The Formation of the Dominican Capitalist State and the United States Military Occupation of 1916-1924

Emelio Betances

Gettysburg College

Follow this and additional works at: http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/socfac

Part of the Latin American Languages and Societies Commons, and the Politics and Social Change Commons

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.


This is the publisher's version of the work. This publication appears in Gettysburg College's institutional repository by permission of the copyright owner for personal use, not for redistribution. Cupola permanent link: http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/socfac/18

This open access article is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.
The Formation of the Dominican Capitalist State and the United States Military Occupation of 1916-1924

Keywords
Dominican Republic, military occupation, government intervention, United States, economic intervention, political instability

Abstract
The United States policy towards the Caribbean and Central America during the 1980s repeats an interventionist pattern which occurred early in the twentieth century. Then, the United States set up strong national governments which organized export economies and local political power. Today, social and political developments in the region have outgrown the political scheme created at the beginning of the century. Thus, the recurrent United States intrusion in the region to recreate the old political structures. An historico-sociological analysis becomes necessary to place current events in perspective and shed light in understanding the pattern of regional political development.

This study shows that the political instability that followed President Ulises Heureaux’s assassination in 1899 forced a series of changes on the U.S. policy toward the Dominican Republic. First, the U.S. sought to collaborate with local political elites in order to organize a strong national government by supporting the regime of Ramon Caceres (1906-1911) and signing the Dominican-American Convention of 1907. However, the assassination of Ramon Caceres in 1911, and the political instability that ensured, led the United States policy makers to exclude local political elites from developing a strong national government. Second, nationalist resistance combined with North American opposition to President Woodrow Wilson’s military occupation forced a new change on U.S. policy toward the Dominican Republic. After 1919 the U.S. began to modify its policy of excluding local political elites in organizing national government.

Comments
Presented at the 11th Annual Conference of the Middle Atlantic Council of Latin American Studies, Rutgers University, April 1990.

Required Publisher’s Statement
Credit goes to MACLAS Latin American Essays, Volume IV, the original place of publication.

This article is available at The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College: http://cupola.gettysburg.edu/socfac/18
THE FORMATION OF THE DOMINICAN CAPITALIST STATE AND THE UNITED STATES MILITARY OCCUPATION OF 1916-1924

Emelio Betances

The United States policy towards the Caribbean and Central America during the 1980s repeats an interventionist pattern which occurred early in the twentieth century. Then, the United States set up strong national governments which organized export economies and local political power. Today, social and political developments in the region have outgrown the political scheme created at the beginning of the century. Thus, the recurrent United States intrusion in the region to recreate the old political structures. An historico-sociological analysis becomes necessary to place current events in perspective and shed light in understanding the pattern of regional political development.

This study shows that the political instability that followed President Ulises Heureaux’s assassination in 1899 forced a series of changes on the U.S. policy toward the Dominican Republic. First, the U.S. sought to collaborate with local political elites in order to organize a strong national government by supporting the regime of Ramón Cáceres (1906-1911) and signing the Dominican-American Convention of 1907. However, the assassination Ramón Cáceres in 1911, and the political instability that ensued, led the United States policy makers to exclude local political elites from developing a strong national government. Second, nationalist resistance combined with North American opposition to President Woodrow Wilson’s military occupation forced a new change in U.S. policy toward the Dominican Republic. After 1919 the U.S. began to modify its policy of excluding local political elites in organizing a strong national government.

U.S. POLICY ON THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC LEADING UP TO OCCUPATION

The dictatorship of Ulises Heureaux (1882-1899) was the first attempt to consolidate national political power in the Dominican Republic. Heureaux developed an alliance with foreign resident sugar planters and merchants, who paved the way for his dictatorship. His successful promotion of foreign investments in the sugar industry and the development of a relationship with foreign credit engendered the initial formation of the capitalist state. Subsequently, however, the monopolization of the sugar industry and Heureaux’s
continual reliance on foreign credit inhibited the formation of a state based on sugar planters and merchants.

Heureaux was able to develop a unique relationship with the North American based San Domingo Improvement Company (SDIC). The SDIC succeeded the Dutch Westendorp Company in administering Dominican customs houses and finances. In this capacity the SDIC loaned money both to Heureaux and the Dominican government. While beneficial to the SDIC and Heureaux, this relationship resulted in an unprecedented increase in the country’s foreign and internal debt. For 1899 it is estimated that the foreign debt was $23,587,078 in U.S. gold and the internal debt had increased to 10,126,628 silver dollars. These are astronomical figures if we recall that in 1888 the external debt was $4,122,750.40 and the internal amounted to $5,500,000 respectively. These huge debts threw Heureaux’s regime into a deep financial and political crisis.

As the Dominican economy became engulfed into the international capitalist system, the local bourgeoisie, based on sugar planters and merchants, grew progressively weak. The political elites of this class saw the state as the main source of revenue. As long as the local elites received political pay-offs, Heureaux was able to remain in power, but when he was unable to raise the money to pay subsidies to his political supporters with a certain regularity, his government faced a dead end. Heureaux sought to rely on foreign credit to gain a certain autonomy from local creditors and sugar planters, but when these allies were at a loss, they ceased to support him. In July 26, 1899 Horacio Vasquez and Ramón Cáceres, landowners from the northern Cibao region, plotted successfully to assassinate Heureaux while on an official visit to the city of Moca. Heureaux’s assassination unleashed a political struggle for state power. The two leading political figures of the time were Horacio Vasquez and Juan Isidro Jiménez. Jiménez, a well known merchant and landowner from the city of Monte Cristi, became a national political hero after he attempted to carry out an expedition to overthrow Heureaux in 1888. Vasquez, a landowner from the city of Moca, led the movement that toppled Heureaux and asked Jiménez to return from exile to take power. However, these two leaders would later distance themselves over the handling of the debts contracted by Heureaux with the North American based San Domingo Improvement Company. A period of political instability followed the political division between Jiménez and Vasquez.

While none of the existing political forces in the Dominican Republic held power with any certainty, foreign merchants exercised influence over whoever appeared to be in charge. The United States negotiated with Dominican government as they succeeded one another. When Horacio Vasquez overthrew Jiménez in April 1902, he proceeded to negotiate with John T. Abbot, U.S. commercial agent in Santo Domingo. Also vice president of the San Domingo Improvement Company, Abbot’s dual role indicates how far the United States was willing to go to support that company. Vasquez and his followers, who during the Jiménez Administration had opposed any negotiation with the San Domingo Improvement Company and foreign arbitration, agreed to sign a protocol in 1903. According to this protocol the Dominican authorities recognized a debt of $4,500,000 in gold to the San Domingo Improvement Company and its subsidiaries (Herrera, 1955, Document No. 31:404-7).

The leadership of Vasquez and his followers did not consolidate in power until 1906 when Ramón Cáceres took power. The coming to power of Cáceres paved the way for the Dominican-American Convention of 1907, which extended the protocol of 1903. According to this convention 45% of the collection would go to the Dominican government and the other 55% to pay for the amortization and interest rates on the Republic’s foreign and Internal debt and to cover the Customs Receivership administration. Article two of the Convention stated that “the Government of the United States will give to the general receiver and his assistants such protection as it may find to be requisite for the performance of their duties.” Clearly, the Dominican Republic had become a protectorate of the United States because ‘protection’ could be easily interpreted as military intervention to protect U.S. interests. In addition, the third article stated that “until the Dominican Republic has paid the whole amount of the bonds of the debt its public debt shall not be increased except by previous agreement between the Dominican Government and the United States” (U.S. Foreign Relations, 1907:307-10).

The Dominican-American convention is a clear landmark in the process of the country’s integration into the international credit system. Unlike previous loans obtained from private foreign creditors, this convention provided for the direct control of the state’s income by the United States. The methods of collection which had been implemented since 1905 as an interim agreement became, after 1907, legal measures that regulated the state’s accounting procedures and budget. The government would have clearly defined budget which it could assign to the different ministries. In addition, there was money allocated to take care of public work projects and to develop a modern army and police force. The convention was implemented with relative success under President Ramón Cáceres (1906-1911). Cáceres enjoyed the full technical and military support of the United States and, in exchange, favored direct United States investments in the sugar industry and financial control of the country.

The Cáceres regime represents the second attempt in the process of developing the Dominican capitalist state. Capitalist development occurred through his efforts to organize an army, a police force and a series of public work projects. However, the realization of such projects excluded members of Cáceres own party from receiving political pay-offs. Cáceres had to use force to introduce reforms which adversely affected local business groups while favoring foreign
capital. This fact was acknowledged by a United States minister to Santo Domingo, William Russell, in a letter to the State Department on November 15, 1915. "The Convention of 1907 never could have been secured had it not been for the forceful hand of President Cáceres, who inspired the opposition with adject terror" (U.S., Internal Affairs of the D.R., Roll No. 13, Sub. No. 1776). Unlike Cáceres, the leaders who took power after his assassination in 1911 were not strong enough to subdue their opponents. This weakness forced most of them to accept greater participation by the United States in the organization of the state.

As President, Juan I. Jiménez supported amendments giving greater control of the country's finances and policy to the United States. In a letter to President Wilson dated October 19, 1915, he acknowledged that the Convention of 1907 had to be modified, but considered it necessary to postpone any amendments because the republic had just gone through "the painful spectacle of an unjustified civil war...the people are very excited and any new pretext for a hideous fratricidal war should be avoided." Jiménez concluded his letter by saying that "once peace is secured in the country, my humble efforts and your noble and sincere aid will drive the moral and material progress of the Dominican Republic" (U.S., Internal Affairs of the D.R., Roll No. 13, Sub. No. 1776).

Despite Jiménez's attempts to share power, the United States urged the appointment of North Americans to direct the country's finances and consular affairs. The Borjas Administration (1913-1914) had already proposed the post of financial expert though it was not ratified by Dominican Congress. The following description of the financial expert's duties points up the failure of the 1907 Convention and the need for further controls over Dominican finance. These were his duties:

He was supposed to observe the implementation of the 1907 Convention; formulate a system of public accounting; investigate the means to increase public income and to reduce public spending; verify the validity of any claim against the Dominican government; sign government checks; guide the Dominican government to determine its debts; exercise the power of a customs inspector and director of the department of public works and accountant for all public offices; mediate any conflict between the government and the Customs Receivingship, Treasury, and Commerce Departments; aid Dominican officials in preparing their budgets; finally, to provide a veil of legality this powerful figure's appointment was made according to the first article of the Convention (Henríquez Ureña, 1919:62-3).

Jiménez, unable to giving these duties to a foreign power, sent them to Congress for discussion. Desiderio Arias, a former ally of Jiménez and chief of the armed forces, controlled a majority in Congress and opposed the North American plan. In the midst of the crisis, the United States Minister in Santo Domingo, William Russell, offered military aid to Jiménez, but he rejected it. On May 16, 1916 after no response came to an ultimatum to Arias's forces and the United States proceeded to occupy the city Santo Domingo on May 16, 1916.

While the United States marines occupied the country militarily, Arias and his troops left the capital for the northern Cibao region and Congress prepared to discuss the election of a new President. William Russell kept insisting on his own conditions for recognition of the new President. Federico Henríquez y Carvajal, on learning that Russell had been manipulating the congressional vote to get a pro-United States president, withdrew his candidacy. In a last-minute decision, however, the Dominican congress surprised the United States by electing Federico's brother, Dr. Francisco Henríquez y Carvajal. The new president held a medical degree from Paris and Havana. He also had a law degree and extensive diplomatic experience. In spite of these credentials, Minister Russell judged him as "not satisfactory" because he had not accepted the United States demands. Russell suggested withholding United States recognition of Henríquez y Carvajal as the constitutional president of the country. On June 15, 1916, Russell ordered the general receiver of the customs receivership to establish control over all the country's internal finances. In August, the receivership cut off all funds to the government until it agreed to meet the demands of the United States. With the country under military occupation, President Henríquez y Carvajal proceeded to negotiate with Russell and agree to permit the United States to control all finances as well as a consular. He considered it constitutionally impossible, however, to accede to the demands which would give a foreign country plenary power over the republic's government (Muaro, 1964:311; Moszà, 1976:113-114; Hoepelman y Senior, 1973:333-371). With the United States demanding total capitalization, local political elites were entirely excluded from government and United States officials prepared to rule "in the name of the Dominican people."

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY GOVERNMENT

The proclamation of a military in the Dominican Republic culminated the process of exclusion of local political elites from participating in the creation of a strong national government. United States marines invaded on May 15, 1916, but the proclamation of a military did not occur until November 29. During this period, the State Department sought to work out an arrangement similar to that
in Haiti, where the previous year the United States had intervened militarily to establish a government in collaboration with part of the local elite (Schmidt, 1971:82-107; Munro, 1964:302; Castor, 1971). But since there were no Dominicans willing to collaborate, the United States decided to proclaim the establishment of a military government on November 29, 1916.

Even though President Wilson had announced in 1913 that "we are the friends of constitutional government in America; we are more than friends, we are its champions" (Cited in Munro, 1964:271), he authorized the Navy Department to establish a military government in the country. This evident contradiction forced the Wilson Administration to look for excuses to justify its actions. In fact, the proclamation of the military government stated that: Dominican governments had violated the Convention of 1907 by supposedly increasing the country's public debt, a fact denied by Dominican authorities. The U.S. went even further:

This military occupation is undertaken with no immediate or ulterior object of destroying the sovereignty of the Republic of Santo Domingo, but on the contrary, is designed to give to that country in returning to a condition of internal order that will enable it to observe the terms of the treaty (of 1907) (U.S. Foreign Relations, 1916:246-247).

According to the proclamation, Dominican administrators were to remain in office as necessary, but "all under the oversight and control of the United States Forces exercising Military government." Dominican law was to continue in effect as long as it did not conflict with military tribunals. All revenues of the republic were to be collected by the receiver and paid to the military government. The proclamation also stated that "the Forces of the United States in Occupation will act in accordance with military law," which meant in effect that a dictatorship had been established.

The administration of Dr. Henríquez y Carvajal and congress dissolved themselves in protest. Only the judiciary branch of government, operated under the oversight of the military government. In place of the Dominican government the United States Marines installed a new administration with a military and civilian structure.

At the head of both was the military governor, a powerful figure responsible only to the U.S. Secretary of the Navy. At the top of the military structure was the commander of the Second Provisional Brigade...Under the brigade commander were two (later three) regimental commanders, each responsible for a large section of the country. Reporting to them were the commanding officers of the battalions and companies located in the various towns and villages of the republic. Other important officials were the provost marshals. Operating in conjunction with the provost courts, they were the top police and judicial officials of the military government (Calder, 1984:25).

Captain Harry S. Knapp, the first military governor, filled the various government departments with marine officers and proceeded to take up a series of measures which Cáceres had already started. In terms of laying the groundwork for a capitalist state which responded to the needs of capital accumulation, the most important of these measures were those that created public works program, a strong national constabulary, a land registration code and a court to enforce it.

THE PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAM

The stated objective of the public works program was to bolster the basic infrastructure of Dominican society. The projects also had significant implications for state formation. In a detailed account presented in early 1917, the military government proposed to construct bridges and small roads, repair railroads, and an audit in response to Dominican complaints against the payment of high salaries to incompetent North American officials (U.S. Foreign Relations, 1917:714-716). These complaints were important because the military government funded these projects with loans taken from North American banks, thus increasing the country's foreign debt. For first few years of the occupation, however, the military government did not pay much attention to local complaints regarding foreign loans.

In January 1918, the military government unveiled plans to establish a national road network, including a highway from Santo Domingo through the Cibao, Vega, Santiago, and then on to Esperanza and Monte Cristi. Two other secondary roads were planned: one running eastward, connecting Suyobo Province with Santo Domingo via San Pedro de Macoris, and another westward, connecting Comendador at the Haitian border with San Juan de la Maguana, Azua, Bani and Santo Domingo. This road network was partially completed by 1924 when the military government withdrew from the country.

The commercial, political and military importance of this road network were recognized by the military governor on October 18, 1918, when he wrote to Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels that "it will open up large sections of fertile country, and provide an artery of communication that will be invaluable in
both a civic and a military way" (U.S. Foreign Relations, 1818:365). Thomas Snowden, Knapp's successor, shared this opinion and wrote:

It is believed that banditry [guerrilla warfare] could not survive the opening up of the country, which is done as rapidly as funds and the supply of labor will allow; the building of roads through the heart of the country facilitates the opening of new farms and at the same time facilitates military operations against the bandits and this last fact is being allowed for in the inauguration of new roads (U.S. Foreign Relations, 1919:128).

Opening up farms, developing trade and establishing military control of the country were essential goals of the military government. These goals were presented as a means to "civilize" the Dominican people when, in fact, they were instruments in organizing a political power responsive to the needs of capital accumulation. Like Ulises Heurta and Ramón Cáceres, the military government used these new means of communications to exercise political domination over the whole society and to structure a state subordinated to United States interests in the Caribbean basin.

THE NATIONAL CONSTABULARY

The National Constabulary bolstered the national unity of the Dominican state and provided the institutional means to exercise a monopoly of power over Dominican society. The United States plans for a constabulary followed up the strategy of Cáceres by first stripping governors of their military power and reducing them to civil governors whose authority was largely superseded by North American officers (Goldsworthy, 1962:7). On April 17, 1917 the military government issued Executive Order 47 to appropriate $500,000 for organizing, equipping, training, and maintaining a "Dominican Constabulary Guard" to replace the army, the navy, and the Republican Guard. United States marine officers would be appointed to organize the constabulary until Dominicans were sufficiently trained to assume these functions. Members of the disbanded Dominican armed forces were welcomed into the constabulary, provided they had the necessary qualifications and a clean record (Vega y Pogany, 1956:146-150).

The military governor soon found out that Dominicans with any degree of qualification did not want to be associated with the forces of occupation. Volunteers for the constabulary came from the poor, illiterate strata of Dominican society. Harry A. Franck, a North American traveling in the country in 1919, heard from a priest that the constabulary "included some of the worst rascals, thieves, and assassins in the country, men far worse than the guerillas [guerrillas], and these often egged the naive Americans on to vent their own private hates" (Franck, 1920:235; Castro García, 1978; Ducoudray, 1976).

Although the development of the national constabulary was considered "one of the most important matters to be taken up by the military government", the dreadful state of the new force came to light in 1919 when the State Department began to examine its achievements in the Dominican Republic. "It was in no way prepared to take over from the marines' should a United States civilian government a withdrawal be instituted" (Calder, 1984:58). It was not until early 1922 that a plan to fully organize the constabulary began to be put in place. Brigadier General Harry Lee, appointed to accomplish this goal, set out to organize, enlarge, train and Dominicize the officer corps and began to restructure the institutional basis of the constabulary, recently renamed the Policía Nacional Dominicana. By the time the marines withdrew from the country in 1924, they had organized a public coercive force, which had a monopoly of power over the whole Dominican society. The population was disarmed and no one, except the constabulary, had firearms. Furthermore, improvements in telecommunications and roads allowed the constabulary to move rapidly to any place in the country (Calder, 1984:59-62; Welles, 1928:810-817).

The Constabulary and the public works program were a major instrument for the development of the Dominican capitalist state. The Constabulary enforced previous efforts under Cáceres to legalize landownership. In July 1920, the military government issued Ley de Registro de Tierras or, Law of Land Registration, as Executive Order No. 511. Executive Order No. 511. This law built on the 1911 and 1912 laws on land ownership. Bruce Calder has written that

the twin goals of the Ley de Registro were to register without delay all lands located within the territory of the Dominican Republic and to bring about the demarcation, survey, and partition of the terrenos comuneros (communal lands). To facilitate these matters, the law provided for a cadastral survey of the republic, a new system of land registration, and a new court, the Tribunal de Tierras, which would adjudicate cases involving land and administer the other aspects of the law (Calder, 1984:107).

The Ley de Registro legalized false titles held by the sugar companies and furthered the expropriation land Dominican peasants had been experiencing from the 1890s. Nevertheless, the implementation of the Law of Land Registration faced two sorts of problems. The United States military government did not have enough money to implement a land survey and, more importantly, it faced peasant
resistance. According to Marilda Clauser, there was “resistance from small farmers who feared that the purpose of the survey was to take their land, but the attitude of nearly all landowners was friendly” (Clauser, 1973:198). The friendly attitude of landowners and resistance by small farmers suggests the class nature of the law. A guerrilla movement gradually evolved to resist the military government (see below), particularly in the eastern region where peasants were often violently evicted from their lands by the sugar corporations. In spite of peasant resistance the land registration was relatively successful, at least in the Southeastern region of the country, where sugar plantations were common. Again, as with the public works program and the constabulary, the land registration program was a tool to introduce a capitalist dynamic into Dominican property relations.

STRUCTURING DEPENDENCY THROUGH TARIFFS

The policies of the military government were not geared to strengthen the local non-sugar economy, but instead to help a fraction of the import merchants. The trade tariff of 1920 illustrates how the local bourgeoisie was further weakened and restructured. Again the military government built on previous efforts to establish tariffs to regulate foreign trade and allow duty-free entry of agricultural machinery, which favor sugar interests the most. The Dominican government had been interested in a treaty of reciprocity with the United States, and the military government continued to urge such a treaty in its reports.

In 1920, the tariff commission established in April 1919 by the military government presented its report to the military government. As a result, a new tariff went into effect on January 1, 1920. It reduced duties on over seven hundred items, and put nearly 250 on the free list. The duty-free list included transportation equipment, agricultural and machine tools, and industrial machinery, which stimulated development of the relatively mechanized sugar industry. Further, the new tariff reduced import duties on products such as coffee, cacao, meats, and others (Calder, 1984:7-77; Lozano, 1976:194-198; Muto, 1976:92-101; Del Castillo, 1988:169-210).

In contrast to its effect on sugar corporation, the 1920 tariff affected the traditional export sectors negatively, since foreign products entered the country duty-free. For example, Brazilian coffee invaded the country under the new market conditions. Foods traditionally produced in the country began to be replaced by imports. Imported luxury articles often sold at lower prices than indigenous one. These new articles came to satisfy the desires of the nascent urban middle class and thus to create new wants and consequently new markets. The import sector grew rapidly, causing the decline of small artisans, who could not compete with the products of United States industry. For example, although the incipient shoe industry could in theory import machinery tax-free, it was impossible for local shoemakers to compete with United States companies given the differences in the level of development of the two industries.

The increase in imports as a result of the 1920 tariff unquestionably helped the largest foreign resident merchants. These merchants imported consumer goods and foodstuffs and “acted both as retailers through large urban stores and as wholesalers to smaller business and vendors.” Paul Muto adds that the largest commercial operations in the capital and major towns belonged to immigrant merchants...They came from Spain, a variety of European countries, the West Indies, the United States and the Middle East. A continuing flow of individual immigrants kept the upper level of Dominican commerce in foreign hands, a longstanding reality that became even more evident with export stimulated growth. Creoles remained a minority on this level (Muto, 1976:102).

Foreign resident merchants and the itinerant Lebanese and Syrian retailers were integrated into a new structure of dependency generated by the relationship between the importers and their United States, German, British and Spanish suppliers. Though largely subordinated to the North Americans, import merchants benefited marginally from the new arrangements. Traditional agricultural export products (cacao, coffee, tobacco, and so on) small-scale manufacturers of consumer products suffered from the new competition. In sum, the actions of the military government did not have an even or neutral effect on the various Dominican social classes. On the contrary, the occupiers continued the policies implemented during the Cáceres administration, which facilitated foreign investments while discriminating against local business group.

LOCAL RESPONSE TO THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT

Although traditional political elites had always wanted to collaborate with the United States, they were initially excluded from the political process by the U.S. occupying forces, which perceived that a strong national government could be organized without local cooperation. In 1919, the State Department reexamined the Dominican political situation and began to revise its policy of excluding local elites. The difficulties faced by the occupiers in organizing a constabulary that could put an end to guerrilla warfare in the Eastern region of the country was one reason for the new policy. In addition, the nationalists resistance, at home and
abroad, combined with an effective opposition in the United States led President Wilson to reconsider his exclusionary policies. At the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919 President Wilson defeated the right to self-determination of the small European states in his famous Fourteen Points. Yet U.S. forces occupied the Dominican Republic, a fact gleefully noted by Wilson’s Republican opponent in the Presidential election of 1920.

While northern peasants initially offered resistance to the occupying forces, only the eastern peasants organized themselves in guerrilla groups to fight the invaders for a long period, from 1917 to 1922. The marines disparagingly referred to the guerrillas as bandits [known as “gavilleros” in the Dominican Republic] and always attempted to present them as criminals. The fact that the “bandits” gathered support among the population and that the marines could not defeat them for six years clearly shows that they were not delinquents. In the most thorough study on the topic to date, Bruce Calder indicates that

they resisted the changes in their lives which resulted from the loss of their land to the large corporations; they resented being unemployed and poor; and they resented the fear and insecurity brought into their daily existence by the aggressive and arbitrary acts of the occupying marines. Some guerrillas, moreover, were conscious that these issues were important to their struggle. They would, for instance, recruit followers by informing peasant smallholders that the North American corporations were planning to take over their land. Going one step further, various guerrilla leaders and groups openly identified themselves as political revolutionaries and claimed regional or national goals. They also conducted themselves, on some occasions, as an irregular government, exacting taxes, enforcing popular law, and dispensing justice (Calder, 1984:121).

When an end to the guerrilla war was negotiated in 1922, the military officers recognized that many rebels had lost their lands before becoming guerrillas. To redress these grievances, the marines asked sugar companies to give the peasants “permanent jobs” and land for their “comunos” (small plots). This request appears ironic, given that laws enacted during the marines occupation had sanctioned such disposessions “legally.” Finally, it is important to note that though the guerrilla movement lasted for six years, it was essentially regional and never established any links with the nationalist resistance, who looked on them as gavilleros.

THE NATIONALIST RESISTANCE TO THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT

President Henríquez y Carvajal started the nationalist campaign for the withdrawal of the United States marines immediately after his government was overthrown. In December 1916, he visited the United States, still trying to convince the State Department to change its policy toward the Dominican Republic. Though unsuccessful, he proceeded to organize the Dominican Nationalist Commission whose objective was to maintain a constant protest in the United States, Latin America and Europe; preserve Dominican unity; create a directorate to guide the resistance and establish a network of junta nacionalistas or nationalistic committees in the Dominican Republic to sustain the movement (Calder, 1984:183-4).

Havana, where President Henríquez y Carvajal had resided for over 12 years, became the main center to coordinate nationalist efforts. At first, the campaign was a success because it had the support of the Cuban press, and prominent intellectuals. However, by April 1917, the United States attention started to focus on its participation in World War I. The campaign stopped during the war. Meanwhile, Dominicans at home were divided about how to react to the occupation. Some groups favored armed resistance, while others considered that course suicidal.

As the end of World War I approached Dominican nationalists residing in Cuba began to collect money to send President Henríquez y Carvajal to the Versailles Peace Conference in early 1919. At Versailles, he was kept from meeting the North American delegates and was told to present his case to the United States State Department in Washington. His mission in Washington was likewise unsuccessful. There seemed to be no hope of forcing the United States to end occupation of the Dominican Republic. Yet this pessimistic appraisal proved wrong. The forceful nationalist resistance to the occupation coupled with an international campaign of protest and Republican opposition to President Wilson’s interventionist policy in small states, led the State Department to begin a series of conversations with President Henríquez y Carvajal. On April 14, 1919 he submitted a memorandum in which he restated that the United States had no legitimate reason to continue to occupy the country, and again rejecting the United States interpretation of the Convention of 1907:

The Dominican Government has always understood that the obligation imposed on it was that of contracting no new public debt of the same kind as that was guaranteed by the Convention, without previous agreement with the American Government; that a debt arising from a deficit in estimates, by reason of necessary and unusual expenses of war, as well as those due to unforeseen
public calamities or to a diminution of income occasioned by bad crops or by fluctuations in merchandise, a debt irregular in its origins, involuntary and impossible to foresee and upon which it is impossible to count, is surely not the debt provided for in the third clause [of the convention of 1907] (U.S. Foreign Relations, 1919:109-110).

Despite his disagreements with the United States regarding the Convention of 1907, President Henríquez y Carvajal was willing to work with the State Department to initiate a gradual process of organizing the country politically and administratively following a broad plan of legal reforms.

The State Department’s unwillingness to deal with Dominican affairs began to change when World War I ended and Congress refused to ratify the Versailles Treaty in spite of President Wilson’s urging. United States participation in the war in Europe had caused an isolationist and non-interventionist backlash at home (Tulchin, 1971:62). The North American people seemed to oppose additional military interventions. In these circumstances vocal opposition to Wilson’s policy in the Caribbean and Central America grew. Articles appeared regularly in The Nation, The New York Times, Current History and others. However, this new attitude should not be interpreted as discontinuous with the earlier Latin American policy of the United States. For as the Dominican case shows, Wilson’s successors only reformulated his policy to make it more flexible in order to protect U.S. hegemony in the Caribbean and Central America.

In the context of a growing isolationism in the U.S., Dominican nationalists stepped up their campaign for the withdrawal of the military government. Once more Cuba was the center of efforts to promote Latin American solidarity. Jurist Emilio Roig de Leuchtenring made a galvanizing speech at the Sociedad Cívica de Derecho Internacional. His speech was sent by cable to Latin America and the United States and attracted considerable attention. The nationalist campaign at last started to attract the attention of Secretary of State Lansing. Sumner Welles wrote:

...the continued Occupation of the Dominican Republic was giving rise to increasing apprehension among the Republics of Latin America. Protests both informal and official, emanating from Latin American Governments, prominent publicists in South America, and from associations throughout the continent, were being addressed continually through the summer and autumn of 1919 to President Wilson, urging the termination of the Occupation and the reestablishment of a Dominican Government (Welles, 1928:823).

International pressure on Washington was undoubtedly important in turning the State Department’s attention to Dominican internal affairs. This political pressure coupled with the nationalists’ resistance led to the easing of repressive policies by the military government, which had imposed censorship, severe limitations on political activities, and the force represented by armed marines, the provost courts, and the military government’s network of spies (Calder, 1984:189).

In November 1919, the State Department decided to act on Dominican political affairs without consulting President Henríquez y Carvajal’s Dominican Nationalist Committee. Governor Thomas Snowden appointed a Comisión Consultiva of influential Dominicans. The committee consisted of the Archbishop of Santo Domingo, Monsignor Adolfo Nouel, Don Jacinto de Castro, Don Francisco J. Peynado and Don Federico Velásquez. This group represented the traditional elites, which had been excluded from government politics with the military occupation in 1916. However, as individuals, these influential Dominicans had offered their support to the military government. Like Henríquez y Carvajal, the committee suggested the abolition of press censorship, the provost courts and the initiation of a gradual withdrawal of the marines from the country. In December, 1919, the committee submitted an additional memorandum requesting the military government not to contract on behalf of the Republic a new foreign loan of $5,000,000 as it intended. Like previous Dominican efforts, the occupation funded its improvement not by “foreign aid” or use of U.S. dollars but by incurring new debts. The U.S. military government ruled by using the same methods that it criticized from Dominican governments.

The appointment of the Comisión Consultiva appeared to signal a shift in the United States policy of exclusion of local political elites from the political process. The conservative faction of these elites had been eager to cooperate with the military government, a fact noted by the nationalists who saw it as a form of collaboration and thus a departure from the original policy of presenting a united front that demanded the complete withdrawal of the marines. Yet, contrary to the wishes of the State Department, on December 22, 1919, the military government issued a new censorship restricting even more severely than in the past the right of free speech and the rights of the press (Calder, 1984:191-193). Having been rejected by the military government and under pressure from the nationalists, the Comisión Consultiva resigned in January 1920 after demanding the abolition of press censorship and the provost courts.

A conflict between the military government and the State Department over Dominican affairs became increasingly evident. Sumner Welles explained it by saying that

for a period of two years [because of World War I], the Department of State had apparently withdrawn from all
supervision over the conduct of affairs in the Dominican Republic. The Navy Department, in view of this, permitted the Military Government to acquire an increasingly large measure of authority in determining Dominican problems...the Military Governor had...grown to feel that his powers were absolute (Welles, 1928:827).

Undoubtedly conflicts between the State Department and the military government helped to mobilize the nationalists. One sign of nationalist popularity was that in February, 1920, Americo Lugo and Fabio Fiallo, a prominent lawyer and poet respectively, formed the Unión Nacional Domincana. The Union had two guiding principles: "the immediate reestablishment of the republic as an absolutely sovereign state and a prohibition against any collaboration with the military government which might limit Dominican sovereignty after United States withdrawal" (Calder, 1984:194). These two principles sent a direct message to the members of the former Comisión Consultiva and acknowledged the need for unity to regain a "pure and simple" (total) independence after the marines departed.

The Unión Nacional Dominicana rapidly began to organize Junta Nacionalistas, or Nationalist Committees, in the nation's principal cities and towns. The elite's traditional social clubs became nationalist meeting places; some clubs ceased inviting the military authorities to their festivities. Opposition to the military government mounted. The first major protest of the Unión Nacional Dominicana against military rule was the Semana Patriótica, or Patriotic Week, held from May 12 to 19, 1920. The main objective of the week was to raise consciousness about the military occupation as well as funds to subsidize the nationalist missions of Dr. Henríquez y Carvajal and other leaders.

The military government tried to undermine Semana Patriótica, reacting with severe repression against the nationalists. "The authorities jailed more than twenty publishers, journalists, poets, and other intellectuals, many of them connected with the republic's most important families" (Calder, 1984:197). Among them were Americo Lugo and Fabio Fiallo. The accusations were questionable. Lugo refused to recognize the authority of the provost courts because he thought they were illegal. Horacio Blanco Ambiones, a well-known Venezuelan journalist, was jailed and later deported for publishing a photograph of Cayo Báez, a peasant victim of marine brutality.

The Unión Nacional Dominicana sent diplomatic envoys to Latin America and the United States to denounce the repression of the military government. Protests again began to reach the State Department from both Latin America and the United States. Once more, the United States was pushed to reexamine its involvement in the Dominican Republic.

LEGITIMATION OF THE NEW STATE AND THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE UNITED STATES MARINES

Through brute force, the United States marines were able to lay the material foundations of a strong national government in the Dominican Republic. This formation was not enough, however, to constitute a legal government minimally acceptable to the majority of the politically active population. Aware of this reality and responding to mounting political pressure in the Dominican Republic, President Wilson issued a plan on December 23, 1920, for the gradual withdrawal of the marines. The Wilson plan included the formation of a Comisión Consultiva composed of representatives of Dominicans, meaning those traditional politicians who had been advising the military government informally (even members of this group had resigned in disgust from the first Comisión Consultiva, formed in December 1919). A technical advisor was also included to help revise the constitution and to draft a new electoral law (Welles, 1928:830-31). This plan was rejected by the majority of politically active Dominicans. The Unión Nacional Dominicana condemned any form of collaboration with the military government and proposed its own formula for evacuation with no strings attached, a plan unacceptable to the United States. The forceful rejection of the United States plan by the nationalists infuriated the conservative faction of the local elites. The nationalists had charged them with "treason to the homeland" for agreeing to collaborate. Even so, the United States continued a policy of including this conservative faction in the political process, hoping to gain legitimacy for the actions of the military government.

When he assumed office in March 1921, President Warren G. Harding found himself faced with the dilemma of how to withdraw the United States marines. He had attacked Wilson's policies and the occupation during his campaign. Harding and his Secretary of State, Charles Evans Hughes, were reportedly determined to end the North American military presence in the Dominican Republic. "They believed that abandoning armed intervention in favor of advice and counsel would foster good will in Latin America and ultimately benefit the United States by enabling it to garner the trade and support of the region" (Grieff, 1969:425). While this policy seemed to offer a unique opportunity to improve Caribbean relations, its translation into practice in the Dominican case produced results not significantly different from those of previous policies. The United States was still committed to legalizing the actions of the military government in the country, thereby making the new state structurally subordinated to U.S. imperialism.

On June 14, 1921, the Harding administration issued a second proclamation regarding the withdrawal of the military government from the country. This plan built on the earlier Wilson Plan. It called for the ratification of all the acts of the
military government, the validation of a loan of $2,500,000 to complete public works in progress, an extension of the duties of the General Receiver of Dominican customs, the maintenance of a constabulary organized and offered by North Americans appointed by the Dominican president upon designation of the President of the United States, and the organization of elections under United States tutelage (Welles, 1928:843-844). Again, as noted above, it was a clearly defined U.S. policy to incur foreign debts with North American banks to carry out public work projects in the Dominican Republic.

The Harding plan was unacceptable to the majority of politically active Dominicans. The Unión Nacional Dominicana called for a demonstration in front of the Governor’s office, and over three thousand gathered to protest the plan. The protest surprised the military government and officials in Washington. The strength of the nationalist movement led President Henríquez y Carvajal to take a more confrontational position toward the United States. It also allowed nationalists to exercise more pressure on the local conservative groups, who appeared to be working behind the scenes to reach a pact with the United States involving acceptance of a revised version of Harding plan. Amerindo Lugo warned nationalists against the traitors who were willing to collaborate with the military government. He wrote:

The military occupation cannot be considered in any other form but as a case of force majeur; the one who suffers it, is not obliged to do anything...the moment we accept a change, we would have ceased to be under the protection of a case of force majeur...thus, granting a title that legitimates an injustice (Lugo, 1976:29).

As a lawyer, Lugo was aware that behind the United States plan for withdrawal was the need to legitimize the actions of the military government. The United States needed a local group that would be willing to accept the intervention as a legal fact, and thus it worked to induce the leading members of the traditional political parties to come to terms with them. Yet, the nationwide popularity of the Unión Nacional Dominicana forced conservative groups to act cautiously. The strength of the nationalists led Samuel Robinson, Governor Snowden’s successor, to issue a clarification, which tempered the original proclamation. A moderate faction within the nationalists wrote to President Henríquez y Carvajal urging him to accept the Harding plan. Nonetheless, nationalists remained more or less united and continued to voice their new standard objections to U.S. control of elections, the Dominican military, internal revenues, and of the process of amending the constitution (Calder, 1984:211).

On December 7, 1921, nationalists met with traditional politicians in Puerto Plata and signed a nine article pact. This plan of action sought to enable politically active Dominicans to effect the withdrawal of the marines from the country. The principal points of the Harding plan were dismissed and various constitutional and administrative reforms were adopted. The plan also urged that the diplomatic mission of the Comisión Nacionalista had to continue (Hoepelman y Senior, 1973:312-316). Because of inherent political disagreements between the parties, the Puerto Plata pact, however, was not translated into meaningful political action, and the two sides reached an impasse. The State Department took advantage of the paralysis of the nationalists to announced that since the Dominican people were unwilling to collaborate in the implementation of the Harding plan, the process of withdrawal would be postponed "until such time as the urgent public works, and an adequate Dominican constabulary is functioning..." (U.S. Foreign Relations, 1922:10-11).

**THE HUGHES PAYNADO AGREEMENT**

The impasse that followed the nationalist rejection of the Harding plan seems to have reduced the activities of the Unión Nacional Dominicana. Funds raised in the semana Patriótica were exhausted. Dr. Henríquez y Carvajal was dispirited and plagued by personal problems. Hopes that the Harding administration would accept a compromise favorable to the Dominican cause withered away with the delay of the President’s plan for withdrawal. Thus, a weakened Unión Nacional Dominicana opened the way for traditional political leaders to step in with their compromising solutions.

In this context, Francisco Peynado traveled to Washington to discuss a way to break the impasse created by the intransigence of the nationalists. Peynado was used to working with the North Americans. He had been a lawyer for sugar companies, a former Dominican Minister to Washington, and the head a public safety committee designed to maintain order in the early days of the military invasion. Peynado was well equipped to strike a compromise solution with the State Department.

When Peynado went to Washington, he was ready to compromise on key issues, including the validation of the Executive Orders of the military government, which legalized the lands of the sugar companies, reformed public administration, regulated the public coercive force and guaranteed the loans incurred by the military government on behalf of the occupied republic. Last, but not least, Peynado offered a new idea which seemed to satisfy Washington and the traditional political leaders: the creation of a provisional government. The main function of the provisional government was to preside over the process of
transition from United States military rule to a new civilian government by conducting general elections to choose a Dominican Congress. Once elected, this Congress was to validate all the important actions of the military government. Peynado suggested that before these negotiations could be completed it would be necessary to get the support of the main political leaders of the country. While pro-North American leaders like Federico Velásquez, Horacio Vásquez, and Elías Brache were invited to discuss the future of the Dominican state with the United States, President Francisco Henríquez y Carvajal, Americo Lugo, Fabio Fiallo and other prominent nationalists leaders were not informed of the negotiations.

Once a deal was negotiated with traditional political leaders, the plan was published in September 1922. According to the Hughes-Peynado plan, named after Francisco Peynado and Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes, a provisional government would be elected by the members of a United States-appointed commission composed of Horacio Vásquez, Federico Velásquez, Elías Brache, Francisco Peynado, and Monsignor Adolfo Noel. The provisional government would promulgate legislation to organize presidential elections and elections for a new Congress. The newly formed government would then recognize the validity of all the Executive Orders issued by the military government as well as the bond issue of 1918 and the twenty-year five and one-half percent Customs Administration Sinking Fund Gold Bond issue authorized in 1922. The customs tariff of 1920 would not be changed by the new government and the Convention of 1907 would remain in force. Finally, the Convention itself "will be referred to the Congress for its approval. The Congress will, in addition, pass the law recognizing independently the Convention of Ratification the validity of the Executive Orders referred to in the said Convention" (Welles, 1928:863-871).

In sum, these initial agreements meant that for the first time since the intervention, the United States had struck a deal which would give the new state a veil of legality, something that Lugo, President Henríquez y Carvajal, Fiallo and others have fought against. Nationalists quickly launched a campaign denouncing the agreement and charging that the United States military occupation of the country was illegal. Again, Lugo proposed a "pure and simple" [total] withdrawal with no strings attached (Lugo, 1976:41-48). Nonetheless, the agreement with the traditional political parties had delivered a mortal blow to the nationalist political parties. The United States, having reached an agreement which have "legality" to its actions in the country, went ahead with the implementation of the Hughes-Peynado plan, despite the continued opposition of the nationalists.

The United States-engineered Commission of Representatives elected Juan Bautista Vicini Burgos, from one of the wealthiest families in the country, to head the provisional government. During his term in office (1922-1924), Vicini Burgos worked closely with Sumner Welles, President Harding's special commissioner in the country. Welles worked with the conservative political factions traveling with their representative through the country to explain and gain support for the Hughes-Peynado agreement. In fact, Welles had helped frame the agreement and used his personal influence over Federico Velásquez, Horacio Vásquez, Elías Brache, Francisco Peynado, Monsignor Noel and others worked behind the scenes to direct the commission of representatives and the provisional government (Ortega Frier, 1973). Welles worked to soften the differences between the traditional political parties. He advised the provisional government on preparing for general elections and pressed the military government to complete unfinished public work projects and to speed up the training and organization of the conscriptuary. General elections were held on March 15, 1924, and Horacio Vásquez won by an overwhelming majority. A congress had been elected also; it would soon be convened to legalize the actions of the military government in the Dominican Republic. Once these important tasks were completed, the United States military forces withdrew from the country, on July 12, 1924.

SUMMARY CONCLUSION

The difficulties in organizing a strong national government favorable to United States interests in the Caribbean basin at first forced the United States to exclude Dominican political elites from the state building process. Nonetheless, the military government established by the United States in the Dominican Republic in 1916 continued earlier efforts to promote public works projects that unified the state and encouraged capitalist development. The formation of a military government without the collaboration of local elites, however, proved to be problematic in the context of widespread nationalist resistance combined with significant North American opposition to President Wilson's occupation of the country. These pressures forced Wilson to initiate a process that would integrate a fraction of local political elites into the occupation regime. The nationalist forces, however, rejected North American conditions for withdrawal because they included the acceptance of the legitimacy of the military government. The traditional conservative elites took advantage of the impasse that ensued and negotiated the creation of a provisional government and the withdrawal of the military government in a two-year period.

Most of the policies of the military government were geared to strengthen the military apparatus of the Dominican state and to consolidate the power of the North American sugar corporations. The military government ensured that the traditional export economy was crushed by introducing a trade tariff which gave duty-free entry to many foreign products. In this context, only the largest foreign
resident import merchants profited, and those marginally, while creole merchants were further distanced from the higher echelons of the merchant class.

Finally, this analysis suggests that while the local embryonic bourgeoisie was structurally weakened by the actions of the government of occupation, a military elite slowly began to form within the newly equipped and reorganized constabulary. The United States military government helped make traditional regional caudillos obsolete, but by fostering a strong military apparatus, prepared the way for the emergence of a national military caudillo.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

DOCUMENTS

DEPARTMENT OF STATE. PAPERS RELATING TO THE FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES.


RECORDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE RELATING TO THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.

1) Letter in Spanish from President Juan I. Jiménez dated October 19, 1915 to President Woodrow Wilson, Roll No. 13, Sub. 1776.

2) Letter dated November 13, 1913, North American Consul in Puerto Plata reports interview with Arias and gives opinion, Roll No. 7, Sub. 968.

3) Memorandum dated March 31, 1914 describes revolutionary activity of Desiderio Arias; position of Arias in Dominican politics, Roll No. 8, Sub. 1144.

BOOKS AND ARTICLES


Henríquez Uría, Max. Los Estados Unidos y La República Dominicana. La Verdad de los Hechos Comprobados por datos y documentos oficiales. Santiago: "El Siglo XXI", 1919.


