
Written before the earthquake that took place in Haiti in early 2010, this article provides an overview of many of the economic policies and events that contributed to the food crisis and the related riots that took place in Haiti in 2008. In this article, Jean-Germain Gros argues that the role played by the international community, particularly the international financial institutions, in shaping Haiti's policy since the 1980s not only failed to benefit the Haitian economy, but actively contributed to the ongoing food crisis.

In a section titled "The Policy Template", the author details the basic history of the policies employed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank when working with poor and developing countries beginning in the 1980s. Initiatives such as Structural Adjustment Loans (SALs) and Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) were supposedly intended to provide poor countries with the capital they needed to prevent becoming too deeply indebted and to maintain or increase their rate of growth. However, the author argues that the SALs and SAPs could be viewed from an alternate perspective, where the policy reforms attack the involvement of the government and push for things such as reduced protectionism, deregulation, currency devaluation, a decrease in government spending and an increase in privatization.

The article also provides a brief economic history of Haiti from the 1940s onward. Gros argues that up until the 1980s, the state had fairly significant control in the economy, and that state-managed industry was relatively strong and was supported by the international community. While the author is obviously in favor of significant state control within the economy, he does not pretend to idealize the state of the Haitian economy at that time.

Through an overview of the policies of the IMF and World Bank, Gros discussed the effects of unpegging the Haitian currency from the U.S. dollar, which included the rapid devaluation of Haitian currency and a drop in real wages of Haitian workers. The author also describes the effects the IMF and World Bank policies had on Haitian agricultural products. For example, coffee sales decreased, and the Haitian rice market was devastated by the forced removal and reduction of protective tariffs. The market was flooded with heavily subsidized rice from the U.S. and the Haitian producers simply couldn't compete. Haitians experienced a drop in prices with the influx of subsidized American rice, but in 2008 when the rice prices rose significantly, that was one of the instigating factors in the beginning of the food riots. Overall, the SAPs and SALs were having negative effects on the economy as a whole, and on the ability of the state to intervene.

Overall, the author presents a negative view of the policies of the IMF and World Bank with regards to Haiti and other developing economies. This is a topic that I consider relevant and important even, or perhaps especially, post-earthquake in Haiti and considering the condition of the country and its food issues today. I found the author's arguments to be valid and interesting, especially because Gros is himself a native Haitian. This article presents the intentions behind the policies imposed upon Haiti by the financial institutions as overwhelmingly negative, and illustrates their effects as long-lasting and destructive to the Haitian economy, a perspective which comes across as valid and relevant.

Excellent choice for this assignment, very well summarized with good evidence of critical thought. Good work!