
Anatomy of a Haitian Tragedy: When the Fury of Nature Meets the Debility of the State

Journal of Black Studies

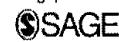
42(2) 131–157

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DOI: 10.1177/0021934710394442

<http://jbs.sagepub.com>



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Abstract

On January 12, 2010, Haiti experienced one of the most catastrophic natural disasters in recent history. In terms of fatalities, only the Bangladesh cyclone of 1970 and the Tangshan earthquake of 1976 in China surpassed the Haitian tragedy. This article argues that geography and geology sparked the Haitian earthquake, but the extent of the destruction was due to the massive failure of Haitian institutions, in particular the state, and international policy, which predated the earthquake. In sum, the Haitian tragedy combined the fury of Nature and the ineptitude of “Man.” The article demonstrates the logic, mechanisms, and consequences of institutional failure. Furthermore, it deems Haitian state building an existential imperative and suggests a road map to its achievement.

Keywords

Haiti, earthquake, state failure, neoliberalism, nongovernmental organizations, state building

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Something was out of the ordinary in this early January (2010) but nothing presaged "the event," whose antecedent had long been erased from collective memory.¹ For one thing, the sun had taken leave of Port-au-Prince, cooling off the perennially sweltering and socially ebullient capital, which, before its pulverization, combined unrelenting decay and, for the perspicacious visitor, fading, almost primal, charm.² The slums, smell of open sewage, car pollution, and gang violence were part of the tapestry of the city, but so, too, were the gingerbread houses in Turgeau, the serpentine Canapé-Vert road leading to the swanky nightclubs of Pétionville, the cathedral of Notre Dame, and the brightly colored jitneys (tap-tap) in Portail Léogâne. Even more so, poverty did not lull the three million, or so, inhabitants of this mostly unplanned megapolis into somnambulism. On the contrary, it boosted their vitality, underscoring in the process, if not the Haitians' *joie de vivre*, their *volonté de survivre* (will to survive).

Port-au-Prince and its environs epitomized the duality of the Haitian experience: that is, they offered glimmers of what could potentially be right with Haiti amidst unmistakable evidence of what was actually wrong with the country. In the spate of 35 seconds on January 12, 2010, the urban alchemy gave way to utter tragedy, which was perhaps its ineluctable destiny. The scale of the devastation of the earthquake is almost unimaginable, even for Haiti, where misfortune has long seemed to establish its abode and the only escape route for many is emigration: at least 250,000 people dead, another 300,000 injured, 1.5 million homeless, 120% of the gross domestic product destroyed, virtually all of the symbols of Haitian statehood liquefied (International Monetary Fund, 2010).³

There have been two prominent media narratives of the Haiti tragedy. One attributes the latest travail of Haiti to supernatural forces. At least one famous American religious figure, Reverend Marion Gordon "Pat" Robertson, to accord him the full honor of his name, has opined that January 12, 2010, was in effect a hecatomb, God's wrath for the satanic orientation of Haitians. (Reverend Robertson conveniently ignored that most Haitians are fervent Christians, although their Christianity is largely syncretic: that is, mixed with non-Christian faiths, especially Vodun.) Such musing by someone with a history of vitriol, especially toward people of African descent, Muslims, and other "minorities," can be easily dismissed as the quintessence of bigotry unworthy of even cursory attention. But what is disconcerting, although not entirely surprising, was the embrace of the metaphysical narrative by some Haitians and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France, whose rumination, admittedly, was less tinged with religious undertones. Still, one wonders what more circumspect "friends" of Haiti may be murmuring behind closed door. That,

as of the time of writing, little of the billions of dollars promised by the international community had been disbursed may speak volume of what these actors really think ails Haiti and of its prospects for recovery. Between Reverend Robertson's theological revisionism and the skepticism of his secular cousins, there may not be much substantive difference.

Another narrative occupies the other end of the ideological spectrum. It was swiftly propagated in the new media world of the Internet, with its increasing army of bloggers, twitters, and the like. This is the tale of anti-U.S. conspiracy theorists, not least Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez, who declared the earthquake to be the result of U.S. military action. While it is impossible to refute the theological explanation on logical and scientific ground, this one can be so dismantled. First, to the best of our knowledge, no earthquake-triggering weapons system exists, in other words, the means, or opportunity, as they say in police investigations, is lacking. Second, what reasons would the United States have to destroy much of Haiti, in other words, what was the motivation? Considering longstanding American antipathy toward the Castro regime, Cuba would have been a "better" candidate than Haiti for what surely would have been the mother of all war crimes, for which hell, not The Hague, would have been the most suitable residence. Third, a military operation of this import would have had to be approved at the highest level of the U.S. government, meaning that President Barack Obama would have had to give the order. From there one has no choice but to conclude that President Obama destroyed Haiti, unless of course "the operation" was the handy work of renegade elements within the U.S. military establishment who callously ignored their commander in chief. The mere mention of these conjectures points to their lunacy, which is not atypical of the paranoid style on the extreme Right and Left of American politics. It is in the nature of conspiracy theory, of whatever ideological slant, that the more farfetched the conspiracy, the more credibility it has among believers. For the real purpose of conspiracy theories is not to prove the veracity of "facts" to skeptics but to reinforce the mental predisposition of believers.

Neither eschatology nor demagoguery explains the Haitian tragedy. Thus, this article categorically rejects both narratives and makes a more logical argument. *Goudougoudou* was triggered by Nature, but the scale of the destruction was due to the massive failure of Haitian social institutions, namely the state, and international policy, which predated the earthquake. At its core then, this is a study of institutional failure in general and that of the Haitian state in particular. Earthquakes cannot be prevented, but there would have been considerably fewer deaths and damage to property from the Haitian earthquake, if Haiti had a working state to enforce building codes, extract victims from the rubble, and

provide emergency care. Such a state may have emerged, if the international community had not pursued antistate policies in the 1980s and channeled development aid through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but had invested, instead, in building state capacity in Haiti. Perhaps no other natural disaster in recent memory underscores more dramatically the importance of states. Working states save lives, failed states do not.

The policy implication of the article's thesis should be readily apparent: state building (not rebuilding) in Haiti is an existential necessity of utmost urgency. God did not punish Haiti for having made a pact with the devil. Nor was the country victim of a stealth U.S. attack. Haiti's bad geography and the debility of its social institutions are responsible for the untold suffering of the Haitian people. While Haiti certainly cannot relocate, it can, with external assistance, improve its institutions of governance, to minimize the fury of nature the next time it is made manifest.

The rest of the article highlights how the pathologies of Haitian politics debilitate the state, demonstrates how the failed state magnified Haiti's latest disaster, and provides a road map for state building. But before getting into these matters, the geology of the earthquake should be acknowledged as a contributor to the widespread destruction. Thus, I am not suggesting that human institutions alone were responsible for Haiti's "apocalypse." Instead, what I am suggesting is that more effective human institutions, in particular a working state, may have significantly moderated the extent of the damage. Institutions matter, arguably none more so than the state.

At 7.0 on the Richter scale, the Haitian earthquake was huge by comparative standard. In 2009, for example, there were only 17 earthquakes of this magnitude and greater worldwide, and only one exceeded 8.0. A 7.0 earthquake would have caused havoc in any developing country, even one with a working state, but the location of the Haitian earthquake almost guaranteed its destructiveness. The epicenter was on land in Léogâne, which had a population of 120,000 and is located only 16 miles (25 kilometers) from Port-au-Prince, by far the largest and most densely populated city in Haiti. Contrary to initial reports, the earthquake occurred on a previously unknown fault, which means that, even if it were so inclined, the Haitian state may not have installed the seismic devices that might have rung the proverbial alarm bells. At a depth of only 8.1 miles, the earthquake was extremely shallow; the force of the energy released was not cushioned by the earth's layers. In other words, the energy released below the surface was practically the same one on the surface, which explains the violence of the tremor. Soil quality (solidity) varies around Port-au-Prince. Much of the city's waterfront (*bord-de-mer*) consists

of soft sediments. This would explain why all the facilities in the area sustained significant damage: the seaport, the parliament building, city hall, the main post office, the ministry of foreign affairs, and so on. In sum, the geography or science of the earthquake made it the “perfect storm.”

Still, not everything is to be blamed on Nature. The performance of the Haitian state in dealing with other, more predictable disasters has not exactly been stellar. In November 2008 the collapse of a school in Pétionville killed dozens of Haitians (97), weeks before that tropical storms Fay, Gustav, Hanna, and Ike killed hundreds (800), and in 2004 Hurricane Jeanne killed thousands (3,306). The last two natural disasters killed far fewer people in the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Florida, which they visited, in addition to Haiti. The precariousness of Haitian life cannot be attributed to bad geography alone; it is also due to how the risks imposed by geography are managed by Haitian institutions and the international actors that have been active on the Haitian scene for decades, if not centuries.

Institutions and States

“Institutions are the rules of the game in any society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction” (North, 1990, p. 134). They stem from the vicissitudes of the natural environment, limited mental capacity (Herbert Simon’s bounded rationality), imperfect information, shared memory, and the need for order in any community. In other words, institutions help to protect humans against the challenges of Nature and their own imperfections. However, institutions should not be the objects of secular idolatry. There can be good as well as bad institutions. In the idiom of Norbert Elias, institutions have both civilizing and decivilizing influence (Elias, 1978). Moreover, institutions are not immutable; appropriate institutions today may become inappropriate ones in the future. The longevity of institutions should not be construed as *prima facie* evidence of their utility. Suboptimal institutions may endure for a long time, as the process of institutional change requires human agency, which objective conditions alone, such as technological change, do not create.

Bad social institutions exacerbate human problems and those sparked by Nature. They give way to others with better performance when the incentive structures that underwrite them are replaced by those that are more supportive of better performing institutions. There are always costs to institutional change, which individuals may not wish to bear, given the expected (meager) benefits and the difficulty of excluding free riders. Such costs, if shared, may

induce actors to take the risks associated with institutional change. Institutional change, therefore, is the product of the right mix of incentives, which include risk insurance.

Among the constellation of secular institutions, the state probably shines the brightest (though not always for the good). In its modern incarnation, the state is an organization that wields exclusive power over a large area and group of people, which power is rooted in monopolistic control of the means of violence and is used to tax, maintain internal order, protect property rights, make war or peace, and deliver social goods. Thus, the state reaches wide and far; in various ways it even decides who lives and who dies. Max Weber was not exaggerating when he remarked that

owing to the drastic nature of its means of control, the political association [the state] is particularly capable of arrogating to itself all the possible values toward which associational conduct might be oriented; there is probably nothing in the world which at one time or another has not been an object of social action on the part of some political association [state]. (Weber, 1978, p. 902)⁴

Be that as it may, the manifold functions of the state can probably be reduced to their simplest expression. What states do, or are expected to do, first and foremost, is to protect citizens against certain adverse conditions, which for various reasons do not easily lend themselves to individual solutions. In other words, states are expressions of collective action in response to contingencies, which, left unattended, tend to destabilize social order. Minimally, states offer protection from natural disasters, external attacks, local predation, infectious disease, violence, and other antisocial behaviors, including transactional opportunism (cheating), which is “the incomplete or distorted disclosure of information, especially to calculated efforts to mislead, distort, disguise, obfuscate, or otherwise confuse” (Williamson, 1985, p. 49).

Again, all social institutions protect in some ways; the state, therefore, is hardly alone. What makes it distinct is the number of hazards against which its protection is expected, nay demanded, and, in the exercise of this function, that it usually brooks no formal competition. Even in the one country where state power is viscerally held in great suspicion, the popularity of presidents hinges not only on their ability to protect the homeland against enemies but apparently how they handle industrial accidents such as oil spills. Also, the state protects large numbers of people, who are often spread over vast areas. In order to effectively perform any and all of its functions the state must be structurally bureaucratic, politically autonomous, and financially viable.

The functional depth and geographic breadth of the state make bureaucracy a *sine qua non* condition for successful state making, for no one person can possibly possess the skills set required to perform all of the functions of the state; moreover, even the most energetic of leader cannot be omnipresent. A complex division of labor requires an equally complex means of supervision and protection, as the near-meltdown of the U.S. financial system in 2008 amply illustrates. Bureaucracy is not simply a way of organizing work, it is a necessity in managing in any large social system. However, there is no free lunch, to paraphrase the late Milton Friedman.

Bureaucracy, which may be equated with political modernization, inevitably results in a transfer of power from rulers to subalterns. In other words, the delegation of authority always entails some loss of control by hierarchs. The question is whether rulers think that (a) the benefits of bureaucracy outweigh the costs and (b) they have any choice in deciding between bureaucracy and its obverse (patrimonialism). In some countries, political modernization was the *fait accompli* of social revolution: rulers had no choice, in fact, they were lucky if they could preserve their head (France in 1789). In others, the transformation was effected through gradual changes in the benefits–costs matrix or incentives structure (the United States during the administrative reform period of the 1880s onward). In these cases, rulers who may have resisted political modernization had the time and the incentives to adjust.

The Politics of Uncertainty

Thucydides was right: uncertainty (or fear) partly underwrites most political struggles (the other “political passions” that animate conflicts are material want and glory). The phenomenon of the failed state is not unconnected to the unwillingness of rulers in some countries, including Haiti, to accede to the orderly dissipation of power because they fear it threatens their longevity in office. When faced between maintaining control and a moribund bureaucracy and losing some control and an active bureaucracy, many rulers have chosen the first pair; some have in fact pursued policies of “debureaucratization” or neo-patrimonialism. Rulers who are ill-disposed toward the sharing of power, because, once again, they fear losing control, will tend to deploy state assets only so far as they can personally monitor their use. In practical terms this means that all of the services provided by the modern state, that is, policing, justice, sanitation, clean water, health care, education, even birth certificates, will be limited to the core or capital city, where the ruler resides. The periphery or countryside becomes a social wasteland, good only for exploitative purposes. It will host state assets only if it poses a threat to the

existing order, and even then such assets are likely to be of the coercive type, unless enterprising peripheral elites manage to skim off nonlethal resources for "my people."

The tendency of Haitian rulers to personalize state power is due to uncertainties inherent to the institutional environment. Since colonial times, Haiti has been a deeply conflictual society crisscrossed by all manner of social cleavages, among them class, skin color, religion, language, place of residence, and regionalism. Haiti of course is not unique. All countries share these features, to varying degrees. They are mediated through formal politics and the state, which must be able to enjoy relative autonomy if it is to be efficacious in its role as umpire. The Haitian state does not stand apart from society; it is part and parcel of the struggle for sectarian (broadly conceived) domination. In fact, it is the most important prize in this struggle, for its control allows not only for the enjoyment of the spoils of power by incumbents and their allies but also the elimination of rivals from the realm. In this zero-sum environment, social disputes are not resolved through a politics of accommodation; instead, they are exacerbated by a politics of exclusion fueled by relentless poverty (discuss next). Any leader inevitably becomes a *gwo nèg* (big man), because uncertainty militates against dissipating power. Among other things, the mitigation of uncertainty entails the consanguinity of politics (hence Papa Doc and Baby Doc).

All states are discriminating political monopolists. They do not spread their assets evenly; instead, state makers decide where asset deployment is likely to be most efficacious from their standpoint. Obviously, how (un)evenly assets are distributed depends on the severity of budget constraints. Financially viable states deploy assets more evenly throughout their territory than their less viable counterparts. Where Haiti is concerned, even in the best of times, the state's share of the gross domestic product (GDP) does not exceed 10%, and in some years (e.g., 1991–1994) it has been as low as 4%. The Haitian state does not raise enough revenue locally to project hard and soft power credibly on a national scale. Some simple, albeit not entirely scientific, calculations will suffice to make the point.

The Haitian GDP in 2009 was US\$7 billion. Assuming that 10% of this accrued to the state, the Haitian treasury "collected" US\$700 million in 2009. Assuming further that Haitian officials took nothing for themselves and spent all of the revenues they collected on the civilian population of 9.25 million,⁵ this would mean an annual per capita spending by the state on its citizens of US\$76. One need not think long and hard about the universe of public goods the modern state provides (or should) to realize the paltriness of this sum and its inadequacy in delivering even the most basic ones to the Haitian populace:

security, justice, education, health care, clean water, roads, sanitation, and so on. But in reality things are considerably worse, for Haitian officials are venal and corrupt. Thus, they do consume the lion's share of what they collect. On average 80% of the budget of Haitian ministries is used to pay salaries, leaving 20% for internal operation and service delivery.

To paraphrase Cicero, material abundance is the sinew of state making.⁶ For want of money, the Haitian state operates under the most severe of budget constraints and, as a consequence, cannot effectively project power on a sustainable basis throughout its territory. Haitian state makers, therefore, have historically shown a preference for deploying state assets only where the proverbial return on investment is the highest, that is to say, in Port-au-Prince where the rumor mill (*teledyòl*) works incessantly to churn out "news" of the next coup d'état. The deployment of state assets away from the center is foregone, because it yields low returns, and may even backfire as it raises the risks of capture by the opposition. The concentration of state assets in the center near the leader is embraced as a political strategy because it maximizes (short-term) returns in the forms of monitoring of those assets, punishing opponents and rewarding friends. Sometimes the practice has been extreme, almost comical. Under François Duvalier, for example, the army's heavy weapons were parked on the lawn of the national palace; the ammunitions were locked in the basement, with Papa Doc in sole possession of the key.

In any environment of extreme economic scarcity and political uncertainty one logical response by those who are socially excluded is to seek rapprochement with the state. Membership in the governing coalition moderates both poverty and political uncertainty, even as it often entails physical relocation. Simply put, when the state does not come to you, you go to the state, at least for the more pleasurable goods it dispenses. As a rule, the extreme concentration of state assets literally within eyesight of the national ruler creates a pull effect, wherein ordinary citizens from the hinterland flock to the state rather than the state going to them. One of the results of this process is the emptying out of the countryside and provincial towns and the swelling of the capital city. This bastardized urbanization (so labeled because it takes place in the absence of serious planning and industrialization) was one of the key factors behind the secular apocalypse of January 12, 2010.

So the devastation wrought by the earthquake is rooted in two interrelated Haitian phenomena: the tendency of Haitian rulers to hold national resources hostage for reasons already spelled out and the natural response of desperate Haitians to this strategy, which was to rush toward Port-au-Prince. The geography and geology—in sum, the science—of the earthquake caused the simultaneous destruction of the state assets and hundreds of thousands of people because

the pathologies of Haitian politics had needlessly concentrated both. A brief history of Port-au-Prince is necessary at this point, to focalize the argument.

“The Republic of Port-au-Prince”

Port-au-Prince proper was officially founded by the French in 1749. It originally spanned less than 10 kilometers on the north–south coordinate (i.e., from Portail Saint-Joseph to Portail Léogâne), an area that covered the city’s oldest neighborhood: Bel-Air. Settlement patterns initially followed the natural layout of the land, which rises from sea level to 3,274 feet (998 meters) at Morne l’Hôpital. Residents lived on the hills while businesses occupied the waterfront (*bord-de-mer*). Following the earthquake of 1770 the colonial government encouraged the use of wood as the primary material for construction and placed strict limits on the heights of buildings (Corvington, 1972). This legacy, along with the turbulence of the natural and social milieu, explains why Port-au-Prince, unlike San Juan in Puerto Rico, Havana in Cuba, or even Cap Haitien, lacked a historic district even before the earthquake. What hurricanes did not destroy over the years was easily consumed in the fire of accidents and revolutions.

During the first American occupation (1915–1934) the boundaries were informally expanded northward to include the industrial area occupied by the former Haitian-American Sugar Company (HASCO) and southward toward Bizoton and Lamentin, where the city kept its petrol reserve and naval fleet. In the 1950s there was a further expansion to Delmas in the east, where the government of Paul Eugène Magloire built modern residences for civil servants, industrial workers, and members of the military. Pétionville, of course, where Haiti’s “rich” live(d), had been laid in the 1830s under Jean-Pierre Boyer, against the backdrop of lingering fear of military invasion by France.

In all, Port-au-Prince, if stretched to the breaking point, could accommodate, at most, 250,000 people. A capital city of this size was quite appropriate for a country, which at the mid-20th century had fewer than 5 million people. As late as the mid-1970s Plaine du Cul-de-Sac, which is now, de facto, a suburb, was a collection of sleepy hamlets and farms that served as Port-au-Prince’s immediate breadbasket and the main source of its underground water. But things changed drastically in the last two decades of the 20th century. On the eve of the earthquake, Port-au-Prince had between 2.5 and 3 million residents for a total population of 9.3 million, in other words, nearly one third of Haitians lived in the capital. Meanwhile, the infrastructure, that is, the roads, the electrical power grid, the sewer system, the number of land-based telephone lines, and so on, remained practically unchanged. Land was especially scarce.

Homes in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area were as likely to be built on mountainsides as in riverbeds, to accommodate the new residents, who were as numerous as they were poor. To understate the matter, the population of early-21st-century Port-au-Prince was not aligned with its early-20th-century infrastructure.

The growth of the population of Port-au-Prince actually began under François (Papa Doc) Duvalier, who fancied his regime to be anchored in the peasantry. The elder Duvalier was always reluctant to leave the national palace, fearing that the Haitian army may ask him never to return. During his 14 years in power he traveled outside of Haiti not once (if one does not count a brief stay on the Haiti–Dominican border) and rarely ventured outside of Port-au-Prince. Instead, Duvalier bused thousands of Haitian peasants every year during celebrations of the regime, which were penciled for the 22nd day of whatever month these events were being held (he was a superstitious man). The relative prosperity of the capital, where, once again, many of the state assets were concentrated, enticed many of the guests to stay, as was their right. Besides, Duvalier's invitation did not usually come with the courtesy of a return ticket to the hardscrabble of the villages. For in spite of rhetoric by Duvalier to the contrary, no Haitian government, either before him or since, has ever invested in the countryside. The only time agricultural spending approximated 10% of the national budget was under the American occupation, but, even then, that was because the Americans wanted to make Haiti another banana republic, not elevate the conditions of its rural masses.

With international help and encouragement, Port-au-Prince's domination of Haitian affairs was further sealed with the creation of Société Nationale des Parcs Industriels (SONAPI) in 1969. A huge industrial park was built on the outskirts of the city, located, unsurprisingly, between the international airport and a privately owned seaport. The logic and intent of SONAPI were not disguised, they were in fact its selling points. Haiti's "comparative advantage" in cheap labor would be used to produce (or, more accurately, assemble) manufactured goods mainly for the U.S. market. The countryside would supply the reserve army, instead of food, which would be either imported or donated, but not produced, because of Haiti's alleged comparative disadvantage in this sector. In sum, Port-au-Prince absorbed both state assets and industrial assets. The pull effect of the state was now complemented with that of private capital.

A hallmark of capitalism is the alienation of workers from the products they make. Fordism alleviates alienation through higher wages, which not only allow workers to consume but also help to sustain governments through the income tax. But Sam Walton, not Henry Ford, inspired the Haitian model. The proto-industrialization of Haiti improved neither the perennial fiscal crisis of

the state nor the conditions of the masses. In fact, its success was predicated in preventing precisely these outcomes. To attract capital, the Duvalier regime exempted foreign investors from taxation, in some cases for as long as 25 years, kept wages at the pauperized rate of US\$2.50 per day, and forbade unionizing.

Still, Port-au-Prince was paradise compared to the hinterland (*peyi andeyò* in Haitian Kreyòl or *pays en dehors* in French), especially after 1981 when a USAID-sponsored swine eradication program mandated the destruction of the local pig, hitherto literally the piggy bank of the Haitian peasantry. The culling was Haiti's iteration of the enclosure in England. The march to Port-au-Prince was on, as was the logic of seeing Haiti through the prism of charity rather than development, which ushered in the reign of the NGOs (discussed next).

The Duvalier regime's overture to the forces of globalization did not endear it with donors because of its extreme corruption. No less an authority than the World Bank conceded in a 1983 report that at least 40% of the aid given the Haitian government could not be accounted for. A "new" strategy was needed, for the old one of relying on an authoritarian regime to bring about capitalist development had created only an overgrown capital ringed by scores of malodorous slums teeming with workers scrapping by on low wages. Charles Dickens would have recognized the tableau. Apologists could justify it only by asserting, in effect, that misery was the price of capitalism in its primitive accumulation phase but that prosperity would surely come "in the long run." The introduction of guns and gangs in the Haitian urban theater after 1986, and the subsequent dismantling of the Haitian army in 1995, eliminated the last vestige of statehood: state monopoly over the means of violence.

One of the ironies of Haiti's urbanization without industrialization was that the amenities that attracted people to Port-au-Prince were the same ones that eventually made the city almost unlivable and turned it into a deathtrap during the earthquake. Residence in the capital made it theoretically possible to have a job, be on the power grid, send the children to school, and receive medical care, but it also meant bribing state officials to acquire construction permits, unknowingly buying substandard materials such as reinforcement steel bars, sand, and cement (because of lax regulation), hiring incompetent craftsmen (because no system of licensing existed), living in congested space (because of the absence of urban planning), breathing dirty air, and exposing oneself to crime.

Thus, the schools were shoddily built, the hospitals and clinics ill equipped and understaffed, the roads narrow, and the government buildings unsafe, most having been built at a time when seismic activity was not a concern. More importantly, because of the state's decrepitude, Haitians were unknowingly building their own crypts when they thought they were building homes. The

transformation of Port-au-Prince from sleepy tropical capital to ramshackle metropolis was underwritten, fundamentally, by the pathologies of Haitian politics and the logic of dependent capitalist development. The consequences should have been anticipated, although it is doubtful Haitian leaders were interested in preventing their occurrence. Under the circumstance, any natural disaster was bound to be catastrophic if it scored a direct hit on the capital.

Haitian state assets were not only wanting and parsimonious, they were too concentrated in the core to enable residual state power in the provinces to be of much, if any, use. Even casual observers of the Haitian carnage should have noted that not a single unaffected area of Haiti (e.g., Cap-Haïtien in the north) sent food, firefighters, police officers, or medical personnel to the west and south, broadly speaking, the epicenters of the earthquake. The apparent indifference is in no way a moral blight on Haitians, whose humanity should have forced the world, especially the Western media, to reassess its image of Haiti as a violent land of neo-troglodytes. The provinces were totally impotent because Port-au-Prince, like an insatiable glutton, had its arms tightly wrapped around all of the state's assets. These were being consumed not only by the coterie of friends and sycophants around President René Préval but also by members of the so-called morally repugnant elite, who long ago shunned a formal role in government but have continued to pull the strings behind the scene. Once Port-au-Prince was out of commission, any aid had to either come from within, meaning the victims themselves (*naje pou sòti*, swim to get out, as Préval had counseled Haitians during his first term) or the international community.

“The Republic of Port-au-Prince Neoliberalism and NGOs”

Haitians alone are not responsible for the misfortunes of Haiti. The neoliberal policies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the channeling of official development assistance by donor governments through NGOs in the aftermath of the collapse of the Duvalier dictatorship in 1986 weakened the Haitian state to the point where it could not deal with routine natural risks (e.g., hurricanes), much less an unusual and major earthquake (Gros, 2010). Haiti may have been a propitious ground for the World Bank and the IMF, given the extent of its dependence.

Among the first policy reforms that Haitian officials were urged to implement in 1986 was trade liberalization. Until then it had been the policy of Haiti to protect its local producers, including rice farmers. Taxes on trade, although highly regressive, were a major source of revenue for the Haitian state. In

some years, coffee alone may have provided as much as 40% of the taxes. A reliable tax base enabled the state to operate with a measure of autonomy and undertake at least some development initiatives. But thanks to the World Bank and IMF, Haiti was forced to liberalize trade almost completely in the late 1980s. This had the effects of destroying local industries (such as rice and poultry) and decreasing revenue from exports. Attempts to make up for the loss by taxing imports were largely ineffectual because of smuggling and corruption at the *Autorité Portuaire Nationale*, the customs office. In theory, increased activity in the light assembly sector could have provided more taxes, but tax exoneration for foreign investors and their local allies foreclosed the possibility.

As the role of external actors in economic policy formulation in Haiti grew in the mid-1990s, so did the antistate biases of the policies. The following international institutions were involved in drafting the blueprint for the economic recovery of Haiti in 1994, a sign of the internationalization of the Haitian crisis or, viewed alternatively, an indication of the failure of the Haitian state to take the lead in setting the future course of the country: Inter-American Development Bank, World Bank, United Nations Development Program, Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations HABITAT, UNESCO, United Nations Family Planning Association, UNICEF, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, World Food Program, European Union, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Organization of American States (OAS), Pan American Health Organization, World Health Organization, and Canadian International Development Agency.

Jointly the aforementioned institutions penned the Emergency Economic Recovery Program (henceforth EERP) in 1995, which was a road map for the economic reconstruction of Haiti. Details of the EERP were supposed to be adjusted according to the progress of the program. The Executive Summary and the section titled "Macroeconomic Conditions: A Statement of the Problem" captured the enormity of the Haitian challenge in the mid-1990s. There was a dramatic decline in economic and social conditions. From 1980 to 1991, real gross national product per capita fell by about 2% each year. Between 1992 and 1993, real per capita income dropped at a multiple of this rate, or well below US\$250, which made Haiti by far the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. GDP had declined by 20% in 1992 and 1993, and by an additional 10% in 1994. Inflation, which had averaged 25% a year in 1992 and 1993, was estimated to have more than doubled to 52% by the end of 1994 (UN, 1995).

The years of the coup d'état (1991–1994) had adverse effects on public finances, as Haiti reeled under an international embargo. Tax revenues as a

percentage of GDP were cut in half to 4% in 1994. Government deficit increased from 0.5% of GDP in 1991 to 4.7% in 1994. Because of the fiscal deficit, central bank net credit to the public sector increased by an average of 65% a year between 1992 and 1994. Total exports fell by over 40% in 1994 to \$47 million, which was about one-third their 1991 level. Total imports declined by 20% in 1994, and by about 66%, excluding food and supplies imported for humanitarian reasons. Finally, state institutions were in total disarray. Even the most basic services were not provided to any degree approaching acceptability by the de facto government. Mountains of garbage rotted under the Port-au-Prince sun; the capital was plunged in total darkness sometime for days. The army (Forces Armées D'Haiti; FAD'H), ostensibly the guarantor of peace and order, was a major source of violence and disorder, along with paramilitary forces such as the Front pour l'Avancement et le Progrès d'Haiti (FRAPH).

What did the international institutions propose to remedy the aforementioned situation? The EERP broke down the Haitian economy by sector, highlighted the problems in each one, and proposed strategies (and costs) for addressing these problems. While the EERP did not remove the government entirely out of the economy, there is no doubt that the overwhelming orientation of the report was toward the private sector. The bias would be one of the reasons Aristide would fall out of favor with the international community in late 1995. Among other institutions, the EERP suggested the privatization of ports, the telecommunications company TELECO, and the electricity company Electricité d'Haiti. A total of nine state-owned enterprises (SOEs) were to be privatized, in keeping with the spirit, if not the letter, of the neoliberal policies of the 1980s and the so-called Washington Consensus. These SOEs generated revenue for the state; privatizing them entailed the emasculation of the state.

The EERP saw the usefulness of the state mainly in instrumental terms: "Government must assume leadership of the strategic development efforts that the international community will support in Haiti" (UN, 1995, p. 12). In other words, donors would finance Haiti's economic recovery but needed the Haitian government to cheer on (euphemistically called taking ownership). Nowhere is it mentioned in the report that in the mid-1990s the Haitian state had essentially collapsed, and therefore needed to be revived. The EERP, in the end, was a wish list of what needed to be done in Haiti, but an incomplete one at that, for it mainly left out the most important item (reconstruction of the state).

When it became clear in late 1995 that the Aristide government would not go along with the proposed neoliberal reforms, at the heart of which was the privatization of the SOEs, the international financial institutions began to

disengage from Haiti. This was in direct contradiction to the EERP's own counsel, which urged donors to commit to "long-term development objectives and to the continuity of aid flows" (UN, 1995, p. 13). A Stand-By Agreement with the IMF, expected to be reached in December 1995, never materialized. In reality, aid was not based on Haiti's needs, which included strengthening the state, but implementation of neoliberal reforms.

The World Bank stated its reasons for disengagement in Haiti from the late 1990s through the early 2000s in the manner of an angry teacher justifying the punishment of an irreverent pupil: its idiom was totally devoid of the usual diplomatic niceties:

The international community has established three conditions for re-engagement in Haiti: a resolution to the political crisis, macro-economic stability, and a commitment by the government to undertake sectoral reforms. These conditions have not been met. Even once they are met, the Bank should approach re-engagement in Haiti with extreme caution. (World Bank, 2002)⁷

Figure 1 shows the precipitous decline of Haitian external aid from the late 1990s through the early 2000s.

Aid to Haiti not only declined, but what little of it was provided during this time increasingly went to NGOs. Donor preference for NGOs was part of a general trend in foreign aid, which may have itself been influenced by a larger debate in public administration in which government is seen as an enabler, and not necessarily a direct provider, of public goods. But undoubtedly the main reasons were the lack of faith of donors in recipient governments and pressure from their own publics for better performance and greater accountability in foreign aid. The entrepreneurship of NGO advocates may have also helped to propel NGOs at the forefront of the aid "industry."

All told, Haiti has at least 10,000 NGOs, second only to Afghanistan. They range from well-known organizations, such as Doctors Without Borders, Care International, Oxfam, the Red Cross, Viva Rio, Mercy Corps, Save the Children, Catholic Charities, Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, Friends of the Poor and the various UN agencies, such as the United Nations Development Program, the International Organization for Migration, UN Habitat, and the World Food Program, to very obscure local ones. Many of these organizations deliver critically needed services. Their contribution to relieving Haitian suffering is immense. Even before the earthquake, Care International alone provided food daily to hundreds of thousands of Haitians; Viva Rio, not the Haitian police, tried to keep the peace in the slums.

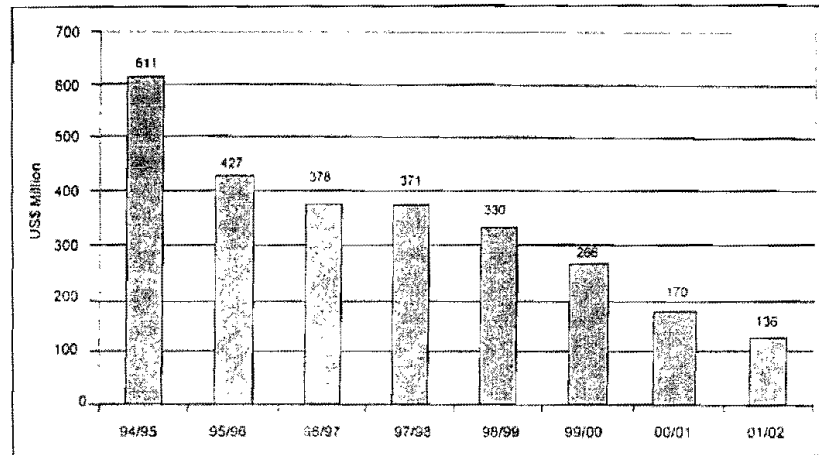


Figure 1. Haitian external aid
Source: Republic of Haiti, *IFC*, July 2004, p.3.

Still, foreign NGOs in Haiti are no panacea. In fact, they exacerbate Haiti's manifold problems, as much as they help to alleviate them. They function independently of local control. Once the legal formalities are fulfilled with the relevant ministries (those of the interior and finance), NGOs essentially operate as parallel bureaucracies, rather than in support of the agencies of the Haitian government. Moreover, there is little coordination among them, as each closely guards what it regards as its prerogatives. The net result is often duplication of efforts, or projects that are allowed to wither of the vine because the NGO responsible for them has ran out of fund. NGOs have helped neither the Haitian state to become stronger nor the economy to develop because their modus operandi militates against technology transfer to both. In addition, NGOs have delegitimized the Haitian government in the eyes of its citizens, as they see the services that should be performed by the state now being performed instead by nonstate actors—foreign ones at that.

In sum, NGOs have their limits, which is why no NGO has ever been credited with the development of any country. NGOs can supplement the state but cannot entirely supplant it; they can palliate poverty but cannot eradicate it. NGOs cannot be used as shortcuts to progress, to borrow from Goran Hyden. Ultimately, NGO dominance of the Haitian aid landscape helps to ensconce Haiti in charity and dependency, not economic development and autonomy. More than 7 months after the earthquake, Haitians were still receiving ready-to-eat meals (REMs), tarps, bottled water, and personal hygiene kits, in sum,

the kind of aid that is provided in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster. The deaths and casualties triggered by the earthquake were due, in part, to the fact that donors had informally subcontracted the management of natural risks to NGOs, rather than strengthening the capacity of the Haitian state to perform well in this area. The NGOs had concentrated their assets in Port-au-Prince for the same reasons that ordinary Haitians had been attracted to the capital city, and since Port-au-Prince was ground zero for the earthquake, this meant that NGOs were hit as hard as anyone else.

The Existential Imperative

Haiti has no choice: To ensure the survival of its people, it must build a working state. Everything else should be secondary. For without the all-important institution of a state, Haiti cannot protect itself from either natural or human-made disasters, which are sure to come. Geologists have identified at least four faults in Haiti: the Enriquillo-Plantain Garden Fault, the Septentrional Fault, the Trans-Haitian Fault, and the Léogâne Fault. The Enriquillo-Plantain Garden Fault has been silent since 1770 and the Septentrional Fault since 1842, when it leveled Cap Haitien. It may be prudent to assume that they will strike again in the near future. Hurricanes remain a constant annual threat, their frequency and intensity likely to increase as the planet heats up. Less than 2% of Haitian territory consists of forest cover. Some parts of the country (e.g., the northwest) are more reminiscent of the Sahara desert than the lush tropics. More than half of Haiti's population is younger than 25. At least 70% of Haitians are unemployed, and half of those who work make less than US\$2 per day. I could go on indefinitely citing abysmal statistics, including those generated by the earthquake, to underscore the urgent need for an effective Haitian polity.

A working state in Haiti is a state that can project hard and soft power throughout the national territory, not just one or the other intermittently in the greater Port-au-Prince area. To be specific, it is a state that can provide, first and foremost, security. The primary duty of any state, after all, is to protect its citizens from each other, its territory from other states, and both from the hazards of Nature. As it exists today, the Haitian state is able to provide none of these protections. The Haitian National Police (PNH in the French acronym), with 8,000 officers (pre-earthquake), cannot effectively police a population of 9 million people. New York City, with roughly the same population as Haiti, has a police force of 40,000. Even if one adds the current UN force (MINUSTAH), Haiti has, at most, 17,000 security personnel, but the UN has

been reluctant in immersing itself in the maelstrom of everyday law and order, fearing that doing so poses a direct threat to its blue helmets.

Haiti should consider a police force on a par with the regional average for countries of roughly equal sizes. The Dominican Republic, for example, which has nearly the same population as Haiti but admittedly is now much richer, has a police force of 20,000 officers. Minimally, in my view, the PNH should have as many officers (20,000) in order for security to be adequately provided. Before the earthquake the Haitian government and its international partners had projected a maximum force of 14,000 members by 2011. Given the death of hundreds of police officers and other priorities, it is unlikely this goal will be reached, and even if were it would probably be inadequate for the protection of the Haitian people.

The enlargement of the PNH would facilitate the projection of hard state power throughout Haitian territory. The distribution of the force could be based on a mixture of geography, population, and security consideration, the same ones that govern policing elsewhere. For example, a base force of 1,000 police officers could be deployed in each of Haiti's 11 departments, while the remaining 9,000 officers added to the base could be assigned in proportion to the prevailing security need and the population of each region. In this way, the PNH would be both depoliticized and able to protect and serve.

To protect its land border and nearly 1,000-mile long coastline as well as prevent and mitigate the effects of natural disasters, Haiti needs to reconstitute its military. Even in advanced democratic countries, the military is the institution called on when the homeland is threatened from whatever source. There are several compelling reasons for this. The military is more likely to incarnate a sense of heroism and self-sacrifice than nonmilitary institutions, although there are exceptions in the latter category (police officers and firefighters). Its hierarchical structure is well suited for the kind of commands and controls that may be needed in emergency situations, and it generally has the technical capability in the forms of heavy equipment, communications technology, and aerial transportation. In sum, culturally, organizationally, and technically, the military has distinct advantages in providing exceptional (i.e., specialized) protection. It can deploy valuable assets in a short time, thus saving lives.

Haiti cannot respond adequately, if at all, to any natural disaster due to the absence of any organization of the state that can quickly mobilize human and technical resources. This is why the U.S. military had to be given temporary custody of the airport in Port-au-Prince in the wake of the earthquake. No one in Haiti could have directed the hundreds of aircrafts circling above Port-au-Prince

to land in all safety. In an earlier time, the Haitian military might have taken over, or flights might have been diverted to Bowen Field, the old military airport. Even President Préval was restricted in his movement. President Fernandez of the Dominican Republic had to lend him a helicopter! More people may have been saved if Haiti had the airlifting capability to evacuate the wounded, which in most countries is provided by the military. The closest Haitian organization with the capability for intervention in emergency situations is the Centre National des Equipements (CNE), but its legal status remains opaque. In line with Haitian political practices, CNE seems to depend entirely on the generosity of the presidency, which calls into question its sustainability.

A reconstituted Haitian army would be a fundamentally new army, not a replica of the corrupt, violent, and coup-happy FAD'H dismantled in 1995. It would be both a professional army and an army of professionals. Roughly patterned after the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, perhaps half of its personnel would be highly trained technical professionals: doctors, engineers, geologists, architects, environmental scientists, operations managers, communications specialists, search and rescue experts, and so on. The new army would naturally be much smaller than the PNH, probably numbering no more than 5,000. Some personnel could even serve on a reserve basis. Haiti faces no discernible threat from any state and does not, therefore, need a large standing army. The immediate threats to Haiti are from nefarious nonstate actors, such as illegal narcotics and human traffickers and Nature.

The new army being called for in this article would be structured to meet the aforementioned challenges. It would be the technical nerve center of the Haitian state and its chief emergency responder, scaling up and maintaining the infrastructure, providing emergency relief, and undertaking reforestation, in addition to protecting Haitian territory from foreign foes. To sustain itself, it could even be allowed to engage in activities not traditionally associated with the military. It is a different world when the army of "communist" Vietnam now owns 60% of Haiti's national phone company TELECO. Like the assets of the PNH, those of the new army would be spread throughout Haitian territory. The deep-water port of Môle Saint Nicholas in the northwest could host the Haitian navy, while Les Cayes or Jérémie in the South and Grande-Anse, respectively, could receive the air force (these two regions are considered the points of entry into Haiti for drug planes from South America).

The soft power of the Haitian state would be projected mainly through a reinvigorated and modern public administration. Simply put, Haiti needs a utilitarian, legal-rational public administration that is technically competent and ideologically committed to alleviating the lot of the majority, or *un*

état-service, to borrow from the late Marc Bazin. Haiti should develop institutional capacity in virtually all areas of the civil service: tax collection, education, agriculture, health, housing, infrastructure, environmental protection, and so on. Lack of capacity in these and other areas could be initially palliated by pairing the various foreign NGOs strewn pell-mell across the Haitian landscape with the relevant agencies of the state. Paul Farmer's Zanmi Lasante, for example, could formally be a service delivery and training subcontractor of the Ministry of Health. In this way, NGOs would be accountable to the Haitian state and engaged in technology transfer. Encouraging the Haitian Diaspora to return to Haiti, even on a temporary basis, could also immediately infuse much needed skills into the civil service.

The modernization of Haitian public administration does not necessarily mean its geometric expansion. What is being advocated are two types of seemingly contradictory administrative reform that are, in fact, entirely consistent. The number of executive agencies in Haiti could be reduced, but capacity within the remaining ones could be greatly enhanced. Haiti is a case where the state needs to be expanded in some areas while being cut in others, but the ultimate aim is to enhance its overall capacity in projecting soft power nationally, which would enhance its political credibility.

There are 16 executive, cabinet-level agencies in Haiti, including a ministry for Haitians living abroad, a ministry for women's affairs, and a secretariat for youth and sports. However laudable the official mission of these agencies, their work, if indeed their employees do any such thing, could probably be performed by others. For example, why a ministry for Haitians living abroad, when there is already a ministry of foreign affairs? Why a ministry for women's affairs, when there is a ministry for social affairs?⁷ Haiti can be effectively ruled with 11 cabinet-level ministries, namely finance; interior; defense; justice; agriculture; education; energy and environment; health; housing and social welfare; commerce, industry, and tourism; and foreign affairs.

Why ministries in the 11 areas just mentioned? Because they combine the universal functions of states with the existential needs of Haiti. Either Haiti does not need ministries in the areas that are not mentioned (e.g., mining) or the ostensible functions of some clientage ministries (e.g., women's affairs) could be carried out by more general ministries (social affairs). The number of ministries advocated here also complies with the Haitian constitution.⁸ Finally, Haiti is an extremely poor country with a state that needs mending. It cannot afford to stretch resources far and wide; it has to be selective and create capacity in those areas that are at the heart of statecraft. The list presented above contains the so-called items that would be minimally necessary to make

Haiti a viable state capable of maintaining internal order, protecting its territory and citizens from external foes and natural disasters and delivering basic social services to ordinary Haitians.

What would really be important is for Haitians "to feel" the state in the plenitude of its functions. In this connection, general agencies, such as finance and foreign affairs, could remain in Port-au-Prince, but the clientele agencies could be scattered throughout the country serving the people they are supposed to serve. For example, the ministry of agriculture could be headquartered in the Artibonite Valley, Haiti's grain basket, the commerce, industry, and tourism ministry in the north, and the energy and environment ministry in the south, where Haiti's largest national parks are located. In this time of Internet, fiber optics, wideband, and wireless technology, there is no reason why the agencies of the state have to be in close geographic proximity to one another. The political capital of the future may well be "located" in cyberspace rather than in some geographic referent. Interagency communications and coordination can be achieved by electronic means. Once power is secured, in other words, once political uncertainty is reduced, the symbols of power can be scattered. In fact, the dissipation of power may facilitate the reduction of uncertainty, inasmuch as it makes the authority of the state more legitimate because of improved performance.

Given Haiti's weak state, decentralization in the form of devolution is inappropriate. Entrusting local authorities with no experience to perform tasks that would normally be performed by centralized authority is likely to result in poor performance. Worse, it may create independent power centers, or to be less kind, local fiefdoms. This would be a return to 19th-century Haiti, not advancement into the 21st century. Instead, what Haiti needs is a strengthening of the capacity of the essential agencies of the state and greater access to them by ordinary Haitians through deconcentration. In other words, Haiti needs a center with tentacles long enough to reach the periphery. Until Haiti develops more effective centralized authority that can supervise substate officials, devolution, no matter how emotionally appealing, is most unwise. When the center is an empty space, the periphery cannot be expected to be any different.

As much destruction as the January 12, 2010, earthquake wrought on Haiti, it also offers unparalleled opportunity for transformation. But what will actually propel Haitian leaders to craft the kind of state advocated in this article? Fear of the awesome power of Nature alone will not bring about the change. If this were the case, Haiti would have built a working state a long time ago, given the frequency of hurricanes, which rural Haitians still use to approximate

the year of their birth. The much too visible scars of the earthquake, more than 6 months after its occurrence, have not prevented Haiti from returning to the kind of venal, corrupt, and zero-sum politics that has made it the open sore of the western hemisphere.

Incentives are the engines of institutional change. Those that have made the despotic, neo-patrimonial state attractive to Haitian rulers must be replaced by others that are conducive to and supportive of a modern state. Only then will such a state emerge. The tendency of Haitian rulers to hold state assets hostage in the capital, or better yet from their standpoint, in the national palace, has been due to the political risks of their dispersion in the provinces. When the most popular leader ever to be elected to office in Haiti could be overthrown, not once but twice, then no one is safe. Elected or not, Haitian leaders can never be sure whether they will serve their full term in office. Rumors of coups, plots, and other cabals (*zen* in Haitian Kreyòl) always threaten to end presidential tenure before the official expiration date in one of three time-honored ways: death, imprisonment, or exile. State assets are used as a bulwark against these unwelcome outcomes.

Thus, there are real incentives to keeping state assets under lock, in some cases literally, in Haiti. The short span of control of the Haitian state and the uncertainty of the larger political environment generate behavior patterns inimical to legal rationality, the lack of which, in turn, makes Haiti vulnerable to catastrophic failure. Were the political risks to be mitigated through risk insurance, different behavior patterns in regard to the state might ensue. This is where the international community has a crucial role to play: that of risk insurer. Until now, it has palliated Haitian risks rather than insuring them. Sometimes, it has even exacerbated those risks by fomenting uprising (France and the United States in 2004).

One obvious type of political risk insurance that could be of use in Haiti is international law. Resolution 1080 of OAS calls for intervention in the event of a sudden or irregular interruption of the democratic process or of the legitimate exercise of power by a democratically elected government in any of the organization's member states. The Protocol of Washington, signed in 1992, enjoins the OAS to suspend member states whose legitimate government has been overthrown by force. The Caribbean Community charter also allows for the suspension of countries with undemocratic government. Haiti is a member of these regional organizations. They could pledge that they will not countenance any government unless the Haitian people sanction it and, furthermore, that they would be prepared to intervene militarily to defend legitimate government on the island.⁹ Such a commitment by the international community

could go some way toward giving Haitian leaders the political insurance to extend state assets beyond their eyesight, in other words, share power.

As seen earlier, the tendency of the international community to short-circuit the Haitian state by channeling development aid through NGOs has had perverse incentives on state making. Because NGOs in Haiti unofficially manage the aid that is aimed for service delivery, this reinforces spoils as the sole *raison d'être* of Haitian public administration. Haitian agencies do not have the resources to pay salaries, fund their internal operation, and deliver services to citizens. Instead, nearly their entire budget is devoted to their personnel. The bureaucracy (50,000-strong before the earthquake) becomes a huge employment machine for supporters of the regime in power.

The inability of the public administration to deliver services, because the latter has been contracted to NGOs by donors, may make it illegitimate in the eyes of ordinary Haitians but quite legitimate in the eyes of regime supporters since it provides them with jobs. From the standpoint of Haitian leaders, the private and concentrated benefits delivered to supporters to keep them in the winning coalition are much more important than sound public policy, from which they derive no return, given the prevailing dispensation. A more generous budget, especially if it is accompanied by strong accountability measures, may make it possible for Haitian state makers to not only make payroll but also provide services. This would enable them to regain popular legitimacy, which would then obviate the need to pursue forms of legitimacy that are destructive of modern state making. Simply put, Haitian rulers might settle for sound policies that benefit the many rather than the corrupt policies that benefit the few, if this will secure their staying power.

The policy implication of the above argument should be readily apparent: recalibration of aid by the international community could help recast the Haitian state. Specifically, redirecting aid to support the national budget could usher in incentives in favor of a modern state. This would not necessarily bring an immediate end to NGOs, which could in fact continue to function, but their *modus operandi* would have to change. They would have to accept to be part of Haitian public administration rather than parallel institutions of governance. In this connection, there is much to be learned from the experience of state and local governments in developed countries such as the United States. These governments increasingly contract with nonprofit organizations to provide social services that in earlier times were provided by their bureaucrats. The separation of finance and service delivery is a major creed of the "new" public administration. Its adoption has not, in the main, reduced the legitimacy of government institutions. Under the right institutional arrangement, NGOs could be complementary, not antithetical, to Haitian state making.

Conclusion

January 12, 2010, should be Haiti's September 11, 2001, that is to say, a catalyst to state making. This article does not underestimate the difficulties of (re) making the state in Haiti. Haiti is a deeply conflictual society where decisions that elsewhere might elicit little controversy are hotly contested. Moreover, the international community has been extremely reluctant to even admit the necessity of rebuilding states in the Haitis of the world, much less take the lead. State remaking in Haiti would require profound ideological and policy changes. The post-cold war dogma of seeing markets as the solutions to all social problems and states as the root of all evils would have to be sidelined. State building, which is often misnamed nation building, would have to be seen as an endeavor worthy of the blood and treasure of the international community. The practice of donors getting together and passing out a collection plate for their favorite failed state *du jour*, only to quietly renege on pledges, would have to end. Donors should make multiyear commitment to state re(making) in Haiti, and aid that is promised publicly should be fast-tracked for delivery so suffering Haitians feel its effects right away. Donor governments would need to cease using foreign aid to support their favorite NGOs while Haitian state capacity is either ignored or not built. Aid would have to be *really* aimed at (re)making the state, rather than intended to foster dependency. Given the checkered history of Haiti, punctuated as it is by innumerable false starts and spectacular failures, skeptics of the ilk of "Pat" Robertson may doubt whether the Pearl of the Antilles will ever recover its luster. The resilience of the Haitian people in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds and more effective state making may ultimately prove them wrong.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

Notes

1. *Evenman an* or "the event" is how many Haitians refer to the earthquake. They also use *goudougoudou*, in imitation of the noise made by the energy released during "the event" and falling objects. Earthquakes struck the Port-au-Prince area in 1750 and 1770 and Cap Haitian in 1842. In a society where the oral tradition

remains strong, because of high illiteracy rates, few Haitians would have known of their country's seismic vulnerability.

2. No slight of the areas outside of Port-au-Prince affected by the earthquake is intended. Jacmel in the southeast suffered significant damage, and Léogâne, 30 kilometers west of Port-au-Prince, was 80% destroyed. But Port-au-Prince was where most of the fatalities and casualties occurred. I also know Port-au-Prince better than the other cities, having been born there.
3. See International Monetary Fund (2010).
4. My additions are in brackets.
5. There are 9.3 million Haitians and 50,000 Haitian government officials.
6. Cicero is credited for having actually said, "Endless money forms the sinews of war."
7. As one prominent Haitian I once interviewed mused, "*En quoi la condition féminine dans un pays si pauvre comme Haiti diffère-t-elle de la condition masculine?*" Translation: How are women's affairs in a country as poor as Haiti different (i.e., worse) than men's affairs? I do not necessarily agree with how this statement seems to trivialize the problems faced by women in Haiti, but it contains an important grain truth, namely: in a country of extreme and generalized poverty with a weak state, the case for targeting one group of citizens for benefits over another is harder to make than in an environment of plenty. Interview with David Adès, August 21, 2001.
8. Article 166 of the Haitian constitution stipulates that "the number of ministries may be no fewer than 10." While it is debatable whether it is the role of any constitution to fix the number of ministries a country should have, it seems reasonable to conjecture that for a state to be credible the range of activities in which it is directly involved cannot be too narrow.
9. It should be conceded that this commitment may not be as easy for countries to make, much less respect. A democratically elected leader may not govern democratically. This is, in fact, what happened to Aristide between 2001 and 2004. Was it right for the international community to refuse to intervene to protect Aristide from falling, or should it have defended an obviously flawed leader, who was democratically elected and remains, perhaps, the most popular Haitian politician even today? Major powers like the United States and France have been more interested in protecting their interests in Haiti, which do not necessarily include democracy. Still, the idea of the international community mitigating uncertainty in Haiti is worth pondering, if only to underscore the positive role external actors could play in Haiti's renewal. It is an entirely different matter whether they will actually play this role.

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Bio

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