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The impact of international proceedings for bypassing the State: the example of Madagascar

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Madagascar was severely hit by a protracted political and diplomatic crisis triggered by the 2009 military coup. The transitional government, in power until 2014, was unable to prevent the State from being bypassed and its humanitarian sovereignty from being transferred to international actors. This has done nothing to improve the situation of a country which is among the world's Least Advanced, ranked the third most vulnerable to climate hazards, behind Bangladesh and India (and the first in Africa) and the second most food-insecure in 2014. Christiane Rafidinarivo explains the mechanisms put in place by these actors between 2009 and 2014, and which are still applied today. She provides a comparative analysis in order to draw political and diplomatic lessons for African countries...

The transitional crisis realism invented for Madagascar created an international precedent in humanitarian diplomacy, especially for Africa. As a result of the political and diplomatic crisis which began in 2009, international financial sanctions were imposed on the country and, from 2009 to 2014, the only international funding authorised was humanitarian aid¹. However, this aid was substantial enough to affect Madagascar's money supply and so international stakeholders at multiple levels employed unprecedented proceedings to ensure it bypassed the State. The systems put in place were maintained after the end of the diplomatic crisis and even after the presidential elections in 2014. The comparative political analysis² made here seeks to answer the following crucial question: what "governance situation" have these bypass systems created³ and what is its impact on international financial relations and crisis recovery prospects?

The substitution of governance

Madagascar's transitional government was not recognised by the international community. Consequently, international partners pursued strategies for bypassing the State that were clearly intended to limit its decision-making and budgetary capacity. In so doing, international governance engaged in a process of delegitimising the nation State's humanitarian function and de-institutionalising its humanitarian coordination, normally carried out by the *Bureau National de*

¹ Christiane Rafidinarivo (dir.), *L'État dans les relations internationales. La communauté internationale face à la crise malgache actuelle*, Report to the Institut des hautes études de Défense nationale, association régionale océan Indien, Saint-Denis, 2010, letter of congratulations from Richard Laborde, vice-admiral and IHEDN director.

² Christiane Rafidinarivo (dir.), Hantsa Ralamboson and Marie-Donna Ranaivoarivelo, « Transition politique et transition humanitaire : analyse politique comparée de la transition financière », *Fonds Croix-Rouge française, Les Papiers du Fonds*, n° 10, February 2017, www.fondcrf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Transition-politique-et-transition-humanitaire_Analyse-comparee-de-la-transition-financiere.pdf

³ Elinor Ostrom, *Gouvernance des biens communs. Pour une nouvelle approche des ressources naturelles*, Éditions de Boeck, Paris, 2010.

Gestion des Risques et Catastrophes [National Office of Disaster Risk Management (BNGRC)]. Thus, from a “financial transition”⁴ point of view:

“2009 [was] a turning point in terms of the loss of capacity of State institutions through the suspension or cancellation of development assistance. There were no longer any high-level political interactions for managing cooperation in Madagascar, only direct technical exchanges for implementation...”⁵.

Moreover, the budgetisation of authorised humanitarian funding transformed 30 % of what had become prohibited Official Development Assistance into humanitarian aid.⁶ And lastly, regional funding was only authorised if it was reclassified as bilateral humanitarian assistance. As a result, humanitarian aid was allocated directly to non-State and/or community actors which then channelled it to the beneficiaries. In other words, the allocation of international humanitarian resources circumvented the State. Indeed, we could say that the diplomatic measure of imposing financial sanctions resulted in the substitution of State governance by international humanitarian governance.

Stakeholder proceedings and popular perception

It all started in 2009 when the United Nations created for Madagascar the “Special situation of development” (SSD). Two types of systems were put in place. One was institutional: “Direct Implementation” by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which maintained the usual amount of aid but paid it directly to the communities. After the presidential elections in 2014, “Direct Implementation” was replaced by “National Implementation” (NIM), which was overseen country-wide by the UNDP. The other system resulted in a *de facto* shift in the role of the World Food Programme (WFP), which departed from its development agency role and moved into a “humanitarian aid agency mode”. Mandated by the United Nations to undertake emergency action, it was solicited by public and private donors, such as the African Development Bank, for example, to act as a humanitarian aid and coordination agency, the role that the BNGRC is normally supposed to assure.

Public and private networks of humanitarian actors organised their own procedures for bypassing the State, putting in place public/private sector-based governance in the form of “clusters”⁷: the ensuing interaction between public and private sector-based aid actions led to the emergence of a non-State coordination structure.

As for international humanitarian networks, their own standard humanitarian governance proceedings circumvented the State-based coordination of the host country, Madagascar. The

⁴ Christiane Rafidinarivo, « Transition politique, transition financière et transition humanitaire : le cas de Madagascar », speech at the Convergences World Forum, Paris, 2016.

⁵ Maherisoa Rakotonirainy, Vulnerability Assessment Officer for the World Food Programme (WFP), cited by Christiane Rafidinarivo (dir.), Hantsa Ralamboson and Marie-Donna Ranaivoarivelo, « Transition politique et transition humanitaire... », *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁶ World bank, « La Gestion des Risques et Catastrophes et l'adaptation au changement climatique », World Bank memorandum, Antananarivo, 2014.

⁷ “Sector-based groups” put in place in 2005 by OCHA, the UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as part of the humanitarian reform programme. These clusters are groups of humanitarian organisations, both UN and non-UN, in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action, e.g. water, health and logistics. They are designated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). The Resident Coordinator and/or the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Country Team manages the humanitarian response through these clusters. See « OCHA d’une seule voix : l’approche Cluster », mai 2012, www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/dms/Documents/OCHA%20on%20Message_Cluster%20Approach_vFR.pdf [editor’s note].

consequences of this are paradoxical. While international humanitarian networks bypass the Malagasy State, their member countries worked closely with the diplomatic governance of their own States. Stéphane Gompertz explains this paradox by the fact that “NGOs willing to work hand in hand with their respective embassies makes things easier”⁸. Bernard Kouchner, the emblematic “French Doctor”⁹ who was France’s Foreign Affairs Minister from 2007 to 2010, contributed to “this governance situation” which was the focus of negotiations of the *ad hoc* international contact group established by donors to Madagascar. On the other hand this sharpens the stakes in geopolitical rivalry and diplomatic competition. The United States then claimed to be Madagascar’s principal donor and principal humanitarian partner – a place that France traditionally claimed for itself.

But what about the beneficiaries? Let us recall that the State bypass measures implemented by international stakeholders were maintained after the presidential elections of 2014 which put an institutional end to the crisis. In order to conduct a post-crisis analysis of the action of the BNGRC and its international networks, in 2016 we thus carried out an unprecedented perceived satisfaction survey of 650 households in three regions exposed to different types of risks and natural disasters¹⁰.

What comes out is a rather medium range level of satisfaction in the Analamanga region in the centre of the country and in the Atsinanana region to the East. In Androy, in the South, the region with the highest famine and insecurity levels and where the State’s hold is weakest, the findings showed blatant dissatisfaction. Indeed, the action of the State and its international partners was seen to be irrelevant and ineffective. It was considered a failure, despite the South being home to the most vulnerable populations and receiving the most aid.

⁸ Stéphane Gompertz, Head of the African desk at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2010 to 2012, *Fonds Croix-Rouge française*, Les états de la recherche, Paris, 15 mars 2017 (speech).

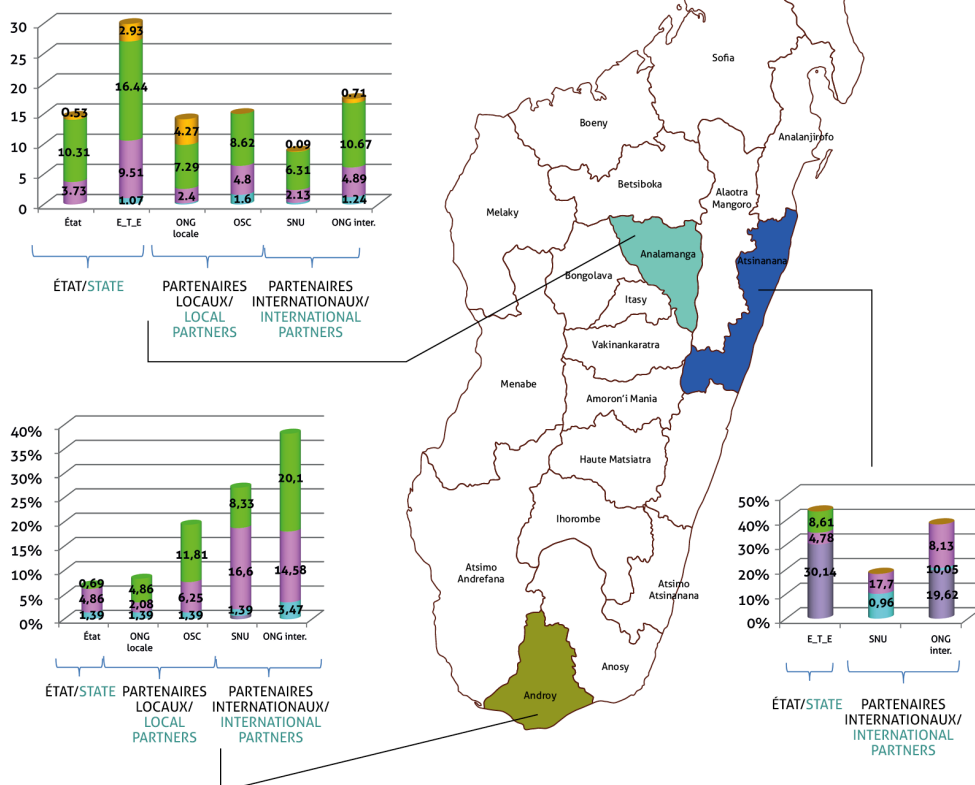
⁹ Philippe Ryfman, *Une histoire de l’humanitaire*, La Découverte, 2016.

¹⁰ Christiane Rafidinarivo (dir.), Hantsa Ralamboson and Marie-Donna Ranaivoarivelo, « Transition politique et transition humanitaire... », *op. cit.*

MADAGASCAR – 2016

SATISFACTION DES MÉNAGES SELON LES INTERVENTIONS DE L'ÉTAT ET DE SES PARTENAIRES LOCAUX ET INTERNATIONAUX

SATISFACTION OF HOUSEHOLDS CONCERNING INTERVENTIONS OF THE STATE AND ITS LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS



Légende/Legend

Limite régionale/Regional limit

Vulnérabilité aux aléas/Vulnerability to hazards

Inondations/Floods

Cyclones et inondations/Cyclones and floods

Sécheresse et inondations/Drought and floods

Degré de satisfaction des ménages exposés/ Level of satisfaction of exposed households

Très satisfait/Very satisfied

Satisfait/Satisfied

Moyennement satisfait/Moderately satisfied

Peu satisfait/Unsatisfied

Très peu satisfait/Very unsatisfied

Map source:

Christiane Rafidinarivo (dir.),

production Nianja Raonivelo and Jaotiana

Rasolomamonjy, advised by Thierry Sabathier,

Ingénieur divisionnaire des travaux géographiques et cartographiques de l'État ["State survey engineer", editor's note], scientific poster exhibition "Political transition and humanitarian transition 2009-2014", association océan Indien de Science politique, 2016.

From diplomacy to humanitarian geopolitics

Bypassing the State and imposing international financial sanctions put considerable pressure on Madagascar's transitional government to achieve an electoral outcome to the diplomatic crisis. Admittedly, it also provided a safety net for those populations most exposed to climate, security and political risks. But this approach, maintained throughout the international negotiations to produce a road map for exiting the crisis, continued to weigh heavily on Madagascar's money supply, while remaining a useful political tool for multi-level international actors to influence the governance of the State and the country's political life.

As a result, bypassing the State helped weaken it. Madagascar was categorised as a failed State by many international stakeholders who used this as a diplomatic and geopolitical argument. It also enabled national and international actors or groups of actors to transform humanitarian influence into cronyism. Lastly, this was used by certain groups to constitute the basis required to ensure their political future¹¹.

Many of these international actors, especially the humanitarian ones, were pleased with the reduction in State capacity, perceived as an opportunity for the population, NGOs and civil society organisations to take charge of their own destiny beyond the control of the State. But why did nobody ever ask the beneficiaries what their opinion was? In the findings of our satisfaction survey, and with no mention on our part of the word "sovereignty", this notion nonetheless occurred very frequently in the responses made by the households interviewed.

The households perceived what our workings brought to light: the new humanitarian funding situation and the status of this funding during the diplomatic crisis reversed the coordination hierarchy. The transitional government could bring no influence to bear on the quota plan (planning and basic stocks in the event of a disaster), so Assia Sidibe's adage became particularly pertinent: "When there's no plan, there's OCHA's plan"¹². According to OCHA's Rija Rakotoson, this doesn't relieve them of uncertainty: "We don't know whether our responses are right, but we try to make them fair"¹³. So is ethics the only protection against the reversal of governance in the context of international financial sanctions and extreme dependence?

In the 1990s, there was much talk about the decline of the State and the new transnational perspectives in the world view and that of humanitarian action¹⁴. And what is witnessed today in the case of Madagascar – and can also be seen in other contexts –, in crisis situations, populations still turn spontaneously to the State and local government bodies. This is where their expectations lie. Our survey revealed that the people of Madagascar deplore the weakening of the State's role in humanitarian action, both in terms of loss of proximity and, above all, national sovereignty. They perceive international humanitarian action as being only relatively effective, essentially palliative and also a source of vital dependence.

¹¹ Maherisoa Rakotonirainy, in Christiane Rafidinarivo (dir.), Hantsa Ralamboson et Marie-Donna Ranaivoarivelo, « Transition politique et transition humanitaire... », *op. cit.*, p. 22.

¹² Assia Sidibe, head of "Country engagement" for African Risk Capacity (www.africanriskcapacity.org), at the Convergences World Forum, Paris, 2016. OCHA : UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [editor's note].

¹³ Humanitarian Affairs Officer at OCHA, in Christiane Rafidinarivo (dir.), Hantsa Ralamboson et Marie-Donna Ranaivoarivelo, « Transition politique et transition humanitaire... », *op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹⁴ Bertrand Badie, *La fin des territoires*, Fayard, 1995.

Heightened humanitarian geopolitical competition

The geopolitical consequences of the reversal in hierarchy between national and international coordination are an erosion of sovereignty and a weakening of State power, corollaries to the predominance of international actors in the humanitarian landscape and all along the allocation process of humanitarian resources. This is indeed a very strong political and financial power in terms of local and global legitimation and delegitimation.

Finally, this political and diplomatic crisis in Madagascar's recent history also revealed a heightening in geopolitical competition for funding between humanitarian actors, which we believe to be the exact opposite of what is required in essential "humanitarian transition", in the sense understood by Jean-François Mattei¹⁵.

We have seen international humanitarian funding transformed into "soft power" through top-down and bottom-up political and geopolitical competition. It has become this way a driver for the (de)mobilisation of institutional networks on the one hand and political capitalisation through humanitarian action on the other. In Madagascar's case, the regional context intensified this competition: the huge gas deposits discovered in 2008 in the Mozambique Channel¹⁶ and confirmed in 2012, have since been exploited by Mozambique and Tanzania on the basis of their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), while Madagascar is still struggling to recover from the crisis. The natural gas wells that Madagascar could pretend to in the same channel are located within the EEZ of the "Îles éparses" (Scattered Islands) disputed with France¹⁷.

However, as humanitarian actors have experienced locally and globally, even a weak, poor and dependant State can prevent them from taking action. If it refuses them access to the country, or to fields of action, aid workers are powerless. In other words, States will always have the capacity to determine the scale and effectiveness of international humanitarian aid. To avoid reaching such extremes, of which the populations are often the first to suffer, and to ensure the State plays its rightful humanitarian coordination role in partnership, it is necessary to practice the co-construction of national and international public humanitarian policies. It is important, to this end, to establish procedures to exit from curtailment of the State so as not to be satisfied with a governance of crisis but to contribute to its resolution. This supposes a re-institutionalisation¹⁸ geared to the fight against the violence of nature and society, to the governance of peace – a common and sovereign asset, and effectively sustainable development.

Translated from the French by Mandy Duret

Biography • Christiane Rafidinarivo

A Doctor habilitated to conduct research in political science, Christiane Rafidinarivo is an invited researcher at Cevipof (CNRS UMR 7048), Sciences Po Paris. She is visiting professor for the Europe-Africa and Europe-America programmes of Sciences Po. She is president of the

¹⁵ Jean-François Mattei, *L'humanitaire à l'épreuve de l'éthique*, Les liens qui libèrent, 2014.

¹⁶ Arm of the Indian Ocean between Madagascar and the rest of Africa [editor's note].

¹⁷ Christiane Rafidinarivo et Johary Ravaloson (dir.), « Regards croisés sur les Îles Éparses : ressources et territoires contestés », *Revue Madagascar Conseil International*, dossier spécial Îles Éparses, n° 72-73, 2016.

¹⁸ Charles Rambolanson, deputy executive secretary of the BNGRC, « L'État et le BNGRC, enjeux d'une institutionnalisation de la coordination », speech at the FCRF and IRD seminar, 2016.

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