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**Titel of paper:**

Political Dynasties and Democratization: A Case Study of Taiwan

**Abstract:**

Political families in transitional societies are often seen in the context of corruption, democratic regression, deterioration of socio-economic development, inequality, and deprivation. High levels of dynasticism, however, also exist in advanced democratic societies. Using the example of Taiwan, this paper explores the factors behind the evolution of electoral dynasties and how the behavior of hereditary politicians has been conditioned by democratization. More specifically, the paper argues that legacy politicians are not per se the Pandorra box of low-quality politics. Rather, they act like other networks of personal relations. As such, self-imposed ethical standards and inherited cultural norms may substantially restrain the intrinsic particularistic potentials of such networks, but in the long run only political modernization can prevent them from cultivating political capitalism – the predatory use of public resources. That is, political modernization conditions the behavior of electoral dynasties. It transforms particularistic networks into more progressive and programmatic forms of dynasticism.

**Keywords:** democratization, dynasties, Taiwan, personal networks

***Political Dynasties and Democratization: A Case Study of Taiwan***

Political families in transitional societies are often seen in the context of corruption, democratic regression, deterioration of socio-economic development, inequality, and deprivation. High levels of dynasticism, however, also exist in advanced democratic societies. Using the example of Taiwan, this paper explores the factors behind the evolution of electoral dynasties and how the behavior of hereditary politicians has been conditioned by democratization. More specifically, the paper argues that legacy politicians are not per se the Pandorra box of low-quality politics. Rather, they act like other networks of personal relations. As such, self-imposed ethical standards and inherited cultural norms may substantially restrain the intrinsic particularistic potentials of such networks, but in the long run only political modernization can prevent them from cultivating political capitalism – the predatory use of public resources. That is, political modernization conditions the behavior of electoral dynasties. It transforms particularistic networks into more progressive and programmatic forms of dynasticism.

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## Introduction

Electoral dynasties emerged under Japanese colonialism with the introduction of local council elections in 1935. During the Japanese colonial era (1895-1945) and KMT authoritarianism (1945-1987), state-elite settlements led to a proliferation of elected hereditary politicians. In a recent study, Batto (2018, 501) asserts that in contemporary Taiwan about 27 percent of legislators have some sort of family tie and 12 percent have a relative who previously served as a legislator or in higher office. From a comparative perspective, Taiwan has much more electoral

dynasties than most Western democracies, but considerably fewer than several other states in Asia, such as Japan, the Philippines, and Thailand (Smith, 2018: 5).

Why study dynastic politics? 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 inherited incumbency advantage (Smith, 2018: 3; Fiva and Smith, 2016). Apart from that, dynasticism is believed to have far-reaching negative impacts on the overall development of a state. Asako et al. (2015: 7) conclude in their study that legacy politicians naturally benefit from electoral and bargaining advantages and thus "undermine the role of electoral competition as a device for achieving desirable policies for the citizens". Several other studies found the monopolizing effect of dynastic politics to cause a deterioration of socioeconomic development, inequality, and higher levels of deprivation (Mendoza et al., 2012; Tusalem and Pe-Aguirre, 2013). Moreover, dynastic politics generates clientelistic networks which undermine collective decision-making (Warner, 1997) and engage in illegal practices, such as vote buying (Teehankee, 2018; Göbel, 2001). Croissant and Hellmann (2020) assert that informal patron-client networks have brought about autocratic reversals in Thailand and Cambodia, and undermined civil liberties and horizontal accountability in the Philippines, Indonesia, and East Timor.

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As Figure 1 shows, the relationship between dynasticism and democratic development is however anything but straightforward. There are numerous other 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 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. That is, Taiwan has progressed towards a consolidated democracy despite its comparatively high proportions of legacy politicians.

This leads to the questions: What causes dynasticism and why do its socio-political effects differ? As to the former, there have been several attempts to trace the causes of dynastic politics in authoritarian as well as in democratic states. The most frequently cited explanation refers to elite theory and asserts that the ruling class because of its status has a competitive advantage over less privileged members of society (Michels, 1915; Mosca, 1939). The explanatory power of elite dominance is however limited. It may explain the existence of dynasties in developing societies, where political institutions are mostly weak and elites tend to have control over large portions of the country's resources but fails to account for the high levels of dynastic politics in advanced democratic societies such as Taiwan and Japan.

Moreover, the persistence of dynastic politics is often explained by cultural and historical factors, such as the historical role of the family in the socio-political development of Asian societies (Smith, 2018; Conteras, 2018). Thompson (2012: 216), however, maintains that the prevalence of dynasticism in Asia is less the result of "embedded cultural mores" than it is "a conscious strategy of harnessing heredity" to ensure the survival of a regime, party, or movement. In similar vein, Curtis (1999: 12) argues against the tautological fallacy of using culture to explain political culture. He asserts that understanding politics requires "paying attention to power relationships, strategies, and trade-offs between relevant actors in society and in the state and within the state structure" (Curtis, 1999: 10). He further

believes that political behavior may be sanctioned by cultural norms, but as to capture the underlying dynamics of the relationship between these two variables, the relationship needs to be analyzed within specific contexts (Curtis, 1999: 15).

Political behavior thus seems to be embedded in socio-political institutions that are affected by historical events. Employing historical institutionalism in studies on dynastic politics may thus offer alternative explanations about how events in history either constrained or nurtured institutional resilience or transformation (Pierson, 2004). As such, this study endeavors to solve the puzzle of how Taiwan's democracy could be consolidated despite high levels of dynasticism by proposing the alternative hypothesis that the socio-political behavior of political families is conditioned by formal and informal institutions that evolved and changed over time. Electoral dynasties like other networks of personal relations are seen here as 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. As Trigilia (2001: 428) pointed out, such mechanisms may be self-imposed in the form of ethical standards established by the networks themselves, such as the Protestant ethos discussed in Weber's (1922) work *Economy and Society,* or may be rooted in the past history of a territory (Putnam, 1993; Fukuyama, 1995).

More importantly, however, politics has to be modernized. Self-imposed and inherited cultural norms play an important role in orienting behaviors that develop through networks, but still may regress to forms of social capital that foster particularism if politics does not provide the necessary conditions (Trigilia, 2001: 435). Weber (1922) maintained that the positive impact of the Protestant ethos is contingent not only on cultural norms but also on political ones. Without the rule of law and a state bureaucracy functioning according to universal rules, social networks would most likely cultivate what Weber (1922) called 'political capitalism'. That is, the state or criminal groups would eventually rely on the use of violence and intimidation to secure economic and political resources for their own benefit.

Democratization should bring about the necessary modernisation of politics and subsequently restrict particularistic interests in favour of codifying citizens' entitlements in universal documents such as policies, domestic laws, and the constitution. Apart from democratic institutions, successful modernisation of politics requires a transformation of citizenship from its premodern submissive form to civic activism to secure the "autonomy of the political," (Diamond, 1999: 162). As such, it is important for the survival of modernized politics that democratic values and norms be internalised by the majority of the population (Linz and Stepan, 1996).

In this context, Rouquié (1978) posits that democracy assumes not only formal political equality but also that the social distance between elites and less privileged members of society 'does not appear natural and legitimate.' That is, modernisation should, normatively, lead to "nearly absolute secularization and unhindered mobility" of all members of society (ibid. 26). In similar vein, Inglehart and Welzel (2005) argue that in pre-modernised politics existential constraints "nurture a culture of social control and civic conformism" restricting mobility and secularization (ibid., 162). Socio-economic development coupled with political modernization 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 (ibid., 163).

This paper makes several contributions to the literature. Theoretically it builds on Smith's (2018: 15-16) approach of recognizing the important role of supply/demand-side factors, but it goes well beyond an analysis of the temporal sequence and process through which institutions in the context of elections and candidate selection evolved and changed. That is, 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 rooted in elite politics, thus underestimating the role of modernized citizenship in the process.

The aim of the paper is to resolve the puzzle of how Taiwan has managed to become a consolidated democracy despite high numbers of dynastic politicians. It examines the relationship between Taiwan's democratization and dynastic politics to understand how they have affected each other's development. More specifically, it addresses the following set of questions: First, what have been the consequences of dynastic politics for Taiwan's democratization? Second, what factors have conditioned the effects/behavior of dynastic politics? Third, what insight can Taiwan's experience provide for understanding dynastic politics in other transitioning states?

The organization of the paper is as follows: First, using historical institutionalism, the evolution of dynastic politics will be examined, and the socio-political circumstances highlighted. Second, the interplay between dynasticism and democratic processes will be critically assessed in the light of recent literature on democratic governance. Third, Taiwan's experience with dynasticism will be discussed from a comparative perspective. Finally, the main findings of the study will be summarized in the concluding part of the paper.

The terms political dynasty, political family, democratic dynasty, and legacy politician are used synonymously in the study and (unless otherwise noted) 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.

## Evolution of dynastic politics

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 KMT government seized control over the island. The Japanese colonial governance and the KMT authoritarian rule until the late 1980s 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, 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 (Kuo, 1999: 32). That is, political families and their clientelist networks served as the third realm, the mediating force between the state apparatus and society, in exchange for lower-level administrative or consultative positions in local government as well as business licenses and state protection (Kuo, 1999: 34).

The KMT extended the scope of popular elections to include positions such as mayors, magistrates, and members of local, provincial, and national representative bodies. The land reform (1949-1953) led to the partial dissipation of traditional political families and the emergence of local factions. The fundamental organizing principle of these new family-clan based local networks was the exchange of benefits (*liyi*) and service (*fuwu*) for political support (Rigger, 1999: 86). External political factors, such as the loss of representation at the United Nations in 1971 and major diplomatic allies, and the growing societal demands for greater political participation brought about a more liberal political environment in the late 1970s. 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 (Schafferer, 2006: 34).

*Post-authoritarian era: the golden age of dynasticism*

The licensing of political parties in 1986 and the lifting of martial law a year later brought about a highly competitive political environment. Apart from the issue of national identity, the newly formed political parties focused on the rising social and environmental problems. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) as the largest opposition party functioned as a catch-all party – a vehicle for all the various social and environmental movements at the time (Jacobs, 2012). The ruling KMT could

not effectively address the rising social and economic problems, partly because of its internal power struggles and partly because of its own involvement in big business corporations. These circumstances not only strengthened the position of traditional political family clans but brought about a new generation of political elites. That is, the opposition parties could run more programmatic electoral campaigns, while the KMT still had to rely primarily on its traditional approach of utilizing local factions 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. However, most candidates engaged in hybrid campaigning.

During the first decade of the transition, the KMT was confronted with an internal power struggle 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 local factions, thus empowering them to act more independently of the party. Consequently, more and more factional candidates contested elections and financed their campaign through illegal activities. The number of elected local officials with gang affiliation increased from 10 percent in the 1970s to over 50 percent in the 1990s (Chao, 1994). Corruption and the criminal background of KMT affiliated politicians soon became a salient issue in elections, benefitting the opposition parties while negatively affecting the overall electoral performance of KMT candidates (Fell, 2018: 142, 143). Yet, some of the most notorious gangsters and their family clans could still step up the career ladder and become members of the Legislative Yuan, Taiwan's parliament.

Broadly speaking, democratization affected the development of political families in several ways. First, it opened up tactical opportunities for local factions, ending the one-sided dependency on the KMT. Second, local factions were no longer restricted to their constituencies. Alliances could be formed, and local

factions could rise to national political influence. Third, economic liberalization diversified sources of income, with land and real estate development becoming particularly important. Fourth, organized crime exploited the political power vacuum created by the political liberalization of the late 1980s and the factional rift within the KMT (Braig, 2016: 145, 146). Fifth, opposition parties felt inclined to establish their own networks of local factions or establish relations with existing ones (Göbel, 2012). In short, the 1990s were the golden age for local factions. However, socio-economic development since the lifting of martial law in 1987 has made it more difficult for vote-brokers to establish effective relations, especially with younger citizens. In recent years, local factions have thus ceased to exist in several counties and cities whereas they are still active in others (Braig, 2016: 137; Anonymous 1, 2, 4, 6, 9). The public attitude towards candidates from political families is mostly negative. They thus are under much tougher scrutiny than other candidates and are obliged to run a more programmatic campaign (Anonymous 1, 2, 4, 9, 10). Candidates of both the KMT and the DPP still utilize local factions to mobilize voters, but more and more legacy candidates either reduce their dependence on factions or conduct their campaigns through social media and other forms of modern campaigning (Anonymous 5, 6, 8).

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Local factions may have partly disappeared and their ability to mobilize voters less effective, but legacy politicians have increased in relative and absolute numbers over the last decade. More specifically, 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). As to local council elections, the share of legacy politicians since 2002 have been considerably lower than in parliament but has almost doubled over the years. In 2002, legacy candidates in local elections

accounted for 8.3 percent and in 2014 for 16.5 percent whereas the proportion of elected hereditary local politicians increased from 11.1 percent to 21.4 percent over the same period (Batto 2018). In terms of political affiliation, the KMT used to have the largest share of family politicians among its elected candidates, but in recent years the DPP appears to be on par with the KMT. In the 2020 parliamentary election, about 38 percent of elected candidates of each of the two parties belonged to political families (Lin, 2020).

Despite the proliferation of dynastic politicians in recent years, Batto (2018) asserts that the "family political enterprise is no longer the unstoppable juggernaut" it seemed to be in the 1990s. In other words, 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 (Batto, 2018: 495) and tend to run in less competitive environments. Rather than being mighty warriors they behave like bullies, "lording it over the weak and shrinking away from the strong" (Batto, 2018: 487). The rise in electoral dynasticism should thus not be interpreted as a sign of democratic regression, but rather as a result of a less competitive political environment, mainly caused by the fact that electoral campaigns require financial assets as well as networks political families are more likely to possess (Anonymous 1, 3). Although there still is the question of fairness, this paper endeavors to answer the question of how Taiwan could become a consolidated democracy despite the high prevalence of electoral dynasticism. The main hypothesis is that dynastic politics in Taiwan has been moderated/conditioned by democratic practices and institutions.

**Dynasticism and democratic development**

In 1949, the Chinese government under Chiang Kai-shek lost the civil war in China and retreated to Taiwan. Between 1949 and 1987, the KMT government ruled Taiwan under martial law. Taiwan was of strategic importance to the US government to contain communism in Asia. The US government thus offered substantial economic and military aid and advice to Taiwan (Jacoby 1966). The

cooperation led to the successful implementation of a land reform and sustained rapid economic growth, which in turn brought about a politically more demanding middle class (Jacobs, 2012). In 1987, President Chiang Ching-kuo lifted martial law and paved the way for far-reaching political reforms. His successor, Lee Teng-hui, continued to reform process and in 1996 Taiwan's first direct presidential election was held. Four years later, Chen Shui-bian of the DPP was elected president, completing the transfer of power. Since then, Taiwan has evolved into one of Asia's most stable and most advanced democracies. Most studies have identified political elites as the key forces behind Taiwan's democratic transition (Shin and Tusalem, 2019). Zhong (2016), on the other hand, asserts that Taiwan's democratic identity formation has been caused by external sovereignty-related factors (i.e., Taiwan's lack of international legal sovereignty and its antagonistic relationship with China) rather than by distinctive domestic reconstruction. Schafferer (2020), elaborating on Zhong's assertion, labels Taiwan's transition as defensive democratization and posits that in order to protect itself against Chinese irredentism, Taiwan has been obliged to demonstrate its 'democraticness' to the world. Elites have been compelled to contest their differences within the boundaries of democratic governance, gradually reinforcing democratic values and norms.

*The state-elite settlement and its implications*

The state-elite settlement can be seen as the prime cause of political dynasties in Taiwan. But how has this settlement affected democratic development? Historically, family clans served as agents of the state and were obliged to suppress voices critical of the ruling regime, especially those advocating Taiwanese nationalism. Kuo (1999: 33) asserts that family clans and local factions acting as the third realm in the state-society relation had a moderating effect on the government's suppression of the opposition, preventing the complete eradication of political movements against the government.

Moreover, local and national elections were not only central to the functioning of the state-elite settlement during KMT authoritarianism, but also a

catalyst in Taiwan's political modernization. They unfolded as 'nested games' where the game of electoral competition is embedded within the megagame of political reform (Schedler 2002, 110). More specifically, elections provided the ruling KMT with legitimacy and ample opportunities to cultivate, reward and control local factions. Apart from the KMT affiliated candidates, members of the democratic movement contested in the elections to challenge the KMT regime's political authority and inspire public debates about political reforms.

The local elections of 1977 were a watershed in Taiwan's democratic development. Opposition candidates won four of the twenty county executive positions and twenty-one of the seventy-seven provincial assembly seats. Soon, candidates of the democracy movement set up a common campaign platform and succeeded in capturing nine of the seventy seats allocated to geographical districts in the 1980 parliamentary election (Jacobs, 2012: 52, 58). Apart from the overall political success of the opposition, the elections were significant in terms of promoting a different category of legacy politician – the legacy politician with a political agenda beyond particularism. In general, politicians of the democracy movement were either relatives of established politicians, such as Huang Yu Hsiu-luan, or became founding members of dynasties, such as Hsu Hsin-liang. The former group mostly comprised the relatives of imprisoned elected officials, such as Hsu Jung-shu, Chou Ching-yu, and Huang Tien-fu, who successfully contested as proxy candidates in elections (Jacobs, 2012: 52, 58).

*Conceptualizing electoral dynasties*

As to facilitate further analysis on the relationship between electoral dynasties and democratic development, two sub types of dynastic politics are introduced. Table 1 summarizes the key differences between the two main categories of electoral dynasticism in contemporary Taiwanese politics. Particularistic dynasticism grounds on the state-elite settlement and subordinates entitlements to the logic of clientelistic networks. Programmatic dynasticism, on the other hand, is based on the popular desire for democratic governance and endeavors to codify citizens'

entitlements in universal documents such as policy programs, domestic laws, and the constitution.

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Moreover, particularistic dynasticism favors exchanges of *private* goods in return for electoral support. *Private* goods are material benefits that are transferred only to the individual citizen (voter) and include money, employment, and direct preferential services (Hellmann, 2014: 53). Programmatic legacy politicians, however, focus on the distribution of *public* goods – goods that are universally desired and whose entitlement is regulated by laws and procedures (Hellmann, 2014: 53).

Broadly speaking, democratic dynasties derive their legitimacy from a democratic (public) mandate that they obtain through the formal process of elections and the informal popular norms of 'inherited charisma' (Table 1). Such charismatic inheritance constitutes a form of 'moral capital' that provides not only political legitimation but also numerous opportunities to mobilize the masses and establish a political movement (Thompson, 2012: 205). The charismatic appeal of such movement dynasties grounds on the heroism or even martyrdom of their founders as well as on the belief that physical characteristics and personal qualities are transmitted from generation to generation (Thompson, 2012: 205).

Although both forms of (movement) dynasticism share the same source of legitimacy, the nature of their underlying motives as well as their trajectories are distinctly different. Democratic mandates and inherited charisma helped the democracy movement to challenge the KMT regime within the constitutional framework and to bring about political reform. They also protected leaders of the movement and their families against arbitrary state oppression. Local factions and their criminal gang members, on the other hand, saw in them ample opportunities

to exploit state resources for their own benefits while ensuring state protection for their illegal businesses (Chin, 2003: 123).

*The rise of particularistic dynasticism*

Moreover, the divergent notions regarding the public mandate and its social obligations also affected the popular understanding of civil disobedience. That is, large-scale street protests and violent outbursts of the opposition in parliament appeared to be legitimate in the absence of a democratic government seeking to deal with the public demand for reform in meaningful way. However, the concept of public disobedience got blurred when politicians with particularistic interests entered the political stage presenting themselves as 'victims' of a police state. Their fight was however not so much about addressing possible injustices caused by the authoritarian structures of the transitioning state but rather about securing political offices "as a resource for localized consolidation and amplification of personal, extralegal, informal, and even criminal powers" (Martin, 2013: 634). More specifically, the so-called outlaw politicians received their democratic legitimacy through their clientelist networks operating as vote brokers and trailblazers of a charisma-based political system – a political system forcing itself upon the fragile democratic institutions and becoming "increasingly entangled with official status, creating an emergent fusion of formal-bureaucratic and informal-charismatic social control" (Martin, 2013: 634).

In the 1990s, particularistic legacy politicians consolidated their political power through informal charismatic politics and by abusing their power as public officials to supervise police work and influence budgetary decisions regarding the police apparatus. The rise of particularistic dynasties at the time was however mostly caused by the fierce succession struggle within the ruling KMT, which created a power vacuum. The opposition could not take full advantage of the situation because of historical legacies in terms of the state-elite settlement. The settlement created a bifurcated system of political control – a system based on *dismissive* rule.

More specifically, Seeberg (2018) in his study on regime transitions asserts that the prospects of democratisation are determined by the type of pre-democratic state-elite settlement. The external patron may either recognize pre-existing local strongmen and collaborate with them (dismissive rule) or dismantle pre-existing political authority structures (disruptive rule). In the latter case the void created by the collapse can be filled by other social forces that may “produce popular resistance to the regime and a viable political alternative" (Ibid., 7). In the case of dismissive rule, however, the collapse of an external patron raises the status of traditional authority structures as the arbiters of political power. This incapacitates the fragile elements of opposition and civic associations, and thus severely limits the possibility of democratic development (Seeberg, 2018: 7). As to Taiwan, the postwar settlement between the KMT and the local factions empowered the latter to act as subsidiary agents of the party-state bureaucracy. Local factions were thus placed at the apex of local political structures. From that position, local factions could immediately occupy the void of authority generated by the lifting of martial law in 1987, the subsequent democratization and the factional conflict within the ruling party.

*Modernization of politics*

Kinship networks are part of a state’s social capital. Social capital may have a positive impact on human development but may as well obstruct it. Self-regulating mechanisms and inherited cultural norms and practices may prevent networks from abusing public resources to a certain extent. But, only through modernization can politics obtain the ability to modify itself, to “function according to more universal principles” that balance and control the particularism that is intrinsic to networks (Tigilia 2018). Democratization should bring about the modernization of politics, which in turn should enable a state to enter the stage of democratic consolidation. In other words, democratic consolidation requires the transformation of networks from being vertical into predominately horizontal social systems. In

terms of electoral dynasties, such a process would mean transforming particularistic (vertical) dynasticism into more programmatic (horizontal) forms.

In this context, Smith (2018) asserts that much of the variation in dynastic politics across democracies can be explained by institutional factors affecting the supply and demand incentives in candidate selection. In his analysis on political families in Japan, he demonstrated that reforms of the electoral system and party nomination rules could successfully condition not only the desire of hereditary politicians to contest elections but also their political behavior. In short, election campaigning became more party-centered and the selection process more centralized and transparent. As such, the pool of candidates expanded and parties placed greater emphasis on collective interests in terms of party image, gender diversity, and policy. More importantly, the 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” (Ibid., 50).

In the case of Taiwan, 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 local factions and led to the increased involvement of underground figures in politics (Hellmann, 2014). 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 (Ibid.).

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-centered campaigning and its comparatively low thresholds for candidates to be elected (Hsieh, 1996: 204, 205). 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 (Ibid.). Moreover, the electoral reform has only altered the electoral system of the Legislative Yuan, Taiwan's national parliament. Representatives at the local level, such as county and city councilors, are still elected under the old SNTV system, thus mitigating the intended effects of 2004 electoral reform (Anonymous 1, 3, 10). The reform was a compromise between public demands and KMT interests. Although the programmatic wing of the KMT took over the party leadership in 2000, the party continued to rely on local factions to win in elections. The reform should contain local factions rather than eradicate them – "push them back to their local turf" (Anonymous 2, 7, 11).

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. Local factions have, however, disappeared in some areas or lost their effectiveness due to reasons related to Taiwan's socio-economic development, such as urbanization, and changing public attitudes towards politics.

*Modernization of citizenship*

The 1990s are often described as the golden age of local factions and their dynastic outlaw politicians (Braig, 2016). A decade later, the latter group lost most of its public appeal. But why? Martin (2013) points out that outlaw politicians eventually lost their legitimate authority, "their status to speak as a subject of democratic politics" through several highly publicized incidences, such as the public murder of a rival by Pingtung County council speaker Cheng Ta-chi in 1994 over gambling debts (Martin, 2013: 634). More specifically, the synergistic effect of political modernization, urbanization and economic development gradually altered the public perception of how politics ought to be conducted in a modern democratic state. In other words, it altered the public understanding of citizenship, leading to a politically active society with intrinsic democratic values and norms (Schafferer, 2020; McAllister, 2016; Sanborn, 2015).

As shown in Table 1, programmatic dynasticism grounds on assertive (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005) or engaged citizenship (Dalton, 2008), 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 (Dalton, 2008: 81). That is, they exhibit comparatively high levels of emancipative values (Dalton and Welzel 2014; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). 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.

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 (Schafferer, 2020: 58; Rowen, 2018). The Sunflower student movement encapsulate the generational conflict over how to define citizenship (Cole, 2015). Göbel (2012: 81) in his field study on local factions concludes that especially young and educated people are reluctant to be instrumentalized by clientelistic networks, have their work and social life in urban centers, 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 neighborhood wardens, but also the relationship within family. Young people increasingly develop their own political identity often being substantially different form their parents. Vote brokers can thus no longer effectively utilize family relations to exert influence on younger voters (Anonymous 1, 4, 6, 12).

Moreover, Chang (2016) in her study on Taiwanese citizenship norms found that Taoism and folk religions correlate positively with duty-based (allegiant) citizenship, while no such relationship could 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 (Chen, 2015: 145, 146). In the 1960s, religious rituals (*baibai*) held at clan temples developed into alienable parts of electoral campaigns (Fried, 1966: 294). 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 (Chang, 2012). 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 (Anonymous 1, 3, 8). While the public image of such events has deteriorated, they have become major tourist attractions (Shou, Ryan and Liu: 582). As to adapt to the changing environments, local factions have tried to replace traditional social bonds based on kinship or *guanxi* by the shared consumption of cultural practices and rituals. That is, religious activities such as the Mazu pilgrimage are promoted as popular culture to attract and establish relations with young voters. The attempt has however largely failed to deliver the expected results and mostly attracted middle-aged men searching for pleasure (Anonymous 1, 2).

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========== Table 2 goes here

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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. 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). Moreover,

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. Although the inherited incumbency advantage still seems to help legacy candidates, 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 (Anonymous 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12).

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++++++++++ Figure 3 goes here

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Figure 3 illustrates the relationship between political modernization and dynasticism. 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. Moreover, data provided by Transparency International suggests that corruption has significantly decreased over the years. More importantly, emancipative values have increased steadily, confirming the existence of an ongoing transformation process in terms of citizenship norms, especially among young people. Notwithstanding this, the proportion of legacy politicians has increased from 24.4 percent to 37.2 percent during the same time span, contradicting theoretical assumptions on the relationship between political

dynasties and democratic development, but serving as further corroborating evidence of a gradual shift from particularistic dynasticism to a more programmatic form of hereditary politics.

## Discussion and conclusion

Using the example of Taiwan, this paper highlights the contextual contingency of electoral dynasties in terms of their implications for democratic governance. 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, Taiwan has become a consolidated democracy despite rising numbers of electoral dynasticism.

To resolve this puzzle, the paper applied an alternative theoretical framework that distinguishes between 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. Moreover, dynasties are not treated as individual social organizations, but as part of a state's social capital. While the relative dominance of one over the other determines the level of democratization, the relationship between democratization and social capital is rather complex and interdependent. Simply put, along the continuum the behavior of electoral dynasties gets increasingly constrained institutionally and by social norms. Such institutions and social norms may be self-imposed or inherited from a distant past. However, only through modernizing politics can social systems be prevented from cultivating political capitalism. In other words, democratic consolidation requires substantial levels of modernized politics. The applied theoretical framework of this study asserts that modernizing politics comprises two dimensions: the institutional and the behavioral. 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.

The framework should be seen as an extension of Smith's (2018) approach of explaining the variance in electoral dynasticism across democracies by analyzing political reforms in terms of electoral system and candidate selection. 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). The approach may help to understand dynasticism in highly developed capitalist societies, such as Japan, and may as well work for newly consolidated democracies, such as Taiwan or South Korea, but lack explanatory power when it comes to less developed states, such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia, or Thailand. In other words, the approach assumes high levels of state capacity and high proportions of assertive citizens within the population.

Broadly speaking, state capacity conditions the development of dynasticism. Low state capacity encourages the growth of vertical organizations/institutions, such as clans and patron-client relationships. State incapacities in dealing with rural poverty or crime in urban areas undermine state authority and lead to the privatization of power (Rouquié, 1978: 27-29). Although high state capacity may substantially mitigate the negative effects of democratic dynasticism, state capacity alone is not a sufficient condition for democratic consolidation. That is, it constitutes an important intervening variable in a state's democratic development, but democratic consolidation eventually requires political modernization.

Apart from the important role of state capacity, much of Taiwan's commitment to democratic development is attributed to its contested statehood – its lack of international legal sovereignty – and the search of a new Taiwanese identity. Taiwan's defensive democratization has ruled out non-democratic forms of governance. Democracy has not only become the only option among the majority of citizens but also among the political elite. In this context, Sasley (2011) emphasizes the important role of political leaders in forming group behavior. 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 the case of Taiwan, the commitment to democratic governance has been a central message narrated domestically and abroad, thus reinforcing democratic values and norms as being an unalienable part of Taiwanese identity formation.

At the beginning of the paper, three questions were asked. First, what have been the consequences of dynastic politics for Taiwan's democratization? Second, what factors have conditioned the effects/behavior of dynastic politics? Third, what insight can Taiwan's experience provide for understanding dynastic politics in other states?

In answer to the first question, electoral dynasties and their networks acted as the third realm in the state-society relations. Although they served as agents of the state and were obliged to suppress the opposition, electoral dynasties had a moderating effect and prevented the complete eradication of the opposition movement. During the 1970s, legacy candidates of the opposition successfully contested elections by running a programmatic campaign, which benefited Taiwan's democratic development. After the lifting of martial law in 1987, a factional rift inside the KMT empowered local factions and accelerated the infiltration of organized crime into politics. Vested with a public mandate through elections, outlaw politicians and their relatives hijacked democratic institutions for their own purposes – a process resembling Bermeo's (2016) executive aggrandizement but with the outlaw legislators not the president as the executive. The development undermined democratic governance and constituted a serious threat to Taiwan's long-term democratic development. However, the modernization of politics averted a democratic reversal. Outlaw politicians were gradually replaced by more programmatic (legacy) politicians.

In answer to the second question, factors related to institutional reforms and norms of citizenship have conditioned the effects and behavior of electoral dynasties. Institutionally, the reform of candidate selection procedures within the KMT and DPP made the process more transparent and more competitive. The

2004 electoral reform only marginally affected the operation of local factions since local factions are deeply embedded in various types of interwoven social subsystems. The role of local factions in mobilizing electoral support has however been compromised by urbanization and the modernization of citizenship norms. That is, mostly young people form their political orientations independently, are more critical of political elites and exhibit strong intrinsic support for democratic governance. The changing norms of citizenship have considerably rendered traditional bonds less effective in establishing vertical relationships.

In answer to the third question, this study presents an integrative perspective to understand the relationship between electoral dynasties and democratic development by emphasizing their contextual contingency. The arguments and findings suggest that although dynasticism has the potentials to negatively affect democratic development, the scope of such impact is contingent upon the macro contexts, particularly the type of the pre-democratic state-elite settlement (dismissive vs. disruptive rule) and state capacity.

Moreover, the case of Taiwan provides corroborating evidence of the hypothesis put forward in the study that democratization has the potential to restrain the intrinsic particularistic potentials of clientelistic networks and gradually reshape them into programmatic behavior. This process, however, requires the modernization of politics, which should make political institutions related to the selection of party candidates and electoral system more transparent and competitive. Processes of political modernization should also include a substantial transformation of citizenship norms – away from being allegiant to becoming assertive.

The importance of modernization case study of Taiwan highlights the restrictions of the cultural explanation. Studies on kinship networks often neglect the importance of political modernization in attempts to deal with the negative potentials of political dynasties and 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 as sign of incomplete political modernization (democratization).

The contextual contingency of electoral dynasties suggested here not only opens new avenues for theorizing about the impact of pre-democratic state-elite settlements on the evolution of electoral dynasties, but also provides a different perspective with respect to some puzzling issues in the literature on democratic dynasties. Specifically, it helps to account for the seemingly contradicting findings regarding the high levels of dynasticism in advanced democratic societies such as Japan and Taiwan and the absence of endemic corruption and other negative effects discussed in the literature.

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Anonymous 5 (2022) Interview, senior campaign aid, Taichung City, 19 September.

Anonymous 6 (2022) Interview, former legislator, Taichung City, 20 September.

Anonymous 7 (2022) Interview, township-level vote broker, Northern Taiwan, 22 September.

Anonymous 8 (2022) Interview, campaign manager, Central Taiwan, 23 September.

Anonymous 9 (2022) Interview, borough warden, Central Taiwan, 30 September.

Anonymous 10 (2022) Interview, township-level city councillor, Central Taiwan, 3 October.

Anonymous 11 (2022) Interview, former legislator, Taipei City, 7 October.

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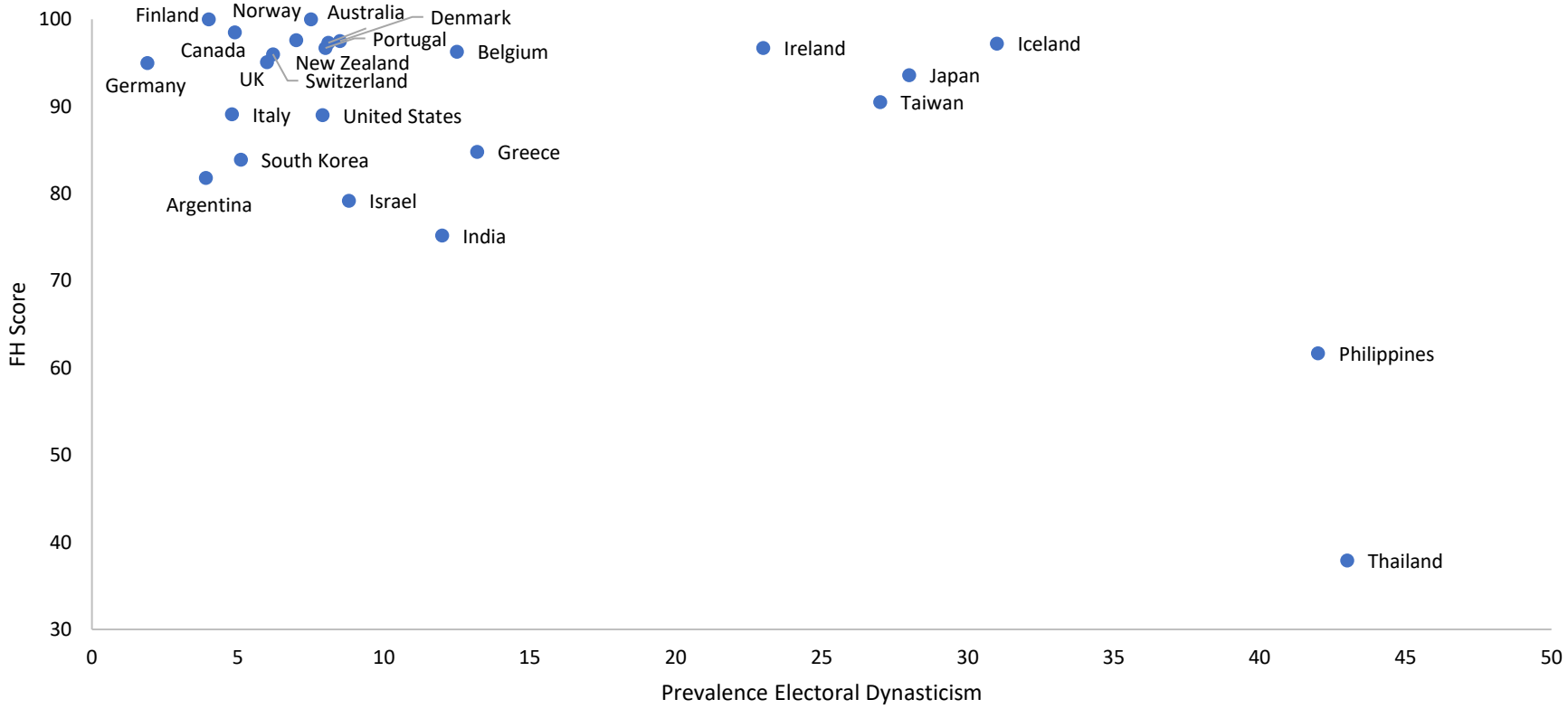
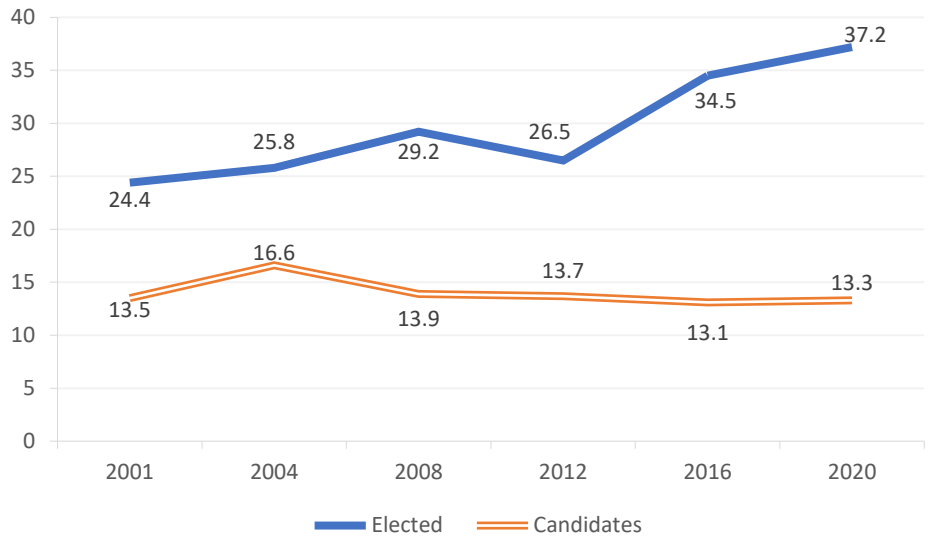
Figure 1: Prevalence of Electoral Dynasticism and State of Democracy



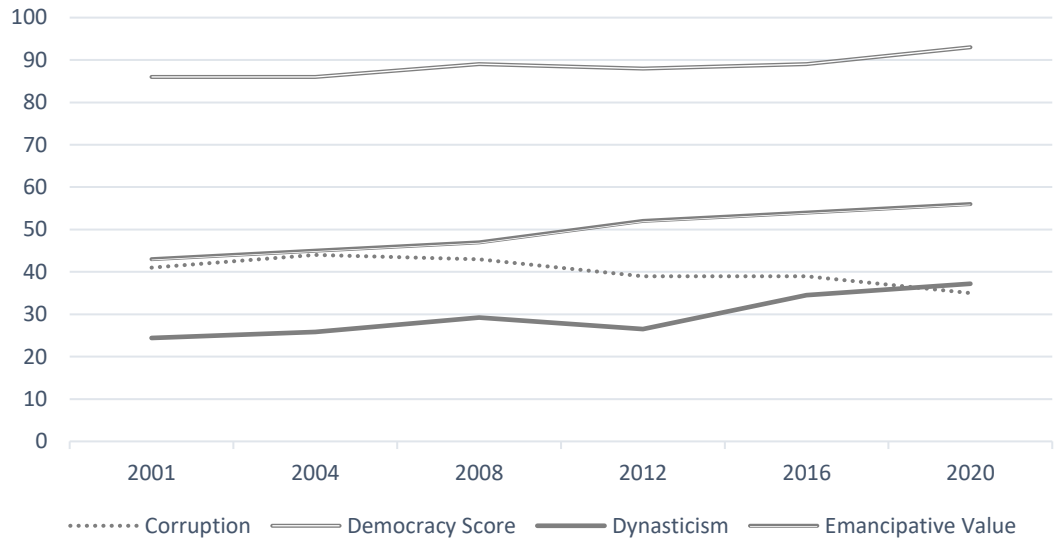

Source: Smith (2016: 5); Freedom House
FH Score is the average aggregate subcategory score of Political Rights and Civil Liberties for the years (2012-2021).
Unit: %

**Figure 2: Candidates and Elected Legacy Legislators (2001-2020)**




Source: Batto (2018) and Lin (2020)
Unit: %

**Figure 3: Legacy Legislators and Socio-political Indicators (2001-2020)**




Source: Batto (2018); Lin (2020); Transparency International; Freedom House; World Value Survey

Note: Corruption: Reverse value of the Corruption Perception Index, Transparency International; Democracy Score: aggregated values of Civil Liberties and Political Rights; Dynasticism: percentage of elected legacy candidates, Legislative Yuan; Emancipative Value: RESEMAVAL for citizens aged <30 years; Unit: %

**Table 1: Particularistic vs. Programmatic Dynasticism in Taiwan**

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

Source: Author

**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.