

Views

International Herald Tribune

THE GLOBAL EDITION OF THE NEW YORK TIMES

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GREECE, IRELAND...

Unless Greece and Ireland are allowed to restructure their debt, they will hobble along for years.

In May, the International Monetary Fund and the European Union thought they had solved Europe's financial troubles. They crafted a \$150 billion bailout for Greece, part of a \$1 trillion rescue fund for vulnerable countries using the euro. With defenses like that, no investor would bet against Europe's financial stability. Six months later, Greece is still tottering, and the Irish financial crisis shows that their deterrent was neither as persuasive nor as effective as they thought.

The bailout recipe for Greece, and now Ireland, has a fundamental problem: It fails to acknowledge that these deeply indebted countries will not recover until they reduce their crushing public debt, which in both cases is on its way to hit a staggering 150 percent of gross domestic product within three or four years. Ireland's total foreign debt, public and private, amounts to 10 times its G.D.P.

Growth could help, raising tax revenues and cutting the ratio of debt to G.D.P. But neither Greece nor Ireland is growing. And the draconian austerity budgets that are the price for the rescue deals — Ireland has promised to cut its budget deficit to 3 percent of G.D.P. by 2014, from 32 percent this year — will make things worse.

Unless they are allowed to restructure their debt, extending payouts or reducing the principal, they will hobble along for years. And any new scare — say financial problems in Portugal — would send investors bolting.

Debt write-offs weren't discussed during the Greek bailout, not least because the country owed a lot of money to banks from other European Union countries. Ireland owes even more. Right now, nobody is talking about restructuring. Instead, the European Union and the I.M.F. seem likely to plow billions more into the Irish banks.

Forcing creditors to swallow debt write-downs also carries big risks. It would hurt the balance sheets of many European banks. It would spook investors, temporarily barring other weak countries from bond markets. There are ways to mitigate these risks by addressing the problems of all the weak countries at once.

Creditors in Ireland's banks could be pressed to swap debt for equity, which would reduce banks' indebtedness. And the I.M.F. and European Union rescue fund could inject capital into some banks that couldn't get it from the markets, as well as shore up governments until they recovered access to private financing.

This won't be easy, especially if the rescue needs to be extended to a much bigger country such as Spain. Yet despite the risks, this approach may offer the only path to lasting solvency for these countries — and long-term stability for the euro.

SAVING THE WILD TIGER

There are only 3,200 tigers left in the wild, and unless countries act to protect them, they will go extinct.

A century ago, there were an estimated 100,000 tigers living in the wild. Now there are perhaps 3,200 left. The best chance — probably the only remaining chance — to save them from extinction was the subject of a summit meeting this week in St. Petersburg, Russia, staged by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and Robert Zoellick, president of the World Bank. The meeting included representatives from major conservation groups and all 13 nations with tigers living in the wild, including India, Indonesia, Thailand and Russia.

Two things are needed. The first is a more focused conservation strategy, like the "source site" approach recommended by the Wildlife Conservation Society. The goal is for all the countries with wild tigers to identify and protect sites with enough breeding females and room for an expanding tiger population. The hope is that vigilant protection of these sites could double the tiger population by 2022.

Ending the international trade in tiger parts, which are still believed to have almost magical powers in China and across Asia, will be harder to solve. This isn't a matter of stopping a few poachers. It means shutting down hard-core traffickers and a high-profit black market. China banned trading in tiger parts in 1993. It must actively discourage the cultural appetite for them and aggressively pursue traffickers.

Unless these efforts succeed, tigers could go extinct in the wild within 20 years. The United States, which sent a senior State Department official to the meeting, has no wild tigers, but it does have well upward of 5,000 tigers living in captivity. The government keeps no track of where they are, who owns them, or what becomes of them, which means they are vulnerable to the black market. It needs to do more to protect these tigers.

The real threat to America

The fear industry and its officers have engineered security's victory over freedom.



Roger Cohen

GLOBALIST

LONDON The full-body scanners and intrusive pat-downs that are fast becoming the norm at U.S. airports — just in time for Thanksgiving! — do at least provide the answer to what should be done with Osama bin Laden if he's ever captured: Rotate him in perpetuity through this security hell, "groin checks" and all.

He'll crumple fast and wonder that 19 young guys in four planes could so warp the nervous system of the world's most powerful nation that it has empowered zealous bureaucrats to trample on the liberties for which Americans give thanks this week.

In his stupor, arms raised as his body gets "imaged," arms outstretched through "enhanced" patting, bin Laden might also wonder at just how stupid it is to assemble huge crowds at the Transportation Security Administration's airport checkpoints, as if hundreds of people on planes were the only hundreds of people who make plausible targets for terrorists.

It seems Abdulmutallab, a name

T.S.A. agents must now memorize, is to blame. Abdulmutallab is the failed Nigerian "underwear bomber" of last Christmas. He joins the failed shoe bomber and failed shampoo-and-bottled-water bombers in a remarkable success: adding another blanket layer of T.S.A. checks, including dubious gropes, to the daily humiliations of travelers.

Whether or not these explosive devices were ever actually operable remains a matter of dispute, just as it remains a mystery that the enemy — if as powerful as portrayed — has not contrived a single terrorist act on U.S. soil since 9/11. What is not in doubt is an old rule: Give a bureaucrat a big stick and a big budget, allow said bureaucrat to trade in the limitless currency of human anxiety, and the masses will soon be intimidated by the Department of Fear.

Laurenti Beria, Stalin's notorious secret police chief, once said, "Show me the man and I'll find you the crime." The T.S.A. seems to operate on the basis of an adapted maxim: "Show me the security check and I'll find you the excuse."

Anyone who has watched T.S.A. agents spending 10 minutes patting down 80-year-old grandmothers, or seen dismayed youths being ordered back into the scanner booth by agents connected wirelessly to other invisible agents gazing at images of these people in a state of near-nakedness, has to ask: What form of group madness is it that forsakes judgment and discernment for process run amok?

I don't doubt the patriotism of the Americans involved in keeping the country safe, nor do I discount the threat, but I am sure of this: The unfettered growth

of the Department of Homeland Security and the T.S.A. represent a greater long-term threat to the prosperity, character and wellbeing of the United States than a few madmen in the valleys of Waziristan or the voids of Yemen.

America is a nation of openness, boldness and risk-taking. Close this nation, cow it, constrict it and you unravel its magic.

There are now about 400 full-body scanners, set to grow to 1,000 next year. One of the people pushing them most energetically is Michael Chertoff, the

former Secretary of Homeland Security. He's the co-founder and managing principal of the Chertoff Group, which provides security advice. One of its clients is California-based Rapiscan Systems, part of the OSI Systems corporation, that makes many of the "whole body" scanners being installed.

Chertoff has recently been busy rubbishing Martin Broughton, the wise British Airways chairman who said many security checks were redundant — calling him "ill-informed." Early this year Chertoff called on Congress to "fund a large-scale deployment of next-generation systems."

Rapiscan and its adviser the Chertoff Group will certainly profit from the deployment underway (some of the machines were bought with funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment

Act). Americans as a whole will not.

Rapiscan: Say the name slowly. It conjures up a sinister science fiction. When a government has a right to invade the bodies of its citizens, security has trumped freedom.

Intelligence has improved beyond measure since 9/11. It can be used far more effectively at airports. Instead of humiliating everyone, focus on the very small proportion of travelers who might present a threat.

You can't talk down fear simply by calling terrorists "violent extremists," or getting rid of the color-coded terrorism alert system, as the Obama administration has done. During the Bosnian war, besieged Sarajevans had a word — "inat" — for the contempt-cum-spite they showed barbarous gunners on the hills by dressing and carrying on as normal. Inat is what Americans should show the jihadist cave-dwellers.

So I give thanks this week for the Fourth Amendment: "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized."

I give thanks for Benjamin Franklin's words after the 1787 Constitutional Convention describing the results of its deliberations: "A Republic, if you can keep it."

To keep it, push back against enhanced patting, Chertoff's naked-screening and the sinister drumbeat of fear.

Who will rise above the muck?

Haiti desperately needs a real leader, but it's unlikely that Sunday's elections will produce one.

Amy Wilentz

LOS ANGELES In Haiti, there's a work-er called a bayakou. The bayakou comes in the middle of the night to clean latrines, which generally get shoveled out only once every year or so.

Few people ever see a bayakou. In fact, he has a status somewhere between a magical, fairy-tale figure and an unobtainable. To get a bayakou to come and do his work, a homeowner must negotiate with a middleman who arranges the assignment, but won't let you know exactly when the cleaner is coming. You tell the middleman where you want the sewage from the latrine buried; he tells you that during the next three nights, you shouldn't worry if you hear a noise in your garden. And then one night, the bayakou comes and the following morning, there's a heap of freshly turned earth in a corner out back, and a clean latrine. You pay the middleman.

With presidential elections scheduled for Sunday, it's fair to ask who will be the grand bayakou for Haiti now. The place surely needs a figure of mythic status who's willing to come in and get real work done. Yet as the country tumbles into the electoral morass, it's hard to imagine that someone will arrive in the dark to engineer a cleanup.

It's not only the aftermath of last January's earthquake that is troubling the still-embryonic democratic process in Haiti — although it's not easy to promote elections amid mass displacement and homelessness, to say nothing of all the electoral identification cards lost in goudou-goudou, the quake's onomatopoeic Creole nickname.

What has Haitian political heads spinning right now are the billions in international aid that have been promised in the disaster's wake. Misery is Haiti's stock in trade, more so now than ever. With every announcement of a further katastwof, or catastrophe — an aftershock, the rainy season, a cholera epidemic, a potential hurricane — the chink chink chink can be heard from across the sea.

In a way, misery is a natural resource as corrupting as any diamond or gold mine, or the discovery of a lake of oil beneath a desert. This realization may in fact explain the inaction of Haitian leaders so far, including the bizarrely silent and invisible Haitian president, René Préval. As long as the people are homeless and hungry and sick, money will keep on flowing from the outside.

Haitian politicians are traditionally talented at only one aspect of the exercise of power: enriching themselves. This is not surprising. For most elected Haitian officials, their job in the legislature is their first-ever regular job, and the salary they receive is often their first-ever regular paycheck. A foreign diplomat with long experience in Haiti told me that the average number of hours per day that a Haitian legislator spends on the job is two.

For such novices, and for old hands, the aid money coming in is an irresistible prize. The next leader of Haiti will

preside over coffers the likes of which his predecessors have only dreamed. The temptations for this leader and his cohort will be great. One example: For months already, customs has been holding back supplies that were to go to various nongovernmental groups, arguing that papers have not been properly filed. (It is not a stretch to see this as a tacit call for under-the-table payments.)

In other countries, such attempts at malfeasance can be offset and even overcome by government or independent institutions that help distribute foreign largess and monitor the overseers' management. In Haiti, however, the few weak institutions that existed were ravaged by the earthquake.

Misery is a natural resource as corrupting as the discovery of a lake of oil beneath a desert.

Government reform is not high on the list of priorities for many Haitians, at least not compared with daily survival.

A cholera epidemic has killed more than 1,400 people so far. A traumatized people at the very edge of survival — ever since goudou-goudou, food,

water, cooking oil, charcoal, shelter and health care are expensive or hard to get or to maintain — now feels pushed over the brink by the spreading illness.

To complicate matters, Haitians are starting to look toward the outside world with increasing suspicion. In a trick of almost literary irony, the cholera bacterium itself has been linked to the controversial United Nations stabilization troops who have been the sole force of order in Haiti since 2004, and who are providing security and logistics for the elections. Demonstrations calling for the ouster of United Nations troops now take place alongside political rallies.

Onto this sulfurous stage, no surprising players have emerged to act out the drama. Mr. Préval, who has managed to do next to nothing with considerable means at his disposal, is pushing the candidacy of one of the front-runners, Jude Célestin, a virtual nonentity who, it is assumed, would simply continue

the non-policies of the Préval regime.

Another front-runner is Mirlande Manigat, a former first lady of Haiti (for five months in 1988, until her husband was deposed) who is associated with the small Haitian middle class. There's also Michel Martelly, a popular local musician with an eccentric performing style (he has been known to wear diapers on stage), and Charles Baker, a candidate with support from among the business elite.

And there are 15 other candidates, each commanding his or her small coterie. None is truly beloved, none generates much excitement. Indeed, there hasn't been an important Haitian election in decades greeted with as little enthusiasm as this one, in part because the party of former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who is still revered, was not permitted to participate.

People like to say that Mr. Aristide, who has been living in exile in South Africa since he was ousted in 2004, is the most popular politician in Haiti, even though he's not in Haiti. His hand hovers over these elections, even though his party cannot put forward a candidate and he has not endorsed anyone. (Haiti's active rumor mill says he supports Jean-Henry Céant, a former close associate.)

With Haitians focused on basic survival, the candidates have spent a significant amount of time courting the Haitian diaspora, which has its own agenda — most notably the desire to be able to vote in future Haitian elections.

Thanks to technology, the more than two million Haitians who live outside the country and send money back to family and friends are within reach of text messages and robo-calls. Mr. Martelly in particular, with his distinctive voice, has been urging diaspora Haitians to get their people inside Haiti

to vote for him, with an implicit promise that he will work to give them the vote.

Herein lies a ray of hope. A diaspora vote could change the political scene in Haiti — ushering in a new generation of leadership and blowing some fresh air and fresh ideas into a fetid situation.

The diaspora is educated, and has seen what it means to live inside economies that function. Although diaspora Haitians can sometimes be unrealistic about what's possible in the country, their standards and hopes are high. For this reason, Haitian politicians are uneasy about encouraging the diaspora to take part in Haitian politics, even as some enlist its help.

So what will happen on Sunday? In all likelihood, the outcome of the election will be no outcome. There will be low turnout and probably a runoff between two candidates in a month or so, prolonging Haiti's political purgatory and postponing the already late arrival of needed assistance. (Foreign organizations want to wait to see who will be in charge; meanwhile, children will die of cholera, a treatable disease.)

It's easy to see what Haiti needs now, of course. What the situation requires is a responsible manager, someone capable of executive decision-making, and at the same time incorruptible.

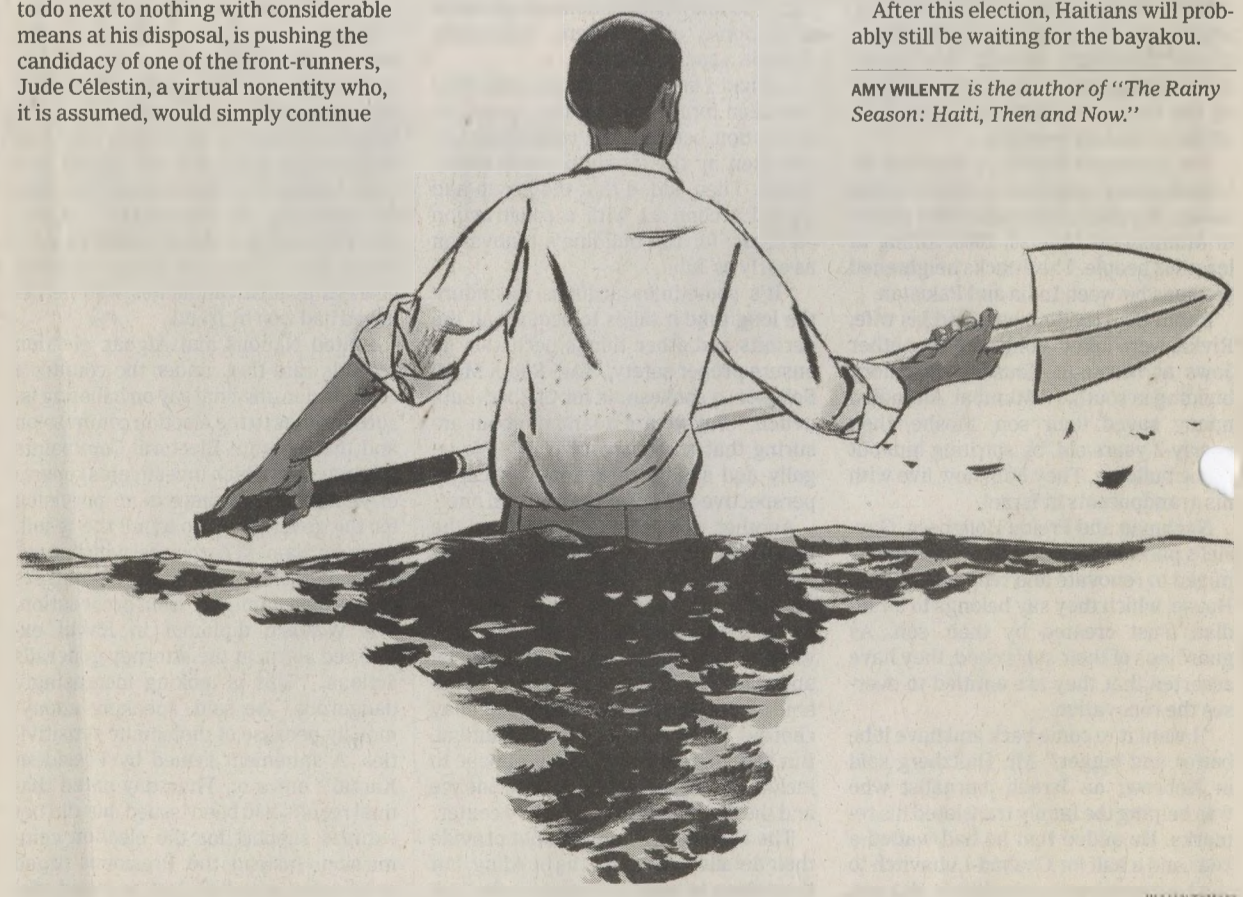
Someone from the diaspora, perhaps, who wants to give up his day job; who cares about Haiti; who's not a dictator.

Let's continue to fantasize: someone who's strong enough to push through to the heart of hundreds of problems and address them on behalf of the Haitian people, but who can also work with the international community.

Many of the candidates would claim that this description fits them, but we have already seen more remarkable men fail when faced with the resistant web of Haiti's many problems. It will take a person of extraordinary character, subtlety and honesty to rise above the muck.

After this election, Haitians will probably still be waiting for the bayakou.

AMY WILENTZ is the author of "The Rainy Season: Haiti, Then and Now."



JULIAN TAMAKI