

Doing business while holding public office: Evidence from Mozambique's firm registry

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October 2021

(1) Motivation

Mozambique's hidden debt scandal

“... in democratic governments like ours people come and go, and everyone involved will want to have his share of the deal while in office, because once out of the office it will be difficult.”

Email from Teófilo NHANGUMELE to Jean BOUSTANI (14/11/2011),
quoted in USA vs. Jean Boustani et al. (Case 1:18-cr-00681)

Political corruption – definition

Political corruption: (ab)use of political office for personal gain

An ingrained problem...

Head of government		Estimates of funds allegedly embezzled
Mohamed Suharto	President of Indonesia, 1967–98	US \$ 15 to 35 billion
Ferdinand Marcos	President of Philippines, 1972–86	US \$ 5 to 10 billion
Mobutu Sese Seko	President of Zaire, 1965–97	US \$ 5 billion
Sani Abacha	President of Nigeria, 1993–98	US \$ 2 to 5 billion
Slobodan Milosevic	President of Serbia/Yugoslavia, 1989–2000	US \$ 1 billion
Jean-Claude Duvalier	President of Haiti, 1971–86	US \$ 300 to 800 million
Alberto Fujimori	President of Peru, 1990–2000	US \$ 600 million
Pavlo Lazarenko	Prime Minister of Ukraine, 1996–97	US \$ 114 to 200 million
Arnoldo Alemán	President of Nicaragua, 1997–2002	US \$ 100 million
Joseph Estrada	President of Philippines, 1998–2001	US \$ 78 to 80 million

Source: Transparency International, *Global Corruption Report*, 2004

Political corruption – prevalence

Precise extent and form of such corruption often hidden.

But, diverse evidence suggests it is widespread:

- Parliamentary candidates in India (Fisman et al., 2014)
- Relatives of elected municipal office holders in Philippines (Fafchamps and Labonne, 2017)
- Conservative MPs in UK (Eggers and Hainmueller, 2009)
- Profitability of firms related to local politicians in Denmark (Amore and Bennedsen, 2013)

Large literature indicates revealed **preference for firms to nurture political connections** – e.g., appointment of current/former politicians – esp. in more corrupt countries (Fisman, 2001; Khwaja and Mian, 2005; Chen and Kung, 2019).

Political corruption – techniques

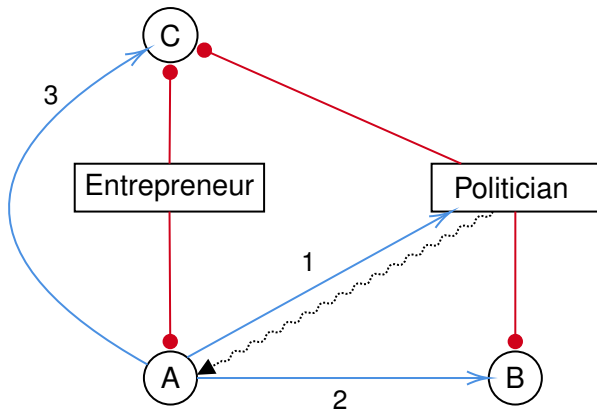
Political corruption involves a blurring of the (idealized) strict division between public and private spheres.

Multiple possible mechanisms, legal and illegal.

Distinguish between direct and indirect exchanges:

- 1** Politicians as direct individual beneficiaries
 - Embezzlement, bribes, kickbacks, appointments
 - One-off bipartite exchanges
- 2** Politicians as indirect beneficiaries, through interests in firms
 - Ongoing networked exchanges, rent sharing
 - Ex. – Berlusconi's media company (Della Vigna et al., 2016)
 - Used to launder/hide proceeds from illegal exchanges

Politician-business relations



Note: Letters in circles represent registered firms, with ownership indicated by lines with round heads (in red); financial flows indicated by solid lines with arrow heads; political support indicated by wiggly line.

Focus of our paper

In many developing countries politicians (or families) are active in business – as owners/partners in multiple firms.

Common in former socialist/communist countries – political elites involved in privatization (Ivanović et al., 2019; Xu and Wu, 2021).

Minimal economics literature *quantifies* effect of holding political office on individuals' business networks.

Empirical question

Do Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs) experience faster growth in their business networks relative to non-PEPs?

Definition of PEPs :-

Presidents, ministers, vice-ministers, governors, and senior members of ruling party.

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(2) Mozambique context

Historical background



Figure: (Tempografica, 1975)

1975 colonial rule ends
1986 market liberalization
1992 end of war
1994 first elections
2011 FDI bonanza

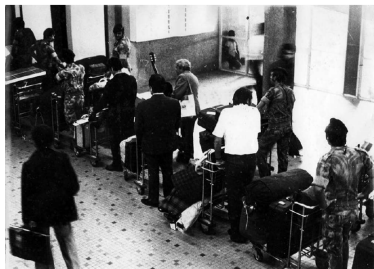


Figure: (Achiles, 1974)

Historical background

FRELIMO in power since 1975.

Weak private sector at time of market liberalization ⇒ party insiders main viable option to become business leaders.

“The business networks and the ruling Frelimo party have been closely interweaved for decades, leading to a risk of insider trading at all levels of power in Mozambique. Support or co-option between entrepreneurs and government officials puts the companies that do not have the benefit of this kind of political protection into a difficult position ... [giving] the Mozambican ruling class an air of a set of political-trading dynasties” (Indian Ocean Newsletter, 29 June 2007)

Various examples of grand corruption – e.g., ongoing ‘hidden debts’ case, proceeds laundered through local businesses owned by political elites.

(3) Data & Outcomes

Panel data

Construct individual-level panel, 1985-2019, 5 year periods:

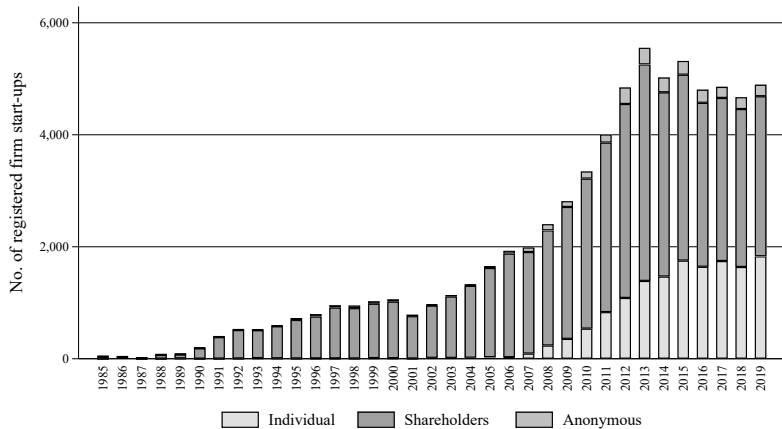
- 1 Firm registry : all named beneficial owners of companies
- 2 Archives + yearbooks: executive or political officers

Unique observations:

Period	(a) Company owners				(b) PEPs			(a) & (b)	Total
	Sole	Joint	Anon.	Any	<1985	≥ 1985	All		
1985	12	1,696	37	1,736	149	258	278	7	121,412
1990	40	7,200	299	7,434	149	355	374	58	121,412
1995	73	16,497	635	16,966	149	380	399	89	121,412
2000	147	27,571	1,144	28,416	149	508	526	127	121,412
2005	1,287	46,632	1,648	48,459	149	541	559	164	121,412
2010	7,109	73,267	2,362	79,220	149	582	599	200	121,412
2015	13,026	91,724	2,586	101,470	149	728	744	244	121,412

Note: individuals defined here as PEPs during and after holding office (kind of permanent treatment).

New firms per year, by type



Frequency of individuals in each PEP category

Type of office	≤1989	'90-94	'95-99	'00-04	'05-09	'10-14	'15-19	All
Political Bureau	38	43	48	55	61	59	61	79
Central Committee	399	487	410	422	426	332	480	757
Minister	41	52	53	55	65	68	63	151
Vice-Minister	13	13	25	27	28	26	33	87
Governor	14	12	14	21	25	25	22	60
Any office	416	512	448	465	481	389	529	882

Outcomes

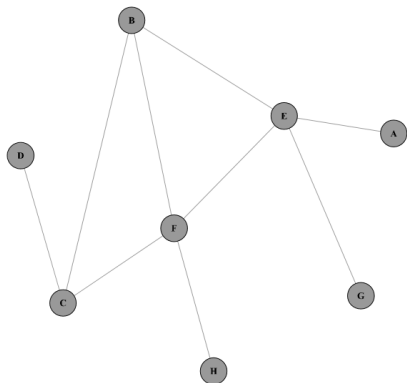
Various outcomes used to quantify individual strength/influence within the network of business owners:

- 1 Number of companies (split by type)
- 2 Network centrality:
 - Godfather centrality (brokerage capital)
 - Degree centrality (number of connections)
 - Decay centrality (access to information)

To assist interpretation, all outcomes transformed using inverse hyperbolic sine transform.

Missing values set to zero → balanced panel.

Centrality example

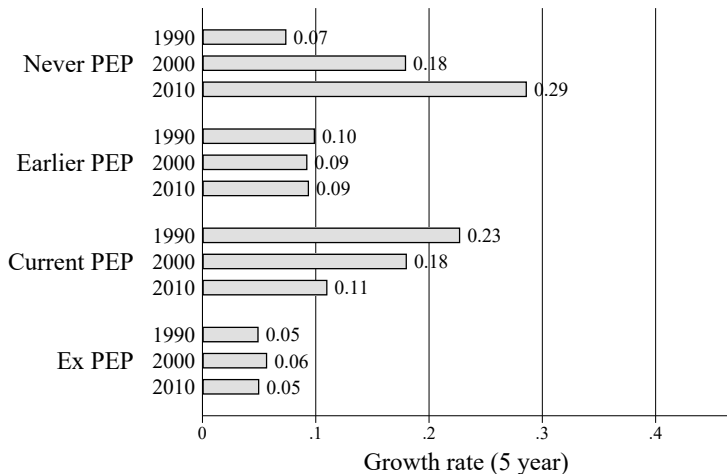


Node	Degree	Godf.	Decay
A	0.14	0	1.50
B	0.43	1	2.50
C	0.43	2	2.25
D	0.14	0	1.25
E	0.57	5	2.62
F	0.57	4	2.75
G	0.14	0	1.50
H	0.14	0	1.62

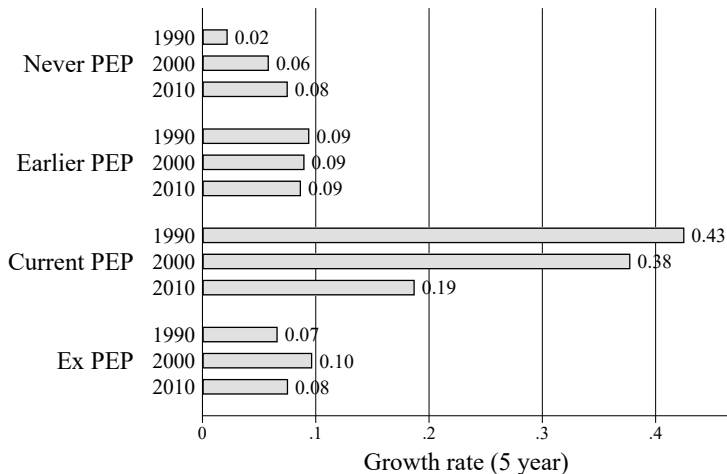
Changes in centrality for an individual reflect: (i) number of companies owned **AND** (ii) their network position ...

- ⇒ centrality can increase through links of business associates
- ⇒ centrality may not increase if number of companies increases

Changes in number of companies



Changes in Godfather centrality



(4) Empirical strategy

Empirical strategy

General model (ignoring time-varying controls):

$$\Delta y_{it} = \alpha_i + \gamma_t + (\delta - 1)y_{it-1} + \beta \text{PEP}_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

α_i individual FEs

γ_t time FEs

δ state dependence, selection on prior outcome

β treatment effect of interest

Identification options:

1 Under assumption $\delta \equiv 1$, conventional two-way FE model

2 Otherwise, lagged outcome (LO) model *without* unit FEs

... lagged outcomes implicitly incorporate $\alpha_i + \varepsilon_{it-1}$

FE + LO expected to bracket the effect of interest (Guryan, 2001)

Control group

Pertinent issue : **what is the relevant control group?**

PEPs are not picked randomly from the pool of (potential) business owners ... and overlap between firm owners and PEPs is small ($< 1\%$ of business owners ever become PEPs).

To focus on more informative comparisons we estimate propensity to become a PEP in each period, then apply:

- Inverse Probability Weights
- Matching weights (closest matches only)

We further restrict the sample in two ways:

- Exclude all individuals that never are/become a PEP
- Switchers only (controls are future PEPs)

Additional details

Limited information available at the individual-level.

We control for:

- Prior business activity (dummy)
- Non-business entries in the register (e.g., non-profit)
- Alterations to the registry
- Year by PEP-type FEs (pre-1985 PEP \times post-1985 PEP)
- Period *after* holding office (split treatment effect)

For lagged outcome model we include time-invariant effects:

- Gender (approximated from first names)
- Lawyer (current members of *Ordem dos Advogados*)
- Status before 1985 (if PEP, no. companies etc.)

Standard errors clustered at family name \times year level.

(5) Results

Δ number of companies, full sample

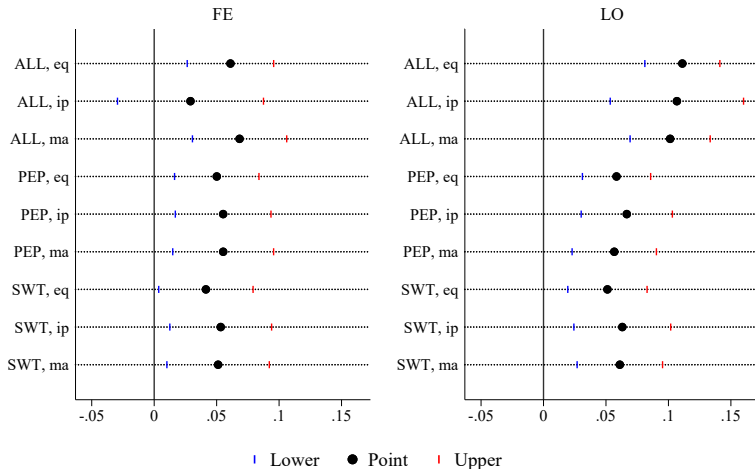
Estimator →	(I) Lagged outcome				(II) Fixed effects			
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
(i) Equal weights:								
Holds office	-0.06*** (0.01)	-0.08*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.11*** (0.02)	-0.16*** (0.02)	-0.31*** (0.02)	0.07*** (0.02)	0.06*** (0.02)
Left office				-0.12*** (0.01)				-0.04*** (0.01)
Female		-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)	-0.01*** (0.00)				
Constant	0.26*** (0.00)	0.27*** (0.00)	0.27*** (0.00)	0.27*** (0.00)	0.18*** (0.00)	0.36*** (0.00)	0.36*** (0.00)	0.36*** (0.00)
Obs.	728,472	728,472	728,472	728,472	728,472	728,472	728,472	728,472
RMSE	0.35	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.40	0.31	0.31	0.31
(ii) Inverse probability weights:								
Holds office	0.04* (0.02)	0.05** (0.02)	0.09*** (0.03)	0.11*** (0.03)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.07*** (0.02)	0.07*** (0.02)	0.03 (0.03)
Left office				-0.10*** (0.02)				-0.10** (0.05)
Female		-0.04* (0.02)	-0.04* (0.02)	-0.04* (0.02)				
Constant	0.13*** (0.01)	0.12*** (0.01)	0.10*** (0.02)	0.11*** (0.02)	0.16*** (0.01)	0.34*** (0.02)	0.29*** (0.01)	0.34*** (0.03)
Obs.	728,472	728,472	728,472	728,472	728,472	728,472	728,472	728,472
RMSE	0.37	0.34	0.34	0.33	0.32	0.26	0.25	0.25
Yr & PEP-type FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yr × PEP-type FEs	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

△ number of companies, PEP sample

Estimator →	(I) Lagged outcome				(II) Fixed effects			
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
(i) Equal weights:								
Holds office	0.03** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.01)	0.03** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.05** (0.02)	0.06*** (0.02)	0.06*** (0.02)	0.05*** (0.02)
Left office				-0.08*** (0.01)				-0.04** (0.01)
Female		-0.02** (0.01)	-0.02** (0.01)	-0.03*** (0.01)				
Constant	0.07*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)	0.07*** (0.01)	0.16*** (0.01)	0.16*** (0.01)	0.18*** (0.02)
Obs.	4,464	4,464	4,464	4,464	4,464	4,464	4,464	4,464
RMSE	0.32	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.30	0.26	0.26	0.25
(ii) Inverse probability weights:								
Holds office	0.04** (0.02)	0.04*** (0.02)	0.04*** (0.02)	0.07*** (0.02)	0.07*** (0.02)	0.07*** (0.02)	0.07*** (0.02)	0.06*** (0.02)
Left office				-0.07*** (0.02)				-0.05*** (0.02)
Female		-0.03* (0.01)	-0.03* (0.01)	-0.03** (0.01)				
Constant	0.06*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.05*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.02)	0.15*** (0.02)	0.16*** (0.02)	0.19*** (0.02)
Obs.	4,464	4,464	4,464	4,464	4,464	4,464	4,464	4,464
RMSE	0.33	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.31	0.26	0.26	0.26
Yr & PEP-type FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controls	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yr × PEP-type FEs	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

Current PEP by sample, weight & estimator

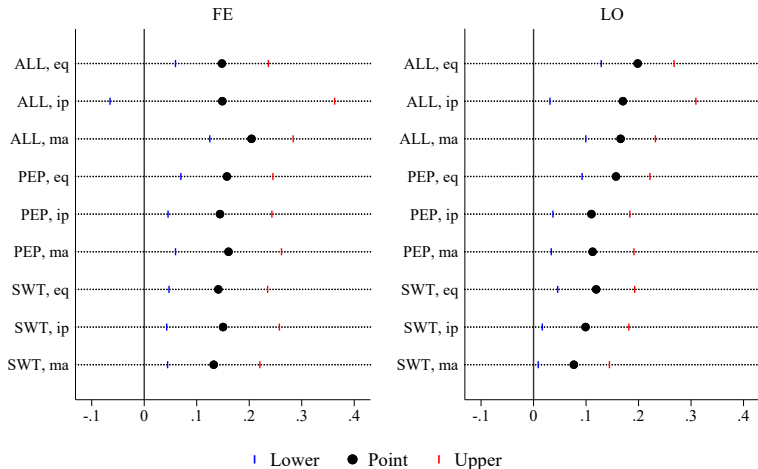
Δ No. of companies



Graphs by estimator

Current PEP by sample, weight & estimator

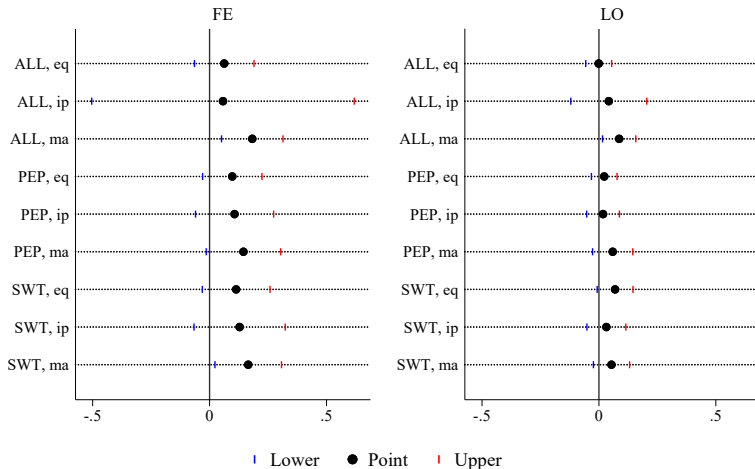
Δ Grandfather centrality



Graphs by estimator

ex-PEP by sample, weight & estimator

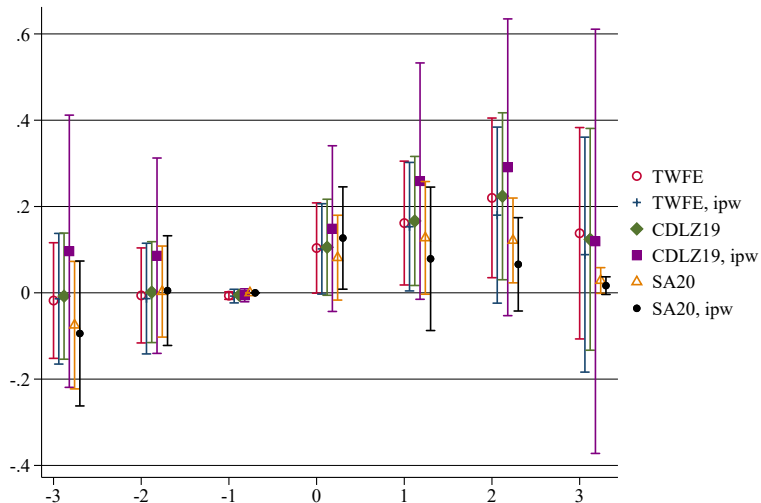
Δ Grandfather centrality



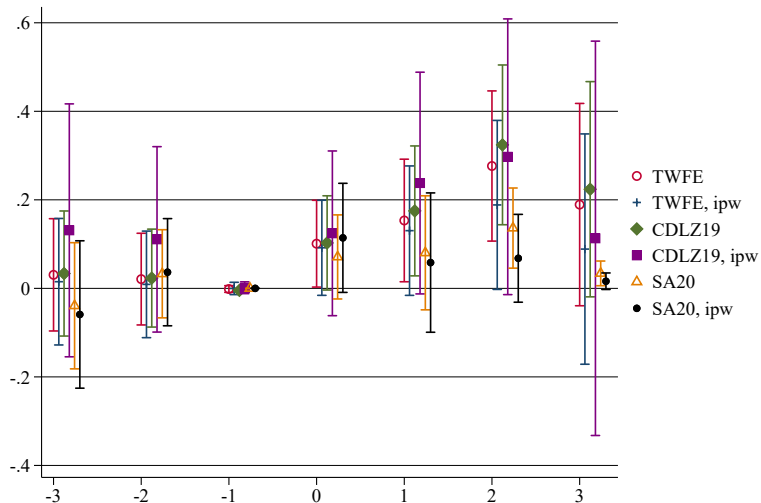
Graphs by estimator

(6) Event study

Δ Grandfather centrality, FE estimator



Δ Grandfather centrality, LO estimator



(7) Extensions

Results split by PEP & company type (LO model)

		(I) Legal form			(II) Named objective		
	All	Sole	Joint	Anon	Trade	Fin.	Mining
<i>(a) Inverse probability weighted PEPs:</i>							
Party PEP	0.04** (0.02)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.02 (0.02)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Party PEP (after)	-0.04*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.03** (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Executive PEP	0.14*** (0.04)	0.00 (0.01)	0.12*** (0.04)	0.00 (0.01)	0.03** (0.02)	-0.01** (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Executive PEP (after)	-0.09** (0.04)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.08** (0.04)	0.01 (0.02)	-0.05*** (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Obs.	4,464	4,464	4,464	4,464	4,464	4,464	4,464
Current diff. (prob.)	0.11 (0.01)	0.00 (0.56)	0.10 (0.01)	0.01 (0.57)	0.02 (0.14)	0.01 (0.02)	0.00 (0.80)
After diff. (prob.)	0.06 (0.00)	0.01 (0.18)	0.05 (0.01)	0.01 (0.21)	0.02 (0.05)	0.00 (0.89)	0.00 (0.38)

Collapsed to family names (dynasties)

	All		PEPs		Switchers	
	LO	FE	LO	FE	LO	FE
<i>(a) No. of companies:</i>						
Holds office	0.10*** (0.02)	0.09*** (0.03)	0.06*** (0.02)	0.07** (0.03)	0.05** (0.02)	0.05* (0.03)
Left office	-0.13*** (0.02)	-0.04* (0.02)	-0.08*** (0.02)	-0.04* (0.02)	-0.06*** (0.02)	-0.05** (0.03)
Obs.	158,712	158,712	3,534	3,534	2,034	2,034
R ² (adj.)	0.34	0.26	0.41	0.34	0.43	0.34
RMSE	0.38	0.40	0.35	0.37	0.34	0.36
<i>(b) Godfather centrality:</i>						
Holds office	0.15*** (0.04)	0.16*** (0.06)	0.12*** (0.04)	0.15** (0.06)	0.11** (0.05)	0.15** (0.07)
Left office	-0.15*** (0.04)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.10*** (0.04)	-0.05 (0.05)	-0.09* (0.05)	-0.03 (0.07)
Obs.	158,712	158,712	3,534	3,534	2,034	2,034
R ² (adj.)	0.13	0.06	0.25	0.13	0.25	0.13
RMSE	0.54	0.56	0.77	0.82	0.76	0.82

(8) Conclusion

Conclusion

What did we do?

- Estimated effect of political exposure on size and strength of individuals' business networks in Mozambique (1985-'19)
- Use firm registry + PEP list → individual-level panel
- Outcomes – no. companies, network centrality – capture complex (networked) relations between firms and politicians, as opposed to one-off payments
- Estimation used FE and LO models (bracketing property)
- Applied re-weighting & sample restrictions
- Robustness tests (event study, placebos)
- Extensions to PEP- & firm types, as well as family dynasties

Conclusion

What did we find?

- Preferred estimates from PEP sample with IPW weights (LO and FE results not significantly different)
- Being a PEP associated with 7% faster growth in no. companies and 11% strengthening of Godfather centrality
- Effects on centrality >> effects on no. companies
- Weaker results for former PEPs \implies being in power matters
- Weaker results for political PEPs \implies exec. power matters
- Results dominated by joint-stock firms, esp. those in trade
- Effects equal or larger at family dynasty level

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(10) Additional material

Main regression results for current PEP

Sample	Weights	(I) No. companies		(II) Godfather cent.		(III) Degree cent.		(IV) Decay cent.	
		LO	FE	LO	FE	LO	FE	LO	FE
All	Equal	0.111	0.061	0.198	0.148	0.232	0.116	0.234	0.123
		(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.017)	(0.000)	(0.016)
		[0.000]	[0.001]	[0.000]	[0.002]	[0.000]	[0.020]	[0.000]	[0.019]
	Inv. Prob.	0.107	0.029	0.170	0.149	0.268	0.322	0.264	0.364
		(0.000)	(0.330)	(0.016)	(0.173)	(0.000)	(0.009)	(0.000)	(0.003)
		[0.000]	[0.330]	[0.019]	[0.175]	[0.000]	[0.012]	[0.000]	[0.004]
PEPs	Matched	0.101	0.068	0.166	0.204	0.231	0.191	0.257	0.245
		(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
		[0.000]	[0.001]	[0.000]	[0.000]	[0.000]	[0.001]	[0.000]	[0.000]
	Equal	0.058	0.050	0.157	0.157	0.153	0.119	0.168	0.137
		(0.000)	(0.004)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.014)	(0.000)	(0.007)
		[0.000]	[0.005]	[0.000]	[0.001]	[0.000]	[0.017]	[0.000]	[0.009]
Switchers	Inv. Prob.	0.067	0.055	0.110	0.144	0.167	0.165	0.168	0.173
		(0.000)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.000)	(0.004)	(0.000)	(0.003)
		[0.001]	[0.007]	[0.005]	[0.006]	[0.000]	[0.006]	[0.000]	[0.005]
	Matched	0.057	0.055	0.112	0.161	0.142	0.127	0.153	0.131
		(0.001)	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.027)	(0.001)	(0.029)
		[0.002]	[0.009]	[0.007]	[0.003]	[0.002]	[0.029]	[0.002]	[0.031]
Switchers	Equal	0.051	0.041	0.119	0.141	0.129	0.096	0.145	0.108
		(0.002)	(0.032)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.079)	(0.001)	(0.058)
		[0.003]	[0.033]	[0.003]	[0.005]	[0.002]	[0.081]	[0.002]	[0.061]
	Inv. Prob.	0.063	0.053	0.099	0.150	0.161	0.172	0.164	0.179
		(0.001)	(0.010)	(0.019)	(0.006)	(0.001)	(0.005)	(0.001)	(0.005)
		[0.003]	[0.013]	[0.021]	[0.008]	[0.002]	[0.007]	[0.002]	[0.007]
Switchers	Matched	0.061	0.051	0.077	0.132	0.156	0.184	0.182	0.222
		(0.000)	(0.014)	(0.027)	(0.003)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)
		[0.001]	[0.017]	[0.029]	[0.005]	[0.000]	[0.002]	[0.000]	[0.000]