Abstract

Ethnic favoritism is seen as antithetical to development. This paper provides credible quantification of the extent of ethnic favoritism using data on road building in Kenyan districts across the 1963-2011 period. Guided by a model it then examines whether the transition in and out of democracy under the same president constrains or exacerbates ethnic favoritism. Across the 1963 to 2011 period, we find strong evidence of ethnic favoritism: districts that share the ethnicity of the president receive twice as much expenditure on roads and have four times the length of paved roads built. This favoritism disappears during periods of democracy.