The Civets: a guide to the countries bearing the world's hopes for growth

Another wave of fast-growing economies is starting to emerge behind developing-world giants such as China and Brazil – and western investors are already taking a keen interest

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Tea production in a factory in Vietnam, one of the six rapidly industrialising 'Civets' countries. Photograph: Kham/Reuters

With many developed markets still reeling from the credit crunch and subsequent recession, the Civets are being targeted as some of the countries most likely to deliver sustained growth.

The term "Civets" – Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa – was pioneered by former HSBC chief executive Michael Geoghegan last year, and brings together a group of emerging markets tipped as the next big bet for growth. The Civets – the acronym forms the name of a small nocturnal mammal – follows on from another group of emerging nations known as the "Brics": Brazil, Russia, India and China. They are spread widely around the world but do share a number of similarities, notably young populations. Their economies are also perceived to have relatively sophisticated financial systems and to not be overly reliant on any one sector.

HSBC Global Asset Management rolled out the first Civets investment fund earlier this year.

COLOMBIA

Already a key target for foreign investment, analysts hail Colombia's pro-business government, which has been reinvesting oil revenues in infrastructure. Colombia is the third largest exporter of oil to the US.

The country's main industries apart from oil are textiles, food processing, clothing, footwear, beverages, chemicals, cement, gold, coal and emeralds. Its economy grew 4.3% in 2010, compared with 2.8% for the US.

Its population of almost 45 million is made up of 27% 0-14 year-olds and 67% 15-64 year-olds, giving it a median age of 28, compared with 40 for the US and UK.

Growth in 2010 4.3% Median age 28

INDONESIA

According to managers of the Civets fund at HSBC, Indonesia's primary attraction is its 'vast pool of educated manpower, giving it the lowest unit labour costs in the Asia-Pacific region'. They add: "The government is ambitious to emerge as a credible manufacturing hub and now has the ability to deliver infrastructure improvements more rapidly."

With an estimated population of 245.6 million, Indonesia is the fourth most populous country in the world. Almost half the economy is industrial.

Growth in 2010 6.1% Median age 28.2

VIETNAM

Vietnam has already been targeted as a potentially profitable new manufacturing hub in Asia, with foreign firms and investors focusing on its relatively low labour costs in particular. Its economy is 41% industrial.

But some analysts have raised concerns about its uncertain outlook for interest rates and inflationary pressures, and the country continues to pursue a fast-growth policy. Downgrading Vietnam earlier this year, Standard & Poor's warned that its banking system was vulnerable to shocks and raised concerns about bad debts.

Growth in 2010 6.8% Median age 27.8

EGYPT

Egypt's fast-growing ports on the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, joined by the Suez canal, are seen as potentially important trade hubs to connect Europe and Africa. The fund managers at HSBC believe the turmoil of the Arab spring, which tore through Egypt earlier this year, will not have a lasting effect on growth.

'While the country has endured recent unrest, which could slow growth in the short term, once the political situation has settled down, we believe Egypt will regain its growth trajectory,' they say.

Growth in 2010 5.1% Median age 24.3

TURKEY

Turkey spent the last decade reforming its economy and democracy. In 2005 it began accession talks with the European Union and already benefits from strong trade and investment relations with the EU. In 2010 agriculture made up roughly 10% of the economy, industry 27% and services 64%.

Growth in 2010 8.2% Median age 28.5

SOUTH AFRICA

The most developed country in Africa, foreign investors have long been attracted to South Africa's rich natural resources, in particular gold. But the country had the slowest growth of all the Civets last year and has suffered unemployment of 25%.

There are concerns that South Africa is recovering more slowly than its neighbours. The latest World Economic Outlook from the International Monetary Fund noted: 'A surge in unemployment, high household debt, low capacity utilisation, the slowdown in advanced economies, and substantial real exchange-rate appreciation are making for a hesitant recovery.'

The IMF is forecasting growth of 3.4% in 2011 and 3.6% in 2012. Still, that compares favourably with the IMF's 2012 outlook for US growth, put at 1.8%, and the UK, at 1.6%.

Growth in 2010 2.8% Median age 25