence of a firm deadline and the alternating tone of rhetoric between harsh and soft gave them the impression that he was not committed to bringing the situation to a close. Furthermore, the bureaucratic infighting within the administration regarding the use of force further reinforced this belief that the President would not use military force to reinstate Aristide. A newspaper article in July summed this up nicely: “Because U.S. policy has zigzagged repeatedly and its saber rattling has been mixed with reluctance to take action, Haiti’s military leaders seem convinced they can call the President’s bluff.”<sup>49</sup> Because of this misperception on the part of the leaders in Haiti, strength of motivation had a negative impact on coercive diplomacy in this case.

Asymmetry of motivation worked against the effectiveness of coercive diplomacy. The military coup had been successful, thus, the diplomatic goal was to undo something that had already been done. Additionally, the interests of the Haitian leaders were at direct odds with U.S. interests. Simply put, this was a zero-sum game—there would be a winner and a loser in this situation. Because of these factors, the motivation for the Haitian leaders to not comply with our demands was much greater than our motivation to use all necessary means to back up our demands. This combination of

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<sup>48</sup> Martin, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> Boston Globe, 11 July 1994, p. 1.

factors meant that it would be very difficult for coercive diplomacy alone to secure our policy objectives.

Sense of urgency received a '+' rating because of the actions taken towards the end of the crisis. President Clinton deliberately chose not to establish a sense of urgency with his initial diplomatic moves. It was not until mid-September 1994, when he announced that the U.S. would use force to remove the military junta that a sense of urgency was created. In fact, because of the previous policy flip-flops and the misperception by Cedras and the others of Clinton's strength of motivation, it was not until the invasion force was in the air that the Haitian leaders truly felt a sense of urgency. It was this fact that ultimately led to the signing of the agreement and the success of coercive diplomacy in bringing the situation to a close.

The President did not exercise strong leadership throughout the process. Certainly, in the end, it was his leadership that helped bring the situation to a peaceful close. But, had he been more involved throughout, it is possible that we would not have come so close to an invasion. A critique by some observers of the administration is that Clinton, while interjecting directions intermittently throughout the process, treated the issue as peripheral until the summer of 1994. It was at that time, when he began to realize that his "try and see approach" was leading towards military action, that he became more intimately involved in the process.<sup>50</sup>

Further evidence of weak leadership is the fact that the Haitian leaders miscalculated his strength of motivation. He was unable to convince Congress or the American public of the need to use force in this situation—so he was unable to credibly back up his threats in the eyes of the military junta. The bureaucratic infighting within

the administration gave the appearance of a deeply divided administration regarding the question of the use of force. He was unable to keep the infighting from resulting in the appearance of an unwillingness to use force. He was unable to even keep the senior members of his administration on the same sheet of music. Madeline Albright certainly muddied the waters a bit when she stated that the refugee problem was “what this is all about in the first place.”<sup>51</sup> This certainly wasn’t a convincing reinforcement of the administration’s policy objective—the reinstatement of Aristide.

Domestic and international support was a mixed bag. President Clinton was very successful in establishing international support for his policy—including the authorization to use force. He was very unsuccessful in establishing domestic support. Public opinion polls throughout the crisis showed that the American public never saw the situation in terms of affecting our national interests. Congressional action clearly demonstrated their reluctance to authorize military force.

Because of the President’s credibility challenges on the domestic front and the upcoming elections in 1994, the domestic support was the more important of the two—and the reason that this condition had an overall negative effect on coercive diplomacy. Furthermore, the timing of the receipt of some of the international support actually created a misperception of weakness in the eyes of the military junta. For the first two weeks of July 1994, the administration stepped up the tough talk by openly discussing the possibility of an invasion. Then, near the end of July, Clinton sought UN approval for the use of force. To some, this was interpreted as a sign of weakness—an unwillingness

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<sup>50</sup> [Washington Post](#), 25 September 1994, p. A1.

<sup>51</sup> Martin, p. 4.

to act unilaterally and an attempt to slow the rhetoric down a bit.<sup>52</sup> Thus, securing international support in this case may very well have helped to create the misperception of the President's weak strength of motivation.

The unacceptability of escalation was a positive factor in this case. For the Haitian leaders, it was clearly a losing prospect. If the situation came to the use of force, there was no doubt in anyone's mind that the U.S. would be successful. The only question was how many Haitian's would die in the process. For Clinton, the use of force would have been a risky prospect. Because of the lack of domestic support for military action, the President felt constrained to do all that he could to keep the situation from eroding to an invasion. Although the U.S. would have been successful, there would have been U.S. casualties; the invasion would have occurred without the approval of Congress. Clinton did not want to have to deal with either of those things. With the mid-term elections just around the corner, the President wanted to do all that he could to achieve his objectives using diplomacy.

The final condition, clarity of settlement terms, was a negative factor. Although the President had certainly shown a willingness to use inducements in the negotiation stage (the 1993 accord and the draft agreement in early 1994), little had been done in the final months of the crisis to keep terms on the table. For the Haitian leaders, there was nothing to openly discuss with Clinton other than conceding power. Once the Carter delegation arrived, terms were discussed again—but it was too late in the process to have had a positive impact. Despite the fact that they were being offered an extremely generous set of inducements to sign an agreement, the military leaders were unwilling to do so until they were convinced that Clinton was backing up his demands with a real

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<sup>52</sup> Toronto Star, 31 July 1994, p. E1.

invasion. Had settlement terms been more openly discussed throughout the process, Cedras and the others may have been able to initiate discussions for a peaceful settlement with the U.S.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In the end, coercive diplomacy proved to be a useful approach in solving the crisis with Haiti. However, it was almost not enough. The U.S. policy objective was the reinstatement of Aristide—which was an ambitious goal. Clinton should have realized very early in the crisis that the military junta would not likely concede to our demands.

The President complicated matters by electing to follow a “try and see” approach to coercive diplomacy. This approach is the weakest form of coercive diplomacy and was unlikely to produce results given the difficult situation. Clinton would have been more likely to achieve success earlier in the process had he taken a more firm stance from the beginning, through either a tacit or classic ultimatum approach to coercive diplomacy.

Because of the President’s weak leadership through the majority of the crisis and the lack of domestic support for the use of force, Clinton was never able to establish the perception that he was deeply committed to backing up his threats. Without this credible backup, the Haitian leaders disregarded the demands and ignored the pressure being placed on them by the U.S. and the international community. They believed that they could hold out long enough to become legitimate.

Despite using the weakest form of coercive diplomacy and despite the mistakes the administration made throughout the process, Clinton was successful in the end. He created a sense of urgency and credibly backed up his threats by being willing to launch

the invasion. Although he had done everything within his power not to use military force to solve the problem, it was the fact that he finally authorized the invasion that allowed coercive diplomacy to work.