

# Political dynasties in the philippines



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The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines dynasty as a powerful group or family that maintains its position for a considerable time. In the Philippines, according to a research by the Center for People Empowerment and Governance, we have about 250 political families who have dominated Philippine politics at the national and local level. This is 0.00001667 % of the country's 15 million families (CENPEG, 2007). They comprise a little, among the represented Filipinos in the country, whom majority are not as elite and as wealthy as they are, and whose interests and needs are not the same as theirs.

Roland G. Simbulan, a notable political scientist of the University of the Philippines, says: " Political dynasties distort governance, and make a sham of democratic governance. Through these, public office becomes an exclusive family franchise, and a provider of more benefits to family interests" (20). Political dynasties in the country should be banned for it does not benefit the people and the state; it only benefits those in power. They shut opportunities and hinder true services by the more deserving leaders who are not fortunate to win against these ruling families in the elections.

This violates Sec. 6 Art. II of the 1987 Constitution which states: " The State shall guarantee equal access to opportunities for public service, and prohibit political dynasties as may be defined by law. " Unfortunately, no law supports this yet. Since 1987, a lot of legislators have tried to pass a law to abolish political dynasties but have failed. This is mainly because most lawmakers come from political dynasties. Thus Simbulan is right when he said that, " Wealthy and powerful families have dominated politics in the

Philippines, concentrating power to the elite families, promoting corruption and abuse of power” (7).

Many people would still choose to favor to political dynasty. As for many, political dynasty seems a very common practice from the highest to the lowest form of government. Political dynasty may be advantageous for some especially when the politician has a good track record in serving his or her constituents well at the same time his siblings or his family members followed suit in the field. Political dynasty makes the continuity of development or program according to their plans and visions since the power and resources are concentrated in their hands.

Political families have intact personnel from their family members and could manipulate the program implementation faster for they do not need to consult opposing parties to approve their projects and budgets. In political dynasties, the legacy of ruling families counted most by achievements through projects and other possible ways in establishing fragrant names to public. Consider this as an example, in Davao City, Dabawenyos love how Mayor Duterte governs and rules the city. Even though his term ends, people would still choose put him into position because of his manifested accomplishments as mayor.

From this, it is clear that people has the tendency to see the profile of the politician’s prestigious ancestry and doing a relatively good job for running the country. Another perfect example for this is our current president, Pres. Benigno Aquino III. His parents, Cory and Ninoy Aquino, were known to be good rulers, honest individuals and have high regards on the morality;

therefore, Filipinos believe that their successor will adhere to similar political agendas as their predecessor. Political dynasty sometimes deals with the built trust and confidence over the people.

However, political dynasty attracts the political families to abuse their powers and authority. As for an example, politicians who tend to hold on to power put their siblings or relatives in position where they vacated therefore, tend to use it for their personal gains like emptying the coffer of the tax payer's money and putting people who is close to him in a certain positions in government institutions. They choose those persons not because of their capability, knowledge and experience for the said jobs but because of reliability and control for future plans and advocacies.

Political dynasty also fails to develop other good leaders because the authority is just revolving around the political families. According to Bobby M. Tuazon, the director of policy studies in the Center for People Empowerment in Governance (CenPEG); " The concentration, expansion, and consolidation of political dynasties over the past 100 years attests to the continuing hegemony of feudal politics, the absence of any form of real democracy, and the continued powerlessness of a vast marginalized majority in the Philippines" (3).

Those whose family names are widely known have more edge than any others, even though they lack real motivations and political knowledge. The majority has been controlled by the invisible hands of political dynasty creating an illusion of a country than has been upholding equality and fairness. Maybe not all, but the intention of the running members that belong

to the famous clans in the Philippines is starting to be questionable for often do they hide in the shadows of their most well-known members during their campaign speeches and paraphernalia.

The Wikipedia defines hegemony as a term used in ancient Greece to indicate an indirect form of government of imperial dominance. It is described further in an illustration of one social class manipulating the system of values and mores of a society. It may be hard to recognize it at first, but definitely, the people would soon realize that they are bind in a cycle of false hopes and promises given by those who are in power. One of its effects is the undeniable control of the reigning social class to what should be the status quo of the whole community.

The ruling party has the ability to contain the industrial and economic progress, leaving no opportunities for the people outside their social class. Since most of the ruling families are successful business men and landowners, they have the capacity to protect their wealth and properties. This leads to politicians abusing their power entrusted to them by the masses. An example of which is the issue of Hacienda Luisita, owned by the Cojuancos in Tarlac. This family is known for its well-established political lineage.

But their ownership of this 6, 435-hectare sugar plantation estate has been put into question and was dubbed as a symbol of abuse by the powerful figures all having stakes in the biggest lands of the country. The Hacienda Luisita massacre, which happened in 2004, served as a monumental event of the people's cry against the governing policies and the manoeuvring of those

who are in the authority. The farmers were not given enough privileges because of the family's political influence, pushing the people to end their patience in giving the government a chance to resolve the existing feud.

The modern day colonization that has been playing the people's trust is very evident, not just in the Local Government Units (LGUs), but also in the House of Representatives, and has been persistent enough to reach the Senate. This covers the national and local governing body of our " democratic" country. The CenPEG also released an obvious list of these reigning clans: " The lower house is filled with the Macapagal-Arroyo kin, while the LGUs have the Ampatuans of Maguindanao, Singsons of Ilocos, and the Jalosjos family in Zambonga.

Not to mention the star-studded dynasty of the Revillas of Cavite, showbiz couple Lucy Torres-Richard Gomez in Leyte and the continued obsession for political turf of Pampanga's absentee congresswoman and former President, Gloria M. Arroyo and her children, " Partylist" representative Mickey Arroyo and new Bicolano citizen, Dato Arroyo" (2). These are famous names, if not celebrities, their kin can be traced back to those ilustrados who were the trustees of the Spanish and American colonial government.

The people are severely blinded by the fame that these families represent, and their faithful face masks and promises during elections. The " change" that this country has been waiting for and the people's thirst for total development have been shut down in limited voice of the small number of families leading it. They can manipulate the circulation of laws in favor to what they think is beneficial to the minority which they obviously belong to,

not for the people's wellness, for they usually hear the same old and common comments in the consecrated government.

I grew up in Davao City, which has been lorded by the prominent families since time in memorial. It's a usual thing for me to hear the names Duterte, Nograles, Bonguyan and Garcia entering the Sangguniang Panglungsod, barangay councils, and even the executive positions of the local government. Our neighbors say that it's hard for the common people not to follow these powerful men and that they now develop the disappointing idea of not being truly concern if who's going to win in the elections for they are quite sure that it's the same old and rusting names.

This philosophy of passiveness has been depriving the citizens to claim what they rightfully deserve. But the cloud of philosophical dynasty has left them with no choice but to maintain this manner. The " democracy" that is fought for and died for by many Filipino heroes has been snatched by those who have the privilege of doing so and clothed by the same brand name but has a deteriorating quality of its definition of service and truth. We can't deny the fact that many political dynasties have numerous contributions in developing our country but we also can't deny the abuse of power, the lack of representation especially in the eeds of the majority of Filipinos, and the selfish ambitions for legacies, family pride, and honor of these ruling families.

They do not only create a world for themselves but create a world of greed, pride, and evil their constituents would have a hard time to escape. But cheers to those fearless Filipinos who chose to challenge these families by

going against them in elections, and filing judicial petitions to cancel their candidacies. These acts prove that it is still in our hands that could stop abusive and useless families from ruling the country.

Let us remove the dirt that blinds our own eyes and destroy the chains that bind and restrain us from speaking and acting out against these dynasties. As Artemio V. Panganiban of Philippine Daily Inquirer challenges, “ If indeed our people want to stop members of political dynasties from occupying government positions simultaneously, they can demonstrate their will in the 2013 elections by voting down the families” (14). Truly, the Filipinos have the power.

We have the power to stop and break the culture of bad political dynasties. Simbulan adds: “ Ultimately, in a country rife with inequality, the hope in our political system and country lies in education, national consciousness, civic values, transparency in governance and social awareness and organization at the grassroots. There is hope (31). ” Our state will be free from political dynasties if we continue to educate and persuade more Filipinos about its disadvantages and if we, anti-dynasty advocates, continue to make a stand.