

## **Policy Position Paper**

**Cape Breton University, Sydney, Nova Scotia**

**Class: Political Science 430: Seminar in International Relations: Human Security**

**Professor: Dr. Terry Gibbs**

**Topic: Failed and Fragile States**

**Case Study of Haiti**

### **Summary of Class Discussion**

#### **Issues Identified:**

- Canada's questionable commitment to democracy in Haiti.
- Why did Canada not react with a responsibility to protect before Haiti became ungovernable through the destabilization of the democratically elected government?
- Haiti's poverty and crippling debt are major destabilizing factors in the country.
- Can Canadians contribute to decision making about foreign policy without background information? How can government contribute to providing varied perspectives (even those they disagree with) so that Canadians will be better informed?
- Need for autonomous decision making in Haiti without too much international interference – i.e. government with accountability to the Haitian people not to international lenders or foreign governments.

#### **EDiscussion Questions Addressed:**

*What are your thoughts/comments on the approach taken towards failed and fragile states in Canada's International Policy Statement? Holding elections prior to the stabilization of the security situation and the development of a democratic political culture can contribute to instability. Given this, in cases where there are significant risks of destabilization, should Canada support undemocratic modes of rule in the medium-term interests of long-term stability and democracy?*

- The government has identified three key areas of focus with regard to failed and fragile states: preventing state breakdown, long-term development and support to the development of vibrant health, education and private sectors.
- We determined that there are a number of contradictions evident in our approach to Haiti. Arguably, Canada was a contributor to the failure of the Haitian state through, it's support of destabilizing economic sanctions, it's active support of only one sector of Haitian civil society (opposition NGOs) and it's ignoring of pleas for assistance by the democratically elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide prior to the 29 February 2004 coup carried out by the US, Canada and France.
- We should be careful when discussing the need for supporting a vibrant private sector in developing countries. This seemingly benevolent goal is often hijacked by powerful interests such as large mining, textile, agricultural companies who have very little interest in the sustainable development of individual countries

even when they are supposedly nationally based. As evidence across the global South indicates, neoliberal policies, including privatization of key state entities, may conflict with a government's ability to provide adequate or even essential services in health and education.

- We have created a false dichotomy between stability and democracy: systems that are undemocratic will ultimately prove unstable. We seem to be “managing stability” rather than contributing to a genuine process of democracy.

### **Policy Recommendations:**

- Talk to the Haitian people. In other words, support mechanisms that give voice to the diversity of civil society (not just foreign-funded sectors of civil society) in order to provide the Haitian people with an opportunity to voice their needs and priorities. For example, what do the Haitian people see as priorities in health and education? Do they want their state industries privatized?
- Play a leading role in pushing for condition-free debt forgiveness for Haiti.
- Need for responsible investment: Canada, along with the US and France has focused on protecting multinational investments in Haiti. In a country this poor, international investments need to be regulated to ensure sustainable development that benefits the poor majority with human security as a central element. We may have to accept that this approach could conflict with the economic interests of Canadian companies at times.
- With regard to long-term development assistance. While Canada has made a commitment to increase its ODA over the next few years, it has refused to agree to the .7% of GDP minimum mandated by the United Nations as necessary to meet the Millennium Development Goals. This seems to be a basic and necessary step to meeting our goal of supporting long-term development goals in aid recipient countries. Although the caveat should be added that a review of these goals in relation to in-country priorities (set by democratically elected governments) should be an essential element of policy ensuring that Canada does not make the same mistakes made in Haiti.
- In support of the Haitian election process, ensure that all parties are allowed to participate (including Lavalas) without politically-motivated restrictions placed on candidates (Aristide or other Lavalas candidates for example) and that political prisoners are freed.
- Help to ensure that elections are held as soon as possible and *before* the implementation of any economic restructuring and the signing of new international agreements (with International Monetary Fund for example). International agreements that affect the entire economy and, therefore, all Haitians, should not be signed until a genuine, democratically elected government is installed.
- Support work and skills exchange programs. Canada has a good track record in this area. Exposes Canadians to the realities of other countries and helps to foster feelings of global citizenship.