

Political Connections and Firm Performance: The Latvian Way¹

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Abstract

This paper examines the effect of political connections on firm performance. I draw on the universe of all registered firms in Latvia to construct a unique dataset of firms connected to politicians in 1996 to 2005, and firms that contributed in the 2002 elections. This paper shows that the effects of connections to politicians vary depending on the type of connection. Using fixed effects framework, I find that firms establishing connection to a politician experience sharp drop in performance in this year, followed by rapid recovery. Using unanticipated change in the ruling coalition following the 2002 election, I find that Latvian firms that provided contributions to the winning parties experienced better performance compared with those that did not, in the year after the election. Firms that provided contributions to the losing parties experienced worse performance as compared to firms that did not contribute. This suggests that direct connections to politicians and campaign contributions help firms benefit from firm-specific political favors.

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1. Introduction

There has been much interest in the social costs of rent-seeking activities by special interest groups, at least since the seminal contributions of Tullock (1967), and Krueger (1974). Mancur Olson (1982) famously suggested that special interest groups could be one of the main causes of stagnation and decline of nations. Shleifer and Vishny (1993) argued that corruption, an evil twin of rent-seeking, is a destructive force in developing countries with weak public institutions. North, Wallis, and Weingast (2006) argued that limiting entry and creation of rents is a salient feature of countries with what they call ‘limited access orders’. Empirically, a growing number of studies using firm-level data documented connections between firms and politicians, found that political connections add to firms’ value, and identified some of the channels through which connections pay off.³ Yet most of this literature uses data on publicly listed firms, which raises the issues of whether the market was fully aware of the benefits conferred by political connections, and whether findings generalize to the whole population of firms.⁴ These issues are especially important for potentially more interesting cases of countries with under-developed capital markets.

This paper uses a novel firm-level dataset to estimate the effect of political connectedness on firm performance in Latvia. There are two reasons why Latvia is a good case to investigate the impact of political connections. First, the value of political connections in Latvia is likely to be greater than in more developed countries because it is a transition economy with relatively weak democratic institutions. There is substantial survey-based evidence of rent-seeking and corruption. *Transparency International*, an international corruption watchdog, has consistently ranked Latvia as one of the most corrupt countries in Europe.⁵ Latvia was also characterized as “high-capture” economy in

³ A non-exhaustive list of contributions in this literature is by Faccio (2005), Fisman (2001), Faccio, Masulis, and McConnell, (2005), Khwaja and Mian (2005), Slinko, Yakovlev, and Zhuravskaya (2005), Claessens, Feijen, and Laeven (2006), Goldman, Rocholl, and So (2006); Faccio and Parsley (2007), Fisman, Fisman, Galef, and Khurana (2007).

⁴ To the best of my knowledge, only Khwaja and Mian (2005), as well as Slinko, Yakovlev, and Zhuravskaya (2005) employ data on non-listed firms.

⁵ On a scale 0 to 10 (10 being least corrupt), Latvia achieved a score of 4.7 in 2006, putting it in the same group with South Africa, Tunisia, and Dominica. This was an improvement as compared with 2000, when it scored 3.4 points.

World Bank's Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey's (BEEPS) ranking of "state capture" by special interest groups in 22 transition countries in 1999. A second important reason to focus on Latvia lies in the quality of the available data. *Lursoft LLC*, a private firm, compiles detailed data on all firms registered in Latvia, which allows me to identify *any* firm in which a particular individual (e.g. a politician or a donor) has *ever* been a board member or a shareholder in 1991-2005. My data have four advantages: (i) unlike most related studies which use a sample of publicly-listed firms, I draw on the *universe* of all registered firms; (ii) they enable use of objective measures of political connection; (iii) they enable me to use detailed measures of the strength of connection; (iv) they allow me to use firm fixed effects to control for unobserved heterogeneity within the same firm over time.

The paper employs two measures of connections. The first follows recent work by Faccio (2006) and others, and focuses on firms with politician or an ex-politician as a board member or a significant shareholder. A second (less direct) measure of connections is based on information regarding all money donations made by individuals and corporations prior to the 2002 election. There are many ways in which politicians may confer benefits on private firms. First, they may pass legislation that would result in redistribution to specific firms, or increase entry costs into some industries. Or, legislators may kill legislation that would hurt specific business interests. Second, through their control of the executive, politicians may grant public procurement to favored firms. Third, through their influence in the courts and police politicians may selectively enforce property rights. Unfortunately, these actions are difficult for a researcher to observe or measure. Therefore, following previous studies, I abstract from the particular channels that politicians may use to help firms and use a simple measure of growth in sales to measure how helpful politicians are to a firm. My hypothesis is that better connected firms have significantly higher growth in sales.

An important concern in the study of the effect of political connections is endogeneity between connectedness and firm performance (Ansolabehere et al 2003). I employ two approaches to mitigate concerns about endogeneity. First, I focus on frequent changes in the governments produced by instability of the Latvian political system. In particular, I analyze the 2002 Parliamentary Election on October 5, 2002, which resulted

in the demise of the highly powerful “Latvian Way” party. The “Latvian Way” controlled the government through most of the post-independence period and was one of the most influential parties. In the 2002 election, however, the party fell 0.1 percentage points short of the 5 percent threshold, necessary to get elected into the Parliament. The departure of the “Latvian Way” was a highly unanticipated event as the polls suggested strong performance in the months preceding the election. On the other hand, the “New Era” party and the “First Party” showed some unexpectedly good performance in the polls and were the clear winners of the election. Figure 1 shows monthly polling predictions for the “Latvian Way”, “First Party” and the “New Era” parties in 2002. Second, I perform matching using a set of controls that influences assignment to the “treated” or “untreated” groups. Previous studies observe that connected firms are typically relatively large (Faccio, 2006; Faccio, Masulis, and McConnell, 2006; Ferguson and Voth, 2008). It is also likely that the opportunities for rent seeking differ by industries. Therefore, each connected firm is matched to a non-connected firm of similar size in the same industry.

The first main result is that politicians have strong effect on the firms that they become connected to. Firms that acquire politicians as their shareholders or board members experience a drop in the sales growth rate by 40%, followed by an increase in the growth rate by 75% in the following year, after controlling for firm and year fixed effects, as well as firm characteristics that vary over time. This suggests that either (i) politicians join the firms in distress and help with political favors, or that (ii) politicians predate some firms in order to secure ownership shares or board positions. Changes in the strength of politicians have large effects on the performance of firms: performance improves in the year following politician joining the ruling coalition, and deteriorates substantially in the year when politician leaves the ruling coalition. However, these results are not robust to alternative specifications because of relatively small number of firms that experienced such events. On the other hand, I find no evidence that ex-politicians matter to the performance of firms. I also do not find statistically significant effect of the businessmen becoming politicians.

Second, I find that the cross-sectional variation in company performance following the 2002 election can in part be explained by donations of individual companies to

political parties. I find strong link between contributions to winning or losing parties and the performance of connected firms. Thus, the departure of the Latvian Way caused every firm that had donated 8,000 LVL (\approx \$16,000) to this party in the previous election cycle to lose 16.3% of its sales growth rate in the year following the election.⁶ In turn, every firm that had donated 8,000 LVL to the First Party, one of the biggest winners of the election, increased its sales growth rate by 15.6%. Because the outcome of the 2002 election was unanticipated, this result mitigates concerns about the simultaneity bias in my findings.

Taken together, my research shows that political connections matter to firm performance. This paper demonstrates that performance of connected firms is strongly linked to the performance of politicians these firms are connected to. The paper also raises the questions of why some firms seek political connections and what determines choice of the mode of political connection, e.g. campaign contributions as opposed to directly acquiring politicians.

My paper contributes to two related strands of literature. First are studies of the effect of campaign contributions on policy outcomes.⁷ Most of these studies examine the effect of contributions on voting by members of U.S. legislature. There is hardly a consensus in this literature because empirical studies of the effect of campaign contributions are plagued by problems of endogeneity and omitted variables bias. Some scholars view campaign contributions as investments in political marketplace, on which a rate of return is expected (e.g. Snyder, 1990; Stratmann, 1995; Kroszner and Stratmann, 1998). A competing explanation promoted by, among others, Ansolabehere, de Figueiredo, and Snyder (2003) is that donors contribute to get their preferred candidate elected, implying that campaign contributions should be viewed as a form of consumption, rather than investment. Ansolabehere, de Figueiredo, and Snyder (2003) surveyed nearly 40 articles in the literature and conclude that the evidence that campaign contributions have effect on legislators' votes is rather thin. Stratmann (2005) applied meta-analysis methods to the same selection of articles and reversed the finding reported

⁶ The average contribution of politically connected firms in my sample was 8,300 LVL.

⁷ See Grossman and Helpman (2001) for a thorough theoretical treatment of the issues. Ansolabehere, de Figueiredo, and Snyder (2003), as well as Mueller (2003) provide comprehensive surveys of empirical literature.

in earlier studies that campaign contributions have no effect on legislative voting behavior.

Second, there is a growing literature that uses micro-level datasets to study the effects of rent-seeking on firm-level outcomes. Hellman, Jones, and Kaufmann (2000) used survey of firms in 22 transition countries to identify ‘captor’ firms, which were engaged in ‘state capture’ activities. They found the sales of those captor firms to grow at substantially higher rates, especially in ‘high-capture’ environments. Fisman (2001) found that politically dependent firms in Indonesia lost more of their market value in the events when President Suharto’s health deteriorated. Slinko, Yakovlev, and Zhuravskaya (2005) constructed measures of special favors granted to large firms by Russia’s regional legislatures. They found that politically powerful firms perform better.

An increasing number of studies proxy rent-seeking by “political connections”, typically defined as having a politician on a firm’s board, or among shareholders, or making a campaign contribution. Faccio (2006) found evidence that political connections have an effect on corporate value of publicly-listed firms in 47 countries. Khwaja and Mian (2005) using loan-level data from Pakistan found that politically connected firms enjoy exclusive borrowing privileges from government-owned banks. Faccio, Masulis, and McConnell (2006) found that connected firms are more likely to be bailed out. Jayachandran (2006) found that when Senator Jeffords switched party affiliation, tipping control of legislature to the Democrats, firms that made substantial donations to the Republicans lost in value. Faccio and Parsley (2007) used an unanticipated effect – a politician’s death, to document the value of political connectedness. Claessens, Feijen, and Laeven (2006) used campaign contributions to political candidates in Brazil, rather than board connections, to define political connectedness. They found that politically-connected firms experienced higher stock returns and substantially increased their risk financing. Goldman, Rocholl, and So (2006) found that even in the U.S. the market value of S&P500 companies connected to the Republican Party increase in response to Republicans’ victory in the 2000 Presidential Election. However, Fisman et al (2007) using event study methodology found that news of political fortunes of U.S. Vice-President Dick Cheney had no effect on returns of companies with board linkages to Dick Cheney. Finally, Ferguson and Voth (2008) traced political connections of German firms

to the Nazi party in early 1933 and found that connected firms experienced unusually high returns following the ascension of the Nazis to power.

The paper is organized as follows. The next section describes the Latvian political system in the 1991-2005 and the outcomes of the 2002 election. Section 3 outlines hypotheses, measurement, and econometric methodology. Section 4 describes the data. Section 5 provides a discussion of the results. Section 6 concludes.

2. Political system and campaign financing: The Latvian Way

In this section, I give a brief overview of the electoral system in Latvia and the institutional setup for campaign contributions. I also describe the special role played by the “Latvian Way” party and the outcome of the 2002 election.

Latvia is one of transition’s success stories: an ex-Soviet republic, it joined European Union in 2004 and is now one of Europe’s fastest growing economies. Unlike the United States, it is a parliamentary republic with executive power concentrated in the Cabinet of Ministers, headed by the Prime Minister. The Parliament (*Saeima*) has 100 members, elected for a four year term by proportional representation with a 5% threshold. Locally, Latvia elects municipal councils consisting of 7 to 60 members, depending on the size of the municipality, also by proportional representation for a four year term. Another important difference between the two countries is that whereas U.S. has a two-party system, Latvia has about seven significant political parties. Coalition politics is important in Latvia because parliamentarian majority chooses members of the Cabinet of Ministers.

Proportional system of representation and the turbulences of transition period produced substantial instability in the political system, especially in the 1990s. Since restoration of independence in 1990 and up to 2005 there were 12 changes in the ruling coalition. On average during the period a ruling coalition consisted of four parties and its average life expectancy was about 500 days. In spite of frequent changes of governments and the ruling coalition, however, there was one attribute of Latvian politics that stayed relatively constant throughout the 1990s – the influence of the “Latvian Way” party. The “Latvian Way” has been part of every coalition government from July 1993 to November

2002 and its members held the Prime Minister's office for most of the period. Table 1 summarizes changes in the ruling coalition in 1996-2005. In the 2002 election, held on October 5, 2002, however, the "Latvian Way" failed to exceed the 5 percent threshold and was not elected in the Parliament. Departure of the "Latvian Way" was largely an unanticipated event because the public opinion polls taken before the election predicted that the party will get elected.⁸ Table 2 outlines the results of the 2002 elections. It shows that the "Latvian Way" was only 0.1% short of getting elected. "For Fatherland and Freedom" party was another big loser in the election, having lost 10 seats as compared with the previous election. On the other hand, the "New Era Party", "Latvia's First Party", and "Union of Greens and Farmers" received unexpectedly large number of votes. These parties formed the ruling coalition and the new government together with "For Fatherland and Freedom" party.

There are two more features of Latvian politics worth noting. First, anecdotal evidence suggests that some of the largest political parties are closely associated with influential businessmen and their affiliated businesses. Thus, the *People's Party* is associated with Andris Skele, who is rumored to control much of the food industry. *Union of Greens and Farmers* is often associated with Aivars Lembergs, a tycoon from the port city of Ventspils, who has a substantial stake in the transport sector. *First Party* is linked to Ainars Slesers, a businessman with interests in wholesale and retail trade. A notable exception to the rule seems to be the *New Era* party, elected on the anti-corruption ticket. Second, Latvia has a sizable Russian-speaking minority and much of voting takes place along the ethnic lines. To this date, parties that represent interests of Russian-speaking voters (*FHRUL* in 2002 elections) have never been admitted into a ruling coalition.

During most of the post-Soviet period politicians there were very few legal restrictions on politicians' involvement with private businesses. In the early 1990s this matter had not been regulated at all. The 1995 Corruption Prevention Act prohibited MPs to receive remuneration from private sector jobs but allowed them to be shareholders and

⁸ According to the "Latvian Facts", a public opinion survey firm, the predicted percentage of votes for the Latvian Way was 10% in January 2002, 9% in June, 7% in August, and then 5% only in September, a month before the election.

board members in private companies.⁹ Only in April 2002 the new law on prevention of conflict of interests barred MPs from holding any board member positions in the private sector. However, during the whole period MPs were allowed to be shareholders of private companies.¹⁰

Before 1995, contributions to political parties were not regulated in any way either. The 1995 law on financing of political organizations explicitly allowed businesses and private individuals to contribute to political parties and set contribution limit to 25,000 LVL to one party in one year. Amendments passed in June 2002 reduced the ceiling to the maximum of 10,000 LVL a year, to any number of parties. Triggered by public outcry about perceived corruption in campaign financing the regulations were tightened further in 2004. Businesses were prohibited to make campaign contributions and regulations were enforced more rigorously by the newly established anti-corruption agency (KNAB). It is also in 2004 that KNAB began to publish information about all donors to political parties.

The total amount spent in the 2002 election cycle (January 1 to October 5) was 3.6 million Latvian lats (1LVL \approx 2\$). For comparison, across all U.S. elections in 2004, the grand total spent is estimated to be about \$4 billion (Stratmann, 2005, p. 135). Although in absolute terms this may seem a small amount as compared to the U.S., there is about twice as much money in Latvian politics in terms of percentage of GDP. There is substantial survey-based as well as anecdotal evidence of the use of campaign contributions to buy favors from political parties. In World Bank's BEEPS study, conducted in 1999, 35 percent of surveyed firms reported being affected by "contributions by private interests to political parties and election campaigns" (Hellman, Jones, and Kaufmann, 2000). During a surprise raid of the corporate offices of Ventspils tycoon, Mr. Lembergs, in 2007, agents of anti-corruption agency (*KNAB*) found what appeared to be a legal contract between two parties that identified themselves only by the letters "V" and "S". Some observers believe that "V" stood for Ventspils, home city of Mr. Lembergs, whereas "S" stood for social-democratic party. According to terms of the

⁹ There were some exceptions. MPs could not be shareholders in off-shore companies, and ministers were not allowed to be involved with companies that received

¹⁰ From 2002 ministers were barred from owning shares in private companies that stood to benefit from public procurement. This restriction was extended to MPs only in 2007.

contract, “S” promised to withhold any support from a coalition led by another tycoon, Mr. Skele, a rival of Mr. Lembergs. “S” also committed to favor certain ways of privatizing large state-owned enterprises and lobby for legislation favorable to ports and transit industry. In return, “V” pledged hefty annual contribution as well as support in one of Latvia’s largest newspapers, widely believed to be controlled by Mr. Lembergs.

3. Methodology

This section discusses the specific hypotheses tested in this paper, the construction of measures of the strength of political connections, and the econometric methodology used to explain variation in the performance of firms.

If political connections benefit individual firms because of favors from politicians, performance of firms (i.e. sales or profits) should increase in the years when the firm is politically connected. If the connection is to an individual politician, I would expect changes in performance in the year when connection is established and when the political strength (and the ability to grant favors) of the politician changes as a result of him becoming part of the ruling coalition, or leaving the Parliament. If the connection is to an ex-politician, I would also expect performance to increase in years when the ex-politician’s party is in the ruling coalition. If individual firms secure political connections through campaign contributions, firm performance should increase in the years following the contribution if the party supported won the election. However, election of parties with certain political platforms may have an effect on the entire industries or even economy as a whole. Therefore, if individual firms have strong connections and experience positive changes in performance after the election relative to other firms in the same industries, I can conclude that political connections confer firm-specific benefits.

I do not examine the specific channels through which political connections pay off. Firms may benefit because of legislation that confers monopoly power by limiting entry, through better chances to win government contracts, or through faster track through the government bureaucracy. I hypothesize that political connectedness buys favors from politicians, which are reflected in the performance of connected firms. I therefore expect that the performance of politically connected firms increases in the years when the

connection is active (after the elections in case of contributions) relative to the control group of not connected firms.

Based on this discussion I develop two main empirical hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that firms connected to politicians are more likely to receive firm-specific political favors, which improve performance of these firms. Specifically, the POLITICIANS hypothesis is: Using connections to politicians and ex-politicians as a proxy for political connectedness, better connected firms have significantly better performance. The second hypothesis is that firms connected by making campaign contributions have significantly better performance in the years following the elections. Specifically, the DONORS hypothesis is: Using campaign contributions to political parties as a proxy for political connections, better connected firms have significantly better performance.

I further develop sub-hypotheses for each main hypothesis. First, I formulate the COALITION sub-hypothesis because politicians in the ruling coalition are expected to be better able to provide political favors: Using connections to politicians from the ruling coalition as a proxy for political connections, better connected firms have significantly better performance. A version of the above hypothesis related to ex-politicians is: Using connections to ex-politicians when their party is in the ruling coalition as a proxy for political connections, better connected firms have significantly better performance. Second, I formulate WINNERS sub-hypothesis: Using contributions to winning political parties as a proxy for political connections, better connected firms have significantly better performance.

Importantly, the above sub-hypotheses help me to identify whether there is a causal link from connections to firm performance, thereby alleviating concerns about endogeneity. In case of connections to politicians, it can be argued that there is reverse causality because politicians may choose to sell their services to high-performing (or under-performing) firms.¹¹ However, changes in the ruling coalition cause *exogenous* shifts in the strength of politicians *already* connected to a firm. In case of campaign contributions, it could be argued that firms give more contributions merely because they perform better, perhaps because of managerial talent, which also results in better

¹¹ It could also be the case that under-performing firms might seek rents from corrupt politicians.

performance after making a contribution. Then the effect of contributions to the winning parties should not differ systematically from contributions to losing candidates. However, if contributions translate to political favors and therefore matter for firm performance, we would expect that contributions to the winning parties have a systematically greater impact, than contributions in general. This reasoning is valid if the outcome of the election was unanticipated. As it was argued earlier, the outcome of the 2002 election was unanticipated because of the unexpected departure of the “Latvian Way” and success of the “New Era Party” and the “First Party”.

To test my hypotheses, I construct a novel dataset by matching the data on politicians and campaign contributions to financial data in the *Lursoft* database of Enterprise Registry. I argue that the aim of connections to politicians and campaign finance is to acquire political influence and secure economic rents. Then, I construct a number of simple proxies for the strength of political connections.

In case of firms connected to politicians, my first measure is simply whether a firm has a politician (Member of Parliament or a minister) as a board member or a significant shareholder. A related measure is whether an ex-politician is a board member or a significant shareholder. A politician (or an ex-politician) will have greater incentives to provide firm-specific favors if he stands to gain from them directly. My second measure is whether a connected politician is in the ruling coalition. A related measure is whether the party that an ex-politician was last affiliated with is in the ruling coalition. A politician is likely to be in a better position to provide firm-specific favor if he is in the ruling coalition, because the coalition controls the executive. Similarly, an ex-politician’s influence is likely to increase if his cronies are in the ruling coalition. I also construct a number of measures marking a connected firm’s transitions into different stages of political connection: making first connection to a politician, making first connection to an ex-politician, a firm’s board member or shareholder becoming a politician, connected politician becoming an ex-politician, connected politician moving in and out of the ruling coalition, and ex-politician’s party moving in and out of the ruling coalition.

In case of firms making campaign contributions, my first measure is simply the absolute amount the company donated, directly or through its shareholder or board member, to political parties in the 2002 election. I argue that owners and board members

of companies also contribute to acquire political favors for their firms. Henceforth, by firm's contributions I also understand contributions made by its board members and shareholders. If donations help secure favors from politicians, the company will benefit more from donating to the winning rather than to the losing political parties. Hence, I also split this measure into the amounts provided to winning parties and to the losing parties. My second measure is based on the previous work by Claessens, Feijen, and Laeven (2006). I consider competition between donors to gain political influence with a specific party. To build a connection with a party may require a larger contribution if this party already receives a large amount of contributions from other firms. As an alternative measure of the strength of a political connection, I consider the firm's contribution as a fraction of total contributions received by the party.

My measures of political connections may underestimate the number of politically connected firms. For example, previous studies pointed to the importance of connections through relatives and friends (e.g. Faccio, 2006) and there is some evidence that these types of connections are also pervasive in Latvia.¹² However, such connections are hard to pinpoint accurately, because of lack of reliable information on relatives of the politicians. In case of campaign contributions, there are also concerns that part of contributions are channeled through third persons, or that some of campaign financing is illicit.¹³ In case of 2002 election, these concerns are mitigated because the anti-corruption agency (*KNAB*) only began to publish the data on contributions in 2003. Thus, donors in 2002 election may not have been fully aware that their contributions will become subject to public scrutiny. In sum, it is likely that my measures of connections cover what could be a tip of the iceberg of political connections in Latvia and, therefore, understate their effects.

For my dependent variables, I use a firm's total sales and growth in sales, both measured in natural logarithms. I choose a firm's sales as my main proxy for performance because of its reliability and simplicity as compared with other proxies. Measuring performance in a transition economy is tricky because of widespread tax

¹² In earlier stages of this project we also used the Lursoft database to identify business connections of close relatives of 72 ministers. We found that 27 ministers have had relatives who were board members or shareholders of private companies.

¹³ Cigane (2003) estimated that the real amounts spent in the 2002 election could be nearly twice as high as what was officially declared by the parties.

evasion. Thus, accounting profits are likely to be under-estimated because of underreporting. Measures of productivity are also inaccurate because many companies (nearly a third in my sample) do not report number of employees. Moreover, underreporting of the number of employees is likely to be correlated with performance because firms with large sales and small number of employees may be afraid of attracting attention of the tax authorities.

I employ different empirical strategies for working with firms connected with politicians (and ex-politicians) and with firms connected by campaign contributions. For firms connected to politicians I begin by estimating the following regression model:

$$\bar{y}_i = \beta \bar{x}_i + \gamma c_i + \mu_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

where \bar{y}_i is the log of growth rates in sales of firm i averaged over time; \bar{x}_i is a vector of firm-level control variables averaged over time; c_i is a dummy variable for politically connected firms; μ_i is the industry fixed effect, and ε_i is the error term. This approach avoids serial correlation in the data and reduces measurement error concerns. Model (1) uses cross-sectional data and, therefore, raises concerns of omitted variable bias because political connections could be correlated with unobserved factors such as managerial ability. To address this concern I estimate the following regression model using panel data:

$$y_{it} = \beta x_{it} + \gamma z_{it} + \alpha_i + \theta_t + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (2)$$

where y_{it} is the log of firm i sales in year t ; x_{it} is a vector of firm-level control variables; z_{it} is a vector of firm-level measures of political connectedness; α_i is a firm fixed effect; and θ_t is a year fixed effect. I estimate this model using OLS with firm and year fixed effects and heteroskedasticity-consistent robust standard errors clustered at the firm level. By including firm fixed effect I mitigate an omitted variables problem.

In addition, I analyze the impact of changes in the strength of political connections by estimating the following model:

$$\dot{y}_{it} = \beta \dot{x}_{it} + \eta_0 w_{it} + \eta_1 w_{i,t-1} + \lambda_0 p_{it} + \lambda_1 p_{i,t-1} + \alpha_i + \theta_t + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (3)$$

where \dot{y}_{it} is log growth rate of firm i sales in year t ; \dot{x}_{it} is a vector of first differences of firm-level control variables; w_{it} is a vector of firm-level events that increase the strength of political connections (e.g. politician joining the firm, politician getting into the ruling coalition); p_{it} is a vector of firm-level events that reduce the strength of political

connection; α_i is a firm fixed effect; and θ_t is a year fixed effect. Specification (3) eliminates firm-specific growth trend. I also include one year lag of each event to allow for lasting effects of changes in the strength of political connections. I estimate this model using OLS with firm and year fixed effects, and heteroskedasticity-consistent robust standard errors clustered at the firm level.

For firms connected to donors I begin by estimating the following regression model:

$$\dot{y}_i = \beta x_i + \sum_{M}^{j=1} \varphi_j S_{i,j} + \mu_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (4)$$

where \dot{y}_i is log growth rate of firm i sales; x_i is a vector of firm-level control variables; $S_{i,j}$ is donation sum of firm i to party j in the 2002 election ($j = 1, \dots, M$), μ_i is the industry fixed effect, and ε_i is the error term. Model (4) is estimated using cross-sectional data in the first post-election year 2003, as well as using firm-level data in 2004 and 2005. Because this specification uses cross-sectional data, there is a possibility of omitted variable bias, as donations could be correlated with unobserved firm-specific heterogeneity. To remove the effect of time-invariant omitted variables it is desirable to estimate the following regression model:

$$y_{it} = \theta_1 + \theta_3 d03_t + \theta_4 d04_t + \theta_5 d05_t + \sum_{M}^{j=1} \varphi_j S_{i,j} + \sum_{M}^{j=1} \omega_{3j} d03_t S_{i,j} + \sum_{M}^{j=1} \omega_{4j} d04_t S_{i,j} + \sum_{M}^{j=1} \omega_{5j} d05_t S_{i,j} + \beta x_{it} + \alpha_i + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (5)$$

where y_{it} is log of sales of firm i sales in year t ; x_{it} is a vector of firm-level control variables; $S_{i,j}$ is donation sum of firm i to party j in the 2002 election ($j = 1, \dots, M$); α_i is a firm fixed effect; and $d03_t, d04_t, d05_t$ are year fixed effects for 2003, 2004, and 2005, respectively. θ_1 is the intercept for the base time period, i.e. year 2002. Because donation sums $S_{i,j}$ do not vary over time, coefficients θ_1 and φ_j cannot be identified. In general, though I cannot identify the effects of $S_{i,j}$ in any particular time period, I can identify $\omega_{3j}, \omega_{4j}, \omega_{5j}$, and therefore estimate the *differences* in the partial effects of donations relative to 2002 (Wooldridge, 2002, p. 267). Specification (5) also has the advantage of being similar to the *difference-in-difference* specification: with $\hat{\omega}_{3j}, \hat{\omega}_{4j}, \hat{\omega}_{5j}$ being the difference-in-difference estimators of the effect of donations on sales, relative to the period *before* the new government was formed.

The POLITICIANS hypothesis predicts that the coefficient γ for political connections measures in Models (1) and (2) is positive and statistically and economically significant. The COALITION sub-hypothesis predicts that the coefficients η_0 and η_1 in Model (3) are positive and statistically and economically significant, whereas the coefficients λ_0 and λ_1 are negative and statistically significant. According to the DONORS and WINNERS hypotheses, the coefficients φ_j in Model (4) are positive and statistically significant for parties that won the 2002 election, but are negative and statistically significant for parties that lost the election. In addition, the above hypotheses predict that the coefficients $\omega_{3j}, \omega_{4j}, \omega_{5j}$ are positive and statistically significant for parties which were the winners in particular years, as compared with 2002, but negative and statistically significant for parties which were the losers in particular years as compared with 2002.

I include the following control variables: log of total assets (proxy for firm size), long-term leverage (proxy for access to capital), and dummy variable for whether the firm was registered in the capital city of Riga (proxy for accessibility of political connections). I also include dummy variables for the first and last years of a firm's operations to account for the possibility that the firm could have been operating for less than full year in those years.

4. Data and Summary Statistics

This section describes the sources of the data, the process of matching firms to politicians and donors, matching of connected firms to their matched peers, and provides some descriptive statistics.

a. Sources of the data

I construct a new dataset of politically connected firms from several sources of data. First, there are Enterprise Registry data on all registered firms in Latvia, their owners and board members in 1991-2005. Second, there are firm and individual level data on campaign contributions from Latvian anti-corruption bureau in 2002-2005. Third, I use data on members of parliament and ministers in 1991-2005. I briefly describe each of the data sources below.

Firm-level data are provided by *Lursoft* Inc., a private firm which operates online electronic database of the Enterprise Registry, with detailed information on all firms registered in Latvia.¹⁴ Data on firms' shareholders and board members are available for 1991-2005, whereas annual data on balance sheets and profit/loss accounts are available only for 1996-2005.

The data on campaign contributions come from the online database of *KNAB*, Latvia's anti-corruption bureau.¹⁵ The database covers all registered campaign contributions at the individual or firm level during the four year period in 2002-2005. For each contribution I know its sum, the date when it was made, and the political party that received it. Furthermore, I know the name, last name and birth date for individual donors and registration number for firm-donors. Most contributions come from individuals and are relatively small. 3,948 individuals contributed about 7,668,742 LVL in 2002-2005 and 395 firms contributed 2,073,549 LVL in 2002-2004.

The data on members of parliament (MP) in 1991-2005 are obtained from the official website of Latvia's Parliament (*Saeima*).¹⁶ For each MP I know first and last names, year of birth, and party affiliation. As the Cabinet of Ministers is usually formed from MPs, I also collect data on any ministerial appointments that MPs had during his political career, as well as on ministers who were not in the legislature. There were a total of 527 individual MPs and ministers in 1991-2005.

b. Matching firms to politicians

I say that a firm is "politically connected" if one of the company's large shareholders (defined as controlling at least 10 percent of a company's shares) or board members is: (1) a member of parliament, or (2) a donor.¹⁷ This definition of connectedness is similar to what is used in the literature (e.g. Faccio, 2005; Faccio, Masulis, and McConnell, 2005; Khwaja and Mian, 2005). I also view contributions as a form of political connection.¹⁸ I am able to match politicians and donors to firms as my

¹⁴ See www.lursoft.lv

¹⁵ See <http://www.knab.lv/db/donations/>

¹⁶ See www.saeima.lv

¹⁷ A firm that contributed directly is also viewed as politically connected.

¹⁸ This is may not strictly true, of course, because a firm may give contributions to *seek* a 'political connection' but not necessarily be successful in this.

firm-level data contains information on the identities of shareholders and board members. For any registered firm the *Lursoft* database contains the names and personal codes of shareholders and board members. Using this information I match campaign contribution and elections data to firm-level data. Matching is done using a carefully developed algorithm that identifies politically-connected firms.¹⁹

I match *whenever* a donor or a politician was a large shareholder or a board member in 1991-2005. I exclude banks, government-owned firms, and non-profit organizations.²⁰ I exclude insignificant donors who contributed less than 500 LVL (1LVL \approx 2\$) in any year.²¹ Since a politically connected firm may own other firm(s), I also identify companies in which politicians or donors have shares through other companies.²² Furthermore, I calculate *effective* ownership of a politically connected firm, a measure which accounts for complex structures of ownership. For example, suppose a politician X owns 50% of firm A and 50% of firm B, and A owns 50% of B. I then determine that X ‘effectively’ owns 75% of B.

Matching is done very accurately because firm-level data contains information on shareholders’ and board members first names, last names, and eleven-digit *personal codes*, which are functionally similar to social security numbers in U.S. The first six digits of a personal code represent a person’s date, month, and year of birth. Data on campaign contributions by individuals contain an individual’s first and last name, as well as first six digits of the personal code, which enables accurate matching of donors to firms.²³ Data on MPs contain politicians’ first and last name, as well as year of birth, resulting in two digits of the personal code. Given that there is less information about

¹⁹ To make sure that the algorithm worked correctly, we began by matching 53 randomly selected donors to firms by hand, using *Lursoft*’s online database. These hand-collected data were then compared to the data produced by the algorithm to identify any differences and make corrections to the algorithm when necessary. When the data produced by the algorithm perfectly matched hand-collected data, we used the algorithm to do the matching for remaining donors and politicians.

²⁰ The main rationale for excluding banks was that it would probably be impossible to match to a non-connected bank. Not only are the Latvian banks relatively few but most likely all of them seek political influence in one way or the other.

²¹ Thus, my target population is comprised of 2,094 individuals out of a total of 4,194 who contributed in 2002-2005. This represents the bulk of all contributions – nearly 98% of the total sum contributed by individuals.

²² However, firms owned by a politically connected firm in which a politician or a donor is only a board member are not considered to be politically connected.

²³ In case of donor firms the contributions data contain a firm’s name and registration number, which allows exact matching.

MPs' personal codes, there is a small chance of matching to a wrong firm. However, matching firms to politicians is still more accurate compared to similar studies, which mostly used information on politicians' names.

I now describe the results of matching firms to politicians and donors. 302 politicians (out of a total of 527) were matched to 1054 unique firms. After removing firms that were never economically active (i.e. non-zero sales), firms that were not active in the years of being connected to politicians, and firms that were connected with future politicians well before their political career, I am left with 638 firms connected to 259 politicians and ex-politicians. With regard to all 2,094 individuals who donated significant amounts (more than 500 LVL a year) to political parties in 2002-2005, 1,215 were matched to 4,788 firms. After removing firms that were never active, I am left with 3,010 firms matched to 1,094 individuals. Further, focusing on donations in the 2002 election cycle, there are 747 firms matched to 517 individuals, who contributed almost 2.9 million LVL in 2000 prices. In addition, 193 firms contributed 1.3 million LVL (2000 prices) directly. Summing up, I have 844 connected firms that made contributions directly or through board members or shareholders.

c. Matching to non-connected firms

For every connected firm, a match is sought in the whole universe of registered firms, *except* firms that were already identified as politically connected. A necessary eligibility condition is that a potential match must be active in the years that a connected firm was active. Matching is done in the year preceding the establishment of political connection. Henceforth, I define political connection to a politician (or ex-politician) to exist in a particular year if the politician was a board member or a shareholder in that particular year and the firm was economically active. In the case the firm is connected to more than one politician I use the earliest connection. For firms connected with donors, 'connection' is established in the year in which a firm made a contribution directly, or through one of its shareholders or board members. For each connected firm, a match is identified among all the firms meeting eligibility requirements (not connected, active in the period, same industry) using the nearest-neighbor matching in terms of assets. Another necessary condition is that the difference between assets of the connected firms

and it matched peer should not exceed 40% of the assets of connected firm. Size of the caliper is the same as used in a study by Faccio, Masulis, and McConnell (2006). Matching is done without replacement. When identifying all potential matches in the same industry we begin with the primary 4-digit NACE classification, assigned by the Latvian Central Statistical Bureau. If no company satisfies these criteria, the process is repeated at 3-digit NACE, and then at 2-digit NACE.

I now report the results of matching connected firms to their peers. After removing firms with missing industry classification, 616 firms connected to politicians were submitted for matching and 559 of them were successfully matched to their peers. No match could be found for 56 (typically very large) firms that would satisfy all the criteria. Of those firms that were successfully matched, 486 firms were matched at four digit NACE level, 29 firms at three digit level, and 44 firms at two digit level. Matched firms operate in a variety of industries, with the most popular activities being “other business” (14% of all firms), “real estate activities” (9%), “wholesale trade” (7%), “manufacture of food products and beverages” (7%), and “retail trade” (6%).

As to the firms connected by donating, 878 firms were submitted for matching and 844 firms were successfully matched. 759 firms were matched at the four digit NACE level, 43 firms at the three digit level, 42 firms at the two digit level, and no matches could be identified for 34 firms. The most popular activities of donating firms are “wholesale trade” (11%), “real estate” (10%), “other business activities” (10%), “retail trade” (10%), and construction (7%).

d. Descriptive Statistics

In this section I report descriptive statistics for the datasets on politicians and donors, as well as their respective control groups of matched firms. Table 3 provides the definitions and the sources of the variables I use.

Table 4, Panel A compares selected financial characteristics for firms connected to politicians and their matched peers in the year of matching. The table shows that, in terms of assets, firms connected to politicians have very similar size as compared to their matched peers. Interestingly, Panel A also indicates that the distribution of sales for connected firms is skewed to the right, as compared with their matched peers. Another

interesting fact is that connected firms have lower profits and somewhat lower leverage. None of the differences are statistically significant, however. Panel B presents similar statistics for firms connected to donors in 2002 elections and their matched peers. Connected firms are somewhat larger in terms of both total assets and total sales, as compared with their matched peers, although this difference is not statistically significant. Connected firms have lower return on assets, as compared with matched peers, and this difference is statistically significant at 10% level of significance.

Table 5, Panel A shows basic structure of the data on 554 firms connected to politicians and summarizes changes in the strength of connection. This is a panel, although an unbalanced one, with a maximum length of ten years. Politicians, on average, are connected to more than one firm. There are 286 unique politicians (and ex-politicians) in the data. Most of connections are when ex-politicians become shareholders or board members, connection with an acting politician, or a businessmen becoming politician are less frequent events. Changes in the strength of already existing political connection affected by changes in the government are relatively rare: there are only 21 cases when the party of connected politician joins the ruling coalition and only 11 cases when the party of connected politician leaves the ruling coalition. It is possible that acting politicians attempt to conceal their connections to companies by selling their shares to relatives, or hiding behind off-shore companies. Observing such connections is difficult for a researcher. However, to address this concern I construct a broader measure of connections by including what I call '*conspiracy*' connections. I define conspiracy connections to exist when politician abandons the company right before the election, or at any point during his political career. Using this broader measure of connectedness, I identify more events when changes in the ruling coalition affect the strength of the existing connection: 46 cases when the politician joins the ruling coalition and 28 cases when he leaves the ruling coalition.

Panel B shows structure of the data for the 844 firms connected to donors in the 2002 election. This is an unbalanced panel with a maximum of ten years of data for a firm. 186 firms contributed directly, and the others have individual donors among their board members and significant shareholders. The average donation per firm was 8.3 thousand LVL. I count donation on the firm level, and not on the level of individual

donors. As an aside, I note that there is substantial loyalty among the donors because most companies in my sample (664) focused their donations on only one particular party.

Table 6, Panel A presents means and medians for firms connected to politicians and their matched peers, and tests for differences in means. Mean growth rates of sales of connected firms are nearly twice as high as compared with their matched peers, but it is not statistically significant. Given that there are many extreme growth rates, I windsorize growth of sales by removing the top and bottom 1% of the distribution. Windsorized growth rate of connected firms is substantially higher as compared with matched firms, and the difference is statistically significant at a 5% level. I also note that the return on assets (ROA) of connected firms is very small as compared with their matched peers, and the difference is statistically significant at a 1% level. There is no statistically significant difference in total sales, total assets, and leverage between connected and matched firms. Panel B shows the same statistics for donor firms and their matched peers. Sales growth (windsorized) of donor firms is nearly twice as high as compared to their matched peers, and the difference is statistically significant at a 1% level. As with firms connected to politicians, donor firms have very low ROA as compared with their peers and the difference is highly statistically significant. Thus, there is evidence that connected firms have higher growth rates of sales, but lower reported profitability. Because the distribution of the growth rates of sales has many extreme values I use difference in the log of sales (log growth rates) in the estimations.

5. Empirical Results

In this section I provide results of my empirical analysis in two parts. The first part provides results on the impact of politically connected shareholders and board members on firm performance. The second part provides results on the impact of donations in the 2002 election on firm performance.

a. Firms connected to politicians

Table 7, Panel A presents between effects regressions for the POLITICIANS hypothesis that firms connected to politicians perform better as compared with their matched peers. The dependent variable is log of growth in sales. My pooled sample for

1996-2005 data contains 5608 observations for 1108 firms. For all the regressions I report heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors corrected for clustering at the firm level. In addition, dummy variables for the first and last years of operation are included in each regression, but not reported.

Regression (1) does not confirm the POLITICIANS hypothesis by showing a somewhat negative but not statistically significant coefficient of -0.026 for having politically connected board member or shareholder. In regression (2) I control for total assets (size), measured in logs, leverage, and being registered in Riga. In regressions (3) and (4) I also add industry fixed effect, on the 2 digit and 4 digit levels of aggregation, respectively. In all the regression the coefficient for connected firms does not change in magnitude and remains statistically insignificant. In regression (5) I use a more balanced panel with at least 7 years of data for each firm and replicate the results of regression (4). The coefficient of interest in regression (5) is 0.002 and it is not statistically significant.

Next, in Table 7, Panel B, I use firm fixed effects and I split my general measure of political connections to distinguish whether the firm is connected to a politician or an ex-politician. My dependent variable now is log of firm's gross sales. Regression (1) shows that the coefficient on connection to politician is -0.01 and not significant. The coefficient on connection to ex-politician is 0.21 and it is significant at the 5% level. In regression (2) I control for size, measured in log of total assets, and leverage. This results in the coefficient on connection to ex-politician dropping to 0.009 and losing significance. This suggests that ex-politicians are connected to larger firms, and do not explain much of the firm's growth once size is controlled for. Further, inclusion of controls decreases the coefficient on connection to politician becomes more negative. In regression (3) I add year fixed effects but this does not change the results in a substantial way. Thus, my main results so far do not lend empirical support to the POLITICIANS hypothesis. In regressions (4) to (6) I test COALITION hypothesis, i.e. whether politicians in the ruling coalition matter more than opposition politicians. In regression (4) I use interaction terms of connection to politician with whether politician was in the ruling coalition. In case of connection to ex-politician, the interaction term is with a dummy of whether ex-politician's last party is in the ruling coalition. The coefficients on both interaction terms are positive, which is consistent with the COALITION hypothesis but not statistically

significant. Interestingly, the coefficient on connection to politician increases in magnitude to -0.25 and becomes statistically significant at the 10% level. Connection with an opposition politician implies a decrease in sales by 22.4%. The sum of the connection to politician coefficient with its interaction with ruling coalition is -0.059 and it is not statistically significant. Coefficients on connection to an ex-politician and interaction with the ruling coalition have the positive signs, confirming my hypotheses, but are not statistically significant.

In regression (5) I subject my main result to a more detailed analysis by using alternative measure of political connection to politician. In my standard “connection to politician” variables I include all ‘conspiracy’ connections to acting politicians. A conspiracy connection occurs when a politician (i) abandoned the company a year before becoming the politician, or (ii) abandoned the company at any point during his political career. This makes the main result less susceptible to the critique that politicians may conceal their connections to companies (e.g. by ‘selling’ their shares to a relative) in years when they provide political favors to these companies. Nevertheless, the regression shows that the results are largely similar in magnitude: the coefficient on connection is -0.19 but not statistically significant, and the coefficient on interaction term is 0.21 and significant at the 10% level. In regression (7) I subject my results regarding connections to politicians to further tests by using another alternative measure of the strength of connection. Instead of using the ruling coalition dummy in the interaction term, I use more detailed measures of (i) number of days in the ruling coalition in the year, and (ii) number of days as a minister in the year. When including these two alternative measures of the strength of connection, I find a negative effect of connection to an opposition politician and positive effect for the interaction term with the number of days in the ruling coalition. Interaction with number of days as a minister is not significant in real world or statistical sense.

In regression (7) I use a more balanced sample by including only firms with at least 7 years of observations and replicate the results of Regression (5). The main drawback of using a more balanced sample is the sharp fall in the number of observations from 6774 to 4263. The coefficient of the interaction of connection with the ruling coalition falls to 0.079 and loses statistical significance. In regression (8) I exclude all firms that were

connected to more than one politician and replicate the results of regression (5). This makes the coefficient on connection to politician more negative and statistically significant at the 5% level, and the coefficient on the interaction term falls and becomes insignificant. Interestingly, the coefficients on connection to ex-politician and its interaction with ruling coalition also fall sharply. This suggests that my main results for the effect of the ruling coalition are driven by companies that are connected to more than one politician or ex-politician.

Taken together, the results in Table 7 do not confirm the POLITICIANS hypothesis but provide some support for the COALITION hypothesis. Moreover, the results imply that connection to opposition politicians has the effect of decreasing total sales, which is mitigated if the politician is in the ruling coalition. One way to interpret these results is if political connections are endogenous to the performance of firms. If politicians boost performance of firms, but firms invite politicians when they experience fall in performance, or, alternatively, if politicians offer their ‘services’ to firms in trouble, then regression of performance on connections will suffer from the simultaneous causality bias and the coefficient on connections will be underestimated. The above results are broadly consistent with the hypothesis of simultaneous causality. Furthermore, in some unreported regressions I break down the connection dummy into a set of dummies indicating the year of connection. I find that the negative effect is the biggest in the first year of connection and then falls sharply, which is also consistent with the story that politicians help ailing firms.

To mitigate the endogeneity issues I use even more detailed measures of political connections and investigate the effect of changes in the strength of the connections. First, I analyze whether establishment of political connection is the result of (i) politician joining the firm, (ii) ex-politician joining the firm, or (iii) businessman becoming politician. The main source of changes in the strength of existing connection is provided by relatively frequent changes in the ruling coalition, which are exogenous to the performance of connected firms. I construct dummy variables for the years in which politician’s party joins the ruling coalition, and leaves the ruling coalition. For ex-politician, similar measures are constructed for the last party he was affiliated with. In addition I construct a dummy variable for the year when politician leaves the parliament.

The estimation results are reported in Table 8. The dependent variable is log of growth in sales. Firm fixed effects are included in all regression. For all the regressions I report heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors corrected for clustering at the firm level. In addition, dummy variables for the first and last years of operation are included in each regression, but not reported. An advantage of this specification is that it removes firm-specific linear growth rates.

Regression (1) shows that businessman becoming politician has a positive, but not statistically significant effect. The coefficient on politician joining the firm is -0.44 but not statistically significant, whereas the coefficient on ex-politician joining the firm is 0.006 and not statistically significant. The coefficient on the politician leaving the parliament is positive but not significant. Changes in the ruling coalition provide mixed evidence. On the one hand, in the year when politician joins the ruling coalition the estimated effect is negative, but not statistically significant. On the other hand, in the year when politician moves from the ruling coalition to opposition the coefficient is -0.45 and statistically significant at the 10% level. The coefficient for the year when ex-politician's party moves to the ruling coalition is somewhat positive, and coefficient for the year when he goes to opposition is negative, but neither is statistically significant. In regressions (2) I add controls for size and leverage, and in regression (3) I add year fixed effects. This results in the following changes in the main results. First, the coefficient on politician joining the firm increases in magnitude and becomes weakly significant at the 10% level. Second, the coefficient on politician going from ruling coalition to opposition decreases in magnitude and loses statistical significance. Third, the coefficient on ex-politician's party joining the ruling coalition becomes negative but not statistically significant.

Next, in regression (4) I allow changes in the strength of connections to have lasting effects on performance by including one year lags for all the variables of interest.²⁴ This further strengthens the evidence of the effect of political connections on firm performance. First, although the coefficient on the politician joining the firm remains negative but falls in magnitude to -0.52, the coefficient on the lagged effect is 0.55, and

²⁴ Because I only have a maximum of ten years of observations for each firms and the panel is very unbalanced, including more than one year lag results in sharp loss in the number of observations.

statistically significant at the 5% level. This implies that the firm's growth rate falls by some 40% in the year when politician joins, but then increases by 75% in the following year. Second, the coefficient on ex-politician joining the firm is slightly negative and small, but the coefficient on the lagged effect is 0.16. Although neither estimate is statistically significant, this implies a large increase in the growth rates of sales by 17% in the following year. Third, the coefficient on the lagged effect of politician becoming ex-politician is 0.17 and statistically significant at the 10% level of significance, implying 18.5% increase in the growth rate.

Then, I further refine my analysis. In regressions (5) and (6) I use alternative measures of connections that include 'conspiracy' connections. The advantage of including conspiracy connections is that the number of transitions to and from the ruling coalition in the sample is increased. In regression (5) I replicate the results in regression (3), and in regression (6) I replicate the results of regression (4). This does not change the main results substantially except for when politician leaves the parliament or ministerial post. This coefficient drops substantially and the lagged effect ceases to be statistically significant. I conclude that politicians may have terminated official connection shortly before providing political favors to the firm. Further, as in Table 7, I subject my results to robustness check using a more balanced sample and excluding firms with connections to multiple politicians. Thus, regressions (7) and (8) replicate the results in Regression (4) with more balanced sample and firms with a single connection, respectively. The main results largely survive both of these robustness checks.

The above results raise the question of why does the firm's sales growth drops sharply in the year when the politician joins, and then increases substantially in the following year. One explanation is that joining of the politician is correlated with broader changes in the ownership and/or board structure, which may have an adverse effect of its own, followed by a recovery once things return to normal. In an additional robustness check we identified all cases when politician joins the firm and this coincides with substantial changes in the board or ownership composition. In a number of unreported regressions we controlled for these changes but the main results were not changed. A second explanation is that of reverse causality. Firms seek political connections in bad years, and political favors help firms to recover. A third explanation is that politicians

may target certain firms with regulation (or excessive attention of law enforcement agencies) in order to secure ownership shares or management positions in these firms.

In total, the results in Tables 7 and 8 provide mixed evidence for the POLITICIANS and COALITION hypothesis. Having politician or ex-politician on board or among shareholders as such does not correlate strongly with firm performance in those years. However, the results point to simultaneous causality between political connections and performance. Moreover, my results suggest that politicians either join the firms when those are not doing well in the marketplace, or target some firms with harmful regulation to grab shares or management positions. The results also suggest that politicians conceal their connection to the company before making political favors. Sorting out the causality between connections and performance using changes in the ruling coalition is difficult because only a relatively small number of firms were affected. When politician goes to the opposition, there is a large negative effect implying about 34% drop in the growth of sales, but it is not statistically significant in many specifications. On the other hand, politician going to the ruling opposition has a negative contemporaneous effect and positive lagged effect, implying a drop in the sales growth by 13%, and the following year increase by 17%. Neither coefficient is statistically significant in any specification.

b. Donors in 2002 elections

Table 9, Panel A presents OLS regressions using cross-sectional data for the DONORS and the WINNERS hypotheses. The results reported in this table are for post-2002 election years 2003 to 2005. For all the regressions I report heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors. In addition, dummy variables for the first and last years of operation are included in each regression, but not reported.

First, I test the DONORS hypothesis that firms that donated in the 2002 election performed better after the elections as compared with their matched peers. My main explanatory variable is the amount of contributions to all parties. I begin with analysis of the effect of donations on performance in 2003, the first post-election year. Regression (1) does not confirm this hypothesis by showing a coefficient of 0.0012 on total donations made by a firm (in 1,000 LVL). The effect is not significant and not economically important. In regression (2) I add controls for size (log of assets), leverage

ratio, and a dummy of whether a company is registered in Riga, but do not report their estimates. Then, in regression (3) I add industry fixed effects at NACE 4 digit level of detail. Adding these controls does not change the main result. There is no evidence that donors performed better compared with the control group in 2003.

Second, I test the WINNERS hypothesis that firms that donated to the winning parties performed better compared to their matched peers and to firms that donated to the losing parties. I break down total donation into donations to each of the major political parties in the 2002 election. Estimation results using this new set of variables of interest, as well as controls and industry fixed effects are reported in Regression (4). The results in this regression strongly support the WINNERS hypothesis by showing positive coefficients for contributions made by the winning parties (New Era Party, First Party, Union of Greens and Farmers). The estimated effects are similar in magnitude and economically important, but only donation to the First Party is statistically significant at the 5% level. For example, a one standard deviation increase in donations to the First Party implies an increase in the growth of sales by 20.9% (9.091985×0.023). Interestingly, a one standard deviation increase in donations to the New Era Party, which got the biggest number of seats and the Prime Minister's office, would imply a smaller increase in the growth of sales by 13.6% (9.091985×0.015). Moreover, the coefficients for donations to the losers in the 2002 election (Latvian Way, For Fatherland and Freedom, LSDSP) are negative, suggesting that these firms were hurt by donating to these parties. The largest economic effect is from donating to the Latvian way, implying that a one standard deviation increase in donations would decrease sales growth by 21.8%. The effect of donating to the Latvian Way and to the Fatherland and Freedom are both statistically significant at the 5 and 10 percent level of significance, respectively. Donating to LSDSP is not statistically significant, possibly because of small number of firms that contributed. A notable exception is the FHRUL party, which emerged as one of the winners in the 2002 election yet the firms that donated to it experienced lower growth rates in 2003. A likely reason is that FHRUL is a 'Russian' party, largely ignored by the parties catering to 'Latvian' voters.

In regressions (5) and (6) I replicate the main results of regression (3) and (4), respectively, for the year 2004. Then, in regressions (7) and (8) I replicate the main

results for 2005. This changes all the results. All the coefficients of interest lose economic and statistical significance in the regressions using the 2004 and 2005 data.

Next, I refine my analysis by using alternative measures of contributions. To account for possible competition between donors of the same party I measure relative contribution as the percentage of the firm's contribution to a party relative to total contributions received by this party. Regressions (1), (2), and (3) in Panel B replicate the results from regressions (4), (6), and (8), respectively. I find that the main results are confirmed: the coefficients for the winning parties are positive, and the coefficients for the losing parties are negative. However, only the coefficients for donations to the Latvian Way, the First Party, and For Fatherland and Freedom are statistically significant.

The results so far suggest that in 2003 there was a redistribution of economic rents from the firms that donated to losers, to those that donated to the winners. However, it appears that politicians had short memory: I find no effect from donating to either winners or losers in the 2002 election cycle on the performance of firms after 2003. Although I have no data on campaign contributions before 2002, it is possible that the donors in the 2002 election also sought political connections before 2002. Thus, using donations in 2002 as a proxy for political connectedness before the 2002, I assess whether it had any effect on the performance of firms. The estimation results using cross-sectional data for each year from 1997 to 2005 are reported in Table 10. The dependent variable is log sales growth. The variable of interest is the dummy variable denoting whether the firm donated in 2002 election cycle. In all regressions I include controls for size (log of assets), leverage ratio, a dummy whether the company headquarters were in Riga, as well as industry fixed effects at NACE 4 digit level. For all the regressions I report heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors. In addition, dummy variables for the first and last years of operation are included in each regression, but not reported. I find that being a donor in 2002 had a positive effect on sales growth in 1998 to 2002. Moreover, the coefficients for 2000, 2001, and 2002 are economically and statistically significant at 5 to 1 percent levels of significance. One way to interpret this result is that consistently high-performing companies are more likely to donate to parties. However, this does not square with (i) the observation that correlation between performance and donations ceased to exist after 2002; and (ii) differences in performance in 2003 for those

who donated to the winners and those who donated to the losers. The alternative explanation is that the 2002 election marked the end of the era of the *Latvian Way*, changed the distribution of political power, which, in turn, had effects on the politically connected companies.

Another concern is that the results are affected by an omitted variable, like managerial ability, which might be correlated with both performance and donations. A standard approach to control for time-invariant factors like managerial ability is to use fixed effects estimations. Although contributions to political parties do not vary over time, I can estimate whether contributions had different effects in different post-election years, as compared with the election year, using firm fixed effects. In Table 11, Panel A I provide an additional test for the WINNERS hypothesis using panel data for 2002-2005. The dependent variable is log of sales. The variables of interest are interaction terms between dummies for years 2003, 2004, 2005, and donations to major parties. The coefficients of these interactions terms can also be interpreted as difference-in-difference estimates of the effect of treatment (donations) on the treated (donors) as compared with the control group (matched peers). In all regressions I include controls for size (log of assets), leverage ratio, and firm fixed effects. For all the regressions I report heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors corrected for clustering at the firm level. In addition, dummy variables for the first and last years of operation are included in each regression, but not reported. The results provide additional support for the WINNERS hypothesis by showing positive coefficients for the effects of donations to winners, and negative coefficients for the donations to losers. The largest and most statistically significant coefficients are for the unexpected winner (First Party), and the unexpected loser (Latvian Way). The effect of donating to the New Era is only statistically significant at the 10% level of significance in 2004 and 2005. Next, In Table 11, Panel B I replicate the results in Panel A using relative measures of donations. This does not change the main results.

6. Conclusions

This paper addresses the question whether political connections translate into better company performance. The paper investigates two types of political connections:

connections to politicians and ex-politicians, and contributing in the 2002 election. In the first case it analyzes the effects of changes in the strength of political connections on the performance of connected firms. In the second case the paper analyzes the effects of changes in the strength of political connections after the 2002 election: in particular, the unanticipated demise of the Latvian Way party, and unanticipated rise of the First Party and the New Era Party.

Using a measure of connectedness based on having (ex)politicians as board members or shareholder, the paper derives three main results. First, the firms experience a plunge in sales in the year when politician joins, followed by a sharp recovery in the following years. This suggests that politicians join the firms in distress and help with political favors. An alternative explanation, however, is that politicians use the opposite of favors to secure ownership or management positions at the firm. Second, I find some evidence that changes in the strength of connection caused by changes in the ruling coalition has effects on the performance of connected firms. In particular, some results suggest that firms experience substantial fall in the growth of sales in the year when the politician they are connected goes to opposition. Third, I find no evidence that ex-politicians matter to the performance of firms.

Using a measure of political connections based on contributions in the 2002 election, I find robust evidence that change in political strength maps into the performance of connected firms. Following the 2002 election, the firms contributing to the winning parties improved their performance, whereas the firms that donated to losers experienced decrease in performance.

In conclusion, this paper presents evidence that political connections matter to the performance of firms. It suggests that changes in the strength of connection causes changes in the distribution of economic rents among connected firms.

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Figure 1: Monthly polls for the 2002 election for selected parties

This figure presents the monthly polls for the Latvian Parliamentary elections in 2002 for three parties. The horizontal axis represents the pre-election period in months and the vertical axis shows the predicted percentage of votes for *Latvian Way* (LW), *New Era Party* (NEP), and *First Party* (FP). The “Minimum Threshold” line represents the minimum 5% threshold necessary to get elected. The “Actual Results” vertical line represents actual results of the October 5, 2002 elections. These numbers are based on the poll data provided by the *Latvian Facts*, a public opinion research firm.

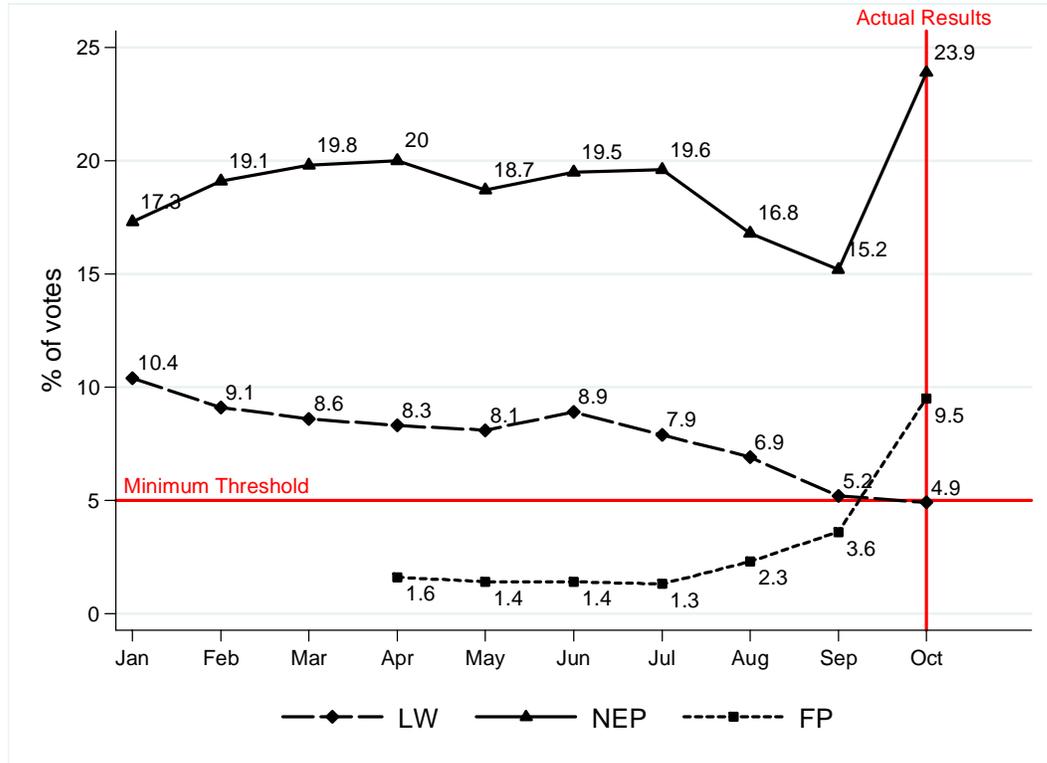


Figure 2: Monthly donations to political parties

This figure presents total monthly donations to all political parties in 2002-2005. The horizontal axis represents the time period in months and the vertical axis shows the donation amount in million Latvian lats (1LVL \approx 2\$) in 2000 prices. The vertical lines correspond to the October 5, 2002 national election; June 12, 2004 elections to the European Parliament; and March 20, 2005 elections to the local governments.

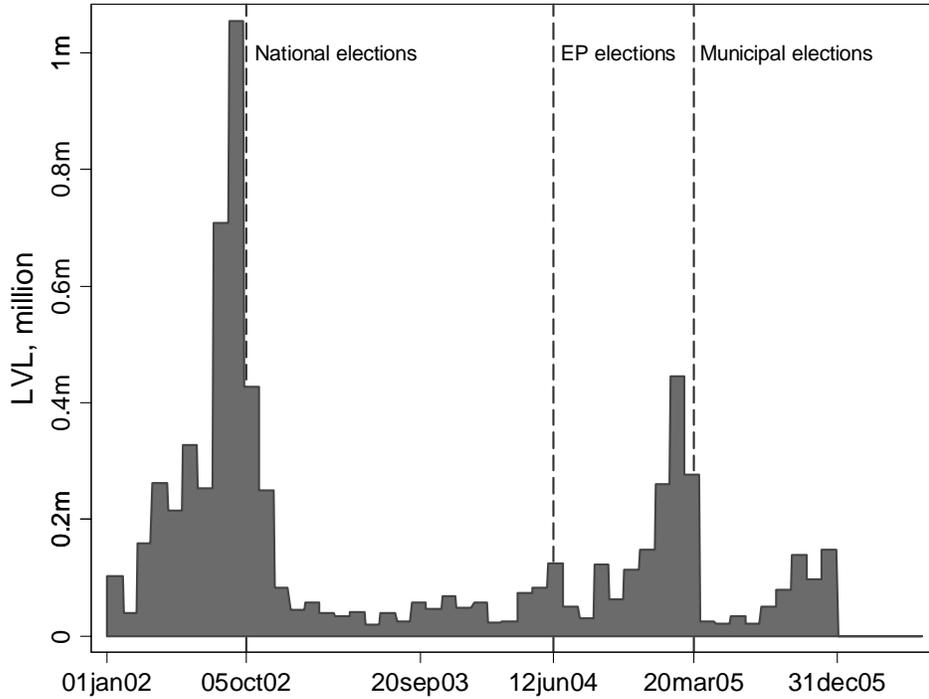


Table 1: Ruling coalition in 1996-2005

This table reports the political parties which made up the ruling coalition in the Latvian Parliament in 1996-2005 period. The party with an * held Prime Minister's office.

21-Dec-95 to 13-Feb-97	13-Feb-97 to 7-Aug-97	7-Aug-97 to 26-Nov-98	26-Nov-98 to 16-Jul-99	16-Jul-99 to 2-May-00	5-May-00 to 7-Nov-02	7-Nov-02 to 9-Mar-04	9-Mar-04 to 2-Dec-04	2-Dec-04 to 7-Nov-06
Latvian Way*	Latvian Way*	For Fatherland and Freedom*	Latvian Way*	People's Party*	Latvian Way*	New Era*	Union of Greens and Farmers*	People's Party*
Union of Greens and Farmers	Union of Greens and Farmers	Latvian Way	For Fatherland and Freedom	For Fatherland and Freedom	For Fatherland and Freedom	Latvia's First Party	Latvia's First Party	Latvia's First Party
For Fatherland and Freedom	For Fatherland and Freedom	Latvian Christian Democratic Union	Latvian Christian Democratic Union	Latvian Way	People's Party	Union of Greens and Farmers	New Era	New Era
Latvian National Independence Movement	Latvian National Independence Movement	Latvian Farmers' Union	New Party	New Party	New Era	For Fatherland and Freedom	People's Party	Union of Greens and Farmers
Democratic Party 'Saimnieks'	Democratic Party 'Saimnieks'	Democratic Party 'Saimnieks'						
Latvia's Unity party								

Table 2: Results of the 2002 election

This table reports the outcome of the 2002 election for major political parties. Parties which failed to win more than 5% of the votes did not get to the Parliament. Change in the number of seats pertains to change in the number of seats in the Parliament after 2002 election, as compared with the previous election. All donations are in 2000 prices in Latvian lats (1LVL \approx 2\$).

Parties and coalitions	% of the votes	Seats won	Change in the number of seats	Donations, LVL	% of total donations	Donations per vote, LVL
New Era Party (NEP)	23.9	26	26	381,825	8	1.61
For Human Rights in United Latvia (FHRUL)	19.0	25	9	342,122	7	1.81
People's Party (PP)	16.6	20	-4	1,146,618	24	6.94
Union of Greens and Farmers (UGF)	9.4	12	12	446,549	9	4.76
Latvia's First Party (LFP)	9.5	10	10	501,292	11	5.29
For Fatherland and Freedom (FFF)	5.4	7	-10	427,417	9	8.00
Latvian Way (LW)	4.9	0	-17	671,656	14	13.87
Latvian Social Democratic Labour Party (LSDLP)	4.0	0	-14	414,648	9	10.41
Total	100	100		4,735,137	100	4.75

Table 3: Definition of variables

This table reports the variables used in my regression analyses and their description. Data sources are *Lursoft LLC* (L) - a copy of the Registry of Enterprises of Latvia, *Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau KNAB* (K) - authority registering donations to political parties, and *Saeima web-page* (S) - the official homepage of the Parliament of Latvia.

Variable	Description	Source
Connection to donors	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the company donated in 2002 election cycle or if an individual contributor is a major shareholder (with >10% of shares) or a board member of an active company.	K
Connection to politician	Dummy variable equal to 1 if (i) a Member of Parliament or (ii) a minister is a major shareholder (with >10% of shares) or a board member of an active company.	L
Connection to ex-politician	Dummy variable equal to 1 if an ex-politician is a major shareholder (with >10% of shares) or a board member of an active company.	L
Ruling coalition	Dummy variable equal to 1 if politician is (i) a Member of Parliament in the party which is in the ruling coalition, or (ii) a minister. An ex-politician is 'in the ruling coalition' if the last party that he was affiliated with is in the ruling coalition.	S
Number of days in ruling coalition	Number of days that a politician was an MP in the ruling coalition in a year.	S
Number of days as minister	Number of days that politician served as a minister in a year.	S
Businessman becomes politician	Dummy variable equal to 1 if a major shareholder (with >10% of shares) or a board member of an active company became (i) a Member of Parliament or (ii) a minister in this year.	L
Politician joins a firm	Dummy variable equal to 1 in the year when (i) a Member of Parliament or (ii) a minister first became a major shareholder (with >10% of shares) or a board member of an active company.	L
Ex-politician joins a firm	Dummy variable equal to 1 in the year when an ex-politician first became major shareholder (with >10% of shares) or a board member of an active company.	L
Politician becomes an ex-politician	Dummy variable equal to 1 in the year when a politician quits from (i) a Parliament or (ii) leaves a minister position.	S
Politician moves from opposition to the ruling coalition	Dummy variable equal to 1 in the year when a politician's party (i) joins the ruling coalition or (ii) politician switches party to the one in a current ruling coalition.	S
Politician moves from ruling coalition to opposition	Dummy variable equal to 1 in the year when a politician's party (i) leaves the ruling coalition or (ii) politician switches party to the one not in the ruling coalition.	S
Ex-politician's party moves from opposition to ruling coalition	Dummy variable equal to 1 in the year when an ex-politician's party joins the ruling coalition.	S
Ex-politician's party moves from ruling coalition to opposition	Dummy variable equal to 1 in the year when an ex-politician's party leaves the ruling coalition.	S
Total donation sum	Total donation by a company and all its shareholders and board members to all political parties in the 2002 election cycle in thousands of 2000 Latvian lats.	K
Donation sum to a party	Total donation by a company and all its shareholders and board members to a political party in the 2002 election cycle in thousands of 2000 Latvian lats.	
Relative donation to party	Donation sum of a company to a political party divided by a total sum of all donations received by that party per year in thousands of 2000 Latvian lats.	K
Donor in 2002 election	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the company, or one of its shareholders or board members donated to political parties in the 2002 election cycle.	K
Total assets	Total assets of the firm at the end of the year in thousands of 2000 Latvian lats.	L
Total sales	Total sales of the firm at the end of the year in thousands of 2000 Latvian lats.	L
Growth in sales	Sales in this year less sales in the previous year, divided by sales in the previous year.	L
ROA	Net profits after taxes divided by total assets times 100, obtained from the company's financial report	L
Leverage	Ratio of long-term debt divided by total assets, obtained from the company's financial report in thousands of 2000 Latvian lats.	L
Registered in Riga	Dummy variable equal to 1 if the company was registered in Riga in 2006.	L

Table 4: Selected financial data for connected firms and their matched peers in the year of matching

Thus table reports means and medians of selected financial characteristics for politically-connected firms and their matched peers at years of matching. Year of matching is the year preceding first political connection or the year of political connection if this was the first year of the data. ROA are net profits after taxes divided by total assets times 100 from the company's financial report. Leverage is long-term debt divided by total assets times 100 from the company's financial report. Amounts are in 2000 Latvian lats (1LVL \approx 2\$). P-values are for the difference in means.

Panel A: Politicians					
	Connected firms		Matched firms		T-test
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	P-value
Total assets (thous. LVL)	847	90	845	95	0.99
Total sales (thous. LVL)	1,161	88	982	110	0.39
ROA (%)	-7.08	0.57	-1.06	2.78	0.27
Leverage (%)	20.11	0	23.81	0	0.53
Panel B : Donors					
Total assets (thous. LVL)	832	145	767	139	0.58
Total sales (thous. LVL)	1093	172	941	166	0.33
ROA (%)	-8.13	0.85	-2.12	1.45	0.06
Leverage (%)	26.99	3.35	23.76	3.65	0.30

Table 5: Data description

This table describes the data on political connections, both for the firms connected to (ex)politicians and the firms connected to donors. Political connection to a (ex)politician exists when he is a major shareholder (with >10% of shares) or a board member of an active company (with nonzero sales). Political connection to a donor exists when the firm donated as a corporate entity to the 2002 elections, or when an individual donor is a major shareholder (with >10% of shares) or a board member of this company. Conspiracy connection occurs if politician terminated connection in the year preceding his election, or in any year in his political career. Changes in the strength of political connection are on the level of the firm, not the politician. All donations are in thousands of 2000 Latvian lats (1LVL ≈ 2\$). Donations are on the level of the firm, and not the donor.

Panel A: Data coverage for firms connected to politicians and ex-politicians			
No. of years (maximum)	10		
No. of unique firms	554		
No. of unique (ex)politicians	259		
No of firm-year observations	3,496		
	Regular definition	With 'conspiracies'	
No. of events when businessman becomes a politician	75		
No. of events when politician joins a firm	47		
No. of events when ex-politician joins a firm	231		
No. of events when politician leaves the Parliament	58	97	
No. of events when politician joins the ruling coalition	21	46	
No. of events when politician leaves the ruling coalition	11	28	
No. of events when ex-politician's party joins the ruling coalition	43		
No. of events when ex-politician's party leaves the ruling coalition	39		
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
No. of firms connected to a politician in a year	52	40	81
No. of firms connected to a politician from the ruling coalition in a year	32.9	22	57
No. of connections to a politician in a year (including 'conspiracies')	76.3	46	115
No. of firms connected to a politician from the ruling coalition in a year (including 'conspiracies')	54.5	35	84
No. of firms connected to an ex-politician in a year	168.7	74	234
No. of firms connected to an ex-politician in a year when his party is in the ruling coalition	28.3	5	59

Table 5: Data description (continued)

Panel B: Data coverage for firms connected to donors					
No. of years (maximum)		10			
No. of unique firms		844			
No. of firms that contributed directly		188			
No. of unique individual donors					
No. of firm-year observations		6,294			
	No of firms that	Donation amount, thous. LVL			
	donated	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Total donations	844	8.3	9.1	0.1	69.1
Donations to the “New Era Party”	177	5.6	6.1	0.1	23.9
Donations to the “People’s Party”	155	9.2	8.2	0.4	43.1
Donations to the “Latvian Way”	184	6.8	6.4	0.4	34.1
Donations to the “First Party”	98	12.2	7.7	1.3	37.3
Donations to the “For Freedom and Fatherland”	90	7.6	6.8	0.6	28.2
Donations to the “Union of Greens and Farmers”	46	5.1	4.6	0.4	14.3
Donations to the “FHRUL”	44	4.9	5.6	0.5	32.6
Donations to the “LSDLP”	86	6.6	5.1	0.4	23.9
Donations to other parties	166	3.8	4.7	0.1	32.6

Table 6: Summary Statistics for Politically Connected Firms and their Matched Peers

Thus table reports means and medians of selected financial characteristics for politically-connected firms and their matched peers. Growth in sales is calculated as sales in this year less sales in the previous year, divided by sales in the previous year. Winsorizing is performed by removing top and bottom 1% of the distribution of growth in sales. ROA are net profits after taxes divided by total assets times 100 from the company's financial report. Leverage is long-term debt divided by total assets times 100 from the company's financial report. Amounts are in 2000 Latvian lats (1LVL \approx 2\$). P-values are for the tests in difference in means.

Panel A: Politicians					
	Connected firms		Matched firms		T-test
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	P-value
Growth in sales	1.995	0.046	1.024	0.033	0.14
Growth in sales (winsorized)	0.371	0.046	0.287	0.033	0.02
Total sales (thous. LVL)	1,382	144	1,491	156	0.38
ROA (%)	-15.5	0.8	6.8	2.5	0.00
Total assets (thous. LVL)	1,279	134	1,176	132	0.34
Leverage (%)	18.2	0	17.8	0.05	0.58
Registered in Riga (dummy)	0.562	1	0.622	1	0.00
Panel B : Donors					
Growth in sales	2.596	0.080	1.571	0.043	0.23
Growth in sales (winsorized)	0.490	0.080	0.265	0.043	0.00
Total sales (thous. LVL)	1,337	227	1,139	206	0.01
ROA (%)	-11.9	1.9	4.3	2.6	0.01
Total assets (thous. LVL)	930	169	858	158	0.12
Leverage (%)	34.5	2.6	28.5	1.7	0.52
Registered in Riga (dummy)	0.672	1	0.647	1	0.00

Table 7: Impact of connections with politicians

This table reports between-effects regressions of the form: $\bar{y}_i = \beta \bar{x}_i + \gamma c_i + \mu_i + \varepsilon_i$, where \bar{y}_i is the log of growth rates in sales of firm i averaged over time; \bar{x}_i is a vector of firm-level control variables averaged over time; c_i is a dummy variable for politically connected firms; μ_i is the industry fixed effects, and ε_i is the error term. The dependent variable is log of growth rate of firm's sales in the period 1996-2005. Politically connected firms here are those firms that had a politician or an ex-politician as a major shareholder (with >10% of shares) or a board member at any time in 1996-2005 period. I include the following firm-level control variables: log of total assets, and a dummy variable for whether a firm was registered in Riga. Dummy variables for the first and last years of operations are included in all regressions, but these are not reported. In model (3) I include dummies for industry at NACE 2 digit level. In model (4) I include dummies for industry at NACE 4 digit level. In model (5) I use a more balanced sample with at least 7 years of observations for each firm. *, **, *** indicate significance at 10%, 5%, and 1% level, respectively.

Panel A: Between Effects Regressions					
	Log of growth rate of sales				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Politically connected firm	-0.026 (0.043)	-0.024 (0.043)	-0.021 (0.044)	-0.021 (0.045)	0.002 (0.024)
Log of total assets		0.032*** (0.010)	0.033*** (0.011)	0.054** (0.013)	0.028*** (0.007)
Leverage		0.099 (0.088)	0.093 (0.093)	0.12 (0.104)	0.096 (0.06)
Registered in Riga		0.042 (0.044)	0.003 (0.049)	-0.024 (0.054)	-0.008 (0.031)
Industry fixed effects (2 digit level)	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO
Industry fixed effects (4 digit level)	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES
Number of observations	5608	5600	5600	5600	3808
Number of firms	1108	1108	1108	1108	453
R-squared (adjusted)	0.089	0.098	0.096	0.139	0.109

Table 7: Impact of connections with politicians (continued)

This table reports OLS regressions of the form: $y_{it} = \beta x_{it} + \gamma z_{it} + \alpha_i + \theta_t + \varepsilon_{it}$, where y_{it} is the log of firm i sales in year t ; x_{it} is a vector of firm-level control variables; z_{it} is a vector of firm-level measures of political connectedness; α_i is a firm fixed effect; and θ_t is a year fixed effect. The dependent variable is log of firm's sales in the period 1996-2005. Political connection to a (ex)politician exists when he is a major shareholder (with >10% of shares) or a board member of an active company (with nonzero sales). A politician is in the ruling coalition if he is (i) a Member of Parliament in the party which is in the ruling coalition, or (ii) a minister. An ex-politician is 'in the ruling coalition' if the last party that he was affiliated with is in the ruling coalition. Number of days in the ruling coalition is the number of days politicians was an MP in the ruling coalition in a year. Number of days as minister is the number of days politician served as a minister in a year. I include log of total assets as a firm-level control variable. Dummy variables for the first and last years of operations are included in all regressions, but these are not reported. In Model (5) I use alternative measures of connection to acting politicians that account for 'conspiracy' connections. Conspiracy connection occurs if politician disassociated himself from the firm in which he was a major shareholder (with >10% of shares) or a board member in the year preceding his election, or at any year in his political career. In Model (7) I use a more balanced sample with at least 7 years of observations for each firm. In Model (8) I exclude all firms that were connected to more than one politician or ex-politician. Heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors corrected for clustering at the firm level are reported in parentheses. *, **, *** indicate significance at 10%, 5%, and 1% level, respectively.

Panel B: Fixed Effects Regressions								
	Log of sales							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Connection to politician	-0.010	-0.14	-0.13	-0.25*	-0.19	-0.25*	-0.21	-0.25**
	(0.101)	(0.087)	(0.088)	(0.164)	(0.116)	(0.164)	(0.155)	(0.113)
(Connection) x (ruling coalition)				0.19	0.21*		0.079	0.093
				(0.126)	(0.111)		(0.150)	(0.126)
(Connection) x (number of days in ruling coalition)						0.00068*		
						(0.00035)		
(Connection) x (number of days as minister)						-0.00007		
						(0.00044)		
Connection to ex-politician	0.21**	0.009	0.042	0.028	0.035	0.028	0.049	0.023
	(0.091)	(0.067)	(0.068)	(0.068)	(0.070)	(0.069)	(0.077)	(0.066)
(Connection to ex-politician) x (ruling coalition)				0.11	0.10	0.10	-0.006	0.009
				(0.101)	(0.101)	(0.101)	(0.102)	(0.113)
Log of total assets		0.73***	0.74***	0.74***	0.74***	0.74***	0.76***	0.73***
		(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.050)	(0.035)
Leverage		-0.47***	-0.45***	-0.45***	-0.45***	-0.45***	-0.36***	-0.41***
		(0.106)	(0.105)	(0.105)	(0.105)	(0.105)	(0.122)	(0.104)
Firm fixed effects	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Year fixed effects	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Number of observations	6783	6783	6774	6774	6774	6774	4263	6331
Number of firms	1108	1108	1108	1108	1108	1108	453	1039
R-squared (adjusted)	0.850	0.894	0.895	0.895	0.895	0.895	0.908	0.896

Table 8: Impact of changes in the strength of political connections

This table reports OLS regressions of the form: $\dot{y}_{it} = \beta \dot{x}_{it} + \eta_0 w_{it} + \eta_1 w_{i,t-1} + \lambda_0 p_{it} + \lambda_1 p_{i,t-1} + \alpha_i + \theta_t + \varepsilon_{it}$, where \dot{y}_{it} is log growth rate of firm i sales in year t ; \dot{x}_{it} is a vector of first differences of firm-level control variables; w_{it} is a vector of firm-level events that increase the strength of political connections (e.g. politician joining the firm, politician getting into the ruling coalition); p_{it} is a vector of firm-level events that reduce the strength of political connection; α_i is a firm fixed effect; and θ_t is a year fixed effect. Model (1) is estimated with variables of interest only. In Model (2) I add control variables, and in Model (3) I add year fixed effects. One year lags of variables of interest are added in Model (4). In Model (5) and (6) I use alternative measure of connections that include ‘conspiracy’ connections. Conspiracy connection occurs if politician disassociated himself from the firm in which he was a major shareholder (with >10% of shares) or a board member in the year preceding his election, or at any year in his political career. Dummy variables for the first and last years of operations are included in all regressions, but these are not reported. Controls for log difference in assets and difference in leverage are included in Models (2) to (8), but are not reported here. In Model (7) I use a more balanced sample with at least 7 years of observations for each firm. In Model (8) I exclude all firms that were connected to more than one politician or ex-politician. Firm fixed effects are included in the regression, and year fixed effects are included in models (3) to (8). Heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors corrected for clustering at the firm level are reported in parentheses. *, **, *** indicate significance at 10%, 5%, and 1% level, respectively.

	Log of sales growth							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Businessman becomes politician	0.14 (0.122)	0.14 (0.124)	0.14 (0.128)	0.14 (0.130)	0.14 (0.129)	0.14 (0.130)	0.070 (0.116)	0.082 (0.125)
- one year lag				-0.0061 (0.129)		-0.023 (0.131)	-0.0090 (0.139)	-0.024 (0.157)
Politician joins a firm	-0.44 (0.355)	-0.57* (0.328)	-0.60* (0.324)	-0.52* (0.306)	-0.60* (0.325)	-0.52* (0.307)	-0.62* (0.349)	-0.82** (0.369)
- one year lag				0.55** (0.263)		0.54** (0.264)	0.46 (0.307)	0.51* (0.308)
Ex-politician joins a firm	0.0060 (0.0929)	-0.062 (0.0730)	-0.066 (0.0737)	-0.035 (0.0770)	-0.065 (0.0736)	-0.034 (0.0766)	-0.015 (0.0579)	-0.099 (0.0927)
- one year lag				0.16 (0.101)		0.16 (0.101)	0.038 (0.0671)	0.19 (0.127)
Politician becomes an ex-politician	0.14 (0.127)	0.14 (0.123)	0.13 (0.124)	0.085 (0.129)	0.048 (0.0895)	0.015 (0.0903)	0.11 (0.137)	0.020 (0.127)
- one year lag				0.17* (0.0999)		0.0025 (0.118)	0.15 (0.0980)	0.15 (0.0989)
Politician moves from opposition to the ruling coalition	-0.17 (0.154)	-0.16 (0.158)	-0.19 (0.159)	-0.14 (0.195)	-0.021 (0.103)	0.11 (0.147)	-0.26 (0.268)	-0.18 (0.281)
- one year lag				0.15 (0.197)		0.15 (0.155)	-0.080 (0.225)	0.17 (0.261)
Politician moves from ruling coalition to opposition	-0.45* (0.263)	-0.40 (0.283)	-0.39 (0.284)	-0.42 (0.273)	-0.19 (0.125)	-0.20 (0.124)	0.032 (0.218)	-0.50* (0.281)
- one year lag				-0.067 (0.231)		-0.28 (0.224)	-0.014 (0.311)	-0.076 (0.308)

Table 8: Impact of changes in the strength of political connections (continued)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Ex-politician's party moves from opposition to ruling coalition	0.011 (0.274)	-0.10 (0.257)	-0.15 (0.255)	-0.25 (0.234)	-0.16 (0.257)	-0.17 (0.236)	-0.23 (0.154)	-0.25 (0.271)
- one year lag				-0.25 (0.259)		-0.28 (0.253)	-0.0043 (0.162)	-0.34 (0.330)
Ex-politician's party moves from ruling coalition to opposition	-0.076 (0.131)	-0.042 (0.105)	-0.029 (0.111)	-0.027 (0.125)	-0.025 (0.111)	-0.019 (0.128)	0.012 (0.108)	-0.10 (0.144)
- one year lag				-0.041 (0.163)		-0.048 (0.164)	-0.048 (0.167)	-0.18 (0.177)
Controls	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Firm fixed effects	YES	YES						
Year fixed effects	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Number of observations	5521	5505	5505	5505	5505	5505	3667	5135
R-squared (adjusted)	0.158	0.235	0.238	0.241	0.238	0.243	0.132	0.237

Table 9: Impact of donations in the 2002 election using cross-section data in 2003-2005

This table reports OLS regressions of the form: $\dot{y}_i = \beta x_i + \sum_{j=1}^M \varphi_j S_{i,j} + \mu_i + \varepsilon_i$, where \dot{y}_i is log growth rate of firm i sales; x_i is a vector of firm-level control variables; $S_{i,j}$ is donation sum of firm i to party j in the 2002 election ($j = 1, \dots, M$), μ_i is the industry fixed effect. Models (1) to (4) are for the year 2003, and Models (5) to (6) and (7) to (8) are for years 2004 and 2005, respectively. All donations are on the firm level and in thousands of 2000 Latvian lats (1LVL \approx 2\$). Dummy variables for the first and last years of operations are included in all regressions, but these are not reported. Control variables are log of assets, leverage, and whether registered in Riga, but these are not reported here. Industry fixed effects are at the NACE 4 digit level. Heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors are reported in parentheses. *, **, *** indicate significance at 10%, 5%, and 1% level, respectively.

Panel A: OLS regressions with absolute measures of donations								
Year	Log of sales growth							
	2003	2003	2003	2003	2004	2004	2005	2005
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Total donation	0.0012 (0.00394)	0.00071 (0.00395)	0.00078 (0.00405)		-0.0049 (0.00342)		-0.0051 (0.00593)	
Donation to Latvian Way				-0.024** (0.0108)		-0.011 (0.0101)		-0.0077 (0.0125)
Donation to New Era Party				0.015 (0.00942)		0.004 (0.00632)		-0.005 (0.00486)
Donation to Latvia's First Party				0.023** (0.0112)		-0.0053 (0.0079)		0.0097 (0.0092)
Donation to People's Party				0.0018 (0.00749)		-0.0043 (0.00586)		-0.018 (0.0127)
Donation to For Fatherland and Freedom				-0.018* (0.00962)		-0.0068 (0.00738)		0.015 (0.0116)
Donation to Union of Greens and Farmers				0.019 (0.0197)		-0.0077 (0.0164)		-0.03 (0.0252)
Donation to LSDSP				-0.0032 (0.0127)		-0.0046 (0.0103)		-0.017 (0.0145)
Donation to FHRUL				-0.036 (0.0308)		-0.014 (0.0171)		-0.009 (0.016)
Donation to other parties				0.014 (0.0158)		0.016 (0.014)		0.0042 (0.0132)
Controls	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Industry fixed effect	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Number of observations	1543	1542	1542	1542	1422	1422	1290	1290
R-squared (adjusted)	0.034	0.044	0.016	0.027	0.008	0.006	-0.015	-0.008

Table 9: Impact of donations in the 2002 election using cross-section data in 2003-2005 (continued)

This table reports OLS regressions of the form: $\hat{y}_i = \beta x_i + \sum_{j=1}^M \varphi_j S_{i,j} + \mu_i + \varepsilon_i$, where \hat{y}_i is log growth rate of firm i sales; x_i is a vector of firm-level control variables; $S_{i,j}$ is the relative donation of firm i to party j in the 2002 election ($j = 1, \dots, M$), μ_i is the industry fixed effect. Models (1) is for the year 2003, and Models (2) to (3) are for years 2004 and 2005, respectively. All relative donations are on the firm level and in percentage of the total amount donated to a political party. Dummy variables for the first and last years of operations are included in all regressions, but these are not reported. Control variables are log of assets, leverage, and whether registered in Riga, but these are not reported here. Industry fixed effects are at the NACE 4 digit level. Heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors are reported in parentheses. *, **, *** indicate significance at 10%, 5%, and 1% level, respectively.

Panel B: OLS regressions with relative measures of donations			
Year	2003	2004	2005
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Relative donation to Latvian Way	-0.16** (0.0726)	-0.076 (0.0681)	-0.052 (0.0838)
Relative donation to New Era Party	0.055 (0.0360)	0.015 (0.0241)	-0.019 (0.0186)
Relative donation to Latvia's First Party	0.12** (0.0563)	-0.027 (0.0396)	0.049 (0.0461)
Relative donation to People's Party	0.021 (0.0859)	-0.05 (0.0672)	-0.21 (0.146)
Relative donation to For Fatherland and Freedom	-0.079* (0.0411)	-0.029 (0.0316)	0.063 (0.0494)
Relative donation to Union of Greens and Farmers	0.084 (0.0879)	-0.034 (0.0730)	-0.13 (0.113)
Relative donation to LSDSP	-0.013 (0.0528)	-0.019 (0.0429)	-0.072 (0.0603)
Relative donation to FHRUL	-0.12 (0.105)	-0.047 (0.0586)	-0.031 (0.0548)
Relative donation to other parties	0.057 (0.0637)	0.066 (0.0563)	0.017 (0.0534)
Controls	YES	YES	YES
Industry fixed effect	YES	YES	YES
Number of observations	1542	1422	1290
R-squared (adjusted)	0.027	0.006	-0.008

Table 10: Donations in 2002 election and firm performance: 1997-2005

This table reports OLS regressions with log of growth in sales as dependent variable. Donor in 2002 election is a dummy variables that takes the value of one if the company is a donor in the 2002 election Dummy variables for the first and last years of operations are included in all regressions, but these are not reported. Industry fixed effects are at the NACE 4 digit level. Heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors are reported in parentheses. *, **, *** indicate significance at 10%, 5%, and 1% level, respectively.

	Log of sales growth								
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Donor in 2002 election	-0.088 (0.0811)	0.11* (0.0618)	0.086 (0.0529)	0.16*** (0.0519)	0.12** (0.0475)	0.14*** (0.0527)	-0.0086 (0.0473)	-0.021 (0.0395)	-0.043 (0.0496)
Log of total assets	-0.01 (0.0309)	0.026 (0.0274)	0.065*** (0.0203)	0.041** (0.0178)	0.025 (0.0188)	0.049*** (0.0167)	0.028 (0.0173)	0.021* (0.0123)	0.080*** (0.0177)
Leverage	0.17 (0.107)	0.043 (0.118)	0.099* (0.0564)	0.00092 (0.000753)	0.029 (0.0375)	-0.061 (0.0471)	-0.0063*** (0.000500)	0.037 (0.0301)	0.031 (0.0383)
Company registered in Riga	0.081 (0.111)	0.046 (0.0783)	0.068 (0.0623)	-0.044 (0.0666)	0.048 (0.0597)	-0.046 (0.0594)	0.0011 (0.0614)	0.0091 (0.0479)	-0.095 (0.0588)
Industry fixed effect	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Number of observations	632	792	943	1109	1286	1442	1542	1422	1290
R-squared (adjusted)	0.102	0.129	0.122	0.146	0.087	0.03	0.016	0.005	-0.017

Table 11: Donations in 2002 election and firms performance: interactions between donations and years in fixed effects regressions

This table reports OLS regressions of the form: $y_{it} = \theta_1 + \theta_3 d03_t + \theta_4 d04_t + \theta_5 d05_t + \sum_{M=1}^{j=1} \varphi_j S_{i,j} + \sum_{M=1}^{j=1} \omega_{3j} d03_t S_{i,j} + \sum_{M=1}^{j=1} \omega_{4j} d04_t S_{i,j} + \sum_{M=1}^{j=1} \omega_{5j} d05_t S_{i,j} + \beta x_{it} + \alpha_i + \varepsilon_{it}$, where y_{it} is log of sales of firm i sales in year t ; x_{it} is a vector of firm-level control variables; $S_{i,j}$ is donation sum of firm i to party j in the 2002 election ($j = 1, \dots, M$); α_i is a firm fixed effect; and $d03_t, d04_t, d05_t$ are year fixed effects for 2003, 2004, and 2005, respectively. Each reported coefficient estimate is the interaction between donation to a party and the year. All donations are on the firm level and in thousands of 2000 Latvian lats (1LVL \approx 2\$). Dummy variables for the first and last years of operations are included in all regressions, but these are not reported. Control variables are log of assets and leverage, but these are not reported here. Heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors are reported in parentheses. *, **, *** indicate significance at 10%, 5%, and 1% level, respectively.

Panel A: Interactions with absolute amounts of donations			
	x2003	x2004	x2005
Donation to Latvian Way	-0.029** (0.0137)	-0.033* (0.0194)	-0.042* (0.0247)
Donation to New Era Party	0.009 (0.0095)	0.017* (0.0095)	0.017* (0.0095)
Donation to First Party	0.028* (0.0148)	0.029* (0.0165)	0.041** (0.0186)
Donation to People's Party	0.0032 (0.00734)	-0.0035 (0.00857)	-0.019 (0.0173)
Donation to For Fatherland and Freedom	-0.011 (0.0116)	-0.015 (0.0108)	-0.0071 (0.0129)
Donation to Union of Greens and Farmers	0.0073 (0.0210)	0.0071 (0.0225)	-0.015 (0.0350)
Donation to LSDSP	-0.0093 (0.0134)	-0.0041 (0.0153)	-0.012 (0.0185)
Donation to FHRUL	-0.029 (0.0272)	-0.046 (0.0322)	-0.048 (0.0356)
Donation to other parties	0.011 (0.0153)	0.025 (0.0180)	0.030 (0.0224)
Controls		YES	
Year fixed effects		YES	
Firm fixed effects		YES	
Number of observations		5977	
R-squared (adjusted)		0.921	

Table 11: Donations in 2002 election and firms performance: interactions between donations and years in fixed effects regressions (continued)

This table reports OLS regressions of the form: $y_{it} = \theta_1 + \theta_3 d03_t + \theta_4 d04_t + \theta_5 d05_t + \sum_{j=1}^M \varphi_j S_{i,j} + \sum_{j=1}^M \omega_{3j} d03_t S_{i,j} + \sum_{j=1}^M \omega_{4j} d04_t S_{i,j} + \sum_{j=1}^M \omega_{5j} d05_t S_{i,j} + \beta x_{it} + \alpha_i + \varepsilon_{it}$, where y_{it} is log of sales of firm i sales in year t ; x_{it} is a vector of firm-level control variables; $S_{i,j}$ is the relative donation of firm i to party j in the 2002 election ($j = 1, \dots, M$); α_i is a firm fixed effect; and $d03_t, d04_t, d05_t$ are year fixed effects for 2003, 2004, and 2005, respectively. Each reported coefficient estimate is the interaction between donation to a party and the year. All relative donations are on the firm level and in percentage of the total amount donated to a political party. Dummy variables for the first and last years of operations are included in all regressions, but these are not reported. Control variables are log of assets and leverage, but these are not reported here. Heteroskedasticity-consistent standard errors are reported in parentheses. *, **, *** indicate significance at 10%, 5%, and 1% level, respectively.

Panel B: Interactions with relative measures of donations			
	x2003	x2004	x2005
Relative donation to Latvian Way	-0.20** (0.0922)	-0.22* (0.131)	-0.28* (0.166)
Relative donation to New Era Party	0.034 (0.0364)	0.066* (0.0363)	0.063* (0.0363)
Relative donation to First Party	0.14* (0.0743)	0.14* (0.0827)	0.21** (0.0931)
Relative donation to People's Party	0.037 (0.0841)	-0.040 (0.0983)	-0.22 (0.198)
Relative donation to For Fatherland and Freedom	-0.048 (0.0496)	-0.066 (0.0461)	-0.030 (0.0549)
Relative donation to Union of Greens and Farmers	0.032 (0.0936)	0.032 (0.101)	-0.068 (0.156)
Relative donation to LSDSP	-0.038 (0.0555)	-0.017 (0.0633)	-0.048 (0.0766)
Relative donation to FHRUL	-0.098 (0.0929)	-0.16 (0.110)	-0.17 (0.122)
Relative donation to other parties	0.044 (0.0619)	0.10 (0.0726)	0.12 (0.0901)
Controls		YES	
Year fixed effects		YES	
Firm fixed effects		YES	
Number of observations		5977	
R-squared (adjusted)		0.921	