



# Situation Report

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## Madagascar: Anatomy of a Recurrent Crisis

### Introduction

On 17 March 2009, President Marc Ravalomanana of Madagascar was reported to have announced his resignation and handed over power to a military directorate. Soon after this announcement, the military officers who had seized one of the presidential palaces the previous day declared Andry Rajoelina, former mayor of Antananarivo, 'president' of Madagascar. The High Constitutional Court later confirmed this decision and on Saturday 21 March he was inaugurated as Madagascar's president and head of the 'High Transitional Authority'.

Rajoelina's swearing in occurred at a time when the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), of which Madagascar is a member, the European Union (EU) and individual donor countries, including the United States and Norway, had already officially condemned his coming into power as having been unconstitutional. Meanwhile, France – the country's former colonial power – declared that it would continue to trade with and to give aid to Madagascar. Paris nevertheless expressed concern over the two-year transition period proposed by the new authorities, saying that it would be long. At the time this paper was completed, Rajoelina was also facing some local opposition from supporters of the ousted president.

After many unsuccessful attempts, the coordination of international mediation was given to former Mozambican president, Joachim Chissano, who has brought some glimmer of hope regarding a possible ending of the crisis.

The way in which Rajoelina came to power in Madagascar is symptomatic of the prevalent crisis of governance on the African continent in general and the recurrent political instability in Madagascar in particular. Just in the few months preceding Rajoelina's coming to power, two unconstitutional changes of government were recorded on the continent, while two countries were coerced into coalition governments following disputed elections, and one country saw both its president and army chief of staff assassinated within hours of each other.<sup>2</sup> Madagascar's case, while undoubtedly unique, appears to be in line with similar developments in other African countries.

The situation in Madagascar can best be understood by looking at the events that acted as catalysts to the political crisis and the eventual accession to power of Andry Rajoelina. Since it gained independence in 1960, Madagascan politics has been marred by a cycle of violent accessions to power in which members of the

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public are used as instruments of revolt, whether post-elections – as was the case in 2001/2002 when Ravalomanana came to power – or as a result of growing disdain with the incumbent administration. Both the current situation and what happened when Albert Zafy came to power in 1993 illustrate this scenario. Better insight into the ongoing crisis can also be achieved through a closer examination of the key protagonists in the crisis.

This paper therefore examines three key issues: firstly, it seeks to answer the question as to why there was an unconstitutional change of government in Madagascar. This is in view of the debate around the appropriate qualification of the way in which Rajoelina ascended to power. Secondly, it will try to fathom Rajoelina's rise to power from a DJ to the Mayor of Antananarivo and then to the presidential palace. These two key issues will set the stage for an examination of the core issues that perpetuate the cycle of political instability in Madagascar. The concluding section then provides some policy recommendations that might contribute to ensuring that Madagascar extricates itself from this vicious cycle and establishes itself as a well-functioning and stable democratic state.

The Malagasy crisis, while having taken a political dimension, seems to be a clash of personalities and not of political ideologies. However, the personalities and issues are so inextricably linked that they cannot be separated from each other. They will, therefore, be dealt with simultaneously, though the primary emphasis will be on the protagonists when trying to unpack the crisis. The major players in the crisis are former President Marc Ravalomanana (2002-2009), current transitional president Andry Rajoelina and, to a lesser extent, elements within the military. Another factor in the crisis is the role that former presidents Albert Zafy and Didier Ratsiraka continue to play. There are also other players, which include the Malagasy people, prominent foreign nations on whom Madagascar depends, and the wider international community.

The current crisis, though a symptom of an underlying problem, can be traced back to the 2007 local elections that saw the emergence of Andry Rajoelina as the mayor of the highly strategic Antananarivo, the capital of the country. He had won the city with some 67 per cent of the vote against a well-known government backed candidate. If the election of the former public event organiser was seen as a blow for Marc Ravalomanana, it also symbolised the re-emergence of popular or populist opposition politics that would take a dramatic turn in December 2008.

On 13 December 2008, Andry Rajoelina's television station, VIVA, broadcast an interview with former president Didier Ratsiraka, who was at the time exiled in France. In the interview, Ratsiraka lamented the state of governance in Madagascar and blamed the country's economic woes on his successor, Marc Ravalomanana. The government ordered the temporary shutdown of VIVA immediately after this.<sup>3</sup> Angered by the shutting down of his television station, Rajoelina began publicly criticising Ravalomanana and his administration. On 26 January 2009, after weeks of calling on his supporters and all those in opposition to Ravalomanana's administration to hold a public protest, his supporters took to the streets of Antananarivo. The first protest marked the beginning of public demonstrations that had a major impact on the country's economy and education system.

Less than three months later, at least 135 people were reported dead and many more injured amid nationwide protests against Ravalomanana's administration. What at first appeared to be a petty dispute between two political leaders boiled over dramatically and unearthed a deeper underlying problem with Malagasy politics. The crux of the initial crisis lay in Rajoelina accusing Ravalomanana of bad governance and ruling Madagascar as if it were part of his business conglomerate. He also accused him of repressing the opposition and running a one-party state. It would seem that these accusations are what got him the public support he needed to oust Ravalomanana.

Ravalomanana's opponents claim that since he became president in 2002, he mixed state politics with personal business and, through his company, Tiko,

took over the running of many former state-owned enterprises. For example, Asa Lalana Malagasy, a Tiko sub-corporation, became the primary road construction company. Tiko has some shares in Phoenix, which controls oil production and exploration in the country. Tiko also bought *Société d'Intérêt National de Produits Agricoles* (SINPA), the former state agricultural corporation, and *Société Malgache de Collecte et de Distribution* (SOMACODIS), a former state-run trading company, when they were both privatised in 2003. No invitation to tender was issued in either case.<sup>4</sup> In 2008, Ravalomanana bought a US\$60 million private jet to be used as the president's official aircraft.<sup>5</sup> This purchase, coupled with a deal with Korean giant Daewoo Logistics to lease 1.5 million acres of land for agricultural production to meet Korea's demand<sup>6</sup> gave Rajoelina the fuel he needed to rally the masses against Ravalomanana.

It was observed that Ravalomanana is first and foremost a businessman, 'who favours the American business style of macroeconomics'<sup>7</sup>. His support for this system might be attributed to the fact that his dairy business was propped up by assistance he received from the World Bank in 1982,<sup>8</sup> and also because he has benefitted from this style of doing business. However, this has not been particularly beneficial to the majority of the Malagasy people who live in very difficult conditions and are very poor, according to economic estimates.<sup>9</sup> Olukoshi notes that while economic reform is necessary for all countries, if it is conducted in such a way that it wipes out the social gains of the populace it is meaningless and should be done away with.<sup>10</sup> It is therefore alleged that Ravalomanana's propensity to focus primarily on his own personal gain has had a negative effect on the economy.

Rajoelina's other accusations do not seem ill founded either. For example, he alleges that Ravalomanana muffled dissent and a free press. The charge is that until the emergence of Rajoelina, Ravalomanana had managed to effectively silence the opposition through repression and censorship. As a result, one party, Ravalomanana's *Tiako I Madagasikari* (TIM), dominated Malagasy politics. Madagascar is not alone in this state of affairs. Leaders of other African countries have also succeeded in thwarting the opposition, mainly through censorship. Ravalomanana wholly owns Madagascar's largest media outlet, Madagascar Broadcasting System (MBS) and while he was in power, MBS did not suffer from the same censorship that other broadcasters did.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, it was the decision to temporarily shut down VIVA on 13 December 2008 that acted as a catalyst for Rajoelina's 'rebellion' or 'revolution'.

The problem cannot, however, be blamed entirely on the ruling party. As is the case in many African countries, even where the opposition is not blatantly censored, in most cases, after failing to win power in elections, it simply splinters into several factions and/or fades into oblivion.<sup>12</sup> Commenting on the state of the opposition in Africa, Olukoshi laments their weaknesses, which directly impact on democracy on the continent, given that democracy is dependent on a representative vote in order for it to be realized.<sup>13</sup> Gyimah-Boadi adds that the weakness of the opposition can be attributed to the low levels of institutionalisation, weak organisation and weak links to the society that parties are supposed to represent. He thinks that this is a reflection of the 'immaturity' of the African democratic system.<sup>14</sup> It will be fair to recognise that opposition parties in Africa operate in a complex political setting without the necessary financial resources to challenge incumbents that do not hesitate to use public funds in their campaigns.

Between 2002 and 2009, while he was in power, Ravalomanana managed to systematically weaken the opposition. His decision to suspend state subsidies to the newly elected mayor of Antananarivo was interpreted as an attempt to undermine the ability of Andry Rajoelina to deliver on his electoral promises. An early warning organisation noted in 2007 that in the aftermath of the elections, opposition voices were significantly weakened, while Ravalomanana worked to consolidate his grip on power.<sup>15</sup> Given this weakened state of the political opposition and the erosion of institutional power structures, it was not difficult for Rajoelina to channel public anger and position himself as the spokesperson for a revived opposition.

Protestors, unhappy with the Ravalomanana regime and increasingly discontent with their socio-economic status, used the streets – instead of the ballot – as their tool to effect regime change. On 28 January, a protest staged in the capital Antananarivo turned violent, leaving 48 people dead and hundreds more injured, marking the beginning of large-scale aggression towards the government. Rajoelina, who was then the mayor of Antananarivo, was removed from office on 3 February, a move which worsened the already volatile and tense situation. One could even argue that this action worked as another catalyst for Rajoelina's movement. In the same vein, the presidential guard opened fire with live bullets on a crowd that was protesting near one of the presidential palaces. Approximately 28 people died as a result and hundreds were injured. This tragic day of 7 February is now known as 'Red Saturday'.

Many international and regional organizations, as well as individual countries, have condemned the change of power in Madagascar.<sup>16</sup> On 19 March, Mozambique, Angola and Swaziland were the first to refuse to recognise Rajoelina's presidency.<sup>17</sup> These three countries make up the defence, political and security troika of the southern African regional grouping, SADC. The AU followed suit and on 20 March the continental body resolved to suspend Madagascar in keeping with Article 30 of the Constitutive Act of the AU and in reference to the 2000 Lomé Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government.<sup>18</sup> Article 30 of the Constitutive Act of the AU stipulates: 'Governments which shall come to power through unconstitutional means shall not be allowed to participate in the activities of the Union'.

In line with this principle, the AU told Rajoelina's new administration to take concrete steps to return the country to constitutional order as speedily as possible, as provided for by the Lomé Declaration and in accordance with the Malagasy Constitution. Democratic elections are regarded as being central to this return to constitutional order. This is the latest suspension by the AU showing strict adherence to Article 30. The AU has suspended both Mauritania and Guinea for coups in those countries and only lifted Mauritania's suspension in late July 2009 after elections were held.<sup>19</sup>

In the days immediately after the suspension of Madagascar from the AU, countries like Nigeria, the United States, France, Norway and the Czech Republic (on behalf of the European Union) also joined the condemnation chorus calling the ousting of Ravalomanana a military coup d'état or at least an unconstitutional change of government, which it was indeed.<sup>20</sup> While the EU has decided not to cancel pre-existing aid arrangements and France has said it will continue with its trade relations, countries like Norway have withdrawn aid from the country. In justifying its decision, the EU's representative in Madagascar, Jean Claude Boidin, said that it was motivated by the need to ensure that beneficiaries and affected populations did not suffer during the ongoing period of political turmoil and international isolation. Boidin also said that the European Commission's decision reflects its desire to maintain continuity of cooperation, adding that the Commission is committed to honouring its legal and contractual obligations. The EU's representative, however, also said that no new aid contracts would be negotiated as a precautionary measure.<sup>21</sup>

On 30 March, following an extraordinary summit, SADC also resolved to suspend Madagascar from the activities of the regional bloc, calling for the immediate reinstatement of Ravalomanana based on representations he made at the summit. It would seem that Ravalomanana indicated in this representation that his resignation was made under duress brought on by alleged threats to his life and his family made by the army. SADC's position at the time served to further isolate Rajoelina, who was already facing resistance from the Malagasy people. What seems curious, however, is that the SADC did not call for elections as a means to return the country to constitutional democracy. Instead, it said that it would give Rajoelina time to respond to its position to vacate the premises of the presidential palace. France seemed to support this position, as its Minister for Cooperation, Alan Joyandet indicated at the time.<sup>22</sup>

Since the outbreak of the crisis, concerted attempts have been made by the international community, both before and since Rajoelina ascended to power, to end the worsening crisis through mediated talks. The international community's decision to engage in the country came after they realised that the political crisis in Madagascar had reached boiling point.

While SADC was vocal about the unconstitutional change of government, it did not do much to alleviate the political crisis in the country before Rajoelina took over. There was, however, little SADC could have done and the prospects of success at the time were slim even if they had actively engaged. This is because none of the two protagonists seemed disposed to make meaningful compromises, particularly at the height of the political standoff. SADC has made concerted efforts to alleviate the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for example and has spearheaded efforts to resolve the political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe. But the Madagascar coup was the first time the regional grouping was faced with such a situation. Criticising it for inaction on this matter would therefore not be entirely fair.

Following Red Saturday, the AU sent a team of three prominent diplomats to help resolve the crisis in Madagascar: Ramtane Lamamra, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) Commissioner, Pascal Yao Konan, an adviser to the AU's PSC, and Amara Essy, former Ivorian Minister of Foreign Affairs and last Secretary General of the OAU. Amara Essy expressed great concern over the situation in Madagascar and appeared skeptical about a quick and peaceful solution to the crisis. Earlier in the negotiations, Essy suggested that an inclusive government in which the opposition is not thwarted would be the ideal solution to the crisis. His remarks came following meetings he held with both Ravalomanana and Rajoelina. Both parties repeatedly agreed to talks on the basis that Haile Menkerios, the United Nations Under-Secretary for Political Affairs, would mediate, although they showed little propensity for compromise.

The AU was not alone in its bid to broker talks between the feuding rivals, as envoys from the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), the Organization of French Speaking Countries (OIF), the influential Madagascar Christian Council of Churches (FFKM) and France were all in favour of a mediated resolution to the crisis. The bad blood between the two protagonists and a blatant lack of coordination, however, gravely complicated these mediation efforts. The main hindrance to any resolution was the fact that both leaders dogmatically stood their ground in spite of the rising death toll. Throughout this initial negotiation period, both Rajoelina and Ravalomanana continually raised and dashed the hopes of the Malagasy public through agreeing to meet for talks and then boycotting them or issuing statements immediately after the talks that indicated that no progress was being made.

The mediation attempts of these various actors of the international community proved ineffective at the beginning and during the first phase of the crisis. This was partly due to a lack of coherent and harmonised positions among these actors and even consensus on the way forward in Madagascar. This partly explains their failure to prevent the unconstitutional change of government by Rajoelina and his supporters. They only managed to adopt a united and an unambiguous position following Rajoelina's accession to power, and especially after the appointment of former Mozambican president, Joachim Chissano as the chief mediator. Indeed, the appointment of Chissano marked a sharp departure from the radical stance that had been adopted by some SADC members, which included a hint at the possibility of military intervention to reinstate Ravalomanana.

The two rounds of talks held in Maputo in August 2009 were supposed to help end the political crisis. Interestingly, the first round was successful in bringing the key protagonists to the table for the first time and resulted in the signing of the Charter of the Transition drafted by the International Contact Group. In terms of the deal, signed on 8 August, a transitional authority was envisioned to govern the country until elections in October 2010. This body was to be set up within

a month of signing the deal. Importantly, some contentious issues, including an amnesty provision for all former presidents and the suspension of the arrest warrant against Ravalomanana, were resolved amicably. However, whereas the second round of talks, held from 25–27 August, was meant to finalise the practical modalities of the transitional government, it ended without any consensus on who would lead the transitional government.

This wrangling ultimately led to a stalemate in the Maputo talks in late August. However, according to the chief mediator, before the talks stalled, the mediating team and the negotiators ‘were close to reaching a consensus on naming Andry Rajoelina as the new interim president’.<sup>23</sup> The consensus was lost when the office of the Prime Minister came under discussion and both Rajoelina and ousted president Marc Ravalomanana made it clear that they wanted the post to go to their respective parties.

The three top positions within the GNU (President, Prime Minister and Vice-President) became the bone of contention. The antagonism took a radical turn as former President Ravalomanana vowed not to recognise Rajoelina’s regime. The parties, however, reached a consensus on these positions in early October after intense negotiations in Antananarivo. They agreed that Rajoelina would remain the president of the transitional government. Eugène Mangalaza, an ally of former president Ratsiraka, was nominated for the post of Prime Minister, while Emmanuel Rakotovahiny, a former Prime Minister and ally of former president Zafy, was given the post of Vice-President.<sup>24</sup>

While this constitutes a positive development, the GNU had not been formed at the time this paper was completed. In addition, while reaching this agreement was necessary to put an end to the crisis, there is still a need to deal with the root causes of the crisis in order to achieve durable stability in the country.

In seeking a solution to the crisis in Madagascar, one must not focus solely on the unconstitutional seizure of power by Rajoelina. It is also important to try to address the underlying issues that continue to undermine political stability and democracy in the country. As Bratton and Van de Walle<sup>25</sup> note, ‘contemporary political change is conditioned by mechanisms of rule embedded in the old regime’. This implies what the two authors call ‘regime transition’, which they define as ‘a shift from an old pattern of rule to a new one’.<sup>26</sup> What this means is that the tone is often set by preceding governments and those that follow may break away from this norm or expand on it. However, it should be noted that the change in regime does not necessarily mean a change in approaches to governance. Madagascar is no stranger to the perpetuation of the vicious political cycle despite changes in regime.

#### *Doing away with the legacy of bad governance*

Madagascar’s post-colonial history has been characterised by regime transitions brought on primarily through popular uprising. It thus appears that while the regimes change, the cycle of political violence and instability continues. The popular uprising of 1947 saw the Malagasy people coming together in opposition to French colonialism. The first post-colonial president, Philibert Tsiranana, came to power in 1959, and it was through demonstrations by young people in 1972 that his government was brought down. He was succeeded by his Prime Minister Gabriel Ramanantsoa, who became President on 11 October 1972. Less than three years later, he too was forced to resign in February 1975 amid ethnic and social tensions. Months of political unrest ensued, during which Ramanantsoa’s immediate successor, Colonel Richard Ratsimandrava, was assassinated after only six days in office.<sup>27</sup> Ratsimandrava was succeeded by General Gilles Andriamahazo, who resigned in favour of Vice Admiral Didier Ratsiraka after only five months in office.<sup>28</sup> In the late 1980s and early 1990s, strikes against Ratsiraka’s regime coerced him to accept multi-party elections, which he lost to Alberty Zafy in 1993.<sup>29</sup> Zafy was later impeached, and Ratsiraka came back onto the political scene. In 2001, following the disputed elections in which both

Ratsiraka and Ravalomanana claimed victory, the latter was propelled to the office of president by virtue of his massive support in the cities, which was mobilized into public and often violent protests.<sup>30</sup>

Given this history, Rajoelina's coming to power is therefore nothing extraordinary. It can be argued that the political terrain of Madagascar paved the way for his ascension. Indeed, the similarities are startling and are an indication that the rise to power of both Rajoelina and Ravalomanana before him are not merely coincidental. In fact, it can be argued that Rajoelina learnt from Ravalomanana's victory in 2002. Ravalomanana came to power on a wave of popular support through public protests, so too did Rajoelina. Even more interesting is the fact that both leaders started off as mayors of Antananarivo and both managed to gain immense public support in the capital despite only being in office for two years. Both Ravalomanana and Rajoelina's business acumen and popularity made it easy for them to rise to the presidency. The only difference (and the important distinguishing factor) lies in the fact that Rajoelina's uprising preceded the elections, while Ravalomanana's followed a disputed election. However, given that Rajoelina would not have been able to contest in the elections anyway, due to the age limitation, it can be concluded that he exploited the situation to his advantage. One could therefore argue that had Ravalomanana not succeeded in 2002, Rajoelina might not have had sufficient fervour to take him on. In reality, mechanisms and institutionalisation of power alternation in Madagascar remain problematic as a result of a failed democratisation process initiated in the early 1990s.

According to Ellis, Madagascar's instability stems primarily from the country's extreme poverty combined with the high birth rate (the population has increased from less than 3 million around 1900 to 6 million in 1960, to 20 million today). He argues that the arrival in Antananarivo of large numbers of young people every year looking for employment has created a volatile atmosphere.<sup>31</sup> Ellis notes that in Madagascar, the ability to control the 'urban mob' is significant in national politics.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, without the public protests that fuelled Rajoelina's movement, it is unlikely that he would have been able to oust Ravalomanana.

In discussing the ability to rally the masses, Marcus has argued that it is extremely easy to garner support of the masses in Antananarivo because they are predominantly unemployed youth in desperate need of a political saviour promising a better future<sup>33</sup>. Ellis agrees with this, adding that the high numbers of unemployed youth also help create a volatile atmosphere prone to uprisings. Morobe, in the late 1980s, advocated for the use of popular uprisings to effect regime change<sup>34</sup>. According to him, what is needed is 'direct as opposed to indirect political representation, mass participation rather than passive docility and ignorance. In other words, a situation where ordinary people feel that they can do the job themselves'.<sup>35</sup> Though Morobe was writing from a South African perspective, at a time when the apartheid regime was tightening its grip to thwart uprisings, his words resonate in the case of Madagascar. In 2001, one interviewee had this to say:

If people rise up and fly into a rage it is because politicians are not concerned about the people. People lose confidence because of the improper behaviour of politicians. In 1993 people chased the president out of power. But then came Zafy Albert; he showed a flagrant inability to lead the country. So he was kicked out through impeachment.<sup>36</sup>

Bratton and Van de Walle argue that efforts of African citizens to hold leaders accountable are at the heart of African democracy<sup>37</sup>. By a stretching of the meaning of the concept of democracy, one could argue that Rajoelina's mobilisation of the masses in an effort to hold Ravalomanana accountable for what he regarded as an abuse of power and bad governance could be seen as promotion of democracy. Indeed, Olukoshi argues that any public uprising condemning unbridled corruption and bad governance is a step further away from despondent apathy and a step closer to democracy.<sup>38</sup> However, for this conclusion to hold in the case of Rajoelina, his efforts should have been conducted with the intention of

re-establishing constitutional democracy by calling for Ravalomanana's resignation and then holding fresh elections, which he did not do. The manner in which he seized power can, therefore, hardly be seen as being democratic. As Bratton and Van de Walle later point out, the mobilisation of the masses in seeking to hold the government accountable should be done within the framework of free, fair and transparent elections and not through protests or civilian or military *coup d'états*.

#### *The need for credible elections*

The reason why elections are so important is because they are at the root of the concept of democracy. While they are not a sufficient condition for democracy, there can be no democracy without elections. According to Bratton and Van de Walle, the 'rule of the people' derives its legitimacy from the principle of popular sovereignty. In essence, modern democracy is representative democracy and, according to Lindberg, democratization can only succeed through holding elections<sup>39</sup>.

However, Teshome-Bahiru is of the opinion that while holding an election is a milestone, it is not the key to Africa's democratic legitimacy<sup>40</sup>. Her argument is based on the fact that most of the elections in Africa have fallen short of internationally accepted standards for free and fair elections. She, however, notes that elections should still be embraced as an indispensable mechanism for establishing democracy and as such there should be a promotion of free, fair and transparent elections.

However, in analysing the situation and options for a successful transition in Madagascar, it should be noted that there is no such thing as 'full' or 'pure' democracy<sup>41</sup>. According to Olukoshi,<sup>42</sup> the democratic process is dynamic and is constantly being renewed on local and global scales. Thus any recommendations that relate to democracy must bear in mind the unique context in which Malagasy democracy will have to be fostered. It is imperative that a static notion of democracy in which a certain view of the concept is imposed on all countries be done away with if democracy in African countries is to be realised.

The problem is therefore not so much that Rajoelina got into power by way of a military *coup d'état*; but that the Malagasy polity *allowed* him to do so. Borrowing from Tocqueville's description of nineteenth century France, Marcus asserts that Madagascar's democracy is 'without anything to lessen its vices and bring out its advantages'.<sup>43</sup> He goes further to argue that the popular uprisings that plague the country occur because, while voting offers an opportunity for the Malagasy to participate in politics, meagre voter turnouts force the people to seek an alternative to fill the vacuum created.<sup>44</sup> The urban social movements are an attempt to do this. Thus, any engagement in the country should bear this in mind, in effect encouraging the populace to voice their opinions through the ballot and not on the streets. Thus, it will not be enough to condemn Rajoelina or to force him out of office, because that will be a symptomatic approach to dealing with the political malaise from which the country has suffered even before it regained its independence. The time is ripe for the international community to engage in Madagascar in a way that will extricate the country from the vicious cycle in which it finds itself and move towards sustainable constitutional democracy.

## Conclusion

Despite the previous failure of the international community to engage Rajoelina in talks to resolve the crisis, the fact that he suffered from growing opposition prompted him to seek a quicker solution. First he reduced the transition period from the initial 24 months to less than 19 months. Secondly, he agreed to meet with Ravalomanana, Ratsiraka and Zafy in the Maputo talks at which he made a key concession granting Ravalomanana amnesty. The Maputo talks show a clear commitment by the SADC and the rest of the international community to a clear and consensual position on the Malagasy crisis. Some countries like France have, however, decided not to halt aid to the island in a 'show of solidarity' with the long-suffering Malagasy people. This could easily be construed as implicit 'legitimation' of the regime.



However, if appropriate mechanisms are put in place that ensure the transitional government properly distributes this aid, then the position of these countries can serve the interests of the nation without compromising their stance on democratic governance. Thus, it is important that countries like France set new conditions on their aid that will push the transitional government to move more swiftly towards re-establishing constitutional democracy.

As noted above, SADC's initial position was an insistence on the reinstatement of Ravalomanana. This was arguably based on the organisation's reading that the seizure of power by Rajoelina was unconstitutional and that Ravalomanana's reported resignation was made under duress and is therefore null and void. But the SADC changed this stance as time passed and eventually aligned its position with that of the AU and other international actors. This is to deal with the fundamental issue of thoroughly re-evaluating and overhauling the political system. Indeed, if constitutional democracy is to exist in Madagascar, the push should be towards holding free and fair elections, as well as institution building and establishing a credible and accountable leadership.

Bearing in mind the importance of constitutionality and democracy, it is prudent that the root causes of the political crisis be addressed. A system that allows for a young mayor to ascend to the position of President in the way Rajoelina did is clearly flawed. But what has allowed the system to be flawed? The country's leaders and national institutions, as well as the international community have been taking a symptomatic approach to the crisis instead of dealing with the underlying problems of increased poverty and bad governance in a country with immense economic potential. Over 50 per cent of Madagascar's land is arable, yet it remains mostly untouched. Bolstering the agricultural sector is likely to go a long way towards ensuring food security and thwarting disdain.

Recent mineral discoveries in the country have seen mineral giants like Total (France) and Rio Tinto (Australia/UK/Canada) investing in the country's mining industry, with Rio Tinto being the largest current international investor. Rajoelina has called for the renegotiation of mining contracts to better suit national interests, a move that has been heralded by locals as a true indication that he has the Malagasy people's best interests at heart. Success in this venture depends mainly on foreign cooperation and increased investment.

Lastly, it is clear that Rajoelina will not be easily removed from office especially given that his hard-headedness was instrumental in his rise to power. Above all else, it would appear that he seeks respect and recognition. While it cannot be said for certain, it is likely that if the international community affords him this he will relent and possibly make some concessions. This 'recognition' should not be equated to condoning his actions. It should be seen as an acknowledgement that he is only a symptom of the underlying problem.

The war of personalities continues at the expense of restoration of political order, but it is clear that the establishment of a neutral or all-inclusive transitional authority that is better organized and coordinated could go a long way towards re-establishing constitutional order. The transitional authority would be tasked with preparing the country for elections and, together with the international community, work towards re-evaluating and establishing functional national institutions geared towards firm adherence to constitutionality, accountability and democracy. The biggest task will however be convincing the key protagonists of the necessity of such a transition. The mediators must therefore push for a setting aside of personal differences and a commitment towards the re-establishment of constitutional order.

About six months after Rajoelina's ascendance to power, the crisis continues as uncertainty prevails. Only time will tell whether Madagascar will manage to revive itself and ultimately be able to extract itself from the vicious political cycle that has ruined its economic potential.

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- 1 At the time of writing this Report, Ottilia Maunganidze was an intern with the African Security Analysis Programme of the ISS, Pretoria.
  - 2 They are, respectively, Mauritania (August 2008) and Guinea (December 2008); Kenya (January 2008) and Zimbabwe (August 2008); and Guinea-Bissau (March 2009).
  - 3 Video: 'The video that started it all' at <http://vodpod.com/watch/1344546-12-16-08-didier-ratsiraka-the-video-that-started-it-all> (Last accessed: 30 August 2009)
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