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The Politics of Labeling in International Relations: The Case of the So-Called "Coup d'Etat of March 2009" in Madagascar

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I. Introduction

On December 13, 2008, President Marc Ravalomanana's government decided to shut down VIVA Television, a private television station owned by Andry Rajoelina, who was then an up-and-coming mayor of the capital city Antananarivo. The reason behind this decision was that VIVA Television aired a few days earlier an interview of former President Didier Ratsiraka, the archrival of Ravalomanana who was living in exile in Paris (France) at that time. However, instead of bowing down to this sanction, Rajoelina defiantly issued a twenty-five day ultimatum to the government to reopen his television station. Otherwise, he would organize street protests. As expected, Ravalomanana's government did not back down from its decision. Consequently, Rajoelina initiated on January 17, 2009, the street protests, dubbed "Orange Revolution," which led to a long period of instability and crisis and ultimately resulted in the overthrow of Ravalomanana and his exile to South Africa.[1]

Indeed, following weeks of violent protests, marked by massive looting (January 26, 2009) and the killing of several protesters by the Presidential Guards (February 7, 2009), a small group of soldiers and officers from the unit known as CAPSAT,[1] based in the military camp of Soanierana (on the outskirts of Antananarivo), started a mutiny on March 8, 2009, which spread quickly to other military camps throughout the country the following days. In the night of March 16, 2009, the mutineers of CAPSAT took control of Ambohitsorohitra, one of the presidential palaces located in the center of the city. The following day, instead of transferring his power to the President of Senate, as provided by the Constitution, President Ravalomanana decided to transfer it to a Military Directorate led by Admiral Hyppolite Ramaroson before fleeing the country to Swaziland and then to South Africa. Nevertheless, by the end of the same day, Admiral Ramaroson and the two members of the Military Directorate were forced by the mutineers to hand over power to Rajoelina, who was quickly sworn in as the President of a High Authority of the Transition (HAT) on March 21, 2009. By then, the great majority of the members of the international community had already labeled and condemned the consecutive and unconstitutional transfers of power as "a coup d'état," and the supporters of Ravalomanana were already organizing daily street protests against the transitional government set up by Rajoelina. Additionally, Madagascar was suspended by regional organizations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU), and sanctioned by major donors such as the United States (US), the European Union (EU), and the Bretton Woods institutions.

While there seemed to be a quasi-consensus on the application of the label of "coup d'état" in the case of Madagascar in March 2009, the actual responses of each member of the international community in dealing with this case were totally different. For instance, some countries, like China and Turkey, among others, continued to do business with Madagascar as usual; other countries, like the US, categorically refused to recognize what was called "de facto government" of the country and suspended their non-humanitarian aid to the country. In addition, despite the application of the label of "coup d'état" in this case, the ensuing political instability and crisis were treated as a political conflict between, on the one hand, the alleged

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"coup perpetrators," Rajoelina and his supporters, and on the other hand, the alleged "victims of the coup," Ravalomanana and his supporters. As a result, whereas the rules and procedures of the AU banned the coup perpetrators from participating in any government of transition resulting from a "coup d'état," in Madagascar, on the contrary, the transitional government since March 2009 was under the control of Rajoelina and his supporters. Besides, the alleged "victims of the coup d'état" were forced, not only to negotiate but to reconcile with their alleged "persecutors."

This article focuses on the relevant members of the international community that had significant influences on the political and economic development of Madagascar, including the United Nations (UN), the AU, the SADC, the EU, France, and the US. With the exception on the UN, all of these international organizations and states used the label of "coup d'état" in the case of the consecutive and unconstitutional transfers of power in March 2009. In this sense, the main purpose of this article is to analyze how the label of "coup d'état" was used in this case. Specifically, this article attempts to find out whether these members of the international community had standing rules and procedures in dealing with a coup d'état in general, whether they were consistent with their rules and procedures in the particular case of Madagascar, and whether they were able to achieve their policy objectives.

The article relies primarily on the news reports related to the events occurring in Madagascar and published by different local and international news agencies. It also takes into consideration the press releases and official statements made by the official representatives of states and international organizations involved in these events, as well as several studies published by different scholars and think tanks.

II. Conceptual Framework

The labeling approach has been used for some time in other social science disciplines, such as sociology and psychology. However, it was only in the 1980s that some political scientists discovered its usefulness, particularly in the study of the interactions between international donors and developing countries. Indeed, compared to other approaches, the labeling approach allows researchers to ask questions, not only about the labels used by international donnors but also about their motivations in using these labels.

Originally, Howard S. Becker, one of the pioneers of the labeling approach, talks about *labeling* in connection with *social deviance*. As he puts it,

> Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders. From this point of view deviance is *not* a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender.' The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label. (Becker, 1963: 9)

The main idea from Becker (1963) is that, at the national level, social groups create rules (or codes of conduct) and label *deviants* or *outsiders* those who violate them. This idea also implies that these deviants or outsiders were supposed to be excluded or banned from the groups. Since Becker's publication, other sociologists and psychologists used the labeling approach, which was also known as "interactionist theory of deviance," and came up with other concepts, approaches, and theories, including stigma, stereotyping, discrimination, etc. (among many others, Oboler, 1992; Downs, Harrison & Robertson, 1997; Link and Phelan, 2001; Staum, 2003; Gray, 2010).

In the field of political science in general, and in international relations, in particular, it was only in the 1980s that some scholars have been interested in using the labeling approach. Geoff Wood, one of the pioneers in the use of labeling approach in political science, justified his choice of this approach as follows:

> The purpose of our focus on labelling [sic] is to reveal processes of control, regulation, and management which are largely unrecognized even by the actors themselves. It is our conviction that the significance of labelling has been underestimated as an aspect of policy discourse, and especially for its structural impact (through creation, reinforcement, and reproduction) upon the institutions and their ideologies through which we are managed. Since the process of labelling affects the categories within which we are socialized to act and think, the object of our concern is fundamental rather than peripheral. Of course, it is not a simple matter to prove the significance of such processes. However, it is possible to set out a theory of labelling (and its connection with politics) through which the significance of familiar material can be re-interpreted. (Wood, 1985: 347)

Thus, following Wood (1985), the use of labeling approach in the case of the so-called "coup d'état" of March 2009 in Madagascar allows us to ask questions, not only about this label used by the majority of the members of the international community but also about their motivations in using it. After reviewing the rules and procedures of the relevant members of the international community in dealing with a coup d'état in general, this article analyzes their actual responses in the case of Madagascar to find out whether they were consistent with their own rules and procedures in this particular case and whether they were able to achieve their policy objectives.

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III. The Rules and Procedures of the Relevant Members of the International Community in Dealing with a Coup D'etat

Among the relevant members of the international community that have significant influences in the case of Madagascar, only the AU, the EU, and the US had standing rules and procedures in dealing with a coup d'état in general. In fact, it was the AU's rules and procedures that took precedence in this case, and the SADC (which was in charge of leading the negotiations to end the political crisis starting in June 2009) and the other members of the international community were referring to these AU's rules and procedures.

a) The AU and its "Zero Tolerance Policy" against Unconstitutional Changes of Government

The AU established a tradition of "zero tolerance policy" against unconstitutional changes of government in 1997 with the case of Sierra Leone (African Union, 2000). This tradition has been backed up by three legal documents stating clearly the rules and procedures to follow in case of unconstitutional changes of government, including coup d'état. These documents are:

a. *The Declaration on the Framework for an OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government* (*AHG/Decl.5 XXXVI)* (July 10-12, 2000),
b. *The Constitutive Act of the African Union* (2000), and
c. *The African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance* (2007).

Until of the creation of the Peace and Security Council in 2002, the Chairman and the Secretary General of the Organization were directly responsible for the determination of the occurrence of a coup d'état, and its condemnation. Thus, as stated in *The Declaration on the Framework for an OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government,*

> Whenever an unconstitutional change as provided for in the definition of unconstitutional change above, takes place in a Member States, our Current Chairman of the OAU and our Secretary-General, on behalf of our Organization, should immediately and publicly condemn such a change and urge for the speedy return to constitutional order. (African Union, 2000)

If the condemnation and the call for a speedy return to constitutional order failed, the next step for the AU is to impose sanctions not only on the state where the unconstitutional change has occurred but also on the perpetrators of such a change. The main sanction against the state is its suspension from the organization (African Union, 2000). Nevertheless, despite this suspension, the AU expects to maintain diplomatic relations with the state with unconstitutional change. As stated in Article 25 paragraph 3 of *The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance*, "notwithstanding the suspension of the State Party, the Union shall maintain diplomatic contacts and take any initiatives to restore democracy in that State Party" (African Union, 2007, Art. 25, parag. 3).

Furthermore, concerning specifically the perpetrators of the coup d'état, Article 25 of *The African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance* gives the following list of sanctions:

- The perpetrators of unconstitutional change of government shall not be allowed to participate in elections held to restore the democratic order or hold any position of responsibility in political institutions of their State.
- Perpetrators of unconstitutional change of government may also be tried before the competent court of the Union.
- The Assembly shall impose sanctions on any Member State that is proved to have instigated or supported unconstitutional change of government in another state in conformity with Article 23 of the Constitutive Act.
- The Assembly may decide to apply other forms of sanctions on perpetrators of unconstitutional change of government including punitive economic measures.
- State Parties shall not harbour or give sanctuary to perpetrators of unconstitutional changes of government.
- State Parties shall bring to justice the perpetrators of unconstitutional changes of government or take necessary steps to effect their extradition.
- State Parties shall encourage conclusion of bilateral extradition agreements as well as the adoption of legal instruments on extradition and mutual legal assistance. (African Union, 2007, Art. 25)

In practice, according to J. Shola Omotola, the AU's rules and procedures in dealing with unconstitutional changes also include the "deployment of envoys and the constitution of [International Contact Groups] ICGs in redressing the problem" (Omotola, 2011, p. 35). But there is not clear instruction on how these procedures were to be executed in the legal documents.

b) The SADC as a Subsidiary Body of the AU

Contrary to the AU, the SADC has no established "zero tolerance policy" regarding unconstitutional changes of government, nor does it have any legal document stating clearly the rules and procedures to follow in case of unconstitutional changes of government. In fact, according to Gavin Cawthra, "the precursor to SADC, the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC),

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deliberately excluded explicitly political, and hence peace and security, issues from its agenda, concentrating on economic development" (Cawthra, 2010, p. 10), until the adoption in 2001 of the *Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation* (Southern African Development Community, 2001).

However, given the fact that the SADC is considered a subsidiary body of the AU and that all SADC's member states are also members of the latter organization, it can be assumed that the SADC and its member states are obligated to follow the AU's rules and procedures in dealing with unconstitutional changes of government. Thus, as we will see in the next section on the actual responses of the relevant members of the international community in the case of Madagascar, the SADC, and its member states adopted to some extent the AU's rules and procedures.

c) The EU and the Cotonou Accord

The legal framework for the EU in dealing with a coup d'état occurring in a member state of the ACP-EU organization is the so-called "Cotonou Accord" (ACP-EU, 2000). Under this accord, the main procedure consists of dialogue and consultation between the EU and the member state where a coup d'état occurred. If the dialogue and consultation failed, the organization might eventually sanction the member state where the coup d'état occurred. Thus, as stipulated in Article 96 of the of the Cotonou Accord,

> (a) If, despite the political dialogue regularly conducted between the Parties, a Party considers that the other Party has failed to fulfill an obligation stemming from respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law referred to in paragraph 2 of Article 9, it shall,except in cases of special urgency, supply the other Party and the Council of Ministers with the relevant information required for a thorough examination of the situation with a view to seeking a solution acceptable to the Parties. To this end, it shall invite the other Party to hold consultations that focus on the measures taken or to be taken by the party concerned to remedy the situation. The consultations shall be conducted at the level and in the form considered most appropriate for finding a solution.
>
> The consultations shall begin no later than 15 days after the invitation and shall continue for a period established by mutual agreement, depending on the nature and gravity of the violation.
>
> In any case, the consultations shall last no longer than 60 days. If the consultations do not lead to a solution acceptable to both Parties, if consultation is refused, or in cases of special urgency, appropriate measures may be taken. These measures shall be revoked as soon as the reasons for taking them have disappeared. (ACP-EU, 2000, Art. 96, 2.(a))

Furthermore, concerning the sanction against the state and perpetrators, Article 96 of the Cotonou Accord provides that:

> The "appropriate measures" referred to in this Article are measures taken in accordance with international law, and proportional to the violation. In the selection of these measures, priority must be given to those which least disrupt the application of this agreement. It is understood that suspension would be a measure of last resort. (ACP-EU, 2000, Art. 96, 2.(c))

d) France as a Member State of the EU

The analysis of French government statements on recent coups in Africa (Niger, Guinea, Mali and particularly Madagascar) demonstrates that France does not have rules and procedures in dealing with a coup d'état. In other words, at least at the national level, there is no legal framework that would obligate the French officials to label, condemn or sanction any coup d'état anywhere in the world. This fact led, for instance, Sawyer Blazek to suggest that the French approach to the case of Madagascar in March 2009 has been "pragmatic," as opposed to the "principled approach" of the US (Blazek, 2010).

Nevertheless, since France is a member state of the EU, one can assume that France would follow the EU's rules and procedures. Indeed, as we will discuss below, after adopting what has been described by some observers as "ambiguous position," the French government did, in fact, align its position with that of the EU in labeling and condemning the consecutive and unconstitutional transfers of power in Madagascar as a "coup d'état."

e) The US and its Foreign Aid Policy

Some observers referred to the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, and particularly to its Section 508, as the "foundational legal framework authorizing and defining U.S. foreign aid" (Aziz, July 31, 2013). Although Section 508 of the FAA was repealed in 1973, it was replaced, at least since 1985, by continuing resolutions included in annual foreign operations appropriation legislations, banning assistance to any country in which a coup d'état has occurred (U.S. House of Representatives, & U.S. Senate, 2003). Thus, concerning the fiscal years 2012 and 2013 particularly, Boris Zilberman reports that:

> According to Section 7008 of the FY2012 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 112-74), aid administered by the State Department and USAID is banned to the government of any country where a military coup or decree has overthrown a democratically-elected government. The Congressional Research Service (CRS) points out that, 'Similar provisions have been included in annual foreign operations appropriations legislation since at least 1985, and have been carried over into FY2013 via continuing resolution.' (Zilberman, July 03, 2013)

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In line with these continuing resolutions, it is the responsibility of the president to determine whether a coup had occurred or not, and also to certify to the "Committees on Appropriations that subsequent to the termination of assistance a democratically elected government has taken office" (Zilberman, July 03, 2013).

f) The UN and its Nonintervention in Internal Affairs of Member States

Since a coup d'état is by definition an internal affair of a member state, the general principle of the UN in dealing with such internal affair is nonintervention. Indeed, as stipulated in Article 2 of Chapter 1 of the United Nations Charter,

> Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter, but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII. (United Nations, 1945, Chap. 1, Art. 2)

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that at least since 2005, the UN has adopted the principle of "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) "to protect civilians from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity by preventing them from taking place or taking remedial action when necessary" (Albright and Williamson, 2013, p. 5). This principle allows the world body to intervene in some cases of internal affairs of member states, but its application has been limited so far.

IV. The Actual Responses of the Relevant Members of the International Community in the Case of the So-Called Coup D'etat of March 2009 In Madagascar

This section analyzes how the relevant members of the international community responded to the particular case of the consecutive and unconstitutional transfers of power in Madagascar in March 2009.

a) The AU's Responses

On March 17, 2009, as the consecutive and unconstitutional transfers of power occurred in Madagascar, the AU issued a statement "condemning what it called an attempted coup d'état" (Burgis, March 17, 2009). The label of "attempted coup d'état" was changed later to that of outright "coup d'état," when the AU decided to suspend Madagascar from the organization on March 20. In the meantime, the AU also called for an "immediate return to constitutional order" (International Crisis Group, 18 mars 2010).

However, despite the labeling and condemnation of what was happening as a "coup d'état," the AU, along with the other organizations which were involved in the resolution of the political conflict since the beginning (the UN, the SADC, and the International Organisation of the Francophonie) decided to resume on May 20, 2009, "the multilateral negotiations seeking to establish a neutral, peaceful and consensual transition in Madagascar" (African Union et al., 22 May 2009). These negotiations, which eventually led to the creation of a transitional government including the alleged perpetrators of the coup d'état (Rajoelina and his supporters), constituted already a flagrant violation of the AU's own rules and procedures, as stated in Article 25 paragraph 4 of the *African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance*, which clearly stipulates that: "The perpetrators of unconstitutional change of government shall not be allowed to participate in elections held to restore the democratic order or *hold any position of responsibility in political institutions of their State*" (African Union, 2007, Art. 25 parag. 4).

Furthermore, after the failure of the multilateral negotiations in May 2009, the AU let the SADC to lead the subsequent negotiations (from August 2009 in Maputo to September 2011 in Antananarivo), which resulted in the signature on September 17, 2011, of the *Roadmap for Ending the Crisis in Madagascar* (Southern African Development Community, 13 September 2011). At every step of the negotiations, the AU endorsed not only the SADC's general approach but also every agreement reached by the parties, including the Roadmap, which allowed Rajoelina, not only to stay in power but also to participate in the future presidential elections. Indeed, the Roadmap in its Article 3 clearly states that "Andry Rajoelina is the President of the Transition. In this quality, he exercises the functions of the Head of State." Furthermore, in its Article 14, the Roadmap indicates that the President and the members of the transitional government may participate in the presidential and legislative elections, but they would only have to resign before running (Southern African Development Community, 13 September 2011).

In sum, the facts that the AU negotiated with Rajoelina and his supporters, allowed them to stay in power throughout the transition and participate in the presidential and legislative elections are all violations of the AU's own rules and procedures concerning the perpetrators of unconstitutional changes, as stated in Article 25 paragraphs 4 and 5 of the *African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance* (African Union, 2007, Art. 25 parag. 4). It is true that the AU and the other members of the international community managed to prevent Rajoelina from participating in the 2013 presidential election. However, this was based on a technicality (Rajoelina having submitted his application

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Madagascar as "an attempted coup d'état," Kgalema Motlanthe, South African President and chair of the SADC, was still expressing his concern over "the unconstitutional attempts undertaken by the opposition that led to the resignation of the democratically elected president" (Burgis, March 17, 2009). The following day, Zambian Foreign Minister Kabinga Pande told a news conference in Lusaka that "Zambia rejects the unconstitutional change of government in Madagascar" (BBC News, March 18, 2009). Finally, on March 19, 2009, the SADC itself issued a statement condemning "in the strongest terms the circumstances that led to the ousting of a democratically-elected president of Madagascar" (BBC News, March 19, 2009). In the same statement, the SADC also refused to "recognise Madagascar's new leader, Andry Rajoelina, who on Tuesday ousted the democratically-elected president" (BBC News, March 19, 2009). The SADC's early statements seem to indicate that the organization was reluctant to use the label "coup d'état." Nevertheless, similarly to the AU, the SADC also suspended Madagascar from the organization on March 30, 2009 (Lanz & Gasser, 2013), while at the same time calling for "an immediate return to constitutional order" (International Crisis Group, 18 mars 2010).

However, despite the condemnation, nonrecognition, and suspension, the SADC participated in May 2009 in "the multilateral negotiations seeking to establish a neutral, peaceful and consensual transition in Madagascar" (African Union et al., May 22, 2009). As mentioned earlier, these "negotiations seeking to establish a neutral, peaceful and consensual transition," which would include not only the alleged "victims of the coup d'état" (Ravalomanana and his supporters), but also the alleged "perpetrators of the coup d'état" (Rajoelina and his supporters), constituted a violation of the AU's rules and procedures, which ban the perpetrators of the coup d'état from holding "any position of responsibility in political institutions of their State" (African Union, 2007, Art. 25, parag. 4).

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the SADC was given the responsibility of leading the negotiations, after the failure of the early negotiations in May 2009. These negotiations led to different agreements (such as Maputo I and II, Additional Act of Addis Ababa and the Roadmap) between the political alliances (known as *mouvances* in French) affiliated with the alleged "victim of the coup d'état" (Ravalomanana), the alleged "perpetrator of the coup d'état" (Rajoelina), and the two former presidents, Didier Ratsiraka and Albert Zafy. Most importantly, in flagrant violation of Article 25 paragraphs 4 and 5 of the *African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance*, each one of these agreements allows Rajoelina, not only to stay in power during the transition but also "participate in elections held to restore the democratic order."

c) The EU's Responses

According to news reports, the EU was the first to use the label of "coup d'état" in the case of Madagascar officially. Indeed, on March 19, 2009, one day before the suspension of Madagascar by the AU, Karel Schwarzenberg, Czech Foreign Minister, speaking for the Presidency of the EU, told a press conference that "there was a coup d'état [in Madagascar], it was not a democratic election" (LeMonde.fr, 20 mars 2009). This official statement of the EU was followed the next day by that of the US, which also labeled and condemned what happened as "a coup d'état" (Wood, March 20, 2009).

In the immediate aftermath of this so-called coup d'état, the EU seemed to have followed to some extent its own rules and procedures in dealing with a violation of human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law referred to in Article 96 of the Cotonou Accord. Thus, on May 19, 2009, the EU representatives in Madagascar initiated a dialogue with the transitional government. Following this initial dialogue, the EU representatives issued a statement, in which they gave thirty days to the transitional government to hold a consensual dialogue among all Malagasy political parties, and 120 days to implement the decisions made during this consensual dialogue. The EU's decision to suspend its assistance to the country would depend on the results of this consensual dialogue (Bill, 22 mai 2009). In the meantime, the EU did not participate in "the multilateral negotiations seeking to establish a neutral, peaceful and consensual transition" initiated by the AU, the SADC, the OIF and the UN (African Union et al., May 22, 2009). On the contrary, it held a formal consultation with the transitional government in Brussels in July 2009. At the end of this consultation, the EU refused the proposal presented by the transitional government to resolve the political crisis unilaterally (Iloniaina, 7 juillet 2009).

However, when the SADC became officially in charge of the Malagasy political problem in June 2009, the EU completely put aside its own rules and procedures and deferred the resolution of the political problem to the SADC. As a result, the EU endorsed not only the SADC's approach but also all of the agreements it was able to reach with the Malagasy parties, including the Roadmap of September 17, 2011, which left Rajoelina as the president of the transition and allowed him to participate in the future elections.

d) France's Ambiguous Responses

Being the former colonial power of Madagascar, France has always tried to maintain close diplomatic relations with its former colony since independence in 1960. However, the relations between the two countries deteriorated since 2002, when Ravalomanana came to power.[2] These difficult relations between the two countries in recent years led many observers to suspect

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that France might have been the instigator of the so-called coup d'état of March 2009 (Deltombe, mars 2012). Consequently, the position of France has been scrutinized very carefully by many observers.

The first public statement of the French government on March 18, 2009, did not refer to, nor condemn any "coup d'état" happening in Madagascar (BBC News, March 18, 2009). On the contrary, the spokesperson of France's foreign ministry stressed that "France would continue its aid to the island and maintain its policy of co-operation" (BBC News, March 18, 2009). However, following the meeting of the EU on March 19, the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, was constrained to align the French position to that of the EU, by referring to what happened as a "coup d'état," and by calling for elections as soon as possible (Lexpress.fr, 20 mars 2009). Nevertheless, in Madagascar, France was seen as the main supporter of the transitional government led by Rajoelina. Indeed, France sent its new ambassador to Madagascar the very next day after the so-called coup d'état, and this new ambassador was the first foreign diplomat to meet with Rajoelina (International Crisis Group, 18 mars 2010).

Furthermore, after aligning its position to that of the EU, France also had to endorse the approach taken by the SADC and every agreement that this regional organization was able to reach with the Malagasy political leaders, including the Roadmap of September 2011.

e) The US' Principled Responses

The US seemed to be the only relevant member of the international community that has been consistent with its initial position in the case of Madagascar. Indeed, after having labeled and condemned what happened as "a coup d'état" (Wood, March 20, 2009), the US announced that it would "suspend all non-humanitarian assistance to Madagascar" (Wood, March 20, 2009). Furthermore, it did not participate in "the multilateral negotiations seeking to establish a neutral, peaceful and consensual transition in Madagascar" (African Union et al., May 22, 2009).

However, these principled responses led the US to hold some contradictory positions. Indeed, on the one hand, the US made different statements supporting the efforts of the SADC in resolving the crisis (Tananews, 07 août 2012). Yet, on the other hand, it disagreed with some of the agreements reached by the regional organization with other actors involved in the resolution of the crisis. For instance, it never recognized the transitional government resulting from the application of the Roadmap, which included representatives of Ravalomanana's political alliances. Furthermore, while the SADC and the AU decided to prevent Ravalomanana and Rajoelina from running for president in 2013, the US issued a statement rejecting this decision (Tananews, 07 août 2012).

f) The UN's Responses

Consistent with its own rules and procedures, the United Nations, as represented by its Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, did not label, nor condemn the consecutive and unconstitutional transfers of power in Madagascar as a "coup d'état" (Lee, March 18, 2009). Nevertheless, the UN representatives in Madagascar participated in "the multilateral negotiations seeking to establish a neutral, peaceful and consensual transition in Madagascar" (African Union et al., May 22, 2009). Furthermore, when the SADC became officially in charge of the Malagasy political problem, the UN deferred the resolution of the political conflict to the SADC, and endorsed not only the SADC's approach, but also all of the agreements it was able to reach with the Malagasy parties, including the Roadmap of September 17, 2011.

V. Conclusion

The use of the labeling approach allows us to think that, in the same as the members of social groups at the national level, those of the international community are also "making rules whose infraction constitutes deviance," and they apply "label" to the "deviant behavior" of some of its members. In the case of Madagascar, the consecutive and unconstitutional transfers of power which occurred on March 17, 2009 were labeled and condemned as a "coup d'état" by the vast majority of the members of the international community. However, the analysis of their existing rules and procedures in dealing with a coup d'état in general along with their actual responses in the particular case of Madagascar reveals that, on the one hand, they had different rules and procedures; and on the other hand, most of the times, their responses in the particular case of Madagascar were inconsistent with their own rules and procedures.

Among the relevant members of the international community which labeled and condemned the consecutive and unconstitutional transfers of power as a "coup d'état," the AU and the EU had comprehensive rules and procedures in dealing with a coup d'état. Nevertheless, these two entities failed to follow their own rules and procedures in the particular case of Madagascar consistently. In this sense, on the one hand, in total violation of the Article 25 of the *African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance*, the AU negotiated with those who were supposed to be the "perpetrators of unconstitutional change of government" (Rajoelina and his supporters) and allowed them to stay in power through the whole transitional period; on the other hand, despite the initiation of consultation with the transitional government unilaterally set up by Rajoelina, the EU decided to put aside its own rules and

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procedures and deferred the resolution of the conflict among the Malagasy political leaders to the AU and the SADC.

Finally, the French approach to the case of Madagascar has been diversely interpreted either as "ambiguous" or "pragmatic." That of the US has been seen as "principled," but it led to some contradictions in the end.

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Notes

[1].The political crisis of March 2009 in Madagascar is analyzed in detail in other publications by the author. See Ratsimbaharison (Forthcoming 2017a, Forthcoming 2017b, and 2016). For more information, see also Randrianja (2012), and Ralambomahay (2011).

[2] CAPSAT stands for "*Corps d'Administration des Personnels et des Services de l'Armée de Terre*" (Army Corps of Personnel and Services Administration). This unit played a key role during the political crisis of March 2009.

[3] There are different reasons explaining the difficult relationships between France and Madagascar under the presidency of Marc Ravalomanana. To begin with, Marc Ravalomanana was not the typical political leader that the French would like for its former colony: he was from the Merina ethnic group, and protestant (the French would have preferred a Cotier and Catholic); he was not educated in France nor at least in the French educational system in Madagascar, and publicly displayed his disdain of the French culture and his preference for the Anglo-American culture. In addition to the cultural differences, many economic interests opposed Ravalomanana with the French. Ultimately, the expulsion of the French Ambassador from Madagascar by Ravalomanana was the culmination of the antipathy between Ravalomanana and France.

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