Exploring the Roles Metanarratives Play in the Dynamics of Conflict Recurrence in Madagascar: 1947-2016

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Abstract

Madagascar has experienced various episodes of conflict since the colonization period. Despite the solutions local and external actors implemented, conflict recurs. Metanarratives such as socialism, communism, capitalism, and liberalism greatly impacted the conditions explaining the dynamics behind such recurrences. How did metanarratives contribute to the creation of more peaceful (de-escalating roles) or conflict situations (escalating roles)? With the help of Qualitative Comparative Analysis, this article identifies and studies the metanarratives influencing and being influenced by the following: a) conflict dimensions, b) the framing of the conflicts by the actors involved, c) the construction of the images of the self/the other, d) the accommodation policies (the solutions implemented to address the incompatibilities between the actors), and e) the repertoires of action. It argues that metanarratives play significant roles in transforming a conflict in both constructive and destructive ways.

Keywords

Accommodation Policies; Conflict Recurrence; Conflict Transformation; Metanarratives; Peace and Conflict Processes

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Introduction

Life is built on lived experiences transmitted through stories, both imagined or fictive. Narratives significantly shape the interactions of the actors involved in peace and conflict processes, as well as the decisions they make: pursuing peace or sustaining conflict. For some time, narratives in social sciences have been criticized and questioned, with scholars suggesting that "narrative should, figuratively speaking, go back where it belongs—in the arts, not the sciences" (Merrill, 2007: 20). However, narratives are an important element that needs to be taken into account in peace and conflict studies, as they are central in actions relating to conflict resolution (for example, when setting up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission).

Madagascar, an island in the Indian Ocean, experienced nine episodes of conflict between 1947 and 2016. Despite the various solutions local and external actors implemented to resolve the incompatibilities between conflicting parties, conflict recurs in the country. This article argues that metanarratives are among the significant elements transforming a given conflict in a constructive or destructive manner, thus building up the dynamics behind conflict recurrence.

Metanarratives are embedded in structural factors and parts of mechanism behind those dynamics. This article shows how they influence and are influenced by these factors. Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), a set of methods and techniques using causal configuration to explain the occurrence or non-occurrence of a given outcome, helped to identify these metanarratives. This article starts with a literature review, after which I define the factors (the conditions in QCA terms) I study in this article and describe the methodology. I continue with the presentation of the results and conclude with a discussion of the findings and an indication of future studies.

The episodes of conflict in Madagascar: contextualizing the study

The dynamics of conflict in Madagascar involve multiple episodes occurring sequentially, yet all part of a single conflict, sharing elements such as the continuous involvement of the state or the political dimension. This indicates continuity and conflict recurrence. However, these episodes are qualitatively different in terms of conflict dimensions, actors involved, or solutions implemented to resolve their incompatibilities.

In 1947, the fight for independence triggered a conflict (with more than one thousand deaths) involving the ethnic communities *Merina* and the *Côtiers*.[2] It is said that France created the conflict between these two groups (Spacensky, 1967). Another episode occurred in 1971 (with more than one thousand deaths) – an uprising of farmers in the South supported by the Maoist opposition political party MONIMA, followed by State intervention (the *gendarmerie*). 1972 saw another conflict

[2] There are eighteen (18) ethnic groups in Madagascar. But the categorization of "*Merina*" and *Côtiers* has been used to differentiate between the people from the highlands and those from the Coastal regions.

(forty deaths), involving students in the capital, Antananarivo, and a group of deprived and jobless youth called ZOAM. These protestors opposed what they believed to be French neo-colonialism and imperialism in education, culture, economy, etc. (Blum, 2011; see also Télévision Française 1's documentary on episode 1972 available at the repository of INA.fr, 1972). In 1975, another episode (twenty-two deaths) involved the elite and the assassination of the new President, Colonel Ratsimandrava, after just six days in power. It is said that he was assassinated because of the bottom-up policy called *Fokonolona* he wanted to implement in Madagascar (Archer, 1976): it upset France, the Bourgeoisie, the *Côtiers*, the Socialists and the Communists. Another episode occurred in 1984, during which the state used a group of young delinquents called TTS to attack and terrorize the population and crush any political protest the opposition organized (ZOAM member, personal communication, March 2016). In response, a Kung-Fu group stood up and fought against the state, an action that was strongly repressed through military intervention (more than one hundred people died). In 1991, another conflict arose between President Ratsiraka and the opposition, generating a strong movement fighting for democracy (Urfer, 1993) and climaxing at the Presidential Palace, *Iavoloha* with three hundred wounded and fifty deaths. In 1996, another crisis among the elite occurred, leading to the impeachment of the President by the National Assembly. In 2002, one more episode started with an electoral dispute (Raharizatovo, 2008, Mocaër, 2002), but involved other issues pertaining to identity dimensions concerning the *Merina* and the *Côtiers* ethnic groups, resulting in over sixty deaths. Finally, the military coup of 2009 that toppled President Ravalomanana and resulted in more than one hundred deaths (Ralambomahay, 2011, see also TV Plus' documentary on episode 2009 produced by Realy, 2009) involved many politicians from the historical political parties participating in the former episodes of conflict, supporting Mayor Andry Rajoelina against the President, whom they accused of corruption and authoritarianism, and demanding democracy and freedom of speech.

My research design considers these episodes of conflict together, due to the homogeneity of the actors involved (presence of state governance in all events) and to the saliency of the political dimension in all of them, despite the presence of open and multiple underlying dimensions – for example, some episodes greatly revolved around centre/periphery issues (e.g.: in episodes 1971 and 1972, the state was accused of neglecting the development of the southern region of the country), while others involved conflict among political leaders/top-down conflict (e.g.; episode 1996 and 2009 concerned mainly the political elite and their policies). That being said, it is worth remembering that these dimensions can be purely subjective as the interpretation of the causes of conflict depends on the involved actors' understanding of them and the narratives they built upon them. This article aims to understand how such narratives affect peace and conflict processes.

State of the art

Narratives in peace and conflict processes

Narratives are potent (Raheja and Gold, 1994), powerful and impactful. People give sense to their experiences through stories. They create meanings, tell their own versions of events and voice their concerns about a given issue through personal narratives (Erol, 2015), which are said to "be negotiated in the context of narratives told by communities in which we live" (Rappaport, 2000: 6). Consequently, in society, communities and collectives of actors develop and use superior narratives to justify their existence (e.g.: nationalist narratives), to build an image of the other – the enemy – as morally and existentially inferior (e.g.: narratives pertaining to ethnicity in civil wars), to imagine a collective future (e.g.: living together in peace after war), or to counter a given narrative (e.g.: counter-narratives aimed at addressing extremism), etc.

There has been a growing interest in studying narratives in peace and conflict processes, with some scholars working on conflict-supporting narratives. For example, there is an important amount of literature on narratives in protracted conflicts such as the one between Israelis and Palestinians (Rotberg, 2006), and on narratives in inter-group conflicts based upon "Justification and Threats (of conflict), Delegitimization (of the opponent), Glorification and Victimhood (of the in-group), the in-group's need for Patriotism and Unity…" (Bar-Tal et al. 2014, p.662). Others explore narratives in contexts of conflict resolution or those building peace, including storytelling to address intractable conflicts (Bar-On and Kassem, 2004), collective narratives in peace education (Biton and Salomon, 2006), or the roles of conflict narratives in leading to empathy and dialogue (Cobb, 2013). This article builds on this peace and conflict-potency of narratives.

In peacebuilding literature, narratives have been studied through various lenses and from various sources: as collective memories in joint textbooks (Wang, 2009), as narrative therapy dealing with trauma (Pia, 2013), as personal narratives of social trauma (Chaitin, 2014), or through the roles of narratives in peacebuilding with women (Flaherty, 2012). In the literature on hybrid peace, conflict and politics, Mac Ginty and Firchow (2016) highlight the importance of studying the roles of top-down and bottom-up narratives, exploring the differences between everyday bottom-up narratives and those employed by international actors. However, and despite this burgeoning literature, there is a significant gap in the study of the processes behind narratives´ influence and implications for the dynamics of conflict recurrence, a caveat this article addresses through the lens of conflict transformation.

Conceptualizing metanarratives

Scholars have studied metanarratives mostly in processes of national identity-building. They are called grand narratives, master narratives, universal truths, super-stories, and shared worldviews.

Ross (2003, 2007) uses the concept to study anchored beliefs pertaining to national identity, while scholars working on hegemonic narratives study these through social representations that are considered as dominant scripts or myths (Moscovici, 1988).

Metanarratives are "abstract, intangible, non-figurative" (Auerbach, 2009: 298), they "legitimize specific action or beliefs under the guise of a universal truth" (Panuccio, 2012: 2) and they are a "holistic, hierarchical framework that embraces the national narratives and creates and feeds them" (Auerbach, 2010: 102). Metanarratives are grand ideologies people believe in and strongly adhere to. They are deeply anchored in the national psyche and it is argued that they are "very hard to modify, particularly so in the early stage of conflict resolution (Auerbach, 2010: 103). In a country like Madagascar, which has been greatly influenced by the outside world and, therefore, has experimented with ideologies from China, Russia, the US and France, these narratives play crucial roles in shaping collective memories, as featured in the song excerpt below:

> "The political game in Madagascar aims at giving birth to AMBATOBEVOKA
> Many are dreaming of seeing the sky falling on us so as to save us
> As if a Boeing will land on a hut
> Waiting for a train to arrive at the top of a tree….
> Hoping that we become Russians and Americans
> However we live in Africa…" (Author's translation of an excerpt from the song by Sareraka, 2018 entitled "*Méditations*" (*Ambatobevoka* means "pregnant stone")

As mentioned earlier, this article considers the peace and conflict potency of narratives. Consequently, metanarratives can be about how the conflict erupted, how the conflict was resolved or not, about an imagination of a peaceful future and how violence continued. Cobb (1993) talks about conflict narratives, those that create fractures, while Galtung (1998) speaks about peace narratives, those that counter-balance the conflict ones [see also Hammack (2010) regarding peace-supporting narratives]. On the one hand, "societies in conflict develop opposing conflict-supportive narratives" (Bar-Tal et al. 2014: 663) and, on the other, peace narratives are created from positive and critical imagination: "positive imagination is utopian creating a world of positive peace that does not exist while critical imagination communicates a predictable post-conflict state" (Matyók, 2010: 10).

Structural factors and parts of mechanism building up recurrence

There are many factors that can intervene in the dynamics of conflict recurrence (Razakamaharavo, 2018), but, in this article, I mainly study how metanarratives are embedded, interact, co-exist and co-construct each other with a set of factors outlined below:

Structural factors

These are remote factors which are relatively stable over time. Structural factors are outcome-enabling conditions and can also be considered as contexts. In this article, they are:

a) the conflict dimensions, also considered as the causes or the issues of the conflicts: cultural, socio-economic, political and external dimensions (Féron, 2005);
b) the accommodation policies – the initiatives the actors implement so as to address the incompatibilities during the episodes of conflict (Féron and Schildt, 2007). They can be conflict management, resolution or transformation initiatives, mediation and negotiation activities, peacekeeping, peacebuilding…

Parts of mechanism

These are proximate factors which are spatially closer to the outcome to be explained. In this article, they are:

a) how the conflicts are framed by the actors, based on their interpretations of the origins of the conflicts [referring to the categorization of Élise Féron's (2005) conflict dimensions];
b) how the actors construct the images of themselves and the others: the alien, the one that does not exist symbolically (the non-culture), or the one from the different culture who can nevertheless be a partner (Vetik, 2007);
c) the repertoires of action: the actions actors use to defend their causes. They are conventional and institutional (e.g.: voting, lobbying…), non-institutional actions (e.g.: authorized demonstrations, petitions…), non-conventional actions with or without violence, possibly involving damage to public or private property (e.g.: boycott of products, destruction of signposts…) or violence against persons (e.g.: bombing, sexual abuse…) (PEACE-COM, 2005).

I posit that metanarratives can influence and be influenced by the elements (the structural factors and parts of mechanism) intervening in the dynamics behind conflict recurrence (escalation, de-escalation or phases of stability). Thus, based on the discussion above, I hypothesize that metanarratives play significant roles in transforming a conflict in either a constructive or destructive manner. A given factor changes the conflict in a constructive manner when the situation becomes more peaceful. Destructive transformation occurs when a given factor builds situations of conflict.

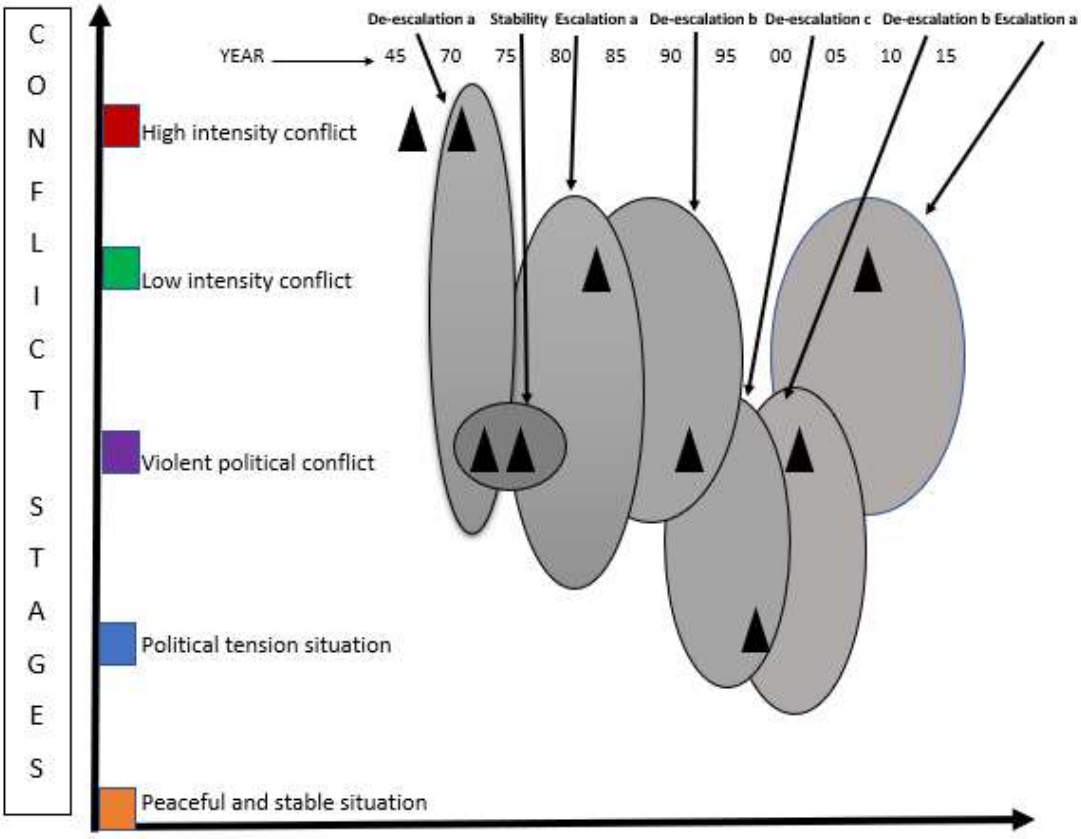
Methodology

Conflict trajectories: escalation, de-escalation, and stability

I grouped the episodes of conflict in Madagascar by using Féron's typology of conflict stages (2005): stage one – peaceful and stable situations; stage two – political tension situations (one or two people killed); stage three – violent political conflict (up to one hundred deaths); stage four – low

intensity conflict (between one hundred and nine hundred ninety nine deaths) and stage five – high intensity conflict (more than one thousand deaths). It is worth noting that these are categorizations and these episodes feature various dimensions and intensities (sometimes similar and at other times different). Graph 1 shows these episodes of conflict along with the shifts occurring throughout the cycle: conflict escalation, conflict de-escalation and a situation where the level of conflict does not change, which I call a situation of stability.

Graph 1. Timeline of the episodes of conflict in Madagascar. The triangles represent the episodes of conflict and the circles the shifts of conflict stages. In order to place the episodes of conflict in a timeline, I have used dates with 5-year intervals. The episodes of conflict occurred in 1947, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1984, 1991, 2002, and 2009. The period between 1950–1970 is not considered as no major episode of conflict broke out.



Source: Author.

Data collection and analysis

The data for this article, specifically focusing on the narrative aspects of conflict, results from a larger project studying the dynamics of conflict recurrence in Madagascar (see Razakamaharavo, 2018a). The methods and techniques behind Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) allowed me to identify the metanarratives and study their influence at multiple levels (see Appendix 1 for details about the QCA procedure). QCA draws both from variable-oriented and case studies approaches

(Rihoux and De Meur, 2009) and its main principle is causal configuration: a combination of conditions (factors) explains the occurrence or non-occurrence of a given phenomenon (one causal path). It is possible that such occurrence or non-occurrence can be explained by multiple causal paths (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009).

Various sources were used to collect data on metanarratives: the discourses of the actors involved in the episodes of conflict, found in reports and policy documents, local and international news outlets (e.g.: Lakroan'i Madagasikara, Midi Madagasikara, L'Express de Madagascar, Radio France Internationale, etc.), songs of Malagasy artists (e.g.: the group Mahaleo and Sareraka) or during protests, video footage from local and international TV broadcasts (e.g.: TV Plus, MaTVetc.), blogs (e.g.: Pakysse), or press releases from political parties. I also conducted in-depth interviews with 44 informants in Madagascar and abroad (in France and Switzerland).

Before the first round of interviews in Madagascar (June 2014), a list of interviewees was drawn up from the literature review and my knowledge of the episodes of conflict. I identified the main leaders of the parties involved in each episode of conflict, the actors involved in the accommodation policies (if there were any), opinion leaders (journalists, bloggers) and actors from the grassroots and civil society (Churches, NGOs and associations). However, once on the ground, I discovered that other actors who did not appear in the public sphere were much more knowledgeable about the issues I wanted to cover, having been deeply involved in the whole process. I was introduced to them by those in the initial list.

During the second round of interviews in Madagascar in April 2016, I adopted what I call "phased and focused interviews". I made a careful choice of interviewees based on the knowledge of the issues we were to discuss. Some were well-informed about the mediation and negotiation initiatives, others were highly knowledgeable about the episodes of conflict and the evolution of the events, while the remainder had a thorough knowledge of the history of Madagascar. However, I initially posited that, even if I succeeded in getting direct testimonies, perceptions change over time and one's understanding of the conflict in the present might not be the same as when the events occurred. Thus, the data from the interviews were checked against other materials I collected about each case (e.g. posters, press releases…).

The data collection was made easier thanks to the Boolean logic (Rihoux et al. 2013) used by QCA. It allowed the construction of all the typologies categorizing the concepts I used, the selection of the episodes of conflict to be studied and of the information I was specifically looking for. I dichotomized the data as follows: for each condition (structural factors and parts of mechanism), I assigned a value [e.g.: high (one: 1) or low saliency (zero: 0) of a given conflict dimension, presence (one: 1) or absence (zero: 0) of significant accommodation policies…]. The narratives are therefore

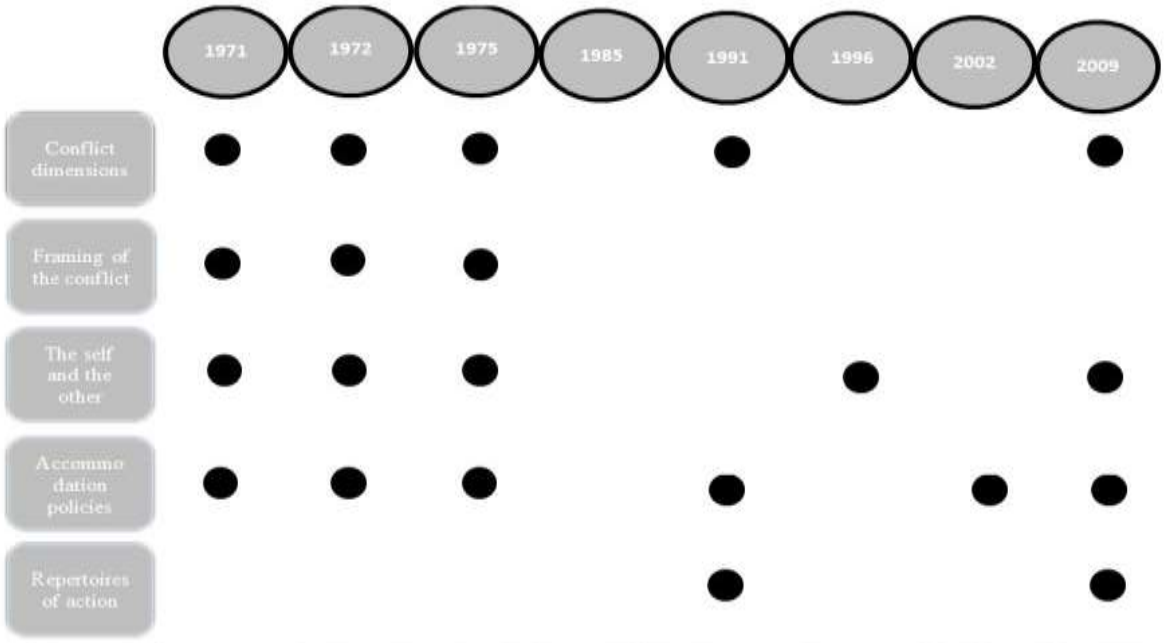
circumscribed within these categorizations/typologies. Once the data were collected, I coded them, dichotomized the data by using Crisp-set QCA (csQCA) and input them into the fs/QCA software.

It is worth reiterating that the study of narratives in this article is part of a larger project (see Razakamaharavo, 2018a). Therefore, I will only explore the metanarratives in the contexts and the parts of mechanism from these results. The goal is not to identify which narratives are important and which ones are not (obviously, other narratives were important during the process, e.g.: the local narratives), but to locate in which episode the metanarratives have high and low saliency. Therefore, I used the process of dichotomization of QCA for each episode of conflict: the saliency of the metanarratives is high if they are decidedly present in the discourses of the actors, in policies, and in the other resources selected for the study (e.g.: flyers, press releases), and low when they are absent. During the interpretive phase of QCA, I did interpretive analysis (Yanow, 2014, Bhattacherjee, 2012; note that the data collection itself already includes the interpretive approach - e.g.: interviews and documentation) to substantively study and analyse the metanarratives.

Results

This section explores how metanarratives are embedded in the structural factors (e.g.: conflict dimensions) and parts of mechanism (e.g.: the perceptions of the self and the other, repertoire of actions of the actors) and what effects they have on peace and conflict processes. Graph 2 shows the levels at which metanarratives were highly salient throughout the episodes of conflict (the concepts are also explained in Appendix 1).

Graph 2: Contexts and parts of mechanisms in which metanarratives were highly salient. The dots indicate all conditions (factors) where metanarratives are highly present in each episode of conflict.



Source: Author.

Clashes of metanarratives in the conflict dimensions and framings of the conflict

In some of the episodes of conflict in Madagascar, metanarratives were deeply ingrained in the conflict dimensions and in the framings of conflict origins by the actors involved. For example, a phenomenon I call "clashes of metanarratives" created situations of conflict during episodes 1971 and 1972. These were not merely ideologies the elite based their decisions on or adhered to, but metanarratives entrenched in the national psyche that could persuade the conflicting parties and the population to take arms and fight each other.

External dimensions were highly salient as the capitalism vs socialism/communism debate was raging during these episodes – see song excerpt below

> "Because my Ministry is to run a fair and impartial school
> Those who are placed at the top will be brought low, and those who are at the bottom will be uplifted
> It is there that the BEMOANED social EQUALITY will occur"
> (Author's translation of an excerpt from the song by Mahaleo entitled "*Tao antsekoky*", about socialism and social and educational inequalities)

Indeed, when Madagascar gained its independence, the country was led by President Tsiranana, who, supported by his political party PSD (Social Democratic Party), chose to engage the country in the path of capitalism (Althabe, 1980), facing the opposition of two major historical parties: the AKFM (Congress Party for Independence of Madagascar), with a "progressivist nationalist" wing and a pro-communist wing, espousing the ideas and principles of the URSS, and the MONIMA (Madagascar for the Malagasy), which defended Maoism and socialism as practised by the People's Republic of China, with its ideology revolving around the fight against social inequality, the *"fitovian-tsaranga"* (Rabearimanana, 2002).

The co-existence and interaction of these metanarratives in the conflict dimensions and the framings of the conflict (capitalism, communism, socialism, Maoism etc.) created clashes and incompatibilities. On the one hand, the opposition was fighting against those who they considered to be imperialists and capitalists: the state represented by its President and his political party. On the other, the state based its interpretation of the origin of the conflict and its military intervention upon the idea that the protesters had fallen into a very weird communist conspiracy (Althabe, 1980: 425). Indeed, the President engaged in discourses such as: "…there are really leaders who get small children involved in this… they are really crafty. Be careful, they are bandits, so they are communists… Be wise… Get yourselves out of this weird story" (Blum, 2011: 17).

Roles of metanarratives in the construction of the images of the self and the other

> "These were people who did not accept being controlled by the colonial power or the state… they had a big and renowned nationalist leader, Monja Jaona… very close to the communists and the socialists. At that time, the Tsiranana regime fought against communism. He built alliances with

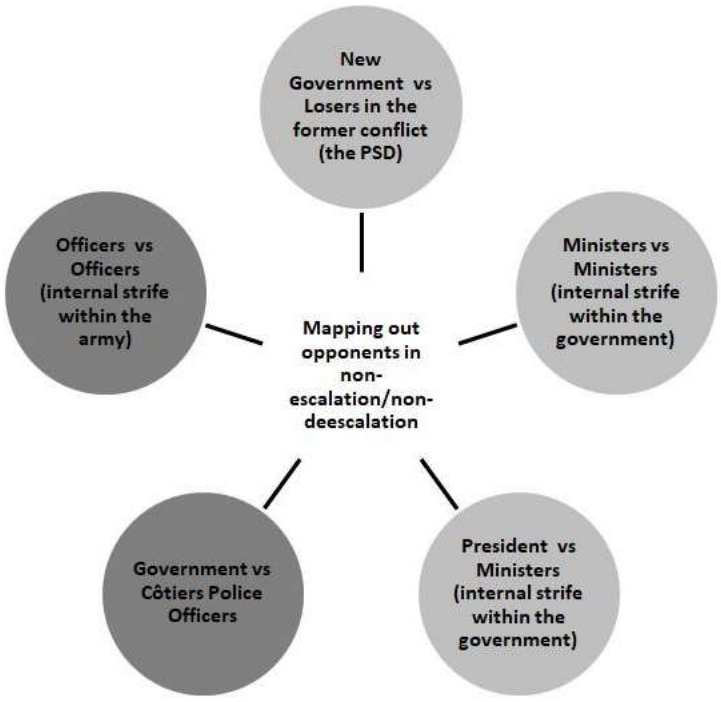
> Taiwan's China, not with Mao Zedong's communist China… Madagascar was considered to be a barrier against communism in Africa, the colonial power put Tsiranana in power to protect against that threat" (Raharizatovo, personal communication, June 2014, Madagascar).

The clashes of metanarratives mentioned earlier have a lot to do with the construction of identities and relationships between the actors. Among the political elite, and during the phase of stability, they never led to physical confrontations. However, once the clashes included the ethnic dimension there was direct violence.

Metanarratives define and construct the identities of conflicting parties

Another example showing the massive role metanarratives play throughout the peace and conflict processes in Madagascar can be seen at the level of identity construction: the construction of the self and the other. Episode 1975 is an example of that, as metanarratives are particularly highly salient, especially in terms of identity construction of the conflicting parties. Graph 3 maps out all the actors involved in episode 1975 and the relationships influenced by metanarratives.

Graph 3: List of the opponents in the dynamics of no shift of conflict stage/ stability phase (shift from episode 1972 and 1975). The circles with lighter color represent the relationships influenced by metanarratives.



Source: Author.

The clashes of metanarratives carried on during this episode created disputes mainly within the government and state institutions, obliging the head of government to transfer power to a Military Officer (Archer, 1976). It was important for some to be a "socialist", or a "socialist but relying on Malagasy principles", for others to be a "communist" or a "Maoist" (Rajakoba, personal communication, June 2014). The image of the other was constructed through these lenses and

identities were defined by these metanarratives. Consequently, the clashes of metanarratives prompted the disputes between the new government and the losers in the former conflict episode (the PSD), among the ministers within the government, and between the President and his ministers. These clashes arose because these actors´ identities stemmed from the metanarratives and political aspirations they promoted.

Graph 4: Extracts illustrating the use of metanarratives in discourses.

Author's translation:
. "Who won: America or China?" Lakroan'i Madagasikara (1972)

. "Letter from Monja Jaona: "… This government must be dissolved because it does not care about human lives. It is a government that is amassing wealth, a puppet of imperialists, and plotting with those who hate the blacks … this government persecuting the small people was dissolved…" Lakroan'i Madagasikara (1972)

. "We do not need various foreign ideologies" Lakroan'i Madagasikara (1972)

Source: Lakroan'i Madagasikara (1972).

Social class, ethnicity, and metanarratives in identities: direct violence at play

The identities built upon these metanarratives were even stronger as they were accompanied by an acute awareness of social class and ethnic origins, a mix that led to direct violence. Indeed, after episode 1972, an apolitical government was formed to protect national unity, composed of six military officers from various units of the army and the *gendarmerie*, and six "technicians" representing each of the provinces, but they could not agree on which ideologies should shape Madagascar. The origin and social class of each group's leader constructed the image of the group and how it saw the other. The proponents of capitalism were mainly from the national Bourgeoisie, the big families of the *Merina* ethnic group and the Nobles who occupied the key economic positions (Razafindrakoto et al. 2017). The followers of Maoism, mainly from the working class and peasantry, wanted to protect the interests of the weak, the poor and the peasants, defending a proletarian power. Finally, the *Fokonolona*, led by General Ratsimandrava, of *mainty* (black) and *andevo* (slave) origin, defended a pure Malagasy socialism (see Midi Madagasikara, 2016). It is worth noting that in episode 1947, democracy already influenced the identities of political parties. For example, the first nationalist political party whose members were Merina and who fought for the independence of the Malagasy

was called Mouvement Démocratique de la Rénovation Malagache (Democratic Movement for Malagasy Rejuvenation)

The *Fokonolona* was a "*politique paysanne*" (rural-based policy) aimed at giving power back to the population, inspired by Malagasy values and principles (tolerance, the cult of the ancestors, family links…) (Condominas, 1961) against so-called progressive ideas (the grand ideologies from 'outside' such as capitalism). It is said that General Ratsimandrava was assassinated because of this policy (Rakotovazaha, personal communication, March 2016). Moreover, in the coastal regions (e.g.: Toamasina), after episode 1972, when President Tsiranana gave the power to General Ramanantsoa, the members of his political party PSD felt totally excluded from the political arena. As a result, they formed a new political party called "*Partie Socialiste Malgache*" or Malagasy Socialist Party (PSM) (Morrison et al. 1989), which campaigned along ethnic and tribal lines, fomented troubles and organized riots in those areas.

Metanarratives in the accommodation policies

In the course of these episodes of conflict, there were many types of accommodation policies: those fashioned and implemented in a collaborative manner (e.g.: officially-signed agreements, tacit agreements, initiatives supported by third parties) and those that were designed and implemented in a confrontational manner (e.g.: unilateral intervention by the state, by the military, pacification).

The waves of metanarratives in accommodation policies

What I call "the waves of the metanarratives" built the dynamics up. The first wave, prior to 1980, saw the glory of the socialism/communism vs capitalism debate. During this first wave, the Malagasy relied a great deal on initiatives they implemented among themselves. For example, an interesting dynamic was built upon what I consider to be a "transfer of accommodation policies to regular policies", when regular policies were used to address the issues of the conflict. During episode 1972, the actors implemented a series of accommodation policies which resulted in a transfer of power to General Ramanantsoa. Immediately afterwards, the state engaged in the implementation of regular policies aimed at addressing some of the issues at stake in episodes 1971 and 1972 (Ravalitera, 2016). Among these were initiatives addressing external dimensions, namely the problems triggered by the socialism vs capitalism debate. These policies were implemented through a local solution called "*Malgachisation*": giving a Malagasy character and feature to something (culture, economy, education…). For instance, the "*Malgachisation*" of the economy was done through the nationalization of French-owned firms and the replacement of foreign shareholders and managers by Malagasy people (Ramarolanto-Ratiaray, 1984). Madagascar also decided to leave the French Franc Zone, advocating economic independence and renegotiating the cooperation treaties it signed

with France. This decision was followed by the dismissal of French "*co-opérants*" working in Madagascar (see Raison-Jourde, 2002).

Graph 5: Extracts illustrating the use of metanarratives during the second wave of metanarratives.

Author's translation:
. "A population ready for democracy and development" Lakroan'i Madagasikara (1971)

. "Do not cry because that day will come … Demos is a no he says!" Lakroan'i Madagasikara (1971)

Source: Lakroan'i Madagasikara (1971).

The 1980s saw a rupture with a complete shift of metanarratives. The failed socialist experiment brought to the centre of the political arena external actors, namely the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (African Democracy Encyclopaedia Project, 2010), and the Malagasy government accepted to implement the Structural Adjustment Programme imposed by these two institutions. Consequently, the actors completely changed metanarratives and the national psyche shifted from adhering to socialism, communism, and capitalism to supporting liberalism and democracy.

During this second wave of metanarratives, accommodation policies included the Panorama Convention, an official Peace Agreement aimed at addressing the issues at stake in episode 1991. Democratic principles and ideas guided the design and the implementation of this accommodation policy, which was thought to be the only way to save Madagascar back then:

> "We changed our name, we were no longer those who fought for the setting up of a government for the small people, we were those who fought for the development of Madagascar, we chose liberalism … the interpretation was because we cannot back down from the agreement with the World Bank" (Rakotovazaha, personal communication, March 2016).

Institutions built upon metanarratives: creating extractive and inclusive institutions

A significant aspect of the accommodation policies influencing and influenced by these metanarratives is the type of institution that was created. These institutions played significant roles in the dynamics of conflict recurrence, having at times destructive effects, but also playing constructive roles. For instance, in the case of the transfer of accommodation to regular policies (along the first wave of metanarratives), the solutions addressing external dimensions were supposed to improve the Malagasy economy. However, they created even more situations favouring the

outbreak/recurrence of conflict. In episode 1975, the actors created publicly controlled firms that increased the power of the state and its agents, who were running monopolies – this approach resulted in the creation of a new generation of *Merina* administrative elite and Bourgeoisie, reinforcing the oligarchic control of the economy by the *Merina* ethnic group (see Razafindrakoto et al. 2017). The decision to exit the French Franc Zone also backfired, hitting the economy hard, causing monetary inflation, increasing unemployment, decreasing GDP, and leading to a recession and an economic crash (Jütersonke et al. 2010: 21). It is thus fair to argue that some of the accommodation policies building on the first waves of metanarratives (pre-80s) created bad and extractive institutions (Acemoğlu and Robinson, 2012), instead of benefiting the masses as they were intended to.

In episode 1991, as mentioned, liberalism and democracy became the metanarratives. In this case, the implementation of the peace agreement (the Panorama Convention) had both constructive and destructive effects on the process. Constructively, it allowed for the setting-up of a government of transition and the organization of democratic elections, creating institutions built on the "democratic principles" the actors involved had demanded, and addressed the identity issues in episode 1991: representativeness of the *Merina* and the *Côtiers* ethnic groups, both receiving key positions within the state institutions (e.g.: presidency and National Assembly). The actors also chose a multi-party system, in response to having been silenced prior to the 90s, during Ratsiraka's presidency, when they were forced to unite under the one umbrella party FNDR (*Front National pour la Défense de la Révolution Malgache* or the National Front for the Defense of the Malagasy Revolution). Note that the Assembly of Christian Churches, FFKM, is a key player in this episode. It initiated the "*concertations nationales*" or national consultations in 1989 aimed at revising the socialist constitution of President Ratsiraka, but also had the goal of setting up a government of transition, and later became an instrument for peace - for example, it was a crucial participator of the mediation process, and the Panorama Convention was the fruit of their support.

Nonetheless, in the long run, the system the actors chose and the democratic institutions they thought would solve the problems proved to be sources of trouble. A majority with variable geometry (expression to qualify the absence of a stable majority at the National Assembly) caused instability and disputes among the actors, as many were driven by vested interests and it was impossible to make decision alone without consulting the others (anonymous interviewees, personal communications, June 2014 and March 2016). The revised constitution was also thought to be a threat, given that the President had no control over the Prime Minister, while the National Assembly accused the President of having too much power and abusing it. Moreover, the constitution the Assembly of Christian Churches drafted, which was part of the provision of the Panorama

convention, did not satisfy everyone. Finally, the losers (President Ratsiraka and his supporters) were excluded from the political sphere during the post-conflict period.

In the second period, corresponding to the second wave of narratives (post-80s), liberalism, democracy and globalization were the fundamental guides of the institutional choices (see Radio France Internationale, 2010). Interestingly, those dynamics are associated with cases of escalation of conflict stages in Madagascar. This second wave of metanarratives created what I consider to be "better institutions", "more inclusive" and representative, with power more evenly distributed. Furthermore, the actors involved were, at least in the beginning, working collaboratively to make their choices effective. However, contrary to what was expected, it was precisely the inclusive institutions that brought the demise of the actors who had chosen democratic institutions and the multiparty system. It is also worth considering that the interpretations of democracy and how it should be implemented can be different, which could explain why there are negative transformations [see the discussion by Ralijaona (2014) of the kind of democracy the Malagasy and the mediators such as the African Union wanted during episode 2009].

Metanarratives and repertoires of action

As explained earlier, in the 70s, there were situations during which the actors used metanarratives as an excuse to commit direct violence. For instance, in 1971, the state sent the *gendarmerie* to pacify the Southern parts of Madagascar and committed horrendous exactions under the pretext of fighting against communism. In 1972, the ZWAM used extreme violence, attacking and killing some members of the FRS, the President´s Security Forces.

Other cases show that metanarratives can influence the choice of repertoires of action in a more constructive manner. For instance, the Churches in episode 1991 made a strategic use of non-violence to overthrow the state. This strategy got its inspiration from the democratic principles the actors from the opposition side strongly supported and adhered to (Tronchon, 1995).

The case of episode 1996 was quite different. Because the actors wanted democracy and liberalism, they were supposed to respect democratic rules, procedures and institutions established by the Panorama Convention. Consequently, patterns of behaviour and repertoires of action mostly followed such a framework, with disputes happening at the institutional level. However, the actors used loopholes, controlling the machinery of institutions and the law to settle their incompatibilities. For example, they used the law to impeach President Zafy Albert (Allen, 2003), whose power was transferred to the Head of the High Constitutional Court, Norbert Lala Ratsirahonana. Such a decision was unconstitutional given that it should have been the head of the Senate coming to power.

Discussion and conclusion

The findings of my research demonstrate that metanarratives are indeed embedded in structural factors and parts of mechanisms building up peace and conflict processes in Madagascar. For example, when they were deeply ingrained in the conflict dimensions triggering what I call clashes of metanarratives (capitalism vs socialism) which created situations of conflict and incompatibilities. Furthermore, my research found that metanarratives are so powerful to the extent that they construct identities, the images of the self and the other. In the case of Madagascar, this, paired with an acute awareness of social class and ethnic origins triggered direct violence. I also demonstrated that metanarratives in Madagascar have been playing crucial roles in the shaping and the implementation of accommodation policies aimed at resolving the incompatibilities between the actors. I explained that Madagascar experienced two waves of metanarratives: the first saw the glory of the socialism/communism vs capitalism debate and the second started in the 1980s with a complete shift where the national psyche fully adhered to liberalism and democracy. Depending on the situation, the accommodation policies influenced by metanarratives created extractive as well as inclusive institutions. Indeed, metanarratives can also build peace and I could further confirm this for example when explaining how democracy influence the actors' choice of repertoires of actions.

These findings confirm my hypothesis that metanarratives are among the elements transforming a conflict in both constructive and destructive manners. They can influence and be influenced by the structural factors and parts of mechanism building up the dynamics of conflict recurrence. This means that metanarratives influence the trajectory of a given conflict as they can be, at one level, peace-supportive (Galtung, 1998), while, at another, behave as conflict- supportive elements (Cobb, 1993). However, it is worth remembering that metanarratives alone cannot explain destructive or constructive conflict transformation. They do not work alone in the dynamics, but are part of the answers, in interaction with other factors.

The conflict potency of metanarratives indicates its power to transform a conflict in a destructive manner. The case of Madagascar shows that their high saliency in conflict dimensions and framings trigger clashes of metanarratives and construct incompatibilities. Metanarratives can be strong enough to make actors take up arms and fight each other, especially when ethnicity and social class are involved. The real danger of metanarratives also lies in the fact that they are deeply anchored in the national psyche. In the eyes of those who completely adhere to them, they are the one and only option (accommodation policy) that can resolve incompatibilities between conflicting parties and address the issues at stake in the conflict. As a result, some of the institutions that were created based on metanarratives can cause further situations of conflict. That is the case of communism creating extractive institutions or liberalism leading to more hardship and poverty.

Unfortunately, many of the accommodation policies implemented to resolve conflicts can be categorized as what Mac Ginty and Firchow call top-down narratives (2016) from external actors – in the case of Madagascar, these constituted metanarratives.

The peace potency of metanarratives shows that they can also be leveraged to transform conflicts in a constructive manner, as they create inclusive institutions. However, they have their limitations. The most concrete example of those types of narrative is the role democracy, liberalism, and capitalism play in peace and conflict processes in Madagascar. One can say that these are part of the liberal peace paradigm (Richmond, 2006). Some of the principles behind those metanarratives are peace-supportive, with the accommodation policies – such as the peace agreement – encouraging collaboration, power-sharing and freedom of speech (see the intervention of Mr Mamy Rakotoarivelo in the evening news of the TV channel MaTV, 2012 discussing the importance of freedom of speech during the peace processes in episode 2009). The effects of the Panorama Convention in episode 1991 are the best example of a constructive transformation built upon metanarratives in terms of repertoires of action. Indeed, the places of contention became the institutions, with actors appealing to both conventional and non-conventional institutional actions. That is because their behaviour was dictated by the belief in democratic rules and procedures – such a situation established some sort of law and order, even if the actors also exploited loopholes in order to impeach the President in episode 1996.

All this has policy implications. Miall (2004) argues that conflicts are transformed gradually either in a constructive or a destructive way. Through the results communicated in this article, it is clear that metanarratives are among the elements contributing to those transformations. In order to prevent conflict recurrence, it is necessary to address the problems of the effects/the influence of metanarratives on the structural factors and parts of mechanism, or their interaction and co-construction discussed in this article. Metanarratives are genuinely present in peace and conflict processes and anchored in the national psyche. The narratives about Russia and China are back in the political arena, in the fields of international development and in peacebuilding in Africa. Proxy wars can also be considered as a manifestation of the role metanarratives play in conflicts. Peace and conflict scholars are familiar with the failure of liberal peacebuilding (Paris, 1997). But, even if we are aware of these issues, these problems are not addressed in conflict management initiatives, peace agreements or peacebuilding programmes.

This article is just the beginning of a questioning of the roles played by metanarratives in conflict recurrence. Further research should be done at regional and international levels, involving cross-national studies. This article is also key to starting discussions among scholars, policymakers and practitioners regarding the roles metanarratives play in conflict prevention and transformation,

and to the extent they should be taken into account in accommodation policies. Regarding Madagascar, I can confirm the hypothesis that metanarratives influence the conflict trajectory, as they played constructive and destructive roles in the process of conflict recurrence. However, in order to fully understand the dynamics behind these processes in the country, it is necessary to analyse all the QCA results in Appendix 2, to understand how these elements interact in the dynamics of conflict recurrence. A key question that could be addressed in future research is why, in the case of Madagascar, the first wave of metanarratives (socialism, communism, Maoism, etc.) is associated with de-escalating phases and stability while the second wave (liberalism, democracy, globalization etc.) is related to phases of escalation.

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Supplementary material is available for this article.