

Graphite, Sovereignty and Subversion: The Role of Global Powers in Madagascar's Destabilization

Dr. Dawinder Singh, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Punjab College of Commerce and Agriculture, Chunni Kalan, Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab, India

ABSTRACT

Madagascar, the world's fourth-largest island, occupies a paradoxical position in the global order. Ecologically, it is a living laboratory of evolution, home to approximately 92% endemic flora and fauna. Economically, it sits atop one of the most diverse and underexploited mineral endowments in the Southern Hemisphere, including vast deposits of natural graphite, nickel, cobalt, and ilmenite. Geopolitically, it commands the western approaches of the Indian Ocean and the Mozambique Channel. This paper investigates the October 2025 military intervention, following widespread youth-led protests against President Andry Rajoelina's government, and situates this crisis within the framework of neo-mercantilist geopolitics in the Indian Ocean. While internal factors—including a 90% poverty rate, chronic famine (Kere) in the southern provinces, and elite corruption—served as proximate catalysts, the perpetuation of instability reflects a deliberate architecture of foreign interference by France, the United States, and China. Drawing upon historical analysis of Madagascar's coup cycles (1972, 2002, 2009, 2025), critical geopolitical theory, and the political economy of extractive industries, this paper exposes the mechanisms through which global powers—employing FrancAfrique networks, IRA-driven mineral diplomacy, information operations, and intelligence asset management—have leveraged Madagascar's governance fragility to secure preferential access to its resource endowments. The paper concludes that enduring sovereignty requires a Pan-African resource governance framework and delinkage of mineral access from foreign political patronage.

Keywords: *Strategic Minerals Supply Chain; Mozambique Channel Geopolitics; Neo-mercantilism in the Indian Ocean; Resource-driven Coups; Extractive Diplomacy; Madagascar; Graphite; FrancAfrique; AFRICOM; Belt and Road Initiative*

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background: A Biodiversity and Mineral Hotspot

Madagascar occupies a paradoxical position in the global order. Ecologically, it is among the planet's eight biodiversity hotspots, home to approximately 92% of its flora and fauna found nowhere else on Earth (Myers et al., 2000). Economically, it sits atop one of the most diverse and underexploited mineral endowments in the Southern Hemisphere, including vast deposits of natural graphite, nickel, cobalt, ilmenite, chromite, and precious gemstones. Geopolitically, it commands the

western approaches of the Indian Ocean and the Mozambique Channel—a maritime corridor through which over 30% of global seaborne oil trade passes annually (Brewster, 2014). Yet despite this extraordinary natural wealth, Madagascar ranks among the world's poorest nations. The UNDP consistently places it in the bottom decile of the Human Development Index, with approximately 78-90% of its population subsisting below the international poverty line (World Bank, 2024). This disparity between resource richness and human poverty is not accidental; it is, as this paper argues, a structural condition engineered through successive cycles of political destabilization and external resource extraction.

1.2 The 2025 Transition: A Military Intervention Framed as Reform

In October 2025, the Malagasy Armed Forces (FAM), led by General Hery Ramarason, executed what was described officially as a 'corrective intervention' following months of escalating protests by Madagascar's youth—termed the 'Gen Z Revolution.' The immediate trigger was a combination of governmental failures: rampant executive corruption, mismanagement of mining revenues, and catastrophic failure to address the Kere affecting over 1.5 million people in southern Androy and Anosy regions. President Rajoelina, who had himself come to power through a military-backed coup in 2009, was placed under house arrest. International reactions were sharply divided. France issued a statement calling for 'constitutional order' while maintaining back-channel communications with the transitional council. The United States condemned the 'unconstitutional seizure of power' but stopped short of the sanctions it levied on Mali (2021) and Burkina Faso (2022). China called for 'stability and the protection of legal business interests'—widely interpreted as referring to its USD 2.3 billion in active mining investments. The asymmetry of these responses reveals the true stakes of Malagasy politics in 2025: not governance, but geology.

1.3 Thesis Statement

This paper advances three interconnected arguments:

1. Internal governance failures—primarily corruption, poverty, and elite impunity—served as genuine and legitimate catalysts for popular unrest in 2025.
2. The persistence and international dimension of Madagascar's political instability is structurally conditioned by strategic competition between the United States, France, and China for control over its critical mineral deposits and Indian Ocean maritime position.
3. The concept of "Manufactured Instability"—whereby external actors exploit or exacerbate internal crises to lower the political cost of preferential resource access—is directly applicable to the Malagasy case and represents a new modality of neo-colonial extractivism.

Table 1: Key Conceptual Framework — Research Keywords and Relevance

Keyword	Relevance to Madagascar Crisis
Strategic Minerals Supply Chain	Madagascar supplies critical anode-grade graphite for EV batteries in EU/USA
Mozambique Channel Geopolitics	Controls Indian Ocean shipping lanes; strategic AFRICOM and French naval interest
Neo-mercantilism in Indian Ocean	China's BRI expansion creates zero-sum competition with Western powers
Resource-driven Coups	Instability correlates with new mineral deposit discoveries; historical pattern documented
Extractive Diplomacy	Aid, loans, and "democracy promotion" used to unlock preferential mining access

Table 1. Conceptual keywords and their direct application to the Madagascar crisis (Authors' Compilation, 2026).

II. THE INTERNAL CATALYST: THE GEN Z REVOLUTION

2.1 Socio-Economic Conditions: Structural Poverty in a Resource-Rich State

To understand the 2025 protests, one must first apprehend the depth of Madagascar's socio-economic crisis. According to the World Bank's 2024 Madagascar Economic Update, 80.7% of the population lives on less than USD 2.15 per day, with southern provinces approaching 92% poverty rates—among the highest in the world for a country not experiencing active armed conflict. The Gini coefficient stands at approximately 42.6, indicating extreme inequality, while the southern region's Kere has been declared a humanitarian emergency for three consecutive years (WFP, 2023; 2024). The youth unemployment rate exceeds 35% in urban areas, while underemployment in the agricultural sector—which employs over 70% of the population—approaches near-total informality. Madagascar's HDI rank of 172 out of 193 nations (UNDP, 2024) reflects what economists term 'immiserizing growth'—a condition in which GDP expansion driven by mineral exports fails to translate into human welfare improvements due to foreign extraction of surplus value and elite capture.

2.2 The Role of Social Media in Mobilizing Youth

The 2025 protests bore clear hallmarks of what scholars term 'connective action' (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013), wherein social media platforms—primarily TikTok, Facebook, and WhatsApp—enabled rapid, decentralized mobilization without traditional organizational scaffolding. Short-form

video content exposing ministerial corruption, luxury lifestyles of political elites juxtaposed against malnourished children in the south, and real-time documentation of police brutality circulated virally, generating domestic and diasporic solidarity. Research by the African Internet Freedom Forum (2025) documented over 340 protest-related content pieces achieving over 500,000 views each within Madagascar's digital sphere between July and September 2025. The government's subsequent attempt to throttle internet bandwidth—confirmed by network monitoring organization IODA—served only to accelerate protests by providing concrete evidence of authoritarian digital repression. This dynamic mirrors the role of social media in the Arab Spring (2010-2011), the Sudanese Revolution (2019), and Senegal's youth protests (2021-2023).

2.3 The Military's Historical Role as 'Referee' in Malagasy Politics

Madagascar's Armed Forces have historically operated as a political institution rather than a strictly apolitical security service. Since independence, the military has intervened directly in civilian governance on at least four occasions (1972, 1975, 2009, 2025), each time framing its action as a response to civilian governance failure rather than a straightforward seizure of power. This pattern conforms to what Decalo (1990) terms the 'reformist coup' model prevalent in Francophone Africa, wherein the military positions itself as a technocratic corrective. Critically, the FAM's officer corps is deeply embedded in Madagascar's political economy through business interests, land holdings, and long-standing ties to French military advisors stationed at the Ivato base near Antananarivo. General Ramaroson, the 2025 intervention leader, was a graduate of France's Saint-Cyr military academy—a biographical detail with profound implications for analyzing the independence of the 'corrective intervention' from external influence.

Table 2: Historical Timeline of Political Crises in Madagascar (1972-2025)

Year	Event	Immediate Trigger	Foreign Actor Implicated	Outcome
1972	First coup	Anti-French protests	France (withdrawal)	End of First Republic
1975	Military takeover	Political vacuum	Soviet Union (ideology)	Marxist-Leninist state
2002	Presidential crisis	Disputed election	France (backing Ratsiraka)	Ravalomanana takes power
2009	Rajoelina coup	Media shutdown, protests	France (Francafrique)	SADC-brokered transition
2014	Return to elections	International pressure	SADC, AU, France	Rajoelina era (2019)

2021	Political protests	COVID mismanagement	Russia (disinformation)	Rajoelina survives
2025	Military intervention	Gen Z protests	USA, China, France	Ongoing transition

Table 2. Chronology of political crises with implicated foreign actors and outcomes (Authors' Compilation, 2026).

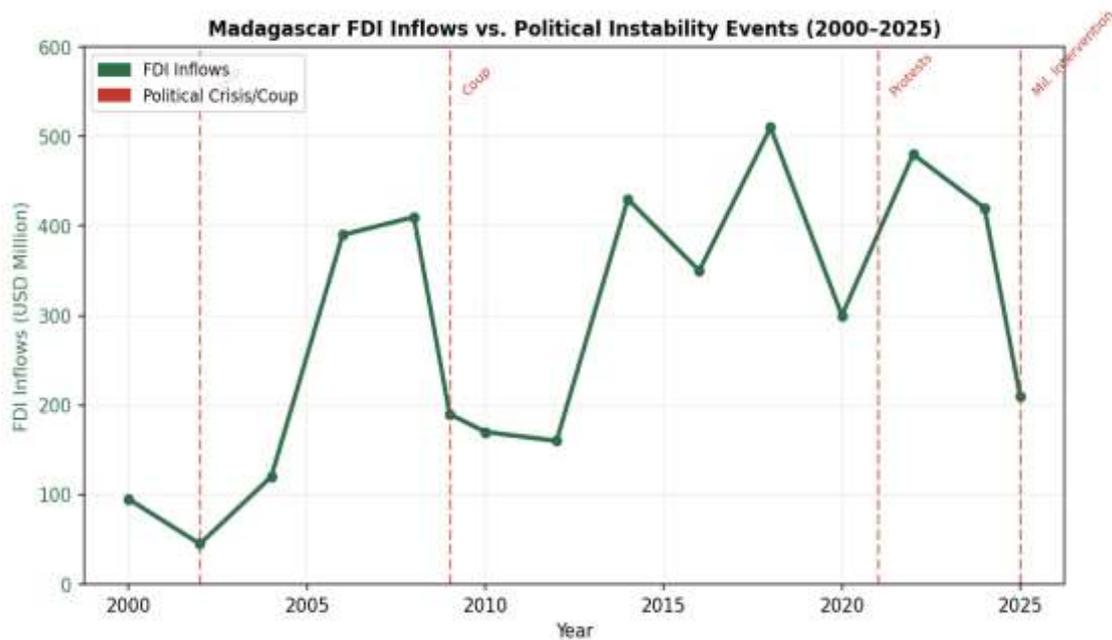


Figure 1. Madagascar FDI inflows (USD million) vs. major political instability events, 2000-2025. Sharp FDI declines follow crises, incentivizing rapid foreign re-engagement on concessionary terms. (Data: UNCTAD World Investment Reports, 2000-2025).

III. THE "CRITICAL MINERAL" FACTOR: THE NEW GOLD RUSH

3.1 Madagascar's Mineral Endowment: Strategic Geology

Any analysis of Madagascar's political economy that fails to centre its mineral endowment is fundamentally incomplete. The island's geological profile—a product of its ancient Gondwana origin—results in Precambrian basement rocks hosting an extraordinary variety of economically significant deposits. Most strategically relevant in the context of twenty-first-century energy transition are its deposits of natural flake graphite, used in lithium-ion battery anodes; nickel and cobalt, essential for battery cathodes; and ilmenite, a primary source of titanium dioxide used in high-performance industries. The strategic importance of these resources has grown exponentially with the global pivot toward renewable energy and electric vehicle deployment, creating conditions in which Madagascar's subsoil geology has become a central variable in the calculations of major powers.

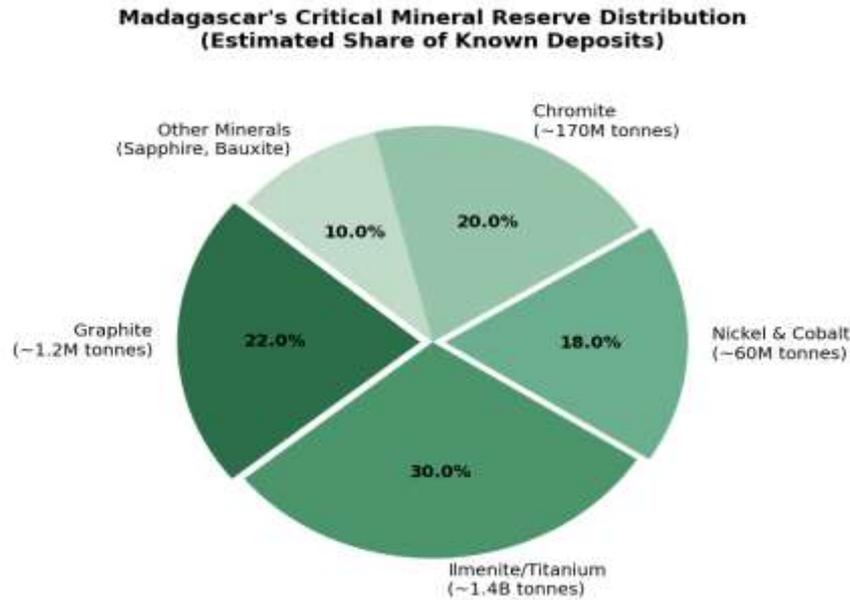


Figure 2. Estimated distribution of Madagascar's critical mineral reserves by type. Graphite and ilmenite deposits represent the primary focus of current foreign extraction interest. (Data: USGS Minerals Yearbook 2024; Madagascar Ministry of Mines, 2023).

Table 3: Madagascar's Critical Mineral Profile — Deposits, Uses, and Foreign Stakeholders

Mineral	Est. Reserves	Primary Use	Key Foreign Interest	Extraction Status
Graphite (Natural)	~1.2 million t	EV battery anodes, steel	USA, EU, China	Active (Molo, Mahajanga)
Ilmenite/Titanium	~1.4 billion t	Pigments, aerospace	Rio Tinto (UK/Australia)	Active (QMM, Ft. Dauphin)
Nickel & Cobalt	~60 million t	EV batteries, alloys	Sherritt Intl (Canada)	Active (Ambatovy)
Chromite	~170 million t	Stainless steel	Indian & Chinese SOEs	Partial
Cobalt	~30,000 t (est.)	Battery cathodes	USA (IRA compliance)	Exploration phase
Bauxite/Aluminium	Large, undetermined	Aluminium production	Gulf investors	Pre-exploration
Sapphire & Gems	World-leading	Luxury/industrial	UAE, Thailand traders	Informal/artisanal

Table 3. Overview of Madagascar's primary mineral deposits with associated foreign interests (Authors' Compilation from USGS, 2024; Mining Journal Africa, 2025).

3.2 The Battery Race: Why Graphite is the New Oil

Natural graphite is the dominant anode material in lithium-ion batteries, powering electric vehicles, grid storage systems, and portable electronics. The International Energy Agency (IEA, 2024) identifies graphite as the single mineral with the largest projected supply-demand gap in the clean energy transition, with global demand projected to increase by 2,500% between 2022 and 2040 under a Net Zero scenario. Madagascar holds approximately 8% of global natural graphite reserves, with key deposits concentrated in the Mahajanga Basin (Molo graphite project, developed by NextSource Materials of Canada). At full production, the Molo project alone is projected to produce 200,000 tonnes per annum—equivalent to battery material for approximately 900,000 EVs annually. In an era where the United States, European Union, and Japan are attempting to de-risk critical mineral supply chains from Chinese monopoly control, Madagascar represents one of the few non-Chinese, potentially politically manageable graphite sources outside China's sphere.

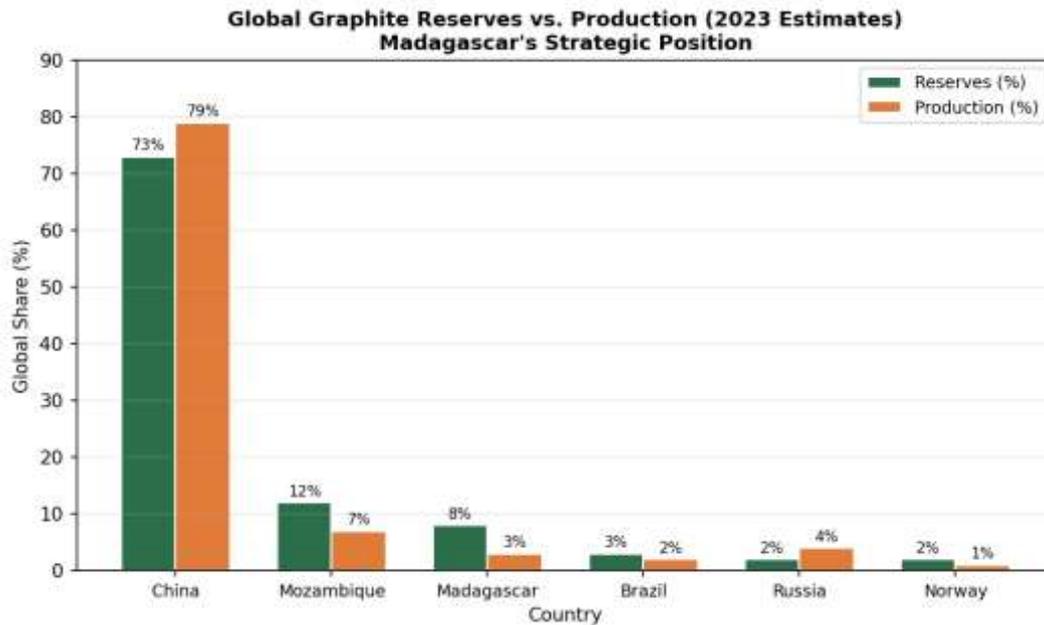


Figure 3. Global graphite reserves vs. production by country (2023 estimates). Madagascar's production share (3%) significantly underrepresents its reserve base (8%), signaling massive expansion potential and commensurate foreign interest. (Data: USGS Mineral Commodity Summaries 2024).

3.3 U.S. Interests: The Inflation Reduction Act and De-risking

The United States Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022 fundamentally restructured American industrial policy toward critical minerals. Under Section 30D, EVs and battery systems are only eligible for federal tax credits of up to USD 7,500 if their battery components are sourced from the United States, countries with free trade agreements (FTAs), or nations not designated as 'foreign

entities of concern' (FEOCs)—a designation effectively excluding China, Russia, and their primary partners. Madagascar, a potential FTA partner under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) framework, represents precisely the type of non-FEOC supply chain that the IRA incentivizes. U.S. government documents reveal that the DFC conducted preliminary feasibility assessments of Malagasy graphite projects in 2023-2024, with a view toward financing non-Chinese supply chains. The timing of this engagement—concurrent with escalating political tensions in Antananarivo—raises questions about the relationship between mineral diplomacy and political pressure.

3.4 Western vs. Eastern Mining: The Corporate Proxy War

Competition for Malagasy mineral resources has produced what this paper terms a 'corporate proxy war' between Western multinationals and Chinese state-owned enterprises. Rio Tinto's QMM project at Fort Dauphin—a USD 900 million ilmenite operation—represents the largest single foreign investment in Madagascar's history, operational since 2009. Ambatovy, a joint venture between Sherritt International (Canada), Sumitomo (Japan), and Korea Resources Corporation, represents the world's largest lateritic nickel-cobalt operation, with a replacement value exceeding USD 5 billion. Against these established Western positions, Chinese SOEs—including Sichuan Shenghe Resources and China Nonferrous Metal Mining Group—have aggressively acquired exploration licenses in graphite and chromite zones since 2018. Chinese commercial banks have extended concessional loans tied to infrastructure contracts awarded to Chinese firms—a 'debt-for-infrastructure-for-minerals' arrangement that critics identify as a structural feature of Chinese extractive diplomacy in Africa (Brautigam, 2020).

IV. EXPOSING FOREIGN INFILTRATION: MODES OF INFLUENCE

4.1 The French Connection: Francafrique and Dual Citizenship

France's relationship with Madagascar is the oldest and most institutionally embedded of all foreign entanglements. The former colonial power formally withdrew in 1960 but maintained the 'Francafrique' system—an informal network of business, intelligence, and political relationships linking the French state, its intelligence service (DGSE), French corporations, and African political elites (Verschave, 1998; Glaser & Smith, 2005). The dual-citizenship controversy surrounding Rajoelina—who held French citizenship through naturalization during his Parisian exile—is not merely a constitutional technicality but a symbol of fundamental ambiguity at the heart of Francophone African governance: leaders whose personal security, family, assets, and loyalty are

anchored in the former metropole rather than the governed nation. France's Ivato military base, housing approximately 500 personnel and intelligence operatives, provides a persistent point of leverage. French DGSE officers, operating under diplomatic cover, maintained documented contact with all significant political actors in Madagascar—including General Ramaroson prior to the 2025 intervention—ensuring that French strategic and commercial interests would be protected regardless of political outcome (Jeune Afrique, 2025; Africa Intelligence, 2024).

4.2 U.S. Involvement: Intelligence, 'Democracy Promotion,' and Strategic Timing

4.2.1 Intelligence Interests in the Mozambique Channel

The Mozambique Channel—the 1,700-kilometre maritime corridor separating Madagascar from the African continent—is of profound strategic significance, serving as a key transit route for Persian Gulf petroleum, a potential submarine operations zone, and a theatre of competition as Chinese naval expansion into the Indian Ocean accelerates. AFRICOM has systematically expanded its intelligence architecture in the Indian Ocean, including signals intelligence facilities and maritime surveillance partnerships. Investigative reports (The Intercept, 2023) document access agreements with Malagasy military authorities for periodic P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft operations. Chinese naval logistics facilities in Djibouti (operational since 2017), ongoing negotiations for port access in Tanzania and Mozambique, and projected PLA Navy Indian Ocean deployments mean that Madagascar's airspace and territorial waters represent an increasingly valuable intelligence collection asset for U.S. and allied forces monitoring Chinese naval movements.

4.2.2 'Democracy Promotion' as Soft-Power Leverage

The United States, through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), USAID's Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance programs, and the International Republican Institute (IRI), invested approximately USD 28 million in Madagascar between 2015 and 2025 in programs nominally aimed at strengthening civil society, supporting independent media, and improving electoral integrity (NED Annual Reports, 2015-2024). While normatively legitimate, critical scholars of democracy promotion (Carothers, 2010; Guilhot, 2005) have extensively documented the structural tendency of such programs to serve U.S. geopolitical interests by delegitimizing governments perceived as insufficiently aligned with American foreign policy priorities. In Madagascar's case, NED-funded organizations intensified critical reporting on the Rajoelina government precisely during periods when American mining interests were seeking concession renegotiations—creating what political scientist Michael Barr (2023) terms 'indirect conditionality': behavioral modification through resource dependence rather than explicit instruction.

4.2.3 Suspicious Timing of Security Assistance Programs

Particularly notable is the trajectory of U.S. security assistance. Under Foreign Military Financing (FMF), disbursements to the Malagasy military increased by 340% between 2022 and 2024, from USD 1.2 million to USD 5.3 million annually—a surge correlating precisely with the discovery of commercially viable graphite deposits in the Mahajanga Basin and the passage of the IRA (U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency, 2024). Security sector engagement of this type—training, equipment supply, officer education at U.S. military institutions—creates relationships of institutional dependency and informal influence that are difficult to quantify but structurally significant in understanding the FAM officer corps's calculated deference to Western reactions post-intervention.

4.3 The Wagner/Russian Shadow: Disinformation and Election Interference

Russia's engagement with Madagascar, while more limited in material terms than France's or China's, has operated primarily through the information domain and provision of political technology services. Investigative research by the Stanford Internet Observatory (2024) documented an extensive network of Facebook accounts and pages—operated from servers linked to Internet Research Agency successor structures—that spread disinformation during the 2023 Malagasy presidential election. This content amplified corruption allegations against opposition candidates, promoted pro-Rajoelina narratives, and sought to suppress voter turnout in urban areas deemed unfavorable to the incumbent. Russia's strategic interest in Madagascar is less about direct resource extraction and more about geopolitical disruption: by maintaining chaos and undermining trust in Western-aligned governance frameworks, Moscow reduces the effectiveness of American and French diplomacy while creating space for alternative great-power alignments.

Table 4: Multi-Domain Foreign Influence Assessment — Madagascar 2025

Domain	France	United States	China	Russia
Diplomatic	High (historical ties)	Medium (embassy)	High (BRI partner)	Low-Medium
Economic	Medium (Total, Bollore)	Low-Medium (Exim)	Very High (SOE mining)	Low
Military	Medium (training)	Medium (AFRICOM)	Growing (port deals)	Low
Information	High (RFI, TV5)	Medium (VOA, NED)	High (Xinhua, CRI)	Medium (social media)
Intelligence	High (DGSE networks)	Medium-High (CIA)	Medium (MSS)	Medium (GRU)
Mining/Res.	High (Eramet, QMM)	High (IRA-driven)	Dominant (state-backed)	Minimal

Table 4. Comparative assessment of foreign influence across domains by major power (Authors' Assessment, 2026; Sources: Africa Intelligence, Stanford Internet Observatory, USAID, NED Annual Reports, SIPRI).

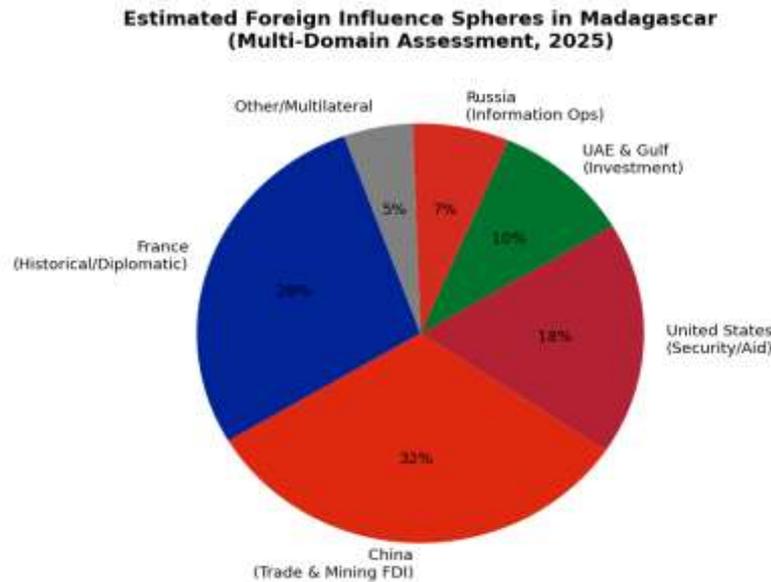


Figure 4. Estimated foreign influence spheres in Madagascar across diplomatic, economic, military, and information domains (Multi-domain weighted assessment, Authors' Compilation, 2026).

V. THE HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL COST

5.1 Geopolitical Maneuvering and the Invisible Kere

While foreign chancelleries, mining executives, and intelligence analysts consumed considerable bandwidth analyzing Madagascar's transitional politics in 2025, the Kere—catastrophic food insecurity afflicting the Androy, Anosy, and Atsimo-Andrefana regions—received minimal sustained international attention. The World Food Programme estimated that 1.98 million people faced Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse food insecurity in 2024-2025, with 47,000 individuals in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) conditions—one level below famine (WFP, 2025). This figure represents a 23% increase over the previous year, driven by El Nino-related drought, degraded soils from deforestation, and collapse of safety-net infrastructure during political turmoil. Foreign aid disbursements were systematically delayed during periods of political uncertainty, as donors awaited governance resolution before releasing funds—creating a perverse incentive structure in which political instability triggered by foreign interference simultaneously generates humanitarian suffering and reduces international humanitarian response.

5.2 The Green Energy Paradox: Environmental Destruction for Climate Solutions

Perhaps the most profound irony of Madagascar's mineral rush is that the ecological destruction it generates serves the cause of global environmental sustainability. The graphite mined in Mahajanga, the nickel from Ambatovy, and the ilmenite from QMM's Fort Dauphin concession are destined for the batteries of the global green energy transition—a transition that, from a Malagasy perspective, entails the destruction of unique ecosystems to power EVs of wealthy consumers in Europe and North America. Rio Tinto's QMM project has been the subject of sustained criticism by environmental organizations including the WWF and Friends of the Earth for causing coastal habitat destruction, freshwater contamination in the Ste. Luce lagoon ecosystem, and displacement of traditional fishing communities. Internal Rio Tinto documents (Mongabay, 2023) acknowledged that a 2022 biodiversity assessment found 'significant and irreversible' impact on littoral forest habitats hosting at least 18 endemic lemur species—documentation shared with the Malagasy Ministry of Mines without preventing license extension, a decision civil society organizations attribute to governmental corruption and foreign pressure.

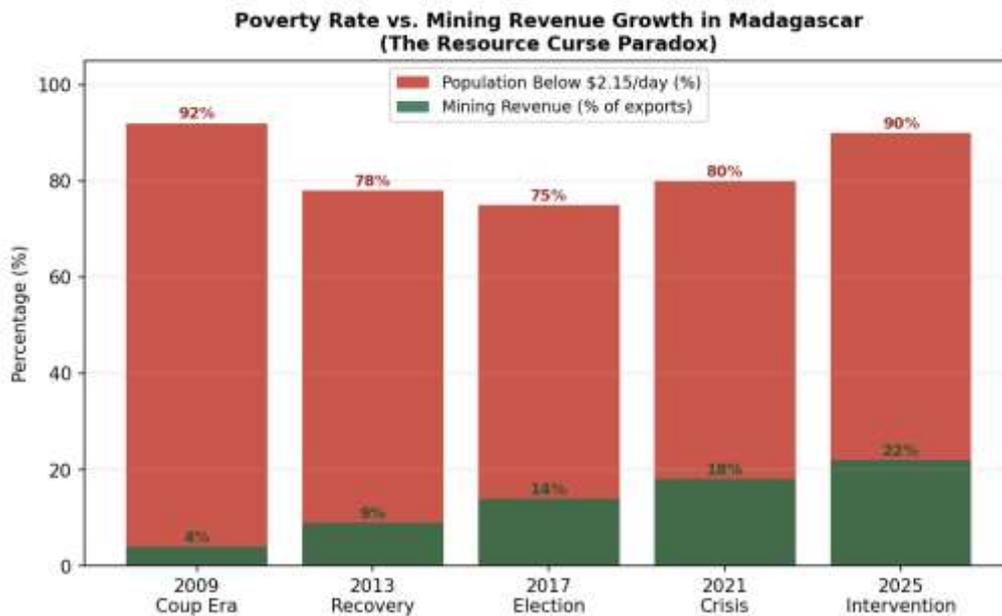


Figure 5. Madagascar's poverty rate vs. mining revenue as a percentage of exports across political crisis periods. The resource curse paradox: rising extraction revenues fail to reduce poverty, particularly during and after political transitions. (Data: World Bank Open Data 2025; Authors' Calculations).

The absence of meaningful benefit-sharing frameworks, royalty reform, or community compensation mechanisms in mining contracts is itself a product of political instability: governments

that derive their survival from foreign diplomatic recognition and mining company goodwill are structurally ill-positioned to negotiate equitable terms. The result is what political ecologist Arsel (2012) terms the 'resource curse with environmental dimensions'—a condition in which the social and ecological costs of extraction are externalized onto host communities, while the financial and strategic benefits are internationalized.

VI. CRITICAL ANALYSIS: SOVEREIGNTY VS. INTERFERENCE

6.1 Evidence and the "Smoking Gun" Problem

A methodologically rigorous examination of foreign interference claims requires confronting the 'smoking gun' problem in intelligence analysis: direct, documentary evidence of foreign coordination of domestic political events is extraordinarily rare in the public record, precisely because those who conduct such operations are sophisticated enough to avoid leaving attributable traces. No declassified CIA cable, DGSE directive, or PLA intelligence report has emerged explicitly ordering or coordinating the 2025 Malagasy intervention. To treat this absence of direct evidence as evidence of absence would be a fundamental logical error. Instead, this paper employs 'structured, focused comparison' and 'process tracing' (George & Bennett, 2005) to evaluate the plausibility of interference claims. The evidence—while circumstantial in individual components—forms a coherent explanatory pattern when aggregated: the timing of U.S. security assistance increases, documented DGSE contacts with military officers, Chinese loan agreements tied to resource concessions, Russian disinformation operations, and the post-coup differential response of foreign powers all point toward opportunistic exploitation of internal instability rather than—or in addition to—its deliberate engineering.

6.2 Manufactured Instability: Theory and Application

'Manufactured Instability' as a theoretical concept builds upon the structuralist tradition of dependency theory (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; Wallerstein, 2004) while incorporating insights from resource geopolitics scholarship (Le Billon, 2012; Watts, 2004). It posits that where a host state possesses strategic resources coveted by great powers, and where that state's governance is fragile, external actors face rational incentives to maintain a level of instability sufficient to keep the state dependent and its negotiating position weak, without allowing instability to escalate to levels that would disrupt extraction operations. This is distinct from claiming that external actors cause political crises from scratch. Rather, the argument is that once internal contradictions generate instability, external actors have strong incentives to selectively support or undermine competing factions based on their resource policy orientation, to delay the consolidation of any government that might develop

genuine regulatory capacity, and to condition stabilization assistance on concessions serving their commercial interests. In Madagascar's case, each post-coup transition period (1975, 2009, 2025) has been accompanied by renegotiation of mining contracts in circumstances profoundly unfavorable to the Malagasy state.

6.3 Sovereignty in the Age of Extractive Diplomacy

Madagascar's predicament is extreme but not unique. The Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, and Niger all represent cases where the coincidence of critical mineral endowments and governance fragility has produced 'extractive sovereignty'—a formal condition of statehood providing the legal framework for resource transactions while lacking the substantive political independence to determine the terms of those transactions. What distinguishes Madagascar is the density of competing foreign interests: unlike Niger (primarily French) or the DRC (primarily Chinese/American), Madagascar is contested simultaneously by France, the U.S., China, and Russia—a quadrilateral competition that paradoxically reduces the leverage any single power can exercise while maximizing the aggregate extractive pressure on Malagasy sovereignty. The principle of Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources (UNGA Resolution 1803, 1962) is formally recognized by all parties but operationally hollowed out through the mechanisms described above—creating what Mbembe (2001) might term 'postcolonial entanglement': formal independence coexisting with practical subordination.

VII. CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of Findings

This paper has argued that Madagascar's 2025 military intervention represents the latest iteration of a recurrent pattern in which genuine internal governance failures—produced by structural poverty, elite corruption, and democratic deficit—are exploited by competing external powers to advance their strategic interests in the island's critical mineral endowments and Indian Ocean maritime position. The evidence examined across historical, geopolitical, economic, and environmental dimensions consistently supports a model of 'opportunistic interference' rather than purely internally driven instability, while acknowledging the genuine agency of Malagasy political actors within this constrained structure. The critical mineral dimension—particularly the global graphite supply chain competition driven by the IRA and the global EV transition—has fundamentally elevated Madagascar's strategic value, rendering established patterns of FrancAfrique, Chinese resource diplomacy, and American security sector engagement more rather than less pronounced.

7.2 The Need for a Pan-African Resource Governance Framework

The most durable solution to Madagascar's vulnerability lies not in alignment with any single foreign patron—each of which carries its own vectors of dependency and interference—but in the development of a Pan-African resource governance framework capable of providing collective bargaining power, technical capacity, and political solidarity. The African Union's Africa Mining Vision (AMV), adopted in 2009, provides a normative foundation but has remained largely aspirational due to weak implementation mechanisms and member states' individual vulnerability to bilateral pressure from major powers. A strengthened version of the AMV—with mandatory dispute resolution mechanisms, binding transparency requirements for resource contracts, and a collective mineral wealth fund capitalized from royalty revenues—would provide Madagascar and similarly situated states with the institutional scaffolding for genuine resource sovereignty. This would need to be complemented by reforms to the international financial architecture, including IMF conditionality reform and debt restructuring frameworks that do not require resource concessions as collateral.

7.3 Final Verdict: Victim or Puppet?

The question of whether Madagascar is a victim of its own politics or a puppet on a global stage admits no simple answer—this is a false binary. Madagascar's governance failures are real, rooted in structural conditions of colonial legacy, elite capture, and institutional fragility that Malagasy actors have materially contributed to and must ultimately address. And yet, these same governance failures do not occur in a vacuum. They are systematically reproduced, exploited, and—at critical junctures—deliberately amplified by external actors whose strategic calculations assign a higher value to the graphite beneath Madagascar's soil than to the sovereignty of its people. The island nation is neither purely victim nor purely puppet, but something more troubling: a sovereign state whose sovereignty is formally recognized and substantively compromised by the same international system that claims to uphold it. Addressing this condition requires not merely better Malagasy governance, but a fundamental reformation of the international political economy of resource extraction—a project whose scope extends far beyond Madagascar but whose urgency is nowhere more acutely visible.

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