African History through the lens of Economics

Questions and Answers - Week 5

Tuesday March 1, Main Lecture 5: The Scramble for Africa *with Stelios Michalopoulos and Jeffrey Herbst*

Wednesday March 2, Special Lecture 7: A Closer Look at South Africa and Nigeria from Colonization *with Nonso Obikili, and Johan Fourie*

Please visit our course website to access the recorded lectures and slides of each session. Due to the high volume of questions received during the live Q&A, we have prepared this document, which addresses a selection of questions that were not possible to answer during the lecture.

1. How comparable is border creation or border emergence between Europe and Africa?

An interesting assessment of the artificiality of borders across the world was devised by Alesina et al. (2011). They use two measures of artificiality: (1) whether a political border splits an ethnic group into different countries, and (2) whether a land border is close to a straight line. We reproduce Table 7 of their paper here:

TABLE 7. Partitioned and fractal variables.

Country	Partitioned	Fractal	Country	Partitioned	Fractal
Afghanistan	74.7	0.0387784	Laos	–	0.0443039
Albania	10.7	0.0549994	Latvia	42.4	0.0323801
Algeria	20	0.013163	Lebanon	18	0.0682286
Andorra	55.1	–	Lesotho	15	0.0400953
Angola	20.77	0.0165523	Liberia	28.9	0.0459384
Argentina	0.15	0.0344787	Libya	0	0.0029258
Armenia	0	0.0627588	Liechtenstein	6.2	0.0495613
Australia	0	–	Lithuania	17.5	0.0483234
Austria	–	0.0555577	Luxembourg	22.6	0.10436
Azerbaijan	7.8	0.0576272	Macedonia	30.9	–
Bahrain	0	–	Malawi	66	0.0412763
Bangladesh	–	0.0803165	Malaysia	28.1	0.0532849
Belarus	18.4	0.0502272	Mali	89	0.025853
Belgium	63.9	0.0708405	Malta	0	–
Belize	6.6	0.0205279	Mauritania	–	0.015962
Benin	37.4	0.0365344	Mexico	0	0.0243315
Bhutan	–	0.02744	Moldova	28.9	0.0808332
Bolivia	60.76	0.028772	Monaco	63	–
Bosnia-Herzegovina	54.1	0.0694794	Mongolia	5.9	0.0194791
Botswana	17.1	0.0294423	Morocco	40	0.0056441
Brazil	0.1	0.0415929	Mozambique	75	–
Brunei	100	–	Myanmar	1.4	0.0480375
Bulgaria	20.7	0.0319928	Namibia	64.6	0.0237068
Burkina Faso	73.1	0.036303	Nepal	–	0.0417655
Burundi	97.4	0.0467118	Netherlands	6.1	0.0929256
Cambodia	10.9	0.0473892	New Zealand	0	–
Cameroon	37.3	0.0351837	Nicaragua	0	0.0379603
Canada	0	0.0120471	Niger	73.4	0.0176729
Central African Republic	43.8	0.0418999	Nigeria	58	0.0316343
Chad	51.4	0.0175157	Norway	1	0.016572
Chile	0.5	0.0309559	Oman	0	0.0151743
China	–	0.036679	Pakistan	57	0.0266516
Colombia	1	0.0348071	Panama	1.4	–
Congo	–	0.0261842	Papua New Guinea	–	−0.0056359
Congo, Dem Rep (Zaire)	–	0.0241071	Paraguay	5.2	0.0331543
Costa Rica	0	0.0461199	Peru	52.5	0.0476466
Croatia	15.4	0.0618193	Poland	0.1	0.0341985
Cyprus	–	0.0435001	Portugal	0.95	0.0351065
Czech Republic	–	0.066471	Qatar	0	0.0331155
Denmark	0.7	0.0120669	Romania	15.73	0.0451932
Djibouti	66.7	0.0313146	Russia	5.4	0.0357435
Dominican Republic	–	0.0557279	Rwanda	100	0.0720322
Ecuador	40	0.0212623	San Marino	12	–
Egypt	0	0.0105541	Saudi Arabia	0	0.00028
El Salvador	16	0.027693	Senegal	91.1	0.0464541
Equatorial Guinea	80	0.0073728	Serbia And Montenegro	23.1	0.0620166
Eritrea	83	0.0079781	Sierra Leone	33.7	0.0550279
Estonia	33.3	0.045948	Singapore	14	–
Ethiopia	–	0.0192632	Slovak Republic	–	0.0366983
Finland	6.11	0.0281986	Slovenia	6	0.0829063
France	5	0.0419574	Somalia	22	0.0029158
French Guiana	–	0.0250828	South Africa	21.98	0.0254923

TABLE 7. Continued

Country	Partitioned	Fractal	Country	Partitioned	Fractal
Gabon	35.5	0.0297724	Spain	18.9	0.0245267
Gambia	62.9	–	Sudan	16.3	0.0241656
Georgia	19.7	0.0535029	Suriname	–	0.0378448
Germany	2.6	0.0573345	Swaziland	–	0.0263498
Ghana	84.7	0.0428391	Sweden	3.22	0.0210959
Greece	7.7	0.0568056	Switzerland	95.7	0.0816537
Guatemala	43.05	0.0253266	Syria	13.7	–
Guinea	88.4	0.0459671	Tajikistan	7.4	0.0581085
Guinea-Bissau	35.1	0.0327188	Tanzania	–	0.0250633
Guyana	6.8	0.0260477	Thailand	18.5	0.0371513
Haiti	–	0.0557279	Togo	0.5	0.0383742
Honduras	1.64	0.0356374	Tunisia	0	0.0223485
Hungary	5.3	0.0518711	Turkey	20	0.0443709
India	–	0.041401	Turkmenistan	19.4	0.0125608
Indonesia	17.6	0.0439307	Uganda	21.9	0.0236287
Iran	31	0.0310722	Ukraine	34.1	0.0514058
Iraq	20.2	0.023863	United Arab Emirates	0	0.0159324
Israel	19.47	0.0488663	United Kingdom	–	0.0747827
Italy	2.29	0.0545924	United States	–	0.0141888
Ivory Coast	59	0.0516242	Uruguay	0	0.0426762
Jordan	51	0.0160013	Uzbekistan	19.4	0.039586
Kazakhstan	41	0.0340632	Venezuela	0	0.0255508
Kenya	27	0.0133011	Vietnam	2.8	0.0521464
Korea, North	0	0.0277805	West Bank	–	0.0643072
Korea, South	0	0.0203319	Yemen	–	0.0117803
Kuwait	–	0.0114641	Zambia	31	0.0193908
Kyrgyz Republic	38.9	0.0486664	Zimbabwe	99	0.0276735

Partitioned is the percentage of a country's population that belongs to a partitioned group;. a lower value for *Fractal* (ranging from 0 to 0.1) indicates that a country's borders are closer to a straight line. The border drawing by European colonial powers for Africa led to straight lines and partitioned ethnicities. This is less true for Europe, where borders appeared to emerge more naturally over time. The fact that European country borders emerged following natural borders has also been documented by Kitamura and Lagerlof (2020). Another paper on the artificiality of African borders and its impact is Englebert et al.(2002). Finally, on the evolution of borders in Europe, please see Lagerlof and Kitamura (2020).

2. What is the optimal size of a state?

The degree to which the size of the state influences economic, political and societal outcomes is a long-standing question. In *The Size of* Nations (2003), Alesina and Spolaore argue that the optimal size of a country is dependent on a trade-off between the benefits of size and the cost of heterogeneity. In particular, economies of scale mean that the per-capita costs of a large country are lower, but reaching a consensus is harder. If you are interested in the theory behind this, have a look at Alesina and Spolaore, 1997.

3. How does splitting ethnicities by borders affect economic and social outcomes?

The partitioning of ethnicities that took place during the Scramble for Africa had a lasting impact that is still apparent today. Partitioned groups suffer from higher incidence, severity and duration of political violence, and experience frequent military interventions from neighbouring countries (see Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2016). Moreover, they are often subject to government-led

discrimination and ethnic wars. DHS survey results indicate that partitioned ethnicities are also worse off economically and less educated.

There are also some studies investigating the positive effects of ethnic groups on different sides of a national border. Iwanowsky (2018) shows that artificial borders have created connections between separate countries that gave rise to migration and, in turn, trade. This had economic benefits for the regions concerned. In a case study on Niger and Nigeria that examines the additional costs of cross-border trade, Aker et al. (2014) find that, if trade between the two countries takes place among one ethnic group, the increase in the cost of goods is substantially lower compared to transactions between distinct groups. Furthermore, trade taking place within Niger but between different ethnicities gives rise to a similar premium as the cross-national-border, within-ethnicity exchange.

On the consequences of group fragmentation across international boundaries between 1886 and today, see Cederman et al. (2021). The authors introduce a new index of "territorial fractionalization" that measures how fragmented groups are across states, and combine geocoded data on ethnic settlement areas with this newly collected data on international borders since 1886, finding that groups that experienced increases in fragmentation are particularly violence-prone.

4. Where is conflict data taken from?

The source of the conflict data that Michalopoulos and Papaioannou use in their 2016 paper are ACLED and the Ethnic-Power Relations Dataset, which links ethnicities to civil wars using UCDP/PRIO. ACLED provides geo-referenced information on political violence, protests and politically relevant non-violent events across the world in real-time. The data is available for some countries from 1997. Four different types of sources are used: traditional media (media outlets governed by the journalistic principle of verification); reports (by international institutions and non-governmental institutions); local partner data (conflict observatories at the local level); and new media (targeted and verified, e.g. Twitter, Telegram, WhatsApp).

UCDP/PRIO collects data on armed conflicts around the world dating back as far as 1946. The sources are news reports that contain information about individuals killed or injured. Each year, more than 50,000 news reports are evaluated by experts who classify them. Similar to ACLED, reports and data from non-governmental organisations and international organisations, case studies, truth-commission reports, historical archives and other sources of information are used as well. This information is then used by the Ethnic-Power Relations (EPR) Dataset to link rebel organisations from UCDP/PRIO to the groups from the EPR.

5. What shapes a national identity and political attitudes?

How a national identity is formed is a complex process. One contributing factor to the ideology of citizens is the school curriculum (see Cantoni et al., 2017). In evaluating a staggered introduction of changes to the school curriculum in China, the authors found that the reforms led to a more favourable view of China's governance, changed views on democracy, and led to scepticism towards the free market.

Another channel that affects behaviour and values is media. Evidence for Africa on this channel is sparse. In the US, Fox News has been studied (DellaVigna and Kaplan, 2007), and for Europe there is evidence on nationalistic Serbian radio broadcasting (DellaVigna et al., 2014). It appears that the media affects voting behavior, electoral turnout and attitudes. Blouin and Mukand (2019) show how propaganda broadcast over radio helped to change inter-ethnic attitudes in post-genocide Rwanda.

Depetris-Chauvin et al. (2020) provide an interesting example of national-identity formation in sub-Saharan Africa. They show that a national football team winning a match in an international competition leads to a higher level of trust between ethnicities and reduces violence.

6. Did the Scramble for Africa lead to ethnic fragmentation and polarisation? If so, what are the impacts?

This is akin to Question 5. from Week 1. For convenience, we repeat the answer here:

This is another great question that many asked. There is a considerable amount of research on linguistic (and ethnic) heterogeneity, fractionalisation, polarisation and segregation. One strand looks at the origins of language groups, stressing the role of geography, ecology, the disease environment and history. You may want to look, for example, at the following:

- Pelle Ahlerup & Ola Olsson (2012) *The Roots of Diversity*
- Matteo Cervellati, Giorgio Chiovelli, and Elena Esposito (2019) *Bite and Divide: Malaria and Ethnolinguistic Diversity*
- Michalopoulos Stelios (2012) *The Origins of Ethnolinguistic Diversity*

Another strand of research compiles cross-country statistics of various diversity angles, then correlates income, public goods, conflict and education on these measures of diversity. You may want to consult the following cross-country works, for example, which also provide country statistics:

- Fearon (2003) *Ethnic and Cultural Diversity by Country*
- Fearon and Laitin (2003) *Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War*
- Desmet, Ortuno-Ortin, and Wacziarg (2012) *The political economy of linguistic cleavages*
- Alesina, Michalopoulos, and Papaioannou (2016) *Ethnic inequality*
- Posner (2009) *Coethnicity: Diversity and the Dilemmas of Collective Action*

A more recent strand of the academic literature uses survey data to compile measures of heterogeneity in beliefs, opinions, trust and ideology across and within 'groups', then examines their (conditional) correlation with public-goods provision. See, for example, Desmet et al. (2017) *Culture, Ethnicity and Diversity.*

Another strand of research looks at favouritism and discrimination (or lack thereof) across social cleavages such as race, ethnicity and religious adherence; often looking across many African economies or within countries. For example, see:

- Franck and Rainer (2012) *Does the Leader's Ethnicity Matter? Ethnic Favouritism, Education, and Health in Sub-Saharan Africa*
- Kramon and Posner (2016) *Ethnic Favouritism in Education in Kenya*
- Kasara, Kimuli, 2007. *Tax Me If You Can: Ethnic Geography, Democracy, and the Taxation of Agriculture in Africa*. APSR.

There is also literature on institutional innovation to cope with ethnic diversity, such as:

Francois et al. (2015). *How is Power Shared in Africa?*

Burgess et al. (2015) *The Value of Democracy: Evidence from Road Building in Kenya*

7. How does having a large number of landlocked countries affect development?

Africa has a large number of landlocked countries (16 in total). This affects development because it makes transportation more expensive. This in turn affects the profitability of exports and imports (one study by Clark et al. (2004) shows that being landlocked increases average transportation cost by almost 50%). Sachs et al. (2004) argue that better regional integration among countries through infrastructure is a necessary condition for landlocked countries to develop.

8. Could you suggest some further readings on the Scramble for Africa and its impact?

Here are some readings that we recommend:

- Asiwaju, A. (1985). *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations Across Africa's International Boundaries, 1884-1984*. St. Martin's Press.
- Dowden, Richard. 2008. *Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles*. London, UK: Portobello Books Ltd.
- Englebert, Pierre. 2009. *Africa, Unity, Sovereignty and Sorrow*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc
- Frankema, E., Williamson, J., & Woltjer, P. (2015). *An Economic Rationale for the West African Scramble? The Commercial Transition and the Commodity Price Boom of 1835–188* (No. w21213). National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Pakenham, T. (2015). *The Scramble for Africa*. Hachette UK.

9. How are literacy rates and education defined and where is data taken from?

The standard rates of literacy shown by Nonso Obikili refer to those who could read and write in English, but the extended measure includes being able to read and write in any language. Education is measured in years of schooling. While this is not synonymous with the quality of education, this is a hard measure to obtain for historical studies. For current educational quality, you may want to look at this report by the World Bank. Data is taken from the censuses of Nigeria in 1921, 1932 and 1956.

10. Why should it matter whether food surpluses are cereal-based or tuber-based?

The rationale behind differentiating staple crops and cereals versus roots and tubers is that the former are easier to appropriate. This ease of appropriability leads to an increased demand for security; hence the emergence of more centralised societies in regions that are suitable for cereals because an elite can collect the yield in the form of a tax. A recent paper by Mayshar et al. (2019) explores this in more detail.

11. What is the status of other development outcomes (e.g. internet coverage) in the 'homelands' in South Africa? Could there be an explanation other than the institutional one for their relative poverty?

In general, economic outcomes and other development outcomes, such as literacy, internet access and nutrition, are worse in the homelands as compared to other parts of the country (see e.g. Noble and Wright, 2012). Ultimately, improvement on these dimensions is dependent on flourishing market institutions. These are absent mainly due to the institutional setting, where the incentive to invest is lacking (Burger, 2018).

The homelands in South Africa have experienced a reversal of fortunes as they were prosperous (as proxied by population) before the arrival of Europeans, but are relatively underdeveloped today. However, this is not due to institutional reversal, such as that experienced by other colonised regions (Acemoglu et al., 2002). Instead, South Africans were living under extractive institutions in both 'white South Africa' and in the 'homelands'. Democracy later brought inclusive institutions for black residents in white South Africa, but not in the former homelands (von Fintel and Fourie, 2019).

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