

MADAGASCAR

Research paper's abstract



In the early 1990s, a "wave of democratisation" reached the African continent. More than two decades later, the results of the so-called "third wave of democratisation" are more than mitigated. These democracies can be called "electoral authoritarian" regimes or "competitive authoritarian" (Levitsky and Way 2002, 2010) where competition is real, but unfair. Elections and the entire electoral process is manipulated by the elite holding most of the power, with their primary goal to keep their position. As a matter of fact, although multi-party elections have clearly become a regular institution in Africa, there are still many doubts about the value and the quality of these elections.

Madagascar has seen a number of multi-party elections and is one of the few countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that went through several electoral transitions (1993, 1996, and 2001). Although the country has a history of frequently held elections, the regimes elected in the run-offs, tend to be hegemonic, as one party "takes it all" and installs authoritarian governance practices. These practices and the lack of credibility and transparency in the organisation of the electoral process led to violent protest, the mobilisation of power outside the institutions and the seizure of power through public demonstrations (Galibert 2009) and a coup d'état in 2009 (Randrianja 2012, Ramasy 2012). The latter, originating an almost five year during political crisis and international isolation of the country. Internal and external mediation efforts were challenged seriously but ultimately leading to the organisation of elections as a necessary condition to end the crisis.

This article aims to have a close look at the most recent electoral transition that took place with the presidential and legislative elections of 2013. In Madagascar's history, these elections embodied many "firsts". In organisational terms, they were the first elections being organised by an Independent Electoral Commission with the support of the international community. It was also the first time that a single ballot paper was used, rather than asking political parties to distribute their individual ballots throughout the country's 20,001 polling stations. It was also the first time that multi-party elections took place without the incumbent president on the ballot. Moreover, these post-transition elections should allow the country to end its political crisis and return to constitutional order and political and democratic normalisation.

In the light of the thesis that election systems, election administration and the management of the electoral process in general have an influence on the democratization process, this article has the objective to analyze this link in the Malagasy electoral context and especially by looking at the most recent election experience. The success of the 2013 elections was a necessary condition to step out of the political crisis, be again part of the international community and get access to international

development aid. International pressure somehow imposed the government to learn from the past and to organize the elections in a transparent and credible way as to avoid the cyclical post-election crisis, and to obtain their acceptance by all stakeholders. But more than one year after the election, an institutional crisis between the President of the Republic and some members of the National Assembly has characterized the political scene with the 'motion de déchéance' of the President of the Republic and the 'motion de censure' against the government. The lack/absence of a clear majority in the National Assembly is one of the consequences of the weakness of the regime/political system. This article will analyze to what extent the 2013 elections in Madagascar are a step back in term of democratization, 'election without democratization'. Madagascar's 2013 elections can be seen as a democratic 'makeover election', aimed at legitimizing the country's 2009 coup d'état, a process by which coup leaders and outside actors transform illegally-obtained power into seemingly legitimate rule. It will be important to analyze the political system, the political parties and the elite in a historical perspective.