

Mauritius

African Success Story

Jeffrey Frankel

Some might be tempted to put a question mark after a title like “Mauritius: African Success Story.” But this would only be because some ask if the country off the eastern coast of Madagascar is truly African, in light of its unusual ethnic composition.¹

There cannot be much doubt about the word “story.” The country’s story is a fascinating one.

Nor can there be much doubt that it is a “success”: of all countries identified as being in the geographical region of Africa, Mauritius appears at the top of the governance rankings, as table 8.1 shows. The Rule of Law

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1. Today, 68 percent of the population has Indian forbears. Even inside this share are ethnic cleavages between Hindu and Muslim, and between those whose ancestors immigrated from the Ganges plain and those who emigrated from elsewhere (especially Tamils). Major remaining shares include Creoles, Franco-Mauritians, and Sino-Mauritians. (An ethnic composition that features a small number of large ethnic groups is usually considered a negative factor for development.)

Table 8.1 Sub-Saharan countries ranked by governance, with other indicators

Index of African Governance ranking (2007)	Country	GDP per capita, PPP in constant 2005interntl. \$ (2008)	UN Human Development Ranking (2007)	Worldwide Governance Indicators, Rule of Law index ranking (2008)
1	Mauritius	11,412	2	1
2	Seychelles	19,758	1	5
3	Cape Verde	2,957	5	3
4	Botswana	12,537	6	2
5	Ghana	1,351	18	7
6	Namibia	5,909	7	4
7	South Africa	9,343	8	6
8	São Tomé & Príncipe	1,615	9	18
9	Gabon	13,461	3	24
10	Benin	1,361	27	22
11	Malawi	744	26	10
12	Gambia	1,259	33	8
13	Senegal	1,656	31	12
14	Madagascar	974	14	15
15	Burkina Faso	1,072	41	14
16	Tanzania	1,201	17	9
17	Mauritania	1,810 ^a	20	30
18	Lesotho	1,444	23	11
19	Zambia	1,253	29	16
20	Comoros	1,081	11	31
21	Rwanda	949	32	17
22	Kenya	1,432	15	28
23	Uganda	1,077	22	19
24	Niger	631	46	27
25	Mali	1,043	43	13
26	Mozambique	774	37	25
27	Djibouti	1,975	21	21
28	Cameroon	2,027	19	29
29	Togo	767	25	26
30	Sierra Leone	723	45	32
31	Guinea-Bissau	496	38	40
32	Ethiopia	802	36	23
33	Nigeria	1,939	24	34
34	Burundi	354	39	33
35	Liberia	358	34	36
36	Equatorial Guinea	31,309	4	39
37	Swaziland	4,551	12	20
38	Congo (Brazzaville)	3,647	10	35
39	Guinea	975	35	45
40	Zimbabwe	185 ^b	n/a	47
41	Angola	5,375	13	38
42	Eritrea	592	30	37
43	C. A. R.	685	44	41
44	Cote d'Ivoire	1,526	28	43
45	Congo (DR)	290	42	46
46	Chad	1,234	40	44
47	Sudan	1,990	16	42
48	Somalia	—	n/a	48

Notes: Ranking is among African countries excluding North Africa.

^aData from 2007.

^bData from 2005.

1 index from the Worldwide Governance Indicators puts Mauritius first in
2 sub-Saharan Africa, followed by Botswana and Cape Verde. The Index of
3 African Governance compiled by Rotberg and Gisselquist (2009), which
4 attempts to rely less on subjective measures, again puts Mauritius in the
5 number one spot, followed by Seychelles, Cape Verde, and Botswana.² Mau-
6 ritian growth in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita rate averaged
7 5.4 percent over the period 1970–2010, during which the growth rate in the
8 rest of Africa was only about 1 percent. By 2010 Mauritius had achieved a
9 per capita income of about \$7,000 at current exchange rates. (The number
10 is higher, of course, in purchasing power parity [PPP] terms: \$11,000.) An
11 oil-rich country such as Equatorial Guinea has higher income, but as a result
12 of poor governance, few people outside the elite enjoy improved quality of
13 life. The Human Development Index from the United Nations Develop-
14 ment Program, a more comprehensive measure, classifies Mauritius in the
15 “High Human Development” quartile globally: it ranks number 81 out of
16 182 countries, well ahead of other African countries.³ Life expectancy is
17 72.8 years, for example.⁴ Table 8.2 reports additional statistics for all African
18 countries, standardized for the common year 2006.

19 Others may wonder if the country is too small to hold important lessons
20 for typical-sized countries. The land area is only 1,865 square kilometers,
21 or 720 square miles. But given the population of 1.25 million and the cur-
22 rent relatively high level of income per capita, GDP puts the country at the
23 median among African countries in economic size, ahead of Namibia.⁵

24 Still, others may wonder if the uniqueness of the story of Mauritius
25 prevents generalizing to lessons that can be useful elsewhere. Of course,
26 every country is unique. If econometricians have run “two million cross
27 section regressions” looking for the determinants of countries’ economic
28 performance,⁶ it sometimes seems that others have complained two mil-
29 lion times that the institutional, cultural, and historical particularities of
30 individual countries can never be captured by the data fed into a computer.
31 This chapter uses cross-country regressions as one input into the analysis—
32 but only one. Two other kinds of inputs enter as well. One is the relevant
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34 2. The next countries in the governance rankings are South Africa, Namibia, and Ghana,
35 with the sequence depending on the precise measure and year.

36 3. Tiny Seychelles is ahead, at 57. The next nearest competitors in sub-Saharan Africa are:
37 Gabon at 103, Equatorial Guinea at 118, Cape Verde at 121, Botswana at 125, South Africa at
38 129, and Sao Tome and Principe at 131. Most fill out the bottom ranks. (Human Development
39 Report 2009, United Nations Development Programme; at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>.)

40 4. World Development Indicators (2009) and Rotberg and Gisselquist (2009) show the
41 Seychelles as just surpassing Mauritius in lifespan in 2007, followed by Cape Verde, Western
42 Sahara, Sao Tome and Principe, Comoros, Mauritania, Senegal, and Ghana. (Source: United
43 Nations, for 2005–2010.) Table 2 reports additional statistics for all African countries, standard-
44 ized for the common year 2006.

45 5. Namibia has twice the population and 400 times the land area. Total GDP in Mauritius
46 also surpassed Mali, Madagascar, and the Congo in 2009.

47 6. Sala-i-Martin (1997).

Table 8.2 Performance of sub-Saharan African countries (2006 unless otherwise noted)

Country	GDP per capita, PPP (constant 2005 international \$)	Population, millions	Average annual GDP growth rate (constant 2000 \$)		Worldwide Governance Indicators, Rule of Law index ranking	Index of African Governance ranking	UN Human Development ranking
			1968-1976 (%)	1977-2006 (%)			
Angola	4,163.76	16.56			39	44	13
Benin	1,319.02	8.76	1.55	3.81	18	13	26
Botswana	12,252.27	1.86	15.28	7.85	2	4	6
Burkina Faso	1,060.48	14.36	3.17	4.49	14	20	41
Burundi	347.02	8.17	3.53	1.42	34	35	40
Cameroon	1,972.82	18.17	4.29	3.15	32	25	19
Cape Verde	2,796.55	0.52			3	3	5
C. A. R.	670.82	4.26	3.00	0.68	45	43	43
Chad	1,304.66	10.47	1.88	4.16	42	46	38
Comoros	1,116.86	0.61			29	14	11
Congo (Brazz.)	3,640.58	3.69	6.63	4.10	38	28	10
Congo (DR)	271.55	60.64	1.87	-0.94	47	47	42
Cote d'Ivoire	1,536.51	18.91	7.78	1.09	44	42	28
Djibouti	1,889.75	0.82			22	26	21
Eq. Guinea	24,416.68	0.50			37	36	4
Eritrea	609.91	4.69			31	41	30
Ethiopia	683.38	77.15			19	31	36
Gabon	12,933.20	1.31	15.95	0.68	25	8	3
Gambia	1,181.91	1.66	5.24	3.65	9	27	33
Ghana	1,242.08	23.01	1.29	3.46	7	7	20
Guinea	955.95	9.18			43	40	35
Guinea-Bissau	489.09	1.65		2.02	40	30	39
Kenya	1,386.43	36.55	6.43	3.51	28	17	15

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Lesotho	1,345.99	1.99	4.79	3.82	8	12	22
Liberia	334.31	3.58	3.29	-3.55	30	38	34
Madagascar	901.25	19.16	1.10	1.59	12	16	14
Malawi	660.13	13.57	5.91	2.83	15	11	27
Mali	1,012.80	11.97	4.40	2.95	11	23	44
Mauritania	1,820.52	3.04	2.92	2.86	20	32	18
Mauritius	10,476.46	1.25	8.00 ^a	4.34	1	1	2
Mozambique	707.77	20.97			26	22	37
Namibia	5,659.85	2.05			6	6	8
Niger	602.68	13.74	-1.86	2.07	27	24	46
Nigeria	1,800.82	144.70	9.97	2.71	35	39	23
Rwanda	833.97	9.46	4.77	3.11	23	18	32
Sao Tome & P.	1,486.65	0.16			17	9	9
Senegal	1,611.75	12.07	2.71	2.78	10	10	31
Seychelles	18,414.93	0.08	7.19	3.76	5	2	1
Sierra Leone	678.64	5.74	3.45	1.54	36	37	45
Somalia		8.45			48	48	n/a
South Africa	8,861.93	47.39	3.73	2.42	4	5	7
Sudan	1,743.57	37.71	5.70	3.82	41	45	16
Swaziland	4,410.90	1.14		5.02	24	34	12
Tanzania	1,104.95	39.46			13	15	17
Togo	782.19	6.41	3.62	2.25	33	29	25
Uganda	966.31	29.90			16	19	24
Zambia	1,168.84	11.70	2.75	1.62	21	21	29
Zimbabwe		13.23	7.01		46	33	n/a

^aEstimated.

1 economic, political, and historical literature. Another kind of input is what
2 the author—with no previous background in Mauritius—learned from ex-
3 ploring the country.

4 The many global econometric cross-country studies have produced a
5 variety of important conclusions, notwithstanding their limitations and
6 ambiguities. Some of the more robust findings include that remoteness,
7 landlockedness, tropical location, and small population size⁷ are bad for
8 economic performance, other things equal. These variables help explain why
9 incomes are lower in Africa than in other parts of the world. Access to the
10 sea, education, and national saving tend to be good for economic perfor-
11 mance. High population density is often bad. Two of the most consequen-
12 tial findings are that openness to trade and the quality of institutions are
13 major determinants of economic performance, but there are valid questions
14 regarding the measurement of those two variables, and about the exogeneity
15 of the relationships. Clearly a major reason that remoteness and landlocked-
16 ness hurt economies is that they impede international trade.

17 A common finding is a negative dummy variable for Africa. It often can
18 be attributed to some of the other variables, however, especially tropical
19 location,⁸ as becomes evident when the econometrician controls for them
20 and the apparent Africa effect disappears.

21 While some of these variables may help explain the negative dummy for
22 Africa, they do not necessarily help explain variation within Africa. Indeed,
23 when using regression analysis to learn about differences in growth per-
24 formance among African countries, one major finding is that many of the
25 variables that are most significant on global data sets do nothing for us
26 within this continent.

27 The reader who has looked at table 8.1 may have noticed a striking fact:
28 not only is the highest performer in Africa reported to be a small island
29 country (Mauritius), but so are numbers two and three (Seychelles and Cape
30 Verde, respectively). Not until we get to fourth place do we see a country
31 on the mainland (Botswana), and not until fifth place do we see a coun-
32 try of substantial size (Ghana, in 2008). Is it just a coincidence that the
33 top performers are island countries? There exists at least one small African
34 island country with poor performance: the Comoros. What explains the
35 difference?⁹

36 Island countries provide an intriguing subset of self-contained data
37 points. There is less likely to be an issue of endogenous borders, for example.

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39 7. Frankel and Romer (1999, table 3), to take just one example.

40 8. Probably the best interpretation of why tropical location seems to be bad for economic
41 growth is the presence of malaria and other tropical diseases. Sachs (2003) shows that specific
42 determinants of malaria are correlated with slow growth across countries.

43 9. Madagascar is an island, but we are not counting it as small. As noted, Equatorial Guinea
44 shows high income per capita, but consistent with natural resource curse the benefits from its
oil discoveries have gone to the elite rather than the general population. In any case, only part
of it is an island.

1 The econometric analysis of the determinants of economic performance in
2 this chapter includes a cross section of island countries, before we turn to a
3 within-Africa data set.

4 We begin with a short history of Mauritius, however. Next comes an over-
5 view of the competing hypotheses that others have put forward to explain
6 Mauritian success. Then the econometrics, followed by an attempt to put
7 everything together. When we are done, we will not be able to claim a defini-
8 tive answer as to the single reason for the island's success, nor will we ever
9 attempt to answer whether it is African. But the story will be of interest, or
10 so the author hopes. Most importantly, notwithstanding the uniqueness
11 of the country, there are potentially valuable lessons for others seeking to
12 achieve economic development in Africa.

13 **8.1 A Brief History of the Island**

14 Our account will just briefly hit the highlights, but will slow down a bit
15 when we get to the postindependence history.

16 **8.1.1 Globalization at Its Worst**

17 The first two centuries of Mauritius' history could be described as global-
18 ization at its worst.¹⁰ The Dutch arrived in 1598 and the Dutch East India
19 Company left a settlement in 1638. They immediately stripped the island of
20 its ebony trees, using slaves imported from Madagascar for the work, and
21 famously killed off the dodo birds. Today, less than 1 percent of the indig-
22 enous forests are left. When the Dutch decamped for the Cape Colony in
23 1710, they left the island nothing useful but its name.

24 In 1721 the French landed. A competent governor Bertrand Mahe de
25 Labourdonnais built a port/capital at Port Louis on the western coast and
26 made many improvements in the land that the colonizers called Ile de France.
27 They began to grow sugar for export—the first factory was built in 1744—
28 and other crops. But the expanding sugar economy depended on slavery,
29 the ultimate evil of the age. As if to complete a list of evils of globalization,
30 passing ships occasionally brought either pirates or cholera, wreaking havoc
31 on the population.

32 The island officially passed from France to Britain with the defeat of
33 Napoleon in 1814.¹¹ The British valued their new possession, but as a cov-
34 eted way station on the route to India and the Far East. They had no particu-
35 lar desire to settle the island, and were happy to leave the Franco-Mauriciens

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41 10. I am counting from 1638. The island was visited by Arabs one or more times in the seventh
42 to ninth centuries, but they did not stay. The same with the Portuguese in the early sixteenth
43 century. This section of the chapter draws in part on Lutz and Wils (1990) and Selvon (2005).

44 11. Ironically, the French navy in 1810 scored the strongest of its very few victories of the
Napoleonic Wars in the Battle of Grand-Port, on the eastern edge of Mauritius. But de facto
possession of the island passed to the British later that year; 2010 is the 200th anniversary.

1 in place as the land-owning elite. The French Napoleonic code was retained,
2 and still constitutes an important component of the legal system.

3 Slavery had already been abolished in the British Empire in 1807. The
4 French landowners were reluctant to comply, however, and it wasn't until
5 1835 that slavery was finally ended on the island. The abolition of slavery
6 marks the end of what I am calling the period of globalization at its worst.¹²
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8 8.1.2 Globalization at Its Best

9 The next phase of Mauritian history began with a problem for the sugar-
10 based economy. The abolition of slavery had left a shortage of labor. The
11 freed slaves were understandably reluctant to go to work for their former
12 masters. Who would work the plantations? The solution was a “Great Ex-
13 periment”: indentured workers were brought from India. From 1849 to
14 1923, a half million indentured Indian laborers passed through the immigra-
15 tion depot at the dock called Aaprivasi Ghat, the Ellis Island of Mauritius.
16 Although their lot was hard, most of them chose it voluntarily because the
17 conditions were better than what they were leaving behind.¹³ Production and
18 exports from the plantations grew rapidly. The experiment was sufficiently
19 successful that it was copied in other sugar-growing parts of the world such
20 as Fiji and the Caribbean.

21 Eventually locals and even nonwhites gained some political rights. Under
22 the 1886 Constitution, which lasted sixty years, the British governor allowed
23 a Creole elite to join the Franco-Mauritians among the national representa-
24 tives. When a new constitution extended the franchise to all adults who could
25 write in 1948, the Indian-dominated Labour Party suddenly won a majority
26 in the Legislative Council seats. Its members were mainly rural workers and
27 its platform was mainly socialist. It was opposed by the Franco-Mauriciens,
28 who accurately described themselves as “oligarchs,” and who feared “Hindu
29 hegemony.” This phrase referred to what the majority ethnic group were
30 expected to do if and when the country became independent, which the
31 Franco-Mauriciens opposed.

32 The Labour Party became more moderate under the leadership of See-
33 woosagur Ramgoolam. By 1960 it had renounced its previous position that
34 the sugar plantations should be nationalized.¹⁴ This decision was to prove a
35 key turning point in several respects. First, it helped establish the important
36 precedent of safeguarding property rights. Second, it contrasted with other
37 African countries that have either expropriated natural resources, taxed
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12. Many slaves had escaped to the wild over the years. Reportedly, when British soldiers
came to bring news of their liberation, some of the escapees thought they were to be arrested,
and so instead jumped to their deaths over the vertical sides of the mountain that was thence-
forth called Le Morne.

13. In his novel *Sea of Poppies*, Amitav Ghosh describes a variety of circumstances that would
inspire residents of the Ganges Plain to seek a better life in far-off Mauritius.

14. Selvon (2005, 404).

1 them away, or discouraged production through other devices, such as mar-
2 keting boards.¹⁵ Third, it eventually helped reconcile the Franco-Mauritians
3 to independence.

4 8.1.3 Independence 5

6 In the early 1960s the British prepared for independence,¹⁶ but communal
7 or sectarian tensions were strong. Creoles, the descendants of the original
8 slaves, many of whom had acquired positions in the civil service and in
9 the growing private sector, aligned with Franco-Mauritians in their fears
10 regarding independence, adding to the voting strength of the latter. Chinese,
11 Muslim, and Tamil minorities were also afraid that those Hindus descended
12 of immigrants from the Ganges Plain would dominate an independent
13 country. The Mauritian Social Democratic Party (PMSD), composed of
14 Franco-Mauritians and Creoles, lost elections to the Hindu-dominated
15 Labour Party in 1967. This election confirmed the narrowly drawn fault
16 lines regarding the independence issue: only 55 percent voted for the inde-
17 pendence platform. Riots along ethnic lines took place periodically in the
18 1960s, especially as the date of independence drew near. The Labour Party
19 government had to call in British troops to restore order in January 1968.

20 Mauritius became an independent country in March 1968, with Ram-
21 goolam as prime minister. He had won respect by avoiding divisive appeals
22 and cooperating with all factions. He was to serve in that post for four-
23 teen years.

24 The PMSD boycotted the independence ceremony. It soon became rec-
25 onciled to independence and the need for nation building, however, to some
26 extent reassured by minority rights, and especially pushed by two powerful
27 constituencies who favored stability: business leaders, including plantation
28 owners (who were financial backers of the party), together with the foreign
29 diplomatic community. The PMSD joined in a series of changing coalition
30 governments. All governments have been coalitions, and each has included
31 either Labour, the PMSD, or often both. The precedent that the parties
32 must enter coalitions was set by the British governor, before independence.

33 The leftist niche was staked out by a new party, the Mouvement Militant
34 Mauricien (MMM). The government responded in a heavy-handed way
35 in 1971, first by postponing elections scheduled for the following year and
36 then, when the MMM called strikes, by imprisoning its leader, a Franco-
37 Mauricien named Paul Bérenger. The strategy seemed to work, at any rate.
38 Bérenger subsequently moved to the right, perhaps as the policies of the
39 ruling party were seen to be successful. (Economic growth averaged over
40 8 percent during the years 1970–75.) Eventually Bérenger entered a coali-
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43 15. One example of Ghana's past treatment of its cocoa farmers (Frankel 1974).

44 16. This section draws on Bowman (1991, 33–42), Brautigam (1999), Bunwaree and
Kadenally (2006), Selvon (2005), and Simmons (1982), among others.

1 tion government with Anerood Jugnauth, when he was elected the second
2 prime minister in 1982. Jugnauth served through 1995, in six coalition gov-
3 ernments.

4 There are many parties, but two broad alliances usually dominate: one
5 built around Labour, the MLP, and the other built around the MMM. The
6 son of the founding premier, Navin Ramgoolam, at the head of Labour,
7 became the third prime minister from 1995 to 2000 and was returned to
8 office in 2005, which he held for ten years.

9 10 8.1.4 Which Colonial Heritage?

11 Some economists and historians have sought to discern if one national
12 brand of colonialism in Africa and elsewhere left behind better institutions
13 than another.¹⁷ This test would be impossible to perform in the case of Mau-
14 ritius, because of the impossibility of saying who left the colonial heritage.
15 The Dutch? They first colonized the island, and named it. The French?
16 They left the landowning elite and gave the island its dominant language.
17 The British? Cars drive on the left and, remarkably, the country's Supreme
18 Court is Britain's Privy Council, even though it became a Republic—Queen
19 Elizabeth ceased to be the head of state—in 1992. Or perhaps it could be
20 described as India's colony. Three languages appear on the money: English,
21 Hindi, and Tamil.

22 23 8.1.5 Stages of Development

24 The traditional three stages of development worldwide feature gradual
25 shifts in the composition of a country's economy, from the primary sector
26 to manufactures, and then on to the service economy. This stylized model
27 happens to fit Mauritius in a literal way. The commodities at the primary
28 stage were agricultural, particularly sugar, as we have seen. Industrialization
29 began in the 1970s, consisting largely of textiles and apparel. More recently,
30 the desired and actual share of services has risen, especially tourism but
31 also financial services, information and computer technology (ICT), and
32 others. When economists ponder the island's success, they are usually talk-
33 ing about the solid achievement of that critical first stage of development:
34 labor-intensive manufacturing, especially clothing exports.¹⁸ But we need
35 equally to consider the subsequent phase of adaptation to trade shocks,
36 especially the decline of clothing export markets.

37 38 8.1.6 Adapting to External Shocks

39 While globalization carries gains from trade and other benefits, it also can
40 also increase exposure to external fluctuations. Mauritius has experienced

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43 17. For example, Feyrer and Sacerdote (2009).

44 18. Basic manufactures at the beginning also included wigs, toothpaste, and simple electron-
ics, among other things.

1 many external shocks in its history, inevitably suggesting the metaphor of
 2 a small ship on stormy seas. Whether through luck or skill, however, the
 3 country has usually been able to adapt to changed circumstances over the
 4 years. Consider four.

5 *Labor Shortage*

6 We have already discussed the big adaptation to the labor shortage on the
 7 sugar plantations that followed the abolition of slavery in 1835: the import
 8 of indentured workers from India.
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10 *Independence*

11 The second big shock was independence in 1968, under inauspicious con-
 12 ditions that will be elaborated in the next section of the chapter. The country
 13 soon achieved trade-led growth in the 1970s, despite protectionist import
 14 policies.
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16 *The 1974–1980 Increases in World Oil Price*

17 Like most other oil-importing developing countries, Mauritius initially
 18 responded to its higher import bill by borrowing, running large current
 19 account deficits in the late 1970s. But it undertook successful adjustment
 20 ahead of most of the others.¹⁹ The adjustment took place in macroeconomic
 21 policy, when it devalued twice in compliance with International Monetary
 22 Fund (IMF) programs,²⁰ as well as in microeconomic policy, featuring an
 23 important trade reform in 1984²¹ consistent with a World Bank Structural
 24 Adjustment Facility. The reforms were implemented over three successive
 25 governments; a number of observers have highlighted what this says about
 26 the stability of the political system and its ability to do what is best for the
 27 country, even while simultaneously squabbling furiously over personal and
 28 factional politics.²² There followed a period of strong economic performance
 29 that can be said to have carried the country into tiger status by the end of
 30 the 1990s.
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32 *Further Trade Shocks over the Years 2004–2009*

33 The worst of the latter-day trade shocks was the end of favored treat-
 34 ment abroad of its most important exports: the loss of sugar preferences
 35 in 2004 and the loss of MFA clothing preferences around the same time, as
 36 the Multi-Fiber Agreement (MFA) system was dismantled, the world mar-
 37 ket became free and open, and low-wage manufacturers in China displaced
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40 19. Gulhati and Nallari (1990); Selvon (2005).

41 20. Twenty-three to thirty percent (depending on the measure) in 1979 and almost as much
 42 again in 1981; Ancharaz (2004, 6), Brautigam (1999, 156–57), Gulhati and Nallari (1990), and
 43 Imam and Manoiu (2008).

44 21. Ancharaz (2004).

22. Brautigam (1999, 156–57) and Subramanian (2001).

1 textiles and apparel in many developing countries.²³ In Mauritius the sector
2 suffered a 30 percent fall in output and 25 percent drop in employment. The
3 balance of payments deficit, budget deficit, and unemployment all deterior-
4 rated. The adverse trend in the terms of trade continued with the rise in
5 world prices of oil and food over the period 2003–2008. Finally the great
6 global recession hit all export-oriented countries in 2008–2009.

7 The incoming Labour government that was returned to power in 2005
8 responded to the loss of trade preferences and current account deficit in
9 several ways.²⁴ A multifaceted reform program in 2006 included a Business
10 Facilitation Act to eliminate obstacles to investment and hiring, steps to
11 make it easier for desired immigrants to become citizens,²⁵ and a simplified
12 tax system with a flat 15 percent tax rate for individuals and companies.
13 Soon the government was able to claim tangible results: (a) the country
14 climbed even higher in international rankings of climate for business,²⁶ and
15 (b) the budget deficit fell, so that by 2007 the primary deficit was almost
16 down to zero.²⁷

17 The government had achieved enough reduction in the budget deficit, and
18 had enough foresight when the US subprime mortgage crisis lingered a year
19 after its origins in mid-2007, to ease a bit fiscally as early as mid-2008, just
20 in time for the global recession.²⁸ This sort of example of countercyclical
21 fiscal policy—allowing deficits to fall in booms and rise in downturns—had
22 been rare among developing countries in the past, but was newly achieved
23 by some in 2008–2009.

24 With the loss of MFN preferences for clothing exports, and the new com-
25 petition from China in all manufactures, Mauritians described the way for-
26 ward as “the third sector,” that is, services. Tourism was already the leading
27 service export Durberry (2004), and was now joined by banking and ICT,
28 looking to Singapore as a model. (Join the club!)

29 Is the move to banking a wishful-thinking pursuit of a mirage in the
30 desert? Not quite. But neither should the island see itself as the next Sin-
31 gapore. Subramanian (2009, 20–21) explains: “the offshore financial sector
32 has grown because of the Indian diaspora which led to the signing of a
33 double taxation treaty between Mauritius and India. As a result, Mauritian
34

35 23. Ancharaz (2009) and Imam and Manoiu (2008).

36 24. Rama Sithanen, finance minister (Labor Party), said: “When we came to power in 2005,
37 the situation was awful” (Hawkins 2008).

38 25. Needless to say, most countries are less welcoming to immigrants. Think of South African
39 attacks on recent Mozambiquan and Zimbabwean immigrants in 2008, Ivorian attacks on its
40 immigrants in 2002, or Uganda booting out its entire Indian population in 1972.

41 26. The Business Facilitation Act evidently succeeded in boosting the climate for business in
42 Mauritius as judged by the *Doing Business Report* of the World Bank and the *Global Competi-*
43 *tiveness* measure from the World Economic Forum (especially low barriers to trading across
44 borders, such as days required for importing and exporting).

45 27. Down from 1.5 percent of GDP in 2005/06. For example, subsidies on rice and flour were
46 removed. African Economic Outlook (2008, 434).

47 28. Ministry of Finance (2008).

1 offshore centres have mediated large financial flows to India and Mauritius
 2 has become the largest investor in India.” If the financial center is built on
 3 Indians using a bilateral investment treaty for round-tripping, it is unlikely
 4 to be durable.

5 More recent plans call for expansion in a variety of other sectors: a sea-
 6 food hub, an “integrated resorts” scheme, and more. They are characterized
 7 as “pillars” of the new economy.²⁹

8 Even within the textiles and apparel sector, when a country loses low-end
 9 exports to low-wage competition, a reduced subset of the industry can be
 10 reborn through innovation. This describes northern Italy, for example, and
 11 it also describes Mauritius.

12 One can see tangible evidence of precisely such adaptation if one visits
 13 the successful *Compagnie Mauricienne de Textiles*. Rather than closing its
 14 clothing factory when the MFA ended, the company brought in an experi-
 15 enced new manager from India, opened a textile factory just across the
 16 parking lot, adopted current Asian technology, and is now fully integrated.³⁰
 17 On one side of the parking lot, the textile plant is so highly automated that
 18 it requires only a few young workers, who get around the large building on
 19 roller skates to tend the machines. Meanwhile, the apparel plant next door
 20 is still a beehive of low-skilled workers. The textile factory takes raw cotton
 21 and turns it into yarn and fabric. The apparel factory takes the fabric and
 22 turns it into finished garments. Although the integrated process can be run
 23 continuously from beginning to end, CMT also keeps inventories of many
 24 kinds of cloth, so as to be able to respond even more rapidly to the sort of
 25 sudden new requests that are standard in the world of fashion.

26 One plausible way forward for Mauritius is as a platform for firms from
 27 India and China wishing to do business in Africa. Everyone’s favorite
 28 entrepôt, Singapore, is an obvious model. (Mauritius has the second big-
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30
 31 29. When one hears of the sectors that have been designated as promising priorities for
 32 the future, it is difficult to discern the balance of government versus private participation in
 33 these plans. The government intervenes in many markets. (Lange [2009] declares Mauritius a
 34 “developmental state”—for which he credits direct British colonial rule!) The strategic docu-
 35 ments describing “pillars” are from the government, but officials deny that they are directing
 36 investment in the manner of socialist five-year plans. Perhaps the “administrative guidance”
 37 of some East Asian countries is a parallel. Perhaps, in a sufficiently small country, a meeting
 38 to plan an integrated resort (a luxury hotel and villa development intended to attract foreign
 39 investors), even though it is called by government officials, need not operate fundamentally
 40 differently from the sort of meeting among private developers that would take place in a larger,
 41 more purely capitalist, country.

42 30. The primary motivation for integrated production was the African Growth and Oppor-
 43 tunity Act (AGOA), under which the United States decided in 2000 to grant duty-free access
 44 to African apparel exports provided that the fabric or yarn not be imported from Europe, but
 rather be either homemade or imported from the United States. Mauritius was one of the first
 two countries (with Kenya) to be approved for AGOA, which has proven successful (Frazer and
 Van Biesebroeck 2010, 130) to a surprising extent. The AGOA benefits are no longer relevant,
 but once established, CMT’s integrated production is profitable regardless. (The manager told
 us that he knew this ahead of time, but that the owners who hired him did not.)

gest container cargo in sub-Saharan Africa.) But another possible model is Hong Kong, which long had a favored position as the window or platform for investing into China. Another possible analogy more recent in origin is Dubai, which can be viewed as the platform for investing into the volatile Middle East. These city-states share the traits of being open, stable, well functioning, cosmopolitan, and adaptable.³¹

8.2 Economists' Hypotheses Regarding Mauritian Economic Performance

We review six explanations that have been put forward for the success of Mauritius. (This section owes much to the cataloging of theories in Subramanian [2009].³²) Each of these explanations will be rejected at least in part, suggesting that the field is still open.

8.2.1 Initial Conditions

After the fact, success often looks preordained. So any recounting of the performance of the pearl of the Indian Ocean must start by relating how two Nobel Prize winners, around the time of independence, independently forecast doom instead of success. The first, James Meade (1961a), was later to win the Nobel Prize in Economics: "Heavy population pressure must inevitably reduce real income per head. . . . That surely is bad enough in a community that is full of political conflict . . . the outlook for peaceful development is poor." The second, V. S. Naipaul (1972), had a more literary vantage point, but came to the same conclusion: "The disaster has occurred . . . now given a thing called independence and set adrift, an abandoned imperial barracoon, incapable of economic or cultural autonomy."

There were excellent reasons for such fears. Three were perhaps uppermost in the minds of observers at the time; three more would have been particularly worrisome given empirical regularities that we know about today.

- Geography. A country that is small lacks internal economies of scale and a complete array of endowments. Many small countries make up for these limitations through international trade. But a country that is located remotely from the centers of population and economic activity is at a disadvantage for trade. Mauritius ranks as more disadvantaged than Madagascar, and alongside eleven South Pacific countries, as the most remote in the world.³³
- Ethnic tensions. Mauritius had, and has, a split of several major ethnic groups that would normally not be considered conducive to growth.

31. China has already begun to use Mauritius as a platform for investment into Africa (Ancharaz 2009, 6, 19).

32. Also Brautigam (1997, 1999), Russell (2008), and others.

33. Remoteness is measured as a weighted average of log distance from other countries, with shares of either GDP or population used as weights.

Social scientists generally consider a low degree of ethnic fragmentation to be the best for growth (Sweden, Japan, Botswana).³⁴ A widely used measure of ethnic, linguistic, and religious fragmentation shows Mauritius as far more split than all the other small African island states, and remarkably similar to Trinidad and Tobago, and Fiji.³⁵ As we saw in the preceding section, ethnic riots accompanied the run-up to independence.

- Population density. The island has one of the higher ratios of population to land area in the world. Unemployment was high in the 1960s, resulting in outmigration. The apparent overpopulation, together with ethnic and political conflict, were major reasons for the pessimism of Meade and Naipaul.
- Volatile monocrop. The economy of 1968 was considered highly dependent on a single crop, sugar, that suffers from high volatility. Today, even more than then, we are aware of the natural resource curse. It is discussed in the next subsection.
- Regression to the mean. The growth literature suggests that, although there is no tendency for countries' income levels to converge unconditionally, there is a significant tendency for gradual conditional convergence. That is, if various factors such as geographical suitability for trade suggest an income level above where a country is at the beginning of a sample period, on average its income can be expected to move slowly in the direction of that long-run equilibrium. But Mauritius in the 1960s had an income level above the Africa average, and perhaps above what would be predicted from its geography. What had been a favorable location a century earlier—a deep-water port well placed for stopping off on the shipping route to India—had become unfavorable when the Suez Canal opened in 1869. Looking forward from the 1960s, one might have predicted downward convergence.
- Last on the list of poor initial conditions at the time of independence

34. Easterly and Levine (1997). One hypothesis is that the relationship is U-shaped, that a very high degree of fragmentation can also be fine for growth (twenty small groups, none of which dominate), and that it is the middle degree that is dangerous (Collier et al. 2007, 393–95; Bates and Yackolev 2002; Collier 2000). They give Botswana as their example of an ethnically homogeneous country and Tanzania as an example at the other extreme. Carroll and Carroll (1997, 465) consider Botswana to be ethnically divided because, even though 80 percent of the population is Tswana, they come from eight Tswana tribes; perhaps, then, the distinction between very high and very low ethnic fragmentation is a subtle matter of definition. (This paper was brought to my attention by Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam.)

35. The remarkable part is that all three tropical islands, though located in three different oceans, got their ethnic diversity in essentially the same way: Indians were brought to work the sugar fields. Trinidad and Tobago subsequently enjoyed oil wealth, but suffered the natural resource curses of rent-seeking behavior and Dutch disease cycles in a way that Mauritius has been able to avoid by using rents from trade privileges effectively (Auty 2009b, 2–3). Trinidad and Tobago fits right on the international natural resource curse line: 1970–2008 growth was a little substandard in a way that can be statistically associated with the high share of oil in its exports (Frankel 2012, figure 1). Fiji is discussed toward the end of this chapter.

were distortionary trade barriers. It is not that the first government was especially antimarket in philosophy, but import substitution was the fashion of the day. Today it is more widely believed that trade is good for economic performance, less because classical and modern trade theory say so, perhaps, than because of the demonstration of trade-led growth in East Asia and elsewhere.

All in all, one must agree with Meade (1961b) that the initial conditions were not auspicious.

8.2.2 Sugar Wealth

The second possible explanation for the success of Mauritius is the sugar plantations, but natural resources often have undesirable effects.³⁶ For every Botswana, a diamond-rich and successful state, there is at least one Congo, a mineral-rich and failed state. Indeed, as already noted, dependence on a volatile monocrop economy is on the list of poor initial conditions facing Mauritius at the time of independence. There are many versions of the natural resource curse. Perhaps a majority focus on mineral commodities as the culprit, or more specifically oil; some of these explicitly exclude agricultural products.³⁷

But there is a version of the natural resource curse, designed by Engerman and Sokoloff (1997, 2000, 2002) to think about the Americas (Brazil versus the United States), that explicitly includes sugar. The idea is that lands endowed with point-source extractive industries (oil and mining) and plantation crops (sugar and cotton) developed institutions of slavery, inequality, dictatorship, and state control, whereas those climates suited to fishing and small farms (fruits and vegetables, grain and livestock) developed institutions based on individualism, democracy, egalitarianism, and capitalism. When the industrial revolution came along, the latter areas were well suited to make the most of it. Those that had specialized in extractive industries were not, because society had come to depend on class structure and authoritarianism rather than on individual incentive and decentralized decision making.

Several other versions of the natural resource curse apply to agriculture products in general as much as to minerals: external returns to manufacturing, the Dutch disease, and commodity volatility.

Outside of classical economics, diversification out of primary commodities into manufacturing in most circles is considered self-evidently desirable.

36. Frankel (2012) offers a survey of the natural resource curse.

37. Sala-i-Martin and Subramanian (2003), Bulte, Damania, and Deacon (2005), and Mehlum, Moene, and Torvik (2006). The latter use the phrase “lootable” resources. Isham et al. (2005) explicitly include coffee and cocoa as plantation crops that are damaging to institutional development, alongside oil and other point-source minerals, rather than as small-scale farm products. (But in Africa cocoa and coffee should perhaps count as small-scale farming.)

1 Several dubious arguments have been made for it. One is the “structuralist” or Prebisch-Singer hypothesis of secularly declining commodity prices,
 2 which is not generally borne out by the long-term data. Another is the mistaken “cargo cult” inference—based on the observation that advanced countries
 3 have heavy industries like steel mills—that these visible monuments are
 4 necessarily the route to economic development. But one should not dismiss
 5 more valid considerations, just because less valid arguments for diversification
 6 into manufacturing are sometimes made.
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 9 Is industrialization the *sine qua non* of economic development? Is encouragement of manufacturing necessary to achieve high income? Classical economic theory says “no”: countries are best off producing whatever is their comparative advantage, whether that is natural resources or manufacturing. In this nineteenth century view, attempts by Brazil to industrialize were as foolish as it would have been for Great Britain to try to grow coffee and oranges in hothouses. But the structuralists were never alone in their feeling that countries only get sustainably rich if they industrialize. Nor were they ever alone in feeling that industrialization in turn requires an extra push from the government (at least for latecomers), often known as industrial policy.

10
 11 Matsuyama (1992) provided an influential model formalizing this intuition: the manufacturing sector is assumed to be characterized by learning by doing, while the agricultural sector is not. The implication is that deliberate policy-induced diversification out of primary products into manufacturing is justified, and that a permanent commodity boom that crowds out manufacturing can indeed be harmful.

12
 13 On the other side, it must be pointed out that there is no reason why learning by doing should be the exclusive preserve of manufacturing tradables. Nontradables can enjoy learning by doing.³⁸ Mineral and agricultural sectors can as well. Some countries have experienced tremendous productivity growth in the primary sector. American productivity gains have been aided by public investment since the late nineteenth century.³⁹ Attempts by governments in developing countries to force linkages between the primary sector and processing industries, however, have been less successful.⁴⁰

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 15 Some have suggested that the high volatility that afflicts most commodities is the source of the natural resource curse.⁴¹ Highly variable prices on

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38. Torvik (2001).

39. In such knowledge are infrastructure institutions such as the US Geological Survey, the Agricultural Extension program, and land-grant colleges (Wright and Czelusta 2006).

40. Hausmann, Klinger, and Lawrence (2008) warn of the pitfalls of assuming that South Africa, for example, can move from diamond mining to diamond cutting. They are not opposed to industrial policy, but rather believe that linkages are more likely where factor intensities and technological requirements are similar across sectors, rather than to upstream or downstream industries.

41. Blattman, Hwang, and Williamson (2007), Hausmann and Rigobon (2003), and Poelhekke and van der Ploeg (2007).

1 world markets, usually attributable to low short-run elasticities, are the most
2 obvious sort of volatility experienced by agricultural and mineral products.
3 But there are other sorts as well, both on the demand side and the supply
4 side. On the demand side, large swings in the trade policies of the major
5 markets for Mauritian sugar have been a bigger source of volatility during
6 its history than the variance in a world price of sugar. On the supply side,
7 cyclones have caused great damage to the crop, particularly several that hit
8 in the 1960s.

9 Over the 150 years during which Mauritius was overwhelmingly a sugar
10 economy, it suffered from periodic Dutch disease cycles due to big changes
11 in European barriers/preferences toward its crop. Three booms related to the
12 granting of preferences occurred in the 1830s, 1919–1920, and 1973–1974.
13 Ancharaz (2004, 5) sees in these Mauritian booms the familiar Dutch disease
14 pattern of a rise in public spending “of dubious economic value,” budget
15 deficits, inflation (especially in the price of land), and real appreciation of
16 the currency.

17 Even leaving aside undesirable macroeconomic effects of commodity
18 booms, cyclical shifts of resources (labor, capital, and land) back and forth
19 across sectors may incur needless costs. Frictional unemployment of labor,
20 incomplete utilization of the capital stock, and incomplete occupancy of
21 housing are true deadweight costs, even if they are temporary. A diversified
22 country is indeed probably better off than one specialized in oil or a few
23 other commodities, other things equal.

24 8.2.3 Openness

25 Subramanian (2009) attributes to Jeff Sachs⁴² the view that an open trade
26 policy contributed to Mauritian success, and then rejects it:

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28 Mauritius was one of the countries that Sachs and Warner classified as
29 being open or following liberal trade policies. But this categorization of
30 Mauritius as an open economy was misleading, even incorrect. In Sub-
31 ramanian and Roy (2003, tables 4 and 5), we provide estimates of the
32 restrictiveness of Mauritius’ trade policy regime. During the 1970s and
33 1980s, Mauritius remained a highly protected economy: the average rate
34 of protection was high and dispersed. In 1980, the average effective pro-
35 tection exceeded 100 percent, and although this diminished by the end
36 of the 1980s, it was still very high (65 percent). Moreover until the 1980s,
37 there were also extensive quantitative restrictions in the form of import
38 licensing, covering nearly 60 percent of imports.

39 That Mauritius did not follow free trade policies, at least until relatively
40 recently, does not mean that trade was not a critical part of the story. It seems
41 difficult to escape the conclusion that it was. Exports and imports are each
42 about two-thirds of GDP. But Subramanian and Roy (2003) and Subrama-

43
44 ⁴² Sachs and Warner (1997).

nian (2001, 2009) discuss two other particular trade-related hypotheses, to which we now turn.

8.2.4 Export Processing Zone and Heterodox Trade Strategy

“Free trade” is normally taken to mean *laissez faire*, the absence of trade distorting policies, whether antiimport (tariff or nontariff barriers against imports) or proexport (export subsidies and other export-promoting policies, including privileged access to imported inputs).⁴³ But Rodrik (1998) has suggested that Mauritius’ success was the result of a “heterodox” trade policy reminiscent of the East Asian tigers, a strategy that created high returns to the export sector, while preventing resources from being diverted into the protected import-competing sector. The specific institutional mechanism was the export processing zone (EPZ), which was established in 1970.

It accomplished the successful promotion of exports by (a) giving EPZ firms tax advantages, (b) eliminating tariffs on the imported inputs used by manufacturers, and (c) setting laxer labor standards for EPZ workers and a lower minimum wage. Initially the differential between sugar workers and EPZ workers was almost 50 percent. That the EPZ factory workers were mostly women made discriminatory labor laws politically possible.

Although there is a strong *a priori* case that the development of a manufacturing sector inside the EPZ was an important component of Mauritian success, there are two counterarguments to Rodrik and his heterodox trade policy. First, many countries, including a number in Africa, have established export processing zones without similarly successful results.⁴⁴ Second, Subramanian and Roy (2003, 19) compute that the various effective EPZ subsidies in Mauritius (encouraging resources to move into trade) were substantially smaller than subsidies to import-competing sectors (discouraging resources from moving into trade):

[E]ffective protection for the import-competing sector averaged about 125 percent in the 1980s and about 65 percent in the 1990s. . . . Even allowing for favourable tax breaks, it seems that heterodox opening and intervention (in the form of subsidies in the export sector) did not offset completely the anti-export bias of the restrictive import regime.

8.2.5 Ideas and FDI

Paul Romer (1990, 1993) contributed an approach to growth theory based on ideas (innovations in either products or production methods) as the key

43. To the mercantilist minded, import tariffs and export subsidies seem similarly designed: to increase the trade balance. To a trade theorist, the trade balance is determined in other ways in general equilibrium (national saving and investment) and in the very long run is zero; as a result, import tariffs lead to a lower level of overall trade (exports as well as imports) and export subsidies to a higher level (again, on both sides of the trade balance).

44. Subramanian (2009, 15): “Apart from Mauritius, EPZ facilities and the attendant incentives were provided by a host of other African countries such as Zimbabwe, Senegal, Madagascar and Cameroon. . . . The EPZ experiment failed in almost all these countries.”

1 ingredient for development, rather than capital, labor, or other factors of
2 production. Romer (1992) argues that importing ideas from abroad through
3 inward foreign direct investment (FDI) is an effective alternative to growing
4 them at home. Specifically in the case of Mauritius, Chinese businessmen
5 brought the idea of textile and apparel manufacturing to the EPZ, jump-
6 starting the country's industrialization.⁴⁵

7 Subramanian and Roy (2003) and Subramanian (2001; 2009, 14) argue
8 against Romer's explanation for Mauritian success on the grounds that the
9 share of foreign companies in the EPZ was not all that large: "For example,
10 in 1984, only 12 percent of the total employment in the EPZ was accounted
11 for by wholly foreign-owned operations compared with 72, 42, and 64 per-
12 cent, respectively, in Korea, the Philippines and Malaysia. It is estimated
13 that about 50 percent of the total equity of firms in the EPZ was owned by
14 Mauritian nationals." This criticism seems a trifle unfair. The idea of "ideas"
15 is that they can be emulated, when observed at close hand. So, it is perfectly
16 plausible that local firms caught on quickly after the Chinese-owned apparel
17 factories were successful. Hausmann and Rodrik (2003) would call it the
18 social benefits of self-discovery.

19 A more serious objection is that the idea of producing clothing is rather
20 obvious—it is famously the first rung on the ladder of industrialization
21 (though, in fairness, this might not have been so obvious in 1970)—and that
22 something else beyond FDI and the EPZ is needed to explain why it worked
23 in Mauritius and not in other African countries. For Subramanian (2009) a
24 key ingredient is preferential treatment for Mauritian exports in the markets
25 of Europe and the United States. I agree that this was a *sine qua non*. Under
26 the Multi-Fiber Agreement (MFA) exports of textile and apparel were lim-
27 ited by quotas, but Mauritius benefited from relatively lenient treatment.⁴⁶
28 That Hong Kong had quickly used up its export quotas, and had proceeded
29 to fill the quotas in other Asian countries, explains why its businessmen were
30 willing to start apparel factories in such a far-off country as Mauritius, which
31 had not been using its quota.

32 Three more ingredients were useful. A key one was a competitively valued
33 exchange rate,⁴⁷ which helped offset the antitrade bias of the import tariffs.
34 Another was ethnic links between the Chinese and Chinese-Mauritians,
35 whose ancestors had immigrated long before.⁴⁸ Chinese-Mauritians had
36 been instrumental in persuading the government to set up the EPZ in the
37

38 45. Also Nath and Madhoo (2008) and Ancharaz (2009).

39 46. It could be argued that the United States also gave favorable treatment to the exports of
40 Korea and Taiwan during the Cold War.

41 47. Imam and Minoiu (2008).

42 48. Global econometrics with the gravity model show that bilateral trade links are signifi-
43 cantly stronger when two countries share some population that speaks the same language
44 (perhaps especially so if the language is Chinese). Frankel (1997, 74–75, 104).

1 first place.⁴⁹ Another ingredient was the capital of the Franco-Mauritians,
 2 some of whom set up factories in parallel with the Chinese.⁵⁰

3 4 8.2.6 Good Institutions

5 After poking holes in all the other hypotheses—initial conditions, open
 6 trade policies, a heterodox trade policy built around the Export Processing
 7 Zone, and the importation of manufacturing ideas via foreign direct invest-
 8 ment—Subramanian (2009) declares himself for institutions as the explana-
 9 tion. It was good institutions that allowed Mauritius to develop the EPZ
 10 effectively, where others might have gotten mired down in corruption. He
 11 points out that Mauritius ranks high in the standard measures of the quality
 12 of institutions: political participation, rule of law, and control of corrup-
 13 tion. As many have noted, Mauritius and Botswana, two star performers, are
 14 also the only two African countries to have been democratic continuously
 15 since independence.⁵¹

16 A prominent trend in thinking regarding economic development is that
 17 the quality of institutions, especially property rights and the rule of law, is
 18 the fundamental factor that determines which countries experience good
 19 performance and which do not,⁵² and that it is futile to recommend good
 20 macroeconomic or microeconomic policies if the institutional structure
 21 is not there to support them.⁵³ Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2001)
 22 famously use settler mortality rates as an instrumental variable for institu-
 23 tions. Nath and Madhoo (2008) suggest that the settler story applies literally
 24 to Mauritius: success is attributed to good institutions, which is attributed
 25 to European settlement, and in turn to suitable climate.

27 8.3 Digging Deeper

29 8.3.1 Deeper Determinants

31 Perhaps the most interesting part of the debate on growth over the past
 32 decade has been: What are the deeper determinants? Yes, policies regard-
 33 ing taxes, government spending, and tariffs help determine investment,
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35 49. Subramanian (2001). Particularly one E. Lim Fat (Brautigam 1999, 148). The government
 36 sent a team to Hong Kong and Taiwan to investigate the export success of these newborn tigers,
 37 and the EPZ Act of 1970 was the result of its recommendations.

38 50. Brautigam (1999, 149) reports that from the beginning, half of the EPZ investment came
 39 from the locals.

40 51. For example, Carroll and Carroll (1997). Radelet (2010) argues that progress toward
 41 democracy has contributed importantly to economic progress among a number of African
 42 countries.

43 52. North (1994). Four of the most important empirical contributions are Barro (1991),
 44 Hall and Jones (1999), Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2001), and Rodrik, Subramanian,
 45 and Trebbi (2004).

46 53. Acemoglu et al. (2003).

1 education, and trade, which in turn are good for growth. But what are the
2 deeper determinants of those policies? Rodrik, Subramanian, and Trebbi
3 (2004) pose the question well. In their view, there are three emerging theo-
4 ries: (a) openness; (b) geography, which I prefer to interpret more narrowly
5 as tropical disease; and (c) institutions. Each theory can be captured by
6 some standard measures, such as trade volume, malaria incidence, and rule
7 of law, respectively. Each has serious endogeneity problems that must be
8 addressed: when countries grow richer they lower tariffs, drain swamps,
9 and adopt accounting standards. The endogeneity of trade has been largely
10 addressed by geographic determinants, such as access to coastline. It ought
11 to be possible to address malaria by purely topographic and climatologic
12 determinants.

13 That leaves institutions. The settler mortality variable of Acemoglu, John-
14 son, and Robinson, (2001) is probably the best we have econometrically, but
15 it is just a start on the problem. The very aspects that make it exogenous—
16 colonial history and geographic susceptibility to disease—also raise the
17 question of whether the sort of institutions at stake are so predetermined
18 as to make postindependence mortals powerless to shape them so as to
19 benefit their countries.⁵⁴ Fatalist determinism cannot be the answer. Good
20 institutions have been chosen by mortal people in living memory, in coun-
21 tries as diverse as Germany, Singapore, Hong Kong, Chile, Botswana . . .
22 and Mauritius.

23 8.3.2 Measuring Institutions

24 We will use measures of institutions in the econometric analysis in the next
25 section, but some are vulnerable to subjectivity. Where they come from sur-
26 veys (for example, Transparency International's widely cited results on cor-
27 ruption), there is the danger of a "halo effect." Survey respondents "know"
28 that Switzerland is a more successful country than Colombia, and so they
29 tend to give higher ratings to institutions in one place than the other, even
30 when it might not be based on specific familiarity with the facts. Rotberg
31 and Gisselquist (2009) have, since 2007, compiled the Index of African Gov-
32 ernance, which attempts to be less subjective than survey-based measures
33 from Transparency International or the Worldwide Governance Indicators
34 (WGI). The cost of eliminating subjectivity is increased reliance on mea-
35 sures that could be regarded as endogenous outcomes, instead of the more
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37
38 54. One might argue that the same is true of trade, as have Rodriguez and Rodrik (2001) in
39 critiquing Frankel and Romer (1999). They ask how we can be sure that the beneficial effects
40 of trade that result from trade policy decisions are similar to the beneficial effects of trade
41 that are observed to result from sea access and other geographic variables. The answer is that,
42 although, as always with instrumental variables, we cannot be sure the effects are the same, (a)
43 those antiglobalizers who question the benefits of trade liberalization generally feel the same
44 when it is technological progress in transport and communications that shrinks the world, and
45 (b) it is possible to measure trade unambiguously. The concept of "better or worse institutions"
46 lacks the unambiguous unidirectionality of "more or less trade."

1 exogenous institutions that most of us mean by the word “governance.”
 2 The Index of African Governance data are good for the ranking game, but
 3 perhaps more worrisome as the independent variable in a regression. The
 4 solution is to drop the three categories of “outcome” components (eco-
 5 nomic opportunity, safety/security, and health/human development), and
 6 focus solely on the two “input” sets of components (rule of law and partici-
 7 pation/human rights). The correlation between the rule of law measures in
 8 the WGI and in African Governance is .91.

9 Mauritius ranks first by participation and human rights. It ranks third in
 10 rule of law, after Cape Verde and Botswana. Amazingly, the Heritage Founda-
 11 tion in 2011 ranked the island country’s economic freedom, not just as first
 12 in Africa, but as number eight in the world. Transparency International and
 13 the Internet Center for Corruption Research place Mauritius second only to
 14 Botswana in freedom from corruption within the region.⁵⁵

15 It can be hard to square such rankings with common reports from citizens
 16 of government corruption that recurrently goes unpunished.⁵⁶ Perhaps it is
 17 best to conclude that the basic comparison to most other African countries
 18 is valid, but Mauritius still does not belong with the Nordic countries. For
 19 perspective, when Transparency International gives Mauritius a ranking
 20 of number forty-six in its Corruptions Perspectives index for 2011, that
 21 is midway between New Zealand’s number one and Liberia, Trinidad, or
 22 Zambia, which are tied for number ninety-one. Its raw score (5.1) is midway
 23 between the United States (7.1) and the three-way tie of Albania, India, and
 24 Swaziland (3.1, ranked number 95).

25 Very few available indicators of the quality of institutions seem able to
 26 escape both the Scylla of subjectivity in judgments and the Charybdis of
 27 judging by outcomes. To measure fundamental institutional quality, two of
 28 the best candidates from the Index of African Governance are the reported
 29 number of days to settle a contract dispute and the number of pretrial
 30 detainees. Mauritius does not rank as highly if judged by these two statis-
 31 tics as by the other indicators. Does the island paradise thus benefit from a
 32 discriminatory halo effect when its institutions are rated? National prison
 33 authorities themselves are the sources for the raw detainee data; perhaps
 34 the researchers are not able to enforce across countries adequate honesty in
 35 self-reporting. We are left short of unambiguous indications of high-quality
 36 institutions.

37 The unusual arrangement whereby the British Privy Council serves as the
 38 Supreme Court of Mauritius sounds like a textbook case of a well-designed
 39 institution: It can be expected to deliver answers that will be respected by
 40

41 55. Rotberg and Gisselquist (2009).

42 56. Dukhira (2002, 279–82) and Selvon (2005, 492–94). Crime is another area where local
 43 residents (Dukhira 2002, 271–76; Selvon 2005) paint a less idyllic picture than the rankings,
 44 which give Mauritius the best possible rating on violent crime (homicides) (Rotberg and Gis-
 selquist 2009, 57, 90).

1 competing groups who would not necessarily trust home-grown mecha-
2 nisms. Another observation encourages the notion that Mauritius does
3 actually have effective institutions: A sophisticated cyclone warning sys-
4 tem successfully gives warning of coming cyclones on a scale of four alerts,
5 allowing the people to move to higher ground. The system requires both
6 government competence and public cooperation. A new tsunami warning
7 center has also been described as state of the art. These are perhaps clean
8 examples of specific good institutions.

10 8.3.3 Democracy

11 As noted, Mauritius and Botswana are the two African countries that
12 have been continuously democratic from birth.

13 The statistical evidence across countries is at best mixed as to whether
14 democracy per se is good for economic performance. Barro (1996) finds
15 that it is the rule of law, free markets, education, and low government con-
16 sumption that are good for growth, not democracy per se. Tavares and Wac-
17 ziarg (2001) find that it is education, not democracy per se. Alesina et al.
18 (1996) find that it is political stability, not democracy per se, that is good for
19 growth.⁵⁷ Some even find that, after controlling for important factors such
20 as the rule of law and political stability, democracy has, if anything, a weak
21 negative effect on growth.⁵⁸

22 One can claim good evidence for the reverse causation, that economic
23 growth leads to democracy, often assisted by the creation of a middle class.⁵⁹
24 Examples include Korea and Taiwan. Of course, democracy is normally
25 regarded as an end in itself, aside from whether it promotes economic
26 growth. Even here, one must note that the benefits of the formalities of
27 elections can be overemphasized. For one thing, elections can be a sham.
28 Such leaders as Robert Mugabe, Hamid Karzai, and George W. Bush have
29 each claimed to have been elected without having, in fact, earned more votes
30 than their opponents. Western style or one-man, one-vote elections should
31 perhaps receive less priority in developing countries than the fundamental
32 principles of rule of law, human rights, freedom of expression, economic
33 freedom, minority rights, and some form of popular representation.⁶⁰

36 57. It is worth noting, however, that many autocracies fail to deliver political stability that sur-
37 vives the term or life of a particular autocrat (leaving aside whether they deliver economic ben-
38 efits for the people). China is the exception; also Singapore, if it is not counted as a democracy.

39 58. Collier and Hoeffler (2009) find that when developing countries have democracies, as
40 opposed to advanced-country democracies, they tend to feature weak checks and balances.
41 As a result, when developing countries also have high natural resource rents, the result is on
42 average bad for economic growth.

43 59. Helliwell (1994), Huber, Rueschemeyer, and Stephens (1993), Lipset (1994), and Minier
44 (1998).

60. Zakaria (1997, 2004).

8.4 The Econometrics

Econometric studies of economic performance worldwide often show a negative dummy variable for Africa. We begin with some econometrics that includes other parts of the world, so as to see to what extent Africa's problems stem from variables such as tropical location. But rather than repeating the sort of 150-country data sets that are so familiar from other papers, we look at a cross section consisting of island countries around the world. There are at least two reasons why this is of interest. First, islands are a test case that can isolate certain factors.⁶¹ For example, national borders are not likely to be endogenous. Second, as noted, not just Mauritius, but three out of the top four performers in Africa are islands, an intriguing fact that invites investigation.

8.4.1 Performance across Island Countries

Table 8.3 reports results of a pure cross section of island countries. Our dependent variable is per capita income in 2006 (PPP basis). The results show a highly significant negative effect for a dummy variable that registers a country's location in the tropics. Since the variables are in log form, a coefficient of -1.8 means that nontropical countries have a sixfold advantage relative to tropical countries, other things equal.⁶² The Africa dummy is negative, but not statistically significant when included along with the tropic dummy. The Worldwide Governance Indicators rule of law variable has a highly significant positive effect.⁶³ Its presence takes two-thirds off of the tropic dummy, confirming the view that tropical lands tend to develop less satisfactory institutions.⁶⁴ Surprisingly, the coefficient on size (population) is negative. Normally size is a positive factor for income, presumably due to internal economies of scale and diversity of factor endowments. One conceivable explanation is that all islands are so geographically well-disposed to trade because they, by definition, have good access to the sea that they are able to use trade to make up for the disadvantages of small size.

Within the island data set the trade/GDP ratio has a highly significant positive effect. Remoteness has the expected negative sign, but it is not significant when it has to compete with trade, the main channel through which it is thought to work. When, however, trade is excluded and we also condition on the WGI measure of rule of law, remoteness is indeed signifi-

61. Feyrer and Sacerdote (2009) study a sample of islands as a natural experiment. (Their finding is that the length of the colonial period is an important determinant of income today.)

62. $\exp(-1.8) = .16$.

63. When we tried other measures of institutions from Freedom House, they did not do as well, at least not when they had to compete with the WGI measure.

64. For example, Hall and Jones (1999) and Easterly and Levine (2002). The Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2001) story about settler mortality is one way this could happen.

Table 8.3 Islands cross section

	Log of 2006 GDP per capita, PPP					
Tropicdummy	-1.811*** (0.328)	-1.725*** (0.330)	-0.605* (0.351)	-1.800*** (0.405)	-1.961*** (0.364)	-0.342 0.400
L_pop	-0.0870* (0.0497)	-0.0914* (0.0495)	-0.0123 (0.0441)	-0.0860 (0.0551)	-0.121* (0.0692)	0.032 0.053
Tradey	0.00569*** (0.00131)	0.00552*** (0.00129)	0.00313** (0.00125)	0.00578*** (0.00193)	0.00534*** (0.00126)	
Remoteness	-0.234 (0.463)	-0.140 (0.477)	-0.338 (0.346)	-0.251 (0.439)	-0.601 (0.568)	-0.773** 0.344
Africa		-0.537 (0.457)				
WGI			0.731*** (0.155)			0.826*** 0.183
L_pden				-0.00833 (0.124)		
Fragment					4.189 (2.905)	
Fragment ²					-3.177 (5.902)	
Constant	13.02*** (3.789)	12.31*** (3.819)	11.91*** (2.796)	13.17*** (3.488)	15.79*** (5.076)	15.018*** 2.766
R ²	0.570	0.594	0.694	0.570	0.625	0.6246
Root MSE	0.839	0.830	0.730	0.855	0.836	.77857
Obs.	33	33	32	33	31	37

Note: Robust standard errors are reported below the coefficients in parentheses.

***Significant at the 1 percent level.

**Significant at the 5 percent level.

*Significant at the 10 percent level.

cant, while the effect of the tropic dummy is greatly reduced. Density, too, has the expected negative sign but is not statistically significant. Finally, we tried fragmentation and fragmentation squared to test the hypothesis of a U-shaped relationship between ethnic/linguistic/religious homogeneity and economic success. They are not yet significant. By limiting the data set to islands, we have reduced the sample size to thirty-one, which inevitably raises standard errors, and may possibly explain the statistical insignificance of many of these variables (remoteness, density, fragmentation).

Tables 8.4A, 8.4B, and 8.4C allow for conditional convergence in the islands data set by including initial income as a regressor. The base case has only initial income and size. In table 8.4A the initial year is 1968, the year of Mauritian independence. The coefficient on income is very close to 1, so that we can think of the results as pertaining to average growth rates over the period. That the coefficient is so close to 1 may also indicate that we have not done a good job finding other determinants of equilibrium income. (When the initial year is 1968 and we have only fifteen island observations, nothing

Table 8.4A **Islands from 1968**

Log of 2006 GDP per capita in constant year 2000 dollars

L_Ypc2k1968	1.003*** (0.108)	1.004*** (0.138)	0.956*** (0.103)	0.967*** (0.107)
L_Pop1968	-0.017 (0.047)	0.168 (0.270)	-0.004 (0.048)	0.008 (0.041)
Tradey6872		0.011 (0.016)		
L_Pden1968		0.010 (0.125)		
Remoteness		-0.731 (0.445)	-0.690** (0.321)	
Fragment				-9.065** (3.224)
Fragment ²				11.535** (5.115)
Cons	1.138 (0.985)	3.715 (5.966)	7.171** (2.873)	2.551** (0.859)
R ²	0.8325	0.9103	0.8511	0.8793
Root MSE	.66361	.6263	.64503	.59983
Obs.	20	15	20	20

***Significant at the 1 percent level.

**Significant at the 5 percent level.

*Significant at the 10 percent level.

Table 8.4B **Islands from 1976**

Log of 2006 GDP per capita in constant year 2000 dollars

L_Ypc2k1976	1.035*** (0.096)	1.083*** (0.082)	1.033*** (0.089)	0.977*** (0.089)	1.026*** (0.113)
L_Pop1976	0.034 (0.053)	0.218** (0.078)	0.190* (0.092)	0.038 (0.050)	0.040 (0.052)
Tradey7680		0.012*** (0.004)	0.010* (0.005)		
L_Pden1976			-0.020 (0.086)		
Remoteness			-0.522 (0.344)	-0.802** (0.284)	
Fragment					-6.060* (2.990)
Fragment ²					8.412* (4.787)
Cons	-0.175 (1.194)	-4.298** (1.641)	1.215 (3.930)	7.055* (2.456)	0.727 (1.300)
R ²	0.8649	0.9215	0.9302	0.8906	0.8800
Root MSE	.57133	.46467	.46616	.52690	.56627
Obs.	24	21	21	24	24

***Significant at the 1 percent level.

**Significant at the 5 percent level.

*Significant at the 10 percent level.

Table 8.4C Islands from 1996

Log of 2006 GDP per capita in constant year 2000 dollars

L_Ypc2k1996	1.037*** (0.022)	1.017*** (0.024)	1.024*** (0.022)	0.918*** (0.049)	0.894*** (0.043)	0.945*** (0.049)
L_Pop1996	0.000 (0.011)	0.000 (0.010)	0.012 (0.013)	-0.020 (0.021)	-0.017 (0.020)	-0.002 (0.015)
Tradey9600			0.002** (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.001* (0.001)
L_Pden1996				0.050 (0.031)	0.040 (0.030)	
WGI1996				0.216** (0.097)	0.233** (0.089)	0.157* (0.085)
Remoteness		-0.237** (0.110)			-0.207* (0.104)	
Cons	-0.106 (0.246)	2.089** (1.026)	-0.355 (0.274)	0.838 (0.525)	2.797** (0.988)	0.489 (0.476)
R ²	0.9793	0.9812	0.9818	0.9896	0.9908	0.9878
Root MSE	.20375	.19711	.19942	.18747	.18214	.19736
Obs.	40	40	36	22	22	22

***Significant at the 1 percent level.

**Significant at the 5 percent level.

*Significant at the 10 percent level.

else is significant. These results are in appendix table 4a.⁶⁵ If we drop the trade and density variables then we can expand the sample size to twenty.)

A limited specification estimated on twenty countries is enough to generate some significant results—at least when considering the nonbase variables one by one. Remoteness is significant, with the hypothesized negative effect. Significant coefficients on fragmentation (negative) and fragmentation squared (positive) support the U-shaped hypothesis: The suggestion is that either complete homogeneity or high fragmentation can be good for growth, but that a modest number of large ethnic/linguistic groups is bad for growth.

When the initial year is 1976, we have twenty-one to twenty-four observations, as shown in table 8.4B. Now both trade and size show significant positive effects. (Density is of the hypothesized sign but insignificant.) The negative effect of remoteness is now statistically significant, except when it has to compete with the trade variable. (The explanation could be either multicollinearity or a difference in sample size.) The U-shaped fragmentation relationship is again significant.

When we start the data in 1996, as shown in table 8.4C, we are able to expand the sample size further and also to use the Worldwide Governance

65. The appendix is available in the NBER Working Paper version of this chapter (no. 16569, December 2010).

Indicator Rule of Law index. The WGI is statistically significant, but trade loses much of its significant positive effect. Remoteness becomes a significantly negative influence even when it has to compete with the trade variable. Fragmentation loses statistical significance.

8.4.2 Performance across African Countries

Next we switch to a data set consisting of African countries (table 8.5A). Here we can use the Index of African Governance, which attempts to avoid some of the subjectivity of the other measures of institutional quality. We add a dummy variable for the island countries. We also add a variable defined as the ratio of coastline to land area. This variable will be zero for a landlocked country, small for the Congo, larger for coastal countries, and larger still for small islands. The purpose is to test if access to the sea is the key variable or if something else special about small islands emerges.

We see in table 8.5B that the coastal variable is positive and significant, but only when trade openness is not there to compete with it. A dummy variable for being landlocked is negative as expected, and significant, but again only when it does not have to compete with trade. (A country with at least a little sea access has an advantage of more than 50 percent over one that is landlocked.) It seems clear that the coastal and landlocked variables have their effects via trade. The reader who is concerned about the endogeneity

Table 8.5A Africa cross section

	Log of 2006 GDP per capita, PPP			
Tradey	0.0108*** (0.00294)	0.00968*** (0.00311)	0.0111*** (0.00292)	0.0100*** (0.00308)
L_pop	-0.337** (0.155)	-0.285* (0.152)	-0.141 (0.106)	-0.0703 (0.102)
L_area	0.196** (0.0873)	0.214** (0.0940)		
L_pden			-0.190** (0.0872)	-0.209** (0.0936)
FHdemys	0.0257* (0.0130)	-0.00879 (0.0166)	0.0257* (0.0130)	-0.00881 (0.0166)
Rule		0.0347** (0.0131)		0.0347** (0.0131)
Constant	9.172*** (1.966)	6.713*** (2.111)	9.120*** (1.959)	6.658*** (2.106)
R ²	0.438	0.541	0.435	0.538
Root MSE	0.858	0.785	0.860	0.787
Obs.	43	43	43	43

***Significant at the 1 percent level.

**Significant at the 5 percent level.

*Significant at the 10 percent level.

Table 8.5B Africa cross section with coastal variable

	Log of 2006 GDP per capita, PPP					
Coast_Area	0.00595 (0.528)	0.690** (0.341)	-0.0363 (0.539)	0.727** (0.346)	0.0658 (0.514)	0.683** (0.330)
Rule	0.0314*** (0.0105)	0.0339*** (0.00969)	0.0289*** (0.0106)	0.0304*** (0.00979)	0.0300*** (0.0102)	0.0297*** (0.0100)
Tradey	0.00908** (0.00433)		0.0101** (0.00434)		0.00964** (0.00424)	
L_pop	-0.293* (0.154)	-0.402** (0.150)	-0.293* (0.156)	-0.415** (0.158)	-0.294* (0.154)	-0.416** (0.158)
L_area	0.221** (0.0985)	0.225** (0.0922)	0.234** (0.0990)	0.237** (0.0944)	0.218** (0.0981)	0.250** (0.0972)
Landl	-0.354 (0.228)	-0.519** (0.233)				
Island	0.0286 (0.516)	-0.395 (0.446)	0.237 (0.511)	-0.154 (0.436)		
Cons	7.005*** (2.212)	9.327*** (2.183)	6.772*** (2.256)	9.385*** (2.290)	6.966*** (2.136)	9.283*** (2.178)
R ²	0.560	0.501	0.540	0.454	0.538	0.453
Root MSE	0.790	0.806	0.797	0.832	0.788	0.822
Obs.	43	46	43	46	43	46

***Significant at the 1 percent level.

**Significant at the 5 percent level.

*Significant at the 10 percent level.

of trade will prefer the versions that show coastline and landlockedness in place of trade, as they are much more exogenous. Across the specifications, the coefficient on the island dummy hovers around zero.

Remoteness is never statistically significant (and is omitted from the results reported here). One should not be too surprised that the remoteness variable does not work in the African context, even though it works well in the rest of the world. It uses straight line distances. Thus Tombouctou appears closer to Europe, and less remote, than does Accra, and Kisangani appears less remote than Maseru. These are not the right answers in a meaningful sense.

We add to the Africa regressions the measure of the rule of law from the Index of African Governance. It has a highly significant positive effect on income. The Freedom House measures of democracy do not do as well, though number of years under democracy (since independence) has a significant positive effect when it does not have to compete with rule of law. Population density has a significant negative effect. Size has no significant effect.

Tables 8.6A, 8.6B, 8.6C, and 8.6D allow for conditional convergence in the Africa data set by including initial income per capita as a regressor. The coefficient on initial income is very high, indeed insignificantly less than one. Even if one takes the point estimate at face value (.8 in the sample that starts in 1968, the year of Mauritian independence), it says that income converges

Table 8.6A Africa from 1960

Log of 2006 GDP per capita in constant year 2000 dollars				
L_ypc2k1960	0.809*** (0.217)	0.743** (0.319)	0.726*** (0.238)	0.770*** (0.184)
Tradey6064	-0.002 (0.008)	-0.002 (0.008)	-0.008 (0.010)	-0.014 (0.009)
L_pop1960	-0.239 (0.216)	-0.203 (0.198)	-0.199 (0.206)	-0.196 (0.213)
L_pden1960 ^a		-0.099 (0.223)	-0.160 (0.209)	-0.212 (0.204)
Remoteness			2.612 (1.817)	3.933** (1.576)
Island				-1.747*** (0.525)
Cons	4.966 (3.851)	5.064 (4.100)	-16.770 (14.682)	-27.851** (12.670)
R ²	0.4065	0.4165	0.5072	0.5940
Root MSE	.86818	.88318	.83387	.77887
Obs.	24	24	24	24

^aNo data for land area in 1960, so density is 1960 population/area in 1961.

***Significant at the 1 percent level.

**Significant at the 5 percent level.

*Significant at the 10 percent level.

Table 8.6B Africa from 1968

Log of 2006 GDP per capita in constant year 2000 dollars								
L_ypc2k1968	0.851*** (0.141)	0.890*** (0.192)	0.825*** (0.243)	0.780*** (0.199)	0.811 (0.171)	0.902*** (0.147)	0.795*** (0.136)	0.851*** (0.147)
L_pop1968	-0.176 (0.126)	-0.205 (0.199)	-0.173 (0.188)	-0.213 (0.214)	-0.242 (0.222)	-0.097 (0.144)	-0.172 (0.115)	-0.176 (0.138)
Tradey6872		-0.006 (0.011)	-0.005 (0.011)	-0.009 (0.011)	-0.013 (0.010)			
L_pden1968			-0.098 (0.149)	-0.148 (0.151)	-0.178 (0.150)			
Remoteness				1.976 (1.498)	2.834* (1.422)		1.492 (1.150)	
Island					-1.415*** (0.455)			-0.001 (0.509)
Fragment						-1.170 (5.626)		
Fragment ²						0.185 (4.976)		
Cons	3.661 (2.404)	4.175 (3.146)	4.315 (3.350)	-11.331 (10.904)	-18.038* (10.425)	2.854 (2.269)	-8.774 (8.962)	3.662 (2.508)
R ²	0.5719	0.4589	0.4726	0.5351	0.5950	0.5878	0.6019	0.5719
Root MSE	.73975	.7515	.75715	.72619	.69304	.75436	.72696	.75384
Obs.	30	29	29	29	29	30	30	30

***Significant at the 1 percent level.

**Significant at the 5 percent level.

*Significant at the 10 percent level.

Table 8.6C Africa from 1976

	Log of 2006 GDP per capita in constant year 2000 dollars							
L_ypc2k1976	0.940*** (0.117)	0.913*** (0.133)	0.924*** (0.124)	0.881*** (0.113)	0.860*** (0.121)	1.013*** (0.124)	0.880*** (0.107)	0.910*** (0.120)
L_pop1976	-0.124* (0.073)	-0.086 (0.110)	-0.082 (0.107)	-0.104 (0.120)	-0.085 (0.128)	-0.002 (0.082)	-0.110 (0.070)	-0.104 (0.084)
Tradey7680		0.002 (0.006)	0.002 (0.006)	0.000 (0.006)	0.001 (0.006)			
L_pden1976			0.053 (0.090)	0.013 (0.102)	0.000 (0.105)			
Remoteness				1.263 (1.128)	1.135 (1.167)		1.326* (0.757)	
Island					0.217 (0.510)			0.385 (0.463)
Fragment						0.474 (3.781)		
Fragment ²						-1.746 (3.427)		
Cons	2.256 (1.365)	1.703 (1.773)	1.421 (1.819)	-8.517 (8.207)	-7.612 (8.468)	0.444 (1.533)	-8.893 (6.310)	2.102 (1.424)
R ²	0.7309	0.7327	0.7367	0.7530	0.7548	0.7715	0.7527	0.7387
Root MSE	.6172	.62558	.63188	.62329	0.6982	.58863	.60171	.61851
Obs.	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33

***Significant at the 1 percent level.

**Significant at the 5 percent level.

*Significant at the 10 percent level.

only 20 percent of the way to its long-run equilibrium over the span of thirty-eight years. Most of the other variables are not significant, probably because of the small sample size. When the data sample starts in 1996, we raise the sample size to forty-one. Now size has the expected positive sign, and at moderate significance levels. The other coefficients are of the expected signs, but of low significance. Tables 8.7A, 8.7B, 8.7C, and 8.7D repeat conditional convergence across African countries, but with landlocked dummy now added back in.

8.4.3 Findings from the Econometrics

What have we learned from the regressions, across African countries or across island countries? There is some confirmation, in the island results, that small size is a disadvantage but that trade can help make up for it (less so within Africa). Access to the sea is important. Landlocked African countries are at a disadvantage, as is well known.⁶⁶ But beyond sea access, there does not seem to anything special about islands per se. And straight-line

66. Everything else equal, of course. Landlockedness has not stopped Botswana, nor has a long coastline mattered enough to save Somalia.

Table 8.6D Africa from 1996

Log of 2006 GDP per capita in constant year 2000 dollars						
L_ypc2k1996	1.009*** (0.051)	1.052*** (0.049)	1.050*** (0.050)	1.017*** (0.054)	1.017*** (0.056)	1.009*** (0.057)
L_pop1996	-0.032 (0.055)	0.042 (0.028)	0.040 (0.028)	0.062* (0.035)	0.062* (0.036)	0.068* (0.035)
Tradey9600		0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)
L_pden1996			-0.007 (0.023)	-0.020 (0.026)	-0.020 (0.026)	-0.029 (0.030)
Wgi1996				0.101 (0.063)	0.101 (0.067)	0.096 (0.067)
Remoteness					-0.002 (0.304)	-0.034 (0.315)
Island						0.145 (0.162)
Fragment						
Fragment ²						
Cons	0.647 (1.075)	-0.838 (0.587)	-0.784 (0.617)	-0.811 (0.682)	-0.797 (2.506)	-0.571 (2.544)
R ²	0.8966	0.9636	0.9637	0.9601	0.9601	0.9612
Root MSE	.37575	.21367	.21625	.21651	.21967	.21992
Obs.	45	43	43	41	41	41
L_ypc2k1996	1.045*** (0.077)	1.011*** (0.058)	1.015*** (0.052)	1.015*** (0.056)		
L_pop1996	-0.059 (0.078)	-0.032 (0.055)	-0.041 (0.068)	0.003 (0.056)		
Tradey9600						
L_pden1996						
Wgi1996	-0.101 (0.141)					
Remoteness		-0.025 (0.303)				
Island			-0.119 (0.205)			
Fragment				-0.151 (1.147)		
Fragment ²				-0.215 (0.973)		
Cons	0.782 (1.096)	0.849 (2.873)	0.764 (1.231)	0.247 (1.171)		
R ²	0.8865	0.8966	0.8974	.38037		
Root MSE	.38052	.38029	.37874	0.8991		
Obs.	43	45	45	45		

***Significant at the 1 percent level.

**Significant at the 5 percent level.

*Significant at the 10 percent level.

Table 8.7A Africa from 1960 with landlocked dummy

	Log of 2006 GDP per capita in constant year 2000 dollars			
L_ypc2k1960	0.844*** (0.261)	0.760* (0.385)	0.615* (0.334)	0.472 (0.303)
L_pop1960	-0.220 (0.213)	-0.197 (0.209)	-0.237 (0.211)	-0.303 (0.205)
Landl	0.110 (0.390)	0.0445 (0.386)	-0.283 (0.508)	-0.809 (0.517)
Tradey6064	-0.00130 (0.00784)	-0.00181 (0.00823)	-0.00892 (0.0112)	-0.0200** (0.00926)
L_pden1960 ^a		-0.0948 (0.227)	-0.194 (0.240)	-0.330 (0.237)
Remoteness			2.924 (2.334)	5.354** (2.057)
Island				-2.448** (0.870)
Cons	4.422 (3.897)	4.840 (4.666)	-17.95 (17.40)	-35.66** (15.52)
R ²	0.408	0.417	0.516	0.655
Root MSE	0.889	0.907	0.850	0.740
Obs.	24	24	24	24

^aNo data for land area in 1960, so density is 1960 population/area in 1961.

***Significant at the 1 percent level.

**Significant at the 5 percent level.

*Significant at the 10 percent level.

Table 8.7B Africa from 1968 with landlocked dummy

	Log of 2006 GDP per capita in constant year 2000 dollars							
L_ypc2k1968	0.937*** (0.149)	0.955*** (0.205)	0.884*** (0.251)	0.722** (0.276)	0.605** (0.282)	0.977*** (0.187)	0.836*** (0.151)	0.934*** (0.157)
L_pop1968	-0.154 (0.114)	-0.169 (0.185)	-0.153 (0.184)	-0.236 (0.223)	-0.341 (0.209)	-0.0815 (0.137)	-0.163 (0.109)	-0.151 (0.124)
Landl	0.249 (0.342)	0.237 (0.340)	0.173 (0.310)	-0.153 (0.462)	-0.579 (0.534)	0.226 (0.343)	0.107 (0.318)	0.253 (0.345)
Tradey6872		-0.00477 (0.0116)	-0.00480 (0.0116)	-0.00976 (0.0120)	-0.0178 (0.0106)			
L_pden1968			-0.0808 (0.141)	-0.170 (0.185)	-0.270 (0.201)			
Remoteness				2.211 (2.039)	4.050* (2.156)		1.377 (1.144)	
Island					-1.956** (0.864)			0.0558 (0.490)
Fragment						-1.108 (5.790)		
Fragment ²						0.171 (5.123)		
Cons	2.740 (2.024)	3.107 (2.680)	3.510 (3.090)	-12.48 (13.85)	-24.95 (14.95)	2.057 (2.548)	-8.218 (8.973)	2.704 (2.125)
R ²	0.581	0.469	0.478	0.538	0.629	0.595	0.603	0.581
Root MSE	0.746	0.760	0.770	0.740	0.679	0.763	0.740	0.761
Obs.	30	29	29	29	29	30	30	30

***Significant at the 1 percent level.

**Significant at the 5 percent level.

*Significant at the 10 percent level.

Table 8.7C Africa from 1976 with landlocked dummy

	Log of 2006 GDP per capita in constant year 2000 dollars							
L_ypc2k1976	1.024*** (0.134)	1.005*** (0.169)	1.038*** (0.150)	0.984*** (0.146)	0.966*** (0.147)	1.069*** (0.148)	0.950*** (0.135)	0.998*** (0.129)
L_pop1976	-0.0962 (0.0641)	-0.0746 (0.104)	-0.0658 (0.0950)	-0.0836 (0.108)	-0.0487 (0.109)	0.00373 (0.0803)	-0.0939 (0.0656)	-0.0651 (0.0713)
Landl	0.344 (0.237)	0.334 (0.255)	0.395 (0.250)	0.299 (0.233)	0.349 (0.234)	0.245 (0.227)	0.240 (0.245)	0.401 (0.244)
Tradey7680		0.00130 (0.00601)	0.00107 (0.00595)	0.000195 (0.00624)	0.00117 (0.00624)			
L_pden1976			0.0810 (0.0844)	0.0493 (0.101)	0.0335 (0.104)			
Remoteness				0.797 (1.055)	0.513 (1.127)		1.054 (0.760)	
Island					0.353 (0.425)			0.507 (0.444)
Fragment						0.867 (3.958)		
Fragment ²						-1.953 (3.516)		
Cons	1.207 (1.260)	0.904 (1.504)	0.325 (1.332)	-5.682 (7.776)	-3.744 (8.361)	-0.242 (1.744)	-7.340 (6.231)	0.831 (1.228)
R ²	0.748	0.748	0.757	0.763	0.767	0.780	0.760	0.761
Root MSE	0.608	0.618	0.618	0.623	0.629	0.589	0.603	0.602
Obs.	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33

***Significant at the 1 percent level.

**Significant at the 5 percent level.

*Significant at the 10 percent level.

distances are not very relevant in Africa, given that most trade has to go to a coastal port first.

Institutional measures make a big difference. Democratic institutions per se are not as important as rule of law. But institutions immediately bring up the question of endogeneity, as does trade. If trade and rule of law lead to good economics in Africa as elsewhere, but remoteness, tropics, and fragmentation can't explain variation in trade, rule of law, and incomes within Africa, what can explain relative performance within Africa? How did a small, remote, ethnically divided country like Mauritius achieve success?

8.5 So What is the Answer?

Mauritian success really divides into two distinct accomplishments. The first big accomplishment is that manufacturing took root after independence in 1968. The second is that the country was able to adjust relatively well to subsequent shocks, such as the oil price increases of the 1970s and further trade shocks in later decades, particularly the loss of sugar and textile preferences.

Table 8.7D Africa from 1996 with landlocked dummy

	Log of 2006 GDP per capita in constant year 2000 dollars					
L_ypc2k1996	1.010*** (0.0578)	1.070*** (0.0489)	1.069*** (0.0499)	1.038*** (0.0601)	1.045*** (0.0707)	1.045*** (0.0723)
L_pop1996	-0.0319 (0.0562)	0.0462 (0.0279)	0.0458 (0.0282)	0.0626* (0.0355)	0.0658* (0.0353)	0.0762** (0.0333)
Landl	0.00997 (0.0966)	0.118* (0.0666)	0.118* (0.0672)	0.0836 (0.0767)	0.0923 (0.0897)	0.123 (0.0999)
Tradey9600		0.000542 (0.00137)	0.000539 (0.00138)	0.000561 (0.00162)	0.000672 (0.00167)	0.000940 (0.00165)
L_pden1996			-0.00210 (0.0216)	-0.0145 (0.0246)	-0.0124 (0.0265)	-0.0228 (0.0285)
Wgi1996				0.0747 (0.0688)	0.0753 (0.0702)	0.0595 (0.0696)
Remoteness					-0.102 (0.358)	-0.181 (0.396)
Island						0.201 (0.154)
Fragment						
Fragment ²						
Cons	0.635 (1.165)	-1.066* (0.595)	-1.049* (0.617)	-1.027 (0.719)	-0.264 (2.780)	0.229 (2.957)
R ²	0.897	0.966	0.966	0.961	0.961	0.963
Root MSE	0.380	0.209	0.212	0.216	0.219	0.217
Obs.	45	43	43	41	41	41
L_ypc2k1996	1.061*** (0.0904)	1.013*** (0.0684)	1.015*** (0.0573)	1.014*** (0.0619)		
L_pop1996	-0.0593 (0.0793)	-0.0316 (0.0565)	-0.0412 (0.0715)	0.00360 (0.0554)		
Landl	0.0664 (0.0879)	0.0121 (0.102)	-0.00331 (0.115)	-0.0125 (0.107)		
Tradey9600						
L_pden1996						
Wgi1996	-0.122 (0.150)					
Remoteness		-0.0353 (0.323)				
Island			-0.120 (0.231)			
Fragment				-0.141 (1.158)		
Fragment ²				-0.229 (0.986)		
Cons	0.661 (1.146)	0.917 (2.864)	0.769 (1.372)	0.253 (1.211)		
R ²	0.887	0.897	0.897	0.899		
Root MSE	0.384	0.385	0.383	0.385		
Obs.	43	45	45	45		

***Significant at the 1 percent level.

**Significant at the 5 percent level.

*Significant at the 10 percent level.

8.5.1 Policies

One can list many of the specific policies that led to these two achievements:

- **Education.** Mauritius has long invested heavily in quality schooling. Sir Ramgoolam boldly granted free education to all citizens. As a result, the country has achieved a high rate of literacy: 87 percent in 2007. Scholarships promote study abroad. Successful recycling of export rents contributed to the fiscal position that made all this investment in human capital possible.
- **The Export Processing Zone.** We have already noted the importance attributed to the decision to segment manufacturing exports from the rest of the economy by means of favorable tax policy and labor policy, and to encourage foreign direct investment by Chinese businessmen to start the textile and apparel industry.⁶⁷
- **Favorable Trade Preferences from Britain, Europe, and the United States.** We have seen that the discrimination in favor of Mauritian exports in its major markets was more than enough to overcome what, at least at the beginning, was an antitrade bias to national policy. Obviously these preferences were not policies set directly by Mauritians. Good luck must be given its due. This includes the good luck to have had multiple powerful patrons in the world, whether on geopolitical or sentimental grounds, going back to the time when the island was the strategic crossroads of the East India trade. But Mauritian leaders were not merely passive beneficiaries in winning these trade preferences, their diplomats worked actively to negotiate them.
- **International Diplomacy.** When the United Kingdom joined the Common Market, the Commonwealth sugar preferences were replaced by the 1975 Sugar Protocol of the Lomé Convention. It happened that African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) sugar producers were negotiating terms for the access of their product at a time (1974) when world prices were very high. Most chose the option of relatively small European Economic Community (EEC) quotas, seduced by transitorily high world prices. But Mauritius negotiated a large quota at the domestic EEC price. Even though the EEC price was well below the world price then, during most of the time since it has been far above, due to the political power of European farmers domestically. Thus the decision by Mauritius to place priority on quantity turns out to have been a brilliant strategy. Sugar exports to Europe produced large rents for many years thereafter.⁶⁸ The government was able to capture part of these rents and

67. Brautigam (1997, 1999), Romer (1992), Subramanian (2001, 2009).

68. Sugar rents were 5.4 percent of GDP on average, and in some years much higher Subramanian (2001).

1 use the revenue for social spending; another part of the rents went to
 2 investment.⁶⁹ From the beginning Mauritian leaders took diplomatic
 3 steps to maintain good relationships with many countries, for example,
 4 recognizing a single China very early.

- 5 • **A Competitive Exchange Rate.** The IMF-recommended devaluations
 6 restored competitiveness in the early 1980s and put exports back on a
 7 vigorous footing. But Mauritius had a competitively valued currency
 8 during most of its history, compared with many African and Latin
 9 American countries.⁷⁰ This, like the trade preferences, helped promote
 10 trade.

11 8.5.2 Political Institutions

12 The question that previous authors have understandably had a harder
 13 time answering is why Mauritius made these sound policy choices when so
 14 many other countries did not. To be sure, if we were to say that the coun-
 15 try was lucky enough to have good leaders who made good decisions, that
 16 would not be an altogether discouraging moral. Such a conclusion might
 17 help to let modern policymakers realize that they have free will at times when
 18 they feel they are completely constrained by history and politics. But some
 19 other authors have tried to go further to explain institutional choices, and
 20 so should we.
 21

22 Is it just luck that good decisions were made around the time of indepen-
 23 dence? If so, what accounts for the second half of Mauritian success, the
 24 ability to continue making relatively good decisions to adjust to the various
 25 shocks that came along in the 1970s and early in the twenty-first century?
 26

27 *Leadership*

28 An answer to the second question is that many of the good decisions
 29 that were made around the time of independence involved the setting up
 30 of institutions—or the adoption of practices that soon turned into institu-
 31 tions—and that these subsequently served the country well.⁷¹ The institu-
 32 tions were put in place primarily by a combination of the decolonizers and
 33 the first prime minister, Ramgoolam.

34 Brautigam (1999, 144):

35 Indeed, Mauritius was fortunate to have leaders who agreed to conduct
 36 their political competition within the boundaries of democratic rules and
 37 who saw early on that labor-intensive manufacturing for export could pro-
 38 vide the employment required by the rapidly growing population. How-
 39 ever once the “defining moment” of independence had passed, the rules
 40

41 69. Brautigam (1999), Subramanian (2009).

42 70. Imam and Manoiu (2008); African Economic Outlook (2008, 431).

43 71. Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson (2002) tell an analogous story for Botswana, attrib-
 44 uting good policies to good institutions and then in turn tracing back the origins of the good
 institutions.

of democracy and the other institutions established in that time created the constraints . . . for political action.

Or Brautigam (1999, 158):

Although the institutions put in place at the time of independence were established to solve the immediate problem of economic and political instability in an ethnically diverse land, they also created a set of norms, procedures, and constraints that continued to shape political and economic strategies and behavior in the post-independence decades.

The Parliamentary System

The rules and institutions that Brautigam has in mind concern first and foremost the Mauritian parliamentary system. During the preparations for independence, elites from different ethnic groups deadlocked over whether delegates should be elected by proportional representation. The British proposed pure proportional representation, but the Labour Party rejected it on grounds that it would fragment the political process too much. They wanted instead single-member districts, which they would dominate. Other ethnic groups, naturally, wanted arrangements that would ensure them more representation. The British brought in the three-member Banwell Commission to work out a solution with the various parties in 1967. The system that resulted features twenty districts with three members each (and two additional from the small island of Rodriguez). The three candidates in each district to get the most votes are elected. But the electoral commission can seat an additional eight of the unsuccessful candidates with the highest number of votes as “best losers,” which works to ensure representation by all minority groups.⁷² Furthermore, the boundaries of the districts were constructed to give bias to rural constituencies, which counteracts what Bates (1981) sees as a bias to urban constituencies in much of mainland Africa.

The need to form coalitions requires consensus building, encourages inclusion (so that nobody seeks routes outside the system), and produces moderation in policy making. Positions in the government have been shared out. Cabinet posts have been allocated to achieve ethnic balance.⁷³ Various minorities have also been represented at other levels of public management.⁷⁴

72. Bowman (1991, 33–42), Brautigam (1999, 146), Selvon (2005, 436), and Subramanian (2009, fn 17). Some object to the best-loser system because it perpetuates communalism. Ali Mansoor points out that the nation building might have been even more successful if the “best loser” way of assuring minority representation had been supplemented by a provision for seating in parliament some top vote-getters who represented no ethnic group or geographic district, but instead the country as a whole.

73. Auty (2009a).

74. The share of Muslims and Chinese in the Senior Public Service rose in the first three decades after independence. The share of Hindus had been a bit higher than in the general population ever since independence, but had not risen as of 1995. The Chinese had 10 percent

No Army

Another institutional choice made at the beginning was to forego a standing army. As with Costa Rica, its neighbors (such as the Comoros) chose differently; and as with Costa Rica, the “pacifist” route has paid off subsequently. Military spending in Mauritius in 1992 was only \$6 per capita, equal to 0.45 percent of GDP or 4 percent of spending on education and health. These statistics for other sub-Saharan countries are far higher, averaging \$20 per capita, 2.8 percent of GDP, and 43 percent of education and health spending.⁷⁵ Brautigam points out the dual benefit to Mauritius: on the one hand, financial savings, and on the other hand freedom from the military coups that have plagued so many other African countries. One could argue that an island country has less need of an army than a mainland country;⁷⁶ but Cape Verde, the Seychelles, and the Comoros all spend substantially higher percentages of GDP on defense.

Institutions Chosen around the Time of Independence

To summarize what we mean by institutions:

- No expropriation or taxing away of the Franco-Mauritians’ sugar plantations, which both allowed them to give up political power and established the importance of property rights;
- a politically, economically, and socially stable environment, with rule of law, respect for property rights, and so forth;
- no single elite group was in a position to dominate the others;
- vigorous political opposition and media;
- parliamentary structure: coalition governments and comprehensive participation (representation for rural districts and ethnic minorities, best loser system, power sharing in cabinet); and
- no army.

8.5.3 The Deepest Determinants and Lessons

If good policies were not attributable solely to accidents of personalities or history, but also to good institutions that were put in place at independence, this just pushes the question back another step. When those institutions were put in place, was it attributable solely to accidents of personali-

(vs. 2 percent of the population), the Creoles had 13 percent (vs. 28 percent of the population), English/French have been reduced to zero, non-Muslim Indians steady at 68 percent (vs. 52 percent of the population), and Muslims 9 percent (vs. 17 percent of the population) (Carroll and Carroll 1997, 476).

75. Brautigam (1999, 153). Her source is the *Human Development Report 1995* from UNDP.

76. Mauritius has in fact suffered the loss of territory to external military force. The United States and United Kingdom took the Chagos Islands in order to build the base of Diego Garcia, without the permission of either the islanders or Mauritius. Of course Mauritius has hardly been in a position to resist, with or without an army, but small size has not stopped other countries from futile military endeavors.

1 ties or history? If we dig deeper can we still find some more fundamental
2 determinants as to why here and not somewhere else?
3

4 *Colonialists*

5 In many ways the British administrators in the end served the future
6 nation well. It is relevant that very few British settlers arrived in the nine-
7 teenth century to displace the Franco-Mauriciens, who remained in place
8 as the land-owning elite. Thus when independence came, the British did
9 not have to protect the European settlers to the same extent as in Kenya
10 or other countries. At the time of independence, they helped broker the
11 power-sharing structure, in which the Franco-Mauriciens kept their sugar
12 plantations, while surrendering political power.

13 It was also useful that the British took their time to prepare the colony
14 for independence in a way that was not true of most African countries. That
15 the process was drawn out to 1968 is to some extent attributable to the lack
16 of enthusiasm for independence on the part of almost half the population.
17

18 *Cosmopolitanism*

19 Even though Mauritius ceased to be the crossroads of the Indian Ocean
20 when the Suez Canal opened, it retained its cosmopolitan character and
21 mind-set. This is another respect in which it resembles the entrepôt city-
22 states, not just Singapore, but also Hong Kong and Dubai. This cosmopoli-
23 tanism came in handy in the process of economic development. Ethnic links
24 to China and India led directly to the rise of the textile and apparel sector
25 and the financial center, respectively.
26

27 *Lessons for Others*

28 There are at least three possible lessons that can be applied to the rest of
29 Africa. First, trade is the key to growth, especially for a small country. Geo-
30 graphic impediments to trade can be counteracted in other ways, including
31 a competitive exchange rate and regional free trade areas. Second, a well-
32 designed electoral system can accommodate ethnic diversity—even harness
33 it for good. Although oppressive rule by a single group is not conducive to
34 development, the opposite extreme of ethnically blind democracy is not
35 necessarily feasible in all countries. Deliberate steps to assure representation
36 of each ethnic group might be necessary. Third, democracies can achieve
37 economic reform, and perhaps in a more sustainable way than autocracies.
38

39 *The Puzzle*

40 All this has been noted by other authors, but some ingredient seems to
41 be missing. Something having to do with the intriguing puzzle noted at
42 the beginning of the chapter, that four of the most successful countries in
43 Africa are islands. Some superior cultural values of the Indians? No. For
44 one thing, while Mauritius was industrializing, India itself was stagnating

1 with a miserable “Hindu rate of growth.” Meanwhile, countries like Cape
2 Verde have done well, with no Indians.⁷⁷

3
4 *Immigrant Isles*

5 What do Mauritius, Seychelles, and Cape Verde have in common? Each
6 was uninhabited three centuries ago.⁷⁸ Everyone who is there came from
7 somewhere else, in modern times. The same is true of famously successful
8 Singapore versus, for example, benighted Sri Lanka.

9 Why does it help if everyone is an immigrant? Two possible theories.
10 One theory is that migrants self-select for vigor and initiative, and they pass
11 these traits down to their descendants. Another theory is that most countries
12 have nativist factions, children of the soil, who resent newcomers regard-
13 less of their merit or perhaps because of their merit. If everyone came from
14 somewhere else, nobody can claim special privileges.

15 Consider a less successful small country that can serve as a comparator
16 with Mauritius because they have some important things in common: Fiji.
17 The tropical island economy has long been based on sugar, with indentured
18 Indian workers brought to work the fields, and was supplemented more
19 recently by tourism. Ethnic Indians became a majority of the Fijian popula-
20 tion in the 1940s.⁷⁹ But the first time an ethnic Indian was elected prime min-
21 ister in 1999 (even though from a party that included many native Fijians),
22 he was soon overthrown in a coup. The climate has been sufficiently bad for
23 the Indians since then, so that a high percentage of them have emigrated. As
24 a result of the political instability and the loss of the Indians, the economy
25 has done poorly. What was the key difference between Mauritius and Fiji? I
26 believe it is that the native Fijians always resented the newcomers, whereas
27 there were no native Mauritian (except the unfortunate dodo bird).

28 A combination of the two theories, immigrant initiative and absence of
29 nativist resentment, would emphasize the benefits when everyone feels they
30 have a common stake in building a new nation together.

31 Having said that, Mauritius illustrates that the ideal of an identity-blind
32 meritocracy, however desirable, is not essential. The important thing is for
33 everyone to feel included. Some degree of power sharing along ethnic lines in
34 some circumstances might help achieve this goal rather than hurt it. Another
35 lesson for countries in Africa and elsewhere? History cannot be rewound.
36 But any country can adopt policies that are inclusive to all its ethnic groups

37
38
39
40 ^{77.} Macedo and Pereira (2009) conclude that a combination of globalization and governance
41 helps explain the success of Cape Verde, where emigrants’ remittances are a major source of
42 income.

43 ^{78.} If we go back to 1493, then we can add São Tomé and Príncipe to the list.

44 ^{79.} Leuprecht (2011) makes much of the fact that, because the Indian migration occurred
later in Fiji than in Mauritius, the population was younger and faster growing around the time
of independence.

1 rather than exclusive and that are more welcoming to immigrants, past and
2 future. This is perhaps the fourth of the lessons.

3 4 8.5.4 Summary

5 While tropicalness, remoteness, small size, and landlockedness go a long
6 way to explaining why Africa overall has done less well than some other
7 regions economically, these variables do not help much to explain relative
8 success within Africa (with the exception that access to the sea makes a
9 difference). Tropicalness does not show up because almost all sub-Saharan
10 countries share it. (The exceptions are South Africa, Lesotho, and Swazi-
11 land.) Remoteness does not show up, if measured by straight-line distances,
12 because the problem of getting from the interior to the nearest seaport mat-
13 ters more in Africa than in most parts of the world. It is less clear why small
14 African countries do not seem on average to suffer much the usual disad-
15 vantage relative to larger countries with economies of scale; it may reflect
16 the success of several small countries, especially the three top-performing
17 island countries—Mauritius, Seychelles, and Cape Verde—itself a puzzle
18 considered by this chapter.

19 Mauritius has made some policy decisions that have promoted strong
20 economic performance, including the establishment of the EPZ, diplomacy
21 regarding trade preferences, spending on education, avoiding currency over-
22 valuation, facilitation of business, and so on. These policies can be attrib-
23 uted both to successful deliberate choices of individuals and to successful
24 political institutions, particularly a parliamentary system that builds consen-
25 sus by representing all groups. The successful political institutions, in turn,
26 were the outcome both of decisions made at the time of independence, by
27 the first prime minister together with the outgoing colonial rulers, and of
28 some still deeper underlying causes. Any country can in principle adopt good
29 institutions and good policies at any time. But in the case of Mauritius, the
30 deep underlying origins include a cosmopolitan population with an unusual
31 combination of ethnicities: Franco-Mauritians and Creoles who were will-
32 ing at the time of independence to trade off their past domination of political
33 power for guarantees under the new system, Indians who were willing to take
34 the other side of the bargain, and Chinese who had links to their country of
35 origin. And, as with the Seychelles, Cape Verde, and São Tomé and Príncipe,
36 everyone in Mauritius came from somewhere else.

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