

"HEIRS TO THE THRONES" – FAMILIES AS POLITICAL DYNASTIES AND LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA

Don't deny the sons and daughters and close relatives of leaders from seeking political leadership in their land. It's their right.

By

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Political dynasties have long been present in democracies, raising concerns that inequality in the distribution of political power may reflect imperfections in democratic representation.....[W]e find that political power is self-perpetuating: legislators who hold power for longer become more likely to have relatives entering Congress in the future. Thus, in politics, power begets power.

Dal Bo, E., Dal Bo, P., and Snyder, J., (2009) "*Political Dynasties*" *Review of Economic Studies* (2009) 76, 115–142)

Political dynasties¹are present all around the world, even in democratic countries. Political dynasties are families who have exerted disproportionate influence on the politics of their societies. If they are very successful they may produce more than one Head of State or Head of Government. But at the very minimum political dynasties have produced political leaders in varied ranks of the political process².

In DRC the current leader, Major General Joseph Kabila is the son of the assassinated President Laurent Kabila. The long-term president of Togo; Gnassingbe Eyadema was succeeded by his son Faure Gnassingbe.

In Kenya Uhuru Kenyatta, he is a son of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta 2013. In 2002, Uhuru started his bid for the presidency that bid failed. He tried in 2013 and went through elections and defeated another from the political dynasty: Raila Odinga, the former Prime minister during the Kibaki regime. Raila is the son of former vice president Oginga Odinga. Raila had joined government under a power sharing arrangement after the election crisis of 2007 in Kenya. While in Kenya the dynastic politician (Uhuru) went through elections, the ones of DRC and Togo went through succession by military means.

¹ Dynastic politicians can simply be defined as those whose family members have also served in the same and related political position in the past.

² Mazrui, A., (2009), "Half A Century of The Post-Colonial Judiciary and State-Formation: The African Experience", Binghamton University

Is this a phenomenon of the Africans?

Let us go to Asia and start with South Korea. The current president (and the first woman president to hold that office, serving the 18th presidential term) of South Korea, Park Geun-hye, is the daughter of former president General Park Chung-he. She was elected. In Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon), a male leader is assassinated and the female relative rose to become Prime Minister. That was Mrs. Bandaranaike. Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan was executed but overtime his daughter Benazir Bhutto became Prime Minister of Pakistan twice. Unfortunately she was also assassinated during the regime of Parvez Musharraf.

Example of the Philippines will suffice. The Philippines constitution prohibits political dynasties. Following the return to democracy after a 15-year long dictatorship by Ferdinand Marcos, the 1987 Philippine Constitution introduced various changes aimed at decreasing the power of political dynasties. For example, Article II, Section 26 of the Constitution included a clause stating: The State shall guarantee equal access to opportunities for public service and prohibit political dynasties as may be defined by law³. In the Philippines, according to Mendoza (2012) with the 2010 elections, 70 percent of the 15th Philippines Congress is dynastic; and dynasties dominate all of the major political parties; on average, there are more dynasties in regions with higher poverty and lower human development; and dynasties tend to be richer when one outlier is removed among present non-dynasties (MP) and 80 percent of the youngest Congressmen (age 26-40) are from dynastic clans⁴. From the Philippines (Mendoza et al., 2009:1) results show that representatives from political dynasties account for 70 percent of the jurisdiction-based legislators in Congress. On average, they possess higher net worth and win in elections by larger margins of victory compared to non-dynastic representatives.

In Chile, the two lady presidential contestants were not strangers to the high offices in that land. They are members of the political dynasties in that land. Matthei Fonet is the daughter of Fonet, a military general, and a minister of health during Augusto Pinochet's government. He later became commander –in-chief of Air Force, and was a member of the Military junta until Chile's return to democracy. Matthei already served as minister of labour and social security under President Sebastian Pinera until July 2013.

Michelle Bachelet is the daughter of air force military general who served as the in-charge of the Food Distribution Office under the government of Salvador Allende. He was arrested and charged with treason and tortured and died of cardiac arrest in detention under General Augusto Pinochet. Pinochet had come to power through the 11 September 1973 coup d'etat. Michelle Bachelet

³However, after 23 years, a dynasty-controlled congress has failed to pass legislation providing a definition of political dynasty making this constitutional ban vacuous. (See Pablo Querubin (2011), "Political Reform and Elite Persistence: Term Limits and Political Dynasties in the Philippines". Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies)

⁴Mendoza, R, U., Beja, E., Venida, V., and Yap, D., (2012) "Inequality in democracy: Insights from an empirical analysis of political dynasties in the 15th Philippine Congress". *Philippine Political Science Journal* 33(2):132-145.

served as the minister of health and defense under her predecessor president Ricardo Lagos. She was president from 2006-2010.

There are other dynastic politicians in the other countries. There are the Venizelos and the Mitsotakis families in Greece, the Kirchners and the Rodríguez Saás in Argentina, the Allendes in Chile, the López family in Colombia, the Arosamenas in Ecuador, the Batlles in Uruguay, the Nehru-Gandhi family in India, the Bhutto's in Pakistan, and the Bongo Odimba family in Gabon⁵. Dynasties exit in varying degrees regardless of level of democracy⁶.

Let us go to the developed world. Lady Nancy Bush once remarked that she was seated between two presidents, i.e. her hubby and her son. Both were presidents. The US constitution prohibits on American political royalty. However, dynasties still rule in the US.

Let us look at them. These dynasties have been in influential offices in the land. The Bush family had Bush Senior and Bush Junior as presidents. Jeb Bush is alleged to have rigged for his brother in Florida where he was Governor. He is likely to stand and should he win, he will be another of the Bush family in the White House. The Kennedy family has dominated politics for decades. Prominent among them are Robert, Edward, and John F. Kennedy. JF Kennedy was the president who was assassinated in office in 1963. Hillary and Bill Clinton have been president and state secretary.

In 2008, Obama defeated Clinton and later John McCain to become president. He was not from the dynasts. In the past six presidential elections in the US, before 2008, four of the presidential aspirants were children of prominent politicians in the land. These were Mitt Romney, George W. Bush, and Al Gore.

What do the findings on the names associated with the 'heirs to the throne' show?

Could be also that the longer term in office for a politician induces other family members to enter politics and a vocation? There is not yet empirical evidence on this. We can say that oftentimes

⁵Rossi, Martín A. (2009:3), "The Causes of Political Dynasties in Democratic Countries", Universidad de San Andrés

⁶ Numerous politicians have since taken over the reins of power from their fathers, husbands, or brothers. A brief list includes: President Cristina Fernandez (wife of former President Nestor Kirchner) in Argentina, Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra (sister of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra) in Thailand, former President (now Congresswoman) Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (daughter of former President Diosdado Macapagal) in the Philippines, former President George W. Bush (son of former President George H. W. Bush) in the United States, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (son of former Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew) in Singapore, Prime Minister Najib Razak (son for former Prime Minister Abdul Razak) in Malaysia. Additional examples include: India's Jawaharlal Nehru, daughter Indira Gandhi, her son Rajiv and daughter-in-law Sonia; Sri Lanka's Solomon and wife Sirimavo Bandaranaike and daughter Chandrika Kumaratunga; Bangladesh's Mujibur Rahman and daughter Sheikh Hasina, as well as Ziaur Rahman and wife Khaleda Zia; Pakistan's Zulfikar Bhutto, daughter Benazir and her husband Asif Ali Zardari (see Mendoza, U.R., Edsel, L.B., Venida, S. V., and David Barua Yap II, D. B., (2011), "An Empirical Analysis of Political Dynasties in the 15th Philippine Congress", Asian Institute of Management, Working Paper 12 – 001)

children have ended up in the vocations of their parents. These candidates start young, dragged to the county fairs and Fourth of July parades from their earliest years (Miller 2013:25).

The advantage of name recognition may be surpassed only by the political networks of high-powered supporters that come with it. There is also the advantage of experience. Studies conducted in Argentina, where representatives in Argentina are elected through a closed party list at the provincial level, and not through a uninominal race at the level of a smaller legislative district, as in the US, find that a longer tenure allows a legislator to accumulate an asset in terms of name recognition. Rossi (2009:3) finds evidence that the particular channel behind self-perpetuation is family name recognition⁷.

Dynastic politicians often enjoy two issues - *campaign advantage* and *brand-name advantage*, as noted in Laband and Lentz (1985)⁸. In United States, for example, Feinstein (2010) shows that for all open seat House contest between 1994 and 2006, dynastic politicians entertain significant "brand name advantage". Moreover, this advantage provides them a considerable edge over comparable non-dynastic opponents⁹. Even in Japan, in a study covering 1997-2007, it was found that as compared with non-dynastic legislators, dynastic legislators enjoy higher electoral success (Asako et.al, 2012).

In the US, political scientists found that a legislator who has served for more than one term is 70 percent more likely to have another relative enter Congress than other Americans¹⁰. According to Dal Bo, E., et al (2009, p.115), legislators who hold power for longer become more likely to have relatives entering Congress in the future. In the US, roughly one in ten lawmakers in Congress have had a family member serve in either the House or Senate, and many more come from state and local political clans¹¹.

Dal Bo, E., et al., (2009) after examining political dynasties since 1700s, found out that there is a causal relationship between longevity of service and the creation of political dynasties.

The children coming from political dynasties have wealth, and there is a close relationship between wealth and politics. The super-rich Rockefellers were in the top three of America's political dynasties with a vice president, three governors, two senators, and two representatives

⁷Rossi, Martín A. (2009), "The Causes of Political Dynasties in Democratic Countries", Universidad de San Andrés

⁸ Laband and Lentz (1985) cited in Rahman, R., (2013). "Essays on Political Dynasties: Evidence from Empirical Investigations", A PhD thesis, Department of Government of the London School of Economics and Political Science

⁹ See Rahman, R., (2013:16), also see Feinstein, Brian D. 2010. "The Dynasty Advantage: Family Ties in Congressional Elections" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* XXXV(4), pp. 571-598

¹⁰Source: [America's Political Dynasties - TIMEhttp://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2148168,00.html#ixzz2koJF9iWC](http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2148168,00.html#ixzz2koJF9iWC) (accessed on 11/16/13)

¹¹Source: [America's Political Dynasties - TIMEhttp://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2148168,00.html#ixzz2koJF9iWC](http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2148168,00.html#ixzz2koJF9iWC) (accessed on 11/16/13)

(Hess 1997). Those who campaign for elective offices incur financial costs for running ground operations including opening campaign offices in the constituency, ads campaigns, and fuel and food on the campaign trail. In the Philippines elections of 2010, Party-list system (15th Congress): 52 (or 91percent) of the 56 seats held by millionaires and multi-millionaires; 10 nominees come from political clans¹².

The mere existence of political dynasties, however, does not necessarily reflect imperfections in democratic representation. Research continues without success to find out if political dynasties arise because some families have certain characteristics that make them more prone to political success. However, such families seem to always campaign on this claimed strength. We may associate interest in politics by children from political dynasties by saying that that is the job they have known from their parents or relatives. Also, it may be that other people think that politics is for those from the dynasties: and they ignore politics and concentrate on other things and professions. What is true is that in Africa where politics are of 'blood and iron', most possible candidates fear for their lives and live politics to the 'mafias'.

There is a negative aspect regarding political dynasties. According to Mendoza et al., (2013:2), political dynasties can be effective in preventing the people from communicating their real needs to the government. They can weaken existing governance and accountability mechanisms to secure their positions. More specifically, dynastic officials can take advantage of state power for self-serving interests without fear of replacement or administrative sanctions; or, use state power to influence the selection of political leaders, thereby favoring those with political clout, preventing the best and the brightest from serving in the government, and/or biasing policies in favour of certain elite groups.

In the African countries, the key issue is that we should be careful not to de-enfranchise the citizens because their parents once occupied the high office in their land. All citizens should be allowed a right to vote and be voted for and so it doesn't matter who stands for political office (political dynasty or not). Any eligible citizens can apply or aspire for any office in the land. This is not a problem. We find that the problems according to other citizens and academics are where the child of a former or current leader is given unfair advantage to enter the highest office in the land. This unfair advantage is viewed to be undemocratic; and may cause both social and political unrest.

We should note that most African countries are still in a state of forming democratically established institutions in place. To supervise 'free and fair' elections especially where one of the candidates is a child or wife of a former president, is not a problem where there are 'mature' institutions. It is necessary that the elections commission is non-partisan and independent – in order to be able to conduct elections where a close relative (son, daughter, wife, brother or sister, or sister-in-love) is standing for the highest office in the land. As human beings, there is a tendency of emotion and the degree of partiality may be compromised. This is important. Let the

¹² Tuazon, M. B (2012), "Six Centuries of Political Dynasties: Why the Philippines will forever be ruled by Political Clans?" Center for People Empowerment in Governance.

electoral commission be agreed be seen to be independent. This is vital for peace and security and for giving elections credibility.

Otherwise don't deny the sons and daughters and close relatives of leaders from seeking political leadership in their land. It's their right.

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