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# Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA)

## Madagascar

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## **Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA), Madagascar**

Published by the  
Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP)  
Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies  
Rue de Lausanne 132, P.O. Box 136  
1211 Geneva 21, Switzerland  
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**Acknowledgements:** The authors would like to thank all their colleagues who have collaborated on this project or provided valuable feedback and support – notably Victorine Andrianaivo, Lyna Comaty, Klaus Heimer, Keith Krause, Robert Muggah, Thania Paffenholz, Jeannot Ramiamanana, Jean Claude Ramandimbarison, François Randrianarivo, Lovamalala Randriatavy, Michel Razafiarivony, Marie Jeanne Razanamanana, Sandra Reimann, Dennis Rodgers and Achim Wennmann. Gratitude also goes to the Délégation InterCooperation (DIC) in Antananarivo for their logistical assistance, as well as to Dorothée Klaus (UNICEF), Bruno Maes (UNICEF), Christophe Legrand (UNDP) and the Embassies of France and Norway for making this assessment possible. Finally, our thanks go out to all the stakeholders who had the patience to meet and engage in fruitful discussion.

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Mandated by UNICEF for the United Nations Office of the Resident Coordinator in  
Madagascar with the support of the Embassies of Norway and France



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# Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
<b>1. Introduction: aims, definitions and methods .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. The economic dimension of recurring crises.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>3. Power and authority in Madagascar .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>4. The media as “fourth power” of the political system.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>5. Security sector governance in Madagascar .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>6. Development strategies and the prospects for peace .....</b>	<b>71</b>
Appendix: key dates in Madagascar's modern history .....	86

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# Executive Summary

This Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) for Madagascar seeks to map the effect of foreign aid and development policies onto the factors driving conflict or supporting peace in Madagascar. Avoiding normative statements about the current political crisis, the study offers guidance on the main challenges facing development programmes as well as opportunities to strengthen peace-enhancing structures. The research focuses on understanding the effects of past, present and forthcoming development strategies on institutional capacity; state, societal and human security; political and economic structures and processes; and social (re)construction and empowerment.

It is not the objective of this PCIA to suggest concrete ways in which the effectiveness of aid to Madagascar can be improved, nor to give specific recommendations related to operational programming. Instead, the study takes the key message of the “3C Roadmap” to heart and looks at the ways in which a lack of coherence, coordination and complementarity on the part of the international donor community has impacted the societal, economic and political dynamics of Madagascar. The aim of this PCIA is not so much to supply stakeholders with solutions, but rather to challenge them to think differently about the environment in which they work, and to provide stimulating material that can be incorporated into critical reflections over the way development projects are designed and implemented.

Since its independence in 1960, Madagascar has not been subject to large-scale violence, and the PCIA is not a post-conflict impact assessment. Rather, the present study constitutes an analysis of tensions resulting from power aspirations of political leaders, economic aspirations of entrepreneurs, and a variety of other interests pursued by a multitude of groups and individuals. Such tensions are an intrinsic part of politics, and the challenge to state and society is how to develop institutions in such a way that the natural tensions among conflicting interests are turned into a positive, productive energy rather than allowed to descend into disorder and violence. The backdrop for this assessment is not conflict that has already occurred, but ominous signs that the absence of a functioning state apparatus since the beginning of the current political crisis 18 months ago has enabled predatory actors to consolidate their position on the island. The country's abundant natural resources are being recklessly exploited at the expense of the Malagasy people and the island's fragile ecosystem.

The PCIA differentiates between societal fault lines, conflict drivers and conflict amplifiers. These have been distilled by means of an elaborate process of desk research, over 150 key informant interviews, and a range of commissioned background studies. The aim was not to establish and test a hypothesis, but to engage in a critical dialogue with independent researchers, development practitioners, Malagasy decision-makers, civil society actors and the diplomatic community. The process involved identifying and critically deconstructing the common narratives expounded by our interlocutors, thereby engaging in the sequential reformulation of our arguments over a period of five months. The PCIA is a participative process, and not an evaluation tool, and the joint learning process that was initiated by this study is just as much the final product as the present document.

The three major fault lines identified are the division between an oral culture of authority and the written word of the state administration, the disjuncture between the economic centres and the periphery, and the concomitant divide between a predominantly urban-based elite and the underprivileged rural areas. These fault lines sustain the conditions for a high concentration of power and economic influence in the centre, thereby paradoxically

weakening the state's capacity and outreach in the periphery. The resulting vicious circle continuously accentuates and deepens the three fault lines.

While not necessarily harbouring causal relations with them, these fault lines are related to a series of conflict drivers, notably social exclusion and disempowerment, a lack of capacity on the level of local government, and the disparate state of the security sector. Most importantly, the lack of local government structures enables elite groups to remain unchecked. In the struggles among elites for power and economic benefits, the permanent discontentment among the excluded and disempowered parts of society provides a critical resource to destabilize and overthrow central government. The complete incapacity of the Malagasy security forces to prevent crime, provide safety for communities, and professionally quell riots and social unrest further drives the conflict dynamics and volatility of governmental authority.

These conflict drivers are, in turn, amplified by the weaknesses of the media sector, which is characterized by superficial content, a lack of training and protection for journalists, and the inability to act as an effective intermediary between the state authorities and the electorate. What is more, the strong polarization in the media contributes actively to the elites' instrumentalization of the urban and rural poor.

The sources of authority in Madagascar can be traced to the cellular stratification of the Malagasy society that is expressed most visibly in the concept of the *ray amendreny*, and to the centrality of an oral culture of communication. These two factors help to explain a number of observations. First, they shed light on the extreme personalization of political rule, instead of identification with the institution an individual represents. Second, they accounts for the absence of mass movements, even in the face of severe impoverishment: rising up against the ruling elite has not been a feature of the Malagasy mindset. Third, they explain the disconnect between the technocratic approach of former President Marc Ravalomanana and the international community, and a political elite and civil service that is not accustomed to indicators, benchmarks, and success ratings.

The fault lines between urban and rural, centre and periphery, result from historically grown institutional and economic structures. Importantly, the liberalization and privatization policies of the 1980s and 1990s created the conditions for a shift in Madagascar's elite structures. The descendents of the royal families, by dint of their ancestral veneer, continue to constitute a moral authority in the classical sense of the term, but in terms of economic power, foreign business interests play the defining role, owning – or at least controlling – the vast majority of the country's assets. What is more, the two waves of privatization undertaken merely transferred monopolies and oligopolies from the public to the private sector, and market competition remains the exception rather than the rule. The state administration thus continues to be an important partner to protect business interests or crowd out competitors, and from a conflict perspective, the real problem in Madagascar is not the everyday corruption of public officials and civil servants, but the great clash of interests between the state administration, the security forces, and large-scale economic ventures, many of which appear to be contributing to Madagascar growing informal sector. As the economic and political stakes are highly condensed in urban areas, the central administration enters into a virtual and anticipated competition with the regional and communal administrative structures. This is why the much talked about efforts to decentralize have not borne fruit: instead of reducing the control of the state, decentralization would reduce the influence of those actors profiting most from the relentless raid on Madagascar's resources.

One of the most striking features of contemporary Madagascar is the gaping chasm between 80% of the population that lives in dire poverty without access to basic public services and

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infrastructure, and an urban elite benefiting from the country's export-oriented economic policy. The resulting inequality between centre and periphery, between industrial production and inefficient subsistence agriculture, is one of the main drivers of rising crime rates and heightened insecurity. The security forces, in turn, are either unable to deal with the situation, or are, indeed, themselves involved in the illegal activities. Overall, the politicization of the armed forces, the involvement of high-ranking officers in economic activity, and a penniless administration leading to corruption on all levels has meant that predatory economic actors are continuing to plunder the island at will. The Malagasy population, by contrast, continues to starve. Without an urgent reform and strengthening of the armed forces and the judiciary, coupled with the instatement of a recognized government, Madagascar's sovereign prerogatives will continue to be at risk.

Although many multilateral and bilateral donors have currently ceased funding their programmes in Madagascar, one can only hope that enough momentum can be soon be created to find an end to the current political crisis. And when the aid flow does recommence, it is crucial that the international community does not revert to a "business as usual" approach, the way it did after the events of 2001-02. Back then, Madagascar witnessed what was probably the worst episode of political violence since its independence, and the country was on the brink of civil war. Roadblocks had physically split the country, the military was divided, and thousands of assault rifles and grenades had been distributed to reservists, civilians and dubious militias. Yet once Ravalomanana's presidency had received international recognition, the international community quickly turned the page and continued with its development programmes as before. Perhaps because armed violence did not escalate, the mindset did not switch from development to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and no major policy initiative (weapons collections, reconciliation efforts, etc.) to concretely address the ramifications of this violent episode were undertaken. This mistake should not be repeated. Instead, a long-term development strategy must be adopted that is centred on principled process rather than short-term results-based management. This strategy needs to confront the elite struggles that have repeatedly led to political crisis, and the high concentration of power and capital in Antananarivo. Prioritizing local government structures offers an entry point for coherent development efforts that will truly be for the benefit of the people of Madagascar.

Geneva, October 2010

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# 1. Introduction: aims, definitions and methods

Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) is founded on the observation that development projects do not, by dint of their mere existence, generate or reinforce the conditions for peace. Without the necessary degree of context-sensitivity, development interventions can be at odds with traditional value systems and authority structures, raise the stakes for economic and even political competition, and exacerbate, rather than alleviate, tensions in society. It is the aim of PCIA to give a long-term analysis of the general environment within which development interventions have been occurring, with a particular focus on the ways in which the overall context has been affected by development initiatives, and how, in turn, such initiatives have responded over time to the environment that they have helped to shape.

As has rightly been pointed out, today the term PCIA covers a wide range of different approaches, with not all of them building on the original concept as it evolved out of the context of the Rwandan genocide.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, there is a certain continuity in terms of the aim of the assessment, and how it differentiates itself from other forms of analysis. To begin, it is therefore useful to briefly define the terms at stake.

**Peace** is more than just the absence of war, conflict, and armed violence. Indeed, it is appropriate here to refer to the peace researcher Johan Galtung, and his concept of “positive peace”, involving social justice through equal opportunity, a fair distribution of power and material resources, and an equal protection by and in the face of the rule of law. Peace, in the context of the PCIA, means long-term peace. It means creating the conditions under which individuals in society can benefit from public order, political stability, and economic opportunities. And “peacebuilding” thus refers to all efforts to foster a sustainable peace through the establishment of institutions that promote and enable the non-violent resolution of tensions and disputes.

Contrary to what many of our interlocutors at first believed, a PCIA is not a post-conflict impact assessment.

**Conflict**, in turn, is not simply the opposite of peace, and it is more than just war and organized violence. If this were the case, implementing a PCIA in Madagascar would make little sense, as the country, since independence, has never been involved in inter-state confrontation nor been subjected to a civil war. Rather, a PCIA is an analysis of tensions resulting from power aspirations of political leaders, economic aspirations of entrepreneurs,

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<sup>1</sup> Thania Paffenholz, “Third-generation PCIA: Introducing the *Aid for Peace Approach*”, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2005, p. 3.



and a variety of other interests pursued by a multitude of groups and individuals. Such tensions are an intrinsic part of politics, which is, after all, about solving collective action problems. People need to co-exist, and the challenge to state and society is how to develop institutions in such a way that the natural tensions among conflicting interests are turned into a positive, productive energy rather than allowed to descend into anarchy and violence.

The term **impact**, as used in PCIA, refers to broader and potentially long-term changes to the general context that have been brought about, directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, by a development intervention. It is thus important to differentiate “impact” and “outcome”, with the latter referring only to the changes a development project has initiated within its immediate environment.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, this PCIA, as mandated by UNICEF for the Office of the Resident Coordinator, is not an assessment of any particular project, but a study of the overall effect of long-term engagement of the international community in promoting the economic, political and social development of Madagascar. As has been pointed out, talking about impact only makes sense for macro-level development policies or programme interventions, such as a national poverty reduction programme (PRSP).<sup>3</sup>

Related to the previous point, a PCIA is an **assessment**, and not an evaluation. PCIA is not concerned with the “log frames” and “outcome mappings” designed to monitor and evaluate the stated outcomes, outputs and objectives as defined in the proposal for a particular development project. A project may very well fail according to predetermined and narrowly defined development criteria, but may nonetheless succeed in terms of having a positive impact on the overall environment. By contrast, a project may also receive full marks in terms of having achieved its stated outcomes, outputs and objectives, but simultaneously be a complete disaster for the overall context and contribute to an exacerbation of societal tensions, rather than to peacebuilding in general.

This brings us, finally, to a definition of what we mean by **development** in the context of this PCIA. We will use the term rather loosely to encompass all projects and programmes funded by and/or implemented by foreign agents, be they multilateral organizations and agencies, bilateral donors, international NGOs, or private sector investors (the building of roads or the free vaccination of children by a multinational mining company, for instance, can still be considered a development project). Unless describing the characteristics of a particular intervention, we will also use expressions such as “foreign aid”, “development assistance” and “development aid” in our discussions. In particular instances, we may also incorporate “humanitarian assistance” (for famine, tsunamis or cyclones, for example) into the scope of our analysis.

## Aid effectiveness and the 3C approach

As the OECD-DAC’s Paris Declaration and a range of recent policy initiatives has emphasized, aid **effectiveness** is just as important – indeed, more so – than the actual quantity of assistance dispersed. Studies have shown that the positive impact of much assistance is far less than originally anticipated, either because much of the resources are taken up by the system of aid delivery itself, or because the lack of a coherent overall

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Thania Paffenholz and Luc Reyhler, *Aid for Peace: A Guide to Planning and Evaluation for Conflict Zones* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2007), p. 112.

development strategy leads to the simultaneous implementation of projects that may well be at odds with each other. As a result, the positive effects of development may be severely diminished, and may even, in certain cases, exacerbate the situation and reinforce conflict drivers and triggering mechanisms for violence. It has thus correctly been argued that because the underlying premises of a development intervention (regarding project-internal assessments of potential positive and negative influences and effects) are rarely made explicit, projects are often selected that may be hypothetically useful (because they have been “successfully” applied elsewhere), but in the context at hand only serve the particular interests of the donor or implementing agency, rather than a comprehensive development strategy.<sup>4</sup> It is against precisely this backdrop that the PCIA seeks to situate its analysis.

A recent initiative of the Swiss Federal Government, elaborated in collaboration with the World Bank, the OECD, the United Nations and NATO, will further serve as a useful placeholder for this assessment. At a high-level conference in Geneva in March 2009, participants signed-off on a “3C Roadmap” that seeks to focus on a coherent, coordinated and complementary approach to fragile states and situations.<sup>5</sup> The important message of the 3C initiative is that foreign aid requires greater programming coherence and a common language among the various policy communities. It also needs enhanced coordination across bilateral donors, as well as with local actors from state and local authorities to civil society and the private sector. Moreover, each donor and implementing agency needs to build on its comparative advantages to avoid duplication and the simultaneous operationalization of projects that might cancel each other out or be detrimental to the overall situation.

“PCIA will not make a difference unless it challenges and changes the way we do our work. ”

Kenneth Bush, 2003

The current debate on aid effectiveness, exemplified by the 3C initiative, sets the scene for this PCIA. It offers the contemporary context for the analysis, and acts as an overall guide in terms of specifying the kind of questions and challenges the study should raise in order to be useful for stakeholders operating in Madagascar. Yet it should be emphasized that ***giving recommendations as to how aid to Madagascar can be made more effective is not the aim of this PCIA.*** Instead, this study will attempt to challenge its readers to think differently about the environment in which they work, and to provide stimulating material that can be incorporated into critical reflections over the way operational programming is designed and conducted.

<sup>4</sup> See the discussion by Angelika Spelken, “Kurzeinführung: Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment. Thematische Einführung zu einem Workshop”. Gruppe-Friedensentwicklung (FriEnt), 2006.

<sup>5</sup> For an overview of the 3C approach, see <http://www.3c-conference2009.ch/> and the conference report that was produced by the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP).

## Conceptual framework

The research undertaken in the context of this PCIA aimed at mapping the effect of foreign aid and development policies onto the factors driving conflict or supporting peace in Madagascar. Avoiding normative statements about the current political crisis, the study offers guidance on the main challenges facing development programmes as well as opportunities to strengthen peace-enhancing structures. The research thus adopted a broader historical framework within which the current crisis serves mainly as an indicator for more profound and structural conflict dimensions. For that purpose, the framework was subject to continuous adaptation and refinement throughout the main research period (February – May 2010) by means of cooperation with local researchers, discussions with international field staff, and over 150 interviews with key stakeholders.<sup>6</sup>

This study is guided by the observation voiced by Kenneth Bush, the originator of the PCIA, that development is “inevitably conflictual, destabilizing and subversive because it challenges existing political, economic, and social power structures that stop individuals and groups from attaining their full potential”.<sup>7</sup> Our research thus focused on understanding the effects of past, present and potentially forthcoming development strategies on institutional capacity; state, societal and human security; political and economic structures and processes; and social (re)construction and empowerment. A number of background studies were commissioned from a dozen international and local academics and experts, many of whom wish to remain anonymous. These studies were accompanied by intense desk research and six weeks of key informant interviews in Antananarivo and various regions of the country, in both urban and rural settings.

This PCIA is thus more than just an analysis of context. It takes what has been called a “project transcending perspective”, involving a critical dialogue of independent researchers, practitioners and policy-makers.<sup>8</sup> In over 150 in-depth interviews, we attempted to induce the interlocutor to try to relate his or her experience of a particular development intervention or of the overall development strategy with the broader societal and political setting of Madagascar. Interviews were also conducted in different cities in Europe or by phone with experts and consultants who worked for government or development agencies in Madagascar. Finally, a number of interviews with Malagasy scholars, historians and researchers helped to crosscheck or triangulate information and to regularly test our own ideas.

<sup>6</sup> Without going into the academic details here, the research conducted applied what is generally called “grounded theory”, or the sequential reformulation of tentative arguments. Unlike standard positivist approaches, we did not use existing theory to develop a hypothesis which was then tested through empirical analysis. Instead, we engaged in several rounds of desk studies, commissioned research, and key informant interviews in an attempt to identify common narratives and repeatedly refine our core arguments in a series of reflective feedback loops.

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Bush, “Hands-on PCIA: A Handbook for Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA), author’s version, published under the auspices of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2003, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Hans Gsänger and Christoph Feyen, “PCIA Methodology: A Development Practitioner’s Perspective”, Berghof Research Center, 2003, p. 72.

The heuristic framework applied in this study differentiates between societal fault lines, conflict drivers, and conflict amplifiers:

- A ***fault line*** is an empirically observed or subjectively perceived societal division along which the tensions among individuals and groups are structured and interests are defined. The major fault lines identified in this PCIA are the divides between an oral culture and the written word, between centre and periphery, and between the urban and the rural parts of the island.
- A ***conflict driver*** is a condition that has the potential of producing social unrest, oppression, or open confrontation. The resulting violence may subsequently be structured along specific fault lines, but is not necessarily causally related to them. The conflict drivers distilled by this study are social exploitation and disempowerment, a lack of local government structures, and a disparate security sector.
- An ***amplifier*** is a factor that may hasten the onset or escalation of violence by heightening the impetus of a conflict driver. Again, there usually is a link between an amplifier and the structural fault lines in society, but the relationship does not need to be causal. This PCIA focuses on the weak media sector as constituting the main conflict amplifier in the current political setting.

This differentiation avoids categorization of “peace” and “conflict” in absolute, static and apodictic terms (see the definitions of both terms above). Instead, a dynamic conceptualization localizes peace-supporting factors in the broader political and societal order of Madagascar beyond the formal institutions of the state. Nevertheless, the capacity of these institutions, at both the national and the local level, are a key focus of the research. A useful way of assessing this capacity is to refer back to the core functions of the modern state as being the provider of security, welfare and representation for individuals residing on its territory.<sup>9</sup> From this perspective, the general impact of development aid can be assessed according to whether and to what extent such assistance generates gains in security (public safety and security sector reform), welfare (provision of basic services such as clean water and health care, and a private sector offering competitive market opportunities) and representation (free and fair elections, a functioning judiciary, an independent media sector, etc.).

Crucially, the point is not to confuse the capacity to deliver public services with binary categories of a “strong vs. weak” state apparatus, but rather to differentiate between administrative efficiency and the particular constitutive elements of power and authority in the Malagasy polity. In other words, our heuristic framework places the emphasis on delineating key fault lines, conflict drivers and amplifiers in the concrete political and socio-economic dynamics of politics in Madagascar – and not in terms of deviance from institutional ideal-types of modern statehood. Conceptually, we thus focus in the functional equivalents of essential state services that are possibly also provided by alternative (and fragmented) social and political forces and groups, which thereby are resisting and challenging governmental structures. Expressed differently, the framework asserts that peace-supporting structures do not depend primarily on *who* delivers the services required for individual well-being and public order, but *if* and *how* these services are provided.

Multilateral organizations, bilateral donors, NGOs and multinational companies are just some of the main external actors whose role needs to be assessed. It is of particular importance to study all of these actors in combination, as development assistance has

<sup>9</sup> See the special section of the journal *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 36: 4-5 (2005), edited by Oliver Jütersonke and Rolf Schwarz.

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a significant impact on the delivery of functionally equivalent public services (by, for instance, unintentionally strengthening structures and forces that are resisting the state administration). Focusing on functional equivalents in this way responds to recent mixed-method studies, which demonstrate that the effects of conflict drivers are not universal, but very much depend on the specific local context.<sup>10</sup> In this way, the PCIA tackles recent frustrations resulting from the observation that the same conflict drivers may be found in almost every civil strife, but that their “causal” effects differ significantly from case to case.

“PCIA is meant to empower individuals and institutions both to understand better their work, and, more importantly, to induce the changes necessary to amplify the positive impacts and to minimize negative impacts on the peace and conflict environment. ”

Kenneth Bush, 1998

If pro-poor development is in fact a subversive enterprise, as Kenneth Bush suggests, that challenges the structures contributing to social and economic exclusion of a large part of the population, then we cannot conceive of it only in terms of technical assistance. Development aid is thus by definition a highly political endeavour, and for many governments, receiving foreign aid is an important political stake. It endows their policies with external recognition and legitimacy, and gives them political capital at the domestic level when they face the electorate. We therefore conceive of development strategies and programmes as actions taking place in a political field and concomitantly development actors as political players.

### Standard narratives

When seeking to understand the drivers of conflict and instability, one should always adopt a critical distance to what is taken to be the obvious: presuppositions and assumptions that are rarely, if ever, questioned and that have become part of the mindset of those involved. The notion of antagonistic identity struggles usually founded on some historical myth and subsumed under the notions of “hatred” and “grievance” are a preferred way to perceive conflicts. Western mind maps constructed around the historical experience of large inter-state wars have resulted in a rather narrow and binary notion of conflict as armed violence and war. Similarly, contemporary intra-state wars are looked upon based on the historical

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<sup>10</sup> James Fearon and David Laitin, “Civil War Narratives.” Theory and Research in Comparative Social Analysis Working Paper Series, 27, Department of Sociology, UCLA, 2005  
<http://repositories.cdlib.org/uclasoc/trcsa/27>.

experience of civil wars and revolutions. These wars played important roles in the century-long processes of state and nation-building, and the political instrumentalization of such conflicts led to the type of oversimplified and binary differentiations that continue to be part of our mental reflexes.

Without going into details of current academic debates here, this is one of the main reasons for the common understanding that conflicts are wars between clearly delineated groups divided along visible and obvious fault lines. During the Cold War, many conflicts in Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia, each having quite diverse dynamics, were drawn as proxies into the block confrontation between East and West. Again, assessing these conflicts only as proxy wars, however, reduces the many different levels and dynamics of political violence and societal conflict. Despite recent sociological, anthropological and criminological studies on political violence highlighting that the major fault lines at the national level interact with elite, local, communal, and inter-family feuds, this insight has yet to be internalized by stakeholders outside of the university classroom.

None of this means, however, that such simplified narratives about conflicts and political crises should be cast aside. Rather, it is important to record the main narratives characterizing and caricaturizing the political struggles of a country and use them as a starting point, to be verified and submitted to critical inquiry. Narratives are fallacious as they reverberate a certain knowledge on an issue, thus functioning as spectacles through which social reality is perceived and “hard data” interpreted. In other words, by applying a pre-conceived grid of analysis to a conflict, narratives help to occlude alternative conflict drivers and structures. Obviously, the choice of conflict definition may already jeopardize the analysis, by running the risk of providing a stereotyped understanding of societal processes. This is one more reason for why a broad, sociological definition of conflict is being used in this PCIA.

In the following paragraphs, we will build on insights from interviews and a number of official documents of international organizations to distil the main narratives – and, importantly, the stereotypes – shaping the perception held by the international community of politics and conflict lines in Madagascar. Questioning these (oftentimes rather polemic) narratives will then constitute our point of departure for a more detailed analysis of the economic, political and societal environment in which development interventions are operationalized.

During the first series of interviews with the international community and many expatriates, two narratives on Malagasy politics immediately crystallized as constituting the dominant perceptions of the sources of crisis and conflict in the country. In fact, in all interviews the first matrix of interpretation applied on Madagascar defined the political and societal fault lines explicitly as ethnic, with interviewees rarely failing to mention the supposed division of the Malagasy population into numerous ethnic groups (18 being a commonly cited figure). Indeed, the spontaneous resort to this argument makes it safe to declare that ethnic and tribal divisions have become the most popular explanation for the causes of instability in Madagascar.

One need not scratch the surface all that long before a number of serious anomalies appear that raises significant doubt on the adequacy of this standard interpretation – for a start, it is simply rather difficult to draw clear ethnic lines within the group constituting the main players of the current political crises. Again, after gently and somewhat superficially questioning the validity of the explanation offered, all interviewees then reduced the cleavage from one of multiple ethnic groups to the binary division between the Merina – imprecisely encompassing the two main ethnic groups of the highlands and plateau area – and the *côtiers*, subsuming eight different communities into one group.



As will be elaborated in Chapter 3 below, these divisions were actually imposed upon the inhabitants of the Great Island by foreigners. Indeed, the anthropological categorization of the island stems from early French ethnographic work based on the ideas of evolutionary anthropology.<sup>11</sup> The binary division between Merina and *côtiers* was the result of a colonial policy, directed against an emerging Malagasy nationalism, that was based on a pragmatic simplification of the indigenous context. Of course, the fact that these classifications were externally imposed does not exclude their effectiveness; what it does is stress that they are neither natural nor deeply embedded in the cultural and historical consciousness of the Malagasy people. As we will see, the Merina-*côtiers* divide does play a significant role in Malagasy politics, but it does not fit into the matrix of ethnic fault lines.

When we then proceeded to question the validity of the Merina-*côtiers* dichotomy as the source of conflict in Madagascar – after all, the two central figures of the current crises, the ousted President Marc Ravalomanana and the current President of the transition authority (HAT), Andry Rajoelina, are both Merina – a surprising shift of explanation occurred on the part of our interviewees. Now it was claimed that one must remember that Madagascar is an isolated island, culturally and historically separated from the rest of Africa. It thus constitutes an exceptional case, far too complicated for outsiders to assess and make sense of. Indeed, we were frequently warned of what one foreign official called the “complex Malagasy brew”.

Depending on how well acquainted our interlocutors were, this complex brew was composed of a number of different elements. The common denominator of this narrative, however, was the assertion that Madagascar’s political crises did not have their origins in broad popular movements. Political upheavals in the country are not revolutionary, but instead reflect a form of Byzantine-like elite struggle or even local feud. One interviewee of the diplomatic community, after highlighting that the crises are fundamentally ethnic, then went on to present the Merina-*côtiers* divide before finally settling on the intra-Merina family struggles that were qualified as a “*jeux de patricien*” – or, as another interlocutor eloquently phrased it, a “*jeu de théâtre d’ombres*”.<sup>12</sup> From this perspective, the rationales of these struggles are impenetrable to the outsider – and least of all to the foreigner briefly passing through. Intervening in Madagascar thus ultimately entails fumbling in the dark amidst all sorts of internal rivalries about pride, respect, property, marriage, and vanity. These rivalries, moreover, are played out amongst a small number of around 20 elite families who, it is further claimed, show little interest in the welfare of the broader population.

According to this discourse, then, the “complex brew” makes Malagasy politics unpredictable and unreliable, and today’s friends and allies can be tomorrow’s foes and vice versa, as yet another diplomat in Antananarivo expressed it. The World Bank thus rightly observes in one of its policy papers (more cautiously in tone, of course), that “*la crise actuelle de gouvernance est surtout une crise de l’élite malgache*”.<sup>13</sup> Needless to say, the “complex brew” narrative contradicts the notion of ethnic division. The ethnic card can be played in the

<sup>11</sup> On the ethnographic background of the ideas and work of Grandidier, Le Bon, Gautier, Lyautey, and Gallieni, see Paul Rabinow, *French modern: norms and forms of the social environment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), chapter 5.

<sup>12</sup> Another member of the diplomatic corps spoke of family clans and then defined the struggles as a “*guerre des familles*”, in which family solidarity plays a major role.

<sup>13</sup> Jacques Morisset, “Pour que la terre tourne...aussi à Madagascar: Vers un agenda de relance économique”, *World Bank*, 7 December 2009, (<http://blogs.worldbank.org/africacan/pour-que-la-terre-tourne-aussi-a-madagascar-vers-un-agenda-de-relance-economique>).

countryside or in the coastal urban centres, but the idea of family feuds reflects the highly centralized political, economic and administrative structure of Madagascar. The political game exclusively takes place in the capital Antananarivo, with the rural population remaining totally detached from it.

Another narrative that we regularly came across places the emphasis on the cyclical nature of political crises in Madagascar (1972, 1991, 2001 and 2009). This narrative combines the idea of a wheel of history with an economic explanation of conflict. The narrative suggests that before each crisis, Madagascar experiences an increase in GDP, indicating the potential beginning of more prosperous times for the country. Depending on the interlocutor, one of two causal links is then presented.

- The first one is advanced predominantly by Malagasy nationals, who believe that France continues to maintain its grip on “*la Grande Ile*”. They argue that an increase in economic growth is an indicator of Madagascar’s opening up towards other countries, and thus asserting its independence from its former colonial masters.
- The second explanation for the link between economic growth and the onset of political crises offers a more detailed look at the economic data and deplores that despite the increase in production, the returns are not justly distributed. This narrative thus relies on the assumption of popular unrest as the trigger of crises. With each phase of economic growth, the argument goes, the cleavage between the elites and the poor deepens even more.

As we will elaborate in the next chapter, both of these narratives are flawed. Yet they represent important elements of the standard narrative, expressed by the Malagasy public as well as by members of the international community, and as such are an important element for the type of analysis offered by this PCIA.

Our use of standard narratives is a starting point for a sceptical and thoughtful approach to understanding societal tensions and conflict drivers in Madagascar. The critical stance taken is in no way meant to constitute an accusation of the international community’s vision for, reading of, or discourse on Madagascar and its people. In fact, we noticed during our interviews that many Malagasy begin by presenting arguments (at least to us, the foreign, “*vazaha*” researchers) that are very similar to the standard narratives we had identified on the side of the international donors and implementing agencies. Yet we also noticed, as the interviews progressed, that our Malagasy interlocutors soon began to appreciate our critical interrogation of the standard discourse, and started to build up a surprising degree of enthusiasm for the PCIA and our approach. Indeed, we were often faced with the unfortunate situation of having to cut short the ensuing discussions, which more often than not lasted for several hours, because of a lack of time.

The vision we develop of a country, the way we problematize its situation informs the strategy we apply in development aid and peacebuilding programmes. Simplifications are an inevitable and necessary tool to grasp our complex environment, but they should be handled with a high degree of care and awareness.



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## Audience

This PCIA is intended for a variety of audiences. It is, first and foremost, destined for the international donor community – both multilateral and bilateral – engaged in providing development assistance to Madagascar, as well as for those operationalizing such assistance. As Kenneth Bush writes about the PCIA in general: “International donors might rely on it to guide project selection, funding decisions, and monitoring, whereas implementing or operational agencies might well use it to design projects and to guide operational decisions”.<sup>14</sup> Yet the PCIA will also be of use to those on the receiving end of such development interventions, from state and local authorities to civil society actors and even private businesses. These actors may use the assessment, to quote Kenneth Bush again, “as a means of assessing the utility, relevance and efficacy of outside-sponsored development initiatives”, thereby enabling them “to engage more effectively with formal development actors in the peacebuilding process by providing a common framework for dialogue and cooperation”.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, it is worth emphasizing again that PCIA is a participative process, and not an evaluation tool. As Kenneth Bush has himself noted, emphasis in the donor community seems to have shifted from perceiving PCIA as a context-specific, organic and Southern-led learning process to what he terms “a mechanistic Northern-led quest for mainstreamable products (tools, frameworks, manuals, indicators – especially indicators – etcetera)”.<sup>16</sup> Contributing to such a Northern-led quest was certainly not our aim, but neither can the call for context-specificity be taken to demand “the complete picture”. Indeed, the present document can only provide a synthetic snapshot of some of the messages that have been generated through the hundreds of conversations we have had over the past months. Many of the stakeholders reading this report will thus continue to point out that some issues have been omitted, or only given a cursory or insufficient appraisal. Indeed, much more could have been written, but attempting to present an (historically or thematically) exhaustive account could never have been the aim of this short-term mandate. Instead, we hope that the present text will continue to stimulate critical reflection amongst international and national stakeholders. In that sense, this document is also just the beginning of the process, and perhaps a modest contribution to the long-term development of Madagascar.

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<sup>14</sup> Kenneth Bush, “A Measure of Peace: Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) Of Development Projects in Conflict Zones”, Working Paper 1, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), 1998, p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Cited in Gsängen and Feyen, “PCIA Methodology”, p. 68.

## Structure

The following chapters of this PCIA are written in the spirit of the “grounded theory approach” described above. They are arranged thematically, rather than along the main heuristic devices of our conceptual framework: fault lines, conflict drivers, and amplifiers. The reasoning for this decision is twofold. First, it seeks to draw the reader away from the presupposition that the key “factors” identified are causally linked with one another, or with development work. Instead of addressing each fault line and conflict driver in turn, we attempt to present the complexities behind the standard narratives we identified, each of which may entail implicit or explicit reference to multiple fault lines and drivers. Second, thematic arrangement is also more appropriate because it highlights the process of sequential reformulation: an analysis of conflict drivers, for instance, is possible without a simultaneous assessment of related fault lines. Structuring the chapters more conceptually would risk occluding the intricacies of the analysis presented and losing the analytical fabric of our approach.

The economic analysis in Chapter 2 will focus on one of the three main conflict drivers, namely social exclusion and disempowerment. By so doing, it will also highlight one of the social fault lines identified, that between the (economic) centre and the underprivileged periphery. The political analysis in Chapter 3 will then elaborate on another fault line: the discrepancy between an oral culture of authority and the written word of “Western” political institutions. An analysis of the repercussions of this discrepancy will then lead into the formulation of the second conflict driver: the lack of capacity on the level of local government – which, in turn, is closely linked to the third fault line between urban and rural. Chapter 4 will supplement the political analysis with an analysis of the media sector, whose weaknesses constitute the major amplifier for the three conflict drivers that are the focus of this study. Chapter 5, which assesses the security sector and the disparate state of the armed forces, represents the culmination of our analysis of fault lines and drivers. By the end of that chapter, we will have completed the analytical portrait of the potential for violence facing contemporary Madagascar. A final, sixth chapter will then follow a different logic and approach and attempt to transpose this portrait onto recent strategies of the international community to promote the development of the country.

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## 2. The economic dimension of recurring crises

To immediately pick up on the discussion of standard narratives in the preceding chapter, a useful example of the way well-meaning but purely economic attempts at explaining the Madagascar “puzzle” can be found in a strategic document of the World Bank dating from 1995:

“Since independence, up until the mid-1980s, Madagascar’s economic policy and regulatory environment was characterized by: (a) highly restrictive and inward-looking trade and exchange rate policies, with a strong bias against export production; (b) state domination of the productive sectors, with extensive government regulation, including domestic market and price controls, leaving little room for private initiative and investment (which remained very low as a share of GDP); (c) a large but inefficient public enterprise sector, dominating virtually all sectors of the economy, including trade and services; (d) an inefficient, poorly administered taxation system; (e) a weak and outmoded system of business law; and (f) a repressed financial system, dominated by a few state-owned financial institutions.”<sup>17</sup>

While plausible at first, a closer look at this statement reveals a number of fundamental issues the authors of the report seem to have overlooked. For a start, no differentiation is made between the economic structure of the First Republic and the one established after the events of 1972. Further, the colonial heritage of the First Republic is not taken into account, otherwise the authors could not suggest that the economy in the unmentioned Franc zone era was inward-looking and biased against export production. In fact, the *économie de traite* had created a market economy based on the export of primary goods and the import of processed goods. And despite the support of the government for import substitution industry, the government owned only very few public enterprises.

In the following sections, we will try to elaborate on these points further in order to make our case that a number of elements are being occluded by the standard narrative that seeks to establish a causal link between certain economic trends and recurrent political crises. It is worth emphasizing again that the aim is not to provide a comprehensive economic history of post-independence Madagascar, nor to challenge the sound economic analyses provided by the main international actors, notably the World Bank. Rather, the aim of this chapter, in the overall spirit of the PCIA, is to complement such analyses with a perspective that breaks out of the macroeconomic mindset and tries to link economic indicators with the social exclusion and disempowerment resulting from an economic strategy that privileges a small elite and the export market to the detriment of the vast proportion of the Malagasy population.

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<sup>17</sup> World Bank, “Madagascar: New Horizons – Building a Strategy for Private-Sector, Export-Led Growth: A Private Sector Assessment”, Report No. 14385.MAG (May 1995), p. 1.

## The First Republic and the colonial heritage of the *mise en valeur*

When the Bretton Woods institutions were created after the Second World War, their primary function was sustaining the reconstruction efforts of its member states. Yet the capacity of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) could hardly respond to the needs of European countries. Fearing the expansion of Soviet influence in Western Europe, the United States government thus developed the Marshall Plan, thereby making the reconstruction aid of the IBRD obsolete. The focus shifted, and with most African countries still being under colonial rule, the first World Bank loans specifically designed for development aid were primarily targeting Latin America.

The 1920s had previously witnessed Great Britain and France reformulating its colonial development policy. In France, this took the form of the rather neo-mercantile notion of the *mise en valeur*, formulated by the then French Minister of the Colonies, Albert Sarraut.<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, these early reflections on colonial development did not assume that economic growth was the key to development. Rather, the theory was that with the improvement of the social and sanitary conditions of the indigenous populations, the production capacities of the colonies would increase and new markets for the consumption of Western goods would support the labour markets at home.

Under the anti-colonialist pressure of the United States and with the new possibility of benefiting from World Bank funding, Great Britain and France reshaped their colonial development policies again during the 1940s. As a result, a few colonies did, in fact, then receive World Bank loans through the intermediary of their colonial patrons, although it was more the exception than the rule. In any event, Madagascar was not among them, and even after independence in 1960, multilateral aid was not forthcoming. The First Republic continued to belong to the Franc zone and most of its exports were still destined for mainland France. It was only in the 1970s that some of its bilateral debt was eventually restructured through the World Bank.

The First Republic of Madagascar was proclaimed and Philibert Tsiranana elected President, but the colonial economic structures remained largely intact, and so did the country's dependence on France. Societal structures also remained fairly similar, and even the infamous *taxe de capitation* was kept, albeit under a different legal construct, and forced labour thus continued to be reality.<sup>19</sup> Most productive facilities were under foreign ownership, and the main beneficiaries of the political and economic organization of the fledgling country were French companies. These made good use of the monopolistic and oligopolistic market structures to export Madagascar's natural resources, with support from the French financial and insurance sectors.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Albert Sarraut, *La Mise en valeur des colonies françaises* (Paris: Payot, 1923).

<sup>19</sup> The *taxe de capitation*, a poll tax, was initially introduced by Governor-General Gallieni in the nineteenth century as part of the pacification policy. Although the forced labour to pay off the tax was abolished in 1920, the tax technically continued to oblige the rural population to work. The levy of the poll tax was combined with an effective presence of the state to ensure tax collection, give instructions on agricultural production, and support distribution and transport services. See Solofo Randrianja, *Société et luttes anticoloniales à Madagascar: de 1896 à 1946* (Paris: Karthala, 2001), p. 18.

<sup>20</sup> See Philippe Hugon, "Conjuncture et politiques économiques depuis l'indépendance", *Annuaire des Pays de l'Océan Indien*, volume I, 1974, in Jean Benoist et Centre d'études de géographie tropicale (Talence, Gironde), *La Deuxième République malgache* (Aix-en-Provence: CEGET; Presses universitaires d'Aix-Marseille, 1989), pp. 53-72, at 53.

Madagascar's *économie de traite*, characterized by large-scale French plantations and smaller, regional ventures in the hands of Chinese and the “Karana” (of Indian descent), remained untouched until 1966. Needless to say, the Malagasy elite at the time could hardly be compared with the industrial and financial bourgeoisie in Europe, nor with coffee barons and owners of large estates in Latin America. The overwhelming majority – at least 80% – of the population lived on subsistence agriculture and fishery. A further 17% were made up of low-wage employees and labourers in urban centres.

Pre-colonial times had privileged the *Andriana* (royalty) and the *Hova*, a status group made up of advisors and warriors in the service of the royal rulers. This bias largely remained throughout French colonization and into the First Republic, with economic opportunities and societal advancement through access to higher education continuing to be in the hands of a small group of people coming from this inner circle.<sup>21</sup> For the other strata of society, the French education system offered principally a career path in the civil service – hence the emergence of a petite bourgeoisie or middle class deriving its political force from state institutions. Economic opportunities for this group materialized mainly in the form of rents, rather than from production. The Karana and Chinese communities were the other entrepreneurial elite, whose role in politics and society remains largely under-researched, especially in the early years after independence. It appears, however, that their political and economic influence was quite marginal in the early decades following Madagascar's independence.

As already mentioned, the economic structures of French colonial development prevailed during the time of the First Republic, in particular due to the country's adherence to the Franc zone. These were years characterized by a significant imbalance between social and educational investment, and an infrastructural policy geared towards the profit of French companies and the promotion of trade: infrastructures were highly centralized and were primarily destined to connect factories, plantations, mines and harbours.<sup>22</sup> Communal infrastructure with immediate benefits for the broader rural population played only a marginal role, thereby supporting a constant reproduction of a highly vulnerable subsistence economy of peasants and the creation of agricultural labourers rather than a thriving agricultural sector of farmers. The government severed the imbalance by prioritizing substitution industrialization over agricultural production, consequently increasing the country's dependence on imports of basic consumer goods and primary resources. Hence, not only did the external terms of trade deteriorate, but the internal terms between the rural and urban centres were negatively affected as well.

Despite France's alleged efforts during the colonial period to minimize the dominance of Antananarivo, the highly centralized administration and education sector in the capital continued strengthening the regional pre-eminence of the highlands. In fact, the structural advantage of Antananarivo was already blatant then, and it was thus constantly outpacing investment in the coastal regions. As a result, none of the policies of the First Republic could decisively transform the existing economic and administrative structures. The competitive advantage of the established foreign and highland elites remained largely intact.

<sup>21</sup> The pharmaceutical company established by the Ramaroson family is a case in point.

<sup>22</sup> As Didier Galibert explains: *“l'espace insulaire s'emboîte dans le champ de pouvoir défini par l'empire colonial français. Enfin, la bureaucratisation suscitée par les nouvelles nécessités administratives et économiques fonctionne comme une pompe aspirante et refoulante à partir du centre tananarivien”*. Galibert, *Les gens du pouvoir à Madagascar: État postcolonial, légitimités et territoire (1956-2002)* (Paris, Saint-Denis: Karthala; CRESOI Université de la Réunion, 2009), p. 27.

The broad masses continued to accept their exclusion from power, with the Malagasy beliefs, faiths and societal traditions ensuring this toleration of power asymmetries and social injustice.<sup>23</sup> However, independence accelerated the broadening of an educated middle class, which despite its importance for the running of a modern bureaucracy and private business creation was confronted with outmoded post-colonial institutions.<sup>24</sup> With the end of colonialism, investments in secondary education surged, and 1961 witnessed the establishment of the University of Antananarivo, thereby effectively broadening the scope of higher education. The subsequent revolt in 1972, which was based on student movements, bears testimony to the rise of a new middle class. Nevertheless, while investments in secondary education also created new opportunities for the urban centres on the coast, the centre continued to gain in comparative importance.

The development plan established in 1966 combined a conservative monetary and fiscal policy (due to the Franc zone) with a very low level of external debt and aid. However, the plan focused mainly on investment in the industrial sector, while prices remained stable until 1970 before inflation surged dramatically in 1971-72. The rural sector was further penalized by fixing prices at a very low level, coupled with a stagnation of the rice price since independence. The consequent impoverishment of the rural areas was taken into account as long as a sufficient surplus was created for the cities and for export, and order was maintained. A significant social transformation of the rural sector did not take place.<sup>25</sup>

Madagascar's relatively well-performing, export-oriented growth rates of the 1960s are somewhat deceiving, as the internal market expanded only gradually. Thus, while the First Republic witnessed an average 3% increase in GDP per year, income per capita in rural areas decreased by 30%.<sup>26</sup> In sum, growth benefited only a relatively small group, surpluses were transferred abroad, and foreign elites hardly re-invested their gains into the Malagasy economy. Consumption in Madagascar remained low and mainly non-productive (in the sense that a traditional societal structure motivated investment policies: elders would privilege investments that demonstrated social prestige and power rather than those promoting economic growth),<sup>27</sup> and economic impulses came from the outside with over 90% of the private sector owned by foreigners. By 1970, social unrest in rural areas and on the coast had begun to rise. The number of students increased sharply, especially in Antananarivo, and under the influence of the critical *Zeitgeist* of '68, concern was voiced that there were almost no career perspectives outside of advancement in the civil service. Moreover, the urban, national elites and the middle class were frustrated by the foreign dominance and relatively meagre benefits they accrued from economic growth in the modern sectors. These societal fault lines provided the conditions for the popular movement of May 1972.

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<sup>23</sup> This issue will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 below.

<sup>24</sup> The education reform of 1951 ended the segregation between indigenous and European schools.

<sup>25</sup> See Philippe Hugon, "1972-1974: Conjoncture et politiques économiques depuis l'indépendance," p. 57.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.



## The “second independence” and *Malgachisation*

The events of 1972 and the resulting new Republic in 1975 reflect the aspirations for a “second independence” that would usher in the “break up” with France. The departure of French technicians was thought to open up the space for a new generation of Malagasy students, and a new development model was proposed that focused on the promotion of agriculture and industry. Through the expected economic growth, living conditions of the broader populace would be improved and agricultural productivity enhanced. Yet the first oil crisis of 1972 severely dampened these efforts, as the import-substitution industry, the main economic performer, was hit hard by the global recession.

The transitional military government of 1972, headed by General Gabriel Ramanantsoa, also sought increased economic independence and decided to leave the Franc zone in 1973, negotiating a treaty of co-operation instead. This decision had important implications on the economy. Balance of payments deficits were unproblematic within the Franc zone – and foreign capital investments were guaranteed secure returns. Now, this was suddenly no longer the case, and arguably, the abrupt exit of the Franc zone was ill-prepared and not carefully thought through: the re-investment rate in Madagascar was very low, and national capital accumulation was a real problem if growth was to be sustainable and less dependent on the “*métropole*”. Pulling out of the Franc zone thus led to a major economic shock: there was a considerable reduction in trade capital and national income from foreigners, and economic activity fell dramatically. Employment rates sank and imports decreased.

The second important shift was the complete abolition of the *taxe de capitation*, which not only reduced the income of the state, but also made the financing of the concomitant bureaucratic structures impossible. Instead, popular structures for development in the form of *Fokonolona* were established, but in the absence of the coercive power of the poll tax, they had little leverage on the rural population. The main goals of the *Fokonolona*, a traditional village institution, were to increase production and the value of agricultural produce through local processing and marketing. Simultaneously, the *Fokonolona* were thought to pave the way towards the decentralization and democratization of the country by organizing the local collective. In reality, however, the policy failed to improve either agricultural production or rural living conditions, but instead weakened the outreach of the government.

In August 1973, Ramanantsoa proclaimed a new development plan focussing on the nationalization of French-owned firms and capital. The plan basically divided the economy into a public and a private sector, but with the latter having to follow the conditions fixed by the state. Emphasis was placed on industrialization for import substitution, with the agricultural and mining sectors being the major drivers. The nationalization of foreign-owned firms was dubbed “*Malgachisation*”, and that was, in essence, the goal of the operation: not socialist nationalization in the strict sense, involving the transfer of capital to state ownership, but the replacement of foreign shareholders, directors and senior management with Malagasy equivalents. A focus was also placed on increasing the rate of profit re-investment.

On 17 June 1975, two days after Didier Ratsiraka was proclaimed Head of State, the first large wave of nationalization commenced with the appropriation of 51% of the shares of large and medium-sized firms, in particular in the banking and insurance sectors. Whilst making itself the principal shareholder, the state did not, at that point, interfere in the management of the companies – although an *Office militaire national pour les industries stratégiques* (OMNIS) was created in 1976 in an effort to give (badly paid) senior members of the military a piece of the economic pie. Ratsiraka and his AREMA (*Alliance pour le Renouveau de Madagascar*) were preoccupied with the campaign for the 1977 legislative elections, which were perceived to be decisive in the consolidation of his power and for the preparation of a new wave of socialism. Then, in 1978, the state extended its control over

the economic sector with the promulgation of a “socialist enterprise charter”. What is more, Ratsiraka placed all his bets on an immense round of public investment in the industrial and agricultural sectors, leading to a huge external debt. The oil crisis in 1979 and the fact that prices of commodity goods fell between 1979 and 1981 added pressure to an already rapidly increasing balance of payments deficit.

In contrast to many other less-developed countries, Madagascar had until the mid 1970s managed to keep its external debt at a rather low level, at around 4.5% of export revenues. Yet Ratsiraka wanted to give the Malagasy economy a big push to generate lasting growth, and huge investments were simultaneously planned in the agriculture, transport and industry sectors. And in contrast to what one may suppose, given Ratsiraka's political preferences, communist states were not the only technical and financial partners of Madagascar at that stage. Indeed, assistance from the Soviet sphere of influence mostly came in the form of equipment and fertilizers. France remained the main economic partner, and the World Bank provided aid for large projects on soya production and infrastructure, especially for the upgrading of the railway system. North American, Arab and French funds were invested in a hydroelectric power station in Andekaleka, and a US transnational company built a fertilizer plant in Toamasina with money from Canada and Austria. Other countries such as Japan, Spain and Germany also participated in what was becoming Madagascar's largest investment programme since independence. In fact, and in contrast to many other socialist experiments elsewhere, the majority of loans came from semi-private and private Western banks.<sup>28</sup>

The 1970s had witnessed a strategic shift in the international aid community, which increased the volume of aid flows by cooperating with the private banking sector. As a result, France lost its position as the major donor to Madagascar and was overtaken by multilateral aid, coming first and foremost from the World Bank. The large-scale investments mentioned above were conducted in co-operation with international donors, who debited 100 billion Francs Malgaches for the period 1977–79 alone. The consequent lag between immediate financial imbalances and the returns on investment was obvious and acknowledged. Indeed, the “Plan 1978–80” presented a “socialist” long-term strategy targeting the year 2000. Yet already by 1979, the budget deficit had attained 18%. Bilateral and multilateral aid was hardly motivated by sound economic policy, but rather by efforts to maintain close ties with Madagascar, given its important strategic position in the Cold War with its proximity to the coast of Mozambique.<sup>29</sup> From 1979 to 1980, the debt tripled. In 1982, it had reached 51,8% percent of GDP, with servicing reaching 42%. Most worryingly, the production of rice had stagnated from 1975 to 1982 while the population grew by 30%. The value of rice imports in 1975 had amounted to roughly 31% of commercial rice production; in 1982 the level had reached 83,2%. Already in 1980, Madagascar could not service the debt without the support of the IMF, based on loan agreements and rescheduling of debts, and the use of “stand-by” agreements to enforce the required structural adjustments. By 1980–81, Madagascar's socialist experiment had effectively come to an end.

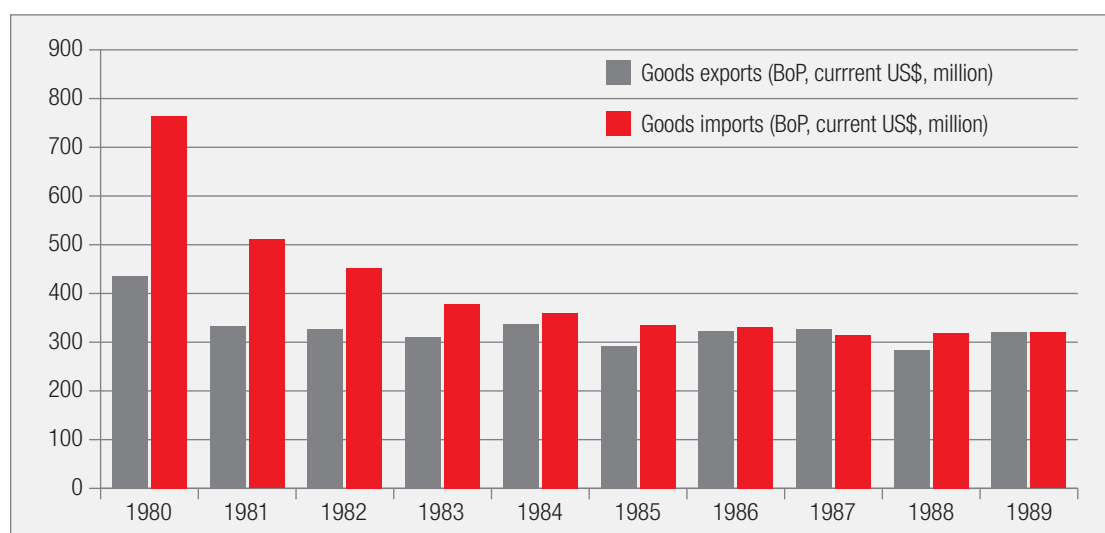
<sup>28</sup> Philippe Hugon, “Les orientations économiques”, *Annuaire des Pays de l’Océan Indien*, Volume V, 1978, in Jean Benoist et Centre d’études de géographie tropicale (Talence, Gironde), *La Deuxième République malgache* (Aix-en-Provence: CEGET; Presses universitaires d’Aix-Marseille, 1989), p. 179.

<sup>29</sup> Madagascar's strategic position in the 1970s and 80s resulted from two interlaced geostrategic factors: 1) Madagascar's long coastal line offered a privileged position for military reconnaissance, notably for submarines. Soviet bases on the island would have been a major threat for Western naval forces. 2) With the demise of Portuguese colonialism in 1974–76, and the concomitant rise of socialist, nationalist regimes in Mozambique and Angola, the anti-communist buffer between central and southern Africa disappeared. The ports of Mozambique were a major access point for weapon supplies in the Front Line States supporting nationalist movements such as SWAPO in Namibia, the ANC in South Africa and the two ZANU factions in Zimbabwe.



## Structural adjustments and the first wave of privatization

Madagascar underwent its first Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) by the IMF and the World Bank in 1981. The programme consisted of restrictive monetary and budgetary policies aiming at lowering the government's budget and balance of payments deficits. The main measures focused on removing price controls on agricultural goods, devaluating the local currency – in order to bring it closer to its “real value” – and reducing the state apparatus. As a result, the price of primary goods rose substantially and the pressure on the rural population, low-wage employees and the middle-class was increased once again. The main benefactors of the measures imposed were the export-oriented industries, but exports did not grow substantially (see graph below). The general hope was that the liberalization of prices would reinvigorate the private economy.



Source: INSTAT

Since 1983, the international financial institutions (IFIs) demanded the liberalization of the marketing boards of the main agricultural goods (rice in 1985, vanilla in 1995). It was argued that although the fact that the state controlled marketing channels ensured a certain price stability for producers, the latter were characterized by rent seeking, inefficiency and corruption. Another measure included in the SAPs consisted in radical cuts in state expenses, thus necessitating salary cuts for civil servants and a reduction in the services offered.

Overall, it appears that the success of the SAPs remained quite modest. The development plan for the period 1986–90 aimed at promoting a “sustained growth” and progressive liberalization of the economy, but imports grew faster than exports, thereby increasing the balance of payments deficit. Foreign debt rose from 180 million US dollars in 1975 to 3.4 billion US dollars in 1989.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Serge Zafimahova, “Privatisation à Madagascar: Jeux et enjeux”, *L'Express*, 20 August 2004 ([http://www.malagasy.org/article.php3?id\\_article=1545](http://www.malagasy.org/article.php3?id_article=1545)).

The SAPs required further measures in 1986, initiating the first wave of privatization of public firms, a process that was then abruptly stopped in 1993 with the advent of the Third Republic. In 1986, only 10% of the volume of investments in the economy came from private persons or entities, while around 300 firms existed that were either completely public or had mixed public/private participation. Little information exists on this privatization process. It was not transparent, managed by the *Comité de privatisation* under the Minister in charge of privatization, and the value of the firms appears never to have been properly ascertained before they were sold. Overall, 93 firms underwent a total or partial privatization between 1986 and 1993, for a total amount of 150 billion Francs Malgaches.

This period of privatization is arguably one of the most important episodes in the recent history of Madagascar. Yet it is also one that has received the least attention. The 1995 World Bank strategy paper cited at the outset of this chapter, for instance, only mentions the privatization in passing, stating that:

a major privatization program was launched, involving divestitures as well as liquidations of public enterprises, although implementation proved slow, incomplete and lacking in transparency; ... a financial sector restructuring program was undertaken, including liberalization of interest rates (to market-determined levels), strengthening of prudential supervision of banks, restructuring (and privatization) of two state-owned banks, and licensing of two new private banks.<sup>31</sup>

Yet the first wave of privatization was much more than a mere technical issue. It was a highly political affair, one that would have a lasting impact on Madagascar's societal structures. Indeed, a well-known World Bank study on privatization in Africa rightly notes:

The process has been prompted in many cases by economic necessity and enabled by the political changes occurring across Africa. Although reduction of fiscal deficits is commonly cited as the main objective, the choice of enterprises for privatization suggests that the primary motivations for privatization have been the need for World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and donor financial support and the need to generate proceeds and divest some troubled state-owned enterprises while *minimizing political fallout*.<sup>32</sup>

The major economic and political force in the country after independence had continued to be France, with the basic structures of the colonial *économie de traite* remaining intact. *Malgachisation* efforts had then subsequently erased many of the explicit features of this trade economy, but the imprint of the industrial tissue and infrastructures continued to be visible. The wave of privatization starting in the mid 1980s, by contrast, had a crucial effect on the foundations of the elite structures in the country. While *Malgachisation* offered a first opportunity for broadening the base of a formal indigenous private sector, which had remained largely untouched by the socialist experiment, privatization now presented the opportunity for Malagasy entrepreneurs to enlarge their businesses and consolidate their position in the market. In fact, the privatization policy agreed upon with the IMF and the World Bank was limited to two goals: a reduction of the deficit and a broadening of

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<sup>31</sup> World Bank, "Madagascar: New Horizons", p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> Oliver Campbell White and Anita Bhatia, *Privatization in Africa* (World Bank, 1998), p. 1 (emphasis added).

ownership. To ensure the second aim, the World Bank's International Financial Cooperation (IFC) supported Malagasy entrepreneurs with loans for the acquisition and modernization of the formerly state-owned firms. One of the entrepreneurs emerging from this first round of privatization was a certain Marc Ravalomanana.<sup>33</sup> Overall, privatization played a central role in supporting the conditions that gave rise to an urban economic elite, thereby strengthening the conflict fault lines between centre and periphery.

Alongside a very small number of highly influential Malagasy families, whose firms had remained untouched by nationalization, a number of new entrepreneurs were now able to emerge, although the competitive advantage of those with established businesses was undeniable. The World Bank's private sector assessment distinguishes quite clearly between a large-scale formal indigenous private sector, a foreign-affiliated private sector, a non-resident foreign private sector, and a small scale and traditional private sector.<sup>34</sup> The assessment correctly notes that Malagasy entrepreneurs are mainly owners of small to medium businesses, but that a number of well-established families are prominent in larger firms. Moreover, the first wave of privatization tended to concentrate the capital in the highlands and plateau area, and

this indigenous private sector group is over-proportionately represented in existing business organizations and professional associations. This group also has more extensive trading and financial links overseas than small-scale traditional groups, including ownership of assets abroad.<sup>35</sup>

Neither the French trade economy nor the nationalized economy of the Second Republic created the conditions for a *competitive*, liberal market. As a result, the secondary and tertiary sectors also featured mainly monopolistic and oligopolistic traits, and this did not change through privatization. In essence, then, privatization contradicted the IFIs' assumption of increased competition, economic growth and benefits for consumers. What in fact happened was that state-led monopolies and oligopolies were replaced with privately-owned ones. Moreover, the dominance of capital in the hands of Chinese, Karana and French entrepreneurs, who account for only a very small part of the population, continued unabated.<sup>36</sup> As the World Bank noted: "The French group tends to dominate foreign ownership in agri-business and includes Bolloré (tobacco) and Fraise (originally import-export, but now diversified into breweries and hotels by taking advantage of the privatization program)."<sup>37</sup>

It is insightful to examine the numbers for 1990-91, as presented by the World Bank's private sector assessment. Firstly, due to the rapid growth of the population the proportion of the rural population living off subsistence agriculture had increased from circa 80% to 92%, with the remaining 8% of the labour force split equally between the modern private

<sup>33</sup> In 1982, Ravalomanana received a World Bank loan of several million US dollars from the World Bank, and used it to transform the family milk business into a nationwide industry, Tiko SA. At the time, he enjoyed the support of a number of members of Ratsiraka's government. See Jean-Loup Vivier, *Madagascar sous Ravalomanana: la vie politique malgache depuis 2001* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007), p.18.

<sup>34</sup> World Bank, 'Madagascar: New Horizons', pp. 5–6.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> We have been told that today there are about 650 French-owned firms in Madagascar. According to official statistics (Central Bank of Madagascar, 2009) the stock of foreign direct investments from France was US\$ 171 million in 2008 and the dividends paid to investors from these funds were US\$ 28.3 million.

<sup>37</sup> World Bank, 'Madagascar: New Horizons', pp. 5–6.

and public sector (government and state-owned firms).<sup>38</sup> The report acknowledged that the state's share in the economy was high, but also pointed out that it was relatively low compared to other countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Yet while the share of the public enterprise sector was quite substantial at around 25% of the share of firms' total assets, the size of the government itself was strikingly small. Moreover, the government's influence on the economy "has therefore not so much been through heavy taxation to finance a large public sector, nor an enormous fiscal deficit. Rather it has been through crowding out private sector investment".<sup>39</sup> Despite the relatively modest size of the state, SAPs had actually induced the state to shrink even further.

The legacy of international involvement until the 1990s, and arguably until today, is its inability to help establish the conditions for a state structure that can fulfil its core functions of providing basic levels of security, welfare and representation for all its citizens across the island.

Of course, it must be borne in mind that historically, the outreach of the government in Madagascar was very limited to begin with. With the abolition of the poll tax and the creation of the autonomous communes during the Second Republic, the presence of the state outside the urban centres then contracted even more, leading to a highly centralized state apparatus with a very weak presence in the rural areas, which did not have the capacity to govern themselves. At no point in its history, therefore, did Madagascar feature a strong state apparatus. The Imerina royalty hardly controlled the entire island, and thus ruled through a system of protectorates that regularly faced insurgencies. France then co-opted the Imerina structures, and Gallieni's "*politique des races*" basically created a tribal form of indirect rule. The establishment of the poll tax and the concomitant forced labour then led to the deepest penetration of the rural areas by the central government, but even in this period the state's presence was still superficial by Western standards. The development strategy of the IFIs during the 1980s did little to strengthen this capacity.

### **The liberal paradigm and the promises of export-led growth**

The political crisis of 1991 and the subsequent five-year reign of Albert Zafy mark somewhat of an economic draught period for Madagascar. Privatization ceased and most donors interrupted their foreign aid programmes. Moreover, President Zafy judged that the first wave of SAPs had increased Madagascar's dependence and that the terms left too little room for the government to set its own economic policies.<sup>40</sup> Zafy's decision was encouraged by

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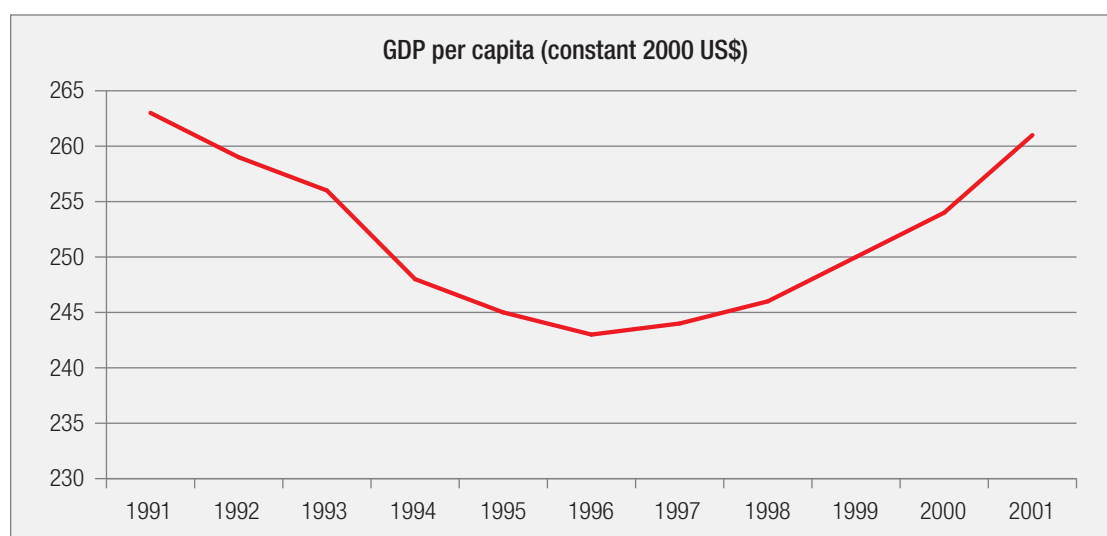
<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> According to a confidential interview with a former official.

his negotiations with private lenders for parallel financing. A promise for a huge credit from a Liechtenstein firm turned out, however, to be an immense scam, tearing a further hole in Madagascar's budget.<sup>41</sup> As a result, Zafy's position in negotiations with bilateral and multilateral donors was considerably weakened. The IFIs were thus able to exert greater influence on proceedings and negotiated an approach placing all bets on export-led growth.

A free-floating exchange rate was introduced in 1994, and Madagascar acceded to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995. The subsequent liberal economic policy had the desired effect: in 1996, the country received a massive inflow of foreign aid, and also experienced an increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) as well as export growth in the textile sector (through the establishment of the tax free zones), the prawn industry and tourism. Legislative reforms were also undertaken to develop the mining sector. The World Bank and the IMF called for a policy of liberalization that would eliminate all remaining marketing boards and price controls, yet without being accompanied by support measure for producers, the effect on agricultural production was limited. Nonetheless, GDP per capita grew steadily between 1996 and 2001 (see the graph below), even though most firms continued to be owned by foreigners and the economic reforms made little if no contribution to poverty reduction.<sup>42</sup> The inflation rate rose from year to year, and the vast majority of the Malagasy population did not benefit from the economic growth achieved.



Source: INSTAT

The year 1996 also witnessed the start of a second wave of privatization, encouraged by the IFIs. Although the state undertook a stock-taking exercise of the first privatization phase that had started a decade earlier, the same actions were repeated: the value of firms' assets was never properly ascertained, nor were the debts of the firms vis-à-vis banks and the

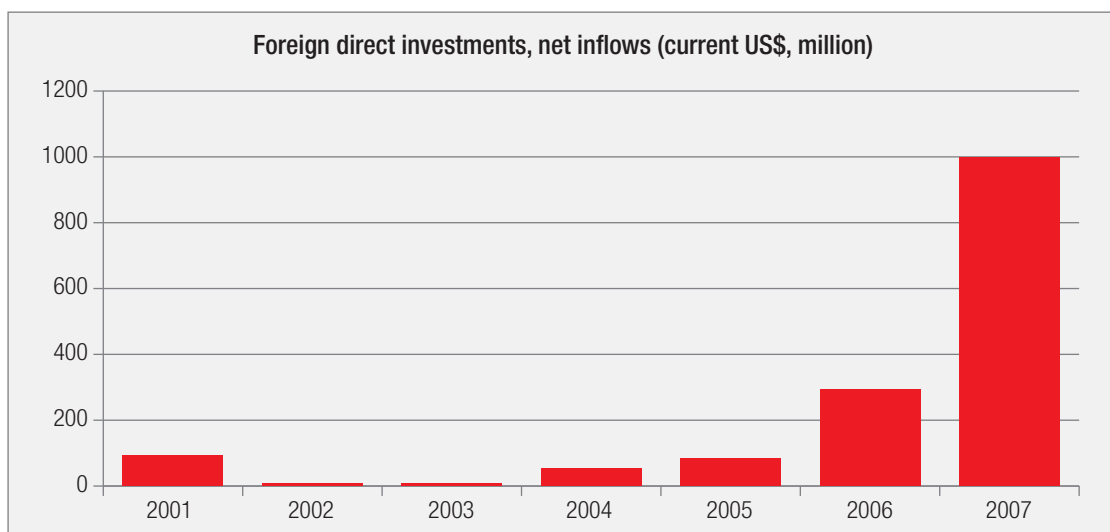
<sup>41</sup> See Alain Leauthier, "Madagascar victime d'une arnaque à l'humanitaire. 3 millions de dollars du FMI s'évaporent après un passage par le Liechtenstein", *Libération*, February 2, 1996 (<http://www.liberation.fr/france/0101173168-madagascar-victime-d-une-arnaque-a-l-humanitaire-3-millions-de-dollars-du-fmi-s-evaporent-apres-un-passage-par-le-liechtenstein>).

<sup>42</sup> World Trade Organization, "Trade Policy Review Madagascar 2001", Press Release PRESS/TPRB/156, 21 February 2001.

state. As a result, it is estimated that the state made a huge loss, and it remains striking how the IFIs would give loans to private persons in order to buy up public firms at an undervalued price. What is more, there continued to be a stark absence of antitrust law or relevant commission, and the critique of the first wave, that public monopolies were turned into privately-owned ones, holds true for the second phase as well.

The political crisis of 2002 again saw the economy suffer in terms of a reduction of production, FDIs, and exports. The new president Marc Ravalomanana officially placed poverty reduction on the top of his agenda – in the *Document de Stratégie de Réduction de la Pauvreté (DRSP)* – while adhering to the recommendations of the Washington Consensus: stabilization, privatization, and liberalization. During his first mandate, Ravalomanana received massive financial support from the international donor community and the IFIs, and used these funds to invest in public infrastructure, as well as education and health care reforms. Economic growth was thus driven by a rise in public expenditure, rather than by means of an increase of the private sector. In 2002, the IMF also conceded a debt relief to the country, under the condition that the government implement reforms in the realm of economic governance (simplification and increase of taxes) and macroeconomic stability (better control of public expenses and monetary policy to keep inflation under control).

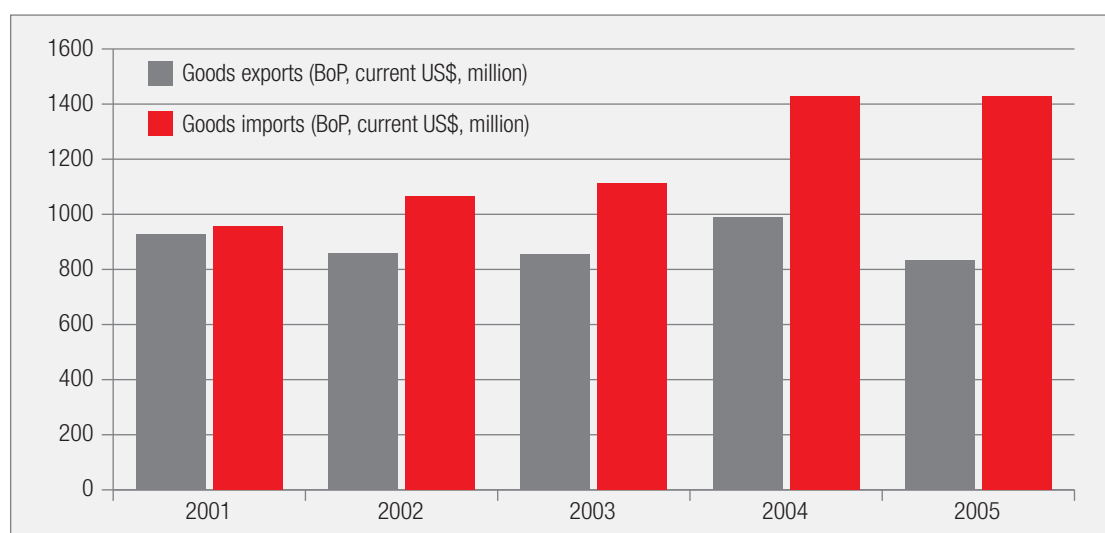
In his second mandate, starting in December 2006, Ravalomanana's economic strategy was based on attracting foreign private investors in regions known as having valuable natural resources and a high population density – the so-called *pôles intégrés de croissance* (PICs): Taolagnaro (Fort Dauphin), Nosy Be, Antsirabe and Toamasina (Tamatave). His new economic programme, elaborated as part of the Madagascar Action Plan (MAP), foresaw that the development of the private sector would be a driver for poverty reduction and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The World Bank sponsored the creation of the EDBM (Economic Development Board of Madagascar), a one-stop shop for foreign investors located in Antananarivo and with branches in the PICs. While the government promoted favourable conditions for foreign investors to implement and develop their activities in the country, Ravalomanana at the same time created the conditions to expand his own economic empire, via tariff exceptions and coercive measures to capture providers and retailers. With this position of power, and the absence of an anti-trust law, it was almost impossible for Malagasy entrepreneurs to compete.



Source: INSTAT

Nonetheless, Ravalomanana's government introduced a number of improvements in the framework conditions for foreign investors, and indeed, FDIs witnessed an explosion in 2006 and 2007, as the graph above shows. In 2008, the main sectors of FDIs in terms of FDI stock (in Ariary) were, by decreasing order of importance, mining, construction, telecommunications, financial services and trade. The total stock of FDIs that year amounted to 3.12 billion US dollars – as a comparison, the country's GDP that year was 4.6 billion US dollars. The most important investors in 2008 came from the UK, Canada, Japan, South Korea, France and Mauritius, with a particularly significant rise in investments in the mining sector by the UK and Canada.<sup>43</sup> It is interesting to note that the major part of investments is composed of “other direct investment transactions”, which consist of loans from the investor directly to the enterprise, and not of capital participation.

In 2004 the Franc Malgache (FMG) lost in value due to a decision of the government to eliminate import taxes on 380 products. The ensuing major increase in demand for imports led to the depreciation of the FMG, as such a disturbance caused a significant change in the equilibrium real exchange rate. The expected increase in exports due to the decreasing costs of production did not materialize, since non-price competitiveness had meanwhile not improved: it was more than just a short-term depreciation through, for instance, a lack of confidence in the currency. In the meantime, the depreciation of the currency led to a period of inflation. The lag between major depreciation and inflation amounts to between six and twelve months, due to the necessary imports to Madagascar (energy, food, intermediary processing goods). On 1 January 2005, a new currency using the pre-colonial denomination “Ariary” was introduced at a factor of 1:5. This episode was accompanied by recurrent unrests, which culminated in serious riots in May 2005. Similarly to the riots of 1984 or 1979, a clear link between economic growth and crises cannot be established. More importantly, however, the hypothesis of the cyclical nature of crises is weakened as it is based on observations of “successful” destabilization leading to regime changes.

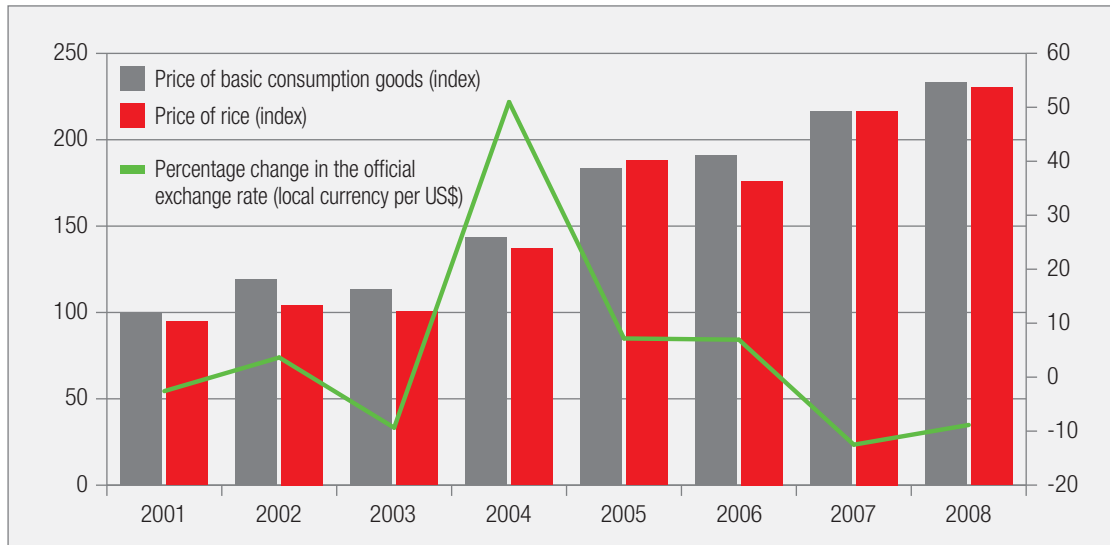


Source: INSTAT

<sup>43</sup> Central Bank of Madagascar – INSTAT, Investissements Directs Etrangers et de Portefeuille à Madagascar (2008).



Since 2004, the prices of basic consumption goods, in particular rice, have steadily increased every year. The price of rice has increased by 2.5 times since January 2003, which is a heavy burden on the population's purchasing power since rice is the most important food consumption good. This increase in price is not determined by a shortage in production. Explanations for the increase may instead lie with greater control of the market by big firms combined with a depreciation of the currency, making imported rice more expensive. Indeed, Madagascar is not self-sufficient in rice production.



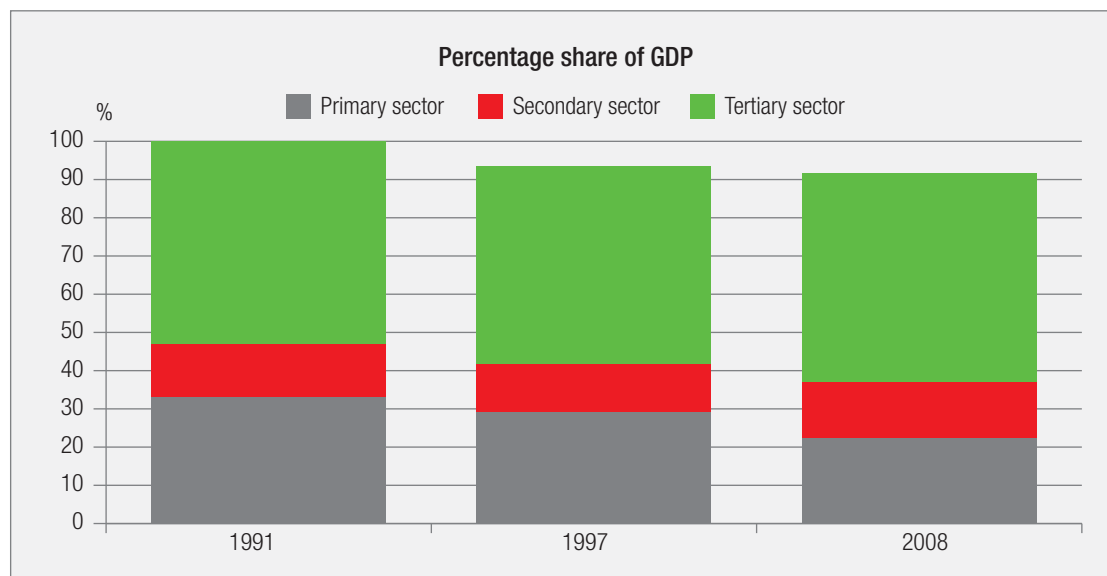
Source: INSTAT

During the same period, although big firms were created in the textile and mining sectors, there were no subsequent positive benefits for the population. The population living in rural areas and making its living from agriculture (around 80% of all Malagasy) have not witnessed an improvement in their living conditions. The Human Development Indexes (HDIs) for Madagascar have changed little since 2001, with only school enrolment passing from 42% in 2000 to 61% in 2007 due to an active promotion of this issue by the government of Marc Ravalomanana.

A closer look at the economic performance of Madagascar beyond a narrow reading of macro-economic indicators paints a rather different picture. Indeed, due to the emphasis on export processing zones (EPZs), highly mobile industries, notably the textile industry, were attracted to the tax free zones, with the tariff advantages to be had for textile products from Madagascar to the United States under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and to the EU under the Everything-But-Arms (EBA) initiative providing added incentive. These industries, however, require very little investment, only provide employment for highly vulnerable low-wage workers, and establish themselves in such a way that they can also leave again without having invested in substantial sunk costs. The value added for the Malagasy population is thus quite limited.

Finally, it is very interesting to take a brief look at the development of the three economic sectors in the last two decades. In 1991, the primary sector accounted for 33%, the secondary for 14% and the tertiary sector for 53% of GDP; in 1997, the numbers were 29.2%, 12.4%, and 52% and in 2008, 22.3%, 14.7%, and 54.6% respectively. Despite the 15 years of export-led growth strategies, neither the industry nor the tertiary sector show a substantial gain in importance, while the strategy should have encouraged a substantial increase in the secondary and tertiary sectors as percentages of GDP.





Source: INSTAT

## Conclusions

The above analysis of a number of significant features of Madagascar's economic history has yielded some interesting insights about the effects of different economic models and development policies on the socio-economic structures of the country. Unfortunately, the repercussions of the so-called "transfer of power" in 1960 underlined that the country was not prepared to stand economically on its own feet. The common policy of maintaining strong ties with the former colonies so as not to offset the economic benefits for the *métropole* and in order to secure the interests of the European community remaining in the country, may have worked out well, but it was at loggerheads with the newly independent country's ambition to create the conditions for a strong economy. In contrast to commonly held perceptions, the economic environment during the First Republic was not detrimental to exports. Similarly, the subsequent *Malgachisation* was far more nuanced than a mere nationalization of companies. Despite all nationalist and socialist rhetoric, the Second Republic did little to improve its domestic market and especially the productivity and living conditions of the rural population.

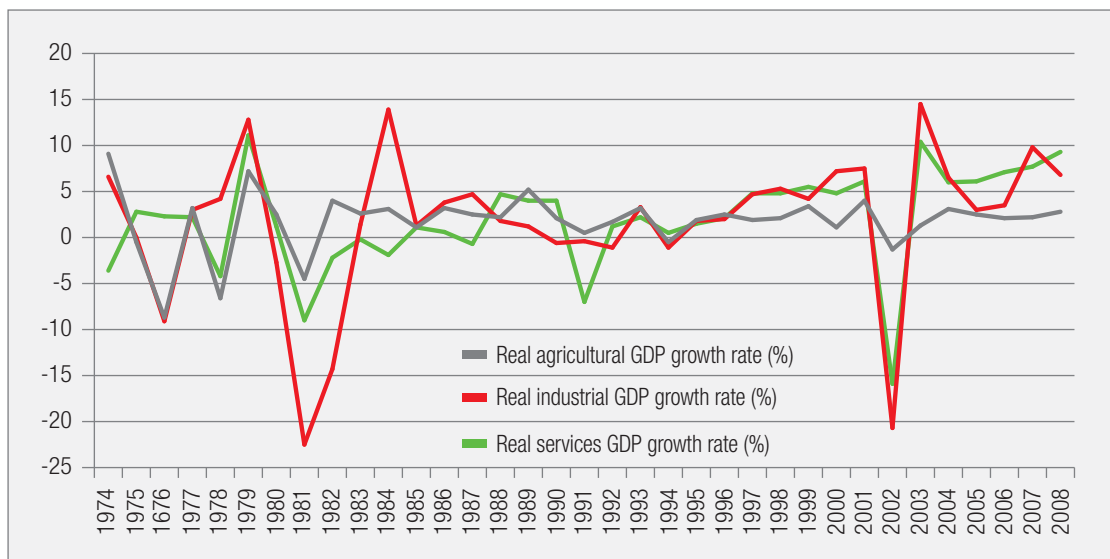
It also remains unclear how the structural adjustment loans and its concomitant liberalization and privatization programme could have generated a major shift under such conditions. While the economic policy of the state considerably confined the actions and opportunities of the private sector, it was itself not the type of absurdly overblown administration often found in similar settings elsewhere. Together with publicly owned firms it amounted to only a modest share of GDP and the employment sector. The large amount of loans and financial support from bilateral donors and foreign private banks and businesses cannot be explained on the basis of sound economic development policy, but were rather motivated by anti-communist, geopolitical considerations that were blind to the long-term consequences for the country.

Three sorts of elites emerged from the socialist years and the subsequent privatization policy. First, a number of Malagasy entrepreneurs profited from the very poorly managed process and could acquire undervalued public companies with credits from the state or the IFC. Second, the transformation of the commercialization of agricultural products through

the *fokonolany* led to the de facto disintegration of numerous Chinese and Karana businesses, who subsequently shifted many of their networks and commercial activities to the urban centres.<sup>44</sup> Third, French entrepreneurs returned to Madagascar in order to acquire a significant portion of the financial and insurance sector. Ironically, the French banks buying the formerly nationalized enterprises were at the time still public sector companies themselves. In sum, the elite configuration was once again shifting.

The privatization and liberalization policies of the 1980s and 1990s were not unproblematic either, to say the least. Firms were again sold without a prior assessment of their value. Corruption was anything but a marginal phenomenon, and further reduced the already small potential benefit for the government, which ran the process of privatization without independent oversight. The IFIs had not pushed for adequate preparation of the Malagasy economy, no anti-trust commission was created, no clear guidelines on accounting existed, and management capacities were not built up. Although privatization may have been a sound policy from a purely economic perspective, the political reality and the effects of such a measure on society should have been given a greater bearing than appears to have been the case.

Lack of a clear export promotion strategy was not the reason for why a growth in exports did not occur. Instead, Malagasy traditional export products have been overtaken by countries that are more competitive on the export markets. An increase in FDIs alone does not reduce poverty nor break up the structures that are disempowering the population. The capital brought into the country, especially through export processing zones and the extractive sector, generates little return for the country and its people. The creation of jobs is extremely localized and leads to price inflation where the firms are located. Such activities also increase imports of goods (as inputs for firms), thereby unsettling the balance of trade.



Source: INSTAT

<sup>44</sup> It proved very difficult to approach members of the Karana and Chinese communities during the research conducted for this PCIA. While the Malagasy rumor mill enjoys linking these communities with the current influx of Asian actors engaged in trafficking and the plundering of the island's natural resources, we were unable to corroborate such claims. Undoubtedly, however, the long-established Karana and Chinese communities constitute very influential business networks in Madagascar, involved in key economic sectors such as trade, services, tourism, agriculture, industry, real estate and construction.

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Madagascar has undergone a very turbulent economic history. Yet as the above graph and the analysis of this chapter demonstrates, the standard narratives trying to link the apparent cyclical nature of political crises with peaks in economic growth are laying claim to a non-existent causality. Recurrent crises have not been caused by the collusion of self-interested external actors, nor by popular movements erupting every time the socio-economic injustice becomes unbearable. It is certainly true that the severe impoverishment of the population and even famine in the south of the island is the most disturbing feature of the Malagasy landscape, but the economic, social and political exclusion of the majority of the population by a business-oriented minority has, technically speaking, not been the underlying cause of conflict and instability. When coupled with the current political vacuum, interminable corruption and the rise of predatory economic actors seeking to exploit the Madagascar's natural resources, however, this social exclusion and disempowerment of the Malagasy people represents an important conflict driver that has the potential of becoming a major triggering factor for future violence.

### 3. Power and authority in Madagascar

In political science, a standard approach to making sense of modern politics is to first describe a state's system (i.e. is it unitary or federal; parliamentary or presidential; democratic (representative or direct), semi-authoritarian, authoritarian or totalitarian) and its composition (the legislative, the executive and its administration, and the judiciary), before proceeding to study government policies and the dynamics of political parties and pressure groups. For a PCIA, however, it is more important to identify structures and fault lines of societal and political conflict in the broad sociological sense. It is equally crucial to assess the extent to which these structures are interrelated with development work.

The following sections will continue in the same vein as the previous chapter. Rather than deliver a comprehensive analysis of politics in post-independence Madagascar, we will attempt to unravel the “complex Malagasy brew” that, according to many of our interlocutors, lies at the heart of the endemic political “problem” in the country. What will emerge is a second major conflict driver that goes hand-in-hand with the social exclusion and disempowerment already identified. The sources of power and authority in Madagascar are at loggerheads with the “Western” institutions that were imposed on the Malagasy state. The result is a political system marred by a personalization of institutional prerogatives and a lack of capacity on the local level.

#### **Social stratification and the divide between the oral and the written<sup>45</sup>**

The narrative of there being an ethnic division in Madagascar, which we identified in Chapter 1, seeks to differentiate 17 or 18 ethnic groups. As we already indicated, however, the narrative does not stand up well to questioning, and is soon boiled down to a supposed conflict between Merina and *côtiers*. Although this distinction does indeed manifest itself in various dimensions of Malagasy politics, the fault line is not one of ethnicity or cultural difference. Instead, the differentiation was introduced as a means by which the French colonial rulers sought to divide and rule the Malagasy elites and society. It was a strategy to dampen and curtail the Malagasy nationalism propagated mainly by the political elites from the Haut Plateau. In essence, however, the simplistic dichotomy between Merina and *côtiers* acts as a veil behind which hide the actual fault lines that determine the distribution of state power. What is involved is hardly an issue of ethnic identity, in the sense of *côtiers* or Merina group identities, and the factions within each “group” are deep and multiple. There is no such thing as an ethnic identity conflict in Madagascar.

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<sup>45</sup> This section draws on two papers commissioned from local experts in anthropology and political science, as well as on several interviews with Malagasy scholars in political sociology, history and political economy. Further, the information and our interpretation have been crosschecked with around 20 interview partners. Needless to say, the views expressed in this section are our own and reflect our interpretation of what we were told. References from additional source material are indicated.

Although ethnic and linguistic diversity in Madagascar is a reality, identities are mainly constructed around kinship and territory.<sup>46</sup> Surprisingly, despite the propagation of modernity, Christianity and capitalism on the Great Island, many parts of society have proven resilient to individualism. A large part of the Malagasy population still perceives and appreciates its environment through a collectivist lens. Unfortunately for us, the authors of this PCIA, such a mode of reflection is very foreign, and perhaps even outside the realm of our intelligibility. It is therefore important to note at the outset that we have simply tried to acknowledge this reality without in any way suggesting that we have managed to gain a genuine insight. Our assessment of identity in a collectivist society is therefore an interpretative “translation” that necessarily reduces (and possibly skews) the complexity of the phenomenon.

Water not only surrounds the island, but many rivers run across and divide the land. In Madagascar, as elsewhere, rivers and lakes are important geographical reference points that often denominate the region of origin of a person and his or her kinship ties. Although land remains first and foremost the basis of livelihood for a large part of the population, especially in rural areas, it also has deep spiritual meanings indispensable for a happy and harmonious life. Land is a cornerstone of kinship, and the basis of Malagasy identity and culture. Kinship ties are stratified along a hierarchy from the child to the ancestors, who are perceived as an active part of the living members of the family. The tombs, where the bodies of the deceased are conserved, are a central symbol of the connection between the spirit of the ancestors and the earth – and thus with the living. Ancestors also have an important influence on the birth and growing up of children: having children is taken to be a sign of a good relationship with the ancestors. An appreciation of these kinship ties as representing a holistic entity reuniting past, present and future generations translates into a non-linear temporality.

According to the royal “*Code de 305 articles*”, proclaimed in 1881, it was forbidden to sell land to foreigners, reflecting the belief that all land is holy and given by *Zanahry* (the Creator) to the ancestors. The living head of the kinship – the *ray amandreny* (literally “father and mother”) – functions only as the custodian of the land, assuring its conservation and distribution to the heirs. The royal authority in the Sakalava kingdom (in the North-East of the island) drew on the holiness of the relics, using the cult of the *jiny* to mark the omnipresence of the power and authority of the king, and superimposing the cult of the dead kings on those of the ancestors of the different kinships making up their subjects.<sup>47</sup> The Imerina kings on the plateau, by contrast, placed the royal tombs at the centre-stage of the cult of their dead kings. Culturally, the land of the ancestors counts as a collective good, and not as an individual title. With the introduction of modern structures and an economy based on the principle of individual property, insecurity about land rights continues to prevail among many Malagasy families.<sup>48</sup> This constitutes an important source of tensions and disputes at the micro-level of society. In fact, we were told that about 80% of the cases pending in communal courts concern land rights issues.

<sup>46</sup> See Françoise Raison-Jourde, *Les souverains de Madagascar* (Paris: Karthala Editions, 1983), p. 16, on Madagascar's strong sense of insularity.

<sup>47</sup> Marie-Pierre Ballarin, *Les reliques royales à Madagascar: source de légitimation et enjeu de pouvoir, XVIIIe-XXe siècles* (Paris: Karthala Editions, 2000), p. 53.

<sup>48</sup> Didier Galibert, “Mobilisation populaire et répression à Madagascar: Les transgressions de la cité culturelle,” *Politique Africaine* 113 (March 2009), pp. 139-151, at 142.

Ethnicity was a category that simply did not exist in Madagascar until it was introduced by anthropologists, who were unable to make sense of the world without resorting to race classifications. This does not mean, however, that the imposed categorization was ineffective. Rivalries between different kinships did exist, and power asymmetries and injustices were resented. In many cases, the instrumentalization of ethnicity may have overlapped with such grievances, resentments and feuds, thereby effectively co-opting micro-level conflicts for more macro-level political ends. Yet surprisingly, despite linguistic and phenotypic differences, the kinship principle and its concomitant stratification was common to all communities of the island. Further, the different languages share a common core and origin. Most importantly, social customs and norms are very similar across Madagascar.

It is possible to differentiate between a cellular social stratification and a broader societal stratification operating on the basis of the former. The cellular social stratification is closely linked to the cult of the ancestors as practised by the traditional religion. Interestingly, two different belief systems constitute the spiritual life of most Malagasy since the twentieth century: Christianity and the cult of the ancestors. The cult propagates a notion of the human being as a soul (*fanahy*) endowed with a force called *hasina*. The orally transmitted traditional myths and discourses highlight that the human being is a product of his or her soul, which, in contrast to European beliefs, is not separated from the body.<sup>49</sup>

“Having a good soul” means, in Malagasy, to behave well according to one’s social status, without doing harm to others and one’s kinship. After death the soul remains in this world, bound through the tomb to the earth. *Hasina* is a virtuous force attached to the soul. With age and status this force grows and merits respect by the younger. The stratification of the family and kinship stretches in ascending order from the small children, to the older children, the parents, the grand-parents, and the ancestors. While small children have the liberty to play, the older children are those who have to work and cultivate the earth; they receive guidance from their *ray amandreny*, with whom they have to consult before taking decisions. Advice from the elders has the character of orders, and disobedience harms the virtuous force of the soul.

The authority of the elders also draws on the non-linear temporality of the Malagasy culture, given that they are next in line to become ancestors. These ancestors, called *razana* in Malagasy, enjoy even more authority than the living, and their word is feared and holy (*masina*). Rude behaviour and transgression of the orders of the *razana*, and by extension of the elders, attract their curse. The benediction of the ancestors is not only sought because of the powers they possess in the after-life, but also because they function as the intermediaries between *Zanahary* and the living and future kinship. Social and moral order thus rests on this steep hierarchy of kinship relationships. In the era of kingdoms, all kings on the island derived their authority from the Creator and the ancestors. Their power is thus also seen as eternal and continuing in the after-life.

With the emergence of co-existing kingdoms on the island, inter-kinship distinctions and social stratification gained more and more in importance. Formerly egalitarian communities were transformed by introducing differentiations in status groups. Indeed, in the highland kingdom of the Imerina, societal stratification emerging in the sixteenth century had taken on a specific shape that has had major implications for current social disparities and the play of forces underlying Madagascar’s colonial and post-colonial political scene. It is, however, *very* important to note that we are not claiming that the structures of what is often imprecisely called “castes” prevail in modern Madagascar, nor that power relations still

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<sup>49</sup> Jennifer Cole, “The Work of Memory in Madagascar,” *American Ethnologist* 25, 4 (November 1998), pp. 610-633, at 611.

draw on traditional beliefs to delineate inter-kinship stratification.<sup>50</sup> Today's dynamics of power are centred on modern material, economic structures and "state" institutions, notably the education system. Yet the social norms in a collectivist society of kinship, including the principle of the elder, explain two phenomena. First, it explains the population's fear of political and religious leaders and state representatives, who keep the population relatively docile despite blatant social injustices and political deficiencies.<sup>51</sup> Second, the principle of the elder facilitates politics by basing it on individual personality rather than on the legitimacy of institutions and organizations.

The principle of *ray amandreny* is an important source of symbolic power in the field of politics. The constitution of the Third Republic uses the Malagasy term to designate the role of the political leaders (Article 44). In fact, all forms of leadership in society refer directly to the concept of the elder, independently of the real age of the leader. The churches thus also refer to their priests as *ray amandreny*.

The first important transformation in the societal stratification of the Imerina kingdom was tightly linked to its rise and expansion beginning in the eighteenth century. In general, kingdoms differentiated between the royal family and its kinship, the servants and warriors, and free men. Slaves stood outside society as objects and not subjects of the kingdom. In the Imerina kingdom, the royal status group was called *andriana* and included seven sub-groups that corresponded to their functions at the court. Especially powerful were the king's territorial representatives, the *menakely*. Warriors initially were only recruited from the *mainity enindreny* (literally the "seven groups of the blacks"), which did not refer to skin colour, but to something of lesser value (than the *andriana*). The group stemmed from princes and nobles of other provinces and kinships that had once been submitted to the power of the Imerina kings. Finally, the free men, called *hova*, were all those belonging to none of the other groups.<sup>52</sup> In contrast to castes, these status groups were more permeable, and kings could elevate families to a higher status. While certain families until today do not appreciate inter-group marriages, they are not forbidden and not exceptional.

<sup>50</sup> In their respective regions the royal families remain important moral authorities, and even politicians continue to consult with them and demand their advice.

<sup>51</sup> See Sylvain Urfer, "Nouvelle donne malgache," *Etudes* 389, 4 (2003), pp. 465-474 on the importance given to political and religious leaders in Madagascar.

<sup>52</sup> Solofo Randrianja, "Du *hasina* à la confiance en histoire politique de Madagascar," in *Madagascar revisitée: en voyage avec Françoise Raison-Jourde*, ed. Didier Nativel and Faranirina V. Rajaonah (Paris: Karthala, 2009), pp.433-462, at 448; and D. T. Rakotondrabe, "Beyond the ethnic group: ethnic groups, nation-state and democracy in Madagascar," *Transformation* 22 (1993), pp. 15-29.



Confronting difficulties to consolidate and expand their rule, the kings needed the support of a number of *hova* families that were running successful commercial businesses. These families lived primordially in the region of Tsimahafotsy (Abohimanga) and Tsimihamboholahy (Ilafy), and negotiated with the kings important concessions on market reforms and the reorganization of the rice production in exchange for financial support. Soon the economic capacity of the royal court depended on these free men, who effectively gained a higher status. With the assassination of King Radama II in 1863, they finally co-opted the power of the court during the reign of the last three queens.

The second transformation occurred in parallel to the rise of the *hova* with the arrival in the highlands of British traders and missionaries in the nineteenth century. Although with the help of the Muslim *Antalaotra* the Sakalava kingdoms and other coastal areas had already experienced lively trading activities with Arab and later Portuguese traders, the Europeans had not sent a missionary expedition until then or shown any interest in supporting the Sakalava. The British, in contrast, helped modernize the royal court, which already featured an advanced degree of institutional organization with court representatives in the different administrative divisions of the kingdom.<sup>53</sup> In particular, the missionaries and Europeans sent from Mauritius created a school for the royal family and its consultants. For the first time the Malagasy language, as it was spoken in the highlands, was transcribed into the Latin alphabet with the explicit purpose to build an administration based on the written word.<sup>54</sup> For the missionaries, providing education was part and parcel of proselytizing strategies and proved to be highly efficient.

The proliferation of education played a key role in transposing the social stratification and geographical division into political, economic and cultural structures. Education in the royal palace began in 1820 and became mandatory for the sons of the *andriana* and the few *hova* families consulting and working for the court administration. Gradually, new schools were opened in Antananarivo, first in the areas in which the influential kinship groups resided. Slaves were excluded from education at first, but in the 1870s the Imerina authorities then decreed compulsory school attendance for boys and girls in the highlands and plateau region, after the Christianization of Queen Ranavalona II and the *hova* Prime Minister Rainilaiarivony. Most of the *andriana* and grand families of Imerina then followed the Queen's lead and converted to Protestantism.

The introduction of the written word and, more importantly, the very restricted access to secondary and higher education (which in the first decades required travelling to Europe) led to the emergence of a new fault line in the kingdom between the oral culture of the principally rural population and the written culture of the court and the privileged. This division was not simply about literacy, but about the role of the written word as a source of identity and form of reflection. Oral societies have a very different logic of communication and thought than "people of the script". Indeed, the two "worlds" have very separate ways of experiencing the environment. This division was reinforced with the colonization of Madagascar and the proliferation of French primary and secondary schools, where pupils only spoke French.<sup>55</sup> Many did not have the chance to learn Malagasy at school until the mid-1970s.

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<sup>53</sup> Solofo Randrianja, *Société et luttes anticoloniales à Madagascar* (Paris: Karthala Editions, 2001), p. 85.

<sup>54</sup> The first form of written text emerged in the south of the island and was based on the Arabic alphabet; it was, however, restricted to the (holy) scripture.

<sup>55</sup> Directly derived from the idea of "assimilationisme": Patrick Rajoelina, *Quarante années de la vie politique de Madagascar: 1947-1987* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1988), p. 15.



Because the colonial rulers gave their orders only in French, the Malagasy used the expression *teny baiko* (the language of order) to designate it. If a Malagasy misunderstood such orders, punishment was the rule rather than the exception. The culture of the written word thus became even more socially divisive when French became the predominant written language. Until today, the rural population has been far less penetrated by the French school system, and some parts continue to be excluded, even from primary education. In terms of exclusion from higher education and high-quality primary education, both the rural populations and the urban poor are obviously affected. As was already mentioned, the point here is that assimilating the culture of the written word goes far beyond literacy, and is about the presence of the text in daily life. Hence, the oral-written divide created the foundation for the two other major fault lines in Madagascar by institutionalizing an immense comparative disadvantage in rural areas and the periphery. These fault lines have since been deepened constantly by the colonizers as well as by successive Malagasy governments.

With French colonization, Catholic missionaries spread throughout the island to civilize and discipline the indigenous population. Catholic missions profited from the social exclusions of the former slaves, which were freed under the pressure of the British, and large parts of the *mainty*. As a result, the majority of Christians on the coasts are Catholic, while Protestants, mainly from the FJKM church, represent with about 46% the largest group in Antananarivo.<sup>56</sup> Unsurprisingly, the missionary quest first focused on larger, urban communities before it began proselytizing the rural and hardly accessible regions. The pattern of conversion thus reflects the centre-periphery division of the state administration.

While the societal stratification in the various Malagasy kingdoms and chieftaincies was based on cellular stratification and the cult of the ancestors, these factors lost their importance for the reproduction of power relations during the colonial era. Firstly, the colonial masters, who nonetheless tried to make use of the symbolism of the Malagasy culture, could not derive their authority from the cult of the ancestors. Secondly, the Imerina kings did not impose their particular stratification on the territories they conquered, but used a system of protectorates and indirect rule instead.<sup>57</sup> Due to the small size of the colonial administration, the French colonizers had to co-opt the ruling structures of the Imerina kingdom and its protectorates, which spanned substantial but not all parts of the island.<sup>58</sup> A third transformation of the societal stratification then occurred when the comparative advantage of the privileged societal groups was gradually consolidated in the institutional design and economic structures of the colonial administration.<sup>59</sup>

At the financial and economic level, France was very reluctant to invest freely in Madagascar. Gallieni applied the British colonial principle that the territories had to be self-sufficient. To achieve a rapid return on investment, the population had to grow and be concentrated in certain areas, rather than be thinly dispersed all over the island.<sup>60</sup> The *mise en valeur* of

<sup>56</sup> In the captial Antananarivo, the Christian population is divided as follows: the Protestant FJKM has 46%, the Catholic Church (ECAR) has 39%, Lutherans (FLM) have less than 4%, Anglicans 1.3%, Adventists 1.3% and all other protestant groups 7%. François Roubaud, "Religion, Identité sociale et transition démocratique à Tananarive: de fidèles en citoyens", *Autrepart* 10 (1999), pp. 135-49, at 136.

<sup>57</sup> Jean-Roland Randriamaro, "Interculturalité et champ politique à Madagascar: un particularisme identitaire au dénominateur commun confortant l'identité nationale," *Le Cahier de Madagascar* 1, 1 (October 2003), pp. 15-24, at 17; and Randrianja, *Sociétés et Lutttes anticoloniales à Madagascar*, p. 79.

<sup>58</sup> Cole, "The Work of memory in Madagascar", p. 611.

<sup>59</sup> Randrianja, *Sociétés et Lutttes anticoloniales à Madagascar*, p. 45.

<sup>60</sup> Solofo Randrianja and Stephen Ellis, *Madagascar: a short history* (London: Hurst, 2009), p. 162.

Madagascar had to be financed by loans from the *métropole*, and the colonial administration thus favoured urbanization programs, incentivizing internal mobility.<sup>61</sup> As a result, the divide between rural and urban areas was mutually reinforced by the economic, institutional and educational investments in the highlands and the most useful economic areas on the coast.

The power relations of the modern Malagasy state evolved from this structural and institutional comparative advantage of the centre and urban areas. Thinking in terms of Umberto Eco's parallelogram of power, the French administrator and economic elites represented the dominant force on the island.<sup>62</sup> The Malagasy commercial elites could adapt themselves to and thus benefit from the situation. The emerging middle class or petite bourgeoisie from the coasts (mainly Catholic and pro French) depended on France for social and political advancement through education and the military.<sup>63</sup> The emerging administrative and economic middle class in the highlands, in contrast, did not feel sufficiently represented despite their privileged access to the state administration. The rural population and later the urban poor remained totally disempowered, but they nevertheless represent a major force to destabilize power if and when the elites or the middle class manage to mobilize them. In view of their living and working conditions, this may not be such a difficult endeavour. As the economic analysis in the previous chapter has shown, the sources of discontentment are always present, with living conditions constantly deteriorating and the poor caught in the vicious circle of daily coping strategies and survival.

In sum, the historical emergence of a geographic, institutional and economic reproduction of asymmetric power relations has coalesced to generate three main and interlaced societal fault lines. The **urban-rural** divide primarily reflects a geographic divide that translates into institutional, economic, infrastructural imbalances. The **centre-periphery** divide signifies fault lines at a variety of different levels; these can be characterized as access to public services in a very broad sense (transportation, security, education, health, etc.). These fault lines materialize in relative rather than absolute differences. Urban-rural and centre-periphery fault lines do not overlap. Centre-periphery divides can be observed, for instance, in Antananarivo's Hectar 67/Ankassina, an underprivileged neighborhood in which over 10,000 inhabitants have almost no access to health care and education, suffer from a situation of endemic criminality and are exposed to appalling sanitary conditions. Centre-periphery fault lines also persist among cities, as for example between Antananarivo and Toamasina. Finally, the **oral-written** fault line constitutes a deep cultural division upon which different mechanisms of social exclusion and disempowerment can operate, notably through the education sector and political representation.

## The struggle for power in the modern Malagasy state

The three fault lines just presented find expression in social asymmetries that evolve out of a privileged access to education, and thus to economic and career opportunities. The dominance of a mainly highland elite and middle class in the administration of the educational sector is undeniably a core problem in Madagascar. However, the mere fact of belonging to the Merina does not necessarily guarantee better opportunities, but it does act as a buffer to exclude people from the coasts. It is only in recent decades that the economic field has become an important source of political power for the Malagasy.

<sup>61</sup> Randrianja, *Sociétés et Luites anticoloniales à Madagascar*, p. 45.

<sup>62</sup> See Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality. Essays* (San Diego and New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986).

<sup>63</sup> Rajoelina, *Quarante années de la vie politique à Madagascar*, p. 15.

The most dangerous pitfall for the development community is to occlude these fault lines and instead privilege a reading of conflict that focuses exclusively on the intermittent occurrence of political crises.

Economic advancement through the marginal indigenous private sector was and remains a difficult proposition. While corruption has always existed, the approach taken by Didier Ratsiraka in the context of the *Malgachisation* of foreign companies has led to an unfortunate dependence of the economic sector to the state administration. As described in the previous chapter, the creation of the *Office militaire national pour les industries stratégiques (OMNIS)* generated a systemic complicity between business interests and the state. The lack of economic advancement opportunities helped establish a system in which entry into politics or a career in a strategic institution of the state such as the military offers the most expedient path to prosperity.

Valuing a long academic career as an entry requirement for political leadership was a positive facet of the French colonial system. However, this was subsequently perverted by the emerging dependency of economic advancement through politics on the one hand, and by a lack of opportunities and employment in the export-oriented *économie de traite*, on the other. This also explains why only few Malagasy have come to value academic education as an asset in itself. Moreover, the new wave of Malagasy students coming out of the universities in the late 1960s expected to reap the same benefits as the primarily grand family elites. The lack of perspectives for many students and the middle class then stirred up resentments against the neo-colonial structures of the First Republic. From then on, the middle class found itself in the constant quagmire of oscillating between the aspiration of economic advancement and the constant threat of being swept back into unemployment, vulnerability and ultimately poverty. Yet although it continues to remain very small, even today, the middle class constitutes the main driving force for a functioning bureaucracy and economy. Indeed, the general strike of 1991 demonstrated its capacity to destabilize governmental power.

Violent clashes and uprisings in Madagascar were never of a revolutionary nature; all applied a strategy of destabilization. Military directorates in 1972 and 2009 were installed after the President handed over power. The military itself never seriously attempted to stage a coup itself. What is more, despite regular uprisings on the coast, the authorities in Antananarivo were never overthrown by force. The most violent change of power took place in 2002 after the contested first round of presidential elections.<sup>64</sup> The siege of a large perimeter of the Antananarivo province was accompanied with the arming of militias and reservists, and featured the first basic traits of a civil war. Nonetheless, political destabilization was the initial strategy applied by Marc Ravalomanana. Following the same rationale as 1991, a general strike was called and short but bloody clashes between protesters and the security forces were provoked. The destabilization strategy places its bets on media effect and the military's habit of retreating to the barracks.

<sup>64</sup> Wenche Hauge, *Madagascar Past and Present Political Crisis: Resilience of Pro-Peace Structures and Cultural Characteristics*, Report to donors (Oslo: International Peace Research Institute (PRIO), June 2005), p. 10.

In order to make sense of the underlying nature of a particular crisis, a crucial step is to observe what social forces or groups initially participate in the protests. In Madagascar's history of such episodes, it is possible to schematically discern two distinct patterns:

- The **idealist** pattern of mobilization has its roots in academia, where an educated youth needs to gain the support of broader masses stemming from the middle class, public servants, low wage labourers and the urban poor combined. This type of mobilization has proven to be very effective, as general strikes immediately constrain the capacity of the government and thus weaken it considerably. This is the pattern that could be observed in 1972 and 1991.
- The **elite** pattern of mobilization, by contrast, reflects a basic struggle for power among rival factions. Ironically, this strategy is dependent upon the impoverishment of the urban and rural poor and the underprivileged. As their plight has hardly improved in the 50 years since independence, they constitute an expedient and ever-present source of political destabilization. Stirring up fears and prejudices is not a major challenge, and gathering a crowd of 15,000 would cost less than 115,000 (excl. transportation).<sup>65</sup> The strategy aims at creating a momentum by giving the impression that it is a real popular movement, thereby hoping to draw further participants onto the streets. With targeted provocation of the security forces, deadly confrontations are taken into calculation without hesitation. This kind of destabilization has allegedly occurred during the events of 2009, and was also used during several unrests in 2010 and in 2004. According to some interviewees, a combination of both strategies was applied in 2002.

Governments have historically found different strategies to quell discontentment. Schematically, we can differentiate oppression, de-politicization, and integration.

- **Oppression** requires tough surveillance and violent suppression using highly visible security forces and a large intelligence service spying on its citizens.
- **De-politicization** can either be the result of a long oppression that curtails any space for articulation, or the corruption and co-optation of civil society and the economy. That is, civil society and economic actors become so interlaced with the ruling party and government that any opposition would harm their own interests as much as those of the ruling regime. A good indicator for a situation of de-politicization is the dominance of a mainstream economic ideology. Opposition parties usually prove to be very weak, as they hardly offer any political alternative; in some instances, they even end up being supported by the government in order to showcase an alleged pluralism. Civil society organizations, in turn, confine their attention to social, charitable and environmental issues. Elections are held regularly, but degenerate into rituals of confirmation of the ruling government and its party. The more advanced the process of de-politicization becomes, the less visible restrictions on civil liberties need to be. This is why the resulting "hybrid" regimes have long been a thorn in the eye of democracy indicators.
- **Integration**, finally, seeks to increase the representation of the various social forces in the country. Political parties, civil society organizations, pressure groups and citizen initiatives are important vehicles for the articulation of interests and discontentment. However, the mere existence in quantity of such institutions is a very poor indicator of the real integration of the population. What matters is the penetration of these organizations into the fibres of society, the degree of participation, and the function that they actually fulfil. Integrative organization does not have to follow the Western model, but might draw on local forms of consultation and gathering. In Madagascar, the *kabary* represents such a form of consultation that is inscribed in the cellular stratification of society.

<sup>65</sup> Figures taken from interviews with eyewitnesses. It was estimated that the money given to individuals ranged from 15,000 to 20,000 Ariary per person.

In the three successive republics of Madagascar, no regime managed to successfully follow any of the three strategies. While the first Ratsiraka regime tried an odd combination of oppression, corruption and integration, the constitution of 1992 clearly expressed the hope of finally establishing an integrative multi-party system. The second Ratsiraka regime applied, intentionally or not, a de-politicization approach. Under Ravalomanana, the trend initially showed a real interest in increasing participation and consultation of civil society and faith-based organizations. As discussed below, however, the reliance on experts and technocrats, coupled with the particular management culture of the presidency, proved not to be very helpful in advancing integration, but instead accelerated the process of concentration of presidential prerogatives. The current transitional government (HAT) unfortunately shows clear preferences to stabilize its position at the head of the state administration through repressive measures. Regarding future developments, the international community will have to pay close attention to the media and local structures of communication and exchange of information, as these can support oppression and de-politicization as well as integration. Although the media do not constitute a causal factor in conflict dynamics, they can amplify conflicts and become part of the mechanism reproducing existing power relations. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

The divide between the middle class and the Malagasy elite, and most importantly the permanent threat of social and economic decline faced by the middle class, is one of the main facets of social exclusion and disempowerment in Madagascar. However, while the middle class factor continues to play a role, the idealist pattern of mobilization will hardly re-occur in the near future. The major dynamic of political violence in Madagascar identified by this PCIA rests with the capacity of coalitions within the economic, political and military elites – conditioned by the societal fault lines and conflict drivers – to destabilize the government. Discontentment within the underprivileged rural and urban populations is a constant feature of Malagasy society and provides a large reservoir to stage social unrests. Although it would be impossible to predict when destabilization in each case will be effective enough to topple a government, the possibility remains if the major conflict drivers are not addressed.

### **Elite struggles, centralization and the paradox of the fragile state**

As we outlined in the previous chapter, the liberalization and privatization policies created the conditions for a shift in the elite structures. The descendants of the royal families, by dint of their ancestral veneer, continue to constitute a moral authority in the classical sense of the term, but in terms of economic power, foreign business interests continue to play the defining role, owning – or at least controlling – the vast majority of the country's assets.<sup>66</sup> Although many of these economic actors and communities have been around for some time, often for generations, it is unclear to what extent they constitute genuine players on Madagascar's political scene. An analysis of their position and status within the broader societal fault lines is thus a challenging task. What can be said, however, is that elite struggles, the drive towards centralization and the concomitant paradox of fragile states do not in themselves constitute critical conflict drivers; instead, they are deficiency syndromes indicating more fundamental structural conflict drivers, notably the lack of local government and social disempowerment.

<sup>66</sup> See Chapter 2 above.



Interestingly, we can observe a dual centralization of capital accumulation and state administration in Antananarivo, combined with oligopolistic market structures. The overlapping interests of these small and geographically concentrated economic and political elites thus constitute a serious source of tension and potential conflict. For despite the abundant resources found in Madagascar, economic opportunities may not match their growing appetite. One of the reasons for this is that despite the strong export orientation of the country, many businesses also depend on the domestic market, which in the face of crushing poverty and a narrow middle class remains very weak. As privatization had merely transferred monopolies and oligopolies from the public to the private sector, market competition is rather the exception than the rule. Against this background, the state administration remains an important partner to protect business interests or crowd out other competitors. From a conflict perspective, the real problem in Madagascar is not the everyday corruption of public officials and civil servants, but the great clash of interests between the state administration, the security forces and large-scale economic ventures, many of which appear to be contributing to Madagascar growing informal sector. As the economic and political stakes are highly condensed in urban areas, the central administration enters into a virtual and anticipated competition with the regional and communal administrative structures. The much talked about decentralization would not reduce the control of the state, but would instead reduce the influence of those actors profiting most from the relentless raid on Madagascar's resources.

The paradox of political, capital and administrative centralization is that with each round of action to shift the administrative capacities and prerogatives to the core (i.e. to Antananarivo and the other major urban centres) the capacity of the state as a "polity" is further weakened. All attempts to decentralize were accompanied by the creation of additional administrative structures in the capital and the regional centres in order to control and organize this decentralization. Thus, Marc Ravalomanana, for instance, appointed a Minister for Decentralization within his cabinet. In reality, however, the disconnect between local communities and the central decentralizing administrative structures was only increased, and the capacity of the polity to shape and strengthen the social fabric and initiate progress was further limited.

The only entities that are elected or designated by the local communities themselves are the mayors and heads of *fokontany*, whose means, however, are very limited and for whom no forum exists that would offer them the space for articulation.<sup>67</sup> Villages and "communes" remain deprived of their capacity to govern themselves, and to take the most important decisions for their own development. The presence of centrally nominated and controlled heads of districts and regions aggravates tensions between elected local representatives with relatively limited prerogatives, and nominated functionaries from the centre who are placed in a position in which they are effectively constraining the work and budget autonomy of the local representatives. Given the cultural divide between a largely "oral" population and a "foreign" administrative system based on the written word, the central state authority is perceived with fear and reservation. Cooperation largely fails and the exclusion of the local rural population is thus further strengthened. Similarly, the heavy bureaucratization with which mayors and heads of *fokontany* are confronted places most of them in a position of inferiority. The entities of the centre have the administrative staff and capacities to make

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<sup>67</sup> In 2007, however, the decree of 2004 was again modified. Today, members of the *Fokonolonata*, reunited in a General Assembly, vote for five names. Among them, the "Chef de District" nominates the head of the *fokontany*. See especially articles 4, 5 and 9 of "Décret 2007-151 modifiant certaines dispositions du Décret 2004-299 du 03 mars 2004, fixant l'organisation, le fonctionnement et les attributions du Fokontany", available at <http://www.mprdat.gov.mg/fkt.html>.

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the mayors dependent on them. Today, the capacity of local structures to work in favour of their constituency and respond to their very specific safety, health, education and infrastructural needs depends to a large extent on the personality and drive of the individual head of *fokontany* and the mayor.

As is currently being debated at length by the international development community, the challenge of the “fragile state” lies not the existence of a centralized government as such, but in the lack of local self-government that it often brings with it. The extremely weak local government structures in contemporary Madagascar also undermine the capacity of the polity as a whole. From a conflict perspective, however, the real problem remains the absence of local and village councils that would support the head of *fokontany* and the mayor. Self-government plays a crucial role in consolidating the structures for mediation and conflict transformation in society. The goal should be to provide an active space for deliberation and common action through the creation of shared experiences and trust. The central decentralization structure, by contrast, seeks to manage and regulate people to meet certain abstract indicators, but does not actually encourage self-organization.

The elite struggles and concurrent centralization of capital accumulation and state administration are syndromes of the absence of countervailing forces in the system. The weakness of the legislative branch stems from the total detachment of members of parliament from their local constituencies, with the latter not being in a position to hold them accountable because of the lack of political organization at the local level. In fact, the entire selection and election process of electoral candidates remains exceedingly skewed and without a real space for deliberation. As long as local communities – mainly in the rural world but also in the periphery – cannot participate effectively in community life due to basic hurdles such as a lack of transportation and electricity, local forms of political organization cannot develop. It must therefore be clearly understood that the drivers of conflict are not the visible elite struggles and the centralization phenomenon, but the less apparent lack of local governance structures and mechanisms of social exclusion. Bearing in mind the parallelogram of forces, the power relations do not result from the strength of the elites, the state institutions, and the military, but from the lack of resistance. Under present circumstances, however, and without effective resistance, conflicts will continue to manifest themselves primarily and superficially as confrontations among the elites themselves. As discussed below, Marc Ravalomanana may have been perceived as a figure coming out of nowhere who challenged the traditional elites and advanced a transformative agenda, but he was inevitably an active participant in the elite struggles. His downfall and the 2009 crisis were premised upon his business interests interfering with those of other economic and military elites.

Basic goods and services falling under the classical prerogatives of state institutions are often delivered by alternative providers. However, functionally equivalent goods and services tend to be hyper-localized and demonstrate only limited effectiveness. In general, external initiatives to build or strengthen peace-enhancing structures should co-operate with existing actors of change. Unfortunately, we could not identify any promising indigenous actors or structures of change in Madagascar. Building lasting structures of peace will thus require long-term processes that work towards gradually eroding the prevailing power relations.



## Presidential concentration

The final piece in the puzzle of Madagascar's political dynamics is demonstrated by the evolution of the constitution of the Third Republic. The constitution of 1992 represents a bold attempt to replace the concentration of power in the central state and the presidency by the construction of an increasing pluralistic representation and by giving political parties a more prominent role. The political liberalization following the end of the Cold War and the new wave of democratization in Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa brought new hope for a fundamental transformation of the Malagasy polity.

With the approval of the referendum of August 1992, a new constitution created the novel institutions of the Third Republic. The new constitution, providing for a parliamentary regime, was designed to reduce the concentration of power in the presidency.<sup>68</sup> The new configuration confined the President to a largely representative head of state, and by referring to the principle of *ray amandreny* in Article 44, emphasized the president's role as the holder of moral authority. As such, the President was to assure respect for the constitution as a clear symbol of a change towards the rule of law. The constitution privileged the parliament as the body representing the will of the people. The new system was destined to increase the importance of political parties and guarantee a broader participation. The supremacy of the President was thus considerably decreased, making the office accountable to the legislative branch. This was reflected in the National Assembly's powers of impeachment. The head of government would derive his mandate from the parliament, as the President would appoint the Prime Minister only after having been elected by the National Assembly. The provisions of this constitutional system were applied in 1993 when, with the approval of the Assembly, Albert Zafy, President elect, designated Francisque Ravony as Prime Minister. The presidency, according to the new constitution, functioned primarily as an oversight body, while the Prime Minister and his cabinet would shape politics.

The constitution of 1992 was the result of a pristine reflection that identified one of the major problems of Malagasy politics to be the concentration and personalization of power, exacerbated by the high degree of centralization.<sup>69</sup> The bicameral system was supposed to increase the representation of the regions, allowing deputies to articulate and advocate the interests of their constituencies. The previous republics, by contrast, had inverted the logic of democratic representation. The dominant AREMA party was created after Ratsiraka was nominated as the President, and served as a tool to recruit followers and implant the power of the person Didier Ratsiraka in the provinces and communes. In this way, the authority of the presidency was personalized: it was not the institution of the presidency that enjoyed authority and respect.<sup>70</sup> The AREMA party was not an organic organization that aggregated the different interests and opinions of its members and provided a space for deliberation and programmatic work.

It is unfortunate that the path from independence to the Third Republic had not generated such an organic party organization, one that would reflect a pluralism of ideas and regions within the party and would also make it a transmission belt between the state and society and a resource for political vision. The landscape of political parties in Madagascar, with its surge in small, highly personalized parties,<sup>71</sup> reflects the detachment between the state and

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<sup>68</sup> Rajoelina and Ellis, *Madagascar: a short history*, p. 202.

<sup>69</sup> Charles Cadoux, "La constitution de la troisième république malgache", *Politique africaine* 52 (December 1993), p. 59.

<sup>70</sup> Vivier, *Madagascar sous Ravalomanana: la vie politique malgache depuis 2001*, p. 21.

<sup>71</sup> An official party list does not exist. Our sources suggest that there are currently well over 180 political parties.

the population, and the concomitant exclusion and disempowerment of large parts of society. In fact, political parties in Madagascar lack any sign of a democratic basis. The conditions for the consolidation of a multi-party parliamentary system were thus not favourable. Depending on the party system of a country, political “maturity” is either based on a process of active engagement through party structures or on a more individual basis through the civil service at the communal level. When the Third Republic was proclaimed, the relationship between the members of parliament and their electoral district was not the result of an ascendancy of political echelons through the capacity and merits of a successful civil service, party work, or both. The effective political structures of the Second Republic hindered such activities or at least did not make them very attractive. Undeniably, the construction of a parliamentary system with a directly elected President was highly problematic, but more organic political parties could have compensated for this factor.

Sadly, the very structures that the Third Republic wanted to transform worked against the parliamentary system. Members of parliament had not undergone adequate political socialization. Moreover, neither the political elites nor the Malagasy population would have had the patience to let the new system establish itself. Less than two years later, in 1995, the new constitution already became highly contested. Due to constant quarrels among members of parliament, the coalition parties of the “*Forces vives*”, the Prime Minister, and the President, the country was unable to advance a coherent agenda.<sup>72</sup> The concomitant tensions spilled over to the executive branch, and were reflected in the fierce competition between the Prime Minister and the President. The political struggle originated from the increasing divergence of the once united coalition *Hery Velona*, which had spearheaded the overthrow of Didier Ratsiraka's regime.

The highly personalized parties that constituted the coalition proved to be dysfunctional and lacking experience in engaging in debate and compromise. Divergent interests and aspirations for personal status exacerbated the political discourse, and the coalition split into separate movements, turning to strategies of detraction. These divisions afflicted the executive level, with the majority in parliament supporting Ravony and opposing Zafy. The government was paralyzed, incapable of developing and realizing the sorely needed economic and social reforms in Madagascar. The regrettable scam linked to the search for parallel financing, which resulted in the World Bank and IMF suspending their programmes in Madagascar in 1994, disenchanted public opinion and increased the pressure on the government to find a solution to the power struggle.<sup>73</sup>

A compromise was reached between Ravony and Zafy, but it did not lead to an immediate end of the political struggle. In exchange for the new government composition preferred by Ravony, Zafy organized a referendum in 1995 with the aim of increasing the president's power. To his satisfaction, the results of the referendum were favourable, and allowed the President of the Republic, rather than the National Assembly, to appoint and dismiss the Prime Minister. This was the first step towards the gradual transformation of the Third Republic from a broadly representative system to a total concentration of presidential power that reached its apex with the referendum of 2007.<sup>74</sup> The trend steadily increased the concentration of power in the hands of the executive, namely the President. This was all the more evident after Zafy's impeachment by the National Assembly and Didier Ratsiraka's subsequent election and return to power.

<sup>72</sup> Rajoelina and Ellis, *Madagascar: a short history*, p. 204.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Richard R. Marcus and Andrien Ratsimbaharison, “Political Parties in Madagascar: Neopatrimonial Tools or Democratic Instruments?,” *Party Politics* 11, 4 (2005), pp. 495-512, at 503.

Political representation through political parties was further compromised by the exponential rise in the number of parties and the atomization of factions around a variety of politico-economic elite figures. With the election of Ratsiraka, the mechanisms of an allegiance system that revolved around “buying in” followers in the regions returned with a vengeance. Another referendum in 1998 took the next step in bundling state prerogatives in the hands of the president.<sup>75</sup> The resulting changes once again shifted the power balance from the parliament to the executive branch. The hurdles to dissolve the parliament were reduced and all effective restrictions to the presidential nomination of the Prime Minister removed. Under the umbrella of decentralization, the referendum foresaw more autonomy for the provinces with directly elected governors and independent revenues through tax collection. However, it has been pointed out that the provinces were Ratsiraka’s power base, and thus the move considerably increased his control over governors and the legislative – the governors were not elected, but nominated by the President for a “transitional period”.<sup>76</sup>

As is well known, a tough power struggle following elections that were marked by irregularities swept Marc Ravalomanana to the presidency in 2002. Indeed, the events of that year brought the country to the brink of a civil war. The rise and electoral success at the national level of Ravalomanana, a Merina from the *andriana* status group,<sup>77</sup> further underlines the limited utility of the narrative over ethnic divisions. In fact, his electoral success in the coastal areas showed the eagerness of the population for a fundamental change of politics in Madagascar, even though the importance of his financial resources to wage a US-style electoral campaign should not be underestimated. Crucially, the advent of Marc Ravalomanana should be seen as a strong indicator of the changes in the elite structures of the country. For in many ways, Ravalomanana represented the antithesis of the Malagasy political class. His economic and career advancements were not based on an academic or military path, but on his rise to the liberal economic, entrepreneurial elite of Madagascar. The commonly heard story that Ravalomanana suddenly appeared out of the blue with his election as Mayor of Antananarivo occludes his biography.<sup>78</sup>

Ravalomanana is one of the few Malagasy entrepreneurs who managed to profit from the liberalization and privatization of the 1980s. Until his election, he had adopted the same strategy as other members of the economically active elite, who prefer to maintain a low profile and influence politics from behind the scenes. Under Ratsiraka as well as under Zafy, Ravalomanana profited from preferential treatment. It is only with his appearance at the forefront of the political arena that the likes of Ratsiraka perceived him as a threat to their power.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, the lack of tangible information on his career path and biography underlines once more the importance of myths in the historical discourse and consciousness in Madagascar, an area that remains seriously under-researched.

Like all Malagasy leaders, upon his ascent to power Ravalomanana created his own political party, the TIM, which he initially qualified as a movement until he ran for the presidency.<sup>80</sup> The 2002 legislative elections led to a considerable victory of the TIM, with 103 seats out of

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 504.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 503.

<sup>77</sup> Ravalomanana’s status in Merina’s hierarchy is documented by Vivier, *Madagascar sous Ravalomanana: la vie politique malgache depuis 2001*, p. 14. Originally, Ravalomanana’s family is *andriana*. However, doubts remain as to whether his family actually managed to take care of their family’s tombs, as tradition requires to keep one’s noble status.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25-27.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

160, despite the shallowness of its message and policy package. The TIM party then went on to win an even larger majority (105 seats out of 127) in the elections of 2006. The trend of presidentialization of the regime was steadily kept going, as is shown by figures related to parliamentary work and voice in legislative initiatives. Indeed, the National Assembly became more and more inactive over the course of Ravalomanana's mandates. From 2003 to 2006, in contrast to the 218 law proposals and 316 amendments submitted by the executive branch, the legislative only initiated 8 law proposals and 37 amendments.<sup>81</sup> In addition, the trend towards presidentialization can be seen in the referendum of 2007. The population was asked to vote and adopt several new measures: (1) the President's authority to amend laws during a state of emergency without parliamentary approval; (2) redefinition of the country's administrative divisions by replacing the six autonomous provinces with 22 regions within the provinces;<sup>82</sup> (3) adoption of English as the third official language, in addition to French and Malagasy; and (4) removal of the term "secular state" from the constitution. With the success of this referendum, parliament was rendered all the more inactive, with no law proposals or even amendments coming from the legislative during the 2007-2009 period.

The concentration of presidential power also occurred with means other than a constitutional expansion of prerogatives. Paradoxically, efforts to improve governance by the presidency and with the support of the development complex have not broadened participation or improved the balance of power. Two short quotes from a November 2003 interview underline Ravalomanana's vision of governance; he first stated: "*Diriger un État, c'est comme gérer une grande entreprise*". A few questions later, the journalist asked: "*Vous avez récemment déclaré que vous n'attendriez pas l'aval du Parlement pour mener à bien les réformes...*", to which Ravalomanana answered: "*J'ai simplement voulu dire qu'en attendant l'aval du Parlement il n'était pas question de rester les bras croisés.*"<sup>83</sup>

From such a perspective, government is an issue of management: it requires expertise, good technicians, and lot of investment in communication and public relations. As a result, efficiency becomes the crucial factor by which management decisions are taken. Ravalomanana even took the step of incorporating a number of his Tiko senior management staff into the government. His party, TIM, created just after he decided to run for office, had its seat in one of the outlets of his supermarket chain, Magro – which, given the self-service nature of such establishments, is in itself highly symbolic.<sup>84</sup> The President also created a very strong team of experts and technicians, including Malagasy from top universities and a number of foreign consultants. With this highly professional team, the presidency grew not only in numbers, but also in capacity. Prominent names such as Jeffrey Sachs or Joseph Stiglitz were regularly invited to provide training to ministers;<sup>85</sup> indeed, these ministers were often appointed for their technical expertise and not as political figures and leaders. In fact, at a later stage of Ravalomanana's mandate, minister positions were advertised, and the selection process involved interviews and assessments. The post of a minister was thus reduced to one of a senior management employee, thereby de-politicizing the function and thus politics in general.

<sup>81</sup> Figures provided by the *Secrétariat Général de l'Assemblée Nationale*, Antananarivo.

<sup>82</sup> Some points clearly reinforced the presidential party and the ability of the President to maneuver its increase of power: SeFaFi highlighted how single lists were numerous for those regional elections and how this showed the prevalence of TIM to power, SeFaFi – Observatoire de la vie publique. "Elections régionales, entre flou et incertitude." *Communiqués 2008: A qui appartient l'Etat?* (Antananarivo, 2008), p. 20.

<sup>83</sup> Interviewed in Jean Domin, "J'entends gérer mon pays comme une entreprise," *Jeune Afrique* (21 November 2003).

<sup>84</sup> Vivier, *Madagascar sous Ravalomanana: la vie politique malgache depuis 2001*, p. 21.

<sup>85</sup> Ministers had to attend training sessions early in the morning before they started their work. Some were also sent abroad – to Canada, for example – in order to receive two-week training courses.

In sum, the asymmetries between the capacity of the presidency and the government grew steadily. As one of our interlocutors explained it very well, a certain cyclical process emerges by applying such a project approach: first you have a weak administration not able to provide services and generate income; donors and the presidency want to strengthen the administration and thus hire the best people out of the ministry; as a result, all the best people work in the president's office and have no competent counterpart in the ministries. Further, those in the presidency are paid much better; those left in the ministry are thus resentful and unmotivated; their attitude then actively blocks the work of others. In order to push a particular policy forward, the ministry is subsequently circumvented whenever possible in order to attain quicker results. This explanation highlights what happens under a presidency that is run like a business enterprise. Although some ministries did perform well and were able to absorb the pace and capacity of the presidency, most could not. Similarly, the administration of the National Assembly remained underfunded with a small and very badly paid staff that could not keep up with the presidency. In sum, the more the presidency invested in improving its capacities and develop the MAP, the *"politique générale de l'Etat"*, and various other reform projects, the more it weakened the other government institutions.

This dynamic constitutes a major driver of the further concentration of power during the last decade. It also led to an immense accumulation of knowledge with the presidency, raising the temptation to develop reforms in a small circle and reducing deliberation, parliamentary debate or other participative measures to a ritual of acclamation. In a country such as Madagascar, in which a significant gap remains between the "oral mentality" of its people and the imposed "written word" of the modern political system, "standard" Western operating procedures can result in confusion and instrumentalization by those "in the know". For instance, the notion that a proposed reform project, though written on paper, is simply a working paper to begin deliberations, and not a ratified decree, is one problem we identified. Often, draft papers written by consultants or expert groups in the presidency were perceived and proclaimed as finished products, thereby further excluding other institutions from being part of the decision-making process. The same happened in well-performing ministries, where projects were built on expertise but not on discussions and participation. As a result, the documents "presented" lack government ownership, as all those excluded from its production do not identify with it. Moreover, they are not based on previous communications either within government and the bureaucracy, nor with the wider public through the media. Draft policies and reform proposals are not "tested" on the populace, and are thus perceived as being imposed from above. This increases resistance to change, which in turn incites those in power from deliberating even less in order to simply push things through. This vicious circle ultimately leads to diminished participation and support, and to entrenched struggles within the political milieu.

## Conclusions

While giving the external and structural impression of constituting a modern bureaucratic state, the dynamics of power and authority in Madagascar cannot be understood without attempting to come to terms with a number of basic cultural traits about the foundations of power relations in Madagascar. With a little effort, two basic elements can be discerned: the sources of authority based on the cellular stratification of the Malagasy society expressed most visibly in the concept of the *ray amendreny*, and the centrality of an oral culture of communication.



These two factors help to explain a number of observations. First, they shed light on the extreme personalization of authority and power, instead of in the institution that the person represents. Second, they account for the absence of mass movements, even in the face of severe impoverishment: rising up against the ruler is not a feature of the Malagasy mindset. Third, they explain the disconnect between the technocratic approach of Marc Ravalomanana and the international community, and a political elite and civil service that is not accustomed to indicators, benchmarks, and success ratings.

The cultural attitude of the Malagasy is often described as fatalistic, yet the acceptance of authority structures is not a sign of surrender, but born out of strong social norms and obligations. Hopes for change are not utopian, but they do not rest on a specific social force or group either. Societal change does not occur overnight; it requires time and patience and the strength to handle setbacks. For change to occur, the fault lines and drivers identified in these chapters have to be addressed head-on. A shift in power relations will only emerge if the conditions for an active community life can be created. The oral culture provides an opportunity for the Malagasy to deliberate and express themselves, but local communal infrastructures are so poor that public services, even if created, remain out of reach for most. The opportunity cost of gathering information and expressing discontent is extremely high for a population struggling to cope and survive.

The fault lines between urban and rural, centre and periphery, result from the historically grown institutional and economic structures described in detail in this chapter. They help to maintain competitive disadvantages and actively hinder large parts of the population from developing their somatic and cognitive potential. They also provide the conditions for making the constant social exclusion and disempowerment of the population possible. Elite struggles, the accumulation of capital and political power at the centre, and the phenomenon of presidentialization since the creation of the Third Republic are all specific Malagasy deficiency syndromes resulting from the social exclusion and cellular stratification in Madagascar.

Despite all romanticism for traditional cultures, changes in power relations will be accompanied by a transformation from an oral to a written culture. Yet cultural shifts are by definition gradual and slow. They require a broad access to quality education for children, and everyday political interaction within local communities with the support of media and communication structures (e.g. public spaces, village markets, etc.). We do not concur with the idea that “civility” is mainly taught in the classroom. Learning and behavioural changes are based on lived experiences. Without investments in the infrastructure of local communities, the opportunity to make such experiences will not arise.

In the vocabulary of the international donor and development community, Madagascar can indeed be categorized as a fragile state because its populace and its elites do not identify with state institutions. There may be a national assembly and a cabinet, but the source of power and authority in Madagascar continues to be found elsewhere. This PCIA does not seek to make predictions, but in light of the power relations in Madagascar and the current weakness of the middle class, it is not far-fetched to assume that the Malagasy elite will become more virulent in its attempt to maintain or expand their influence and grasp over the economy. The constant state of disenchantment of the populations living at the periphery (including the urban poor) provides ample human resources to destabilize the HAT or any future government. Further, the disparate nature of the security sector and the volatile security situation – described in chapter 5 – could incite economic or military elites to increasingly rely on militias to secure their interests and provide for their own safety. Madagascar may have reached a dangerous tipping point, and the longer the political impasse continues, the higher will be the risk for a much more negative scenario to become reality.

## 4. The media as “fourth power” of the political system

According to democratic standards, mass media have the general task of organizing the public sphere and public debate in it. This entails reflecting the viewpoints of a large variety of individuals, groups and institutions, providing information to the electorate about significant events related to the country and its people, and adding background, context and meaning to these news items. In this way, the media represent the interface between the public and the government, state administration, politicians, parliamentarians, political parties, the economic sector and civil society.

In periods of political crises, the role of the media is accentuated even more. In such instances, the media need to address the sensitive issues related to the conflict, its causes and its consequences. The supply of information becomes an essential prerequisite for public debate over ways to prevent an escalation of the crisis and a resort to violence. Indeed, the role of the media becomes particularly pertinent when parliamentarians, political parties and other intermediaries between the government and the electorate are weak or compromised. This is arguably the case in contemporary Madagascar. When those intermediaries cannot fulfil their role of informing and educating the public and placing concerns onto the public agenda, the media need to fill this gap.

Can the Malagasy media live up to these expectations? Do they operate in a legal and economic environment that is conducive to this role? Do journalists and the media possess the capacities and resources to match these expectations? This chapter analyses the characteristics of those factors that influence the performance of the Malagasy media sector. It starts with an assessment of the media content given by media experts and the audience. Poor content appears to be the main problem. The chapter then turns to possible explanations for this shortcoming and systematically describes the situation with regard to journalists, media organisations, training institutions and media associations, the economic factors for media, and the legal situation. The analysis will demonstrate that almost all elements of the media sector exhibit deficiencies that need to be addressed in any endeavour of improving the sector's performance in view of mitigating, rather than exacerbating its long-term impact on conflict drivers. The chapter concludes with some remarks on how these shortcomings could be dealt with.

This analysis is based on a research tool developed by Christoph Spurrk for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to analyse media landscapes in a structured and coherent manner. The analysis was informed by a variety of already existing documents,<sup>86</sup> and by reports written especially for the PCIA by Malagasy academic media professionals. The latter compiled public information and analysis on the media landscape and its legal environment, and offered assessments of the media content, professionalism and related

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<sup>86</sup> In particular Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, “African Media Barometer Madagascar 2008 (AMB Madagascar),” 2008, (<http://fesmedia.org/african-media-barometer-amb/>); IREX, “Media Sustainability Index (MSI) 2007 Madagascar,” 2007, ([http://www.irex.org/programs/MSI\\_Africa/20067/2007/MSI07\\_madagascar.pdf](http://www.irex.org/programs/MSI_Africa/20067/2007/MSI07_madagascar.pdf)); IREX, “Media Sustainability Index (MSI) 2008 Madagascar,” 2008, ([http://www.irex.org/programs/MSI\\_Africa/2008/madagascar.asp](http://www.irex.org/programs/MSI_Africa/2008/madagascar.asp)); and the results of audience ratings for 2007 generated by ATW consultants.



issues. The analysis was substantiated between March and May 2010 through a series of interviews with media people, experts and politicians, and by means of focus groups with ordinary media users.

## Audience habits and an assessment of media content

As in many African countries, radio is the most effective medium to gain access to the population. According to the sources just mentioned above, over three quarters of all households in Madagascar listen to the radio, whereas less than a third have access to a television, with the latter, moreover, restricted mainly to urban areas. Newspapers are only consumed by around a quarter of all households, with numbers being even lower in rural areas. Indeed, newspapers tend to be too expensive for ordinary people, and many only take a glance at the headlines on the front page while standing at the kiosk. Only employees in offices have regular access to newspapers, with some having access to more than one.

There is a distinct pattern in the use of media. Radio is mainly listened to in the morning, until around midday. Listeners pay attention to the main lunchtime news on *Radio nationale Malagasy (RNM)* and other stations, as radio is readily available in, for example, buses, public places, shops, and in offices. In the evening, television tends to dominate the audience, and is watched for several newscasts and then for entertainment. It is worth pointing out that many households zap between various television news programmes in order to get a full picture in a short time and thus try to compensate for the propagandistic efforts of any particular station.

With a few exceptions, the content of the Malagasy media is generally assessed very critically by the public and many experts. The box below gives a synthetic overview of concerns raised. Especially pertinent is the lack of in-depth reporting and analysis, an issue that is of particular relevance in the context of successive political crises, where daily analysis and debate of causes, triggering factors, and ways out are a vital element of public discourse. One main reason for the low proportion of analysis in the printed media is, according to persons interviewed for this study, a too restricted timeframe that does not allow reporters to go into any detail.

Other experts, including those collaborating on the Media Sustainability Indexes for 2007 and 2008, are even more outspoken. It is charged that hardly any media produce impartial and quality reporting, and that reports often only state the facts without exploring the issues any further. Journalists cover events, but face problems in making in-depth analysis and producing commentary, evidently due to a lack of means and capacities on the one hand, and laziness and inadequate knowledge on the other. Younger journalists are also charged with bad-quality reporting, in which crime suspects are already proclaimed guilty, facts are wrong, and libel is committed. Government media, in turn, are biased and do not report on the opposition, and state television and radio do not raise criticism of the government unless such criticism is also reported in other media. Information and sources are often not checked, and the topic selection is questionable, with one interviewee mentioning that government media do not report on important social issues, but only on political ones – and then only superficially. Here, again, we see a lack of analysis, in-depth-reporting, and even bias towards the holders of power. There are some exceptions, nonetheless – *l'Hebdo de Madagascar* is a case in point.

The Malagasy audience, for its part, has clear and high expectations towards the media. It wants to know the truth and be provided with the right information; it believes that journalists should educate the public, and that they need to engage in proper observation, analysis, argumentation and synthesis. And it wants the information provided to be relevant for their daily needs. All this points to the fact that the Malagasy audience is putting the tasks of truth, observation and analysis very high on the agenda, and that the media, in turn, have a very demanding remit in the public's view. This role is even more demanding in times of political crisis, insecurity, and economic uncertainty. As assessments portray, stations such as Radio Don Bosco are much appreciated because they air talk-shows that present a diversity of viewpoints. It is clear that audiences hope that good reporting will build trust, contribute to elaborating a vision for society, tear people out of their isolation, and perhaps even change their mentality.

### The Malagasy media: overview of criticisms

- Lack of in-depth-reporting and solid analysis
- Sensationalistic and exaggerating reports
- Lack of professionalism
- Use of information that is not verified or cross-checked
- Journalists unknowledgeable about the rules of their profession
- Media are instruments of propaganda
- Credibility is suffering as some journalists have been bought off
- Media are only commercially oriented
- There is a missing sense of dignity
- Journalistic analysis is not independent from owners' opinion
- There is too much censorship

Needless to say, some media outlets are more positively assessed than others. TV plus, for example, is said to have a larger diversity of information and be less partial than many of its competitors. Furthermore, the public media were reporting more critically on one particular issue, that of the distribution of relief items, than TV Viva, for instance. Yet the overall performance of the media continues to be disastrous: the media have lost people's confidence not only due to their political bias, but mainly due to an obvious lack of substance. When journalists do not come across as objective, they lose their credibility.

## What factors are causing this state of the news media?

### *a) Knowledge and professionalism of journalists*

Liberalization towards the end of the 1980s and a flourishing of the media sector at the start of the 1990s has led to a steady increase in the number of journalists in Madagascar. Today, the number of working journalists is approximately 1000. Yet newly employed staff members did not necessarily bring with them the skills needed, and today it is apparent that journalism in Madagascar is characterized by a lack of professionalism, of theoretical foundations, and by the non-adherence to the professional rules of verification, cross-checking and multi-sourcing. Moreover, there is no clear and agreed-upon role model for journalists in Madagascar. Their main aims and tasks are not transparent, neither to the public nor to the journalists themselves. Additionally, knowledge of ethics in journalism is very limited, and consequently journalistic opinion can be bought by newsmakers. Journalists accept brown bags for covering certain issues and are willing to align themselves with the political coloration of their owners. There is some disagreement over whether journalists simply do not have the capacities to cover in-depth stories and report in an unbiased way, or whether it is a result of them not obeying the code of ethics. Self-censorship, another widespread phenomenon, hinders good reporting further. Such limitations are attributed to the absence of a solid education (bar a few short, thematic courses) and to a lack of investment by owners into quality. Ultimately, the factors prevent most journalists from really getting to grips with a subject matter.

### *b) Characteristics of media outlets*

As with other African countries, Madagascar has seen a flourishing of electronic media when the state monopoly of its airwaves ended. Liberalization in the 1990s delivered a rapid growth of radio and television stations, and the numbers continue to rise. In 2000 there were 136 radio stations and 17 private television stations; in 2010 there are 305 radio stations and 40 television stations. Nevertheless, their geographical coverage is limited: only the national public broadcasters are entitled to cover the whole country. Others, such as Radio and Television Analamanga (RTA) and Malagasy Broadcasting System (MBS), establish subsidiaries in an effort to enlarge their coverage; this partly explains the exceptional high numbers of radio stations. There are also various licences for international broadcasters like the BBC, Voice of America, Radio France International, and Radio Nederlands.

There are three remarkable issues regarding national media outlets in Madagascar:

- the polarization of media according to their political affiliation;
- the strictness of the editorial line; and
- political pressure and reactions inside media organizations.

The majority of mass media in Madagascar is owned by politicians or business people with interests in politics, and most political leaders have their own media outlets.<sup>87</sup> Due to this polarization, there is a strict editorial line in opinion, and journalists are expected to take this into consideration. State television and radio do not present criticism of the government unless such criticism also features in other media; the public thus sees them as being biased.

Not only has the repression of journalists been on the increase since the start of the current political crisis, but some owners have also been interfering in editorial matters, either through fear of losing advertisement revenue from particular industries, or through fear of being closed down by the authorities. This interference can take on various forms. Generally, editors-in-chief are known to read journalists' articles and make changes according to the political view of the owner, a practice that has been on the rise since the start of the present crisis. Before, directors of publications were mostly reading the newspaper only after they had been published. Now, it is said that some read articles before publication and suggest changes. Journalists of one particular media outlet have also been known to belong to opposing political camps. Since the crisis, however, many have been forced to alter their opinion; many no longer feel secure.

### ***c) Limited capacity of media institutions***

**Training** facilities for journalists exist, although most working journalists have learnt their profession on the job. Donors offer a lot of short-term education and training courses, but these efforts appear to be fragmented and un-coordinated, leading many experts to view them as problematic and unsustainable. Today, the University of Antananarivo offers a new Master's in Communication and Media, conducted by academics and professionals and open to new and mid-career journalists. A private institution, the *Ecole supérieure Saint Michel*, offers a similar degree. There are also other private schools offering courses, mostly in communication. Overall, only a very small number are active in journalism training, and the quality is low; moreover, there is little opportunity for working journalists to receive continued education as editorial staff is always scarce.

**Associations** for journalists are common in Madagascar, although hardly any one of them seem to be effective in terms of supplying much needed protection. The *Ordre des journalistes (OJM)* was founded with the aim of being the juridical arm of the press, but it has been inactive since 2007. In collaboration with UNESCO, OJM had elaborated a code of ethics that could act as a guide for the journalistic profession. Yet the code has so far not been widely accepted. Suggestions have been made to merge it with the "*Code de communication*", a proposed new law to regulate the entire media sector that has been discussed for a number of years. There are also more than 20 other associations grouped according to age, specialization, region, and media genre, but their effectiveness is limited as people are not inclined to pay for membership.

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<sup>87</sup> Marc Ravalomanana owns MBS radio and TV, Radio Mada as well as a number of newspapers, but many other media outlets are close to the current opposition (i.e. "*les trois mouvances*"). Rajoelina owns only Radio and TV Viva by himself. Many owners of other stations have or have had close ties to members of the HAT, like RTA, Radio Tana, Radio Antsiva as well as newspapers such as *La Vérité*, *L'Express* and *La Gazette de la Grande Ile*. The Alliance which swept Rajoelina to power proved to be quite volatile and is reflected in shifting attitudes of these media outlets towards the HAT.

The main problem of journalistic self-organization seems to be that there is not one body that takes up the task of protecting journalists from undue interference by state or non-state actors. This is especially urgent in the current crisis, where numerous attacks against journalists, undue closures of media, and incidents of harassment have been registered. The lack of protection adds to insecurity and paralyzes the best in the profession. Journalists need an organization for the defence of their interests. Indeed, a new “*collectif de journalistes*” has been formed with that same aim. Additionally, the directors of publications have convened in order to adopt a charter for elections, stressing impartiality and truth. There is even a board monitoring the charter. There also appears to be some support for free media through a new civil society body, the Observatory of Public Life, or SeFaFi.

**Media research**, beyond audience ratings by special agencies, does not exist.

#### *d) Conducive Economic Environment*

In comparison to many other African countries, the **advertising** market in Madagascar seems to be rather large, according to the 2008 African Media Barometer. There is also a well-developed range of media agencies. Publicity is organized and attracted mainly by big groups of media houses, radio and live television broadcasts, even though there are signs that the market has recently been shrinking. All this does not mean, of course, that every media outlet is profitable, and many are dependent on contributions and advertisements from international donors, NGOs, and the state. Overall, however, the economic environment for the media appears to be conducive in Madagascar, a phenomenon that may be related to the monopolistic and oligopolistic structures (and thus advertising power) of many market sectors.

By contrast, **salaries** for journalists are relatively low, and similar to those found in other African states. While salaries appear to be in the range of 100 to 250 US dollars per month, some reports suggest that starting salaries may be as low as \$30, rendering subsistence and family support very difficult. This is one reason why brown bag journalism becomes attractive. In consequence, many journalists are doubly employed, also acting as press attachés for ministries, as special consultants, or engaged in other public relations work. But again, some media outlets take advantage of this double employment, as press attachés have privileged access to government information and can monopolize information.

In terms of **infrastructure**, modern equipment is in use for media at the national, but generally not at the regional level. Government interference is not an issue here, as printing presses, broadcast transmitters and Internet providers are privately owned and controlled. The distribution of print media, however, is rather more problematic; while also in private hands, it is unorganized, and dissemination to rural areas is fragmentary. Overall, though, the economic environment for media development is rather positive, despite salary concerns for reporters.

#### *e) A legal environment hindering good crisis journalism*

Freedom of expression and freedom of the media is guaranteed by the Constitution and Communication Act 92-039, and the violation of the media law is punishable by imprisonment. Indeed, the Penal Code and Act 90-031 are regularly and strictly applied against journalists for offences against the Head of State, for the incitement to public disorder, and for defamation. Yet the text for the implementation of Act 92-039 does not exist, nor has the already mentioned *Code de communication* been instated. In other words, the legal setting is one of instrumentalized vagueness and imprecision, coupled with a degree of juridical ignorance among legislators and journalists alike.

The insecurity resulting from this lack of legal reform and opaque interpretation of the law opens up additional avenues for the political authorities to harass and suppress the media. Thus, Marc Ravalomanana closed down Radio Viva in January 2009 and Radio Antsiva in March 2009; Andry Rajoelina, in turn, subsequently forced the closure of MBS and Radio Mada. Journalists are also regularly intimidated, stations jammed, and unequal access to government press conferences is a common occurrence. For many, self-censorship often appears the only means of avoiding such actions, with private channels and stations opting not to question official viewpoints and to restrict their reporting to less controversial issues.

Two additional issues are worth raising here. The first relates to licensing procedures. In order to broadcast on radio or television, it is necessary to acquire a licence, valid for five years, from the *Conseil supérieur de la communication audiovisuelle (CSCA)*. Established by two ministries and one regulatory body, the *Office Malagasy d'Etudes et de Régulation des Télécommunications (OMERT)*, the CSCA authorizes licences, controls programming, and imposes sanctions when stipulated requirements are not adhered to. Yet whilst the CSCA ought to be an entity independent from government, its employees are actually from the ministries themselves. It should also be a self-funded body, which it is not – although it has received contributions from the United States and UNICEF.

The second issue is related to the *Code de communication*, which, though constituting a worthwhile initiative, currently includes several contradictory chapters. While supposed to promote the freedom of expression, Chapter 5 stipulates that this freedom is restricted for issues of national defence, national unity, and cultural identity – a complete reversal of its original *raison d'être*. It also seems risky to establish the registry for journalists, as is suggested, on the basis of graduation from a professional education programme, thereby severely limiting the number of journalists eligible. Such registries are commonly used (in Africa and elsewhere) to eliminate critical voices, either by not renewing their licences or manipulating their graduation documents.

#### ***f) Some societal beliefs are not in favour of critical journalism***

A further factor that needs to be taken into account is the widespread belief that Malagasy culture is one of compromise. Critical journalism and the constant questioning of authorities, according to this argument, is thus foreign to the Malagasy mindset. A more questionable assertion is the claim that a “culture of secrets” is predominant in Madagascar, and that this is the reason why journalists find it difficult to obtain information from government sources. Our own experience in conducting this PCIA, by contrast, saw officials of all governments and all levels being quite ready to share all sorts of details, albeit anonymously.

## **Conclusions**

The main problem of journalism in Madagascar is not the much-discussed “politicization”, i.e. the political bias in some media in favour of one side or another. As long as such opinions are transparent, such bias need not be to the detriment of the media sector; indeed, other countries bear testimony to this. The main dilemma, instead, is the poor quality of the information presented, and the lack of background and analysis. Not only is there room for a greater diversity of viewpoints, but journalists seem either incapable, unable or uninterested when it comes to searching for new information, cross-checking available facts, and going into in-depth analysis. When criticism is voiced, it remains superficial and ultimately polemic.



This observation is particularly pertinent in times of political crisis, societal tensions and insecurity. Under such circumstances, the demand for up-to-date, precise information is not only higher, but audiences are looking for answers related to the drivers of conflict, possible solutions, and how, in the interim, their daily lives will be affected. This demand is further accentuated in situations where political parties are weak, opposition parties silenced, other intermediaries are failing to have an impact and the elites are busy looking after their own interests. This is the case in contemporary Madagascar, and the role of the media as “fourth power” of the political system – and its concomitant potential of being an amplifier of conflict drivers – should not be underestimated.

The poor performance of the Malagasy media to provide the much sought after in-depth reporting and analysis about successive political crises and related socio-economic issues is rooted in:

- the absence of a positive vision for journalism and the task it is supposed to fulfil (no ethical code, no role model);
- the lack of thematic knowledge and journalistic capacity, and a low degree of professionalism in general;
- the current wave of repression and a lack of protection for critical journalists; and
- limited resources for journalistic work (low salaries and few resources for investigation).

All of these factors are hindering journalists from fulfilling their task, especially in times of instability. Poor and superficial information, in combination with political bias, may well be fuelling the tenacity and longevity of the current political impasse. It has definitely not helped enlighten the public about its causes and possible solutions.

There are a number of ways the international community could further peacebuilding in Madagascar by giving greater attention to the media sector. The first crucial issue that needs to be addressed is the protection of active journalists. Creating the conditions that allow them to continue to work (support could range from the provision of safe houses for journalists in danger, the setting-up of mechanisms for monitoring and advocacy) would not only be a contribution to overcoming the current political crisis, but also a long-term investment. Indeed, regarding long-term protection, the legal situation is in dire need of improvement. One way forward would be to discuss, modify, and finally adopt the *Code de communication* as a coherent legal framework for the media. A strong union or association would then be required to implement and monitor the protection of journalists, building on the sector’s own self-regulation efforts. Perhaps the OJM could also be re-vitalized.

Secondly, the capacities of journalists need to be drastically enhanced. On the one hand, this would entail efforts to foster debate and reach agreement on the overall role and vision of journalism in Malagasy society, and in particular on how this role contrasts with that of other “political” institutions such as the government, the civil service, and political parties. This debate should involve the journalistic community and the wider public, and be codified in professional standards and regulations. On the other hand, this would entail strengthening journalists’ conceptual knowledge of issues related to peace, societal conflict, and political processes in times of instability. It would have to be determined whether such capacity-building could be achieved in cooperation with existing training institutions, with on-site training, or by other means.

A third option would be to enhance the operational support for some of the more diverse stations that already offer open debate (such as Don Bosco, or TV plus, for instance). While it is currently quite risky for the media to report on politics, it should nonetheless be possible to discuss key social issues, for instance, in a way that offers concrete analysis while not posing direct threats to those harbouring aspiration for power.



In sum, it is important to emphasize again that the media in Madagascar should not simply be perceived as taking on the role of “watchdog”; nor that this analysis is criticizing the lack of – and thus calling for more – investigative journalism. In constitutional democracies, the media are part of what has been called the fourth branch of government, next to the executive, legislative and judiciary. Its main task is to deliver qualitative and balanced reporting that critically examines the discourse of politicians, state institutions, business enterprises and civil society organizations, and tests this discourse for argumentative consistency and thus validity. This is precisely what the Malagasy media sector is not doing. In Madagascar, as elsewhere, laws, regulations, programmes and initiatives are generally drawn up in a technical and elitist vocabulary; it is the task of the journalist to decipher such texts and make them comprehensible for the layperson, so that the latter may form his or her own opinion.

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## 5. Security sector governance in Madagascar

An analysis of security and the security sector constitutes one of the central pillars of any PCIA. Security is the flip-side of conflict. On the one hand, it relates to human security: the way individuals perceive and react to threats to their physical and psychological well-being. On the other, security refers to the structures put in place by the public authorities in order to prevent and act in the face of an external attack, as well as internal disorder, civil strife and criminality.

Not only did Madagascar inherit the French political system of presidential republicanism, but it was also bestowed with the French security triad of the army, the gendarmerie, and the police. The following sections will look at each of these institutions in turn, outlining the challenges, pathologies, and security consequences of each. The focus will then shift to the penitentiary system, before discussing recent ill-fated reform initiatives of the security sector. A concluding section will present reflections on today's situation, marked by an increase in the use of firearms for acts of robbery and assault, collusion of elements of the armed forces in the smuggling trade (illegal logging and cattle rustling, in particular) and ominous signs suggesting the increasing presence of private militias.

The disparate state of the security sector represents the last building block in our analysis of societal fault lines and conflict drivers. We will thus be able to complete the analytical toolkit which will subsequently enable us to critically reflect in a concluding chapter on the way the international development community has been engaging in Madagascar.

Research for this chapter has revealed the urgent need to undertake a comprehensive survey of armed violence and crime, not just in Antananarivo but across the country. The availability of firearms appears to be rising at an alarming rate, but as many violent acts are not reported to the authorities (perceived to be part of the problem), the picture remains nebulous and fragmentary.

Writing this part of the PCIA for Madagascar is challenging, not least because of a lack of existing material and accurate data. This chapter thus draws heavily on numerous confidential interviews with high-ranking officers, government officials and consultants, and elements of the private security sector. It also draws upon new survey data collected as part of a small study of security perceptions that was conducted specifically for this PCIA between February and May 2010. Although the limited time and resources did not allow

for a full household survey, an elaborate questionnaire was nonetheless prepared and applied in 15 *Fokontany* (neighborhoods) of Antananarivo. Further survey data were collected in two *Fokontany* in Ambotolampy, a town 70km south of the capital, that is paradoxically known for both its craft production of firearms, and for its particularly efficient police forces. Nine focus groups were also organized with a cross-section of the population.

## The military

As a recent academic article aptly expressed it, the only thing Madagascar's military has in abundance is generals.<sup>88</sup> It has no navy to speak of, no functioning airforce, and its battalions are built around material that the country managed to acquire (tanks, artillery, etc.), rather than on what it actually required to fulfil its functions. A third of the island is designated as *zones rouges* – for the simple reason that none of the Malagasy armed forces could ever deploy there due to difficult terrain, missing infrastructure, and the wrong equipment. But the country does have an astonishing number of high-ranking officers, enough for an army of around 400,000 soldiers, in fact – rather than the 12,000 men it actually possesses.

In Madagascar's post-independence history, the military first appeared on the scene during the *mai malgache* of 1972, when a student-instigated general strike in Antananarivo and the refusal of the army to open fire on demonstrators induced President Philibert Tsiranana to hand all powers to the Chief of Staff, General Gabriel Ramantsoa. Ramantsoa established a military transitional government in the capital and appointed military governors to each of the six provinces. Yet the new regime was split into a number of competing factions, resulting in an open rebellion of the armed forces in December 1974 under the leadership of Colonel Brécharid Rajaonarison. Ramantsoa dissolved his government and handed power over to the Interior Minister and Head of the Gendarmerie, Colonel Richard Ratsimandrava, on 5 February 1975.

Ratsimandrava was promptly assassinated a week later (by whom continues to be shrouded in mystery). Martial law was proclaimed that same evening of February 11, and a *directoire militaire* proclaimed. This military directorate was in place for four months, and the man who benefited most from it was a certain “*capitaine de frigate*”, Didier Ratsiraka, who had been appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs under Ramantsoa. On 15 June 1975, Ratsiraka was nominated to be the new Head of State by the military directorate, and was additionally given the title of *président du Conseil Suprême de la Révolution (CSR)*. Madagascar's socialist experiment was about to begin.

As Jaona Rabenirainy has nicely analysed, Ratsiraka followed a three-fold strategy to rid his presidency from any contestation of his rule from the ranks of the military.<sup>89</sup> The first consisted in a “banalization” of the military establishment by redefining the armed forces as “militants in uniform” fighting for the socialist cause. The second entailed a major restructuring of the army into three new General Staffs (*état-majors*): “*armée de développement, forces aéronavales et forces d'intervention*”, all of which had a primarily domestic orientation. The third strategy involved caring for the long-term careers of his high-ranking officers. We already mentioned the *Office militaire national pour les industries stratégiques (OMNIS)* in Chapter 3, which offered “loyal” members of the military the possibility of benefiting from the *Malgachisation* of various economic sectors.

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<sup>88</sup> Joana Rabenirainy, “Les forces armées et les crises politiques (1972-2002)”, *Politique africaine*, 86 (2002), pp. 86-101.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 90-2. A further strategy was to proclaim himself “Admiral” in 1983, thereby becoming the highest ranking officer in the history of Madagascar.

Overall, the structures put in place by Ratsiraka, in particular the focus on internal affairs and the high degree of clientalism amongst an inflated officers' club, remain features of the security sector until today. Indeed, the crisis of 2002 demonstrated the internal cleavages that had been creating within the armed forces by Ratsiraka's approach: the principle chasm between Ratsiraka's "*loyalistes*" and Ravalomanana's "*légitimistes*" was no longer related to political principles over the role of the armed forces in a constitutional state system. Instead, the military had been reduced to an institution paralyzed by infighting and characterized by the pursuit of individual career opportunities and economic interests.

The split in the army in 2002 induced Ratsiraka to hand out assault rifles to militias in the countryside, in order to consolidate his power base. Ravalomanana, in turn, ensured that his *légitimistes*, including a significant number of reservists, were armed as well. The resulting situation was precarious, to say the least, and was as close as Madagascar came in its turbulent history to being confronted with a civil war. And although the army remained a central player in the crisis, its instrumentalization by individuals vying for power further underlined its institutional paralysis. The situation also led to a militarization of Malagasy society (most of the weapons distributed were never returned to the arsenals), thus setting an uneasy precedent for future violence.<sup>90</sup>

2009 reveals a similar pattern in which the military appeared strongly divided and unable to unify behind one cause. On 17 March 2009, after several weeks of tensions and political violence between Andry Rajoelina and Marc Ravalomanana, during which the former repeatedly asked the President to resign, power was handed to a military directorate led by Vice-Admiral Hyppolite Ramaroson, loyal to Ravalomanana. According to the decree of the military directorate, Ramaroson was in a position to take all measures deemed necessary to restore public order and stability. For this purpose, he was required to convene a national congress to reassess the constitution and was due to hold elections within two years.<sup>91</sup> However, it was not clear whether the military had agreed to this transition to military rule, and many of those siding with Ravalomanana perceived this as a provocation, worsening dissensions within the army.

Ravalomanana's decision to relinquish power had been highly motivated by the threat posed by the CAPSAT barracks (the *Corps d'armée du personnel et des services administratifs et technique*), a mutinous movement supportive of Rajoelina that was led by General Noël Rakotonandrasana. A week before Ravalomanana's resignation, members of CAPSAT had begun taking control of ministries in Antananarivo and then marched to the presidential palace.<sup>92</sup> Then, the same day a presidential *ordonnance* granting power to Ramaroson was proclaimed, the mutinous group got in on the act once again. They "kidnapped" the members of the military directorate in front of the cameras of the media, bundled them into a van and took them to the CAPSAT barracks where they were "asked" to transfer all powers to Rajoelina.

It is interesting to note that many CAPSAT officers had been influential under Ratsiraka's regime, notably Colonel André Ndriarijaona, whom CAPSAT subsequently imposed as *chef de l'Etat major* on Rajoelina.<sup>93</sup> Other members seem to have followed a more opportunistic strategy: Rakotonandrasana, for instance, who led the mutineers at CAPSAT, had been part

<sup>90</sup> Hauge, *Madagascar Past and Present Political Crisis: Resilience of Pro-Peace Structures and Cultural Characteristics*, pp. 14 and 29.

<sup>91</sup> See "Ordonnance 2009-001 du 17 mars 2009 conférant les pleins pouvoirs à un directoire militaire".

<sup>92</sup> "Armée, gendarmes et policiers dans la tourmente", *Lettre de l'Océan Indien* 1257 (13 March 2009).

<sup>93</sup> "Les soldats du Capsat sont partout," *Lettre de l'Océan Indien* 1259 (April 4, 2009).

of the *légitimistes*, in 2002 – indeed, he has been an influential figure ever since Ratsiraka's second term in office. The uprising of the mutinous group in 2009 was therefore definitely linked to old allegiances and the will to be in control of the head of state.<sup>94</sup>

Many of the army officers who played important roles in Rajoelina's ascension to power were then nominated to the HAT's government. Colonel Camille Vital, Prime Minister of the HAT, is one of them. As an article in *La Lettre de l'Océan Indien* remarked, "*Les soldats du Capsat sont partout*". The article also provided evidence of the ambition of the military to control civilian members of the government, thus highlighting the army's growing appetite for power.<sup>95</sup> Given that Andry Rajoelina does not enjoy international recognition as the official leader of Madagascar, he relies heavily on the military's support to consolidate his position. Certain elements of the army seem perfectly willing to oblige, again leading to an overall paralysis of the institution and a diminution of its status in the eyes of the public. The recent violent confrontations in the CAPSAT barracks in April and May 2010 highlight that the internal split is set to continue.<sup>96</sup>

## The gendarmerie

As in France, the *Gendarmerie Nationale* in Madagascar constitutes a branch of the military that is tasked not with the defence of the country against external attack, but with the maintenance of law and order.<sup>97</sup> And just as in France (and for instance in Italy with the *Carabinieri*), insuring the force is both accountable and legitimate requires a careful balance of oversight from the Interior and Defence Ministries. In Madagascar, however, both of these two ministerial positions have tended to be occupied by military men, and a comparable degree of accountability has generally not materialized. Instead, the gendarmerie shows up similar trends to those just described for the army, involving far too many officers, a meddling in domestic politics, entrepreneurial enrichment, corruption, and ultimately an ineffective implementation of its actual task: maintaining public order in rural areas.

The gendarmerie was not spared the comprehensive restructuring of the armed forces undertaken by Ratsiraka during the late 1970s. So-called *unités spéciales de la gendarmerie* were created for the defence of the regime – in particular the infamous commandos of the *Groupe spécial d'intervention et de sécurité (GSIS)* – and were placed under the direct control of the presidency. The rationale for this lies with the capacity of the gendarmerie in the areas of intelligence and security provision, and thus with its ability to lend direct support

<sup>94</sup> Considering Rajoelina's young age, it was imagined by CAPSAT that he would be a puppet of the military.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* and "Andry Rajoelina a du mal à garder la main," *Lettre de l'Océan Indien* 1264 (June 20, 2004).

<sup>96</sup> "Afflux de militaires au gouvernement," *Lettre de l'Océan Indien* 1276 (December 25, 2009) and "Andry Rajoelina abat sa dernière carte," *Lettre de l'Océan Indien* 1285 (May 15, 2010), which stated that "*La hiérarchie militaire mise en place par Rajoelina et qui l'a soutenu jusqu'à ce jour doit composer avec d'autres sensibilités au sein de l'appareil militaire. Cette semaine, d'anciens officiers en retraite, regroupés derrière le général Désiré Rakotoarijaona et le colonel Jean Emile Tsaranazy, tous deux proches de l'ancien président Didier Ratsiraka, ont créé une structure militaire chargée de veiller à la bonne marche de la transition. Même s'il ne s'affichera sans doute pas sous le qualificatif de "militaro-civil", un nouveau gouvernement au sein duquel le poids des militaires serait accru est toujours à l'ordre du jour.*"

<sup>97</sup> See Ministry of Defense's website, Decret 63-253, Article 1, May 19, 1963 (available at [http://www.defense.gov.mg/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=26%3Ahistoire-de-la-gendarmerie-nationale&catid=2%3Ahistorique&Itemid=2&showall=1](http://www.defense.gov.mg/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=26%3Ahistoire-de-la-gendarmerie-nationale&catid=2%3Ahistorique&Itemid=2&showall=1)).

to a regime. Many gendarmes have headed intelligence agencies or played key roles in their restructuring, a recent example of this being Marc Ravalomanana's Central Intelligence Service (CIS).<sup>98</sup>

Indeed, the gendarmerie has always had a crucial influence on Malagasy politics, alongside the army, and its siding has proved crucial in determining whether a political crisis resulted in the overthrow of a regime. Although generally considered to remain passive,<sup>99</sup> in times of political crisis, Madagascar's gendarmerie has either repressed or supported the political leader and his regime. In fact, special units of the gendarmerie, controlled directly by the presidency, crushed rebellious youth movements in Antananarivo in the mid 1980s.<sup>100</sup> And in 2002, the gendarmerie was again at the forefront of politics, with nine officers of the *Inspéction générale de la gendarmerie nationale* launching the so-called "*courant légitimiste*" in favour of Marc Ravalomanana on February 28, 2002.<sup>101</sup> Overall, it appears that obtaining support of military institutions, including the gendarmerie, is fundamental for Malagasy leaders to prolong their stay in power.

The gendarmerie's most formidable foe have always been, and arguably continues to be, the *Dahalo* cattle raiders:<sup>102</sup> armed bands roaming the countryside on the hunt for "zébu", and willing to engage in the slaughter of villagers in order to obtain them. The gendarmerie, however, have been accused of battling fire with fire: often, it appears that members of the *Dahalo* have been shot on the spot, thus preventing them from having a fair trial. Collusion with the gendarmerie may be one possible reason for this intentional "silencing" – indeed, allegations of corruption have been raised related to the stolen cattle that were resold with falsified documents.<sup>103</sup>

A new target has been the illegal rosewood loggers. The regional gendarmerie commands are hopelessly overstretched, not least following the administrative restructuring of the island from six provinces into 22 regions in 2004 and 2007, which was not coupled with an adequate regrouping of the gendarmerie. With calls for action on the part of international activists and NGOs to do something about the rampant logging on the rise, a special "Task Force" was created and sent to the affected areas on 18 September 2009. Not only did capacities allocated to its role prove insufficient,<sup>104</sup> but according to several of our interviewees it soon appeared as if the Task Force had itself been bought off. Instead of preventing the illegal logging activities, it was claimed that elements of the gendarmerie was actually now involved in securing safe passage of the goods from the forest to the harbour.

<sup>98</sup> "Une super agence d'espions," *Lettre de l'Océan Indien* 1050 (December 12, 2003).

<sup>99</sup> Jaona Rabenirainy, "Les forces armées et les crises politiques (1972-2002)", *Politique Africaine* 86, (March 2000), pp. 86-101, at p. 87.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

<sup>102</sup> See Ministry of Defense's historical account of the gendarmerie (available at [http://www.defense.gov.mg/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=26%3Ahistoire-de-la-gendarmerie-nationale&catid=2%3Ahistorique&Itemid=2&showall=1](http://www.defense.gov.mg/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=26%3Ahistoire-de-la-gendarmerie-nationale&catid=2%3Ahistorique&Itemid=2&showall=1)).

<sup>103</sup> Jonny Hogg, "Cattle 'war zone' in Madagascar," *BBC News* (21 June 2008).

<sup>104</sup> Global Witness and Environmental Investigation Agency, "Enquête sur l'exploitation, le transport et l'exportation illicite de bois précieux dans la region Sava à Madagascar" (August 2009), available at [http://www.globalwitness.org/media\\_library\\_get.php/1187/1270578151/madag\\_report\\_revised\\_finalfr.pdf](http://www.globalwitness.org/media_library_get.php/1187/1270578151/madag_report_revised_finalfr.pdf), p. 14.



## The police

Madagascar's *Police Nationale*, in contrast, has generally tried to keep away from the political scene. They have not, of course, been overly successful in doing so, given that the *Directeur générale de la Police Nationale (DGPN)* is, together with his counterparts from the army and the gendarmerie, subordinate to the *Etat-major mixte opérationnel national (EMMONAT)*. After having been somewhat marginalized under Ratsiraka's regime (who was more in favour of bolstering special units that were directly under his command), the police forces subsequently received greater attention during Marc Ravalomanana's presidency. Collaboration and donor support in the police and justice sectors came from France, the United States, China and South Africa, and the European Union funded a programme to reinforce the workings of the judicial police.

Stockpile management of small arms has been one of the main worries of Madagascar's armed forces, not least the police. A number of sources have asserted that the low salaries of police officers has led some of them to rent out their firearms while off duty, although this remains unconfirmed. What is certain, though, is that the availability of small arms for use in armed robbery has been on the increase, not least in the capital Antananarivo. There, a revolver can be bought for as little as 300,000 Ariary (around € 120.00), and rented out for the day for a third of that.<sup>105</sup> Even AK-47 assault rifles are available for sale, pointing to the fact that the weapons handed out to "reservists" during the 1991 and 2002 crises may still be in circulation. It also hints at a thriving arms trade, with 155 of the 243 hunting rifles seized in 2009 having been found by custom officials at Toamasina (Tamatave), Madagascar's largest port. The result of all this is clear: recent compilations of media reports from a variety of sources show that during the month of May 2010, firearms attacks made up around two-thirds of all crimes reported, constituting an increase of over 40% from twelve months previously, May 2009.

The survey conducted as part of this PCIA confirm this trend – as, indeed, do the records of a police station we were able to gain access to.<sup>106</sup> 66% of survey respondents named firearms to be the weapon used by those constituting the main source of insecurity. 72% classified their current personal situation within the community as lacking order and stability, and 75% also deemed the situation to be worsening. What is more, calling the police is often not perceived to be a worthwhile endeavour when attacked, leading us to believe that official statistics are subject to a high degree of under-reporting, both in urban and in rural areas. Interestingly, this trend has also led to the formation of neighbourhood watch initiatives – *Andrimasom-pokonolona*, or self-defence units – which have opted to take the provision of security into their own hands.

Overall, it appears that the authority of the regular police is being severely undermined at present, both because of corruption in its own ranks, and because of the presence of the gendarmerie and a whole host of special forces and intervention units in urban areas. Furthermore, we have been told that a number of private militias are also now operating in the region of Antananarivo – this, perhaps, is the most worrying development of the on-going political crises, but also perhaps the most difficult to accurately assess. Given the territorial features of the city (a densely-populated labyrinth of alleys and one-lane streets sprawled across a number of steep hillsides), an armed insurgency of any sort would be almost impossible to quell.

<sup>105</sup> See for instance, "Armes à vendre", *l'Hebdo de Madagascar*, 271 (23 April 2010).

<sup>106</sup> One activities report, dated 1 April 2010, observed: "*La dotation d'un fusil d'assaut (KALACHNIKOV) est vivement souhaitée car le CPD [...] ne dispose qu'un seul fusil d'assaut alors que les attaques à main armée s'accroissent de jour en jour et suscite des commentaires défavorables à l'endroit des forces de l'ordre*".



## Trial and punishment

According to the accounts of people having professional ties with Madagascar's judiciary or working for an improvement of conditions in the country's prisons, much is awry in the way the system works. Indeed, what we heard is corroborated by the insightful chronicles of Patrice de Charette, who was sent to the country in 2005 as *Magistrate détaché* for the *Mission d'appui à l'Etat de droit mise en place par l'Union européenne*.

In the hopelessly overcrowded Central Prison of Antananarivo, inmates spend their time in cramped conditions in communal cells meant for 800, but in which there are regularly 2,600 prisoners. The prison is also tremendously under-staffed, with two guards for 1,100 prisoners being another figure from the same prison. Sanitary installations are almost non-existent, and the daily ration comes to 300g of "manioc" grains, the equivalent of 100 calories. Torture is systematically applied.

The tribunal system fares little better. The courts are over-stretched and desperately short of funding, and a mind-boggling two-thirds of the roughly 20,000 inmates in Madagascar are actually in "preventive detention", awaiting trial. In 2005, a horrifying number of these had been there, waiting, for over a decade. For many, it turned out, the dossier had been lost.

In rural areas, the situation is oftentimes quite simply bizarre. Some prisons are run by one single warden, who is thus forced to work day and night, 365 days a year. The local court may be more than a day's walk away, and given the lack of police vehicles, trials are scheduled in blocks. Then, groups of up to 30 or 40 people walk, without handcuffs, and in the accompaniment of only one guard, for a day or two through the bush to the courthouse. The night is spent sleeping outside. After the mass trials, everyone walks back again, although depending on how harsh the sentences were, "the general atmosphere amongst the group is no longer as merry". On the other hand, you may also find rural prisons that have not had any inmates for years, and where the prison warden is using the cells to hold his farm animals – but is still steadily receiving his monthly salary.

Corruption in the prisons is rampant, and even has an official name, "*écolage*". This practice basically consists of prisoners "paying" the head warden in order to be let out for the day. Traditionally, the service rendered as payment could entail doing menial work for the head magistrate, or cultivating his rice paddy. According to some accounts, however, the practice has now turned much more sinister, with prison guards letting prisoners engage in armed robbery, in return for a share of the bounty. Moreover, the collusion may well extend outside the prison walls to include elements of the police and gendarmerie – this might explain the disturbingly high number of bandits that are chased by the security forces (perhaps for not returning to the prison as agreed) and shot on the spot, perhaps to keep quiet.

## Reform

Apart from the enormous number of high-ranking officers, the interminable corruption, and the constant filling of civilian government positions with military personnel, what is most striking about the security sector in Madagascar is the complete occlusion of "prevention". While there are numerous special task forces and rapid intervention units, they are all intended to *react* when an incident has occurred – rather than being deployed in order to *prevent* something from happening. There are no community policing initiatives and no consistent patrols of certain neighbourhoods or regions – the only activities of that sort are conducted by private security companies. As PSCs in Madagascar are unarmed, they may take a few police officers or gendarmes with them on patrols, but this is a far cry from

constituting a systematic prevention agenda on the part of the public authorities. Fire prevention (through building regulations, the provision of fire extinguishers, and strategically positioned fire brigades) is another area where a lot more could be done.

The other striking feature of the Malagasy security sector relates to the total absence of a coast guard. Madagascar is an island, located in such a way off the African coast to be of high strategic importance to the world's "great powers". It is thus understandable, given the Cold War setting, that the seas around Madagascar, and particularly the Straits of Mozambique, were (and continue to be) patrolled by others. Madagascar's navy was consequently a non-starter, right from the beginning. But the island's shores are so porous that smuggling is also a huge problem in Madagascar, entailing everything from rosewood, gems and rare animal species, to pigs transported by speedboat to the predominantly Muslim Comoros Islands. Add to this the massive over-fishing of its waters, an issue that may well be the most significant fallout of the current political crisis. All of this begs the question why it was not possible to muster enough government and international support to establish an effective coast guard that would protect Madagascar's economic interests and environmental integrity.

A reform along these lines was indeed conceived towards the end of Marc Ravalomanana's reign in 2007. Led by a team of international consultants, a special presidential committee for security sector reform came up with much the same analysis of structural lacunae and institutional pathologies as we did for the purpose of this PCIA. And the recommendations that followed were also the logical consequence of their assessment: a restructuring of the army, gendarmerie and police to reflect the actual security needs of the island and to decrease the budgetary burden of having far too many high-ranking officers; the establishment of a coast guard to help protect Madagascar's valuable resources and prevent the influx of illegal weapons; and a focus on prevention and mobile forces that could be deployed in situations of natural disasters and as African Union or UN peacekeeping troops.

While the right elements were all there, it appears that the way these insights were presented to the military establishment as a *fait accompli* were the main reason why it was met with the strong resistance that it did – a resistance that arguably did not help Ravalomanana's cause when his position became more precarious towards the end of 2008. It represents an instance of the top-down process that we have already discussed in Chapters 3 above. The draft paper of a working group in the presidency, which was intended to represent the starting point for a participative process of consultations with the armed forces and the relevant ministries, was instead presented as the final product in front of Madagascar's entire top brass – a crowd of 800 people. The military interpreted the initiative as a severe threat to its cosy nepotism (which it was), while the gendarmerie perceived it as a threat to its very existence (which it was not). What was clear, however, was that in the presidential organization, participatory consultation was not the order of the day. The complete disarray in the security sector that we witness today (with almost daily news of demonstrations, barrack mutinies, and indeed violent exchanges among elements of the armed forces themselves) is still a reflection of the after-shocks of that day in 2007, when the military establishment was shaken to its very core.

## Concluding reflections

There are many places in the world that have a much worse track record of corruption and brutality than Madagascar. Although the picture painted in the chapter is rather bleak, Madagascar does not come close to constituting a truly repressive regime. Nonetheless, there is much that is wrong with the country's security sector, most of which is linked to the dire financial situation of its institutions and civil servants. With three-quarters of

the population living on less than USD 10 per month, and the minimum salary for a civil servant or police officer being at just over the equivalent of USD 20 per month, most of the corruption and collusion we described may well be the result of sheer desperation to escape outright poverty.

While organized crime does exist in Madagascar – primarily linked to smuggling networks and the infamous *Dahalo* cattle thieves – the main reasons for a worsening security situation in the country can be found in three conflict drivers that we have been fleshing out over the past four chapters. The security threats posed by each of these drivers manifest themselves along the three major fault lines identified: the division between an oral culture of authority and the written word of the state administration, the disjuncture between the economic centres and the periphery, and the concomitant divide between a predominantly urban-based elite and the underprivileged rural areas.

**1. Social exclusion and disempowerment.** One of the most striking features of contemporary Madagascar is the gaping chasm between 80% of the population that lives in dire poverty without access to basic public services and infrastructure, and an urban elite benefiting from the country's export-oriented economic policy. The resulting socio-economic inequality between centre and periphery, between industrial production and inefficient subsistence agriculture, is one of the main drivers of rising crime rates and heightened insecurity. Civil servants, from the police officer to the prison warden to the clerk in the local magistrate's office, are willing to engage in corruption to fend for the survival of themselves and their families. The centralized structures of the presidential system offer amply opportunity to instrumentalize the bureaucracy for personal enrichment. The longer the current political impasse continues, the more difficult it will be to drag the country back onto the path of prosperity.

**2. A lack of communal governance structures.** Although decentralization has continuously been on the agenda of every government for decades, the impact of this “centralized decentralization” on local communities has been marginal, to say the least. Most of those wielding authority in the regions (including district and regional heads), are still nominated in Antananarivo, making any type of grass-roots or bottom-up community initiatives all but impossible. Yet the lack of funding and resources of the central government has meant that top-down policies have not trickled down either. An inaccessible terrain, involving flooded roads in one region and draught and famine in another, adds to the challenge. The result is perpetual corruption and a severe lack of basic service provision (security, education, healthcare) for a large part of the Malagasy population.

**3. The disparate state of the security institutions.** As was highlighted in this chapter, a combination of factors has led to the steady deterioration of the security and justice sectors: the politicization of the armed forces, the involvement of high-ranking officers in economic activity, and a penniless administration leading to corruption on all levels. A lack in focus on prevention, an extremely weak territorial outreach (for both the protection of natural resources and for deployment in the face of regularly occurring natural disasters), and an absence in community-policing add to the dire picture. What is more, the increasing appearance of armed militias to protect economic interests and trafficking activities – in both rural and urban areas – constitutes an undeniable threat to the integrity of the state and the security of its people. Without an urgent reform and strengthening of the armed forces and the judiciary, coupled with the instatement of a recognized government, Madagascar's very sovereignty may soon be under threat.

Without wishing to sound overly alarmist, the current vicious cycle of extreme poverty, rising criminality, the paralysis of the armed forces and the concomitant mushrooming

of “alternative” security services does not bode well for the future of Madagascar. While the political crisis continues, the country’s valuable resources continue to be plundered at will, and the population continues to starve. With every week, those pillaging the island become increasingly ruthless, while the capacity of the public authorities to do something about it steadily diminishes.

Fault lines	Conflict drivers
<p><b>Oral culture vs. the written word</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reproduction of highly asymmetric power relations</li> <li>• Cognitive mechanisms of exclusion</li> </ul> <p><b>Urban vs. rural</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divisions in the distribution of institutional capacity, political voice and representation, and economic opportunity</li> </ul> <p><b>Centre vs. periphery</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Societal division in the access to quality public services</li> <li>• Permanent comparative advantage of the centre in terms of access to education, as well as economic and social advancement opportunities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Social exclusion and disenpowerment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elites and foreign companies are the main benefactors of export-oriented growth</li> <li>• Rural impoverishment</li> <li>• Poor access to public services and a lack of local infrastructure and integrative mechanisms in the periphery and rural areas</li> </ul> <p><b>An absence of effective local government</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lack of autonomy (e.g. the district and regional heads) from centralized structures</li> <li>• High dependency of local communities on centrally allocated funds</li> <li>• Weak representation through communal councils</li> <li>• No accountability towards local constituencies</li> </ul> <p><b>Disparate state of the security sector</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict of (economic and institutional) interests within the armed forces</li> <li>• A lack of vocation of the armed forces</li> <li>• Weak territorial outreach and no capacities for emergency relief</li> <li>• Inexistent prevention strategies and community policing</li> <li>• The free circulation of firearms</li> <li>• A corrupt and malfunctioning judiciary</li> </ul>

## 6. Development strategies and the prospects for peace

The principle aim of the PCIA is to help the international development community to gain a new perspective on the link between development efforts and the drivers of conflict in Madagascar. It should be clear that it is not an evaluation or audit of development programmes, nor an attempt to measure the success and achievements of foreign aid and individual organizations. A PCIA analyses development strategies and approaches through the political lens of the environment in which they are applied. A programme may score well according to its own indicators and objectives and still have unintended effects on conflict structures. We admit that it is a real challenge for development experts to add a conflict-sensitive dimension to their strategic reflexions. This PCIA thus attempts to formulate constructive critique. Taking into consideration the delicate situation since the fall of Ravalomanana's government and the resulting setbacks for many programmes and projects, our discussion of strategies adopts a forward-looking perspective. The focus will be on issues that need to be addressed in the coming months to get Madagascar back on track, based primarily on our observations of the way in which development was approached during the Ravalomanana era. Importantly, the recommendations offered in this concluding chapter are not *operational* recommendations for development programming (as was highlighted in Chapter 1, generating such recommendations is not the task of a PCIA), but should instead be seen as suggestions meant to stimulate development stakeholders into thinking self-critically about the way they work.

### 2001–02 and the resumption of “business as usual”

In the aftermath of the political turmoil in early 2009, UNICEF recognized the urgent need for a PCIA to be conducted. The rapid evolution of the events since November 2008 had taken many stakeholders in the development and diplomatic field by surprise. The fruits of several years of effort and investment in the future of Madagascar were suddenly at risk, and with every day that the political limbo continued, those achievements were steadily unravelling. Yet the simple fact that such a PCIA has now been conducted after the 2009 events highlights the fundamental flaw in the development strategies applied after 2001-02. Back then, Madagascar witnessed what was probably the worst episode of political violence since its independence, and the country was on the brink of civil war. Roadblocks had physically split the country, the military was divided, and thousands of assault rifles and grenades had been distributed to reservists, civilians and dubious militias. Yet once Ravalomanana's presidency had received international recognition, the international community quickly turned the page, and save for a number of physical reconstruction efforts, very few new measures were undertaken. In fact, the dispensing of free basic health services for around six months constituted the only major policy initiative to concretely address the ramifications of this violent episode.<sup>107</sup>

With almost no stockpile management, the quantity of weapons and ammunitions that had been taken out of military arsenals in 2001-02 continues to be unknown; equally unclear is

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<sup>107</sup> User Financial Participation was introduced in all basic health centres and hospitals as part of the SAP.

what proportion was eventually returned. In fact, no campaign was initiated to disarm the militias and recollect the weapons that were in circulation. Perhaps because no visible international peacekeeping intervention occurred and no peace treaty had to be signed, the international community did not have the reflex to switch from a development to a conflict prevention and peacebuilding perspective. The tools would have been available, as both the United Nations and the World Bank had been generating comprehensive frameworks and strategies to address the security-development nexus throughout the 1990s. Instead, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) of 2003 referred to the crisis, but only to mention that political stability was returning and would be consolidated once communal elections had been conducted.<sup>108</sup>

Many measures would have been essential to deal with the crisis effectively, notably the initiation of short to mid-term reconciliation initiatives. Unfortunately, the mainstream understanding of reconciliation paints a far too one-dimensional picture of the problem: reconciliation is either reduced to the very superficial notions of compromise and agreement among the political elites at the national level, or to a narrow understanding of transitional justice. Rather, reconciliation is a process that should systematically address the political and economic drivers of violent conflict and its underlying societal fault lines. A resort to the forms of political violence witnessed in 2001-02 is undeniable evidence of the total failure of the political institutions of Madagascar, and not just of its administrative capacities. The development strategies implemented since 2002 failed to make this crucial link between good governance and political violence.

Although it is tempting to leave the past behind and focus on the future, peace will hardly last without an effort to understand how after 1972 and 1991 Madagascar descended into bloody clashes each time. The country's path from colonization to independence has generated many historical myths, which recent historical scholarship is at pains to assess, verify and interpret. The mystification of events proves to be expedient for political instrumentalization, but not for a constructive political debate and a shared constitutional and societal vision.

Although Chapter 5 has already discussed the issue of security sector reform, it is worth noting here that the surge of militias during the 2001-02 strife would have required concrete programmes to identify them and create programmes for the rehabilitation and reintegration of their members. Criminality has been a constant problem since the mid-1970s, as evidenced by the priority given to the issue during Ratsiraka's electoral campaign in 1977. Today, newspapers report daily on organized crime and armed banditry. Also, many sources confirmed to us that a considerable number of small arms in circulation, as well as the individuals belonging to these groups, can be traced back to these militias.

The 2003 PRSP presents the first strategic focus on the restoration of the rule of law and a well-governed Malagasy society, giving priority to the re-establishment of the justice system and the creation of institutions sanctioned by the constitution. Additionally, according to the PRSP, modernizing the equipment of the police and building its operational capacity at all levels, particularly in the area of criminal investigation, should have tackled the security issue.<sup>109</sup> Yet, while the paper points in the right direction, its assessment and approach were not appropriate to the scale of the problem. The strategy entailed no reform element, did not mention rural security and the gendarmerie, occluded the small arms issue, and did not

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<sup>108</sup> See International Monetary Fund, "Madagascar: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper", IMF Country Report 03/32, 3 (October 2003), p. 11.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.



address military reform, despite the crushing share of the country's budget and GDP taken up by the military establishment. What is more, little was achieved in terms of implementation, which hardly went beyond technical modernization.<sup>110</sup>

Finally, our interviewees confirmed reports on the very negative and aggressive tone with which the electoral campaign was conducted in 2001, highlighting that the government reverted to intimidations and restrictions on the movements of opposition candidates, notably Marc Ravalomanana. The same sources, however, also emphasized that the latter made ample use of his business facilities to further his campaign.<sup>111</sup> As a result, the electoral commission proved to be largely dysfunctional, as it could not gain the confidence of the people in the processing of the ballots and the adequacy of the results. Moreover, the High Constitutional Court had significantly damaged its image by having allowed itself to be influenced by the President. However, no comprehensive reform of the electoral laws and institutions has since been undertaken, even though donors had urged Ravalomanana to do so. And instead of envisioning a fundamental overhaul of the electoral system, the 2003 PRSP focused its attention on improving the communal election laws, and emphasized the building of capacities of the election monitoring body (the CNE) and of independent NGOs.<sup>112</sup>

### Recommendation 1

Whenever and however this crisis eventually ends, the international community and the technical and financial partners should under no circumstances revert back to a “business as usual” approach. All programmes should be urgently oriented towards preventing the recurrence of political violence and armed conflict.

## Development strategies and suboptimal scenarios

“Fifth Avenue brochure”, “glossy magazine”, and “luxury catalogue” were just some of the terms used to describe the Madagascar Action Plan 2007–2012 (MAP), which was prepared by the presidency of Ravalomanana as an alternative approach to the “standard”, 150-300 page-long PRSP. A look inside the shiny cover of the MAP soon reveals a number of key elements related to its logic and functions. Regarded by the president as an important instrument for the promotion of his vision and policies, the logic of the MAP consisted in eschewing an analysis of development by focusing not on processes, but solely on indicators. Indeed, strategies require clear goals linked to specific results, and indicators offer a very expedient tool to evaluate and monitor progress. However, a comprehensive strategy also focuses on the process itself, and consequently requires tactical guidance. In the case of “pro-poor” development based on an agenda of good governance and human rights, the need for a principled process seems even more obvious. The MAP, as well as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), however, rely heavily on a “log-frame” approach and results-based management. This can engender serious inconsistencies between the goals pursued and the means applied or indirectly supported.

<sup>110</sup> Based on confidential interviews in Antananarivo and Europe.

<sup>111</sup> Vivier, *Madagascar sous Ravalomanana: la vie politique malgache depuis 2001*, p. 21.

<sup>112</sup> See IMF, “Madagascar: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper”, 2003.

The UN development strategy, though based on the MAP, broadened its approach to governance and foresaw programmes to strengthen the parliament and the capacities of its members. Not a single point in the MAP, by contrast, refers to the administrations of the National Assembly or the Senate as agencies of implementation or leadership. Similarly, not one budget position in the PRSP of 2003 included the parliament. However, the UNDAF document states: “*La première année de mise en œuvre du MAP (2007) est jalonnée par une série de consultations publiques dont le referendum sur la révision de la Constitution de la République de Madagascar.*”<sup>113</sup> It might be true that a referendum (as indicator) is a participative approach, but in terms of good governance it constituted a net reduction in democratization, as the immunity of parliamentarians was being seriously undermined.

There is nothing wrong with indicators per se, but indicators alone, without an accompanying focus on principled process (which may, indeed, be more difficult to get to grips with), are not sufficient. A principled process is indeed crucial when dealing with suboptimal scenarios such as the considerable decrease in effective democratization. Although many supporters of the Ravalomanana regime deny the existence of such a trend, the 2008 Afrobarometer, publicly presented only a few months before the 2009 events, clearly indicated that such a decrease in “democracy” was indeed occurring, and that general discomfort with the evolution of the political system was mounting.<sup>114</sup> Development programmes and their underlying theories must take into account the conditions and realities of the system they are working with. The high degree of corruption and the ramifications of the socialist experiment on the political and administrative structures and the general political culture of Madagascar were all more than obvious facts, well known to anyone working in and with the country. Regrettably, the regular occurrence of crises, uprisings and riots are part and parcel of the tragic history of Madagascar. Logically, development strategies should have worked on the basis of suboptimal scenarios. Yet it appears to have been assumed that the conditions the entire good governance approach sought to create in the following year were already in place. At least we were unable to locate tactical guidance in any strategic document for what should happen when indicators or the process itself were deteriorating rather than improving. Although the 2007 Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) devotes a section to risks, it is of only limited utility as it does not develop a framework for risk assessment and does not adopt a principled process perspective.<sup>115</sup> The CAS only mentions adjustments to the new situation, but no preventive or counter-action.

Principled process differs fundamentally in the approach to operationalization and monitoring, as the indicators reflect value-based rather than quantifiable indicators. Further, indicators focus as much on the process as on outcomes and impact. In our discussions, Malagasy local officials expressed their frustration over how politicized the implementation of development projects has become. Again, those in a position to decide about concrete projects, as for example the construction of local agricultural infrastructures or the creation of a police station or basic health centre, are usually well acquainted with administrative procedures and regulations, and wield considerable influence on the process. In contrast, local communities, immersed in their oral culture, have no leverage towards such decision-makers. While results-based management will simply quantify the number of facilities created and services disbursed, it will not gain any insights into the process itself and the social and political implications of the project.

<sup>113</sup> UNDAF Madagascar, “Plan cadre des Nations Unies pour l’Assistance au Développement 2008-2011”, (June 2007).

<sup>114</sup> See Afrobarometer 2008. This was not the only sign, with series of publication by SeFaFi and in the *Lettre de l’Océan Indien* also capturing well the increasing concentration of power in the presidency.

<sup>115</sup> See World Bank, “Country Assistance Strategy for the Republic of Madagascar, FY 2007-2011” (March 7, 2007), p. 34 *et seq.*

Although all our interlocutors from the international community justified the application of direct budget support to Madagascar and the considerable inflow of project-based foreign aid on the basis of promising trends and indicators (especially in the area of human rights), we could not be convinced that such a substantial degree of trust was justified. Upon further in-depth discussions with Malagasy officials, it became clear that conditions were perceived as being temporarily fulfilled if laws or decrees were pending, or if justifications were provided for bad or missing indicators. That is, many conditions were not concretely present, but declarations of intent with concomitant documents and strategies were nonetheless accepted as proof. Again, the whole strategy was based on a best-case scenario. In the last decades, in contrast, many NGOs, inspired by best practices from the micro-credit sector, have emphasized that the free delivery of services is often worthless, because not valued. The “donation” character of aid can lead to dependency and expectations that, regardless of how it is used, will always be available, as donor agencies are perceived to be under pressure to spend in order to justify their budgets. All this is not to say that we are recommending a return to conditionality, which leads ownership, needs and demand-driven strategies ad absurdum, but aid must nonetheless come at a cost, in the form of a pre-investment by the “partner” (rather than the “benefactor”). The more the partner must participate in the investment, the higher will be the costs of defection from the principled process.

### Recommendation 2

Despite all the enthusiasm for political openings and the positive development of results and indicators, regularly undertake risk assessments and prepare contingency plans. Evaluations need to be conducted with a focus on the **coherence** of the process and means of achieving results according to the values underlying the development project.

### Recommendation 3

While conditionality pre-determines the strategy and leads to poverty and risk assessments that are supply-driven, “pre-investment” provides proof of the partner’s determination and capacity to mobilize its own resources. If decentralization and rural development is seen by Madagascar as the priority, then concrete decentralization **measures**, and not simply plans or statements of intent, must be showcased before aid is disbursed. In the same vein, if a forthcoming Malagasy government, based on the declared principles of the Fourth Republic, wishes to resume its development partnerships, concrete initiatives for political stabilization and the separation of economic interests from political posts must be acted upon.

## Prioritization

The MAP allegedly followed the vision expressed in the presidential document “*Madagascar naturellement*”, which emphatically suggested that development should rest on a more positive vision than the one formulated in the previous PRSP.<sup>116</sup> The reduction of poverty is, according to the new approach, only an objective – the new vision instead focused on flourishing landscapes, cities and villages. In fact, *Madagascar naturellement* was based on a very clever reading of the previous PRSP, which made very clear that Madagascar’s main development problem was rural poverty. Based on previous assessments, the PRSP noted very correctly that the main impediment to rural development was the lack of local infrastructures and security. It also pointed out that the lack of electrification and permanent water access in the rural community further amplified the effects of poor infrastructures. Another pressing problem resulted from unequal access to land and uncertainty over land titles.<sup>117</sup> Finally, the PRSP noted very critically that the growth impact of the economic production zones (EPZs) on the economy was not as important as expected, despite the fact that they represented the major source of FDIs; the principle growth factor, instead, was the creation of direct and indirect jobs.<sup>118</sup>

*Madagascar naturellement* noted very cleverly that the concentration of investments in the EPZs had thus far not had an effect on poverty.<sup>119</sup> Although it does not do so explicitly, the document nonetheless points to the lack of coherence in the PRSP: on the one hand, rural development should be prioritized, but on the other, the kind of infrastructural and agricultural investment hardly reflected this strategic focus. The document underlines the need for evolution from a *subsistence* to a *market* economy, and a bit further then notes that the PRSP focuses mainly on tourism, mines, fishery and manufacturing industries as growth sectors, but that these measures are necessary but insufficient for rural development.<sup>120</sup> In contrast, rural development would assure a higher yield in reducing poverty in Madagascar. *Madagascar naturellement* clearly endorsed an understanding that development would have to adopt a bottom-up approach to development, harnessing the economic potential of environmental protection.

According to the assessment of the 2003 PRSP, the focus should have been on the construction and reestablishment of the local, rural infrastructures, security institutions, land access and the proximity of health and education services. However, measures directly affecting these fields are not well reflected in the paper’s “log frame”. In contrast, the infrastructural investments connecting strategic industries with the main urban centres are much better defined. Although rural communities undeniably profit from such infrastructures, the effects are of a very mediated kind. The main benefactors of such programmes are again the urban economies and the export-oriented large-scale enterprises and the EPZs. This kind of economic growth, which relies heavily on the “trickle down” effect, does not help to address the deeply entrenched societal fault lines. What is more, increasing the intra-urban connection further strengthens the urban-rural divide, rather than privileging local, rural infrastructures. Having better communal infrastructures also means improved communication and interaction among the population, and better access to public services such as health and education – all highly interdependent factors necessary to achieve genuine self-government. Finally, the prioritization of national

<sup>116</sup> See “Madagascar Naturellement. Une Vision pour Madagascar et ses Régions”, Présidence de la République de Madagascar, 2004, p. 3. All major official documents refer to the vision when presenting the MAP, see e.g. ‘Plan Cadre des Nations Unies. Pour l’Assistance au Développement. UNDAF Madagascar 2008–2011’, June 2007.

<sup>117</sup> See IMF, “Madagascar: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper”, Section 2.2, pp. 17 *et seq.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> “Madagascar Naturellement. Une Vision pour Madagascar et ses Régions”, p. 5.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

infrastructures increases the competitive advantage of the urban cores, thus facilitating further concentration and centralization.

In consequence, the prioritization of development aid has augmented the conflict drivers by strengthening the centre at the expense of the periphery and the rural areas. Rural development cannot focus only on economic growth through higher yields of rice production, for instance. The point is not that such development outcomes are not important, but from a conflict perspective, priority must be given to those local infrastructures and services that will have an impact on local political organization. If development aid genuinely seeks to be demand-driven and based on participation, it is not clear how such needs can be effectively assessed in Madagascar when the population is systematically excluded and ideas must be “transferred” from an oral culture into log-frames and highly formalized procedures.

Recent data from INSTAT<sup>121</sup> on the percentage of communes according to the main type of mobility/locomotion linking them to their district heads shows an average for Madagascar of 47.3% by taxi brousse, 13.1% by cart, and 22.7% on foot. To showcase the extreme disparities in mobility, one need only take the example of Alaotra Mongero (semi-urban periphery) 66.2%, 6.8%, and 18.9%; Analamanga (urban periphery) 82.5%, 0.8%, and 11.9%; Atsinanan (rural) 32.5%, 0%, and 45.5%; and Melaky (rural) 28.1%, 56.3%, and 0%. These immense disparities already underline the division between rural and urban. Yet the most crushing numbers are that only 9.5% of all *Fokontany* have access to electricity, and only 6.8% to water. Further, the average percentage of *Fokontany* by principle means of transportation of agricultural products amounts to 6.9% by car/lorry, 44.7% by cart, and 42.8% carried on the human back, with six regions surpassing 79% in the latter category. Rural mobility, as noted initially in the 2003 PRSP, is the major path to pro-poor development, and the integration of the largely excluded population.

Surprisingly, the coherence of *Madagascar naturellement* is not reflected in the MAP, which under the heading “Madagascar naturally” presents a very different vision from the one endorsed in the 2004 document. The MAP vision substitutes the term *market* economy with “high growth” economy, and “rural development” with “employed in agriculture”.<sup>122</sup> This new vision is followed by the immediate priorities summarized under the six “breakthrough reform initiatives (BRI)”: 1) public finance reform; 2) significant increase in investment to promote high growth; 3) sow the seeds of a green revolution; 4) transform public security; 5) implement bold new measures for health and family planning; and 6) transform the judiciary. The measures prioritize the reforms of government institutions, without placing the same emphasis and importance on political structures that are primarily integrative in function.

Another observation from the good governance strategy of the 2003 PRSP underlines the prioritization problem. The PRSP’s “strategic intervention focus no. 1” on the restoration of the rule of law and a well-governed society lists the first objectives as follows:

- Establish a reliable information system necessary for knowing the country’s economic and financial situation.
- Implement a budget policy.
- Fight against corruption, ensure transparency and improve the quality of services rendered at ministry level.
- Put in place a transparent and effective civil service at the service of the citizens.<sup>123</sup>

<sup>121</sup> See all data from INSTAT, “Présentation des résultats de la cartographie numérique en préparation du troisième recensement général de la population et de l’habitation”, (Antananarivo, 2010).

<sup>122</sup> See “Madagascar Action Plan.”

<sup>123</sup> IMF, Madagascar: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper”, p. 50.

These four objectives receive a very detailed list of measures and processes to engage with wide-ranging reform projects for the civil service, administration, and public finance.<sup>124</sup> In contrast, objective no. 2, entitled “respecting democracy” notes:

“Democracy: free elections, status of the opposition, respect for human rights, freedom of speech of the media will be respected with transparency and respect for the people’s choices.”<sup>125</sup>

And the implementation mentions in very vague terms: “Transparency and respect for the people’s choice”<sup>126</sup>. In this vein, the budgetary allocation for the activities, which are not described in the document, remain completely unspecified. And not one position within the entire good governance strategy of the PRSP is devoted to strengthening the parliament or increasing the capacities of members of the National Assembly.

Rule of law provisions in the PRSP only seek to build capacities and makes vague appeals to the creation of constitutional institutions. Reforms focus primarily on the administration and civil service, and on the fight against corruption. Democratization as the core principle of good governance<sup>127</sup> has no prominent role in the PRSP. Thus the first sub-programme dedicated to the respect of democracy, the *reliability of elections operations*, consisted of improving the electoral roll and conducting a census of *fokontany* in view of the repartition of electoral districts. And the second sub-programme on *citizen participation* was basically an awareness-rising programme through radio broadcasts and training for journalists. While the programmes may have been useful, they appear very meagre in view of the democratization challenge that Madagascar is facing.

The problem of prioritization plays an important role for the coherence of development strategies. Administrative, civil service, and public finance reforms are extremely important, but the reforms imply a huge increase in the capacity of the executive branch at the detriment of a legislative body that was considerably weakened through the referenda of 1995 and 1998.

Another significant case highlighting the problem of prioritization is BIANCO, the independent anti-corruption agency created in October 2004. Important resources were invested in BIANCO, and in its conception as an agency, it proved to be truly remarkable. Its staff demonstrated a high degree of professionalism and made quick progress. During our trips across the island, we did not see a single government building without posters informing the users of public services about their rights and duty to withstand corruption. We could also come to the conclusion that the aggressive information campaign and its precise work quickly established its reputation. We heard many witnesses claiming that a reference to BIANCO turned out to be an efficient threat against civil servants looking for bribes or simply refusing to deliver the due services. However, the image and quality of BIANCO could be seriously jeopardized, and not only because of the political crises and the illegal, anticipated termination of the director’s mandate. BIANCO received about

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<sup>124</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>127</sup> See World Bank, *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth* (1989). This path-breaking report, which introduced for the first time the notion of good governance in development, makes clear reference to the notion of democracy promotion.



30,000 complaints in its first years of operations, with about 8% to 10% of eligible cases retained for further inquiry. The danger that BIANCO may be abused for political ends has considerably increased through the current transitional nature of the government, as the Assembly remains dissolved until new elections will be conducted. The main problem, nonetheless, emerged around the prioritization of programmes. BAINCO is a necessary and very valuable agency, but without a functioning and effective judiciary, its efforts and achievements are more and more diminished. We are very pleased to note that a very recent policy paper of the World Bank comes to precisely the same conclusion.<sup>128</sup>

We further welcome the strategic shift that seems to underlie some of the new policy papers recently presented by the World Bank. One paper, when drawing the balance of GDP growth from 2003 to 2008, notes its fragility, the lag created by the 2002 events, and the economic effects of state expenses based on foreign aid. What is more, the paper follows our analysis of the narrow, sectoral investment and the urban bias of growth:

*Cette concentration géographique de la croissance correspondait au choix stratégique de favoriser la création d'entreprise autour de pôles de croissance en raison de leur forte densité de population, génératrice d'économie d'échelle au niveau de la production et de la distribution, de leur proximité de projets d'envergure qui peuvent servir de locomotive, [...]. Si l'expérience historique et internationale justifie cette approche, celle-ci conduit, mal maîtrisée, à la marginalisation de nombreuses régions où vivent la majorité des ménages en situation de pauvreté extrême.<sup>129</sup>*

Another paper proposes a perspective from below as a means to improve the democratic governance and economic performance of the country. In an exciting paper by Alfredo Brizzi, the country manager of the World Bank, a proposition is presented that echoes well our own analysis:

*Plutôt que de se focaliser uniquement sur la mise en place de systèmes publics destinés à atteindre les communautés pauvres, il faudrait placer les communautés au centre du dispositif.<sup>130</sup>*

The rationale underlying such a notion is identical to our conclusion on the self-government of rural communities as a path to effective decentralization and a mid- to long-term perspective to dissolve Madagascar's main societal fault line.

This perspective on the real structural conditions of poverty in Madagascar was, however, already at the heart of the assessment of the PRSP published in 2003. It is thus unfortunate that the strategic focus presented in the PRSP itself, and then in the MAP and the CAS, did not coherently absorb these propositions. Especially the so-called leadership approach to development, which amplifies the suboptimal trend to a personalization of politics and

<sup>128</sup> Jacques Morisset, "Au Coeur des ténèbres: le renouveau des institutions et de la gouvernance" in World Bank, *Madagascar: Vers un agenda de relance économique* (June 2010), p. 27.

<sup>129</sup> Jacques Morisset, "Vers un agenda de relance économique à Madagascar", in World Bank, *Madagascar: Vers un agenda de relance économique*, p. 5 (emphasis added).

<sup>130</sup> Adolfo Brizzi, "Organisation sociale: une vue du bas... pour aider le haut," in World Bank, *Madagascar: Vers un agenda de relance économique*, p. 47.

authority, runs counter to the notion of rural integration and empowerment through self-government.<sup>131</sup> Especially when it is not well managed, leadership can quickly take on rather worrying authoritarian tendencies.

The prioritization and coordination of strategy between such participative poverty assessments and common programming of the government and the development community remains a significant challenge. An effective, conflict-sensitive development approach will have to prioritize rural, decentred development through self-government.

#### Recommendation 4

Shift priorities to rural development based on participative poverty and conflict assessments, and coordinate these with the strategic focus of the CAS and UNDAF. This entails combining the economic opportunities of building new, multiple cores in the periphery, strengthening the decentralization and devolution of power, and integrating the rural population in the development effort and Malagasy polity. Quantitative conflict assessments based on the cultural bias of the “written word” need to be avoided in this endeavour, and the rich oral resources of Madagascar tapped into.

### Timing, quick results and technocratization

The major and recurring critique of the organization of development aid, expressed by our Malagasy interlocutors and confirmed in numerous interviews with foreign development actors, concerned the issue of timing and the obsession of the development complex with attaining quick results. Interestingly, Marc Ravalomanana, with his entrepreneurial mindset, shared this obsession, and the MAP's ambitious goals reflect this will to accelerate development. However, while these goals might have sounded attractive, they hardly took the realities and conditions in Madagascar into account. Yet subsequently blaming the Malagasy for their cultural or cognitive deficiencies does not solve the problem and is not a valid justification after 30 years of international engagement in the country's development. The point is that if we look at the timing and goals of the PRSPs, the MAP and UNDAFs, they all suggest that Madagascar could take off economically after only five years. Although it is undoubtedly important to have ambitious goals, such a lack of realism can also lead to highly problematic constellations, as several of our interviews brought to light.

First, the logic of development project tends to follow three- to five-year cycles. Similarly, foreign development workers and project leaders generally stay about three to five years in the country. Officials in development agencies are thus under pressure to show rapid improvements based on result indicators. They therefore have a natural tendency to co-operate primarily with those local counterparts that are regarded as being most apt to advance their projects and programmes. In turn, through the co-operation with the foreign

<sup>131</sup> On the World Bank support of the leadership approach, see Guenter Heidenhof, Stefanie Teggemann and Cia Sjetnan, “A Leadership Approach to Achieving Change in the Public Sector: The Case of Madagascar,” WBI Working Papers (2007). The introduction of the leadership approach had its origin in the work of one of Ravalomanana's main consultants, a scholar from Harvard. He initiated the National Leadership Institute of Madagascar.

official, the Malagasy partner gains a significant advantage over his or her peers. Both become highly dependent on each other to further their agenda, as each has to deliver numbers.

Second, the need to attain quick results encourages taking the path of least resistance. Indeed, gaining the support of those who are not “in the know” and removing major stumbling blocks can be a very time-consuming and frustrating activity. The need to meet results-based indicators thus incites the prioritization of projects with higher and faster yields, rather than tackling long-term programmes and projects that may have a greater potential of inducing societal change.

During the era of Ravalomanana, the mindset just described helps to explain some of the uncritical euphoria for the MAP. As three members of the MAP team confirmed independently to us, the document was principally a means to raise funds. It hardly entailed any clear strategy on the process, and the values underlying it were not elaborated but only used as catchwords based around the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MAP team was a congregation of highly skilled Malagasy technocrats and extremely productive foreign consultants paid by the same donors that were the intended addressees of the MAP. These individuals were, of course, well acquainted with the procedures and requirement of project loans and fund-raising. What is more, as some officials participating in the MAP negotiations noted, the consultants referred to the different international declarations on development co-operation to put pressure on bilateral donors. This led to an increased level of dependency among the personnel of donor agencies, international organizations and the Malagasy officials in the presidency. In order to meet the results and indicators eloquently presented in the MAP, programmes with better prospects for higher yield were prioritized. Most strikingly, good governance overwhelmingly targeted central, administrative structures such as the finance ministry (especially tax collection, customs, statistical services, etc.). Unfortunately, taking the path of least resistance further supported the drive for presidentialization under Ravalomanana. Yet the indicators adopted uncritically from the MAP were skewed towards “trickle-down” economic growth and could not pick up on this trend.

### Recommendation 5

Review point by point the development strategy and create tables of dependencies, i.e. reflect with a principled process perspective (rather than with results-based management) what conditions must be established first before other strategies can be coherently incorporated.

It remains a real puzzle to us why the reform of the justice system and the armed forces has not been made a top priority, as any investment in good governance is hardly effective if the security sector is not functioning properly. Of course, such reform projects do not lend themselves to rapid development strategies, but would have needed to reflect the reality of the conflict-prone Malagasy political struggles. Sustainable social protection, for example – a priority in advancing pro-poor development – as well as local government structures need efficient local judicial institutions and police programmes oriented towards crime prevention. Even if overarching central institutions would also have to be reformed, local initiatives would have to be run in parallel in order to strengthen structures attenuating the societal fault lines and main conflict drivers. Hence, once again the problem of timing and technocratization led to the omission of crucial reform initiatives because their impact on conflict dynamics would only be measurable in the long-term. A principle-based approach, by contrast, would value the immediate *process* as much as future *results*.

## Participation

The MAP has been lauded for its participative approach to development. Due to the ambitious scope of the PCIA, we could not conduct systematic research on the participation project itself, especially because the regime change has already led to a considerable re-shuffling of regional and communal personnel. Retracing the whereabouts of former participants of MAP presentations turned out to be quite challenging. We were nonetheless able to talk with about 20 individuals who had participated in different functions related to the presentations of the MAP at the communal and central levels.

Different heads of *fokontany*, who were all called to the capital to participate in the presentation, were rather puzzled at the idea that this was meant to be a participative process. One interlocutor said: “*C'était une indoctrination sous forme d'entertainment.*” Most underlined that the presentation was rather abstract and distant from the problems they were facing. Indeed, they would only have been able to formulate questions and comments on the basis of their specific experience. Others mentioned that they felt rather intimidated by the event. Most interestingly, one interlocutor remembered that the presentation addressed principally the issue of leadership; he consequently believed that he had attended a training session.

In a discussion with an active member of a civil society organization, who had previously worked for a project that aimed at preparing local participants to the communal presentation of the MAP, explained to us that the event was simply a presentation, with the participants allowed to ask questions and make comments. Yet due to their training the local participants sometimes came with questions that were rather pertinent. These were met with surprise by the presenters, who then proceeded to evade answering them.

The impression we obtained was thus that the type of participation promoted went hand-in-hand with the trend within the presidency and ministries to become an ever more top-heavy administration. A foreign consultant of the presidency confirmed our suspicion that what may have started as working papers to be disseminated, commented and deliberated, had, due to the pressure to produce quick achievements, turned into a very concrete version to be released in the sense of a decree, rather than legislation. What is more, a consultant participating in the MAP noted his dissatisfaction with the fact that Ravalomanana figured too prominently in the glossy brochure and misused it as his PR tool during the electoral campaign. Indeed, participative approaches are not meant to be used as the political platform of the President. The episode further indicates the many ways development can become an important dimension of politics. The MAP became one of Ravalomanana's main political assets, providing him with the symbolic force of the international community's support – and an additional factor facilitating the concentration of power in the presidency.

### Recommendation 6

A Malagasy research team should conduct a study on the participatory approach applied in development projects, which could also inform the participative poverty assessments.

## Concluding thoughts

As highlighted throughout this PCIA, development is inevitably a subversive endeavour because it necessarily interacts with the political dynamics of a state administration and government that is itself grappling with calls for democratization and accountability. Social development seeks to empower those that under the current power relations have no chance of self-fulfilment. On the one hand, if the international community is not continuously aware of the role of the political dimension of development aid, its strategies may affect domestic power relations in ways that solidify structures of injustice. On the other, carefully designed and deliberated programming may strengthen peace-enhancing structures.

Perhaps no other development programme illustrates this as well as the second round of the education reform programme entitled *Education Pour Tous (EPT)*. This latest reform initiative built upon the previous reform attempt in 2003, which had made impressive progress in increasing attendance numbers of primary school children. Without going into the details of the plan, three elements of the reform radically challenge the neo-colonial heritage of power relations. First, the reform sought to align its policy to the SADC region by extending primary education from five to seven years. This avoids the early separation of the child from his or her family when secondary schools are only available in the next urban centre.<sup>132</sup> It also provides a longer and better education to those children who would not continue with secondary school, thus offering an important strategy against illiteracy. Second, the reform sought to increase the number of schools, with priority given to rural communities. This would finally tackle the comparative advantage of the urban elite. Third, the primary language would be Malagasy.

Of course, the re-introduction of Malagasy for primary education brought the reform to the centre stage of political struggles, as it directly attacked one of the principle social exclusion mechanisms. We underline the importance of the education reform here as a long-term strategy that has the potential of strengthening peace-enhancing structures. Nonetheless, the overall dynamics of the concentration of power in Ravalomanana's presidency and the technocratic approach of development unnecessarily jeopardized the reform plan. Ironically, the lack of political integration, which the reforms attempted to tackle, hindered a sensible deliberation and information process to gain broad popular support in the inevitable struggle with the elite forces in Madagascar.

Every strategy entails an experimental dimension. Unintended consequences of development and aid programmes will therefore always occur. But in the process of creating, negotiating, and reassessing specific strategies, the establishment of clear conceptual reference points has the potential to increase our understanding of the effects of development. The 3C approach, touched upon in Chapter 1 above, offers such a policy framework that can reduce the risk of unexpected development impacts.

The PCIA emphasized the importance of reflecting on the coherence among the needs assessment, the priorities defined in the strategies, and the budget lines. Therefore, we suggest placing the issue of prioritization at the nexus between coherence, coordination and complementarity of aid and development programmes.

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<sup>132</sup> Many families cannot support their children, who do not always find guest families. This situation places children in a situation of high vulnerability, especially, girls.

Programming coherence is the main prerequisite for a sustainable development strategy. It requires a common language (all stakeholders need to understand “decentralization” or “rural development”, for instance, in the same way), and is thus dependent on continuous deliberation, consultation and exchange – among elements of the donor community, as well as among different sections of the state and local administration, and with civil society. The political subversiveness of development that Kenneth Bush was referring to can only be mitigated through such as participatory process with all actors concerned.

Without sufficient coordination among the bilateral and multilateral donors and aid agencies, prioritization will not have the desired effect. All donors may be targeting decentralization, but if one agency implements the policy by funding a decentralization ministry in the capital, while another understands decentralization to mean funding rural projects directly and thus circumventing the central administration, a coherent development strategy will not be possible. Individual projects need to “speak to each other”, else the effects of one project run the risk of undermining or even jeopardizing those of the other.

Yet the focus on coherence and coordination does not imply that everyone should be working on the same project. The needs assessment should not just set priorities, but it should also help determine who does what, i.e. in which setting a particular development actors can make the most of the comparative advantage it has in a specific sector or field of expertise. This is the third part of the 3C approach: complementarity. It requires flexibility on the part of development actors to learn from each other and adopt the methods and techniques which fit best with the priorities set. Without such complementarity, the aims of aid effectiveness will hardly be achieved in Madagascar, and duplication, high transaction costs, and even the waste of resources may ultimately characterize the work conducted.

A 3C approach also implies that all bilateral donors adhere to the same standards and speak a common language when interacting with the local stakeholder. The Malagasy partners must be able to be confident that the development community acts responsibly by taking into consideration the existing conditions in the country, rather than operate with a pre-conceived image of its politics and culture.

Chapter 3 came to the sad conclusion that Madagascar does not feature internal drivers of change and that the fault lines and conflict drivers identified in this PCIA provide the conditions for elite struggles with the potential for the regular recurrence of political violence – and, indeed, in the extreme case to a descent towards pervasive, warlord-like, criminal violence. Any development strategy seeking to avoid the recurrence of armed violence will thus have to adopt a long-term vision of development oriented towards the erosion of current power relations. The international community would be ill-advised to take an idealized vision of European state and nation-building as a template for Madagascar. Modernization has not been the solution to Madagascar’s trouble but an essential part of it.

Our recommendations linked to the 3C framework cannot offer concrete ideas on operationalization. Not only would it go beyond the scope of the PCIA, but it would offend the very principles advanced in this report and would itself run the risk of supporting conflict drivers. Our recommendations must remain at the “meta-level”. It is the task of the donors and development agencies to develop their programmes in partnership with the Malagasy people and in line with its needs, and not according to the pet-projects of the international community. The fault lines, conflict drivers and amplifier presented in this PCIA should guide foreign and Malagasy development actors in this endeavour.

In principle, if development aid does not want to run the risk to enforce societal fault lines and conflict drivers, it needs to understand that it must approach Madagascar’s development



with a patient, long-term perspective. Export-led growth may produce more rapid results than rural and community development, but it inevitably deepens the societal fault lines as it has done over the past decades. The high concentration on power and capital in the centre is a reality of Madagascar, and **we are not suggesting that all development aid must be redirected towards rural development**. Priority must be given to local government structures broadly understood. In the Malagasy context, the fragility of the state can only be tackled by strengthening local, decentralized structures. The state's capacity to enforce its policies and its outreach depends on the capacity of local communities to organize themselves politically. Local government is also essential for the functioning of national legislative structures, as only active communities provide the conditions for strong and accountable members of parliament. Hence, effective civilian control of the armed forces can only be sustained in the long-term through the devolution of power to the local population. In this vein, local government encompasses also the creation of communal police forces geared towards the protection and security needs of the communities and accountable to them. Prioritizing local government structures offers an entry point for a coherent development strategy that simultaneously addresses the different fault lines and conflict drivers. This PCIA suggests that the 3C approach be mainstreamed along the envisioned development priorities as a means to guarantee that all efforts at co-ordination, coherence and complementarity may succeed.

The efficiency and/or effectiveness of aid should not be measured in numbers alone, but must also specify the values it supports and use them as benchmarks for the quality of the development process. This can only happen if all partners agree on shared values and a common vision – aid must thus come at a cost. The commitment of the Malagasy partners could be put to the test by demanding a pre-investment before the disbursement of external funding, thereby showing a determination to mobilize its own resources. A focus on principled process also includes the integration of conflict assessments and contingency procedures, and having shared values and a common vision requires coherence in the conceptualization of approaches. What is the vision of each partner on good governance? Does it only mean improved administrative efficiency or does it entail the balancing of power asymmetries? Unfortunately, decentralization measures focusing on the government in Antananarivo have worked at cross-purposes to more promising approaches such as the EU's ACORDS (*Appui aux Communes et Organisations Rurales pour le Développement du Sud*) or the SAHA programmes of the Swiss organization InterCooperation. While SAHA and ACORDS endorse a similar and rather more proactive vision of decentralization and devolution of power, other policies and programmes supporting the governmental approach use a much more technocratic notion of decentralization that may well be detrimental to achieving its stated objectives.

This PCIA concludes on the note that the worst-case scenario for forthcoming development aid would be to revert to a “business as usual” approach. The flip-side of local ownership, much acclaimed by less-developed countries, is local responsibility. We have heard in different conversations that the current cessation of development aid has already had dramatic repercussions on the social and humanitarian situation on the ground. It is, nevertheless, the HAT's duty towards its citizens to act responsibly and devise a rapid and realistic path to bring the transition to an end as soon as possible. Taking into account its transitional nature, it should limit its own prerogatives to managing the transition and holding back from legislating through executive orders. Any future government should, however, also be reassured that bilateral and multilateral donors are ready to develop a common development strategy aiming at preventing the recurrence of violence in Madagascar.

## Appendix: key dates in Madagascar's modern history<sup>133</sup>

October 1958	Madagascar becomes an autonomous Republic within the French Community.
May 1959	Philibert Tsiranana is elected President of the Republic by the <i>Assemblée constitutive</i> .
June 1960	Madagascar proclaims independence on June 26.
September 1960	Madagascar joins the United Nations.
March 1965	Tsiranana is re-elected President of the First Republic by direct universal suffrage.
January 1972	Tsiranana is re-elected for a second time.
April 1972	Beginning of student strikes, leading to the proclamation of a state of emergency on May 13 and the handing over of all power by Tsirana to the army's Chief of Staff, General Gabriel Ramanantsoa on May 18.
May 1973	Madagascar leaves the Franc Zone.
January 1975	Following an attempted coup d'état, Ramanantsoa dissolves the government.
February 1975	Creation of a military directorate on February 11 following the assassination of Colonel Richard Ratsimandrava, to whom Ramantsoa had given all powers on February 5.
June 1975	Didier Ratsiraka is nominated Head of State by the military directorate.
December 1975	Adoption by referendum of the <i>Charte de la révolution socialiste malagasy</i> , of a new Constitution, and of Ratsiraka's presidency; the Democratic Republic of Madagascar is proclaimed on December 31.
November 1982	Ratsiraka is elected President by universal sufferage.
March 1989	Ratsiraka is re-elected for a second time.
April 1991	Creation of the <i>Conseil des Forces Vives</i> .

<sup>133</sup> The following chronology draws on Galibert, *Les gens du pouvoir*, as well as on the BBC News Timeline: Madagascar; [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country\\_profiles/1832645.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1832645.stm); and IRIN, Madagascar: Timeline – A turbulent political history; <http://irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=88457>

June 1991	Establishment of a <i>gouvernement provisoire de la transition</i> and a parallel power structure by the <i>Conseil des Forces Vives</i> on July 16.
November 1991	Albert Zafy is proclaimed President of the <i>Haute Autorité de l'Etat</i> .
August 1992	Referendum on a new Constitution.
February 1993	Zafy wins the presidential elections against Ratsiraka.
September 1996	Parliamentary impeachment and resignation of Zafy. Norbert Ratsirahonana is nominated interim president.
December 1996	Ratsiraka wins the presidential elections against Zafy.
January 2002	Proclamation of the results of the first round of presidential elections involving Marc Ravalomanana; announcement that a second round of elections would have to be held.
February 2002	The first barricades are set up on the road between Antananarivo and Toamasin by Ratsiraka on February 5. The first inauguration ceremony of Ravalomanana takes place on February 22, and is condemned by the United Nations Security Council the following day.
May 2002	Second inauguration ceremony of Ravalomanana.
June 2002	US President George Bush sends a letter of congratulation to Ravalomanana.
July 2002	Ratsiraka and his inner circle leave Madagascar on two military airplanes. Cessation of military operations two days later.
July 2003	After a year-long suspension Madagascar is readmitted to the African Union (AU).
December 2003	Ratsiraka, still in exile, is sentenced to five years in prison for his role in the 2002 political crisis.
October 2004	The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund announce the cancellation of nearly half of Madagascar's debt (around \$2bn).
March 2005	Madagascar is the first state to receive development aid from the United States under a scheme to reward nations considered by Washington to be promoting democracy and market reforms – the Millennium Challenge Account.
December 2006	Ravalomanana is re-elected President of the Third Republic.
July 2007	Ravalomanana dissolves parliament after a new constitution calls for an end to the autonomy of the provinces.
December 2008	Andry Rajoelina, Mayor of Antananarivo and owner of the Viva TV station, airs an interview with exiled former president Ratsiraka; authorities promptly shut down the television station.

January 2009	Thousands take to the streets demanding a new government. Dozens are killed as protests turn violent. Opposition leader Rajoelina calls on Ravalomanana to resign as president and proclaims himself in charge of the country.
February 2009	Rajoelina is sacked as mayor of Antananarivo. At least 28 people are killed when security forces open fire on an opposition demonstration in the capital.
March 2009	Soldiers of the CAPSAT military barracks outside Antananarivo mutiny and say they will defy government orders to repress civilians. Ravalomanana resigns and hands power to a military directorate, which was subsequently coerced by members of CAPSAT to transfer power to Rajoelina. The AU and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) suspend Madagascar's membership.
June 2009	Ravalomanana, who has been living in exile in South Africa since March, is tried in absentia for abuse of office and sentenced to four years in prison.
August 2009	International mediators broker a power-sharing agreement between the rival camps at talks in the Mozambique capital Maputo.
December 2009	Following several failed attempts to agree on the line-up of an inclusive government, Rajoelina announces that he is formally abandoning the power-sharing deal.
February 2010	Rajoelina postpones parliamentary elections to May.
March 2010	African Union imposes targeted sanctions on Rajoelina and his administration.
May 2010	Rajoelina sets dates for constitutional referendum (August), parliamentary elections (September) and presidential elections (November). Rajoelina reshuffles cabinet but disappoints critics who hoped he would form a neutral government ahead of elections.
June 2010	The EU decides to suspend development aid to Madagascar in the absence of democratic progress.



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