

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

Country briefing – Madagascar

28 January 2013

1 Summary

President Andry Nirina Rajoelina (2009 – present) decides not to contest the May 2013 presidential election. His main opponent, former president Marc Ravalomanana, had already decided not to run in December 2012. Both candidates will back ‘stalking horses’ to revive their presidential bids in 2018. The economy continues to stagnate as the international community refuses to re-establish large-scale aid until a free and fair election is held. The May 2013 elections are not a certainty with continued talk of delaying the presidential election. The stagnating economy increases insecurity. The risk of a military coup remains low.

President Andry Nirina Rajoelina says he will not run in May 2013 presidential election...

President **Andry Nirina Rajoelina** (2009 – present) joins former President **Marc Ravalomanana** (2002 – 2009) in agreeing not to contest the presidential election slated for May 2013.

Madagascar’s current political crisis started in March 2009 when **Rajoelina** (a.k.a **Andry TGV**¹) ousted Ravalomanana and his ruling **Tiako-y-Madagasikara**² (**TIM**) party through mass public protests and military backing. Rajoelina was a former disc jockey, printing entrepreneur, television and radio station owner and then mayor of Antananarivo. After coming to power, he established the **Haute Autorité de Transition (HAT)** to run the country until the organisation of elections. Since 2009, the international community, through the **Southern African Development Community (SADC)**, has led the mediation process called ‘the roadmap’ between Rajoelina and Ravalomanana.

Rajoelina’s bottom line is that he does not want Ravalomanana to return. Rajoelina fears his return because Ravalomanana still has a strong popular support base - 50%-60%³- in Antananarivo.

Rajoelina is popular in Antananarivo especially amongst the middle class, youth and students⁴, but the

¹ 'train à grande vitesse'

² Translation: I Love Madagascar

³ Multiple sources: Source, business person, Antananarivo; Source, locally engaged western embassy official, Antananarivo.

⁴ Source, political analyst, Antananarivo.

average Malagasy has had enough time to evaluate Rajoelina's presidency and is dissatisfied with his government's economic performance. If a free and fair election were held Rajoelina would lose, *"If an election was held today Rajoelina would not win ... Ravalomanana would not win the first ballot but would make it to the second round and win⁵".* Hence Rajoelina is no hurry to fulfil HAT's obligations in the roadmap and to fight an election he knows he will not win⁶.

The SADC has done a good job in keeping the general framework of the roadmap process on track – *"It has kept the process going despite delays and bickering⁷".* Fed up with the political stalemate, the SADC pushed for a 'neither nor situation' – a presidential election with neither Rajoelina nor Ravalomanana.

"... politically you cannot have an election in Madagascar with one and not the other. If you allow Rajoelina to run and not Ravalomanana, this would show acceptance of his 2009 coup and ... the Malagasy people and the international community agree on this point⁸".

Due to international pressure Ravalomanana decided not to run in the upcoming presidential election in May 2013. On 21 January, under the same international pressure, Rajoelina also publicly stated he would not run. However, Rajoelina did state he wants to run for president in 2018.

Rajoelina and Ravalomanana still plan to influence presidential candidates...

Without any candidate charismatic enough to alter the current political landscape⁹, a third candidate can emerge only if he or she has the backing of Rajoelina or Ravalomanana. Hence, Rajoelina and Ravalomanana will try and put forth a stalking-horse or *homme de paille*, likely to come from their respective political parties – TGV and TIM¹⁰. The parties have not chosen their candidates but

"There is a fight inside TGV. The question is, if a TGV or Rajoelina aligned candidate wins the election, is he going to be a figurehead with Rajoelina calling the shots or will he become a power centre in himself? Will he protect Rajoelina's corrupt businessmen and political cronies? Rajoelina's cronies are worried ... they are nervous, they are very corrupt and they are not included in the amnesty deal and want to maintain political protection. Who will give them cover? Therefore TGV has to pick a candidate who is electable in 2013 but not in 2018 when Rajoelina wants to return to the presidency¹¹".

⁵ Source, senior civil society leader, Antananarivo.

⁶ Source, political analyst, Antananarivo.

⁷ Source, Western diplomat, Mauritius.

⁸ Source, political analyst, Antananarivo.

⁹ Source, senior western diplomat, Antananarivo.

¹⁰ Source, political analyst, Antananarivo.

¹¹ Source, political analyst, Antananarivo.

The political impasse between Rajoelina and Ravalomanana will remain in place regardless of the 2013 election outcome - *"The fight between Rajoelina and Ravalomanana is just delayed until 2018¹²".*

The economy continues to stagnate...

The government has revenue from mining production and oil exploration but remains dependent on the flow of aid to revive its ailing economy. The economy will only get worse if the international community does not release aid¹³. Some international aid is delivered through non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which means some projects are still functioning but there is no direct budget support for government operations. Rajoelina has managed the economy poorly and the average Malagasy is dissatisfied with his government.

"... Rajoelina does not have strategic vision ... the economy is going down and continues to go down ... people are dissatisfied and they know, after he has been in power for a few years, that he cannot solve the situation or make it better. People now want Ravalomanana back. He was corrupt but at least with him they were eating and had jobs and he had strategic vision ... Madagascar was moving slowly but in an upward direction. Under Rajoelina things are just getting worse. The economy is stagnating ... something has to be done¹⁴".

The international community will only re-open the flow of aid after a free, fair and credible election is held¹⁵.

Security declines as the economy continues to stagnate...

Malagasy people are not violent, but due to the deteriorating economic conditions security has deteriorated. Security in Madagascar was only

"... a small issue years ago ... there has been a major change ... Now there are reports of foreigners being attacked, murdered or robbed ... areas of Antananarivo that used to be safe for foreigners to walk around in at night are now no-go areas¹⁶".

The risk of a military coup remains low...

Historically, Madagascar's military stayed out of politics, but a small portion backed Rajoelina's 2009 coup¹⁷. The average Malagasy has lost respect for the military after its involvement in Rajoelina's coup. However at present the military does not want power,

¹² Source, political analyst, Antananarivo.

¹³ Source, political analyst, Antananarivo.

¹⁴ Source, senior civil society leader, Antananarivo.

¹⁵ Source, political analyst, Antananarivo.

¹⁶ Source, former senior journalist, Madagascar.

¹⁷ Source, former senior journalist, Madagascar.

“The military will not take casualties unless they face more casualties by standing on the sidelines ... Shortly before the 2009 coup that brought down Ravalomanana, he appointed a woman as defence minister. This was unacceptable to the military. When the military overthrew Ravalomanana they held power for just one hour before handing it over to Rajoelina. The coup was led by one battalion of 600 men out of an army of 16,000 officers. No one said no. The CapSat regiment - an administration battalion highly placed under the Ratsiraka government - was sidelined when Ravalomanana came into power. They were isolated and their headquarters moved outside of Antananarivo, near the armoury. When the coup happened they had access to all the armoured vehicles – the only six in the country and played a decisive role in the coup...¹⁸”.

The immediate risk of another military coup is low. The military is not a cohesive unit¹⁹. The sidelining of the military in the political fold of the SADC roadmap is another positive step, and signals the confidence of donors and international mediators that there is little support for another coup within the army hierarchy.

“If there is going to be a military coup it will be from junior officers or non-commissioned officers, who are upset with the general getting rich and taking advantage of the political crisis to enrich themselves”.

The military will “sit and wait” to see who comes out on top as most of the officers are “related to politicians and do not want to fight their own people²⁰”. They prefer to adhere to Madagascar’s tradition of consensus building. Therefore, the risk of the military as a catalyst for a civil conflict is also low²¹.

2 Implications

Rajoelina and Ravalomanana’s decision not to take part in the upcoming presidential election is an encouraging step towards the end of Madagascar political crisis, but it will not end their political ‘fight’. The May 2013 elections are not a certainty yet. There is continued talk of delaying the presidential election and Rajoelina has suggested holding legislative elections ahead of the presidential election as “this will keep him in power longer and allow him to influence the outcome of the legislative elections²²”.

Madagascar’s current political crisis is not over and requires cautious stakeholder engagement and strict impartiality during the process towards the May 2013 elections. Investors are encouraged to wait for a permanent, legitimate government before entering negotiations with the government. HAT

¹⁸ Source, political analyst, Antananarivo.

¹⁹ Source, political analyst, Antananarivo.

²⁰ Source, political analyst, Antananarivo.

²¹ Source, political analyst, Antananarivo.

²² Source, political analyst, Antananarivo.

is not recognised internationally therefore contracts and agreements signed with HAT are not recognised as secure.

3 Key events chronologies

25 Jan 2013 Washington (United States) *l'Express*. The **United States (US)** indicates it will re-establish aid links once free and fair democratic elections are held;

24 Jan 2013 Antananarivo (Madagascar) *Xinhua*. New French ambassador **Francois Goldblatt** presents credentials;

21 Jan 2013 Taomasina (Madagascar) *Xinhua*. President Andry Nirina Rajoelina (2009 – present) says he will run for president in 2018;

19 Jan 2013 Brussels (Belgium) *AP*. The **European Union (EU)** calls on Madagascar to expedite election preparations;

16 Jan 2013 Antananarivo (Madagascar) *AP*. Rajoelina says he will not run in the next presidential election. His pledge follows a promise from former president **Marc Ravalomanana** (2002 – 2009) not to run;

14 Jan 2013 Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) *Tanzania Daily News*. The **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** politics, defense and security troika meets to discuss Madagascar's political crisis;

11 Jan 2013 Fort Dauphin (Madagascar) *AFP*. **Rio Tinto** threatens to abandon Madagascar as hundreds of protesters blocked its mine compound entrance, trapping nearly 200 staff inside, including the CEO, the company said;

10 Jan 2013 Washington (United States) *SNS*. The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** board is briefed on the economic situation in Madagascar;

3 Jan 2013 Antananarivo (Madagascar) *l'Express*. 8 to 10% of eligible voters are not registered and civil society accuses the government of a slow response to the issues;

3.1 Forward looking

Early 2013. The start of the lean rice season in Madagascar;

8 Mar 2013. Deadline to submit presidential nominations to the electoral commission;

1 May 2013. Labour day;

8 May 2013. Presidential election.

3 Jul 2013. Legislative elections and second presidential election round if needed;

26 Jul 2013. Independence day;

End of 2013. Madagascar Oil expected to make a final investment decision on the development of its **Tsimiroro** field²³.

²³ www.reuters.com

