
The 1987 Constitution: Born to Break the Marcos Chains but Now Served Stale Like Daily Lechon — How Political Dynasties Have Turned Mini Dictatorships into a National Indigestion

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Author's Personal Note (Opening)

The presence and relentless proliferation of political dynasties in the Philippines reminds me of eating lechon every single day. At first, it's a delight — crispy, savory, the star of every feast. But after the third day? Nakakaumay (it sucks) and nakakasawa (tedious)! Like a never-ending buffet of the same dish, political dynasties keep serving us the same old brand of politics — only it's stale, greasy, and worse, sometimes toxic.

You know that feeling when you say, "Maybe tomorrow I'll have something different," but tomorrow comes, and it's the same lechon again, just reheated? That's our political scene every election season. Political families keep recycling themselves, like a badly written rerun of a telenovela that refuses to end.

If these political mushrooms continue to sprout unchecked, they might just choke the democratic appetite of our people. Unlike lechon, however, we cannot just send this "leftover" dynasty back to the kitchen and order something fresh. The problem is that these mini dictatorships have seasoned themselves into our system, making it a challenge to dislodge them without a serious change in recipe.

Introduction: A Constitution's Broken Promise

The 1987 Philippine Constitution emerged from the ashes of dictatorship with a bold vision. The framers intended to prevent the concentration of political power in the hands of a few families. Article II, Section 26 reads:

"The State shall guarantee equal access to opportunities for public service, and prohibit political dynasties as may be defined by law."^[1]

Four decades later, this provision reads like a poetic joke. Political dynasties, far from disappearing, have multiplied — transforming the political landscape into a family reunion that never ends. How did a Constitution designed to liberate Filipinos from one dictatorship end up enabling hundreds of mini-dictatorships?

^[1] Philippine Constitution, Article II, Section 26: "The State shall guarantee equal access to opportunities for public service, and prohibit political dynasties as may be defined by law."

burnt bits of public funds. They slice the pork so thin, they leave nothing for the rest of us except the greasy grease.

And don't think for a second that they're just sharing the feast fairly. No, this is a buffet where the family only invites themselves and their closest cronies. They pass around government contracts like extra lechon slices — but only to their in-laws and loyal hangers-on. It's a pasalubong center of corruption, where kickbacks are the main delicacy, and accountability is the dish nobody ordered.

You know how with lechon, the first bite is heavenly, but by the fifth day it's just nakakaumay and you start wondering if it's actually doing you more harm than good? That's exactly what these political dynasties are — a political indigestion that the whole country is suffering from. Except instead of curing it with some tangy vinegar, we keep pouring more gravy on it and calling it progress.

If this political lechon keeps getting served at every election, no wonder democracy feels bloated, sluggish, and sickly. It's time to toss out the reheated leftovers and demand a fresh, clean dish. One that isn't just for the family but for every Filipino's table. Because honestly, we deserve more than political lechon that's been reheated, recycled, and rotten inside.

Judiciary's Silent Role: When Watching Becomes Enabling

The courts have largely stayed silent on the issue. By declaring that the anti-dynasty provision is “not self-executing,” the Supreme Court politely passed the hot potato back to Congress. The judiciary, thus, has been more a spectator than a guardian of the Constitution.^[4]

If the courts fail to hold the legislature accountable, political dynasties will continue to feast on the Constitution's weaknesses. This silence is a subtle yet effective endorsement of dynastic rule.

Cultural Enablers: The Padrino System and Pakikisama

The law is not the only culprit. Filipino culture, with its values of padrino (patronage) and pakikisama (smooth interpersonal relations), often places family loyalty above merit and public interest.

^[4] Ibid.

Voters tend to support familiar names, expecting favors or stability. This cultural tendency allows political families to recycle power under the guise of tradition and loyalty.

In this way, dynasties sustain themselves not only by lawlessness but by the warmth of familial and social obligation. Even the most ironclad laws flounder when cultural dynamics support the opposite.^[5]

Regional Rays of Hope: BARMM's Bold Attempt

While the national government stagnates, the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) has taken steps to restrict political dynasties within its territory.

Despite legal challenges and political pushback, BARMM's initiatives provide a glimpse of hope. These regional efforts show that when political will exists, meaningful reform is possible.^[6]

Could BARMM be the canary in the coal mine, warning the nation that political dynasties are indeed winnable?

Recommendations: Charting a Way Out of the Dynastic Maze

If the Philippines truly aims to revitalize its democracy, it must take decisive steps:

1. Enact the Enabling Law

- Congress must act on its constitutional duty to define and prohibit political dynasties clearly. This law should specify degrees of consanguinity and affinity, plus firm enforcement mechanisms. No more excuses.

2. Judicial Assertiveness

- The Supreme Court should revisit its position on the self-executing nature of the anti-dynasty provision and clarify its role in protecting democratic principles against familial monopolies.

3. Electoral Reforms

- Strengthening the party-list system and implementing robust campaign finance reforms can democratize politics, providing alternatives to dynastic candidates.

4. Public Education and Awareness

- Educating voters on the dangers of political dynasties can empower them to make informed decisions and resist patronage politics

^[5] Ibid.

^[6] Bangsamoro Organic Law (RA No. 11054), provisions on political dynasties within BARMM.

Conclusion: Time to Reclaim the Constitution's Promise

The 1987 Constitution was born from a desire to end tyranny. Its failure to check political dynasties reveals the challenge of translating ideals into reality.

Without political courage and cultural evolution, the dream of equal access to public service will remain a distant ideal. Filipino democracy cannot thrive as long as family dynasties dominate the political scene.

If the Philippines wants to serve democracy a fresh lechon — not the same old leftovers — then reform is no longer optional. It is essential.

Author's Personal Note (Closing)

Returning to my lechon analogy: imagine if after decades of the same dish, you finally demand variety. You refuse to accept reheated leftovers disguised as fresh meals. That is the stance Filipinos must take toward political dynasties.

Our democracy cannot flourish on stale family recipes of power. It demands innovation, fresh ideas, and accountability — a menu change, if you will.

The Constitution gave us the recipe for a free and fair democracy. Now, it is up to us, the diners and chefs of this nation, to insist on a better feast. No more lechon reruns. Let's serve democracy the way it was meant to be — rich, flavorful, and available to all.

