

Colonialism, Institutional Trust and Outgroup

Bias: Evidence from Morocco

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Introduction

This study shows that Morocco's exposure to different institutional and administrative practices under French and Spanish protectorates in the early 20th century has long-run effects on out-group bias and trust in institutions. The French colonial administration pursued a discriminatory "Berber policy" aimed at curtailing the influence of Arab and Muslim communities and favoring Berber communities that was implemented through the education system and by separating legal systems between ethnicities. I find that people on the former French side of the border have lower trust in the president and parliament compared to those on the Spanish side where this policy was not present. They also have worse perceptions of how the government is handling economic issues. Furthermore, they show more negative attitudes toward people of other religions and ethnicities.



How "Berber Policy" was implemented?

The Education System

- Berber education system became "vehicle of social mobility"
- Special schools were created for Berber-speaking children in rural areas where French teachers were assigned
- French officials insisted on instructing in French and prevented allotting more time to Arabic
- Berbers were given preference in matter of governmental grants
- Elite college of Azrou was established to prepare Berber youth for higher posts in the administration

Customary Courts

- As a result of French desire to maintain and encourage separation of Berbers from Arabs, for the first time, Berber customary laws were inscribed in two decrees of 1914 and 1930
- tribes said to be Berber custom are and will remain regulated and administered according to their laws and customs under the control of the authorities"
- Customary courts were established that gave legal status to jemaa (council of elders)
- where the customary courts were created, judicial power of the makhzan was eliminated

Data and Sample

- Rounds 7, 8, 9 of the Afrobarometer Survey in Morocco
- Morocco DHS-V Survey
- Murdock's Ethnographic Map and Ethnographic Atlas
- Defense Meteorological program Operational Linescan System Nighttime Lights Series (DMSP OLS) Version 4
- Sample period: 2018-2022
- 3,600 individual-level observations with around 1,000 observations within the optimal bandwidths

Empirical Strategy

I estimate the following Regression Discontinuity model:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha + \gamma \text{French}_{it} + X_i'\beta_1 + Z_i'\beta_2 + f(\text{geographic location})_i + \varepsilon_{it}$$

where

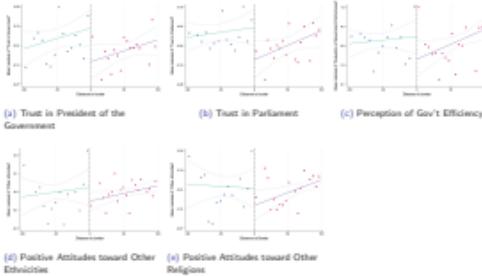
- Y_{it} is the outcome of interest for individual i in the enumeration area t ;
- X_i' is a vector of individual characteristics - gender, age, age squared;
- Z_i' is vector of geographic characteristics at location of the EA - elevation, precipitation, distance to coast, distance to Casablanca;
- French is an indicator equal to 1 if the EA is on French side of the border and 0 if on the Spanish side;
- $f(\text{geographic location})_i$ is RD polynomial which controls for smooth functions of the distance between the EA and the boundary.

Balance across border: Culture and Geography

	Within 25km	Within 50km	RD coefficient	SE
Spanish	425.21	490.74	(49.08)	549.83
French	419.42	503.00	(28.31)**	509.64
SE	511.48	527.19	(41.83)**	521.00
Spanish	219.26	132.94	(14.05)**	218.50
French	186	113	111	146
SE	346	346	346	346
Location Characteristics				354
Distance to coast	24.48	84.50	(4.11)**	45.17
Distance to Casablanca	406.31	395.96	(17.69)	409.98
Number of observations	170	315	112	146
Pro-Population Characteristics				356
Dependence on hunting and agri.	0.53	0.37	(0.11)	0.63
Type of slavery	0.49	0.63	(0.14)	0.38
Population density	806.31	851.72	(96.72)	788.30
Non-territorial headcount selection	2.79	2.70	(0.50)	2.61
Indigenous language	1	0.92	(0.09)	1
Permanent settlement	1	0.92	(0.09)	1
Number of observations	170	315	112	146
Number of ethnic groups	3	5	3	5

To argue that individuals on the Spanish side of the border serve as appropriate counterfactuals for those on the French side, I show that relevant factors such as geographical and cultural characteristics do not differ across the border prior to the establishment of the protectorates. For most of the ethnicities the quantitative data on the cultural characteristics was collected before 1912 enabling us to argue smoothness of cultural characteristics before the establishment of protectorates. In the table above, although mean differences in rainfall and ruggedness are statistically significant, all RD coefficients are insignificant, indicating geographic and cultural comparability across the border.

Regression Discontinuity Results



Conclusions

- Colonial institutions have persistent effect on formation of contemporary informal institutions
- This analysis provides quantitative evidence on durable effect of discriminatory colonial policies on trust in key institutions - president of the government and parliament
- Moreover, results suggest that outgroup bias is also impacted - individuals exposed to discriminatory institutions exhibit less positive attitudes toward representatives of other ethnicities and religions
- Alternative channels of persistence have been ruled out - the disparity in trust outcomes is not channeled through education, wealth or economic activity.

What is already known about this topic?

Becker et al. (2011) find that people residing in the area that was part of Habsburg Empire have higher trust in courts and police. In a related study, Blouin (2022) demonstrates how the extractive and divisive policies implemented by the Belgian administration in Rwanda influenced ethnic tensions. His findings indicate that Hutu individuals subjugated to forced labor by Tutsi are less likely to collaborate with Tutsi on cooperative tasks and exhibit lower levels of trust toward them. Not much is known about how colonial discriminatory policies shapes institutional trust and attitudes toward people of other ethnic and religious groups.

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