

# TRAUMATIZED SOCIETIES: SOCIAL CUBISM AND THE PREDATORY STATE OF HAITI

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The end of the twentieth century has seen an increase in societies devastated and traumatized by mass violence. Traumatized societies develop when severe inter-ethnic conflicts cause drastic shared losses, humiliation by the enemy, and helplessness that prevents positive adaptation to the situation.<sup>1</sup> We see examples of this resulting from the genocide in Rwanda and Bosnia, the brutal militarism in Haiti, and the ongoing clashes between Palestinians and Israelis in the Middle East. While many of these societies no longer appear traumatized on the surface, these events may still affect societal processes.<sup>2</sup>

For more than 200 years, Haiti has suffered such traumas. Slavery and colonization, a succession of predatory dictatorships, and economic sanctions and international isolation continue to plague Haiti. In this post-Cold War setting, the daunting challenge for conflict resolution scholars and practitioners, government officials, and non-state actors is to develop multi-modal and multidimensional mechanisms for dealing with failed states and traumatized societies. This chapter will examine the effectiveness of social cubism as an analytical framework for dealing with the multifaceted conflict in Haiti.

According to Byrne and Carter, studies of ethno-territorial politics typically examine political and economic structures, to emphasize the competing interests

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1. VAMIK VOLKAN, *BLOOD LINES: FROM ETHNIC PRIDE TO ETHNIC TERRORISM* 43 (1998).

2. *Id.*

of groups, or use a psychoanalytic approach to emphasize psychological and cultural forces.<sup>3</sup> Byrne and Carter advocate the perspective of “social cubism,” emphasizing the interaction of both the material and psychological mechanisms. The social cube of conflict has six interrelated facets or forces: history; religion; demographics; political institutions; economics; and psychocultural factors.<sup>4</sup>

Social cubism evokes images of the Rubic’s Cube, which, if one twists or turns the cube in any direction, that move will alter the interaction of various elements of the game. These six social forces, when combined, produce differing patterns of intergroup behavior or interaction. No one force can be isolated to explain its relation to the other forces, nor can one stand alone as a single cause of a conflict. For example, one dilemma for international policy makers is that they do not have a scientific methodology for assessing the cultural, political, and social meanings of trauma in the lives of civilian populations and how these traumatic experiences alter the everyday lives of the affected individuals. Little empirical research is conducted for assessing outcomes, and humanitarian goals are often subordinated to political agendas. Although the magnitude of such problems are becoming clearer, methods of prevention and reconstruction of damaged societies have remained elusive. Consequently, the enormous burden of human suffering and loss of social and economic productivity remains hidden behind a veil of neglect, ignorance, and denial.<sup>5</sup>

Social cubism offers an analytic framework for assessing the cultural, political, and social meanings of trauma. I will use the six forces to examine the state of Haiti today. Can this perspective shed new light on efforts to rebuild a traumatized society in ways that promote economic development, civil society reconstruction, justice, democracy, and human rights, and prevent a relapse into new rounds of crisis and chaos? My contention is that neglecting the interaction between these six forces, as well as the collective psychology of people displaced from their homes and their country, along with the economic and political reconstruction of the community, cannot support a lasting resolution. Resolution of the ongoing political conflict in Haiti requires not only political settlement, but also a wider healing of the traumatized society. Transformation of this material and psychological anomaly requires short-term and long-term efforts by many actors.

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3. Seán Byrne & Neal Carter, *A Social Cubism: Six Social Forces of Ethnoterritorial Politics in Northern Ireland and Québec*, 3 *J. PEACE & CONFLICT STUDIES* 52, 52-66 (1996).

4. *Id.*

5. Richard Mollica, *Trauma and Reconstruction in Kobe, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Columbia*, 16 *Harvard School of Public Health* 1, 1-4, available at <http://www.cgp.org/cgplink/vol16/articlesvol16.html> (last visited Jan. 19 2002).

Haiti is a country of extreme political polarization, class divisions, a fractured national identity, and stark socioeconomic contrasts.<sup>6</sup> Elites who artificially perpetuate the extremes of the nation's colonial traditions have proven unwilling to relinquish their status and wealth (and therefore power) in post-independence Haiti. These divisions have exacerbated cultural rifts manifested in language, religious practices, and attitudes toward skin color, which can only impede the transition to democracy that the Haitian government is now trying to effect.<sup>7</sup>

Haiti has endured many horrendous events in its brief history. Perhaps the perpetuation of these traumas down throughout its history, without the benefit of healing as a nation, inhibits Haiti's development today. Volkan describes the transgenerational transmission of trauma as

when an older person [or group] unconsciously externalizes his traumatized self onto a developing child's [or group's identity] personality. A child then becomes a reservoir for the unwanted, troublesome parts of an older generation. Because the elders have influences on a child [or community], the child absorbs their wishes and expectations and is driven to act on them. It becomes the child's task to mourn, to reverse the humiliation and feelings of helplessness pertaining to the trauma of his forebears.<sup>8</sup>

Volkan uses the term "chosen trauma" to describe the collective memory of a calamity that once befell a group's ancestors. It is, of course, more than a simple recollection; it is a shared mental representation of the event, which includes realistic information, fantasized expectations, intense feelings, and defenses against unacceptable thought.<sup>9</sup> He maintains that the word "chosen" fittingly reflects a large group unconsciously defining its identity by the transgenerational transmission of injured selves infused with the memory of the ancestors' trauma. I contend that Haiti as a country suffers from a transgenerational transmission of trauma. I will use social cubism to analyze the various social forces that interlock to produce the crisis in Haiti today.

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6. Jennifer L. McCoy, ROBERT ROTBERG, HAITI, RENEWED: POLITICAL & ECONOMIC PROSPECTS 1-26 (Robert I. Rothberg ed., Brookings Institution Press, 1997) (1997).

7. IRWIN P. STOTSKY, SILENCING THE GUNS IN HAITI: THE PROMISE OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY 17 (1997).

8. VOLKAN, *supra* note 1, at 43.

9. *Id.* at 48.

## II. HAITI: AN OVERVIEW OF A TURBULENT HISTORY

Perhaps the single most important element to understand about contemporary Haiti is that it remains the only nation in history to have been founded by slaves who overthrew their masters . . . This unique aspect of Haitian history is both an asset and a liability.

Chetan Kumar

Haiti was the first country in the Caribbean to win its independence, when the French were expelled in 1804, and only the second republic of the hemisphere after the United States. Haiti, earlier known as Saint-Domingue, shares roughly a third of the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic.<sup>10</sup> Modern Haitian history began in 1492, when Christopher Columbus landed on Haiti near Cape Haitien on the north coast of Hispaniola.<sup>11</sup> The island became an important colony and the seat of Spanish government in the New World until Spain lost interest in Haiti because its obsession with gold had exhausted that natural resource on the island.

Within fifty years of enslaving the island's inhabitants, half a million Arawak Indians had been exterminated in the Spanish gold mines.<sup>12</sup> The genocide of the native Indians did not go unnoticed in Spain, however. The missionary Bartolome de las Casas campaigned against Indian slavery, achieving its abolition in 1542. Yet not only was the measure too late to prevent the extinction of the Arawaks, but it also brought about the beginning of African slavery in the New World.<sup>13</sup> By 1517, Charles V authorized the export of 15,000 African slaves to San Domingo, and thus priest and King launched on the world the American slave trade and slavery.<sup>14</sup>

After nearly one hundred years of Spanish, British, and French fighting over the island, Spain ceded Saint Dominique, now Haiti, to the French in 1695 by the Treaty of Ryswick.<sup>15</sup> By 1789 the French West Indian colony of San Domingo supplied two-thirds of the overseas trade of France and was the greatest individual market for the European slave trade. Slavery was an integral part of the economic life of the age in the greatest colony in the world, the pride

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10. DAVID MALONE, *DECISION-MAKING IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL: THE CASE OF HAITI 1990-1997* 40 (1998).

11. Leslie A. Benton, & Glenn T. Ware. *Haiti: A Case Study of the International Response and the Efficacy of Nongovernmental Organizations in the Crisis*, at <http://www.law.emory.edu/EILR/volumes/spg98/benton.html> (last visited Jan. 19, 2002).

12. JAMES FERGUSON, *PAPA DOC, BABY DOC: HAITI AND THE DUVALIERS* 1 (1987).

13. *Id.* at 2.

14. C. L. R. JAMES, *THE BLACK JACOBINS: TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE AND THE SAN DOMINGO REVOLUTION* (Vintage Books 1989) (1963).

15. *Id.*

of France and the envy of every other imperialist nation. The economic structure rested wholly on the labor of half a million slaves.<sup>16</sup> San Domingo was also noted for being the world's most repressive colony engendering a caste system of French domination and set the stage for the social discord and political exploitation that remains today.<sup>17</sup>

Social discord between whites and black widened when the French slave owners and their black female slaves produced a new class, the mulattos, also known as *gens de couleur* or *affranchis*. This new class's social status rested between those of whites and blacks. The plantation owners usually educated their progeny and often signed over land titles to them, so in spite of institutional discrimination against them, many mulattos became wealthy landowners, establishing themselves as a viable class.<sup>18</sup> Cruel and abusive racial discrimination, however, was the hallmark of French colonization in this three-tiered society of whites, mulattos, and blacks.

The modern nation of Haiti is the product of a revolution against slavery and colonialism beginning in 1791. In the fifty years or so leading to the 1791 slave revolution in Haiti, black slaves began to react to the brutal treatment of their masters. The continuing racial strife, bolstered by the inspiration of the French revolution, contributed to the outbreak of a revolution. During this period of civil war, Toussaint L'Ouverture emerged as the dominant black leader<sup>19</sup> of the first large-scale successful slavery revolt in the Americas. L'Ouverture eventually gained command of the entire island. In 1802, however, Napoleonic forces sent to depose L'Ouverture took him to France, where he later died in prison. Nevertheless, Napoleon and his troops, having been exhausted and defeated in Europe, finally conceded to the Haitian rebellion.<sup>20</sup>

Haiti proclaimed independence on January 1, 1804. It emerged as a nation under the successive leadership of two figures, Toussaint L'Ouverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines. After two centuries of Spanish and French colonial rule, and in the wake of the French revolution and a new government based on the "Rights of Man," Haiti's slave population began to struggle for political rights equal to those possessed by the island's white and mulatto elites.<sup>21</sup> The world's first free black republic was therefore characterized by racial hatred and corruption. The slave revolution virtually eliminated the white population and

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16. JAMES, *supra* note 14, at 6.

17. Benton & Ware, *supra* note 11.

18. *Id.*

19. *Id.*

20. *Id.* at 2.

21. CHETAN KUMAR, BUILDING PEACE IN HAITI (1998).

degenerated into a ten-year entanglement of atrocities known as the "War of the Castes."<sup>22</sup>

After Dessalines's rule, the desperate competition between blacks and mulattos manifested itself in the eventual division of Haiti; a northern kingdom under black Henry Christopher (King Henry I of Haiti), who ruled harshly from a Cape Haitian palace, and a southern republic under mulatto Alexandra Petion's laissez-faire rule at Port-au-Prince.<sup>23</sup> After Petion died in 1818, the republican senate selected the commander of the Presidential Guard, General Jean-Pierre Boyer, as the new president for life. President Boyer then invaded San Domingo following its declaration of independence from Spain, with the entire island controlled by Haiti until 1844.

Upon King Henry's death in 1820, Boyer was able to consolidate Haiti and establish a government remarkable only for its relative stability over a twenty-five year rule. After decades of Haiti's isolation from the international community, France agreed to recognize Haitian independence in exchange for a financial indemnity of 150 million francs. Most nations, including the United States, shunned Haiti for almost forty years, fearful that its example could stir unrest there and in other slaveholding countries. Over the next few decades Haiti was forced to take out loans of seventy million francs to repay the indemnity in hopes of gaining international recognition. Under Boyer, the economy stagnated and the division between blacks and mulattos widened. Boyer's rule gave way to a succession of twenty-two heads of state between 1843 and 1915, when the United States invaded Haiti.<sup>24</sup>

Since its first independence, Haiti's form of government has been, practically speaking, a dictatorship. The main method of changing dictators has been by coup, abetted by execution or exile. In 1915, United States Marines invaded Haiti with an average force of 2000 to control the country. Although legalistic reasons were given, the practical reasons were to protect United States business interests and to keep Germany away (World War I had started and the waters between Haiti and Cuba are the main ocean passage from the east to the Panama Canal).

After twenty years of occupation, political stability, and some improvements to Haiti's infrastructure, the United States withdrew. The United States occupation had few lasting effects other than to reinforce racism between the blacks and mulattos because the Marines granted mulattoes political power over black Haitians.<sup>25</sup> In the absence of established political or social institutions, the military remained the only cohesive institution in the country,

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22. STOTSKY, *supra* note 7, at 18.

23. Benton & Ware, *supra* note 11, at 2.

24. MALONE, *supra* note 10.

25. *Id.*

and the tool by which future governments would rule. Many Haitians refer to the United States' withdrawal as Haiti's second independence.<sup>26</sup>

After several attempts in the late 1950s to move toward democratic governance ultimately failed, military-controlled elections lead to victory for Dr. François Duvalier. The accession of the *noiriste* Duvalier, "Papa Doc" broke with the tradition of the mulatto elite ruling the country but did nothing to improve services that the state offered its citizens. In 1964, Papa Doc declared himself President-for-Life and formed the infamous paramilitary force, the *Tontons Macoutes*. Duvalier's regime was marked with terror and corruption, as tens of thousands of Haitians were killed or exiled. The Duvalier reign of terror finally fell apart twenty-nine years later, in February 1986, when his son, Jean-Claude, was escorted into exile by the United States.<sup>27</sup>

In December 1990, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a charismatic Roman Catholic priest, won sixty-seven percent of the vote in a presidential election that international observers deemed largely free and fair. Aristide took office in February 1991, but was overthrown by dissatisfied elements of the army and was forced to leave the country in September of the same year. It is estimated that between 300 and 500 Haitians were killed in the days following the September coup, and 3000 in the following three years. The coup created a large-scale exodus from the country; in fact, the United States Coast Guard rescued a total of 41,342 Haitians from 1991 to 1992, more than the combined number of rescued refugees from the previous ten years.<sup>28</sup>

The political and human rights climate continued to deteriorate as the military and the *de facto* government sanctioned repression, assassination, torture, and rape in open defiance of the international community's condemnation. An American military intervention that restored Aristide to his office in 1994 demonstrated once more that violence remained the decisive element in Haitian politics; it represented the only viable means of ending redictatorialization.<sup>29</sup> The intervention, however, has had contradictory consequences. While it resuscitated the difficult process of democratization and facilitated the relative emasculation of the repressive organs of the state, it also protected the old balance of class power and set out constraining parameters for economic transformation. The result was a change of regime rather than the

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26. ROBERT DEBS HEINL, JR. & NANCY GORDON HEINL, *WRITTEN IN BLOOD: THE STORY OF THE HAITIAN PEOPLE, 1492-1995* 489 (1996).

27. FERGUSON, *supra* note 12, at 119.

28. UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE, *Background Notes: Haiti, March 1998*, at [http://www.state.gov/www/background\\_notes/haiti\\_0398\\_bgn.html](http://www.state.gov/www/background_notes/haiti_0398_bgn.html) (last visited Jan. 19, 2002).

29. Robert Fatton, Jr., *The Rise, Fall and Resurrection of President Aristide*, in *HAITI RENEWED: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROSPECTS* 1, 136 (Robert I. Rothberg ed., 1997).

creation of a new state.<sup>30</sup> In the November 1995 elections, René Préal, formerly a minister in Aristide's administration, was elected in the second free election in Haiti's history. Conditions in the country, however, remained volatile over the next five years.

Aristide won his bid for re-election in November of 2000 with an overwhelming ninety-two percent of the vote (although it is estimated that only ten percent of the population participated in the election). The elections, however, were plagued with controversy. Many of the major opposition parties and six unknown candidates (too scared to participate) boycotted the election.<sup>31</sup> Opponents accused Aristide of rigging the elections, inciting violence, intimidating opponents, and even using bombings against political rivals. The international community has yet to recognize the elections as legitimate. The air of conflict contrasted with the public euphoria that accompanied the former priest's election victory in 1990, when he became Haiti's first freely elected president.

Haiti's past and present exemplifies a society traumatized by violence, poverty, and a predatory state apparatus. If the country is to heal from its past, it must dismantle the remnants of the predatory regime, replacing it with a humane, democratic government that can respond to the needs of the nation. Next, the interlocking relationship between history, demographics and the political structure will be considered to better understand Haiti's psychocultural trauma.

### III. DEMOGRAPHICS: THE LAY OF THE LAND

Haiti's only ties with its hemisphere are latitude and longitude. Think rather of Haiti as a fragment of black Africa, a fragment dislodged from the mother continent that drifted across the Atlantic and grounded in the Antilles.

Heinl & Heinl

Approximately 700 miles southeast of Florida, Haiti shares a Caribbean island with the Dominican Republic. Haiti is located between the islands of Cuba, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico. The geographic proximity raises questions of national security in the region, with Haiti as a democratic buffer, leaving Cuba the only country in the hemisphere still under a dictatorship. The proximity of Haiti to the United States has led to a large American expatriate community of

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30. Fatton, *supra* note 29.

31. David Gonzalez, *Final Haitian Vote Tally Shows Aristide Winning 91.69%*, N.Y. TIMES, Nov. 30, 2000, at A15.



Haitian citizens and an influx of Haitians seeking political and economic asylum.<sup>32</sup>

Demographic factors continue to be a wedge between the Haitian people reminiscent of post-colonial Haiti. About ninety percent of all Haitians (*noirs*) are ebony black. The remaining ten percent have varying traces of Caucasian blood and are known as *jaunes* or *mulâtres*. This racial division, Haitians call it exactly that and speak of "the two races," is the most important fact of life in Haiti. It dominates the country's whole existence. It is also, in the words of one of Haiti's ablest thinkers, Alcuis Charmant, "the supreme evil of our Republic, the virus that ravages it, and the road to its ruin."<sup>33</sup> Indeed, it is based upon opposing ideologies concerning the form of government best suited to the country.<sup>34</sup>

Two-thirds of Haiti's 7.5 million citizens live below the national poverty level with an average annual income of less than \$250, while a small group of military and civilian elites continues to oppress the population.<sup>35</sup> Human security in Haiti is dangerously weak, not only from a political standpoint, but also more importantly from a health standpoint. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) reports that life expectancy at birth is only fifty-six years, compared with seventy-six in Costa Rica and the United States.<sup>36</sup> Haiti has an overwhelmingly rural population with only thirty percent living in urban areas.

The physical infrastructure of the cities has also decayed due to financial constraints, which intensified from 1991 to 1994, swollen populations, and environmental degradation. The Inter-American Development Bank reports that less than forty percent of the water needs of the capital are being met and that erratic gathering and disposal of solid waste in Port-au-Prince and Cape Haitien contribute to deplorable sanitation conditions. Soil erosion and poor watershed management damage roads and infrastructure in urban and rural Haiti.<sup>37</sup>

Haiti has the highest rate of illiteracy in the Western hemisphere and one of the highest in the world. Roughly sixty-five percent of all Haitians are illiterate. The other thirty-five percent, among whom a superbly educated elite boasts degrees from the world's greatest universities, can read and write.<sup>38</sup>

It is an old saying that Haiti is eighty percent Catholic and 100 percent Voodoo (also written Vodun or Vodoun). This may not be the literal truth, but

32. McCoy, *supra* note 6, at 21; HEINL & HEINL, *supra* note 26.

33. HEINL & HEINL, *supra* note 26, at 5.

34. STOTZKY, *supra* note 7, at 22.

35. KUMAR, *supra* note 21; McCoy, *supra* note 6, at 2.

36. McCoy, *supra* note 6, at 2.

37. *Id.*

38. HEINL & HEINL, *supra* note 26, at 5.

it is doubtful whether more than fifteen percent of Haiti, including a small but vigorous Protestant community, practices Christianity exclusively. As Judaism had in Israel and Shinto in Japan, Vodun helped define the Haitian nationality and ethos even though Roman Catholicism, in its French variant, remained the official religion until 1987.<sup>39</sup>

#### IV. THE PREDATORY STATE: POLITICAL STRUCTURES IN HAITI

The Haitian state has traditionally functioned as a parasitic force, siphoning off economic resources from the peasantry through draconian taxes and other means, and enforcing its will through a multiplicity of controls, including the threat and the use of force.

Donald Schultz

During Haiti's history of governance by forty-two emperors, kings, presidents, and other heads of state, all but three ended their term in office in a bloody coup d'état, violent death, or exile.<sup>40</sup> In Haiti a deeply embedded culture of predation has fostered autocracy and corruption, extreme social injustice, and economic stagnation. "It is in this sense that one speaks of the state versus society, with the military operating as both a repressive arm of the government and as a semiautonomous actor with interest of its own."<sup>41</sup> As North and Rothberg describe it, "the predatory state extracts income from constituents in the interest of one group or class without regard to the impact on the wealth of the society as a whole. Throughout the history of independent Haiti, the presidency served as a source of private income for the rulers."<sup>42</sup> Characterized by few productive expenditures or none, the state became, as Mats Lundahl comments:

at once too small and too big: too small in the sense that it has failed to create a policy environment conducive to productivity and growth; too large if one takes into account the number of public sector employees who have been taken into the service of kleptocrats to assist in the creation of private ruler income or have served solely as

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39. Patrick Bellegard-Smith, *Resisting Freedom: Cultural Factors in Democracy; the Case of Haiti*, in HAITI RENEWED: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROSPECTS 1, 28 (Robert I. Rothberg ed., Brookings Institution Press 1997) (1997).

40. ELIZABETH D. GIBBONS, SANCTIONS IN HAITI: HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY UNDER ASSAULT 177 THE WASH. PAPERS 1, 2 (1998).

41. Donald E. Schultz, *Political Culture, Political Change, and the Etiology of Violence*, in HAITI RENEWED: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROSPECTS 1, 93 (Robert I. Rothberg ed., 1997).

42. McCoy, *supra* note 6, at 9.

recipients of public funds without performing duties other than backing the ruler politically.<sup>43</sup>

In this sense, Duvalierism was not an aberration but rather the culmination of a particular set of historical experiences, including those provided by traditional African culture, slavery, a bloody war of liberation, the reimposition of elite dominance and mass submission, chronic cycles of tyranny and chaos, and the effects of a prolonged United States occupation. The result has been the development of an elaborate syndrome of destructive and self-destructive political behavior marked by authoritarianism, paternalism, personalism, patronage, nepotism, demagoguery, corruption, cynicism, opportunism, racism, incompetence, parasitism, rigidity, intolerance, rivalry, distrust, insecurity, vengeance, intrigue, superstition, volatility, violence, paranoia, xenophobia, exploitation, class hatred, institutional illegitimacy, mass apathy, aversion, and submission.<sup>44</sup>

The democratization of Haiti has been a slow and arduous process. The decline in the predatory state began with the 1986 fall of the Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier dictatorship. Five different subsequent governments preceded the internationally observed elections of December 1990, in which Aristide, candidate of the Front National pour la Convergence Democratique (FNCD) captured sixty-seven percent of the popular vote. The transition from authoritarianism to populism was a function of the ascendancy of civil society. The 1991 coup that followed suggests, however, that the old balance of class power, as well as the vital repressive organs of the Duvalierist state, survived the departure of Jean-Claude Duvalier and instigated the redictatorialization of Haitian society.<sup>45</sup>

The coup represented yet another setback for the aspiration of ordinary Haitians due to an American economic embargo instituted to oust the ruling military regime. "The motivations for this intervention were ostensibly the restoration of democracy and human rights, but there may have been an underlying motive in that the stabilization of Haiti was the only politically acceptable way to avoid a politically unacceptable influx of Haitian refugees into the United States."<sup>46</sup>

Either the return of a populist leader like Aristide or the stabilization of military rule, was acceptable to the American government, provided the refugee problem was 'handled,' even if handling meant

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43. *Id.*

44. Schultz, *supra* note 41, at 95.

45. GIBBONS, *supra* note 40, at 1.

46. RICHARD FALK, PREDATORY GLOBALIZATION: A CRITIQUE 58-9 (1999).

forcible repatriation, brutal means to discourage the outflow, and resettlement in already overburdened countries in Central America and the Caribbean.<sup>47</sup>

At the heart of the current Haitian national crisis is an incendiary conflict between leadership groups inside and outside the government over the direction of national politics generally, and economic reform specifically. Politically, Haiti's leadership is torn between supporters of President Aristide and his "Fanmi Lavalas" and supporters of the Lavalas Political Organization (Organisation Politique Lavalas, OPL) led by Gerard Pierre Charles. Both political parties grew out of the broad populist Lavalas movement originally led by Aristide. OPL is now opposed to the Aristide's perceived influence over Haitian politics and vaguely accuses him of having anti-democratic tendencies. The first step toward democracy must be to dismantle the old state controls and the public and private monopolies that formed the basis of the predatory state.<sup>48</sup> As long as these mechanisms are in place, regional security in the Caribbean and the placement of refugees will remain a central issue.

Behind the values, attitudes, beliefs, and behavior that foster political violence and a predatory state in Haiti are stark economic needs and relationships. While the military-institutional bases of violence have been destroyed, the economic substructure remains largely intact. The critical issues here, both for democracy and political stability, are poverty, inequality, economic growth, and class conflict.<sup>49</sup>

#### V. ECONOMIC STRUCTURE: WILL IT EVER ADD UP?

Haiti's economic structure may be locked into a low-level equilibrium that offers no easy way out ...even well-intended governments with a purged, honest, bureaucracy have a Herculean task in this respect.

Mats Lundahl

Haiti has long held the dubious distinction of being the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation. In an economy with only a 9/10 percent per capita annual growth between 1965 and 1980, -2 2/5 percent rate between 1980 and 1992,<sup>50</sup> a thirty percent drop in GDP during the 1991 to 1994 military

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47. FALK, *supra* note 41, at 59.

48. McCoy, *supra* note 6, at 5.

49. Schultz, *supra* note 41, at 101.

50. McCoy, *supra* note 6, at 6.

period, and a 2 2/5 percent rate for 1999,<sup>51</sup> and the need for massive economic reconstruction is starkly clear. About eighty percent of the population lives in abject poverty. Nearly seventy percent of all Haitians depend on agriculture, which consists mainly of small-scale subsistence farming and employs about two-thirds of the economically active work force.<sup>52</sup>

Haiti has yet to recover from the United States economic embargo launched in 1993 to force out the government of Raoul Cedras. The embargo devastated the nation's miserable economic base. During the three-year military rule, conditions in all areas of Haitian life noticeably worsened. Infectious diseases such as cholera and tuberculosis were rampant, with only forty percent of the population having access to modern medicine. Free schools were available to only ten percent of Haitian children. Deforestation and over-farming severely eroded the land, and the country of 7.5 million had one of the highest population densities in the world. The economy shrank more than two percent annually during the 1980s, then plummeted thirty percent during military rule. Streets were pocked with craters, most prisons had no water or electricity, and some judges were without pencils or paper.<sup>53</sup> "The military government was incompetent, corrupt, and violent with 3000-4000 deaths attributed to state violence during that period. When Operation Restore Democracy was initiated in the autumn of 1994, Haiti was an economic wasteland."<sup>54</sup>

The embargo was a double-edged sword:

While the United Nation-sponsored action undoubtedly applied pressure on the military junta running the country, the poorest Haitians suffered its worst effects. Moreover, the negative consequences of the embargo created a great many new challenges for those seeking to help Haiti recover. United States assembly companies that had been in Haiti, and then moved out at the request of the United States government wanted recompense. Haitian infrastructure deteriorated badly during the embargo and would cost much more to repair. In short, the embargo, arguably useful in the short-term to defeat the military regime, devastated Haiti economically, making the longer-term United States objective of restored growth much more complicated.<sup>55</sup>

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51. United States Central Intelligence Agency, CIA World Factbook (2000), available at <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook>.

52. *Id.*

53. DAVID J. ROTHKOPF, *THE PRICE OF PEACE: EMERGENCY ECONOMIC INTERVENTION AND U.S. FOREIGN POLICY* 15-6 (1998).

54. *Id.* at 16.

55. *Id.* at 16-17.

External aid is essential to Haiti's future economic development. Comparisons of social and economic indicators show that Haiti has been falling behind other low-income developing countries (particularly in the hemisphere) since the 1980s. Haiti's economic stagnation is the result of earlier inappropriate economic policies, political instability, a shortage of good arable land, environmental deterioration, continued use of traditional technologies, undercapitalization, migration of large portions of the skilled population, and a weak national savings rate.<sup>56</sup> Domestic and foreign private investment has been slow to return to Haiti due to concerns about political conditions and economic reform, even though international financial institutions and donor agencies have committed substantial sums to assist Haiti in restoring and expanding its physical infrastructure. High domestic interest rates and poorly developed internal capital markets are other factors restraining economic performance.<sup>57</sup> Today, the military institution is gone but the oligarchy remains. Prospects for economic development and a substantive improvement in living conditions are problematic. The redistribution of economic power in favor of the poor majority does not seem likely. Although Mintz has argued that hardly any beneficial long-term political change can be accomplished without such a redistribution, this is an explosive issue.<sup>58</sup> More than any other single factor, the threat of class warfare led to the coup that overthrew Aristide in September 1991. A resurrection of that specter would have repolarized Haiti, risked more violence, and frightened away investors. Economic reconstruction is critical to the continued expansion of democracy in Haiti. In addition to the economic and political difficulties, however, a more difficult obstacle to democracy in Haiti may be psychological and cultural influences. The tradition of a predatory, oppressive state has left Haitians deeply distrustful of government and of foreigners.

## VI. PSYCHOCULTURAL FACTORS: CREATING A COHESIVE COMMUNITY

We're All in the Same Boat, and This Boat Isn't Going to Florida.

Jennifer McCoy

The history of Haiti is one of sharply opposed interests, starkly competing visions of state and nation, and a rigid class structure. If "the Haitian mind" or attitude is meant to signify the political, economic, and social positions of the majority, Haitians have been of one attitude only twice in their history. Their

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56. UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE, *supra* note 28.

57. *Id.*

58. Schultz, *supra* note 41, at 102.

first coming together as a people was in the period 1791-1804, when they bravely united against slavery and French colonialism. The second was in 1990, when a majority of at least sixty-seven percent elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide to the presidency in the country's first democratic and free elections. Events since that election, however, reflect the deep divisions that developed in this society between these two defining moments.<sup>59</sup>

While pride in their historic accomplishment allows Haitians to think of themselves as one nation despite the yawning social gulf that divides the top from the bottom, this same pride also creates an inward focus that prevents many Haitians from learning from others.<sup>60</sup> All Haitians sincerely consider themselves members of the African race and claim bonds of brotherhood with black Africans. Nevertheless, educated Haitians have always shared the Europeans' paternalistic disparagement of things African.<sup>61</sup> The fundamental issue is how to create a sense among Haitians that they are all in the "same boat," and that if one group or class goes overboard, the whole boat will sink.

The problem is that Haitian elites honestly believe, and have believed for a century and a half, that they can survive without the poor, rural majority of Haiti. Class structure, not merely income, and historical tides, not simply the immediate past, are at the root of Haiti's modern crisis. Indeed, a positive resolution of this crisis is impossible unless these cultural and historical issues are understood and confronted.<sup>62</sup>

The solution, Trouillot contended, involves a social contract between the state and society, which lays out the obligations of each to the other. For Haiti, as for most countries, the state preceded the nation at independence. But, unlike other emerging democracies, the Haitian state did not achieve a social contract that could produce a sense of national identity. Instead, in nineteenth century Haiti, elites reacted to the rise of the peasantry not with a package of social benefits that would have led the majority to believe that they were actually in the same boat as the elites, but with a form of social apartheid. Elites have believed that they could survive even if the majority did not. Thus, a sense of sameness across class lines, a sense of nationhood, was never achieved in Haiti.<sup>63</sup>

This cultural division among Haitians has created an internalized violence in relation to the ethnic diversity of the population. Variation in skin color is

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59. McCoy, *supra* note 6, at 10.

60. See KUMAR, *supra* note 21.

61. STOTZKY, *supra* note 7, at 23.

62. *Id.* at 18.

63. McCoy, *supra* note 6, at 4.

perhaps the most "real" of the agents of cultural strife. There exists in Haiti a historical tension between the older "mulatto" elites and the "black" middle class. This is a complex issue, however, no aspect of Haitian history is more confusing than the physical appearance of its people. Haiti is said to be divided by color, but that is a gross simplification. It is closer to the truth to say that consciousness of color varies between social classes and also within each class, and that for many people light skin is symbolically important. But this statement merely skims the surface. "The skin color of people must be seen as part of a perceptual whole that includes hair type, nose type, lip type, eye color, ear size and other features, such as amount of body and facial hair, and body type."<sup>64</sup> As important as color is to Haitians, however, it is not clear that this determined the identification that emerged of a ruling class, so much as did education, military records, and personal connections. Thus, while color is a significant cultural issue, it was not, at the birth of the nation, nor today, so neatly a defining marker that social groups can safely be described in color terms.

Similarly, variation in the use of language is one manifestation of cultural division. All Haitians speak Haitian Creole to one degree or another. Eight to ten percent of the population (the elites) speaks French well enough to claim fluency, however, only a tiny minority within the elites is truly bilingual in both French and Creole. More important than bilingualism is the messages given to elite children that it is unacceptable for members of their class to speak Creole.<sup>65</sup> Until Aristide's reinstatement to office, French was the official language in schools and in the court systems. In this way, language is an effective social barrier that denies majority participation in certain state institutions, thus ninety percent of Haitians are excluded from power. Furthermore, there are subtle nuances of meaning within Haitian Creole that illustrate cultural prejudices and cynicism. For example, the word *leta* in Creole means both "the state" and "bully." The urban people, in turn, refer to the rural peasants a *mounn andewò*, which means "outsiders."<sup>66</sup>

Language manifests itself in the cultural divide as a tool of domination. Whether one imagines hegemony to be relatively open or relatively closed, the essence of the concept is not manipulation but legitimation. The ideas, values, and experiences of dominant groups are validated in public discourse; those of subordinate groups are not, though they may continue to thrive beyond the boundaries of received opinion.<sup>67</sup>

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64. STOTZKY, *supra* note 7, at 21-22.

65. HEINL & HEINL, *supra* note 26, at 5; STOTZKY, *supra* note 7, at 21.

66. STOTZKY, *supra* note 7, at 21.

67. T.J. JACKSON LEARS, *The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities*, 90 AM. HIST. REV. 567, 567-93 (1985).



The very things that brought Haitians together are the very things that keep them apart. Language and religion helped the Haitian peasants to face the power deficit between master and slave, oppressor and oppressed, and a dominant Europe and a subaltern Africa. In both Haitian language and Haitian religion, one finds the necessary compromises and subterfuges that the weak use to survive.

#### VII. RELIGION IN HAITI: VODOO OR CATHOLICISM— MUST THERE BE A CHOICE?

It is often said that Vodun kept Haiti backward. Probably the reverse is true: Vodun flourished because the rulers of Haiti denied their multitudinous citizenry a chance to transform a socially and economically stagnant rural life.

Robert Rotberg

Voodoo is deeply rooted in the Haitian culture; it is an amalgam of the animist cults of West Africa infused with Catholic ritual. Voodoo plays a central role in the life and history of Haiti, to disregard it is to foreclose serious understanding of these people. Haitian Voodoo is the dominant system of belief, therefore, an important national characteristic. The struggle between Voodoo and the leading Christian faiths of Haiti (Roman Catholicism and, more lately, Protestantism introduced by American missionaries) has been a constant element in Haiti's social evolution.<sup>68</sup>

Religious convictions and their representations divide Haitians culturally. The elites proclaim their adherence to Christianity. Publicly, the elites associate folk religion with evil, and successive Haitian governments have persecuted many individuals who openly practice Vodun. Yet there is widespread evidence that many of the elites themselves consistently practice aspects of it behind closed doors. They thus claim for themselves a sense of cultural superiority based on adherence to Christianity and rejection of Vodun (they have even accepted the encouragement and support of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the persecution of Vodun believers), while continuing to practice Vodun themselves.<sup>69</sup>

A large number of the peasants, too, claim to be Roman Catholic Christians. Indeed, they practice it and follow the annual cycle of Roman Catholic events, but they also refer to themselves as "servants of the gods," members of the major Haitian folk religion Vodoun, Vodun or Voodoo (these

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68. HEINL & HEINL, *supra* note 26, at 5.

69. STOTZKY, *supra* note 7, at 22.

terms will be used interchangeably). In Vodun, Catholicism is joined with Haitianized African religions to form an integrated system of beliefs and rituals. As one peasant put it, "one has to be a Catholic to serve the *loa* (Vodun spirits)." <sup>70</sup>

Vodun is as much political as it is religious. President Aristide was conscious of both the symbol and reality of Voodoo when he took the oath of office in Creole, and received the presidential sash from a *mambo* (female priestess) in February 1991, with symbolic forms of greeting that resonated deeply within the population. His deliberate use of Creole indicated a break and discontinuity in cultural patterns that was strangely symbolic of the synthesis in Vodun, and dealt blows to both the elite language (French) and elite religion (Catholicism). <sup>71</sup>

Vodun has an exploitative side, however. Duvalier extended his control over the Haitian population through the use of Voodoo and the *Houngans* (male priests). Houngans had traditionally played an important role in the local community and had in the past often, but unsystematically, been exploited for political purposes by the Haitian governments, especially when elections had been imminent, while after elections Voodoo was often outlawed. <sup>72</sup>

Duvalier made use of his knowledge of Voodoo and its influence over the masses to establish a more solid and enduring relationship with its leaders. Rotberg argues that because Voodoo presents a form of government in the rural areas since the country does not, Voodoo will only be replaced by development; Vodun is resilient. Without Duvalier, as without Soulouque, its links to the state will fade away. Its small, secure, parochial base of power will remain until that distant day when modernization, if it ever comes to innermost Haiti, erodes the very foundations of a protective security-giving cognitive universe. <sup>73</sup>

Vodun became so closely associated with the Duvalier regime that once Duvalier fled, many *houngans* and *mambos* were killed in the ensuing popular uprising. <sup>74</sup>

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Healing the trauma that Haitians have experienced over the last 200 years is a herculean task. More importantly, the task is to understand that both the material (economic and political) and psychological (psychocultural)

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70. Fatton, *supra* note 29, at 138.

71. Bellegard-Smith, *supra* note 39, at 29.

72. MATS LUNDAHL, POLITICS OR MARKETS?: ESSAYS ON HAITIAN UNDERDEVELOPMENT 278 (1992).

73. Robert I. Rotberg, *Vodun and the Politics of Haiti*, in THE AFRICAN DIASPORA 365 (Martin L. Kilson & Robert I. Rothberg eds., 1976).

74. Fatton, *supra* note 29, at 139.

dimensions interact to maintain or mitigate conflict in a society. Social cubism allows for the identification of various interrelated or interlocking social factors and their detrimental affects on Haiti. These factors must be examined in light of one another to initiate understanding of the conflict. Although the factors, when combined, may produce different patterns of importance or urgency, it is important not to allow one factor to overshadow the others just because it appears more salient at the time. According to Byrne and Carter, the interlocking nature of the cube also indicates that addressing only one dimension is unlikely to provide a settlement, and yet improvements in a single facet may ameliorate others as well.<sup>75</sup>

If historical circumstances do not allow a new generation to reverse traditions of powerlessness. The mental representation of the shared calamity still bonds members of the group together. But instead of raising the group's self-esteem, the mental image of the events link people through a continuing sense of powerlessness, as though members of the group existed under the large tent of victimhood.<sup>76</sup> For Haitians as a society to emerge from this "tent of victimhood," it is important to analyze the present dilemma using the social cubism approach to intergroup conflict to account for how structural and psychocultural mechanisms interact to exacerbate or ameliorate political conflict, economic strife, and cultural divide that the country faces.

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75. Byrnes & Carter, *supra* note 3, at 66.

76. VOLKAN, *supra* note 1, at 76.