



Madagascar — Va-PoReg Country Report

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09/27/1896 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of France]: The modern era of Madagascar commenced under the reign of King Andrianampoinimerina (1787–1810) of the Merina dynasty. He initiated the consolidation of power in the Highlands, initially focusing on the twelve sacred hills of Imerina before expanding influence towards the coastal regions.¹ On 10/23/1817 King Radama I of „Imerina” entered a treaty of friendship and peace with the United Kingdom in which he is recognized as king of Madagascar (officially Kingdom of Imerina). On 12/17/1885, however, France unilaterally declared Madagascar a protectorate (named Malagasy Protectorate). After a war, on 09/30/1895, Queen Ranaivalona III and her government surrendered to the French (Mutibwa 1973). On 09/27/1896, the Kingdom of Imerina was declared a French colony (named Colony of Madagascar and Dependencies) by annexation (Oppenheim/Roxburgh 1920: 168, Marcus 2004). Based on our observations, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Both LIED and V-Dem’s PCLI classify political liberties as absent. For the relevant period, V-Dem’s JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are moderate. Simultaneously, V-Dem’s LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. On 10/27/1946 the colonial Madagascar became a French overseas territory. Already since 1945 delegates from Madagascar were elected to the French Assembly. Besides, a National Representative Assembly and provincial assembly were created.² According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held in 1946, from 1947 to 1950 only legislative elections, which weren’t multiparty, were held, from 1951 onward only multiparty legislative elections were held. There were no executive elections. Universal suffrage was introduced in 1956. The Malagasy rebellion of 1947 stands out as one of the most violent uprisings in the colonial era, resulting in an estimated loss of 100,000 lives.³ Political liberties were absent according to LIED. V-Dem’s PCLI classifies political liberties as not really present in 1946, as absent from 1947 to 1956 and as not really present from 1957 onward. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem’s JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem’s LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent.

03/30/1957 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of France, Liberal Democracy]/Start Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of France, Liberal Democracy]: On this date, elections for local and six provincial assemblies were held under universal suffrage, after the loi-cadre (Reform Act) of 1956 had removed voting inequalities by abolishing the multiple electoral college system. Delegates to the Territorial Assembly were elected by the provincial assemblies between 05/13 and 05/19/1957.⁴

10/14/1958 End Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of France, Liberal Democracy]/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: On this date the colonial administration was abolished, after holding a referendum on 09/28/1958, and Madagascar was granted internal autonomy as the Malagasy Republic.⁵ In 1959, universal suffrage was introduced, and an elected college of provincial counsellors established, which were to select the first president. The election was held under French auspices on 04/27/1959, and won by Philibert Tsiranana and his Parti Social Démocrate de Madagascar (PSD) (Marcus 2004).⁶ The president did not formally hold power until independence was finalized in June 1960. According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were present. Besides, for that timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem’s PCLI is

classified by us as indicating that political liberties are not really present. This period is coded as transitional because there had been clear prospects toward independence. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate in 1958-1959 and limited in 1960, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent.

06/26/1960 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start Electoral Autocracy: On this date, independence from France under the leadership of Tsiranana and the PSD was declared. According to Covell (Covell 1987: 30), French colonial administrators chose moderate, pro-French Tsiranana as party founder and first national leader. He was indirectly elected president before independence in 1959. The PSD general secretary became the Minister of the Interior and controlled „the organization (and results) of elections“ (Covell 1987: 32). The First Republic's constitution mirrored the governmental structure of the Fifth French Republic, featuring an unconstrained President at the helm of the executive branch. Until 1962, the President was chosen indirectly by an electoral college. Following that, the method of direct election has been utilized, employing the absolute majority system, with presidential terms enduring for seven years. The political landscape was predominantly shaped by the PSD, led by Philibert Tsiranana, who embraced a pragmatic socialist ideology. However, the parliamentary elections of 1965 and 1970 were marred by allegations of government interference, undermining their fairness. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED affirms that the elections were not competitive. Moreover, between 1961 and 1964 not real cleanliness is scored. Since 1965, no electoral cleanliness is achieved (V-Dem CEI). V-Dem's EF&FI declares the overall election conditions as not really free and fair. Additionally, the electoral system's majoritarian nature cemented the PSD's dominance in the National Assembly. By the early 1970s, amid severe economic challenges, opposition to Tsiranana's autocratic rule gained momentum in society (Thibaut 1999: 532-534). Besides, political liberties were absent (LIED) and not really present according to V-Dem's PCLI. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent.

05/18/1972 End Electoral Autocracy/Start Military Autocracy: Tsiranana faced a severe student uprising against the French character of the regime and the economic woes in the country. On 05/09/1972, he relinquished a considerable part of his authority to a military prime minister, General Gabriel Ramanantsoa (Covell 1987: 47-48, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 76). According to Polity5, during this period, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent.

10/11/1972 End Military Autocracy/Start Military Autocracy: On this date, Ramanantsoa forced the president with whom he shared power to resign. Ramanantsoa became president. A referendum approved a five-year transition period under military leadership. While this referendum was in a comparative perspective a very unconventional way to start a military autocracy the regime can hardly be coded otherwise.⁷ Based on our observations, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. As per FH, for 1972, the country receives a score of 8, which we interpret as falling into the rather not free category. For the remaining period the country scores between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free. Moreover, LIED still identifies political liberties as absent whereas V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as showing that political liberties are not truly present. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative

constraints on the executive were absent.

12/21/1975 End Military Autocracy/Start Communist Ideocracy: Continuing ethnic and class tensions led to Ramanantsoa's resignation from his interim position. On 12/21/1975, a constitutional referendum was conducted, converting Madagascar into a presidential republic with Didier Ratsiraka assuming the role of the first unelected president. We code this regime change event as a civilian opposition coup, because of Ramanantsoa's forced resignation and Ratsiraka's seizure of power by having a new constitution established. This decision acknowledges that, although Ratsiraka is an officer, he acted as a civilian and had his rule legitimized by a referendum. The new constitution also established the High Revolutionary Council tasked with spearheading a socialist revolution.⁸ On 12/30/1975, the Democratic Republic of Madagascar was declared. The military government's collective leadership appointed Naval Captain Didier Ratsiraka as President of the Republic. Ratsiraka instigated a shift from the collective leadership by high-ranking military officials to a governing coalition encompassing civilians organized under a new political party along with military officers (Covell 1987: 57-62). The era following 1975 is regarded as a new regime due to the shift in the composition of influential decision-makers and policy influencers, transitioning from solely top military officers to a coalition comprising both military officers and civilian party leaders (Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 76). On 01/04/1976 President Ratsiraka was sworn in which marked the beginning of the Second Republic. He declared Madagascar a Marxist republic. Ratsiraka created a regime party as well as an umbrella organization named National Front for the Defense of the Revolution (FNDR). Only parties which were member to this organization were allowed to become politically active.⁹ Ratsiraka sought to enact the principles laid down in the Charter of the Malagasy Socialist Revolution.¹⁰ Ratsiraka was reelected president in 1982 and in 1989. In May 1978 following sharp economic decline, the socialist government was met with student protests in Antananarivo in May 1978. The government responded by sending the military. Nevertheless, it accepted free-market reforms which were being demanded by the IMF in order to enable foreign aid. Ratsiraka abandoned his „scientific socialism”.¹¹ The fall of the socialist regime in the USSR had rippling effects on the socialist regime in Madagascar. After the elections in 1989, opposition forces began to become more noticeable and started denouncing alleged election fraud. Large protests were already held in 1989 which reached a peak on 08/10/1991 when around 400 000 citizens took to the streets. The protestors were answered with violence.¹² Based on our observations, executive and legislative elections, which weren't multiparty, were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. As classified by FH for the period between 1976 and 1989, the country fluctuates between 9 and 12, scoring not free, which we interpret as moving between rather not free and not free. From 1990 onward the country is partly free with a score of 8, which we interpret as rather not free. For this period, LIED still identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties are not really present. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent.

10/31/1991 End Communist Ideocracy/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: The events beginning in 1989 led to Ratsiraka's agreement on 10/31/1991 to support the process of democratic transition. Albert Zafy, who later became president of the Third Republic, emerged as head of the „High State Authority”, a transitional government which shared power with Ratsiraka's government for the duration of the transition.¹³ The new constitution was approved by referendum on 08/19/1992. According to LIED executive and legislative elections, which weren't multiparty, were held. Per FH's scoring for the assessed regime period, the country is classified as partly free with a score of 8, which we categorize as rather not free. LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as ambiguous regarding the status of political liberties. Based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the

executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate.

11/25/1992 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start Electoral Hybrid Regime: Albert Zafy emerged victorious from the first round of presidential elections on 11/25/1992. Based on our observations, only multiparty executive elections were held during this period, which contradicts the observations of LIED. On 02/10/1993 President Ratsiraka lost the second round of elections against Zafy.¹⁴ He was sworn in as President on 03/27/1993. This marked the beginning of the Third Republic of Madagascar. Parliamentary elections were held on 06/13/1993. The Forces Vives (Zafy's party) gained the majority. Following political and economic struggles beginning in 1994, Zafy was impeached 09/05/1996. The elections during this period were conducted under universal suffrage.¹⁵ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Since the democratic transition process, the country held competitive elections according to LIED. Until 2000 V-Dem's CEI scores ambiguous cleanliness. The following six years are labeled by not really cleanliness. Since 2007 the electoral cleanliness turned back to ambiguous. V-Dem's EF&FI indicates between 1993 and 2005 somewhat free and fair elections, except for 2001 where an ambiguous status regarding freedom and fairness of the election is indicated. Since 2006, EF&FI indicates that the freedom and fairness of the elections were ambiguous. As classified by FH for this regime period, the country is partly free with a score ranging from 6 to 7, which we place in the rather free category. Moreover, political liberties were absent for the entire time according to LIED. Whereas V-Dem's PCLI scores somewhat political liberties. FH classifies Madagascar in this period as being partially free (Puddington 2008: 431-434). Until 1997, based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. Since 1998, as per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was significantly constrained by institutional checks during this time. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate until 2002 and limited between 2003-2008, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited in 1992 and between 1997-2008 and robust between 1993-1996.

03/17/2009 End Electoral Hybrid Regime/Start Military Autocracy: After being reelected in 2006, Ravalomanana's government was dissolved in March 2009 in a militarily backed uprising led by Mayor of Antananarivo, Andry Rajoelina. The elected president handed power to the military, which in turn handed it to Rajoelina, who formed a High Transitional Authority of which he was the 'Transitional Head of State' (Lansford 2012, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 76).¹⁶ The HAT persistently postponed both the parliamentary and presidential elections. The constitutional referendum of 2010 implemented a fresh constitution, which prohibited individuals who hadn't resided in Madagascar for the prior six months from running for office. This effectively disqualified opposition figures living abroad, such as Ravalomanana, who had been residing in South Africa since his removal from power.¹⁷ Based on our observations, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Per FH's evaluation for this regime period, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. Furthermore, LIED still identifies political liberties as absent while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by as indicating that political liberties are somewhat present. According to the Polity5 indicator, during this period, the executive faced substantial limitations on decision-making power. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited in 2009 and absent until 2013, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent between 2009-2010 and limited until 2013.

12/20/2013 End Military Autocracy/Start Electoral Hybrid Regime: On this date, general elections were held in Madagascar, following a first round of presidential elections on 10/25/2013.¹⁸ The results were announced in January 2014. The winner and the next president was Hery Rajaonarimampianina. He was backed by Rajoelina, who led the 2009 coup and still was a very influential political figure. The EU's chief election observer, Maria Muniz de Urquiza, described the elections as „free, transparent and credible“, despite isolated

incidents of violence.¹⁹ In the second round of the 2018 presidential election, Andry Rajoelina emerged victorious over Marc Ravalomanana, securing 55.7% of the vote. Despite accusations of fraud, the High Constitutional Court (HCC) upheld the result. Additionally, the majority of regional and international election observers deemed the election to be largely transparent and fair.²⁰ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Since 2013 the elections are classified as competitive by LIED. V-Dem's CEI indicates not really clean election until 2018. Since 2019 ambiguous cleanliness is scored. Regarding the overall election conditions, they are classified as ambiguous until 2017. Since 2018 V-Dem's EF&FI indicates somewhat free and fair elections. Government corruption remains an ongoing issue, coupled with a lack of accountability. Press freedom is hindered by defamation and other restrictive laws. Authorities routinely deny permits for demonstrations and forcibly disband those that do occur.²¹ Classifications by other datasets are mixed. RoW classifies the regime as an electoral autocracy and BR as a civilian autocracy, BMR as a non-democracy until 2018 and a democracy afterward, LIED as an electoral democracy, and REIGN as a (presidential) democracy. The most recent presidential elections were held on 11/09/2023. Voter turnout was reported at a record low with 46.36%. The electoral process was marred by a boycott by ten opposition candidates and efforts, including violent measures by the military, to suppress opposition rallies and gatherings. According to V-Dem's CEI not real electoral cleanliness is given. V-Dem's EF&FI considers not real freedom and fairness for the election conditions. Corruption is pervasive and defamation laws impede a free media landscape. Civil liberties and freedoms are partly restricted. Per FH's scoring for 2014, the country is classified as partly free with a score of 8, which we categorize as rather not free. From 2015 onward the country is partly free with a score ranging from 6 to 7, which we place in the rather free category. In 2024 Madagascar's score declined to 8, which we interpret as rather not free. According to LIED political liberties were absent. However, V-Dem's PCLI indicates them as fully present ever since 2014. As per Polity5's categorization, the executive's authority was significantly constrained, nearing parity with other branches, placing it in the third intermediate category. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited and only moderate in 2018, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited and moderate between 2018-2019. In many parts of the country, institutions fail to enforce the rule of law effectively. While there is an active legislature, it does not function as an effective and independent check on executive power.²² On 05/29/2024 parliamentary elections were held and were subject to controversy and legal challenges. While the ruling coalition named Together with President Andry Rajoelina initially lost its majority, it ultimately secured 84 seats, enough for a slim majority, after the High Constitutional Court certified the results. The main opposition coalition, Firaisankina, won 22 seats, with independent candidates securing 50 seats. International observers noted reports of candidate intimidation, exclusionary administrative measures, and the unlawful closure of radio stations during the process. Despite these issues, the observers concluded that the elections were generally peaceful. The voter turnout was estimated at just under 48%.²³

Electoral Hybrid Regime as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional Sources (Metz 1994a)

Notes

¹ <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/MDG>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Madagascar

³ <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/MDG>

⁴ <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/french-madagascar-1946-1960/>,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loi-cadre_Defferre

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Madagascar

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37

- ⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriel_Ramanantsoa
- ⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1975_Malagasy_constitutional_referendum
- ⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Madagascar/The-Second-Republic>
- ¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Republic_of_Madagascar
- ¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Republic_of_Madagascar
- ¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Republic_of_Madagascar
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- ¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1992%E2%80%931993_Malagasy_presidential_election
- ¹⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/suffrage/>
- ¹⁶ <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-madagascar/>; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7948196.stm>
- ¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2013_Malagasy_general_election
- ¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2013_Malagasy_general_election
- ¹⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-24694421>
- ²⁰ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/madagascar/freedom-world/2022>
- ²¹ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/madagascar/freedom-world/2023>
- ²² <https://freedomhouse.org/country/madagascar/freedom-world/2024>
- ²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_Malagasy_parliamentary_election

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