Motivation

Does colonial history matter for development? In Africa, British colonial legacy said to be more favorable than others, especially as far as education was concerned.

Data

Cameroonian population census data from 1976 and 2005. Education variables give information on the education system during the period when an individual was of schooling age (people rarely go back to primary school in adulthood). This feature of education variables allows me to decompress history, identifying the effect of colonizer identity on education outcomes for different periods, using different age groups.

Results

For each 10-year cohort, estimation of the following equation:

\[ s_i = \tau BR_i + P(x_i, y_i) + \beta B_i + \epsilon_i \]

where \( s_i \) is the education outcome of individual \( i \), \( BR_i \) is a dummy equal to 1 if individual \( i \) was born on the anglophone side of the border, \( P(x_i, y_i) \) is a polynomial in latitude and longitude, \( B_i \) is a border of vector sector dummies. Results shown here estimated on a 10-km bandwidth, using a polynomial of order 2, but results robust to a variety of specifications.

Natural Experiment

To solve the problem of selection (French and British colonies not necessarily comparable), border discontinuity analysis. Comparing regions on both sides of a border. If the border is (locally) random, comparable regions (pre-colonial history, geography, etc.)

Mechanisms

What is identified: effect of being part of British Cameroon rather that French Cameroon. Mechanisms need not go through colonial policies (fact of being attached to a richer market, etc.) However, the pattern of evolution of the discontinuity is consistent with a mechanism going through education supply.

- Intervar period: the British regulated low quality mission schools (inspected and subsidized on the basis of efficiency) while the French turned a blind eye to the private sector (very small subsidies).

- After WW2 (Brazzaville Conference): education expenditure increased radically in French Cameroon. Both private sector subsidies and investment in public sector.

Take home message

- Intervar period: British colonial education more efficient at reaching a large number of students.

- Not laissez-faire VS colonial government control but government providing right incentives to missions (Belgian and Portuguese colonies: private education, bad education outcomes).

- Decompressing history: colonial policies evolved during the colonial period. Specific policies seem to matter more than identity of the colonizer per se.

- Persistence: hard to argue that the effect on human capital persisted. However, shock on religion was highly persistent.