

On December 16, 1990, Jean-Bertrand Aristide was elected president of Haiti in what was generally judged a free and fair election, receiving 67 percent of the vote. Nine months later, he was ousted by the Haitian military and forced to flee the country. Neither the United States nor any other government recognized the “de facto” military regime, led by General Raul Cedras, that had seized power. Over the following three years, the international community employed political pressure, economic sanctions, and eventually the threat of military force to secure President Aristide’s restoration. On September 18, 1994, General Cedras signed an agreement in the face of an imminent U.S. invasion. The agreement, brokered by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, allowed U.S. and other coalition troops to enter the country. On October 15, 1994, three weeks after the arrival of U.S. troops and three years after being ousted, President Aristide returned to power in Port-au-Prince.

CHALLENGES

Although the U.S. entry was peaceful and U.S. forces suffered and caused almost no casualties or physical damage, the three years of Cedras’ rule and the ensuing international sanctions undermined Haiti’s fragile economy and deepened tensions between its large, impoverished, mostly black majority and its small, wealthy, predominantly lighter-skinned social and economic elites.

Security

Haiti had no civilian police. Its army, which also functioned as a police force, was corrupt, abusive, and incompetent. The first tasks the U.S.-led coalition faced were to secure control over the country and to ensure the safe return and installation of President Aristide. The next was to maintain law and order without heavy reliance on the repressive Haitian security apparatus, whose abuses had been responsible for the intervention in the first place. The last was to reform old and create new civil institutions—police, courts, and penal authorities.

Humanitarian

Following the ouster of President Aristide, 68,500 Haitians fled their country in small boats between 1991 and 1994. Of this number, 20,000 put to sea during June and July 1994. Another 30,000 Haitians found refuge, sometimes under onerous circumstances, in the Dominican Republic; upward of 300,000 persons were internally displaced in Haiti. The “boat people” were primarily motivated by economic deprivation and a desire to enter the United States. The mounting level of repression under the Cedras regime also contributed to the exodus and made it difficult for the United States to continue its practice of dismissing all claims for asylum and forcibly returning intercepted “boat people.” Consequently, U.S. authorities housed most of the Haitian asylum seekers at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The continued exodus of refugees, the unwillingness of the U.S. authorities to either return them forcibly to Haiti or allow them to enter the United States, and the impossibility of accommodating greater numbers at the Guantanamo facilities were critical factors in motivating the U.S. intervention.

Civil Administration and Democratization

The Clinton administration argued that the purpose of its intervention was the restoration of democracy. This was something of an overstatement. President Aristide had been freely elected, but few other elements of a functioning democracy were available to be “restored.” The Haitian parliament was corrupt and ineffective, the Haitian bureaucracy weak and incompetent, and the Haitian judi-

ciary almost nonexistent. Among political parties, only Aristide's movement, Lavalas, had any grassroots constituency, and that was largely a product of his personal appeal. Finally, Aristide's record after his first eight months in office called into question his own stability, judgment, and democratic intentions.

Reconstruction

Two centuries of misgovernment had left Haiti's economy as weak as its polity. Three years of progressively draconian economic sanctions had driven out of the country the meager amount of foreign investment that had been attracted over the preceding two decades. Between 1991 and 1994, per capita GDP fell by over a quarter as manufacturing facilities shut their doors and tourism disappeared. Haiti began the 1990s as the most impoverished nation in the Western Hemisphere and one of the poorest in the world. By the time of U.S. intervention, its situation had deteriorated even further.

THE U.S. AND INTERNATIONAL ROLES

U.S. forces entered Haiti under the terms of a request from President Aristide, an agreement with the de facto Cedras government, and a UNSCR authorizing the use of "all means necessary" to restore the democratically elected government of Haiti. For six months, the U.S.-led coalition, the Multinational Force (MNF), provided security and supported the efforts of the Aristide government to reestablish itself. These responsibilities shifted on March 31, 1995, to a UN peacekeeping force, also led and largely manned by the United States.

During the summer of 1994, U.S. military planners began considering possible scenarios for a U.S.-led intervention in Haiti, even as U.S. soldiers were withdrawing from Somalia. Drawing on what they believed to be the lessons of the failed Somalia operation, U.S. defense planners were particularly anxious to avoid "mission creep," to establish an "exit strategy," and to set a fixed and early departure date. In an effort to relieve the military of some responsibilities and to ensure better support from civil agencies, military planners involved the departments of State and Justice in various aspects of the planning from an early date. This experience eventually prompted the development of more-formalized interagency proce-

dures for planning and coordinating future such operations throughout the remainder of the Clinton administration.¹

Military

On July 31, 1994, the UN Security Council authorized member states to use “all necessary means” to remove the Cedras government and restore the democratically elected Aristide government. At the same time, it authorized the subsequent establishment of a UN peace-keeping force intended to replace the initial forces once a secure environment had been established. The United States provided nearly all the initial MNF and the largest contingent of the follow-on force, which fell under the UN Mission in Haiti (UNMIH).

Civil and Economic

Both the U.S.-led MNF and UNMIH were responsible for establishing and maintaining a secure and stable environment in Haiti. UNMIH was also responsible for helping the Haitian authorities organize local and national elections. But UNMIH's responsibilities did not extend to economic reconstruction, which donor states supported, under the loose coordination of the World Bank.

WHAT HAPPENED

Operation Uphold Democracy achieved all its principal objectives on schedule. President Aristide was restored to power. The Haitian military was abolished, and a new civilian police force was created. Local and national elections were held. New mayors, members of parliament, a new prime minister, and a new president took office in accordance with the Haitian Constitution. With isolated exceptions, systematic violations of human rights ceased. U.S. and other international forces departed, however, before a competent Haitian administration could be created, self-sustaining democratic structures could be put in place, or meaningful economic reforms could be instituted.

¹As discussed in the Kosovo case, these procedures would be codified in Presidential Decision Directive 56 in May 1997.

Security

Americans entered Haiti unopposed on September 19, 1994. A total of 28 nations and 23,000 troops participated in Operation Uphold Democracy and formed the MNF. Its initial task was to restore stability and ensure public safety in preparation for the return of President Aristide. To this end, units searched and seized weapon caches and conducted presence patrols. U.S. forces were committed to a two-year presence in Haiti. The U.S. military initially resisted conducting any law enforcement missions. As General John Shalikashvili, the Chairman of the JCS, stated:

The task of keeping law and order in Haiti is the responsibility of the Haitian police force and the Haitian military. We are not in a business of doing day-to-day law and order.²

This position quickly became impractical.

Anticipated resistance to the U.S.-led intervention did not materialize. There were only a handful of violent incidents over the two-year U.S. presence. On September 24, 1994, only five days into the intervention, a patrol of U.S. Marines in the city of Cap Haitien fired on a group of Haitian soldiers who made threatening gestures, killing seven of them. Three months later, on December 26, a firefight broke out among elements of the Haitian Army in the vicinity of the presidential palace. The incident was sparked by tensions over pay and separation benefits, and U.S. troops and international police intervened to suppress the fighting. By the end of the day, three Haitians had been killed, seven had been wounded, and 83 had been taken prisoner; 500 weapons had been seized. A few weeks later a civilian trying to avoid inspection at a roadblock shot an American soldier to death.

Responsibility for security passed from the MNF to UNMIH on March 31, 1995. As noted earlier, the United States retained the military command and remained the largest contributor of forces to the operation. At its peak, in June 1995, UNMIH comprised 6,000 military

²As quoted in Pirnie (1998), p. 65.

personnel from 24 countries, 2,400 of whom were Americans.³ Furthermore, some 820 police from 20 countries served as civilian international police monitors under the leadership of former New York City Police Department Commissioner Raymond Kelly, who reported to the military commander of the MNF. When authority passed from the MNF to UNMIH, the international police monitors gave way to a somewhat smaller number of UN Civilian Police (CIVPOL). In each phase, these international police were armed with both weapons and arrest authority, an innovation in international peacekeeping practice.

Recruiting international civilian police was time consuming and labor intensive. Few countries had entire units of police available for deployment abroad, and volunteers were often recruited individually. It was several weeks into the intervention before significant numbers of such police became available.

As noted earlier, the U.S. military intended to rely on existing Haitian Army units acting as police to maintain law and order until a sufficient number of international civilian police could be deployed. A few days into the intervention, these Haitian military units moved to break up a friendly crowd congregating to watch U.S. troops debarking on the Port-au-Prince waterfront. International camera crews filmed Haitian "police" savagely beating these individuals while U.S. soldiers, who had come to halt such abuses, stood passively by. In response to this incident, hundreds of additional U.S. Military Police were dispatched to Haiti to monitor; oversee; and, when necessary, substitute for Haitian security forces until enough international civilian police became available.

The United States also began to organize an Interim Haitian Police Force composed of superficially retrained Haitian military and lightly trained recruits drawn from among Haitian refugees held at Guantanamo Bay. Simultaneously, the United States selected and trained a new civilian police force, the Haitian National Police (HNP). HNP recruits were selected through a nationwide competition. They received 16 weeks of training by instructors from the U.S. Depart-

³For more information on UNMIH, see David Bentley, "Operation Uphold Democracy: Military Support for Democracy in Haiti," *Strategic Forum*, No. 78, June 1996. Also see the UNMIH Web site.

ment of Justice, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the French *Gendarmerie*, and other donor law enforcement agencies. The U.S. objective was to train and field 3,000 new police (a target subsequently raised to 5,000) by the time its troops were scheduled to depart after two years. When throughput at the new HNP Academy caused delays in the timetable, 2,000 recruits were transported to the U.S. Army's Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri, where they were put through a comparable 16-week course organized by the U.S. Department of Justice.

The task of creating a new civilian police force took on added urgency when, shortly after his return to Haiti, President Aristide decided to completely abolish rather than simply to reform the Haitian Army. As a result, the HNP was destined to become the only legal armed force in the country. Aristide's determination to disband the Haitian Army came in the immediate aftermath of the above-mentioned firefight among Haitian soldiers. This incident occurred within earshot of the presidential palace, providing the president an unsettling reminder of the coup d'état that had forced his departure three years earlier. Aristide's decision may also have been influenced by strong U.S. resistance, on human rights grounds, to the officers he wished to name as leaders of the reformed Haitian military.

Plans to build a new civilian police force were in place before the intervention was launched. The project was adequately funded, well staffed, and quickly launched. There was no comparable advanced planning or funding to reform the penal or judicial sectors. Belated and half-hearted efforts to do so produced indifferent results. Strengthened law enforcement efforts quickly produced more accused criminals than the prisons could hold or the courts could try. The HNP, whose recruits were selected, trained, and funded by the United States, became for a time the most honest and effective component of the Haitian bureaucracy, only to find itself slowly sucked back into the culture of corruption, incompetence, and politicization in which it was embedded.

Six months into the intervention, the bulk of U.S. troops departed and handed the MNF's responsibilities over to the smaller UNMIH force. This force, however, retained a core of U.S. troops and an American commander. A year-and-a-half later, the United States turned these responsibilities over to Canada, at which point all but a

handful of U.S. military engineers and medics left the country. Both transitions went smoothly, although they greatly diminished Washington's capacity to oversee and ensure a lasting democratic transformation of Haitian society.

Humanitarian

The arrival of the MNF soon created conditions in which the United States was able to return the more than 16,000 asylum seekers held at Guantanamo Bay and other screening centers and to resume the direct and forcible repatriation of further Haitian migrants seeking entry into the United States. Over the succeeding weeks, the U.S. Coast Guard returned several hundred asylum seekers to Port-au-Prince each day, where they were provided transport, or the means to procure it, to their home towns and villages. Feeding and other humanitarian programs that had been in place during the "de facto" period continued.

Civil Administration and Democratization

The Clinton administration declared the goal of its intervention to be restoring democracy in Haiti. As a practical matter, this became defined as the return of President Aristide and then the renewal, through free elections, of all Haitian electoral offices: local, legislative, and executive.

Among Haitian politicians and parties, only Aristide and his Lavalas movement had any substantial national following. Parties other than Lavalas were numerous, small, poorly funded, and largely personal vehicles for their leaders. The United States brought in a number of NGOs, including its Republican and Democratic Party institutes, to help all the Haitian parties organize and mount the election campaigns of 1995 and 1996. Given Aristide's overwhelming popularity, however, Lavalas did not need or want such assistance. Opposition parties had little hope of prevailing electorally, with or without such outside advice and assistance.

Aristide's own tenure was a matter of debate. The Haitian Constitution precluded his succeeding himself at the end of his five-year term. Some of his supporters argued that the three years he spent in

exile should not count in this calculation. However, the Clinton administration, international community, opposition parties, and key leaders within the Lavalas movement disagreed, insisting that Aristide step down in 1996. He eventually agreed to do so. Aristide subsequently broke with those in Lavalas and formed a new and even more personalized political movement.

Local and national elections were held in fall 1995, and another round of national elections took place in 1996. Despite UN oversight and U.S. assistance, the Haitian authorities responsible for organizing those ballots were incapable of doing so competently—or even of maintaining an appearance of impartiality. International observers found these elections technically flawed but basically fair. There is little doubt that the results generally reflected the intentions of the voters. Reactions in both Haiti and the United States tended to break down along party lines. In Haiti, opposition politicians who had not boycotted the process from the beginning contested the results. In the United States, the Clinton administration and its supporters in Congress defended the elections as an advance toward democracy, while the Republican opposition decried them as a failure and a fraud.

One complaint the Haitian opposition advanced was the fear of government-sanctioned intimidation. On March 28, 1995, six months after the arrival of U.S. troops, the Cedras regime's former spokesperson, Madam Mireille Durocher Bertin, was gunned down on a Port-au-Prince street in what appeared to be a professional assassination. Acting at the suggestion of the U.S. ambassador, President Aristide immediately requested Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) assistance in the investigation. He and his officials became progressively less cooperative, however, as the FBI began to delve into the possibility of complicity among elements of the Palace Guard. The United States did not develop sufficient evidence to bring charges, but U.S. officials did insist upon and secure the exclusion of suspected individuals from that force. Three years later, the assassination of two more opposition figures was more clearly traced to yet other individuals within the Palace Guard, at which point that entire force was purged and reorganized under close U.S. control.

With these notable exceptions, international observers believed that human rights were generally respected throughout Haiti in the years

immediately following Aristide's return. Indeed, having only three politically connected killings over a three-year span was a significant advance over the de facto regime's average of three killings per day.⁴ But the Clinton administration, which had so lavishly touted its "restoration" of Haitian democracy, could take little comfort in such comparisons. The Republican opposition, which had endured a decade of Democratic criticism during the Reagan and Bush administrations for allegedly having tolerated "death squads" in Central America, was not forbearing in tarring the Clinton's enterprise in Haiti with the same brush.

The Haiti intervention was controversial in the United States from the beginning. In this, it did not differ from many previous or subsequent such operations. Seldom, however, has the U.S. debate broken down so clearly along party lines. To build support for the intervention, the administration was compelled to oversimplify its rationale and exaggerate the scale of its early successes. The Republican opposition went to opposite extremes. Reasoned cross-party dialogue about how to deal with a desperately poor and miserably governed nation only a day's boat ride from U.S. shores became progressively more difficult. Partisan differences in Washington and Port-au-Prince tended to reinforce each other. Only seven weeks after the launch of the Haiti intervention, Republicans won control of the U.S. Congress. This change led to differences over the direction of U.S. policy toward Haiti between the Executive and Legislative branches, and funding for Haiti gradually diminished while legislative restrictions over its use increased.

Reconstruction

Following the entry of U.S. troops, Washington moved quickly to lift economic sanctions and mobilize a broad international assistance effort. The United States and other donors paid off Haitian arrears to the IMF and World Bank, thereby qualifying Haiti for further lending and allowing the World Bank to assume leadership of the international reconstruction process. The World Bank provided an Emergency Economic Recovery Credit of \$40 million within a few months

⁴International observers estimated that 3,000 to 5,000 people died in politically related violence during the three years of de facto rule.

of President Aristide's restoration to power.⁵ This credit was designed to provide balance-of-payments support to pay for priority imports. Aristide named a moderate probusiness figure, Smarck Michel, as his prime minister and appointed other qualified free-market reformers to key economic posts. The Haitian currency, the gourde, quickly stabilized. Subsequently, international financial institutions, such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank, provided larger-scale project financing.

The U.S. and international strategy for Haiti's economic revival centered on improving governance; targeting investments in infrastructure; and alleviating poverty, especially in rural areas where more than two-thirds of the population lived.⁶ A key problem for donors and international financial institutions has been the ineffective operation of the Haitian government. The World Bank pressured the Haitian government to set up a special Emergency Implementation Unit to handle the disbursement of funds from the initial World Bank loan. Both European and North American donors decided to work more closely with NGOs, many of which had been active in Haiti for years, rather than government agencies. Channeling assistance through NGOs increased the accountability of donor funds and alleviated pressure (and funding) for reform of government operations.

A key objective of donor efforts was to privatize the public utilities, which had long been dreadfully mismanaged. The state also owned other enterprises, such as manufacturing plants, some of which were moribund. Encouraged by Prime Minister Michel and his government, privatization plans initially moved forward. However, they encountered growing resistance from entrenched interests, including "workers" in long-defunct national enterprises and ideologues within the Lavalas movement, with which Aristide eventually sided. Approximately 12 months after his appointment, Prime Minister Michel was forced to resign and the privatization effort was effec-

⁵World Bank, *Haiti-Emergency Economic Recovery Credit*, Washington, D.C., Report No. PIC1271, 1997.

⁶L. M. Garry Charlier, "Review of the Impact and Effectiveness of Donor-Financed Emergency Poverty Alleviation Projects in Haiti Related to Basic Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Employment Generation," in *The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Haiti: The Challenges of Poverty Reduction*, Vol. 2, 7242-HA, August 1998, pp. 141-148.

tively terminated after accomplishing nothing. This state of affairs has yet to change. In January 2003, the IMF still underscored the importance of privatizing state-owned enterprises to improve the environment for economic growth.⁷

One of the brighter spots in Haiti's economy in the 1970s and 1980s was the export sector. Foreign and domestic investors made modest investments in such light assembly industries as apparel and sporting goods, which were designed to take advantage of Haiti's low-cost labor force and proximity to the U.S. market. International sanctions drove nearly all this investment out of the country in the early 1990s. Much of it went to Central America. Postconflict foreign investment has been very limited, running \$10 million a year or less, and a number of the manufacturers that left the country in the early 1990s have not returned.

Neither the Haitian government nor the donor community made serious efforts to attract foreign capital by investing in such necessary infrastructure as roads, ports, and airports or by making a concerted effort to improve the legal and business environments. In addition, any preferential access that Haiti had to U.S. markets in the 1980s had been extended to Central America by the mid-1990s, reducing incentives for foreign investors to consider Haiti as a location for operations.

U.S. assistance to Haiti was not generously funded, particularly compared with the reconstruction efforts in Bosnia and Kosovo. Per capita, Bosnia received five times more postconflict reconstruction assistance from the United States than did Haiti. Kosovo received ten times more U.S. aid. Once U.S. peacekeepers departed in 1996, U.S. aid to Haiti returned to preconflict levels. Indeed, U.S. assistance levels after 1996 were not notably higher than during the Cedras regime itself.

Neither was U.S. assistance to Haiti large as a proportion of total external aid to that country. Despite Haiti's geographic proximity to the United States, the exodus of refugees to the United States, and the existence of a large Haitian-American community that supported

⁷IMF, "IMF Concludes 2002 Article IV Consultation with Haiti," Washington D.C., Public Information Notice No. 03/23, March 3, 2003b, p. 4.

assistance, the U.S. proportion of total external assistance to Haiti in the mid-1990s was only 30 percent. This markedly contrasts with the European contribution to the Balkans, which lay on Europe's doorstep and to which Europe contributed 65 percent of total external assistance.

International transfers, which encompass private as well as public financial flows, were also substantially lower on both a proportional and absolute basis in Haiti than in Bosnia or Kosovo. Per capita transfers averaged \$74 per annum between 1995, the first postconflict year, and 1998. In contrast, they averaged \$265 in Bosnia and \$317 in Kosovo. As a share of GDP, international transfers to Haiti were also smaller than transfers to Bosnia and Kosovo. Transfers to Haiti peaked at 23.7 percent of GDP in 1995 but fell to 13.7 percent by 1998, four years after the end of the conflict. In Bosnia, transfers as a share of GDP were still at least 20 percent in 2000 and 2001—more than 5 years after the end of the conflict. In Kosovo, they accounted for over 50 percent of GDP in 2000, the first postconflict year, and 44 percent in 2001.

While the Haitian government's resistance to privatization and other economic reforms contributed to U.S. and international reluctance to provide generous assistance, similar attitudes among the Bosnian authorities did not present a comparable obstacle to large-scale external aid. The simple fact is that an internally divided U.S. government assigned a lower priority to Haiti's democratic transformation than European—or even U.S.—governments did to Bosnia's and Kosovo's only a few years later.

LESSONS LEARNED

The Haiti operation began well, proceeded smoothly, and ended on schedule but left little residue in the way of transformation. While U.S.-led reconstruction efforts achieved some goals, such as restoring President Aristide to power, the mission was not very successful. U.S. and international forces departed before a competent administration could be created, self-sustaining democratic structures could be put in place, or lasting economic reforms could be instituted. As in Somalia, many of the important lessons from the U.S. experience in Haiti are negative:

- Short departure deadlines and exit strategies diminish prospects for enduring transformation.
- International police armed with weapons and the power to arrest can usefully supplement military peacekeepers.
- Broad justice-sector reform is necessary to bolster policing efforts.
- Where government is grossly ineffective, it needs to be reformed before reconstruction programs can be successful.
- Privatization can be a prerequisite for economic growth, especially where government officials use state-owned enterprises for their own private purposes.

Haiti was the fourth Caribbean intervention the United States had conducted since 1965 but the first for which it was able to secure a UN Security Council mandate. With that mandate came allied forces and large-scale financial burden-sharing. But in the wake of the failed Somalia operation, the U.S. military adopted an extremely narrow definition of its appropriate mission and a short timeline for accomplishing its objectives. U.S. military planners were anxious to avoid mission creep and therefore set a fixed and early departure date. The problem with this approach is that nation-building takes significant time, resources, and determination. Out of the seven cases examined in this report—Germany, Japan, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan—no successful example took less than five years. Setting an early and abbreviated timetable in Haiti made it nearly impossible to build viable political and civil institutions.

Haiti was the first instance in which significant numbers of international police, armed with weapons and the power to arrest, were deployed in support of military peacekeepers. These police were able to supplement and reduce the burden on military forces. But reforming the police is not enough to create an atmosphere of security and protection of civil liberties. An effective justice system requires a functioning police force, as well as courts and prisons. If unreformed, any one of these elements can diminish the effects and even undo reforms in the other parts of the justice system. For example, improved law enforcement in Haiti created an untenable situation in which there were more accused criminals than the courts could try

or the prisons could hold. Furthermore, in the absence of a competent judiciary that could bring accused criminals to trial and incarcerate lawbreakers, the HNP eventually reverted back to a culture of corruption and incompetence.

Under the aegis of the World Bank, foreign donors created a strategy for Haiti's economic revival centered on improving governance; targeted investments in infrastructure; and alleviating poverty, especially in rural areas. Because NGOs were more effective than the government in reaching the indigent—especially the rural poor—donors channeled funds through NGOs rather than through the government. However, widespread lawlessness, graft, and the inability of the government to provide basic legal and other government services forestalled economic recovery. Ultimately, the failure to make the Haitian government more effective also resulted in the failure of the reconstruction program.

In most instances, Haitian state-owned enterprises were either used to provide jobs for government supporters or as sources of cash for politicians. The Haitian government's continued resistance to privatizing these companies resulted in the diversion of resources to government supporters at the cost of maintenance and investment. Consequently, state-owned enterprises frequently failed to provide the goods and services, such as electric power and clean water, for which they were created. Had international donors successfully pressured the Haitian government to privatize these enterprises, economic growth would probably have been stronger and poverty less extreme.