



Is Africa the Future of New England?

Yes, If We're Ready for It

NATHANIEL BOWDITCH WITH KATE POMPER

The Asian miracle had an extraordinary impact on the U.S. West Coast. The African miracle, quietly underway now for a decade, could have a similarly profound effect on the U.S. East coast—especially for those states that anticipate and embrace it.

America failed to recognize the beginnings of the Asian miracle because in the 1960s, our mindset equated Asia with struggling, developing countries. We also held uncomplimentary preconceptions about Asians; we weren't convinced they were capable of economic leadership. Now history is repeating itself and, even though free-enterprise democracies have taken hold all across the African continent and despite the fact that many of them are achieving rapid annual growth rates reminiscent of the early years of Asia's emergence, our mindset stands in the way: a color-laden mindset, reinforced by our own tormented American racial preconceptions, of a "dark continent" and a "Black Africa" paralyzed by disease, drought and dictatorship.

Most Americans, including most New Englanders—be they bankers, investors or educators; secretaries, carpenters or construction workers—imagine Africa as a monolithic land of despair. They don't think about a continent of 53 countries, 48 of them the so-called sub-Saharan African nations, each with its own distinct culture, economic base and aspirations. We must change our mindset because the 700 million citizens of those African nations, joined by millions of highly educated,

successful overseas Africans—and backed by the descendants of slaves throughout the African Diaspora (more than 1 billion people in all)—are beginning to achieve an African miracle which over the next 30 years will rival the Asian miracle.

As this happens, simply because of our geographic proximity to the African continent—especially West Africa—the economy and the universities of New England stand to gain hugely and disproportionately just like the West Coast economy and universities did as the Asian miracle unfolded. Consider this:

- Kwesi Botchwey, Ghana's former minister of finance and now director of Africa research and programs at Harvard's Center for International Development, recently told me: "If you look at the economic performance of the past three or four years, the numbers are encouraging. There are countries (Uganda, Botswana, Mauritius, Ghana, La Cote D'Ivoire, Mozambique for example) with a good policy environment, which are stable from a macroeconomic point of view and are also politically stable."

- The chief economist of the International Finance Corp. observed in a speech last fall: "A dozen economies whose markets add up to \$170 billion or 60 percent of Africa's total, are showing definite signs of progress. Their combined GDP has been growing at nearly 5 percent a year during the past five years [and] their exports have been expanding at 7 percent annually."

PHOTOS BY NATHANIEL BOWDITCH.

• In March 1998, “to help the American people see the new Africa” President Clinton visited six countries: five economic high-flyers—Senegal, Ghana, Uganda, South Africa and Botswana—and Rwanda, where he apologized for American inaction during that country’s dreadful ethnic cleansing. During that trip, the *Boston Sunday Globe* reported that “burgeoning stock markets ... a rise in exports and a 5 percent annual increase in the continent’s gross domestic product for the past several years are shattering Africa’s stereotype as a financial basket case.” *The New York Times* said about President Clinton’s visit to Uganda that he “will be entering a country that is a far cry from the dirt-poor and oppressed nation ruled by Milton Obote and Idi Amin in the 1970s and 1980s. Uganda has seen an average growth of 6.7 percent for the 12 years of President Yoweri K. Museveni’s tenure.”

• The fastest growing world economy in the three decades leading up to 1997 was not in East Asia. It was Botswana, whose per-capita income grew at an average rate of 9 percent annually during that period, according to the World Bank.

• Ghana’s stock exchange is “one of the world’s best performing stock markets,” according to *The Economist* magazine. “Building, tourism, technology and financial services provide more than 46 percent of national income and are usually cited for the country’s average annual growth of nearly 5 percent for more than 12 years.”

• South Africa is the Japan of Africa. The *Harvard Business School Bulletin* recently quoted Harvard Business School Professor Richard H.K. Vietor as saying, “The driving force behind the region’s growth is South Africa. South Africa produces 20 percent of Africa’s GNP.” The *Bulletin* quotes his B-School colleague, Associate Professor Robert J. Robinson, as saying: “South Africa is a regional superpower. For those who can access it, the country has a First World infrastructure—financial institutions, health care and transportation, for instance—and it is rich in natural resources.”

The countries that America and New England should be watching carefully are: South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Uganda, Lesotho, Mauritania, Ethiopia and, in West Africa—closest to New England’s shores—Ghana, Senegal, La Cote D’Ivoire, Benin, The Gambia and Nigeria (with its brand new democratic government). But so far,

America is not taking much notice and neither is New England.

When members and guests of the New England Economic Project gathered in May to hear Zurich Financial Group Chief Global Economist David Hale meticulously describe the state of world markets, they heard valuable inside information on Europe, Asia and South America, and they heard exactly what they expected to hear about Africa: nothing.

Among the 33 Yale seniors “pursuing research projects in far-flung corners of the globe” through Yale Summer Traveling Fellowships, only one is headed for Africa, based on an eyeballing of itineraries published recently in the *Yale Bulletin and Calendar*.

Hundreds of New Englanders (almost all of African descent) did gather at Boston’s John F. Kennedy Library in July 1999 for a regional conference organized by the Boston Pan-African Forum to explore issues around education, economic development, quality of life, democracy and peace on the African continent. The event was organized as the New England Regional Forum of the multiyear National Summit on Africa project, whose goal is to heighten the interest of Americans in a continent with which most have no personal or financial connection. That this event was even held in New England is a testament to the leadership and determination of MIT Professor Emeritus Willard Johnson. Notably, however, New England’s African Summit was held on a Friday night and Saturday, probably because most participants couldn’t justify attendance as part of their *real* jobs.

ASIAN PARALLEL

Asian matters weren’t seen so differently through American eyes 30 years ago. Since then, the Asian miracle—led by postwar Japan and joined by Hong Kong, Taiwan, China and a handful of “Asian tigers” (Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia)—has transformed a continent. The formula was simple. These nations provided low-cost manufacturing to an increasingly global economy, fueling the creation of an indigenous middle class whose consumer demand opened huge new markets for a wide assortment of products: CDs, telephones, life insurance policies, roads, sewer systems, Stephen King novels, home loans and mutual funds, razor blades, computers and fast food restaurants.

As that happened, New England certainly benefited. In 1998, every single

New England state featured at least five Asian nations on its top 20 list of export buyers. Maine had nine; Massachusetts and Connecticut, eight; Rhode Island and Vermont, six; and New Hampshire, five. But the real American beneficiaries of the Asian miracle were the West Coast states, in particular, California.

A geographically large, economically diverse state—not unlike New England’s six states taken together—California has positioned itself carefully vis-a-vis Asia, invested heavily and benefited greatly from the Asian miracle.

How much did Asian growth over the past 40 years contribute to the growth of the U.S. West Coast states? Did this West Coast growth come perhaps at the expense of the Northeast’s longstanding leadership in research and development, high technology and manufacturing?

In its December 1988 issue, *The Economist* gushed about Asia and its impact on California, blaring:

• “America’s shores are washed by the Pacific as well as by the Atlantic, and some people think that American interests lie more with the countries of East Asia than with those of Western Europe.”

• “The rise of Asia is one of the biggest stories of this half-century. ... In the quarter century that began in 1960 the East Asian economies grew at an average real rate of 6 percent a year. ... East Asia’s share of gross world product more than doubled during 1967-87, from 8 percent to 20 percent. Its share of manufactured exports went from 8 percent to 18 percent, of imports of all kinds from 12 percent to 17 percent.”

• “Californians of Asian descent already make a bigger splash in the state’s university system. They account for 25 percent of this year’s entering class at the University of California at Los Angeles. ... Asian money is contributing along with Asian people. Japan has, after Canada, the biggest single stake of foreign capital in California; its companies are, bar none, the biggest foreign source of employment in the state.”

• “Californians do know more about Asia and pay more attention to it than New Yorkers—as well they might, considering where so much of their money is coming from.”

If California’s head was already turning West in 1988, consider these more recent statistics from the California Trade and Commerce Agency.

In 1996, California was the national leader in foreign direct investment with

3,500 foreign affiliates (accounting for more than \$100 billion in assets). Not one New England state ranked in the top 10 in terms of foreign direct investment. In 1996, 48 percent of California's foreign investment came from Asia versus 26 percent nationally.

In 1996, Asian and Pacific Rim countries accounted for a majority of all foreign-owned commercial property in California: \$18 billion, of which Japan accounted for \$14 billion.

Meanwhile, the Organization for International Investment reports that the 549,000 California workers employed by U.S. subsidiaries of foreign companies in 1995 constituted 5 percent of California's total workforce, up from 3.2 percent in 1987. And between 1980 and 1995, California employment at U.S. subsidiaries of foreign-owned companies increased more than four times faster than all jobs in California.

It isn't just California. *The Tacoma News Tribune*, under the headline "NUMBER OF WORKERS EMPLOYED BY NON-U.S. COMPANIES GREW NEARLY 300 PERCENT OVER 15 YEARS" reported as follows: "With Japanese and Taiwanese investment in Washington plants and factories booming ... the number of workers employed in Washington state by foreign companies and their subsidiaries grew from 21,100 to 81,500 during the 15-year period from 1980-1995." Oregon's foreign subsidiary employment was up by 365 percent between 1980-1995!

The Asian miracle seems also to have left its mark on higher education on the U.S. West Coast, particularly California.

In 1996, according to the U.S. Department of Education, Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders accounted for 328,000 of California's college and university students, or 17 percent of the state's higher education enrollment.

In the same year, all New England enrolled 36,114 Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders, or just 5 percent of its higher education enrollment.

Even with these low numbers, four of six New England states enrolled more Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders than they did African-American students in 1996.

NOW RUSSIA

I recently went to the Russian Far East on an assignment in support of five Russian small business associations. I traveled aboard Aeroflot #855/856, a twice-weekly flight connecting Seattle

and Anchorage with the Russian Far East cities of Vladivostok, Khabarovsk (just north of Vladivostok) and Yuzhno Sakhalinsk (on the Island of Sakhalin, just North of Japan). Though huge, the Russian Far East is not well-known and its economy has been declining for years. Nevertheless, Alaska has a sister state relationship with Sakhalin Island. The president of the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce recently completed a business association technical assistance mission to the cities of Yuzhno Sakhalinsk and Khabarovsk. And an executive of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce (40 percent of all U.S. trade to and from Russia enters the country through Seattle) did the same three months ago. Portland, Ore., has a sister city relationship with Khabarovsk. And the list of connections goes on.

There are two reasons for all this exchange activity. First, our fellow West Coast American citizens have learned how (and where) their bread is buttered. Second, a few years ago—with prodding from U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska)—Vice President Al Gore and the then Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin signed a long-term agreement establishing a number of U.S. government programs to foster a new relationship between the U.S. West Coast and the emerging Russian Far East. This has made it possible for legislators, mayors, businesspeople, professors, venture capitalists and various Russian Far East project directors to travel back and forth and to implement an assortment of special initiatives. All this because U.S. policymakers take Russia and Asia seriously, and U.S. West Coast leaders have learned from the Asian miracle growth years how important it is to leverage their political clout in Washington into special programs to grow new global connections.

Enough of the parallels between Asia and Africa. So how will New England catch the African wave?

FIVE STEPS

First, we need to significantly raise our awareness of sub-Saharan Africa and understand more about the emerging African economies, what they need to continue their advance and how New England resources—especially the region's private sector and education resources—can best respond.

Second, we need to learn a lot more about the impact of the Asian miracle on the West Coast, particularly how states

such as California leveraged the Asian miracle into opportunities for their states.

Third, we need to talk to our Congressional representatives, inform them of this strategic *new* New England global perspective and ask that they start paying attention to African issues and opportunities, learning new tricks from their West Coast colleagues and fighting for resources to support a New England (or U.S. East Coast) Africa initiative.

Fourth, we need to concern ourselves anew with preconceptions about race and geography, lest the Africans conclude they would rather do business with Southern states whose African heritage and more aggressive relationship-building programs make them more attractive partners.

Fifth, the six New England states need to resolve not to go it alone on this one. Each New England state is too small, its resources too limited to make the necessary impact on those 15 or so emerging African economies that are leading the way. Connecticut is off to a great start with its "Demystifying Africa" initiative. But the region needs to open relationships *together*.

In the words of Kwesi Botchwey: "New England is a hub of liberal democratic thinking and practice, has a unique concentration of schools and universities, a long tradition of student connections [with Africa], a substantial group of African professionals, respected African studies programs and thriving African communities. New England can harness these resources, provide a political forum for debate and mobilize civil society. The seeds are here. They just need to be watered."

Where to focus?

Education. America's Western governors have joined forces to create a virtual university to respond to the lifelong learning needs of their widely dispersed populations. New England's distance education resources, though less developed, could be harnessed to meet the African continent's huge demand for education.

Investment. The 1998 World Bank annual report states: "Long-term private capital flows to Africa have increased from \$4 billion in 1996 to \$8 billion in 1997 but remain a fraction of the \$256 billion total flows to developing countries. Africa must attract more investment [and] not only from foreigners. ... Some 37 percent of African assets are held abroad ... higher than for any other region." Equator Bank of Hartford, Conn., is focused entirely on sub-Saharan Africa. But it is virtually alone.

Yet New England is the mutual fund capital of the world, a venture capital center and probably the repository for much of these African assets. Special investment packages—possibly with the support of the federal government—could be mobilized to underwrite infrastructure and private sector initiatives in the most rapidly emerging African nations.

Infrastructure. Roads, water, sewer systems, airports, electricity and telecommunications are the backbone of economic growth and development. Raytheon has longstanding relationships with African countries, building methanol plants, airports and radar systems. Prodigy operates an Africa Online

Internet Service. Are other New England companies getting their fair share of infrastructure projects targeted to the most rapidly emerging African nations? And shouldn't at least one airline offer at least one scheduled flight from New England to at least one African destination?

AIDS. Despite all the good news coming out of Africa, AIDS is a tremendous problem and a serious challenge to development. New England is the health care



capital of the United States and a major biotechnology center. Couldn't a New England-West Africa AIDS coalition be created as a partnership between that expertise and the region's philanthropic leaders?

Are we ready for it? Are we up to it? If so, Africa may indeed be the future of New England. ■

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New England and Africa

The Higher Education Connection

LAURA GHIRARDINI

African nations need sound educational systems to foster development and participate in the global economy, but most lack the academic infrastructure to educate their fast-growing young populations. As a result, an increasing number of African college students will turn abroad for education. At the same time, "educational institutions in the United States have much to gain from collaboration with Africa," according to education experts behind the New England Regional Forum of the National Summit on Africa held in Boston in July 1999.

Who will Africa's education partners be? Where will African leaders look for models?

New England—with its world-famous higher education institutions and proximity to Africa—is a natural choice. The region, home to 260 colleges and universities, lies just 4,000 miles from Dakar, Senegal—that's not much farther than Paris, and several thousand miles closer than Tokyo, with whom New England enjoys thriving academic relationships.

FOREIGN ENROLLMENT

New England has been a magnet for foreign students, according to data from the

New York City-based Institute for International Education (IIE). In 1997-98, New England enrolled 40,000 foreign students—almost 9 percent of all foreign students in the United States. Boston University enrolled 4,603, ranking second nationally. Harvard enrolled 3,249, ranking 10th. The region also attracted more than 7,000 foreign research scholars—11 percent of the U.S. total. Harvard University ranked first among U.S. universities in foreign scholars; MIT ranked sixth; and Yale University ranked 20th.

Most foreign students and scholars are from Asia and Europe. In the 1980s and early 1990s, the Asian economic miracle brought prosperity to both "Asian tiger" nations and American college towns, as more than 250,000 students from Japan, China, South Korea and other Asian countries flocked to U.S. campuses annually, bringing hard cash and invaluable diversity, while inspiring lasting Asian studies initiatives.

Could an African miracle bring similar benefits?

Already, African exchanges are becoming more common. In 1997-98, more than 23,000 African college stu-

dents traveled to the United States for study, up 5 percent from the previous year. More than 1,800 of those students—about 8 percent of all African students in the United States—studied in New England.

Meanwhile, just 2,500 U.S. college students studied in Africa in 1996-97, according to the latest IIE study-abroad data. But that number was up 27 percent from a year earlier. Nearly 350 New England college students studied in Africa, most of them in Kenya or South Africa.

PROGRAMS PROLIFERATING

A 1987 New England Board of Higher Education report on *The Impact of Economic Globalization on Higher Education* examined a wide range of foreign language and area studies programs on New England campuses.

At that time, both foreign enrollment and study abroad were growing rapidly. But the region's new enthusiasm for international issues focused on East Asia and Canada. And the 1987 study revealed few area studies programs and partnerships between New England higher education and Africa, save the

African Studies Center at BU, one of the nation's largest and oldest.

Since that time, the number and scope of New England programs involving Africa have grown dramatically, and others are in the works.

Suffolk University, for example, recently established a campus in Senegal, at the far western tip of Africa. The campus at the Ecole Nationale d'Economie Applique in Dakar will offer a bachelor's degree program in business for African students. The program is unique in that it enables African students to begin their undergraduate education in Africa, perhaps saving two years of room and board, before going on to earn degrees from Suffolk or another U.S. institution.

"With the globalization of higher education, it makes sense for a university to have a global strategy," says Suffolk President David J. Sargent. "We are responding to a demand for American-style business education that combines practical and theoretical approaches to learning. In turn, we have much to learn as our faculty members teach in Senegal and Senegalese students take part in classroom discussions here on Beacon Hill."

Jim Sintros, an international consultant to Suffolk, notes that Senegal's political stability made the former French colony particularly attractive for such an exchange. In addition, says Sintros, the Senegalese minister of higher education is committed to leaving an American-style educational system as his legacy. "The minister is eager to change from the current French system to the American system of education, which he feels is superior," Sintros says.

The Suffolk exchange will also feature a summer educational and cultural tour on Dakar's Goree Island, the historic departure point for Africans captured for the slave trade, which has become an important cultural site for African-Americans.

VIRTUAL AFRICA?

Links between New England colleges and Africa may get a boost from new information technologies. As New England Board of Higher Education President John C. Hoy noted recently at a Boston conference on distance learning: "The Information Revolution adds a new dimension to the global appeal of going to college in New England."

The University of Massachusetts at Amherst has been transmitting courses on circuit analysis to students in Africa via satellite since 1996. Working through

the African Virtual University, UMass and several other U.S. and European institutions provide live and videotaped engineering courses via satellite to students in more than 40 countries. Recently, the UMass Video Instructional Program has expanded its African distance learning endeavors to include other engineering and computer science courses, and additional courses in computer science and French are planned.

Faculty at Central Connecticut State University and Manchester Community-Technical College are exploring development of on-line courses for Ghanaian students, who sometimes wait up to six years for a slot at a local university. "There is a need in Ghana, because many students have passed requirements and been accepted to college, but there is not enough space in universities there," says Evelyn Phillips, coordinator of African studies at Central Connecticut State.

A distance learning program would cater to students who cannot afford to travel abroad to study. Most students in Ghana have access to computers in public places if they do not have a computer at home, says Phillips.

ABROAD IN AFRICA

A growing number of New England institutions—ranging from Brown, Yale, Tufts and Boston universities to the School for Field Studies in Beverly, Mass.—offer study-abroad programs in Africa. Vermont's School for International Training (SIT), meanwhile, is a major sponsor of African programs for students from a variety of institutions in New England and beyond.

In 1982, SIT sent the first group of 10 students to Africa for a Kenya upcountry program. By 1998-99, 543 students from throughout the United States were enrolled in 17 SIT programs in Africa, ranging from Biodiversity and Conservation in Tanzania to Arts and Social Change in Zimbabwe, according to Associate Director of Admissions Laurie Black. With 37 percent of SIT study-abroad students already destined for Africa, the school has planned new ventures in La Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal.

Elsewhere, Central Connecticut State College last year signed a formal student and faculty exchange agreement with the University of Ghana, Legon. Colby College is joining Bowdoin and Bates colleges to establish a consortium for study abroad with a site in Cape Town, South Africa. About 15 students drawn from the three

colleges will take classes at the University of Cape Town, while working on community service projects.

DIVERSE CONNECTIONS

New England higher education's Africa connections are diverse, running the gamut from Maine Maritime Academy's work with marine oil-spill response officials from South Africa, Namibia and Mauritius, to a University of Connecticut professor's work training villagers and professionals in Madagascar in conservation techniques.

The Amherst and Worcester campuses of UMass were recently awarded \$460,000 from the U.S. Agency for International Development to fund a range of health-related collaborative teaching, research and community services projects in South Africa. One reason UMass was selected for the grant, according to project director John Cunningham: South Africans haven't forgotten the university's relatively early opposition to apartheid and its decision to divest.

Last March, UConn capitalized on its connections with prominent African figures when campus officials signed an agreement making the university the official North American depository for materials related to the African National Congress (ANC) and its struggle for human rights in South Africa.

As part of the agreement, UConn plans to open a Center for Oral History whose staff will interview more than 200 ANC leaders including South African President Nelson Mandela. In addition, UConn and the University of Fort Hare in South Africa agreed to exchange faculty, staff and students, conduct an annual conference on comparative human rights and co-publish the first journal on comparative human rights.

"The partnership is a strategic decision because of the commonality of the history of race relations in the United States and in South Africa," said Amii Omara-Otunnu, associate professor of history and head of the project. "We can learn a lot from them, and they can learn a lot from us."

UConn was selected for the project because of the high-caliber archival facilities at UConn's Thomas J. Dodd Research Center as well its established linkages with African notables. Narissa Ramdhani, director of the ANC historical archives project, received a master's degree from UConn in 1990, and Naomi Tutu, daughter of Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu, taught at UConn's School of Education.

The human rights theme is prominent in New England's Africa programs.

The New England School of Law operates the Rwanda Genocide Program, providing legal research and analysis to the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Kigali, Rwanda.

With a grant from the Oak Foundation, Colby has established a fellowship enabling practitioners in human rights to spend a semester at the college as scholars-in-residence. The 1999-2000 Oak Fellow is Dydier Kamundu, a 29-year-old human rights activist who fled from the Democratic Republic of Congo to protect his family and himself. Kamundu, a baker before ethnic strife turned his homeland into a battleground, taught himself law and began a human rights organization in a small shack in Goma, where he documented legal protests of arbitrary arrests and other abuses.

AFRICA THINK TANKS

New England's think tanks also have their eyes on Africa. The African Studies Center at Boston University, established in 1953, was one of the first U.S. graduate programs to offer a multidisciplinary

African studies curriculum. The center has formal links to universities in Niger, Ethiopia and South Africa, where more joint research and exchange programs are being developed, according to center director James McCann.

Harvard's W.E.B. DuBois Institute for Afro-American Research recently released a CD-ROM on the history, geography and culture of Africa and people of African descent. DuBois, himself, believed that cataloging blacks' contributions would help fight racism. The AIDS Institute at Harvard's School of Public Health has undertaken projects in Senegal, Tanzania and Ethiopia. And the Harvard Institute of International Development is involved in strengthening market systems and women's education in South Africa.

Since 1989, the Yale Center for International and Area Studies has been convening teachers in New Haven for a two-week "Teaching of Africa" program designed to improve curricula on Africa. The goal is to expose stereotypes and myths about Africa that perpetuate prejudice, according to Maxwell Amoh, the center's director of outreach. Yale also sends graduate students in African studies

to public schools throughout Connecticut to share their knowledge of Africa.

Other New England colleges are engaged in projects to raise awareness about Africa. In early 1998, Brown and Brandeis universities, Bates, Dartmouth College and others participated in the annual "African Peace Tour," an American Friends Service Committee program which allows African dignitaries to share views on African policy issues with college students in different regions of the United States.

The 11-day New England tour was timed to coincide with President Clinton's 1998 visit to Africa. A team of African activists and artists made 35 stops as part of the six-state program to promote citizen action on U.S. foreign policy issues such as slavery in Mauritania and the African arms trade. The enthusiasm of New England participants has prompted organizers to plan another "mini-tour" for the region.

That level of enthusiasm suggests that New England colleges and universities are ready to reap the benefits of a strengthening U.S.-Africa relationship. ■

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