# Peacebuilding in Madagascar

## A Multi-Levelled Peace

Velomahanina Tahinjanahary Razakamaharavo

palgrave
macmillan

# Peacebuilding in Madagascar

Velomahanina Tahinjanahary
Razakamaharavo

# Peacebuilding in Madagascar

## A Multi-Levelled Peace

palgrave
macmillan

Velomahanina Tahinjanahary Razakamaharavo
School of Philosophy, Politics, and Economics
University of Reading
Reading, UK

ISBN 978-3-031-91382-2 ISBN 978-3-031-91383-9 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-91383-9



This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG.
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

# Preface

Conflict recurrence remains a fundamental challenge in peacebuilding, especially in regions where socio-political structures interweave with historical tensions and hybrid governance systems. Madagascar, with its unique socio-political landscape, provides a compelling setting for studying conflict recurrence, hybridity, multi-layered peace, and peacebuilding across multiple scales. This book offers an in-depth examination of these interwoven concepts, shedding light on how peace and conflict processes are shaped by dynamic interactions from local to international levels.

Drawing on extensive research and fieldwork, this book analyzes Madagascar's conflict and peacebuilding dynamics. A diverse array of actors—including state institutions, local leaders, grassroots organizations, international bodies, and sometimes passive but legitimate entities like the military—play critical roles in shaping peace and conflict outcomes. These actors, with their distinct influences, can deepen social divides or reinforce the resilience essential for lasting peace. Their interactions across scales underscore the fluidity of conflict transformation, showing how varying forces and motivations can either sustain or disrupt cycles of conflict recurrence.

Applying a cross-, inter-, and multi-scalar perspective, this analysis delves into how Madagascar's peacebuilding efforts unfold across various societal layers, from local communities to national institutions. These perspectives reveal how multi-layered interactions create both tensions and synergies, propelling peace initiatives forward at times while complicating them at others. By investigating these interconnected dynamics, the book advances the concept of multi-levelled peace, recognizing that peace and

conflict are interconnected and continuously shaped by transformations across scales. It challenges conventional binaries of peace and conflict, viewing conflict transformation as a cyclical, long-term, multi-track process that reflects the interdependent nature of peacebuilding efforts.

Through examining the complex workings of hybrid systems, this book aims to deepen scholarly understanding and inform practical peacebuilding strategies. It is intended to inspire further exploration into how multi-/ cross/ inter-scalar approaches can redefine peacebuilding in complex conflict environments. The reflections and findings here offer valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners, providing fresh perspectives on conflict recurrence, hybrid peacebuilding, and conflict transformation in similarly intricate settings.

Reading, UK Velomahanina Tahinjanahary Razakamaharavo

# Acknowledgements

For all that You've done, I will thank You. For all that You're going to do, for all that You've promised and all that You are is all that has carried me through. Jesus, I thank You.

First and foremost, I extend my deepest gratitude to God, to whom all glory and honor belong. As it is written: *"For the vision awaits its appointed time; it testifies of the end and does not lie. Though it lingers, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay."*

To my beloved parents, thank you for your unwavering love, perseverance, and sacrifices. Your guidance and support have been the foundation of my journey. To my siblings and their families, your encouragement and love have meant the world to me.

I am sincerely grateful to the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) for their financial support, which made aspects of this work possible.

A special and heartfelt thank you to Élise. Words cannot fully capture how blessed I am to have had your mentorship and supervision. Your unwavering trust, insightful guidance, and dedication to my growth have been invaluable. You have not only shared your expertise but have also been a source of inspiration. This manuscript is also dedicated to you.

I extend my deepest appreciation to Dominik for his mentorship and encouragement. Thank you for fostering an environment where I could fully express my creativity and for your continuous support—not just for me but also for my entire team in Madagascar. Your belief in our work has been instrumental in amplifying Malagasy voices and sharing their stories with the world.

I am also deeply grateful to Dr. Maria Mälksoo and Professor Benoît Rihoux for their constructive feedback and thought-provoking discussions, which have significantly contributed to the quality of this work.

To the BSIS and Canterbury staff, as well as the University of Reading's SPPE team, I extend my sincere thanks for their support throughout the years. Special gratitude goes to Yvan for his guidance and for facilitating key connections, and to Albena for her invaluable academic advice. I also wish to thank Inez Summers, Sarah Konate, Michael Sewell, Uma Kambhampati, Adam Humphreys, and Nicola Humphrey for their steadfast support. Tom and Bojan, your guidance has played an essential role in my academic and professional growth. I am grateful to all the professors and colleagues at BSIS and UoR for the enriching academic experiences in Brussels and Reading.

A heartfelt thank you to Nadine, an exceptional friend and colleague—your support has been immeasurable. Klaudia, your friendship and shared PhD experiences have been truly invaluable. My appreciation also extends to my colleagues from CCDP at the Graduate Institute in Geneva and CESPOL. Thank you, Oliver, Sandra, and Keith, for the intellectually stimulating research collaborations.

To my dearest family, this journey would not have been possible without your love, sacrifices, and patience. We made it! Catherine, your love and continuous support have been a pillar of strength. Claudia, your friendship and encouragement have helped me navigate both academia and life. Holy, Jemima, Nandrianina, Piso, Lalatiana, Tsiry, Vola, Donnah, Fidisoa, and Feno—thank you for always being there. Oelisoa, though no longer with us, your encouragement was pivotal in my pursuit of this PhD. I cherish our memories and the role you played in my journey.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the many friends, colleagues, and families who have supported me along the way, including Sam, Mollie and her family, Paul, Alison and her family, Rick and Eve, Jean-Claude, Pakysse, Cedric, Pastor Haga and Ramatoa, Pastor Camille, Mosa Justin, Narindra, Oliva, Rivo, Raphaël, Anne, Joanna and Andrew, Sarah and Pete and their daughters, Filip, Deanna, Michael, Hasina and Aina, Joël and Linda, Nouns and Nessa, Christophe, my parents' extended families, Rabarison, Anaclet, Ralijaona, Beantanana, Narijaonina, Bill and Georgia, Anouk's family, ISCAM, Friday Talk, the ARAKE and Hybricon teams, my journalist friends and colleagues, various project teams, and the families of Brodkom, Von Arx, McCoys, Dailloux, Fieldsend, Walker Mme Bochet, and the students I have had the privilege to teach over the years.

A special note of appreciation to Isobel, our editor along with the Palgrave team, whose meticulous attention to detail and dedication have been instrumental in refining this manuscript. Your expertise has been invaluable in bringing clarity and depth to my work.

Finally, I extend my heartfelt sympathy and respect to those who lost loved ones during the Malagasy episodes of conflict.

To all those whose support and contributions may not have been explicitly mentioned but were nonetheless invaluable to this journey, I extend my deepest gratitude.

Misaotra betsaka! May the Lord bless you abundantly.

# Contents

# About the Author

**Velomahanina Tahinjanahary Razakamaharavo** is a Research Fellow at the School of Philosophy, Politics and Economics (SPPE) at the University of Reading. With an academic background in International Conflict Analysis, she has held several academic and policy positions, including Lecturer and Postdoctoral Fellow at the Hochschule für Politik München (HfP) at the Technical University of Munich (TUM), and Visiting Postdoctoral Fellow in Global Transformations for the 2019/20 academic year at HfP. She was also a Scientific Collaborator at the Center for Political Science and Comparative Politics of UCLouvain, Belgium, and has been involved in various research and policy roles at institutions such as the European University Institute in Florence, Uppsala University, Umeå University, and the Graduate Institute of Geneva. She has experience in bridging theory with practice, engaging in initiatives beyond academia on pressing global issues. These include peace and security, climate change, emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, and gender equality. Dr. Razakamaharavo holds a PhD in International Conflict Analysis from the University of Kent's Brussels School of International Studies (BSIS), an MA in Marketing and Communication from ISCAM, and a BA in American Studies from the University of Antananarivo. She has received awards, including an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) New Investigator Grant as Principal Investigator, and several prestigious fellowships in the field of global transformations and conflict analysis.

# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| AfDB | African Development Bank |
| AGOA | African Growth and Opportunity Act |
| AKFM | Antoko Kongresin'ny Fahaleovan-tenan'i Madagasikara or Congress Party for the Independence of Madagascar |
| AREMA | Avant-garde pour la Rénovation de Madagascar or Vanguard of the Malagasy Rebirth |
| AU | African Union |
| CENI-T | Commission électorale nationale indépendante pour la transition or Transitional Independent National Electoral Commission |
| CFM | Conseil du Fampihavanana Malagasy or Malagasy Reconciliation Council |
| CNME | National Mixed Committee of Investigation |
| CNOE | Comité National de l'Observation des Eléctions or National Committee for the Observation of the Election |
| CNPD | Conseil National Populaire de Développement or National Council of Development |
| CNR | Conseil National pour la Réconciliation or National Council for Reconciliation |
| COI | Commission de l'Océan Indien or Commission of the Indian Ocean |
| COMESA | Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa |
| CRN | Comité pour la Réconciliation Nationale or Committee for National Reconciliation |
| CSOs | Civil Society Organizations |
| CSR | Conseil Suprême de la Révolution or Supreme Council of the Revolution |

| | |
|---|---|
| DGID | Direction Générale des Investigations et de la Documentation or General Directorate of Information and Documentation |
| EU | European Union |
| FAEM | Fédération des Associations des Etudiants de Madagascar, or Federation of the Associations of Malagasy Students) |
| FFKM | Fikambanan'ny Fiangonana Kristianina eto Madagasikara or Council of Christian Churches in Madagascar |
| FFM | Filankevitry ny Fampihavanana Malagasy or Council for the Malagasy Reconciliation |
| FIS | Force d'Intervention Spécial or Special Intervention Force |
| FJKM | Fiangonan'i Jesoa Kristy eto Madagasikara or Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar |
| FNDR | Front National pour la Défense de la Révolution Malgache or National Front for the Defense of the Malagasy Revolution |
| FRAM | Fikambanan'ny Ray aman-drenin'ny Mpianatra or Association of the Student's Parents |
| FRS | Force Républicaine de Sécurité or Republican Force of Security |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GIC | Groupe International de Contact |
| GMP | Groupe Mobile de la Police |
| HAT | High Authority of Transition |
| HCC | Haute Cour Constitutionnelle or High Constitutional Court |
| IFI | International Financial Institutions |
| IFR | International Fellowship of Reconciliation |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| KIM | Komity Iraisan'ny Mpitolona or Common Committee of the Protesters |
| KMD | Komity Miaro ny Demokrasia or Committee Defending Democracy |
| MDRM | Mouvement Démocratique de la Rénovation Malgache or Democratic Movement for the Malagasy Renovation |
| MFM | Mpitolona ho amin'ny Fanjakana ny Madinika or Party for Proletarian Power changed into Mpitolona ho amin'ny Fandrosoan'i Madagasikara or Movement for the Progress of Madagascar |
| MONIMA | Mouvement National pour l'Indépendance de Madagascar or National Movement for the Independence of Madagascar |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organizations |
| OAU | Organization of African Unity |
| ORSTOM | Office de la recherche scientifique et technique outre-mer or Office of Overseas Scientific and Technical Research |

| | |
|---|---|
| PADESM | Parti des Déshérités de Madagascar or Party of the Disinherited of Madagascar |
| PCRM | Parti Communiste des Régions de Madagascar or Communist Party of the Regions of Madagascar |
| PSC | Protracted Social Conflict |
| PSD | Social Democratic Party |
| PSM | Partie Socialiste Malagache or Malagasy Socialist Party |
| SADC | Southern African Development Community |
| SAP | Structural Adjustment Program |
| SECES | Syndicat des Enseignants-Chercheurs de l'Enseignement Supérieur or Syndicate of Professors-Researchers of the Higher Education |
| SEFAFI | Sehatra Fanaraha-maso ny Fiainam-pirenena or Observatory of Public life |
| SFIO | Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière or French Section of the Workers' International |
| SINPA | Société d'Intérêt National des Produits Agricoles or National Interest Society for Agricultural Products |
| SOEs | State-owned enterprises |
| SONACO | Société Nationale de Coton or National Cotton Company |
| TNCs | Transnational Corporations |
| TTS | Tanora Tonga Saina or Young People Aware of their Responsibilities |
| UN | United Nations |
| US | United States |
| VVS | Vy Vato Sakelika (Iron, Stone, Branch) |
| ZOAM | Zatovo Orin'asa Malagasy or Young Unemployed Malagasy |
| ZWAM | Zatovo Western Andevo Malagasy or Young Cowboys of Slave Descent |

# List of Figures

PART I

# Setting the Scene

CHAPTER 1

# An Account of the Episodes of Conflict in Madagascar: "tsy maintsy mipoaka ny sarom-bilany" or 'the cover of the cooking pot will always explode one day or another'

## Introduction

… While I recognized it as a political affair, I didn't fully understand the extent of what was happening. However, its repercussions had a profound impact on me; family members were pitted against each other, and it left a lasting mark …

-- It had a significant impact on Diego. We witnessed it firsthand. The '72 events happened before this. Often, these events seemed to reinforce the notion of 'Divide for better reign.' As for the events of '91, it seemed to involve skilled politicians …

-- This situation has persisted, making it challenging to resolve crises since then. We are currently experiencing the aftermath of the '91 events

-- Well, you were still young in 1972. I was in Tamatave when this tribal issue sprouted out. After 1972, no, after this May 13th, I don't recall which date exactly it was, it was still the same year, the tribal issue emerged …

(Narrative workshops in Antsiranana, June 2022, Razakamaharavo, 2024)

Madagascar's history presents a paradox: although the Malagasy people are believed to deeply value peace, they have also endured recurring cycles of intense conflict, frequently driven by both internal and external



V. T. Razakamaharavo, *Peacebuilding in Madagascar*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-91383-9_1

divisions. This book traces the evolution of Madagascar's peace and conflict processes from the royal period (c. 1540–1897) to 2022, shedding light on how a country so invested in peace could also be host to recurrent political crises and conflicts. Across these years, nine distinct episodes of conflict have arisen, varying from periods of political tension to episodes of high-intensity violence. These events tell the story of how conflict continues to resurface, seemingly inevitable, as captured by the Malagasy saying, "*tsy maintsy mipoaka ny sarom-bilany*"— "Conflict is inevitable, much like the eventual eruption of a sealed pot." This expression is more than a metaphor; it captures the collective Malagasy understanding that conflict, though undesired, is an unavoidable part of their national reality.

The recurring conflict in Madagascar has often followed a pattern of escalation, de-escalation, and, at times, extended protracted phases where underlying tensions linger. This book seeks to understand the dynamics that drive these cycles of peace and conflict, examining the interplay between local peace traditions and the forces that sustain division. It argues that peace and conflict in Madagascar are not simply opposing forces; they coexist and interweave, creating a "multi-leveled peace" (Féron, 2002) that is at once fragile and resilient. This complex picture emerges through examining the coexistence of constructive and destructive transformations, in which local values and customs reinforce peace while unresolved historical grievances and structural issues catalyze discord.

Madagascar's case is particularly intriguing because of its hybrid governance structure, where state institutions operate alongside traditional authorities, grassroots organizations, and international actors. This interaction between various levels of power is both a source of strength and vulnerability, as it allows local peace practices to thrive even as external influences and internal divisions shape cycles of conflict. By examining the multiple scales at which peace and conflict interact, this book offers a detailed view of how peacebuilding can work in tandem with, or at times be undermined by, processes of conflict.

At the core of Madagascar's cycles of conflict lies a disconnect between the nation's peace-oriented ideals and its turbulent internal dynamics. For generations, Malagasy communities have upheld values, principles, and customs that promote peaceful coexistence. These traditions have long shaped Madagascar's local-level interactions and help explain why, despite recurring episodes of violence, Malagasy society retains a strong commitment to peace. Yet, beneath this ethos lies a more complicated reality where structural and historical issues persist, often surfacing in moments

of political crisis. Madagascar's colonial past, its post-independence struggles, and its complex relations with international actors have all contributed to the country's internal divisions, fueling resentments that occasionally ignite into open conflict.

The repeated return of conflict in Madagascar is not solely the result of unresolved grievances; it also reflects the interactions between different groups, each with its distinct vision for the country. Whether driven by political ambitions, economic disparities, or social hierarchies, these internal divisions contribute to an environment where peace and conflict are continuously co-constructed. This book explores how both peace-promoting practices and conflict-generating forces shape the country's political landscape, revealing the extent to which local peace traditions coexist with, and occasionally give way to, violent expressions of discontent.

The aim of this book is to provide a detailed understanding of conflict recurrence in Madagascar by analyzing how peace and conflict are intertwined across different levels of society. The exploration is grounded in multi-scalar peacebuilding as our main concept that we will further explore through the concept of hybridity and thanks to a narrative analysis. By focusing on these frameworks, this book seeks to demonstrate how Madagascar's conflict dynamics are not simply local phenomena but complex processes that interact across local, national, and international scales. This approach also emphasizes that peace in Madagascar is not a singular, uniform process but one shaped by diverse actors, from traditional leaders and state officials to international diplomats and local activists.

This book's insights are based on extensive fieldwork and in-depth qualitative research across Madagascar. 33 narrative workshops with 207 participants from five key regions (Boeny, Analamanga, Atsinanana, DIANA, and Analanjirofo) were conducted, engaging a wide range of voices, including political leaders, traditional authorities, activists, and community members in May and June 2022. These workshops, facilitated using the Delphi Technique, provided an opportunity for participants to freely share their perspectives on Madagascar's peace and conflict processes. In addition, 49 semi-directed interviews were conducted to further explore themes emerging from the workshops. These primary data sources were supplemented by earlier research, involving 44 in-depth interviews across Madagascar, France, and Geneva between 2014 and 2016. This wealth of data is analyzed through the lens of narrative theory, emphasizing how narratives contribute to peacebuilding and conflict recurrence in Madagascar.

The book provides a rich, multi-dimensional view of Madagascar's peace and conflict processes by blending these data sources. It examines not only the official accounts of peace and conflict but also the local narratives that shape perceptions of Madagascar's political landscape. This narrative approach helps to reveal the ways in which conflict is constructed, interpreted, and transformed over time, offering insights into how Madagascar's complex history influences its present and future peace efforts.

Madagascar's peace and conflict processes are unique, shaped by a blend of local traditions, historical legacies, and external influences. This book argues that the recurring conflicts in Madagascar are not merely the result of unresolved tensions but also a reflection of the country's hybrid peace system, where different scales of governance and narratives coexist. Through a detailed examination of Madagascar's conflict history, peace practices, and the multi-scalar interactions that sustain or disrupt them, this book offers a deeper understanding of how peace and conflict coexist in a context where each influences the other in often unpredictable ways.

The hope is that by revealing the complex interplay between peace and conflict in Madagascar, this book will contribute to broader discussions on conflict recurrence, hybrid governance, and multi-scalar peacebuilding. Through the lens of Madagascar's experience, the book seeks to challenge conventional views on peacebuilding and conflict resolution, highlighting the importance of local narratives, the resilience of traditional peace practices, and the need for more nuanced approaches to understanding and addressing the cyclical nature of conflict.

Madagascar has experienced nine major episodes of political unrest, each shaped by shifting power struggles, governance challenges, and historical tensions. These episodes, spanning from 1947 to 2009, reflect cycles of crisis and resolution that continue to shape the country's stability. The following sections provide an overview of each conflict episode, outlining their causes, key actors, and impact on Madagascar's peace and conflict processes.

## The Pre-colonial Period

Madagascar, located in the Indian Ocean, is the fifth-largest island in the world. According to the World Bank (WB) census of 2020, it has a population of approximately 28 million and suffers from one of the highest poverty rates globally. Between 2000 BC and 1500 BC, the "*Ntaolo*" or

ancestors, the *Vazimba* primarily occupied the highland's caves and forests (Dugal, 2004), while the *Vezo* established themselves along the east coast and southern regions (Astuti, 1995). The origins of Madagascar's ethnic groups, clans, kingdoms, and dynasties can be traced back to these early communities (cf. Bloch, 1977; Middleton, 1999; Randrianja & Ellis, 2009)

The early communities in Madagascar were influenced by diverse migrations and trade, welcoming Indonesians, Africans, Indian and Arab merchants, and later European settlers. The term "*vazaha,*" once broadly applied to these newcomers, is now used specifically to describe foreign white individuals.

By the mid-16th century, pivotal dynasties began to form in the southwest and central highlands, leading to the establishment of three significant kingdoms: the *Sakalava* in the west (Lombard, 1988), the *Betsimisaraka* along the eastern coast (Ellis, 2007), and the Merina in the central plateau (Kus & Raharijaona, 2006; Rabesahala-Randriamananoro, 2006)

In the southwest, the *Maroserana* dynasty extended its rule over several south-central communities, creating the powerful states of *Menabe* and *Boina*. These states eventually united to form the *Sakalava* Empire, originating from the warrior clans who aligned with the *Maroserana* before 1660. As these warriors merged through intermarriage with west-coast clans, they extended "*Sakalava* citizenship" and built a shared identity around reverence for the *Maroserana* ancestors. Yet the *Sakalava*'s influence weakened by the 19th century due to internal conflicts, religious shifts, and wars with the Merina.

Meanwhile, on the eastern coast, the *Betsimisaraka* confederation rose in the 18th century under Ratsimilaho (c. 1694–1750), uniting coastal communities in a confederation that endured until his death in 1750, after which it fragmented.

The *Merina* kingdom developed in the Ikopa valley on the central plateau in the late 16th century, with Antananarivo as its capital. Though divided among competing rulers in the 18th century, it was reunified by King Andrianampoinimerina (c. 1745–1810) in 1797, who instituted common laws and, leveraging firearms acquired through the coastal slave trade, expanded into neighboring territories. (*Madagascar—Colonialism, Merina Kingdom, Trade | Britannica*, 2024)

Under his rule, *Merina* society was organized into distinct social classes—nobles, commoners, and slaves. Within the *Merina* kingdom, the "*Hova*," a Neo-Austronesian group (Delagrave, 1898), were classified as commoners or "*rôturier*," but their ranks included diplomats, traders, and

soldiers. The *Hova* were led by individuals recognized as "*Andriana*" (princes, lords, or nobles) (Callet, 1908), who are now acknowledged as the nobility.

Under the reign of King Andrianampoinimerina, the *Merina* kingdom reached its zenith, characterized by ambitious territorial expansion and a fervent desire for exclusive sovereignty over Madagascar. His guiding maxim, "*ny ranomasina no valam-parihiko*" or "the sea is the only limit to my paddy field," captured his vision of uniting the island under his rule. This unification was achieved through assertive military conquests and strategic alliances, often cemented by matrimonial unions (Imbiky Anaclet, personal communication, June 2014). Andrianampoinimerina imparted a legacy of ambition to his son, with a vision of a kingdom extending to the sea.

The well-governed *Merina* kingdom was organized into six administrative districts known as "*toko,*" each subdivided into smaller villages called "*foko*." These villages were collectively governed by the *Fokonolona*, which took on judicial, administrative, and policing responsibilities, demonstrating the kingdom's cohesive and structured system of governance.

Following the reign of King Andrianampoinimerina, his successor, King Radama I (c. 1793–1828), Andrianampoinimerina's son, played a crucial role in advancing Madagascar's engagement with the Western world, continuing efforts toward unification, and establishing the kingdom's military apparatus. However, the western region of the *Sakalava* kingdom and the southern territories remained beyond the reach of this unification. Radama I's campaigns were marked by bloody conquests of other Malagasy kingdoms.

In 1817, the kingdoms of *Merina*, Betsileo, Bezanozano, and Sihanaka united, resulting in the formation of the Kingdom of Madagascar (Delagrave, 1898; Ellis, 1980). This consolidation was a significant turning point, creating a unified political entity that would profoundly influence the island's future development.

Queen Ranavalona I (1778–1861), the successor to Radama I, is remembered for her resolute and authoritative reign, characterized by staunch opposition to European (French and British) influence. She embraced a policy of isolationism and actively resisted missionary activities. Despite her efforts to maintain Madagascar's sovereignty, her son, Radama II, secretly entered into the Charte Lambert in 1855, a covert agreement with France (Olivier Rakotovazaha, personal communication, March 2016; see also Downer, 2000). This agreement later provided

France with a pretext to establish a protectorate over Madagascar, which ultimately led to its colonization.

On December 17, 1885, Queen Ranavalona III (1861–1917) (Schwarz-Bart, 2001) signed a Franco-Malagasy treaty, but tensions soon followed. In 1895, France launched a military invasion of Madagascar, citing disputes over the treaty's interpretation. The French sought to establish a protectorate, invoking the Charte Lambert as justification for controlling Madagascar's economy and foreign affairs. This invasion triggered resistance from the "Menalamba" or "Red Shawls" movement (cf. Ellis, 2003; Valensky, 2000), ushering in a period of intense upheaval and struggle in Madagascar's history.

From 1896 to 1905, General Joseph-Simon Gallieni, who governed French colonies and Madagascar, led a brutal campaign of pacification and repression that resulted in the deaths or disappearance of approximately 100,000 people out of the island's 3 million inhabitants. Gallieni's approach, known as the "politics of race," aimed to dismantle the power of the *Merina* elite. This strategy involved the use of anthropological photography and race-based policies to reorganize the island into administrative circumscriptions (Boëtsch & Savarese, 2000), further entrenching French control over Madagascar.

In response to French domination, a secret nationalist resistance movement known as Vy Vato Sakelika (Iron, Stone, Branch), or VVS, emerged in 1915. Said to be mainly led by the *Hova Merina* elite, the movement sought to challenge the oppressive colonial regime. Intellectuals, pastors, and doctors played prominent roles in Vy Vato Sakelika, as noted by Olivier Rakotovazaha (personal communication, March 2016), who remarked, "…The intellectuals fought against that; pastors and doctors were part of Vy Vato Sakelika (though some interpreted it as Vonoy ny Vazaha Sisa—Kill the Remaining Foreigners or White people). It was a long and tumultuous crisis" (see also Gow, 2006; Randrianja, 2001).

## Episodes of Conflict

According to mainstream literature, Madagascar has experienced nine major episodes of conflict, each bearing certain similarities while also marked by distinct characteristics. Nonetheless, there were already other episodes of violence before 1947. Table 1.1 highlights the human toll of these events, from the 1947 uprising, which claimed over 1,000 lives, to the more recent 2009 political crisis, where the death toll exceeded 100.

**Table 1.1** The number of casualties in the Malagasy episodes of conflict

| *Episode of conflict* | *Casualties* | *Stages of conflict* |
|---|---|---|
| 1947 | More than 1000 deaths | Stage 5 |
| 1971 | More than 1000 deaths | Stage 5 |
| 1972 | Around 40 deaths and 100 wounded | Stage 3 |
| 1975 | 22 deaths | Stage 3 |
| 1985 | More than 100 | Stage 4 |
| 1991 | 50–75 deaths and 300 wounded | Stage 3 |
| 1996 | No casualties | Stage 2 |
| 2002 | More than 60 deaths | Stage 3 |
| 2009 | More than 100 deaths | Stage 4 |

Source: compilation made by the Author

> From the Latin for 'to clash or engage in a fight', a confrontation between one or more parties aspiring towards incompatible or competitive means or ends, conflict may be either manifest, recognisable through actions or behaviours, or latent, in which case it remains dormant for some time, as incompatibilities are unarticulated or are built into systems or such institutional arrangements as governments, corporations, or even civil society. (Miller & King, 2005, p. 22)

A situation of conflict inherently displays incompatibilities. This analysis considers both a transversal dimension and a longitudinal one, examining phenomena over an extended period. In studying community conflicts in Europe, Féron (2005) suggests identifying conflict stages based on their intensities and specific characteristics, including the annual count of casualties. This approach allows for a structured understanding of conflicts, classifying them as outlined below.

1. peaceful and stable situations (no casualties),
2. political tension situations (one or two people killed),
3. violent political conflicts (10 to 100 people die),
4. low-intensity conflicts (between 100 to 1000 deaths),
5. high-intensity conflicts (more than 1000 people die).

Figure 1.1 shows the timeline of these events in Madagascar, charting the evolution of conflict across distinct stages. This classification proved valuable, allowing for the categorization of homogeneous populations of cases or "episodes of conflict." Secondary sources (Ragin & Byrne, 2009),

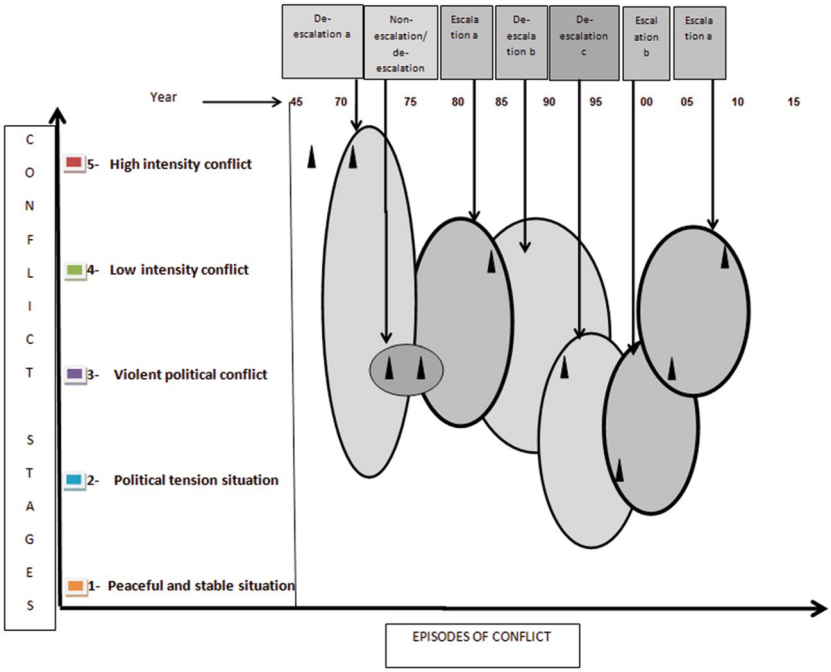


**Fig. 1.1** Timeline of the episodes of conflict in Madagascar. The triangles represent the episodes of conflict and the circles show the shifts of conflict stages. In order to be able to put the episodes of conflict in a timeline, I have chosen to put dates with five-year intervals. The episodes of conflict occurred in 1947, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1984, 1991, 2002, and 2009. The period between 1950 and 1970 was removed as no major episode of conflict broke out during this period. The colors show that there are qualitative differences between these stages. Although the academic convention focuses on the number of casualties, one must recognize that these episodes of conflict are qualitatively different. Source: the Author, see also Razakamaharavo, 2018, 2019, 2020)

alongside in-depth case knowledge, informed the identification of key episodes. Here, historical insights (see Berg-Schlosser & De Meur, 2009; Levi-Faur, 2006; Lijphart, 1971; Peters, 1998) into Madagascar's development were essential, supporting the identification of periods of homogeneity and defining the boundaries of these cases. This chapter provides a detailed exploration and description of each of these conflict episodes.

In what follows, we will give a brief description of each of these conflict episodes.

## Episode 1947

The year 1947 marked a pivotal moment in Madagascar's quest for independence. Since 1946, the movement had been spearheaded by the political party MDRM (Mouvement Démocratique de la Rénovation Malgache, or Democratic Movement for Malagasy Renovation), whose leadership allegedly comprised mainly descendants of the *Hova* and prominent figures from the *Merina* royal court (Weigert, 1995). However, it is important to note that the MDRM had members from various ethnic groups across Madagascar, countering the mainstream narrative that it was exclusively *Merina*.

In response to the rising influence of the MDRM, France, continuing its divisive "politics of race," endorsed the creation of PADESM (Parti des Déshérités de Madagascar, or Party of the Disinherited of Madagascar). PADESM primarily represented the interests of the coastal regions, particularly the "*Côtiers*," including the *Mainti-enindreny* (literally "Blacks of the six mothers" or "six clans"—used to refer to the group of freed Black individuals) and *Tanindrana* (whose traditional territories either border or are closely associated with the coastal regions)—descendants of *Merina* slaves and coastal inhabitants. This group opposed a resurgence of *Merina* dominance and challenged the authority of the *Merina* elite within the MDRM (Randriamaro, 1997).

In 1947, in response to manipulation and growing resistance against colonization, France launched a brutal repression campaign. Clashes between members of the MDRM and PADESM resulted in significant casualties, with estimates of deaths ranging widely from over 1,000 to as high as 80,000 (Rabearimanana et al., 1994; Ratsimamanga & Rajoelina, 2001)

Despite the suppression of the 1947 movement, France continued its colonial rule over Madagascar (Rabearimanana et al., 1994). In the 1950s, reforms shifted Madagascar's status, making it a member of the French community and designating it as an overseas territory (Galibert, 2008; Paxton, 1990). The PADESM kept its concerns about potential *Merina* dominance. Hence, a new political party formed, called the Social Democratic Party (PSD) it was founded by Philibert Tsiranana (1912–1978) who was a former PADESM member. Viewed as the

successor to PADESM, the PSD maintained an anti-nationalist stance (See Saura, 2006 for his biography).

Fearing the resurgence of *Merina* influence, after independence, France sought a leader aligned with Republican ideals. Tsiranana, a member of the *Tsimihety* community known for its Republican outlook, was ultimately chosen to assume the presidency.

> France was concerned that the *Merina* might regain power, so they sought a leader more aligned with Republican ideals. Tsiranana was chosen because he came from the *Tsimihety* community, known for its Republican mentality. In his community, leaders, known as *Sojabe*, are elected based not on race or origin. They pushed him to become the President. (Olivier Rakotovazaha, personal communication, March 2016)

Tsiranana championed a negotiated path to independence, fostering a close relationship with France throughout this process. As a moderate nationalist, he embraced an open policy toward the West, seeking to balance Madagascar's aspirations for self-governance with the realities of international relations.

> We think that a well-prepared independence would have mixed value because political independence too early would lead to a more atrocious form of dependence: economic dependence. We maintain trust in France and count on French talent to discover, when the time comes, a system comparable to that of the British Commonwealth. For we Malagasy will never want to cut ourselves off from France. We are part of French culture and we want to remain French. (Saura, 2006)

Madagascar's complex journey toward independence, marked by the pivotal events of 1947 and the shaping influence of political figures like Tsiranana, reflects a delicate balance between national sovereignty and continued ties with France, ultimately highlighting the intricate interplay of ethnic dynamics, colonial legacies, and the aspiration for a stable, self-governing future.

## Episode 1971

In 1971, Madagascar experienced a significant historical episode centered on Monja Jaona and his Maoist political party, MONIMA (Mouvement National pour l'Indépendance de Madagascar, or National Movement for

the Independence of Madagascar). Monja Jaona (1910–1994), a nationalist affiliated with the political party Jiny—linked to the MDRM—operated mainly in the southern region of the island. His views on independence sharply contrasted with those of Tsiranana and the PSD (see Galibert, 2008).

The activism of Monja Jaona culminated in 1971 when MONIMA sparked a rebellion in the impoverished southern region of Madagascar, rallying farmers and peasants in their struggle for justice (Althabe, 1973). This area faced severe poverty, worsened by government mistreatment and neglect. The heavy burden of annual capitation taxes and cattle taxes imposed by the state became unbearable for the peasants, leading to resistance that resulted in collective punishments and harsh reprisals (Althabe, 1972; Rabearimanana et al., 1994). The uprising in the south highlighted the deep-seated grievances of a marginalized region, often referred to as the "cemetery of projects" due to the repeated failures of major development initiatives in the area (Gilbert Raharizatovo, personal communication, June 2014).

> The revolution of 1971 represents a movement from a specific part of Madagascar—the deep Malagasy south—an area rich in natural resources yet profoundly impoverished and neglected by the state. We refer to this region as the 'cemetery of projects,' as all major initiatives implemented there have failed. It is a desert area where the people, influenced by their geographical circumstances, are akin to nomads, making them difficult to control by both colonial powers and the state. During this time, Tsiranana was actively fighting against communism; he aligned himself with Taiwan rather than with Communist China under Mao Zedong. Madagascar was viewed as a barrier to communism in Africa. (Gilbert Raharizatovo, personal communication, June 2014)

After Monja Jaona and his supporters targeted military posts, clashes erupted, prompting a strong state response in the form of a pacification campaign led by General Ratsimandrava. This intervention resulted in over a thousand casualties, effectively quelling the movement. In the aftermath, Monja Jaona and his followers were arrested and imprisoned.

## Episode 1972

In 1972, Madagascar experienced another significant episode as the repercussions of MONIMA continued to resonate. Monja Jaona's influence persisted, drawing numerous followers and intellectuals, especially university professors, who were trained in the ideologies he promoted,

particularly Maoism. During this period, Manandafy Rakotonirina (1938–2019), the lead of MONIMA, chose to break away and founded his own political party, MFM (*Mpitolona ho amin'ny Fanjakana ny Madinika*, or Party for Proletarian Power) (Galibert, 2001; Olivier Rakotovazaha, personal communication, March 2016).

In 1972, the "*Mai Malgache*" (*Malagasy May*) student movement emerged, originating among medical students at Befelatanana who protested an education system that relegated Malagasy students to subordinate roles as auxiliaries to French doctors. The government's response, which included closing the school, further fueled discontent. Additionally, policies limiting the age of entry to the 6th and 10th grades triggered strikes against perceived injustices in the educational system, leading to the formation of the student movement.

The protests grew as the FAEM (Fédération des Associations des Etudiants de Madagascar, or Federation of the Associations of Malagasy Students), along with teachers, union representatives, and parents, joined in solidarity. Together, they denounced what they viewed as "cultural imperialism" and criticized the treaties of cooperation with France (Blum, 2011)

The student strikes quickly escalated into a nationwide movement, resulting in casualties in various regions, including Ambalavao. In response, the government arrested approximately 371 protesters and deported them to Nosy Lava, echoing colonial-era practices of incarceration. Provoked by these actions, demonstrators took to the streets on May 13, demanding the release of the arrested individuals. The situation intensified further when the *Zatovo Orin'asa Malagasy* or Young Unemployed Malagasy (ZOAM) later *Zatovo* Western *Andevo* Malagasy or Young Cowboys of Slave Descent (ZWAM), a group of underprivileged youth mobilized by intellectuals like Manandafy, joined the protests.

The FRS (Force Républicaine de Sécurité, or Republican Force of Security), tasked with serving as the President's personal security and acting as an anti-riot unit, opened fire on the protesters. In retaliation, ZWAM confronted the FRS physically, resulting in casualties on both sides. President Tsiranana addressed the nation via radio, warning of more bloodshed if the protests continued.

In light of the escalating movement, various organizations, including KIM (*Komity Iraisan'ny Mpitolona*, or Common Committee of the Protesters), were formed to facilitate united meetings and articulate specific demands, including the resignation of President Tsiranana. In a