

Polity IV Country Report 2010: Madagascar

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2009</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2010</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polity:</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autoc:</td> <td>3</td> <td>3</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Durable:</td> <td></td> <td>1</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td></td> <td>Yes</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2009	2010	Change	Polity:	0	0	0	Democ:	3	3	0	Autoc:	3	3	0	Durable:		1		Tentative:		Yes		
Score:	2009	2010	Change																						
Polity:	0	0	0																						
Democ:	3	3	0																						
Autoc:	3	3	0																						
Durable:		1																							
Tentative:		Yes																							
SCODE	MAG	CCODE	580	Date of Report	1 June 2011																				
Polity IV Component Variables																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
2	1	4	5	3	3																				
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																									
End Date			Begin Date																						
17 March 2009			18 March 2009																						
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution	2010																								
Executive(s)	President of the High Transitional Authority Andry Rajoelina; designated by the military on 17 March 2009 after former democratically elected president Marc Ravalomanana stepped down																								
Legislature	Bicameral: The National Assembly (127 seats; directly elected; most recent elections, 23 September 2007) and Senate (90 seats; 60 selected by electoral college, 30 appointed by president) were dissolved by the High Transitional Authority; new elections are promised in late 2011 or early 2012																								
Judiciary	Supreme Court; Constitutional High Court																								

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Designation (3)

Commander Didier Ratsiraka came to power in Madagascar in 1975 following five years of serious social unrest and unstable and ineffective military governments. In January 1976 he became president and founded the Vanguard of the Malagasy Revolution (AREMA) party to implement his nationalization policies and economic reforms. Historically, Madagascar has been characterized by political tensions between coastal residents (Cotiers) and central highlanders (Merina). In early 1990, opposition groups from the capital and surrounding highlands formed an alliance called the Active Forces Committee (CFV) and staged massive strikes calling for an end to military control of politics. In July 1991, the CFV formed a parallel provision government with opposition leader Albert Zafy as its prime minister. President Ratsiraka

¹ The research described in this report was sponsored by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF). The PITF is funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. The views expressed herein are the authors' alone and do not represent the views of the US Government.

suspended the 1975 constitution in October following increasing unrest and conceded to an 18-month transitional government leading to a new constitution in 1992, open electoral politics, and a diminution of presidential power in favor of stronger parliamentary government.

A special provision of the 1992 constitution requires that if a cotier is elected president then the prime minister must be a merina, and vice versa. In the February 1993 runoff elections, Albert Zafy was elected president and replaced Ratsiraka. President Zafy resigned in October 1996 after parliament voted to impeach him but was allowed to run in the subsequent presidential elections. Ratsiraka, as the candidate of the renamed Vanguard for Social and Economic Recovery (ARES) party, defeated Zafy in the December 1996 runoff vote and returned to the presidency with a narrow majority (50.7%) of the popular vote. The election was widely accepted as free and fair. December 2001 presidential elections were contested by six candidates. In January 2002, the High Constitutional Court announced that no candidate has received the required 50 percent of the vote and set 24 February as the date for a runoff election between the top two vote getters: Ratsiraka (41%) and Marc Ravalomanana (46%). The announcement triggered large demonstrations in the capital by supporters of Ravalomanana, who claimed fraud by the Ratsiraka government and that Ravalomanana had won an outright victory at the polls. The protests extended to a nation-wide general strike and continued through February. On 22 February Ravalomanana declared himself President; Ratsiraka countered by declaring a state of emergency. The tension continued to escalate in March and April. On 17 April, the High Constitutional Court ordered a recount of the ballots and on 29 April the Court announced the results: Ravalomanana was declared the winner with 51.5 percent of the vote. Ravalomanana was sworn in on 6 May but violent confrontations between rival groups continued until finally Ratsiraka fled the country on 5 July 2002.

In May 2006 the main opposition parties boycotted talks with President Ravalomanana which were intended to ease political tensions ahead of the December 2006 presidential elections. Ravalomanana was declared the victor of the December polls with 54.8% of the vote. The elections were deemed to be largely fair by international observers; however, a coup attempt in the run-up to the election demonstrated the fragility of the electoral process in Madagascar. In November 2006 an opponent of the President, General Fidy, had taken control of a military base and called on the army to remove the President from office. Fidy had earlier declared his intention to run in the upcoming election but was refused the right to participate by the Constitutional Court. While the coup attempt failed to remove the President from office, nonetheless, 8 of 13 presidential candidates had pledged support for Fidy's insurrection. Moreover, the President's main political rival, Pierrot Rajaonarivelo, who had served in the government of former President Ratsiraka and had gone into exile after the political crisis of 2002, was blocked from returning to the country and registering his candidacy. In response, supporters of Rajaonarivelo's Arema party took to the streets in protest. President Marc Ravalomanana resigned on 17 March 2009, following two months of popular protests against his presidency; executive power was transferred to opposition leader Andry Rajoelina who enjoyed the support of the military. The resulting "caretaker" regime is clearly unconstitutional but its real nature remains unclear. The opposition appears muted, probably due to restrictions imposed by the military.

Executive Constraints: Substantial Limitations (5)

The new Madagascar Constitution of 1992 set up a comprehensive system of checks and balances that substantially constrain the president's power. The power is divided between the president, prime minister, cabinet, and the bicameral legislature; although the constitutional amendments narrowly approved by a popular vote (51%) in 1998 granted the president the power to dissolve parliament and removed parliament's power to impeach the president. Still, the president is required to promulgate the laws adopted by the National Assembly within no more than two weeks, and the legislature's vote of no confidence in the Government requires that the Government resign. The President, on the other hand, has powers to dissolve the National Assembly if more than two votes of no confidence take place within eighteen months. Moreover, in April 2007 the citizens of Madagascar voted to endorse a constitutional reform package that sought to increase the powers of the president. As part of these reforms, the president was given the power to rule by decree in times of emergency. Ravalomanana's political power was further enhanced in the aftermath of the September 2007 legislative elections in which his political organization, the I Love Madagascar Party, won 106 out of 127 seats in the National Assembly. The country's judiciary is formally independent, but is deemed subject to executive influence. The Court's ruling against the incumbent president in the disputed December 2001 presidential election was a highly visible display of increasing independence. Following the forced resignation of President Ravalomanana on 17 March 2009, the military

has assumed a more active role in politics, albeit acting mainly behind the scenes through former opposition leader Andry Rajoelina, who the military placed in executive power despite constitutional age restrictions that should have prevented him taking executive office. It remains unclear in mid-2011 how much independent authority President Rajoelina may exercise and what the actual role of the military is in the current regime.

Political Participation: Factional/Restricted Competition (6)

Until the 2001 crisis, Madagascar had demonstrated a relatively peaceful transition from restricted to institutionalized competitive participation. Before 1990, opposition parties were barely tolerated and no direct criticism of the government was permitted. But after competitive and generally free multiparty legislative elections of 1993 and 1998, Madagascar made steady progress in its pursuit of democratic pluralism. However, political parties continued to function primarily along patrimonial lines and structures. The newly established political parties remained weak and fluid and were easily overshadowed by Ratsiraka's well-entrenched ARES party. The opposition CFV alliance that initiated the democratic reforms movement in 1991 split into factions prior to the 1993 legislative elections and the opposition has continued to be fragmented, allowing the ARES party to dominate the 1998 legislative elections and the 2001 Senate elections. Following the final resolution of the disputed December 2001 presidential elections, new President Marc Ravalomanana dissolved the ARES-dominated legislature and called new elections in December 2002. The results of those elections gave Ravalomanana's I Love Madagascar (TIM) party 103 of 160 seats and gave the National Union (FP), which supports the new president, another 22 seats. The ARES party was decimated and received only 3 seats. The September 2007 legislative elections further enhanced the ruling party's dominance of the political process. However, this dominance merely indicated the nation's widespread support for the President rather than any institutionalized consolidation of power by the TIM itself. This party, like all that had preceded it, is elite-based and largely anchored in neo-patrimonial ties and networks. The popular uprising that led to President Ravalomanana's 17 March 2009 resignation and the assumption of executive office by his rival Andry Rajoelina has further energized the factional divide that characterizes politics in Madagascar. A public referendum to approve a new constitution was held on 17 November 2010; a military coup attempt was launched the same day, led by twenty senior officers. The referendum was passed with 70.5% of the vote (and enacted on 11 December 2010); the coup attempt was ended on 21 November when loyal military forces stormed the rebel barracks. The new constitution was cited as a crucial step toward a return to an elected civilian government with elections to be held in late 2011 or early 2012. On 26 March 2011, the High Transitional Authority announced an agreement and the formation of a national unity government that included eight small political parties; the three main opposition groups rejected the agreement.

Historically, no political party has been able to dominate the national political landscape largely because of the complexity of ethno-regional cleavages that gives no group a numerical advantage. Multiple fault lines exist within both of the main ethno-regional groups, the Merina highlanders and Cotier lowlanders, and have led the major parties to forge precarious and shifting coalitions across the dominant Merina-Cotier divide. Despite this historical record of ethno-regional political accommodation, traditional tensions between the Merina and Cotiers continue to shape political relations in Madagascar. The Merina, who constitute 26% of the population, were the first group to unite Madagascar at the start of the 19th century and were the favored ethnic group when the French took over the island in 1896. In the post-colonial era, the coastal-based Cotiers argued that the political system continued to favor the highland-based Merina. The concentration of power and educational opportunities in the capital city, Antannarivo, further increased the perception of Merina superiority. While the Merina gained economic power, their efforts to capture political power, and the presidency, have, until recently, been less successful. For the first time in post-colonial history, both the president, Marc Ravalomanana, and the prime minister, Charles Rabemananjara, are highlanders. Despite this consolidation of Merina power, President Ravalomanana won significant support in the Cotier strongholds. Ravalomanana's national success reflected a significant break in the historic pattern of ethno-regional voting. Despite the emergence of Ravalomanana as a national candidate, ethnic tensions remain a significant problem in the country. In May 2007 ethnic tensions exploded into violence in the coastal town of Tulear. Over 80 Merina-owned businesses in this town were targeted in the aftermath of protests over the lack of electricity.