Strong Support for Weak Performance: State and Donors' Mutual Dependence in Madagascar

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Abstract

Although the Malagasy state's ability to meet its developmental and environmental conservation goals has remained weak since independence, Madagascar has never suffered a shortage of foreign assistance. What explains such weak development and environmental performance despite steady inflows of foreign aid? By the same token, why has aid continually come to Madagascar despite the state's weak performance?

Building on the scholarship linking foreign aid and development, I examine how the Malagasy state has adapted its development rhetoric since independence, capitalizing on the country's biodiversity starting in the mid-1980s, to show that maximizing foreign aid rather than strengthening the state's development capacity per se has been the state's *de facto* primary goal. I further argue that without foreign aid both the state and donor organizations would cease to thrive as institutions. Given the similarities between Madagascar and other aid-recipient countries, this analysis should prove useful beyond the Malagasy case.

Introduction

The world that we live in is a world in which over a billion humans live in extreme poverty. People living on US$1 a day are concentrated in East Asia, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Why are so many people poor? According to Jeffrey Sachs (2005), poor countries are in this situation due to persistent low rates of GDP growth over the last two centuries. By contrast, currently rich countries sustained long-term growth in GDP per capita over the same period. As a consequence, in 2005 the gap between the rich and the poor is wider than ever. To change this situation, argues this economist, it is imperative that richer countries give larger shares of their annual output to countries that have yet to achieve a minimum rate of GDP growth and jump start their economies. This, Sachs argues, is the key to ending poverty.

The present analysis seeks to contribute to the debate about why the sub-continent's development has stalled. The literature on this subject is vast, as is the continent, in fact, with explanations ranging from weak states, the failure to invest in Sub-Saharan Africa, corrupt African and foreign elites, and ineffective foreign aid. Exploring this vast literature is beyond the scope of this paper, and so the question it raises is limited to the reasons for poor development performance despite steady inflows of foreign aid. Likewise, the analysis limits itself to a single case, Madagascar, a country that ranks among the poorest of African countries despite repeated state claims and actual attempts to devise the types of policies that would foster economic growth, conserve the natural resources on which the country's economy depends, and improve people's standards of living.

Judging from Madagascar's present situation of widespread poverty and environmental degradation, one must conclude that the state's ability to meet its developmental and environmental goals has remained weak since independence: economic growth has been slow and nature conservation, especially deforestation, remains a challenge. Yet, during the same period (1960 to present), Madagascar enjoyed a steady inflow of foreign aid. The question thus is: What explains such weak performance despite a steady inflow of foreign aid? Just as importantly, why has aid continually come to Madagascar despite the state's weak performance?

The literature linking development assistance and development outcomes offers several plausible explanations as to why foreign assistance does not necessarily produce development. A few works from the field of African politics are illuminating. To explain Sub-Saharan Africa's long-lasting economic crisis, van de Walle (2001) points to the emergence of an international aid regime in which a myriad of institutions has effectively slowed down the process of policy reform, helped sustain ineffective policies, and served to sustain and even protect African leaders' neopatrimonial tendencies in decision making (p. 189). In other words, foreign assistance has inadvertently blocked African efforts to enact the types of reforms necessary to affect change in ways favorable to Africans' well being.

Reno (1998) argues that the World Bank and the IMF's liberal reforms were hijacked by political actors who served their personal interests (rather than those of their nations) by exploiting their state's weakness, thereby rendering warlord politics possible and profitable, in some cases, to specific individuals. In the same vein as van de Walle, Reno asserts that in such a context "reform that emphasizes economic and political liberalization further undermines weak state rulers' incentives to pursue conventional strategies for maximizing power through generating economic growth and, hence, state revenue" (p. 4). Thus, foreign assistance in the form of liberalization strips African leaders of the incentive to build their respective state's development capacities.

In her analysis of why foreign aid has been ineffective in Africa, Lancaster (1999) focuses on deficiencies proper to donors in their attempt to spur economic development. In particular, she notes that aid-funded projects and programs have been unsustainable because aid has been allocated less for development purposes than for diplomatic and commercial ones; that is, aid has effectively been a tool of statecraft. Aid agencies have simply lacked the capacity to undertake the kind of development intervention that they have attempted due to lack of technical experience, inappropriate managerial styles, poor understanding of African local contexts, and bureaucratic and political imperatives pushing them to spend monies regardless of recipient countries' readiness; finally, Lancaster asserts that these problems are further compounded by poor coordination among various donor agencies. Consequently, aid has had detrimental effects on behavioral, institutional, and political changes in Africa.

Most recently, Gibson et al. (2005) also explore "what is wrong with development aid." Presenting development as a collective action problem, the authors use the tools of institutional analysis and the IAD framework[1] to construct a model of foreign aid linking development aid institutions (understood as rules of interactions), donor and recipient incentives, and development outcomes. According to this analysis, the structure of the "development game" constrains donors' and recipients' behavior, resulting in sub-optimal outcomes that end up hindering (instead of enhancing) well-being for all. In game theoretic terms, the dilemma lies in Samaritans being better-off extending aid regardless of recipients' efforts and recipients aware that a low level of effort will guarantee aid given the structure of these actors' interaction (pp. 38-39).

My analysis builds on this literature and draws, in particular, on Gibson et al.'s model that includes key actors (donors and the Malagasy state), their interests, their incentives for giving and receiving aid, and Madagascar's poor development outcome. The arena it presents is Madagascar's environmental sector, which has experienced a veritable explosion in aid activity since the mid-1980s due to the country's exceptional biodiversity. My argument is that the best

[1] IAD stands for Institutional Analysis and Development.

way to understand the apparent disjuncture between aid inflows and development performance is by looking at foreign aid as a rentier's resource in an aid regime that locks the Malagasy state and foreign donors in a situation of mutual dependence. On the one hand, the Malagasy state's *de facto* primary goal is reduced to maximizing aid inflows without producing development; on the other hand, donors capitalize on the state's weak conservation performance to maintain opportunities to stay in business.

This paper traces the evolution of the Malagasy state's development ideology, goals, and strategies since independence in 1960, showing that, in the end, almost five decades of experimentation have not produced decent living standards for most Malagasy people. The next section examines the ways in which successive leaders have skillfully diversified sources of funding to maximize aid inflows and succeeded in doing just that. To illustrate the politics behind development assistance the fourth section focuses on the explosion of the country's environmental sector at the onset of liberal reforms in the 1980s. The final section focuses the analysis on how the politics of biodiversity conservation in Madagascar have produced a situation of mutual dependence in which both the state and foreign donors are locked in survival politics that preclude conservation and, by extension, development.

Madagascar's Political Economy Since 1960

One can distinguish four political economic periods since 1960. Although Madagascar gained its independence from France in June 1960, the French influence in the country's political, economic, and educational affairs remained intact until 1972 (Brown 1995). During that period, and as was the case throughout the rest of newly independent Africa, the first president of Madagascar, Philibert Tsiranana, made economic development a priority. Thanks partly to a substantial inflow of multilateral and bilateral aid funds, the country's economic performance was good. As Madagascar's privileged trade partner, France provided close to 85 percent of the bilateral aid, which Tsiranana accepted given in his strong dislike of communism. The Center for Economic Research on Africa finds that, from 1961 to 1971, the Malagasy economy expanded in both the agricultural (food crops, industrial crops, and export crops) and industrial (mining, food processing, clothing and footwear) sectors (CERAF 1990). According to Brown (1995), "during the first decade of independence percentage growth in GNP comfortably exceeded the growth in population […] and most other economic indicators showed a steady improvement" (305).[2]

However, due to France's continuing strong presence on the island, students in the capital city called for the effective end of colonial rule and the beginning of true independence during widespread popular protests that started in May 1972. As a result, the first republic fell and a military provisional government took power. In response to popular pressure and under General Gabriel Ramantsoa's leadership, the country began to embark on a massive program of *malgachisation*, which called for increasing the state's role in the country's economic development and progressively discouraging private, especially foreign, initiative. In addition, French military and naval bases were closed, and Madagascar withdrew for the "zone franc" in May1973. This program of *malgachisation* was politically and economically motivated in that the government also realized that "the policy of continuity had run its useful life," with economic and other benefits not as substantial as had been hoped for: as of 1972, the economy ceased to expand and in 1973, the country experienced economic decline (CERAF 1990: 21-22).

After a short period of political instability that spanned from 1974 to 1975, Madagascar entered a long chapter of its history under the rule of Didier Ratsiraka, a French-educated naval officer who began a Marxist-style socialist revolution in 1975 (Schraeder 2004). Ratsiraka's scientific socialism, whose principles were spelled out in his *Boky Mena* (otherwise known as the Little Red Book), called for "genuine popular democracy with decisions taken at the village level (…) and then at the higher levels of district, province and finally nation by representatives chosen by those elected at the lower levels." Despite this populist discourse, in reality village communities merely carried out the socialist policies decided by the central government (Brown 1995: 330).

To be sure, Ratsiraka's economic policies were Marxist and devised at the national level. His first and second economic plans (1978-1980 and 1982-1987) were based on the goal of self-reliance, with agriculture as the basis of the economy and industry the engine of development (CERAF 1990: 23). By 1976, his government embarked on aggressive nationalization programs of banks, insurance companies, utility companies, and large trading companies. In 1977, an Investment Plan was approved which called for the doubling of GNP over a twenty-year period,

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[2] It should be noted, however, that while standards of living improved for urban dwellers, they declined for peasants. This is significant given that about two-thirds of the population live in rural areas.

with financing from state investment and, in perfect contradiction with the goal of self-reliance, borrowing from outsiders. Within three years of launching this Investment Plan, Madagascar's economy was in ruins, with a budget deficit running over 40 percent and exports covering less that 50 percent of imports. Foreign debt skyrocketed to over US $1 billion in 1981 (Brown 1995: 334).[3]

State policies for the 1976-1985 decade were, to say the least, detrimental to the country's economy. As a result of poor economic performance, Madagascar's debt crisis came to a crunch by 1982. In light of this, the state turned to foreign lending institutions to help it out of its economic crisis, and economic policies were designed not to foster economic growth but, rather, to service the country's foreign debt. True to neo-liberal principles, the IMF instituted austerity, stabilization, and recovery policies, which translated into a significant drop in the living standards of the populace. Between 1980 and 1987, GNI per capita fell by some 25 percent and inflation rates hovered around 15 to 20 percent (Brown 1995: 340). Store shelves were empty, the black market was fully developed which benefited some, while the majority of people became more and more desperate to find rice, the national food staple. Shuttleworth (1989) reports a sharp decline in per capita rice availability beginning in 1981, with a downward trend until 1985. Under intense domestic and international pressure, Ratsiraka abandoned socialist economics and slowly instituted economic reforms (Rajcoomar 1991). Politically, Ratsiraka found himself re-instituting multi-party politics. By 1992, democratic reform was in full swing and a new constitution was adopted, effectively putting an end to the socialist era.

The period of liberal reforms and structural adjustments spanned the next two decades (1982-2001), and the impact of reforms on the country's GDP growth rate was positive. Madagascar's annual GDP growth rate went from 1.4% for the 1982-87 period to 3.5% for the 1987-90 period. This rate dropped due to the 1990-1991 political crisis that officially brought an end to Ratsiraka's authoritarian rule. Beginning in 1997 Madagascar experienced five years of solid economic growth and accelerating foreign investment (see Table 1). However, years of political oppression and economic deprivation that resulted in a legitimacy crisis for Ratsiraka afforded his political opponents the opportunity to organize and successfully pressure him to resign from the presidency. In 1993 a new leader by the name of Albert Zafy emerged, the Third Republic was born, and a period of intense political turbulences began. Deemed largely

[3] This figure was four times smaller in 1978.

incompetent, Zafy was impeached three years after his election to the presidency, and a transition government was put in place until a new presidential election was organized in 1996.[4]

Table 1: Foreign Direct Investments Inflows 1996-2001 (US$ Million)

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
10	14	16	58	70	108

Source: OECD

This election brought Ratsiraka back to power.[5] As he had done in the past, Ratsiraka promptly consolidated his power by changing the constitution (in 1998) with the sole aim of strengthening the executive and ensuring that his party, AREMA, controlled the legislature. In contrast to politics, in terms of economic policy this decade was a mere continuation of the neo-liberal period of debt servicing, nonetheless with some economic growth, a drop in the inflation rate, and a marked increase in pluralism and direct foreign investments (Thomas 1998).

The final period began with the international recognition of Marc Ravalomanana as Madagascar's president in 2002. A self-made businessman with close ties with the Anglophone world, Ravalomanana came to power by building the country's first agro-industrial complex.[6] The personal fortune he amassed allowed him to enter politics by becoming Mayor of Antananarivo in 1999 and then challenging Ratsiraka in the 2001 presidential race. Defeating a dictator who dominated politics for 27 years was no small feat and, indeed, represented a huge victory for democracy in Madagascar. However, the political battle that lasted six months was taxing on the country's economy which, despite great strides in growth from in from the 1990s into 2001 (Table 2), was still fragile. Political instability scared investors and tourists away, ruined the island's infrastructure (so-called federalists blew up bridges), and considerably weakened the EPZ companies which had greatly contributed to hikes in the country's GDP. According to the African Development Bank, real GDP growth dipped from 6% in 2001 to about -12% in 2002. "This situation worsened the poverty from which 80 per cent of Malagasy now suffer, compared with 71 per cent in 2001" (AfDB/OECD 2005).

[4] Domestically, Zafy sought to protect himself from anyone challenging his authority (including his PM); he also seemed ineffective in negotiating conditionalities with the IMF and the World Bank.
[5] From 1993 to 1996, Ratsiraka lived in exile in France.
[6] Ravalomanana's company, TIKO S.A., produces dairy and oil products as well as soft drinks. It also has a wholesale distribution system.

Table 2: Real GDP Growth Rates 1995-2001

1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
1.7	2.1	3.7	3.9	4.7	4.8	6.7

Source: OECD

The nearly collapsed economy did not deter Ravalomanana's administration, however. Once the US and France recognized Ravalomanana's victory in the 2001 election in June 2002, the political situation stabilized and the new government wasted no time instituting market and political reforms with encouragement from international financial institutions (the IMF and the World Bank) and the rest of the donor community.

Since coming to power, Ravalomanana has had one principal objective: poverty alleviation by way of rapid development. To achieve this goal, his government's policies have centered on good governance, broad-based economic growth, and social welfare. As mentioned earlier, democratic gains were achieved at great economic costs. One of the most devastating developments that took place during the post-electoral crisis was the destruction of infrastructure critical to the free flow of people and goods: proponents of federalism blew up bridges were and barricaded main roads in order to "choke" the capital city.[7] As a consequence, Madagascar's economy was in disarray, businesses had to shut down, and many foreign investors, including those working in the EPZ, had not choice but to leave the country.

Understanding the need to stimulate the economy and bring investors back, Ravalomana's government concentrated its initial efforts on infrastructure repairs, fiscal reforms (to encourage capital imports and domestic production), and fighting corruption. These efforts were not in vain, as the economy rebounded in 2003, with an increase in GDP from -12.7% in 2002 to 9.6% in 2003 and a sharp drop in the inflation rate from 15.2% to 2.9% for the same years, respectively (Repoblikan'i Madagasikara 2003: 4). In 2004, the country maintained a growth rate of 5.3% despite the sharp depreciation of its currency, which lost 50% of its value to the euro, two major cyclones, and a sharp increase in the price of oil on the international market (OECD 2005). As a result, the inflation rate went back up to 8% in 2003 and 14% in 2004 (*Jeune Afrique* 2005: 251-252).

[7] For a day-by-day account of how the post-electoral crisis unfolded see Ymal, Dan. 2002. *L'Eveil d'un Peuple*.

Development Performance

The fact that Ravalomanana's government has had to make poverty reduction its main goal is, arguably, the most powerful indicator that almost five decades of development experiments have done little to provide Malagasy citizens with decent living standards. For a few key development indicators, the country has not registered much progress. For instance, in terms of per capita income, the country's World Bank ranking declined from thirtieth poorest country in the world in 1979 (per capita income of US$290) to the tenth poorest country in 1991 (per capita GNP of US$210). As of 2005, Madagascar had barely reached a per annum per capita income of $300. *Jeune Afrique* reported the following for 2004: Per capita income: US$290; Per capita income PPA: $740/ha; Inflation Rate: 8%; HDI: 0.469 (Ranking: 150/177); Infant mortality: 8.4%; Life expectancy: 55 years; Literacy rate: 67.3%; School enrolment rate: 45%; Population Growth Rate: 2.74%; Rural population: 73.7%.

A report produced for Afrobarometer in October 2005 shows that Madagascar's population is about equally divided on the status of the country's economy: 31 percent think that the situation is good; 35 percent think it is bad; and 32 percent think it is neither good nor bad. However, only 25 percent of the population considers their living standards satisfactory. Overall, Malagasy people wish to see the government adopt policies that would create good jobs (to raise income); slow down inflation; reduce the gap between rich and poor; and alleviate food shortages. In terms of the main problems confronting urban and rural populations on a regular basis, food shortages; poor infrastructure; and health are the main preoccupations for the majority (Razafindrakoto et al. 2005).

Aid Flows since "Independence"

Meanwhile, Madagascar never suffered a shortage of bilateral and multilateral development assistance. This was true in the two decades after independence and, as Table 3 shows, it remained true subsequently.

Table 3: Overseas Development Assistance (All Donors; US$ million)

1979	1982	1985	1988	1991	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
133	264	200	329	557	357	834	481	359	322	354	373	539	1236

Source: OECD 1991; 2003; 2005

Bilateral aid from the West amounted to US$36.3 million in 1976, i.e., one year after Ratsiraka took power. As Table 4 shows, this aid increased steadily until 1991, dropped during the 1992-1997 period because of political uncertainty, picked up again when Ratsiraka came back to power in 1997, dropped and stabilized until the country's political direction became clear with Ravalomanana's ascent into power. By the time Ravalomanana announced clear policy goals which were obviously aligned with Western interests, bilateral aid picked up (in 2003) and reached unprecedented levels in 2004, with close to US$668 million. This is no small feat considering that aid to Sub-Saharan Africa declined steadily in the 1990s (Lancaster and Wangwe 2000).[8]

Table 4: Bilateral Assistance, Selected Years 1979-2004 (US$ million)

	1979	1982	1985	1988	1991	2001	2002	2003	2004
Total Bilateral	78.3	168.1	105.4	217.6	365.5	149.6	123.1	242.5	667.7
France (percentage of total)	38.4 (49%)	96.4 (57.3%)	47.4 (45%)	108.5 (50%)	157.0 (43%)	-	-	99 (40.8%)	319 (47.7%)
Japan	21.0 (26.8%)	28.3 (16.8%)	11.6 (11%)	42.8 (19.6%)	56.8 (15.5%)	-	-	10 (4.1%)	20 (3%)
United States	3.0 (3.8%)	15.0 (8.9%)	17.0 (16%)	13.0 (6%)	71.0 (19%)	-	-	42 (17.3%)	42 (6.3%)

Source: OECD *Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Developing Countries*, Paris: 1991; OECD 2004; OECD 2005.

During the first decade of independent rule, France signed a series of agreements and conventions with the government of Madagascar to protect the investments it had made during colonization and secure its access to military and naval bases in the Indian Ocean. Tsiranana treated France as a privileged partner for trade, security, and culture. But because his aversion to

[8] For reasons for such a decrease in aid flows in the 1990, see pp. 28-26.

communism he also expanded the country’s foreign partners to include other western countries, thereby creating other sources of bilateral aid.

When Ratsiraka came to power in 1975, he developed ties with communist countries. The Soviet Union became a new source of development assistance (military, education, and agriculture), as did China (infrastructure), Cuba (education), and North Korea (agriculture and irrigation). However, despite strengthened ties with these countries, Ratsiraka extracted less than 1 percent of all bilateral assistance from the communist camp from 1977 to 1980. The severe economic decline and external debt that his policies produced gave him little choice but to maintain strong economic ties with the West. In the 1980s, he became so adept at playing off donors that, against the background of red rhetoric and openly anti-Western stance in international relations, he managed to get France to increase its assistance from US$38.4 million in 1979 to US$96.4 million in 1982.[9]

If Ratsiraka did well in attracting foreign aid Ravalomanana has done even better. In July 2002, i.e., once the international community recognized him as Madagascar’s president, the World Bank organized a conference in Paris called “Friends of Madagascar.” During this conference the international community pledged US$ 1 billion in assistance over five years. In October 2004, Madagascar qualified for the cancellation of half of its debt (some US$2 billion) under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. In the summer of 2005, the G8 approved the cancellation of Madagascar’s entire external debt (Midi Madagascar 2005). Later that same year, Madagascar became the first recipient of the new US foreign aid program called The Millennium Challenge Account in the form of a four-year grant in the amount of US$110 million (Wall Street Journal 4/5/2005).

Several factors explain why Ravalomanana has been a magnet for foreign support. First, between 2000 and 2004 the country fully completed the HIPC process. When the GOM produced its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in 2000 it demonstrated to IFIs the government’s understanding of the reasons for poverty and its willingness to alleviate it. Most importantly, it became obvious that Madagascar could not combat poverty without substantial relief of its debt burden.[10] In 2002 Madagascar reached the “decision point” for debt relief. In 2004, having reached the “completion point,” i.e., the country became eligible for debt

[9] Lancaster refers to such tactics as “switching” (1999: 33).
[10] The document is available at http://www.imf.org/external/NP/prsp/2000/mdg/01/INDEX.HTM.

forgiveness. Because debt forgiveness is counted as foreign assistance, aid figures jumped at that point.

In addition to the country's successful completion of the HIPC process, Ravalomanana strengthened the country's ties with the Anglophone world, which had until then operated in France's shadow.[11] In trying to attract as many foreign investors as possible, he diversified the country's sources of assistance, bringing in the US and Germany in particular. Within the context of the PRSP Ravalomanana's government has, in fact, demonstrated its willingness to work with a variety of local and foreign (and local) actors to combat poverty by skillfully integrating a wide variety of players in implementation of the country's development strategy. So much so that when French president Jacques Chirac visited the island in 2005, he felt compelled to declare publicly that France "need not to be treated differently than other countries and that French businesses do not fear competition in Madagascar" (http://www.madanight.com).

Sources of Foreign Assistance

Which countries have assisted Madagascar? For bilateral and multilateral assistance France has been Madagascar's leading donor since 1960. However, Table 4 shows that France's contribution went from about 85 percent of total bilateral aid in the 1960s to around 50 percent (on average) from 1979 to 2004. Malagasy leaders' inclusion of other foreign partners is an important explanation for this decline in France's share of foreign aid. These other partners include Germany, Italy, Japan, Switzerland, and the United States. Of those, the evolution of contributions from Japan and the US are worth noting. Since 1979 Japan's contribution decreased steadily, going from 27 percent in 1979 to 3 percent in 2004. As for the US, although the contributions follow an erratic pattern, they increased steadily, peaked in 1991 (at the height of liberal reforms), and exceeded Japan's thereafter. France has also been a leading figure in the multilateral assistance delivered through international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the European Union. Between 1985 and 1990, Madagascar received nearly US$1,335 million of multilateral assistance, half of which France provided. Past that time, as with bilateral assistance, the United States, Japan, and Germany have contributed, albeit at

[11] Unlike his predecessors, Ravalomanana was not educated in the French tradition. In fact, his French is so poor that he prefers addressing foreign audiences in English. His behavior was consequently labeled anti-French.

lower levels than France. Table 5 shows that, like bilateral assistance, multilateral assistance increased steadily over time.

Table 5: Multilateral Assistance for Selected Years, 1979-2004 (US$ million)

	1979	1982	1985	1988	1991	2003	2004
Total Multilateral Assistance	40.9	80.6	95.1	108.9	191.4	296.5	568.3

As previously mentioned, the IMF and the World Bank became involved in Madagascar when the country, like many of its African counterparts, faced tremendous economic problems in the 1980s. Speaking about Sub-Saharan Africa in general, Callaghy (1988) describes Madagascar's situation well:

> The already weak states of Africa were confronted with decreasing or negative growth rates, stagnant and falling *per capita* income figures, and severe balance of payments and debt service problems. These difficulties were often exacerbated by inappropriate policies, unproductive investment, deteriorating infrastructure and productive capacity, lax implementation, limited administrative and technical capabilities, the rise of *magendo* (parallel economies) and corruption (p. 11, author's emphasis).

As an indicator of increased IFI participation, between 1979 and 1986, Madagascar held the record number of IMF assistance programs (Callaghy 1988:14). It also benefited from World Bank loans for development projects. So, as France's aid contributions decreased over time, those of international financial institutions increased steadily. The main explanation for this is that the post-cold war international environment was particularly propitious for the imposition of neo-liberal policies, of which structural adjustment programs (SAPs) are the best example. As international institutions' presence became stronger, Anglosaxons' interests began to influence the country's policy agenda. The explosion of Madagascar's environmental sector illustrates this shift in foreign influence from French quasi-monopoly to multi-donor power. Biodiversity conservation is at the top of the most influential donors' agenda.

The Political Economy of Aid in Madagascar's Environmental Sector

Ravalomanana observers have noted that he replaced the phrase "rapid development" with "sustainable development" in his policy speeches five months into his tenure (interview with Rakotoarijaona 2005). Although this change could easily go unnoticed, it is a critical one because it is symptomatic of the leadership's ability to adapt policy rhetoric to the interests, not of his constituents, but of those foreign donors and a Malagasy minority that benefits from their assistance. This minority is what Azam (2002) refers to as the "winning coalition" that profit from the triangular predation game in which an elite few capture the rents of, in this case, foreign aid (6). This section discusses how resource capture and redistribution, more so than saving biodiversity, is at the heart of resource conservation politics in Madagascar.

Madagascar has an environmental problem and deforestation has preoccupied its state since the 18th century. Since King Andrianampoinimerina united the kingdoms and societies of Madagascar into a relatively unified political system in the late 1700s, the state has presented itself as a fierce guardian of the forests (Harper 2002). To this day, all forests are considered the sole property of the state (*domaine de l'Etat*), which gives the state, at least in principle, the authority to decide how best to exploit and protect them. As the ultimate guarantor of sustainable forest management, the state has long exercised tremendous power over forest users, ranging from forest-dependent communities to *exploitants forestiers*.[12] From the standpoint of the state, farmers have threatened the nation's interests with their "irrational" exploitation of natural resources, whereas *exploitants forestiers* were seen as crucial instruments of economic development (Rabesahala Horning 2005:152).

Blaming farmers' practices has resulted in, and in some ways justified, repressive behavior on the part of the state from the days of the monarchy to the present (Jarosz 1996), but especially during colonial rule (Bertrand et al. 2006). There is little doubt that the practice of slash-and-burn agriculture, coupled with increasing demographic pressures in rural areas, has come at the expense of forest and, therefore, biodiversity conservation. However, given the state's failure to provide economic alternatives for these farmers to secure their livelihoods, it seems facile to attribute deforestation to farmers' actions. An institutional approach to the issue

[12] This French term is used to refer to logging companies of all sizes.

would suggest that poorly enforced rules that serve the interests of decision-makers may provide an alternative explanation for this phenomenon (Rabesahala Horning 2004).

Since colonization protected areas have constituted the most explicit attempt at keeping farmers out of forests. Their protection is governed by forest legislation that was enacted when such areas were first established in the late 1920s and early 1930s, shortly after the French created the forest service in 1896 and passed legislation in the early 1900s.[13] So long as the colonial state was willing and able to enforce its own laws, forest legislation was, arguably, effective in terrifying farmers into compliance. Upon independence, in 1960, the Malagasy state preserved the system of protected areas that the French had developed and adopted the forestry legislation that governed their protection. When the state espoused Marxist-Leninist ideals in 1975, Ratsiraka's populist discourse provoked a mad rush for valuable forest resources, which was a disaster at the national scale. Despite the massive deforestation that resulted, the existing network of protected areas was maintained.

It was in the context of this scramble for forest resources that the severely impoverished Malagasy state opened up to the international donor community in the mid-1980s. It was not long before foreigners began praising the value of the island's biodiversity and, mimicking the Malagasy state, identified farmers' practices as the main force behind deforestation. Suddenly the state assumed the role of guardian of Madagascar's forests (against rural farmers) with financial and technical support from the international community. Liberalization presented a unique opportunity for conservationists to access the island's biodiversity capital. The Malagasy state, for its part, saw environmental conservation as an opportunity to attract foreign aid, treating biodiversity as a commodity, playing to the interests (and sentiments) of the Anglophone Western world. Aid for conservation was immediately seen as, in the words of a national, *vola mora tangosana*, or easy money (anon-x 2005).

Globally, something else was happening at the onset of liberal reforms. Whereas development had thus far entailed states meeting the most basic needs of their citizens (food, shelter, health and education), the concept was expanded to include economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection with a concern for meeting "the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"

[13] Bertrand et al. (2006) cite Lavauden (1934) and Coudreau (1937) to show how repressive the state was in terms of forest protection.

(WCED1987: 40). This shift came about as the result of global actors' awareness that poverty was afflicting more and more human beings throughout the world and that many of the poor were heavily reliant on natural resources to secure their livelihoods.

As both development and conservation proponents faced forest depletion and the environmental degradation and rural hardships that came with it, foreign donors began to collaborate with the government of Madagascar (GOM) to "stop the spiral of environmental degradation" (*Office National de l'Environnement* mission statement). In 1990, a National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) was adopted whose objectives explicitly took into account the need to combine biodiversity protection and improving the living conditions of rural and urban people (Lindemann 2004: 3-4). This NEAP was to be implemented over a fifteen-year period in three phases referred to as EP1 (1991-1995), EP2 (1996-2002), and EP3 (2003-2008). Interest among conservationists in preserving the environment initially appeared to favor conservation for its intrinsic value, while Madagascar's 1990 Environmental Charter calls for integrating environmental conservation into the country's overall development goals.[14] Increased interactions and negotiations between the state and its foreign partners resulted in political and financial agreements that materialized in conservation projects.[15]

Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs) were the dominant paradigm during EP1. Under the logic of ICDPs, a core conservation area was designated as off-limits, while a buffer zone was reserved for limited subsistence uses (Wells and Brandon 1992). In Madagascar, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Malagasy government funded ICDPs, which were implemented by international conservation organizations (Hough 1994) and a few US universities (Kull 1996). Before ICDPs had a chance to show positive results in terms of conservation and rural livelihood, their effectiveness was questioned (Marcus 2001), and a new category of projects was launched to address mounting criticism to the effect that existing protected areas, of which ICDPs were part, did not incorporate ecological zones, or eco-regions. This new approach called for delineation of "corridors" linking various natural habitats into larger units of conservation. This "corridor" paradigm began shaping conservation and development projects in the latter part of the1990s, during EP2 (Gezon 2000).

[14] « Cette politique nationale de l'environnement se propose (…) d'intégrer la politique de l'environnement dans le développement global du pays. »
[15] These negotiations over environmental protection did not begin to involve local resource users until the late 1990s although rural farmers were the alleged aggressors of the forest.

As was the case with ICDPs, implementing agencies were foreign NGOs, although explicit efforts were made to give nationals and local NGOs some responsibility in implementing the NEAP's conservation strategies. [16] For EP3 a new model for NGO intervention has been introduced. Instead of executing conservation projects, NGOs such as Conservation International have changed their role to be one of facilitation: funds are now directly disbursed to small national NGOs charged with implementing conservation projects aligned the vision of international NGOs (interview with Langrand 2006).

In sum, much like development, environmental conservation has been experimental and highly dependent on foreign financial and technical assistance. That is, conservation has been a donor-driven process. Moreover, it has been fueled by western environmental ethics and dominated by "Anglosaxons" (interview with Gaylord 2005). This is not to suggest that the Malagasy state has not been preoccupied with protecting its natural heritage (notwithstanding the decade of scientific socialism). But the state has generated too few resources (human and financial) to carry out this formidable task. Absent this state's capacity to devise and carry out its own environmental policies, foreign donors have been able to dictate how conservation should be done.

Madagascar's Environmental Performance since Independence

How effective have conservation efforts been? Assessing a country's environmental performance is no easy task, although reports that discuss the major achievements under the first two phases on the EAP offer indicators (Lindemann 2004).[17] Deforestation is a critical indicator of environmental performance because it is central to environmental degradation and because close to 90 percent of Madagascar's remaining biodiversity occurs in forest habitats. Because the task here is to appreciate the extent to which state policies have supported (or hampered) biodiversity conservation since 1960, one must move beyond the spatial confines of protected areas and consider forest cover in general.

[16] For an alternative historical account of Madagascar's "environmental boom," see Kull (1996): pp. 54-65.
[17] These include rates of deforestation, critical habitats conservation/degradation, quality of biodiversity, rural households benefiting from conservation-related projects; tourism revenues; and changes in mentalities with regards to the environment (pp. 11-12).

Harper et al. (n.d.) recently conducted a study of deforestation and forest fragmentation in Madagascar over a fifty-year period (1950s-2000). Setting aside areas obscured by cloud cover, they find that forest extent was 160,000 km^2 in the 1952 and 89,800 km^2 in 2000. For the 1950-1970 period they find that 6.2 percent of forests were cut down; for 1970s-1990, the figure went up to 28.4 percent; and for 1990-2000, it receded to 8.5 percent.[18] Overall, forests covered 27 percent of the island in the 1950s down to 16 percent in 2000.

The decrease in deforestation since the 1990s, the authors point out, is deceiving and remains troubling considering the increased fragmentation of forests (i.e., smaller and smaller portions of forest remain intact). The combination of deforestation and forest fragmentation leads Ganzhorn et al. (2001) to conclude that "[m]any of Madagascar's ecosystems have been reduced in size and degraded beyond the point of recovery and will suffer further losses in biodiversity" (347), although these scientists remain hopeful that scientists decision-makers will find ways to effectively protect what remains. Why so much optimism?

Why Politicians Care About Nature

In September 2003, Ravalomanana, made conservation history when he announced his government's intention to more than triple the total area under (state) protection, going from 1.7 million hectares to 6 million hectares in five years. This happened at the Fifth World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa. This ambitious plan received enthusiastic praise from leading conservation organizations, whose representatives declared: "This historic decision is a gift to the Earth that clearly signals Madagascar's commitment to saving its unique and spectacular wildlife and habitats," to which another added that such a decision "was unimaginable a few years ago and needs the fullest possible international recognition and support" (www.forests.org).

In January 2005, just as stunningly, the French government organized an international conference on *Biodiversity: Science and Governance*. At this well-attended conference, French president Jacques Chirac, who until then had shown little (if any) interest in biodiversity

[18] These periods correspond roughly with the first three political economic periods identified in the first section of this paper. The first is the immediate post-colonial period (1960-1971); the second the time of scientific socialism (1972-1981); the third is the liberal reforms and structural adjustment period (1982-2001).

conservation, pledged to have France contribute to ongoing international research on biodiversity and educate the public about the detrimental ecological impacts of individuals' consumption habits. Just before Chirac addressed the audience, Ravalomanana had announced his "*Madagascar, Naturellement!*" (Madagascar--naturally) initiative based on the Durban vision. The idea behind this vision, he explained, was to integrate environmental protection into Madagascar's political and economic strategies and actions. This vision, he went on to say, was a strong message to the Malagasy people and to his government. Of course, this was also a strong signal to the international community present at this Paris-based conference.[19] In addition, Ravalomanana also publicly stated that fostering economic growth without destroying the country's natural heritage is "a difficult challenge for which we (Madagascar) need the support of the international community," given the resources such a goal demands (http://www.recherche.gouv.fr). Ten years of efforts and international support, he declared, helped but did not erase the problem of environmental degradation.

For lemurs, too, have been magnets for foreign assistance. The decade of efforts and international support to which Ravalomanana was alluding amount to more than US$ 100 million for EP1 alone; for EP2 and EP3 the total figure was US$150 million and US$ 170 million, respectively (Rakotoarijaona 2005).[20] Whereas most of the EP2 foreign contributions came in the form of loans, 70 percent of these contributions were given to Madagascar as grants in EP3. Table 6 shows the breakdown of different players' financial contributions for EP3 as an illustration of the extent to which the effort was "international" more so than Malagasy. The proportion of USAID and the World Bank's contributions suggests a large role for Anglophones, which perhaps explains why the French decided to carve a niche in the biodiversity arena by organizing an international conference on Biodiversity in 2005. What has the green draw been about?

[19] There was nothing new about this concept, since Madagascar's 1990 Environmental Charter specifically states that environmental protection is a means to development goals. The above historical background also helps suggest that Ravalomanana's "new" vision amounts to little more than history repeating itself.

[20] For EP1 Gezon (2000) reports US$120 million and Lindemann reports US$85.5 million for EP1 and US$150 million each for EP2 and EP3. Regardless, to appreciate the volume of support for the environment, one can cite the funding for the World Bank's *Rural Development Support Project*: US$110 million over a period of five years.

Table 6: Breakdown of Financial Contributions to EP3

Contributors	Amount (US$ million)
World Bank	35
USAID	35
German KfW	20
Global Environment Fund (GEF)	8
UNDP	4
Other Bilateral Donors	6.4
Government of Madagascar	10

Source: UN 2002 cited in Lindemann 2004: 9.

From Dependence to Mutual Dependence

In one of the most insightful analyses of Madagascar's "conservation boom" Kull (1996)[21] examines the reasons for the explosion of the country's environmental sector in the 1990s. He highlights three interrelated factors: combined "megadiversity" status and degradation; the global environmental movement; and the country's political-economic situation.[22] Writing in the context of EP1, Kull reports a sharp increase in World Wildlife Fund for Nature's expenditures from 1963 to 1993. He notes that, in a decade, WWF funding for Madagascar increased ten fold.

If nature has not, who has benefited from such generous support for conservation? Notwithstanding rural development/conservation success stories, of which there have been a few, it is a stretch to suggest that people, animals, and plants have benefited from two decades of intense conservation efforts. Regardless, an economic analysis produced by two World Bank consultants in 2004 identifies the most likely beneficiaries of PAs (Carret and Loyer n.d.). According to this report, the beneficiaries are water users (including urban users), the tourist industry, and ANGAP (*Association Nationale pour la Gestion des Aires Protégées*). As segments that profit, these are the main sources of sustainable funding for Madagascar's PAs. The report finds that for each hectare of PA, the initial net annual benefits are US $10[23] whereas

[21] Kull, CA 1996. "The evolution of conservation efforts in Madagascar." *International Environmental Affairs* **8** (1): 50-86.
[22] Megadiverse countries are the twelve countries that host 70 percent of the planet's biodiversity.
[23] $3 for biodiversity conservation, $4 for eco-tourism, and $3 for watershed conservation.

the annual costs of maintaining PAs is $6.8 (32). That is, PAs are good investments for the state (interview with L. Rajaobelina 2005) and for donors.

The Beneficiaries of Foreign Aid for Biodiversity Conservation

These findings gave a huge boost for conservation, and they have been widely cited as testimony of the economic soundness of maintaining PAs, hence the euphoria surrounding Ravalomanana's "Durban vision." [24] This section examines how the Malagasy state, donor institutions, and the country's professional elite are the primary beneficiaries of biodiversity conservation.

The Malagasy state has benefited from conservation efforts in several ways. First, foreign assistance has permitted the creation of institutions with a specific environmental mandate. The *Office National pour l'Environnement* (ONE), ANGAP, ANAE, the Ministry of the Environment, etc. were created and have been maintained, at substantial cost, through donor technical and financial assistance.[25] Second, because at least seven out of ten Malagasy depend on natural resources for their livelihood, alleviating the environmental crisis is a *sine qua* for people's survival. Given the state's past record, it is difficult to imagine that the Malagasy state would have performed this task without foreign support. Third, the environmental sector has produced a wide range of professional opportunities for poorly paid civil servants and other Malagasy professionals. In the environmental sector salaries and benefits are good, and for some the job comes with material perks such as vehicles, access to computers, and trips overseas.

One of the consequences of this draw is that, absent growth in other sectors, very able Malagasy professionals have found themselves locked in conservation even though some of them are discouraged by performance results (anonymous 2005). Trapped in the conservation game, these relatively well-paid professional constitute an economic elite eager to keep conservation-friendly leaders in power and donors involved. As for civil servants, a plethora of institutions, individuals, and activities has created a haze masking various illicit activities from which they benefit materially (interview with Koto 1999). In addition, multiple meetings and field visits offer the opportunity to supplement meager salaries (interview with S. Rajaobelina 2005) which,

[24] The excitement around these findings is rather astonishing, considering that the study was conducted in 10 of Madagascar's 41 PAs.
[25] This is to name just the main ones. There are dozens more institutions involved in the NEAP, some smaller than others.

one can argue, renders efficiency and good performance less attractive. In the end, the state has benefited from the support of influential constituents without having to pay for their allegiance. As for the rest of the population, the state has derived its legitimacy from "flexing muscles" with donors, attracting foreign assistance, and keeping the island "on the map" rather than providing better living standards. In other words, to stay afloat the state has depended on donors' generous support. Part of the problem, as Shivakumar (2005) suggests, is the state as an agent of development (53-62).

That African countries are highly dependent of foreign assistance to mitigate the effects of state weakness is widely accepted in the literature on African political economies (Leonard and Strauss 2003:11; Van de Walle 2001: 220; Lancaster 1999; Chabal and Daloz 1999: 110-119; Reno 1998: 20-24). What does not transpire as much in the scholarship on aid and development is the idea that the dependency syndrome might afflict foreign actors as well. Yet, as Madagascar's case shows, foreign donors' eagerness to inject resources into a system where the state has not produced decent conditions for humans (and other species) strongly suggests that they, too, might thrive on weak performance (interview with Rabesahala 2005). Several developments support this. First, there has been a shift in individual donors' ability to influence the policies of successive Malagasy governments. Most strikingly, France has lost its monopoly of influence to other governments and IFIs (former communist bloc in the 1970s and early 1980s; Bretton Woods institutions since the mid-1980s; and the US and US-based NGOs since the 1990s). This has been, in part, the result of savvy leaders' ability to play foreign donors against one another in a changing international context since WWII. But, had there been no aid to extract from competing foreign parties, playing them against one another would have been pointless.

Second, the states' development policies have changed to reflect and accommodate multiple foreign interests. So long as western powers were interested in containing communism, poor policies, reckless development projects, and blatant resource plundering were tolerated. With the triumph of liberalism, the World Bank and the IMF became well-positioned to prescribe a Western style of governance and dictate the country's development priorities (Chappell 1997). With new development priorities (notably social development and environmental conservation) and a newly opened political system, new expertise was needed and Madagascar became the El Dorado of conservation NGOs. Conservation International started in the shadow of WWF in the late 1980s but thanks to its executives' relentless marketing and fund raising, it has become so powerful as to play a donor's role with a significant portion of its budget spend on funding conservation partners (interview with Crowley 2005; interview with Langrand 2006). For donors and contractors, it takes a dire environmental situation to stay in business.[26] Alarmist signals are thus key to staying in business.

Individuals, too, profit from opportunities that non-development affords. For foreigners, the need to save Madagascar from environmental disaster has created career moves not easily available in their respective institutions. A number of conservation professionals have been in Madagascar for over two decades. Some who left wish to go back, and a few have succeeded (sometimes against Malagasy professionals' advice). This is intriguing given the supposed difficult living and working conditions the country offers. The truth is, expatriates live notoriously comfortable lives in poor countries. Professionally their ability to control financial resources earns them the feigned respect of locals who need those resources to thrive materially. More importantly, this empowers them to influence government officials (from the lowest to the highest levels) to follow their foreign agendas. As controllers of hard-currency budgets they have easy access to Malagasy decision-makers, convert technical positions into political appointments (interview with Otsuka 2005; interview with Ramarojaona 2005) and, as one Malagasy professional put it, "make rain and shine in the country" (interview with anonymous, 2005). This they do with minimal accountability. That is, the criteria for evaluating their performance are not always clearly specified (interview with anonymous 2005). In most cases, foreign professionals are considered to do a good job if they raise more and more funds, if they spend money quickly (interview with anonymous 2005), if they set up or maintain conservation projects, and if they succeed in pressuring the GOM to expand the country's network of protected areas.

Conclusion

Why has poor development and environmental performance not deterred foreign support? The political-economic history of Madagascar since independence reveals three principal reasons for this paradox. First, the leaders have been effective at mobilizing foreign assistance by adapting their "drawing tactics" to an evolving international context. In fact, attracting foreign aid has

[26] A USAID-funded study found that the statistics on deforestation used to secure funding from the US Congress were exaggerated by an order of magnitude for protected areas funded by this agency (Horning 1999).

been an integral part of the political game, so much so that aid has become a tool for legitimizing power at the domestic level. Second, in response to pressures from key interest groups among their own constituents, foreign governments and donors have been eager to provide aid to advance their various agendas ranging from economic and political (spheres of influence, spreading democracy, containing terrorism, etc.) to environmental. Importantly, since Malagasy leaders multiplied their aid donors, less aid per donor still accomplished the goal of influencing the state's policy agenda. Third, Madagascar never developed to the point of not needing foreign assistance. That is, the country fell into dependency with no means to cure itself of this syndrome.

This begs the classic question: why has there been so little performance despite steady inflows of foreign assistance? Duffy (2005) argues that clandestine networks" beyond the formal control by government institutions, donors, and NGOs" hamper conservation efforts (832).[27] This is only part of the explanation, however. The politics of biodiversity conservation in Madagascar provide additional answers. Conservation politics have consisted of donors buying the power to influence the state's policy agenda. To do this foreign governments and IFIs have provided the means to set up an environmental sector with all the distribution opportunities it has afforded the state. As a consequence, much state and donor energy has been expanded on staying in the political game at the level of capital cities and relatively little energy has been invested in actual conservation projects in areas where improvements need to occur. In other words, beneficiaries have been put last, not first (Gibson et al. 2005).

The case of Madagascar reveals a great irony: while foreign donors seek to control recipient governments' policy agendas, they find themselves trapped in a situation of dependency in which the incentives for aid organizations to turn foreign aid into success stories become weak. The dilemma is that the success of foreign aid goes against the very *raison d'être* of aid agencies and against the interests of the professionals who work for them.

The implication is that until the Malagasy state moves its developmental goals beyond securing foreign assistance, Madagascar's sovereignty will remain an illusion, development performance is likely to stay weak, and the island's biodiversity will continue to be threatened. Further, unless the state and donors extricate themselves from a situation of mutual dependence, the incentives for turning aid into better living standards for the Malagasy will stay weak.

[27] Duffy uses the example of illicit sapphire mining in southern Madagascar.

Ultimately, what trumps development is neither volume nor type of aid but the absence of institutions that effectively align donor and state incentives with good development performance.

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