Madagascar at a crossroads: breaking the cycle of state capture

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About GI ACE

The GI ACE research programme generates actionable evidence that leads to more effective anti-corruption initiatives. We move away from national-level, top-down technical and regulatory approaches towards operationally relevant, problem-driven, rigorous, and actionable research that takes into account specific context and the complexity of corruption. Since its inception, GI ACE has supported research projects on topics including anti–money laundering approaches, beneficial ownership, cross-border trade, medical theft, procurement risks, and urban planning. GI ACE funds research with innovative approaches tied to concrete challenges around our priority areas and promotes collaboration with practitioners who directly deal with these challenges.

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Introduction

In late 2025, large-scale street protests precipitated the downfall of President Andry Rajoelina and opened the door for regime change. What began as protests over electricity and water shortages quickly evolved into broader demands for accountability for corruption by regime insiders. Protesters contested the system of governance in Madagascar, which has seen an elite network monopolise economic opportunities, restrict political competition, and organise state structures in ways which serve their own interests - a system of state capture.

Exploiting the political upheaval created by the protests, a transitional military government headed by Colonel Michael Randrianirina seized power in October 2025 and has initially committed to a two-year transition period before elections will be held. The transitional government has further promised a national dialogue on the future direction of the country to take place in the summer of 2026.

The protests and subsequent change in power may create an unexpected opening for governance reform. But there are also real risks that the moment will be lost and patterns of state capture reproduced or even reinforced. The events in Madagascar followed similar demonstrations in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Serbia among others, collectively termed the 'Gen-Z protests'. In all these cases, protesters laid the blame for economic deprivation on state capture.

Those seeking to overthrow capture all face a similar set of challenges: if one regime falls, what should come next? How can captor networks be dismantled and more inclusive systems of governance put in place? How can the momentum from street protests be translated into durable institutional reforms?

This brief considers such questions in Madagascar with a view to informing ongoing debates around the country's direction of travel as well as surfacing challenges that may be relevant elsewhere. Pairing an in-depth understanding of the political and economic context in Madagascar with lessons from GI ACE's international research project on building resilience to capture, this brief seeks to:

- Provide a clear synthesis of how state capture manifests in Madagascar.

- Highlight lessons from other countries which have undergone power transitions, including the risks and tensions inherent in responding to capture.

- Outline the political economy dynamics which shape this transition period in Madagascar.

- Set out principles and questions on how to counter capture which can be taken forward by key stakeholders as they enter the national dialogue process.

The brief is aimed at individuals involved in discussions on governance reforms in Madagascar, including Malagasy civil society, the transition government, international financial institutions, and development partners.

State capture in Madagascar

We understand state capture as a "type of systematic corruption whereby narrow interest groups take control of the institutions and processes through which public policy is made, directing public policy away from the public interest, and instead shape it to serve their own interests" (Dávid-Barrett, 2023). This definition builds on earlier research which predominantly focussed on how businesses shaped rules in strategic economic sectors to their own advantage (Hellman, Jones and Kaufmann, 2000). It uses these ideas and extends them to identify several key features of capture, namely that:

- It is perpetrated by networks which move fluidly between politics and business, and in some countries includes organised crime groups.

- Motivations include not only self-enrichment but also impunity and retaining political power.

- It encompasses both legal and illegal forms of conduct.

- It is often underpinned by violence or the threat of violence, as well as patronage systems.

Experts have identified capture as the predominant form of corruption in several countries in Southern Africa, including Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe – as well as Madagascar.

Three pillars of capture in Madagacar

Examining a range of contemporary case studies from around the world, Dávid-Barrett (2023) has argued that common strategies pursued by captor networks can be analysed in terms of three pillars:

1. Influence over the formation of constitution, law and policy, to secure political control and define the rules of the game, especially for institutions of governance and important economic sectors.

2. Influence over the implementation of policy, namely the use and abuse of state administrative procedures to benefit captor networks.

3. The disabling or repurposing of accountability institutions, such as law enforcement bodies, civil society, and the media, to prevent scrutiny and checks on the power of the executive.

Table 1 applies this framework to describe the main mechanisms of capture in Madagascar over the last 15 years. High levels of state fragility, as apparent in the state's low capacity to deliver basic services, raise taxes, and maintain a full territorial presence, have influenced the strategies pursued by captor networks and the relative importance of different mechanisms. While captors at times work through state structures to advance their goals, profiteering has also taken place beyond the remit of state control and in vacuums created by deliberately weakening certain state functions (Rafitoson and Shipley, 2026).

Table 1: Mechanisms of state capture in Madagascar

Pillar of capture and objective	Example mechanisms of capture	Examples of impact
1. Formation of constitution/law/policy Secure control over the means of violence, shape the rules of the game as they apply to politics and key economic sectors.	• Executive control over the legislature through direct appointment of one-third of Senate members. • Frequent recourse to rule by Presidential ordinance. • Permeation of military leaders throughout state structures. • Executive Control over the Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI), the election management body. • Weak political finance legal and regulatory framework. • Manipulation of regulatory frameworks for natural resource sectors, including export rules, licensing frameworks and price controls.	• Undemocratic power transitions • Election processes lacking democratic legitimacy. • Opportunities for economic development squandered. • Depletion of biodiversity and enhanced susceptibility to climate shocks (the eleventh most vulnerable country globally to climate shocks on the Notre-Dame Gain Index, 2025).
2. Implementation of policy by government bodies/civil service Influence administrative procedures to benefit captor network and disadvantage opponents.	• Key appointments and control over state-owned companies such as JIRAMA (power and water utility), Kraomita Malagasy (mining). • Manipulation of public procurement procedures to favour cronies. • Control of regulatory framework (e.g., export and price controls) and access to opportunities for public-private partnerships.	• Negligible public service delivery (bottom 10 country in the UNDP Human Development Index (2025)). • Appointments by patronage create incentives to be loyal to the leadership and not challenge power. • Economy dominated by a few monopolists, crowding out innovation. • Direct economic losses to the state in a country where 84% of the population are estimated to be multidimensionally poor or at risk of multidimensional poverty (UNDP, 2025).[1]

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1. UNDP data on multidimensional poverty assesses individual deprivations across 10 equally weighted indicators covering health, education, and standard of living.

Table 1: Mechanisms of state capture in Madagascar (cont.)

Arena of capture and objective	Example mecahnisms of capture	Examples of impact
3. Accountability institutions, e.g. judiciary, supreme audit institutions, civil society, media Disable and undermine institutions, organisations and individuals that reveal corruption or seek to hold power to account.	• Executive appointed three of the nine members of the High Constitutional Court (Article 114 of the Constitution), the apex body responsible for adjudicating legal matters related to elections and referendums. • President acted as Chair of the Superior Council of the Judiciary, overseeing judicial appointments and standards. • Limited budget and effectiveness of anti-corruption institutions. • Violent repression of protests. • Use of defamation laws to quell journalist and civil society organisations.	• Decisions regarding constitutional matters shape rules in ways that favour captor elites. • Undermines rule of law by diverting law enforcement and prosecutors from investigating or prosecuting certain kinds of wrongdoing. • Elite impunity for corruption. • Restricted civic space deters expression of critical views and reduces accountability.

Pillar 1: Influence over the formation of constitution/law/policy

Rajoelina owed his rise to power in 2009 to a group of senior military officers, and a close alliance between the executive and the military's top brass was central to maintaining control. Military figures represented one core node of a closed network of elites who occupied senior posts across government, the security services, and the judiciary, while also benefiting directly from businesses interests in the extractives and other sectors (TI, 2019).

The Malagasy constitution – enacted in 2010 amid a political crisis and following a coup facilitated by military intervention – institutionalises executive dominance. It grants the Presidency the right to appoint one-third of the members of the Senate (Article 81), providing an important patronage tool. Fragmentation in the legislature, which houses more than 50 political parties and a large proportion of independents, also reinforces executive dominance. Voting processes have often been subject to individual bargaining processes, as demonstrated by a 2018 bribery scandal in which 79 National Assembly members were accused of taking up to US $14,000 each to pass a bill to change electoral laws (Trilling, 2019).

Through control of the legislature, the captor network could in effect set the rules of the game in politics. Glaring gaps in the legal framework for political finance (TI Initiative Madagascar, 2022) enabled wealthy patrons – often operating in the natural resource sectors – to exchange vast flows of untraceable campaign funding for favourable policy outcomes. Given the high levels of corruption under the former regime, there were widespread concerns that the proceeds of corruption could make their way into politics. One prominent businessman and supporter of the previous regime, Mamy Ravatomanga, fled to Mauritius following the protests where he was arrested by the Financial Crimes Commission (FCC) on suspicion of possessing the proceeds of criminal activity valued at more than US $158m (FCC, 2025). Criminal proceedings against him are ongoing at time of writing.

Pillar 2: Influence over the implementation of policy

Individuals who made their wealth from looting natural resources also obtained seats in the National Assembly from where they could shape the formation and implementation of economic frameworks in strategic sectors. Madagascar is renowned for its rich forestry, but harvesting rosewood became a vital source of profits in the early years of Rajoelina's administration (Rémy, 2021). Under the influence of timber barons, government manipulation of regulatory frameworks was a recurring feature, particularly through the timely imposition and lifting of export moratoria. While export bans were nominally intended to deter fresh logging, the strategic temporary lifting of moratoria during calculated 'windows' of legality, often declared during cyclone seasons or under emergency ordinances, allowed traffickers to move previously stockpiled timber and pass this off as legal logging. As rosewood stocks declined, captor networks shifted to the lucrative vanilla trade, where again manipulation of rules for exports and pricing controls reinforced the position of captor networks (Caramel, 2023).

In this weak state, captor networks also clustered around certain institutions which presented opportunities for rent-seeking. A key example linked to poor development outcomes is the national power and water utility company Jiro sy Rano Malagasy (JIRAMA), the largest state-owned enterprise in Madagascar. Despite consuming an estimated 10% of state revenues, JIRAMA provides only 36% of the Malagasy population with access to electricity (one of the lowest electrification rates globally) and the company is highly indebted (De Soyres, Tan and Wendling, 2025). Much of this under-performance can be attributed to corruption, mismanagement, and captor networks' interference in personnel appointments. The scale of the problems partly surfaced with the convictions in May 2024 of the company's former CEO and interim CEO. They were two of 36 managers at JIRAMA who were charged with misappropriation from the company, having awarded themselves bonuses of MGA 40 to 180 million (approximately US$ 9,000-40,000) in 2020, during a time of acute financial difficulty for the state-owned firm (Ibid).

Pillar 3: Attacks on accountability institutions

The concentration of powers in the executive negated the role of the judiciary and law enforcement bodies in challenging presidential authority. Captor networks also directly interfered in the functioning and structures of anti-corruption bodies to ensure impunity.

Through institutional tweaks captors effectively undermined a specialist anti-corruption court, the Pôle Anti-Corruption (PAC), established by the Rajoelina government in 2018 under pressure from donors. To sideline PAC, the Malagasy government created a second court, the High Court of Justice (HCJ), which became the only court where the president, members of government, and leaders of parliament could be tried for offences related to the exercise of their duties. This move undercut PAC's jurisdiction over high-level corruption and money laundering. Initiating prosecution at the HCJ moreover required a majority vote in the National Assembly, an institution which, as described, was fragmented and firmly under executive control (Schatz, 2019).

Until the 2025 protests, the Rajoelina government was also successful for a long period in managing civic dissent through repressive and often violent action. In the campaign for the 2023 presidential elections (won by Rajoelina in a controversial way), the government issued regulations to ban political gatherings in open spaces and then employed violence to stop street protests (Reporters without Borders, 2023). Violence often went hand-in-hand with other tactics to shut down critics, such as the use of a draconian law rendering defamation of state officials punishable by up to five years in prison.

The Malagasy Gen-Z uprising: from civic fear to political rupture

The Gen-Z mobilisation that reshaped Madagascar's political trajectory in September-October 2025 did not emerge spontaneously. Gen-Z protesters in Madagascar drew inspiration from successful movements in Sri Lanka (2022), Nepal (2025), and elsewhere, but the protests ultimately represented the culmination of a slow escalation of civic pressure in a context marked by fear, repression, and institutional exhaustion. For several years, civic space in Madagascar had been shrinking steadily. Public demonstrations were routinely banned; activists were harassed, arrested, or judicially pursued; journalists faced intimidation; and the political opposition had become largely performative. The sense that democracy had hollowed out – in essence been captured by elites and become disconnected from lived realities – had become widespread.

Roots of revolt

The rise of Madagascar's Gen-Z Movement reflects the convergence of three factors:

1. A material crisis of everyday life. Chronic water shortages, rolling electricity cuts, inflation in staple foods, and deteriorating public services had become permanent features of urban and peri-urban life. These were not episodic shocks but conditions of existence. For young people in particular, they translated into blocked futures: interrupted schooling, unemployment, and the erosion of any credible social contract.

2. A crisis of political legitimacy. Having been a leading powerbroker in Malagasy politics for more than 15 years, Rajoelina embodied continuity rather than renewal. His fall from power in 2025 was unexpected but not unprecedented, as he had himself first taken the presidency in similar circumstances in 2009. What changed was the depth of popular disillusionment. Elections continued to be held but they had lost all meaning. Governance was experienced as arbitrary and extractive rather than representative.

3. A civic rupture enabled by digital networks. Social media provided both the infrastructure and the language of mobilisation. It allowed dispersed grievances to crystallise into a shared narrative of injustice and urgency.

On 15 September 2025, Transparency International Initiative Madagascar (TI-MG) called for a march for Democracy Day under the banner #DemokrasiaMainty ('Black Democracy'). Only a few dozen people participated. The low turnout reflected not apathy but fear. Yet the march was symbolically significant. It publicly named what many felt privately: Malagasy democracy had died in substance, even if it still existed in form.

Three days later, on 18 September, three city councillors, Alban 'Babà' Rakotoarisoa, Clémence Raharinirina, and Lily Rafaralahy, walked through central Antananarivo dragging yellow jerrycans and carrying candles. Their silent performance symbolised two of the most acute daily hardships: water scarcity and electricity cuts. Their subsequent arrest in Analakely triggered a wave of public indignation. Images circulated rapidly online. What had been an abstract malaise now had a concrete focal point around which protesters could coalesce.

25 September 2025: the tipping point

The date of 25 September marked the formal beginning of the Gen-Z uprising in Madagascar. Thousands of young people gathered in Antananarivo and in regional cities. Unlike previous protest cycles, these mobilisations were decentralised, leaderless, and digitally coordinated. Participants rejected affiliation with political parties. Drawing inspiration from the famous manga One Piece, their slogans – "There is no future like this", "This is not politics, it's life", "Better to die than to die slowly" – framed the struggle as existential rather than ideological.

The movement's demands were deliberately minimal and morally framed. Protesters did not present a technocratic programme. They articulated expectations rather than policies: dignity in daily life (water, electricity, food, safety); an end to arbitrary rule and impunity (all fuelled by corruption); a future that is liveable, not merely survivable; and a political order that listens rather than disciplines.

In this sense, Gen-Z's demands were less about who governs than about how power is exercised. The protests named a breach of the social contract. The insistence on "this is not politics, it's life" signalled a refusal of the entire grammar through which Malagasy politics had long been conducted.

Between 25 September and 18 October, demonstrations persisted despite arrests, intimidation, and the deployment of security forces. The human toll is at least 28 deaths and more than 400 injuries (Varanges, 2025). This crisis was characterised by the use of "lethal force" denounced by international organisations, as law enforcement resorted to live ammunition and intensive tear gas shelling. The latter caused tragic collateral damage, particularly within several maternity wards and densely populated neighbourhoods in Antananarivo, causing respiratory distress in newborns and indirect civilian casualties. In parallel with the clashes, the insecurity fostered massive looting and serious damage to urban infrastructure.

Gen-Z Madagascar: where next?

The military ultimately intervened, not as a neutral guarantor of civic demands, but as an arbiter of regime transition. Rajoelina's fall has nonetheless created a potential political opening. The rupture was moral and symbolic before it became institutional. Gen-Z did not overthrow the regime in a classic revolutionary sense; it destabilised the political order to such an extent that the military judged continuity impossible. The transition was therefore born of civic mobilisation but resolved through military arbitration, creating an immediate asymmetry between the aspirations of the street and the incentives of those now in power.

The uprising represents both a democratic breakthrough and a structural vulnerability. It shattered the myth of popular resignation, demonstrating that civic fear could be overcome. It marked a shift from elite competition to lived injustice as the core political grammar. Yet, it did not itself create the architecture of reform. That task was immediately absorbed by institutions and actors shaped by the very system the protests had delegitimised. In this sense, Madagascar's Gen-Z mobilisation resembles other youth-led ruptures, from Sri Lanka to Nepal, in its moral clarity, decentralisation, and refusal of party capture. It differs, however, in the absence of a negotiated civilian transition framework. Where Nepal's youth mobilisation fed into constitutional restructuring, Madagascar's rupture passed through a military gateway and the end outcome is, as yet, unknown. The Gen-Z uprising ultimately revealed the depth of social demand for change. What remains unresolved is whether this civic rupture will be translated into structural transformation or simply see the continuation of state capture.

Responding to capture: lessons from other power transitions

Core challenges

Madagascar is potentially at a critical juncture (Collier & Collier, 1991) – a moment where a country may be able to make progress towards "political reorientation, the founding of new institutions, and setting new trajectories for change—or not" (Guerzovich, Soledad Gattoni and Algoso, 2020: 14). Yet its direction of travel and whether this represents a true opening remains uncertain. Reformers in such situations face acute dilemmas over potential courses of action, priorities, and trade-offs. As reformist groups in Madagascar weigh up their choices, they may benefit from considering lessons from other countries about how to recover from, dismantle, and build resilience to state capture.

Such windows arise owing to a variety of forces which may affect possibilities for reform, and do not last forever – as examples from Guatemala to Sri Lanka to Ukraine have shown. Moreover, attempts at recovery from capture face multiple challenges:

1. Reformers often encounter stiff opposition from vested interests which, owing to the power they accumulated through capture, are able to weaponise state institutions against them in their efforts to hold on to power.
2. Incoming governments typically rely on coalitions of business and political elites who have varying agendas and may therefore fragment in the face of particular reforms.
3. Populations are generally impatient to see the benefits of change from new governments, creating additional pressure on incoming administrations that often lack the resources and skills to re-purpose captured institutions.

4.   Incoming administrations often request assistance from external actors in terms of financial, technical and political support, but this injects another player into the bargaining process with a different agenda and interests (Johnston, 2005; Reinsberg, Kentikelenis and Stubbs, 2019).

5.   Sequencing of reforms should be considered. Since the task of responding to capture is one of the state reforming itself, there is a risk that major reforms in one area might undermine state capacity to undertake reform in another.

Planning how to dismantle capture and build resilience

Efforts to dismantle capture are about ensuring that public policy and institutions work in the interests of the public rather than narrow interest groups. To achieve this, reformers might think about reform in terms of the three pillars, namely to:

1.   (re-)Establish rules of the game that reduce executive dominance and permit competition for political power.

2.   Ensure that decisions about how to implement policy and distribute state resources, such as public contracts, grants and subsidies, are made impartially.

3.   Empower accountability institutions with the independence, authority and resources to scrutinise the executive and hold power to account.

The following sections describe some of the pros and cons of common steps taken by countries in dismantling state capture, illustrating with reference to several examples. The three pillars are each addressed in turn, although attention needs to be given to sequencing. For instance, it can be argued that restoring accountability institutions is a first priority to improve the chances that reforms in other areas are undertaken in proper and appropriate ways.

Pillar 1: The rules of the game

Constitutional reform

Where the constitution has in-built mechanisms to protect the power of the executive, reversing this can be an important signal of change. However, there is a paradox: if the incoming government wants to change institutional mechanisms favouring capture, it is easier to do so with a powerful executive. In Sri Lanka, the government elected in 2024 promised to abolish the so-called 'executive presidency' and it has a sufficiently large parliamentary majority to change the constitution. However, some argue that it should do so only after achieving progress on other reforms.

Constitutional revisions consume considerable resources and entail opportunity costs for other issues. Kenya's history of constitutional reform is instructive. Historically, political elites in Kenya had used constitutional amendments to divert popular demands for democratisation. A new constitution (the so-called Wako draft) was rejected in a referendum in 2005, in part due to widespread concerns that the process had been captured by the Kibaki government. With the Kenya case in mind, Bannon recommends that to counter elite capture the "review process should limit elites' control over drafting, while also providing them with meaningful opportunities to influence substantive choices (thereby reducing the benefits of capture) and including mechanisms for transparency and publicity (increasing the costs of capture)" (Bannon, 2007, p.1850).

In Kenya the process was revived after the 2007 post-election violence and a new constitution was endorsed by referendum in 2010. With respect to drafting, there is a balance to be found between the inclusivity of the process and maintaining coherence. For the 2010 Kenyan constitution a committee of 12 experts (including three foreign nationals) drafted the document, having invited proposals from the public. A draft was scrutinised by the legislature within a strict 30-day timeline and also distributed nationwide for comment (Rigon, 2010). The outcome was a political compromise which reduced executive power in some respects but also left ambiguity around the role of executive which has since been exploited by political elites. For instance, the constitution created a Supreme Court

which demonstrated its independence in 2017 when it rejected presidential election results. However, it has been alleged that Uhuru Kenyatta's government (2017 – 2022) subsequently made the judiciary a target and engaged in various efforts to undermine its work, including slashing court budgets and blocking appointments (Gichohi and Arriola, 2022).

National dialogues

A national dialogue is "an inclusive process for building national consensus around social, political or economic concerns through an open and tolerant exchange of ideas" (Murray, 2017). Some countries use such techniques when the existing institutional framework lacks legitimacy and is considered unable to resolve critical national issues – a scenario typical of countries with entrenched state capture. In francophone countries in particular, national dialogues are an established political tradition but take different forms; in some cases directly feeding into a constitution-making process and in others simply providing a forum for airing grievances and deliberating responses.

The fuzziness around the idea of a national dialogue can be a blessing or a curse. In theory, dialogues can be used to 'reset' the political landscape, opening up the space to a much more diverse group of stakeholders than existing powerholders. Looseness around objectives may bring captor networks to the table if they do not perceive an immediate threat. On the other hand, dialogue processes can be subverted by political incumbents, as often proved to be the case in a wave of dialogues which took place across francophone Africa in the early 1990s (Robinson, 1994). Influence over the invite list, the format of proceedings, and agreed outcomes from dialogues can allow incumbents to retain control. At their worst, dialogues can allow incumbent elites to obfuscate and placate demands for change.

Following the Jasmine Revolution in 2011, Tunisia entered a constitutional crisis which was resolved through national dialogue. The dialogue was convened by a group of four civil society organisations (collectively known as the Quartet and later awarded a Nobel Peace Prize) which enjoyed wide popular support and effectively used that leverage in negotiations with a transitional government led by Ennahda, an Islamist party (Stephen, 2015). The dialogue had a fixed mandate to set an election date, form a new government of technocrats, and support the finalisation of a constitution.

On several occasions, especially during disputes over contentious aspects of the constitution such as women's rights, the Quartet drew on street protests to break deadlock with the Ennahda government. The dialogue allowed for a democratic transition and the constitution adopted in 2014 marked an important step towards reducing executive authority (Mednicoff, 2017). With its more limited scope, the dialogue did not, however, openly address root causes of the prevalence of state capture under the disposed Ben Ali regime. In 2022 the constitutional changes were in effect reversed by President Kais Saied, an authoritarian president, who invoked emergency powers to redraft the constitution following a decade in which captor networks reformed and consolidated (Amnesty International, 2022).

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2. The Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT, Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail); the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA, Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat); the Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH, La Ligue Tunisienne pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme); and the Tunisian Order of Lawyers (Ordre National des Avocats de Tunisie)and standard of living.

The rules of the game: lessons from international cases

- Anticipate attempts by captor networks to control constitution-making processes. Allow opportunities for all interest groups to make submissions on constitutional design and enshrine transparency around the process.
- Find a balance between inclusiveness and coherence in forming the team responsible for re-drafting the constitution. A limited number of external specialists can also bring additional expertise.
- Maintain the protest networks which brought about regime downfall and be prepared to mobilise again as a counterweight to elite capture of the constitution-making processes.
- While maintaining the broad scope and openness of national dialogues, set a limited number of objectives to ensure there are tangible outcomes. Consider making addressing state capture an explicit objective.
- Ensure that the list of invitees and format of proceedings are agreed through an open process to improve legitimacy and reduce the risk that the dialogue is subverted.

Pillar 2: Resources and jobs

The second pillar, implementation of public policy, is often where most resources are stolen from the state and significant economic harm caused. We have collated examples in three areas of particular relevance to Madagascar below: natural resource management, state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and civil service reform.

Natural resource management

In the DRC natural resources are a focal point for capture – illicit financial flows from mining underpin an oligarchical system of governance and are a driver of conflict (Batumike, Bauma and Stearns, 2025). While different interventions (often supported by international donors) have had limited impact on governance dynamics, the country has seen some improvements in transparency around mining contracts in the last three years. Under the auspices of an IMF lending agreement, new mining contracts are now published within 60 days. The government has also published more information around a controversial resources-for-infrastructure deal known as SICOMINES (IMF, 2026). The DRC shows the limits, however, of piecemeal transparency without equivalent support to the broader accountability environment to empower actors who might make use of this information. Deeper institutional reforms, including root and branch reform of governance structures for leading SOEs as well as the key licencing and regulatory bodies overseeing the sector, are needed to disrupt patterns of capture.

Lessons have been drawn from past efforts in Madagascar with community-based natural resource management programmes. Promoted on the logic that anti-corruption efforts are likely to enjoy greater legitimacy if they include local participation, previous initiatives have included use of community patrols to monitor protected forest areas. In Makira National Park, these initiatives registered some successes in reducing requests for bribes by environmental authorities and park rangers; however, they were powerless to prevent large-scale illegal logging driven by capture of state institutions (Klein et al., 2021).

SOEs

Reform of state-owned enterprises is a priority which can disrupt the stranglehold of captor networks over key economic sectors. To strengthen resilience to capture, SOE management needs to be professionalised and de-politicised. This can involve ensuring that appointments to the boards of SOEs are based on merit rather than political connections, setting clear corporate objectives, requiring transparency about decision-making, and separating regulatory and ownership functions (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2024).

In Ukraine between 2019 and 2021, UkrOboronProm (UOP), a huge defence conglomerate comprising more than 100 SOEs, succeeded in introducing more transparent, open, and competitive procedures. Key elements of the reform process included establishing a supervisory board, introducing stronger oversight of director appointments, and commissioning an international firm to undertake several independent audits of UOP's operations (Husk and Musiiaka, 2022). It has been estimated that the introduction of an e-procurement system (Prozorro) saved the company around US$ 40 million in 2021 alone (Open Contracting Partnership, 2021). In the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the company reverted to less competitive and open procedures – arguably a necessary step given the security situation, with debates ongoing as to the appropriate level of transparency during a conflict.

Similar progress was achieved in relation to the state purchase of medicines in Ukraine. A market once captured by organised crime groups was reformed in the years following the 2014 revolution. This was achieved by outsourcing the procurement function to third parties while cleaning up practices in the Ministry of Health, resulting in reduced prices and improved service provision to patients (Dávid-Barrett & Raballand, 2026).

Civil service reform

A common strategy of captor groups is to pack the civil service and public institutions with loyalists so that they can control the implementation of public policy. The politicisation of the civil service typically manifests in two main ways:

1. Loyalists are appointed to senior and strategic roles to enable captors to control decisions about the implementation of regulation or awarding of contracts.

2. A generalised expansion of the civil service and public employment is used to buy the electoral support of large parts of the population through providing state jobs or – in the case of ghost workers – simply state salaries.

Reform of the civil service is fraught with dilemmas. An incoming government may find it necessary to remove the previous regime's political appointees. However, this carries risks:

•   It may prompt backlash from vested interests.

•   It may appear as a political purge, undermining the incoming government's legitimacy.

•   The loss of staff may cripple aspects of the state by reducing institutional capacity.

One alternative – abolishing whole institutions to replace them with new agencies – can also lead to major delays while the new institution tries to establish its mandate and set up standards and procedures.

In Zambia, the Hichilema government (2021-present) reportedly dismissed over 200 staff from the Ministry of Finance because of concerns that they would not act impartially, but this was later perceived to have stalled implementation of the government's economic agenda. Indeed, the effectiveness of the Finance Ministry has long been hindered by the frequency of political turnovers (Hinfelaar and Sichone, 2019). In contrast, the Zambia Central Bank's autonomy has made it more resilient to political changes. This partly reflects the bank's internal culture, influenced by recruitment policies with minimum qualification demands and systematic use of performance appraisals (Cheelo and Hinfelaar, 2020). Having become a late target for capture under the Lungu government, signified by the dismissal of its respected governor Denny Kalyalya in 2020, the central bank has been able to quickly recover its position in supporting successful macroeconomic reforms under the new administration.

Even in contexts where the civil service is deeply intertwined into patronage systems, it may be possible to look for quicker wins. In the DRC an audit of the civil service registry identified 145,604 ghost workers and a further 53,328 officials receiving multiple salaries. The General Inspectorate of Finance estimated the annual losses from this fraud at US$ 800m, equivalent to 8% of the state budget in 2022 (Skrdlik, 2023). With support from the World Bank, in 2025 the DRC launched a process to digitalise its civil service registry, issuing ID cards to more than 118,000 civil servants (Estrada, Burdescu and Balungwe Samavu, 2025). However, realising the financial savings has been more politically and technically challenging, and there have been delays in deactivating ghost accounts from the payroll.

Reform of civil service recruitment is a long-term and complex process. In South Africa a 2022 National Framework for the Professionalisation of the Public Sector set out plans to reform appointment and dismissal procedures. Legislative amendments (awaiting presidential approval at time of writing) have also proposed clarification of roles between political executives and senior civil servants, moving powers on human resource management from the former to the latter (Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI), 2025). South Africa also conducts lifestyle audits of civil servants, matching up various datasets to surface evidence of unexplained wealth.

Finally, learnings are also available from a previous initiative in Madagascar which introduced performance-based contracts in the customs service at the Port of Toamasina. With the support of the World Bank, this initiative contributed to a significant drop-off in clearance times as well as higher revenue collection (Raballand et al., 2017).

Policy implementation: lessons from international cases

- Transparency can be conceptualised as a step towards more effective policy implementation rather than an end-goal in itself. In relevant domains such as natural resource and SOE governance, the aim should be to improve availability of information, as well as plotting routes to using data to promote accountability.
- Corruption in the management of natural resources needs to be tackled at multiple levels. A national level agenda should be informed by (and actively promote) scaling of successful local initiatives.
- To build support for a transition programme, focus on SOE reforms in sectors where shifts in governance will be linked to stronger public service delivery wit tangible development impacts.
- Structural reforms to the civil service are a long-term measure cannot be ignored. Look for wins which address clear deficiencies, such as removing ghost workers and enhancing the credibility of appointment processes to senior positions. Support pockets of effectiveness across public agencies which will have positive demonstration effects.
- Do not neglect the trade-offs and risks around overhauling government agencies. To maintain legitimacy, there is a need to maintain public service delivery.

Pillar 3: Accountability

Transitional justice

When a new government comes to power after a period of pronounced state capture, there may be considerable domestic pressure to investigate and prosecute former leaders for corruption. Moreover, there may be strong interest in recovering stolen assets as a way of boosting state coffers.

However, transitional justice is complex. There is a balance to find between backward-looking retribution and forward-looking pragmatism. Pressure to achieve 'justice' by prosecuting outgoing leaders for past wrongs is often prioritised, but this carries three risks:

1. Those targeted for prosecution, as the beneficiaries of capture, are likely to wield considerable power and may use it to fight back, potentially derailing a fragile incoming government before it can achieve much.

2. It is practically difficult to collect evidence about state capture, either because the corruption was legalised by the captors and/or because law enforcement agencies have been politicised or stripped of resources and skills.

3. Even in the best circumstances, prosecutions for grand corruption are long and costly endeavours. They are unlikely to yield quick results, and in the meantime may consume economic resources and political capital that could potentially be better spent elsewhere.

An alternative path could be to focus on preventing corrupt actors from holding office in the future by introducing strict vetting procedures for those in public roles.

In Guatemala, the incoming administration of Bernardo Arevalo in 2024 quickly identified that more than 1,400 state contracts let under the previous government contained irregularities. He therefore sought to suspend the contracts pending prosecutions. However, the attorney general, appointed by Arevalo's predecessor and still loyal to that cause, blocked the process. Nothing was achieved, a lot of political capital was wasted on the battle, and, meanwhile, the freezing of the contracts meant that important infrastructure maintenance went undone, leading to public ire.

Previously in Guatemala, during another window of opportunity, a major International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) operated 2008-2019. The CICIG was established through an agreement between the government and the United Nations and was headed by foreign commissioners. The CICIG investigated and prosecuted serious crimes and was lauded for the high number of prosecutions achieved, including of senior politicians. Yet some argue that this came at the expense of improving public service delivery in ways that might build legitimacy for new constellations of power (Krylova, 2017). The CICIG was dissolved in 2019 following a regrouping and reconfiguration of captor networks.

South Africa tried a different approach with the Zondo Commission, an independent judicial commission established on the recommendation of the Public Protector with a mandate to investigate state capture under President Jacob Zuma (2009 – 2018). While Zuma sought to block the inquiry, the accumulation of a wealth of evidence about capture from leaks, investigative journalists, and academic work undermined his standing in his own party, and the Constitutional Court finally compelled him to create it. The commission went on to take testimony from more than 300 witnesses, culminating in a six-part report of 5,000 pages with extensive evidence on key mechanisms of capture, including manipulation of senior public appointments and procurement deals, and capture of key institutions, including the revenue service, police, and intelligence agencies (Pillay, 2025).

This style of inquiry, conducted in public, can be forward-looking and learning-focused (Nel and Van Romburgh, 2024), creating an evidence-based agenda for reform. In addition to making 255 recommendations related to the prosecutions of individuals and companies, the Zondo Commission made around 100 recommendations for policy reforms, including enhanced legislative oversight of the executive (Pillay, 2025a). Subsequently, President Cyril Ramaphosa absorbed many of these into an implementation plan, while referring others to appropriate agencies for consideration.

Protecting the civic space

In intensified periods of state capture, civic space is typically eroded. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and independent media may be unable to function because of constraints on funding or outright repression. Building a confident and competent civil society can take time. However, where power transitions are brought about by popular uprisings, and perhaps particularly by Gen-Z protestors, there might be more scope to transform the protest momentum into citizen engagement in countering capture. Notwithstanding likely distrust between civil society groups and a new government, CSOs may come together to try to influence other actors who have authority in the post-transition reform bargaining process. For example, in Sri Lanka, CSOs provided considerable input into the IMF's governance diagnostic process, in turn shaping the conditionality of the fund's lending to the country and hence the reform agenda (Transparency International Sri Lanka, 2026).

Neglecting the civic space following power transitions can embed problems for the future. In Zambia, a network of campaigning CSOs, often working tactically with the then political opposition while harnessing the power of the judiciary and media, played a critical role in pushing back against capture under Lungu. In 2019 this coalition notably prevented the adoption of Bill 10, proposed constitutional amendments which would have strengthened executive power. As Zambia's score on global democracy indices declined rapidly during Lungu's tenure, CSOs drew support from international donors. Funding has since fallen significantly following the electoral turnover in 2021, perhaps driven by a sense of the job being done, impacting the capacity of CSOs to hold the new government to account. Groups were unable to mobilise in the same way in 2025 when the government pushed through constitutional changes which had echoes of the 2019 proposals (Cheeseman, 2025).

Protecting the civic space: lessons from international cases

- Demand for justice to right past wrongs should be accompanied by forward-looking measures which strengthen the accountability environment.
- Law enforcement-focused justice campaigns tend to meet significant practical challenges and are vulnerable to politicisation.
- Where countries have followed broader transitional justice processes, the most successful have been led by institutions which operate with high transparency and have safeguards in place to protect their operational autonomy and independence.
- There needs to be sustained support to civic space beyond the moment of regime turnover.
- Reform processes can be used to alter power imbalances through purposeful inclusion of civil society in policy forums and rule-making processes.

Tailoring lessons to Madagascar

This brief is produced at a pivotal moment for Madagascar. The contours of the transition government remain fluid, and elite bargaining is already underway, raising the spectre that state capture might simply be recycled under new labels. At the same time, youth expectations are high, donors are reassessing their engagement, and political space is volatile.

The transition government's [Programme de Mise en Œuvre de la Politique Générale de l'État pour la Refondation](#) (PMO/PGE-R), in English "Programme for the Implementation of the State Policy for Refoundation", articulates an ambitious vision rooted in zero tolerance for corruption and calling for a renewed social contract. It explicitly frames the transition as the product of a civic awakening initiated by Malagasy youth and commits to transparency, participation, decentralisation, and a time-bound return to constitutional order. Yet, the gap between declaratory ambition and political reality is wide. The central dilemma of this moment is not whether reform is desirable, but whether the political economy of the transition can support it.

Major dilemmas

Three interlocking dilemmas shape the current moment:

- **Urgency vs transformation.** The population expects rapid improvements in daily life (electricity, water, security, prices) while the PGE-R calls for deep structural reforms of institutions, law, and, political practice. Without visible early gains, popular trust will erode; without structural change, urgency will be managed through patronage and short-term fixes.

- **Legitimacy vs capacity.** The transition claims legitimacy from youth mobilisation, yet its operational power depends heavily on inherited state structures, senior technocrats, and the security forces. The risk is that reformist language becomes an empty signifier, reproducing a familiar pattern in which popular energy is celebrated rhetorically but excluded institutionally.

- **Inclusion vs control.** Elite actors (political, economic, and military) have strong incentives to limit the scope of deliberation and to shape reform in ways that protect existing interests and risk reproducing the very patterns of capture the transition seeks to undo. The more meaningful the participation becomes, the greater the resistance it will generate. At the same time, genuine inclusion takes time: it slows decision-making, complicates sequencing, and frustrates those seeking rapid stabilisation. While exclusion may appear more 'efficient' in the short term, a durable transformation requires space for contestation, learning, and collective ownership, rather than quick fixes negotiated among elites.

Breaking cycles of capture requires coalitions that can align popular legitimacy, reformist expertise, and institutional power without allowing any one to dominate the others.

The political economy of Madagascar's transition is shaped less by a binary opposition between 'reformers' and 'blockers' than by a fragmented landscape of actors whose incentives, capacities, and vulnerabilities differ sharply. At one end of this spectrum are those who hold institutional knowledge and technical competence: senior civil servants, magistrates, auditors, and policy professionals who understand how the state actually functions and who often recognise the depth of its dysfunction. Many of them aspire to stability, professional credibility, and institutional survival. Yet they operate under constant political pressure, with limited protection and real fear of reprisal. Their ability to design and implement credible reforms depends entirely on whether political cover and public backing can shield them from interference.

At the opposite end are the Gen-Z collectives and youth movements that catalysed the 2025 protests. They command moral authority and symbolic legitimacy. Their demands express a profound rupture with recycled politics. But their power remains volatile: fragmented organisation, limited infrastructure, and vulnerability to repression or co-optation constrain their capacity to sustain pressure beyond the street. Their central function is not technical design but political anchoring: keeping reform rooted in popular expectations, shaping narratives, and legitimising change. Without channels for sustained participation, however, their energy risks dissipating.

Between these poles sit civil society organisations and watchdog groups. They combine technical expertise, international linkages, and long experience in monitoring corruption and rights. Their motivations are mission-driven (accountability, justice, civic space) but their operating environment is shrinking. Resource limitations, politicisation, and regulatory pressure limit their room for manoeuvre. Their comparative advantage lies in translation: converting diffuse popular demands into concrete reform agendas, tracking implementation, and mediating between citizens and institutions.

Religious institutions, particularly those grouped under the Council of Christian Churches –Fiombonan'ny Fiangonana Kristiana eto Madagasikara (FFKM) – occupy a distinct position. They retain high social legitimacy and exceptional convening power, even as their political role is increasingly contested. Their incentives revolve around stability, moral authority, and social cohesion; their constraints stem from internal diversity and external political pressure. They can host inclusive forums, guarantee procedural fairness, and provide ethical framing for reform. Yet, they also risk becoming brokers of elite compromise rather than engines of transformation if their convening role substitutes reconciliation for structural change. The intervention of religious leaders (notably FFKM) during the 2025 crisis sparked an unprecedented debate among Gen-Z regarding the secular nature (laïcité) of the state. While these institutions possess strong legitimacy to mediate reforms, their growing influence raises fears of a blurring of lines between faith and governance.

The security forces are pivotal arbiters of the transition's trajectory. Their incentives centre on institutional autonomy, budgetary security, and insulation from accountability. They are constrained by internal hierarchies and political instrumentalisation. Depending on how reform is framed, they can either guarantee a peaceful transition or obstruct change that threatens entrenched privileges. They may be better able to align with reform if it is presented as national stabilisation rather than elite punishment.

Economic powerholders are similarly divided. Parts of the business elite thrive on monopolies, opaque regulation, and political connections; others seek more open markets and fair competition. The private sector is therefore internally heterogeneous: incumbents defend rents, while emerging entrepreneurs favour level playing fields. Reform coalitions succeed or fail depending on whether incentives can be organised in a way which supports those groups pushing for change.

Beyond the territory, the diaspora offers financial resources, skills, and international voice. They are motivated by national renewal and personal return pathways, but also constrained by distance, suspicion, and fragmented organisation. Their potential role is catalytic: funding initiatives, amplifying reform narratives abroad, and linking domestic movements to global arenas.

Finally, donors and international partners remain decisive. Their incentives are stability, fiduciary assurance, and reputational risk management; their constraints include geopolitical caution and transition fatigue. They can either underwrite elite bargains in the name of stability or condition support on transparency, participation, and measurable reform.

Together, these actors form a landscape defined by asymmetry: those with the strongest reform appetite often lack structural power, while those with the greatest leverage are ambivalent or risk-averse. It is this vertical divide, between moral legitimacy and institutional control, that structures the transition and sets the stage for the political-economy map that follows.

Figure 1: Map of stakeholder motivations and power
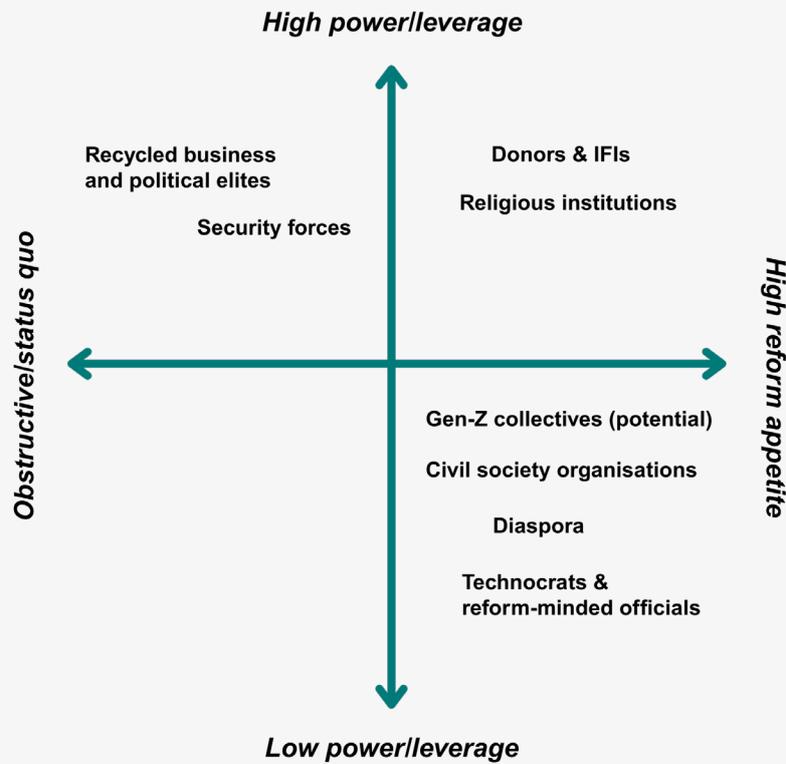
The upper-left quadrant in the map represents the danger zone. It is occupied by recycled political elites, monopoly-based business actors, and segments of the security apparatus. These actors rarely oppose reform openly. Instead, they absorb it, fragment it, delay it, and ritualise it. Their skill lies in transforming rupture into managed continuity, ensuring that change remains compatible with existing hierarchies and networks.

The upper-right quadrant holds actors with both power and potential reform leverage. Donors, international financial institutions, and religious institutions can decisively shape outcomes. Their orientation is inherently ambivalent. They can either underwrite elite bargains in the name of stability, or enable structural change by conditioning support on transparency, participation, and measurable reform. Their choices will weigh heavily on the direction of the transition.

The lower-right quadrant concentrates the moral and political energy of the moment. Civil so-ciety organisations, the diaspora, and many technocrats carry legitimacy, ideas, and popular expectations. Yet without protection, resources, and coalition-building, these actors remain vulnerable, easily marginalised, co-opted, or exhausted. Their leverage is uneven but real: when coordinated, they can translate social demand into policy shifts.

The lower-left quadrant, by contrast, captures a different form of transformative power. Gen-Z collectives do not currently command institutional leverage, and many operate outside formal structures. Yet their strength lies in disruption, mobilisation capacity, and their ability to reshape public narratives and political imagination. While their formal power is limited, their capacity to unsettle entrenched arrangements and expand the boundaries of what is politically possible makes them a pivotal force in any genuine refoundation process.

The strategic implication is clear: refoundation will succeed only if coalitions bridge vertically. Gen-Z actors, civil society, and reform-minded technocrats must be linked to donors and legitimised through trusted institutions such as religious bodies. Reform must be framed not as elite punishment, but as national stabilisation and collective renewal in order to avoid a backlash from the military and security forces. Otherwise, the gravitational pull of the upper-left quadrant will prevail, and reform will be performative rather than transformative.

This map conveys the core tension of the transition: Madagascar's future hinges on whether reform energy can be connected to structural leverage faster than status-quo actors can neutralise it.

Likely blockers

The most formidable obstacles to reform in Madagascar are unlikely to come from actors who openly reject change. Over the past two decades, a relatively small circle of political figures has demonstrated a remarkable capacity to survive ruptures and 'recycle' itself across regimes, appearing in different guises under former presidents Marc Ravalomanana (2002–09), Rajoelina (2009-2014 and 2019-2025), and successive transitional arrangements. Former ministers, party leaders, senior advisors, and power brokers re-emerge as 'new' reformists while retaining the same networks, practices, and transactional logic. Their interest lies not in blocking reform outright, but in controlling its tempo and scope.

Alongside them stand economic actors whose dominance rests on regulatory opacity and privileged access. Large importers, conglomerates in energy, construction, agribusiness, and telecommunications, and firms tied to political families benefit from monopolistic positions, discretionary licensing, and weak enforcement. For these actors, predictability through rules is less attractive than predictability through relationships. They rarely oppose reform in public; instead, they lobby for exemptions, shape implementing decrees, and encourage 'pilot' approaches that never quite scale.

Segments of the security apparatus also constitute a latent veto player. While many within the armed forces seek stability and professionalisation, others remain wary of oversight, transitional justice, or reforms that could expose past abuses or disrupt entrenched hierarchies. Their leverage lies not in formal policy arenas, but in their capacity to shape what is politically 'possible' in moments of uncertainty.

Finally, obstruction can emerge from within institutions. Senior officials and agencies may adopt the language of refoundation while emptying it of substance, multiplying strategies, committees, and dashboards without transferring authority or resources. Participation becomes procedural, consultation performative, and reform a matter of announcements rather than change.

What unites these actors is not ideological opposition to reform but an interest in promoting strategic ambiguity. By fragmenting processes, stretching timelines, shifting arenas, and turning inclusion into ritual, they preserve room for manoeuvre and ensure that renewal is absorbed into familiar patterns rather than allowed to disrupt them. The risk for Madagascar's transition is therefore not backlash – it's dilution.

Forums needed for real change

Given the low levels of societal trust, associational membership, and civic participation in Madagascar (Afrobarometer, 2024), if reform is to break free from the gravitational pull of elite capture, it will require forums that genuinely shift power, rather than merely repackage it, and that substantially expand civic participation.

A truly inclusive national dialogue should aim to change who speaks, who decides, and who is accountable. It should be built on transparent rules, real youth representation, regional reach, and public reporting. Protected spaces are needed for reform coalitions to emerge, bringing together technocrats, civil society actors, youth leaders, and reform-minded officials to co-design and test policies without fear of political retaliation. And refoundation cannot remain a central decree. It must be rooted in regional and local forums, embedding democratic practice in everyday governance and ensuring that renewal is experienced not only in Antananarivo, but across the country. Only through such layered, participatory spaces can reform escape elite recycling and become a genuinely collective project.

This national process should be complemented by permanent citizen oversight platforms linked to the government's refoundation dashboard, enabling communities to track concrete issues such as electricity provision, budget execution, and reform milestones.

Donor engagement too should evolve from transactional support toward structured compacts between the state, society, and international partners, aligning financial assistance with clear benchmarks on transparency, participation, and accountability.

The lesson from other windows of opportunity is clear: moments of rupture do not automatically produce transformation. They do so only when popular legitimacy, institutional capacity, and political protection are bound together in durable coalitions. Madagascar's challenge is not to invent reform from scratch, but to ensure that the promise of refoundation is not absorbed into the very systems it seeks to dismantle.

Key considerations and questions

With a national dialogue on the horizon and based on the learnings from international cases, we have suggested below a series of key questions for reform-minded actors to consider. Within each pillar, the precise reforms needed will depend on diagnosis of the problem in a particular context. To assess feasibility there should also be consideration of how reforms will interact with one another and what sources of opposition might arise. Heywood and Pyman (2024) also suggest that reformers need to decide on an overarching strategy with decisions to be made on priorities and sequencing.

Designing a reform strategy

- Is there a clear enough understanding of how captor networks have operated in the country and, if not, what further diagnostic work is needed?
- At what levels could reform be focused to have demonstrable impact (for example, national institutions, sectoral-level interventions, and subnational authorities)?
- What is a realistic timeframe within which gains can be made, and what are the short, medium, and long-term priorities?
- How will reforms be monitored and evaluated?

Pillar 1: The rules of the game

- What are the specific outcomes expected from the national dialogue process?
- What safeguards can be put in place to prevent any envisaged constitutional revision process from being captured?
- What are three key areas where it is a priority to reduce executive control?

Pillar 2: Resources and jobs

- In core domains of service delivery, where would addressing capture be most feasible and have the highest development impacts?
- What national policy reforms are needed to strengthen local initiatives aimed at achieving the dual objectives of protecting natural resources and promoting local development?
- Are there existing pockets of effectiveness in government agencies which deserve increased support?

Pillar 3: Accountability

- How can a transitional justice process be organised to ensure it enjoys high levels of legitimacy and transparency?
- What changes to the institutional framework for accountability bodies are needed to better protect their independence?
- What inclusive forums must be established to bridge the gap between national reform agendas and local grievances, ensuring that protest groups, NGOs, and community leaders have a structured space to provide accountability for a reform programme?

The answers to these questions will determine whether Madagascar transforms the civic rupture of 2025 into lasting institutional renewal, or whether the same patterns of state capture simply reconfigure themselves under new guises, continuing to impoverish the state and weaken democracy.

Breaking this cycle requires more than a mere change of elites or technical adjustments to public policies. It demands realigning the rules of the game, the management of resources, and accountability mechanisms around the public interest, while building coalitions capable of connecting popular legitimacy, reform expertise, and institutional power. The current transition is not merely a window of opportunity; it is a historic test of the collective ability to turn moral indignation into durable political foundations in the service of social justice and democracy.

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