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Analysis

Madagascar between peace and conflict—domestic capabilities for peaceful conflict management

Wenche Hauge

Despite severe political instability and many political crises since independence, Madagascar has experienced peace for nearly four decades. Unlike the dominant research on causes of armed conflict, this article focuses on the causes of peace. It introduces a new concept—domestic capabilities for peaceful conflict management—to identify factors related to conflict fault lines, civil–military relations and a culture of constructive conflict management, that facilitate the prevalence of peace. The domestic capabilities for peaceful conflict management perspective draws attention away from preventive diplomacy and external intervention and places the focus on internal capabilities for peace. On this basis, the article also analyses the severe crisis in 2009 and how it was handled.

Introduction

Post-independence Madagascar has been characterised by severe political instability and a series of deep political crises, with peaks in 1971–72, 1990–91, 2001–02 and 2009. Several of the conditions associated with armed conflict in quantitative research—such as a low level of economic development, soil degradation, political instability and multi-ethnicity—have characterised Madagascar during all of these crises.¹ However, only the

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crisis in 1971 led to armed conflict. The definition of armed conflict used here is taken from Harbom and Wallensteen and the Uppsala dataset on armed conflict. According to Harbom and Wallensteen, an armed conflict is a 'contested incompatibility, which concerns government or territory or both, where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a year' and where 'of these two parties, at least one has to be the government of a state'.²

In situations of political conflict and looming war, international attention is often drawn to the potential effects of preventive diplomacy and external intervention. However, this article turns the focus in a different direction—to the effects that the internal context and internal actors can have on the development of a crisis, either towards peace or transforming it into an armed conflict. The article seeks to identify the particular conditions that facilitate *domestic capabilities for peaceful conflict management*, defined as the abilities of national political, military and social actors to handle political conflict and crisis in a non-violent manner. It is assumed here that the actors' capabilities are influenced by historical experiences, cultural context and the structural and institutional framework.

Theories

To understand how domestic capabilities for peaceful conflict management operate, it is necessary to look into the dynamics of armed conflict as well as the dynamics of peace. Theories on the causes of armed conflict abound, covering topics as different as the role of socio-economic disparities, renewable and non-renewable resources, regime types, democratisation, multi-ethnicity, religion and language—to mention some of the most important. Although, within the academic literature on conflict causation, there is no general agreement on this, several researchers, such as Gurr and Moore, Østby and Stewart, conclude that socio-economic disparities contribute to armed conflict.³ Socio-economic inequality per se may not be sufficient to cause armed conflict, as long as this disparity does not coincide with dividing lines of identity and discrimination in society. Therefore, in spite of existing cleavages, when these are crosscutting peace may prevail.⁴

Thus, an important part of the focus of this article will be on the existence of fault lines and their potential to become weakened or crosscutting. The fault lines are defined here as expressions of social, political, economic and cultural cleavages that cause individuals to fall into the groups they do. In short, they explain the sources and the effects of the

conflict's participants.⁵ However, an equally important part of the focus of the article will be on factors that facilitate peace. Each time there has been a severe political crisis in Madagascar particular mechanisms have been set in motion by groups of actors from civil society and within the military that have wanted to prevent armed conflict from breaking out or bring the serious political crisis to an end.

My earlier research has revealed that particular types of civil–military relations and a culture of constructive conflict management can constitute important pillars of a country's domestic capabilities for peaceful conflict management.⁶ Each of these topics will be treated in depth in sections following the discussion about the fault lines below. In the following a deeper discussion of the importance of conflict fault lines, civil–military relations and a culture of constructive conflict management will give a basis for understanding why some of the crises transformed into armed conflicts, whereas others did not, and why some of the crises were more violent than others. In other words, it will show under which conditions the domestic capabilities for peaceful conflict management can best work.

An historical glimpse at Madagascar's conflict fault lines

Madagascar is a low-income country, but socio-economic and political cleavages in the country are, to a large degree, crosscutting. The most important ethnic divide has been between the Mérimina group of the highlands and the coastal groups. Madagascar became a French colony in 1896, but before that period the country was divided into many different kingdoms. According to classical definitions of ethnicity that refer to an ethnic group as a group of persons whose members identify with each other on the basis of a presumed common genealogy or ancestry,⁷ Madagascar has 18 different ethnic groups.⁸ However, these 18 groups all speak the same language, and according to other definitions that include language as one of the distinguishing markers of ethnicity,⁹ one could question this use of the concept of ethnicity in Madagascar.

The Sakalávas cover all of Madagascar's west coast.¹⁰ Before French colonisation in 1896, the Mérimina Kingdom controlled almost two thirds of Madagascar. During the colonial period, General Joseph Simon Galliéni conquered the island and built up a French administration, partly by introducing indirect rule, using local leaders within the colonial apparatus.¹¹ At the same time, he also made sure that all of the most important Mérimina political institutions were destroyed. The task was completed in 1905, when Galliéni left

the country. However, after independence in 1960, the old split between the Mérina ethnic group of the highlands and the coastal population continued to play a role in Malagasy policies.

Malagasy post-independence policies have not reinforced ethnic divides very much—neither through increasing socio-economic inequality between the groups nor through unequal access to political power, although the Mérinas have in general become somewhat more prosperous than the Côtiers. In Madagascar 85.1 per cent of the population live under the poverty line of USD \$2 a day,¹² but poverty does not follow ethnic lines. This can, for example, be observed through regional poverty figures: although Toliara and Toamasina—both coastal regions—have the highest percentages of poverty of all the provinces in Madagascar, 72 per cent and 65.9 per cent respectively, Mahajanga—also a coastal province—has a lower level of poverty (50.5 per cent) than Antananarivo (52.8 per cent).¹³ More recently, during the regime of president Ravalomanana, socio-economic inequality has however increased in Madagascar.¹⁴

Civil–military relations theory

Theories of civil–military relations mainly focus on why the military enters into politics and on the different forms that this can take.¹⁵ There is less focus on how the armed forces behave in situations of acute political crises, when they have to confront situations that involve large crowds of organised or disorganised civilian protesters, although some case and area studies touch upon this theme.¹⁶ How will the officers' and soldiers' historical experiences and military philosophy transform into action in these cases? Where will their loyalty lie? And do they have any internalised cultural barriers against the use of violence against their own civilian population that will come to the fore in these cases? Although civil–military relations theory does not offer any explicit focus on this, it offers some entry points through arguments about the importance of historical factors, institutional factors, military doctrine and recruitment.

One of the main arguments from civil–military relations theory is that involvement by the armed forces occurs in situations where civilian institutions and civil society are relatively weak and the military establishment comparatively strong.¹⁷ Koonings and Kruijt use the concept of 'political armies', maintaining that the starting point for the constitution of these is 'the profound identification of the military with the historical foundation and subsequent fate of the nation'.¹⁸ According to Koonings and Kruijt, 'Most

political armies—and not only the more ‘benign’ specimens—claim that their actions are necessary to counter such dangers as economic disarray and increasing poverty, institutional breakdown or state collapse, or social disintegration and the proliferation of violent conflict.¹⁹

The politics of regimes set up by political armies have often focused on two particular issues: the struggle against internal enemies (‘foes’) on the basis of pervasive but largely low-intensity counter-insurgency campaigns; and ‘the pursuit of development projects that includes economic stability and growth, (limited but targeted) welfare, and in some cases social integration.’²⁰ Janowitz emphasises that recruitment and training are also important for how the military develops what he refers to as its ‘national ethos’, including its military philosophy and strategies:

*Moreover, the military by its recruitment, training, and rotation of personnel to various parts of the nation-state, develops a strong national ethos [. . .] In a sense, it is a bridge with the past. Its heroic leaders are concerned with drawing upon cultural traditions, real or imagined, and even with redefining previous military experiences which were not necessarily victorious or heroic.*²¹

In the search for explanations regarding the behaviour of the military in times of political crisis, there are two factors that appear to be particularly important—and that will be the focus of this article: firstly, the identity and the loyalty of the military and how this influences the military’s behaviour towards the civilian opposition during times of political crisis; and, secondly, the internal fragmentation of the military. Danger of oppression and use of violence against civilians is assumed larger when military doctrine is concentrated on potential internal enemies rather than on external ones. Furthermore, when recruitment is relatively open, and no particular strata of society dominates the armed forces, there is a higher probability that there will be common interests, loyalties and identification with the general population, or with segments of it and its culture (and also within the armed forces), and that this may function as a certain barrier against the use of violence.

Civil–military relations in Madagascar

In the 37 years from independence up until the end of 1997 Madagascar had 19 years of military rule—from 1972 to 1991.²² The armed forces effectively entered into the political arena in May 1972 when, after a stable period of nearly 12 years, president Tsiranana had to resign due to strong popular pressure. He left power in the hands of General Ramanantsóa.

To understand how the most serious political crises in Madagascar's post-independence history were managed—the crises in 1971–72, 1990–91, 2001–02 and 2009—it is necessary to look back at what kind of armed forces Madagascar was left with after independence in 1960—their loyalty, doctrine and recruitment.

Before colonial times in Madagascar, the sovereign Mérima Kingdom already had its own army. With the French annexation of the country in 1896, the Malagasy Army was dissolved. However, the colonial administration recruited many Malagasy officers and soldiers into the French armed forces, as a result of the needs of the armed forces in fighting two successive world wars and in carrying out the tasks of the French empire. There was an armed uprising against French colonial rule in Madagascar in 1947, but it was brought down by France, and the transition to independence 13 years later took place in a peaceful manner.

With independence in 1960—and following the agreement of co-operation with France—Madagascar became equipped with an army constituted by transfers of materiel and necessary equipment from the French Army to the Malagasy Government. The personnel of the Malagasy Army was further made up of Malagasy officers transferred from the French Army or directly formed from courses in the well-known French military academies at Saint-Cyr, Ecole Navale, or other military academies. The basic structure of the security forces of newly independent Madagascar was inherited from the colonial system, in particular, the tripartite system of army, gendarmerie and police.²³ No navy was established, and thus Madagascar's armed forces were not equipped to defend the territory against external threats.²⁴

Even though the Malagasy Army was what Janowitz terms a 'post-liberation formation', the officers brought with them their historical memories and experience from training and service in France, as well as in the colonial Malagasy Army, when they now entered into their new positions as officers in the army of a newly independent nation. They were used to perceiving the enemy as external, although the structure of independent Madagascar's armed forces did not encourage such perceptions. They were also trained with ideals of civilian control over the armed forces, loyalty and professionalism but, at the same time, they were strongly influenced by their own pride of service in the new armed forces of independent Madagascar. Like the other francophone African countries, Madagascar was tied to France through agreements of co-operation and defence, and France disposed of a strategic base in Diégo-Suarez in 1972.²⁵ Thus, even after independence, colonial power remained visible for several years.

At independence in 1960, the Malagasy Armed Forces were placed under the responsibility of General Ramanantsóa. However, President Tsiránana placed the gendarmerie directly under his own authority. It was commanded by a separate, special joint staff headed by Colonel Bocchino. Hierarchically it was placed above the army's joint staff.²⁶ This fact sowed the seeds of the first post-independence tensions between the army and the gendarmerie in Madagascar. It did not make things better that Tsiránana was known to have a certain admiration for the gendarmerie, which in popular language was called his 'chouchou' or favourite.²⁷

To safeguard his personal security and to avoid any potential military coup, President Tsiránana also gave his Minister of the Interior, André Resampa, a free hand to establish the security forces, Les Forces Republicaines de Sécurité (FRS), that would act as an anti-riot unit. It recruited exclusively non-Mérina men.²⁸ The officers of FRS were educated in Israel, and Israel also equipped the FRS with necessary arms. Before the colonial period, during the Mérina kingdom, the Malagasy Army was mainly recruited from the Mérina nobility in Madagascar. However, this changed during the colonial period under France. Recruitment no longer took place only among families from the nobility but was equally open to other social classes. Many young Malagasy men considered the different branches of the armed forces as an opportunity for education and technical skills that they later could bring with them into some kind of civilian occupation.²⁹

Constructive conflict management: the role of religion and culture

In his book, *On Perpetual Peace*, Dieter Senghaas points to a set of factors that facilitate peace, summarised in a 'civilisatory hexagon'.³⁰ The components of this hexagon are: power monopoly; rule of law; interdependences; affect control, political participation; social justice/equity; and a culture of constructive conflict management. With regard to the culture of constructive conflict management, a discussion of some theoretical aspects of what this may entail follows below.

Within the literature on political culture, several theories focus on people's ideas, ethical and philosophical orientations, and on their *attitudes* to the use of violence as an important factor in explaining whether a political conflict turns violent or not. These theories seek an explanation for armed conflict and/or non-violent action in culture, conflict traditions and philosophical and religious orientation.³¹ Other theories pay more

attention to non-violent action as a successful *instrument* for reaching political goals.³² In an article about non-violent action in African liberation struggles, Zunes argues that ‘those who engage in or support non-violent action need not have an ethical commitment to nonviolence.’³³ Zunes maintains that many of the non-violent struggles in Africa have been motivated by the conviction that this leads to better outcomes than armed struggle.

Madagascar is a highly religious society: 50 per cent of the population practice traditional religion, seven per cent are Muslims and 43 per cent are Christians. Several Christians also still keep some of their traditional rituals.³⁴ Malagasy politicians, Church leaders, NGOs, cultural workers and even army officers point to the non-violent and conciliatory attitudes of the Malagasy population and trace this characteristic back to some strong traditional and cultural values in Malagasy society, materialised in the concepts called *Fihavanana* and *Raiamandreny*.³⁵ Juliette Ratsimandráva, Director-General of the Centre for Languages (Madagascar’s National Academy of Arts, Letters and Sciences), explains the concepts as follows:

*There is a word in our language called fihavanana. It means solidarity. This idea is transformed into the life of the neighbourhoods. People who live in the same block as you develop some sort of solidarity with you. If you live in the same area as me, I have problems hurting you, because we have walked the same road, been drinking the same water [. . .]. In Madagascar we search for what we call raiamandreny. It is the mother and father whom one resorts to when one has problems. Literally it means mother and father, or authority, moral authority. One searches for reconciliation. People look for a leader, but in a situation of crisis, the leaders are questioned, and thus we search for moral authority.*³⁶

Anthropologists refer to *Fihavanana* as a concept that has its use and meaning mainly within the larger family. In his book from 1971, *Placing the Dead*, Maurice Bloch argues that the concept of *Havanana* is usually translated into English by the word ‘kinsman’, and Bloch adds that ‘a man describes as *Havanana* all his blood relatives.’³⁷ However, in a more recent book (from 1998) Øyvind Dahl argues that the meaning of the concept of *Fihavanana* goes far beyond pure kinship and is also a synonym for friendship, solidarity, good relations, peace and harmony.³⁸ My own interviews revealed that people from different layers and sectors in Malagasy society also use the concept in relation to their work colleagues and to conditions in the larger society in general, lifting it up to a higher

level. This indicates that *Fihavanana*, a concept rooted in Malagasy culture and traditional religion, has been able to survive modernisation and social changes, and that it may have had an important function in internalising barriers against the use of violence. However, there is a need to question what happened to this culture during the political crisis in 2009.

The Tsiránana years and the crisis in 1972

Madagascar became independent in 1960 and the country's first president, Philibert Tsiránana, initiated a long period of political stability and development at a time when much of Africa was characterised by turmoil and political unrest. Only at the end of Tsiránana's presidency, in 1971–72, did political instability and problems begin emerging. There were several reasons for this, one of which was education policy. France still had great influence over Malagasy policies and the educational system worked in accordance with the French model.³⁹ Another problem was that Tsiránana had not paid enough attention to the problems in the south and south-western part of Madagascar, an arid region, vulnerable to drought and climatic changes, with a population heavily dependent on cattle-holding to survive.

In 1971 a local uprising, led by Monja Jaona, sprung out of a movement named *Mouvement National pour l'Indépendance de Madagascar* (MONIMA) in the south. MONIMA was established in 1958 and was one of the most extreme nationalistic groupings, working not only for independence but also for a total break with France. Tsiránana's most trusted man, head of *Etat Major*, Jean Bocchino, ordered the *gendarmerie* to bring down the uprising in the south and the head of the *gendarmerie*, Colonel Ratsimandráva—who had been very keen on changing its philosophy, emphasising the need for dialogue and a good relationship with the local population⁴⁰—found himself in an uncomfortable situation. Loyal as he was, he obeyed orders, but this led to a cooling of the relationship between Ratsimandráva and the president. Already in 1969 Ratsimandráva had organised a seminar at the School of the *Gendarmerie* in Moramanga, where he stressed the need to redefine the relationship between officers and subordinates as well as to develop a good relationship with the local population.

The aims for political changes were not brought to an end with the suppression of the uprising in the south in 1971. In May 1972, the discontent among the students came to the fore and there were student riots strong enough to paralyse the whole education system in Madagascar, spreading to the streets of the capital, Antananarivo. In the army and the

gendarmerie, the officers were well aware of the strong popular demands for political changes and a break in the ties with France and, in general, sympathised with them.⁴¹ The army did not take part in any action against the crowd. The gendarmerie were present in the streets, but abstained from the use of violence. For Colonel Ratsimandráva this was an opportunity to clean up his reputation with the population after the events in the south. However, the Security Forces (FRS), that were loyal to Tsiránana, fired at the crowds.

As for Ratsimandráva, he was also helped by the actions of some of the lower-ranking officers in the gendarmerie. Mijoro refers to one incident during the demonstration in 1972 which shows how the non-violent line of a young lieutenant found such strong resonance in the crowd that it made the line of non-violence easier to sustain also at the top of the military hierarchy. Crowds had gathered in front of the city hall, which had been set on fire, when a young lieutenant (instructor at the School of the Gendarmerie in Moramanga, where Ratsimandráva had been teaching on the importance of dialogue with the local population), with his detachment of young gendarme recruits, worked his way through the crowds. Some people blocked the way and others were already beginning to throw stones in their direction:

The young lieutenant stayed calm and a genuine idea came to his mind: He stopped his men and ordered them to shoulder their weapons—barrels turned towards the ground. ‘Taken aback, the crowd turned silent, and then some of them began to applaud, followed by the others. The officer was able to lead his detachment to the destination, with the crowd applauding: Gendarmes—save us! The news spread quickly throughout the whole avenue, which was overcrowded with people.’⁴²

The news also reached the general staff, where Colonel Ratsimándrava had already received orders to authorise the gendarmes to start firing. This made him order the gendarmes to continue their mission without using violence. The event increased the population’s sympathy with the gendarmes and the Gendarmerie.⁴³ The demonstrations forced Tsiránana to resign. He dissolved the government and left executive power in the hands of General Gabriel Ramanantsóá.

Ratsíraka and the crisis in 1991

General Ramanantsóá handed over power to Colonel Richard Ratsimándrava on 5 February 1975. Only six days later, Ratsimándrava was murdered in an ambush. In spite of

a thorough investigation process, the case was never solved. A military directorate was immediately established and Naval Captain Didier Ratsíraka was appointed as president. This marked the beginning of Ratsíraka's long presidential rule in Madagascar, finally coming to an end in 2002. Ratsíraka was quite conscious of how he had come to power and tried to make sure that his rule would not subsequently be contested from within the ranks of the military. He initiated a complete restructuring of the army—thus wiping out the traditional distinction (ground, air and sea)—by establishing three états major (armé du développement, forces aéronavales and forces d'intervention) all led by l'état-major generals within the president's office.⁴⁴ A defence ministry was created simultaneously, but it did not have clear lines of command or accountability.⁴⁵ Ratsíraka also deliberately cared for the long-term careers of his high-ranking officers, who received important posts in the military development committee, the national revolutionary council, the state administration and nationalised enterprises. A National Military Office for Strategic Industries (OMNIS) was actually set up for this purpose.⁴⁶ With this strategy, the seeds were sown for later divisions and competition within the military.

Ratsíraka assured himself the support of the population for the next seven years through a referendum on his presidency based on a political programme, defined in his 'little red book' (*Chartre de la révolution socialiste malgache*), and on a new constitution.⁴⁷ He established the Supreme Revolutionary Council (CSR) and all new law propositions had to be accepted by the council. He also established the National Front for the Defence of the Revolution (FNDR). Until March 1990 political associations had to operate within the FNDR as the nation's only legal political entity, but in March 1990 a High Constitutional Court Decree permitted multi-partyism.⁴⁸ The 1980s were characterised by economic deterioration in Madagascar,⁴⁹ and the combination of this deterioration with the lack of opportunity for political opposition finally brought the crowds out onto the streets to protest in 1991.

During this crisis the Council of Christian Churches, FFKM, played an important role.⁵⁰ The FFKM often criticised human rights violations, corruption, the spread of the black market, theft, prostitution and violence. In 1991 the state of affairs led the FFKM to organise a series of conventions, to which all parties of the crisis were invited, aimed at finding solutions to the country's political and economic problems. One of the outcomes of the conventions was that a permanent *Comité de Forces Vives* (living force) was set up. Although it was the FFKM's organisation of the conventions that had made it possible for the *Forces Vives* to be born, the FFKM in a statement later detached itself from the committee, because it would not be involved in direct political activity.

During spring 1991 the *Forces Vives* demonstrated their ability to mobilise the masses, and work boycotts became increasingly intensive in Antananarivo, the capital, as well as in the provinces. On 10 June they called for a general strike, which, except for some short interruptions, lasted six months. The administrative machinery was paralysed and there was increased pressure on the president to resign.⁵¹ However, President Ratsíraka refused to resign and the *Forces Vives* then, on 17 July, announced a transitional government with Professor Albert Záfy as Prime Minister. The crisis culminated in a large peaceful protest march on 10 August 1991, in which more than half a million participated. The enormous crowd which gathered in the streets behaved in a very disciplined and non-violent manner, thus providing a clear example of how Fihavanana works. As the crowd approached the presidential palace, the security forces, now named RESEP,⁵² were loyal to the president and responded by dropping tear gas and hand grenades on the crowd from helicopters. RESEP was resented by the regular officer corps.

Within the armed forces tensions ran high. In the army and the gendarmerie the officers were well aware of the strong popular mobilisation for political change that existed, and they were in general concerned about the political direction Ratsíraka's policies had taken. Some senior officers, aware of the looming catastrophe, were particularly eager to bring the parties to an understanding.⁵³ Among these were General Rakotoarijaona, General Rakotoarison, General Ramakavelo and General Soja, who were all well-known Christians and Church members in their local communities and also participating in the FFKM. The role of these officers became crucial, and this case demonstrates how important the background of officers and their representation of common cultural and/or religious values can be in a situation of crisis. However, Rakotoarison and Soja were also firm admirers of Ratsimandráva—the first head of the gendarmerie, who was assassinated in February 1975—and Soja was one of the younger 'Ratsimandravist' officers, who had earlier been sidelined by Ratsíraka in an effort to weaken potential elements of opposition within the armed forces. Thus, military institutional memory clearly also played a role here.

On 30 October General Ramakavelo spoke on behalf of these senior officers, and challenged the politicians to solve the crisis through dialogue. Faced with this challenge, the prime minister finally invited the *Forces Vives*, the pro-government group of political parties, Militant Movement for Malagasy Socialism (MMSM) and the FFKM to meet for a third convention at the Hotel Panorama from 29 to 31 October 1991. This convention culminated in a solution and on 19 December a coalition government with Ratsíraka and

the opposition was established. In August a referendum was organised giving the country a new constitution based on parliamentarism.

The 2001 presidential elections—Ratsiraka against Ravalomanana

On 26 June 2001 Ratsiraka announced his candidacy for re-election in the presidential elections in Madagascar scheduled for 16 December 2001, and on 5 August 2001 Marc Ravalomanana, the Mayor of Antananarivo, declared his candidature. Ravalomanana had earned himself a good reputation through the cleaning up of the streets of Antananarivo. He was known to be a respected Christian and a leader of the Reformed Church in Madagascar. His business empire in Madagascar was also well known.

On 25 January 2002 the High Constitutional Court (HCC) ruled that a second round of elections would be held, to be contested by Ravalomanana and Ratsiraka. Ravalomanana's followers were not happy about this news, and on 28 January a series of massive protest rallies began in the capital, including an indefinite general strike. Towards the end of February the crisis escalated considerably. Ravalomanana declared himself president on 22 February and had himself sworn in. Despite international condemnation, Ravalomanana continued to appoint his ministers and, one by one, Ratsiraka's ministers resigned in the face of the pressure from the crowd of Ravalomanana supporters in Antananarivo. By the end of February Ravalomanana had appointed his Prime Minister, Jacques Sylla, and Ratsiraka's Prime Minister, Tantely Andrianarivo, fled the capital and several other ministers of the Ratsiraka government submitted their resignations.

Again the Malagasy armed forces showed calm and self-control in a very difficult situation. Ratsiraka responded to Ravalomanana's steps by declaring martial law in Antananarivo and appointed General Raveloarison as military governor, instructing him to enforce a curfew.⁵⁴ However, the General attempted no such thing, knowing that this would have led to a bloodbath. As the new ministers of Ravalomanana's government began occupying their offices in the capital, there was a sudden deployment of troops but, again, they made no effort to confront the thousands of Ravalomanana supporters who accompanied their new appointees to their place of work.

Ratsiraka's last hope lay with the governors of five of Madagascar's six autonomous provinces. On 5 March 2002 these five governors signed an agreement in which they designated the eastern port city of Toamasina as their capital.⁵⁵ They also agreed that they

would maintain the blockade of Antananarivo to cut off vital supplies. Thus, Madagascar was split down the middle, with two governments and two capitals, and the potential for civil war was high. In March–April the security situation worsened considerably. Some Ravalomanana demonstrators were killed by security forces in Ratsíraka's Toamasina stronghold, and as Jacques Sylla occupied the prime minister's palace in Antananarivo, on 15 March, there were also incidents of violence.⁵⁶ This actually led the army to make its first call for dialogue between the two sides, a call which Ravalomanana rejected. He now dismissed the five provincial governors loyal to Ratsíraka. On 29 March General Raveloarison resigned as military governor of Antananarivo, thus admitting that his mission had been futile.

This demonstrates how many officers were now torn between, on the one hand, their traditional respect for professionalism and loyalty towards the regime and, on the other hand, a certain sympathy with the population and its support for Ravalomanana. Nevertheless, in the many dilemmas they had to face, considerations about the need to protect the civilian population were prominent.

The long awaited results of the recount came on 29 April. The HCC—recomposed to remove last-minute 2001 Ratsíraka appointees—then declared that Ravalomanana had won the first round with a clear majority of 51.46 per cent of the vote to Ratsíraka's 35.9 per cent.⁵⁷ Ratsíraka immediately rejected the ruling. On 2 May Toamasina made a declaration of independence, and the governors of four of the six provinces that supported Ratsíraka announced plans to secede from the capital and form an independent confederation. War again seemed likely.

In the end the pressure on the armed forces also became too large, and the army was split. The leadership loyal to outgoing president Ratsíraka resigned on 7 June. When the army Chief of Staff, General Rajaonson formally handed over the armed forces to Ravalomanana's appointee, General Razafimandimby, the final and somewhat more violent part of the crisis began. The same day Ravalomanana—as he inspected the troops at the handing-over ceremony—announced that there was no turning back, and ordered the soldiers to dismantle the barricades that were cutting off the capital from the ports. In the clashes that followed between Ratsíraka supporters and army soldiers loyal to Ravalomanana, together with reservists—who behaved without discipline—people were killed.⁵⁸ However, it should be emphasised that, in general, the acts of violence during the Malagasy crisis in 2001–2002 were directly linked to, and limited to, situations and places where fighting between the closest supporters of both sides took place. Although there were skirmishes in some other provinces, the violence did not in general spread to, or affect, civilians elsewhere very much.

The military coup in 2009

Marc Ravalomanana was re-elected as president in December 2006, but already 27 months later—in March 2009—he was ousted in a military coup. The coup came as a culmination of a series of large social protests headed by the popular Mayor of Antananarivo, Andry Rajoelina. In March 2009 Rajoelina assumed power with the backing of the military and the High Court.

During his presidency, Ravalomanana opened up the country to foreign investments and turned Madagascar into a global financial player. Among the largest foreign investments was a titanium dioxide mine developed by the multinational company, Rio Tinto, estimated at more than USD \$800 million. Several oil companies also began offshore exploration.⁵⁹ Some of the investments were perceived of as quite provocative by groups of the population. This was the case with Ravalomanana's plans to lease almost a million hectares in the west of the country to the South Korean firm, Daewoo, that wanted to use the land to grow 50 per cent of South Korea's needed corn. The Malagasy population perceived of this potential lease of land as treason, and Rajoelina accused Ravalomanana of selling Malagasy land to foreigners. On top of this came Ravalomanana's purchase of a USD \$60 million private jet which actually led to the suspension of direct support to Madagascar by its major international donors—who were already angry over an import duty moratorium that reduced state revenues and favoured Ravalomanana's own enterprise. Ravalomanana was accused of budgetary misconduct, and of mixing his own business interests with those of the state. However, there were also political triggers to the crisis. The most important of these was the closure of Rajoelina's television channel, Viva, on 13 December 2008, after it transmitted an interview with former President Ratsiraka.

During the crisis, there were some efforts at mediation by the ecumenical council FFKM. However, this time the Church was not considered neutral, as the Protestants had given unanimous support to Ravalomanana during the elections in 2001–02. Secondly, the FFKM was internally split, as the Catholics after a while distanced themselves from Ravalomanana, who is a Protestant and Vice President of the FFKM. This hampered the FFKM's capacity for action, as the council works on the basis of consensus.⁶⁰

President Ravalomanana had his own agenda with the military and did not consequently listen to military officers wanting to pursue the line of dialogue in the conflict. One of the generals from the gendarmerie tried to establish co-operation with the

opposition leader Rajoelina, to be able to re-establish law and order. However, President Ravalomanana shortly afterwards removed the commander of the gendarmerie from his position, thus having larger parts of the military turning against him.

The political crisis finally took on a different dimension in March 2009, when a group of officers and soldiers from Corps d'Armée des Personnels et des Services Administratif (CAPSAT) mutinied and shifted over to the opposition's side.⁶¹ Discontent with President Ravalomanana's top-down style was part of the background to the mutiny as was the money received by a number of commissioned and non-commissioned officers from individuals close to Rajoelina.⁶² The CAPSAT soldiers from the military base at Soaniera, on the outskirts of Antananarivo, set up roadblocks along the main road to Antananarivo. The mutiny quickly gained force and spread. On 16 March the soldiers occupied the Presidential Palace and the rest of the armed forces did nothing to stop it, passively supporting the mutiny. As a culmination of the crisis, Andry Rajoelina subsequently assumed power with military and high court backing.

There were some international efforts to solve the crisis by mediation and dialogue in 2009, involving the African Union (AU), South African Development Community (SADC) and France. During a meeting in Maputo, Mozambique on 9 August 2009, the mediation efforts led to a power-sharing agreement between the rival camps. A follow-up accord was signed on 6 October 2009, agreeing in principle on the composition of an interim government to lead Madagascar to fresh elections with Rajoelina as president.⁶³

Problems soon surfaced again, as Rajoelina, in February 2010, postponed the parliamentary elections to May. This resulted in targeted AU sanctions against Rajoelina and his administration. However, during autumn 2010, there were some positive changes as domestic peaceful forces again entered onto the scene. In August 2010 a committee of the wise, 'Raiamendreny Mijoro', organised a national conference that marked the beginning of a process to seek a peaceful solution to the crisis.⁶⁴ As a consequence, a political accord was signed by President Rajoelina and 80 different political parties and groupings. The accord was signed in the presence of several representatives from both the public and private sector, and from civil society in general, represented by La Coordination Nationale des Organisations de Société Civile (CNOSC).

Although this type of national effort for dialogue and co-operation did not show much strength in 2009, it did come back in 2010 demonstrating that the culture of constructive conflict management was not dead.

Domestic capabilities for peaceful conflict management

This analytical part of the article looks into and summarises how conflict fault lines, civil–military relations and the existence of a culture of constructive conflict management have influenced Madagascar’s capabilities for peaceful conflict management during the political crises described above, starting with the conflict fault lines.

Although Madagascar throughout history has lived with certain tensions between the Mérima—mainly highland population—and the ethnic groups on the coast, there has never been any clear-cut overlap between these dividing lines and socio-economic inequality or between the ethnic divides and political discrimination. However, in the run-up to the latest crisis in 2009, there was economic deterioration that affected the poor in Madagascar. Even during the first years of Ravalomanana’s presidency, in the period 2001–05, poverty increased.⁶⁵ Although not constituting any clear-cut overlap with ethnic divides, the effect of the increasing inequalities in the country was strengthened by the symbolic value of President Ravalomanana himself being a millionaire, running the largest private businesses in the country. This, in part, triggered political crisis in 2009.

With regard to civil–military relations, the Malagasy case supports the argument put forward in this article that the identity and loyalty of the armed forces are important in shaping military behaviour during confrontations with large crowds of civilians. The open recruitment to, and social mobility within, the Malagasy armed forces have proved essential for the general thinking within the armed forces’ institutions and for their identification with the Malagasy people. Clearly, the military did not see itself as a separate elite. The management of the crises in 1971–72, 1990–91 and 2001–02 reveals that, in particular, senior officers from the gendarmerie and the army had maintained close contact with important trends of thinking both at the local level of Malagasy society and in terms of more general thought and developments within Malagasy culture, traditions and religion. Several of the officers were well-respected Christians with links to the Church. The concept of *Fihavanana* is also well known and respected within military circles.⁶⁶ This strengthens the argument that *Fihavanana* is understood and used beyond the original meaning of kinship. Bloch, for example, uses another concept than the earlier mentioned *Havanana*: ‘Closely linked to the concept of *Havanana* and, likewise, having for its ideal model the system of the society of ancestors, is the idea of *Fiankaviana* [...] When two strangers meet and are able to establish some kinship or link, however remote, it is

sufficient for them to recognise that they are of the same *Fiankaviana*.⁶⁷ The current interpretation of *Fihavanana*—and as used also by army members—seems to come close to a mixture between *Havanana* and *Fiankaviana*.

Within the armed forces there was much awareness about, and sympathy with, the crowds that came out on the streets and what they demanded in terms of political changes during all the three crises.⁶⁸ The most difficult challenge for the officers was the choice between legality and legitimacy: staying loyal to the regime, acting professionally and legally; or staying passive, tacitly taking side with the protesting crowds.

Institutional factors have also influenced the behaviour of military actors. A certain rivalry between the gendarmerie and the army, rooted in President Tsiránana's favouritism of the gendarmerie, continued into Ratsírakas long term as president, but with his sympathies going in the opposite direction. Ratsíraka's policy of sidelining several old Ratsimandráva supporters made the choice of sympathising with the protesting crowds in the streets an easy choice for these officers.

The recruitment and training of the security force, FRS—and later the RESEP—was different from that of the army and the gendarmerie. The FRS was recruited solely from the province of Toliara. In addition, they were trained in Israel, and not in France or Madagascar like most of the officers and soldiers in the Malagasy armed forces. The RESEP were trained by North Korean instructors. This prevented the security forces from having the same type of broader identification and contact with mainstream thinking in Malagasy society and it also, to a certain degree, isolated this unit from the rest of the armed forces.

Madagascar's culture of constructive conflict management has been important in calming down several of the crises discussed in this article. During Ratsírakas first terms before Madagascar changed into a multi-party system—and even after that period—the role of the churches, acting as an alternative channel for political participation through the Ecumenical Council, was quite important. This was possible only because the Church already had some political leverage, being a channel of communication that the authorities respected to a certain degree. After giving birth assistance to a new political movement, the Church however retreated from direct political involvement and was able to act as a mediator in the crisis in 1990–91.

Civilian actors also played a constructive role during many of the demonstrations in Madagascar. The crowds that gathered in the streets during the political crises in Madagascar in 1990–91 and 2002 behaved with self-control and discipline. During the

first crisis in 1971–72 there were some incidents when the situation became out of control from the demonstrators side. Although this crisis initially transformed into a small armed conflict, it was brought to an end by the calm and wise behaviour of officers in the gendarmerie and by the army.

In Madagascar it is tempting to explain non-violent action mainly through attitudes, as the emphasis on peaceful coexistence—through the concept of *Fihavanana*—is so strong in Malagasy culture. However, it is also important to highlight that non-violent action as a tool for change actually worked in several of the crises, and that each new crisis that was solved peacefully left the civilian population with a stronger experience that non-violent methods work.

In 2009 a combination of factors weakened Madagascar's capabilities for peaceful conflict management. After a period of economic growth of 2.3 per cent in 2005–06 and 4.1 per cent in 2007–08, GDP fell to 2.2 per cent in 2008–09.⁶⁹ This, combined with discontent with the political leadership once again brought the people onto the streets. This time the Church was not able to act as a mediator as, especially, the Protestants in the capital had supported President Ravalomanana during the elections, and the Church was therefore no longer considered neutral. Ravalomanana also sabotaged the efforts of some of the military leaders to mediate in the conflict, strengthening their sympathy with the opposition. With the population's patience stretched to the limit, and with factions of the armed forces sympathising with the people on the streets, the crisis took a violent turn. However, with President Rajoelina and the different political groupings coming together in August 2010—on the initiative of 'Raiamendreny Mijoro' and with the resulting signing of a political accord—Madagascar was again on the track of a more peaceful solution to the crisis.

Conclusion

With the exception of the armed conflict in 1971, post-independence Madagascar has in general been able to maintain peace, despite several severe political crises in the country. In this article, key explanatory factors for Madagascar's long peace have been identified, along with explanations as to why some of the most severe political crises broke out, and how they were handled—including the most recent one in 2009.

First and foremost, there have been no clear fault lines in Malagasy society from which armed opposition could be easily mobilised. Socio-economic disparities have

been there, but they have not been overlapping very much with ethnic or regional dividing lines. There has been a certain historical cleavage between the inland Mérida population and the coastal population, but in general this cleavage has been activated only to a very low degree by economic, political or other types of discrimination. During the last crisis in 2009, it was more of a generally increasing inequality that had an effect. In general, the economy had improved since 2002, except during the period 2008–09, but the President's flagrant favouritism of the elite around him, in addition to alienating the generally poor, also alienated the business community outside of his own conglomerate.

The other important explanatory factors for Madagascar's domestic capabilities for peaceful conflict management are found in civil–military relations and in the country's culture of constructive conflict management. As recruitment to the Malagasy armed forces in general has been open to everybody, the armed forces have come to reflect the composition of Malagasy society and the soldiers and officers have brought important aspects of Malagasy culture and thinking with them into the armed forces. One of these cultural values is *Fihavanana*, or the belief in peaceful coexistence. The possibility of following this ideal has been strengthened by a military philosophy that has not been focused on internal enemies, although potential external enemies are hard to identify.

During the crisis in 1991 the Church also took on the role of mediator in the conflict, with the co-operation of a few generals that identified themselves with the Protestant Church. In this context the Church was accepted as a moral authority—or in the wording of the traditional culture—a *Raiamandreny*.

However, the handling of each of the crises in Madagascar's post-independence history, particularly the most recent one, illustrates that a country's domestic capabilities for peaceful conflict management are subject to changes, and that it takes a constant preoccupation with its constituents to keep these capabilities sound and in balance at any time. In 2009, economic deterioration and increasing socio-economic disparities created discontent, and the culture of constructive conflict management had lost some of its force, as the Church supported President Ravalomanana during the elections in 2001 and was no longer able to act as a neutral mediator in the crisis. The divisions and competition within the military had also gained strength. During the protests and the military coup that followed in 2009, there was bloodshed. However, forces in favour of a peaceful solution to the crisis gained strength again with the political pact that was signed

between the president and different political parties and groupings in August 2010. It remains to be seen whether the balance in the constituents of Madagascar's domestic capabilities for peaceful conflict management can be regained in the near future.

Endnotes

1. Hauge and Ellingsen, 'Beyond Environmental Scarcity'; Ellingsen, 'Colorful Community or Ethnic Witches Brew?'; Hegre et al., 'Towards a Democratic Civil Peace?'
2. Harbom and Wallensteen, 'Armed Conflicts 1946–2009'. There have been some incidents of violence, however, that cannot be characterised as armed conflict according to this definition. The most serious one was a clash between Kung-Fu groups and groups known as TTS in 1984. The TTS were linked to the secret police (DGIT) and financed by the government. According to some sources this clash led to around 50 persons being killed. Brown, *History of Madagascar*, 339.
3. Gurr and Moore, 'Ethnopolitical Rebellion'; Østby, 'Polarization, Horizontal Inequalities and Violent Conflict'; Stewart, *Horizontal Inequalities*.
4. Rokkan, *Stat, Nasjon og Klasse*.
5. Dessler, 'How to Sort Causes in the Study of Environmental Change and Violent Conflict'.
6. Hauge, 'Causes and Dynamics of Conflict Escalation'.
7. Smith, *Ethnic Origin of Nations*.
8. Dahl, *Merkverdige Madagaskar*, 73.
9. Isaacs, *Idols of the Tribe*.
10. In the eighteenth century the most important kingdoms on the coast, apart from the Sakaláva Kingdom, were the Antankárana in the north, the Betsimisaraka Federation of Ratsimiláho in the east and the Zafiramínia Kingdom of Anósy in the south. Inland, the Isandra Kingdom in Betsiléo and the Mérina Kingdom around Antanarivo were the most powerful. See Dahl, *Merkverdige Madagaskar*, 73.
11. Brown, *History of Madagascar*.
12. UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 2007.
13. UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 1994; World Bank, *World Development Report 2000*; World Bank, *Madagascar Poverty Assessment*; Ministère des Finances et de l'Économie/Institut National de la Statistique, *Enquete Aupres des Menage*.
14. CESR, *Madagascar Visualisant les Droits*.
15. Janowitz, *Military in the Political Development*; Koonings and Kruijt, *Political Armies*.
16. Trikunas, 'Crisis in Venezuelan Civil–Military Relations'.
17. Janowitz, *Military in the Political Development*.
18. Koonings and Kruijt, *Political Armies*, 19.
19. *Ibid.*, 2.
20. *Ibid.*, 27.
21. Janowitz, *Military in the Political Development*, 43.
22. Mijoro, *Forces Armées Malgaches: Face à la Crise 2002*, 11.
23. Mijoro, *Forces Armées Malgache: Entre Devoir et Pouvoir*.
24. Jütersonke and Kartas, *Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment*.
25. France also disposed of a base at Ivato, outside of Antananarivo, where the international airport is currently located.
26. Galibert, *Les Gens du Povoír à Madagascar*, 112.
27. Mijoro, *Forces Armées Malgaches: Entre Devoir et Pouvoir*.
28. Jütersonke and Kartas, 'Ethos of Exploitation', 172.
29. Mijoro, *Forces Armées Malgaches: Entre Devoir et Pouvoir*.
30. Senghaas, *On Perpetual Peace*.
31. Childress, *Moral Responsibility in Conflicts*; Ross, *Culture of Conflict*; Teichman, *Pacifism and Just War*.
32. McCarthy and Sharp, *Non-violent Action*; Zunes, 'Non-violent Action in African Liberation Struggles'.
33. Zunes, 'Non-violent Action in African Liberation Struggles', 23.
34. Turner, *Statesman's Yearbook 2004*.
35. Interviews with Randriamana Harison (2000); Juliette Ratsimandrava (2000); and General Ramakavelo (2005). All took place in Antananarivo, Madagascar.
36. Interview with Juliette Ratsimandrava, Antananarivo, Madagascar (2000).
37. Bloch, *Placing the Dead*, 59 and 240.
38. Dahl, *Merkverdige Madagaskar*.
39. Brown, *History of Madagascar*.
40. Mijoro, *Forces Armées Malgaches*, 47.
41. Mijoro, *Forces Armées Malgaches: Entre Devoir et Pouvoir*.
42. *Ibid.*, 50–51.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Rabenirainy, 'Les Forces Armees et les Crises Politiques'.
45. Jütersonke and Kartas, 'Ethos of Exploitation'.
46. *Ibid.*
47. Dahl, *Merkverdige Madagaskar*.
48. Mukonoweshuro, 'State "Resilience" and Chronic Political Instability'.
49. The average growth rate of GNP was less than 2.5 per cent in Madagascar in the period 1980–91. World Bank, *World Development Report 1993*.

50. Rakotonirainy, 'Christian Council of Churches in Madagascar'.
51. Dahl, *Merkverdige Madagaskar*.
52. RESEP is the acronym for 'Regiment de Sécurité Présidentielle' and is a security force established by Ratsiraka in late 1981, much similar to the FRS that existed under Tsiranana. It was trained by North Korea. Galibert, *Les Gerns du Pouvoir à Madagascar*.
53. Brown, *History of Madagascar*.
54. Cornwell, *Madagascar: Stumbling at the First Hurdle?*
55. Mijoro, *Forces Armées Malgaches: Entre Devoir et Pouvoir*.
56. Cornwell, *Madagascar: Stumbling at the First Hurdle?*
57. *Ibid.*, 6.
58. Rafidinarivo, 'Réservistes'.
59. ICG, *Madagascar: Sortir du Cycle de Crises*; Bafd/OECD, *Madagascar*.
60. ICG, *Madagascar: Sortir du Cycle de Crises*.
61. *Ibid.*
62. ICG, *Madagascar: Sortir du Cycle de Crises*; Razsafison, 'Soldier: I was Paid \$10,000'; Eugène Rajofera, 'Madagascar: Col Charles Andrianasoavina—"le FIS, sans Bureau ni Statut"' [the FIS without Office or Statutes]. *Midi Madagasikara*, 9 March 2010.
63. Africa Policy Institute, 'Madagascar: Regional Path to Peace'.
64. Madagascar Tribune, 'L'accord a été Signé par Andry Rajoelina' [The Accord has been Signed by Andry Rajoelina], 14 August 2010. Available at: <http://www.madagascar-tribune.com/spip.php> [Accessed 4 August 2011].
65. In 2001, 88.7 per cent of the population fell below the international poverty line of \$2 a day. This increased to 89.6 per cent in 2005, even though GDP growth was 2.6 per cent in 2003–04. World Bank, *World Development Report 2006; 2011*.
66. Interview with General Ramakavelo, Antananarivo, Madagascar (2005).
67. Bloch, *Placing the Dead*, 60–61.
68. Interview with General Ramakavelo, Antananarivo, Madagascar (2005).
69. World Bank, *World Development Report 2011*.
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