



Haiti PAPERS

The Dilemma of Building a Multiparty Democracy in Haiti

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With the return of Jean-Bertrand Aristide to the presidency after a five-year constitutionally imposed hiatus, Haiti is poised to consolidate its democracy. Unfortunately, the type of democracy Haiti is about to consolidate will neither end the current political stalemate nor secure the political legitimacy and stability so essential for beginning the difficult task of developing the impoverished nation. Haiti is on the brink of consolidating a type of democracy that is best characterized as a *populist democracy*, otherwise known as *illiberal democracy*.

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In a liberal democracy, a combination of constitutional limits, institutional checks and balances, and legitimate political opposition restrains the arbitrary exercise of public power. In a populist democracy, the formal trappings of a constitution sanction the unrestrained exercise of state power. Typically, an executive president is directly elected with an overwhelming margin because opposition parties are weak and divided, due to internal dissensions and the selective use of cooptation and repression by the government and the dominant party. In fact, the government and the dominant party are indistinguishable. The dominant party is not a traditional political party that attempts to aggregate competing societal interests, but a highly structured instrument of mass mobilization designed to suppress expressions of conflicting views and unite the population behind a patrimonial leader, by force if necessary.

The distinguishing hallmark of populist democracy is the patrimonial leader who relies on a combination of personal charisma, the dominant party, and a selective application of coercion and violence to concentrate power. The defining mode of governance in a populist democracy is an intolerance of opposition, the fusion of government and party, and total monopoly of state power and resources.

In a liberal democracy, rules confer legitimacy on the restrained exercise of public authority. In a populist democracy, the personal ruler confers legiti-

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macy to his unrestrained exercise of public power. Haiti's central dilemma is how to transfer the source of legitimacy in democratic governance from the ruler to the rules. This is a daunting challenge. For example, in negotiations in early February with Democratic Convergence, the opposition coalition, President Aristide signaled an inclination to entertain limits on his power. However, there is nothing in his past actions and extant writings to suggest that he is likely to translate this new-found inclination into practice. Indeed, his implacable opposition to the power-sharing arrangement proposed by Democratic Convergence largely contributed to the failure of the negotiations to break the current impasse.

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As the dominant political figure in Haiti over the past decade, Aristide has received praise and criticism from American commentators and policy makers. But this singular focus on one individual, while convenient, is misguided and shortsighted. It deflects attention from the institutional and organizational foundations of Haiti's populist democracy and their problematic relationship with the country's prevailing social and political pluralism. In particular, it betrays a serious misunderstanding (if not ignorance) of how the combination of the current institutional design of the Haitian government and the organizational structure of Fanmi Lavalas (FL), the dominant and the current ruling party, is ideally suited to serve Aristide's ill-conceived populist agenda. This combination under his rule will help to entrench the political authoritarianism that is inherent in the populist democracies established recently in several countries in Latin America and Africa. These include, for example, Peru under Alberto Fujimori, Venezuela under Hugo Chavez and such African countries as Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Togo, among others.

Perhaps no event in the past year exemplifies more vividly the authoritarian impulse of the FL regime and its drive to establish total control of the Haitian government than the cynical ma-

nipulation of results in the May 2000 legislative elections. The defining feature of competitive elections in liberal democracies is the inherent uncertainty of their outcomes. It is precisely this uncertainty that confers legitimacy on democratic elections. In other words, political actors accept the legitimacy of democratic elections because they are assured that the rules that organize the electoral competition do not determine its outcome in advance. The rules of election administration are the principal source of, and an independent election commission responsible for implementing the rules is the institutional anchor that secures, this assurance. However, this legitimating principle of electoral uncertainty is fundamentally at odds with the authoritarian impulse of populist democracy. Consistent with that impulse, the FL-controlled Operations Directorate of the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP), which organized the May 2000 elections, prematurely released unauthorized partial results, giving FL a clean sweep of the crucial Senate seats, including seats where the FL faced stiff opposition. Not only did this action violate Article 162 of the Haitian Electoral Code, but the Senate results were also based on a fraudulent formula that excluded about 1.1 million votes (25 percent of the total votes) cast for 99 opposition candidates and therefore also violated Articles 53 and 64 of the Code.

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What makes such brazen manipulation of the election process so egregious is that it was unnecessary for an FL victory. Systematic analysis of the relative strength of the major parties competing in the elections as well as pre-election public opinion polls indicated the real possibility, albeit not the certainty, of FL winning a plurality, and perhaps even a narrow majority, of legislative seats. However, the prospect of a narrow margin of victory, rendered the more elusive by the uncertainty of outcome inherent in electoral competition, was anathema to the authoritarian impulse of populist democracy, and fueled FL's drive for total control of the government.

This essay, while acknowledging President Aristide's powerful personal influence on Haitian politics, elaborates three factors that provide

the social, institutional and organizational foundations of that influence. Its central argument is that the prospective entrenchment of populist democracy in Haiti under Aristide is the combined effect of these three factors:

- (1) the political fragmentation and high degree of electoral competition that threatened to deny FL total control of the government;
- (2) the structure of incentives embodied in the institutional design of the Haiti government; and
- (3) the congruence of FL's populist ideology and organization.

The essay concludes with a discussion of the policy implications of the analysis and an outline of a framework for possible solutions.

POLITICAL FRAGMENTATION AND ELECTORAL COMPETITION

As in all post-authoritarian countries in the early stage of democratic transition, the Haitian polity remains highly fragmented. Five indicators of the party system structure and electoral competition pattern illustrate the nature and extent of this fragmentation. They portray a highly fluid political system in which no political party possesses the capacity to monopolize power, thus increasing the likelihood of highly competitive elections and severely limiting the ability of any party to win overwhelming majorities without systematic fraud.

First, 37 political parties and 1,971 independent candidates contested the May 2000 elections.¹ In the national parliamentary elections, a total of 725 candidates representing 32 parties, including 125 independents, contested the 83 seats in the House of Deputies. A total of 145 candidates representing 22 parties, including 25 independents, contested the 19 seats in the Senate. In local elections, a total of 28,620 candidates representing 37 parties, including 1,821 independents, contested 7,529 positions in communal and municipal governments.

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Second, based on the number of candidates they nominated for national and local offices, the 37 political parties fell into three unequal groups. The first group consisted of the "big five" that nominated candidates for every office across all nine administrative Departments: FL, Espace de Concertation (EC), National Christian Movement of Haiti (MOCHRENA), People in Struggle Organization (OPL), and Assembly of Progressive National Democrats (RNDP). The second group consisted of ten political parties that nominated a small number of candidates for only a limited number of offices. The third group consisted of 22 parties that nominated most of their candidates in a select number of Departments or principally in local races.

Third, the entry of 1,971 independent candidates added to the political fragmentation and increased the uncertainty of the electoral competition. Since the 1990 elections, Haiti has witnessed the emergence of a substantial number of leaders with deep-rooted local support. Most of these leaders came to prominence and acquired their political skills as community organizers and members of local non-governmental organizations spearheading grassroots development efforts. A few became activists in national politics, although most supported Aristide's belated candidacy for president in 1990. For strategic reasons, these activists joined emerging national political parties, principally to secure much-needed financial and organizational support. However, the unresponsiveness of the major parties to their local concerns engendered their disenchantment with national political parties and re-directed their political energies to the newly created local government structures. In the 1995 and again in the controversial 1997 elections, these popular local leaders won unexpectedly large numbers of local elections, challenging the reputed domination of the major parties, especially FL. In the 2000 elections, these grassroots leaders made their presence felt again by nominating 607 three-member independent

¹The term "political party" is used broadly in this essay to refer to formally organized political units conventionally recognized as political parties as well as to loosely organized political units that are little more than the personal creations of individuals with political aspirations.

cartels (totaling 1,821 individual candidates) to fill local government offices.

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Among Haitian voters, candidates' personal standing and individual attributes matter more than their formal party affiliations. This placed a heavy premium on the major political parties to recruit these independent local leaders and secure their tacit support or discourage them from supporting the opponents. The FL confronted a particularly acute dilemma in this respect. Its effectiveness as an instrument of populist mobilization depended heavily on a cadre of committed followers who expected to be rewarded with a nomination on the party's ticket in the May elections. However, FL could not acquire control of local governments, one of its principal objectives, without the support of the independent leaders with local power bases. Recruiting these leaders meant sacrificing their committed cadres. To limit the impending damage to party unity, FL waited until the last moment, before the candidate registration deadline, to announce its list of candidates for the May elections.

The fourth indicator of the extent of fragmentation is the large number of candidates running for disproportionately small numbers of seats, which made the May elections highly competitive. The degree of competitiveness in these

elections can be measured by a Competitive Index (CI), which is derived by calculating the average number of candidates per seat. Across elective offices, the parliamentary races were the most competitive with a CI of 8.7 for the House and a CI of 7.6 for senatorial races. Because of the significant number of available seats at local levels, communal and municipal elections were relatively less competitive than the national parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, with an average CI of 3.8, these elections remained quite competitive in their own right. Across local offices, the degree of competitiveness ranged from a CI of 3.3 for elections to the Communal Section Administrative Councils (ASECS), to a CI of 4.5 for elections to the Communal Section Assemblies (CASECS), to a CI of 4.9 for City Delegate elections, to a CI of 6.3 for the elections to the Municipal Councils. Table 1 displays the relevant data on the number of candidates and seats, the CI and the number of independents by office.

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Finally, at first glance, the size of the "big five" parties (FL, ESPACE, MOCHRENA, OPL and RNDP) appears to give them an edge in the

TABLE 1. DATA FOR THE LEGISLATIVE AND LOCAL ELECTIONS, MAY 21, 2000

OFFICES	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES	NUMBER OF SEATS	COMPETITIVE INDEX	INDEPENDENTS
House of Deputies	725	83	8.7	25
Senate	145	19	7.6	125
ASECS	16,582	5,039	3.3	444
CASECS	7,593	1,692	4.5	771
Municipal	2,496	399	6.3	189
City Delegates	1,949	399	4.9	417
TOTALS	29,490	7,631	3.9	1,971

elections. But this advantage is mitigated in part by the localized influence of independent candidates. It is, more significantly, diminished by the use of the two-round majority run-off formula for the national parliamentary races and the plurality "first-past-the-post" formula for local races. Both formulas usually favor a limited number of parties and candidates competing for support from geographically concentrated or ideologically homogenous blocks of voters. However, both formulas also tend to dramatically increase the competitiveness of elections in a fragmented polity like Haiti's. The presence of a large number of parties and independent candidates competing for the support of geographically dispersed and ideologically disparate voters severely diminishes the prospects of any party winning outright, especially with overwhelming majorities of votes or seats. In the parliamentary elections, for example, the use of the two-round majority run-off formula would encourage vote dispersion among the approximately nine candidates per seat for the House of Deputies and about eight candidates per seat for the Senate, thus making it extremely difficult to secure a first-round victory. This would also mean increased uncertainty for the two first-round winners who in order to win the second round must secure the support of the smaller parties who lost in the previous round. In the local elections, the use of plurality formula and the presence of large numbers of parties and candidates drastically reduced the marginal percentage of votes required to win.

[T]he combination of a high degree of electoral competition engendered by the prevailing fragmentation of the Haitian polity and the institutional design of the electoral systems used in these elections seriously limited the ability of any party or candidate to secure a sweeping victory. A sweeping victory could be secured, however, but only through the systematic manipulation of the election results.

In both national and local elections, therefore, the combination of a high degree of electoral competition engendered by the prevailing fragmentation of the Haitian polity and the institutional design of the electoral systems used in these elections seriously limited the ability of any party or candidate to secure a sweeping victory.

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THE INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN OF THE HAITI GOVERNMENT

The high degree of political fragmentation and electoral competition jeopardized the prospect of total FL domination of the government, thus encouraging the manipulation of election results. Moreover, the institutional design of the Haitian government defined the repository of state power and established the instruments for its exercise, thus providing additional incentives for such manipulation. Two aspects of this design are particularly important in this context. The first concerns the relationship between the executive and the legislature. The second concerns the relationship between the central government and sub-national governments at the Department, Commune, and Sub-Commune levels. Both relationships emanate from an institutional design that facilitates unfettered centralization of power. Moreover, the intricate institutional design of sub-national governments fosters debilitating bureaucratic inefficiencies and is costly to maintain.

Executive-Legislative Relationship in the National Government

At the national level, Haiti has a semi-presidential system in which the directly elected president governs through a prime minister selected from the majority party in parliament. A prime minister selected from and responsible to the legislature helps curb the arbitrary exercise of power by the executive president. This system works efficiently to the extent that the president and the prime minister come from the same party or coalition. When they do not the creation of stable governing majorities and policy coordination becomes problematic. Thus, relative harmony prevailed in Haiti's 46th Parliament prior to the rupture between OPL and FL over the disputed 1997 elections and the resignation of OPL Prime Minister Rosny Smarth.

The OPL-FL rupture contributed to the political gridlock that precipitated the controversial dissolution of the parliament by President Preval. Gridlock is usually considered detrimental to effective governance. Yet a democracy requires debate, moderation and compromise,

the potential catalysts for gridlock. To that extent, gridlock is good. In a presidential system, gridlock constrains the arbitrary exercise of power by the executive who enjoys an institutional advantage vis-à-vis a fragmented legislature. In the context of Haiti's authoritarian past, the role of the OPL-led legislature in confronting the executive over the formation of a new government and new elections was arguably an important contribution to the development of a democratic culture. The political recalcitrance of the OPL-led legislature produced relatively minimal damage to a culture of political tolerance compared to the Preval administration's refusal to accommodate demands for a new round of elections. The Preval government only exacerbated the situation by suppressing the damning report of a commission it had appointed to investigate allegations of fraud and irregularities in the 1997 election.

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Political gridlock is inherent in Haiti's semi-presidential system and can be avoided only by ensuring that the president commands a partisan majority in the legislature. Hence, there was considerable institutional incentive to manipulate the results and ensure a FL sweep in the May elections. Such a sweep would prevent a repetition of the troublesome gridlock that confronted the Preval administration and the previous Aristide administration. More importantly, it would give Aristide unfettered control of the government upon his reelection in February 2002.

The Structure of Sub-National Governments

The structure and role of the sub-national governments at the Department, Commune, and Sub-Commune levels also created incentives for manipulating the May elections to ensure a FL sweep. The 1987 Constitution invests these bodies, among other things, with a number of crucial powers of nominating and electing higher-level officials. The directly elected members of the Sub-Commune Assemblies (ASECS) and the Town Assemblies send delegates to

represent them in the Municipal Assemblies. These Municipal Assemblies send one delegate each to represent them in the Departmental Assembly. The Departmental Assemblies, in turn, send one delegate each to represent them in the Interdepartmental Council (CID), the highest body in the decentralized structure of government whose members have cabinet status and participate in the meetings of the Council of Ministers.

In addition, Municipal Assemblies are empowered to nominate candidates for Justice of the Peace and Departmental Assemblies are empowered to nominate candidates for the nine departmental Courts of Appeal and the Courts of First Instance. These nominees make up the pool of potential candidates from which the executive makes the final judicial appointments. Moreover, the nine Departmental Assemblies are empowered to nominate three candidates each for potential membership in the nine-member Permanent Electoral Council (CEP). These 27 candidates make up the pool from which the executive, the legislature and the Supreme Court select the nine CEP members.

An FL sweep of these sub-national bodies would thus enable Aristide to exercise complete control over policy priorities as well as judicial appointments. It would also give Aristide unrestricted opportunity to determine the composition of the permanent CEP.

POPULIST IDEOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION

Limiting the power of the central government after the brutal authoritarian rule of the Duvalier regimes was the principal and legitimate motivation for the choice of the semi-presidential system and the dispersal of power among multiple sub-national governments in Haiti. To work effectively, however, the institutional design of any democratic government is grounded in a broad consensus among political elites on a vision of democracy (however vaguely defined) that the design is supposed to embody and foster. Such a consensus never emerged in contemporary Haiti, where the destruction of the Duvalier regime was the only factor that unified the disparate elites. Absent such a consensus, and given the abject failure of the current opposition leaders to articulate an alternate vision (or visions), President Aristide's unprincipled populism defines the terms of political discourse and action in the country. More ominously, FL's

TABLE 2. THE INTERNAL ORGANIZATION OF FANMI LAVALAS

ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS	PARTY COORDINATION COMMITTEES	PARTY ASSEMBLIES
National Levels	9 Departmental Delegates, other participants, and national representatives	National Congress
Departments	3 Delegates (1 nominated, 2 elected)	Departmental Coordination
Communes	3 Delegates (1 nominated, 2 elected)	Communal Section Coordination
Communal Sections	3 Delegates (1 nominated, 2 elected)	<i>Ti Fanmi</i>

NB: *Ti Fanmi* = 12 members
One Delegate represents one or more *Ti Fanmi*

Source: *Charte, Statuts et Reglements de L'Organisation Fanmi Lavalas*, 1er Congres, 14-16 December 1999, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, p. 10.

↓ = Direction of authority and control

NOTE: This table reverses the bottom-up order of the different levels of the party and administrative hierarchy that appears in the original document. The ordering in the original document, however, is a misleading representation of the relationship between the different levels. The arrow, which is not in the original document, is added in this table to indicate the correct relationship and flow of authority between the different levels.

internal organization designed to implement this vision remains highly centralized and authoritarian. Aligned with the nominally decentralized structure of the government, the party's centralized organization is ideally suited to entrench a populist democracy with firmly embedded authoritarian features and tendencies.

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The FL charter offers crucial insights into both the organizational structure of the party and the principles underlying it. The party's internal organization parallels the different levels of local and national government – communal sections, communes, departments and the national level. The lowest party unit corresponding to the lowest administrative unit, the communal sec-

tion, is the *Ti Fanmi* (little family) constituting a 12-person cell. Each level has a coordination committee of three people, two elected and one appointed. This outwardly decentralized structure parallels the decentralized governance system organized around the CASECs and the ASECs, including the lower levels sending delegates to represent them at the higher levels. Table 2 displays FL's internal organization.

The layered stratification of FL's internal units reflects the principle of subsidiarity, one of the central organizing principles of the Catholic Church whereby governance authority is delegated to the smallest unit that is capable of exercising it, namely, the parish. But the principle of subsidiarity in Catholic doctrine does not give autonomy to local governance units. It invests the higher units with complete discretionary authority to delegate such autonomy. In the FL hierarchy, the authority of lower units is limited by the presence of appointed members on coordination committees through which the center controls the party network. As in the Catholic Church, authority and control in FL flows downwards, not in the opposite direction. However, the organizational chart on page 10 of

the party's charter lists the lower units at the top of the chart and the higher units at the bottom, and does not include arrows showing the flow of authority. This chart thus creates a deceptive impression of a decentralized structure with autonomy for lower-level units. A close scrutiny of the charter, however, suggests otherwise (see Table 2).

Populism as ideology and organizing principle has inherent authoritarian tendencies that can be constrained by strong constitutional safeguards, rule of law and expanded space for alternative forms of political organization. But where such safeguards are weak or nonexistent, as in contemporary Haiti, populism's authoritarian tendencies are readily harnessed to messianic impulses in an attempt to create a polity that puts a premium on absolutism at the expense of pluralism. In this polity, control and unity animate governance. Traditional political parties that articulate and aggregate competing societal interests are considered meddling and divisive. The hegemonic party emerges as the instrument of mass mobilization. And the patrimonial messianic leader of the party becomes the sole embodiment of "the will of the people." The organizing logic of this polity is an explosive fusion of the leader, party and the state.

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Translating this vision of a populist polity into reality requires a malleable society that is reflexively amenable to mass mobilization and hegemonic control. Contemporary Haiti, however, is anything but that. It has a vibrant civil society featuring a dizzying array of peasant associations, women's groups, urban professional associations and networks of non-governmental organizations, in addition to labor unions, business associations and the media. These groups vary widely in organizational capacity, goals and ideologies. Given the tradition of predation by the state and repeated failures of democratic experiments since 1990, these groups remain understandably skeptical of political parties, very protective of their autonomy and extremely suspicious of centralized control. Because of this

localized and diffuse pattern of social activism, Haitian society remains highly fragmented. This fragmentation makes it invulnerable to the mass mobilization strategies employed by FL to establish Aristide's vision of an authoritarian populist polity. Controlling Haiti's fragmented social structures through a hegemonic party, moreover, requires an organization with a high degree of coercive capacity that the FL simply does not possess at this time.

The high degree of social fragmentation in Haiti closely corresponds to the country's high degree of political fragmentation. This close correspondence of social and political fragmentation did not augur well for Aristide's populist agenda in the May 2000 elections. Evidence from survey research and focus group interviews, as well as close analyses of the 1995 and 1997 elections, all indicated sharply diminishing levels of support for Aristide and FL since Aristide's return to power under international protection in 1994. However, declining support for FL did not automatically translate into advantage for the other parties at the polls. "Pox on (all) your houses" was the general sentiment of Haitian voters. Contrary to some predictions and despite threats of violence and insecurity, approximately 60 percent of the registered voters came out to vote in the May elections. Such a high turnout in the context of the high degree of political fragmentation and electoral competition rendered a sweeping victory by a single party a virtual impossibility. Even with its well-financed organization, FL could have expected to win a plurality, and perhaps even a narrow majority, of seats at all levels of the government, but not the total domination required to realize Aristide's vision of a populist polity. The manipulation of election results thus became a rational alternative.

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IMPLICATIONS

The central lesson of the preceding analysis is that Haiti is poised for the consolidation of a populist democracy based on institutional and organizational foundations in which

authoritarianism is firmly embedded. With FL in virtually total control of every level of the Haitian government due to the manipulated results of the May 2000 elections, Aristide's accession to the presidency gives him unfettered power to govern unilaterally and implement his populist vision.

The prevailing institutional design of the Haitian government, moreover, embodies an authoritarian logic that is ideally suited for the institutionalization of populist democracy. Inherent in the directly elected executive presidency is a centralizing tendency that, left unchecked, can create perverse incentives for the unrestrained exercise of centralized power.

Aristide's vision, however, is not an ineluctably autonomous force behind the imposition of an authoritarian populist democracy in Haiti. Its heightened salience and effectiveness have been greatly facilitated by the intellectual vacuum that has existed in Haiti since the fall of the Duvalier dictatorship in 1986 and especially since the introduction of democracy in 1990. Haitian opposition leaders have been singularly incapable of filling this vacuum. Indicative of this incapacity is their failure to develop and institutionalize a coherent political process grounded in widely accepted rules of the game. United only by their opposition to Aristide and divided by personal differences and factional conflicts, they have been unable to articulate coherent alternatives to Aristide's vision of populist democracy. In the absence of such alternatives, Aristide's populism, however misguided, remains the only game in town.

The prevailing institutional design of the Haitian government, moreover, embodies an authoritarian logic that is ideally suited for the institutionalization of populist democracy. Inherent in the directly elected executive presidency is a centralizing tendency that, left unchecked, can create perverse incentives for the unrestrained exercise of centralized power. The Haitian legislature as conceived by the 1987 Constitution can potentially counter-balance the monopolization of power by the executive, but only if it is controlled by the opposition or if the presidential party possesses a legislative plurality and needs the opposition to form a governing majority. Absent these two conditions, as well as

a tradition of political accommodation, the total monopoly of executive and legislative authority by a single party is tantamount to fostering a "constitutionalized tyranny".

The distribution of power between the central and local governments also facilitates the institutionalization of an authoritarian populist democracy in Haiti. The constitutional powers of the local assemblies to nominate candidates to the judiciary and the permanent electoral commission make them particularly susceptible to populist control. This control is institutionalized through the parallel structures of a hegemonic mobilization party to which the local assemblies are linked by party cadres appointed by, and responsible to, the party's central leaders. The long-term consequences of this populist institutional design will be an intensely politicized judiciary and electoral commission.

The single most important and urgent of these steps is a power-sharing arrangement that incorporates key opposition leaders in a government of national unity headed by President Aristide.

Moreover, in majoritarian electoral systems – the two round majority run-off formula in single-member districts for the parliament and the first-past-the-post plurality formula for local government elections – are also quintessential "winner-take-all" institutional designs. They typically give preference to a small number of large parties. But if the party system is fragmented and the prospects are low for any party winning outright majorities, as is the case in Haiti, they are also likely to foster fragmented party systems that make it difficult to form a stable, governing majority. Only the imposition of total control by a hegemonic party can mitigate this prospect.

The consequences of populist democracy about to be institutionalized in Haiti are clearly worrisome. The structures and modalities of populist governance prescribed by the regime are fundamentally at odds with the social and political pluralism of contemporary Haiti. Most vividly reflected in the proliferation of political parties, this pluralism is indicative of a vibrant civil society and political activism that have become the hallmark of a dynamic Haitian polity since the fall of the Duvalier dictatorship. It has, in particular, engendered a wide range of con-

flicting social, economic, and political interests. The organized and peaceful expression of these multiple interests require corresponding pluralism of political structures. However, the centralization of power and the imposition of organizational uniformity required for the effective implementation of the populist polity contemplated by Aristide simply does not allow for such political pluralism. Without adequate institutionalized outlets, these interests are likely to explode in violence in the streets. That outcome is just as likely to contend with counter-violence by a regime with a habit for using violence to repress legitimate opposition.

[A] government of national unity should help defuse current political tensions.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS?

Is there a solution, then, to Haiti's dilemma? Perhaps, but only in the long run. To reach this potential long run solution, however, will require a series of incremental steps in the short run. The single most important and urgent of these steps is a power-sharing arrangement that incorporates key opposition leaders in a government of national unity headed by President Aristide. The Prime Minister, in particular, should come from the ranks of the opposition. As an expression of goodwill on the part of the government and the opposition, a government of national unity should help defuse current political tensions. It would also manifest the seriousness of President Aristide's professed commitment to accommodation and national unity that he made in his inaugural address and has repeated in subsequent public statements. Moreover, it would provide an opportunity for the opposition leaders to manifest their heretofore professed but untested capacity and commitment to make a positive contribution to governing the country.

To have a lasting impact, however, the government of national unity must seriously embark on a major effort to reform the current institutional design of the Haiti government. For the purpose of this essay, limitations of space preclude a detailed discussion of this critical issue, but a framework can be briefly outlined. First, the current presidential system should be replaced with a parliamentary system. The current presidential system contains the intrinsic proclivity

for a concentration of power if the same party controls the executive and the legislature or debilitating deadlock in the case of divided control. A parliamentary system would provide greater institutional opportunities to avoid either outcome by facilitating the formation of governing majorities, through a single party or a coalition of parties, that would be routinely subjected to checks by parliamentary procedures and institutionalized opposition in the parliament.

Second, the Senate, which currently duplicates and often exceeds the powers of the House of Deputies, should be abolished and its 27 seats added to the current 83 seats in the House of Deputies to create a 110-seat unicameral parliament. In addition to the savings on administrative costs gained from the elimination of a bicameral legislature, this would help expand opportunities for political representation in the parliament – an important aspect of FL's populist project. Third, creating a two-tiered electoral formula for electing the unicameral parliament would help balance such expanded opportunities for representation with the accountability of elected representatives to their constituents. The current 83 seats should, therefore, continue to be allocated in single-member districts, but on the basis of first-past-the-post plurality formula instead of the current two-round majority run-off formula. Securing accountability through direct electoral connection between elected officials and their constituents, single-member districts and plurality formula would also help to limit the fragmentation of the party system by reducing the prospects of smaller parties winning in single-member districts. However, allocating the remaining 27 seats in a single nationwide district by a proportional representation formula can readily compensate the smaller parties. Requiring a threshold of five percent of the national vote for winning these seats can provide additional safeguards against party system fragmentation.

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Fourth, because of its massive size and expense, the structure of local government must be an important focus of any institutional reform effort. Currently, Haiti has a total of 1,396 units of local government (ASECS, CASECS, Municipalities and City Delegates) comprised of about 7,529 discrete positions. With each of these positions filled by a three-member cartel, a total of 22, 587 individuals occupy positions in local governments. Moreover, these local government units elect members to intermediate levels of the administrative hierarchy, such as the Department Assembly and the Interdepartmental Council. These multi-layered units of governments, created in the initial flush of populist enthusiasm to disperse power as a reflexive (instead of a considered) response to the centralized oppression of the Duvalier dictatorship, have established an inordinately complex bureaucratic maze that is ideally suited to foster severe administrative inefficiencies. Likewise, the financial cost of sustaining such a complex and inefficient system in a severely impoverished country will become unconscionably prohibitive. With local units dependent on extremely limited revenue sources, the burden will inevitably fall on the financially strapped central government. Routine political conflicts over the allocation of scarce resources will thus become magnified, leading eventually to either the collapse of the system weighted down by its own inefficiency and penury or the intensification of increasingly oppressive central control.

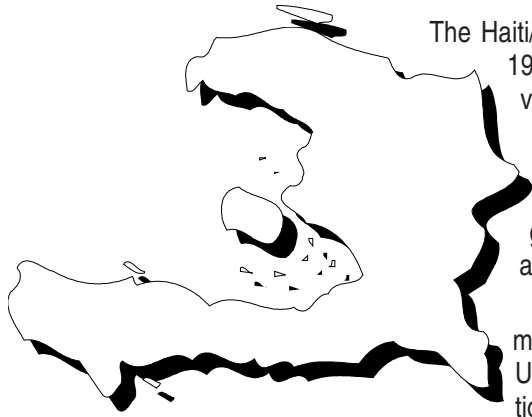
Finally, Haiti's virtually total dependence on foreign assistance provides donors with the leverage to adopt a disciplined and cost-effective approach that, in the first instance, should maintain the current embargo on assistance to the country. As conditions for the resumption of foreign assistance, donors should also require that Haiti must (1) hold the disputed Senate elections and (2) establish a government of national unity with meaningful opposition participation for two years during which it will consider major institutional reform and corresponding constitutional revisions along the lines recommended above. The first condition would remove a lingering source of dispute between the government and the opposition and would add considerably to the domestic and international legitimacy of the government. The second condition would test the resolve and commitment of both the Aristide government and the

opposition groups to cooperate with each other.

The international community, especially the United States, can play an important role here by eschewing what is increasingly perceived as its pro-opposition stance and pressuring the opposition groups to forgo their implacable anti-Aristide position and engage in serious negotiations with Aristide over the creation of a government of national unity. A disciplined approach requires that the international community explicitly define the actions (and not simply the rhetoric) of the Haitian government and the opposition in terms of progressive and unambiguous benchmarks for resuming assistance. A cost-effective approach requires that the international community exert its leverage to insist that Haitians must be the principal architects of any political solution crafted to resolve that country's problems. The international community can facilitate this process by providing a neutral forum and mediation, perhaps within the Organization of American States (OAS) framework. Ultimately, however, Haitian actors must take responsibility for their country's present dilemmas and must therefore also design and assume ownership of the political solutions for them.

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Information on the Haiti Program



The Haiti/Hispaniola Program of the Georgetown University Caribbean Project, launched in mid-1994, seeks to provide accurate, up-to-date, and insightful information and analysis to individuals and organizations involved in current Haitian political, economic, and social issues. It seeks to achieve similar goals for issues that link Haiti and the Dominican Republic and, therefore, to encompass the entire island of Hispaniola. In 2000, the Haiti Program expanded to initiate joint affiliation with Trinity College in Washington, DC, where some program activities are now based. The principal methods of the Haiti Program's dissemination and analysis are two-fold:

The Haiti Study Group was founded in 1994 and now comprises approximately 125 members, including policy makers and program planners in agencies and branches of the U.S. government as well as representatives of academic and non-governmental organizations. The Haiti Study Group (HSG) convenes approximately six times annually for presentations by U.S. and Haiti-based actors and analysts on issues of topical interest. Occasionally, HSG speakers emanate from other countries, particularly the Dominican Republic. Frequently, the Haiti Program collaborates with other organizations to co-sponsor meetings. All meetings are strictly off-the-record and by invitation only. In 1999 the project expanded its focus to more actively incorporate Haiti-Dominican Republic issues. A prominent activity of the HSG in 2001 will be a full-day symposium on Haiti's Political and Economic Development.

The Haiti Info Circular reproduces short articles, essays, and reports written by members of the HSG and other Haiti Scholars. The Circular is distributed two or three times annually to members of the Haiti Study Group and is available to other interested individuals upon request. In 1999, the Haiti Info Circular began to include short articles, essays, and reports that cover Hispaniola-wide topics. Longer documents are occasionally posted on the Program's web site at <http://www.georgetown.edu/sfs/programs/clas/Caribe/main.htm>.

Haiti Briefing Papers are concise analytical essays on current topics of interest to policy makers. While only occasionally commissioned by the Haiti Program, three Briefing Papers are scheduled for publication in 2001.

The Haiti Program also sponsors occasional briefings for Congressional Staff members and participates in meetings, consultations, and conferences on issues linked to Haiti and Hispaniola. The Program is coordinated by Dr. Robert Maguire and is a sub-unit of the Georgetown University Caribbean Project, directed by Gillian Gunn Clissold.

The Georgetown University Haiti Papers are designed to serve the needs of decision makers and analysts interested in Haiti. The Papers are an occasional publication of the Haiti Program of the Caribbean Project, a unit of the Center for Latin American Studies, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author, and not the Project, the Center, the School, or the University. Copies of this and other Haiti-relevant publications can be obtained by writing to the Caribbean Project, 3307 M Street, NW, Suite 202, Washington, DC 20007, or by visiting the Project's website at: <http://www.georgetown.edu/sfs/programs/clas/Caribe/main.htm>.

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