

# ARTIFICIAL STATES

Alberto Alesina  
Harvard University

William Easterly  
New York University

Janina Matuszeski  
Oxfam America

Abstract

We define "artificial states" as those in which political borders do not coincide with a division of nationalities desired by the people on the ground. We propose and compute for most countries in the world two measures of the degree to which borders may be artificial. One measures how borders split ethnic groups into two separate adjacent countries. The other measures the straightness of land borders, under the assumption the straight land borders are more likely to be artificial. We then show that these two measures are correlated with several measures of political and economic success.