



FROM KINSHASA TO KANDAHAR: Canada and Fragile States in Historical Perspective

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**ENTANGLED:
Canadian Engagement in Haiti,
1968–2010**

Andrew S. Thompson

Introduction

Since the late 1960s, Haiti has occupied a disproportionately large place in Canadian foreign policy decision making. Despite its small size, Haiti—perhaps the quintessential fragile state—has been, and continues to be, a strategic priority for Canada.¹ For more than four decades, Canada has been engaged in an ongoing international reconstruction effort in Haiti, an engagement that has only increased since the earthquake of 12 January 2010 that levelled the capital, Port-au-Prince.

This chapter offers a brief survey of Canada's involvement in Haiti from the Duvalierist period to the earthquake of 2010. The record is mixed. At times Canada used its diplomatic, economic, and military resources to advance and protect democracy and human rights. Yet there were other moments when its motives and actions were less benevolent, even counter-productive. Given the long history of relations between the two countries, this variation is hardly surprising. For nearly half a century, Canada has been entangled in Haiti's affairs, unable to divorce itself from

the tiny Caribbean island nation's troubles. Although it is a rich source of talented, francophone professionals, who maintain their homeland's political profile in Canada, Haiti's strategic and economic value to Canada is minimal. However, its geographic proximity to the United States, which has a strong stake in regional stability, and the centrality of the Canada-US relationship, means that Ottawa does not have the luxury of being able to ignore this island country.

Although it is by no means a passive actor, much of Canada's involvement in Haiti has been reactive, responding to both internal conflicts and exogenous threats. Indeed, the history of Canada's involvement in Haiti is as much the story of Haitian agency as it is about Canada's attempts to bring stability to a fragile state, and the relationship between the two countries has been far from asymmetrical, even though the former is a member of the G7 and the latter the poorest country in the western hemisphere. Broadly, Haiti is representative of the central dilemma that fragile states pose to developed countries in an age of globalization and interconnect-edness: they are too complex to "fix," yet too volatile to be left alone.

Duvalierism

Dr. François "Papa Doc" Duvalier preyed on Haitians with a ruthlessness that made the regime an international pariah during his fourteen-year reign as Haiti's president, from 1957 to 1971. Black, rather than a member of the mulatto population (who comprised the island's traditional economic and political elites), charismatic, nationalistic, educated, and fluent in French and Creole, Duvalier seemed the ideal candidate to lead Haiti, at least in the eyes of the Haitian military, which hoped he could win the support of the people without diminishing the authority of the army. But as Michel S. Laguerre argues in his pioneering book *The Military and Society in Haiti*, those who backed him underestimated him. Elected in 1957, Duvalier understood power—not only how to acquire it but also how to consolidate and hold onto it. He did so through a combination of tactics: practising divide-and-conquer politics, neutralizing and even eliminating real and potential opponents, engaging in strong-man rule, and employing state terror through his infamous

henchmen, the Tontons Macoutes.² Declaring himself “President for Life” in 1964, he finally relinquished control of the country on 21 April 1971, dying peacefully in his sleep, but not before naming his son, Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier, as his successor.

The “Baby Doc” era began with cautious hope in Haiti and abroad that things would be different. Duvalier advocated what he called “Jean-Claudism.” According to political scientist Robert Fatton, Jr., this was a “relatively ‘open’ technocratic project” in which the president liberalized the economy, “stopped the worst excesses of the macoutes, tolerated some dissent, and rehabilitated the army as an institution.”³ Encouraged by the prospect of reform, international donors—including Canada—responded by funding millions of dollars’ worth of development assistance. In 1973, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) gave Haiti a modest grant of US\$150,000 to subsidize existing agricultural projects being administered by France; the amount of the subsidy was later increased to US\$7.24 million.⁴ The following year, CIDA sponsored two additional projects worth almost US\$5 million.⁵ CIDA subsequently added another US\$2 million over a five-year period, and sent US\$1.17 million in food assistance.⁶ In 1977–78, CIDA committed an additional US\$39 million to Haiti over the next four years, US\$21 million of which was allocated to a soil rejuvenation project in Nippes.⁷ By the end of the decade, Canadian bilateral assistance to Haiti was second only to that of the United States. Much of the money was channelled through development organizations and faith-based groups, many of whom had been operating in the country since the 1940s.⁸ Nonetheless, by the early 1980s, as Duvalierism began to flounder, officials at CIDA began to doubt the merits of its programs and to pull back funds on the grounds that the Haitian government had not contributed its share of funds for joint projects.⁹

The timing of Canada’s development assistance to Haiti coincided with Washington’s re-engagement with the Caribbean country through the 1970s. From 1976 to 1978, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) issued nearly US\$43 million in government-to-government grants, and worked closely with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) on a Disaster Preparedness Project. It also pledged an additional US\$86 million over five years for a food-for-work program to bolster agricultural production.¹⁰

USAID assistance to Haiti was, in part, a response to Washington's concerns about illegal immigration. During the 1970s, large numbers of unskilled Haitians had fled the country in tiny wooden ships headed for other Caribbean countries and the US mainland.¹¹ By the early 1980s, "Haitian boat people" had become a contentious political issue in a number of southern states, most notably Florida and Missouri. The issue was made worse in 1981, when Haiti's precarious economy was hit hard by a series of external and internal shocks. Hurricane Allen and an outbreak of African swine fever virus devastated much of Haiti's agricultural production.¹² To further Haiti's economic woes, the country's bauxite reserves were almost depleted and tourism was on the decline. USAID responded to the swine fever crisis by launching the controversial, and largely ineffective, Interim Swine Repopulation Project, which imported pigs from the United States to Haiti, while Republican President Ronald Reagan provided US\$5 million in emergency economic aid in return for an agreement with the Duvalier government that permitted the US Coast Guard to repatriate any Haitian intercepted at sea.¹³

But "Baby Doc" Duvalier proved as repressive as his father, and by the early 1980s, confidence in the new regime had collapsed, so much so that Washington cut off aid on the grounds that Haitian authorities had violated its citizens' freedoms.¹⁴ Within the country, Haiti's faltering economy and massive trade deficit, combined with widespread tax evasion and embezzlement of foreign aid by government officials, fuelled the flames of anti-Duvalier sentiment. By 1986, the nation had had enough. Anti-Duvalier riots broke out across the country. To escape, "Baby Doc" boarded a US plane for France, while Tontons Macoutes were dragged into the streets and killed by angry mobs, thus bringing a violent end to twenty-nine years of Duvalierism.

Transition

Jean-Claude Duvalier's departure put immediate pressure on international donors to assist Haiti with its transition from dictatorship to democratic rule. USAID asked Congress to fund programs aimed at promoting both the welfare of the population and private sector development in

light assembly manufacturing.¹⁵ Similarly, in March 1987, CIDA granted US\$10.51 million in bilateral assistance—roughly three times the amount given the year before—to help prepare Haitians for the upcoming elections.¹⁶ Minister for External Relations Monique Landry even travelled to Haiti to discuss Canada’s role in supporting the country’s new Interim Development Program, and invite the country’s new leadership to attend the summit of La Francophonie, which was to take place in Quebec City in September.¹⁷ Little did anyone know at the time that the transition from dictatorship to democracy would prove so difficult, violent, and costly.

To fill the void left behind by Duvalierism, a provisional military government, the Conseil National de Gouvernement (CNG), was established under the direction of General Henri Namphy. The initial activities of the CNG were encouraging. Upon assuming office, Namphy scheduled the first and second rounds of the presidential elections for November 1987 and February 1988. He also created a constitutional assembly with an assortment of Haitian stakeholders charged with rewriting the constitution to check the power of the president and the military.¹⁸ On the human rights front, he freed political prisoners, welcomed back exiles, and announced that the Macoutes would be disbanded.¹⁹ Moreover, a team of UN observers led by Canadian Michel Gauvin—an experienced and outspoken diplomat who had previously served in Vietnam, the Congo, and the Dominican Republic—reported that it was satisfied that the CNG was relying less on terror and intimidation to govern and more on due process of law. Of the six human rights cases it presented to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, only one involved a violation that had occurred after Duvalier’s departure.²⁰

But Haitians were no more empowered after the revolution than they had been under Duvalier. They had displaced the president and the Tontons Macoutes, but the military quickly filled the vacuum. The months leading up to the November 1987 presidential election were particularly violent. In July, wide-scale, state-sponsored violence broke out as reports emerged that the CNG was using force to bar church groups and unions from fielding candidates. Four weeks later, the human rights group Washington Office on Haiti reported that the Tontons Macoutes, in league with wealthy landowners, had massacred between three hundred and seven hundred farmers in the rural town of Jean-Rabel who were suspected of belonging to the popular peasant group Tet Ansanm (Heads Together).²¹

The violence mounted as Duvalierists launched an aggressive campaign to reclaim power. On 2 November, supporters of the former president, who were barred from holding office under the new constitution, burned down the Provisional Electoral Council headquarters, attacked human rights activist and leader of the Christian Democratic Party Sylvio Claude, and fired machine guns at a voter registration office.²² On election day, 29 November, roughly thirty voters in Port-au-Prince were gunned down while waiting to cast their ballots. Namphy responded by suspending the election. The Haitian military then arrested and executed forty-six Haitians from the area for having involved themselves in pro-democracy demonstrations.²³

The brutal act was met with widespread international condemnation. After the massacre, USAID slashed its bilateral assistance from US\$96.5 million to \$36.9 million.²⁴ In Canada, the opposition Liberal Party called on the Mulroney government to reduce aid or cut it off altogether. The Conservatives replied that any action taken would be in concert with UN Security Council resolutions.²⁵ Meanwhile, Ottawa recalled its ambassador to Haiti in protest nine days after the incident. On 8 January 1988, CIDA announced that until there was a legitimate election all funds for Haiti would be channelled through NGOs, private Canadian businesses, and multilateral organizations.²⁶ At first, the decision to use aid as leverage for democratic reforms seemed to be working. Shortly after the aid transfers stopped, Namphy announced that a new round of presidential elections was scheduled for 17 January 1988.

Historian Leslie Manigat won the election, but many in the international community contested the legitimacy of the results, in part because of reports of widespread human rights violations.²⁷ Washington considered the election to be undemocratic. In the Canadian House of Commons, the Liberals denounced the events in Haiti, calling it a “Macoute election,” and asked the government whether it would recognize the newly elected Haitian government. The parliamentary secretary to the minister for external relations admitted that all the government could do was denounce the election, conceding that the CNG was the effective governing authority.²⁸ In March, a Canadian parliamentary delegation travelled to Haiti to meet with President Manigat, hoping that diplomatic pressure would convince Haiti’s new leader that new elections were urgent.

Meanwhile, the situation in Haiti continued to disintegrate. Six months after the election, the UN reported that conditions in Haiti had become as oppressive as those under Duvalierism, estimating that more than five hundred Haitians had lost their lives to political violence.²⁹ According to Professor Michel S. Laguerre, the loss of funds from the international community angered the country's economic elite, whose livelihood depended, in part, on the revenue from aid projects. Namphy's answer to the instability was to re-take power, deposing Manigat on 19 June 1988. Two months later, soldiers killed eleven people, injured another seventy, and burned down St. Jean Bosco Church in a failed attempt to assassinate the popular Catholic priest (and future president) Jean-Bertrand Aristide.³⁰ Predictably, mass opposition to the government erupted. Fearing a popular rebellion, the military hierarchy took matters into its own hands. Six days after the St. Jean Bosco burning, the Haitian army under the command of Lieutenant-General Prosper Avril removed Namphy from office.

The Avril regime was little better than the one it succeeded. A UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) fact-finding mission reported in February 1989 that human rights conditions were only slightly more humane under the new government.³¹ Nevertheless, both Washington and Ottawa agreed to assist Avril with the transition to democracy. In the US, Congress pledged US\$50 million in economic assistance once a new government was democratically elected.³² For its part, CIDA granted US\$22.1 million (\$10.16 million of which was in the form of direct bilateral assistance) and launched a four-year AIDS prevention program with McGill University, the Pan American Health Organization, and the World Health Organization.³³ Under close and sustained international scrutiny for his government's lacklustre human rights record, Avril was eventually forced to concede the presidency to civilian Ertha Pascal-Trouillot in March 1990.³⁴

Like her predecessors, Pascal-Trouillot's principal responsibility was to organize a new round of presidential elections. Once again, both Washington and Ottawa offered significant material support for the elections. In addition to a number of development projects, USAID provided technical assistance and elections training programs. Similarly, four days after taking office, CIDA rewarded the new Haitian leader with an initial US\$150,000 in humanitarian aid. This was followed up with US\$1 million in food aid and "small, labour-intensive community projects," and another US\$1 million through Elections Canada in support for the election.³⁵ To

her credit, Pascal-Trouillot was good on her promise to hold new elections, thus bringing to an end five years of turbulence marked by mass human rights violations.

Aristide

On 16 December 1990, Aristide and his Lavalas Party won 67 percent of the popular vote in what observers considered to be Haiti's first legitimate election since the 1986 revolution. After twenty-nine years of Duvalierism and five years of military rule, it finally seemed as though the difficult transition from dictatorship to democracy was over. A populist, Aristide implemented political and economic reforms that would redistribute wealth within the country, steps that certainly angered the Haitian elite. As a result, on 30 September 1991, eight months into Aristide's term, Lt.-General Raoul Cédras and the Front pour l'Avancement et le Progrès Haitien (FRAPH) staged a *coup d'état* that forced Aristide to flee the country.

Predictably, the coup aroused widespread condemnation and prompted the international community to intervene. On 3 October, the Organization of American States (OAS) called on foreign governments and the UN Security Council to impose diplomatic sanctions and suspend all commercial relations. Six days later, it sent a civilian-led mission to Haiti, the "OAS-DEMOC," to negotiate Aristide's return to office.³⁶ At the same time, Amnesty International reported that in the first few days of the coup, the army had murdered more than fifty civilians living in the Cité Soleil district of Port-au-Prince, another thirty or forty in the district of Lamentin 54, and six more in Gonaïves.³⁷

Canadian prime minister Brian Mulroney was particularly vocal in his opposition to the coup. In the House of Commons, he denounced Cédras and his followers as a "gang of hoodlums," and promised that Canada would do everything in its power to restore Aristide to his rightful position as president.³⁸ Parliament unanimously supported Mulroney's decision to place a moratorium on the return of any Haitian refugee claimants in Canada and to cut off all development aid to the Haitian government. Two weeks later, Barbara McDougall, who had been Canada's representative on the OAS mission investigating the coup, told the UN General Assembly

that neither the international community nor the people of Haiti would accept Cédras's military regime. She encouraged the UN to use its "moral force and political will" to return Aristide to power so that the crisis did not threaten democracy in the western hemisphere.³⁹

President Bush, however, had reservations about intervening in Haiti. At a press conference on 4 October—at which Aristide was present—he acknowledged the crisis in Haiti but refused to send US troops unless American lives were in danger.⁴⁰ Left-wing critics attributed Washington's reluctance to intervene to US commercial interests in the Caribbean country. According to the National Labor Committee (NLC), companies such as Walmart, J. C. Penny, and Sears had been taking advantage of Haiti's inexpensive labour by paying textile workers the equivalent of US\$0.14 per hour without benefits or pensions. One of Aristide's first measures had been to convince the Haitian parliament to raise the minimum wage to US\$0.37, a policy opposed by many US-based multinationals.⁴¹ Nonetheless, by the end of October, as the situation continued to deteriorate, Bush was forced to act, issuing Executive Order 12779, which required US companies to freeze their Haitian assets, halt payments to the regime, and suspend trade with Haiti with the exception of food products.⁴²

Canadian, American, and international pressure notwithstanding, the human rights situation in Haiti continued to worsen. In January 1992, Amnesty International reported that Cédras and his supporters had, in the three months since taking control, eliminated all grassroots organizations, re-established the authority of regional governors known as the "Chefs de Section," issued "hit lists" on the radio, burned houses, attacked domestic and foreign clergy, and permitted soldiers to use rape as a "weapon of terror."⁴³ Moreover, by February 1992, the United Nations estimated that roughly twenty thousand Haitians had fled the country.⁴⁴ Within months, that number had grown to an estimated thirty-four thousand, the majority of whom were destined for the United States. Anxious to avoid a mass influx of refugees, Bush issued Executive Order 12807, the *Interdiction of Illegal Aliens*, on 24 May, which instructed the Coast Guard to repatriate Haitians without first trying to determine their refugee status.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, negotiations were underway to secure Aristide's return to Haiti, but progress was slow as Cédras played for time, even staging parliamentary elections in January 1993. Slowly the economic sanctions, ineffective at first, began to bite. By the spring of 1993, pressured to find



Figure 1: In the early 1990s, Canada and other countries in the ad hoc group “Friends of Haiti” set about rebuilding the country’s battered justice system. In this 1994 photo, RCMP Inspector Joe Healy lectures Haitian police recruits on criminal law in Port au Prince. (Credit: Joe Healy)

a solution by the “Friends of Haiti,” an ad hoc group that included the United States, Canada, France, and Venezuela, government and opposition representatives met at Governors Island, New York, on 27 June. Following six days of negotiations, the two sides agreed to give Aristide the authority to choose a prime minister in exchange for an end to the sanctions and amnesty for Cédras. The Governors Island Agreement also promised international help to reform Haiti’s justice system, the resumption of development assistance, the establishment of a new police force, the naming of a new commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and Aristide’s reinstatement on 30 October. Furthermore, the agreement was to be monitored by the newly created peacekeeping mission, the UN Mission in Haiti (UNMIH) and the UN Civilian Mission in Haiti (MICIVIH). An addendum, the New York Pact, called for an end to arbitrary arrests and torture, the release of political prisoners, respect for fundamental freedoms, and compensation for coup victims.⁴⁶ To ensure compliance, the

UN Security Council passed a resolution on 16 July imposing a total oil and arms embargo until 27 August.

Once again, Cédras proved unwilling to comply and played for time. His *de facto* government refused to cooperate with international forces, and even barred the USS *Harlan County*, a US naval vessel carrying 25 Canadian and 193 US peacekeepers, from docking.⁴⁷ On 11 October 1993, three days after presenting Parliament with a proposal to create a new civilian police force, Aristide's minister of justice, François-Guy Malary, was assassinated. The UN Security Council responded with resolution 873, re-imposing the oil and arms embargos, and resolution 875, which promised "further necessary measures," thus opening the door to a military intervention.⁴⁸

Throughout the negotiations, the refugee exodus had continued, despite a plea from Aristide to his fellow Haitians not to circumvent the "floating Berlin Wall" that now surrounded the country.⁴⁹ In the US, domestic criticism of American policy began to mount. In early 1994, the Congressional Black Caucus submitted two bills calling on US authorities to ensure that their policies toward Haitians intercepted at sea were consistent with standards codified in international human rights law. US civil society actors also levelled sharp criticism at Washington. On 12 April, Randall Robinson, the executive director of TransAfrica, began a high-profile twenty-seven-day hunger strike on behalf of Haitian refugees that drew international attention to US repatriation practices. Weeks later, Amnesty International issued a report documenting seventeen cases of persecution of Haitians who had been returned to Haiti by US immigration officials, further underscoring the need for an urgent resolution to the situation.⁵⁰

The situation remained at an impasse as both sides upped the ante in an attempt to force the other to back down. On 26 May, the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic was closed, a move designed to cut off the military's access to illegal goods. Cédras countered by expelling MICIVIH on 11 July, which effectively forced the UN's hand. At the end of July, the Security Council adopted resolution 940, creating a Multinational Force (MNF) whose mandate was to

use all necessary means to facilitate the departure from Haiti of the military leadership, consistent with the Governors

Island Agreement, the prompt return of the legitimately elected President and the restoration of the legitimate authorities of the Government of Haiti, and to establish and maintain a secure and stable environment that will permit implementation of the Governors Island Agreement.⁵¹

Backed by the MNF and the threat of invasion, President Bill Clinton sent former President Jimmy Carter, former Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Colin Powell, and Senator Sam Nunn, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, to Haiti on 17 September to persuade Cédras to comply with the Governors Island Agreement. Sensing defeat, Judge Emile Jonaissant, whom Cédras had named provisional president, agreed to allow Aristide to return and to let Haitian and US forces provide security jointly. In return, Cédras was granted asylum in Panama.

Sadly, but perhaps not unsurprisingly, governing in the post-coup period proved difficult despite the UN/OAS presence in the country, as deep divisions fostered a climate of political paralysis. During the mid-1990s to early 2000s, during the first René Préval administration and the early days of the second Aristide administration, the UN had several security missions in Haiti, the final one coming to an end in February 2001. As the UN mission wound down, the political situation in Haiti became increasingly unstable. Aristide had been re-elected in 2000 under disputed circumstances. During his second term he came to rely increasingly on his armed militias (Les Chimères) in order to maintain his authority. By 2004, anti-Aristide sentiment within the country had grown considerably while his international support, especially in Washington, dwindled.

The Insurrection

On 5 February 2004, a group of former military and paramilitary officials known as the “Cannibal Army,” led by Guy Philippe, a former army officer and police commissioner, and Louis-Jodel Chamblain, the former second-in-command of the FRAPH, launched an anti-Aristide insurgency that began in the north and quickly made its way south to Port-au-Prince. By the end of the month, the situation had deteriorated to the point of

crisis. Unlike the situation in the early 1990s, when the international community had been willing to intervene in Haiti, there was little appetite for putting down the rebels. Instead, the UN allowed Aristide to be forcibly boarded onto a US plane destined for the Central African Republic before the Security Council passed resolution 1529, creating a Multinational Interim Force (MIF) to re-establish order in the country,⁵² and Supreme Court President Boniface Alexander was sworn in as interim president, thus bringing an end to the insurgency. The following week Gérard La-tortue, a former economist with the UN, was appointed prime minister of an interim government whose principal mandate was to organize a new round of elections, which eventually resulted in René Préal becoming president for a second time in February 2006.

Canada's engagement in Haiti has been controversial since 2004. In the wake of the insurrection, Canada responded by contributing five hundred soldiers to the MIF, which also consisted of troops from the United States, France, and Chile. Once the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) was established and the situation on the ground steadied, Canada withdrew the bulk of its forces. Nonetheless the decision to send Canadian security forces to Haiti was heavily criticized by civil society and Haitian solidarity groups in Canada, even though the UN Security Council had authorized the intervention. At issue was President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's departure from office. US Secretary of State Colin Powell defended the decision to remove Aristide from Haiti, telling the media that the UN had "averted a bloodbath."⁵³ Others, most notably critics on the left, such as the Canada Haiti Action Network, found this argument to be disingenuous, accusing the Canadian government of supporting of a US-led coup against a democratically elected government.⁵⁴

Following the insurrection, Ottawa made—and continues to make—a sizeable financial commitment to the international reconstruction effort. From 2004 to 2006, Canada pledged US\$97 million to Haiti through the international Interim Cooperation Framework, a commitment surpassed only by the United States and the European Union. In May 2006, Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper's recently elected government pledged an additional \$48 million for good governance, human rights, and debt forgiveness programs, primarily aiming to strengthen the Haitian parliamentary system. A month later, Canada committed \$15 million in additional aid, and, on 25 July 2006 at the International Donors'

Conference for the Economic and Social Development of Haiti, the federal government pledged another \$520 million in aid over the next five years. And more seemed likely. A December 2006 report from the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, entitled “Canada’s International Policy Put to the Test in Haiti,” recommended that Canada “continue to affirm its commitment to a long-term human security, development and democratization strategy for Haiti,” and that it do so for a period of at least ten years.⁵⁵ Harper’s trip to Haiti in July 2007, when he ventured into the slums of Cité Soleil, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Maxime Bernier’s subsequent visit to Port-au-Prince in February 2008, were touted as further evidence of the Canadian government’s public commitment to bringing stability to the Caribbean nation.

Since 2004, CIDA has funded numerous projects and initiatives designed to foster economic growth, strengthen the delivery of basic services, advance democratic reforms and human rights (especially human rights for women), and provide election support. According to political scientist Stephen Baranyi, the effects of these projects will not be known for many years; however, there are elements in these initiatives, such as support for programs to deal with gender-based violence, that have the potential to have a positive impact on the lives of Haitians.⁵⁶ These initiatives, particularly those relating to state building, occurred in the context of a larger policy shift by the Canadian government, first initiated by Prime Minister Paul Martin and subsequently adopted and expanded by Prime Minister Harper, to make good governance programming a central component of Canada’s development assistance policies, particularly with respect to investments in fragile and failed states.⁵⁷ Perhaps the most striking example of this priority shift was the creation within CIDA of the Office for Democratic Governance in October 2006 to promote “freedom and democracy, human rights, the rule of law and open and accountable public institutions in developing countries.”⁵⁸ Parliament was also supportive of the good governance agenda. In July 2007, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development released a major report on Canada’s democracy promotion programs, in which it recommended that Canada become a “world leader” in the promotion and advancement of democratic governance to the developing world.⁵⁹

By its own admission, CIDA (which was merged with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in 2013) does not have a great track record when it comes to successful development in Haiti, particularly with respect to good governance programming. In December 2004, the agency submitted a report to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) titled “Canadian Cooperation with Haiti: Reflecting on a Decade of ‘Difficult Partnership.’” As the title suggests, CIDA has found operating in Haiti to be a challenge. From 1994 to 2004, Canada spent \$300 million on development assistance to Haiti, bring its total aid expenditure since 1968 to \$600 million.⁶⁰ The money was not necessarily well spent. According to the report, in the mid-1990s Canada ceased funding programs aimed at reforming the security and justice sectors; the reason cited was “disappointing results,” which were attributed both to corruption and to “President René Préval’s leadership, which stagnated from political deadlock.”⁶¹

While the significance of the internal political feuding within Haiti should not be minimized, several scholars and observers have been equally critical of CIDA’s past operations. Robert Muggah, a specialist on post-conflict state-building in fragile states, has argued that between 1998 and 2002, “exogenous factors have played an equally insidious role in shaping the contours” of Haitian politics. Among other things, international donors withheld roughly \$340 million in aid because of World Bank concerns relating to “political instability, woefully poor governance and corruption.”⁶² The impact was tremendous, although surely foreseeable. Funding for the very sectors most in need of assistance, specifically in areas relating to security sector reform, was largely abandoned by 2000 in response to controversies surrounding Aristide’s re-election, a decision that undoubtedly contributed to dysfunction within the criminal justice system.⁶³ On top of this, Canada, like the US and EU, placed strict conditions on aid and channelled money through civil society organizations instead of the national government, both of which undermined Aristide’s ability to govern.⁶⁴

The coordination of aid, or “donor harmonization,” has also been a problem for CIDA, as well as for the international community in Haiti. In its December 2006 report, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development faulted CIDA for engaging in “too many small short-term projects having little cumulative

effect.”⁶⁵ Finally, Muggah has suggested that the international aid strategy to date has been “overambitious,” “erratic,” unevenly funded, and, perhaps more fundamentally problematic, it has never been “owned’ in any meaningful sense by Haitians and the process was hardly ‘inclusive’ beyond consultation in the capital of Port-au-Prince and to a lesser extent in the regions.”⁶⁶ Much of the reason for this stems from a lack of trust in Haitian authorities to govern effectively, as well as a lack of systematic understanding of realities on the ground.⁶⁷

Haiti, more than most countries, is susceptible to external shocks that have the effect of exacerbating political paralysis.⁶⁸ In this respect, 2008 was a particularly difficult year for the country. In February, the global food crisis that saw international prices for staples rise sharply had a dramatic effect on Haiti, which is a net food importer. With the price of rice out of reach for the majority of Haitians, riots broke out in Port-au-Prince, which resulted in the impeachment of Préval’s prime minister, Jacques Édouard Alexis, in April, a move that compromised the government’s ability to function. Only in the fall of 2008, after two hurricanes and two tropical storms hit Haiti in a period of three weeks, did Parliament finally approve a new prime minister, Michèle Pierre Louis, who had been Préval’s third choice for the job. Although faint, there were signs that life in Haiti was improving in 2009. Thanks to the worst natural disaster to hit Haiti in two hundred years, however, these gains were fleeting.

The Earthquake

In the early morning of 12 January 2010, an earthquake measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale rocked Port-au-Prince and its surrounding districts. The death toll was estimated at more than 230,000, while another 1.3 to 1.5 million Haitians were driven from their homes and forced to live in “temporary” displacement camps. Damage to property and infrastructure was estimated to be between \$8 and \$11 billion.⁶⁹ The state infrastructure was also reduced to rubble: fifteen of seventeen government ministry buildings were destroyed, as was the Presidential Palace, the Parliament building and the Supreme Court. Had it not been for the rapid international

response and MINUSTAH's existing presence on the ground, the disaster could have been much worse.

For their part, Canadians reacted with overwhelming sympathy to the situation. The day after the earthquake, Canada's Governor General, Haitian-born Michaëlle Jean—who had been in Haiti just days before and who would become UN Special Envoy to Haiti later that year—made an impassioned plea to Canadians and the world to lend a hand to Haiti.⁷⁰ According to Baranyi, Canadians responded by donating “a record \$220 million to Haiti,” which Ottawa matched, and “at the International Donors' Conference on 31 March, Canada pledged an additional \$400 million over two years.”⁷¹ In addition to this substantial financial commitment, Canada was actively involved with the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission, a temporary body consisting of Haitian and international actors that was responsible for developing and coordinating the reconstruction effort.

Yet in the half-decade since the earthquake, Haiti remains in a perilous state. Although there were elections in 2011, the country is fragmented politically. Despite the infusion of billions of dollars of aid money, the economy remains fragile. Moreover, the displacement camps that were supposed to be temporary remain in place, with few signs that they will be closed any time soon. Just as troubling, there have been reports of forced evictions and widespread sexual violence in the camps, as both domestic and international police have struggled to provide security to those vulnerable to attack.⁷² All the while, Haiti has also become a *de facto* UN trusteeship, as donors have been unwilling, at least for the time being, to allow Haitian authorities full control of the affairs of the country.⁷³

Conclusion

There is a common view—in Canada and abroad—that Haiti's problems are intractable. It is, sadly, a sentiment that is not completely unwarranted, in part because of internal problems but also because international attempts at nation building have yet to produce anything beyond very limited and short-lived successes. If it thought that it could, Ottawa would undoubtedly disengage from Haiti; at various times since the late 1960s it has been tempted to do so. But there are compelling reasons to remain



Figure 2: Following the massive earthquake of January 2010, Canadians rallied in support of Haiti. In this photo, a Haitian family receives an emergency cooking and water storage kit. (Credit: CIDA/Benoit Aquin)

involved. Many Canadian faith-based and development organizations have deep roots in Haiti, and the country is an important source of talented francophone immigrants. More important, until the day comes when Haiti's problems no longer concern Washington, Canada will have little choice but to play a role in shaping the fate of Haitians, whether it wants to or not. As long as Haiti's instability is deemed to pose a threat to international peace and security, this tiny Caribbean island country that presents no direct danger to Canadian national security will remain a fixture of Ottawa's foreign policy.

Notes

- 1 Despite billions of dollars in aid money, technical assistance, and military support that the international community has provided to the country, contemporary Haiti has never been able to shed its reputation as the “basket case” of the Western hemisphere. It suffers from a host of political, economic, social, and environmental ailments, many of which are internal and of its own making. But it is also acutely vulnerable to exogenous threats such as volatility in the global economy and natural disasters brought on by extreme weather that hinder development and exacerbate the state’s inherent inability to provide for the basic needs of Haitians. See Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (New York: Viking, 2005), 341. For an excellent analysis of Haiti’s fragility and vulnerability, see Amélie Gauthier and Madalena Moita, “External Shocks to Fragile States: Building Resilience in Haiti,” in *Fixing Haiti: MINUSTAH and Beyond*, ed. Jorge Heine and Andrew S. Thompson (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2011), 27–40.
- 2 Upon winning the election, Duvalier institutionalized the Tontons Macoutes—the unofficial, pro-Duvalier militia—in order to create a rival force to the army. For details, see Michel S. Laguerre, *The Military and Society in Haiti* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993).
- 3 Robert Fatton, Jr., “The Fall of Aristide and Haiti’s Current Predicament,” in *Haiti: Hope for a Fragile State*, ed. Yasmine Shamsie and Andrew S. Thompson (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Press and Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2006), 18.
- 4 Of the \$150,000, \$40,000 was in the form of immediate disbursements, while \$110,000 was earmarked for future commitments. CIDA, *Annual Aid Review* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1974), 41.
- 5 CIDA, *Annual Report, 1974–75* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1975), 12.
- 6 CIDA, *Annual Report, 1975–76* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1976), 59, 135.
- 7 CIDA, *Annual Report, 1977–78* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1978), 20.
- 8 See Sean Mills, “Quebec, Haiti, and the Deportation Crisis of 1974,” *Canadian Historical Review* 94, no. 3 (September 2013): 424; Ruth Compton Brouwer, “When Missions Became Development: Ironies of ‘NGOization’ in Mainstream Canadian Churches in the 1960s,” *Canadian Historical Review* 91, no. 4 (December 2010): 661–93.
- 9 CIDA, “News Release,” No. 81-58, 28 November 1981, 1–2.
- 10 USAID, *Congressional Presentation, Fiscal Year 1978, Annex III: Latin America and the Caribbean* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1979), 129, 143.
- 11 The problem of illegal immigration from Haiti was not unique to the United States. As Mills explains, Canada had its own “deportation crisis” in 1974, when the Trudeau government attempted to deport

- 1,500 low-skilled Haitians, a move that prompted widespread public outcry from the Haitian diaspora community, as well as sympathetic civil society, faith, and Quebec nationalist groups. See Mills, "Quebec, Haiti, and the Deportation Crisis of 1974," 405–35.
- 12 United Nations General Assembly, A/40/432, 25 October 1985, 5–6.
 - 13 "Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Caribbean Basin Initiative Legislation, 17 March 1982," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Ronald Reagan* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1983), 315.
 - 14 In 1973, Amnesty International issued its first comprehensive assessment of the human rights situation in Haiti. It found evidence of roughly four hundred cases of political prisoners who had been detained and charged with violating the 1969 Anti-Communist Law, which gave the government the authority to imprison, and even execute, anyone it deemed a threat to national security. Moreover, it found evidence of prisoners being subjected to torture and ill-treatment; those who became ill were denied both medical care and the opportunity to speak with a priest. See Amnesty International, "Report on the Situation of Political Prisoners in Haiti, 1973" (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1973), 3; Amnesty International, "Amnesty Hints at Haiti's 'Cynicism and Deception' Over Political Prisoners" (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1 March 1973), 1; Amnesty International, "News Release," (London: Amnesty International Publications, 9 January 1977); Amnesty International, "Haiti: Human Rights Violations, October 1980 to October 1981" (London: Amnesty International Publications, November 1981), 3; Americas Watch, "Haiti: Report of a Human Rights Mission, 26–29 June 1983" (New York: Americas Watch in conjunction with the Lawyer's Committee for International Human Rights, August 1983), 8.
 - 15 USAID, *Congressional Presentation, Fiscal Year 1988, Annex III: Latin America and the Caribbean* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1988), 234–35.
 - 16 CIDA, "News Release," no. 87-17, 9 March 1987, 1.
 - 17 CIDA, "News Release," 24 November 1986.
 - 18 For two excellent assessments of the significance of the 1987 Constitution on Haiti's political culture see Robert Fatton, Jr., "Haiti's Unending Crisis of Governance: Food, the Constitution and the Struggle for Power," and Mirlande Manigat, "The Legacy of the 1987 Constitution: Reform or Renewal?," both in *Fixing Haiti: MINUSTAH and Beyond*, 41–65, 66–77.
 - 19 United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), A/41/PV.23, 6 October 1986, 60.
 - 20 UNGA, A/41/PV.100, 12 December 1986, 12.
 - 21 Washington Office on Haiti, "Action Alert" (Washington, D.C.: Washington Office on Haiti, 1 July 1987); Washington Office on Haiti,

- “Action Alert” (Washington, D.C.: Washington Office on Haiti, 28 July 1987).
- 22 Washington Office on Haiti, “Democratic Process in Jeopardy in Haiti” (Washington, DC: Washington Office on Haiti, 3 November 1987), 1.
- 23 For an account of the deterioration of the human rights climate in Haiti during this period, see Andrew S. Thompson, “Haiti’s Tenuous Human Rights Climate,” in *Haiti: Hope for a Fragile State*, 53–56.
- 24 USAID, *Congressional Presentation, Fiscal Year 1989, Annex III: Latin America and the Caribbean* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1989), 222.
- 25 *Hansard*, 30 November 1987, 11306-308
- 26 CIDA, “News Release 88-03,” 8 January 1988, 2–3.
- 27 For international condemnation of the election results at the United Nations, see UN, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), E/CN.4/1988/NGO/48, 16 February 1988, 2; UN, ECOSOC, E/CN.4/1988/SR.34, 1 March 1988, 19; and UN, ECOSOC, E/CN.4/1988/SR.35, 1 March 1988, 2.
- 28 *Hansard*, House of Commons, 21 January 1988, 12177-8.
- 29 UN, ECOSOC, E/CN.4/1988/NGO/6, 10 June 1988, 2.
- 30 Amnesty International, “Haiti: Current Concerns” (London: Amnesty International Publications, November 1988), 3.
- 31 UN doc. E/CN.4/1989/40, 6 February 1989, paragraphs 45–90.
- 32 USAID, *Congressional Presentation, Fiscal Year 1991, Annex III: Latin America and the Caribbean* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1991), 149.
- 33 CIDA, “News Release,” no. 89-63, 1 December 1989, 1.
- 34 See Thompson, “Haiti’s Tenuous Human Rights Climate.”
- 35 CIDA, “News Release,” no. 90-13,” 14 March 1990; CIDA, “News Release,” no. 90-17, 25 March 1990.
- 36 United Nations Security Council (UNSC), S/23109, 3 October 1991, 3–4; UNSC, S/23132, 9 October 1991, 2–3.
- 37 Amnesty International, “Haiti: Human Rights Violations in the Aftermath of the Coup D’état, October 1991” (London: Amnesty International Publications, October 1991), 3.
- 38 *Hansard*, House of Commons, 1 October 1991, 3052.
- 39 UNGA, A/46/PV.31, 18 October 1991, 19–21.
- 40 “Exchange with Reporters Prior to Discussion with President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti, 4 October 1991,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George Bush* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1992), 1260.
- 41 According to the NLC, USAID had also objected to the reform on the ground that it would make Haiti less competitive and stifle economic growth. See NLC, “Sweatshop Development,” *The Haiti Files: Decoding the Crisis*, ed. James Ridgeway (Washington, DC: Essential Books, 1994), 135–44.

- 42 “Executive Order 12779—Prohibiting Certain Transactions With Respect to Haiti,” 28 October 1991, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=20157> (accessed 17 May 2014).
- 43 Amnesty International, “Haiti: The Human Rights Tragedy—Human Rights Violations Since the Coup” (London: Amnesty International Publications, January 1992), 2–8.
- 44 UN, ECOSOC, E/CN.4/1992/SR.45, 3 March 1992, 5.
- 45 See “White House Statement on Haitian Migrants,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George Bush*, 818; and “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with the Mount Paran Christian School Community in Marietta,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: George Bush*, 831–32.
- 46 UNGA, A/47/1000, 13 August 1993.
- 47 Roland I. Perusse, *Haitian Democracy Restored, 1991–1995* (New York: University Press of America, Inc., 1995), 55.
- 48 UNSC Resolution 873, 13 October 1993, 1; and UNSC Res. 875, 16 October 1993, 2.
- 49 UNGA, A/48/931, 29 April 1994, 4.
- 50 Amnesty International, “USA/Haiti: The Price of Rejection—Human Rights Consequences for Rejected Haitian Asylum-Seekers” (London: Amnesty International Publications, May 1994), 6.
- 51 UNSC Res 940, 31 July 1994, 2.
- 52 UNSC Res 1529, 29 February 2004.
- 53 Jim Garamone, “Powell Visits Haiti, Says U.N. Action Averted ‘Bloodbath,’” American Forces Press Service, 6 April 2004.
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- 59 Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, “Advancing Canada’s Role in International Support for Democratic Development” (Ottawa: Government of Canada, July 2007), 13. For a critique of Canada’s good governance programming, see Ian Smillie, “Boy Scouts and Fearful Angels: The Evolution of Canada’s International Good Governance Agenda,” in *Exporting Good Governance: Temptations*

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- 61 *Ibid.*, 8.
- 62 As quoted in Robert Muggah, “The Perils of Changing Donor Priorities: The Case of Haiti,” in *Exporting Good Governance*, 171.
- 63 For a critique of current Canadian initiatives relating to security sector reform, see Stephen Baranyi, “Le Canada, Haïti et les dilemmes de l’intervention dans les ‘États fragiles,’” Ébauche présentée au Congrès de LASA à Montréal, 5–8 septembre 2007, 9–12.
- 64 Muggah, “The Perils of Changing Donor Priorities,” 183.
- 65 Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, “Canada’s International Policy Put to the Test in Haiti,” Ottawa, December 2006, 10.
- 66 Muggah, “The Perils of Changing Donor Priorities,” 172–73.
- 67 Baranyi, “Le Canada, Haïti et les dilemmes de l’intervention dans les ‘États fragiles,’” 5.
- 68 See Amélie Gauthier and Madalena Moita, “External Shocks to Fragile States,” 27–40; and Robert Fattouh, Jr. “Haiti’s Unending Crisis of Governance,” 41–65.
- 69 Maguire, “US Policy toward Haiti,” 230; Jorge Heine and Andrew S. Thompson, “Introduction: Haiti’s Governance Challenges and the International Community,” in *Fixing Haiti: MINUSTAH and Beyond*, 2.
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