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## **WILL CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL OF HAITI INVASION WEAKEN PRESIDENTIAL PREROGATIVES?**

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**T**hroughout the Reagan and Bush years, conservatives were skeptical of congressional micromanagement of foreign policy. Conservatives worried that the prerogative of the President as commander in chief was being weakened by the 1973 War Powers Act, which requires congressional approval of a military deployment within 60 days. Conservatives also were concerned that Congress was adding unnecessary pork to defense bills and wasting taxpayers' money on unworkable foreign aid projects. Moreover, conservatives were apprehensive that Congress was leaking classified information and unnecessarily interfering with the smooth running of intelligence operations overseas.

Conservatives are still concerned about the "imperial" Congress, which continues to micromanage foreign policy in the same old ways. But many find themselves torn between their opposition to an invasion of Haiti and their distrust of Congress. Habituated by years of protecting conservative Presidents from the meddling of a liberal Congress, conservatives find it difficult to use the only tool at their disposal—the Congress—to stop an invasion that they believe will be disastrous.

Conservatives need not be so torn. There is a principled conservative position for obtaining congressional approval prior to an invasion of Haiti. Conservatives have always maintained that the President should have the right to use force without congressional approval if American lives are in danger or if U.S. vital interests or allies are threatened. This clearly is not the case in Haiti. No vital U.S. interests are endangered in Haiti. The reason the Clinton Administration gives for invading—maintaining U.S. credibility—has been artificially created by the President himself, with his repeated threats. Far more harmful for U.S. credibility would be the unwise use of force where no vital interests are at stake, or worse, the failure of the whole operation, as occurred when the U.S. invaded Haiti in the early part of this century.

Conservative opposition to the War Powers Act never meant blanket approval of every military operation launched by any President. Rather, it meant constraining Congress's appetite for interfering with the President's duty to defend American security. No one—not even the President—has said that Haiti endangers American security. Conservatives need not apologize or feel reticent in demanding a congressional hearing of Clinton's plans before American lives are lost in a fruitless exercise of liberal gunboat diplomacy.

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