Indian Ocean
five island countries

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Preface

Few works offering a close look at the contemporary island societies of the Indian Ocean have been published in the English language. Even fewer works that place those societies in the context of their historical and geographic settings are to be found. This study, *Indian Ocean: Five Island Countries*, seeks to contribute in a modest way to fulfillment of the void, offering a compact and objective exposition of the dominant social, political, and economic institutions of the island countries and a view of their current problems and tensions. Analysis and interpretation by the authors must be judged, however, in the light of the scant nature of available research data in many subject areas.

With considerable justification, the reader may question the exclusion of Sri Lanka (the island nation formerly known as Ceylon, an important political force in the Indian Ocean) from other than the more general discussions in this study. That country's close proximity to, and long historical associations with, the Indian subcontinent and its early tutelage in self-rule under the British, beginning nearly two decades before independence, however, distinguish it quite clearly from the island countries in the southwestern Indian Ocean. Moreover, it has been treated already in a separate volume in the series. By the same token, the reader may question the inclusion of Maldives, insofar as, like Sri Lanka, it, too, lies close to the subcontinent in the northern Indian Ocean. Unlike Sri Lanka, however, Maldives appears nowhere else in the Country Study series, and in the view of the authors it warranted treatment here, especially as it shares some concerns of the island countries in the southwestern ocean. Reunion, although also a Mascarene Island like Mauritius, chose to become an integral part of metropolitan France, and thus is not included in this volume.

Measurements are given in the metric system; a conversion table is provided in the Appendix. The spelling of place-names generally follows that established by the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) in its latest available gazetteers for the area. Currency conversion factors appear in the Glossary, which is included for the reader's convenience. Country Profile data, ordinarily appearing in the front matter of books
Chapter 1. Madagascar
Country Profile

Country

Formal Name: Republic of Madagascar.

Short Name: Madagascar.

Term for Citizens: Malagasy.

Capital: Antananarivo.

Date of Independence: June 26, 1960.

Geography

Size: 587,040 square kilometers.

Topography: East coast has lowlands leading to steep bluffs and central highlands; Tseratanana Massif in north with volcanic mountains; west coast with many protected harbors and broad plains; and southwest with plateau and desert region.

Climate: Two seasons: hot, rainy from November to April; cooler, dry season from May to October; southeastern trade winds dominate; occasional cyclones.

Society


Ethnic Groups: Some twenty ethnic groups of which principal ones are central highlanders (Merina and related Betisele) and côtiers of mixed Arab, African, Malayo-Indonesian ancestry. Other groups are Comorans, French, Indo-Pakistanis, and Chinese.
Languages: Malagasy belonging to Malayo-Polynesian language family; French also used extensively.

Religion: Estimated 55 percent hold indigenous beliefs; 40 percent Christian, evenly divided between Roman Catholics and Protestants; 5 percent Muslim.

Education and Literacy: Education compulsory for children ages six to fourteen; higher education available through University of Madagascar with six campuses. Literacy estimated at 80 percent in 1991.

Health: Economic decline has caused deterioration of medical services; 35 percent of population lacked adequate access to health services in early 1990s; infant mortality 114 per 1,000 in 1991. Major diseases malaria, schistosomiasis, tuberculosis, and leprosy as well as sexually transmitted diseases. Traditional medicine popular, especially in rural areas.

Economy


Agriculture: Constituted 33 percent of GDP in 1993, provided almost 80 percent of exports, and in 1992 employed almost 80 percent of labor force; 16 percent of cultivated land is irrigated. Major crops: coffee, vanilla, sugarcane, cloves, cocoa, rice, cassava, bananas, peanuts; widespread cattle raising; also extensive fishing.

Industry, Mining, and Energy: Responsible for 13 percent of GDP in 1993; major sectors food-processing, mining, and energy; and in export processing zones clothing manufacturing. Country has many minerals, but exploitation has been disappointing. Dependent on imported oil and local firewood for energy.


Balance of Payments: External debt in November 1993 more than US$4 billion; debt has been rescheduled with Paris Club (see Glossary) and London Club (see Glossary).

Currency and Exchange Rate: 1 Malagasy franc (FMG) = 100 centimes; in May 1995, US$1.00 = FMG4,236.9.

Inflation Rate: Estimated at 20 percent in 1992.

Fiscal Year: Calendar year.

Transportation and Telecommunications

Highways: About 4,000 kilometers of 40,000-kilometer road system asphalted in 1994.

Railroads: In 1994 some 1,095 kilometers of 1,000-meter gauge track in two separate systems: Antananarivo to Toamasina and Fianarantsoa to Manakara.

Ports: Fifteen major ports of which Toamasina, Mahajanga, and Antsiranana most important.

Airports: About 105 of total airports usable; of these thirty had permanent-surface runways in 1994.

Telecommunications: Telephone service sparse; most telephones located in Antananarivo. Two satellite ground stations provide excellent international links via International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (Intelsat) Indian Ocean satellite and Symphonie ground station with European telecommunications satellite. Seventeen government-owned amplitude modulation (AM) stations, three frequency modulation (FM) stations.

Government and Politics

Government: Constitution approved August 19, 1992, by
Indian Ocean: Five Island Countries

national referendum. Constitution establishes separation of powers among executive, legislative, and judicial branches; multiparty political system; and protection of human rights and freedom of speech. President elected by universal suffrage for five-year period with two-term limit. Prime minister nominated by bicameral parliament composed of Senate and National Assembly, and approved by president. Supreme Court has eleven members and forms apex of other judicial bodies. Local government consists of twenty-eight regions with decentralized powers in economic field.

Politics: In first legislative elections of Third Republic in 1993, more than 120 political parties entered 4,000 candidates for 138 seats. Proportional representation list system encourages candidacies. Traditional village council (fokonolona) system supplements modern political system.

Foreign Relations: Good relations with many countries, particularly France and the West; in post-Cold War era, seeking diversified ties with East and West, including Arab countries and Far East.

National Security

Armed Forces: Popular Armed Forces (including aeronaval forces—consisting of navy and air force), Presidential Guard. In 1994 army had about 20,000 personnel, navy about 500 including 100 marines, air force about 500.

Military Budget: In 1994 estimated at US$37.6 million.

Major Military Units: Army in 1994 had two battalions, one engineer regiment. Army equipment included twelve light tanks, reconnaissance vehicles, armored personnel carriers, and some towed artillery. Navy had one patrol craft and three landing craft. Air force had twelve combat aircraft.

Paramilitary: In 1994 about 7,500 gendarmerie, including maritime police.
THE REPUBLIC OF MADAGASCAR, formerly known as the Malagasy Republic and the Democratic Republic of Madagascar, has undergone significant socioeconomic and political changes during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Occupying a strategic location off the southeast coast of Africa, the island historically became the target of British and French imperial ambitions. Ultimately, the competition resulted in French colonization at the end of the nineteenth century. The country gained full independence from colonial rule on June 26, 1960. Philibert Tsiranana headed the conservative regime of the First Republic, superseded in 1975 by a Marxist-oriented military regime under Lieutenant Commander Didier Ratsiraka.

In the face of rising political dissent and socioeconomic decline that reached its height at the beginning of the 1990s, the Second Republic succumbed to the wave of democratization spreading throughout the African continent. On March 27, 1993, the inauguration of Albert Zafy as the third elected president of Madagascar since independence marked the beginning of the Third Republic.

**Historical Setting**

**Precolonial Era, Prior to 1894**

The ruins of fortifications built by Arab traders as far back as the ninth century underscore Madagascar's historical role as a destination for travelers from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Not until the beginning of the sixteenth century, however, did European ships flying Portuguese, Dutch, English, and French flags explore Madagascar's shoreline. Beginning in 1643, several French settlements emerged; the best known of these, Tôlanaro (formerly Faradofoy) on the southeast coast, lasted for more than thirty years. The settlement survived in part because the colonists had taken pains to establish cordial relations with the Antanosy, the ethnic group inhabiting the area. Relations deteriorated later, however, and in 1674 a massacre of nearly all the inhabitants ended French colonization endeavors for more than a century; survivors fled by sea to the neighboring territory of Reunion.
This early checking of French imperial designs coincided with the spread of piracy into the Indian Ocean. In the absence of a significant naval power in waters remote from Europe, privateer vessels attacked ships of many nations for nearly forty years. The favorite hunting grounds were in the north in the Arabian Sea and Red Sea areas, but Madagascar was a popular hiding place where crews could recuperate and replenish supplies for another attack. By this time, the institution of slavery also had been implanted on the island. Madagascar became a source of slaves, not only for the neighboring islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues, but also for more distant points, including the Western Hemisphere.

Madagascar’s social and political structure facilitated the slave trade. Within several small coastal kingdoms, stratified societies of nobles, commoners, and slaves gave allegiance to a single king or queen. For example, the Sakalava ethnic group dominated the western and northern portions of Madagascar in two separate kingdoms. Menabe, on the barren western grasslands, had its first capital at Tolara; Boina, in the northwest, included the port of Mahajanga. The towns became centers of trade where cattle and slaves, taken in war, were exchanged with European merchants for guns and other manufactured goods. These political domains were complemented by the Betsimisaraka kingdom along the east coast, and the southern coastal kingdoms dominated by the Mahafaly and the Antandroy ethnic groups.

The most powerful of Madagascar’s kingdoms—the one that eventually established hegemony over a great portion of the island—was that developed by the Merina ethnic group. Before the Merina emerged as the dominant political power on the island in the nineteenth century, they alternated between periods of political unity and periods in which the kingdom separated into smaller political units. The location of the Merina in the central highlands afforded them some protection from the ravages of warfare that occurred among the coastal kingdoms. The distinction, recognized both locally and internationally, between the central highlanders (the Merina) and the côtiers (inhabitants of the coastal areas) would soon exert a major impact on Madagascar’s political system (see Population and Ethnicity, this ch.). Organized like the coastal kingdoms in a hierarchy of nobles, commoners, and slaves, the Merina developed a unique political institution known as the fokonolona (village council). Through the fokonolona, village elders and other local notables were able to enact regulations and exert a measure of local control in such matters as public works and security.

Two monarchs played key roles in establishing Merina political dominance over Madagascar. The first, who ruled under the name of Andrianampoinimerina (r. 1797–1810), seized the throne of one of the Merina kingdoms in 1787. By 1806 he had conquered the remaining three kingdoms and united them within the former boundaries of Imerina, the capital established at the fortified city of Antananarivo. Radama I (r. 1810–28), an able and forward-looking monarch, succeeded to the throne in 1810 upon the death of his father. By adroitly playing off competing British and French interests in the island, he was able to extend Merina authority over nearly the entire island of Madagascar. Radama I first conquered the Betsileo ethnic group in the southern part of the central highlands and subsequently overpowered the Sakalava, an ethnic group that also sought at times to assert its hegemony over other groups. With the help of the British, who wanted a strong kingdom to offset French influence, Radama I modernized the armed forces. In 1817 the peoples of the east coast, facing an army of 35,000 soldiers, submitted with little or no protest; Radama then conquered the entire southeast as far as Toliana. Particularly barren or impenetrable parts of the island escaped conquest, especially in the extreme south, but before his death Radama I succeeded in bringing the major and more hospitable portions of the country under Merina rule.

Radama I’s interest in modernization along Western lines extended to social and political matters. He organized a cabinet and encouraged the Protestant London Missionary Society to establish schools and churches and to introduce the printing press—a move that was to have far-reaching implications for the country. The society made nearly half a million converts, and its teachers devised a written form of the local language, Malagasy, using the Latin alphabet. By 1828 several thousand persons, primarily Merina, had become literate, and a few young persons were being sent to Britain for schooling. Later the Merina dialect of Malagasy became the official language. Malagasy-language publications were established and circulated among the Merina-educated elite; by 1896 some 164,000 children, mainly Merina and Betsileo, attended the mission’s primary schools. Along with new ideas came some development of local manufacturing. Much productive time was spent,
however, in military campaigns to expand territory and acquire slaves for trade.

The reign of Radama I's wife and successor, Queen Ranavalona I (r. 1828–61), was essentially reactionary, reflecting her distrust of foreign influence. Under the oligarchy that ruled in her name, rivals were slain, numerous Protestant converts were persecuted and killed, and many Europeans fled the island. The ruling elite held all the land and monopolized commerce, except for the handful of Europeans allowed to deal in cattle, rice, and other commodities. Remunerations to the queen provided the French traders a supply of slaves and a monopoly in the slave trade. Enjoying particular favor owing to his remarkable accomplishments was French artisan Jean Laborde, who established at Mantasoa, near Antananarivo, a manufacturing complex and agricultural research station where he manufactured commodities ranging from silk and soap to guns, tools, and cement.

During the reign of Radama II (r. 1861–63), the pendulum once again swung toward modernization and cordial relations with Western nations, particularly France. Radama II made a treaty of perpetual friendship with France, but his brief rule ended with his assassination by a group of nobles alarmed by his pro-French stance. He was succeeded by his widow, who ruled until 1868, during which time she annulled the treaty with France and the charter of Laborde's company.

After 1868 a Merina leader, Rainilaiarivony, ruled the monarchy. To avoid giving either the French or the British a pretext for intervention, Rainilaiarivony emphasized modernization of the society and tried to curry British favor without giving offense to the French. He made concessions to both countries, signing a commercial treaty with France in 1868 and with Britain in 1877. Important social developments under his leadership included the outlawing of polygamy and the slave trade; the promulgation of new legal codes; the spread of education, especially among the Merina; and the conversion of the monarchy in 1869 to Protestantism.

Colonial Era, 1894–1960

The French largely ended the attempts of Malagasy rulers to stymie foreign influence by declaring a protectorate over the entire island in 1894. A protectorate over northwest Madagascar, based on treaties signed with the Sakalava during the 1840s, had existed since 1882. But Queen Ranavalona III refused to recognize the 1894 effort to subordinate her kingdom to French rule. As a result, a French expeditionary force occupied Antananarivo in September 1895. A wave of antiforeign, anti-Christian rioting ensued. In 1896 France declared Madagascar a French colony and deported the queen and the prime minister—first to Reunion, then to Algeria.

Nationalist sentiment against French colonial rule eventually emerged among a small group of Merina intellectuals who had been educated by Europeans and exposed to Western intellectual thought. The group, based in Antananarivo, was led by a Malagasy Protestant clergyman, Pastor Ravelojoana, who was especially inspired by the Japanese model of modernization. A secret society dedicated to affirming Malagasy cultural identity was formed in 1913, calling itself Iron and Stone Ramification (Vy Vato Sakelika—VVS). Although the VVS was brutally suppressed, its actions eventually led French authorities to provide the Malagasy with their first representative voice in government.

Malagasy veterans of military service in France during World War I bolstered the embryonic nationalist movement. Throughout the 1920s, the nationalists stressed labor reform and equality of civil and political status for the Malagasy, stopping short of advocating independence. For example, the French League for Madagascar under the leadership of Antole Franez demanded French citizenship for all Malagasy people in recognition of their country's wartime contribution of soldiers and resources. A number of veterans who remained in France were exposed to French political thought, most notably the anticolonial and pro-independence platforms of French socialist parties. Jean Ralaymonga, for example, returned to Madagascar in 1924 and became embroiled in labor questions that were causing considerable tension throughout the island.

Among the first concessions to Malagasy equality was the formation in 1924 of two economic and financial delegations. One was composed of French settlers, the other of twenty-four Malagasy representatives elected by the Council of Notables in each of twenty-four districts. The two sections never met together, and neither had real decision-making authority.

Only in the aftermath of World War II was France willing to accept a form of Malagasy self-rule under French tutelage. In the fall of 1948, separate French and Malagasy electoral colleges voted to elect representatives from Madagascar to the Constituent Assembly of the Fourth Republic in Paris. The two
On March 29, 1947, Malagasy nationalists revolted against the French. Although the uprising eventually spread over one-third of the island, the French were able to restore order after reinforcements arrived from France. Casualties among the Malagasy were estimated in the 60,000 to 80,000 range (later reports estimated 11,000 casualties, of whom 180 were non-Malagasy). The group of leaders responsible for the uprising, which came to be referred to as the Revolt of 1947, never has been identified conclusively. Although the MDRM leadership consistently maintained its innocence, the French outlawed the party. French military courts tried the military leaders of the revolt and executed twenty of them. Other trials produced, by one report, some 5,000 to 6,000 convictions, and penalties ranged from brief imprisonment to death.

In 1956 France's socialist government renewed the French commitment to greater autonomy in Madagascar and other colonial possessions by enacting the loi-cadre (enabling law). The loi-cadre provided for universal suffrage and was the basis for parliamentary government in each colony. In the case of Madagascar, the law established executive councils to function alongside provincial and national assemblies, and dissolved the separate electoral colleges for the French and Malagasy groups. The provision for universal suffrage had significant implications in Madagascar because of the basic ethnopolitical split between the Merina and the côtiers, reinforced by the divisions between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Superior armed strength and educational and cultural advantages had given the Merina a dominant influence on the political process during much of the country's history. The Merina were heavily represented in the Malagasy component of the small elite to whom suffrage had been restricted in the earlier years of French rule. Now the côtiers, who outnumbered the Merina, would be a majority.

The end of the 1950s was marked by growing debate over the future of Madagascar's relationship with France. Two major political parties emerged. The newly created Social Democratic Party of Madagascar (Parti Social Démocrate de Madagascar—PSD) favored self-rule while maintaining close ties with France. The PSD was led by Philibert Tsiranana, a well-educated Tsimihety from the northern coastal region who was one of three Malagasy deputies elected in 1956 to the National Assembly in Paris. The PSD built upon Tsiranana's traditional political stronghold of Mahajanga in northwest Madagascar and rapidly
extended its sources of support by absorbing most of the smaller parties that had been organized by the cöters. In sharp contrast, those advocating complete independence from France came together under the auspices of the Congress Party for the Independence of Madagascar (Antoko'ny Kongresy Fanafahanana an'i Madagasikara—AKFM). Primarily based in Antananarivo and Antsiranana, party support centered among the Merina under the leadership of Richard Andriananjato, himself a Merina and a member of the Protestant clergy. To the consternation of French policy makers, the AKFM platform called for nationalization of foreign-owned industries, collectivization of land, the "Malagachization" of society away from French values and customs (most notably use of the French language), international nonalignment, and exit from the Franc Zone (see Glossary).

Independence, the First Republic, and the Military Transition, 1960–75

After France adopted the Constitution of the Fifth Republic under the leadership of General Charles de Gaulle, on September 28, 1958, Madagascar held a referendum to determine whether the country should become a self-governing republic within the French community. The AKFM and other nationalists opposed to the concept of limited self-rule mustered about 25 percent of votes cast. The vast majority of the population at the urging of the PSD leadership voted in favor of the referendum. The vote led to the election of Tsiranana as the country's first president on April 27, 1959. After a year of negotiations between Tsiranana and his French counterparts, Madagascar's status as a self-governing republic officially was altered on June 26, 1960, to that of a fully independent and sovereign state. The cornerstone of Tsiranana's government was the signing with France of fourteen agreements and conventions designed to maintain and strengthen Franco-Malagasy ties. These agreements were to provide the basis for increasing opposition from Tsiranana's critics.

A spirit of political reconciliation prevailed in the early 1960s. By achieving independence and obtaining the release of the MDRM leaders detained since the Revolt of 1947, Tsiranana had co-opted the chief issues on which the more aggressively nationalist elements had built much of their support. Consistent with Tsiranana's firm commitment to remain attached to Western civilization, the new regime made plain its intent to maintain strong ties to France and the West in the economic, defense, and cultural spheres. Not entirely sanguine about this prospect, the opposition initially concurred in the interest of consolidating the gains of the previous decade, and most ethnic and regional interests supported Tsiranana.

Similar to other African leaders during the early independence era, Tsiranana oversaw the consolidation of his own party's power at the expense of other parties. A political system that strongly favored the incumbent complemented these actions. For example, although the political process allowed minority parties to participate, the constitution mandated a winner-take-all system that effectively denied the opposition a voice in governance. Tsiranana's position was further strengthened by the broad, multiethnic popular base of the PSD among the cöters, whereas the opposition was severely disorganized. The AKFM continued to experience intraparty rifts between leftist and ultranationalist, more orthodox Marxist factions; it was unable to capitalize on increasingly active but relatively less privileged Malagasy youth because the party's base was the Merina middle class.

A new force on the political scene provided the first serious challenge to the Tsiranana government in April 1971. The National Movement for the Independence of Madagascar (Mouvement National pour l'Indépendance de Madagascar—Monima) led a peasant uprising in Toliaraka Province. The creator and leader of Monima was Monja Jaona, a cöter from the south who also participated in the Revolt of 1947. The main issue was government pressure for tax collection at a time when local cattle herds were being ravaged by disease. The protesters
attacked military and administrative centers in the area, apparently hoping for support in the form of weapons and reinforcements from China. Such help never arrived, and the revolt was harshly and quickly suppressed. An estimated fifty to 1,000 persons died, Monina was dissolved, and Monina leaders, including Jaona and several hundred protesters, were arrested and deported to the island of Nosy-Lava.

Another movement came on the scene in early 1972, in the form of student protests in Antananarivo. A general strike involving the nation's roughly 100,000 secondary-level students focused on three principal issues: ending the cultural cooperation agreements with France; replacing educational programs designed for schools in France and taught by French teachers with programs emphasizing Malagasy life and culture and taught by Malagasy instructors; and increasing access for economically underprivileged youth to secondary-level institutions. By early May, the PSD sought to end the student strike at any cost; on May 12 and 13, the government arrested several hundred student leaders and sent them to Nosy-Lava. Authorities also closed the schools and banned demonstrations.

Mounting economic stagnation—as revealed in scarcities of investment capital, a general decline in living standards, and the failure to meet even modest development goals—further undermined the government's position. Forces unleashed by the growing economic crisis combined with student unrest to create an opposition alliance. Workers, public servants, peasants, and many unemployed urban youth of Antananarivo joined the student strike, which spread to the provinces. Protesters set fire to the town hall and to the offices of a French-language newspaper in the capital.

The turning point occurred on May 13 when the Republican Security Force (Force Républicaine de Sécurité—FRS) opened fire on the rioters; in the ensuing melee, between fifteen and forty persons were killed and about 150 injured. Tsiranana declared a state of national emergency and on May 18 dissolved his government, effectively ending the First Republic. He then turned over full power to the National Army under the command of General Gabriel Ramanantsoa, a politically conservative Merina and former career officer in the French army. The National Army had maintained strict political neutrality in the crisis, and its intervention to restore order was welcomed by protesters and opposition elements.

The Ramanantsoa military regime could not resolve rising economic and ethnic problems, and narrowly survived an attempted coup d'état on December 31, 1974. The fact that the coup was led by several côtier officers against a Merina military leader underscored the growing Merina/côtier polarization in the military. In an attempt at restoring unity, Ramanantsoa, on February 5, 1975, turned over power to Colonel Richard Ratsimandrava (a Merina with a less "aristocratic" background). Five days later, Ratsimandrava was assassinated, and a National Military Directorate was formed to restore order by declaring martial law, strictly censoring political expression, and suspending all political parties.

The political transition crisis was resolved on June 15, 1975, when the National Military Directorate selected Lieutenant Commander Didier Ratsiraka as head of state and president of a new ruling body, the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC). The choice of Ratsiraka allayed ethnic concerns because he was a côtier belonging to the Betsimisaraka ethnic group. In addition, Ratsiraka—a dedicated socialist—was perceived by his military peers as a consensus candidate capable of forging unity among the various leftist political parties (such as AKFM and Monina), students, urban workers, the peasantry, and the armed forces.

The Second Republic, 1975–92

Ratsiraka was elected to a seven-year term as president in a national referendum on December 21, 1975, confirming the mandate for consensus and inaugurating Madagascar's Second Republic.

The guiding principle of Ratsiraka's administration was the need for a socialist "revolution from above." Specifically, he sought to radically change Malagasy society in accordance with programs and principles incorporated into the Charter of the Malagasy Socialist Revolution, popularly referred to as the "Red Book" (Boky Mena). According to this document, the primary goal of the newly renamed Democratic Republic of Madagascar was to build a "new society" founded on socialist principles and guided by the actions of the "five pillars of the revolution": the SRC, peasants and workers, young intellectuals, women, and the Popular Armed Forces. "The socialist revolution," explains the Red Book, "is the only choice possible for us in order to achieve rapid economic and cultural development in an autonomous, humane, and harmonious manner." The Red Book
advocated a new foreign policy based on the principle of nonalignment, and domestic policies focused on renovating the *fokolona*, decentralizing the administration, and fomenting economic development through rigorous planning and popular input.

Several early policies collectively decided by Ratsiraka and other members of the SRC set the tone of the revolution from above. The first major SRC decision was to bring the French-held sectors of the economy under government control. This "economic decolonization" was welcomed by nationalists, who long had clamored for economic and cultural independence from France. The government also lifted martial law but retained rigid press censorship. Finally, the SRC ordered the closure of an earth satellite tracking station operated by the United States as part of its commitment to nonaligned foreign relations.

Political consolidation proceeded apace following the addition of ten civilians to the SRC in January 1976. This act constituted the beginning of a civil-military partnership in that the SRC became more representative of the country's major political tendencies and ethnic communities. In March the Vanguard of the Malagasy Revolution (Antokin'ny Revolisiona Malagasy—Arema) was founded as the government party, and Ratsiraka became its secretary general. In sharp contrast to the single-party states created by other African Marxist leaders, Arema served as simply one (albeit the most powerful) member of a coalition of six parties united under the umbrella of the National Front for the Defense of the Revolution (Front National pour la Défense de la Révolution—FNDR). Membership in the FNDR, necessary for participation in the electoral process, was preconditioned on party endorsement of the revolutionary principles and programs contained in the Red Book.

Ratsiraka and Arema clearly dominated the political system. In the *fokolona* elections held in March 1977, for example, Arema captured 90 percent of 73,000 contested seats in 11,400 assemblies. In June 1977, Arema won 220 out of a total of 232 seats in elections for six provincial general assemblies, and 112 out of a total of 137 seats in the Popular National Assembly. This trend toward consolidation was most vividly demonstrated by Ratsiraka's announcement of his 1977 cabinet in which Arema members held sixteen of eighteen ministerial posts.

Yet, less than three years after taking power, Ratsiraka's regime was confronted with growing popular disenchantment.

As early as September 1977, antigovernment demonstrations erupted in Antananarivo because of severe shortages in foodstuffs and essential commodities. This trend intensified as the economy worsened under the weight of ill-conceived economic policies that gradually centralized government control over the key sectors of the economy, including banking and agriculture. Ratsiraka defiantly adopted authoritarian tactics in response to the evolving opposition, sending in the armed forces to stifle dissent and maintain order during student riots in May 1978. In the economic realm, however, Ratsiraka accepted the free-market reforms demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF—see Glossary) in order to ensure an infusion of foreign assistance vital to keeping the economy functioning. Whereas Ratsiraka's drift toward authoritarianism provided his enemies with political cannon fodder, his economic reforms led them to charge him with abandoning "scientific socialism" and alienated his traditional base of political supporters, as well.

The results of presidential elections within the de facto single-party framework that prevailed throughout the Second Republic clearly demonstrated Ratsiraka's declining political fortunes. Widespread initial enthusiasm for his socialist revolution from above secured him nearly 95 percent of the popular vote in the 1975 presidential elections, but support declined to 80 percent in 1982 and to only 63 percent in 1989. The year of 1989 marked a special turning point in that the fall of the Berlin Wall heralded the intellectual death of single-party rule in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and similarly transformed electoral politics in Africa. In the case of Madagascar, increasingly vocal opposition parties denounced what they and international observers considered massive fraud in the 1989 presidential election, including Ratsiraka's refusal to update outdated voting lists that excluded the anti-Ratsiraka youth vote and the stuffing of ballot boxes at unmonitored rural polling stations. Massive demonstrations against Ratsiraka's inauguration led to violent clashes in Antananarivo that, according to official figures, left seventy-five dead and wounded.

Popular discontent with the Ratsiraka regime heightened on August 10, 1991, when more than 400,000 citizens marched peacefully on the President's Palace in order to oust the Ratsiraka government and create a new multiparty political system. Ratsiraka already faced an economy crippled by a general
strike that had begun in May, as well as a divided and restless military whose loyalty no longer could be assumed. When the Presidential Guard opened fire on the marchers and killed and wounded hundreds, a crisis of leadership occurred.

The net result of these events was Ratsiraka’s agreement on October 31, 1991, to support a process of democratic transition, complete with the formulation of a new constitution and the holding of free and fair multiparty elections. Albert Zafy, the central leader of the opposition forces and a cotier of the Tsimihety ethnic group, played a critical role in this transition process and ultimately emerged as the first president of Madagascar’s Third Republic. The leader of the Comité des Forces Vives (Vital Forces Committee, known as Forces Vives), an umbrella opposition group composed of sixteen political parties that spearheaded the 1991 demonstrations, Zafy also emerged as the head of what became known as the High State Authority, a transitional government that shared power with the Ratsiraka regime during the democratization process.

A new draft constitution was approved by 75 percent of those voting in a national referendum on August 19, 1992. The first round of presidential elections followed on November 25. Frontrunner Zafy won 46 percent of the popular vote as the Forces Vives candidate, and Ratsiraka, as leader of his own newly created progovernment front, the Militant Movement for Malagasy Socialism (Mouvement Militant pour le Socialisme Malagache—MMSM), won approximately 29 percent of the vote. The remaining votes were split among a variety of other candidates. Because neither candidate obtained a majority of the votes cast, a second round of elections between the two frontrunners was held on February 10, 1993. Zafy emerged victorious with nearly 67 percent of the popular vote.

**The Third Republic, 1993—**

The Third Republic officially was inaugurated on March 27, 1993, when Zafy was sworn in as president. The victory of the Forces Vives was further consolidated in elections held on June 13, 1993, for 138 seats in the newly created National Assembly. Voters turned out in low numbers (roughly 30 to 40 percent abstained) because they were being called upon to vote for the fourth time in less than a year. The Forces Vives and other allied parties won seventy-five seats. This coalition gave Zafy a clear majority and enabled him to choose Francisque Ravony of the Forces Vives as prime minister.

By the latter half of 1994, the heady optimism that accompanied this dramatic transition process had declined somewhat as the newly elected democratic government found itself confronted with numerous economic and political obstacles. Adding to these woes was the relatively minor but nonetheless embarrassing political problem of Ratsiraka’s refusal to vacate the President’s Palace. The Zafy regime has found itself under increasing economic pressure from the IMF and foreign donors to implement market reforms, such as cutting budget deficits and a bloated civil service, that do little to respond to the economic problems facing the majority of Madagascar’s population. Zafy also confronts growing divisions within his ruling coalition, as well as opposition groups commonly referred to as "federalists" seeking greater power for the provinces (known as faritany) under a more decentralized government (see fig. 2). Although recently spurred by the desire of anti-Zafy forces to gain greater control over local affairs, historically Madagascar has witnessed a tension between domination by the central highlanders and pressures from residents of outlying areas to manage their own affairs. In short, the Zafy regime faces the dilemma of using relatively untested political structures and “rules of the game” to resolve numerous issues of governance.

**Physical Environment**

**Topography**

Madagascar can be divided into five geographical regions: the east coast, the Tsaratana Massif, the central highlands, the west coast, and the southwest. The highest elevations parallel the east coast, whereas the land slopes more gradually to the west coast (see fig. 3).

The east coast consists of a narrow band of lowlands, about fifty kilometers wide, formed from the sedimentation of alluvial soils, and an intermediate zone, composed of steep bluffs alternating with ravines bordering an escarpment of about 500 meters in elevation, which gives access to the central highlands. The coastal region extends roughly from north of Baie d’Antongil, the most prominent feature on the east coast of the island formed by the Masoala Peninsula, to the far south of the island. The coastline is straight, with the exception of the bay, offering less in the way of natural harbors than the west coast. The Canal des Pangalanes (Lakandranon’ Ampalangalana), an
800-kilometer-long lagoon formed naturally by the washing of sand up on the island by the Indian Ocean currents and by the silting of rivers, is a feature of the coast; it has been used both as a means of transportation up and down the coast and as a fishing area. The beach slopes steeply into deep water. The east coast is considered dangerous for swimmers and sailors because of the large number of sharks that frequent the shoreline.

The Tsaratanana Massif region at the north end of the island contains, at 2,880 meters, the highest point on the island and, north of this, the Montagne d'Ambre (Ambohitra), which is of volcanic origin. The coastline is deeply indented; two prominent features are the excellent natural harbor at Antsiranana (Diégo Suarez), just south of the Cap d'Ambre (Tanjon' i Bobaomby), and the large island of Nosy-Bé to the west. The mountainous topography to the south, however, limits the potential of the port at Antsiranana by impeding the flow of traffic from other parts of the island.

The central highlands, which range from 800 to 1,800 meters in altitude, contain a wide variety of topographies: rounded and eroded hills, massive granite outcroppings, extinct volcanoes, eroded peneplains, and alluvial plains and marshes, which have been converted into irrigated rice fields. The central highlands extend from the Tsaratanana Massif in the north to the Ivakoany Massif in the south. They are defined rather clearly by the escarpments along the east coast, and they slope gently to the west coast. The central highlands include the Anjafy High Plateaux; the volcanic formations of Itasy (Lake Itasy itself is found in a volcanic crater) and the Ankaratra Massif, reaching a height of 2,666 meters; and the Ivakoany Massif in the south. The Isalo Roiniforme Massif lies between the central highlands and the west coast. Antananarivo, the national capital, is located in the northern portion of the central highlands at 1,468 meters above sea level. A prominent feature of the central highlands is a rift valley running north to south, located east of Antananarivo and including Lac Alaotra, the largest body of water on the island, having a length of forty kilometers. The lake is located 761 meters above sea level and is bordered by two cliffs, rising 701 meters to the west and 488 meters to the east, which form the walls of a valley resembling the rift valleys of East Africa. This region has experienced geological subsidence, and earth tremors are frequent here.
The west coast, composed of sedimentary formations deposited in several layers over time, is more indented than the east coast, especially in the northwest, thus offering a number of fine harbors sheltered from cyclones, such as the harbor at Mahajanga. Deep bays and well-protected harbors have attracted explorers, traders, and pirates from Europe, Africa, and the Middle East since ancient times; thus, the area has served as an important bridge between Madagascar and the outside world. Yet the broad alluvial plains found on the coast between Mahajanga and Toliara, which are believed to have great agricultural potential, are thinly inhabited and remain largely unexploited.

The southwest is bordered on the east by the Ivakoany Massif and on the north by the Isala Roinforme Massif. It includes two regions along the south coast, the Mahafaly Plateau and the desert region occupied by the Antandroy people.

The Mananara and Mangoro rivers flow from the central highlands to the east coast, as does the Maningory, which flows from Lake Alaotra. Other rivers flowing east into the Indian Ocean include the Bemarivo, the Ivondro, and the Mananjary. These rivers tend to be short because the watershed is located close to the east coast. Owing to the steep elevations, they flow rapidly, often over spectacular waterfalls. The rivers flowing to the west coast and emptying into the Mozambique Channel tend to be longer and slower, because of the more gradual slope of the land. The major rivers on the west coast are the Sambirano, the Mahajamba, the Betsiboka (the port of Mahajanga is located at the mouth), the Mania, the North and South Mahavavy, the Mangoky, and the Onilahy. The Ikopa, which flows past Antananarivo, is a tributary of the Betsiboka. The Mangoky River has a basin area of some 50,000 square kilometers; the Ikopa River and the Betsiboka River have basin areas of 18,550 and 11,800 square kilometers, respectively. The principal river in the south, the Mandrare, has a basin area of some 12,435 square kilometers, but it runs dry during certain months in this desert region. Important lakes, aside from Alaotra, include Lake Kinkony in the northwest and Lake Ihotry in the southwest.

Madagascar has been called the "Great Red Island" because of the supposed preponderance of red lateritic soils. The red soils predominate in the central highlands, although there are much richer soils in the regions of former volcanic activity—Itasy and Ankaratra, and Tsaratanana to the north. A narrow
band of alluvial soils is found all along the east coast and at the mouths of the major rivers on the west coast; clay, sand, and limestone mixtures are found in the west; and shallow or skeletal laterite and limestone are located in the south.

Climate

The climate is dominated by the southeastern trade winds that originate in the Indian Ocean anticyclone, a center of high atmospheric pressure that seasonally changes its position over the ocean. Madagascar has two seasons: a hot, rainy season from November to April; and a cooler, dry season from May to October. There is, however, great variation in climate owing to elevation and position relative to dominant winds. The east coast has a subequatorial climate and, being most directly exposed to the trade winds, has the heaviest rainfall, averaging as much as 3.5 meters annually. This region is notorious not only for a hot, humid climate in which tropical fevers are endemic but also for the destructive cyclones that occur during the rainy season, coming in principally from the direction of the Mascarene Islands. Because rain clouds discharge much of their moisture east of the highest elevations on the island, the central highlands are appreciably drier and, owing to the altitude, also cooler. Thunderstorms are common during the rainy season in the central highlands, and lightning is a serious hazard.

Antananarivo receives practically all of its average annual 1.4 meters of rainfall between November and April. The dry season is pleasant and sunny, although somewhat chilly, especially in the mornings. Although frosts are rare in Antananarivo, they are common at higher elevations. During this time, the blue skies of the central highlands around Antananarivo are considered by many to be among the clearest and most beautiful in the world.

The west coast is drier than either the east coast or the central highlands because the trade winds lose their humidity by the time they reach this region. The southwest and the extreme south are semidesert; as little as one-third of a meter of rain falls annually at Toliara. Overall, surface water is most abundant along the east coast and in the far north (with the exception of the area around Cap d'Ambre, which has relatively little surface water). Amounts diminish to the west and south, and the driest regions are in the extreme south.

Madagascar suffers the impact of cyclones from time to time. From February 2–4, 1994, Madagascar was struck by Cyclone Geralda, the worst cyclone to come ashore on the island since 1927. The cyclone killed seventy people and destroyed enough property to leave approximately 500,000 homeless, including 30,000 in Antananarivo and 80,000 in Toamasina. The cyclone also significantly damaged the country’s infrastructure, most notably coastal roads, railroads, and telecommunications, as well as agriculture. Damage has been estimated at US$45 million, and the World Bank’s (see Glossary) International Development Association and various European organizations are engaged in financing the reconstruction. The Madagascar government will contribute US$6 million toward the infrastructure rehabilitation.

Flora and Fauna

The island of Madagascar has been described as an "alternate world" or a "world apart" because of the uniqueness and rarity of many of its plant and animal species. Their characteristics are believed to reflect the island’s origins as a part of Gondwanaland and its many millions of years of virtually total isolation following the breakup of the landmass. Thus, certain plants, including the "traveler's" tree (so called because its trunk holds potable water), are found both in Madagascar and on the South American continent, but not in Africa. Many of the most characteristic African species, particularly such large mammals as the elephant, rhinoceros, giraffe, zebra, and antelope and such beasts of prey as the lion and leopard, do not exist in Madagascar. In addition, the island has been spared the great variety of venomous snakes indigenous to the African continent. Although it is assumed that most life forms on the island had an African (or South American) origin, many millions of years of near-complete isolation have allowed old species—elsewhere extinct—to survive and new species unique to the island to evolve. Thus, a great number of plant, insect, reptile, and fish species are found only in Madagascar, and all indigenous land mammal species—sixty-six in all—are unique to the island.

Madagascar was once covered almost completely by forests, but the practice of burning the woods to clear the land for dry rice cultivation has denuded most of the landscape, especially in the central highlands. Rain forests are concentrated on the steep hillsides along a slender north-south axis bordering the
east coast, from the Tsaratanana Massif in the north to Tôlanaro in the south. Secondary growth, which has replaced the original forest and consists to a large extent of traveler's trees, raffia, and baobabs, is found in many places along the east coast and in the north. The vegetation of the central highlands and the west coast is for the most part savanna or steppe, and coarse prairie grass predominates where erosion has not exposed the orange-red lateritic soil. In the southwest, the vegetation is adapted to desert conditions.

The remaining rain forest contains a great number of unique plant species. The country has some 900 species of orchids. Bananas, mangoes, coconut, vanilla, and other tropical plants grow on the coasts, and the eucalyptus tree, brought from Australia, is widespread.

Wood and charcoal from the forests are used to meet 80 percent of domestic fuel needs. As a result, fuelwood has become scarce. The World Bank in 1990 launched an environmental program that has increased the planting of pine and eucalyptus to satisfy fuel needs.

Society

Population And Ethnicity

Madagascar has experienced steady population growth throughout the twentieth century. Since the first systematic census was undertaken by colonial authorities at the turn of the twentieth century, the population has grown from 2.2 million in 1900 to 7.6 million in 1975 (the last year that a census was undertaken) and to a population estimated by the IMF in mid-1995 at 11.86 million. It is expected that the population will approach 17 million by the end of the twenty-first century, underscoring a more than fivefold increase in less than a hundred years. Moreover, the average rate of population growth itself has increased from 2.3 percent in 1975 to 3.1 percent over the 1980 to 1990 decade. This rate has made Madagascar one of the most rapidly growing countries in Africa, with a large youthful population—in 1992 nearly 55 percent of the population was under twenty years of age.

The increase in population is significantly influenced by Madagascar’s increasingly healthy and youthful population. As a result of more extensive and accessible health care services, for example, Madagascar has witnessed a 36 percent decline in infant mortality from 177 per 1,000 live births in 1981 to 114 per 1,000 in 1991—the average for sub-Saharan Africa was 103. Moreover, as of 1991 a significant portion of the population (estimates range from 40 to 50 percent) was below fourteen years of age, and population density (per square kilometer) had risen to twenty (from roughly fourteen in 1981).

The urban population percentage has doubled since 1975, rising from 13 percent of the population to 26 percent in 1992. The annual urban population growth rate in the 1980s was 6.4 percent. Figures for Madagascar's foreign population in the early 1990s are lacking, but in 1988, such persons were estimated to include 25,000 Comorans, 18,000 French, 17,000 Indians, and 9,000 Chinese.

A unique blend of African and Asian landscapes and cultures is usually one of the first things recognized by first-time travelers to Madagascar. In the zebu cattle-raising regions of the south and west, for example, the savannas resemble those of East Africa. In the central highlands, however, irrigated and terraced rice fields evoke images of Southeast Asia. These contrasting images lie at the heart of an ongoing debate over the origins of the Malagasy people.

According to one theory, peoples from the Indonesian archipelago migrated along the coast of south Asia, across the Arabian Peninsula into the east coast of Africa and, finally, across the Mozambique Channel into present-day Madagascar. This movement occurred over several generations and, because of the gradual interaction between Asian and African populations, led to the arrival and eventual implantation of a distinct Malagasy people and culture. A second theory emphasizes the diversity of the peoples inhabiting Madagascar. Simply put, proponents argue that the Malagasy resulted from a series of migrations by different peoples over time. According to this theory, migrants from the Indonesian archipelago arrived first and eventually settled in the central highlands, followed by the arrival of African peoples as a result of normal migrational trends and the rise of the slave trade. Recent scholarship has suggested that perhaps the theories are complementary, with greater emphasis being placed on the first.

Scholars traditionally have described Madagascar as being divided into eighteen or twenty ethnic groups, each with its own distinct territory; political developments in the contemporary period are often described in terms of ethnic conflict. Yet ethnicity is potentially misleading in the Malagasy context because it connotes a more or less self-sufficient and unique
cultural, socioeconomic, and historically united group that perceives itself as being different from other groups.

The population of Madagascar, however, is remarkably homogeneous in terms of language. Unlike most African countries, the vast majority speak the indigenous national Malagasy language. Moreover, despite significant variations, important cultural elements unify the Malagasy people and give them a "pan-islandic" identity. These include a system of kinship in which descent can be traced through either the paternal or the maternal line. The same kinship terms are used by all Malagasy. A second important element is the centrality of respect for the dead (razana) to the social, moral, and religious life of the people. Tombs and the ceremonies related to them are prominent features of both the Malagasy landscape and the way of life of the people. A third important feature is the division of Malagasy societys into three relatively rigid strata: nobles, commoners, and slaves (or descendants of slaves). Other common elements include the circumcision of children, the practice of astrology and divination, and certain concepts associated with authority, such as hainina (sacred, or life-giving, power), which legitimate the position of political and familial authorities.

Another potentially valuable method of analyzing Malagasy society is to differentiate between the so-called côtiers, or peoples living in coastal areas, and those who live in the central highlands. Indeed, scholars have noted in recent years that the salience of ethnic group identity has declined, while the division between the central highlands peoples and the côtiers continues to be of great importance in understanding social and political competition. Although many observers equate the term central highlander with the Merina ethnic group (once again suggesting the importance of ethnicity), it is important to note that the Betsileo people also live within this region, and the Merina themselves have settled in other regions of the country. Equally important, many côtiers do not live anywhere near the coast. In this sense, the central highlands/côtier split is best understood as the historical outcome of the domination of the Merina empire, the original center of which was Imerina (around the city of Antananarivo) and was located in the central highlands.

A true understanding of the character of Madagascar's population and historical development requires an appreciation of the inhabitants' shared characteristics, including language and kinship structure, as well as the central highlands/côtier split and other divisions based on geographical regions. These latter divisions coincide with the major geographical divisions of the island: east coast, west coast, central highlands, southwest, and the Tsaratanana Massif. Within these regions, the people have certain cultural similarities accentuated by the natural environment.

**Peoples of the East Coast**

The Betsimisaraka constitute the second largest (14.9 percent) group of Madagascar's population and clearly are the most numerous on the east coast. They are divided into three subgroups: the northern Betsimisaraka, the Betanimena, and the southern Betsimisaraka. Their territory extends along the coast in a narrow band from the Bemarivo River in the north to the Mananjary River in the south, a distance of some 640 kilo-
meters. The Betsimisaraka, whose name means "numerous and inseparable," have traditionally been traders, seafarers, and fishers, as well as cultivators of the tropical lowland areas. They trace their origins to the confederacy established by Ratsimilaho, allegedly the son of a British pirate and a Malagasy princess, who unified several small coastal states in the eighteenth century. The confederation continued after Ratsimilaho died in 1751, but it was much weakened by internal conflict and external pressure. The Betsimisaraka territory has included the important port city of Toamasina, as well as Fenerive and Maroansetra at the head of the Baie d'Antongil.

South of the Betsimisaraka are ethnic groups who trace their origins to Islamic traders of mixed Arab, African, and Malayo-Indonesian origin who settled on the coasts after the fourteenth century, and are known as Antalaotra ("people of the sea"). The Antambahoaoka, whose name is translated as "the people," make up 0.4 percent of the population and live around the Mananjary River just south of the Betsimisaraka territory. They claim as their ancestor Raminina, a king who came from Mecca around the early fourteenth century, and are part of a larger group known as the Zafi-Raminina, or "descendants of Raminina"; some of this group migrated from the Mananjary region to become rulers of peoples to the south. Some scholars have speculated that the Zafi-Raminina may have formed part of the ruling class of the Merina, who came to dominate Madagascar in the nineteenth century. Their power and prestige derived from their willingness to use their knowledge of astrology, medicine, and divination to serve the courts of kings throughout Madagascar.

Another people descended from the Antalaotra, the Antaimoro ("people of the shore") constitute 3.4 percent of the population and also live south of the Betsimisaraka. The Antaimoro were apparently the last significant arrivals, appearing around the end of the fifteenth century, possibly from the Arabian Peninsula with a sojourn in Ethiopia or Somalia, just before the coming of the Europeans in the sixteenth century. They are the only Malagasy people before the nineteenth century to possess a system of writing, based on Arabic script. Their books, the sorabe (from the Arabic sura, meaning "writing," and the Malagasy be, meaning "big" or "great"), which were inscribed in ink on special paper made from beaten wood bark, dealt with astrology, divination, medicine, and historical chronicles. Like the Antambahoaoka, the Antaimoro are noted

throughout Madagascar for their knowledge of the supernatural and medicine.

Among a number of other groups around Farafangana, at the southern end of the Canal des Pangalanes, the most important are the Anafa ("people of the sands"). They constitute 1.2 percent of the population. To the south, the Antaisaka (5.3 percent of the population) are found in large numbers around the alluvial valley of the Mananara River. The Antanoky ("people of the island"); who live in the extreme southeastern part of the island around Tolomaro, make up 2.3 percent of the population.

The peoples of the eastern escarpment separating the east coast from the central highlands are the Sihanaka ("people of the lake"), who represent 2.4 percent of the population; the Bezanozano (0.8 percent), living south of the Sihanaka; and the Tanala (3.8 percent). The Sihanaka live around Lake Alaotra and practice wet-rice cultivation in a manner similar to that of the Merina. The Bezanozano ("many little braids," referring to their hair style), the Tanala ("people of the forest"), and the inland Betsimisaraka practice slash-and-burn agriculture in the forests, cultivating dry rice, corn, yams, and other crops. Although the Merina conquered the Sihanaka, the Bezanozano, and the inland Betsimisaraka in the early nineteenth century, the southern Tanala remained independent up to the French occupation.

Peoples of the West Coast

The peoples of the west coast, known as the Sakalava ("people of the long valley"), constitute 6.2 percent of the population. Their large territory of some 128,000 square kilometers extends in a broad band up the coast from the Onilahy River in the south to Nosy-Be in the north. The Sakalava were among the most dynamic and expansionist of the Malagasy peoples from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, when the Merina conquered them. During this period, Sakalava territory was divided into a number of kingdoms ruled by branches of the royal Marosera clan. In the early eighteenth century, the kings of Menabe in the south and Boina in the north united these divisions into confederations.

The Sakalava, along with the Bara people of the southwest, are considered the most "African" of the Malagasy peoples. Specifically, several elements in Sakalava culture bear a strong resemblance to those of Africa, including the keeping of relics
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(such as pieces of bone) considered to have magical powers and the practice of spirit possession, in which a medium transmits the wishes of dead kings to the living. The Sakalava are also a pastoral people, and those who live in the hinterland keep large herds of zebu cattle that outnumber the human population.

The Sakalava are perhaps best known for the seafaring skills they developed throughout history. In the seventeenth century, they were potentially the first to receive firearms from Europeans in exchange for cattle and slaves and, thus, were in a position to force many of the other peoples of the island to pay them tribute. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, large fleets of Sakalava outrigger canoes went on seasonal raids to capture slaves in the Comoro Islands and on the East African coast, causing much devastation. They also sought slaves in the central highlands of Madagascar. Because of the Merina conquest and subsequent French occupation at the end of the century, Sakalava fortunes declined somewhat. They have not increased in number as rapidly as many of the other Malagasy peoples, and their territories, still the largest of all the ethnic groups, have been encroached upon, particularly by the Tsimihety people to the east. A people known as the Makoa, the descendants of slaves brought from Africa by slave raiders, also live along the northwest coast and constitute about 1.1 percent of the population.

Peoples of the Central Highlands

The Merina, whose name means "those from the country where one can see far" (an eloquent yet important reference to their control of the central highlands) are not only the most numerous of the Malagasy peoples, representing more than one-quarter of the total population (26.2 percent), but since the early nineteenth century have been the most organized in terms of social, economic, and political structure. During the nineteenth century, the Merina almost succeeded in unifying the entire island under a centralized administration. Although their influence declined somewhat during the French colonial period, especially after the unsuccessful Revolt of 1947, they are heavily represented among the country's socioeconomic and political elite. Merina territory originally consisted only of the lands encircling the current capital of Antananarivo, but as they expanded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it came to include most of the northern central highlands, now the province of Antananarivo. Many Merina have settled in other parts of the island as government officials, professionals, and traders, and all the major cities have sizable Merina populations.

The Merina are considered the most "Asian" of the Malagasy ethnic groups in terms of their physical characteristics and culture. Having relatively light complexions and straight black hair, as well as a way of life based on wet-rice cultivation, they are strongly reminiscent of the peoples of Southeast Asia. It has been suggested that the ancestors of the Merina may have preserved their Malayo-Indonesian characteristics through the practice of endogamy or intermarriage. Such a practice would have discouraged their marrying with African peoples even during their hypothesized sojourn on the East African coast, which may have lasted centuries. The plausibility of this thesis is supported by the fact that the Merina continue to practice endogamy, although it is also plausible that Merina ancestors may simply have migrated directly to Madagascar without settling first in Africa. The Merina are sensitive to physical differences and distinguish between people who are fotsy (white), with relatively light complexions and descended from the freeborn of the nineteenth-century Merina kingdom, and those who are mainty (black), descendants of slaves or captives from other parts of the island who are described as being more "African" in physical appearance. Fotsy and mainty are not always clearly distinguishable, even to the Merina themselves, but this racial distinction nonetheless divides Merina society into two distinct groups and contributes to its highly unequal nature.

The Betsileo, who constitute 12.1 percent of the population and live in the central highlands south of the Merina in a region of about 40,000 square kilometers, have a culture similar to that of their northern neighbors. They are reputedly the best farmers in Madagascar, building rice terraces on the slopes of steep hills similar to those of Indonesia or the Philippines. They were united in the late eighteenth century by King Andriamanalimbetany of Isandra, one of the four Betsileo royal principalities, but were incorporated into the Merina kingdom in 1830. The Betsileo share something of the privileged position of the Merina, constituting a significant portion of Madagascar's official, professional, and skilled artisan classes.

South of the Betsileo live the Bara (3.3 percent of the population), who are divided into five clans in the dry regions at the
of the status of France as the former colonial power, Madagascar is home to many former French colonial administrators and military officers. The country is also home to French professionals, businesspersons, managers of large plantations, and colons (small farmers) working their own holdings. Approximately 18,000 French citizens lived and worked in Madagascar in the early 1990s.

The Comorans (currently numbering 25,000) historically have constituted a second important nonindigenous population group, but their numbers decreased after racial riots in Mahajanga in December 1976 resulted in nearly 1,400 killed; in addition, some 20,000 were repatriated to the islands in the ensuing months. They have been concentrated in the northern part of Madagascar, along the coast, and prior to 1976 formed more than one-tenth of the populations of the port cities of Mahajanga and Antsiranana. Most of the Comorans, who adhere to the Muslim faith, have migrated from the island of Njazidja (Grande Comore); they typically work as unskilled laborers in the fields or on the docks of the ports.

- Indo-Pakistanis (roughly numbering 17,000) represent a third nonindigenous minority group, and trace their origins to the regions of Gujarat or Bombay on the Indian subcontinent. Like the Comorans, they are for the most part Muslim. Despite living on the island for several generations (or even several centuries), the Indo-Pakistanis still maintain contact with their home areas in northwestern India and Pakistan. Historically, they have worked as merchants and small entrepreneurs and in the past have monopolized the wholesale and retail trade in textiles. They tend to be concentrated in the cities along the west coast.

The Chinese (numbering approximately 9,000) constitute a fourth major nonindigenous population group. Like the Indo-Pakistanis, they are engaged primarily in commerce but are found mostly along the east coast and around Antananarivo. They are more commonly found in the rural areas than the Indo-Pakistanis. They work as small traders and often marry Malagasy.

**Language**

The Malagasy language—spoken throughout Madagascar by the entire population—is the only one in the African region that belongs to the Malayo-Polynesian language family. Linguists believe that it shares a common origin with, and is most
closely related to Maanyan, a language spoken in southeast Borneo. Both Malagasy and Maanyan bear a close affinity with the languages of the western Indonesian archipelago, such as Malay, Javanese, Balinese, and the Minangkabau language of Sumatra.

The origins of the Malagasy language in southeast Asia are clearly demonstrated by common words and meanings shared with several of the Indonesian languages. For example, the Malagasy term antaloa (people of the sea) echoes the Malay laut (sea). Even more geographically widespread and interesting affinities have been discovered. Vahiny means "stranger" in Malagasy, while vahini means "girl" in Tahitian Polynesian. Scholars suggest that the two words (assuming they share a common origin) reveal that the first Malayo-Indonesian settlers along the African coast, or Madagascar itself, were male and that women came later as guests or strangers to settlements already established.

Although different regional dialects of Malagasy exist, these are mutually intelligible, and the language is a significant basis of cultural unity. Words are formed from roots with basic meanings, which are combined with prefixes or suffixes to create derivatives. Many Malagasy words, particularly names (such as that of the Merina king, Andrianampoinimerina), are very long, but certain syllables, particularly the last, are lightly accented or not at all.

A number of foreign words are found in the Malagasy vocabulary. The names of the days of the week and the months of the year are taken from Arabic, and the names of animals are taken from a Swahili dialect of East Africa. A number of English and French words also entered the language in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Before the nineteenth century, the only Malagasy people with a written language were the Antaimoro, keepers of the sorabe. By 1824–25, a written form of Malagasy using Roman characters was developed by members of the London Missionary Society working under the patronage of Merina King Radama I. The result was an almost perfectly consistent phonetic language that continues to be used throughout the country; the consonants are pronounced as in English and the vowels as in French, a compromise apparently promoted by Radama I. The completion of the alphabet enabled the missionaries to publish a Malagasy Bible and other books for their schools, and the possession of a written language was to prove decisive to the development of the Merina-dominated portion of Madagascar.

The colonial period witnessed the emergence of French as the dominant language of the island, and Malagasy was relegated to an inferior position, particularly in official and academic circles. Although the First Republic adopted an official policy of bilingualism (French and Malagasy), French continued to dominate until the inauguration of Ratsiraka and his promulgation of an official policy of Malagachization. Originally conceived by nationalists as the promotion of education in the national language, Malagachization also ultimately included the more radical denunciation of French culture and influence over the national economy and political system. Malagachization further entailed the creation of a common Malagasy language that partook of dialects from all the regions and peoples of the island rather than being primarily a Merina dialect, as remains the case with official Malagasy today. After 1982 the drive toward Malagachization increasingly faltered in favor of a continuing trend toward reembracing the concept of Madagascar's inclusion in the international francophone community. Indeed, French remains important, largely because of its international status and the fact that most of the leadership has been educated in French. Both Malagasy and French are used in official government publications.

Traditional Beliefs and Religion

A firm belief in the existence of close ties between the living and the dead constitutes the most basic of all traditional beliefs and the foundation for Malagasy religious and social values. All the Malagasy peoples have traditionally accepted the existence of a supreme God, known commonly as Zanahary (Creator) or Andriamanitra (Sweet, or Fragrant, Lord). The dead have been conceived as playing the role of intermediary between this supreme God and humankind and are viewed as having the power to affect the fortunes of the living for good or evil. The dead are sometimes described as "gods on earth," who are considered the most important and authoritative members of the family, intimately involved in the daily life of the living members. At the same time, the razana (best defined as "ancestors") are the sources from which the life force flows and the creators of Malagasy customs and ways of life. The living are merely temporary extensions of the dead. Great hardship or trouble can result if the dead are offended or neglected.
The burial tomb, a prominent part of the island landscape in all regions, is the primary link between the living and the dead among the Malagasy. It is built with great care and expense, reflecting the privileged position of the dead, and is often more costly and substantial than the houses of the living. The land upon which a family tomb is situated—tanindrazana (land of the ancestors)—is inalienable, and social and economic practices are designed to guarantee that tomb lands are kept within the family. Anthropologists have described the Merina as living, in effect, in two localities: the place where one happens to work and keep one's household, and the tanindrazana, a locality of much deeper sentimental significance, the spiritual center where the family tomb is located. The two are usually separated by a considerable distance. Among some groups, whether one decides to be buried in the tombs of the father's or mother's family determines individual descent-group allegiance.

The tombs of the various peoples around the island differ somewhat in form. Merina tombs tend to be solid, stone structures, built partially underground, with a chamber in which the bodies of ancestors are kept on shelves, wrapped in silk shrouds. The traditional tombs of the Mahafaly in the southwest were built of stone but surmounted by intricately carved wooden posts depicting human and animal figures. More recent Mahafaly tombs, particularly those built by rich families, are often made of concrete, with glass windows, brightly painted designs and often remarkable depictions of airplanes, taxicabs, or other modern paraphernalia mounted on the roof. At one time, it was the custom of the Sakalava people living around the Morondava River on the west coast to decorate their tombs with carvings showing explicit sexual activity. These were meant to illustrate the life-giving force, or fertility, of the ancestors.

Among the Merina and Betsileo peoples of the central highlands, the custom of famadihana ("placing" or the "turning" of the dead) reaffirms the link between the living and the dead. This occurs when a person is taken from a temporary tomb in the tanindrazana, and the remains are taken out of the tomb to be wrapped in new shrouds, or when a body is moved from one tomb to another. These ceremonies are costly, mainly because of the expense of providing food for a large number of relatives and guests. They represent for the peoples of the central highlands a time of communion with the razana and a means of avoiding or reducing guilt or blame. It is considered a serious transgression not to hold a famadihana when one is financially able to do so. The ceremony is presided over by an astrologer, but the chief participants are the close relatives of those persons whose remains are being moved or rewrapped. In this regard, the famadihana resembles in spirit a family reunion or the more austere ancestral ceremonies of China and Korea, where the spirits of ancestors are invited to a feast given by members of a family or lineage, rather than the funerals of the West, which are "final endings."

Although the famadihana does not occur outside the central highlands and the attitudes of the Merina and Betsileo toward the dead differ in certain significant respects, the idea of the dead as beings to be respected is universal in Madagascar. A number of different "souls" are recognized by the Malagasy. Among the Merina, these include the fanahy, a kind of essence
which determines individual character and behavior; thus, an individual can have a good or a bad fanahy. Another is the soul of the person after death, the ambiroa, which is called to the tomb for the celebration of the famadithana, but which, over time, is believed to blend with the collective spirit of other ancestors. The ambiroa is believed to permeate the tomb building, the family household, and the hills and valleys of the imandray, being in a sense omnipresent. Other concepts include the soul of a recently deceased person, the lole, which is said to be harmless but feels homesick for its old surroundings and often appears in the form of a moth or a butterfly. The anjalara, ghosts of the unknown dead, are often malevolent and frighten people at night. The emphases in the minds of the people, however, are not on the afterlife or on the experiences of the dead souls either as ghosts or in heaven or hell, but on the relationship of the dead with the living and the role of the former as bearers of power and authority.

The ombyasy and the mpanandro combine the functions of diviners, traditional healers, and astrologers. They originated among the Antaimoro and the Antambahaoka of the southwest coast, who were influenced by the Antalaoatra. Among the Antandroy, it is the ombyasy who are often asked to eradicate a mistake made by neglecting a taboo. The Bara consult the ombyasy to look after the sick and dying. Family heads ask them when to begin certain agricultural tasks or when to marry or circumcise those entering adulthood. Merina families have their personal diviners who consult the stars; their advice is requested on all enterprises that are thought to involve dangers. They are paid a regular salary and additional fees for extra services. They set the auspicious day for a famadithana. Even a highly educated Merina would not think of building a house without consulting the ombyasy or the mpanandro for the favorable day to begin work. When a marriage is contemplated, both sets of parents will ask the ombyasy and the mpanandro whether the partners will be compatible.

The science of the ombyasy and the mpanandro is tied to the concept of vintana, which means fate ordained by the position of moon, sun, and stars. Accordingly, different values and different forces, either active or passive, are attributed to each fraction of time. Space, too, is thought to be affected by these forces, east being superior to west, and north being superior to south. Northeast therefore is believed to be the most favorable direction. People build their houses on the north-south axis and reserve the northeastern corner for prayers. Guests are seated on the northern side, and chickens are kept in the southwestern corner.

Fady is impersonal and cannot be changed, but certain aspects can be foretold and avoided. For divination the ombyasy use a system of Arabic origin in which fruit seeds or grains of corn are put into rows of eight. Various figure combinations indicate the future and what to do regarding sickness, love, business, and other enterprises. The ombyasy also sell talismans made of such objects as dried or powdered vegetables, glass beads, or animal teeth.

Fady are taboos on the use of certain substances, particularly foods, or on the performance, including the timing, of certain acts. They continue to regulate much of Malagasy life. Many are connected with vintana, while others express certain social values. For example, to deny hospitality to a stranger is fady, as is the act of refusing this hospitality. The concept of fady often also expresses a well-developed metaphorical sense. According to one fady, it is wrong to sit in the doorway of a house while the rice is sprouting, since the door of the house is compared to the "gateway" of birth and by blocking it, one might impede the "birth" of the rice. It is important to remember, however, that fady, particularly dietary prohibitions, vary widely among different ethnic groups, and from village to village within the same ethnic group. To be at home in a different locality, travelers must acquaint themselves with a large number of local variations.

Traditional beliefs are augmented by imported organized religions. Although exact figures on religious affiliations do not exist, it is estimated that approximately 55 percent of the total population adhere to traditional beliefs, and 40 percent are Christian, about evenly divided between Roman Catholics and Protestants, the remaining 5 percent being Muslim. Indeed, Protestant and Roman Catholic churches have found themselves competing for new adherents, most notably underscored by the fact that villages in the central highlands often have two churches, one Protestant and one Roman Catholic, that face each other at opposite ends of the village. The Roman Catholic church enjoys its largest support among the Betsileo people in the southern portion of the central highlands, and is also associated with former slaves and the côtiers. Protestantism enjoys its largest support among the Merina of the central highlands and, therefore, historically has been perceived as the
Christian affiliation of the upper classes. Despite the minority status of Christians, the Council of Christian Churches in Madagascar played a major role in arbitrating a resolution to the conflict resulting from the violence and general strikes in May and August 1991 (see The Second Republic, 1975–92, this ch.).

The nineteenth century witnessed a confrontation between Christianity and traditional religious beliefs, as Queen Ranavalona I expelled foreign missionaries and persecuted Christians, putting many of them to death. The tide reversed at her death, and at the beginning of the reign of Ranavalona II, the old _sampy_—idols or talismans endowed with supernatural powers to protect the kingdom—were destroyed, and Protestantism became the religion of the royal family. Yet opposition has given way in many cases to a kind of mutual assimilation. Christian missionaries were able to build on the Malagasy concept of a supreme God by using the term, "Andriamanitra," to refer to the biblical God and by choosing one of the traditional terms for soul, _fanahy_, to define its Christian counterpart. Although the supremacy of Christianity in the central highlands led to the demise of idol worship, Malagasy pastors have not challenged the strength of traditional beliefs in the power and authority of the _razana_. Christians have their dead blessed at a church before burying them according to the old ceremonies, and may invite the pastor to attend a _famadikana_ and place a cross on top of the tomb. Christian belief in the power of a transcendent and somewhat distant God has blended with older beliefs in the closeness and intimacy of the dead as spiritual beings. Some Malagasy Christians will even say that the dead have become Christians themselves and continue to be the arbiters of right and wrong.

Exact figures are not available, but followers of the Sunni (see Glossary) and Shia (see Glossary) variants of Islam together constitute around 5 percent of the total population. Most are Comorans or Indo-Pakistanis; a small number are converted Malagasy. The majority are located in Mahajanga Province. A small minority of the Indian community practices Hinduism.

Social Structure and Family

Traditional society is hierarchical in structure. Kinship groups are ranked precisely along a superior/inferior continuum, and individuals within these groups are ranked according to age, descent, and gender. This pervasive ranking reflects the perceived power of ancestors as the source of _hasina_ (life-giving power), which is distributed unequally among individuals and family groups. Royal or noble persons are supposed to possess a greater amount of _hasina_ than others, so that their descendants enjoy superior social status. Within families of any rank, elders possess greater _hasina_ than the young, not only by virtue of their maturity and experience but also because they are perceived as closer to the dead and thus share in part of their power. Rulers do not rule alone but share their offices in effect with their ancestors, who are, in fact, more powerful and influential than the rulers themselves. Among the Sakalava, it is believed that the soul or spirit of a royal ancestor can take possession of a person in order to make known its commands to the living.

Social values are highly conservative, demonstrating an awareness of hierarchy and place that permeates the daily life of the people. Observers have noted, for example, that in Merina households each member of the family is expected to eat a meal in turn according to age; the youngest is served last. Family members are seated around the table in an arrangement that reflects age-rank, the father or grandfather occupying the "noble corner" (the northeast). Failure to honor the rank is considered a serious violation of _fady_. Children who eat before their elders can be severely punished. Within the village, the local notables and respected elders of kin groups, who are usually male, have preponderant influence in village affairs.

The society as a whole remains divided into a number of unequal social groups based entirely on descent. Among the Merina, Madagascar's dominant ethnic group, these are referred to as the _andriana_ (nobles), the _hova_ (commoners), and the _andeva_ (slaves or, more properly, the descendants of slaves). The distinction between _andriana_ and _hova_ on the one hand and _andeva_ on the other hand corresponds to the distinction between "whites" and "blacks" in Merina society. Among the Sakalava, royal clans descended from the Maroserana occupy the highest social position, followed by noble and commoner clans; the descendants of slaves again occupy the lowest status. Noble and commoner clans possess histories that define their relations to the king and their different social roles. The social hierarchy of the Malagasy people, however, is actually far more differentiated than this system might suggest, because
within each "caste" constituent clans or kin groups are also arranged in a precise hierarchy of superior and inferior that is well known to all individuals.

Among the Merina, the Malagasy people most thoroughly studied by anthropologists, the population is divided into a number of *karazana* (large kin groups) that are defined in terms of the common land upon which the family tomb is located. They are hierarchically ranked and usually named after a single ancestor. Members of the same *karazana* are described as being "of one womb." The general practice is for individuals to marry within the *karazana* or even within the same subunit to which they belong. Although endogamy carries with it the taint of incest, intermarriage is preferred because, in this way, land (especially tomb land) can be kept within the kin unit rather than being inherited by outsiders. Preserving the boundaries of the kinship unit through intermarriage preserves the integrity of the all-important link between the living and the dead.

Below the level of the *karazana*, the Merina are divided into *fianakaviana* (family), which includes close relatives by blood and affiliation. The family is less defined by territory than by its role as the locus of feelings of loyalty and affection. Members of the same *fianakaviana* are *havana* (relatives) but with a strong emotional connotation. The ideal of *fhavanana* (amity, solidarity) is that *havana* should love and trust one another, rendering mutual aid and sharing each other's possessions. When a man moves to new lands, his relatives will often come after him to claim parcels of land to cultivate. Persons who are not *havana* are often considered untrustworthy. However, fictive kinship, described as "those who are kin because they are loved," is a widespread Malagasy institution drawing individuals into an intermediate status between strangers and kin. This system can be very useful in daily life, particularly outside the *tanindrazana*.

Descent among the Merina is neither strictly patrilineal nor matrilineal. Instead, the practice of endogamy enables the two families involved in a marriage to define the situation as one in which they each receive a new child. The husband and wife are equally deferential to both sets of in-laws. Although women have occupied social roles inferior to those of men in traditional society, they are not completely subject to the will of their husbands or parents-in-law, as has been the case in strictly patrilineal societies.

There is some choice of which tomb group an individual will join and, thus, in which tomb he or she will be buried. Tomb groups consist of closely related *fianakaviana* members who own and maintain a tomb in common. The heads of tomb groups are local notables or government officials, and each member contributes to the tomb's upkeep, often a heavy financial burden because the tomb buildings are large and in frequent need of repair. New tombs are built, and new tomb groups are formed with the passing of generations. Both social identity and relationship with the dead are determined by one's tomb group. The most unfortunate persons are those who, because they are strangers or because of some other disqualification, cannot be interred within a tomb.

The difference between former free persons and former slaves remains particularly significant, despite the formal abolition of slavery by the French in 1897. Persons of slave origin are generally poorer than other Merina and are expected to perform the most menial tasks and to be particularly deferential to others. One observer noticed among the Betsileo in a rural household that during a meal to which a number of men had been invited, two persons of slave origin had to use a common plate, while free persons had their own plates. Former slaves are also often stereotypically described as rude, uncultured, and ugly. Marriages between persons of slave origin and other Merina are rare. When they do occur, the offspring are considered part of the slave group and are denied a place in the tomb of the free parent's family. In fact, the parent of the offspring may also be denied entrance. Former slaves do not possess links to a *tanindrazana* and, thus, are apt to be more mobile than the descendants of free persons, because migration offers the possibility of escaping from the stigma of slave descent. It is estimated that as much as 50 percent of the population of Imerina is of slave origin, whereas the percentage for the Betsileo territory is much lower.

Although the Merina social and kinship pattern is to a great degree common to all the peoples of Madagascar, there are important variations based in part on different histories and on ecological variations between the rice-growing and pastoral regions of the country. The pastoral Bara and the Tsimihety, who are agriculturalists but place great cultural and sentimental significance on herds of zebu, base descent and inheritance on patrilineality more strictly than the Merina.
Education

In traditional Madagascar, education was not seen as separate from the other spheres of life. It emphasized the importance of maintaining one's place in a hierarchical society, trained people in the proper observance of ritual and innumerable *fady* prohibitions, and, above all, taught respect for ancestors. Formal education in the modern sense first appeared when the missionary David Jones of the London Missionary Society established a school in Antananarivo in 1820. It was sponsored by King Radama I, and Jones's first students were children of the royal family. Literacy spread as a result of the schools the Imerina missionaries built; in 1833 an estimated 15,000 persons knew how to read and write the new Malagasy language. Despite significant retrenchment during the reign of Queen Ranavalona I, the missionary school system, including both Protestant and Roman Catholic institutions, continued to grow.

During the colonial period, the French established a system of public schools that was divided into two parts: elite schools, modeled after those of France and reserved for the children of French citizens (a status few Malagasy enjoyed); and indigenous schools for the Malagasy, which offered practical and vocational education but were not designed to train students for positions of leadership or responsibility. Middle-grade Malagasy civil servants and functionaries were trained at the *écoles régionales* (regional schools), the most important of which was the École le Myre de Villers in Antananarivo. Reforms of the public school system designed to give the Malagasy more educational opportunities were initiated after World War II. At independence in 1960, the country had a system of education almost identical to that of France.

Education is compulsory for children between the ages of six and fourteen. The current education system provides primary schooling for five years, from ages six to eleven. Secondary education lasts for seven years and is divided into two parts: a junior secondary level of four years from ages twelve to fifteen, and a senior secondary level of three years from ages sixteen to eighteen. At the end of the junior level, graduates receive a certificate, and at the end of the senior level, graduates receive the *baccalauréat* (the equivalent of a high-school diploma). A vocational secondary school system, the *collège professionnel* (professional college), is the equivalent of the junior secondary level; the *collège technique* (technical college), which awards the *baccalauréat technique* (technical diploma), is the equivalent of the senior level.

The University of Madagascar, established as an Institute for Advanced Studies in 1955 in Antananarivo and renamed in 1961, is the main institute of higher education. It maintains six separate, independent branches in Antananarivo, Antsiranana, Fianarantsoa, Toamasina, Toléara, and Mahajanga. (Prior to 1988, the latter five institutions were provincial extensions of the main university in Antananarivo.) The university system consists of several faculties, including law and economics, sciences, and letters and human sciences, and numerous schools that specialize in public administration, management, medicine, social welfare, public works, and agronomy. Official reports have criticized the excessive number of students at the six universities: a total of 40,000 in 1994, whereas the collective capacity is 26,000. Reform measures are underway to improve the success rate of students—only 10 percent complete their programs, and the average number of years required to obtain a given degree is eight to ten compared with five years for African countries. The *baccalauréat* is required for admission to the university. Madagascar also has teacher-training colleges.

The gradual expansion of educational opportunities has had an impressive impact on Malagasy society, most notably in raising the literacy level of the general population. Only 39 percent of the population could be considered literate in 1966, but the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated that this number had risen to 50 percent at the beginning of the 1980s and to 80 percent in 1991. Similarly, primary school enrollment is nearly universal, a significant increase from the lower figure of 65 percent enrollment in 1965 (Madagascar had 13,000 public primary schools in 1994); 36 percent of the relevant school-age population attends secondary school (there were 700 general education secondary schools and eighty *lycées* or classical secondary institutions); and 5 percent of the relevant school-age population attends institutions of higher learning. Despite these statistics, a 1993 UNICEF report considers the education system a "failure," pointing out that in contrast to the early 1980s when education represented approximately 35 percent of the national budget, in 1993 education constituted less than 20 percent of the budget, and 95 percent of this amount was devoted to salaries. The average number of years required for a student to complete primary
school is twelve. Girls have equal access with boys to educational institutions.

The national education system often has been at the center of political debate. As is the case throughout Africa, educational credentials provide one of the few opportunities to obtain employment in a country with a limited private sector, and the distribution of educational resources has continued to be an issue with explosive political ramifications.

Historically, the system has been characterized by an unequal distribution of education resources among the different regions of the country. Because the central highlands had a long history of formal education beginning in the early nineteenth century, this region had more schools and higher educational standards than the coastal regions. The disparity continued to be a major divisive factor in national life in the years following independence. The Merina and the Betsileo peoples, having better access to schools, inevitably tended to be overrepresented in administration and the professions, both under French colonialism and after independence in 1960.

Adding to these geographical inequities is the continued lack of educational opportunities for the poorest sectors of society. For example, the riots that led to the fall of the Tsiranaana regime in 1972 were initiated by students protesting official education and language policies, including a decision to revoke the newly established competitive examination system that would have allowed access to public secondary schools on the basis of merit rather than the ability to pay. Yet when the Ratsiraka regime attempted in 1978 to correct historical inequalities and make standards for the baccalauréat lower in the disadvantaged provinces outside the capital region, Merina students led riots against what they perceived as an inherently unfair preferential treatment policy.

The lack of access is compounded by an education system that still rewards those who are the most proficient in the French language, despite the fact that the country is officially bilingual. As of 1994, it was estimated that only between 20,000 and 30,000 citizens could be considered truly fluent in the French language and that another 2 million citizens have received, at best, a passive high school-level competence in the language. The vast majority (8 to 9 million) speak only Malagasy and, therefore, potentially find themselves at a distinct disadvantage in terms of future advancement. It is at least partially because of shortcomings in French-language abilities that approximately 90 percent of all first-year university students are refused entry into the second year.

A final challenge revolves around the growing gap between a declining government-sponsored public school system and an increasingly vibrant and growing private school system. The Ratsiraka regime’s education policy of Malagachization strengthened this primarily two-tiered education system during the 1980s. The elite and the well-off middle class placed their children in private French-language schools, while the vast majority of the relatively poorer population had little choice but to enroll their children in increasingly disadvantaged public schools. By the 1991–92 academic year, only 5,870 students were enrolled in private French-sponsored grade schools and high schools (the most prestigious of the education system), while another 199,433 students were enrolled in the second tier of private Roman Catholic schools where teaching is also in French. An undetermined small number of students were enrolled in a third tier of private schools considered “mediocre” by French-language standards, but the vast majority (1,534,142) found themselves competing in the public school system.

Public Health

Life expectancy at birth has gradually improved from an average of 37.5 years for men and 38.3 years for women in 1966 to an average of fifty-two years for men and fifty-five years for women in 1990 (for a combined average of fifty-four). Malaria remains the most serious tropical disease, although eradication campaigns against mosquitoes waged since 1948 initially resulted in spectacular declines in incidence and a dramatic decrease in the island’s mortality rate during a twenty-year period. Indeed, in some regions, especially the central highlands, these campaigns were almost completely successful, although malaria continues to be prevalent in the coastal regions, especially the east coast. As prevention practices faltered during the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the mosquito staged a comeback. The effect on a population with a significantly reduced resistance to malaria was devastating. For example, the Malagasy Ministry of Health reported 490,000 cases and 6,200 deaths from malaria in 1985, but these figures rose—to 760,000 cases and 11,000 deaths—in 1987.

As of 1994, other serious diseases included schistosomiasis, tuberculosis, and leprosy. The prevalence of schistosomiasis, a
parasitic ailment that spreads primarily through the passing of human wastes into ponds, irrigation canals, and slow-moving streams, reflects the continued lack of adequate sewerage facilities, especially in the rural areas. Occasional outbreaks of bubonic plague occur in urban areas, the most recent of them in 1990. Yet Madagascar has been spared many of the diseases common in tropical countries, such as trypanosomiasis, cholera, brucellosis, and yellow fever.

The occurrence of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) has increased during the 1980s and the 1990s. It is estimated that 287 of 100,000 inhabitants have gonorrhea, and 220 of 100,000 have syphilis. According to data collected from 9,574 inhabitants treated for STDs in 1987, the breakdown by type of disease was as follows: gonorrhea (38 percent); syphilis (33 percent); trichomoniasis (20 percent); and candidiasis (8 percent). According to data compiled by the World Health Organization, only three cases of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) were reported in the 1990–92 period, and six cases in 1993, earning Madagascar a 0.0 "case rate" (reported cases per 100,000 population).

The government has committed itself to the principle that good health is a right of each Malagasy citizen, and has made significant strides in the area of health care. A number of new hospitals and medical centers were built in various parts of the country during the 1960s and the first part of the 1980s. However, about two-thirds of the population reside at least five kilometers from a medical center, resulting in the May 1993 finding of UNICEF that 35 percent of the population lacked adequate access to health services.

Economic decline has led to a deterioration in medical services during the late 1980s and the early 1990s. In 1976, of the national budget, 9.2 percent was allocated to health care; this percentage dropped to 6.6 percent in 1981, 4.5 percent in 1990, and 2 percent in 1994. For example, as of 1993, according to UNICEF, the country had only one physician per 17,000 people. Important regional differences also exist. For example, in some provinces the ratio was as low as one physician for 35,000 persons. For the entire island, in 1993 a total of 234 medical centers were under the direction of one doctor, and the remaining 1,728 centers were under the direction of paramedics, midwives, nurses, health aides, or sanitarians. For those unable to obtain modern medical treatment, traditional medi-

cine—the use of herbs or the exorcism of malicious spirits—remains popular.

Additional factors contributing to health problems include overcrowding (in some areas five to eight persons live in a room fourteen meters square), contagious diseases such as the plague, and inadequate garbage disposal facilities. Infant mortality has risen from sixty-eight per 1,000 births in 1975 to 109 per 1,000 in 1980 and 114 per 1,000 in 1991. Malnutrition, diarrheal diseases, respiratory infections, and malaria are major causes of infant deaths. Madagascar had a serious malaria epidemic in 1990 causing the death of tens of thousands; efforts are underway for annual antimalarial campaigns, especially in the Anjafy High Plateaux.

The Economy

Government Policy and Intervention

Over the years, successive French colonial and independence-era governments have sought to modernize Madagascar's economy. Despite such efforts, the majority of Malagasy in 1994 continued to earn their livelihoods in ways fundamentally unchanged from those of their ancestors—small-scale farms supporting traditional irrigated rice cultivation, dryland farming of cassava and other foods, zebu cattle herding, or the raising of cash crops.

The first modern land use projects were established by French settlers or Creole immigrants from the Mascarene Islands in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They introduced cash crops such as coffee, sugarcane, vanilla, cloves, and sisal for export. They also built small-scale mines to exploit the island's graphite, chromite, and uranium resources. To facilitate the processing and marketing of these commodities, the immigrants established a number of financial and commercial enterprises and built a small, modern railroad system. They then brought some Malagasy into this modern sector of the economy, either as wage laborers and sharecroppers on the foreign-owned plantations, or as low-level employees in the civil service or business enterprises. The foreign owners and managers, however, retained almost all of the benefits from these operations.

After independence the Tsiranana regime did little to change the French domination of the modern sector of the economy, despite increasing outrage at this continued eco-
nomic dependence. This anger, together with growing concern over an unequal distribution of wealth that left the southern and western parts of the island in relative poverty, caused the ouster of Tsiranana in 1972 and a shift in economic policy. The new military regime led by Ramanantsoa cut most ties with France and began to Malagachize the economy. Slow progress toward this goal, however, helped to precipitate the end of the Ramanantsoa regime in mid-1975. Only with the rise of Ratsiraka to the presidency later that year did the takeover of formerly French-dominated enterprises begin in earnest.

Ratsiraka’s policy of “revolution from above” went beyond confiscating or buying out foreign firms and turning them over to Malagasy ownership; he intended to socialize the economy by nationalizing major enterprises. The state acquired majority or minority ownership in nearly all large financial, transportation, marketing, mining, and manufacturing enterprises. Firms left under private control were required to buy and sell at state-controlled prices, and the state closely monitored the repatriation of profits. In the rural sector, Ratsiraka aimed to establish local farming cooperatives. Almost as important as this institutional reform was the regime’s intention, announced in an economic plan for the 1978–80 period, to increase dramatically the level of government capital investment in all sectors of the economy in order to improve the availability of goods and services to all.

By the start of the 1980s, however, Ratsiraka’s attempt to fashion viable socialist institutions and to stimulate the economy through increased investment had failed to improve economic production and welfare. Economic growth throughout the 1970s had not kept pace with the expanding population. Despite the availability of significant agricultural and mineral resources, the economy was less productive than at the start of the decade when the average per capita income was already among the lowest in the world. The only apparent effect of the enhanced level of investment, which reached all-time highs in the 1978–80 period, was to put the country deeply in debt to foreign creditors and, therefore, pave the way for a series of structural adjustment agreements signed with the IMF and the World Bank during the 1980s and the early 1990s. Such agreements were necessary because as a 1993 World Bank study pointed out, between 1971 and 1991 the per capita income of Malagasy dropped 40 percent; to return to its 1971 level by

Cut-out embroidered tablecloths for sale in a village on the island of Nosy-Be
Courtesy Brian Kensley

2003, Madagascar would require a 6 percent annual growth rate.

Eventually admitting that adoption of the socialist model of economic centralization and state control was a mistake, the Ratsiraka regime in 1980 initiated a return to a more classic liberal economic model that the Zafy regime wholeheartedly adopted following its inauguration in 1993. The post-1980 Ratsiraka and Zafy regimes have overseen the privatization of parastatals (see Glossary), the disbanding of agricultural marketing boards, the ratification of more liberal investment codes favoring foreign investment, the privatization of the banking industry, diversification of traditional, primary-product exports, and greater investment in food production. The Zafy regime has made reinvigoration of the Malagasy economy its number-one priority.
The major aims of the Zafy regime’s agricultural policy are fivefold. The government seeks to make the country self-sufficient with regard to rice by expanding production through such measures as increased irrigation. It is also attempting to improve the quality of the major export crops—clove, coffee, and vanilla—but to limit their quantities because of restrictions on world demand. The regime is trying to develop new export crops such as cashews, palm oil, shellfish, and soybeans and to diversify consumer food products through introducing rainfed crops such as corn and sorghum. In addition, the government is endeavoring to improve agricultural research and breeding facilities.

**Structural Adjustment**

The structural adjustment requirements of the World Bank and the IMF were and remain critical to understanding the liberalization policies of the Ratsiraka and Zafy regimes. In 1980 severe balance of payments deficits led the Ratsiraka regime to seek the first of ten IMF standby and related agreements to be signed during the 1980s. The last series of agreements of the decade included one in 1988 using IMF trust funds and one in 1989 that expired in 1992. Throughout the 1980s, Madagascar also drew four times on the IMF and received four adjustment loans from the World Bank for industrial rehabilitation (1985—US$60 million), agricultural reform (1986—US$60 million), trade and industry adjustment (1987—US$100 million), and public-sector reform (1988—US$127 million).

The granting of these standby and related agreements was linked to a coordinated set of structural adjustment requirements designed to foster the liberal, export-oriented economy favored by the IMF and the World Bank. For example, an IMF standby agreement signed on July 9, 1982 to cover the 1982–83 period released 51 million in special drawing rights (SDRs—see Glossary) only after the Ratsiraka regime agreed to reduce both the current account deficit and the budget deficit, devalue the Malagasy franc (FMG—for value, see Glossary), limit domestic credit expansion, avoid any new short- or medium-term foreign borrowing, and limit public-sector salary increases. Among the major measures required by later agreements were a ceiling on rice imports, increases in producer prices of rice and coffee, and a further devaluation of the Malagasy franc. Despite a reputation for reneging on commitments to reform, formerly Marxist Ratsiraka ironically became known as one of the IMF’s “star pupils” in Africa.

According to its agreement with the IMF, Madagascar was to limit its deficit to 5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary) in 1989–92. It succeeded in doing so until 1991 when production dropped, inflation increased, and tax income decreased because of political disturbances. Since then the government has not acted on the increased budget deficit, which was scheduled to be 6.2 percent of GDP in 1994, causing dissatisfaction on the part of World Bank officials.

Economic reform was stalled by the economic and political turmoil associated with the downfall of Ratsiraka and his replacement by the popularly elected Zafy regime in 1992. Although publicly critical of the IMF and World Bank during the 1993 election campaign, Zafy, who is a strong proponent of a liberal, free-market economy, initiated negotiations with these financial institutions to resume Madagascar’s structural adjustment programs (and thereby gain access to more than US$1 billion in blocked development funds). However, negotiations throughout the first half of 1994 were tense as Zafy sought to avoid conditions that, no matter how logical from the macroeconomic perspective of long-term reform and development, would constitute political suicide.

General principles of reform that the World Bank considered necessary included macroeconomic stability, which implied moderate rates of inflation and of exchange; foreign trade and financial policy modifications that allowed the convertibility of the current account and liberalized import regulations; and the elimination of barriers to economic activity, such as eliminating obstacles to foreign investment and to participation in the export processing zones (EPZs). The World Bank’s reform principles also involved encouraging the private sector by privatizing the parastatals, as well as concentrating government investment on infrastructure programs and the development of human resources by improving education, including technical education, and health facilities, including family planning to limit population growth. Among the specific reforms demanded by the World Bank were the revision of the 1994 budget, a new timetable for proposed privatization of parastatals, further reforms of the public sector, and the restructuring of terms for marketing agricultural products, most notably vanilla.
The IMF echoed these demands and added several more. These included allowing the Malagasy franc to float freely on the international currency market, restructuring the National Bank for Rural Development, privatizing the National Bank for Trade Development, and forcing all banks to maintain reserves of 10 percent of all deposits. To avoid pressures from the World Bank, the government sought funds from other sources. Considerable furor developed in the spring of 1994, when it became known that without the knowledge of the minister of finance, who was supposed to authorize such transactions, or the prime minister, but with the agreement of president Zafy and the president of the National Assembly, Richard Andriamanjato, the governor of the Central Bank of the Malagasy Republic, Raoul Ravelomanana, had signed promissory notes to several European banks committing Madagascar to repay loans of US$2 million. In short, the Zafy regime must balance the need for international funds (and the conditions that accompany their disbursement) with the need to maintain popular support if Zafy intends to seek a second term in office.

National Accounts and Budget

Economists note that Madagascar's economy severely deteriorated from the 1960s to the late 1980s, particularly as a result of the misguided economic policies of the Ratsiraka regime. Whereas the growth rate in the GDP rose at an average of 2.9 percent in real terms during the 1960s, during the 1970s and the early 1980s this figure declined to 0.2 percent, compared with 2.6 percent population growth. Real GDP rebounded in the latter half of the 1980s, reaching a high of 4 percent in 1989. GDP increased at 1.1 percent per year in the 1980s and at 1 percent in 1992, but the economic output was unable to keep pace with population growth. This can be seen in Madagascar's economic ranking relative to other countries. In terms of gross national product (GNP—see Glossary) per capita, for example, the country declined from a World Bank ranking of the thirteenth poorest country in the world in 1979 (GNP per capita of US$290) to the tenth poorest in 1991 (GNP per capita of US$210).

Going beyond the traditional indicators of GDP and GNP per capita, however, Madagascar is doing better than might be thought. For example, according to the Human Development Report published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1993, Madagascar ranked 128th in the world (and seventeenth in Africa) in terms of "human development." This category represents a composite score of several indicators of development, such as life expectancy and literacy. The UNDP report further notes that, despite a slight drop in the early 1990s, Madagascar's human development steadily advanced during the decades of the 1970s and the 1980s.

The Zafy regime tried to balance the need for economic growth with a desire to enhance social welfare after the turbulent transition period of the early 1990s by putting together a Public Investment Program for 1994–96. The priorities of the US$326 million budget are clearly demonstrated by the breakdown of investments according to four broad categories: infrastructure (US$160 million—49 percent), with transportation receiving the largest share of US$87 million; producing sector (US$79 million—24 percent), with US$53.5 million of this devoted to agriculture; social assistance, including education, health care, and social assistance (US$52.2 million—16 percent); and public administration (US$32.4 million—10 percent). An overriding interest in development as opposed to security is clearly demonstrated by the relatively small amount of investment funds (US$2 million—0.6 percent) allocated to the Malagasy Armed Forces. Finally, the percentage of investment funds slated for each of the individual regions suggests an awareness of the need to favor those that historically have been neglected. The breakdown of investments by region in order of importance is as follows: Antsiranana (28 percent), Toliara (21 percent), Mahajanga (18 percent), Toamasina (15 percent), Antananarivo (10 percent), and Fianarantsoa (9 percent).

Balance of Payments and Debt

The deterioration of the Malagasy economy that peaked in the 1980s is clearly demonstrated by the evolution of balance of payments problems and a growing debt burden (see table 2, Appendix). In 1980 Madagascar experienced a trade deficit of US$328 million and a service deficit of US$286 million, the combination of which contributed to a record current account deficit of US$568 million for the year. After nearly a decade of implementing the structural adjustment demands of the IMF and the World Bank, the Ratsiraka regime reduced the current account deficit to US$128 million in 1989. Among the economic trends contributing to this were a sharp reduction in imports and significant increases in bilateral and multilateral foreign assistance. Progress in reducing the current account
deficit was reversed at the beginning of the 1990s, however, because of disruptions caused by the transition to democracy.

A rising debt burden constitutes the most notable indicator of Madagascar’s fiscal dilemmas. Whereas as late as 1978 Madagascar had only accumulated US$295.5 million in debt, massive borrowing on the international market during a three-year span led in 1981 to the quadrupling of this figure to US$1.37 billion. By the end of the decade, this figure had nearly tripled to US$3.94 billion. Even worse, Madagascar’s external debt exceeded annual GNP after 1986, reaching its height in 1988 when external debt as a percentage of GNP exceeded 160 percent.

The downfall of the Ratsiraka regime and the turbulence associated with the subsequent period of democratic transition exacerbated the debt crisis and presented the Zafy regime with one of its greatest economic challenges. As of November 1993, Madagascar’s external debt was estimated to exceed US$4 billion, with an outstanding initial debt of US$295 million and rescheduled debt of US$625 million being owed to Paris Club (see Glossary) members. Whereas the outstanding initial debt was owed primarily to France (US$138 million) and Japan (US$126 million), several countries were owed the majority of outstanding rescheduled debt, including France (US$182 million), Italy (US$96 million), Japan (US$84 million), Spain (US$76 million), and Germany (US$55 million). Approximately US$77 million was also owed to commercial banks in the London Club (see Glossary), including the Arab Intercontinental Bank (US$31 million), Chase Manhattan Bank of Paris (US$9.5 million), Banque Nationale de Paris (US$7.5 million), and Banque Nationale d’Algérie (US$7.2 million).

Traditional Agriculture

Traditional farming methods vary from one ethnic group or location to another, according to population density, climate, water supply, and soil. The most intensive form of cultivation is practiced among the Betsileo and Merina groups of the central highlands, where population densities are the highest. At the other extreme are the extensive slash-and-burn methods of brush clearing and shifting cultivation in the south and the east.

The Betsileo are probably the most efficient traditional rice farmers. They construct rice paddies on narrow terraces ascending the sides of steep valleys in the southern portion of the central highlands, creating an intricate landscape reminiscent of Indonesia or the Philippines. The irrigation systems use all available water, which flows through narrow canals for considerable distances. Some of the rice paddies cover no more than a few square meters. Only those surfaces that cannot be irrigated are planted in dryland crops.

In parts of the central highlands, two rice crops a year can be grown, but not on the same plot. The Betsileo use a variety of local species that can be sown at different times, employing irrigation to grow some varieties in the dry season and waiting for the rainy season to plant others. The fields surrounding the typical Betsileo village often represent a checkerboard of tiny plots in different stages of the crop cycle.

The cultivation cycle begins with the repair of irrigation and drainage canals and plowing, which is performed with a long-handled spade or hoe. Manure or fertilizer is then spread over the field. If the supply of manure or artificial fertilizer is limited, only the seedbeds are fertilized. After fertilizing, family and neighbors join in a festive trampling of the fields, using cattle if available. Occasionally, trampling takes the place of plowing altogether. If the rice is to be sown broadcast, it may be done on the same day as trampling. In the more advanced areas, the seedlings are raised in protected seedbeds and transplanted later.

Rice-farming techniques among the Merina resemble those of the Betsileo but are usually less advanced and intensive. The Merina territory includes some areas where land is more plentiful, and broader areas permit less laborious means of irrigation and terracing. Although rice is still the dominant crop, more dryland species are grown than in the Betsileo region, and greater use is made of the hillsides and grasslands.

In the forested areas of the eastern coast, the Betsimisaraka and Tanala peoples also practice irrigated rice culture where possible. The dominant form of land use, however, is shifting cultivation by the slash-and-burn method, known as tavy. The smaller trees and brush are cut down and left to dry, then burned just before the rainy season. The cleared area is usually planted with mountain rice and corn. After two or three years of cultivation, the fields are usually left fallow and are gradually covered by secondary vegetation known as savoka. After ten or twenty years, the area may be cultivated again.

Because the slash-and-burn method destroys the forest and other vegetation cover, and promotes erosion, it has been
families, particularly in the central highlands, have established fish ponds to raise carp, black bass, or trout. The breeding of fish in rice fields, however, requires sophisticated water control and a strong guard against dynamiting, poisoning, and poaching, which remain chronic problems.

Agricultural Production

The 1984–85 agricultural census estimated that 8.7 million people live in the rural areas and that 65 percent of the active population within these areas lives at the subsistence level. The census also noted that average farm size was 1.2 hectares; although irrigated rice plots in the central highlands were often 0.5 hectares. Only 5.2 percent (3 million hectares) of the country’s total land area of 58.2 million hectares is under cultivation; of this hectarage, fewer than 2 million hectares are permanently cultivated. Agriculture is critical to Madagascar’s economy in that it provides nearly 80 percent of exports, constituting 33 percent of GDP in 1993, and in 1992 employed almost 80 percent of the labor force. Moreover, 50.7 percent (300,000 square kilometers) of the total landmass of 592,000 square kilometers supports livestock rearing, while 16 percent (484,000 hectares) of land under cultivation is irrigated.

The government significantly reorganized the agricultural sector of the economy beginning in 1972. Shortly after Ratsiraka assumed power, the government announced that holdings in excess of 500 hectares would be turned over to landless families, and in 1975 it reported that 500,000 hectares of land had been processed under the program. The long-range strategy of the Ratsiraka regime was to create collective forms of farm management, but not necessarily of ownership. By the year 2000, some 72 percent of agricultural output was to come from farm cooperatives, 17 percent from state farms, and only 10 percent from privately managed farms. Toward this end, the Ministry of Agricultural Production coordinated with more than seventy parastatal agencies in the areas of land development, agricultural extension, research, and marketing activities. However, these socialist-inspired rural development policies, which led to a severe decline in per capita agricultural output during the 1970s, were at the center of the liberalization policies of the 1980s and the structural adjustment demands of the IMF and the World Bank.

The evolution of rice production—the main staple food and the dominant crop—offers insight into some of the problems
associated with agricultural production that were compounded by the Ratsiraka years. Rice production grew by less than 1 percent per year during the 1970-79 period, despite the expansion of the cultivated paddy area by more than 5 percent per year. Moreover, the share of rice available for marketing in the rapidly growing urban areas declined from 16 or 17 percent of the total crop in the early 1970s to about 11 or 12 percent during the latter part of the decade. As a result, Madagascar became a net importer of rice beginning in 1972, and by 1982 was importing nearly 200,000 tons per year—about 10 percent of the total domestic crop and about equal to the demand from urban customers.

The inefficient system of agricultural supply and marketing, which since 1972 increasingly had been placed under direct state control, was a major factor inhibiting more efficient and expanded rice production. From 1973 to 1977, one major para-statal agency, the Association for the National Interest in Agricultural Products (Société d’Intérêt National des Produits Agricoles—SINPA), had a monopoly in collecting, importing, processing, and distributing a number of commodities, most notably rice. Corruption leading to shortages of rice in a number of areas caused a scandal in 1977, and the government was forced to take over direct responsibility for rice marketing. In 1982 SINPA maintained a large share in the distribution system for agricultural commodities; it subcontracted many smaller parasatal agencies to handle distribution in certain areas. The decreasing commercialization of rice and other commodities continued, however, suggesting that transportation bottlenecks and producer prices were undermining official distribution channels.

To promote domestic production and reduce foreign imports of rice, the Ratsiraka regime enacted a series of structural adjustment reforms during the 1980s. These included the removal of government subsidies on the consumer purchase price of rice in 1984 and the disbanding of the state marketing monopoly controlled by SINPA in 1985. Rice growers responded by moderately expanding production by 9.3 percent during the latter half of the 1980s from 2.18 million tons in 1985 to 2.38 million tons in 1989, and rice imports declined dramatically by 70 percent between 1985 and 1989. However, the Ratsiraka regime failed to restore self-sufficiency in rice production (estimated at between 2.8 million and 3.0 million tons), and rice imports rose again in 1990. In 1992 rice produc-

tion occupied about two-thirds of the cultivated area and produced 40 percent of total agricultural income, including fishing, which was next with 19 percent, as well as livestock raising and forestry (see table 3, Appendix).

In February 1994, Cyclone Geralda hit Madagascar just as the rice harvesting was about to start and had a serious impact on the self-sufficiency goal. In addition, the southern tip of Madagascar suffered from severe drought in late 1993, resulting in emergency assistance to 1 million people from the United Nations (UN) World Food Program (WFP). This WFP aid was later transformed into a food-for-work program to encourage development.

Other food crops have witnessed small increases in production from 1985 to 1992. Cassava, the second major food crop in terms of area planted (almost everywhere on the island) and probably in quantity consumed, increased in production from 2.14 million tons in 1985 to 2.32 million tons in 1992. During this same period, corn production increased from 140,000 tons to 165,000 tons, sweet potato production increased from 450,000 tons to 487,000 tons, and bananas dropped slightly from 255,000 tons to 220,000 tons.

Several export crops are also important to Madagascar’s economy. Coffee prices witnessed a boom during the 1980s, making coffee the leading export crop of the decade; in 1986 coffee earned a record profit of US$151 million. Prices within the coffee market gradually declined during the remainder of the 1980s, and earnings reached a low of US$28 million in 1991 although they rebounded to US$58 million in 1992. Cotton traditionally has been the second major export crop, but most output during the early 1980s was absorbed by the local textile industry. Although cotton output rose from 27,000 tons in 1987 to 46,000 tons in 1988, once again raising the possibility of significant export earnings, the combination of drought and a faltering agricultural extension service in the southwest contributed to a gradual decline in output to only 20,000 tons in 1992.

Two other export crops—cloves and vanilla—have also declined in importance from the 1980s to the 1990s. Indonesia, the primary importer of Malagasy cloves, temporarily halted purchases in 1983 as a result of sufficient domestic production, and left Madagascar with a huge surplus. A collapse in international prices for cloves in 1987, compounded by uncertain future markets and the normal cyclical nature of the crop,
has led to a gradual decline in production from a high of 14,600 tons in 1991 to 7,500 tons in 1993. Similarly, the still state-regulated vanilla industry (state-regulated prices for coffee and cloves were abolished in 1988–89) found itself under considerable financial pressure after 1987 because Indonesia reentered the international market as a major producer, and synthetic competitors emerged in the two major markets of the United States and France. As a result, vanilla production has declined from a high of 1,500 tons in 1988 and 1989 to only 700 tons in 1993.

The fisheries sector, especially the export of shrimp, is the most rapidly growing area of the agricultural economy (see table 4, Appendix). This production is making up for lost revenues and potential structural decline within the ailing coffee, vanilla, and clove trade. Since 1988 total fish production has expanded nearly 23 percent from 92,966 tons to 114,370 tons in 1993. The export of shrimp constituted an extremely important portion of this production, providing export earnings of US$48 million in 1993. It is estimated by Aqualma, the major multinational corporation in the shrimp industry, that expansion into roughly 35,000 hectares of swampland on the country’s west coast may allow for the expansion of production from the current 6,500 tons and US$40 million in revenues to nearly 75,000 tons and US$400 million in revenues by the end of the 1990s. The prospects are also good for promoting greater levels of fish cultivation in the rice paddies, and exports of other fish products, most notably crab, tuna, and lobster, have been rising.

Livestock production is limited in part because of traditional patterns of livestock ownership that have hampered commercialization. Beef exports in the early 1990s decreased because of poor government marketing practices, rundown slaughtering facilities, and inadequate veterinary services. Approximately 99 percent of cattle are zebu cattle. In 1990 the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN estimated that Madagascar had 10.3 million cattle, 1.7 million sheep and goats, and some 21 million chickens.

**Industrial Development**

After registering a negative average annual growth rate of -2.8 percent from 1981 to 1986, industrial development improved from 1987 to 1991 with a positive, albeit small, average annual growth rate of 1.1 percent. As of 1993, it was estimated that industrial output was responsible for 13 percent of GDP, and that the food-processing, mining, and energy sectors contributed 65 percent of the manufacturing portion of this total.

The establishment of EPZs and the passage of a new investment code in 1990 contributed to an expansion of industrial output (see table 5, Appendix). Despite the implications of the title, the EPZs do not require registered companies to establish themselves in specific geographic zones but merely constitute entities that fall under a specific fiscal code. The EPZs are financially attractive in that registered companies only pay one tax on profits (impôt sur les bénéfices) and another on revenues from capital transfers (impôt sur les revenus de capitaux mobiliers), and, in the case of the former, receive an exemption of as much as the first fifteen years of operation. From 1990 to 1995, 100 new companies had established themselves in the EPZs,
creating more than 17,500 jobs and generating more than US$113 million in foreign investments. The majority of these firms were distributed among three economic sectors—clothing (48 percent), handicrafts (15 percent), and agro-processing (9 percent). Only 14 percent were owned by Malagasy; the remainder were owned by French (55 percent), Mauritian (16 percent), South African (4 percent), or other nationals (11 percent). Another 7,000 jobs and US$70 million in investments were generated by more than 160 new companies taking advantage of the new investment code. The creation by the International Finance Corporation (IFC—see Glossary) in June 1994 of the US$2.6 million Madagascar Capital Development Fund is designed to encourage Malagasy firms to establish themselves in the EPZs.

Madagascar contains a wide variety of minerals, but most of the deposits exist in scattered and relatively inaccessible locations. The government nationalized all mineral deposits in 1975, bringing mineral exploitation under the National Military Office for Strategic Industries (Office Militaire National pour les Industries Stratégiques). In 1990 a new mining investment code that encouraged private investment and exploitation was implemented, but the results have been disappointing. Several companies, including most recently Royal Dutch Shell, which disbanded its operations in early 1994, have sought unsuccessfully to find petroleum.

In another venture, in August 1993, a Swiss enterprise, International Capital and Securities Exchange, obtained the right to explore and mine for gold over a twenty-five-year period. French government sources estimate Madagascar’s gold production at about three to four tons of gold annually and its potential yield double that. In 1992, however, as a result of smuggling, only thirty-seven kilograms of gold were officially exported.

Madagascar has reserves of bauxite, chromite, graphite, limestone, mica, nickel, and limestone. The exploitation of these minerals varies. More than 108,000 tons of chromium ores and concentrates, mostly in Andriamena in the central area and near Befandriana Avaratra in the north central area (Madagascar is the world’s tenth largest producer), and 10,600 tons of graphite were successfully extracted in 1992. In contrast, the production of ilmenite ore, used in the manufacture of titanium, ceased in 1977 (although a joint Malagasy-Canadian firm is expected to resume production beginning in 1995). In the southeast, approximately 100 million tons of bauxite deposits at Manantenina are at present unexploited. A variety of other minerals are mined on a small scale, including agate, beryl, quartz, garnet, amazonite, amethyst, moonstone, tourmaline, citrine, and a number of abrasives andfeldsper.

Madagascar depends completely on foreign imports to satisfy its oil needs, but it also refines some petroleum for export. Two-thirds of all electricity demand is met by production from seven hydroelectric power plants that serve Antananarivo, Antsirabe, and the Andriamena chrome mine; the remaining one-third is met by thermal stations. Many plants have their own small diesel or steam generators. Energy needs are also met by firewood and charcoal, which has contributed to the precarious nature of the country’s forests and serious erosion problems, and by the bagasse from sugarcane used in sugar production; two power stations using bagasse as fuel and a solar energy plant are planned. Reserves of 100 million tons of coal are found primarily near Sakoa in the southwest, although fewer than 10,000 tons are used on an annual basis. The government seeks to expand domestic coal use.

Another area that the government has begun to develop is that of tourism, which has good potential in view of Madagascar’s exotic flora and fauna, and some 5,000 kilometers of beaches. In early 1989, the regime launched a tourism plan that was designed to bring in 100,000 tourists annually by 1995. Thus far, however, the greatest number of tourists attracted has been 52,900 in 1990, compared with 250,000 on the much smaller island of Mauritius. To achieve its goal, Madagascar needs additional infrastructure in the way of transportation, accommodations, and other facilities, as well as a greater sense of security on the part of foreigners—in 1993 gendarmes shot two German researchers in error, causing Germany, which was Madagascar’s second largest tourist source, to boycott the island.

Foreign Trade

As of 1992, 81.1 percent (US$311 million) of Madagascar’s total exports of US$383.5 million were to the industrialized West. Four countries served as the primary destination of Malagasy goods: France (30.4 percent), the United States (13.3 percent), Germany (10.1 percent) and Japan (7.5 percent) (see table 6, Appendix). In contrast, only 51 percent (US$193.2 million) of Madagascar’s total imports of US$614.1 million in 1992...
came from the industrialized West (a sharp decline from 78.7 percent in 1980), and only France remained a significant partner (providing 29.9 of Madagascar's imports). Whereas Japan and Germany were responsible for 4.3 and 3.9 percent of Madagascar's imports, respectively, the United States contributed a meager 1.1 percent. Russia remains marginal in terms of both imports and exports (less than 1 percent), and, along with the other former communist countries, has never constituted a major trading partner of Madagascar. In aggregate terms, Madagascar's exports to the industrialized West dropped slightly from US$316 million in 1980 to US$311 million in 1992.

Two trends in trade with the developing world stand out. First, Madagascar slightly increased the percentage of goods exported to other southern countries from 14.3 percent in 1980 to 18.8 percent in 1992. Other African countries were the major market for Malagasy goods (11.0 percent) in 1992, Asia came in second (7.1 percent), and the Middle East and Latin America together imported only 0.5 percent. In aggregate terms, Madagascar's exports to the developing south expanded from US$57.5 million in 1980 to US$72.5 million in 1992.

A second, more noticeable shift occurred in terms of Madagascar's imports from other southern countries, increasing from US$55 million in 1980 to US$301 million in 1992. In sharp contrast to regional patterns related to exports, Madagascar imported the majority of its goods from Asia (15.5 percent) and the Middle East (8.5 percent). Other African countries were the source of only 6.1 percent of Madagascar's imports, and Latin America registered the negligible total of 2.1 percent. A burgeoning trade deficit that exceeded US$230 million in 1992 remains one of the biggest trade problems confronting Malagasy policy makers.

Transportation and Telecommunications

The expansion of the economy is hindered by an inadequate transportation system that deteriorated throughout the 1980s (see fig. 4). Only 4,000 kilometers (10 percent) of an estimated 40,000-kilometer road network are asphalted (no all-weather road links the capital with the southern and northern extremes of the island), and the state-controlled railroad consists of 1,095 kilometers of track in two limited (and separate) railroad systems. The first connects the capital of Antananarivo with the port city of Toamasina, the rice-producing area of Lake Alaotra, and the town of Antsirabe; the second connects the regional capital of Fianarantsoa with the coastal town of Manakara.

The country's ports and airports fare better than the land or rail network. Madagascar has fifteen major ports along the 4,828-kilometer coastline, of which Toamasina, Mahajanga, and Antsiranana are the most important. The air network revolves around the main international airport, Ivato-Antananarivo. The country technically contains 211 airfields, but only approximately 50 percent are usable, and only thirty maintain permanent-surface runways. Whereas the national airline, Air Madagascar, is two-thirds owned by the government (Air France owns the remaining one-third), twelve airports (including Ivato-Antananarivo) were taken over in 1990 by a private company, Aéroports de Madagascar.

In 1994 Madagascar's telecommunications system was sparse, serving only commercial users and residents of large towns and cities. Almost 60 percent of the country's 27,200 telephones were located in Antananarivo in 1989. Figures for that year showed that the country averaged only three telephones per 1,000 inhabitants, and service was limited to government offices, large companies, and a few wealthy families in urban areas. The telecommunications system deteriorated appreciably during the 1980s so that Madagascar had fewer telephones in 1994 than in 1975. Two satellite ground stations near the capital provide excellent international links via the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization's (Intelsat's) Indian Ocean satellite and the Symphonie ground station, working with a European telecommunications satellite.

Broadcast services are thinly scattered countrywide. The entire country has only seventeen mediumwave amplitude modulation (AM) radio stations—a powerful transmitter in the capital and sixteen low-power repeaters in other cities. A government-owned, AM shortwave station broadcasting in French and Malagasy on five frequencies reaches listeners in remote locations and in neighboring countries. In addition, Radio Nederland has a powerful station in western Madagascar that relays programs throughout Africa and the Indian Ocean on shortwave frequencies. Antananarivo and two other cities each have a single frequency modulation (FM) station. Thirty-seven low-power television transmitters broadcast for three and a half hours daily in urban areas.
Government and Politics

Constitution and Institutions of Governance

The Third Republic received its first expression of popular support and legitimacy on August 19, 1992, when the constitutional framework constructed by the National Conference was approved by more than 75 percent of those voting in a popular referendum (the constitution took effect on September 12). On this date, the people overwhelmingly approved a new constitution consisting of 149 articles that provided for the separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government; the creation of a multiparty political system; and the protection of individual human rights and freedom of speech.

The power of the executive branch is divided between a president who is elected by universal suffrage and a prime minister from the parliament who is nominated by his/her peers but who must be approved by the president. If the nominee for prime minister does not achieve an absolute majority of support within the parliament, the president may choose a candidate from the parliament who will serve for one year. As captured in the Malagasy concept ray aman-drey (father and mother of the nation), enshrined in Article 44 of the constitution, the president serves as the symbol of national unity. The president also is the recognized leader of foreign policy and constitutes by far the single most powerful political person within the country. All presidential decrees must be countersigned, however, and the president is bound by the constitutional reality that the prime minister is responsible for the functioning of the government.

The president is elected for a five-year period and is limited to two terms in office. In the event that no candidate wins a simple majority of the popular vote, a run-off election is held between the two leading candidates within a period of two months. The most important unwritten law regarding the executive branch revolves around the côtier/central highlands distinction. If a côtier is elected president, it is understood that a Merina will fill the position of prime minister, and vice versa. In the case of the first national elections held under the Third Republic, for example, the elected president—Zafy—who is a côtier, chose a prime minister—Francisque Ravony—from the ranks of the Merina (although several of the Merina elite were not entirely happy with the choice because Ravony is only half Merina).

The constitution provides for a bicameral parliament composed of a Senate and a National Assembly (Assemblée Nationale). The Senate represents territorial groups and serves as the consultative chamber on social and economic issues. Two-thirds of its members are chosen by an Electoral College, and the remaining one-third are chosen by the president. Envi
sioned elections for 1994 had not been held as of June 1994. The National Assembly consists of 138 deputies elected by universal suffrage using a proportional representation list-system. Both senators and deputies serve for four years. The June 16, 1993, elections resulted in about half the deputies elected being members of the Forces Vives. The remainder belonged to six parties, of which the largest had fifteen deputies and the smallest nine deputies. The parliament as a whole operates with a variety of classic parliamentary measures, such as a vote of no confidence, that enable it to serve as a check on the power of the executive.

A new system of local governance under the constitution is known as the Decentralized Territorial Authorities (Collectivités Territoriales Décentralisées). According to the decentralization law adopted by the National Assembly in March 1994, twenty-eight regions (faritra), more than 100 departments (fileovana), and fewer than 1,000 communes (faribohitra) have been created. Certain urban communes, such as the cities of Antananarivo, Nosy-Be, and Sainte Marie, will function as departments. Envisioned as regional vehicles for popular input in which members are elected by universal suffrage, these authorities have yet to be implemented; their exact role in the policy-making process remains ill-defined, but it is contemplated that the national government will handle such areas as foreign affairs, defense, public security, justice, currency, and broad economic planning and policy, leaving economic implementation to the decentralized bodies. However, the Zafy regime is confident that, once functioning, these regional boards will take the political initiative away from the so-called federalist opposition, which has been seeking to shift power away from the central government to the regions.

A strong, independent judiciary is also enshrined in the 1992 constitution. An eleven-member Supreme Court serves as the highest arbiter of the laws of the land. Other judicial bodies include the Administrative and Financial Constitutional Court, the Appeals Courts, tribunals, and the High Court of Justice. The creation of this complex system indicates the desire of the constitutional framers for a society built upon the rule of law. Indeed, the constitution explicitly outlines the fundamental rights of individual citizens and groups (most notably freedom of speech) and guarantees the existence of an independent press free from government control or censorship.

The creation of a truly free and fair multiparty system is the centerpiece of the new constitutional order. In sharp contrast to the Ratsiraka era, when political parties could only exist under the ideological umbrella of the FNDR, democratization of the political system has led to the proliferation of political parties of all ideological stripes. In the first legislative elections held under the Third Republic in 1993, for example, more than 120 political parties fielded at least 4,000 candidates for a total of 138 legislative seats. Despite constitutional guarantees concerning the rights of citizens to form political parties without fear of government retribution, parties that call for ethnic or religious segregation or demonstrably endanger national unity are subject to being banned.

The electoral system is designed to promote and facilitate widespread popular participation. In fact, it is argued that the proportional representation list-system (including the rule of the largest remainder) for electing deputies actually encourages large numbers of candidates to take part. All resident citizens eighteen years of age or older can vote in elections, but candidates must be at least twenty-one years of age to participate. Electoral registers are usually revised during a two-month period beginning in December, and the country is divided into sixty-eight constituencies for electoral purposes. Although there was a four-month gap between the end of the first presidential elections and the first legislative elections held under the Third Republic in 1993, legislative elections are supposed to be held no less than two months after the end of presidential elections. The next presidential elections are scheduled for 1998.

The Fokonolona and Traditional Governance

Madagascar has a tradition of limited village self-rule associated with the institution of the fokonolona—a village council composed of village elders and other local notables. After having been alternately suppressed and encouraged by the French colonial authorities, authorities officially revived the fokonolona in 1962 in an attempt to involve local communities in plans for rural economic and social development. The perceived usefulness of the fokonolona derived from its traditional role of maintaining order in the village and providing social and economic assistance.

In 1973 the Ramanantsoa military regime furthered the self-rule concept by establishing self-governing bodies at the local
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with a speech that at first seems to support the first speaker but that actually contains a hidden counterproposal. Speakers may express their views by telling jokes. If people laugh or if they simply act according to the second speaker’s proposal, the first has lost. Rarely if ever does an open confrontation between speakers occur.

Foreign Relations

Close Franco-Malagasy ties formed the cornerstone of Madagascar’s foreign policy in the early independence years, as witnessed by the signing of fourteen agreements and conventions with France. An Economic and Financial Cooperation Agreement signed in June 1960 specified and regulated Madagascar’s status as a member of the Franc Zone. Other economic agreements ensured the sanctity of existing French economic interests and, therefore, continued strong levels of French influence over Madagascar’s economy. The Malagasy role was largely limited to the impact of decision makers in the upper echelons of government and input at the grass-roots level by small-scale farmers producing for subsistence or export. Other sectors by and large remained the domain of French trading conglomerates, large-scale agriculturalists, or Chinese and Indian intermediaries.

In the realm of security, defense agreements underscored France’s willingness to provide strategic protection for Madagascar. France was allowed access to military bases and installations in Madagascar. These included the natural harbor of Antsiranana at the northern end of the island and the Ivato airfield near Antananarivo. France also enjoyed complete freedom of movement in the island’s airspaces and coastal waters. In return for these benefits, France provided military aid, technical assistance, and training for Malagasy security forces.

French influence was equally strong in the cultural realm. The country’s intellectual elite was French-speaking, and many prominent Malagasy studied in French lycées and acquired degrees from French universities. Newspapers and periodicals published in French as well as Malagasy circulated in Antananarivo and other major cities. French was the language of instruction for higher education, and many teachers were French. At secondary and higher levels, the curriculum was modeled closely on that of France.

The strengthening of ties with France was complemented by a desire to enhance links with other Western countries, includ-
ing Britain, Italy, Switzerland, the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany), and most notably the United States. In October 1963, the Tolanarana regime consented to the construction of a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) satellite tracking station near the old airport outside the capital. In return, the United States initiated a modest foreign assistance program that guaranteed private investment in the island's economy and made available a number of fellowships to students from Madagascar. Madagascar also established diplomatic links with other newly emerging nations, particularly former French colonies in Africa, and strengthened relationships with Asian countries, most notably Japan, India, and Indonesia.

A significant shift occurred in Madagascar's foreign policy after the downfall of the Tolanarana regime in 1972. In a series of diplomatic moves that three years later were embraced by the Ratsiraka regime, the cornerstone of the Second Republic, the Ramanantsoa regime pronounced Madagascar's commitment to nonalignment, anti-imperialism, anticolonialism, and antiracism in international affairs. In the context of the privileged Franco-Malagasy relationship, these themes translated into harsh rhetoric concerning the necessity of revoking the "slavery agreements" of the Tolanarana regime, followed by the uncompensated nationalization of all French banks and insurance firms in June 1975, contributing to the dramatic cooling of diplomatic relations. Moreover, in June 1976, the Ratsiraka regime laid claim to small, rocky, French-held islands around Madagascar, including the Glorieuses (claimed currently by Comoros), Juan de Nova, Europa, Bassas da India, and Tromelin (also claimed by Mauritius). Originally administered as part of French-ruled Madagascar, these possessions were split off just prior to independence in 1960 and include some minor military facilities.

Diplomatic links also soured with other Western powers, such as Britain, which closed its embassy in 1975. In the case of the United States, the immediate cause of strained ties was the Ratsiraka regime's decision to close the NASA tracking station. Another source of friction was the frequent verbal assaults by the Ratsiraka regime against the United States military presence at Diego Garcia Island. The Malagasy position was that, in accordance with a UN resolution passed in 1971, the Indian Ocean should be a demilitarized, nuclear-free zone of peace. Nonetheless, trade relations remained essentially unaffected, and diplomatic relations continued, albeit at the reduced level of chargés d'affaires.

The most dramatic development was the strengthening of ties with Eastern Europe and with other communist regimes. After establishing diplomatic links with the Soviet Union in October 1972—followed one month later by the establishment of ties with China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)—ties were enhanced in the economic, cultural, and politico-military realms. Soviet development assistance was directed toward the fields of agriculture, medicine, science, and technology, and scholarships were provided to at least 2,000 Malagasy students to study in the Soviet Union. A new Malagasy-Soviet Intergovernmental Commission on Economic and Technical Cooperation and Trade facilitated these links. The Soviet Union was particularly interested in promoting security ties with the Ratsiraka regime. In addition to providing military advisers and technical advice, the former Soviet Union became the primary source of military equipment for the Malagasy Armed Forces, including providing access to MiG-21 Fishbed jet fighters, and aided in the construction of a series of sealane intercept stations along Madagascar's west
coast astride the Mozambique Channel. These stations were eventually dismantled in 1983 after protests by the West.

Relationships with other communist countries developed in a variety of fields. Whereas Cuba provided technical assistance within the educational realm, China funded the construction of roads between Moramanga and Toamasina, and built a new sugar factory near Morondava. The Ratsiraka regime was especially impressed by North Korean leader Kim II Sung and his ideology of national self-reliance known as juche (or chuch'e), hosting an international conference on this topic in Antananarivo in 1976. North Korean assistance was fairly extensive in their fields of agriculture and irrigation. The North Koreans were most noted, however, for their training of Ratsiraka's presidential security unit and the construction of a presidential bunker at lavohola.

New directions in foreign policy were equally pronounced in Madagascar's relationships with other developing countries and its positions in a variety of international forums. In addition to breaking ties with Israel and South Africa, the Ramanantsoa/Ratsiraka regimes strengthened links with Libya, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and liberation movements in southern Africa and the Western Sahara. Madagascar also joined the Nonaligned Movement, became more active in the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and took positions in the UN that favored the communist states, including abstaining on a resolution that denounced the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and supporting Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in 1978. In conjunction with his Cuban and Soviet allies, Ratsiraka even tried to broker an end to rising tensions between Marxist Ethiopia and Marxist Somalia just prior to the outbreak of the Ogaden War in 1977–78.

Despite some alarmist projections that the communist countries would replace the West and turn Madagascar into a Soviet satellite, the changes in Madagascar's foreign policies represented a short-term shift rather than a true break with the past. The Ratsiraka regime had gained little in the form of economic assistance from its friendly relations with the Soviet Union and other communist countries—aid from these sources constituted less than 1 percent of all bilateral assistance from 1977 to 1980—and was confronted with the harsh realities of economic decline. As a result, an increasingly pragmatic Ratsiraka sought to reaffirm and strengthen Madagascar's foreign policy relationships with the West. Indeed, relations with the West appeared to be on the upswing at the beginning of the 1980s, whereas those with the communist countries were more or less static—despite the similarity of views on a wide range of international issues routinely reaffirmed by the spokespersons of Madagascar and of communist countries. As was the case with other self-proclaimed Marxist regimes during the 1970s and the 1980s, Ratsiraka pursued politico-military links with the Soviet Union while seeking to maintain economic ties with the West.

Diplomatic overtures to France served as the logical starting point for achieving a balance in Madagascar's foreign policy relationships. As early as 1977, Ratsiraka provided assurances concerning compensation for French firms nationalized during the mid-1970s in order to foster greater official and private investment in Madagascar. France responded positively, as demonstrated by the tremendous increase in foreign assistance from US$38.4 million in 1979 to US$96.4 million in 1982. Indeed, as of the early 1980s, France remained Madagascar's most important foreign policy partner. It was the principal source of foreign assistance and the most valuable trading partner. The dispute over French control of neighboring islands, although unresolved, had little if any ill effect on Franco-Malagasy relations, mainly because the Ratsiraka regime no longer publicly pressed this issue in international forums. (The motion asking France to cede the islands had been adopted by the UN General Assembly by a ninety-seven to seven vote in 1979 with thirty-six abstentions.)

The diversification of ties, thereby avoiding dependence on any single power, served as another cornerstone of Madagascar's foreign policy initiatives during the 1980s. Relations were fully restored with Washington in November 1980 when United States Ambassador Fernando E. Rondon assumed his post for the first time since his predecessor had been recalled during the summer of 1975. Receiving the new envoy, Ratsiraka expressed the hope that "fruitful, loyal, and lasting cooperation" would develop between the two countries and that there would be "no further misunderstandings" as a result of differing opinions on international issues. Other major events included the reopening of the British embassy in 1979, Ratsiraka's visits with President Ronald Reagan in Washington in 1982 and 1983, the opening of a World Bank office in Antananarivo in 1983, and the strengthening of links with other industrialized countries, most notably Japan.
The levels of foreign assistance provided by the West demonstrate the success of Ratsiraka’s diplomatic initiatives (see table 7, Appendix). Bilateral aid from the West constituted only US$36.3 million one year after Ratsiraka had taken power in 1975. Four years after the beginning of the foreign policy changes initiated by the Ramantsoa regime, this amount increased to US$168.1 million in 1982, to US$217.6 million in 1988, and to US$365.5 million in 1991. Similarly, multilateral assistance from Western financial institutions, such as the IMF and the European Common Market (European Union), increased from US$34.1 million in 1976 to US$80.6 million in 1982, to US$108.9 million in 1988, and to US$191.4 million in 1991.

Equally important, Ratsiraka’s policies led to a diversification of Madagascar’s sources of foreign assistance. Although France in 1991 still provided approximately 43 percent (US$157.0 million) of Madagascar’s bilateral foreign assistance, in 1988 it had provided approximately 50 percent (US$108.5 million). The amount marked a significant decline from almost total dependence in 1970 when nearly 90 percent of all Western assistance was provided by France. Noteworthy, however, was France’s provision of US$655.4 million of the total US$1,334.5 million multilateral aid that Madagascar received between 1985 and 1990. In addition, France gave Madagascar loan assistance for such projects as telecommunications, transportation, and banking, and canceled US$715 million in debts that the Madagascar government owed France. In 1993 Madagascar received about US$167 million in aid from France compared with about US$152 million in aid received from France in 1992. Whereas the United States provided US$71.0 million in multilateral aid in 1991, Japan and Germany extended US$56.8 million and US$30.3 million respectively.

United States direct development aid has become increasingly important for Madagascar and has risen from about US$10 million in 1990 to US$13.5 million in 1991 (US$58 million was authorized but could not be used because of strikes and the disrupted political and economic situation), US$40 million in 1992, and US$40.6 million in 1993. Of the 1993 total, US$20.4 million was earmarked for environmental protection and US$10 million for the private sector.

The growing partnership with the West was cemented by dramatic changes in the international system and in Madagascar’s domestic political system. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 signaled the beginning of a process eventually leading to the downfall of communist regimes and trading partners in Eastern Europe, the fragmentation of the Soviet Union, and the increasing international isolation of North Korea and Cuba as pariah regimes. Furthermore, this international trend facilitated the rise of popular pressures for a multiparty democracy in Madagascar, eventually leading to the downfall of Ratsiraka’s Second Republic and its replacement in 1993 with a democratically inspired Third Republic under the leadership of Zafy.

The cornerstone of Madagascar’s foreign policy in the post-Cold War era is the continued diversification of ties, with an emphasis on promoting economic exchanges. In addition to establishing formal diplomatic ties with the Republic of Korea (South Korea) in May 1993, negotiations were initiated to restore diplomatic links with Israel and South Africa. In each of these cases, diplomatic links are perceived as the precursor to lucrative trading agreements. For example, one month after establishing diplomatic ties with South Korea, Madagascar hosted a South Korean trade mission that included representatives of six major South Korean companies: Daewoo, Dong Yong Electronics, Hyundai, Kolon, Peace Industries, and Samsung. As underscored by Prime Minister Ravony, one of the most critical challenges facing Madagascar is the restructuring of its embassies and foreign policy to "objectives of economic redepotment" in the post-Cold War era. Of particular interest to Madagascar, in view of their proximity and commercial potential, are relations and trade with India, Mauritius, Australia, and South Africa.

The benefits associated with changes in the international environment have an impact on Madagascar’s domestic political system. Similar to other newly installed African democracies at the beginning of the 1990s, the Zafy regime confronts the challenge of consolidating still-fragile democratic practices and governing institutions in a significantly changed international environment. Although such potential benefits associated with the end of the Cold War as a renewed focus on economic as opposed to military investments have been heralded by Western observers, the leaders of African countries, including Madagascar, rightfully wonder if their countries will be further marginalized as former benefactors either turn inward or toward more lucrative economic markets in Asia and Latin America. Equally important, the Zafy regime faces balancing
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The amount of scholarship devoted to Madagascar in the English language is small but growing, and complements a larger body of literature in the French language and a smaller body of research in the Malagasy language. For the most up-to-date analyses by francophone scholars, see a special 1993 edition of Politique Africaine devoted to Madagascar.

Several works offer a useful introduction to the society, economics, and especially the politics of Madagascar. One of the earliest and most useful introductions in English is Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, The Malagasy Republic: Madagascar Today. A more recent introduction, Maureen Covey’s Madagascar: Politics, Economics, and Society, is especially relevant for understanding the Marxist policies of the Ratsiraka era. Pierre Vérin’s Madagascar provides the standard French introduction and includes a useful bibliographic essay.

Several scholars have distinguished themselves as specialists on Madagascar, and their works serve as helpful introductions to each of their discipline’s treatment of Madagascar. In the field of anthropology, Maurice Bloch has written several seminal works, most notably Placing the Dead: Tombs, Ancestral Villages, and Kinship Organization in Madagascar and From Blessing to Violence: History and Ideology in the Circumcision Ritual of the Merina of Madagascar. In the field of history, Mervyn Brown’s Madagascar Rediscovered: A History from Early Times to Independence provides a good overview of the early history of Madagascar. Raymond K. Kent’s Early Kingdoms in Madagascar, 1500-1700 outlines the historical development of various Malagasy kingdoms. In the field of economics, Frederic L. Pryor’s Poverty, Equity, and Growth in Malawi and Madagascar is valuable in exploring the equity versus growth dilemma as applied to Madagascar. Paul A. Dorosh’s Macroeconomic Adjustment and the Poor: The Case of Madagascar offers important insights into the impact of national economic policies and their effect on rural populations.

A variety of bulletins and journals are useful for staying apprised of political and economic developments in Madagascar. The separate economic and political monthly bulletins of the Africa Research Bulletin contain brief references. Also recommended are the annual country surveys in the Africa Contemporary Record: Annual Survey and Documents and the Annuaire des Pays de l’Océan Indien. However, the Indian Ocean Newsletter constitutes the most informative weekly source of up-to-date information on political, and to a lesser degree, economic developments in the African countries and islands in or around the Indian Ocean, including Madagascar. The annual country profiles and the quarterly reports of the Economist Intelligence Unit are vital for understanding trends in the Malagasy economy. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)