

Canada and the Challenges of Democratic Development in Haiti

Notes for presentation by Stephen Baranyi, North-South Institute
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Introduction: Canada's WOG approach in Haiti

Thanks. I'd like to ground this general discussion on Canada & the promotion of democratic governance in one place -- Haiti, which is both a priority for Canada in region, and a laboratory for innovations like whole-of-government (WOG) approaches and new partnerships w/Latin American middle powers like Brazil. I'm drawing on a paper dealing with this theme, written by Professor Yasmine Shamsie of Wilfred Laurier University, and on our Institute's own research.

Let me say a few things about the bigger WOG picture before focusing on democratic development. Canada has been involved in Haiti for decades, & extensively engaged since the intervention in Feb 2004. Current highlights:

- Dev coop: Haiti 2nd largest recipient of Canadian ODA in world after Afghanistan & by far largest in this Hemisphere, at around \$100 M per year since 2004, which current GO is committed to disbursing and maybe increasing over the next three years.
- This cooperation covers several fields:
 - Security: e.g. DFAIT/START's support for Police reform and disarmament.
 - Ecodev: e.g. substantial CIDA support for debt reduction, infrastructure and technical assistance.
 - Socdev: Extensive CIDA support for programming in the areas of public health and education.
 - Innovative CIDA support for cross-cut priorities like gender equality.
 - And course democratic dev, which I'll elaborate on in ...
- Canada has also been actively engaged via diplomacy:
 - Bilaterally, via PM's visit in 2007, the GG's visit in 2006, and numerous missions by DMs and ADMs since 2004.

- Multilaterally, our diplomats and CIDA officials are actively involved in groups of friends of Haiti, in PAP & in NY.
- We have also used diplomacy to build partnerships with Brazil, Chile and other regional powers in/on Haiti.
- Finally, Canada has used its security forces directly in Haiti:
 - Through deployment of ~ 500 troops in the Multilateral Interim Force that intervened in Feb 2004.
 - Then through deployment of under 100 police officers in the UN mission MINUSTAH, since then.
- These elements are part of a coordinated WOG Canadian engagement in Haiti, which has been analyzed by R. Muggah, Y. Shamsie and myself in recent publications.

Today I'd like to focus on one slice of this Canadian WOG approach in Haiti: **DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT**. My basic question is: Are we doing the right thing in this domain?

First, some data:

- Canada was one of the largest contributors to the elections in 2006. Those elections were historic because they included presidential, legislative and local elections the same year, because they were quite inclusive, and because their results have been respected and have led to the establishment of a fairly stable, broadly-based & legitimate government -- perhaps for the first time in Haiti's history.
- Canada supported those processes through Elections Canada, MINUSTAH, OAS and through Provisional Electoral Council.
- We supported foundational initiatives such as the establishment of voter registration cards and an electoral registry.
- CIDA supported the participation of women at various levels in the elections, & training of elected women legislators since.
- During the crisis in the first round of the presidential elections in February 2006, and despite Ottawa's misgivings about Mr. Préval given his connections to the Parti Lavalas, Canada eventually sided with Brazil and others in backing a formula that allowed the recognition of Mr. Préval in the first round.
- Through the Parliamentary Centre, Canada is following up by supporting the modernization of the parliament's infrastructure,

strengthening the capacities of key legislative committees, as well as the ability of parliament to engage constructively with the Executive branch and with citizens.

AN ANALYSIS of Canada & democ dev in Haiti

➤ Now according to Professor Shamsie, all this is important and necessary but insufficient. Essentially, she argues that ours is a state-centric, institutionally-focused approach which, if not coupled with support for wider democratic participation -- especially to promote the engagement of historically-excluded majority constituencies such as the rural poor, poor women and poor youth -- will not change much and will therefore not bring lasting stability or shared development to Haiti.

➤ Let me quote Professor Shamsie's words in this connection:

Until Canada's interventions are better able to reflect the notion that democratization entails a complex process of socio-economic transformation – in sum a redistribution of power -- rather than a fairly clear-cut matter of institutional reform, its well-meaning interventions are likely to yield only halting progress at best.

➤ My own sense is that this is an extremely important cautionary argument. It rests on the recognition that Haitian politics have historically been controlled by elites who have used their power to enhance their and their allies' privileges. It rests on an awareness of the continued influence of those elites, and the contemporary twist to this cruel tale by which some of these elites are now junior partners in transnational organized criminal networks that link kingpins in Colombia to their counterparts in countries like Canada and the USA.

➤ It suggests that we must find ways of supporting the active participation of the poor -- who constitute between 56% and 76% of the population depending on whether you use the 1\$/day or 2\$/day benchmark – in politics. It suggests that

unless we support such participation, even when it challenges our notion of stability, power will not be shared and development will not become broadly-based in Haiti, no matter how much we fine-tune the mechanisms of liberal democracy. For Shamsie, Haiti is but an extreme case of the disconnect between formal and substantive democracy in the Americas.

To be fair, I think that we should add some nuance to this analysis:

- Through mechanisms like Kore Fanm, CIDA supported historic levels of women's participation in the 2006 elections, and their legislative engagement since. The GE strategy that CIDA is currently co-designing with Haitians would involve strengthening the Ministry of Women's Affairs' presence in all provinces and therefore their ability to support the efforts of grass-roots women's organizations to monitor & influence policy locally. It would also include continued support to a wide range of women's organizations across the country -- both in their service delivery and in their policy change roles.
- CIDA has also funded several Canadian NGOs' programming to strengthen civil society organizations' advocacy. For example, it has funded a Rights & Democracy program to support a campaign for justice reform and a campaign for better citizenship registration processes. Rights & Democracy has designed a program to build on this foundational work to ensure continued Canadian support to CSOs working for more inclusive policy processes and indeed for major policy reforms.
- CIDA has also supported the national appropriation of development planning processes, such as the Cadre de Cooperation Intérimaire in 2004-05, and the Decoument de Stratégie Nationale pour la Croissance et la Réduction de la Pauvreté (DSNCRP, or PRSP in English) in 2007-08. This is consistent with core principles of the Paris Declaration such as national ownership and joint responsibility for development. National appropriation could be a part of democratic development.

- Yet these processes are still fragile. For example, it is essential to recognize that the consultations leading to the CIC and the DSNCRP were extremely limited. Last week in Haiti I spoke to several major human rights and women's organizations that had not been consulted seriously in the process leading to the DSNCRP last year. If that is the case, who among the rural poor, youth or other historically-marginalized constituencies were consulted in the process of writing what is supposed to be the country's development roadmap for the next five years?

OPTIONS IN HAITI

How could Canada ensure that it doesn't fall into the trap of promoting only limited democracy in Haiti? Here are a few things we could do soon:

1. CIDA could invest even more in initiatives that broaden popular participation in policy processes, locally and nationally, by:
 - a. Approving fresh funding for constructive civil society policy advocacy efforts supported by Rights & Democracy and others.
 - b. Moving ahead with a multi-dimensional version of the GE strategy that it is developing with GOH and others, and making that strategy a CENTRAL strand of its new Haiti program. I'm not trying to be politically correct here: women are one of the few agents of change in Haiti today that is organized across classes, across institutions and across the national-international divide. Supporting women's organizations can be important not only to promote a reversal of pernicious phenomena like violence against women, but also to support broader reforms in areas like justice and public health, that are essential to build a more effective state and substantive democracy in Haiti.
 - c. CIDA could also invest more in consultative processes linked to the implementation of the DSNCRP, particularly

in areas like tax reform, which will require popular support to be put into practice against the likely opposition of certain economic elites. CIDA's provision of technical assistance in such areas is laudable, but it should be combined with support for democratic engagement to ensure that officials apply their knowledge of best practices despite the resistance of privileged elites.

2. DFAIT could also do more in this area, by supporting more democratic engagement in the SSR processes that START is funding. For example:
 - a. Canadian diplomats could move away from their position of opposing wide consultation on police reform, they could embrace consultation as part of the democratic process in a particularly critical area of public policy.

That's what the OECD DAC guidelines on SSR suggest that we should do. Canada supported the formulation of those guidelines and of the DAC SSR Handbook: Why don't we actually apply those principles in Haiti?

INSIGHTS FOR LAC STRATEGY? Let me end with a few questions for our consideration as Canada tries to re-engage in Latin America and the Caribbean, and apply the activist approach we have pursued in Haiti to other parts of the region.

1. Can Canada develop similarly well-financed, context-appropriate WOG approaches to other challenging situations in the Hemisphere – such as Bolivia, Colombia and Cuba?
2. Can we do so in early enough to prevent the slide towards other international military interventions – which would be much harder and undesirable, e.g. in Cuba? This is not an academic comparison since Cuba has been cited by certain Canadian and Latin America VIPs as the next place that lessons learned in Haiti might be applied. Surely conflict prevention, rather than forward planning for the joint use of force, should be the first priority in this regard.

3. In such contexts, HOW can we combine:
 - a. Support for democratic processes and institutions, bilaterally as well as through the OAS and UN?
 - b. With more dedicated support for real popular participation in critical policy processes?
 - c. Processes that could lead to redistributive tax, agrarian and other reforms that are recognized as necessary in some LAC societies, to close the enduring gaps between formal and substantive democracy?
4. OR ... does Canada barely have the will to try get this right in Haiti – a place where institutional and redistributive reforms are on the policy agenda? CIDA recognizes that both types of reforms are necessary to move towards democratic development, but is there sufficient WOG buy-in on this score?

Will CIDA's development perspective be crowded out as the government moves towards a more integrated WOG approach in Haiti, as it is doing on Afghanistan? Will Canada end up privileging ORDER over TRANSFORMATION – a very real danger according to Professor Shamsie, if current Canadian orientations persist in Haiti.

Let us reflect on these issues carefully as we try to shift from our post-9/11 nightmares to what might be a more sensible post-Bush era. Haiti provides Canada, the West and our LAC partners like Brazil, a chance to find ways of moving beyond the illusion of stabilization, of promoting deeper democracy and truly shared, sustainable development.

Let's not squander this opportunity in our haste to embrace more attractive policy coordination mechanisms at home. Much more is at stake than the superficial elegance of a 3D model. Thanks.

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