



Impacts of Politics of Inheritance on Democracy in Pakistan:
A Case Study of Pakistan Muslim League (N)

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Abstract

The politics of inheritance commonly refers to a family in which several members, by blood or marriage, often across several generations or among multiple siblings, are involved in electoral politics. The politics of inheritance is evident in every country where inequality is sometimes observed in the practice of political power. The situation challenges the significance and existence of political equality. Moreover, it is an example of irony living in a democracy. This work sought to analyse the politics of inheritance within the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz). Along with it, study why the family rule in the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) has been established to date. Another main objective of the study is to assess the success of the family rule in the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) in Pakistan. This research study is qualitative, descriptive, and historical, describing the politics of inheritance within the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) in the country. The study's findings reveal the true meaning of political dynasty, its advantages and drawbacks for its constituents. This study recommends that the government, education, and youth sectors promote an anti-individualistic campaign to transform voters' voting preferences so that the province and the country can be developed in a true sense.

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Introduction

The politics of inheritance have long been present in democracies, raising concerns that inequality in the distribution of political power may reflect imperfections in democratic representation. However, the continuity of political elites may simply reflect differences in ability or political views across families rather than their capture of power. No matter what, family politics is comparable to a democratic dictatorship or a monarchy in a democratic way. (Churchill, 1943) argue that, “Worst form of democracy is better than the best form of dictatorship” While the majority of the political dynasties are infamous some might be out there who are loved by the people and it would not miss mentioning the Trudeau family of Canada. It was said that the pioneering leader of their political family was able to build an empire because of having a good heart and a vision. This just implies that people, when led well by a powerful person, starts to have a patronization. Such behavior is caused by their freedom to choose driven by democracy (Pamaos, 2012).

Political dynasties in South Asia are not just fall-backs into age-old ways. They are modern combination in which elite political aims are linked to popular norms of charismatic legitimacy. Familial succession has been grafted onto regimes, political parties and social movements. Politics of inheritance provide key advantages in a context of weak institutions or institutional decay. India Pakistan and Bangladesh are considered as a hub of politics of inheritance in the South Asia. Political families are common since the people of these countries believe in politics of inheritance being the true and honest politics. Most of these South-Asian political families sometimes are toppled down in either a democratic way or military coup in Pakistan and Bangladesh. While they rise again due to the popular support They have from the people of these countries. Bhutto’s of Pakistan are compared to the Kennedy’s of US not only because of their politics but their disastrous consequences. India’s electoral dynasticism ranges from a five generation old Nehru-Gandhi dynasty. The party has dominated the Indian polity, governing the Congress Party since the Indian independence in 1947 (James, 1972).

Pakistan gained independence on August 14, 1947. The nation designed its constitution after the British and introduced a representative democracy based on the Indian Government Act of 1935. Pakistan’s democracy has been threatened by a number of political challenges. Political dynasty, military intervention and other factors have been affecting Pakistan’s democracy and peace; as a result, have a negative effect on the country’s growth. The major political parties in Pakistan, including the PML (N), are headed by members of a select family; this is politics of inheritance in action (Tewari, 2017; Zaib et al., 2025).

In Pakistan the politics of inheritance has often been linked with the politics of feudalism, the two are not the same. As a general phenomenon, feudal politics has over time weakened in Pakistan. Many feudal families with landholding baselines have been washed out electorally, except for randomly inclusion body in caretaker cabinets by the army. These consist of the Khuhros of Larkana, Tiwanas from Sargodha, Daulatanas of Vehari, the Qazi Fazlullah family from Sindh, the Gardezis of Multan, the Nawabs from Qasur and the Mamdots of Ferozpur/Lahore. Benazir Bhutto inherited the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) over her father’s Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto death, and in 2007 it transferred onto her son and husband through a clear instrument of succession. Another ruling party is Pakistan Muslim League (N) is a center-right; fiscal conservative political party in Pakistan, being the largest conservative political force and second largest political party is Pakistan Muslim League (N) is headed by Nawaz Sharif, his daughter and brother (Syed, 2009).

The fossils of the PML (N) might be traced out from different factions of PML in 1985. These factions merged into single party named as PML (N). These factions basically were formulated on the will of General Zia ul Haq who was in need of one civilian political part to speak in his support in National Assembly of Pakistan (Hussein, 1979; Zaib, 2022).

The effect of family politics also has much to do with the money, time and connections that can only come from being part of the family. Kristoff points to an increase in the size of constituencies and the rising costs of campaigning that make it difficult for an 'unfinanced unknown' to enter politics due to the political monopoly that these families have. The voters in essence do not vote for a party but for a candidate who is expected to win and has access (Raja, 2018).

Literature Review

Pakistani politics and their effect on democracy have long been a source of debate among academics. Several scholars have discussed how military involvement and other factors have harmed Pakistan's democracy and stability, which has a negative effect on the country's growth. The current study aims to assess the influence of politics of inheritance in Pakistan and their impact on democracy. This portion of the report provides a summary of the study's previously published literature.

Hippler, (1995) discussed Pakistani political governments, especially those of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, in his book "Problems of Democracy and Nation-Building in Pakistan". He said that neither of Pakistan's major political parties had any ideology during their terms in office. Also within the parties and their close associates, corruption was in peak. The parties were primarily motivated by financial greed and political opportunism, and they started political victimization against one another for personal gain. It is important to note that all political parties have internal dictatorships, as office bearers are chosen by the political party's higher authorities rather than by party elections. There is no internal democracy of any political party.

Keith, (1968) analysis that Pakistanis have been always idealized democracy, but they did not know how to implement it. According to him, the early years of Pakistan's history were marked by transition and confusion. Political parties have risen and fallen in Pakistan, and they have been disrupted on many occasions. Due to the military and civil bureaucracy, Pakistan's religious leaders have been unable to reform the country's political structure. My point of discussion is the role of political parties in the development of Pakistan's political system.

Baxter, (1971) in his work provides a comprehensive analysis of Pakistan's general election of 1970. The 1970 election was a turning point moment in the restoration of democracy in the country, as it was the first time that elections were held on the basis of universal suffrage, direct voting, and single member constituencies of equal size. The author provides the results of the National and Provincial Assemblies in their entirety. The 1970 elections were based on a set of principles. Constituencies were redrawn and delimited on the basis of the 1961 census survey, which was used to conduct the 1970 elections. Weinbaum, (1977) in his article illustrates the elections of 1977 in Pakistan. Bhutto came to power in 1971 and dominated the electoral landscape until 1977. However, the 1977 elections did not result in a convincing win. Once again, the 1977 election demoralized the nation, which was in the midst of a civil war. The election was rigged, and the PNA and other opposition parties refused to accept it.

In his work Ranny, (1981) emphasized the importance of candidate selection in the existence of any political party. He looked into the connection between relationships and the emergence of

dynasties. This lake has two issues, according to the author. The first was about brand awareness (Brand Name and its Benefits), while the second was about campaign benefits. In comparison to those who were losers in the last election, the writer noted that those politicians who were not dynastic and were winners took their family members into politics in the offing or next election.

Afzal (2017) evaluates that the political parties and the military of Pakistan is playing its prominent role in the destabilization of the democracy. PML (N), a well-known and powerful political party, has a strong political leadership that has given key political positions to all of their relatives and children. These norms place power in the hands of people from the same family, resulting in the failure of many qualified people. The government's most important political roles are often passed on to beloved leaders who are either children of prominent politicians or close relatives. Also during elections, powerful leaders use their money and influence to compel officials to present their preferred outcomes and hold themselves in positions of power, thus establishing themselves as a natural ruling class. However, in this race for political power, the leaders forget that they are chosen by and for the people, and that their existence is contingent on the people's willing consent. The author went on to say that the public, not just politicians, were to blame for political dynasties and the destruction of democracy. People tend to vote for the children and close relatives of current leaders over new candidates because they are party followers rather than people. As a result, it is necessary to bring about reform within the state in order to foster democracy and end politics of inheritance.

Raja, (2018) published a study in which he highlighted the politics of inheritance in Pakistan and its results as failure of democracy. The author discussed that how the politicians and their families enjoy the status quo of being part of ruling families and how it effect the democratic environment of the state. These in return left no space for other new politicians, and left worst impact on Pakistan's democracy. The major political party of Pakistan especially PML (N) is based on politics of inheritance. They have retained stronghold over the political activities of Pakistan and so they do not let average workers to get chance to prove their worth as politician and occupy a key position. The children of the already existing founders of Pakistan's top political parties keep a strong hold over the important political seats. In this connection, Pakistan Muslim league Nawaz (PMLN) is on the top, where the founders or the progeny of the founders enjoy the important political seats. The author further asserted that in case Pakistan hopes to develop a democratic system, it needs to work on the politics of inheritance. The political seats or the ministries must be democratic where the deserving people must get the chance, no matter if they belong to any popular political party or not. The politics need to be openly democratic, where every individual with positive approach must be welcomed by all and party leadership should not be passed from one generation to other in the same family. Also, Pakistan needs to work on the election system, in which the leadership or leading position must be based on the pure selection of public, without any pressure or illegal activities. This all will take time, but sooner or later it will bring great advantages to the nation.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive, and historical research design to examine the politics of inheritance within Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) and its impact on democracy in Pakistan. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth exploration of political dynasties as a complex social and political phenomenon, providing rich contextual understanding of

how family-based political structures have evolved and maintained their dominance in Pakistani politics.

The descriptive nature of the research focuses on characterizing the existence, features, and manifestations of dynastic politics within PML(N), documenting how political power has been concentrated within specific families across generations. This descriptive framework enables the researchers to present a comprehensive picture of the political dynasty phenomenon without necessarily establishing causal relationships. The historical methodology traces the evolution of PML(N) from its roots in the All India Muslim League (1906) through various factional splits and mergers, particularly focusing on the 1985 consolidation under General Zia ul Haq's influence and the 1993 formation of PML(N) under Nawaz Sharif. This historical analysis provides crucial context for understanding how dynastic patterns became embedded in the party's structure.

Data collection appears to rely primarily on secondary sources, including scholarly literature, academic publications, news reports (particularly Dawn News), and existing research on Pakistani politics and political dynasties. The literature review synthesizes works from scholars like Hippler (1995), Keith (1968), Baxter (1971), and contemporary researchers examining dynastic politics in South Asia.

The study adopts a case study approach, specifically focusing on PML(N) as the primary unit of analysis while making comparative references to other political families like the Bhuttos and international examples such as the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty in India. The research examines electoral data, particularly from the 2013 general elections, to analyze dynastic candidate selection and voting patterns across different socioeconomic classes. This methodological framework allows for detailed examination of how dynastic politics operates within Pakistan's democratic framework and its broader implications for political development and governance quality.

Analysis and Discussion

Democratization is a significant phenomenon of globalization, the process of democratization can take a variety of forms, including public education, measures to improve regulatory bureaucracies' transparency and accountability, judicial reform, steps to expand and upgrade civil society activities, redistribution of resources in favor of structurally disadvantaged groups, and revision of constitutions to recognize democratization. As indicators of political development, an organized political system provides stable institutions, responsible form of government, and public participation in decision-making processes. Political development is the process of rebuilding or modernizing a country for the general welfare of its citizens. This process also raises citizen awareness of the need for political institutions that can respond to society's goals and meet people's basic needs. As a result, political development is aided by a stable political system, which includes institutions and their operations. This can aid in the development of a healthy society at both the national and global levels. To achieve political development goals, such institutions consolidate political power and institutionalize the system. Political parties, according to the author, can contribute to the global democratization process. He went on to say that political parties could be the driving force behind public scrutiny of a country's involvement in international affairs (Scholte, 2006).

The AIML, All India Muslim League which was formulated in 1906, preserving the cultural, political and economic interests of people of India struggled hard to create a new Islamic country Pakistan on the map of the world despite staunch opposition of the Hindus and the All Indian Congress as well as Jamat-e-Islami, Majlis-e-Ahrar and Jamiat Ulema Islam Hind. The heartbeat of each Pakistani accompany with Muslim League during 1940/1947.

Muslims of that time who supported Muslim League they believed that Muslim League is the 2nd name of Country or Pakistan. Muslim league got majority in all strata of public. After independence All India Muslim League made a fateful decision when it split into two organizations, one representing Pakistan and the other of the Muslims of India in India. In doing so, the party that had led Pakistan into new era cut its ties to its urban lifeline and allowed the organization to commander by persons unfamiliar with its roots. It was due to non-structure of the party, soon after the independence, Muslim League was split into different parties. Out of 13 total parties 09 parties were offspring of the Muslim League (Ziring, 2001).

These factions largely composed of two groups of PML in 1962. One faction was Ayub called as (PML-Convention) while other Anti Ayub called as PML-Council. Both these so called factions claimed as extension of AIML. In 1970-Elections, there were three prominent factions of Muslim League namely Convention, Council and Qayum League. In 1973, there happened merger of the Council League into new name Muslim League Functional (FML). This party was one of the 09 constituent's parties which led to anti Bhutto electoral alliance named as PNA. The fossils of the PML (N) might be traced out from different factions of PML in 1985. These factions merged into single party named as PML (N). These factions basically were formulated on the will of General Zia ul Haq who was in need of one civilian political part to speak in his support in National Assembly of Pakistan. In 1985, on the direction of General Zia, Pir Pagaro merged into united front by merging all PML factions. After revamp and merger of PML, Junejo was announced as head of the party. In 1993, Nawaz Sharif parted his ways and formed a separate party with brand name, Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz). This new born party, soon after became the largest party like PPP. This party shared the power in 1990 in the form of IJI and afterwards in 1997 election as PML-N (Khan, 2009).

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After military quo of 1999, PML (N) emerged as a democratic and anti-establishment party. The party is dominant Democratic Party in the country particularly in the Punjab, KPK-Hindko regions and in Baluchistan. The party held Central Government as well as Punjab and Baluchistan Governments as a result of General Election of 2013. Currently the party, during the last five years, resolved issues like load shedding and terrorism in Pakistan. The party succeeded itself to line in moderate religious party. After court decision of Nawaz Sharif's disqualification, Nawaz Sharif emerged as an antiestablishment leader. Now he is also Reiterating a new narrative of judicial reform. He is also claiming Pak China Economic

Corridor (C-PACC) as a new gate way to Pakistan progress. PML (N) now is to contest with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf instead of PPP (Dawn News, 2015).

Discussion

Politics of inheritance is sometimes blamed for poverty; there is no evidence to back up this claim. This study looks into the relationship between political dynasties and underdevelopment in Pakistan using extensive data collection, dynastic dominance, and political rivalry. It disproves facts and popular misconceptions about politics of inheritance, as well as the implications for making politics more development-friendly. To what extent does dynastic families' dominance of electoral politics contribute to Pakistan's Underdevelopment, and does their presence make politics uncompetitive? The media and national and international researchers frequently cite the dominance of inherited politicians as a reason for Pakistan's poor socioeconomic performance. However, there is a scarcity of accurate information on the extent of inherited dominance in Pakistan, as well as its implications for political rivalry and underdevelopment.

Political dynasties and democracy were measured in Pakistan's political history after 1970. Election 2013 was studied in particular, with the goal of determining if parties fielded their most central and linked candidates from the constituencies, with a preference for political families and dynastic backgrounds. The belief that candidates belonging to political clans have a competitive advantage in winning elections is based on their name recall, which is linked to low levels of political knowledge and low levels of social economic categorization. However, the research suggests that people with a high level of education and those from the middle class are more likely to vote for dynastic candidates. While these analyses show that there has been an increasing trend to vote for senatorial candidates from political families over the years across all social economic classes, the middle class typically votes for more dynastic candidates than the other social economic classes, their pattern may not be the same for local level races where dynastic families are increasing their hold as each election passes. Dynastic candidates have greater physical asserts and abundant resources than non-dynastic candidates. Some questions remain unanswered as a result of this study. With a changed political structure and a more democratic culture, it is critical to expand the mode to other elections. The researcher believes that as more citizens become directly active in participatory democracy, politics of inheritance will gradually fade away, resulting in more equality of opportunity and a gradual decline in political dynasties.

The chronic dynastic political culture that is strongly established in Pakistani politics, one could argue, is to blame for this lack of leadership. Almost every party is a family affair, with the exception of a select handful. Ironically, all of these families loudly proclaim their support for democracy while doing nothing to foster democratic values within their own ranks. Prime Minister Imran Khan's remark that "I am democracy" needed to be taken seriously and thoroughly understood in this context. It didn't show any arrogance or arrogance of self-importance. It was, in reality, a reflection of his firm confidence in democracy. Also, the writer's suggestion that Democrats have an "authoritarian streak" is a poor judgment call from a seasoned political commentator (Ansari, 2020).

According to research, the presence of such dynasties decreases a government's legitimacy, affects the quality of its policies, fosters patronage and corruption, and has negative implications due to the selection effect. According to the literature on political dynasties, the phrase refers to a form of self-perpetuation in politics that allows a person to remain in government for a prolonged amount of time. The current research study reveals that while dynasties offer more resources, they also bring inferior economic performance, lower

GDP per capita, and higher crime rates. In addition, research reveals that political dynasties have lower parliamentary attendance rates, less formal education, and less development money.

As a result, the existence and endurance of political dynasties in democratic countries has generated many doubts about the democratic system's usefulness. Political dynasties act as a non-institutional barrier to candidacy in elections because they not only increase the opportunity cost of running for office for non-dynastic candidates, but they also have the potential to above dynastic politicians from working efficiently due to their electoral advantage. This is precisely why politics of inheritance in Pakistan hampers political competition in general (Rehman, 2019).

Conclusion

There are flaws in the political structure that have enabled political dynasties to survive to this day. The Political Parties Act of 2001 bound all political parties to hold frequent inter-party elections for all key positions. A new political structure with social implications secured Pakistan's independence. The right to be a public representative should not belong to dynastic candidates. Still, non-dynastic candidates who deserve to serve the community should be allowed to do so in the selection process. It is self-evident that the state has a responsibility to have equal opportunities during elections. Politically influential people appeared to be far more likely to become landowners and to significantly increase the volume of their lands. It is predicted that the democratic process will ensure that non-dynastic candidates have equal opportunities and that political dynasties will gradually fade away.

In Pakistan, party politics has always been impacted by social institutions, religion, family, and geography. Furthermore, understanding Pakistani political history requires an understanding of civil-military ties. PTI has risen from the ashes of a highly rooted social fabric, utilizing fresh strategies and carving out space by resisting the current political culture. The development demonstrates dynamism in Pakistan's political structure, notably in relation to party politics during multiple power changes with no additional institutional obstacle. The challenge to dynastic culture in the party system is an important development, showing that political evolution is on the rise; this, combined with a focus on anti-corruption and performance, has put pressure on political parties to deliver. The immediate result has been a high level of expectation for economic success and systemic transformation, which has been met with opposition from domestic political players.

It is extremely beneficial to introduce discussions into the political process by making candidates for public positions more accountable and comfortable with the electorate. These processes may provide opportunities for the emerging leadership and staff of political parties to develop their political orientation and socialization. Such discussions have the potential to reveal their thoughts and inform the public about their policy convention for addressing national issues. Via their useful political debates, the electorate will be able to explore the candidates' selection process and policy positions by listening to their views and opinions on different national, regional, and local issues. The greatest threat to democracy, however, comes from inside, from the electorate themselves, not from above or below. All of Pakistan's political parties have seen a decline in membership. Election after election, voter turnout is also declining.

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