Like Father, Unlike Son: The Effects of Political Dynasties on Governance

Jacqueline Puschmann

Introduction
Do political dynasties impact governance or cause democratic erosion? Furthermore, is there a difference in impact of political dynasties between authoritarian and democratic governments? Empirical evidence and historical analysis have begun to show the detrimental impacts of political dynasties on governance. Yet state-level political dynasties still remain an understudied phenomenon.

I define political dynasty as any two family members who were heads of government. The effects of this dynasty type is understudied. I make two distinctions within this definition. The first is a parent-child dynasty, in which a pairing of a parent and their child held the same office. An example would be George W. Bush and George H. W. Bush. The second is an extended dynasty, where any two family members have held the same political office. This definition includes spouses and in-laws. An example would be Fidel and Raúl Castro, who were brothers.

I seek to answer the following question: do political dynasties impact governance or lead to autocracy? I offer new empirical evidence on political dynasties, looking at all state leaders between 1945 and 2015 by conducting a time series cross-sectional analysis. I find that for democracies and semi-democracies, certain political dynasties can have a negative impact for democracy.

Effects of Political Dynasties
Political dynasties create feedback loops of power allowing the same group of elites to enter office in an unfair manner. There is a political advantage for candidates running for office who also have a family member in office.1 US Congress members who stay in Congress for a long time are likely to have more relatives also join Congress.2 This leads to the idea that power is self-perpetuating.

Having a relative in office may make a person’s name more known or give them more access to resources.3 This results in an unfair electoral advantage, undermining elections. People


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running for office are also more likely to promise particularistic goods while campaigning if they belong to a political family because they may inherit personal support bases from their families.4

Dynastic candidates who have spent less time in political office benefit from family connections and their campaign strategies, compared to non-candidate leaders who have also had less time in political office.5 These dynastic candidates have had little time in a political office, but can reach office more easily.

Some dynastic leaders then are less experienced than their counterparts.6 This brand recognition of their family name allows for leaders to bypass requirements and training that their counterparts need in order to be elected to office. Additionally, dynastic candidates might be less educated compared to their counterparts. In Italy, certain dynastic candidates are less educated than non-dynastic candidates, due to family-based nepotism, yet also tend to be elected more.7 This advantage is strengthened when the electoral rules are less restrictive.8

The promising of certain goods to only certain constituents undermines good governance, which would dictate all are equally entitled to public goods.9 This also creates a feedback loop by keeping people in power who only represent a small group of the population and continuing to allow similar people into office. This is clientelism, a form of vote-buying.

Clientelism has been shown to have negative consequences for democracy. For transitioning democracies, clientelism can make it hard for those countries to establish strong democratic institutions.10 There is always the possibility the country will resort to a corporatist authoritarian structure.11 Even if countries benefit from clientelism, vote buying should still be questioned and regarded as undermining the democratic process of elections. These goods may only be promised during election season, meaning these goods are selectively given, rather than to actually provide a service.12

Once in office, it is unclear if members of political dynasties make good leaders. Scholarly literature on political dynasties is still limited but business literature regarding family firms can provide insight as to how family dynamics may have negative consequences. In the business sector, family firms can hinder a company's economic development.13 Firms that see a transition of management from a CEO to one of their descendants also see a decrease in performance.14 In firms managed by heirs, companies saw share prices decrease. Family firms would rather keep the power within their family than have the possibility of stronger management.

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5 Ibid, 453-466.
6 Ibid, 453-455.
8 Ibid, F476.
11 Ibid, 200.
Dynasties lead to low performance in governments as well. Dynastic leaders result in higher pork spending and as a result lead to bad governance in a variety of policies on issues like health care and infrastructure.\textsuperscript{15} Dynastic leaders only reward those who have voted for them. Therefore, they are unlikely to provide resources to build a bridge or a hospital that would benefit a larger population, rather than just those who voted for the dynastic leaders.\textsuperscript{16} Dynastic leaders care more about winning elections at any cost and punishing those who do not vote for them.

**Theory**

Political dynasties allow candidates to reach office in a less competitive manner than their peers. Elections, although not the only component of democracy, are a major component of all strong democracies. If these leaders reach office by less competitive means through buying votes, they promote autocratization. As these dynastic leaders take office, it is easier for other members of their family to take office, also through less democratic means and unfair competition.

While the literature shows this is true, there are still large gaps to uncover. The literature does not focus on the effects of state leaders; most of the literature only considers dynastic members of the legislature. If dynastic legislative leaders lead to destabilization of democratic practices, then state leaders should also have negative consequences. The corruption of a leader like President Maria Arroyo of the Philippines might make more national headlines than a regional congressman. So, state leaders and the effects they have on their countries should be considered.

**Hypothesis 1:** Dynastic leaders are more likely than non-dynastic leaders to produce autocratization during their time in office.

Dynasties are not equal across family relationships. George W. Bush stated that he did not want to be known for his father’s presidency yet was compared to his father many times through both his candidacy and presidency.\textsuperscript{17} A leader with a parent in office before them may feel more restricted to change their country’s image of them, leading to instability due to a more direct comparison. A leader with a relative in office may not experience the same type of direct comparison, and thus cause less instability than their other dynastic counterparts. Leaders with relatives other than parents in office may not get the same kind of name recognition either.

**Hypothesis 2:** Dynastic leaders who have had a parent in office are more likely to produce autocratization during their time in office than dynastic leaders who had other types of family members in the same office.

Another failure of the literature is to address the differences between dynastic leaders in differing types of regimes. Leaders in democratic regimes will have different experiences than leaders in authoritarian governments (experiences like education). Additionally, leaders in authoritarian regimes may have more autonomy over institutions. At the same time, authoritarian governments do not have strong – if any – democratic institutions. This means that au-

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 367.

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Thoritarian regimes might not experience democratic erosion, but their authoritarian tendencies can become intensified. Dynamic leaders are already elected where the electoral rules are less restrictive and authoritarian governments cannot be expected to have the same number of electoral rules and fair elections as compared to dynasties.18

Hypothesis 3: Authoritarian dynastic leaders are more likely to produce instability in their countries than democratic and semi-democratic dynastic leaders, leading to further autocratization.

Design
In order to test my theory, I conduct a time-series cross-sectional analysis, with the unit of analysis being leader-year. My independent variables are parent-child dynasty and extended dynasty. I consider all world leaders from 1945 to 2015, using Archigos. Archigos is a database of the primary leader from each country between 1875 and 2015. There are forty-four examples of parent-child dynasties and thirty examples of extended dynasties in this time frame out of more than two thousand world leaders. The dependent variable is the Polity IV score which is measured on a scale of -10 to 10, where -10 is the most autocratic and 10 is the most democratic.

The independent variables are coded 1 if they meet the definition requirements of parent-child and extended dynasties. Based on my hypotheses, I expect democracy to be negative for both parent-child dynasties and extended dynasties compared to non-dynastic regimes. Parent-child dynasties should have a more detrimental effect on democracy comparatively. Last, I expect authoritarian regimes to see greater negative impacts in their democracy scores compared to democratic and semi-democratic regimes.

I offer five control variables: GDP per capita, urbanization, years of education, income inequality, and world region. Empirical evidence suggests that countries with low-economic development have a hard time sustaining democracy.19 The evidence also shows that prosperous countries will lead to stronger democratic institutions like electoral rights and civil liberties. Another factor of economic development may be urbanization. While countries with higher GDP and other forms of development are associated with higher levels of urbanization, high levels of urbanization are associated with high levels of democratic instability.20 Scholars have argued that the biggest threat to democracy is its own redistributive properties.21 Thus, income inequality could be used as another explanation for level of democracy. Economic factors are not enough to explain what stimulates democracy. Education can check governments from becoming overly authoritarian.22

Results
Table 1 shows the results for three different models. Model 1 considers all regime types; Model 2 considers only authoritarian regimes; Model 3 considers only semi-democracies and democracies. The coefficients offer mixed support for the hypotheses. None of the models demonstrate parent-child dynasties as statistically significant. Model 1 shows that across all regime types, extended dynasties have a negative impact on democracy. However, Model 2 shows no

21 Ibid, 158-160.
statistical significance for dynasties' impact on authoritarian regimes.

Model 3 shows that extended dynasties, have a negative impact on semi-democracies and democracies. Democracies and semi-democracies experience a 6 percent decline in democracy when there is a dynastic leader. The explanation here is that democracies and semi-democracies have room for their institutions to become weak.

Model 3 does not show statistical significance for dynasties affecting authoritarian regimes. An explanation for this is that authoritarian governments will not suffer from the weakening of democratic institutions, as these governments already suffer from weak (if any) democratic institutions. Their democracy scores would already be low, meaning there is little room for their scores to continue to decrease. It might be possible then, that dynastic authoritarian leaders allow authoritarian governments to survive.

Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Regime Types</th>
<th>Authoritarian</th>
<th>Democracies/Semi-democracies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent-Child</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynasty</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
<td>(0.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Dynasty</td>
<td>-0.07**</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per Capita</td>
<td>0.00***</td>
<td>-0.00***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (years)</td>
<td>0.02***</td>
<td>0.01***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Inequality</td>
<td>-0.00***</td>
<td>-0.00**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbanization</td>
<td>0.21***</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Region</td>
<td>0.02***</td>
<td>0.01***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.22***</td>
<td>0.16***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>4886</td>
<td>1490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within R2</td>
<td>0.055</td>
<td>0.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between R2</td>
<td>0.510</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall R2</td>
<td>0.476</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

These results are preliminary and show some limitations. However, the results are important as they show the detrimental impact of political dynasties and that they can lead to autocratization.
Conclusion

Political dynasties, although a well-known phenomenon, remain understudied. We do know however, that political dynasties tend to undermine democracy and strong democratic institutions. The literature on political dynasties shows that political dynasties are bad for governance in some ways: they lead to less educated leaders who are selected through unfair competition and can also result in clientelism or poor spending.

However, the literature does not fully cover the effects of dynasties of state leaders, examine specific family relationships, or cover dynasties in different types of regimes. Further research could be expanded to consider leaders who had a relative in any elected office, rather than restricting it to leaders who had a relative in the same office. This would also expand the possible number of cases of dynasties and would help further prove the effects of dynasties on governance.

Despite its preliminary nature, the results from this study have notable implications. If dynasties lead to autocratization, it should be questioned why they have such an easier time being elected into office and what can be done to stop dynasties from having a negative impact.