

# Political dynasty essay sample

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



## Abstract

The study aimed to do a research background about the political dynasties in the Philippines. We all know that the politics in the Philippines has been under control of a few notable families. The term coined by Filipinos to describe the practice is “ Political Dynasty”. Constitution effectively broke the hold of incumbent families on power. The ability of term limits to dismantle political dynasties is not obvious, as term-limited incumbents may be replaced by relatives or may run for a different elected office. Whether these strategies undermine the direct effects of term-limits in reducing the time an individual can hold office is an empirical question. I find no evidence of a statistically significant impact of term limits on curbing families’ persistence in power. The researcher will do a survey if the correspondents are favor to political dynasty.

## I. Introduction

It is a common fact in the country that family members of incumbent politicians run for public office. National and local elections are dominated by these politically empowered families. Up to now, however, the “ political dynasties” have not been clearly defined by law in the Philippines. This condition allows and is being used by incumbent politicians to push their family members to pursue political careers. And of course, seeing how these family members observe and experience the prestige, power, and influence of being in politics, they are more inclined to pursue the same career path. This system then leads to an increased and increasing number of family members holding public office creating the undefined “ political dynasties.”

Being in politics gives a person the power and influence over his area of jurisdiction including its public resources. This could be overwhelming to a person and much more to a family with more than one politician. The basic power and influence of a politician tends to widen as the term of office goes on and the existence of people around them with vested interests to obtain the politician's endorsement and approval. This system in turn overpowers the politician and paves the way to make decisions to the politicians' gain and benefit and that of the more privileged constituencies thereby losing sight of the politicians' morals and inherent obligations towards good governance and uplifting the lives of the less fortunate.

The overwhelming power and influence plus the exposure to unsolicited and solicited favors eventually lead the politicians to become greedy and corrupt. This has been going on and on, never ending, and more of this greediness and corruption could be expected from the existence of political dynasties. To be in politics has become a lucrative business in the process. This political system in the Philippines is one of the major causes of the downfall of the country's economy to the detriment of the struggling Filipinos and the whole country.

In this paper, I study political dynasties in the Philippines

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In section 2, I provide some brief background and history on the political dynasty in the Philippines. In section 3, describes the methodology and the data used in the study. In section 4, I elaborates on the findings. The last section presents the implications of the findings and then concludes the discussion.

## II. DISCUSSION

### 2. 1 What is the history background of the political dynasties in the Philippines?

#### Emergence of political dynasties

The occurrence of political dynasties was believed to be first recorded in the pre-Magellanic period. In his book *The Making of a Filipino*, Renato Constantino pointed out that “communities at this time were already accustomed to an early form of government and politics.” The pre-colonial society had the datu, raja, and maharlika as rulers and stewards of tribal communities. According to Constantino, their strong familial bonds espoused the development of the leadership and social prestige of this ruling class. Perhaps the datu, raja, and maharlika class served as archetypal models for the formation of political dynasties in the Philippines. During the Spanish colonial period, the term *principalia* was introduced.

The *principalia* embodied the new kind of local elite. To Constantino, the *principalia* “was composed of the wealthy landowners, many of whom were descendants of the early datos and maharlikas.” This time, the former datu “has been entrusted with fiscal and administrative duties and became adjuncts of Spanish power. From mere administrators of socially-owned land during the pre-Magellanic period, the *principalia* eventually became formal owners of these lands.” The *principalia*, along with the mestizos, ilustrados, mestizo-sangleys, creoles, and Chinese mestizos constituted the local oligarchs of the country. In *Landlords and Capitalists*, political scientist Temario Rivera revealed that about 87 families controlled the top 120 manufacturing

companies from 1964-1986. Sixteen of these families—about 20 percent—were involved in politics.

Most of them were members of the landowning elite that emerged during the 19th century, including the Aranetas, the Cojuangcos, the Jacintos, the Madrigals, and the Yulos. “ Through government influence,” writes Rivera, “ landed capitalists caused the diversion of state resources to traditional elite economic activities like sugar and coconut milling, limiting further industrial diversification.” The third period was highlighted by “ the introduction of education and suffrage by the US that catapulted the elites in the first local elections in 1903 and the first national elections in 1907,” Tuazon explained. The elites capitalized on education to acquire new knowledge and information. Through education, both the local and national elites obtained a new form of mechanism, which the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu called “ cultural capital.”

Education was the ticket to election participation and a prerogative of wealth. In history, the first elections only catered to the propertied class, which comprised less than one percent of the population. William Howard Taft directed this first-ever election limiting the number of participation only to the local and national elites. A CenPEG study on familial membership in public offices (1907 -2004), that is, from the 1st Philippine Assembly to the present Congress of the two Houses found that Congress is home to 160 families that have continuously served each house with two or more family members. In the 1946 Congress, out of the 98 congressmen elected, 61 came from families with members in elective positions from 1907 to 1941.

The development of both the local and national elites enhanced their monopoly over the landowning system, and businesses such as mining, logging, sugar, tobacco, real estate, media, links to banks, and others.

### Political dynasties as ideology

According to Tuazon, nearly 50 percent of the country's current political dynasties owe their ascendancy to post-Marcos (1986) political deals when most elective positions were filled up by appointees of then President Corazon C. Aquino, "including the Ampatuans of the infamous Maguindanao massacre." In the entry of political appointees, it is understood that more families were allowed to establish their respective dynasties in the political arena. The prevalence of political families in various public posts has become commonplace in the Philippine government today. A CenPEG study in 2011 showed that the May 2010 elections—during which the automated election system was used nationwide for the first time—increased even more the number of political dynasties both at the national and local levels.

Political dynasties have been thriving with memberships increasing through horizontal and vertical expansion. For instance, in the 15th Congress, vertical and horizontal expansion included local and national positions, covering legislative districts, provinces, and regions, and even penetrating the party-list system. The rampant political dynasty building today was described by Tuazon as tactics of "self-preservation and expansion, which are means for a continuing rule of political dynasties." The 2013 election clearly demonstrates how such tactics operate. For instance, the 2013 senatorial slates are basically coalitions of political dynasties through party-switching

for networking and political preservation. Image and visual packaging have become key factors in the expansion, preservation, and continuing rule of political dynasties.

Partnerships with lawyers, the media, showbiz personalities and corporations have favored wider expansion and greater popularity for these political dynasties, ensuring their rule over Philippine politics. The continuing phenomenon of political dynasties today reflects the encompassing influence of traditional politics. Recent studies reveal that “ since 1903 to present, dynastic candidates have had about thirty percent greater chance of winning over non-traditional rivals,” according to Tuazon. It has become customary for citizens to base their decisions on personality-based campaigns backed by familial or dynastic support. While an ideology is in place, for Tuazon, “ such dynasties perpetuate and enjoy various advantages in traditional kinship networks, political machineries, wealth, property, access to government sources, weak political party system, weak electoral system, culture of powerlessness among the people, and warlordism.” Is the citizen in the Philippines is in favor of political dynasties?

Pros and Cons of the Political Dynasty

What is wrong in political dynasty?

Recent surveys for the 2013 senatorial elections paint a familiar picture: many top-ranked candidates are either re-electionists or relatives of incumbent or former politicians. This, once again, prompts a discussion on political dynasties, whether this is an issue that should concern voters in the

upcoming elections or something that can be accepted as part of our representative democracy.

In principle, there is nothing wrong with political dynasties. In practice, however, its prevalence exemplifies the exclusionary power structure in the Philippines, where local elites continue to exert considerable influence in our country. Part of the answer lies in the historic character of electoral politics in the Philippines. Dante Simbulan's pioneering study described the Philippines as an elite democracy where elections have been institutionalized to manage intra-elite competition. Elections have formalized the process of political succession through a periodic democratic exercise which can be easily manipulated for selfish ends. Elite rule is legitimized through this process by giving the illusion that the public has the power to choose its leaders, even though the pool of electable candidates is generally limited to a set of individuals with familiar surnames.

Based on this analysis, one can make an argument that political dynasties are mere post-colonial legacies. To this extent, Enrile is correct – that dynasties have existed since the beginning of Philippine politics. They are social realities that can be traced to the emergence of a cacique class from the Spanish colonial era and, in several cases, the creation of new elites under the Marcos regime. These de facto nobilities are able to stay in power by addressing the needs of their constituents through the strategic distribution of patronage masking as “ public service” and the maintenance of compadre ties. To put it crudely, dynastic politicians are not entirely to



blame, given that they too are products of the principalía's evolution into the modern day elite.

To accept this as part of our contemporary reality, however, is to be oblivious of political dynasties' abuse of our weak democratic structures. One of the main promises of representative democracy is its commitment to future redistribution of material wealth and political power that were accumulated through historic injustices. What's wrong with political dynasties is that instead of working towards the creation of equitable political structures, they have further strengthened the barriers to political inclusion of traditionally disenfranchised citizens such as peasants, workers, indigenous and other minority groups.

In his research, Pablo Querubin has found a causal effect between winning elections and having relatives in office. In particular, " individuals who win their first race by a small margin" are " four times more likely to have relatives in office in the future" compared to " individuals who run but lose by a narrow margin and never serve." These findings are revealing in that they expose how relatives of previous incumbents exclusively benefit from the political investments of their predecessors which, in turn, consolidates disproportionate political power in a few families.

This is particularly troubling because in the Philippines, political power is closely linked to economic power. It is unlike other countries that have a distinct political class of civil servants and technocrats that are relatively autonomous from oligarchic interests and, in the case of South Korea, can discipline economic elites. Instead, as John Sidel argues, politicians in the

Philippines have “ monopolistic control over both coercive and economic resources within given territorial jurisdictions or bailiwicks.” Consequently, concentration of political power among a few families benefits a narrow set of economic interests over a period of time, institutionalizes economic inequalities and perpetuates a culture of dependency between an economically/politically dominant patron and an otherwise disenfranchised client. It is not accidental that provinces with established political dynasties are also among the poorest.

The trend of political dynasties has also served to limit the liberating potential of democratic politics. It undermines the principle of political equality in its most basic form through the principle of one person, one vote. While this right is often qualified by saying that voters usually end up choosing between tweedledum and tweedledee, virtually unopposed political dynasties do not even make room for tweedledee. The seeming inheritability of political positions is reminiscent of an oppressive absolutist state, where citizens are mere subjects that have no choice but to affirm the dictates of a ruling family rather than active citizens that are able to shape their political destiny.

By making this argument, I do not mean to discredit dynastic politicians who, through their actions, have expressed commitment to reform Philippine politics. Congressman Erin Tañada has been at the forefront of institutionalizing transparency through the Freedom of Information Bill. Senator Pia Cayetano has strengthened the system of rights through the Magna Carta for Women and the RH bill. Senator TG Guingona has been the

champion of participatory modes of governance in budget reform. It is indisputable that some dynastic politicians have a good track record of advocating progressive policies but these individual achievements have done little in dismantling the structures that perpetuate political exclusion in a representative democracy. It is only when a person who has worked up the ranks in a political organization can stand an equal chance of being elected with a candidate with a political last name can we consider dynasties as fair practices in a democratic process.

So where do we go from here? A viable option is to strengthen alternative political spaces for the public to organize and secure meaningful inclusion in the political process. Electoral politics has become so crowded with dynastic politicians, requiring mechanisms for citizen participation that are relatively independent of electoral politics. Political scientists describe this as “democracy from below” or the practice of democracy through people’s organizations, non-government organizations, social movements, new political parties and social networks that oppose elite politics and espouse new politics.

Indeed, Philippine politics has been historically driven by bottom-up struggles for social justice and accountability. Grassroots political activities have ousted presidents, raised wages, and guarded ballot boxes. Hopefully, these democratic impulses eventually translate to systemic reform where the citizenry can effectively enforce democratic control over its politico-economic elites.