



## ***The International Peace and Conflict Dimensions of Jamaican and Haitian Diasporas***

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**Abstract:** This article assesses the impact of diaspora communities (defined as transnational populations that play an active role in both home and adoptive societies simultaneously) on instability and insecurity in their home countries, and contributes some preliminary thoughts on the potential for diaspora communities to contribute to peace building there. Haitian and Jamaican diasporas are presented as case studies. The article explores the nature of 'conflict' in both countries using two analytical lenses, one drawing on traditional theories of peace and conflict found in the relevant literature, and another from the views of diaspora members themselves. Taken together, the two perspectives identify a range of 'drivers' perpetuating persistent low-intensity violence, crime, and corruption in both countries. The study then identifies a variety of positive contributions that diaspora populations can and do make to their countries of origin, including through remittance flows, community-based NGOs, entrepreneurial endeavours, knowledge transfer, and political entrepreneurship. However, the study also suggests that a number of factors at the societal and national levels, such as national policy frameworks for diaspora engagement, significantly condition the extent and effectiveness of diaspora involvement. Clearly, Haiti and Jamaica's common status as small island developing states has resulted in some similarity in the two countries' diaspora experiences. Nevertheless, the unique socio-political and economic realities of each country have profoundly influenced the nature and magnitude of diaspora-home country relations. Moreover, these relations tend to be both complex in nature and ambiguous in effect, and further rigorous analysis is needed to clarify the causal relationships between each country's socio-economic stability and the activities of their respective diaspora communities. Such research will facilitate the development of more effective ways to encourage positive diaspora engagement, especially in states with a history of conflict and/or civil violence.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This article has two aims. First it summarizes a number of theoretical concepts linking diasporas and conflict escalation and mitigation. Second, it presents preliminary thoughts about the potential roles that Haitian and Jamaican diaspora populations can play in lessening conflict and strength-

ening their home societies. The article proceeds as follows. Following this introduction, we outline aspects of the theory underpinning an analysis of diaspora involvement in both conflict and peace building. The third section presents an analysis of the sources of 'conflict' in our two case studies. The fourth section describes the diaspora populations associated with Jamaica and Haiti. Section five out-

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For further information about the authors, see the next page.

lines a variety of mechanisms through which diaspora populations may influence the stability of their respective home societies, and finally, the article concludes with a brief summary and a number of caveats.<sup>1</sup>

The term “diaspora” has come to be widely used in the past few years beyond its original narrow association with Greek, Jewish and Armenian ethnic communities. Members of a diaspora may include ethnic migrants, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or even 3<sup>rd</sup> generation immigrants as well as expatriates, students, guest workers and refugees. The term reflects the rise of truly transnational popula-

tions, people who can be thought of as almost literally living in two places, playing an active role in two communities simultaneously.

The connections that today’s diasporas retain with their communities of origin differ substantially from those held by previous generations of ethnic migrants. Technological advances in the late 20th century—the rise of cheap and ubiquitous telecommunications and travel coupled with financial liberalization—have created a new type of “hyper-connectivity” between diasporas and their home communities. Remittances are central to this connectivity. Today, diaspora remittance totals far outstrip levels of Official Development Assistance (ODA). The World Bank estimates that in 2008 remittances to the developing world reached an all time high of over \$283

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billion, up 6.7 percent from \$265 billion in 2007. A study by the same institution estimated that internal conflicts have a higher probability of renewed conflict after a peace settlement when there was a large proportion of the diaspora living in the United States (Collier and Hoeffler 2001). The authors of that report suggest that this recurrence is due to the financial support given to armed groups by people in the diaspora who hold fast to their ethnic hatreds. Though it is likely that only a fraction of all remittances go towards fuelling fires abroad, the basic problem with fungible resources like financial flows is that in the absence of complete information about who should be supported and how the money should be used, benefits are often distributed indiscriminately.

## THEORETICAL OVERVIEW<sup>2</sup>

From the perspective of international politics, the collective claims of the literature on the relationship between conflict and identity-based groups in general and diaspora in particular are that conflict can be generated or exacerbated in three different ways: (1) diversity and weak institutions compound existing political and economic problems within states, leading to intensified competition for resources and a weakening of the state thereby inviting outside involvement; (2) identity-based conflict carries serious risks of contagion and diffusion through processes known as horizontal escalation; (3) identity-based conflict leads to vertical escalation culminating in interstate confrontation and war. This article concerns itself with the first two processes, specifically horizontal escalation in the presence of weak domestic institutions. The essential components of horizon-

tal escalation are non-state linkages in which there are both “push” and “pull” factors leading to outside involvement. Diaspora communities are essential conduits through which both push and pull occur. Their involvement may be perceived as benign or helpful, such as peace building, but it may also be destructive and counterproductive.

Formally, horizontal escalation is a particular kind of process related to diaspora involvement and the subsequent weakening of state structures. It refers to a situation in which events in one state change directly the balance of power and patterns of behaviour in a neighbouring state (Lake and Rothchild 1998). Through this route, displacement, refugee flows and population transfers constitute a form of contagion. The movement of displaced ethnic groups for example, creates changes in demography inviting regional instability. For example, the violent outflow of Tutsis and moderate Hutus from Rwanda to Zaire and Burundi in 1994 and Kosovars to Albania in 1999 had the potential to create a new class of militant ethnic leaders in these neighbouring states.

For our purposes, conflict expands horizontally when diaspora groups in one country prompt groups in another to make more extreme demands or engage in more extreme types of behaviour. Horizontal escalation also occurs through information flows and transnational media networks that condition the behaviour of diaspora groups. Information flows directly influence the level of protest and rebellion and the level of ethnic mobilization among ethnic brethren. In turn, based on this information, members of the diaspora provide material and non-material support for politically mobilized groups. Likewise, horizontal linkages may act as dampeners on conflict, acting as conduits of information necessary to effective negotiation, contributing to economic, political, and social processes that tend to reduce drivers of

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<sup>2</sup> The following section draws on previous work by the authors. See for example Carment, James and Zeynep (2009).

both greed and grievance. In sum, both the horizontal transmission of conflict and its mitigation appear to be inexorably tied to transnational identities and the movements of people, resources and ideas associated with these identities. Two types of linkage are notable in this regard. The first are particularist identities between groups that straddle borders. The second is the impact a global diaspora has on the development of leadership pools in non-neighbouring states. While the former may lead to mutual restraint between states, the latter is a more explicit and well known foundation for the development of domestic insecurity. Given the relatively isolated nature of both Jamaica and Haiti as island societies, the latter also features more prominently in the present analysis.<sup>3</sup>

While a better understanding of the process and impact of horizontal linkage may be achieved in anecdotal terms, there are good reasons to believe that a general theory of the impact of diaspora on conflict would be difficult to develop. This is reflected in the disparate approaches, units and levels of analysis used in the study of diaspora. These elements create the primary theoretical restrictions on an understanding of their impact. Following Robinson (2005), one may break the horizontal linkage model into three levels of analysis: individual/household, societal/communal, and systemic/national. The individual/household level of analysis includes theories of migration grounded in classical microeconomic theory. Social/communal level analysis includes considerations of various sociological effects, including the development of diaspora communities in their adoptive countries, as well as the growth and evolution of tran-

snational networks. Finally, national/system level considerations include classical macroeconomic analyses, as well as more policy relevant studies regarding the effects of national regulatory regimes on immigration and citizenship on the growth and prosperity of diaspora communities.

According to national/state levels of analysis arguments, conflict is an enduring and endemic feature of a system comprised of states at various stages of economic and political development. The approach gives primary explanatory power to external actor motivations to account for the spread of conflict. Such an approach would emphasise conventional foreign policy analysis and the allocation and impact of aid and other forms of conventional state-state flows. If we were to choose a state/national based approach, for example, we would identify the disjuncture between the development of the state and processes of internal struggle between groups as the primary causal mechanism leading to diaspora involvement.

In contrast, a societal or even a household vantage point would be interested in knowing something about the instrumental and affective motivations of diaspora groups and their specific behaviours. Instrumental motivations include international and domestic political incentives, economic incentives, and military/security interests. Moreover, we would want to know about the affective component of diaspora involvement that includes a common sense of historic injustice and shared ethnic, religious, or political, and/or cultural identity and experiences. In practice, it can be difficult to detect whether affective motivations are influenced in part by instrumental concerns and vice versa. The idea of a combination of causes is compelling, as both ideational and material factors are inevitably at play. Choices must be made in any research project however, and the current study is grounded in the latter materialist tradition. It examines the contri-

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<sup>3</sup> Certainly a large number of armed fighters crossed into Haiti over border with the Dominican Republic prior to Aristide's 2004 departure, a core contributor to instability in the country in that period (Wucker 2004). However, that dynamic is not the primary of this article.

butions that members of the diaspora can make to peace building processes in Jamaica and Haiti through a comparison of how the particular strengths and interests of diaspora communities may best address the socio-political and socio-economic factors driving instability and insecurity in the home countries at the household, societal, and national levels.

### CASE STUDIES: JAMAICA AND HAITI<sup>4</sup>

Haiti and Jamaica have large diaspora communities that offer opportunities for political and economic entrepreneurs at the individual, community, and national levels. These linkages also serve as vehicles for positive change and transformation at local, national and regional levels. Both Jamaica and Haiti are 'small island developing states' (SIDS) and therefore face specific vulnerabilities that on one hand immunize them somewhat from conventional effects of large-scale conflict and horizontal diffusion, but on the other create opportunities for grinding low-intensity organized violence that can be protracted and highly disruptive (Carment, Prest, and Samy 2006). Alternatively, it is possible that in both countries the criminalization of conflict is more likely than, for example, political mobilization. Put differently, we may be looking at the diffusion of conflict driven by greed rather than grievance. In either case, the answer may lay in part in the distinct role that the diaspora has played in both countries, whether in supporting peace building initiatives, organizing protest, rebellion and other forms of mobilization, or participating in criminal activities.

In the following sections, we present a general analysis of the sources of insecurity

in Jamaica and Haiti operating at the individual, communal, and national levels. Jamaica and Haiti manifest many indicators of fragility and domestic insecurity, if not open conflict. Such indicators include high morbidity and mortality rates from violence in Jamaica; the series of foreign interventions in Haiti; and large, well-armed extra-judicial groups operating with a large degree of impunity in both countries. Moreover, both are relatively small societies, a fact that implies an inherent danger of personalization, as opposed to the politicization, of grievance and hostility. Once we have established the indicators and sources of instability, we delve more explicitly into the various roles played by diaspora in conditioning the level of instability.

#### *Jamaica*

As a SIDS, Jamaica exhibits particular patterns of insecurity and conflict that are in many ways variance with the experiences of larger, contiguous, and more diverse states. To the extent that instability is present, it is expressed through mechanisms other than organized large-scale violence. Thus, conventional measures of conflict, including the number of battle-related deaths, or the degree of ethnic and political polarization, do not reflect either the true extent of politically relevant instability and violence within the state, leading to a downward bias in assessments of the overall level of conflict within the state (Carment, Prest, and Samy 2006). While Jamaica has not witnessed large scale organized conflict, it has nonetheless experienced persistent low-intensity civil violence and a significant level of violent crime, both to a large degree as a result of politically affiliated gangs (Rapley 2006). The garrison communities in the Kingston area act as the focal point for both gangs and violence.

Though Jamaica is considered a relatively stable two-party democracy, it nonetheless experiences politically motivated

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<sup>4</sup> The case studies and analysis draw on a previously published study conducted by the authors (Harrington, Prest, and Unheim 2008).

violence prior to parliamentary elections (Barrera et al. 2006). The centre-left People's Nationalist Party (PNP) was in power from 1989 until 2007, its time in office bookended by its traditional right-leaning rival the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP). After taking over from former Prime Minister P.J. Patterson in March 2006 in an internal vote, well-known former Minister of Local Government Portia Simpson-Miller became head of the PNP and Prime Minister of a government haunted by its reputation for corruption, inefficiency and "political tribalism" (Transparency International (TI) 2006). According to TI, Jamaica ranked 64 out of 158 countries in 2005. Acknowledging this, the government under Simpson-Miller took steps to crack down on corruption and promote good governance, including the introduction of access to information legislation and the enactment of a *Corruption Prevention Act*. The measures proved insufficient however, as new allegations of 'governmental sleaze' stemming from the PNP's 2006 annual conference decreased the public's faith in genuine reform and buoyed the hopes of the opposition Jamaican Labour Party (JLP) (Jamaica Gleaner 2006c). In the ensuing 2007 election, the JLP eked out a narrow victory under the leadership of Bruce Golding. Even with the change in government however, Jamaica's reputation for corruption continues; the country ranked 96 out of 180 on the 2008 TI Corruption Perceptions Index.

Like many SIDS, Jamaica has suffered neither international conflict nor open civil war in 40 years of independence; to the extent that instability and conflict are present in the country, it is through the various political and economic problems driving low-intensity internal violence and civil unrest (Carmen, Prest, and Samy 2006). Much of that unrest and violence is gang-related. Some Jamaican gangs have political dimensions as well, having served, and in some cases been created to serve, as enforcement wings for the country's major political par-

ties. Gangs built power centres in urban 'garrison communities' and used that power to mobilize voters in the service of preferred candidates (Kerr 1997). By the 1980s, clashes between militant wings of competing parties had become deadly (Erikson and Minson 2005). Jamaica's economy depends significantly upon primary commodity exports, tourism, and remittances from islanders living and working abroad. Jamaica's population now stands at 2.7 million, with more than a million people claiming Jamaican descent residing off-island. The country's economy is highly vulnerable to shocks resulting from natural disasters, particularly the hurricanes that regularly sweep the Caribbean basin. Government spending is limited by the country's need to devote one third of government revenues to service the large national debt. A persistent increase in domestic price levels has also been a concern for Jamaican consumers; annual inflation was recently measured at almost 20 percent (CaPRI 2008). More positively, unemployment dropped more than three percent between 2002 and October 2005, and observers expect the opening of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) to expand economic opportunities within Member countries. The implementation of the PetroCaribe agreement with Venezuela has reduced the country's vulnerability to volatile petroleum prices, while the Jamaican government has had some success in reducing its national debt to sustainable levels; the high level of inflation has provided unexpected assistance toward this end by reducing the domestic portion of that debt (CaPRI 2008).

Admittedly, the elections of 2007 were comparatively peaceful, but violence remains all too common in the streets in and around Kingston (Fund For Peace 2009). Since the early 1980s, many gangs have expanded beyond purely political endeavours into to the drug trade, while still retaining some political links (Erikson and

Minson 2005). Other local and international gangs have emerged to capitalize on the illicit drug trade as well, with each attempting to control some portion of urban territory. Inter-gang violence resulted in a record 1700 homicides in 2005, along with a high overall crime rate (Anderson-Manley 2006). Even with a decline in the country's 'youth bulge' (the proportion of the population under 15 years of age) over the past 15 years, nonetheless some 30 percent of Jamaicans are younger than 15, and school enrolment beyond the primary level continues to decrease (Barrera et al. 2006). Consequently, increased gang participation among disenfranchised youth seems probable in light of the paucity of available opportunities. The government has tried to respond to the violence in various ways. One recent prominent example occurred during 'Operation Kingfish,' in which the Jamaican Defence Force (JDF) worked with the Jamaican Constabulary Force (JCF) to target organized drug syndicates. Opinions on its effectiveness vary, but it can plausibly be argued that such operations do not address the underlying root causes of violence, given the structural factors that allow garrison culture to persist (Rapley 2006).

Turning briefly to the transnational spillovers associated with domestic issues in Jamaica, gang activity in cities in countries with large Jamaican diaspora communities is often connected with gang activity in Jamaica, and vice versa. Jamaicans deported from the United States, the UK and Canada often re-assimilate into gangs in Jamaica; soon after arrival, some criminal deportees reconstitute their former gangs, join new ones, or create their own. Unemployed local teenagers are easy recruits, eager to learn from their 'cultured' cousins (Mozingo 2005; Jamaica Gleaner 2006a). However, despite 2,161 alleged criminals being deported to Jamaica in 2005, concrete evidence regarding the extent to which deportees contribute to criminality in Jamaica remains elusive (Jamaica Gleaner 2006b).

What is certain, however, is that convicted criminals—as opposed to those deported for minor infractions or visa violations—often leave with valuable knowledge of sophisticated crimes and crime prevention systems abroad. They also retain connections through which they can receive illegal arms in exchange for narcotics from Jamaica (Sheil 2006; Sinclair 2003; Mascoll 2001). Deportees without criminal connections may still present a burden to social service institutions and can be a source of tension within communities and families. We will explore linkages between the diaspora and peace building in later sections.

### *Haiti*

Haiti's problems are in many ways more diverse than Jamaica's. Its economic and social problems are deeply engrained, and a pattern of recurrent political instability has afforded Haitians with few opportunities to address aspects of either (Carment, Prest, and Samy 2006). There have been nearly three dozen changes in government in Haiti since its independence, and many have been prompted, or been prompted by international intervention. Jean-Bertrand Aristide's controversial 2000 re-election began the most recent period of unrest; only with the relatively peaceful election of René Préval has the country achieved some degree of political stability. International observers and, more importantly, major factions within Haiti have accepted the result (International Mission for Monitoring Haitian Elections 2006). The country experienced a decline in the level of violence in the wake of the presidential and legislative elections, with most factions appearing to have adopted a 'wait and see' approach (International Crisis Group (ICG) 2006a). Obviously however, the elections are not a cure-all; they represent merely a window of opportunity for the government and international community. Since the election, the country has experienced some economic

growth, but also renewed political turmoil, with Prime Minister Alexis forced from office by the legislature in April 2008 in the midst of riots prompted by a food crisis (ICG 2008; Amnesty International 2009). His replacement, Michèle Pierre-Louis, was not ratified until July, and the government was essentially paralyzed during the intervening four months. The 2008 hurricane season took a further toll, with storms once again devastating the country's people and infrastructure.

Recent economic gains, though positive, must be put in perspective. Though the Haitian economy grew by 2.5 percent in 2006 and 3.2 percent in 2007, the per capita income in 2003 was just US\$441 (in constant 2000 US\$), which was some 60 percent of what it had been in 1990. Inevitably, the worst effects of that previous decline have fallen on the poor, who in Haiti comprise a majority of the population. Fully 55 percent of Haitians subsist on less than US\$1 per day and 76 percent of the population lives on less than US\$2 (UNDP 2004). The poor moreover remain disproportionately vulnerable to economic reversal, a fact dramatically underscored during the food riots of 2008. Demographic pressures represent a further concern; according to the World Bank, Haiti's population density stood at 295 people/km<sup>2</sup> in 2001, higher even than the 176 people/km<sup>2</sup> in the Dominican Republic and 239 people/km<sup>2</sup> in Jamaica. Haiti's youth bulge is also a cause for concern, with youths comprising 39.4 percent of the Haitian population in 2002.

While gang activity and violence appeared to be on the decline with the installation of Préval as President, the months prior to Prime Minister Alexis' departure were marked by renewed unrest (Hauge et al. 2008). Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) efforts are proving particularly challenging in part due to the unconventional nature of MINUSTAH's mission. Though mandated to disarm militarized factions, there was no 'conflict', and

thus no peace agreement to identify the factions requiring disarmament. As a result, the international community remains divided on how best to pursue DDR (Mugah 2007).

Haiti's government capacity and national infrastructure also remain areas of concern. The Haitian National Police (HNP) force essentially disbanded during the extended period of unrest in 2004; thus subsequent security sector reform (SSR) efforts have been directed primarily at reconstituting the HNP. The number of trained officers continues to grow, with more than 8000 in the field by the end of 2008. Somewhat paradoxically, one important measure of success is the increasing number of crime reports; reported cases doubled in 2008 over 2007; according to UN observers, this increase is indicative of growing trust in the HNP, rather than an increase in the actual level of criminal activity (ICG 2009: p. 8). Still, in areas without regular HNP presence, local authorities continue to exercise considerable authority. For instance, in some instances Justices of the Peace have reportedly ordered locally elected officials to execute arrest warrants in contravention of law. While understandable given the limits on state capacity and the inability of the HNP to provide this function in some areas, this nonetheless represents a violation of the legal rights of the accused. Similar breakdowns occur at various stages of the judicial process. Specifically, prisons remain filled to beyond capacity, and efforts to retrain sitting judges, as well as to recruit and train new ones, are proceeding only slowly (ICG 2008: pp. 17-18). Given the culture of legal impunity in Haiti, one that extends back to the Duvalier era, judicial reform remains among the foremost challenges facing the country.

Corruption remains a pressing problem for all major Haitian institutions; the country ranked 176 out of 180 in the 2008 TI *Corruption Perceptions Index*. The results of a survey performed by *La Fondation Heri-*



*tage Haitian* (LFHH) at the end of 2003 indicate the perceived causes of this corruption are numerous and varied, with the most commonly cited being the toxic combination of economic pressure, flawed institutions, the lure of “easy money,” and a lack of political will to address the problem. Unless or until the Haitian economy begins to generate sufficient jobs to satisfy the needs of the substantial un- and underemployed population, criminal activity will remain a potential alternative for those willing to accept the risks. Drug trafficking and kidnapping both remain lucrative and common, if dangerous, occupations.<sup>5</sup> According to the Canadian Border Services Agency (Government of Canada 2004), 21 percent of the cocaine seized at Canadian points of entry from 2000-2003 transited Haiti immediately prior to arrival. ICG reports a decline in the number of kidnappings in 2008 and early 2009 over the same periods in the previous year; however, there are still regular reports of such activity (ICG 2009: p. 8).

Specific individuals and groups within the Haitian diaspora are implicated in such activity as well. Indeed, as in the case of Jamaica, violence in Haiti is closely related to patterns of violence in the diaspora. The first “Haitian gangs” reportedly emerged in South Florida in the wake of the 1991 Haitian military coup (Miami Herald 2007). More recently, observers have suggested a link between rising violence in Haiti, and the continuing deportation of convicted criminals.<sup>6</sup> Both the United States and Canada deport Haitian nationals that have been convicted of violent or otherwise gang-related crimes, regardless of the length of time spent living in their adoptive

<sup>5</sup> Though the circumstances are not completely analogous, the argument to some extent parallels that of Hudson and den Boer’s (2004) “surplus males” theory regarding South Asia. In both cases, young under-engaged males become vectors for social violence. In South Asia, the problem is the result of a high male-to-female ratio; in Haiti, the problem stems from a lack of gainful employment.

country (CBSA 2008). Once in Haiti, all deportees face starkly limited options, and many—even those with no prior history of criminal behaviour—find themselves with little choice but to subsist on the proceeds of various types of illicit activity. Even “non-criminal” deportees still represent another potential driver of instability in Haiti, as the sheer number of actual and potential deportees is a significant concern. 3000 Haitians have already been deported from the United States and Canada, and up to 30,000 more still face deportation proceedings in the US alone. With limited social and financial resources to draw upon, the newly arrived deportees threaten to overwhelm Haiti’s limited state infrastructure and stall the country’s recent tentative movement towards political and economic stability.

In sum, instability and conflict in both Haiti and Jamaica are deeply rooted in socioeconomic conditions within the two countries, and diaspora populations are inextricably linked to such drivers. Following a brief history of the two countries diaspora movements, we will turn to the potential contributions they may make to peace building in the subsequent section.

## DIASPORA PROFILES

Jamaican diaspora communities are concentrated in the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. Migration to Britain intensified after the Second World War, peaking in the 1960s. Between 1955 and 1959, 20,000 to 33,000 people per year moved to the United Kingdom from the West Indies and 168,000 entered between 1960 and 1962. Immigration from the Caribbean was then curtailed under the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, which

<sup>6</sup> Two recent examples include comments by Michel Forst, United Nations independent expert on the human rights situation in Haiti (quoted in Ward 2009) and by University of Miami anthropologist J. Bryan Page (quoted in Jordan 2007).

limited the rights of citizens of Commonwealth of Nations countries (including Jamaica) to migrate to the UK. Today Jamaicans living in the UK are concentrated in Brixton and Tottenham.

Immigration to Canada followed a reverse trend to the United Kingdom as black migration to Canada was essentially outlawed from 1818 until 1962. Even during the period when black migration from the West Indies was discouraged, however, Canadian immigration policy allowed exceptions for applicants with 'exceptional qualifications,' such as registered nurses, stenographers and other professional occupations. According to the 2001 Canadian Census, there are approximately 122,000 Jamaican-born immigrants in Canada, the vast majority of which live in the city of Toronto, where 3.5 percent of the population is Jamaican-born. The size of the Jamaican diaspora in Canada, including second-generation children, is estimated at over 200,000. The last US census finds more than 736,000 persons of Jamaican ancestry living in the United States. According to the 1990 Census, about 56 percent of the West Indian diaspora in the United States resides in the New York City area, with significant populations living in nearby suburbs located in Connecticut and New Jersey. The second largest concentration is in Florida, where the West Indian population is almost as large as the entire West Indian population in Canada. Sizeable Jamaican populations are also found in Boston and the Washington D.C.-Maryland area.

Similarly, emigration has been a constant factor in Haitian life since at least the 1930s, when large numbers of Haitians left the country to work on sugar plantations in Cuba. The largest wave of migration occurred between 1982 and the present however, with more than 1 million people leaving Haiti primarily for the Dominican Republic, Canada, and the United States. In addition, a significant number of Haitians migrated throughout the Caribbean, and

especially to the Bahamas. In 1980, the Bahamian government recorded 11,000 Haitians; by 2000 this number had risen to 21,000, or seven percent of the total island population. Current unofficial estimates used by newspapers and Bahamian Foreign Service officials put the total number of illegal Haitians at over 75,000, or 25 percent of the Bahamian population. Given the distance and expense, Haitian emigration to France is less significant. Official government figures put the Haitian born population in France at 28,000, but if one were to count children born in France and undocumented residents, the figure might be as high as 50,000.

According to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Haitian diaspora in Canada is estimated at close to 80,000 individuals, approximately 54,000 of whom were born in Haiti. Estimates by the Haitian consulate and several of the major Haitian organizations in Montreal, however, put the total size of the diaspora closer to 120,000. These individuals are overwhelmingly concentrated in Montreal, which is said to have close to 70,000 residents of Haitian origin. The next largest concentration is in the national capital region of Ottawa-Gatineau, home to over 5,000 residents of Haitian origin. With respect to the United States, just over 550,000 persons of Haitian descent were found in the 2000 US Census to be residing in the country, but consular officials and community leaders put the true figure at well over 1 million. Current estimates vary widely due to the large numbers of Haitians entering the US illegally. Between 1972 and 1981, for instance, the US Immigration and Naturalization Service reported that while it registered 55,000 Haitians arriving in Florida by boat, an estimated additional 50,000 likely landed and escaped detection. As with Jamaicans, the largest concentration of Haitians in the US is in the greater New York City area, followed by Florida and Massachusetts. Figures for the size of the

Haitian diaspora in the Dominican Republic are more difficult to obtain due to the fluidity of movement of people across the border, political tensions over migration, and the lack of documentation among migrants. A 1983 survey by the International Labour Office (ILO) estimated that between 200,000 and 500,000 Haitians lived in the Dominican Republic.

### DIASPORAS AND PEACE BUILDING

To begin with, it is instructive to explore diaspora perceptions of the social and political situations in their home communities. In interviews conducted with members of the Haitian diaspora in Montreal and New York, the word 'conflict' was not used to describe the social and political situation in Haiti. The word most often used was 'tension'. Interviewees described a situation of simmering low-level tension that occasionally flared into open violence and conflict, as opposed to a situation of continual conflict and violence that occasionally diminished to a level of simmering tension. Further, while crime and security are major concerns of the Haitian diaspora, these concerns appear to take second place to issues of development. Throughout interviews and as seen during the 2004 Montréal conference, the diaspora not only identifies economic development as its primary concern, but links economic development to security, a reversal of the order most often used by the international development community.

One interviewee noted that this was a mark of Haitian national character and that the socio-political and socioeconomic situation that exists in Haiti would likely inspire open conflict elsewhere in the Americas, but not in Haiti. In terms of the impact of the high level of tension in Haiti, those interviewed noted the primary effect was increased levels of stress as members of the diaspora worried about their kin and

friends back in Haiti, but social and political tensions did not divide the diaspora the way tensions in Sri Lanka or Northern Ireland have divided those diasporas. Another interviewee noted that friends holding differing political views would simply agree not to talk about politics. However, a counterpoint to this was seen at the 2004 Montréal Conference of the Haitian Diaspora, where some 50 members of the diaspora picketed outside the conference attended by close to 500 of their compatriots. The 2006 presidential elections and the ascendance to the presidency of René Préval seem to have healed this split. The visit of president-elect Préval to Canada was celebrated by both those who protested outside the 2004 Montréal and those who took part in the event.

The Jamaican diaspora, in its broadest sense, is even more reluctant to use the term 'conflict' to describe the socio-political situation in Jamaica. It is viewed as one of rampant criminality and some degree of corruption, but neither as one of conflict nor tension. Where the term conflict is used by members of the diaspora, it is often within the narrow confines of interactions between political parties and between police and criminals. Nevertheless, the crime situation in Jamaica is of overriding importance and concern to the Jamaican diaspora. During the 2006 Conference of the Jamaican Diaspora in Kingston, attended by over 500 members of the diaspora from Canada, the UK and the United States, the plenary resolution on crime stated that, "safeguarding the nation's security is the responsibility of all Jamaicans including overseas Jamaicans."

The first mechanism, functioning primarily at the household level, involves the direct transmission of funds in the form of remittances. In both countries included in the study, the diaspora remit funds to relatives, providing a significant contribution to consumption among the poor. Simmons et al. (2005) find that 87.9 percent of Hai-

tian-Canadian households, and 87.8 percent of Jamaican-Canadian households, remitted funds at least once in the previous five years. Even including diaspora households that did not remit any funds, Haitian households in Canada remitted an average of CAD\$401 in 2006, while their Jamaican counterparts sent an average of CAD\$314. These are significant financial flows for recipients in both countries. According to the World Bank, private financial transfers accounted for 17.4 percent of Jamaica's GDP in 2004, and nearly a quarter of Haiti's. A survey commissioned by FOCAL in 2005 found that a majority of Jamaican recipients have been receiving remittances for more than five years, and that most receive transfers at least once a month. According to the UN, Jamaica receives 15 times more money in remittances as in foreign aid (ODA).<sup>7</sup> To say that Haitian and Jamaican diaspora populations are unwilling to discuss questions of 'conflict' is not to imply that such groups are either unwilling or unable to contribute to—or indeed to spearhead—efforts aimed at peace building. On the contrary, while survey respondents were to some extent influenced by their political affiliation, nonetheless their nuanced assessments of 'tensions' in their respective home countries point the way towards potential solutions. Accordingly, we now consider ways in which these sizeable diaspora communities might contribute to reducing persistent violence and crime and also contribute to preventing the emergence of large-scale civil conflict. Given that the fundamental causes of upheaval in both countries likely stem from their respective socio-political and socio-economic situations, it is logical to survey current and potential ways in which their respective diaspora communities can have a positive impact on these fundamental drivers of conflict. In the

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<sup>7</sup> In comparison, the ratio is 34:1 in Mexico, 24:1 in Costa Rica, 8:1 in the Philippines and 4:1 in Lesotho.

following paragraphs we discuss five discrete mechanisms through which diaspora populations may influence the political, social, and economic stability of their home countries. Inevitably, as is the case of all diaspora studies, each mechanism touches to some extent on the personal, the communal, and the national levels of analysis. However, they are organized in roughly ascending order, from micro to macro. All draw on diasporas' unique position as a conduit between two societies, and all address in some manner the particular drivers of conflict outlined in the previous sections.

Remittances support household consumption, as well as human investment in the forms of health care, education, and various types of community support (Simmons et al. 2005). At a micro level, families receiving remittances may have the opportunity to keep children healthy, out of the labour force, and in school. Nevertheless, remittances can also be a source of tension, and in some cases a cause of conflict. Money that flows back for consumption can increase the gulf between haves and have-nots in poor communities. One survey found that, while a majority of middle class households in Haiti received remittances from relatives outside the country, only a minority of poor respondents did (Fagen 2006: p. 4). The author surmises that this is due to the fact that the poorest members of society generally lack the resources to fund migration to begin with, a phenomenon similar to the well researched concept of 'brain-drain.' Moreover, to the extent that remittance-fuelled consumption mimics ostentatious fashions of inner-city communities in the diaspora, the same type of status symbol crime seen in ghetto neighbourhoods of New York, Miami and Brixton appears in Jamaica and Haiti as well.

The second mechanism, focused at the household and communal levels, is entrepreneurial investment. As with many nations that witness significant proportions of their population migrating to the devel-

oped world each year, there are concerns in both Haiti and Jamaica over losing their best and brightest to developed countries through the process of 'brain drain.' For instance, an estimated 76 percent of Jamaicans with a college education are estimated to live in the US alone, while 83.6 percent of Haiti's population with some level of tertiary education eventually emigrates (Lapointe 2004: p. 5; Docquier and Marfouk 2006: p. 171). While this flow is often viewed in a negative light, it creates significant opportunities as well. Entrepreneurs and investors in the diaspora community may play a crucial role in transmitting new ideas and novel ways of doing business back to their home country (Zhang 2006). One particularly fruitful area for investment draws on the demand for "nostalgic" products from home countries, as well as related industries of communication and travel. The market develops around immigrants' desire to enjoy foodstuffs and cultural artifacts associated with their homeland, and to stay in contact with loved ones (Robinson 2005: p. 61). Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) tend to dominate the industry in migrants' home countries, providing a dynamic boost to the economy in a vital sector as SMEs account for approximately 50 percent of manufacturing employment in the region (Lapointe 2004).

A third mechanism, one that acts across all three levels of analysis, relates to the ability of diaspora members to apply skills acquired abroad to projects undertaken in their home country, either in the role of practitioner or trainer (Lapointe 2004). Though the benefits of such skills transfer is clear, the home country government must create a sound policy framework to enable it and, to a certain extent, to channel the efforts of willing members of the diaspora. Mexico's so-called "Padrino programme" is an example of such a framework. When diaspora members become involved at a community level

through such initiatives, there is the potential for substantial long-term benefits for recipient communities if managed creatively and cooperatively by donors, recipient communities, and government (Newland and Patrick 2004: p. 13). Jamaican diaspora church groups, such as those identified by Simmons, provide further examples of such beneficial partners (Simmons et al. 2005: p. 11).

A fourth mechanism, operating at both the societal and national levels, draws on the political influence that diaspora groups can have in the political realm in both their home and adoptive countries. Diaspora members and representative organizations may "lobby host countries to shape policies in favour of a homeland or ... challenge a homeland government; influence homelands through their support or opposition of governments; [and] give financial and other support to political parties, social movements, and civil society organizations." (Vertovec 2005: ¶29). Given the unique place that the diaspora occupies, they possess the ability to influence political decision-making in both their home and adoptive states. As with all political actors, they may support specific candidates for public office, or push for particular policies. Regardless, they will do so from a position of relative independence, as diaspora populations are free of the systems of patronage, corruption, and coercion that have at times marked both Jamaica and Haiti. As a result, they may voice support for types of economic and political reform that are necessary, but unpopular among politicians in their home countries. Simultaneously, they may press the government of their adoptive state to support anti-corruption measures and governance reform in their aid efforts, and to adopt more favourable international trade policies toward their homeland. Organizations such as Jamaica Impact Inc. (JAMPACT), a US based non-profit diaspora group with a stated mission "to use our collective energies, intelligence, and re-

sources to make positive contributions towards the improvement of social and economic conditions in Jamaica," provide examples of diaspora groups lobbying for change within their host countries (JAMPACT n.d.).

The net impact of diaspora groups on the political process in Haiti has been somewhat ambiguous. In general, while apolitical support for homeland conflict resolution efforts are generally positive, overly partisan political engagement by diaspora groups in the homeland can in some cases encourage more intransigent behaviour by homeland politicians, particularly in countries with a history of deep social divisions, or open conflict. The recent electoral exercise in Haiti seems to have muted such behaviours for the present, however, as diaspora members from all sides of the political spectrum now seem willing to recognize Préval's new administration and support its efforts to move beyond past divisions and resume development in the country. To a large extent, such efforts will depend on continued good will and active support from the diaspora community, as well as the ability of Préval's government to successfully harness those resources.

Politically motivated diaspora groups often exercise influence through their ability to lobby governments. To cite just one example, the Jamaican Diaspora Canada Foundation, noting that 40 percent of all deportees from Canada are Jamaicans, has vowed to lobby for change in what it perceives as unfair deportation practices; such efforts provide a good example of diaspora groups working to effect policy change in host countries (Blair 2005). Lobbying host countries like Canada for policy action in this area is likely more effective from within than from without, particularly when one considers the ability of diaspora communities to make or break politicians in key ridings at election time through strategic block voting. In many cases, diaspora groups further enhance their influence by

lobbying governments in their home and adoptive countries simultaneously.

Direct participation in home government and home government-initiated programs represents a fifth and final mechanism, operating primarily at the national/systemic level. In addition to lobbying policy makers at home and abroad, diaspora members may make a more concrete contribution to governance in their home countries. This may take place to varying degrees of formality. For instance, participation may take place on an unofficial basis, as in the provision of operational intelligence to police. As noted above, a connection exists between some of the violence that occurs in Jamaica and violence in foreign cities home to significant migrant communities. The JCF has reached out to the Jamaican diaspora, asking Jamaicans abroad to be more forthcoming in their knowledge of criminal activities involving members of their own communities, in particular with respect to drug trafficking and other gang-related endeavours (Cayman Net News 2006).

Participation may take place at higher levels of government as well, though admittedly the policy frameworks adopted by home governments with respect to diaspora populations can have a substantial impact on countries' ability to capitalize on diaspora contributions to both development and peace. To a large extent, positive and effective diaspora engagement depends on the existence of sound government policy designed to enable and encourage diaspora investment in areas of primary importance to the country. A brief survey indicates the wide variety of approaches adopted by developing states to harness the human and financial resources of its diaspora community.<sup>8</sup> For example, a 2003 SIDS report indicated that much more

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<sup>8</sup> For a comparative study of several different policy approaches, see Newland and Patrick (2004).

can be done to encourage repatriation of Jamaican nationals and their services. It further pointed to the diaspora as a natural bridge into developed countries' markets. As observed at a recent conference on Caribbean diaspora populations, a key obstacle to temporary or permanent return is a widespread perception that home governments are not overly welcoming. Several participants at the conference described "a general resentment in home country societies against those who have left," noting that, "such an attitude can discourage diaspora members from playing a more active role in their countries of origin" (Lapointe 2004: p. 5). When neglected or poorly conceived, government policy can represent a significant barrier to diaspora involvement; in extreme cases, such barriers can provoke opposition to the government among diaspora populations, resulting in some of the destabilizing activities referred to in previous sections.

Steps have been taken in Jamaica to rectify this and treat the diaspora as an important part of national identity and national development. This is exemplified by the creation of the Jamaican Diaspora Advisory Board (JDAB) in June of 2004, whose role is to advise the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade on matters relating to the diaspora, and by the establishment of the Jamaica Diaspora Foundations in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. The Jamaican government has already taken some notice of this capacity; in a recent publication for the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (UNCSTD), Arnoldo Ventura, special advisor to the Jamaican Prime Minister, suggested that the diaspora had a decisive role to play in aiding the efforts to overcome the country's knowledge and technology gap. (2005). Noting that the country does not possess the resources to overcome the gap alone, he went on to characterize partnership with the diaspora community as crucial, and suggested that a

decision to work closely with diaspora professionals to transfer knowledge and encourage investment had already been taken by the government. In general, Jamaican government and security forces are capable of implementing and administering programs to recruit and work with diaspora volunteers. These programs could easily be added to existing security cooperation programs between Jamaica and the United Kingdom, Canada and the US. The 2006 Conference of the Jamaican Diaspora featured several suggestions and resolutions along these lines.<sup>9</sup>

The Haitian diaspora has consistently pressed the international community to assist by playing a greater role in the re-development of Haiti. One output of the 2004 Montréal conference of the Haitian Diaspora was a call for a database of Haitian professionals willing to return to Haiti to aid development activities. The interim government serving in Haiti after Aristide's departure was composed largely of members of the diaspora. Aid agencies from the United States and Canada have seconded staff of Haitian origin on an *ad hoc* basis and hired consultants from the diaspora to fill positions in the Haitian government. However, given the overwhelming need, the lack of administrative capacity within the government, and the strong distrust of government by the diaspora, a more coherent, comprehensive and well-organized program will likely be needed to engage the diaspora more fully in efforts to rebuild the country. To this end, a program similar to the Repatriation of Qualified Afghans run by the In-

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<sup>9</sup> Examples of ideas put forth by diaspora attendees at the 2006 conference in Kingston included a proposal by the UK delegation for having Jamaican-origin members of constabulary forces in the UK volunteer to provide technical assistance to the Jamaican constabulary forces and a resolution by the Canadian delegation for it to undertake facilitating the transfer to Jamaica of community policing resources and resources for citizen oversight of police forces.

ternational Organization of Migration, tailored to individual country situations and incorporating best practices and lessons learned, could prove useful.

## CONCLUSIONS

This essay represents an exploration of the numerous ways in which the Haitian and Jamaican diasporas are intimately related to the 'drivers' of conflict, tension, or low-intensity violence that dominates the political and economic landscapes of their home countries. To a certain extent, the two countries' common status as small island developing states is reflected in the presence of similar diaspora experiences; however, the unique social, political and economic histories of each country have had a pronounced effect, influencing both the nature and the magnitude of the diaspora-home country relationship. Though some of these relationships may appear relatively straightforward at first glance, in general they are both complex in nature and ambiguous in effect, requiring rigorous further analysis in order to more fully understand the causal relationships that exist between each country's economic and political stability and their diaspora communities around the world.

There are a variety of positive contributions that diaspora populations can and do make to their countries of origin—remittance flows, community based NGOs, and political entrepreneurs all have the potential to bring about positive change. However, the initial findings from this study suggest that a number of factors at the societal and national levels can significantly determine the extent and effectiveness of diaspora involvement. Depending on the approach taken, government policy at the national level can substantially enable or limit diaspora investment; thus, a sound policy framework remains a vital prerequisite of effective diaspora involvement. Such

a framework and effective regulation can also help ensure that remittances are sent through appropriate channels and their potential benefits maximized.

Ultimately, well-conceived and locally managed partnerships at the community level have the potential to focus and enhance the contributions made by diaspora population. At the same time, however, diaspora groups focused on achieving factional success, rather than community development, have the potential to substantially destabilize their home countries. Within the latter category are criminal organizations, particularly those with resources in communities both at home and abroad. Moreover, such destabilizing dynamics are particularly likely in states that are emerging from or still in the midst of instability or conflict, broadly defined. Given such findings, it is clear that further research is required into the types of structures—both at the community and national levels—most likely to encourage positive diaspora engagement in states with a history of conflict.

## APPENDIX A: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

### *Haiti*

Jean Saint-Vil, founding member of the Ottawa Haiti Solidarity Committee (Kozayiti) and L'association Canado-Haïtien pour sauvegarder la souverainete d'Haïti (Lachasausha) Ottawa, Canada. 02 June 2006

Robert Tippenhauer, Ambassador, Embassy of Haiti to Canada. Ottawa, Canada. 5 June 2006.

Nathalie Gissele Menos, Minister Counsellor, Embassy of Haiti to Canada. Ottawa, Canada. 5 June 2006.

Eric Faustin, directeur general, Regroupement des organismes Canada-Haïtiens pour le développement (ROCHAD).



Montréal, Canada. 06 June 2005.

Franz Voltaire, Director, Centre international de documentation et d'information Haïtienne Caraïbienne et Afro-Canadienne. Montréal, Canada. 06 June 2005.

Pierre-Richard Casimir Consul Général d'Haïti à Montréal. Montréal, Canada. 06 June 2006-06-27

Keder Hyppolite. President, Conseil National des Citoyens et Citoyennes d'Origine Haïtienne (CONACOH). Montréal, Canada. 06 June 2006.

**Jamaica**

Dale Jones, Consul, Consulate of Jamaica in Toronto. Toronto, Canada. 10 May 2006.

Anne-Marie Bonner, Consul General, Consulate of Jamaica in Toronto. Toronto, Canada. 10 May 2006.

Howard Foster, President, Caribbean People Masses Unity Committee CPMUC, Kingston, Jamaica. 16 June 2006.

Philip Mascoll, President, Jamaica Diaspora - Canada Foundation. Kingston, Jamaica. 16 June 2006

Sandra Carnegie-Douglas, President, Jamaican-Canadian Association. Kingston, Jamaica. 16 June 2006.

(Additional information obtained through observation of proceedings, speeches, interventions and exchanges at 500 person diaspora conference. 2006 Jamaican Diaspora Conference. Kingston, Jamaica. 15-16 June, 2006.)

**APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCRIPT**

Interviewee

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Diaspora\_\_ Government\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_

Diaspora:

1. Born in diaspora or Ha/Ja
2. Amount of time in diaspora? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Family in \_\_Ha \_\_Ja \_\_None
4. Average number of visits annually to Ha/Ja over past 5 years \_\_\_\_\_
5. View media/news (on-line, TV, print, etc) from Ja/Ha:
  - \_\_ daily
  - \_\_ more than 1x/week
  - \_\_ at least 1/x week
  - \_\_ less than 1x wee
  - \_\_ do not read/view media from Ha/Ja
6. Frequency of calls to or from Ja/Ha
  - \_\_ daily
  - \_\_ more than 3/week
  - \_\_ at least 1/x week
  - \_\_ less than 1/x week
  - \_\_ do not receive calls from or make calls to Ha/Ja

Question:

- A. How would you describe the social conditions and relations between different classes, political, religious, civil society organizations in Ja/Ha?
- B. Ja/Ha society has been described as being in conflict or suffering from conflict. Conflict is a broad ambiguous concept that takes on different meanings for different groups and in different contexts. If a broader understanding of conflict as a natural multidimensional phenomenon that is typically indicative of change within society that occurs when two or more parties believe that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes or take action that damages other parties' ability to pursue their interests and that becomes violent when parties no longer seek to attain their goals peacefully, but resort instead to violence in one form or another. Would you feel that all, part of none of this description would apply to Ja/Ha?
- C. What do you see as the impact upon

- the diaspora of the social situation in Ja/Ha as you described it?
- D. Are there specific examples that you can think of where the diaspora has contributed toward improving the social situation in Ja/Ha as you describe it? What do you see as the impact of the diaspora upon the social situation in Ja/Ha as you describe it?
- E. If so, do you think these interventions have been successful? Why? How can you tell?
- F. What factors, conditions, programmes, etc., facilitated or hindered the diaspora from becoming involved in a positive manner? Government? Host country social conditions? Home country conditions? Donors? Social/religious groups? PS?
- G. Are there conditions, programmes, or factors that promote negative contributions from the Diaspora? Governments? Host country conditions? Home country conditions? Donors? Social groups? PS?
- H. Are there major differences among the diaspora in terms of its engagement with Ha/Ja? If so, what are these?
- I. Are there major differences between youth/gender social class, religions, education level in terms of engagement?
- J. What special contributions could the diaspora, or segments of the diaspora, could make that are not being undertaken now?
- K. What would be key for donors, aid agencies and other development actors in working with the Diaspora?
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