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Political Dynasties and Democratization: A Case Study of Taiwan

Transcript

[Abstract](#)

This video presentation is about the importance of modernizing politics in attempts to restrain and transform the inherent particularistic behaviours of electoral dynasties. It first looks at how Taiwan succeeded in becoming a consolidated democracy despite rising numbers of hereditary politicians. It then addresses developments in other East and Southeast Asian states from a comparative perspective.

Political Dynasties and Democratization: A Case Study of Taiwan

Introduction

Hello everybody. My name is Christian Schafferer and today I would like to talk about the relationship between democratization and electoral dynasties using the example of Taiwan. The study presented here is part of a research project funded by the *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*. The project was initiated by Julio Teehankee and Paul Chambers. The findings of the study have recently been published in the *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*.



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Political families in transitional societies are often seen in the context of corruption, democratic regression, deterioration of socio-economic development, inequality, and deprivation. In my contribution, I argue that legacy politicians are not per se the Pandora's box of low-quality politics. More specifically, I believe that democratization conditions the behaviour of political dynasties. Using the example of Taiwan, I will show in this presentation how democratization has restrained the particularistic potentials of clientelistic networks and gradually reshaped them into programmatic behaviour.

I have separated my presentation into five parts. First, I would like to talk about the prevalence of political dynasties in democratic societies, its causes, and implications. Second, I discuss the mediating effect of democratization in terms of restraining and modifying the particularistic behaviour of dynasties. In the third part, I look at the evolution of dynasties in Taiwan. The fourth part addresses the question of how the modernization of institutions and citizenship norms has transformed particularistic dynasties into more programmatic ones. In the concluding section of the presentation, I

shall summarize the most important findings of the study and put them into a global context. A typescript of the presentation and other material are available on my website.

		
Presentation's typescript	Presentation's video link	PowerPoint handout

Part I

Political dynasties and democracies

(2min30sec)

Let us now turn to the first part: political dynasties in democracies. But before we start, I should like to elaborate on the term political dynasty. The terms political dynasty, political family, democratic dynasty, and legacy politician are used synonymously in my presentation and refer to a group of elected local or national officials who are related by blood or marriage to a politician who had previously been an elected office holder.

From a theoretical perspective, democratic states should not be run by family clans. Why? Broadly speaking, the existence of dynastic politics in democratic societies contradicts the normative vision of democratic opportunity and fairness, since legacy candidates benefit from additional electoral support through the so-called inherited incumbency advantage. Apart from that, dynasticism undermines the role of electoral competition as a means of obtaining desirable policies for the people. Several studies, for example, found that the monopolizing effect of dynastic politics erodes socioeconomic development, leading to inequality and higher levels of deprivation. Moreover, dynastic politics generates clientelistic networks which cause a proliferation of illegal practices, such as vote buying, and undermine civil liberties and horizontal accountability.

Nevertheless, the relationship between dynasticism and democratic development is anything but straightforward. As Figure 1 shows, there are numerous states, such as Ireland, Japan, Taiwan, and Iceland, exhibiting high levels of democratic development despite substantial electoral dynasticism. On the other hand, there are several less democratic states, such as Argentina, Israel, and India, with much lower incidences of dynasticism. Legacy politicians may thus not per se be the Pandora's box of low-quality politics.

In this context, the newly democratized state of Taiwan is an interesting case for studying electoral dynasticism since it contradicts two basic assumptions of democratic development. First, being a consolidated democracy, electoral dynasticism should have disappeared. Second, high levels of dynasticism should have undermined democratic

development. Notwithstanding this, there have been no records of severe democratic regression, deterioration of socio-economic development, or rampant corruption in Taiwan since the lifting of martial law in 1987. This leads to the question of how Taiwan has managed to progress towards a consolidated democracy despite its comparatively high proportions of legacy politicians.

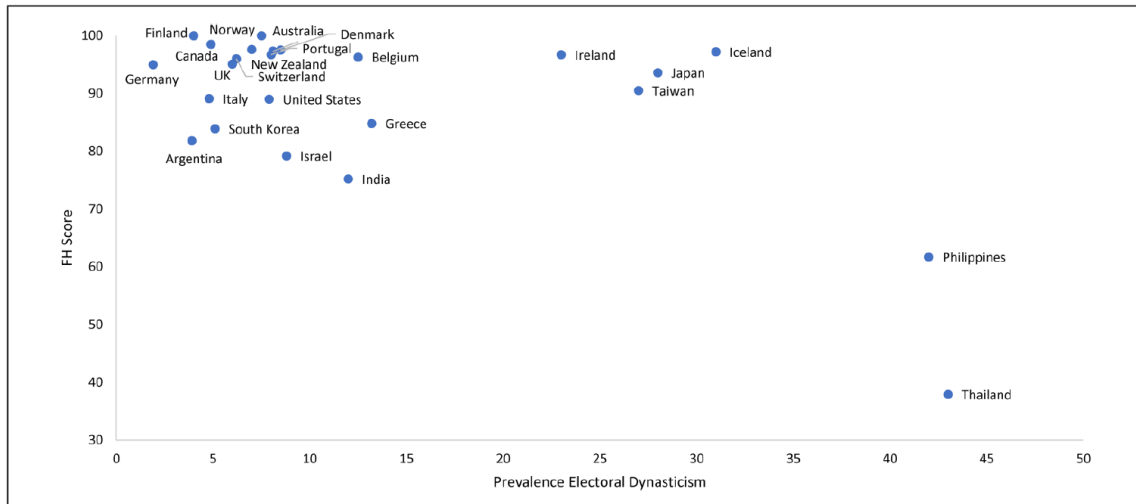


Figure 1. Prevalence of electoral dynasticism and state of democracy.

Source: Smith (2018: 5); Freedom House. FH Score is the average aggregate subcategory score of Political Rights and Civil Liberties for the years (2012–2021).

Unit: %.

Part II

The mediating effect of democratization

(5min50sec)

To solve the puzzle, I shall like to propose an alternative hypothesis, which takes us to the second part of my presentation – the mediating effect of political modernization through democratization. The alternative hypothesis is that political dynasties are constituting elements of a society's social capital. Whether family-based networks foster or obstruct national or local development depends on the existence of regulating mechanisms that restrain their intrinsic particularistic potentials. We may assume that every society possesses such mechanisms to varying degrees in form of institutions and cultural norms. They may be self-imposed in the form of ethical standards established by patron-client networks themselves or may be rooted in the history of a territory.

Although these mechanisms play an important role in orienting behaviours that develop through networks, they still may regress to forms of social capital that foster particularism if politics does not provide the necessary condition (Trigilia, 2001: 435). In other words, politics has to be modernized. Democratization should bring about the

necessary modernisation of politics. Institutionally, political modernization should lead to the rule of law and a state bureaucracy functioning according to universal principles. Behaviourally, political modernization should transform norms of citizenship from its premodern submissive form to civic activism.

Figure 1b summarizes the main differences between traditional and modernized politics. In traditional societies, political processes are routinized and controlled by vertical power structures. Fear and isolation are the sources of political activism. More specifically, it is argued that in pre-modernised politics existential constraints “nurture a culture of social control and civic conformism” restricting mobility and secularization (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005: 162). Socio-economic development coupled with political modernization, however, reduces existential constraints by facilitating opportunities to increase individual economic, cognitive, and social resources.

More importantly, modernization bases on contractual relations that are mostly horizontal. They cut through vertical clientelistic bonds, and by doing so, they diminish individual exposure to conformity pressure, lower the dependence on external authority and eventually empower individuals to make their own choices.

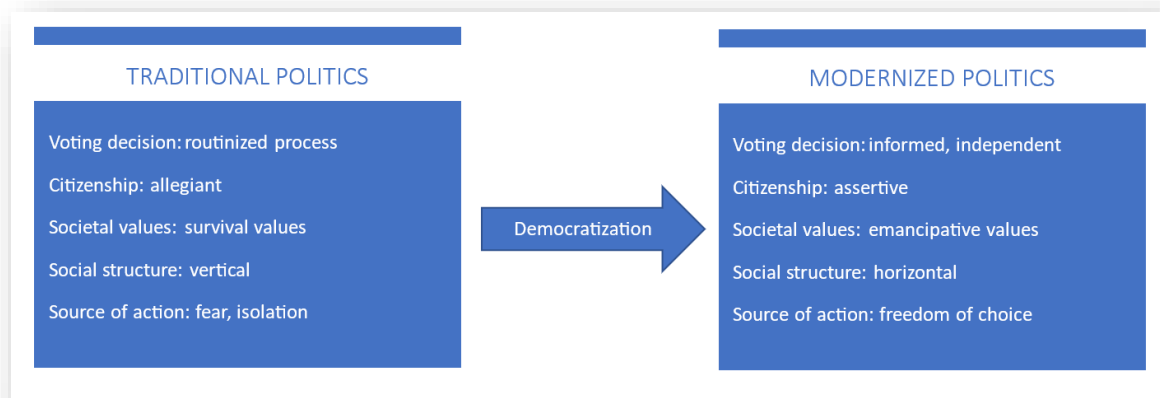


Figure 1b: Traditional vs. modernized politics

Part III

Electoral dynasties in Taiwan

(8min47sec)

Now that we have discussed the theoretical footing of the analysis, we may like to turn to the third part of the presentation – electoral dynasties in Taiwan. There are two distinct periods in the evolution of dynasties in Taiwan: the pre-democratic era and the age of democratization. During the pre-democratic era, electoral dynasties emerged under Japanese colonialism with the introduction of local council elections in 1935. The Japanese governed Taiwan until the end of World War II in 1945, when the Kuomintang (KMT) government seized control over the island.

Pre-democratic developments

(9min31sec)

The Japanese colonial governance and the KMT authoritarian rule share several commonalities. Both regimes first faced local resistance but succeeded in suppressing rebellion, established effective intelligence organizations to monitor anti-government activities, and managed to advance social and economic conditions of the populace. Notwithstanding this, the Japanese colonial rulers as well as the KMT government had to rely on local elites to facilitate long-term consolidation of power, stability, and prosperity. That is, political families and their clientelist networks served as the third realm, the mediating force between the state apparatus and society.

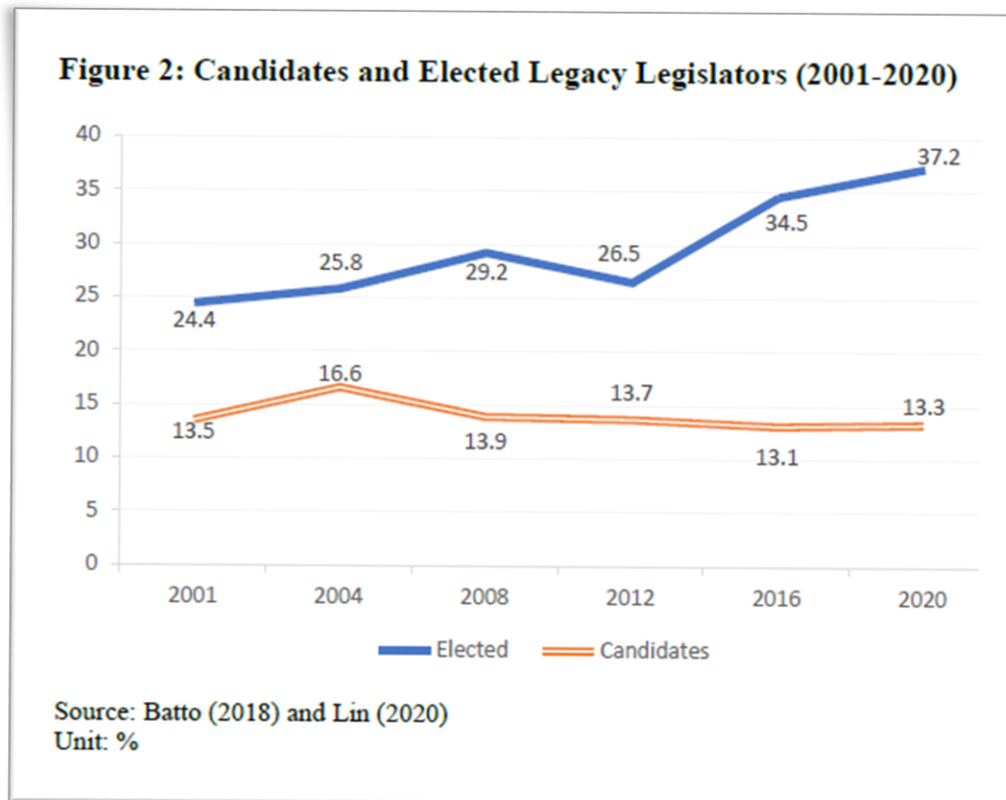
In this context, local and national elections were instrumental in controlling and rewarding members of the third realm while legitimizing the authoritarian regime. Apart from the political families coopted by the KMT regime, opposition figures and their relatives (often as proxy candidates) increasingly felt encouraged to run in local and national elections, further contributing to the rise of dynastic politics in postwar authoritarian Taiwan.

Democratization

(10min57sec)

The licensing of political parties in 1986 and the lifting of martial law a year later brought about a highly competitive political environment. While the newly formed political parties increasingly ran programmatic campaigns focusing on the rising social and environmental problems, the ruling party still relied primarily on its traditional approach of utilizing local factions, that is political families, to ensure victory at the polls. In terms of electoral dynasticism, the two approaches produced two different subtypes of legacy politicians: the *programmatic* type with the aim of contributing to the welfare of society as a whole; and the *particularistic* type with direct exchanges of goods and services through clientelistic networks.

The rise of programmatic campaigns intensified the power struggle within the ruling KMT between the more programmatic non-mainstream faction, mainly comprising mainland-born politicians and children of mainlanders born in Taiwan, and the clientelist mainstream faction, comprising mostly Taiwanese politicians. The struggle weakened the KMT's control over its clientelistic networks, known as local factions (*difang paixi*), thus empowering them to act more independently of the party. Consequently, more and more factional candidates contested not only local but also national elections and financed their campaign through illegal activities. The 1990s can be regarded as the golden age of political families with gang affiliation.

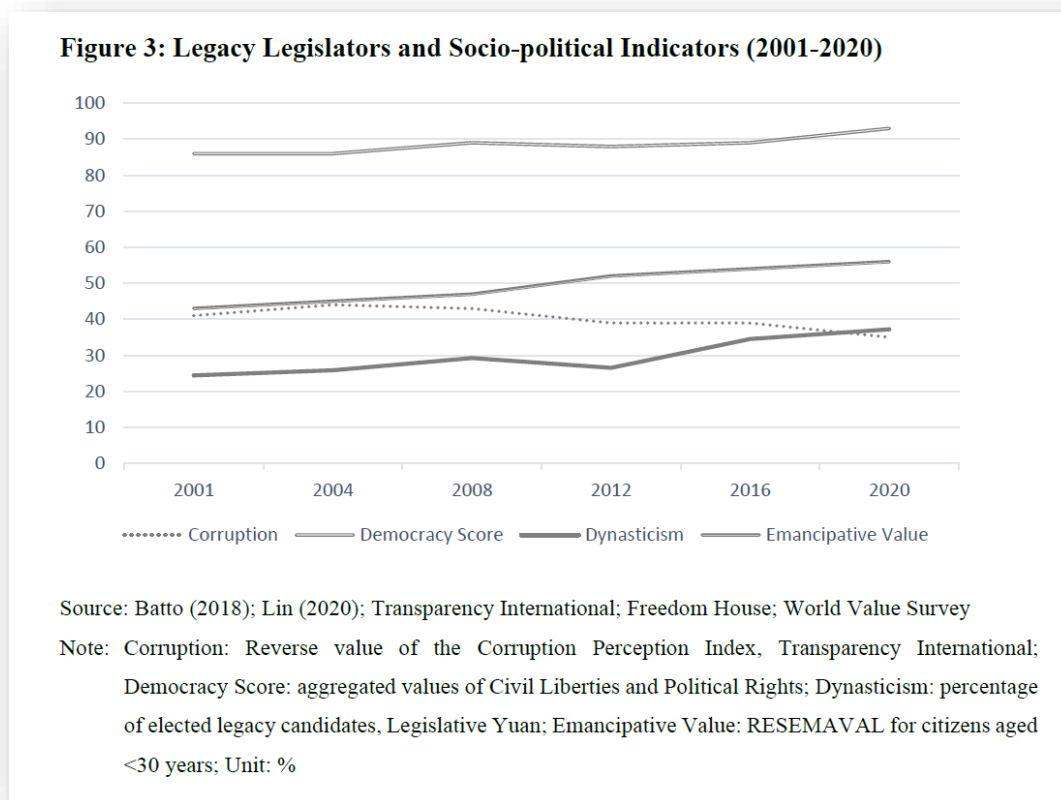


During the period of democratic consolidation, legacy politicians have increased in relative and absolute numbers. As shown in Figure 2, the proportion of elected legacy candidates in parliamentary elections between 2001 and 2020 increased from 24.4 percent to 37.2 percent (see Figure 2). Despite the proliferation of dynastic politicians in recent years, there are several important findings. First, Batto (2018) asserts that the “family political enterprise is no longer the unstoppable juggernaut” it seemed to be in the 1990s. His research on political families in Taiwan shows that family politics in Taiwan thrives on weak competition. More specifically, political families take advantage of variations in the required resources to jump up the ladder in the administrative hierarchy of elected offices and tend to run in less competitive environments.

Second, between the years 2001 and 2020, the aggregated scores of civil liberties and political rights measured by Freedom House have steadily increased and almost reached their maximum values. As such, Taiwan can be considered a consolidated democracy. Third, data provided by Transparency International suggests that corruption has significantly decreased over the years. Fourth, emancipative values have increased steadily, confirming the existence of an ongoing transformation process in terms of citizenship norms, especially among young people (see Figure 3).

These developments can be seen as evidence of a gradual shift from particularistic dynasticism to a more programmatic form of hereditary politics – a shift caused by democratization, or the modernization of politics. In the following section of the

presentation, I will address the question of how these processes of modernisation evolved in the Taiwanese context.



Part IV

The modernisation of politics

(16min5sec)

Table 1 gives us an overview of how political modernisation is related to the two basic types of electoral dynasticism. Programmatic dynasticism grounds on assertive citizenship, a modernized form of citizenship, whereas particularistic dynasticism depends on the existence of allegiant notions of citizenship. Assertive citizens form opinions independently of others, act on their own principles, and address social needs. That is, they exhibit comparatively high levels of emancipative values. Allegiant citizens, on the other hand, tend to engage in routinized political processes that determine their political affiliation and increase their dependence on particularistic networks (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005).

Let us now look at the modernization process itself. The modernization of politics comprises the modernization of citizenship and institutional reforms.

*The modernization of citizenship norms**(16min13sec)*

The modernization of citizenship during the post-martial law era brought about a generational conflict with senior citizens exhibiting lower levels of intrinsic democratic values and younger generations increasingly falling into the category of assertive citizens. The Sunflower student movement encapsulates the generational conflict over how to define citizenship. Field studies show that especially young and educated people are reluctant to be instrumentalized by clientelistic networks, have their work and social life in urban centres, and regard contact attempts by local vote brokers as “a nuisance and often refuse to open the door if the wardens come to visit” (Göbel, 2012: 81). The generational conflict has not only affected the relationship between young voters and traditional social organizations/institutions, such as local factions and neighbourhood wardens, but also the relationship within family. Young people increasingly develop their own political identity often being substantially different from their parents. Vote brokers can thus no longer effectively utilize family relations to exert influence on younger voters.

Table 1: Particularistic vs. Programmatic Dynasticism in Taiwan

	<i>Particularistic Dynasticism</i>	<i>Programmatic Dynasticism</i>
<i>Represented by</i>	local factions, outlaw politicians (movement dynasties)	politicians of the democratic movement (movement dynasties)
<i>Origin</i>	state-elite settlement	democratic conviction
<i>Source of legitimacy</i>	democratic mandate (inherited charisma)	democratic mandate (inherited charisma)
<i>Intrinsic logic</i>	subordinate entitlements to clientelistic logic	codify citizens' entitlements
<i>Goods exchanged</i>	private	public
<i>Voting decision</i>	routinized process	informed, independent
<i>Citizenship</i>	allegiant	assertive
<i>Societal values</i>	survival values	emancipative values
<i>Social structure</i>	vertical	horizontal
<i>Source of action</i>	fear, isolation	freedom of choice
<i>Type of politics</i>	traditional	modernized
<i>Outcome</i>	political capitalism	democratic consolidation

Source: Author

Other studies on Taiwanese citizenship norms show that Taoism and folk religions correlate positively with allegiant citizenship, while no such relationship can be determined among assertive citizens. The modernization of citizenship has thus also challenged the role of religious rituals and organizations in vote canvassing activities. Historically, clan temples served as the place where conflicts were mediated and closer emotional bonds between clan members developed. In the 1960s, religious rituals (*baibai*) held at clan temples gradually evolved into electoral campaign events. In the 1990s, the temples increasingly attracted the interest of outlaw politicians who perceived them as an important political resource for their local faction networks. However, the rise of assertive citizenship has rendered religious organizations and their rituals less effective in acquiring electoral support for local factions. That is, the number of active followers has decreased over the years. Voters in their twenties and thirties hardly attend religious activities and have negative perceptions about temples that are managed by local factions and thus refrain from participating in events like the Mazu pilgrimage, Taiwan's largest annual religious activity.

Table 2: Most serious problems for Taiwan's democratic system

	N	Percent
Too many street protests	66	6.5
Politicians don't care what ordinary people think	155	15.4
Media reporting on politics is not fair	118	11.7
Too many politicians come from political families	57	5.7
Corruption	198	19.6
Religious organizations have too much political influence	54	5.4
Parties are too polarized	360	35.7
Total	1,008	100.0

Source: Author's calculation based on Taiwan's Election and Democratization Study, 2016-2020 (II): Experimental Internet Survey on Political Family, Election Study Center, National Chengchi University.

The transformation of political families towards programmatic dynasticism has also altered the public perception of dynastic politics. In the 1990s, political families and their criminal activities constituted a serious threat to Taiwan's democratic development and became a salient campaign issue in national and local elections. However, a recent survey carried out by the Election Study Centre, National Chengchi University, on the public perception of legacy politicians shows that only 5.7 percent of the respondents consider democratic dynasties as a serious problem affecting Taiwan's democratic development (Table 2). Yet, only 1.5 percent of the respondents have a positive feeling towards legacy politicians, 41.3 percent a negative impression and more than half are indifferent. Almost

eight out of ten voters believe that the inherited incumbency advantage of legacy candidates is unfair. And close to 90 percent consider candidates from political families more likely to engage in corruption than other politicians. In terms of overall efficacy, only one third of the respondents believe that legacy candidates are more capable of getting things done. However, almost 80 percent think that legacy politicians are more likely to secure resources for their constituencies.

In other words, the inherited incumbency advantage still seems to help legacy candidates, but it comes with a significant discount. Legacy candidates get under much more scrutiny than other candidates. Voters more critically evaluate candidates and increasingly confront them with universal issues, such as air pollution and public transportation, rather than particularistic ones, such as work for a family member.

Institutional reforms

(21min22sec)

Let us now turn to the second pillar of political modernization – institutional reform. The most important reforms include the candidate selection process and the electoral system. The candidate selection process has been a significant factor influencing the development of dynastic politics. In the 1990s, the process was still strongly influenced by clientelistic networks, which strengthened the power of political families and led to the increased involvement of underground figures in politics. A decade later, programmatic factions within the DPP and the KMT pushed for formal and transparent procedures beyond the reach of clientelistic networks, which eventually led to the outsourcing of the whole selection process through the introduction of binding public opinion polls.

As to the reform of Taiwan's electoral system, the original system (SNTV-MMD) reportedly facilitated and encouraged dynasticism because of its tendency to lead to candidate-centred campaigning and its comparatively low thresholds for candidates to be elected. The electoral reform of 2004 replaced the SNTV-MMD system with a majority system and halved the number of parliamentary seats. Göbel (2012: 88) in his analysis on the impact of the electoral reform on local factions concluded that the SNTV system facilitated the rise of patron-client networks but "was not the linchpin that held the political machine in place". The study finds that the reform only marginally affected the operation of local factions since local factions are deeply embedded in various types of interwoven social subsystems. As such, the findings in principle corroborate Smith's (2018: 261) assertion that the institutional reform of electoral systems and candidate selection tend to be partly conditioned by path dependence and the preexisting preferences and practices of elites.

Part V

Discussion and conclusion

(23min41sec)

The case of Taiwan may help us to understand the relationship between electoral dynasties and democratization from a global perspective. In this section of the paper, I shall first like to summarize our key theoretical assumptions and then look at how they may explain the existence of electoral dynasticism in other Asian societies.

At the beginning of this analysis on political families, I pointed out that patron-client relations contradict basic principles of democratic governance and that political families should gradually disappear in democratizing societies. There have, however, been several debates in the literature about the proliferation of political dynasties in democratizing Asia. Several analysts consider contemporary dynastic politics a product of modern state and democratic institutions. Indeed, electoral dynasties have become the “new normal” – so to say – in a number of democratizing Asian states, such as Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. Unfortunately, dynasticism has brought about overtly negative effects in terms of democratic and socio-economic development in these countries.

The case of Taiwan, however, stands in sharp contrast to developments in Southeast Asia. More specifically, Taiwan contradicts two basic assumptions of democratic development. First, being a consolidated democracy, electoral dynasticism should have disappeared. Second, high levels of dynasticism should have undermined democratic development. Notwithstanding this, Taiwan has become a consolidated democracy without signs of rampant corruption or socio-economic decay.

To explain the paradox, I introduced two basic categories of dynasties: particularistic dynasties and programmatic dynasties. These should not be understood as absolute categories, but rather as two extremes on either end of a scale. Different subtypes of dynasties exist on the continuum between these two basic categories. Simply put, along the continuum the behavior of electoral dynasties gets increasingly constrained institutionally and by social norms.

The framework should be seen as an elaboration on Smith’s (2018) supply-and-demand approach of explaining the variance in electoral dynasticism across democracies by analyzing political reforms in terms of electoral system and candidate selection. Using the example of Japan, Smith (2018) asserts that institutional reform will reduce the incentives for legacy politicians to contest elections (supply) and the necessity of party leadership to nominate legacy candidates (demand). In other words, Smith recognizes the importance of political modernization in attempts to constrain the behavior of electoral dynasties but sees the variation in dynasticism across democracies mostly as an issue of institutional reforms initiated by political elites, thus underestimating the role of modernized citizenship in the process.

*Mediating variables**(27min15sec)*

There are, however, two important factors determining the success or failure of political modernization: state capacity (or *stateness*) and political emotions. State capacity and *stateness* are two concepts that are overlapping. State capacity usually comprises the monopoly on violence and the state's ability to implement policies. *Stateness*, on the other hand, has a third component - the identification with the state. That is, there is the question of whether the majority of the population accepts the state's authority as the sole legitimate authority of the state or not.

More specifically, state incapacities and contested state legitimacy encourage the growth of vertical organizations/institutions, undermine state authority, and eventually lead to the privatisation of power. Since the minimal and distant state lacks the ability or will to attend to the welfare of citizens, the people in need turn to private territorial strongmen and their families. No matter how beneficial the immediate effects of the privatisation of power may be, in the long run it leads to rampant exploitation of state resources and the electoral manifestation of clientelism. High levels of *stateness*, on the other hand, have the potential to consolidate state authority while significantly increasing the chances of successful political modernisation and democratic consolidation (Croissant and Hellmann, 2020).

Moreover, the modernisation of citizenship norms should not only alter the behaviour of ordinary citizens but also affect political elites. As Sasley (2011) pointed out, political leaders play a crucial role in forming group behaviour. That is, apart from cognitive processes, identity formation is shaped by emotional messages – how a state leader interacts with others and represents the state on the international stage. In our case study of Taiwan, for example, democracy has not only become the only option among the majority of citizens but also among the political elite. On various occasions, state leaders have turned their commitment to democratic governance into a central message narrated domestically and abroad, thus reinforcing the belief that democratic values and norms constitute an unalienable part of Taiwanese identity formation.

*Comparative analysis: East Asia**(29min55sec)*

Having this in mind, we may better understand why some states have been successful in terms of restraining the particularistic behaviour of electoral dynasties and why others have mostly failed to do so. Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan experienced rapid socio-economic development, exhibit high levels of *stateness*, have high proportions of assertive citizens, and are governed by elites committed to democratic development. As such, Smith (2018) concludes in his analysis on the effects of political modernization in Japan that the pool of electoral candidates expanded and parties placed greater emphasis on collective interests in terms of party image, gender diversity, and policy. More importantly,

institutional reforms have exposed legacy candidates to tougher competition and greater public scrutiny, significantly reduced the number of dynasties and brought about new types of legacy candidates who are “more active legislatively than their peers” (Smith, 2018: 50). In similar vein, Park (2023) argues that hereditary candidates in South Korea face unfavourable popular sentiments and are required to properly justify their electoral participation. This “justifiable narrative” must convince the electorate that the candidacy is “compatible with popular demands for meritocracy and procedural fairness” (Park, 2023: 689).

Comparative analysis: Southeast Asia

(31min26sec)

Analysing political families in Southeast Asian states, such as the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia, the importance of *stateness*, political modernisation, and state leaders becomes more than evident. State incapacities in dealing with rural poverty, and the widespread economic dependence on political families have consolidated particularistic dynasticism in these countries.

Broadly speaking, traditional citizenship norms are still prevalent in Southeast Asian states among elites as well as ordinary citizens. As such, democratic regime support is mostly instrumental rather than intrinsic. The global wave of democratisation at the late 1980s affected the region and should have helped individual states to modernize politics to the effect of curbing particularistic dynasticism. However, political elites have hijacked the modernisation project to serve their own interests, leading to a new era of dynasticism. More specifically, political entrepreneurs quickly adapted to the changing institutional environment of the new democratic era, took opportunity of the poorly institutionalist party system, and exploited the constitutional protection of individual rights to justify their behaviour.

Weak party institutions are often cited as a prime source of electoral dynasties in Southeast Asia. The Philippines may be cited here as a textbook example of a political system in which political parties *de facto* and *de jure* have no other obligatory function than to operate as campaign vehicles for electoral candidates. Although there have been debates about passing legislation that should help to institutionalise political parties as agents of political competition, mobilisation, empowerment, and accountability for over two decades, Philippine legislation governing the role of political parties remains restricted to the Omnibus Election Code. Political parties thus still resemble *ad hoc* electoral support committees rather than permanent and stable institutions of democratic enhancement.

In addition, the political emotions conveyed and elicited by political leaders are comparatively much more negative when it comes to defending liberal-democratic values and the rule of law. State leaders, such as Duterte, openly ridicule human rights and democratic institutions, question their necessity, and propagate cultural exceptionalism.

We thus may say that democratisation brought about the gradual modernisation of institutions but failed to substantially challenge traditional norms of citizenship. Vertical social structures, survival values, fear and isolation dominate significant parts of the population. In several states – most notable in Indonesia and Myanmar – religious fundamentalism has become an important factor in politics and in shaping popular notions of democratic governance. Notions of democratic governance that transfer authority from the very institutions of constitutional rule to religious leaders and organisations.

Critical junctures: elite competition and the cosmopolitan villager

(35min4sec)

Political analysts tend to point out that necessary institutional reforms are mostly discouraged by elites to prevent their own loss of power. There may however also be a fundamental lack in the popular understanding of the role and importance of political parties in creating and consolidating democratic societies. Every election cycle has a learning effect that reinforces the public notion of political parties and their role in democratic societies. Critical junctures, that is, turning points that alter the course of this learning effect, would be necessary to challenge routinized behavioural patterns.

Such critical junctures may occur because of increased mobilisation and elite competition as Nam and Nethipo (2022) explain in a recent study on the development of programmatic linkages in rural Thailand. Let us look at their study to understand how such critical junctures may alter the course of the learning effect and change behavioural patterns. Historically, political authority has been monopolized by the Thai bureaucracy and the military – the main agents of the so-called network monarchy. The sociopolitical changes of the 1990s, however, challenged the network's vertical power structure.

At the national level, Thaksin endeavoured to disrupt traditional politics and to construct an alternative power base with the aim of wresting control from the very institutions that comprised the network monarchy. At the local level, challenges to traditional politics came with the rise of the cosmopolitan villager in less developed rural areas, especially in the populous region of Isan. Various estimates suggest that about 70 percent of the Northeast working-age population worked in Bangkok and regularly returned to their villages to visit children and help with the harvest. Nam and Nethipo (2022), therefore, argue that this regular circular migration meant that by the late 1990s, most of the villagers were hardly leading isolated, premodern lives. On the contrary, "they were fully integrated into a capitalist economy, aware of their vulnerability to its vicissitudes and cognizant of the superior benefits enjoyed by urban Thais" (Nam and Nethipo, 2022: 442). In other words, the cosmopolitan villagers at the time enjoyed mobility, were comparatively less dependent on local strongmen and were politically more demanding. Instead of the short-term private goods offered under personalism and clientelism, they sought deeper and longer-term benefits from local political actors.

Thaksin saw in the rise of the cosmopolitan villager ample opportunities to make major inroads into strategically important territories by adopting a hybrid strategy. That is, apart from engaging in traditional vote canvassing activities, Thaksin and his party, Thai Rak Tai (TRT), envisaged to deliver a new and empowering understanding of politics that should bring rural voters into a more horizontal relationship with political actors. The latter approach meant that instead of offering clientelistic rewards for their loyalty, rural voters were promised the implementation of universal programmes, such as health coverage or funds for each village, and more targeted ones, such as subsidies for rubber and orange farmers.

The hybrid strategy had significant implications in terms of party politics and rural development. As to the former, TRT established professional networks of party operatives throughout rural areas to mediate the party's policy messages and soliciting feedback from voters. Instead of handing out cash benefits to the electorate the operatives had to convince them of the long-term benefits of the party's universal policies. The modernized approach also affected the motives of party candidates to contest elections as well as the underpinnings of personalistic charisma. More specifically, most TRT politicians pointed to Thaksin's policies and his innovative methods of practicing politics as opposed to his charisma as their reasons for joining the party.

As for rural development, the hybrid strategy showed the potential and interest of rural voters in more meaningful and empowering political participation. Apart from that, Thaksin's universal policies had positive effects on the welfare of people in general. The Universal Health Coverage (UHC) scheme introduced by Thaksin substantially reduced health-related impoverishment not only in the Northeast but also in other parts of the country. In similar vein, the Village Fund programme affected the welfare of villages throughout the country regardless of whether the constituency supported the TRT or not (Nam and Nethipo, 2022: 225).

While the hybridization and the socio-political transformation may have been preliminary, they are nonetheless meaningful because the voters' experience with the alternative approach of practicing politics became part of their "collective memory of and shared expectations about what democratic electoral politics can deliver" (Nam and Nethipo, 2022: 241). The case of Thailand highlights the complex interdependent relationship between socio-economic development and the dual process of political modernisation. It shows that stakeholders, i.e., state bureaucrats, elites, and ordinary citizens, must act in concert. Otherwise, democratization is likely to foster particularistic dynasticism, further inhibiting socio-economic development and in turn undermining the modernisation of citizenship norms and institutions.

*Several conclusions**(41min38sec)*

There are several conclusions in terms of the relationship between electoral dynasties and democratization.

- First, we may conclude that whether electoral dynasties pose a threat to socio-political developments depends on the existence of regulating mechanisms that restrain the dynasties' intrinsic particularistic potentials.
- Second, self-imposed and inherited cultural norms play an important role in orienting particularistic behaviours but only through modernizing politics can societies effectively transform them towards programmatic political actors or even diminish their role in politics.
- Third, modernizing politics comprises two dimensions: the institutional and the behavioural. As to the former, institutions should work towards the codification of citizens' entitlements and move away from subordinating entitlements to clientelistic logic. As to the latter, modernization should bring about the transformation from allegiant citizenship norms to assertive ones.
- Fourth, two intervening variables can be identified in the process of regulating the behaviours of electoral dynasties: *stateness* and political emotions elicited by the speeches and actions of state leaders.
- Fifth, all stakeholders have to act in concert. That is, stakeholders have to be aware of critical junctures and use them as a window of opportunity to accelerate and/or complete processes of political modernisation.
- Finally, the importance of political modernization highlights the restrictions of the cultural explanation. Studies on kinship networks tend to consider dynastic politics as something deeply rooted in a territory's culture – as something pre-given. What the debate misses is the need to understand the contextual contingency of electoral dynasties. The proliferation of family ties and systemic corruption may not so much be a reflection of cultural authenticity as it may be a sign of incomplete political modernization (democratization).

This takes us to the end of my presentation. I hope you have enjoyed the brief overview of my analysis on political families in Taiwan and other Asian societies.

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(44min21sec)

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