



**Former malagasy presidents Zafy Albert, Didier Ratsiraka and Marc Ravalomanana. Political enemies. Each of them was dropped out of the power by the street. What is the Deal ? Money, money, money...**

This paper was written in 2004... Imagine the Future starting now (18 March 2011).

## **THE TRUTH ABOUT 2001 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

Province	RAVALOMANANA	RATSIRAKA	RAZAFINAHALEO	ZAFY	RAJAKOBA	RAJAOANY
	Marc	Didier	Horizo J.	Albert	Daniel	Patrick R.
Antan- anarivo	63.41	30.35	2.39	1.34	1.22	1.29
Atsir- ananana	31.01	36.63	2.54	26.91	1.65	1.24
Fiana- raatsoa	40.97	42.76	7.44	4.60	2.12	2.12
Mahajanga	47.11	37.39	4.24	6.43	2.85	1.96
Toamasina	28.84	62.52	2.43	3.67	1.31	1.24
Toivora	31.37	47.27	10.18	6.23	4.93	2.00
Total	46.44	40.61	4.27	5.34	1.77	1.57

## Percentage of Votes Won by Candidate and Province (CNE Results in December 2001)

### *Marc Ravalomanana: Background*

Marc Ravalomanana is a self-made millionaire, a capitalist, a nationalist, and *Merina* (Ambaniandro). He was born 12 December 1949 in Imerinkasinina (Centre). Imerinkasinina was an established

*Imerina*

centre even before the rise of Antananarivo and the centralisation of

*Imerina*

under King Andrianampoinimerina in the 1790s. Thus, when Ravalomanana decided to declare his candidacy for president from his native town, 6 august 2001, many construed it to be a statement about where his sympathies lie. In a country where the strongest ethnic divide has been between

*Merina*

and

*côtier*

it was a bold choice of venue for so important an announcement. It did, however, help to galvanise his political base.

Ravalomanana was born to an ethnic advantage, but to fairly humble roots. He convinced the Danish ambassador to underwrite his studies in Denmark and then returned home to take over the family dairy. In 1982, at 33 years old, he successfully obtained the assistance of the World Bank to launch a new enterprise: Tiko. Tiko is now the primary Malagasy dairy company and a leader in the agribusiness sector. Ravalomanana claims that Tiko provides 3 000 regular jobs and collateral employment for 100 000 people in Madagascar. Though *Africa Intelligence* claims that the number of primary employees is closer to 1 000, the company's importance to the Malagasy economy and its reflection of Ravalomanana's strong business leadership skills have been unassailable.

The popular joke is that Ravalomanana decided to enter politics in 1999 by running for mayor of Antananarivo because there was too much red tape for him to conduct his business unfettered. His stated reason was that “People are ready for big change. But the barrier is the old system, the old politics.” The change he referred to was the need to address corruption, mismanagement, unmotivated and underpaid municipal employees, crime, and pollution in Antananarivo. His success in Antananarivo led to his decision to run for president. In his supporters' view, “over the past two years, his result-oriented style of governance has given Antananarivo a dramatically needed face lifting. One prowess to be credited to the new mayor's team in their ongoing efforts to clean the capital off its garbage-strewn streets and implementation of an efficient system to collect the city most unsightly, disease-prone refuse.” Given that, according to the 29 April 2002 High Constitutional Court ruling, Ravalomanana won 71 percent of the vote in Antananarivo Province, it appears this view was widely representative.

Marc Ravalomanana is a practising Christian, and his spiritual life has had a strong influence on both his private and public sector success. All Tiko employees are required to go to church, though not necessarily the Protestant church of Ravalomanana's own faith. As he was Vice President of Madagascar's most important religious association, the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM), he won support for his candidacy for both Mayor of Antananarivo and President of Madagascar from the important church sector of Malagasy civil society. As president, Ravalomanana has increased the stature of the FJKM and specific Christian leaders, and has encouraged the proliferation of Christianity in Madagascar, even as he has faced more organised challenges from the church for his inability to confront economic problems.

### *Nationalism and internationalism*

Ravalomanana is first and foremost a businessman. He is an economic liberal who got his start with the assistance of the World Bank, and he is a great supporter of US-style business-first policies in Madagascar. While he does not stand to benefit directly from Madagascar's access

to US markets under the African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA), he has been vocal about his support for this Act, and the market opportunities it creates. This is a far cry from Ratsiraka’s “socialist” path or even the import substitution and protectionist policies that followed his change of direction. In this sense, Ravalomanana is an internationalist – even a globalist.

Ravalomanana is also a nationalist. He is not a protectionist, but has shown a propensity to protect those goods that are readily available from Malagasy manufacturers. There is a close correlation between Ravalomanana’s “internationalism” as a businessman, his “nationalism,” and his political strategy. A note about Tiko distribution exemplifies this. Starting in mid-2001 Ravalomanana used Tiko distribution channels to enhance his political presence in the countryside and used the network of Tiko employees to help run his campaign. At the time of the 2001 election Tiko had 14 stores in the country. There is a large distribution centre in the Antananarivo quarter of Akorondrano, strategically opened next to the original location of Madagascar’s premier supermarket, Géant Score. Yet, while Géant Score is owned by a Reunionese concern (Sucreries de Bourbon), Tiko is decidedly Malagasy. Management is Malagasy and product inputs are Malagasy. As its distribution has increased throughout the island, so inputs have come from diverse parts of the island.

The expansion of Tiko’s interests, and use of goods from, across the country, are consistent with Ravalomanana’s own brand of nationalism. Many Tiko products are inscribed with “Vita Malagasy” (Made in Madagascar ). He himself has said that this is to “counterbalance the undesirable influences brought by foreigners.” This nationalistic sentiment manifested itself in his campaign slogan for mayor of Antananarivo: “Tiako Iarivo” (I love Antananarivo), and his campaign for the presidency, “Tiako-i-Madagasikara” (I love Madagascar ).

All of this would seem to contradict those who seek to depict Ravalomanana as essentially Francophobic. He is a believer in global capitalist norms, supporting the continuation of a strong economic relationship with France not for reasons of patronage (as in the First Republic), but because France is the island’s largest trading partner. The support he received from the US and Germany in 2002 served only to further his desire to take advantage of broader market opportunities. This is an important distinction. There are those who saw Ravalomanana’s presidential victory as a victory for the US in the waning years of the Franco-American contest for influence in Africa. Clearly this was a concern in Paris as the French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, visited Ravalomanana in Madagascar in June 2002. Significantly, he met with Marc Ravalomanana, Prime Minister Jacques Sylla, and Marcel Ranjeva, Ravalomanana’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, a meeting that led to the signing of five financial conventions focusing on increased trade relations and French aid to Malagasy recovery.

Looking towards Ravalomanana's own actions, this view that Madagascar has chosen the US in preference to France is equally untenable. Ravalomanana may speak English with reasonable proficiency, but this does not imply that his gaze is fixed across the Atlantic. He has been working to link Madagascar more firmly into the global economic system while maintaining the country's distinct character. Using business linkages as an engine for growth has been at the core of his strategy.

### *Ravalomanana and the legislature*

Ravalomanana came into power with a pressing domestic problem. The National Assembly, the Senate, and five of the six provinces were controlled by Ratsiraka's AREMA party. He had mooted political reconciliation, but immediately after the resolution of the presidential drama this was impossible. AREMA leaders who remained in power had been abandoned by their leader. Ravalomanana had to deal with each institution separately.

According to Article 77 (modified by decree No. 2001-007 of January 2001) of the constitution, Ravalomanana could not dissolve the Senate, but he could, and did, replace the 30 senators appointed by President Ratsiraka. This left him far short of control of the Senate, however. Following the constitutional changes of 1998, the president enjoyed the right to dissolve the National Assembly; Ravalomanana used his authority to bring forward the scheduled elections to December 2002.

This proved a good strategy. Ravalomanana's TIM support network quickly became the TIM party and won 102 of the 160 available seats. The closely associated *Firaisankinam-Pirenena* coalition of moderate political parties won another 22 seats and non-partisans, mostly supportive of the president, won another 22 seats. AREMA won only 3 seats and its ally Leader Fanilo 2. The usual voter apathy of legislative elections proved something of the past, a turnout of 67.9 percent exceeded that of the 2001 presidential elections. This victory provided three things to Ravalomanana: it helped him remove the vestiges of AREMA power; it helped him gain essential legislative support for his programme; and it provided the victory necessary for the African Union to join the rest of the world in recognising his presidential victory.

### *Ravalomanana : Beyond neopatrimonialism?*

“Contemporary political changes are conditioned by mechanisms of rule embedded in the ancien régime. Authoritarian leaders in power for long periods of time establish rules about who may participate in public decisions and the amount of political competition allowed. Taken together, these rules constitute a political regime. Regime type in turn influences both the likelihood an opposition challenge will arise and the flexibility with which incumbents can respond. It also determines whether elites and masses can arrive at new rules of political interaction through negotiation, accommodation, and election, that is whether any transition will be democratic”. (Bratton and Van de Walle).

Clearly, it was Ratsiraka who shaped the nature of political competition during the Second Republic and his period of “democratic” revival. Popular antipathy to him ensured that accommodation of the *ancien régime* would ultimately fail and negotiation proved impossible. The question at hand is whether the rise of Ravalomanana, and the subsequent social movement were sufficient to constitute a break with the *ancien régime* and to bring about democratic transition, or if the right to rule is afforded Ravalomanana as person, rather than by virtue of his occupation of the presidential office, and whether his power is derived from favours to his supporters and his accumulated wealth, or from the bureaucratic and administrative systems in place.

At first sight, it would appear that Ravalomanana has not been in politics long enough to muster such lines of personal power. The close relationship between Tiako-i-Madagasikara and Tiko, however, belies such a claim. Numerous members of Ravalomanana’s inner circle come from Tiko. Most notably, Guy Rajemison Rakotomaharo was Tiko’s CEO’s advisor from 1996 to 1999, followed Ravalomanana to City Hall, became his presidential campaign manager, and, ultimately, was appointed as President of the Senate in July 2002. Narisoa Rajaonarivony, was formerly a marketing director at Tiko, briefly became Vice Prime Minister, before being made Ambassador to the US. Secretary of State for Commerce, Eric Beantanana worked for Tiko, and then for Ravalomanana’s mayoral campaign, before becoming Minister for Information, Culture and Communication. In April 2003 Razoharimihaja Solofonantenaina, Tiko officer in charge of protocol and administration (and an executive member of the FJKM alongside Ravalomanana), was named the TIM’s National President. The Chairman of Air Madagascar, Heriniaina Razafimahefa, the chairman of JIRAMA (electricity and water parastatal), Patrick Ramiamanana, and the Chairman of Secren (boat construction contractor), General Andrianafidisoa, were Tiko bosses. Magro, a Tiko subsidiary, serves as TIM party headquarters in Fianarantsoa and other provinces and the presidential security detail is charged with protecting Magro officers for their role in sponsoring the TIM. Tiko was the primary mechanism for Ravalomanana to get his message to Madagascar’s remote rural population. Indeed, his campaign was complemented by a plethora of free Tiko T-shirts and hats, as well as a reduction in the price of milk products shortly before the election.

Now that he is president, Ravalomanana freely mixes state politics and business in a manner that has some labelling him a corporatist. The presidential airplane is registered under Tiko's name. Asa Lalana Malagasy, a Tiko sub-corporation, has become the de facto public roads company. The largest media outlet, Madagascar Broadcasting System (MBS), does not suffer from executive over-reach. Ravalomanana owns the company, and his daughter Sarah runs it. Tiko has expanded dramatically in the two years of its founder's presidency, creating new alliances with German and American companies. It has part ownership of Phoenix, which took over the state oil company on its privatisation, and is considering starting a Tiko Petroleum company. Tiko also bought SINPA, the state agricultural corporation, and SOMACODIS, the Malagasy trading corporation, when they privatised in 2003. There was no invitation to tender in either case.

There were other reasons to be concerned about Ravalomanana when he assumed office. There have been accusations of corporate malfeasance: specifically, that Tiko had failed to repay debts. Ravalomanana himself was the target of lawsuits for expulsions and expropriations, contract violations, among other matters. The accusations against Tiko have continued, mostly resulting in legal settlements. Ravalomanana however, has remained above the fray.

Another challenge to Ravalomanana from the outset was based not on his corporate holdings but rather his allegiance to a corporate class. Since de Tocqueville, scholars have asserted that the growth of democracy is dependent upon a strong, energetic middle class. In Madagascar, the closest thing to a middle class is the business elite from which Ravalomanana emerged. This new business elite is a strong and important constituency in the capital. However, it has a reputation for excluding Madagascar's poor rural majority while it creates new wealth for itself. This may be an acceptable practice in the private sector, but as Ravalomanana has imported this model into the public sphere he has come under significant, and deserved, scrutiny.

Ravalomanana has clearly proven himself to be Ratsiraka's moral superior. He has gone beyond enriching himself to undertake roads and other macro-level development projects with such fervour as to make a mockery of the memory of Ratsiraka. In this sense he has brought improvement for the people. Yet doing this while placating the business class, blurring political and corporate lines, and buoying his own fortunes provides little assurance the Madagascar has eschewed its neo-patrimonial past.

*Changes in presidential power*

Ravalomanana's constitutional powers in relation to the Senate are clearly delineated and very favourable to him. He has the right to appoint (or dismiss) 30 senators of his choosing. On 23 July 2002 he did just that. However, this left him and his TIM with a one-third minority while Ratsiraka's AREMA still held 48 seats. As the remaining senators are elected indirectly, local elections must precede senatorial elections. While local elections took place in November 2003, senatorial elections, had not been undertaken at time of writing. This means that AREMA still commands a majority in the Senate; rather than making AREMA an effective opposition party, however, effectively this has marginalised the Senate.

Local elections were divided – rural elections were held on 9 November 2003 and urban elections on 23 November 2003. Complaints about the efficacy of the rural elections led to a nullification of results in 20 constituencies, mostly in the extreme south, and there were further challenges in Andoharanofotsy, rural Antananarivo province. Further electoral complaints led to a recount and a disputed result in Mahajanga province, where the TIM did not fare as well as it had hoped. Voter turnout was not accurately measured outside the capital, but even by the most optimistic estimates it did not exceed 25 percent of registered voters. Complaints about the registration process further marred the process and reduced the percentage of adults who went to the polls. The TIM party won 66 percent of the commune-level rural vote. The TIM won the mayoral office of all major urban centres except Toamasina (where Ratsiraka's nephew retained his position). In Mahajanga, however, the PFDM won more councillors' seats, though many resigned within days, claiming they were unable to work with the TIM.

In November 2002 Ravalomanana presented the HCC an interesting challenge as he began to issue executive orders, by-passing the AREMA-controlled National Assembly. One of these orders was to provide tariff exemption from a long list of imported goods; these included cement, fertilisers, paper, fibres, iron, steel, sheet metal, construction materials and agricultural machinery. The importance of this was not whether it was the best fiscal measure for a country trying to rebuild while in dire economic straits, but that the HCC permitted a sweeping tax reform by executive order without action by the National Assembly and without direct reference to the provinces. Throughout 2003 Ravalomanana encountered a compliant HCC. His plan for rounding up and trying perpetrators of the conflict exclusively from Ratsiraka's side was upheld and the lion's share of constitutional challenges to what were sometimes questionable legal arrest and detainment processes were dismissed. Most notably, former Prime Minister Tantely Andrianarivo said that he could not be tried under the existing court system because he was not prime minister at the time he allegedly committed offenses in 2002. If it was argued and found that he had been prime minister then he would have to be tried by the High Court of Justice, a body that had yet to be created. The HCC allowed the trial to go forward in the normal court process. Though proceedings were supposed to go ahead in July, they were postponed and Tantely was held without bail. In November the prosecution introduced another charge, embezzlement. The defence went back to the HCC to argue that it was a violation of Article 305 of the penal code to introduce late evidence and that, therefore, all charges should be dropped. Despite the apparent technical error on the part of the prosecution, the HCC allowed both the

continuation of the trial and the introduction of the new charge. This turned out to be significant as Tantal was convicted the following month on only two of the seven charges against him: embezzlement and usurpation of power. He was sentenced, harshly, to twelve years hard labour. The HCC ruling set another precedent as the prosecution successfully convinced the lower courts that Ratsiraka could be tried in normal courts as he was no longer president when he committed his crimes.

The Supreme Court proved equally supportive of Ravalomanana's programme. A notable example came in February 2003 when France Telecom sued the Malagasy government for allowing Hong Kong based Distacom to take over Telma Telecom Malagasy, despite French investment in the latter. Madagascar's privatisation code is clear on the matter and by no stretch of the imagination could France Telecom be denied its rights. The administrative chamber of the Supreme Court, however, ruled that it was in the “higher interests of the state” to allow the sale to Distacom. The Supreme Court also hastened to ratify the 2003 local elections without investigation, despite allegations of malfeasance. To date, there have been no significant court challenges to Ravalomanana's efforts at any level. This includes challenges to Tiko's benefiting from privatisation and challenges to the process under which former Ratsiraka supporters have been tried.

### *The performance of the president*

Ravalomanana's consolidation of power has clearly not been a result of institutional strengthening. Indeed, the opposite would seem to be the case: political institutions are, largely, as strong as the president has allowed them to be. He has shaped the TIM party which dominates the political sphere. He has shaped the nature and actions of the legislature and the judiciary. In addition, he has largely undermined many of the powers given to the provinces by the 1998 constitutional revisions. The question is whether he is a great institution-builder simply reaping personal benefits in the process, or merely enhancing his personal network, entrenching his political and economic power. The test will come when there are significant issues on which he is challenged by one of the institutions he himself has created. This has yet to happen.

Ravalomanana continues to tout his non-partisan attempts at reconciliation with the forces of the *ancien régime*. The perpetrators of crimes in 2002, he asserts, should be tried as part of the effort to bring about reconciliation. Not only should innocent AREMA leaders be allowed to hold office, he has appointed them within his administration.

This appears to reflect a partial truth. Seeking justice is important for reconciliation, as tribunals in South Africa, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and elsewhere have demonstrated. Some critics, however, accuse the administration of selectively guiding the choice of who should be tried; harsher critics consider this a witch hunt. Ravalomanana is correct in saying that non-offenders have been offered positions, but these are mostly civil servant appointments at the Director General level or below. There was only one AREMA member in Ravalomanana's original cabinet. Grad-Iloafo, a Malagasy think tank, argued as early as April 2003 that “either the government is reshuffled or social chaos will prevail.” The president did ultimately push Prime Minister Sylla to reshuffle the cabinet in January 2004. Nine ministers lost their post and a large number were replaced with leaders from other parties. While this was both a move to build political will and reconciliation on the one hand, and co-opt opposition leaders on the other, the core motivation is unclear. Regardless of this, he has been reasonably successful in either arresting or promoting would-be spoilers from the old regime.

The greatest threat in the political sphere in the pre-2002 era was the ethnic divide between the *Merina*

and the seventeen other groups on the island. The

*Merina*

began centralising control over the island at the end of the 18th century and this position of supremacy led to their being favoured under French colonial rule. The point should not be missed that Didier Ratsiraka is

*Betsimisiraka*

from the Toamasina coast, the region of highest tensions in the 1947 anti-colonial movement. Some 100,000 people were killed in the suppression of this uprising, as the

*Merina*

sided with the French. Ravalomanana is

*Merina*

. Through the First and Second Republics it was unimaginable that a

*Merina*

could win the presidency. Ravalomanana has worked assiduously to overcome this cleavage. Ultimately, his indisputable victory in 5 of the 6 provinces is testament to the fact that the Malagasy people ultimately saw the ethnic divide as a marker of times past, and secondary to the need for a change of charismatic leadership. As mentioned, Ratsiraka attempted to fan the ethnic flames in his favour in 2002, not only attacking

*Merina*

establishments on the coast, but allegedly engaging in the pretence that

*Merina*

were attacking

*Betsimisiraka*

establishments. This desperate ploy failed to bring ethnic difference once again to the centre of political culture. AREMA supporters have continued such strategies since 2002, but have met with equally limited success.

Ironically, Ravalomanana's ethnic challenges today are greater from within his own *Merina* support network.

*Merina*

society is historically caste based. While this caste system has diminished significantly in importance, it continues to permeate key

*Merina*

political constituencies. Ravalomanana is from an intermediate caste. The aristocratic caste ( *Andriana*

) supported him in 2002 because he is

*Merina*

. However, now that he is in power Tiko is profiting at the expense of many

*Merina*

-owned businesses, and a number of

*Andriana*

in positions of authority have suffered through his attempts to reconcile other groups. The fear is that ultimately there could be a re-emergence of the Club des 48, or something like it. This strong civic group, resembling a secret society, was composed only of leading

*Merina*

families. They are believed to have been responsible for the assassination of Colonel Ratsimandrava in 1975 and thus, in part, for Ratsiraka's rise to power. The problem takes on a further political significance. For instance, Manandafy Rakotonirina and Olivier Rakotovazaha, both of the MFM party, are advisors to Ravalomanana; they are

*Andriana*

. As concerns have grown that

*Merina*

business is not benefiting enough, their position has become more challenging of the president and their party has become less supportive of the TIM and has formed a stronger alliance with the moderate opposition. Fortunately for Ravalomanana, the primary opposition parties, AREMA and the Comité de Réconciliation Nationale (CRN) of Zafy Albert, have won no support from

*Andriana*

, so Ravalomanana has benefited from the lack of competition for their favour.

Ravalomanana faces similar challenges from the church. As Vice-President of the FJKM, his ties to the church as an instrument of civil society have been strong. He has benefited greatly from Protestant support, but this is no mere political window dressing; Ravalomanana is an evangelical minister himself. It has been said that he requires his entire staff to participate in organised prayer, and many of his political speeches resemble sermons. He often blurs the constitutionally drawn line separating church and state, even as this process has helped him straddle the ethnic divide. Recently, however, the FJKM has begun showing signs of weariness with Ravalomanana and, in particular, his inability to address the concerns of their poorer constituents.

Ravalomanana is playing with fire with the military as well. In order to win the military battles of 2002, Ravalomanana had to enlist the assistance of army “reservists” under the command of General Jules Mamizara. Following their victory, Mamizara was rewarded with the Defense Ministry portfolio, but was subsequently a victim of the January 2004 cabinet reshuffle. The coincidental timing was poor; reservists were soon to be demobilised and a coalition of members accused the government of failing to pay them their due. Mamizara remains behind Ravalomanana, but he supported the reservists, adding weight to their claims. Street demonstrations led the government to enter into negotiations, but efforts through June 2004 failed, and protests turned violent. While Ravalomanana still commands the support of the military as a whole, he has marginalised a small, but vocal and organised, military opposition.

In May 2004, as Ravalomanana celebrated two years in office, he could no longer boast the sort of unquestioned support he had previously enjoyed. Yet his strength should not be underestimated. The institutions he has created have served him well, though without opposition from within to challenge any of his programmes it is unclear if they serve an independent function that will survive a change of government (a litmus test for the level of institutionalisation). While Ravalomanana has not continued to win the hearts of all the business elite, or of the aristocratic *Merina* caste, he has opened up markets. There has been a flurry of international interest in Madagascar, if not yet investment by multinational corporations. However questionable the benefactors poorly-run state industries are being privatised. Part of the economic slump is a result of Ravalomanana floating the Malagasy currency. He has altered the tax structure and agency, and he has streamlined the import and export processes. Given his unusual view of nationalism, he has even pushed through a law that allows foreigners to purchase land in Madagascar. The severity of the economic decline has created hardship and threatened rural support in particular, but the rationale is that he believes he needs to get Madagascar’s fiscal house in order not just because the International Monetary Fund has told him to, but because he is a free-marketeer at heart. All of these efforts will benefit business in Madagascar generally, and Tiko in particular. Reforms are necessary, however, and will, presuming the social ills can be redressed, ultimately be to the benefit the Malagasy population at large.

### *Opposition and the struggle for political party independence*

Ravalomanana’s political honeymoon ended in early 2004. As yet he has met few of his campaign promises, the economy has slumped, and his domestic base is slowly eroding. As of the time of writing he is not under imminent threat, but his internal support needs to be watched carefully.

Other opposition parties can be categorised into moderate and radical factions. The RPSD (New Rally for Sovereignty and Development), GPR parliamentary group, and AVI (Judged by the Work They Do Party) parties form the core of the moderate opposition. Norbert Ratsirahonana, head of the AVI party, gives cause for particular concern. He has long been a supporter of Ravalomanana, and helped bring him to office. AVI has been the TIM's closest partner. By mid-2004, however, the economic crisis led Ratsirahonana to join with other moderate opposition members in directly denouncing Prime Minister Jacques Sylla's government, and the president circuitously. Ratsirahonana even joined with presidential advisor Alain Ramaroson and perennial Malagasy opposition leader Richard Andriamanjato (Akfm-Renouveau) to call for Sylla to be replaced by Ny Hasina Andriamanjato.

AREMA, Zafy Albert's CRN (Committee for National Reconciliation), and the OFPACPA (Organisation of Families of People Detained Following Current Political Crisis) constitute a more radical opposition. Without Ratsiraka at the helm many thought that AREMA would cease to exist as a party, but the old guard has proven more resilient than expected, forming itself into a small, but credible, opposition. Zafy Albert has never recovered from his 1996 impeachment, but he has galvanised a vocal core group. He labels the president “incompetent” and the state of Malagasy affairs “a crisis”, seeking government action before (in a thinly veiled threat) suggesting that the people will ultimately take to the streets to remove Ravalomanana just as they brought him to power. He seeks as agenda items a South Africa-style Truth and Reconciliation Commission to identify and try AREMA leaders and the perpetrators of the violence of 2002. He also calls for a new constitution and thus the establishment of a Fourth Republic. OFPACPA has both launched and faced the strongest challenge. Its leader, Victor Wing Hong, was close to Ratsiraka and the party remains close to AREMA. Hong was arrested in March 2004 for his role in organising a public opposition meeting the government saw as seditious; in June 2004 he was sentenced to 42 months in prison. While none of these opposition groups claims a connection, ethnic conflict in Toamasina has continued since 2002. There appears a link to Ratsiraka, but less clear is the role of AREMA.

No single opposition party is very strong, and no single opposition party is mobilised. Moreover, cooperation between opposition parties is not very effective. Yet opposition parties old and new are gaining strength, and in the absence of political consolidation to date, Ravalomanana has few lines of defence against hit-and-run attacks.

The TIM claims that economic life in Madagascar is better for the majority of the population than it was during Ratsiraka's presidency. Ravalomanana, in particular, refers to the enhanced international engagement, the implementation of a poverty reduction plan, improvements in the rule of law, and in decentralisation. On all counts this is probably correct. Yet, beyond road improvement projects government has to date done little to focus development benefits on the rural poor who make up more than two-thirds of the population. Perhaps more to the point,

without concurrent institutionalisation it is not clear that even improvements in the rule of law, reflected in less capricious courts, are necessarily deepening the democratic process for urban or rural populations.

The greatest internal challenge Ravalomanana faces is on the constitution itself. Zafy Albert, in particular, has called for its complete overhaul, claiming that Madagascar is facing a crisis and that anything short of a Fourth Republic will lead to a bloodbath; he demands a national constitutional conference. Ravalomanana has answered that “a president is not involved in such an issue,” but this is a clear effort to avoid the process. The problem he has is that, as described above, the constitution has been profoundly modified from its original state. It no longer provides a clear set of basic laws or offers a cohesive roadmap for institutional strengthening and the development of the rule of law. To change the constitution, however, would mean undermining the broad powers the president enjoys, while appearing to give in to opposition demands. Even if Ravalomanana did agree to a constitutional convention, this would be unlikely to produce the sort of document Madagascar needs, as the goal of the opposition is not an effective fundamental law, but institutional manipulation to undermine the Ravalomanana government. It was, after all, the same Zafy Albert who initially altered the powers of the president when he was in office.

International support for Ravalomanana and the TIM is far less questionable than domestic favour. The United States, in particular, has supported the TIM and the administration. President George Bush first met Marc Ravalomanana on 11 November 2001 – before the elections. Referring to that event the White House calls it a meeting with “President” Ravalomanana without chronological qualification. The US was one of the first countries to recognise Ravalomanana in 2002; since then Madagascar has qualified to participate in the second phase of the trade preference African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), and it has become one of 16 countries (8 in Africa) that has qualified for the \$1 billion in funds from the US Millennium Challenge Account. President Bush has personally “congratulated” the Malagasy government for its battle against corruption. There are two apparent reasons for the strong support: the strong pro-US, economically liberal actions in Antananarivo, and Ravalomanana’s continual pledge to assist in the US’s War on Terror (in particular cracking down on potential weapons trafficking in the Mozambique Channel ).

Germany and France have both continued to support Madagascar in increasing amounts of aid and the sponsorship of business ties. Key African partners, notably South Africa and Senegal, have offered significant verbal support for Ravalomanana, and criticised his challengers, while promoting bilateral trade. Multilateral donor impacts have been all the greater: the once intransigent African Union has come to support him; in January 2004 the European Union dedicated 1.9 million euros to “democracy” in Madagascar to demonstrate its support for the political direction of the country. This comes in addition to its dedicating 430 million euros to the

country over five years for “revitalisation.” The International Monetary Fund committed itself to funding a \$117.1 million poverty alleviation programme in 2004, though the first disbursement came under threat because of Ravalomanana’s “zero-tax” programme, in terms of which, certain consumer items had taxes removed in an effort to ameliorate social problems. Ravalomanana has reason for concern: other economic liberalisation measures, including significant currency devaluation, have made life harder for the average Malagasy citizen. As a result, popular support for Ravalomanana’s ability to lead the country to an improvement in the quality of life has waned. The zero-tax measure was only stop-gap, but nonetheless went against IMF conditionalities. In the end, Madagascar got only a warning from the Bretton Woods Institution, and received the funding – a sure sign of the desire the IMF has to work with the Ravalomanana government.

## **Conclusion**

It has been broadly argued that the transition from authoritarianism to democracy in Africa is largely a function of the internal dynamics of neopatrimonial rule. Madagascar is no exception. Ravalomanana created the social movement of 2002 only to have it shape him into a populist leader. But was the way Ravalomanana came into office democratic? The electoral process was skirted, the constitution was subverted, and fledgling democratic institutions were uprooted. Yet social movements are a form of political participation. New social movements in Latin America have been well discussed and their relevance to modern democratisation significantly probed. A common conclusion, as argued by Arturo Escobar, is that social movements that achieve political goals in fact help undermine clientalism. This gives participants in the movement a sense of efficacy. Thus, if political mobilisation is “the process by which a group goes from being a passive collection of individuals to an active participant in public life” then six to eight percent of Malagasy society became active political participants in a truly overt fashion.

The elections of 2001 cannot claim to have been part of a procedural democratic process. But, in an Aristotelian sense, the will of the people was realised through social movement. People take to the streets when institutions fail to provide the mediating opportunity they are designed to perform. In this case, the democratic process would have led to a second election and, perhaps, electoral manipulation and the retention of Ratsiraka as president. This would have been a less democratic outcome.

Assuming we are willing to accept the way that Ravalomanana came into office is democratic, and that he came to power as the people’s choice, this does not make him a “democrat.” A new democrat would be building institutions that can perpetuate the smooth transition of government over multiple electoral cycles. It is not clear that the president is doing this. What is apparent is

that, by way of the advantages afforded Tiko, he is benefiting personally from his office. He has worked to advance his supporters and has ensured his political base through the process. **Coming into office as a wealthy businessman, Marc Ravalomanana may prove an unusual species: a “democratic” corporatist who enriches himself and those around him, and consolidates his power base through patronage, while enhancing the lot of the population at large and reflecting popular will. How he reacts to the challenges he is now facing will define who he is, by determining how democratic and how personalised his rule will become.**



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## QUESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE SECTION