Networks of Power:
Political Families, Elite Networks, and Democracy in Modern India

by

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Abstract

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Why do some political families flourish, and others decline quickly? While the presence of political families has been a long-standing feature of many countries, crucial questions about the nature of political succession and the underlying conditions that make it possible remain under-studied. This dissertation focuses on the aspects of the local political economy, and networks that control it, to propose a theory of dynastic perpetuation in India and elsewhere. Specifically, I argue that the diversification of economic resources and political power are key factors that determine the strength and longevity of political families. To test this theory, I map the familial connections of the winners and the runners-up from all elections held in Uttar Pradesh (India) between 1974 to 2019. The analysis shows that politicians from dominant castes and those with greater economic endowment are more likely to form successful political families. In addition to this, I take a closer look at dynamism within political families by classifying them into three distinct groups – families that have been in power for a long period of time, the old political families that have declined in power and status, and new and rising political families. I show that families that successfully diversify their political and economic portfolios are more likely to perpetuate themselves. This diversification strategy, which in part comes from the political family's access to local political economy networks, allows them to project influence even during electorally leaner periods. While most successful political families remain largely confined to their local constituencies, I show how some families manage to scale up their network and influence, while retaining their local power base, through a case study. Finally, I suggest that understanding the rise and decline of political families is key to reflecting on the changing nature of representative democracy in India and elsewhere. And as long as the local state remains beholden to the control of elite networks, political families are likely to flourish, under different guises.

To my Nani and Nana

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Acknowledgments

The pursuit of power is invariably also the pursuit of political perpetuation. This dissertation makes an attempt to understand the conditions that enable the perpetuation of political power. In other words, my aim has been to reflect on the very nature of how political power is accumulated and dispersed across generations. This obsession took a much longer time than anticipated or required. Many people have contributed to this intellectual journey and everyone has made it richer in their own way. I would like to acknowledge them here and offer my sincere gratitude.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Why do some political families flourish, and others decline quickly?[1] This dissertation focuses on aspects of local political economy and networks that control it to propose a theory of dynastic perpetuation in India and elsewhere. Specifically, I argue that the diversification of economic resources and political power are key factors that determine the strength and longevity of political families. These strategies mitigate the possibility of electoral loss and in the short run, provide sustenance to political families even when they are not in elected office. Diversification, in part, is enabled by superior access to a network of elites representing different verticals of the local political economy that some political families have. Political families that are better able to leverage these networks are at greater advantage. In contrast, politicians without family lineage, especially those without multiple terms in office, lack such networks. This is not to argue that access to networks of local power is sufficient to ensure endurance of a political family. Rather, access to such networks is necessary to diversify economic and political resources that helps in dynastic perpetuation.

Drawing on extensive fieldwork in four districts of Uttar Pradesh and an original dataset of 20,000 candidates running for political office in the state between 1974 and 2019, I argue that some political families operate like a cartel and tend to keep multiple political offices (across various levels) within the family, collude with bureaucratic agents, and oversee a large patronage network that has links with criminal entrepreneurs, contractors, and brokers. These powerful political families mediate the relationship between the state and society, shape the implementation of policies, and bend the administrative machinery in line with their interests. This dissertation on political dynasties is based on a rather modest assumption: while the reasons may vary, most politicians would like to pass on the baton

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[1]I prefer to use the term political family than political dynasty as the latter limits the definition to blood-ties only. Political families also draw on clan and kin relatives, who may not be direct descendants, to operate. Furthermore, in few instances, members of the same family contest against each other, while drawing on the same dynastic legacy. Nonetheless, I have used the term 'political dynasty' in some contexts; especially referring to the work of other scholars.

within their family. Politicians may be inclined to do so from a narrow self-interest perspective to conserve or enhance family reputation, to safeguard economic interests including rent-seeking behaviour, or to simply maintain political power. This could also be driven by more altruistic purposes where politicians believe that their family alone can best represent the community interests or certain policy positions. Either way, dynastic perpetuation in electoral democracies is not a question of desire, but rather about feasibility and the ability to do so.

The following chapter is divided into seven sections. Section two begins with the motivation to study political families in the Indian context. I suggest that the underlying aspects of the country's political class, such as the increasing role of wealth and criminality, along with the enduring control of dominant social groups have shaped the characteristic of political families in post-independence India. In section three, I present a brief case study of two political families from Gonda district in Uttar Pradesh to highlight how they have dominated the district politics for more than four decades. In section four, I discuss the complexity of defining a political family and outline the shortcomings in the current literature. I then present a brief description of the theoretical framework proposed in this dissertation in section five. In this section, I also present a brief summary of my proposed typology to illustrate the diversity within political families in India. Finally, I provide details regarding the data collection process in section six, the contribution of this dissertation in section seven and a brief outline of the chapters in section eight respectively.

1.2 Motivation

The prevalence of dynastic politics represents an idea antithetical to the values of representative democracies. This is because, at its heart, the democratic project is about decentralising power and distributing it, through suffrage, among the masses. Political families represent a modification of rule-by-elites (Michels 1915), where the real power rests with a small minority, and the majority is left without authority or agency. It is therefore easy to understand why these two ideas clash in terms of their core values. And yet, they often coexist, and even thrive individually. Recent scholarship has almost exclusively focused on the prevalence of dynastic politics and measuring its adverse effect. Political dynasticism creates a high cost of entry for ordinary citizens, incompatible with the first principle of equality of political opportunity, and thus skews political representation in favour of elites (Cheema et al. 2019, Querubin 2015). Studies have also demonstrated the negative consequences of dynastic politics on economic growth and corruption (George and Ponattu 2018, Tantri and Thota 2017, Mendoza et al. 2012).

The presence of political families has been a long-standing feature of many countries, both in established democracies of the Global North such as the United States (Dal Bo´ et al. 2009) and in consolidating democracies of the Global South such as Philippines (Mendoza et al. 2012) and India (Chandra 2016). In a recent study, Jalalzai and Rincker (2018) analyse the backgrounds of 1,029 presidents and prime ministers who held office between 2000 and

2017, and found that approximately 12 percent of all world leaders belonged to a political family[2] In some cases, the extent of dynasticism is abnormally high. For example, around 70 percent of the 15th Philippine Congress representatives are dynasts and in the 2010 elections, roughly 50 percent of the elected Congressmen and Governors had a relative who had previously held office. Similarly, in a detailed study of political families in Japan, Smith (2018) shows that since the 1996 general elections, more than a quarter of all Members of Parliament (MPs) in the Japanese House of Representatives have come from political families. The design and scale of political capture by powerful families in many consolidating democracies of South Asia are, however, altogether different. Here, the top leadership of most political parties comes from and stays within one family. Indeed, as Chhibber (2013) argues that organizationally weak parties are more likely to be dynastic and this is driven by the absence of supporting civil society organizations and centralized party finance.

Scholars have very recently begun to document the increasing presence of members of political families in India's Parliament and legislative assemblies (French 2011, Chandra 2016). According to one estimate, the number of dynasts elected to the current Lok Sabha (30%) is in fact higher than those elected between 2004 to 2014 (Verniers and Ammassari 2019). Furthermore, in a first-book length empirical treatment of this topic in the Indian context, Chandra (2016) and her collaborators suggest that a majority of these political families are not aristocratic but of recent lineage, emerging in the 1960s and afterward, and are adept at navigating the undercurrents of modern democratic politics.

Even as the presence of political families is receiving greater attention in comparative contexts, crucial questions about the nature of political succession and the underlying conditions that make it possible have remained under-studied. The motivation for this thesis lies in exploring these questions empirically. These questions, I suggest, are central to our understanding of representative politics in India and elsewhere. I analyse subterranean trends in Indian politics to argue that the rise of political families is not an isolated pattern, but rather part of a broader shift in the nature of the emerging political class in India. Dynasticism, wealth and criminality have increasingly become salient in elections and research has exhibited how these attributes privilege certain candidates against others (Sircar 2018, Vaishnav 2017) . I suggest that these trends are interconnected and this dissertation is an attempt to understand India's emerging political class (See Figure 1.1).[3]

First, the Indian parliament (Lok Sabha) has remained largely upper-caste dominated, in spite of caste-based quotas and greater political participation from non-dominant communities (Jaffrelot and Verniers 2020).[4] Second, the median wealth of Indian politicians

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[2]The authors use a broad definition of "political family" as having either blood or marital ties to someone already involved in politics, whether as a judge, party official, bureaucrat, lawmaker, president or activist.

[3]These trends surely have been noted by observers of Indian politics, albeit in isolation. Exceptions include Jaffrelot and Verniers (2020).

[4]Jensenius (2017) argues that political parties rarely nominate SC candidates from General seats in both parliamentary and assembly elections, which means that their share in the parliament has not moved after stabilising in the late 1990s.

has increased substantially in the last two decades.[5] Sircar (2018) has shown that as the wealth gap grows between the top two candidates in a constituency, the richer candidate has a higher probability of winning.[6] In the median case, the wealthier candidate is about 10 percentage points more likely to win than the poorer candidate. Money matters during elections, but not all-kinds of money can be utilised during election campaigns as there is a formal limit on expenditure. Bussell (2019), in a survey of politicians across India, asked what they thought was the most important source of funds for their peers in recent elections – both state and national legislators indicated that undeclared wealth or the funds gained through illegal means (both get colloquially referred as 'black money') were the most important source.

Third, economic wealth combined with the candidate's criminal record (both serious and non-serious) is giving rise to a new set of political actors, who have considerable influence in the local crime syndicates of their area. (Vaishnav 2017) studies the relationship between criminality and money in the context of Indian elections and shows that wealthy candidates with serious criminal charges have a higher chance of winning elections. Fourth, the number of MPs with business as a profession has also seen a significant increase. Wyatt and Sinha (2019) argues that while businessmen entered the parliament generally through the Rajya Sabha (the upper house) in the early days of economic liberalization in 1991, the Lok Sabha (the lower house) also has recently seen a marked increase in business representation. This penetration of business elites into active politics also underlines the growing influence of capital on politics. Finally, the proportion of MPs with dynastic connections is also on the rise. In fact, if one analyses the dynastic information about competitive candidates rather than just the winner, data which has not been collected previously, the proportion of dynastic candidates is significantly high.

The data presented in Figure 1.1 indicates a stable political class, albeit with a reasonable degree of circulation.[7] It would not be an exaggeration to claim that the ruling classes from the past continue to dominate India's social, political and economic life, and they do so by adapting to present-day structures, institutions and practices. Not all office holding families manage to create enduring political families - some fade away within a decade, while others manage to pass on their legacy advantage over multiple generations. However, as the analysis presented in this dissertation indicates, some of the character traits to become members of this class remain the same. It is not the innate leadership qualities that primarily distinguish descendants of persisting political families from other candidates , but the networks they have access to, which allow them to build on available resources and goodwill among the masses.

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[5]In the 2014 national election, candidates reported median wealth as approximately 27 times the nominal per capita income.

[6]Sircar's (2018) analysis focuses on moveable wealth, which are assets that can be quickly mobilised for campaign purposes, as opposed to immovable wealth (which consists mainly of fixed assets like real estate). Sircar shows that more than 80% of the value of moveable wealth is nested in four types of assets: jewellery, cash, deposits, and vehicles.

[7]The proportion of MPs winning re-nomination is declining and the number of MPs entering the parliament for the first time remains significantly high

Aided by their social position in society, economic wealth, and coercive and persuasive strengths, they are able to capture the state more thoroughly than short-lived political dynasties and preside over their family fiefdoms over generations.

In short, the objective of this dissertation is to study the causes behind successful and unsuccessful dynastic perpetuation and the variation in consolidation strategies employed by different political families. This in turn also depends on the motivation of elite networks controlling the local political economy [criminality, business, among others] in shaping the life-span of a particular political family. And these networks of reciprocity sustain each other (Rudd and Nielsen 2018). In the following section, I use a case study from Gonda district in Uttar Pradesh to draw attention to the dynamic nature of dynasties. This example illustrates why a frozen binary of non-dynasts versus dynasts can conceal the causes of enduring dynasticism. The Gonda case study also highlights how elites too occupy a precarious position vis-à-vis social power and must rely on continuously adapting to their immediate political and economic context to ensure dominance.

1.3   A Caste Study from Gonda, Uttar Pradesh

Gonda is one of the least developed districts of Uttar Pradesh with literacy rate around 58 percent.[8] Historically, the district was under a landlord-based land tenure system during the colonial era. [9] For more than forty years, the parliamentary constituency of Gonda has been won by members of two families – Kirti Vardhan Singh and Brijbhusan Saran Singh. And in this story, the political family headed by Vinod Singh (former MLA, and minister in the UP cabinet) is also present in the background. Kirti Vardhan is currently the fourth term MP representing Gonda parliamentary constituency, and Brijbhusan is the sixth term MP representing neighbouring Kaiserganj parliamentary constituency. The latter has also been the president of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) for more than a decade and was elected unopposed for the third time in 2019.

Kiriti Vardhan is the scion of Mankapur royal estate, and he is the fifth-generation representative of a powerful family which had direct influence in the district's politics even before independence. His great-great grandfather Raja Raghuraj Singh and great grandfather Raja Ambikeshwar Pratap Singh won elections for the provincial assembly (of the United Provinces) in 1920s and 1930s. Raja Ragavendra Pratap Singh, Kirti Vardhan's grandfather, was a member of the 1937 and 1946 provincial assembly (of the United Provinces). Post-independence, he was consecutively elected in 1951, 1957 and 1962 to the UP legislative assembly.[10] Writing about Raghavendra's influence in district politics, Paul Brass (1965,

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[8]Hindus are in a majority in the district and Muslims constitute approximately one-fifth of the population. The district has one parliamentary constituency and eight assembly segments.

[9]In the landlord-based arrangements, the landlords held the proprietary right to land, and were liable to pay revenue to the government. They received rents from the non-proprietary cultivators and were free to extract additional rent for the land. In the village-based arrangements, village bodies had joint ownership of the land and joint liability of the revenue.

[10]In 1960s, Raghvendra Pratap moved out of the Congress party and joined the Swatantra Party.

p.70) remarked: "No less than fourteen village panchayat presidents were personal employees of the Raja. Baldeo Singh, the manager of the Mankapur estate, is also the president of the Mankapur community development block, which includes over a hundred villages. The Raja himself was president of the Mankapur cooperative cane grower's union. Another source of strength was the Raja's alliance with nearby Gonda estate."

Kirti Vardhan's father, Anand Singh won the assembly elections in 1967 and 1969 as a candidate of the Congress party and entered the Lok Sabha by winning the Gonda parliamentary seat in 1971. Apart from the 1977 parliamentary elections, Anand Singh won this seat on three consecutive occasions in the 1980s. His hold over district politics was seriously challenged in the 1991 parliamentary elections by his long-time associate Brijbhushan Saran Singh. The latter defeated Anand Singh as a candidate of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) riding on the back of the Ram Temple movement.[11]

Brijbhushan was arrested in 1994 following charges of criminal links, his wife Ketaki Singh contested the 1996 elections against Anand Singh and secured victory. Since then, Anand Singh has relinquished the seat to his son Kirti Vardhan Singh who has won thrice and lost twice.[12] Brijbhushan Singh lost the 1998 elections but won in 1999. The BJP did not nominate him in 2004 and he left the party to join the Samajwadi Party (SP). He returned to the BJP before the 2014 elections and won the last two Lok Sabha elections from the neighbouring parliamentary constituency - Kaiserganj. Many interviewees confirmed that there is an informal political pact between the two families in which Brijbhusan and his family would not lay claim on the Gonda Parliamentary seat, and in return the Raja's family would support Brijbhusan and his kin in other elections.[13] In these years, Kirti Vardhan has swiftly changed parties in the last decade from SP to BSP to BJP in 2014. Now, both families are in the BJP.

The roots of rivalry between Anand Singh and Brijbhusan started in the late 1980s when the former had conspired behind the scenes to prevent the latter's political career from taking off.[14] In 1987, Brijbhusan Singh contested and won the election for the directorship of the district's sugarcane cooperative company. And the year after, he made an unsuccessful bid to become the block council president. Until then, Brijbhusan Singh and Vinod Singh's elder brother were close aides of Anand Singh. While Vinod Singh was from an economically well-off family, the owners of the largest wholesale food grains centre in the district, Brijbhusan worked as a partner with Vinod's brother in their contracting business and used to act as his enforcer due to his strongman image. The duo used to also work as construction contractors, mostly tendered by the government to build local roads, small bridges, repair government buildings among others. It should be noted that these individuals were from the same caste

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[11]Gonda is not very far from Ayodhya, the epicentre of Ram Temple movement in 1980s and 1990s. See Van der Veer (1994) on the agitation to build a Hindu temple in Ayodhya.

[12]Anand Singh had contested the legislative elections as a SP nominee in 2012 and was a minister in the UP government.

[13]Interview with a Journalist in Lucknow, May 2018

[14]Many interviewees (May 2018, Gonda) confirmed that on several occasions Anand Singh blocked Brijbhusan Singh's bid to become a politician.

(Rajput). And it was no secret that they were being awarded such tenders largely due to Anand Singh's largesse.

While Anand Singh continues to hold large amounts of agricultural land running in thousands of acres with investments in several real-estate projects including hotels, my interviewees informed me that his political power was on a decline in the 1980s. In the previous decade, he not only used to have sway on most assembly segments in Gonda district (playing a role in candidate nominations as well as determining who wins or loses), but also in the neighbouring Balrampur district. The emerging vacuum led to Brijbhusan Singh and Vinod Singh charting out their own political trajectories. They fell out in 1991 following the murder of Brijbhushan's brother in a clash over a government contract. In alleged retaliation, Vinod Singh was shot nineteen times outside his home in 1993, but he survived. However, his elder brother was murdered in the following year. Brijbhusan has been listed as the main accused for both episodes. After that, Vinod Singh who already held a position in the district unit of Samajwadi Party strengthened his political position by winning the Gonda assembly seat for consecutive elections. He was appointed as a minister in the UP government in 2004 and then again in 2012. Apart from the family's food grain business, they now own two petrol pumps, a hotel which is named after his slain brother and a rice mill in the district. The family also runs a number of educational institutions - intermediate colleges, degree colleges, a pharmacy college, an engineering college, a management college - under the KRS group, named after his father. Similarly, Brijbhusan Singh has created a sprawling business empire in construction and real estate, over the years. He also owns 54 educational institutes in Gonda, Balrampur, Bahraich, Faizabad and Shravasti districts.

In 2009, Vinod Singh made an unsuccessful bid for the Gonda parliamentary seat against Kirti Vardhan Singh, and in the 2014 general elections, he unsuccessfully contested against Brijbhushan in Kaiserganj. In the 2015 local elections, he managed to get his daughter-in-law elected as the district council president, and two other family members as Block Council presidents. In the 2017 assembly elections, Brijbhushan's son becaame MLA on a BJP ticket, while Vinod Singh and his nephew lost their respective seats. With the BJP coming to power in Uttar Pradesh, Vinod Singh and his family resigned from all local government posts, and Brijbhusan's family members were elected to those posts after few months.

The differences in the origins of these two families from Gonda are significant, yet there is some similarities in the strategies deployed to consolidate power, i.e., political and economic diversification. The case study also highlights that neither the loss in power nor its acquisition happen overnight, it is a slow process which simultaneously plays out across various domains that exhibit power. Taking a cue from the differences in origin and growth of these two families, I discuss the various types of political families dotting the landscape.

1.4 The Complexity of Defining a Political Family

Though seemingly straightforward, there is no unanimous definition of a political family in the scholarly literature. Some earlier studies on political families (or dynasties) deployed

a very restrictive definition.[15] For example, Hess (1966) posits a political dynasty as "any family that has had at least four members, in the same name, elected to federal office." Similarly, Dal Bó et al. (2009) define political dynasty as those from a family that had previously placed a member in Congress.[16] Feinstein (2010), however, expands the meaning of office from Congress only, to governor and U.S. senator as well. The latter definitions became more all-encompassing such as that proposed by Querubin (2015), who defines a political dynasty as one or a small number of families who dominate the power distribution in a particular geographic area.[17] Asako et al. (2015) define a political dynasty simply as a group of politicians who inherit public office from one of their family members who occupied the office previously. In the same vein, Thompson (2012) describes political dynasties as another type of direct and indirect political power transition involving family members.

More recently, Smith (2018), in an important contribution to a comparative work on political dynasties, defines a *legacy candidate* as any candidate for national office who is related by blood or marriage to a politician who had previously served in a national legislative or executive office in Japan. If a legacy candidate is elected, he or she becomes a legacy MP (Member of Parliament) and creates a *democratic dynasty*, which is defined as any family that has supplied two or more members to national-level political office. In the Indian case, Chandra (2016) defines a politician as dynastic if he or she is preceded by a family member who was active in politics.[18] What unites these diverse works is a focus on defining 'political dynasties' in terms of direct-blood relations. While this may appear to be necessary to define 'dynasties', in a more practical sense, political families are networks of local power that go beyond blood-ties and may encompass clan or kin-ship relations rooted in mutual benefit. These networks of cooperation are often extended to broader ethnic lines such as caste-community, business associations and even rent-seeking operations.

Building on this scholarly literature, I define a political family as one which has at least two members in active politics, and its members are related by blood or marriage. The term active politics has a broad connotation here: both members should have either contested an election or occupied an important position in a party organisation in their life-time. The election or party position has to be for a post at the sub-district level (administrative block) or above. And the political party should be recognised at the state level.

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[15]Clubok et al. (1969, p. 1040) use sons, grandsons, nephews, brothers, or first cousins as examples of familial relationship, thus restricting the definition of a political dynasty to male politicians only.

[16]Rossi (2009) uses a similar framework.

[17]In an earlier work, Querubin (2013) defines a dynastic politician as someone who has family members who served as a member of Congress or Governor prior to the election.

[18]Chandra further defines each of the terms. Family members have to be related by "blood" or "marriage". The term "active in politics" could mean holding office in any elected political body, being nominated by a party as a candidate for election to any office, or holding a formal position in the party organisation. An "elected political body" would include the Lok Sabha/ Vidhan Sabha/local level elected bodies, or indirectly elected bodies such as the Rajya Sabha/Legislative Council/indirectly elected post at the local level.

Typology of Political Families

As mentioned above, the scholarly focus of the literature on political dynasties has been on individuals (dynasts), rather than on families and their networks. It has largely dealt in binaries of being a dynast or a non-dynast, rather than outlining the complexities within the former category. And thus there is an inherent assumption that the origin and route of dynastic formation, as well as power and influence of different political families remain equal across cases and over time. I argue that in defining political dynasties, the scholarship has not given attention to specific details that account for much internal diversity among political families. Much of the diversity is caused by two important factors: their origin and the growth. Between how a family starts and who succeeds and carries forwards the legacy, we can witness a wide variety of differently successful families. The typology presented in Figure 1.2 is based on how succession in a political family takes pace – mode of succession (blood-line, marriage, or protégé), time of succession (simultaneous entry, immediately after retirement or demise, or after along gap), and the site of succession (same constituency, neighbouring constituency, or non-adjacent constituency). While the centrality of resource control and the importance of diversification remains paramount for political families, the origin and succession path play a crucial role in determining the expansion (and depth) of a family's influence.

First, political families spread their wings in multiple ways and by definition are based on kinship. The most common form of relationship, therefore, is that of blood.[19] These include members from both the paternal and maternal sides of the family as well as cousins once or even twice removed. It could be within the same generation (for example, husbands, wives, brothers), of the next generations (children, grandsons/daughters, sons/daughters-in-law, nephews, nieces, cousins) and sometimes even the previous generation (father, uncle). The line of political succession in most societies is often traced through paternal lineage. However, in some cases marriage also becomes an important way to chart a course of a political family. Similarly, if there are too many claimants aiming to succeed the patriarch or matriarch of the political family, in-fighting over succession does create ruptures, and leads to the formation of two (or more) different political families despite the same lineage.

Second, the literature on dynastic politics does not fully account for the variation in time when the second member (or the additional members) of the family enters active politics. In some cases, there is simultaneous emergence of different members of the family in the political arena or at least the second member enters politics when the patriarch is still politically active and oversees the spread of the family network to different levels of politics.[20] Though the influence of the patriarch (or matriarch) is significant, day to day management of affairs is

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[19]There are however notable exceptions, such as in cases where the patriarch choses the successor and they are not related by blood. This kind of disciple based succession though rare is not uncommon. For example, the current Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath is also the head priest of the Gorakhnath temple trust, and he carries on the legacy of this tradition.

[20]Such as the Mulayam Singh Yadav family in Uttar Pradesh, the Karunanidhi family in Tamil Nadu and the Badals of Punjab.

delegated to different members of the family and they together control a considerable part of the empire. In most cases, even when the family loses an election here or there, they still manage to hold on to power in their local strongholds. Another common type of political family is one in which the succession often occurs only post the death or retirement of the erstwhile patriarch. Finally, in certain cases, the entry of subsequent members happens after a long gap of the patriarch's retirement or demise in which the interim period is marked by low political activity. Such families have typically seen a break in succession where a generation has stayed away from active politics.[21] Though their extent of power and influence is severely limited due to the significant period of political wilderness, such families can still enjoy name recognition due to their legacy.

Third, in some cases the members of a political family continue to hold on to the power in the same constituency (or district) over generations, and in other cases, they may simultaneously hold more than one seat either neighbouring or in non-adjacent constituencies. The election level may of course differ, it could be at the level of the Lok Sabha or Vidhan Sabha, or both. I suggest that the formative years of the first member's political journey are of great significance as they play a critical role in creating the initial resource endowment (political, social and economic) and influence over power networks that descendants can build upon. Political families manage to enhance their reputation and power if they get identified with any big social or political cause in their region. For example, if a member of apolitical family rises in the ranks to become a state-level or national-level leader within the party organisation or acquires an executive position in the government, then it brings access to a greater network. Such political families can leverage these networks to further enhance their political and economic position, like more resources to disburse patronage. Additionally, if the family member is seen as a leader of the caste or community interest or a leader of the region – much wider than the local assembly or parliamentary segment the founder represented-then it also manages to create greater political legitimacy for itself.

I use the analytical framework discussed above to categorise political families into three groups: some political families may have been very powerful in the first few decades after independence, but either their power and influence have waned considerably or the family is longer active in politics. These could be termed as *declining families*. Further, some families became politically active in the last two-three decades and are either maintaining or increasing their area of influence. These could be termed as *rising families*. Finally, some families have remained politically active since independence. While their influence may have slightly increased or decreased over time, but they still carry considerable political clout in their area. And these could be termed as *stable families*. In the case study from Gonda, Brijbhusan Singh depicts a rising political family, and Kirti Vardhan Singh depicts a stable political family.[22] While we did not discuss an example of a declining political family

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[21]The family of India's former prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri is the prime example of such a break in continuation.

[22]In mere statistical or definitional terms, Vinod Singh's family fulfills the criteria of a political family. The members of the family have been elected to the district and block council, and the nephew contested the 2017 assembly election.

in section 3, there are a couple of political families in Gonda who are no longer active in politics. For example, the Dutt-Pandey family, another family of royal lineage, and with much larger estate than Kirti Vardhan's family, contested elections in the 1960s and 1970s, but went to political oblivion. In fact, according to some of my interviewees in Gonda, the Dutt-Pandey family propped up Brijbhushan Singh to challenge Kirti Vardhan's family.

In the following section, I provide a brief overview of the theoretical framework of this dissertation.

1.5 Political Perpetuation: A Theoretical Framework

Because a majority of the research on the subject of dynastic politics presupposes the existence of strong blood ties, it tends to excessively focus on distinguishing the individual characteristics of a dynast from a non-dynast. For instance, Hess (1996) looked at family politics in the United States to argue that most of the prominent dynasties share a more-or-less common background that might be considered the 'best butter' in American politics: 'old stock, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, professional, Eastern seaboard, well to do'. The underlying assumption of such 'brand name advantage' theories has been that the family name serves as assurance of candidate's performance and accountability among the voters. And, if holding political office brings greater economic wealth, then it is not surprising that the members of political families naturally want to follow the career path of their predecessors, especially in societies where kinship networks are a primary channel for elite selection and recruitment.[23]

These analyses conflated two different outcomes - dynastic succession and electoral success - and assumes that the former causes the latter, thus establishing that some families are just more electable and appealing for voters. Dal Bó et. al. (2009), however, reject the idea that dynastic persistence is a reflection of innate family characteristics (or the "best butter" argument) and find that the probability of a dynasty formation increases with the length of time a founding member holds office. They argue that political families (or dynasties) are more likely to form when the (potential) founding member succeeds in building up what is likely to be a greater incumbency advantage, i.e., "power-treatment effect". For them, holding office for several terms should not necessarily affect the innate personal characteristics of a politician's child or other close relatives, but it most certainly increases his or her political connections, familiarity with election campaigns and the policy making process, and name recognition.

Recently, scholars have also begun accounting for the inherent institutional conditions that influence dynasty formation and perpetuation in competitive polities. Smith (2018) argued that the "power-treatment effect explanation" is too simplistic given the considerable variation in the presence of dynasties across time, countries and political parties. He argues that this variation is best explained by institutional structures that affect the demand for dynastic politicians within parties. First, electoral systems that generate incentives for

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[23]Kurtz (1989) argues that "politics has become something of a 'family business'."

candidate-centred (rather than party-centred) vote choice may increase the relative value of a dynastic candidate's name recognition and other resources, both for voters and for party actors involved in candidate selection. Second, in parties where the candidate selection process is decentralised to local party actors, dynastic candidates may be more advantaged in securing the nomination. This is because they possess closer ties to local party actors, but also because local actors may prioritise local connections whereas party leaders at the national level may take a more diverse approach to candidate selection. Furthermore, scholars have suggested that the failure of political parties in establishing democratic intra-party selection and promotion mechanisms has provided fertile ground for dynastic politicians to dominate the decision making within the party organization, including candidate selection and promotions within the organization.[24]

Political Families as the Central Node of Local Power Network

It is clear from the research cited above that there is inherent complexity in tracing the beginning of what appears to be a circular process: powerful elites acquire more political power, which then gives them further authority and elite status. A way around this complexity is to see political families and their successors less in terms of individual politicians, and more in terms of an organised unit, as networks of local power structures. Even within this network not all families are equally successful or similarly adept at ensuring succession. I argue that the strategies which lead to diversification and multiplication of power, both economic and political, are key factors that determine the strength and longevity of political families. Multiplication of power comes from inducting different family members and loyalists in local institutions, especially the ones which are related to or control the economic activity in the region. Diversification, just like in business, is essential in politics so that families are able to capitalise on changing economic activities in the region and also continue to maintain control over resources (and influence decision-making) even after electoral losses. What enables locally dominant families to enact both strategies is their access to elite networks. Such access to networks could be gained through multiple ways and helps in overcoming political and bureaucratic hurdles. Importantly, in many cases, these networks create a powerful springboard from which political families get launched and sustain influence.

The thrust of this dissertation is not on the prevalence of a political families in a given system, as this limits the scope of research to the mere formation of such families, and does not get into the nuances of why some families manages to successfully perpetuate power and influence. The key to understanding the mechanism by which a dynastic machine perpetuates itself is to first understand the power networks that undergird the local political economy. These local power networks are composed of different levels of cross-cutting grids of local bureaucrats, contractors, brokers and politicians that are tied together in a relationship of patronage. These networks are both horizontal and vertical- smaller horizontal networks

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[24]See, for example, research by Chhibber (2013) and Chandra (2016) in India; Harjanto (2011) in Indonesia; and Amundsen (2013) in Bangladesh.

(such as business associations, youth organisation) are tied together to bigger networks by vertical networks (such as party organisation, caste associations).

At the intersection of these networks lies the dynastic machine. All the power nodes connected to this machine are often loose and de-centralised, and hence possess a substantial degree of autonomy. It is also inherently unstable because it is to subject to centrifugal pulls from these horizontal and vertical networks. The extent of the influence of political dynasties over these numerous power networks is a function of the social capital that these families manage to accumulate over time. Since the purpose of this machine is to withstand electoral losses (by preventing the desertion of power networks from the machine), political families mitigate such risks by creating mutual trust and reciprocity among network members. This means, in effect, using kinship networks to place close family members at strategic points at the intersection of these power networks, so that they will keep these networks bound to the dynastic machine.

I argue that this proposed political economy approach also expands on previous studies that discuss the role of elites in controlling state resources in India. Anyone who has travelled across rural India and interacted with local elites can quickly piece together a story of how modern-day political empires are created and operate in the country. Rosenthal (1977) in an influential study of Kolhapur and Pune districts in Maharashtra, showed how a relatively small segment, which he called "the expansive elite", made disproportionate gains from critical state policies in areas of agricultural investment, educational opportunity, and rural local government. Not much has changed in Maharashtra's rural political economy since, as elaborate networks of family-run enterprises still occupy important positions that forms the backbone of Maratha dominance in state politics (Palshikar and Deshpande 2021; Anderson et al. 2015).[25] For example, in his study of India's new capitalists, Damodaran (2012) underscores how the sugar cooperatives network in Maharashtra blends into the political networks. The sugar cooperatives of Maharashtra, Damodaran writes, are 'self-governing republics headed by powerful chieftains' who follow dynastic lineages and are deeply immersed in local politics. "Every sugar mill is the leaven for a host of other cooperative enterprises: from dairies, consumer and lift irrigation societies, to banks, schools, and medical and engineering colleges. Each of these constitutes a giant empire, associated with a particular cooperative baron nominally elected by the farmer-members of that area (Damodaran 2012, p. 218).

While the local economic activities that undergird the power network may differ, they are commonplace across India's rural landscape. Several rounds of fieldwork in four different districts of Uttar Pradesh between 2014 and 2018 suggest that the phenomenon of "expansive elites" has deep parallels in the state. I argue that political families often operate like a cartel maintained by few powerful elites, who are generally from dominant castes, tend

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[25]For many decades now, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar's family has presided over this vast, byzantine network of local elite collusion across rural Maharashtra, creating a political equivalent of the gilded age, consisting of political barons and impenetrable areas of influence. The family slowly moved to the top of this network. Pawar's father was instrumental in setting up of cooperative sugar mills in Baramati region and his mother was elected to the district local board in pre-Independence India.

to keep political offices (across various levels) within the family, collude with bureaucratic agents, and oversee a large patronage network that has links with criminal entrepreneurs, contractors, and brokers. These powerful political families mediate the relationship between the state and the society, shape the implementation of policies, and bend the administrative machinery in line with their interests. As Paul Brass has noted in a different context, "local power cannot persist without control over or influence in government institutions" (Brass 1984, 334). By capturing local institutions, and leveraging social divisions, these political families firmly established themselves in networks of power and created formidable barriers to entry for people from ordinary backgrounds in the electoral process. These political families also managed to corner enough state resources, through legitimate or extra-legal methods, with the help of a network of contractors and local strongmen (Gupta 1995, Witsoe 2013). This surplus becomes the source of local power, and within the party organisation, while also allowing family members to successfully petition party leaders for contesting tickets. Because traditional social elites (read land owning dominant castes) often already have such business and criminal networks at their disposal, they are more likely to be successful as political families. For others, who need to begin from scratch, the lack of initial social capital can create restrictions for dynastic perpetuation over generations.

1.6   Data and Measurement

The dissertation uses primary data collected from the state of Uttar Pradesh. The state is by far the largest in India and is home to about 200 million people; if it were an independent country, UP would be ranked amongst the top ten in the world in terms of population size, but in the bottom ten in terms of per capita income. It also happens to be the second poorest state with the second lowest life expectancy (Kopf and Varathan 2017). In electoral terms, UP sends the highest number of lawmakers to both the houses of the national parliament (80) and elects a huge number of legislators (403) to the state assembly.[26] The presence of multiple political parties makes UP a hard case to test for dynastic persistence. If there are multiple parties competing for power, it is likely to create more opportunities for candidates with non-political-family background to get nominations to contest elections. First, UP politics is highly competitive with narrow victory margins and high aggregate electoral volatility. Since political families rely on regular re-election, their performance in the state's politics would clarify the nature of competitiveness of dynasts vis-à-vis non-dynasts in a dynamic setting. Second, the state has prominent 'backward' caste parties, whose performance can shed light on the elite nature of political families.

    With help from a team of research assistants, I collected primary data in the form of social, economic and political information about all elected positions in UP for all three levels of electoral representation– high (MPs and MLAs), middle (District Council Presidents and Mayors of Municipal Corporations), and lower (Block Council Presidents and Chairpersons of Urban Local Bodies). The dataset comprised all the winners and first runners-up for the

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[26]The state is divided into 75 districts and over 800 sub-districts or blocks.

Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly elections from 1974 onwards and the local body representatives since 1995. We incorporated a standard verification approach to ascertain veracity of the data collected about these candidates. During the 2015 panchayat elections, the UP state election commission had uploaded the phone numbers of all contesting candidates and we used these numbers to make telephone calls to collect information on the political history of their area and social, economic and political background of the above mentioned elected officials. In addition to this, the team members also cross-checked the same information with local journalists. At least three rounds of such calls were undertaken for each entry in the data set. This allowed for a three-way verification, where each unique entry is verified thrice, by different researchers.[27]

The final dataset includes winners and runners-up in the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections from the year 1974 to 2019, and the winners in local body elections between 1995 and 2015. The UP political family dataset contains approximately 19000 observations (11550 for Assembly Elections and General Elections, and 7400 observations for local body elections). Most previous work on political dynasties does not incorporate the simultaneous occupation of different electoral positions by family members. In contrast, our dataset includes all elected positions in Uttar Pradesh, which helps in identifying the spread and depth of political families across five decades. The dataset also allows us to identify legacy advantages by clarifying the year and position of the preceding and succeeding family members. For example, if A and B are related and A precedes B in active politics, A should have contested at the same level or higher to pass on legacy advantages to B.

There are 1138 political families identified in the UP political families dataset, and among them 729 families contest only in local body elections. In this dissertation, I operationalise the definition of the political family of which at least two members have occupied top two positions either at the assembly or parliamentary constituency level. This criteria yield us 322 political families. The second shortcoming in the literature is that it treats all political families as equal. Along with the election-level variable, the time-variant component allows us to trace when a particular family is not appearing in the dataset for a considerable duration of time, or when a new family appears on the scene. We further categorise these 322 political families into three - declining, stable and rising – and discuss them in detail in chapter 4.

In addition to this primary data, I make use of other datasets to test the proposed theory. The data set on politicians curated by Trivedi Centre for Political Data (TCPD) at Ashoka University provides crucial background dynastic information on all candidates for the 2019 election at the all India level. I expanded this dataset with our own research to include all information on any candidate with more than five percent vote share for the 2009 and 2014 elections as well. More than 18000 candidates contested in the past three Lok Sabha elections, and approximately 4300 won more than five percent votes. We also combine this dataset with other information on candidate's personal background from the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR) and election related information from TCPD. For UP in

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[27]Only in very few cases, were we required to reach out to more than three sources

particular, we have aggregated all dynast level information of local level candidates, including asset ownership, criminal record, businesses, party affiliation, among others. Additionally, we used the National Election Studies (NES) conducted by the Lokniti-CSDS and the ADR-Daksh 2014 survey to understand voter motivation to choose a dynastic candidate, brand recognition, and performance appraisal of candidates.

1.7 Scope Condition and Contributions

Despite such a wide coverage, it is possible that due to the lack of credible information on individual candidates many political families do not find a place in this dataset. Similarly, there could also be under-reporting of political families if one member of the family is either in the upper house of the parliament (Rajya Sabha) or legislative council. Another limitation of this dataset is that it covers the information regarding economic diversification in a single snapshot rather than over-time.

Theoretically, this dissertation builds and contributes to the literature on political elites and their familial connections. It synthesizes information on dynasticism with wealth and criminality. Further, it adds to our understanding about local networks of power and control over local institutions. Empirically, it makes several contributions to the study of political dynasties. First, as mentioned above, the dataset covers over five decades of information about political candidates in Uttar Pradesh at multiple levels. The data presented in Figure 1.3 shows the increasing presence of MLAs with political family backgrounds. Second, the information on dynasticism is not limited to the winner, but also includes the runner-up. Figure 1.4 reports the proportion of candidates with dynastic ties at the top two positions. This is important as our analysis suggests that for every dynastic winner, there were almost an equal number of runners-up with dynastic ties. Third, we show that the prevalence of dynasticism is greater in higher-level elections such as national elections. The data presented in Figure 1.5 shows that the proportion of winners with familial connections in local body elections is similar to that of assembly elections.

Fourth, we expanded the scope of collecting information about political family connections for all competitive candidates (i.e. greater than five percent vote share) in more recent elections. This allows us to empirically tests the advantages a candidate with dynastic lineage enjoys over others – such as in party nomination, campaign finance, mobilizational capacity, among others. Fifth, as the dataset captures political family connections over fifty years, we can examine how the power of political families vary over time. Previous research on the subject has not explored this area and has remained largely limited to the prevalence of dynasticism. I suggest that understanding the rise and decline of political families is key to reflecting on the changing nature of representative democracy in India and elsewhere.

1.8   Overview of the Dissertation

In chapter two, I lay out the main theoretical framework of this dissertation to explain the prevalence of modern-day dynasties in competitive polities along with reviewing alternate explanations. Three strands of research are of particular interest to us. The first, a cultural essentialist approach, argues that societies which place high value onto familial kinship bonds tend to be more tolerant of dynastic succession in politics. This explanation finds Indian politics to be largely driven by traditional, as opposed to modern democratic values. The second explanation looks at the political socialisation of dynasts to suggest that they are better placed at delivering public expectations because of their legacy advantage. This advantage inculcates an aptitude for political survival and inures them from momentary setbacks, thus ensuring longer careers in active politics. A third strand of research looks at underlying political contexts, such as party organisation, to argue that the strength of internal party democracy, decentralised control and local level presence dictates the level of dynastic perpetuation that party outfits would allow. I argue that these explanations do not satisfactorily explain the main question this dissertation seeks to answer: why do certain political families succeed in dynastic perpetuation and others fail?

Chapter three describes how successful political families differ vis-à-vis non-families in the UP dataset – the number of elected members representing the family at various points of time, the average life span of the political family, social background, their economic and political resources, among other things. I then estimate a multi-variate model to determine the factors that separate successful political families from unsuccessful ones. I find that in particular, political economy factors such as resource endowment and access to networks that help in economic and political diversification, matter. In chapter four, I exclusively focus on the 322 political families to understand their stability and demise. The analysis suggests that initial resource endowment (for example, agricultural land) is correlated with access to networks (economic and political diversification). Building on the "circulation of elites" framework, we categorise these families into three groups - declining, stable, and rising. I show that even in a multi-variate setting, economic and political diversification are main drivers of dynastic perpetuation.

Chapter five uses three case studies from Saharanpur district to provide a birds-eye-view on how some political families were not able to cope with the pressure of democratic politics and thus ultimately fall into political irrelevance. The chapter makes an attempt to establish the underlying mechanism of dynastic perpetuation – control over the local political economy network. It also focuses on the question of how do some political families manage to revive themselves after a period of declining fortunes. Chapter six dwells on a detailed profile of Samajwadi Party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav (MSY) and his family. Using extensive insights gathered from multiple rounds of fieldwork in Uttar Pradesh and analysis of media reports, the chapter deals with MSY's initial journey into politics, the roots of power accumulation using through the vast Yadav clan and the strategies of consolidating their hold over the region. The case study of MSY's family helps in outlining how some families manage to scale their power from the local to the regional and the national-level. In

some ways, the story of the Yadav clan is instructive of how dynastic empires are built in electoral democracies. Finally, the conclusion presents a summary of the arguments made in this dissertation. It also reflects on the normative debate on the prevalence and perpetuation of political families in a democratic setting. As perpetuation of political families is aided by networks of local power dominating state institutions, the chapter concludes on rather a pessimistic note.

Figure 1.1: Indian Parliamentarian and their Characteristics
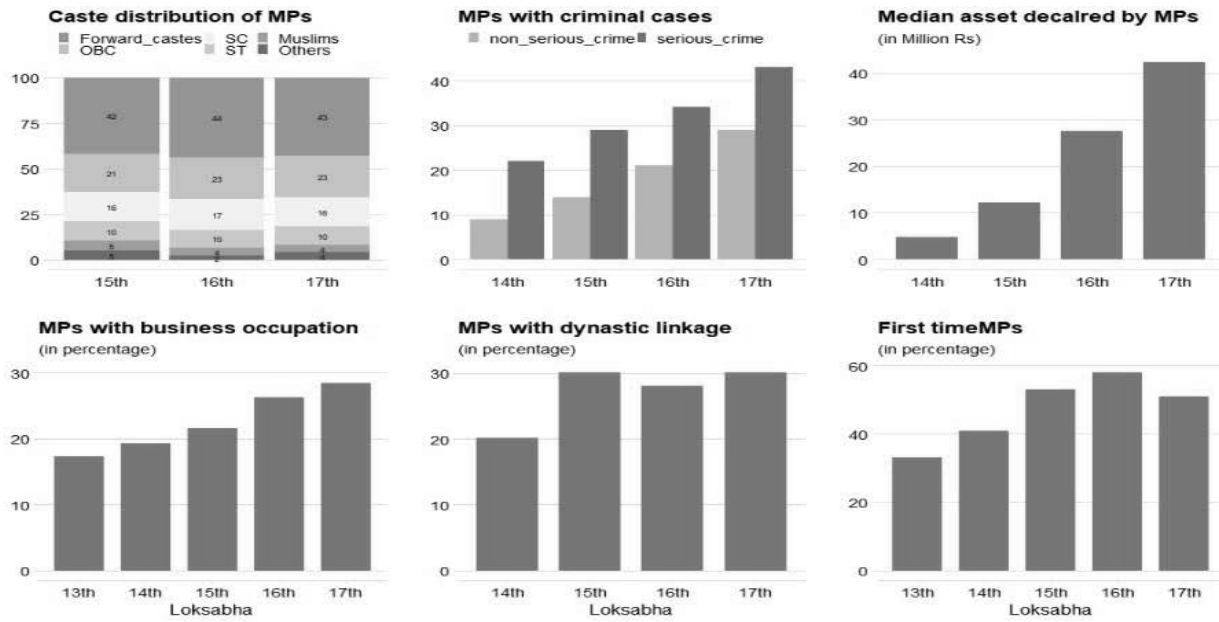
Source: Jaffrelot and Vernier (2020), Wyatt and Sinha (2019), Chandra (2016)

Figure 1.2: Typology of Political Families
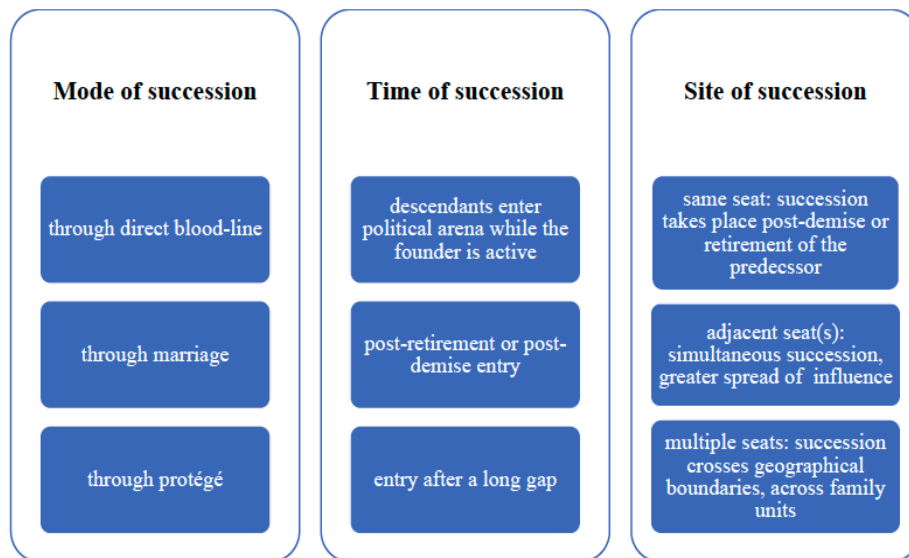
Source: Author's Conceptualisation

Figure 1.3: Increasing Presence of MLAs with Family Linkages in the UP Assembly
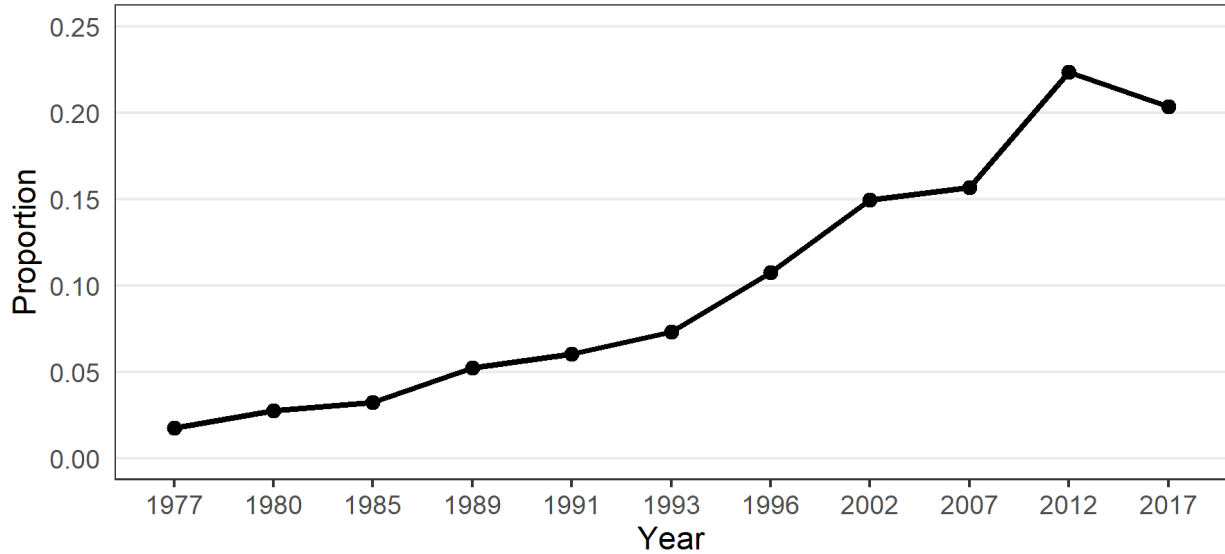
Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Figure 1.4: The Proportion of Candidates with Family Linkages in Uttar Pradesh
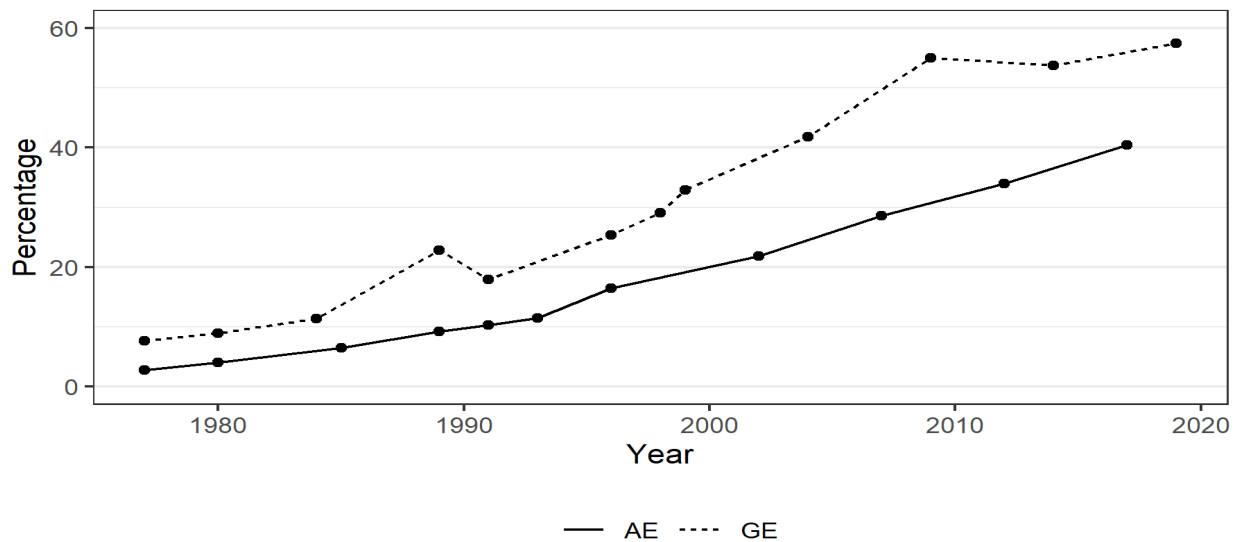
Note: AE = Assembly Election, GE = General Election
Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Figure 1.5: The Proportion of Winners with Family Linkage in Local Body Elections

Rural local bodies

Urban local bodies
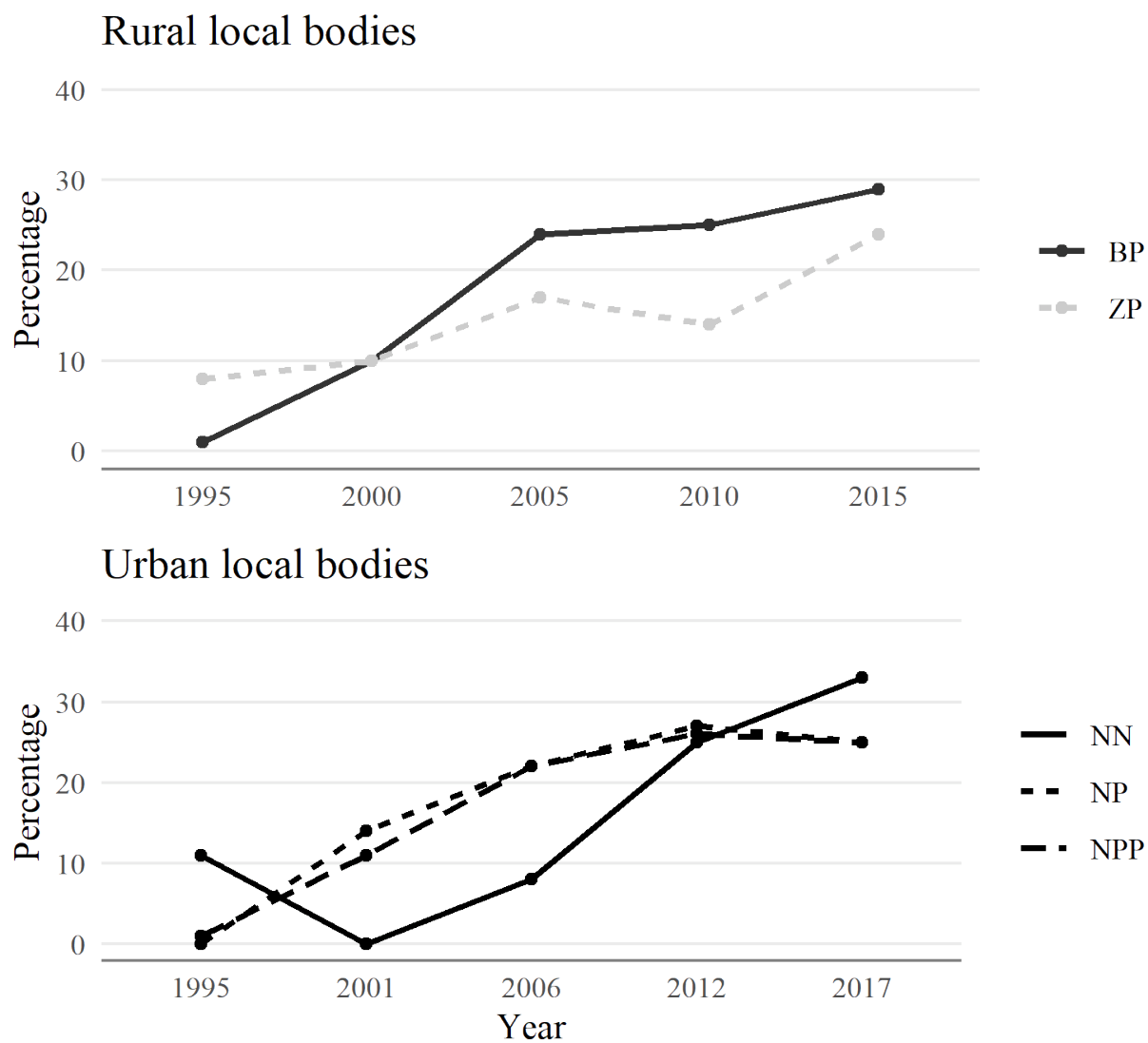
Note: BP = Block Panchayat, ZP = Zilla Panchayat, NN =Nagar Nigam, NP = Nagar Panchayat, NPP = Nagar Palika Parishad.
Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Chapter 2

Networks of Power and Political Perpetuation: A Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

Elections in India are competitive, barriers to entry in politics are low, turnover of elected representatives at every level remain high, and yet political dynasties continue to flourish across the country. The emerging research has focused much more on either the extent of political dynasticism or its economic consequences. While both these aspects are important, these are only part of the story, as our understanding regarding the causes of dynastic perpetuation remains rather limited. There is a dearth of research examining political families as a standalone, self-perpetuating organic institution located in a certain political economy. I argue that to better understand the 'why' of political dynasties (or families), we need a clearer picture of the 'what' and the 'how': what are political dynasties, and how do they function? In other words, the answers to why some families succeed in Indian politics and elsewhere should, at least in part, flow from a unit level analysis of how individual political families persist.

What are the organisational structures and internal mechanisms of political families? Much like a successful firm, a successful political family is one which stands the test of time. Why do some political families fail to last while others succeed in the long run? What goes into the successful perpetuation of a political dynasty? This framework would not only lead us towards a better understanding of the functioning of political dynasties, but through these lenses, we will also be able to develop a more nuanced account of its causes and consequences.

Before proceeding to the discussion of the theoretical framework and mechanisms of dynastic perpetuation, it is important to highlight that a common strand in the existing study of political dynasties (or families) is the implicit adoption of a macro-level framework. Broadly speaking, the available scholarship argues that dynasts flourish due to institutional or or-

ganisational reasons such as formal electoral regulations, the nature of political parties and
state presence. Amongst these, the low level of party institutionalisation has been argued as
the primary reason for the proliferation of political dynasties in the Indian case (Smith 2018,
Chhibber 2013, Chandra 2016). On the other hand, some scholars have emphasized inherent
charisma or pedigree advantages of legacy politicians or cultural demands (of traditional
societies) born out of structural factors such as poverty and underdevelopment (Mendoza et.
al. 2013). These approaches do provide us with several interesting insights but are limited to
focusing on the prevalence of political families rather than explaining the difference between
successful and unsuccessful political families. In contrast, I adopt a micro-level framework,
focused on the internal structures and mechanisms of political families, and how they relate
to the local political economy. In this framework, the function of a political family is simply
the reproduction of its own social, political, and economic power.

In the rest of the chapter, I first engage with the socio-cultural explanations such as the
remnants of feudal societies or pedigree advantages that members of political families may
possess. I show that neither the explanations rooted in political culture, nor those about
heirs of political dynasties having better pedigree in terms of charisma or other leadership
qualities explain dynastic perpetuation. Similarly, there is very thin evidence in support
of legacy candidates having a positive effect on economic development, providing greater
constituency service to voters, or providing clientelistic benefits, or perform better as legis-
lators. I then discuss the arguments rooted in formal political institutions such as a weak
state, party organisations, and electoral rules. I show that while the existing explanations
contribute immensely to our understanding about the prevalence of political dynasties, they
fail to explain the variation among them. Finally, I present a political economy approach to
highlight the underlying causes of dynastic perpetuation. I show that political families are
representative of local networks of power, and the intra-elite competition within and across
these networks plays a crucial role in determining the longevity of a political family.

2.2 Cultural Traits and the Pedigree Advantages of Political Families

While institutional explanations have received greater attention in recent research on politi-
cal dynasties, early studies focused on factors such as political culture and brand recognition.
I argue that neither the prevalence of political families in India, nor their perpetuation, is
due to demand among voters. Instead, it is largely a function of cooperation (or compe-
tition) among the networks that shapes the local political economy. The network of these
non-political elites aims to make windfall gains through such political connections, and the
dynastic route ensures smoother transactions. With political families, these elites have a
more established pattern of communication and deal-making.

Political Culture

A common stereotype about traditional societies, such as India, insists that dynasticism is ingrained in the country's political culture. Some have suggested that the feudal characteristic of Indian society accentuates the role of the moral obligation associated with kinship ties. This implies that family members are bound by strict social norms of interpersonal loyalty that act as a safeguard against sabotage. In a politically competitive landscape, it makes sense for political families to work towards maximizing their electoral gains by appointing loyalists in positions from where future challengers could emerge. If the threat to incumbents was lesser, they would have no reason for spreading their influence out by inducting family members into politics. Thus, the importance of family-lineage and the 'naturalness' of dynastic politics in a patrilineal caste-based society such as India cannot be understated.

While candidates with dynastic lineage may have intuitive appeal, the actual evidence to justify such arguments is weak. Using data from the National Election Studies (NES) conducted by Lokniti-CSDS, I find low support for dynasticism among voters. In the NES 2009, voters were asked whether they think it is democratic or undemocratic if an MLA dies and the party nominates his son or daughter to contest in his place. While forty percent expressed no opinion on the question, a similarly high proportion found such accession to be undemocratic. In fact, only one in five respondents found this proposition democratic. In another survey conducted by the same organisation, respondents were presented with two statements.[1] The first statement read, "Just as there is nothing wrong with doctors' children becoming doctors and actors' children becoming actors, similarly there is nothing wrong with political parties giving tickets to children of political leaders", and the second statement, "Doctors' children may become doctors and actors' children may become actors', but it is not right for political parties to follow the same example and give tickets to children of political leaders." Most respondents agreed with the second statement and around a quarter with the first statement. This evidence thus goes against the kinship-centred model of politics proposed by cultural essentialist theories. While family does play an important role in Indian society, this does not imply that public behaviour, and especially political behaviour, will be determined entirely by familial ethos. The real reason for dynastic prevalence might thus lie elsewhere.

Brand-Recognition

Another set of compelling explanations on the question of dynastic succession in politics focuses on name or brand recognition which simply means that the family's name becomes a credible brands and the successors inherit legacy advantages associated with the family (Rossi 2014). Brand-recognition can be broadly grouped under two categories, based on the candidate characteristic that they focus on: those studies which focus on individual traits such as charisma, leadership ability and likeability of leaders, and studies which focus on the performance of candidates on common parameters of governance.

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[1]Lokniti-KAS Youth in Indian Politics Study, 2011.

Charismatic Appeal

Some scholars have suggested that growing up in close proximity to political affairs on an everyday basis gives dynasts an advantage by familiarizing them with political life early on. Clubok and Wilenski (1969) find the political advantage presented by early socialisation to be conducive 'to the internalization of political values, awareness, understanding and motivation'. Similarly, Hess (1966) indicates that candidates with family lineage tend to have higher charismatic appeal among voters. While members of political families do have certain advantages, there is scant evidence of public's perception of their likeability or greater name recall. In a national tracker poll conducted by Lokniti-CSDS, when respondents were asked if they could correctly name their Member of Parliament (MP), there was statistically no difference between dynasts and non-dynasts. Fifty eight percent respondents in sampled constituencies with a lineage parliamentarian recalled their MP's name correctly, while for the non-lineage MPs, the figure was 57 percent.

Similarly, we find no evidence of greater connect between these lineage parliamentarians and their electorate. The pre-poll survey conducted by Lokniti-CSDS in 2014 asked respondents how often their MP visited their locality in the last five years. The data presented in Table 2.1 shows there is no difference between dynasts and non-dynasts in this regard. These findings are in line with Bohlken and Chandra (2016) who argue that there is no demonstrable difference between individual characteristics of dynasts and non-dynasts.

Performance as Legislators

A second strand of research in this domain analyses the performance of elected dynasts in office and indicates that their success could be attributed to their superior performance whilst in office (Besley and Reynal-Queirol 2017). Recent evidence however, is more inclined to suggest the negative consequences of succession (Asako et al. 2015, Tantri and Thota 2017, George and Ponattu 2018). Furthermore, Chandra (2016) shows that dynast politicians are not likely to be superior in performance to their non-dynast counterparts. The analysis of available data on measuring MP performance, such as the utilisation of constituency-development funds (MPLADS), or their performance in the parliament, on the contrary suggests that the performance of dynast politicians is poorer. Not only is their MPLADs utilisation lower, but they are also less likely to attend the parliament or ask questions or participate in debates.

However, it is possible that voters' might have a more positive perception of their performance on other indicators. To test the public perception of dynasts' performance, we use available survey data from multiple sources. An analysis of the ADR-Daksh survey on the performance MPs indicates that dynasts consistently lagged behind non-dynasts in all performance parameters (See Figure 2.1).[2] Similarly, Lokniti-CSDS data indicates that voters

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[2]The Daksh-ADR survey was conducted in 2014 across 535 constituencies and had a sample of more than 2.5 lakh voters. Respondents were asked what the constituents most pressing concerns was and how well their representative perform in those areas. They are ranked from 1 to 3 where one means bad and

are less satisfied with the performance of the MPs with dynastic lineage.

Power-Treatment Effect

Scholars have suggested that there are positive effects of holding office and it helps a political family to perpetuate itself. For example, they may hold on to power through manipulation of the electoral process (such as candidate selection). Furthermore, holding office for several terms increases the political family's connections, familiarity with election campaigns and the policy-making process, and name recognition. Dal Bó et al. (2009), find that the probability of political persistence of family increased with the length of time a founding member held office in the US Congress. And Feinstein (2010) finds that the resource advantages possessed by members of dynasties give them substantial electoral advantages over other candidates. The basic conclusion, as Dal Bó et al. (2009, p.115) put it, is that 'power begets power'.

This power-treatment effect of incumbency advantage has since been replicated at either the national or local level in Argentina (Rossi, 2016), Brazil (Bragança et al. 2015), and the Philippines (Querubin 2016). Yet, using very similar research designs in the United Kingdom (Van Coppenolle, 2017) and Norway (Fiva and Smith 2018), the authors did not find conclusive results. In fact, Smith (2018) argued that the "power-treatment effect explanation" is too simplistic given the considerable variation in the presence of dynasties across time, countries, and political parties. I suggest that while the intent of "power-treatment" hypothesis is in the right direction, it simply overlooks the mechanisms that help some founders of political families to begin a more enduring legacy than others – making their family the central node of the political economy network. Furthermore, this hypothesis overlooks another important dimension of political families. Many of these families do not just "pass down" the legacy from one generation to another, but they also expand horizontally within the same generation – brother, sister, wife, sister-in-law, among others. Chandra (2016) points out that most MPs with dynastic ties in the Lok Sabha have family members who are concurrently active in politics (59 percent in 2004 and 53 percent in 2009).

The discussion above suggests that while members of political families do carry some legacy advantages, they are no more likely to perform better as legislators. So why do they find it easier to win party nominations or elections? In the next section, I closely scrutinize the role of formal political institutions before presenting my theoretical framework in section four.

2.3 Formal Institutions and Political Families

Recent scholarship has focused on formal political institutions and their role in creating a conducive environment for political families to thrive . In the Indian case, while the

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three means good. Apart a composite index of these two was also created, which is rated out of 10.The data we accessed has around 480 unique constituencies and we have been able to match 405 constituencies from the survey data to our dynasty data. For all India analysis we used the 2009 GE file where we have collected information regarding the dynast status from secondary resources.

state capacity as well as economic indicators vary drastically, the evidence to suggest their role in shaping the variation in the prevalence of political families has not been adequately explored. Furthermore, the electoral rules by and large (except local body positions) remain same across the country. Similarly, most political parties in India remain weakly organised, and the evidence on their linkage with dynasticism, remains mixed.

Weak State Presence

It has been argued that weak state presence creates space for political dynasties to access careers in politics, which are eminently more lucrative due to high returns from the office, legal or otherwise. The kickbacks are often illegal, such as endemic corruption in state dealings, but even the fully legal forms of emoluments proffered to politicians are quite desirable. In this sense, the prevalence of political families has much to do with the economic resources of the state and its inefficiency in safeguarding or distributing them. However, there are limitations to expanding this argument to explain the mechanisms of such perpetuation.

First, taking advantage of weak state presence does not specifically avail itself to political families alone. Any elected representative can corner state resources given the endemic corruption, low supervision, and lack of clear conflict-of-interest guidelines. The presence of political families might heighten the possibilities of such activities, but the literature on the mechanisms that allow incumbents with dynastic lineage to intervene in state functions more than non-dynastic incumbents, is rather thin. In fact, if state capacity limitations were substantially contributing to formation of political families, every incumbent would have at least another generation in active politics. This is clearly not the case as the majority of incumbents themselves fail to get re-elected, leave alone ensuring dynastic succession.

Relatedly, one might expect poorer areas with limited institutional and resource endowment to exhibit a greater propensity for electing dynasts. Mendoza et. al. (2013) in their study of Philippines find a positive correlation between the prevalence of political dynasties and the incidence of poverty. However, the results on this front remain mixed as it is difficult to establish a cause-effect relationship. It is possible that poorer regions tends to elect political dynasties, or political dynasties create hurdles in the economic advancement of the area. Jensenius (2016) finds that the socio-economic backwardness of a constituency generally does not determine whether it elects a dynastic MP or not. The only exception to this is erstwhile royal dynasts, but it is yet undetermined whether poverty in such 'royal' constituencies is a cause of or an outcome of electing dynasts. Regardless, these findings further my argument that weaker state capacity does not fully account for context-diverse political dynasties in the country.

Finally, if weak state presence fuelled incumbent advantage, elections would not be as competitive and electoral volatility would be lower. More candidates would surely vie for elected positions because they are lucrative, but very few would succeed as they would not be able to challenge incumbents. The reality, we know, is different. Representatives routinely lose elections, and the gap between the runner-up and the winner is often competitively close (Nooruddin and Chhibber 2008). Monetary kickbacks and non-monetary favours are

lineage-agnostic. Incumbents in power tend to acquire outsized influence, especially in areas
where state presence itself is weak. In such situations, elected representatives become a
conduit between the public and stretched bureaucracy (Berenschot 2015). Such influence
allows politicians to often surpass legal restraints and indulge in activities that are likely to be
termed as criminal by law. There is, however, no substantial link between criminal candidates
and political dynasties. As Chandra (2016) too finds, dynasts are no more likely to have
serious criminal charges against them. In fact, the case study presented in the introduction
highlights an important feature of political dynasticism and its relationship with criminality.
Kirti Vardhan's family at one time had the likes of Brijbhushan Singh as their associates,
with the latter having begun his political career with the tag of a being a strongman. On
the other hand, Brijbhushan's wife (former MP) or son (current MLA) are less likely to
have direct cases registered against them but are more likely to benefit from his strongman
image. Furthermore, though dynasts are on average wealthier, it does not conclusively
link a predilection for dynastic perpetuation to direct criminal extraction. Kickbacks from
incumbency appear to be uniformly distributed across both kinds of politicians – with and
without criminal records against them.

The discussion above suggests that, while weak state presence may facilitate prevalence
of political families, it fails to explain why a family in the same weak state presence context
succeeds in perpetuating itself, but others fail. More importantly, the causal relationship
between the two remains ambiguous - political families may be a by-product of the weak
state capacity, but it also possible that the presence of such families leads to erosion in the
autonomy of state institutions. These families maintain their power and influence through
networks of local power that are often immersed in local institutions, and they are likely to
undermine the development of state capacity.

Electoral Rules and Barriers to Political Entry

Recent research on the subject suggests that entry barriers might induce greater dynastic
succession. Such barriers can in be in the form of formal restrictions to widespread electoral
participation, or they can be put in place because of competition for ticket distribution within
the party. Legacy candidates, while lacking in certain qualities themselves, might increase
the bar for other candidates competing with them (Smith 2018, Gulzar 2021). Furthermore,
with the help of their family networks, legacy candidates are likely to contribute towards
reducing electoral competition and creating barriers for the entry of other candidates (Cruz,
Labonne and Querubin 2017).

Insights from such studies cannot easily be transmuted to the Indian context. For one,
there exist no formal barriers to entry other than that of a minimum age of 25 years.[3]
Furthermore, constituencies contested by dynastic candidates are not significantly less com-

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[3]Upon filing nominations, candidates are also required to submit a lock-in security deposit amount that
they would lose if they received less than one-sixth of the total votes. This measure however has done little
to depress participation. Number of candidates contesting in elections has grown substantially since the
1960s.

petitive than constituencies where such candidates are not present. Chandra, Bohlken and Chauchard (2014) calculate winning margins for parliamentary constituencies between 2004 to 2014 and do not find a stable trend between the margins of dynasts and non-dynast winners. These findings suggest that electorally at least, barriers to entry forced by dynastic candidates do not seem to have a significant effect on competition. In the Indian context, where formal entry barriers are negligible, dynastic succession does not substantially alter the number of people contesting elections. While it is true that dynastic leaders tend to be younger, implying an easier party nomination, it doesn't inure them from electoral uncertainties. Scholarship on legacy advantages which primarily deals with a candidate-centred system tends to overestimate the importance of the 'family name'. Evidence from Norway suggests that merely the election of a previous family member does not predict electoral success for relatives (Fiva and Smith, 2018). Rather, the success of legacy candidates depends a lot on what their predecessors did while being in office (or active politics).

Nevertheless, the effect of dynasticism on reducing traditional barriers for certain groups is also note-worthy. For example, Querubín (2011) finds that term limits in the Philippines do not stop the perpetuation of dynasties—rather, they allow them to spread because politicians tend to seek higher office and get their relatives elected to their previous positions. Labonne et al. (2019) in his study on the effect of term limits on female representation in Philippines notes that such limits had an overall positive effect on representation. This is because once male members exhausted their three-term limit, they included female members as family representatives in politics. Interestingly, Mendoza et al. (2020) show that it is the institutionalisation of term limits without a full-reform agenda, that creates possibilities for dynastic perpetuation. Research from India also indicates higher probability for female representatives to be dynastic, giving further evidence that in some cases, political dynasties reduce traditional participation barriers (Basu 2016).

Also, it is possible that as elections in India are extremely costly and the opaque campaign finance laws tend to create advantages for wealthy candidates. Furthermore, as legacy candidates, they are likely to inherit a network of patrons in the party hierarchy along with a network of mobilisers on the ground. And these two factors, increase the probability of a legacy candidate for getting party nominations to contest elections (even when they lose their initial elections). Similarly, though there is a formal limit on expenditure, political families tend to overwhelm their rivals in campaign spending. While we do not have data on campaign spending patterns for all candidates, elected MLAs to the UP 2017 assembly were asked to submit their expenditure report. Only half of the non-family MLAs reported information, and among family politicians this ratio was closer to two-thirds. The data presented in Figure 2.2 reports official campaign spending and there is no difference between the two groups.

Electoral rules do matter in giving advantages to certain kinds of politicians. In India, the electoral rules remain uniform across the geography. It is possible that these set of rules facilitate rise of political families, but it does not explain the variation in both their prevalence across states, and perpetuation in a particular geographic context.

Weak Party Organisations and Dynastic Advantage

It has been noted in the past that political parties within a country exhibit a similar level of dynasticism. For example, Mendoza et al. (2012) finds that the four largest parties in the 15th Philippine Congress were equally dynastic, while Dal Bó et al. (2009) shows that levels of dynasticism in the Democratic and Republican Parties in the United States have been similar since the 1860s. In the Indian case, scholars have argued that the poor organisational strength of political parties ensure easier accession to power among certain families (Chandra 2016, Chhibber 2013, Ziegfeld 2016). While Chandra argues that political families often act as substitutes for weak party organizations at the local level, Chhibber's focuses more on political parties that are dynastic in nature. For Chhibber, weak party organisations create conditions in which the party leader can easily promote a family relative to be the successor and centralize party finance.

Why do political parties nominate dynastic candidates? Chandra (2016) argues that political parties and politicians are both acting as rational agents in their quest for stability and maximum returns. Dynastic politics, in her formulation, is then just a rational decision taken by politicians and political parties to get maximum returns in India's "patronage democracy". Parties support dynastic politics to dissuade internal conflicts and 'defection' of party members to rival parties. Furthermore, in some cases, Chandra argues that the nomination of family politicians helps political parties in strengthening local organisational ties. And thus, Chandra and her collaborators suggest that weakly-organised political parties tend to be more dynastic than organised parties. While there is no doubt that weak institutionalisation of Indian political parties is indeed an important reason for the prevalence of political dynasties in India, this factor doesn't explain the questions the dissertation seeks to answer.

First, while the proportion of MPs with family ties have been increasing in the Indian parliament, my analysis of candidate-level information among serious competitors (received greater than 5 percent votes) in the last three Lok Sabha elections indicates that a large portion of party nominees are non-dynastic candidates (approximately 75 percent). Furthermore, an increase in the number of dynasts may increase factionalism within the party, thereby threatening the stability of the existing equilibrium (Chhibber, Jensenius and Suryanarayan, 2014). Since dynasts have their own "brand value recognition", separate from that of the party brand, there is little incentive for parties to repeatedly select dynasts (Feinstein 2010). However, parties are also pre-occupied with short-term gains and thus nomination of candidates with family lineage adds no greater value unless they have a high ex-ante probability of winning, making this a trade-off between balancing factionalism and maximising winnability.

Second, the discussion around organisational weakness argues that political parties with absence of internal rules and codes of behaviour are more susceptible to dynastic endorsement. However, political parties don't function in a similar fashion across time and space, and nor does the strategy of a political party remain constant. While there is a consensus that political parties respond to dynamic circumstances, and that party strategy is malleable

to the extent that it maximises electoral gains, the lack of scholarly work on party nominations in the past three decades suggest that our theorisation on the subject stands on thin ground (Ziegfeld, 2016; Farooqui and Sridharan, 2014). And thus, our understanding of how political parties contribute to the game of dynastic succession is severely limited. Based on my conversations with several dozen politicians in the national capital (Delhi), in the state capital (Lucknow) and in four districts of Uttar Pradesh between 2016 and 2019, I developed a hierarchy of norms that most parties follow during candidate nomination.

Formal mechanisms: The presence of a selection committee in most political parties at the time of elections ensures that prospective candidates can at least present their case before a set of party elites. The party district committees are often asked to send a list of probable candidates and thus these committees can even become opportunities for parading intra-party support and local clout. Local units often implode with workers' protests when their leader is surpassed in the nomination process.[4]. Increasingly, more parties are using independent feedback mechanisms to collect information. They hire political consultants to gather information on winnable candidates in each constituency. While it may be a matter of debate on how much these considerations matter in final nominations, the importance of these exercises cannot be underestimated. For example, prior to the 2018 assembly elections in Rajasthan, the BJP state and central unit were engaged in a public battle of ticket negotiations Thus, even with a strong organisational and administrative system in place, ticket distribution can be a fervently contested space.

Informal mechanisms: Indian political parties are weakly organised and closeness to party elites can help candidates in securing nominations during elections.[5] Given that party decision-making is the purview of a small coterie of elites, it is difficult for unadulterated information about the ground level to reach to them. In such a situation, the importance of close ties with the gatekeepers for ticket distribution gets amplified (Vaishnav, 2017). It has been argued that since top party leaders are not fully aware of each prospective candidate's credentials, they are more likely to favour those candidates who are closer to them. Ziegfeld (2016) suggests that dynasts can find it easier to get tickets because of their association with party elites - "When a single leader or a very small number of leaders are the gatekeepers to ticket allocation, then dynastic politicians are likely to have a considerable advantage over other aspirants". This situation is more precarious in parties with a less clear organisational hierarchy and centralised leadership- such as regional parties or even the Congress. However, it is still true to a lesser degree for other parties like the BJP or CPI(M).

Both these mechanisms rely on certain indicators or norms to nominate candidates, and legacy advantage, I argue, is only one of the criteria. Parties want to maximise their chances of winning, and therefore select candidates who have a greater ex-ante probability of securing

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[4]For example, see this news item on defections from the BJP to Congress. There are allusions to defections from these negotiations being one of the causes of the BJP's defeat in the state. ¡https://www.thequint.com/voices/opinion/bjp-rajasthan-ticket-distribution-defection-congress-camp.¿

[5]"Leaders like as much control over their parties as possible. They like to set agendas, select candidates that are beholden to them, and maintain themselves in power" (Mehta 2001).

victory.[6] Since the ex-ante probability of winning a dynastic candidate is high, it is not
surprising that political parties re-nominate them. However, their re-nomination is rather a
function of other attributes as research suggests that the wealth, education, and criminality
lead to greater electability (Vaishnav 2017, Sircar 2018).[7] Furthermore, elections are a costly
affair, and some wealthy contestants, through out-sized contributions to party coffers help
subsidise campaign costs of others, and find it easier to gain nominations. As Vaishnav
(2017) points out, "If party leaders can sell party tickets to the highest bidder, then they
can create new sources of revenue for themselves and the party". Some political parties are
more prone to this phenomenon, for example the BSP.[8] However, this practice is much more
common across parties (Elliot 2012).[9] I argue that these features of the Indian electoral
system are largely aimed at gathering greater resources to contest elections, both in terms of
bringing complimentary social groups to vote for the coalition as well as campaign finance
and manpower, and these factors put political families in more advantageous position.[10]

Third, political parties in most political systems are tied to specific social groups –
caste, class, region, among others. Through careful social engineering, political parties strive
to stitch specific social coalitions both at the macro and micro level.[11] Given the social
diversity in terms of *jatis* and castes and their geographical dispersion, each constituency can
represent a unique caste combination. To maximise winnability, political parties often collect
very detailed information on constituencies (Jha 2017, Singh 2019). Thus, it is important
for a prospective candidate to have a prominent position in the community they seek to
represent. Dynastic candidates have the advantage of already being known by voters, and
therefore locally rooted dynastic MPs have a big advantage in re-nomination as compared
to dynastic MPs who contest from another seat (Chandra 2016).[12] However, candidates

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[6]An important caveat here. My interviews with senior politicians also suggest that sometimes party
leaders know that their chances of winning in a constituency are very low, and thus they would prefer saving
resources (money and workers) and obliging a politician or a family.

[7]Analysing re-nomination and winning probability of candidates in 2009 and 2014 Lok Sabha elections,
Sircar (2018) found that winnability indeed is an important criterion for candidate selection. In turn, re-
nomination of candidates is also affected by their wealth, education levels and the criminal record.

[8]"In the BSP, the nomination process is centrally about money and candidates are expected to 'buy' their
nominations by making contributions to the party, to be paid personally to the leader, Kumari Mayawati.
The process begins with potential candidates approaching [local party] coordinators...with initial payments
for sending their names up to Mayawati. They then have to make direct payments to be considered for the
nomination." (Farooqui and Sridharan 2014).

[9]Similar allegations were also made against the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Delhi elections. The
allegations were made most prominently by ex-Badarpur MLA ND Sharma. The AAP lost this seat to RS
Biduri, BJP.

[10]Elliot (2012) shows how parties during the 2009 state assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh balance
expectations of unselected candidates through promises of future political rewards; and how defectors are
awarded in opposition parties through ticket distribution, often even leading to large scale resentment and
expulsions

[11]Party nominations are also impacted by coalition arrangements between parties as well as political
defections from other parties (Kailash 2014).

[12]Among dynastic MPs, those MPs who were preceded by a family member in the same seat – what we
call "locally rooted" MPs – were more likely to be renominated than dynastic MPs who were preceded by a

who rise through the party ranks also have significant name recognition and can appear to have as much on-ground goodwill, especially among party elites and workers. In some cases, working up the ladder is the only way to get noticed among the electorate, and can create enough winnability perceptions for party leaders to notice such candidates. While dynasts don't have to necessarily rise through the ranks, most candidates and aspirants still must establish their roots locally. A survey of MLAs across India in the early 1990s found that approximately half of those sampled had held positions in their party before running as an MLA, one-third reported having been active in student politics, and 41 percent reported having held positions in the village-level elections. Only one among ten respondents said that they contested MLA election with no previous political background (Chopra 1996, cited in (Jensenius, 2017).

Fourth, it has been found that some ethnic groups tend to have greater prevalence of dynasticism because of the relative power that their factions can pull in their respective parties. For instance, in the Indian case, prevalence of upper caste political families is much more common than the lower castes political families. The party-centric explanation however runs into serious trouble when one considers the rate of dynasticism among Muslims in India. Chandra (2016) indicates that in 20 percent, 30 percent, and 22 percent of the MPs who were elected in 2004, 2009, and 2014, respectively, were dynasts. If we consider only the Muslim MPs, 26 percent, 36 percent, and 32 percent among them were dynasts in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Lok Sabha, respectively. This is surprising given most political parties in India do not have adequate representation of Muslim politicians. In fact, Muslim candidate nomination remains abysmally low across parties (Jaffrelot 2010). Furthermore, given their low representation across parties, it is difficult for Muslim politicians in most parties to force their way in candidate nomination or promotions.[13] Arguably then, the cause of dynastic concentration amongst Muslims, must be located beyond the power-bloc hypothesis.

The variation in proportion of political dynasties across different communities, I argue, is a function of their wealth and access to networks of local power that creates strong conditions for political dynasties to flourish inside political parties. The risk aversion tendency in parties makes them keen to continue to endorse such candidates who have a higher ex-ante probability of winning. This explains why while Muslim candidates overall find less nominations, those who do, have a lot of locally relevant influence to ensure dynastic succession.

2.4 Alternate Approach: Elite Networks and Cooperation with Political Families

This dissertation presents an alternative theoretical framework; political families are a federation of networks of power designed for the reproduction of social, economic, and political power. The nature of formal and informal power vested in the elected office in India puts

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family member active in politics but not as an MP from the same seat: (Chandra 2016)

[13]The exceptions could include political parties such as the AIMIM, AIUDF or IUML.

politicians at a greater advantage over other elites. Thus, political families sit at the intersection of competing networks of power and exercise their control over the local political economy through them. These networks are spread through the local bureaucracy, business associations, civil society (such as lawyers, journalists, youth associations), strongmen and criminal entrepreneurs, among others and constitutes the infrastructure of local power over which political families flourish.

In this section, I argue that the demand for political dynasties is rooted in networks of elite cooperation at the local level. These networks, my fieldwork suggests, work asymmetrically in favour of dominant castes. In defining the 'dominant caste', we largely follow MN Srinivas (1987) who characterised it based on three features: numerical preponderance, economic resources, and high ritual status. While the third feature denoting ritualised hierarchy has somewhat waned in importance as middle castes have increasingly asserted their position in certain parts of the country, the first two features are central to this framework. Further, whereas in Srinivas's conception, economic resources could be used almost interchangeably with control of land, in the complex local political economy of today, dominant castes vie to control more lucrative businesses such as government contracts, agricultural co-operatives, local money lending operations, hotels, cold storages, petrol pumps, educational institutions, among others.

A dominant caste politician can easily get embedded within the local bureaucratic, coercive, and economic structures, which in turn provide the politician with excess resources that can be channelled for legacy perpetuation. Furthermore, such networks create opportunities for risk mitigation, which provides indemnity against temporary electoral losses. Why do these networks cooperate with or prefer political families? As Ruud and Nielsen (2018) argue, dynasticism as a political project is embedded in a network of trust. A political family holds together such networks in which trust is built on long-term relationships. For the authors, trust is a conduit through which effect is created in the opaque world of politics and decision-making. For all kinds of local-level actors, the cross-cutting political economy network of their own caste or based on kinship relations turns out to be the safest and most trustworthy option. The political family acts as the patron-in-chief and protects the activities of network members from the state as well as their rivals.

The Dynastic Machine: a Network of Local Elites

Political power at the local level can be envisaged as a competition for the control of numerous small and large cross cutting networks. These networks, in aggregate, run the local political economy. A political family operates like a unit, a loose federation of networks composed of constituents having well defined roles, often glued together through kinship, and well-suited to fulfil that role.[14] In the heyday of the Congress system, local power was distributed through a closed, rigid, and hierarchical network, on top of which rested the big

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[14]An important caveat here - family ties are double-edged swords. While family members sometimes operate as cohesive units, disputes (often related to inheritance of property or sharing of legacy) also puts them at odds with each other.

landowner politician - who distributed patronage among his dependents in the bureaucracy, local notables, and poorer constituents. In the following decades, this hierarchical system of patronage became obsolete as political competition increased, economic systems diversified, the population size of constituencies expanded, and increasing income began to give rise to a thicker layer of elites.

In this more complex economic and political landscape, political dynasties arose as the optimal power network, a well-oiled political machine geared towards reproducing power. Each political dynasty is a coalition of local elites — bureaucrats, power brokers, businessmen, contractors, and criminals — headed by a family patriarch or matriarch. The role of the head of the political family in this complex network is threefold: to provide legal protection to constituents, to resolve disputes between constituents, and to provide legitimacy to the network as the figurehead. Beyond these limited roles, the head of the family does not oversee the everyday functioning of the power network, whose constituents look after their domains autonomously.

It must also be noted that a power network is an assortment of different levels of interlocking networks. Each level of the state institutional architecture sustains an attached ecosystem of patronage networks. For instance, the development funds for rural development schemes are provided to the gram panchayat. A rudimentary network of a few low-level contractors, bureaucrats and politicians would invariably emerge to control these funds. In case of block panchayats and district panchayats, the funds involved are even higher, and hence the networks attached also become larger. These networks are both horizontally and vertically connected. In horizontal networks, there is an allocation of financial resources between the various components of the networks operating at the same level. In the vertical networks, money flows upwards in exchange for patronage. Vertical networks are of two kinds: one, larger networks which are connected to an array of smaller networks; and two, guild-like networks composed of individual components of the machine. For instance, the bigger criminals provide protection to lower-level criminals, and the bigger bureaucrats provide protection to smaller bureaucrats.

The Sequence of Dynastic Perpetuation

The object of the dynastic machine is to reproduce its political and economic power. A successful family achieves this by diversifying its political and economic portfolio. The two aspects are mutually reinforcing. The diversification of the political portfolio entails the spreading of family members in key elected offices. Why is this important to the perpetuation of political dynasties? If the dynastic machine can be understood as a firm, the capital of the firm is the extent of control over the numerous power networks, which we can term as dynastic capital. The higher the capital, the higher are the excess revenues of the dynastic machine.

The first element that goes into the formation of a successful dynastic machine is the initial endowments of a political entrepreneur (See Figure 2.3). The initial endowment includes two components: wealth (attained through land holdings or business), and social

status (such as being member of a local dominant caste, or a privileged position in society like royalty). This initial endowment gives access to local power networks for the political entrepreneur.[15] But this federation of power networks is an inherently unstable entity. Since these networks are fluid and amorphous, it is difficult to tie them together with a central point of authority. At any given point, there are multiple network components operating in a particular constituency. They can organise themselves into smaller networks at the operational level but amalgamate into bigger power networks in line with their economic and security interest.

The purpose of diversifying political portfolios is to exert control over these networks. This is done by placing trusted family members at strategic positions of intersection within both horizontal and vertical networks, to exert control over them. The inner circle of political families, bound together by ties of kinship, are crucial because they can provide the focal points for the numerous smaller networks. A clan member holding a key position at the level of the block or village can oversee the network of bureaucrats, criminals, and businessmen operating at that level. Thus, these kinship networks interspersing various power network constrain the autonomy of these networks and ensure their loyalty. If the dynastic capital is expanding - adding more power networks to the machine or at least holding on to its existing power networks - the dynasty will succeed in perpetuating itself.

Inter-Network Competition: A Theory of Dynastic Stability and Decline

Why do some political families decline while others continue to prosper? As described above, the political families sit at the intersection of cross-cutting power networks. The primary role of the dynast in this arrangement is to provide an enabling security umbrella that allows for the smooth functioning of these networks. Aside from this, the dynast as the figurehead regulates economic and political competition between the networks, provides a forum for dispute resolution, and lends legitimacy to these networks. There is a high degree of competition within and across both horizontal networks and vertical networks. Across networks, there is competition to outmanoeuvre rival networks or move up the ladder of patronage networks. Within networks, highly motivated individuals compete for control over the network. The dynastic machine is meant to regulate this competition and ensure continuous allegiance.

The different horizontal and vertical power networks, as well as the components within the power networks have considerable agency. These power networks, as well as the components within them, concede some part of their autonomy to the dynastic machine, subjecting themselves to certain informal norms, to maximise their economic and security interest as rational actors. Each horizontal network is a firm, with its costs and revenues, bound to the dynastic machine in a political arrangement. If a network believes that in a different

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[15]It is important to underline the ability to stitch and maintain a network coalition also in part depends on political skill.

political arrangement it can minimize its costs (in terms of kickbacks above) or maximise its revenues (through more lucrative business opportunities), it will attempt to break from the dynastic machine.

The decline of political families is preceded by the loss of control over these patronage networks. And it can happen in two ways: weakness in peripheries and weakness at the centre. In the first case, the dynastic machine becomes shallow, as smaller horizontal networks become autonomous and are no longer tied to the dynastic machine through vertical networks. This can happen when the electoral offices of the kinship networks do not extend (or no longer extend) to the lower level of government- gram panchayats, block councils or district councils (we discuss this aspect in Chapter 3). Any horizontal network, that is reasonably entrenched, will then free itself to look for an alternative political arrangement. When a critical mass of horizontal networks breaks away from the machine, and becomes independent, it hits not only the financial resources of the dynastic machine, but also diminishes its authority. A coalition of these networks can then form their own political machine or attach themselves to a rival political machine. When the set of networks attached to the rival political machine become larger than the dynastic machine in question, it can result in its disintegration and decline.

In the second case, the centre of the political family itself becomes weak. This could be caused by successive electoral losses or serious erosion in the economic resources of the political family that compromises its ability to ably finance its political campaigns. [16] In this scenario, if the networks under-girding the political family do not act, they risk being outflanked by their rival networks. Thus, the power networks underlying the dynasty have three choices: one, undermine the current leader and push for change at the top within the dynasty; two, to attach themselves to a different political machine; and three, to continue with the present dynast but with a reconfigured terms of the relationship, in which the authority of the political family is severely diminished. And all three, ultimately lead to the decline of the political family.

As earlier defined, a power network is not a rigid, hierarchical structure but a loose corporate structure where member constituents are tied together in an intricate balance of power relationships. If the political component of the dynastic machine becomes weak, any of the other components - particularly criminals and businessmen - can proceed to exert a more dominant influence on the power network. They can either break away to form their own political family or turn the current political family into merely the ineffectual face of the dynastic machine, while extracting disproportionate shares of the excess revenues produced by the machine.

The dynamic balance of power relationships across different levels of horizontal and vertical networks also provides opportunities for newer entrants - in politics, economy, or crime - to come in and exploit the opportunities provided by this inherent dynamism in relation-

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[16]Some may suggest that electoral loss or the erosion in economic base could be due to decline in the personal charisma or political skill of the successor. However, both these factors are antecedent to political family's ability to hold on to networks of local power

ships. This is useful in injecting fresh blood into the dynastic machine. When the politician
is in a strong position, he can use his position of strength to change the hierarchy in the
networks of contractors or criminals, promoting some and under-cutting others. In a position
of weakness, the equation reverses, as the politician becomes more dependent on the power
networks, which start exerting more control.

The decline of a dynastic machine is accompanied by a chaotic phase, with a heightened
degree of competition between as well as within networks. For instance, the criminal net-
works supporting a dynast might come into both legal and financial trouble, if the power
and patronage they draw from above is eroded. In such a situation, they risk being outma-
noeuvred on their turfs by rival criminal networks. Or, in another case, bureaucrats might
start exacting higher terms from contractors within certain networks or start favouring newer
networks of contractors.

Political families can survive electoral losses, but the fatal blow occurs when power net-
works desert them. In other words, political families can weather occasional shows of no
confidence by the electorate but it's hard to come back when they lose the confidence of the
power networks. Thus, political families are quick to execute succession plans to retain the
support of these networks; faces at the top are expendable compared to the larger interest
of the dynastic machine.

In case of rival political families, the one with more dynastic capital - greater number
of power networks under its control - usually controls the political economy and thus is
better placed to reproduce its economic and political power. In turn, the ability to win
elections is crucial to maintain or expand power networks as state power gives access to the
patronage and security infrastructure which can be shared among the network constituents.
To minimise the risk of losing political power, dynasties contest for, and hold, a diversity of
public offices, to maintain a certain level of aggregate political power in a constituency that
can hold together the power network together.

2.5   The Binding Ties of the Political Economy Network

As mentioned before, political families are loose networks, with each component consisting
of self-interested and ambitious members who aim to maximise their economic and security
interest. Thus, centrifugal forces pulling away the member constituents are an inherent
feature of political families, always threatening to unravel the dynastic machine at any
sign of reversal of political fortunes. So, political families require social insurance, so that
relationships are fortified against a temporary loss of power and are sustainable for the
medium to long term. And secondly, political families are composed of essentially informal
relationships of patronage, and therefore mutual obligations cannot be enforced by the force
of law. Both these requirements of social insurance and trust are fulfilled by caste and kinship
networks, which embed themselves in bureaucratic, economic, and coercive institutions.

Political Families and the Network of Trust

Political families operate through networks of local power which includes those who are wedded into a mutually beneficial relationship. In this machine, the political family needs the criminal entrepreneurs and civil society influencers to enforce authority; brokers and bureaucrats to negotiate with the state; leaders of the local party organisation who will help the family in securing nomination and mobilizing the party workers; and the businessmen and contractors to provide campaign finance. However, to work effectively this network operates on mutual trust and reciprocity. This is because these patronage relationships function outside of, and in contravention to, the formal institutions of democracy. Therefore, there is no legal recourse for enforcing mutual obligations. In the Indian social context, that trust is provided by caste networks, which bolsters a transactional relationship of patronage with elements of solidarity and reliability, and in turn ensures that the patronage machine can sustain itself in the long run.[17]

In short, as Rudd and Nielsen (2018) discuss, this network of trusted lieutenants serves three purposes for political families and vice-a-versa. First, a network of trust acts as a crucial form of political knowledge. It enables the network members to navigate the opacities involved in dealing with the local state and its political economy. Second, this network of trust acts a medium through which effect is created without being seen. It is often difficult to work through the thick layers of the Indian state to get any work done. The network ensures the seamless flow of instructions or messages to relevant actors, and that the beneficiary is aware of whom to attribute credit to, without the patron being present at all instances. Third, the network provides stability, and creates expectations among participants in rising through the ranks along with others. This may not be the most efficient system, but it is a trade-off against greater uncertainty. Not joining any network of local power, is not an optimal solution. [18]

The local political economy in Uttar Pradesh is controlled by the dominant castes who reproduce their economic and political dominance by using their cultural and social capital (Gupta 2012, Jeffry, 2002). In other words, if certain groups can dominate civil society, they are able to manipulate state institutions to corner resources such as finance and security.[19] These dominant castes might vary from *Jats* and *Gujjars* in Western UP; *Yadavs* in the

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[17]This is analogous to the social network aspect of caste that has been abundantly emphasized in the sociological studies of Indian business, where Indian industry was first colonised by dominant trading castes who moved into manufacturing in the nineteenth century, followed by a wave of agricultural castes especially after the post 1991 reforms (Damodaran 2008, Munshi 2016). Caste networks have been central to Indian businesses because they functions in an environment where the risks are high, formal institutions are weak and "selective trust" is at a premium (Harriss, 2003, pp. 766–67).

[18]A similar argument has been made by Tanner and Feder (1993, p. 97) regarding 'family politics' in post-Maoist China. The authors argue that faced with Byzantine political bureaucracy, "it is hardly surprising that leaders often respond by creating 'informal' power networks, appointing relatives to carry out important and sensitive tasks. Family networks permit better communications and surveillance of policy implementation, and help top leaders circumvent the lower level's penchant for secrecy."

[19]Jessop (1991) has shown the state is not just a set of autonomous institutions, rather the state is an institutionally and territorially dispersed set of social practices, strategies, and conflicts.

Oudh region; *Bhumihars*, *Yadvas*, and *Kurmis* in Eastern UP; and *Brahmins* and *Rajputs*
across the state. The cultural and social network is provided by their dominance in civil
society (lawyers, journalists, professors, local unions), political economy (politician, criminal,
contractors, businesses, bank/ money lending operations), and administration (police, court,
block and tehsil office, among others).

The Indian State has not been able to maintain a fair degree of autonomy from its
"clients", that include "powerful business interests, professionals and other rent seekers"
(Bardhan 1984, Khan 2000). A range of "intermediate classes" in India, according to Khan,
have used their "positions of leadership in civil society" to "political pressure on the state."
They use this social and political heft to "influence the state's disbursement of rents (subsi-
dies, tax breaks, licenses, and the like) by demanding new concessions and blocking the state's
efforts to remove unproductive rents." Thus, elite groups try to reproduce their dominance
by colonising the state at the local level. This is aided by the fact that most people view
state institutions as "inherently corrupt sources of political patronage" (Witsoe 2011). And
the low-level corruption or rent seeking is a "process that operates through these clientilistic
networks" (Jeffrey 2002).

Caste as a Binding Glue

Political families are underpinned by kinship and caste ties running through the power
networks. In this respect, we move beyond the traditional sociological understanding of
kinship and castes and the standard interpretations of political families which have tended
to be inordinately focused on personalities. The traditional understanding of caste indicates
social location and an ossification of ritualised hierarchy. Within modern politics, however,
caste also operates as an social network (Anderson et al. 2015). Caste networks are integral to
both the formation and operation of political dynasties.[20] In fact, political families represent
a powerful prism through which the transformation of caste from social location to political
identity, in democratic India, can be investigated. In this sense, caste is not undergirding
the maintenance of the social power but a particular political power structure in the form of
the political family (or dynasty). [21]

How does caste facilitate legacy perpetuation in politics? Craig Jeffrey (2000) in his
influential study of political networks in western UP, finds that most local institutions have
been completely co-opted by the dominant castes of the region. Economically well-off mem-
bers of the dominant community (Jats in Jeffrey's study) embed themselves with the local
bureaucracy, and especially the police, through a combination of traditionally derived coop-
eration, corruption and strategically placed 'links or 'source'. This cycle then perpetuates
itself: those with links in the local state machinery prosper and develop further networks,
while those without are left to fend for themselves in a bureaucratic nightmare. Thus, in

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[20]The marriage of political dynasties with caste networks makes intuitive sense as both are essentially
risk mitigating mechanisms functioning in an uncertain environment

[21]In other countries, such a mediating role can be formed by other socio-political identities such as
ethnicity, such as the Irish political machine in urban America in the 19th and early 20th century.

the villages of Meerut where Jeffrey (2002) did his study, Dalits were denied access to legal
recourses for their security because they were shut out of these networks of power, which
were colonised by the Jats.

A political family can be conceptualised as an economic firm closely tied to a particular
caste group and the member components are invested in the success of the firm as it will
bring them dividends. However, to make such investments, network members must possess
initial endowments of socio-economic capital. In the case of Jats in Western UP, the members
of the caste first acquired financial resources in the post Green Revolution era, building on
their advantage of land endowment. These financial resources helped the Jats gain a foothold
in the bureaucracy and amass coercive (read criminal) resources. Thus, conditions became
ripe for the Jats to pool their resources and build a political machine to secure and expand
the interests of its member components in the burgeoning economy. These power networks
also helped the Jats to take advantage of new economic opportunities in both the public
(governments contracts) and private sphere (real estate and construction).

In contrast, political entrepreneurs from non-dominant castes are not able to form self-
sustaining dynastic machines because their kinship and caste networks do not possess initial
endowments of socio-economic capital. Since lower caste politicians do not have access to
bureaucrats, businessmen and criminals of their caste with whom they can build long-term
ties of trust, their relationships with these local elites are transactional and hence susceptible
to electoral reversal. Also, it is quite difficult for a political entrepreneur with limited means
to effectively challenge a political machine with a structural advantage in terms of financial
and criminal resources. In the specific case of western UP, even the presence of an SC chief
minister and party, could do little to "radically improve the capacity of the rural poor to
compete effectively with richer sections of agrarian society in colluding with government
officials" (Jeffrey 2002). This is a good example of how even holding power at the state
level can modestly effect outcomes at the local level. Those who patronise, control, and lead
economic production are destined to greater rewards. Successful and enduring dynasties in
politics are only a tip of the proverbial iceberg.

There is a strong trust-related ground that makes caste or kinship networks essential,
especially in the contracting and criminal sectors. Because kinship creates "bounded soli-
darity, enforceable trust, cooperation, loyalty, and secrecy" needed to protect and enforce
illegal operations, (Van De Bunt, Siegel and Zaitch 2014), caste functions as the central
kinship mechanism that undergirds corrupt or illegitimate relationships. The corrupt trans-
actions between a criminal/contractor and their fellow caste members in the bureaucracy
or police (or a civil society intermediary) are essentially illegitimate and hence can only be
enforced with trust. The persistent linkages of caste in even legitimate economic activity
have been explained by this function of engendering trust, through the force of social sanc-
tion, in a context where markets function imperfectly (Munshi 2017). It stands to reason,
then, where markets are not just imperfect, but completely non-transparent and essentially
illegitimate, this function of caste networks as a community of trust and solidarity becomes
even more vital. In other words, a bureaucrat or a policeman would only engage in a corrupt
transaction or relationship with a contractor or a criminal they can trust. This is also why

criminal networks in many parts of the world are often seen to be sustained on ethnic or
racial lines (Habyarimana et al. 2009, Michelutti et al. 2018). [22]

Local contractors are also more likely to come from the dominant castes. In spaces where
real market competition is superseded by state patronage or petty corruption, state tenders
are the most important means of controlling resources. And it requires financial capital
to be able to bid for tenders. As the preceding discussion shows, in much the same way
that initial difference in money power was used to gain access to jobs in the bureaucracy,
this differential in money power is used by the dominant caste to corner the local lucrative
contracts. As Eynde, Lehne, and Shapiro (2012) have shown, contracts in the sector of
rural roads – under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) – involve massive
corruption and political patronage, and contractors with the same caste surname as the local
politician are much more likely to get the contract for construction of rural roads.

The criminals in these dominant caste power networks are provided legal security as they
often serve as enforcers in economic and inter-caste disputes (Vaishnav 2017), whereas the
contractors are bestowed with government contracts as constant sources of patronage. In
turn, the criminals reciprocate by providing muscle to the dynastic machine while contrac-
tors provide it with funding during elections. There is a considerable amount of discretion
available with local politicians to dispense patronage through the state coffers. For exam-
ple, the local government bodies (panchayats) are partly responsible for the disbursement
of development funds in rural areas and have been co-opted by dominant castes (Kumar,
2018).

The Dynastic Machine and Civil Society

The caste networks of the dynastic machine not just span the domain of the political econ-
omy, they also penetrate the civil society. Civil society plays a significant role in legitimizing
dynastic power networks in public opinion, but also helps it ward off legal challenges. Collu-
sion with state officials and favouritism is only one of the many ways in which the dynastic
power network perpetuates itself. Aggarwal et al. (2015) study civil society institutions,
such as NGOs, trade unions, press clubs and lawyer consortium in the context of Allahabad
to find that the dominance of the upper castes seems to be, if anything, even stronger in
institutions of "civil society" than in "state institutions".[23]

These persons of power and influence can be viewed as intermediaries between the people
and the State or the "gatekeepers of the local state" (Jeffrey 2002), in an urban setting. For

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[22]In his study of organised crime, Klaus von Lampe noted however that even ethnicity is a "superficial
characteristic" of organised crime networks such as the Italian Mafia 'family', and that these networks are
more essentially based on "family, friendship or local community ties" (Von Lampe 2012). Thus, an upper
caste criminal in one district of eastern Uttar Pradesh might not engender any solidarity with upper castes
in a district of Western Uttar Pradesh since he would have little local ties of community or family binding
them. Family ties "are commonly regarded as the strongest basis for criminal networks".

[23]For instance, according to authors, approximately 80 percent NGO representatives and trade union
leaders, 90 percent in the executive committee of the Bar Association, and all the office-bearers of the Press
Club in Allahabad are upper castes

instance, the services of lawyers are essential if you are engaged in a business that involves criminality. Moreover, local established lawyers are likely to have contacts in the police that can be critical for their clients. The local journalists and academics are influential not only for shaping public opinion but also for exerting political pressure. The corrupt and criminal power of local contractors and criminals that belong to the dominant castes can thus be legitimised if they have caste-based links with these opinion shaping classes. In the absence of pressure on the police and the politicians to curb the illegitimate activities of dominant caste contractors or criminals, they can get away with employing corrupt and criminal practices in the pursuit of financial resources.

This discussion helps underline the importance of creating lasting networks of power that rely both on coercive and persuasive strategies. In the situation of a cumbersome bureaucracy, inefficient public sector, unreliable judiciary, and private enterprises often under the radar of rent-seeking public officials or strongmen, it is in the best interest of the non-political elite to ensure that elected office is occupied by a co-ethnic (Rajsekhar 2020). The control over elected position substantially increases rent-extraction (or rent-protection) opportunities across various sectors, not only within the legal jurisdiction of elected official, but also in neighbouring areas. For the businesses and contractors in particular, cooperation with politicians ensures easy circumvention of the law and bureaucratic hassles. For criminals, politicians are their stay-out-of-jail card. But because these are informal relations, caste or kinship solidarity becomes the basis on which trust networks are created. At the same time, trust and resource investment made into a political family appears to be the safest option, as the family's political success depends on reciprocating to the interests of network members. This resource-rich network of elites ensures political families have superior resources to secure nominations and get re-elected.

2.6   Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that institutional factors do not fully explain why some political families manage to retain power for long and others fail. This chapter develops a political economy framework to argue that political dynasties operate as representative of local networks of power that cuts across different domains such as bureaucracy, business, crime, government contracts, among others. Caste often acts a powerful glue in creating a cross-cutting network and helps in reproducing political power in the form of dynasties. In the following chapter, I present the descriptive characteristics of successful political families in Uttar Pradesh since the 1970s

Table 2.1: How Many Times the MP Visited the Respondent's Locality? (in %)

	MPs from Political Family	MPs from Non-political Family
Many times	17	16
Two-three times	16	15
Once	14	15
Never	35	37
Can't Say	18	17

Source: Pre-poll Survey, NES 2014, Lokniti-CSDS

Figure 2.1: The Public Perception of MP's Performance on Key Issues
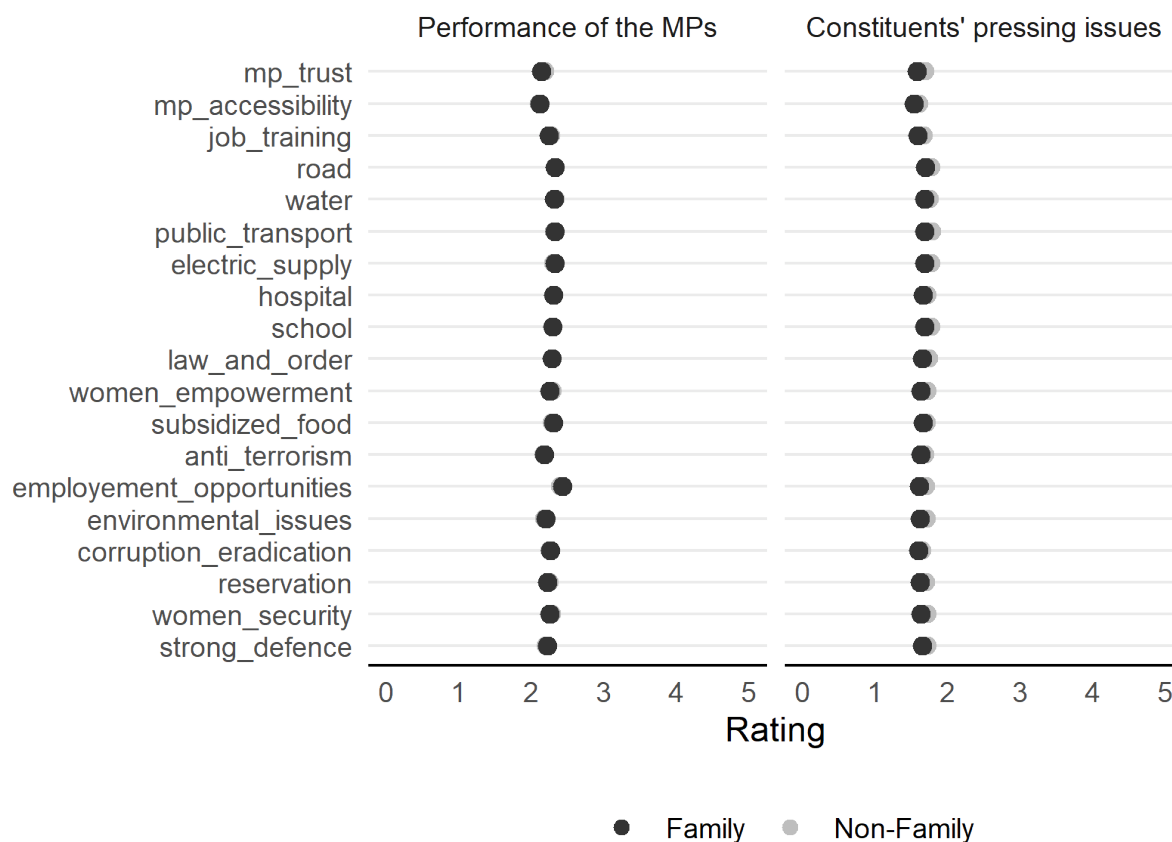
Source: ADR-Daksh Survey, 2014

Figure 2.2: The Differences in Campaign Expenditure Declaration
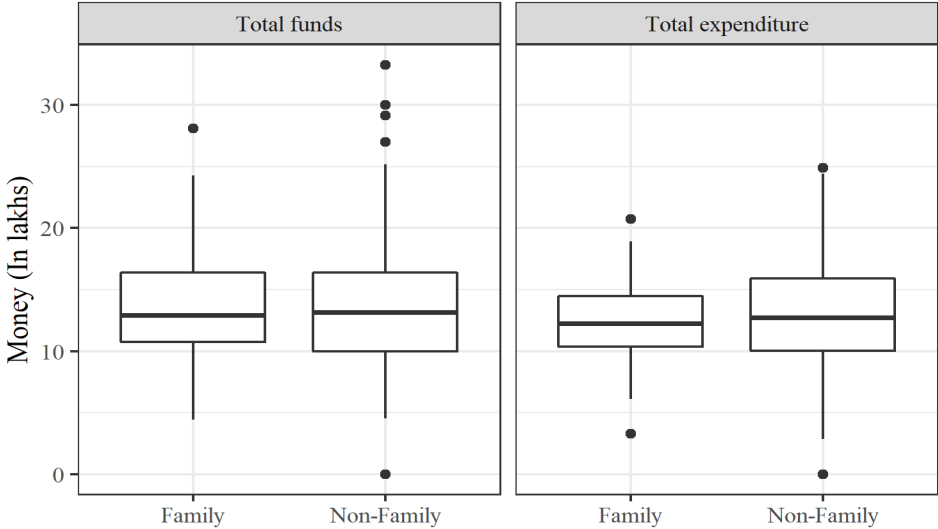
Source: The Association for Democratic Reforms

Figure 2.3: A Theory of Dynastic Persistence
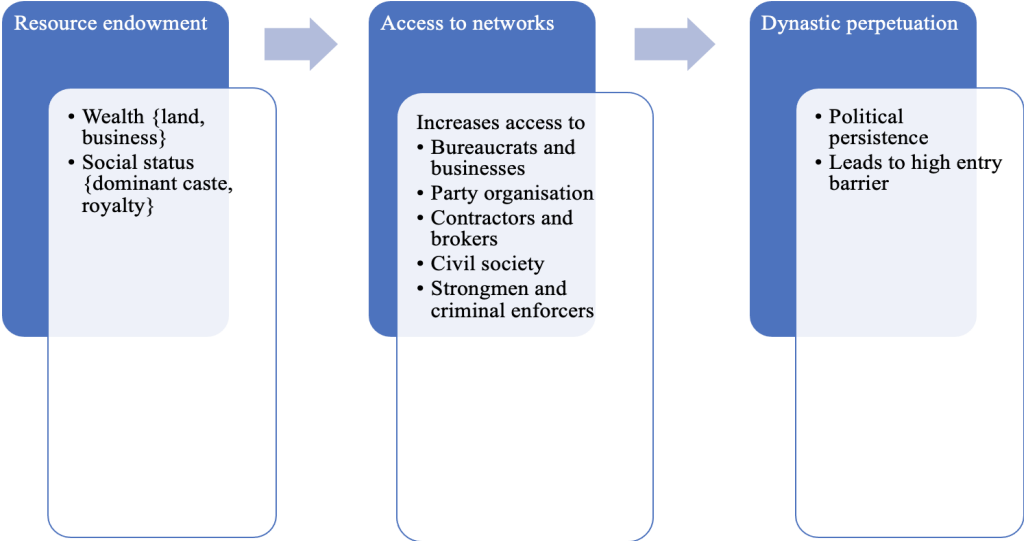
Source: Author's Conceptualisation

Chapter 3

Political Families in Uttar Pradesh

3.1   Introduction

The main function of a political family is to minimize the uncertainties associated with competitive elections and maximize political power. In that sense, they operate like an economic firm which diversifies investments across multiple sectors. The Indian political structure is marked by a preponderance of risk - high turnover of elected representatives and weak institutional structures. In such a political environment, a political dynasty is a way to construct a power structure which is fundamentally geared towards minimising risks. Since their economic investments are subject to their political power, and their prospects of winning political power are subject to their economic power, both economic and political risk are mutually intertwined. To insulate their economic risk, the political office is diversified among family members, and to insulate the political risk, economic assets are diversified to ensure a steady and reliable stream of campaign finance.

In this chapter, I begin by providing a basic description of the primary data on political families in Uttar Pradesh. In section three, I discuss about relationship between political dynasties and initial resource endowments such as the role of wealth (agricultural land holdings) and social status (caste). I then provide evidence on what differentiates successful political families from the ones that could not (or have yet not been able to) ensure the entry of other members in the electoral arena. Finally, before concluding, I estimate multi-variate models to show that political and economic diversification is deeply corelated with dynastic perpetuations.

3.2   Basic Descriptive of Political Families

As mentioned in Chapter 1, there remains a great deal of disagreement among the scholars about defining (or at least operationalising) a legacy candidate or a dynast politician. In the Indian case, for example, George and Ponattu (2018) defines a 'dynast' whose father, mother or spouse preceded them in the Lok Sabha. The reason for this restrictive definition

is largely due to the nature of the data collection process in which the author compiles the list of dynastic MPs based on the names of family members' official bio-data of these politicians.[1] Chandra (2016), on the other hand, uses a more expansive notion to define dynast politicians as those who are preceded by family members currently active in politics or were active in the past.[2] According to this definition, the first member who entered active politics is a non-dynast .

I make certain modifications while operationalising the definition of a political family. The Uttar Pradesh political families dataset covers a period of 50 years – 1974 to 2019 (the term ends in 2024). This includes parliamentary, assembly, and local body elections, and connects the contestants (only top two positions) for the political offices to their family members within that universe. While a majority of political families operate at one level, there are a quite a few of them spanned across multiple levels of office. For the purpose of this analysis, I have restricted the definition of political family as when at least two members of the family contest (among top-two positions) either the assembly or parliamentary election.[3] The dataset includes information on when other members of the family are entering politics. For example, Mulayam Singh Yadav (MSY), the founder of the Yadav family, remains a non-dynast from his political entry in 1967 till 1993 when the second member of the family enters in the electoral arena. After that, MSY is coded as a dynast as he too receives the advantage in getting nominations or campaign support from other elected members of the family.

I now turn towards describing the dataset in more detail. There are 11550 observations in the dataset that includes names and details winners and runners-up in the parliamentary and assembly elections in the dataset.[4] Linking these candidates with their family relatives yields 4867 unique entities, and of these, there are 322 families that have more than two members in our dataset.[5] It would be worth mentioning here again that while we have spent considerable energy in linking unique individuals with their families, this may still be an

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[1]This definition fails to capture some immediate family members such as brothers and sisters, or extended relationships such as uncles or nephews. Neither does it capture if an MP has relatives at the state assembly or in the Rajya Sabha (upper house of the parliament). Therefore, it severely underestimates the actual number of dynasts in the Lok Sabha.

[2]Family is defined as a set of individuals who are bound by proximate ties based on blood or marriage, and this definition includes the father, mother, grand parents, siblings and in-laws. Active in politics refers to holding an office in an elected body or being a candidate in elections.

[3]It is possible that in some cases the members may be politically opposed to each other, while sharing the same family lineage. However, we assume the internal disputes only in a handful of cases. More importantly, often the family members re-unite, only to fall apart again. Even during the period of dispute, family members present a united front to outsiders or challengers. Unless the observer is engaged in a deep case study , it becomes hard to trace the periods of dispute and periods of unity of political families in large historical datasets like this.

[4]We do not use the local body election observations (8000) for the analysis unless otherwise mentioned. 4535 families are represented by one member and are equivalent to 9283 observations. Political families with more than two members have 2267 observations.

[5]4535 families are represented by one member and are equivalent to 9283 observations. Political families with more than two members have 2267 observations.

under reported figure.[6]

These political families could be further classified into different types – such as the number of members from each family active in politics, whether the founder of the political family was a male or female, the relation descendants share with the founder of the political family, the average life span of a political family, among others. Our analysis indicates that approximately 80 percent political families in Uttar Pradesh have just two members contesting (i.e., top wo positions), another 15 percent have three members, and the rest have more than four members. The founders of these families are predominantly male (97 percent), a large portion of the descendants are sons (44 percent) and the second largest category is the 'brother' (16 percent), followed by the 'wife' (14 percent). Daughters and daughters-in-law make up five and three percent respectively, and approximately fourteen percent includes other family members such as uncles, nephews, nieces, among others.

Geography and Political Party Presence of Political Families

Political families in Uttar Pradesh are spread across the state (Figure 3.1). While the incidence of such families varies by parliamentary constituency, they are not concentrated in any particular part of the state. Similarly, they are also present across four main political parties – the BJP, BSP, Congress, and SP. Political parties, however, do vary in terms of proportion of nominations allocated to dynastic candidates - the BJP and BSP nominate lesser dynastic candidates compared to the Congress and SP (Figure 3.2). The former two parties are considered more organised in comparison to the latter two, and in that sense these findings are consistent with previous evidence (Chhibber 2013, Ziegfeld 2016). The analysis presented in Figure 3.2 also helps in underscoring an important point which has not been noted in research on this subject in the Indian case at least - the proportion of candidates with dynastic lineages is higher among winners than among the larger candidate pool. And this is true for all four political parties. Furthermore, the proportion of ministers with dynastic lineage in UP's cabinet is also steadily increasing, with an exception of 2017 (Figure 3.3).[7]

3.3 Life Span of Political Families

As mentioned earlier, the main function of political succession within the family is to safeguard and reproduce power. In some cases the descendants enter active politics when the founder is still active, and in other cases there is a considerable gap. Figure 3.4 depicts that there is a considerable variation in the time-lag in the entry of the second member into

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[6]Among these 322 successful political families, 14 families have not been elected to either assembly or parliamentary level.

[7]The data presented in Figure 3 excludes Members of Legislative Councils (MLCs) in the cabinet since we have no information about their family lineage. Usually, less than one-third of the cabinet members are MLCs.

active politics - the descendants in more than half of the political families enter politics when the founder is still active. I suggest that such a planned line of succession helps bring more stability in political families and elongates the family's political life span.

What is the average life span of a political family in Uttar Pradesh? The life span is simply the longitudinal life of a family, and it measures the years that a political family or individual politicians (form non-political-family) have been active in politics. Since our Uttar Pradesh political family data set begins in 1974 and ends with politicians who are in term till 2024, so within this period, the maximum life span that a family can have is 50 years. In simple words, this metric assigns a binary value checks if a politician or a family was active in a certain year (1= present, 0= absent) and then add it up.[8] I assign the same value irrespective of the number of members of a particular family who are politically active at any given time. The data presented in Figure 3.5 depicts a density chart for the life span of political families and non-family politicians (who have won at least once). The average life of a family active in politics is 24 years and the median life span is 25 years, i.e., around five election cycles if each election cycle is normatively five years. On the other hand, the average life span of politicians without a family background in active politics is approximately 14 years and the median is slightly less than 15 years, i.e., three electoral cycles.

3.4 Initial Resource Endowment

While the formal entry barriers in Indian politics are low, contesting elections is a costly affair. There is also overwhelming evidence to suggest that party labels matter, i.e., candidates with mainstream party nominations have a much higher chance of winning an election. On the other hand, candidates without mainstream party labels are likely to forfeit their deposit, i.e., less likely to even win one-sixth of the total votes polled. Similarly, a majority of political parties in India are rooted in particular social cleavages. This is not to suggest that they do not seek votes from other castes, or they do not nominate candidates of castes other than the ones they claim to represent. However, right from securing nominations to winning elections, the role of caste cannot be understated. And thus, the success of political families is too tied with these factors.

Caste and Political Families in India

Scholars have argued that some ethnic groups tend to have greater prevalence of dynasticism because of the relative power that their factions can pull in political parties. This is because

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[8]We operationalise 'active in politics' as being either a winner or runner-up that election. Few examples of how we calculated life span: • Politician A contested in 1974, 2002 and his son contested in 2017. The life span of this family would be 15 years. We add a value of one for each year they appear in our dataset as a winner or first runner up. • A politician and his wife contested together in the 2012 and later on his wife resigned from assembly and contested in the 2014 Lok Sabha election. In this case, this family's life span would be 7 years.

these factions favour their own members while promoting individuals within the party or-
ganizations or securing nominations to contest elections. For instance, in the Indian case,
prevalence of upper caste political families is much more common than the lower castes.
Chandra (2016) argues that "The "Forward Caste" (or upper caste) advantage in dynastic
politics is an aggregation of the prevalence and promotion of these castes across political
parties, even the ones that specifically mobilize lower castes are being led by non-forward
caste politicians. The "forward castes" are able to have this advantage because they repre-
sent a powerful bloc. On the other hand, even when lower caste and especially Scheduled
Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) find representation, they do not have enough power
within any major party to be able to perpetuate their own political families as successfully.
Chauchard (2016) argues that "SC/ST politicians, do not have the same opportunities to
create political dynasties because they tend to play a less dominant role in the executive of
the main parties that return MPs from these categories to Delhi."

In contrast, I suggest that the relationship between caste and political dynasticism in
India is much more complex than envisioned in the literature. The data presented in Table
3.1 helps in underscoring this complexity. The share of upper castes among candidates elected
as MLAs is almost twice their share in the state's population, and their proportion among
political families is even higher than this. Political reservation for Dalits has ensured that the
proportion of MLAs from the community is equal to their share in the population. However,
their share among political families is less than half the share among MLAs. Though the
proportion of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the state assembly and the parliament
has improved considerably since the 1990s, their proportion among political families still
remains very low. Muslims, on the other hand, have very low presence in the legislature, but
their share among political families is higher than even their population share.

What explains this pattern? First, as the data presented in Figure 3.6 shows, the median
asset of upper caste and Muslim candidates is higher than OBCs and Dalits. These com-
munities are also less likely to have criminal candidates amongst them. If one excludes the
dominant Yadavs from the OBCs, the latter's median asset and criminality record becomes
minuscule. Second, caste or *jati* networks are one of the most common and durable networks
in India. The network of caste often cuts across political, economic and cultural domains.
And in that sense, the aspect of caste that political families build on is not that of social
location or ritualized hierarchy but of caste as a social network (Mosse 2018; Munshi and
Rosenzweig 2006, 2010). The lower caste politicians struggle to form successful political
families because they lack both initial financial endowment (Figure 3.6 and 3.7) and social
capital needed to construct, as well as maintain, a political patronage machine.[9] As, Desai
and Dubey (2012) argue, a social structure based on caste has translated into unequal ac-
cess to land, education, business ownership and occupation, over the years. The social and
economic power of the lower castes in the local political economy has lagged behind their
newfound political power. [10]

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[9]The share of 'forward castes' in India's national cabinets (and UP's state cabinet) has remained very
high.

[10]Similarly, the data from the last economic census conducted in 2013 shows that upper castes are much

Reservations have only had a limited effect on breaking the stranglehold of local networks of power in rural areas. Dalits have not been able to gain a foothold in the local political economy because reservations have been systematically diluted, circumvented and rendered ineffective in a variety of ways. Mendelsohn (1986) has shown that despite four decades of reservations in jobs and education "there was scarcely a 'Harijan elite' today".[11] Among his sample, only two politicians came from business families and even their "demonstrably business interests were of minor stature." The highest reported parcel of land in this group was just 50 acres. Even during the course of their political career, the initially more prosperous Dalit politicians "managed to consolidate their status" whereas the initially poor Dalit politicians "struggled to carry their family into the self-sustaining middle class." [12]

Wealth: Agricultural Land

Land remains an important asset in the Indian countryside and its ownership is closely related to the dominance of certain castes (Harriss 2013). During the colonial period, landlords functioned as governments in themselves, and the council of the village elders (mostly composed of upper castes) strengthened the position of the feudal patriarch (Sharma, 1974). Several studies indicate that despite the land reform efforts to change the ownership structure, elite castes have continued to own greater portions of the land in rural Uttar Pradesh.[13] And not just in India, in diverse settings such as Southern U.S.A, Chile, Sub-Saharan Africa, Imperial Germany, China, and Pakistan, scholars have shown that landed elites were able to use the de facto power that came with their wealth to substitute for a loss of *de jure* power (Acemoglu and Robinson 2008).[14]

Why does land ownership matters in the formation of political families? Land ownership in the past (and even now) was not just an economic asset, it also indicated social status. Additionally, it ensured steady financial resources through agricultural income, and the spread of urban and peri-urban spaces have made land an asset in terms of its real estate value. Furthermore, many landed castes across the country used the value from land and

more likely to own firms and enterprises. Azam (2013) too indicates based on IHDS data that upper castes have a much higher share among white collar employees, while SCs and STs have a much greater share among unskilled workers in comparison to OBCs.

[11]Even the tiny Dalit elite of parliamentarians and legislators, according to Mendelsohn, functioned within the confines of the "patterns of economic and social dominance and subordination in the world outside the legislature" and hence it was "extraordinary difficult to be an effective untouchable politician in India".

[12]In contrast, the financial circumstances of the peasant castes and upper caste politicians were much better. "Perhaps the appropriate comparison is with middle peasant castes - I have no data on parliamentarians from these castes but we can confidently predict that their circumstances would be greatly superior to those of scheduled caste politicians," Mendelsohn wrote.

[13]It is not surprising that the average size of individual landholdings in UP is less than a hectare (Agricultural Census, 2015-16).

[14]The landed elites used diverse strategies to continue their dominance by engaging in electoral frauds in Imperial Germany (Ziblatt 2009), by using violence against blacks in the American South (Algar 2012), by keeping tight control over bureaucratic agents in Pakistan (Ali 1988), and by engaging in patron-client relationships in Chile in the 1950s (Baland and Robinson 2012).

invested outside agriculture (for example educating their children so that they can qualify for government jobs).

We collected information on agricultural landholding by UP politicians in five broad categories – very small (0-25 *bighas*), small (between 25 and 100), medium (100-300), large (300-500) and very large (500 and above) – for two reasons. First, *bigha* the local unit of land measurement varies across UP, sometimes even within districts. Second, as the data collection was conducted in the third-person format, i.e., local informant sharing the knowledge, we mostly received the information regarding land holding in a lump-sum format. The data presented in Figure 3.7 shows that political families on an average have greater land endowment. We also find a positive relationship between land ownership and longer political experience. It is possible that many politicians may have bought land after winning elections, but given that agriculture is no longer a profitable investment, even if they decided to invest in land, they would rather buy real estate in towns and cities. And the unit of land bought for such purposes would be much smaller in size to change the overall land ownership profile of a family.

While the initial endowment matters, it is not sufficient to ensure dynastic succession in the competitive politics of Uttar Pradesh. To test this hypothesis, I collected information on *taluqdars* (landlords and revenue collectors during the British era) of the Oudh region.[15] There were a little over 300 small and large *taluqdari* families in the 12 districts of the Oudh region at the time of independence. Approximately two-thirds of these *taluqdars* were upper caste (mostly different clans of *rajputs* or *kshatriyas*), while a little over a quarter were Muslim taluqdars. Among these 312 families, only one in five ever entered into active electoral politics post-independence. And today just over a dozen of these families are still active. Figure 3.8 shows that many *taluqdari* families with substantial resources either did not enter politics or became politically dormant in the last few decades. The data also shows that the median revenue of families that entered the electoral arena post-independence was higher.

The Kirti Vardhan Singh family, discussed in chapter 1, were the *taluqdars* of Mankapur estate in Gonda district. According to a 1930 document that provides details regarding various *taluqdaris* in the Oudh region, the Mankapur estate comprised 131 whole villages, 58 partial villages spread over Mankapur, Nawabganj, and Mahadewa of Gonda. The family collected a total revenue of forty-six thousand rupees then – which was roughly the median revenue among the *taludari* families of Oudh. The family however made a successful transition from being a traditional authority in the district to a democratic political dynasty. Many *taluqdari* families with substantial resource endowment couldn't ensure dynastic perpetuation in the democratic setting. For example, the Dutt-Pandey family of Singh Chanda

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[15]Taluqdars belong to the upper strata of society who acted as a class of tax collecting intermediaries during the Mughal and then British era. The district or the estate or part of villages which was under the taluqdar was known as 'Taluqdari'. In 1930, there were 312 taluqdars in the Oudh region (Taluqdars, Allahabad, Pioneer Press 1935) an increase from 272 taluqdars in 1880. The Oudh region of Uttar Pradesh comprises of 12 districts - Lucknow, Unnao, Rae Bareli, Sitapur, Hardoi, Kheri, Faizabad, Gonda, Baharaich, Sultanpur, Pratapgarh and Barabanki.

in Gonda had an estate which was five times bigger than that of the Mankapur estate, but their forays in electoral politics were limited for a brief interlude in the 1920s and then in the 1960s.

My conversations with key informants in Gonda suggests that one of the important reasons behind the success of Singh's family was their hold over the local political economy network in the district. They also continuously diversified their economic resources as well as kept most local institutions in the district under the family's (and their loyalists) influence.

3.5 Diversification of the Economic Portfolio

Individuals enter into the political arena either for the nonpecuniary benefits of being in politics or because of the perks and financial returns associated with an elected office. The latter may include earnings while in office, legal or otherwise. The data from financial disclosures in several other countries reveals that political elites enjoy substantial wealth accumulation while in office, usually higher than among similar individuals not in office (Klašnja 2015, Querubin and Snyder 2012). In the Indian case, Fisman et al. (2014) show that the annual asset growth of winners is 3–5 percent higher than that of runners-up, a difference that also holds in a set of close elections.[16] Furthermore, the analysis of financial disclosures by candidates reveals that moveable assets constitute approximately a quarter of total assets, indicating that the vast majority of candidate wealth still resides in real estate, agriculture, and other forms of immoveable wealth.[17]

Investments in Rent-thick Economic Activities

Indian elections are extremely costly, and it most often expected of the candidates to self-finance their campaigns. I argue that this necessitates politicians to not only diversify their economic resources to mitigate risk against financial uncertainties, but also invest a significant portion of their resources in sectors in which money can quickly get converted into cash. During my fieldwork, I observed that politicians were likely to own certain kind of assets such as petrol pumps, brick klins, construction or transported related businesses, agriculture related businesses (dealing in grains or seeds), among others. We collected information about whether politicians own or have invested in these sectors and present evidence related to the same in Table 3.2. While it would have been ideal to gather the asset profile of the politicians over time, this was practically not feasible.[18]

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[16]The relative asset growth of winners is greater in more corrupt states and for those holding ministerial positions.

[17]As Sircar (2018) shows, more than 50 per cent of the value of moveable asset is nested in jewellery and cash. And, jewellery is a convenient store of value for political purposes, as it allows for the movement of high asset value without much visibility.

[18]Similarly, while we did try to estimate the size of a particular business, we had to quickly abandon the idea as our respondents were getting suspicious and were dropping out of the conversation mid-way.

I classified these businesses into two categories – rent-thick and non-rent-thick.I largely follow the classification of rent-thick and non-rent-thick used by Gandhi and Walton (2012) in their study of Indian billionaires and their wealth. [19] In the former, the state plays a significant role, in the form of licenses and other forms of control such as petrol pumps, brick kiln, construction/real estate, transport company and mining. In such business operations cash inflow is also very high. On the other hand, non-rent-thick operations include business investments in shops and showrooms related to consumer durables such as motor-bike/tractor showroom, retail outlets, produce/food, medical/nursing homes, among others. In these kind of transactions, cash inflow is more likely to be recorded and easily tracked.

Conversations with multiple informants during the fieldwork made it clear to me that there is a symbiotic relationship between owning rent-thick economic enterprises and political persistence. It is a "power begets power" story: to maintain political dominance, the actor needs economic resources and to protect economic interests, the actor must command political power. Apart from providing large profits, these rent-thick economic operations also employ more labor, which becomes very handy during election campaigns. Moreover, running these businesses requires the owners to constantly liaison with government officials for some work or the other and thus holding an elected position eases the process. While political families have approximately two-thirds of their assets in rent-thick business operations, this ratio for non-dynastic politicians is just one-third.[20] This difference clearly establishes the advantage of having cash-rich resources that political families and dynastic candidates enjoy.

Investment in Reputation-Building Enterprises: Schools and Colleges

While wealth accumulation may help politicians to win nominations and then elections, evidence suggests that citizens view such accumulation from a negative lens (Chauchard et al. 2019). I argue that, in order to mitigate these negative externalities, politicians often invest in creating resources in their constituency which helps in increasing their reputation and legitimacy. Across Indian states, the political classes have remained dedicated patrons of private educational institutions. This phenomenon which is much more pronounced in the South and West India, is increasingly becoming part of North Indian states such as Uttar Pradesh. Furthermore, as Figure 3.9 depicts, family politicians are more likely to have invested in schools and colleges than non-lineage politicians.

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[19]The authors conclude 43 percent of the total number of billionaires, accounting for 60 percent of billionaire wealth in India, had their primary sources of wealth from rent-thick sectors. A similar report by Oxfam suggested that almost 40 percent of Indian billionaires have inherited their wealth, and the inheritors account for almost two-thirds of the total wealth of billionaires.

[20]An important caveat here. We do not have data on money value associated with each segment, so theoretically it is possible that for some individuals non-rent-thick sectors exceeds the rent-thick sectors in terms of total money investments.

Why do political families invest in reputation-building through investment in the education sector? First, some politicians genuinely feel the obligation to help their constituency, especially when the State has failed to deliver on that front. The Indian state's record has been extremely poor in providing public education and thus it was natural for many private individuals including local politicians to step into the educational sector. On its part, the government provides monetary aids to many of these private colleges which greatly subsidises everyday operational cost. Second, opening schools and colleges increases their social and political prestige. Many of the college buildings I observed during my fieldwork are on illegally occupied prime land that either belongs to the government, the *gram sabha* or on a property that is under ownership dispute . Opening a school or college mitigates some of the bad reputation that comes with illegal occupation of the land. Third, schools and colleges function as sources of patronage for politicians. This patronage can vary from the allocation of admissions to teaching jobs to janitorial positions.

Fourth, educational institutions in smaller towns continuously supply politicians with two important instruments to maintain power — money and muscle.[21] Colleges typically function under trusts and are, therefore, not required to follow the same transparency rules as companies. Politicians often give large amounts of money and provide resources to the trusts of their loyalists. Philip Altbach (1993) notes that politicians use educational institutions as a base for their operations. In smaller towns and poorer parts of the country, a college is likely to be the most important institution in the area. All those who receive such favours then oblige politicians by helping their campaigns by mobilising resources and manpower.

Fifth, and more importantly, these private school and college premises not only serve as examination centres for students studying there, but also as centres for various competitive examinations conducted by the state. And this is where the deep nexus of politics-crime-bureaucracy operates and the resultant phenomenon is colloquially known as - *"nakal mafia"* (a nexus that thrives on providing cheating materials for a fee).[22] This business operates not only in collusion with the local police, but also with the active patronage of political officials, whose influence becomes essential in everything - from allocating the examination centre to protecting the mafia by holding off the police. This business, which completely operates on cash transactions, acts as an annual source of campaign finance for many politicians.

As mentioned in the case study on Gonda, the political families of Brijbhushan Singh and Vinod Singh own several educational institutes in their district. During the 2014 elections, journalist Supriya Sharma travelled to Gonda and interviewed both politicians mentioned above. Despite their open rivalries, Vinod Singh informed her, "I gave Rs 25 lakh to Brij Bhushan's college from my MLA fund. He gave Rs 25 lakh to my college from his MP fund". Supriya Sharma came across several of Brij Bhushan's colleges and many of them were largely

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[21]The members of student's unions or other politically active students also help politicians in mobilizing the public in both election and non-election period.

[22]Recently, a mass cheating incident was recorded on the cell phones in Bihar in which relative of students were photographed climbing school walls to pass on answer sheets. The images captured a cruder form of the organised business of cheating in examinations, where the whole centre is designed to facilitate this illegal operation.

non-functional. In fact, one of them was housed in a row of shops. All of them were empty. The students, she was told, attended college only around exam time. In her conversation with the receptionist at a hotel in the city, she was informed that he moved to Lucknow for his graduation because college degrees from the district had "no value". The respondent further told her that, "both the local MP and the MLA run colleges which specialise in getting students passed on the basis of cheating." Similarly, another informant, Mr. P P Yadav, the secretary of Lal Bahadur Shastri College, said that such was the clamour for quick-and-easy degrees, that only 6,000-odd students had enrolled in the half-century-old institution which paid its teachers up to INR 1.5 lakh a month, while more than 30,000 students had enrolled in Nandini Nagar Mahavidyala, Brijbhushan's college, which paid teachers INR 5,000. She asked Brijbhushan about his colleges, and he replied with great pride, "I have opened 48 educational institutions ... and I didn't start them with any political aim, but yes, today the boys rally around me. Others might call me mafia but my students idolise me. Those who want to call me mafia they will but students idiolise me .... and they touch my feet calling me *guru ji*." He blamed the state government for rampant cheating and said, "Today, only 15 percent of students study, the rest cheat."

The diversification of the economic portfolio often happens in tandem with diversification of the political portfolio. The regulatory zeal of the Indian state has ensured that any business, legal or otherwise, will involve lots of bureaucratic oversight. And thus it becomes important for any ambitious politician to get loyalist in the positions of power, who can bend the local state machinery in line with the interests of the network they preside over.

3.6 Diversification of the Political Portfolio

As argued before, political families diversify their portfolio by contesting for multiple political offices to mitigate the risk of losing the power associated with elected office. They also diversify politically by gaining positions in the state cabinet and party's organisational hierarchy (above the level of district executive committee). Such diversification helps families in greater perpetuation of political power, extraction of resources, and distribution of patronage.

The data presented in Table 3.3 indicates that a large number of political families in Uttar Pradesh managed to successfully diversify their political portfolios by contesting at multiple level. As mentioned in chapter 1, the focus of this dissertation is on the 322 political families that are represented by at least two members in the top-two positions either at the state or national level. Approximately, one-third of these families have members at both levels. Similarly, one in every ten families has presence at all levels of government – the local body, state, and even the at the national level.

Why do these political families already occupying MP or MLA position invest so much energy and capital in winning even local body positions? In chapter six, I discuss how Mulayam Singh Yadav's family ensures that even the lowest elected positions in their pocket borough remains within the clan or with family loyalists even when their party is in power

at the state level. The conversation with several dozen politicians during the fieldwork suggested five reasons. First, as a former MLA explained to me, "an MP (or for that matter even an MLA) is like an ambassador. You may have influence or respect in offices that matter, but you cannot exercise power in-absentia. The locus of power is local and you've to be there to exercise it. So, you cannot let go of other elected positions in your area. Today if you allow someone else to control these positions, tomorrow they will rise as your challengers" [23]

Second, it is a self-serving arrangement wherein the principal power holders of the family continue to move up the order and anoint others as gatekeepers to protect their local fiefdoms. They are ready to go to any length to protect their turf. For example, the former Samajwadi Party MLA Rampal Yadav (from Biswan, Sitapur), who had put up his daughter for block council president (Block Pramukh) in 2015, has physically restrained other candidates from procuring nomination forms. The forms became available only after the intervention of the High Court. Yadav also got his son Jitendra Yadav to contest as the president of the district council (Zilla Panchayat Adhyaksh or ZPA) against his party's official candidate. This led to his suspension from the Samajwadi Party on disciplinary grounds. Jitendra not only won the election, but also Rampal's suspension was revoked later.

Such instances are not uncommon during local body elections in many parts of India. The state machinery gets deployed to its fullest and council members are wooed, often with financial inducements, to swing their vote. They, or even their family members get harassed, or worse, abducted to ensure that they vote in a certain way. The level of money and muscle power during these local body elections, especially for the chairperson post which is marked by indirect election, is much more than assembly and parliament elections (Mukherjee 2018).[24] It is not surprising then that the ruling party in the state virtually sweeps these elections in which large numbers get elected unopposed. In 2021 and 2015, approximately one-fourth of ZPAs and one-third of block pramukhs (BP) were elected unopposed, respectively. The unopposed election doesn't mean there aren't competitive candidates; rather, it is a function of the *de facto* influence of a ZPA and BP hopefuls, or their families.

Third, such diversification also helps in keeping the family (or important loyalists) together, with multiple people nurturing political ambitions.[25] In case of higher-level elections, party nominations are important to increase a candidate's probability in winning elections. And the central party office may not easily allocate party symbol for a variety of reasons such as not having more than one nomination per family. Thus, it is not surprising that the main

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[23]Interview with a former MLA, Lucknow, July 2017.

[24]Conversations with some ZPA and BP aspirants during the fieldwork indicated that in comparative terms, a ZPA candidate often spends more than a Lok Sabha election candidate, and a BP more than a legislative assembly candidate. The expenditure was largely driven by the district council's annual budget (proportionate rent-seeking possibilities) and the amount the competitor was offering to council members.

[25]In local body elections if the seat is reserved for women, generally the mother, or wife, or daughter-in-law (sometimes daughter) of the family patriarch is nominated. In case the seat is reserved for SCs or OBCs, then someone who works at the farm, or the business is nominated. This is not applicable only for upper caste elites, even those from dominant backward communities such as Jats, Gujjars, Yadavs, Kurmis and Ashraf Muslims follow this pattern.

contestants for the council presidency are mostly relatives of sitting Members of Parliament (MP), Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA), and ministers, and other important figures from the ruling party in the state. In fact, as soon as a change in the ruling regime in the state capital takes place, successful no-confidence motions are brought against many sitting ZPAs and BPs. [26]

Fourth, a substantial amount of local area development funds gets dispersed through ZPAs and BPs. Furthermore, a large portion of district council budgets gets spent on construction-related activities (building or repair of roads, government offices, schools, bridges, among others). And as shown in the previous section, political families are more likely to own businesses such as brick kilns, petrol pumps, transport, or sand mining. My conversations with local politicians and contractors indicated a connection between why ambitious politicians (and networks of businessmen associated with construction and transport) make so much effort to win the presidency of district and block councils. These two positions are very lucrative from a business and rent-extraction perspective - the tender for the above works are issued and awarded to the machine is operated by the same network.

Finally, citizens are much more likely to contact their local body representatives to get their work done. While diversification of the political portfolio may place a family in a position to exploit and corner state resources, without a network of functionaries who can oversee different processes of the entire operation, power cannot be exercised effectively. These two attributes are very important for lubricating the patronage machine.

3.7 Determinants of Dynastic Succession

In this section, we estimate two OLS models to analyse the determinants of successful dynastic perpetuation. The dependent variable in both models is whether a political family managed dynastic succession, i.e., entry of the second member in our dataset (either as a winner of runner up in an assembly or parliamentary election). And the main independent variables are economic and political diversification. The measure of economic diversification is an index of the presence of political families in a binary format (present $=1$, absent $=0$) across five different economic activities and the resultant index is an ordinal variable. Similarly, the measure of political diversification is an index of the presence of a political family in a binary format (present $=1$, absent $=0$) across three segments - contesting at multiple level, position in the state cabinet, and position in the party organisation - and the resultant index is again an ordinal variable. The data presented in Figure 3.10 shows that political families have much higher economic and political diversification in comparison to non-families.

In the first model, we include all available data from assembly and general elections between 1974- 2019. This data includes winners and runners-up for the election years. The total number of unique political families in the dataset is 4866, of which 322 families have more than two members. It is important to note here that we exclude the category

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[26]Within months of the BJP's win in 2017, the presidents in one in every four district and block councils got changed. The proportions may vary, but this trend has persisted in UP's local body elections since 1995.

of contesting at multiple levels in this section as it overlaps with the definition a political family, and the data on position in party organisation is only available for the winners. The regression equation is:

$$Political\ family = \alpha + \beta_1 Political\ diversification + \beta_2 Economic\ diversification +$$
$$\beta_3 Land\ ownership + \beta_4 Election\ won\ by\ first\ member +$$
$$\beta_5 Female\ first\ member + Z + \epsilon$$

Where the outcome of interest political family is a dummy variable that is 1 if the family is represented by two members in the dataset and 0 otherwise, political diversification here is a dummy variable that is 1 if there was at least one minister from that family in the state cabinet, Economic diversification is an ordinal variable measuring the presence of a political entity across various sectors, Land ownership is an ordinal variable that denotes the agricultural land owned by a family; Election won by the first member of the family is a continuous variable denoting number of terms (power-treatment hypothesis), Female is 1 if the first member of the family was a female 0 otherwise, Z is the constituency and candidate level controls, is the error term clustered at the parliamentary constituency level.

The model is robust to various specifications and the results are presented in Table 3.4. The base model is reported in column 1, time or decade fixed effect in column 2, sub-region fixed effect in column 3, both decade and sub-region fixed effect in column 4. Since it is possible that independent variables are correlated, we have also clustered the standard errors at the parliamentary constituency (PC) level across all four specifications.[27] And we have also controlled for the political family's caste across specifications. We find that diversification of economic and political (only) portfolio, whether a family member becomes a minister in state cabinet, and initial land endowment are positively related with being a political family. On the other hand, if the founder of the political family was a female, the relationship is negative and statistically significant. We also find that the power-treatment hypothesis, i.e., number of terms won by the founder as statistically insignificant. As a majority of political families concurrently contest for multiple offices, this finding is counter-intuitive, but not surprising.

There are of course some serious limitations to the analysis presented above. A lot of indicators related to economic assets have been captured as a single snapshot in time and do not capture the temporal variation. To overcome some of these problems, the second model restricts the analysis for the past decade (2009-19) as official election affidavits which included information on the candidate's economic assets and criminal record are available for this period.[28] Further, we also had information on whether the candidate was an incumbent

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[27]The standard errors are clustered at the parliamentary constituency (PC) level and not the assembly constituency level, because in certain cases there are political families that contest only at the parliamentary constituency level, and some at both parliamentary and assembly level. Furthermore, assembly constituency boundaries do not cut the parliamentary constituency boundary.

[28]We had collected information on all candidates who secured more than 5percent votes in last three Lok Sabha elections (2009, 2014 and 2019) and two assembly elections (2012 and 2017).

or has changed political parties in this period. The analysis presented in Table 3.5 follows a very similar format of caste control, fixed effects and clustering of standard errors as in Table 3.4.

The results indicates that, while wealth measured through total value of assets mentioned in the election affidavit is positively correlated with being a political family and is statistically significant across all four specifications, the propensity to change parties (mentioned as Turncoat in Table 3.5) has no effect. Serious criminal charges are negatively correlated, but the statistical significance is not at the conventional p-value less than the 0.05 level. Interestingly, I also find that there is high correlation between a candidate's economic asset reported in the affidavit with initial endowment (agricultural landholding) and economic diversification. This indicates that the findings in Table 3.5 are based on more dynamic economic assets data corroborated with the findings in Table 3.4 based on more static economic assets.

3.8   Conclusion

In this chapter on political family formations in Uttar Pradesh, I show that initial resource endowment matters. However, the founders of a political family can increase the likelihood of dynastic succession by diversifying their economic and political portfolio. This in turn depends on their ability to drive a network of local influencers cutting various spheres of the local political economy – a theme we study in detail in chapter five and six. In the next chapter, I exclusively focus on the 322 political families that managed dynastic succession. Nevertheless, the political strength of these families has varied considerably over time. While some continue to remain in power, others have declined, and thus creating space for the emergence of new political families.

Figure 3.1: Political Families in Uttar Pradeshs
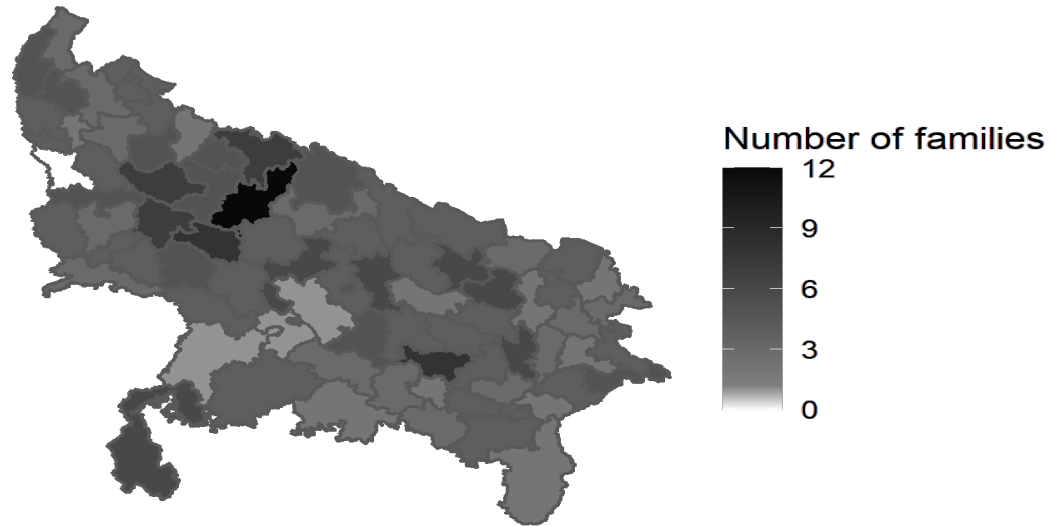
Figure 3.2: Political families Across Parties
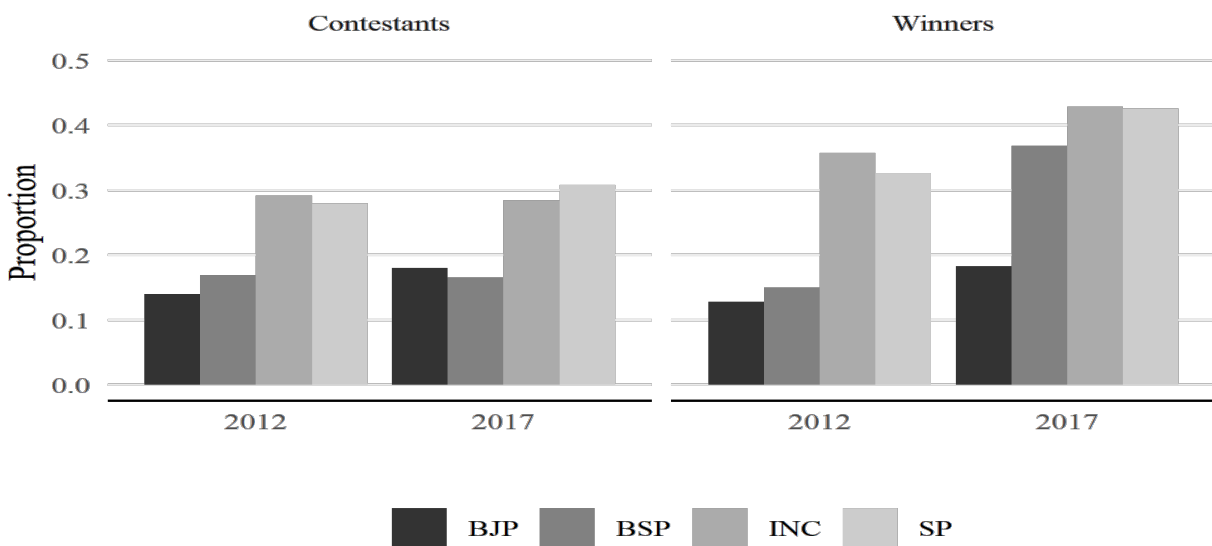
Figure 3.3: Political Families in Uttar Pradesh Cabinet
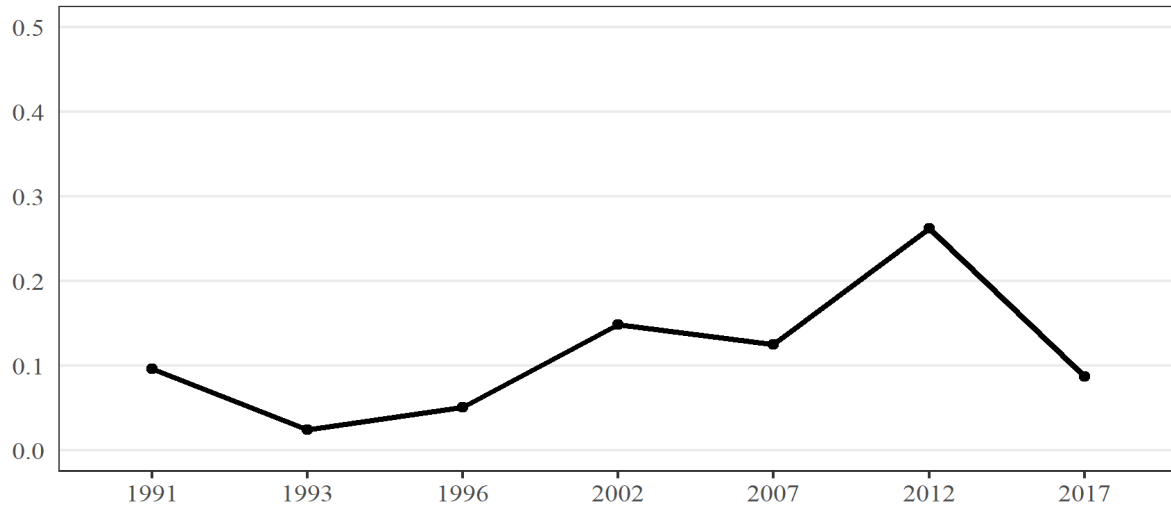
Figure 3.4: Time-Lag in Entry of the Second Member of Political Family
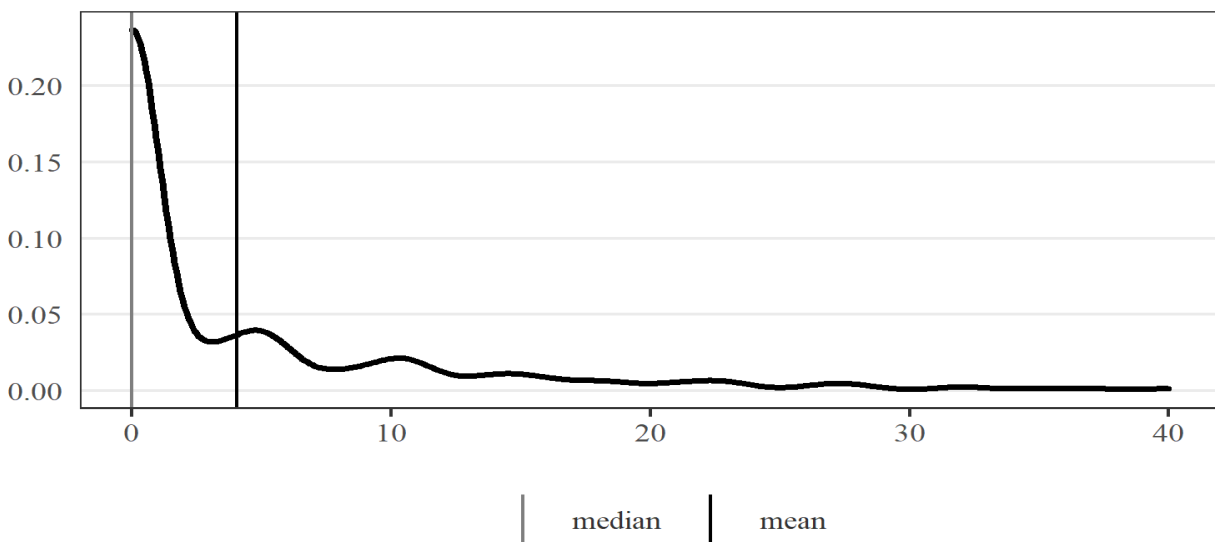
Figure 3.5: Life Span of Political Families in Uttar Pradesh
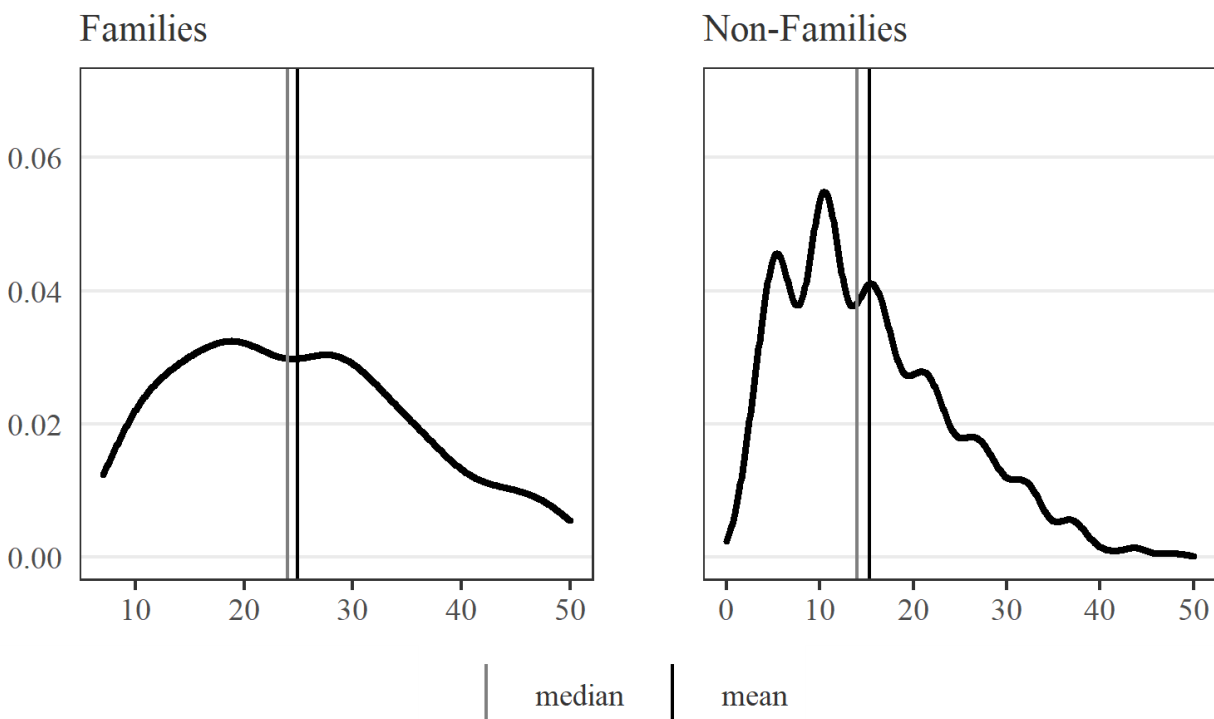
Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Table 3.1: Caste and Political Families in Uttar Pradesh, 1974-2019

	Share in UP's Population (%)	Share among MLAs in the State	Share among Political Families (%)
Upper Caste	18-20	35-45	40-50
Yadav	10-12	8-15	5-12
Non-Yadav OBC	30-32	15-25	8-15
Dalit	21-23	21-23	8-13
Muslims	16-18	8-12	17-21
Others/ Un-identified	4-5	4-5	3-5

Note: I have mentioned the share of different castes in range-format as the caste composition of MLAs and political families varies with every election. And, there is no precise estimate of a caste's share in population is available.

Figure 3.6: Upper Caste Candidates have Higher Median Assets & Criminal Record
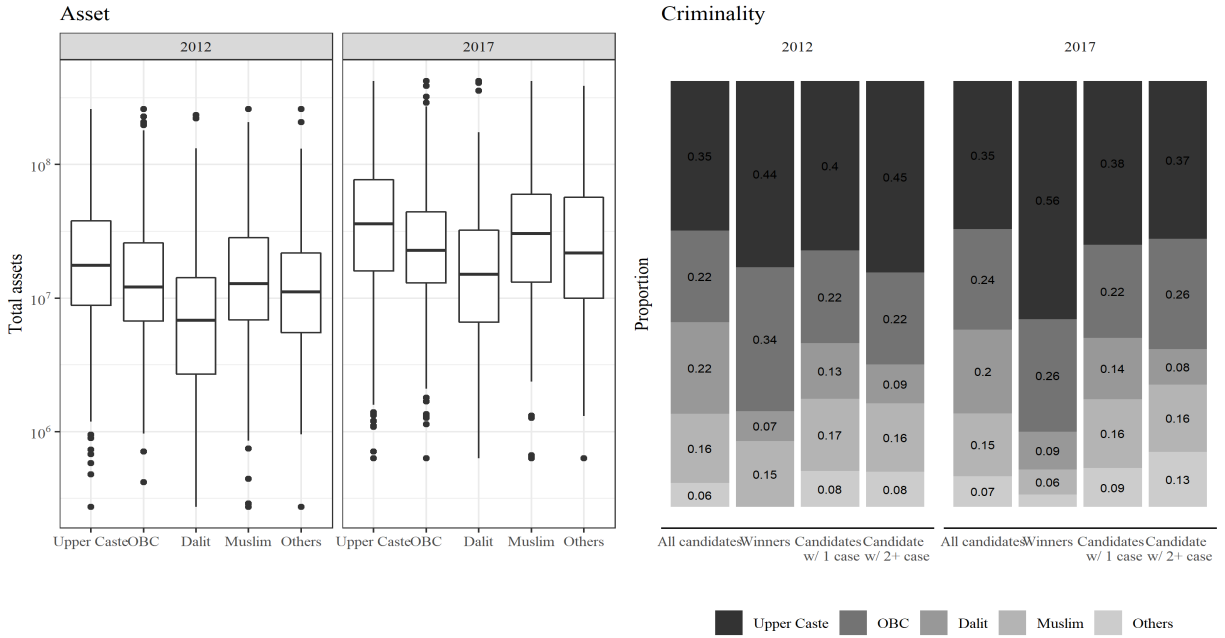
Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Figure 3.7: Political Families have Higher Land Endowment
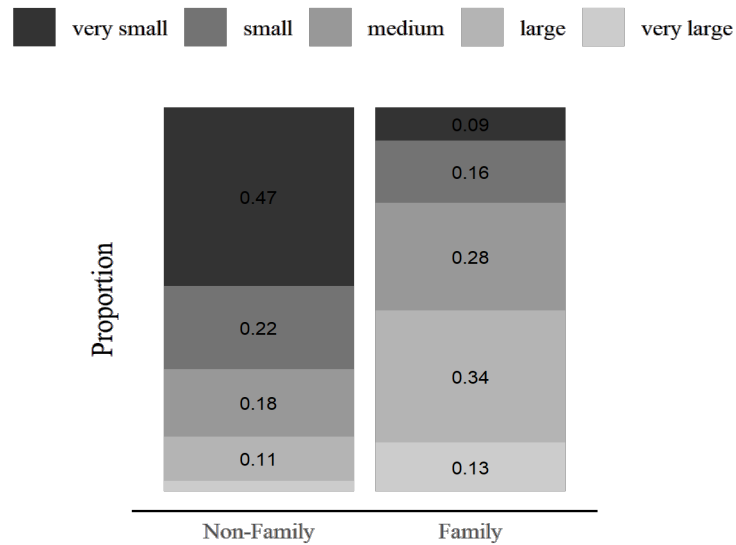
Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Figure 3.8: Higher Resource Endowment among Politically Active Taluqdari Families
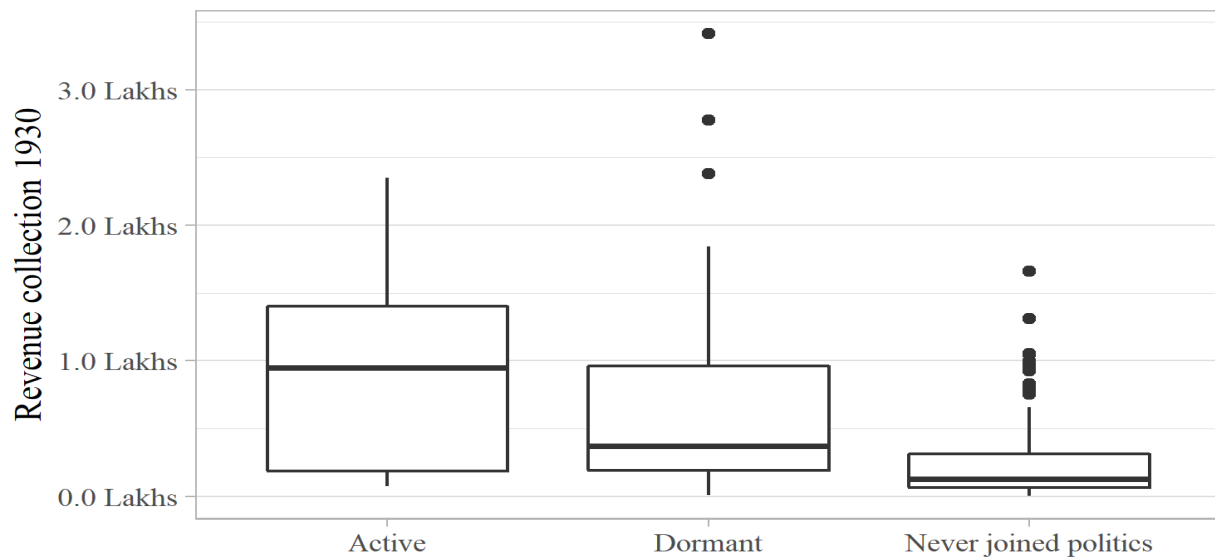
Source: List of Taluqdars, Allahabad, Pioneer Press, 1935

Table 3.2: Successful Political Families with Diverse Economic portfolio

Industries	Fam	Non-fam
Petrol Pumps	0.46	0.12
Construction & Transport	0.43	0.18
Brick klin & Sand mining	0.27	0.08
Agri business	0.07	0.11
Shops & showrooms	0.05	0.03
Small Business	0.38	0.43
Unknown	0.04	0.40

Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Figure 3.9: Political Families and Investment in Education Sector
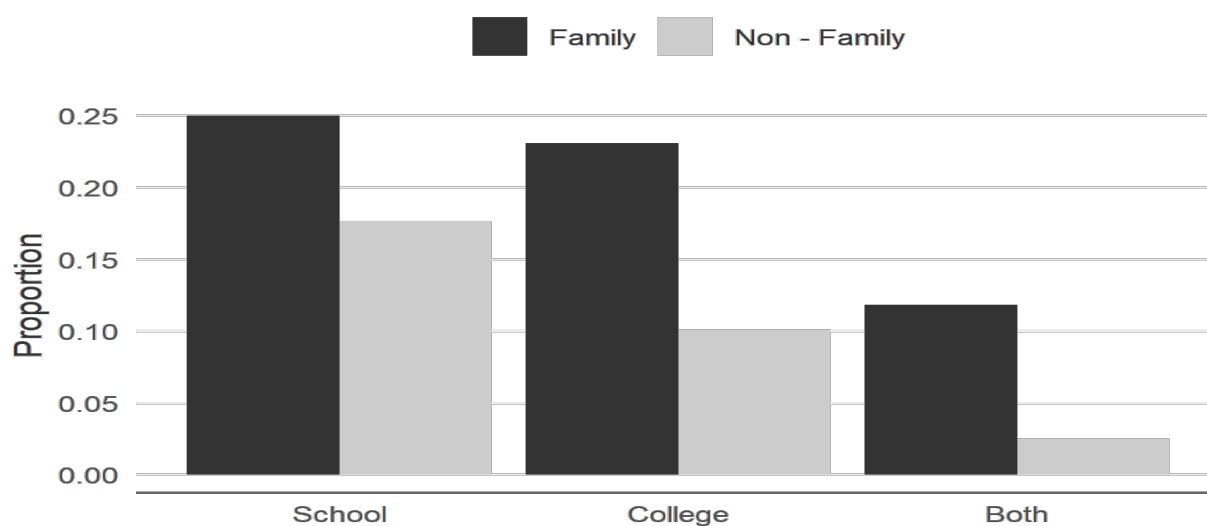
Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Figure 3.10: Higher Economic and Political Diversification Among Political Families
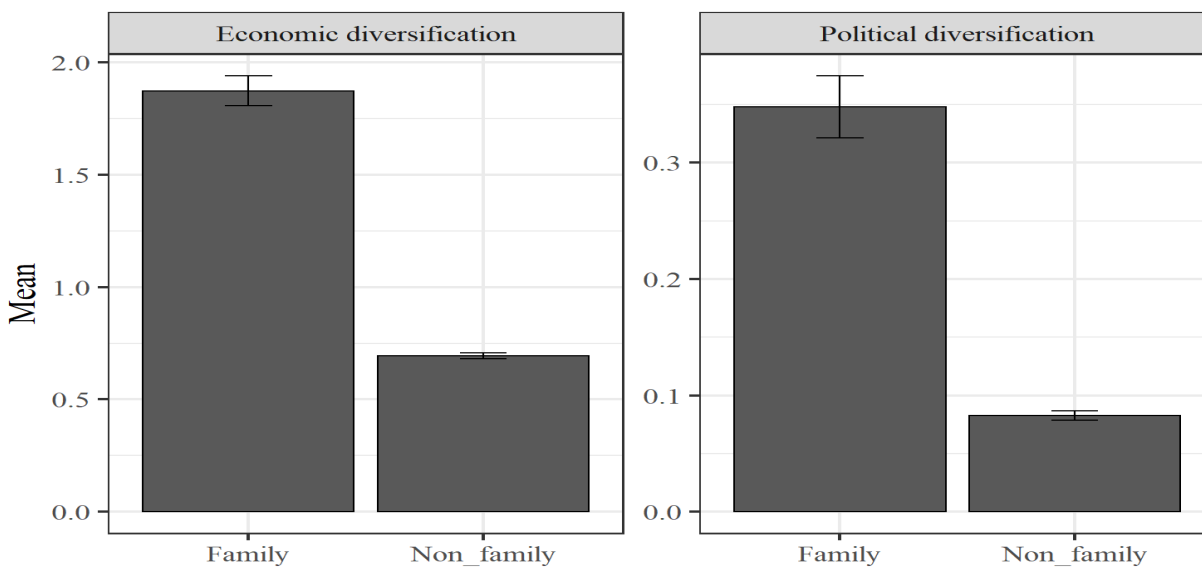
Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Table 3.3: Number of Political Families in Uttar Pradesh

	No. of families with more than two members in UP's electoral arena	No. of families with at least two members contested at AE or GE level
GE-AE-LB	33	23
GE-AE	108	108
GE-LB	6	0
GE	14	14
AE-LB	103	22
AE	155	155
LB	719	0
Total	1138	322

Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Table 3.4: Determinants of Dynastic Succession in Uttar Pradesh (1974-2019)

			Dependent variable:	
			Political Family	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Political Diversification				
(only cabinet)	0.126***	0.126***	0.127***	0.127***
	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.018)
Economic diversification	0.045***	0.036***	0.044***	0.035***
	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)
Land ownership	0.023***	0.015***	0.024***	0.016***
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Elections won by				
first member	0.003	0.0003	0.003	0.0001
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
First member - female	−0.022*	−0.036***	−0.023*	−0.038***
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Fixed effects		*Decade*	*Sub − region*	*Both*
Clustered SE	*PC*	*PC*	*PC*	*PC*
Caste control	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Observations	4,867	4,867	4,867	4,867
R^2	0.121	0.148	0.123	0.150
Adjusted R^2	0.119	0.146	0.120	0.147

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Table 3.5: Determinants of Dynastic Succession in Uttar Pradesh (2009-2019)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Dependent variable:			
	Political Family			
Assets (log)	0.043***	0.046***	0.044***	0.047***
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)
Serious crime	0.019	0.015	0.019	0.015
	(0.020)	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.019)
Turncoat	0.022	0.023	0.021	0.022
	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.025)
Fixed effects		*Year*	*Sub − region*	*Both*
Clustered SE	*PC*	*PC*	*PC*	*PC*
Caste control	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*	*Yes*
Observations	2,909	2,909	2,909	2,909
R^2	0.031	0.033	0.038	0.039
Adjusted R^2	0.029	0.030	0.034	0.035

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Chapter 4

Circulation of Elites: The Rise and Fall of Political Families

4.1 Introduction

Why do some political dynasties endure over a long period of time, whereas others decline quickly? The study of political dynasties has hitherto neglected the question of internal dynamism that impacts when and how families flourish or weaken. Political families are as internally variegated as individual politicians. I argue that viewing political dynasties as internally fixed or static entities limits our understanding of dynastic perpetuation. Afterall, political families degenerate, decline, and disappear often. Modern political families are subject to factors such as economic resources, socio-political legitimacy and a large network of influencers comprising of brokers, criminal entrepreneurs, contractors and bureaucratic agents which shapes whether a political family will continue to hold on to power or they will decline. The arguments presented here borrow from Pareto's concept of the 'circulation of elites'. Instead, I look at the circularity in power of political families as a contest among the influencers of the local political economy network, where political families are often pitched against one another.

This chapter builds on the aspects of classical elite theory with its pluralist dissenters to argue that networks of the local political economy play a huge role in diversification strategies of political families and thereby increasing or decreasing the political life span of a family. In the remainder of this chapter, I provide empirical evidence to the above mentioned claim. In section three, I classify political families in three categories – stable, rising and declining - based on their current position in the electoral arena. In section four, I show that initial resource endowment helps increase a political family's ability to diversify itself economically and politically . In section five, I use multi-variate models to show that lack of diversification plays a key role in a political family's decline. More specifically, I use event history modelling techniques to predict the rate at which political families decline. In the final segment, before concluding, I discuss new rising families. Once again, the role of initial resource endowments

and diversification strategies appears to be critical in shaping their success.

4.2 Theories of Elite Circulation

Elite influence is not thought to be 'one-off', but is usually 'continuous, regular and substantial' (Higley and Burton 2006). This means that the elites of one generation are especially predisposed towards successfully passing on their legacy. Elites perpetuate their power through land holdings, family networks, employment status, wealth, political and religious affiliation, personal history, and personality (Dasgupta and Beard 2007). The early elite studies based on the writings of Machiavelli, Pareto, Mosca, and Michels were based on three simple principles. First, power lies in the position of authority in key economic and political institutions. Second, elites are an organized minority, whereas non-elites are an unorganized majority. Third, elites have intellectual, moral, and material superiority that becomes the source of their power or influence in the society. Along with Mosca and Michels, Pareto provides one of the first studies of elites in the rapidly changing social and political environment of 19th century Europe. In consonance with the accepted view of the time, Pareto's societal elites are a class of people brought together by their superior quality of skills in their chosen activity, with little regard to their 'moral or social qualities' (Pareto, 1916/1935). These elites are imbued with certain unique psychological characteristics and driven by motivations that differentiate them from the masses. Much like his contemporaries, Pareto's understanding also underpins the exclusive status of elites, who are generally thought to be an *organised* minority class that exercises supranormal power and controls all aspects of the politics of the day.

A major contribution of Pareto's conceptualisation of elites to the discourse is the idea of circularity and motion that is inherent in elite control of society. According to him, elites of varied motivations are in contest with one another for control: the 'lions' who prioritise conservative values and morals and the 'foxes' who are practical, clever, and less ideologically restricted[1]. "Lions" tend to lose their hold over time and vacate the elite space for "foxes" to occupy. This degeneration and revival is constant and creates an internal movement that does not let elites, and by extension societies, stagnate. "It flows like a river, never being today what it was yesterday" writes Pareto (1916/1935), "From time to time sudden and violent disturbances occur. There is a flood – the river overflows its banks. Afterwards, the new governing elite again resumes its slow transformation".

In traditional societies, there were no distinct elites among the governing classes. Those who controlled society, and its politics, were the same people who controlled the primitive

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[1]Pareto uses Machiavelli's enduring metaphor of the 'lion' and the 'fox' to explain different residues that determine the nature of elite class members. He argues that "a leonine elite will be deficient in the spirit of innovation and compromise, and this shortcoming will eventually undermine its ability to keep the masses quiet; conversely, a vulpine elite will lack the will power to use force when it is needed and this will eventually erode its authority, perhaps to the point of social anarchy" (Hoffman-Lange, 2018). He does not however offer enough clarity for us to understand the cut-off for such categorisation.

state structure, and there is not much differentiation of function. On the other hand, in
modern nation-states, the diversification of economic activities, specialisation, and divisions
of power, have encouraged the emergence of new elites who control different verticals (Blondel
and Müller-Rommel, 2007). As democracies mature and the state's capacity increases, the
role of political elites gains precedence over others, but the contest between elites never
fully dissipates in highly organized societies. Some scholars have suggested that there is
a tendency among classical elite theorists, including Pareto, to be critical of democratic
movements or the style of governance. While the 'superior' qualities of these governing
elites may give them a moral right to exercise control, the elite class often creates obstacles
in development of democratic norms. Hereditary power, however, did not alone guarantee
membership within the elite, even if it did ease the path of access. Despite their notable
aversion to democracy, in suggesting that elites can degenerate and are bound to be replaced,
there is a kernel of participatory governance within the models of control offered by the
early classicists. Later models, developed in the post-World War II era, assume democratic
governance as the *sine qua non*. Elites now become a class imbued with authority and power
through their professional, not moral credentials.

Max Weber and Joseph Schumpeter sought to bridge the theoretical divide between con-
ventional conceptions of representative democracy and the dominance of elites in a demo-
cratic setting, in their works. In their view, democracy does not equate with "people's
power", only that democracy gives the voters power to authorise and occasionally depose
their leaders. These leaders might, however, be more often selected from existing elite groups,
rather than by the mass of voters. Karl Popper (1966) argued that democracy is a proce-
dure that allowed counter-elites to mobilise people and dislodge incumbent elites. In this
way, democracy facilitates the peaceful circulation of elites, while at the same time ensuring
accountability of leaders. In order to safeguard their status, representative elites tend to
become professional politicians (Weber 1958) or into a "political class" (Mosca 1939), in a
democratic set-up. This professionalisation is meant to increase their longevity in office and
give them a degree of autonomy from the electorate, by protecting them from competition
within parties and between parties.

Similarly, pluralist approach to elite theory underlines the multifarious nature of elite in
modern democratic societies. Different social structures, such as the media, the economy,
politics, and bureaucracy, develop their own form of elites, who are at the apex of these
structures by establishing their professional credentials in their own field. Robert Dahl
(1961) contributes to encouraging a more dispersed model of elite control. He suggests that
there is no single, monolithic, organised elite but rather a many political groups that exploit
different cleavages in society to gain power, and that motivates elites of different groups to
intersect with one another.The prevalence of networks, especially in the form of personal
ties, is an important characteristic of elite integration (Dahrendorf 1979, Best and Higley,
2010). Even though the perception of elites as a homogenous, organised entity has been
sufficiently disproven (Dahl 1961), the presence of cooperative networks between elites of
different kinds is key to understanding political families as dynamic entities. As Bardhan
and Mookherjee (2000) demonstrate how elites use their intricate networks to occupy various

locations of authority and to 'scale-up' their power from the community level to the regional and national level.

4.3 Political Families and their Descriptive Characteristics

I use the analytical framework discussed above to categorise these 322 political families into three groups. Some political families may have been very powerful in the first few decades after Independence in 1947, but either their power and influence have waned considerably, or the family is no longer active in politics. These could be termed as *declining* families. Similarly, some families became politically active in the last two-three decades and have been either maintaining or increasing their area of influence. These could be termed as *rising* families. And finally, some families have remained politically active since independence. While their influence may have slightly increased or decreased over time, but they still carry considerable political clout in their area. These could be termed as *stable* political families.

I operationalise the categorisation in the following manner: if no member of a political family appears in our dataset for ten consecutive years and thereafter, i.e., if they are neither a winner nor first runner-up in a state or national election, then I label them as declining. Similarly, if the founders became politically active in the 1990s or 2000s, and the second member enters the electoral arena (i.e. as a winner or first runner-up) in the last decade, i.e. after 2009, then I describe them as rising political families. Finally, the remaining entities have been defined as stable political families.[2] This criteria indicates that of 322 political families, 90 families (or 28%) have declined, 122 families (or 38%) are rising, and 110 families (or 34 %) have remained stable.

What is the caste composition of these families? We find that while upper caste members continues to have a higher share among political families across three categories, the lower castes political families tend to have made greater space for themselves among the new and rising families. As figure 4.1 shows, their share among rising and stable families is nearly a third of the total, but what is interesting is that nearly half of the declining political families are also upper caste. In contrast, the proportion of political families among the lower castes including Dalits is higher among the new and rising political families. The share of political families among the Yadavs is similar across three categories. Surprisingly, despite a declining representation of Muslim legislators in UP, they continue to have a far higher representation among stable political families in comparison to their population. However, Muslims have lower share among the rising political families. In short, while the politics of UP has undergone drastic changes in the past few decades in terms of the representation of various social groups, the proportion of upper caste political families still remained very high.

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[2]As with any cut-off, it is possible that an entity becomes a political family just before the cut-off and appear only once after the cut-off.

In the next two sections (4 and 5), we leave out the new and rising families (to which we return in section 6) and focus only families that have declined in comparison with those who have remained stable. This leaves us with 200 families – 110 remain stable (55 percent) and 90 have declined (45 percent).

4.4 Resource Endowment, Access to Networks, and Political Perpetuation

Why do upper caste have a such a high representation across the three types of political families? What explains this pattern? First, as evident in Figure 4.2, there is a clear relationship between caste and initial resource endowment (measured in terms of agricultural land holding). There is a huge body of scholarly work that has shown the advantages upper castes have in terms of landownership and that they have the highest share of earnings among all social groups from cultivation as well as from non-farm incomes. Second, the initial resource endowment plays an important role in access to networks which is exemplified by a family's ability to diversify its economic and political portfolio (Figure 4.3).

As argued in chapter 1 and 2, access to local political economy networks matters for the perpetuation of political families, and caste acts as binding glue for these networks. Caste or kinship relations substitute for trust and reciprocity mong network members. These networks create a platform for families in the diversification of economic and political portfolios, they also bring together other resources as well. For example, working with a network of bureaucrats, local businesses and contracts, not only helps the family to disburse greater patronage, but also ensures the continuous supply of campaign finance. Similarly, access to civil society network (such as journalists, lawyers, academics, social influencers among others) helps in building a positive reputation of the family among other stakeholders of the system including citizens. And access to strongmen, to whom these political families serve as protector-guardian, increases their ability to enforce authority.

Economic Diversification

In our restricted sample of 200 political families, while fifty-five percent have remained stable, forty-five percent have declined. The data presented in Table 4.1 show that the stable political families have more diversified economic portfolio, i.e., their proportion among owners of petrol pumps, brick kilns and sand mining, construction and transport, is greater than their share among declining political families.[3] Similarly, families that have declined have lesser investments in segments that help in building reputation and legitimacy such as schools, colleges, dispensaries, rest houses, among others. The analysis also indicates that stable political families are twice more likely to own both school and colleges.

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[3]It is possible that declining political families have lost a great fraction of their wealth after consecutive political defeats or in their efforts to resurrect their political career.

I further classified the economic sectors as rent-thick and non-rent-thick. In the former not only is the role of state (bureaucracy) greater, but these businesses also involve heavy cash flow. The initial resource endowment enables some families to have greater access to networks within the local bureaucracy that helps them in making higher investments in these sectors. And, such families are less likely to decline. Figure 4.4 shows that while political families that have declined have less than half their business interests in rent-thick sectors, stable political families, on the other hand, have more than two-thirds of their business interests in these sectors.[4] As pointed out earlier, rent-thick sectors are likely to generate more cash flow, which politicians are likely to make use for a variety of purposes – from paying honoraria to political workers, to buying party nomination, to financing the campaign, among other things.

Political Diversification

Families often try to diversify their political portfolio. The existing set of networks helps them in the process, and successful political diversification enables these families to access more networks and resources to access. For example, I argued in chapter 3 that despite occupying higher political positions such as MP and MLA, political families make sure that important local body positions in the area remain either within the clan or with a loyalist (Also see, chapter 5 and 6 for an elaboration of this point). Similarly, the appointment of a family member in the cabinet position or an organisational post in a mainstream party also aids in political diversification. I argue that these positions help in the greater perpetuation of political power, extraction of resources, and distribution of patronage.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, I measure political diversification across three segments – 1) whether the family contests across multiple levels – national parliament, state assembly, district council, and block council, 2) whether anyone in the family gained a position in the state cabinet, and 3) whether anyone in the family gained a position in a mainstream party organisation above the level of district executive committees. The measure of political diversification is an index of the presence of political families in binary format (present =1, absent =0).[5] Figure 4.5 shows that political diversification is higher across all three segments among stable families in comparison to the families that politically declined.

Why do some families manage to diversify politically, and how do power networks play a role in facilitating this process? Political diversification, especially when contesting multiple positions is simply undertaken to minimize electoral uncertainties in a competitive environment. It also helps roping in or pacifying politically ambitious members in the family (or long-term loyalists), who may otherwise become uncooperative. Further, if successful, it increases a political family's dominance and reputation in the local area. Similarly, gaining

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[4]An important caveat here, the analysis presented in Figure 4.4 simply allocates a business sector as rent-thick or not. We do not have data on the money value associated with each segment, so it is possible that in terms of total investments non-rent-thick sectors exceeds the rent-thick sectors.

[5]Among these 322 political families, a little over five percent families had presence across all three segments and more than one in five families had presence in at least two segments.

a ministerial berth or a significant position in the party organisation enhances the chances of a political family to contest multiple positions and vice-versa. On one hand, it creates more avenues for resource extraction, and on the other hand, such diversification creates more channels to disburse patronage. The role of power networks become very important in facilitating political diversification. They not only raise resources to finance a campaign, but also mobilise political workers and voters. As mentioned in Chapter 2, political parties also collect feedback from local district organisations and influential citizens while nominating a candidate for contesting elections on the party symbol. Similarly, appointment in the state cabinet is driven by many considerations, and balancing social (read caste) and geographic (region or district) interests and coalitions remain an important criteria. In all of these, a family's access to important networks plays a crucial role.

Access to Networks and the Life span of a Political Family

Economic and political diversification increases a family's ability to perpetuate themselves. We measure perpetuation through a family's life span defined in chapter 3 as the longitudinal life of a family – the number of years that a family have been active in politics. Since our Uttar Pradesh political family data set begins in 1974 and ends with politicians who are in term till 2024, the maximum life span of a family during this period is 50 years. In Table 4.2, we present results from an OLS model to understand the determinants of the Life span of political family. The equation for the model is as follows –

$$
\begin{aligned}
Life\ span\ of\ family = \alpha + \beta_1 Political\ Diversification + \beta_2 Economic\ diversification + \\
\beta_3 Land\ ownership + \beta_4 Years\ to\ second\ member\ entry + \\
\beta_5 Election\ won\ by\ first\ member + Z + \epsilon
\end{aligned}
$$

and where the outcome of interest Life span of a political family is a continuous variable, political diversification measures the presence of the family across three segments and is an ordinal variable, economic diversification measures investments across various sectors and is an ordinal variable, land ownership is an ordinal variable that denotes the agricultural land owned by a family, Elections won is the number of terms won by the first member of the family (Power-treatment hypothesis); second member entry measures time-lag in years, Z is caste and decade control, is the error term.

The results indicate that access to networks of political economy represented by the extent of political and economic diversification of a family is positively correlated with its life span and is statistically significant at even 0.01 level. These results are robust to controlling for the political family's initial endowment (caste and land ownership), time-lag in the entry of the second member, as well as the effect of number of electoral terms won by the family's founder.

4.5 Lack of Diversification and Decline of Political Families

What distinguishes a stable political family from the ones that have declined? In the analysis presented below, I consider political families that do not appear in our dataset for ten consecutive years as no longer politically active (declined). The main analytic technique I use for evaluating the decline of political families is event history modelling. More specifically, I use survival analysis that involves the modelling of time to event data; and in this context, an "event" is the decline of a political family.[6] Survival analysis helps in predicting the proportion of families that will survive past a certain time, and what rate will they decline or fail. I then estimate an OLS model to test these hypotheses in a multi-variate setting.

Survival Analysis

The survival function S(t), is the probability that a political family survives longer than time t. S(t) is theoretically a smooth curve, but it is usually estimated using the Kaplan–Meier (KM) curve. The graph shows the KM plot where the x-axis is time measured in years, from zero (when observation began) to the last observed time point (in our case 50 years), and the y-axis is the proportion of political families surviving. At time zero, the probability of all political surviving is 1 and as the time progresses, the line denotes the decline of a political family. We use Emily Zabor's code to estimate survival probabilities.[7]

Figure 4.6 first presents the survival probabilities of all 200 political families. It shows that within five years of becoming a political family, a quarter of them decline. It takes another twenty years for the next quarter to decline. Roughly one in four political family survives after being in politics for five decades. We then divide political families into two categories - formed before the 1990s and post-1990s – as the maximum life span that can be attained is higher for families that were formed before the 1990s. We find that the survival patterns remain same. In Figure 4.7, we estimate the survival of families by the level of economic and political diversification respectively. We categorised these two factors as low (below median) and high (above median) diversification. Not surprisingly, the results indicate that higher economic and political diversification yields greater survival probabilities.

Political Family Decline: An OLS Estimate

There could be at least two concerns with the analysis presented above. First, the relationship of particular predictors in a multi-variate setting. And second, the change in the coefficient and statistical significance if the cut-off year is changed from 2009. In Table 4.3,

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[6]More generally,for survival analysis in the survival analysis literature – traditionally only a single event occurs for each subject, after which the organism or mechanism is dead or broken. Recurring event or repeated event models relax that assumption

[7]https://www.emilyzabor.com/tutorials/survival_analysis_in_r_tutorial.html#Kaplan-Meier_plot_-_base_R

I present the results from an OLS model. Column 1 represents the results of the base-line model (i.e. using 2009 as cut-off) and in subsequent columns we change the cut-offs to 2014 (column 2) and 2004 (column 3). The total number of families included in each estimates model changes along with number of families that survives or declines. For example, column 1 has 200 families (110 survive and 90 decline), column 2 has 258 families (128 survive and 130 decline), and column 3 has 156 families (91 survive and 65 decline).

The results indicate the centrality of the diversification strategies which is a function of, and also creates greater, access to local political economy networks. We find that political and economic diversification is negatively correlated with political families that have declined. Both the political and economic diversification is statistically significant at 0.01 level across three models. The results are robust even after controlling for the time-lag in second member's entry or election won by the founder of the political family, the lack of economic and political diversification leads to a political family's decline.

4.6 Rising Families and Circulation of Elites

As discussed in section 2 of this chapter, the elite club is a dynamic entity. The power and influence of some elites decline and create space for the entry of new ones. Similarly, the decline of some political families also paves the way for the entry of new and aspiring families. This is not to suggest that the decline of political families is caused by these rising families. They may be a contributing factor, but at least in our case, the rising and declining families do not always geographically overlap.

What is the social composition of these new and rising families? And what explains their rise? The upper castes continue to dominate even among the new and rising familie,s with every two of the five political families from upper caste communities. The share of lower caste Hindus (OBCs and Dalits) among the rising families is slightly higher than these communities' share among stable or declining families. In case of Muslims, it is the opposite, i.e., their proportion among new families is lower in comparison to the stable or declining families. The data presented in Figure 4.8 and 4.9 shows that the route to political perpetuation for these new families remains pretty much the same. In Figure 4.8, I present candidates' declared data of their assets in official affidavit for the last two assembly elections (2012 and 2017) and the last two Lok Sabha elections (2014 and 2019) to show that the median assets of a rising family is slightly higher than candidates who do not come from political families, and slightly lower than candidates representing stable political families. Similarly, economic and political diversification among the rising families is slightly lower than stable families (Figure 4.9), but at least twice as high in comparison to non-political families.

This suggests that rising political families have not been able to align with the networks of the local political economy as much as the stable political families have managed to do. However, as they widen and deepen the extent of their clout in successive elections, and

related control, by entrenching themselves in the local political economy, many of them will
succeed in perpetuating themselves, and others will slowly move into political oblivion.

4.7   Conclusion

Using the framework of elite circulation, I have shown in this chapter that political families
are dynamic entities and their strength varies over-time. While some families managed to
withstand the leaner period, others failed and got relegated to political oblivion. We find
that families that were able to successfully integrate themselves with the networks, controlled
the local political economy. In spite of being embedded in their context and having enjoyed
success, families may ultimately degenerate and disappear. And by forging ties and affecting
perverse cooperation with such elites, newer political families continue to appear on the
scene.

In the following chapters, I first use examples from political families in Saharanpur dis-
trict of Uttar Pradesh to show how the circulation of political families takes shape in com-
petitive polities. Though two families in Saharanpur could trace their political lineage to
pre-independence India, their influence remain largely limited to the district politics, or at
peak of their political power, to a few districts in western Uttar Pradesh. In chapter six, I
provide an in-depth biography of Mulayam Singh Yadav and his family, the patriarch of one
of the most powerful clans, to exhibit how some families scale up their political perpetuation
from the local to the state to the national level.

Figure 4.1: Caste-community Distribution of Political Families
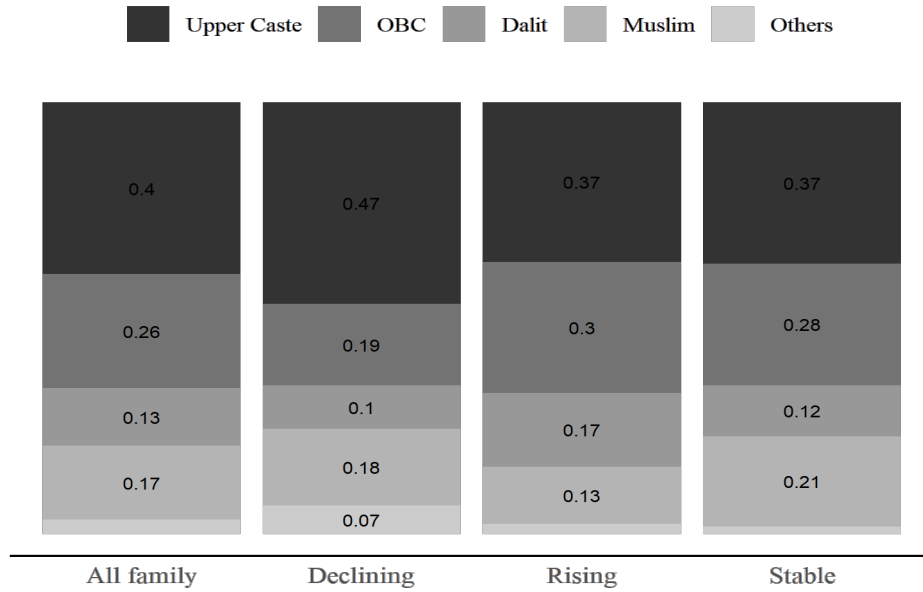
Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Figure 4.2: Caste and Agricultural Land holding
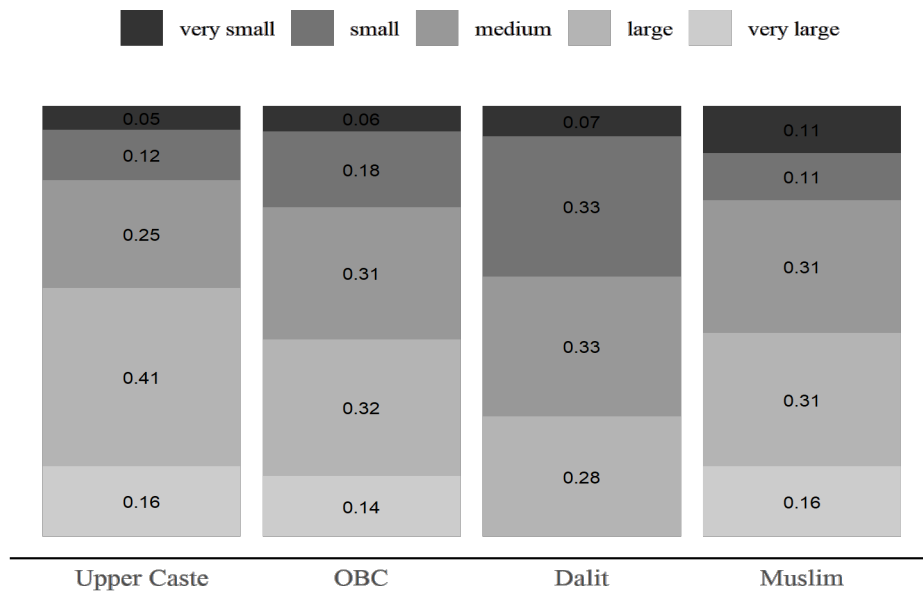
Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Figure 4.3: Landholding and Portfolio Diversification
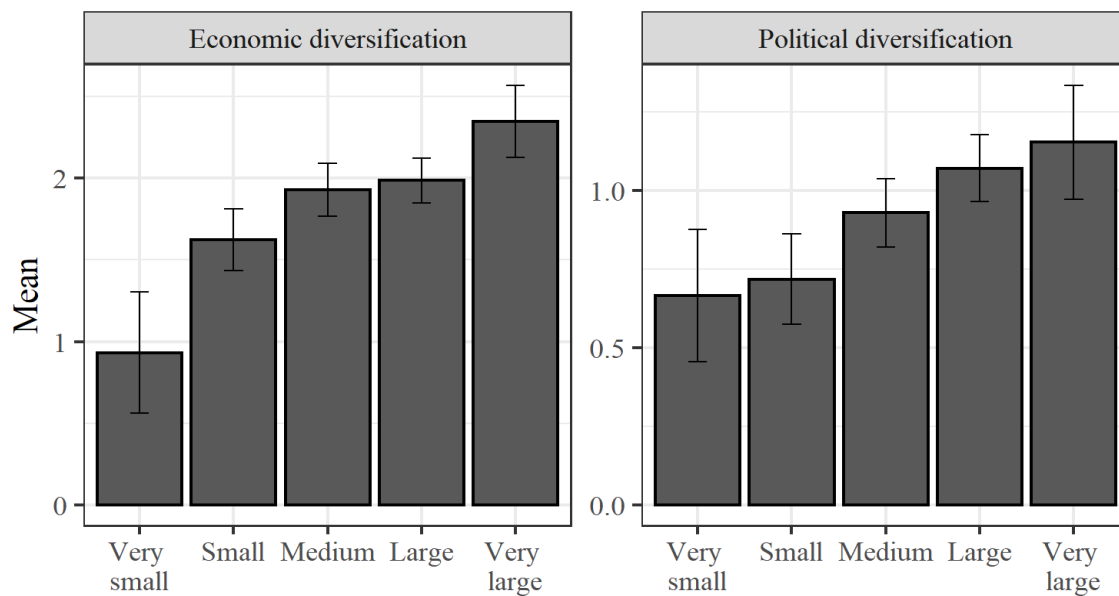
Table 4.1: Diversification of Economic Portfolio

family class	Petrol Pumps	Construction & Transport	Brick klin & Sand mining	Agri business	Shops & showrooms	Small business	Unknown
Stable	0.67	0.62	0.71	0.64	0.58	0.42	0.12
Declining	0.33	0.38	0.29	0.36	0.42	0.58	0.88

Figure 4.4: Political Families and Rent-Thick Investments
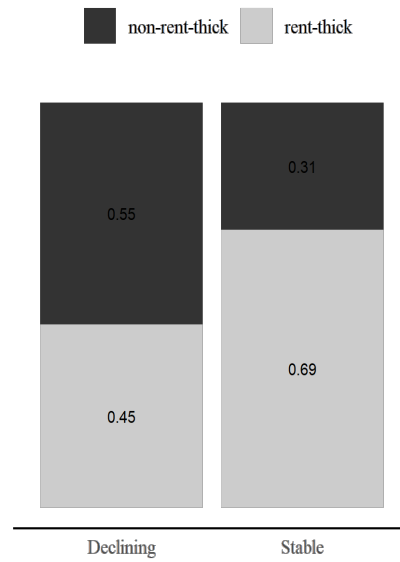
Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Figure 4.5: Diversification of Political Portfolio among Families
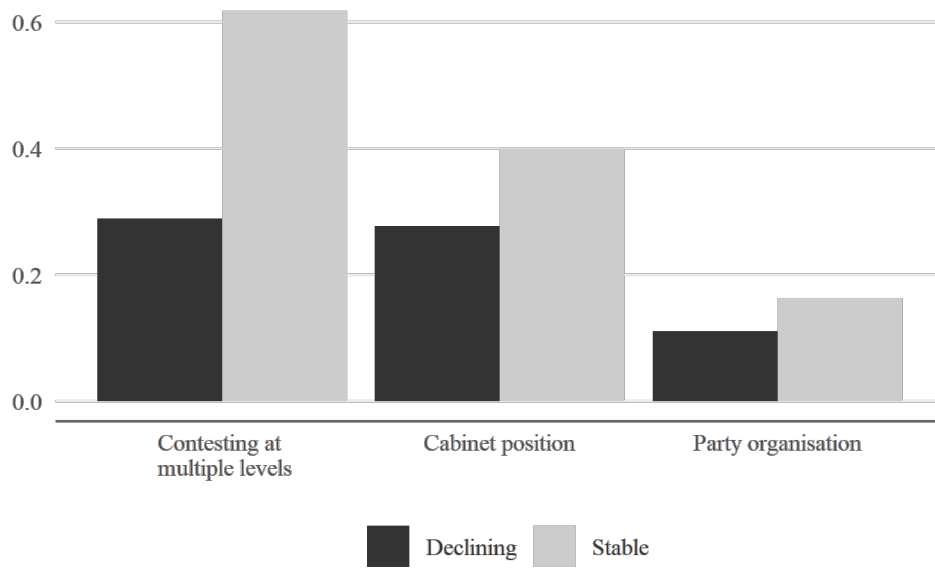
Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Table 4.2: Determinants of Political Family's Life Span

	Dependent variable:
	Family life span
Political diversification	2.457*** (0.717)
Economic diversification	2.371*** (0.515)
Land ownership	−0.393 (0.556)
Years to second member entry	−0.182 (0.134)
Elections won by founder	3.091*** (0.390)
Caste control	*Yes*
Decade control	*Yes*
Observations	200
R^2	0.497
Adjusted R^2	0.462

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Figure 4.6: Survival Probabilities of Political Families
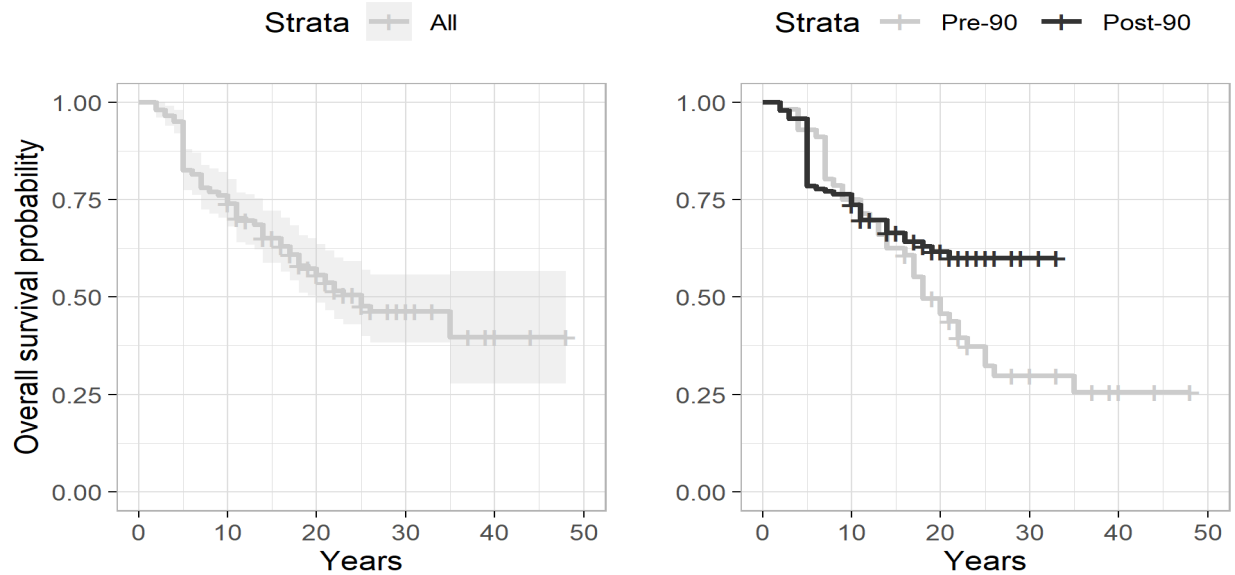
Figure 4.7: Portfolio Diversification and Survival Probabilities of Political Families
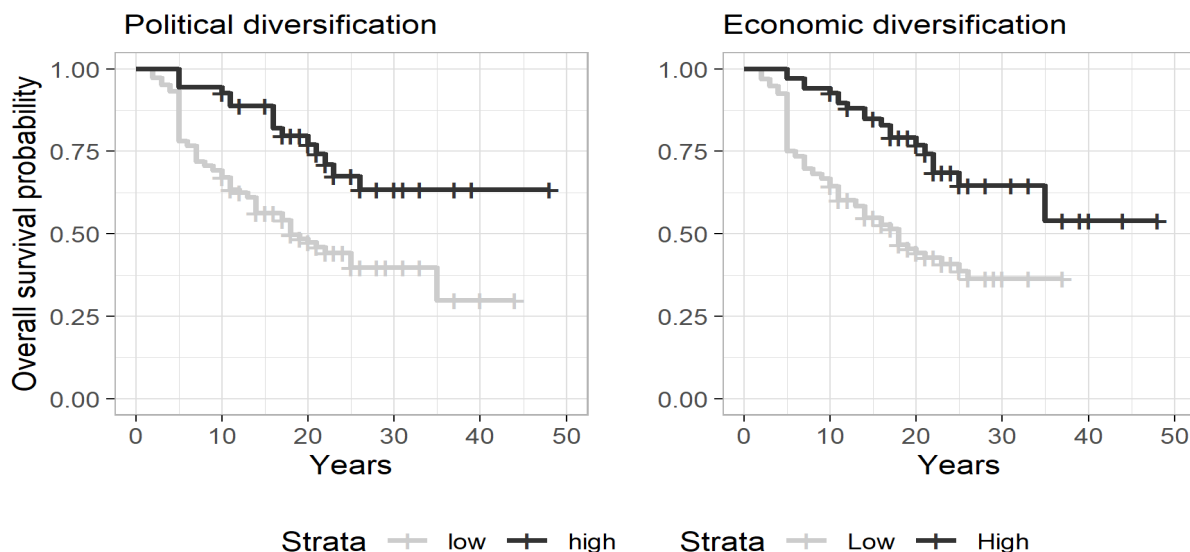
Table 4.3: Decline of Political Families: An OLS model

	DV: Family decline		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Political diversification	0.169***	0.113**	0.171***
	(0.055)	(0.051)	(0.063)
Economic diversification	0.102***	0.089***	0.092***
	(0.029)	(0.026)	(0.032)
Land ownership	−0.006	−0.0001	−0.006
	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.008)
Years to second member entry	−0.026	−0.023	−0.016
	(0.030)	(0.028)	(0.037)
Elections won by founder	0.045**	0.061***	0.042
	(0.021)	(0.019)	(0.026)
Cut-off years	2009	2014	2004
Caste control	Yes	Yes	Yes
Decade control	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	200	258	156

Note: $^{*}p<0.1$; $^{**}p<0.05$; $^{***}p<0.01$

Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Figure 4.8: Total Assets of Rising Families vis-à-vis Stable Families
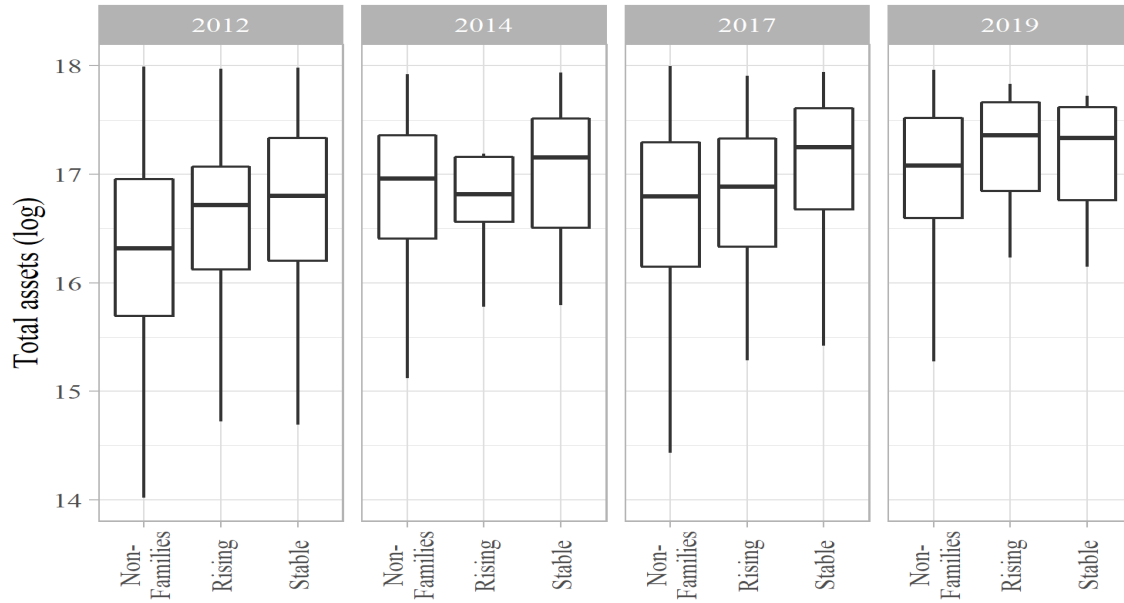
Source:Association for Democratic Reforms

Figure 4.9: Rising Families and Portfolio Diversification
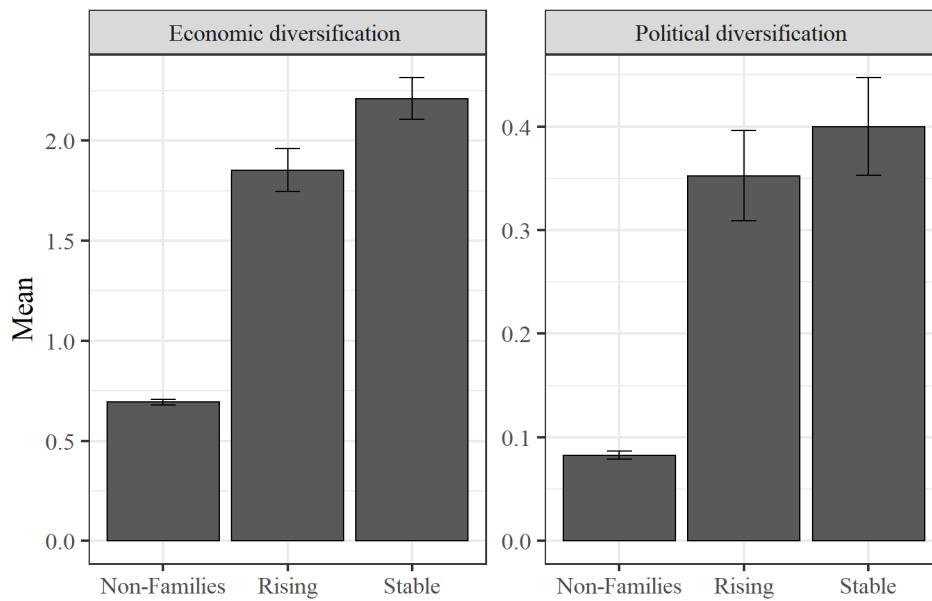
Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Families Dataset, 1974-2019

Chapter 5

Building Networks of Power: Political Families in Saharanpur District

5.1 Introduction

Why do some political families manage to expand their area of influence, while others shrink? And how do some families manage to revive themselves after witnessing a period of slump in their political fortunes? I suggest that in competitive democracies political families in their long electoral carrier are likely to undergo a period of inevitable slump in their long electoral careers. The critical question is whether they manage to withstand electoral losses and revive or not. I argue that the longevity of political families depends on two factors: the strength of elite network ties and the level of economic and political diversification. Initial resource endowment (in the form of land and capital) and social status of the family (such as being the member of a dominant caste) provides a platform for the formation of political dynasties. But it is the continual growth opportunities provided by the interaction of these factors that ensures the perpetuation of political power. Some political families manage to take advantage of these initial resource endowments and nurture a network of elites under their patronage. This relationship works both ways: network members look up to the political family for kickbacks by using state resources, such as government contracts, while political families gain by having more influence, campaign finance resources and mobilizational capacity during elections.

In the following sections, I present a case study of the Nakur-Gangoh region of Saharanpur district in western Uttar Pradesh. This region has been home to some of the most successful political families of UP, and has a long history of dynastic succession. I study three prominent families from Saharanpur district - the Masoods (politically stable), the Chaudharys (declining), and the Kanwarpal family (rising) to build on the evidence provided in the previous chapters. Especially the first two families, provide us with an illustrative exam-

ple of the processes which allow some families to succeed, while forcing others into political irrelevance. Both families continue to have very large agricultural landholding and are easily among the district top one percent landowners in the district. Both families also command very high social status within their respective caste communities – the Masoods belong to a priestly clan among Muslims, whereas the Chaudharys have remained the informal head of their *Gujjar* (a jati among Hindus) clan, for more than a century. Both families also contested their first state assembly elections in the 1950s and continue to have influence in the district politics, but the Masoods have significantly higher influence now than the Chaudharys do.

I first begin with a broad overview of political families in the district. Then I uncover the mechanisations at work behind creating a long legacy, why some families manage to revive, and the others decline with no signs of recovery, through a discussion about the Masoods and the Chaudharys,. I finally conclude with a brief discussion on three new and rising families in the district.

5.2 Political Families in Saharanpur

Saharanpur is one of the most developed districts of Uttar Pradesh with a literacy rate around 76 percent. It is in the north-west corner of UP and shares border with states of Haryana and Uttarakhand. Historically, Saharanpur had a village-based colonial land tenure system.[1] Electorally, the district is represented by one parliamentary seat and seven state assembly segments (See Figure 1)[2]. The assembly segments of Nakur and Gangoh are part of the neighbouring Kairana parliamentary constituency. Hindus and Muslims are the two largest religious denominations with roughly equal proportion. The Gujjars, a caste group among Hindus, are the dominant agrarian community in the Nakur-Gangoh part, while Rajputs have a sizeable presence in the Doband-Muzzafarabad belt of the district.

Saharanpur and the region of western UP have been home to some of the most prominent political families of the state. Foremost among these would be India's former Prime Minister Chaudhary Charan Singh, whose legacy was inherited by his son Ajit Singh first, and continues through his grandson Jayant Singh.[3] Apart from them, the region is peppered with many other political families with varying degrees of electoral success. The Hasans, the Kadir Rana family, and the Hukum Singh family in Muzzafarnagar, and the Manzoors and the Akhlaqs in Meerut, have a long electoral history with multiple members contesting at different levels.

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[1]In the village-based arrangements, village bodies had joint ownership of the land and joint liability of the revenue.

[2]One assembly segment is reserved for the Scheduled Castes (SC) after the fourth delimitation of constituency boundaries in 2008. Before this, two assembly segments in the district were SC reserved.

[3]Charan Singh had a very short stint as the Prime Minister in 1979 and Ajit Singh was several-term MP and minister in the union cabinet.

The Masoods and the Chaudharys are among the oldest political families, not just in Saharanpur district, but in the western region of UP. There are other political families in the district too. A case in point is the Ranas who rose to political prominence in the 1990s. There are other new entrants like Raghav Lakhanpal Sharma (former MP from Saharanpur) and Pradeep Chaudhary (current MP from Kairana) who are carrying forward their family legacy. We discuss briefly about them in section 4.6. However, not all bids for political family formation are fruitfully realised though. Ram Sharan Das' family is a case in point. He was the state leader of the Samajwadi Party, had close ties with Ram Manohar Lohia and was a long-time associate of Mulayam Singh Yadav since his early days. Despite these credentials, Ram Sharan's son has found it hard to even get party nomination to contest assembly elections.[4] Similarly, Bimla Rakesh and Shakuntala Devi, important Dalit politicians from the district who had been active in politics since at least the 1960s, were unable to make space for successors to carry forward their legacy, despite having been elected as MLA for five and four terms respectively.[5]

The inability of these politicians to form successful political families reveals some underlying similarities between those who do succeed. First, successful political families most often have high resource endowment. In comparison to other elites in their area who are aspiring to contest elections, these politicians own substantively more land and capital. Second, being significantly well-off gives these leaders an opportunity to emerge as community leaders. Thus, even before taking the electoral plunge, many of these candidates secure some level of mobilizational capacity. These two points impose some initial qualifying conditions: often, leaders with resources and influence belong to dominant castes. In the highly unequal social schema, lower castes such as Dalits, do not have the opportunity to accumulate these resources. Thus, Dalit politicians, even when they become electorally successful themselves, find it more challenging to pass on their political legacies. It also hampers their ability to withstand electoral setbacks and thus makes them more vulnerable to events beyond their control, such as declining party fortunes or atrophy in their elite network base.

In many ways, the discussion above allows us to conceive of Saharanpur as a microcosm for UP politics. The long legacy of some political families and declining fortunes of others suggests that political families too remain vulnerable at the polls, and no success is absolute. Saharanpur politics is thus a fertile ground to understand the processes which ensure the maximisation of success, and the causes that interrupt this process. In this following section, I explore the political fortunes of the Masoods and the Chaudharys in further detail.

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[4]Interview with Sharan's son Jagpal Das, June 2021.

[5]Bimla Rakesh and Shakuntala Devi were also multiple times first runners-up. On the other hand, Ram Swaroop Nim, another Dalit politician who won the 1985 assembly election, his son Devendra Nim's only victory came in the 2017 assembly election contesting on a BJP ticket. The party won three-fourths majority in this election.

5.3   The Masoods and the Chaudharys

In a network analysis of elites, a crucial role is given to the central actor which connects the multiple parts of a network. For example, Padgett and Ansell's (1993) work on the social and economic ties between different families of Renaissance era Florence, shows the importance of the Medici family and their ability to manage extensive ties among different networks, including two separate groups of families.[6] In the same way, I argue that the Masoods and Chaudharys have remained the two central nodes as they connected multiple networks having influence in the district's political economy. Table 6.1 provides an electoral history of both these families.

The Masoods of Gangoh

The Masood family has been in active electoral politics since 1957. While unsuccessful for the first two times that he contested, Qazi Masood was finally elected as an MLA in 1969. He contested all three elections in the Nakur assembly constituency as an independent candidate, i.e., without a party label. After this, Qazi's younger son Rasheed Masood, entered the electoral fray in 1974 but lost to Chaudhary Yashpal Singh of the Indian National Congress (INC). Though even Rashid Masood too began as an independent, success in the parliamentary elections perhaps required the help of established networks and greater resources, which was made possible by joining an established political outfit, like the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD), a party formed by Chaudhary Charan Singh.

The 1977 Lok Sabha elections conducted after the internal emergency was lifted, began a series of electoral successes for Rasheed Masood, often under the banner of different political parties. He repeated the feat in 1980, 1989, and 1991 Lok Sabha elections, only losing the 1984 elections to Chaudhary Yashapal Singh, who had contested a parliamentary election for the time. Rasheed Masood was then elected to the Rajya Sabha (the upper house of the parliament) in 1986 and served in the Union Cabinet for a brief period in 1990. However, after this he lost three consecutive Lok Sabha elections in 1996, 1998 and 1999. His last election victory came in 2004 as the Samajwadi Party candidate. And he and was party's official candidate to represent a coalition of opposition of parties (UNPA) in 2007 for the post of the Vice President of India. The UNPA could not muster enough support in favour of their candidate.

In 2009, the SP nominated him from Saharanpur and his son Shadan Masood from the neighbouring Kairana Lok Sabha constituency. However, the father-son duo lost their respective elections. In 2010, Masood was again elected to the Rajya Sabha in 2010 and also got appointed as the national vice president of the Samajwadi Party. In 2012 Masood resigned from the SP (and the Rajya Sabha) to join the Congress party, where he was again elected to the Rajya Sabha in 2013 and was made a special invitee to the Congress Working Committee (CWC), the party's national executive. In 2013, he was disqualified from the

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[6]In contemporary China, top political elites derive their power from being at this central interstice between different co-worker networks (Keller 2016).

parliament after being convicted in a corruption charge and it effectively put an end to his long career in politics. [7]

While Rasheed was climbing the ladders in national politics, his family made deep penetrations in local politics (See Figure 6.2). His elder brother Rashid Masood, continued winning at the family's home turf and served as the chairman of the Gangoh municipality (Nagar Palika), a seat that had been under the tutelage of Rashid's son Noman Masood since the early 2000s. Similarly, Noman's brother and Rasheed's nephew Imran Masood first became the chairman of the Saharanpur Municipal Corporation in 2005 and was later elected to the state assembly in 2007. In some ways, Imran Masood emerged as the heir to Rasheed Masood's political legacy, at least in the public perception, especially when he managed to get three nominations for his supporters from the Congress party for the 2012 assembly elections - Pradeep Chaudhary from Gangoh and Naresh Saini from Behat, and Imran himself from Nakur. Though Naresh and Imran narrowly lost; Pradeep Chaudhary won.[8]

The Masoods, however, had a fallout before the 2014 Lok Sabha elections after Rasheed Masood compelled the SP leadership to change the party's official candidate from Saharanpur - Imran to his son Shadan. Imran then contested as the Congress candidate and emerged as a runner up, while Shadan was relegated to the fourth position.[9] Since then Imran and his brother Noman lost 2017 assembly elections from Nakur and Gangoh respectively. Imran also lost the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, despite the family getting re-united. Despite these recent electoral setbacks, Imran has continued to consolidate his position by gaining an important position in the Congress party's national organisational hierarchy.

The Chaudharys of Titron

Unlike the Masoods who still exert influence in the district, the Chaudharys of Titron, once a powerful Gujjar family, are fighting an uphill battle for continued relevance. The patriarch of this family, Chaudhary Yashpal Singh, was a one-term MP, several term MLA, and had brief stints as a minister in the state cabinet in the 1970s and 1980s. Yashpal carried the mantle of his uncle, Chaudhary Data Ram who was elected as an MLA from the Nakur seat in 1952 and 1957 (See Figure 6.3). Yashpal was first elected in 1962. From the 1950s to the mid-1990s, the family remained with the Congress party.[10] In 1984, he made a successful bid for the Saharanpur Lok Sabha constituency, at the height of the conflict between Masoods and Chaudharys to consolidate their position in district politics.

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[7].This was the first time an elected member of the parliament was disqualified in the history of independent India.

[8]Many informants in the field confirmed that both Pradeep Chaudhary and Naresh Saini were supporters of Imran Masood at that time.

[9]Imran Masood became infamous for threatening Narendra Modi, then BJP's prime ministerial candidate, in an election rally. Though he was arrested for his remarks and later acquitted, the speech helped him in becoming the main face of the Congress party in the district.

[10]Since the mid-1990s, the Chaudhary family switched their political allegiance multiple times.

In the 1989 and 1991 Lok Sabha elections, Yashpal lost the Lok election to Masood while his nephew Sushil Chaudhary lost their long-held assembly seat in Nakur to Kanwarpal (Pradeep Chaudhary's father). In fact, in the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, Yashapl was relegated to the third position and won less than one-sixth of total votes polled, losing his security deposit. This forced Yashpal to focus on winning back the assembly constituency and forego his Lok Sabha plans. He won the Nakur assembly seat in 1993, and but in the mid-term election that followed in 1996, Sushil lost the election by a small margin to Kanwarpal. Sushil won the seat against Kanwarpal's son Pradeep Chaudhary during the 2002 assembly. [11] Yashpal Chaudhary once again made an unsuccessful bid during the 2004 Lok Sabha election which was won by Rashid Masood, and Yashpal stood at third position.

However, by this time an internal power struggle began within the family. Both Sushil Chaudhary and Yashpal's younger son, Indrasen Chaudhary contested against against Pradeep Chaudhary in the 2007 assembly elections . Interestingly, all three lost and another candidate won. Since then, his two sons - Rudrasen Chaudhary and Indrasen Chaudhary – have managed to get the party nomination and have alternatively contested the seat but failed to win an election in a long time now.[12] They family has also not directly won local body elections for more than a decade, and even the chairmanship of the home-turf of Titron town area (nagar panchayat) is too not with the family, thus facing the difficult task of rehabilitating themselves in the district's politics.

These two case studies indicate much like the similarities in their initial resource endowment and social status, both the Masoods and the Chaudharys witnessed the dwindling of their political fortunes in the mid-nineties. Both families also faced internal rifts, and both got a ray of hope of electoral revival in the early 2000s . The Masoods managed to capitalise on those gains, whereas the Chaudharys continue to struggle.

5.4   Political Economy Networks and Resource Accumulation

I have argued in previous chapters that networks of local power play a huge role in shaping the longevity of political families. With the help of these networks, political families continue to further diversify their political and economic portfolios. This diversification helps families to withstand economic shocks (or losses) and electoral setbacks. These networks are composed of elites representing various segments of the local political economy - local bureaucrats, businessmen, contractors, party officials, and strongmen, among others. The network members are invested in the success of these families as long as it continues to serve their interests, such as access to the state (businessmen), rent sharing (local bureaucrats), government tenders (contractors), patronage (party officials), and protection (strongmen).

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[11]Kanwarpal died in 2000 necessitating a by-poll in Nakurseat which Pradeep Chaudhary won.

[12]Yashpal Singh served as the national vice president of the Samajwadi party in 2012.

This network also helps political families during elections in resource accumulation (both electoral and financial) and in building political reputation.

I explore this mechanism through the case study of the Masood and the Chaudhary family as both started their political journey simultaneously. In fact, it is the Chaudhary family which has the initial advantage, with Data Ram winning the assembly election against Qazi Masood in 1957. Both families made attempts to diversify into parliamentary and local elections, and both eventually faced a slump in the 1990s. While the Masoods managed to revive, the Chaudharys now face the threat of irrelevance in the district politics. Similarly, the income through large agricultural landholdings was their main source of revenue generation. In the late 1980s, both families started diversifying their economic base - in both legal and illegal sphere.[13] The Masoods began with petrol pumps and moved towards construction and transport business, later. The Chaudharys too invested in petrol pumps, but their business related to paper mills failed after initial success.

The local economy of Saharanpur is primarily dependent on agriculture and allied services. The district falls in the sugar belt of western Uttar Pradesh and sugar cane farming is the most important commercial agricultural activity in the region. A whole range of allied service industries related to sugar manufacturing is also present in the district. The district has been also famous for its woodwork and crafts. In addition to this, due to increasing construction-related activities, numerous illegal sand mining spots have sprung come up in the plain riverbed of the Yamuna River. The river marks a natural border between UP and Haryana, and as the district is situated at this border, rents from sand mining are now an important source of revenue for local politicians.

Through in-depth interviews with many actors playing a crucial role in the local political economy, I was able to piece together a broad map of rent-extraction for the local politicians. While legal businesses of politician's do exist, these ventures are only a small part of their overall earning. The major portion of resources is cornered through less-than-legal means. These included capturing and reselling disputed properties, rent extraction from the local factories, allocating government tenders including the railways, to loyalists, and taking a cut from extortion and kidnapping syndicates (more prevalent in the 2000s). While all major politicians are involved in some form of rent-seeking activities, the extent to which they can patronise, and extract varies greatly. My respondents informed me that it is through their embedded relations in diverse economic activities in the area, that the Masood family not only cemented their position in the district's politics, but they were also placed in a better position to face temporary electoral losses.

The Masood family, on securing a seat in the national parliament, move a part of their family base in the city, close to the Saharanpur district headquarters.[14] In addition to being the administrative centre of the district it is also the centre of economic activity. By shifting and locating themselves in this urban space, the Masoods managed to bring themselves closer

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[13]Interview with a local journalist in Saharanpur. March, 2020

[14]The district is made up of four towns and more than 300 villages. The Saharanpur city is by far the largest of these administrative units and has a population upward of seven lakh residents.

to the business operations that were coming up across the districts of western UP. While the economy continues to remain largely agriculture based, the post-2000s witnessed a significant construction boom, in both the private sector as well as in the government departments. Politicians in many parts of the country used this opportunity to gain access to government contracts, nurture connections with contractors (and strongmen) and accumulated greater financial resources.

The Masoods, who were firmly integrated in the city's politics, which helped Imran Masood become the chairman of the municipal corporation in 2002, were better placed to take advantage of this emerging economy. It is commonly known that the family not only continues to make hefty rents from the sand-mining activities, but they also generated resources through settling property disputes in the city's prime areas. The Chaudharys were more engaged in settling such disputes closer home where rent-extraction was meagre compared to the city. Furthermore, as one informant told me, that perhaps the Masoods profited much from the same business of settling property related disputes than the Chaudharys did. And it was not simply a matter of the location of property or deal making skills, but because with the help of their wider network among city's business entrepreneurs, the Masoods could patiently wait for the right bargain. The Chaudharys had access to a much smaller network, and thus were more risk averse.

On the other hand, because of their failure to integrate themselves into city's life and politics, the Chaudhary family was not able to continuously diversify their economic portfolio like the Masoods did. Similarly, they were also not able to spread their political influence much beyond their immediate geographical boundaries. When the inevitable turn in political fortunes hits them, they were unprepared. The failure of some business ventures created further economic losses. The lack of diversification meant that the economic resource base, some of whose elements were rooted in political power, suffered. For example, Saharanpur continues to have seven sugar mills, but many of them got privatised in the 1990s and 2000s. Earlier, the Chaudharys could route some patronage benefits through these sugar mills, but that platform diminished after privatisation. Slowly, both their economic resource surplus and political influence waned. In the end, they are now reduced to being just big landowners, as opposed to their earlier position of eminence. The changing fortune in economic wealth is also reflected in the total assets declared by the members of the Masood and Chaudhary family in their election affidavits (See Table 6.2)

5.5 Political Diversification and Greater Network Access

While resource accumulation creates wealth, which is an end in itself, in terms of enhancing the political life span of the family, it has other more important uses. First, it creates economic resources required to contest at multiple levels and continue contesting even after some electoral losses. Recent research has consistently pointed towards the increasing influence of

money and wealth in Indian politics. Politicians with a higher resource availability are not
only in better position to get (buy) nominations for themselves, but they are also able to in-
fluence other important actors during the election campaign with money during the election
campaign (Brojkman 2016). Similarly, there is also some evidence to suggest that the show
of wealth, especially during campaigns, helps politicians in presenting a more credible and
competitive face (Chauchard et al. 2019). Their resource base along with the support of
elite networks, enables some political families manage to adapt quickly to electoral setback.
After electoral setbacks in the mid-1990s, both the Masoods and the Chaudharys showed a
great flexibility to move around, geographically as well as between parties. As mentioned
earlier, the Masoods managed to revive, but the Chaudharys continue to struggle.

After the continuous Lok Sabha losses of Rasheed Masood, the next generation of Masood
politicians – Noman and Imran – turn their attention to the local municipality politics.
Because they are already familiar with the city politics, it was not difficult for them to carve
out a space for themselves in that environment. With the help of their uncle's legacy and
network, and through greater control of local businesses, the nephews successfully embedded
themselves in the local urban body. Thus, while their careers at the state or national level
awaited take off, they did not lose precious political legacy and networks. Rather, they
made themselves locally relevant and important for the emerging political economy network.
Rasheed Masood too took similar risks after the loss in 1974. Since competition for the Nakur
seat was always intense, courtesy Yashpal Chaudhary, Rasheed instead made a move towards
national politics and gained greater access to elite networks, even outside Saharanpur.

Interestingly, despite electoral losses, Rasheed Masood family to maintain his prominent
position in every party organisation he joined. During this time, he is also known to have
had substantial influence in deciding the party nomination in the district. The same is true
for his nephew Imran, who is reported to have influenced the choice of candidates in all seven
seats during the 2017 assembly elections. Rasheed also managed to get his son and grandson
elected to prominent positions within local cooperatives. When politicians continue to hold
on to local power centres, political parties too continue to patronise the family. Why do
party organisations sometime choose to patronise a political family going through a period
of slump? I argue that cooperation with different social elites, such as civil society members,
prominent community leaders and with a larger cross-section of allies allows families to
create lasting reputation for themselves. And political parties want to continue harnessing
this reputation for gains elsewhere even when the family is facing temporal electoral setbacks.

The case of the Masood family illustrates this point well. They have strong ties among
the Muslim community, often overseeing the building of *madrasas* [schools meant exclusively
for Muslim children] and in close contact with the local community leadership. In addi-
tion to this, they have also taken efforts to cultivate close ties with politicians of different
communities, even supporting them during elections - the Kanwarpal family (Gujjars), the
Ranas (Rajputs), Sanjay Garg (several term MLA representing Sharanpur City, Bania),
Naresh Saini (Sainis), among others. Similarly, their integration in the city's politics, cre-
ated greater opportunities for the Masood family. The had greater access to civil society
networks (journalists and lawyers), local bureaucracy and businesses, among others. And

all these further enhanced their reputation to enable to take over the mantle of Muslim leadership for the entire district. Furthermore, India's urban centres are more likely to see conflict between Hindus and Muslims (Varshney 2002, Wilkinson 2004). In the post-1990s, with the rise of the BJP, Hindu-Muslim tensions have become more frequent with the rise of Hindutva politics in the region. Such tensions create opportunities for resourceful and ambitious politicians to emerge as community leaders. This opportunity has also availed itself to the Masood family, who are now the foremost Muslim political family in the region, without any visible competitors from within the community.

Did the Massods manged to revive because they were not politically challenged by a co-ethnic, whereas the Chaudharys faced a stiff competition from a co-ethnic political family (Kanwarpal)? A popular narrative around Masoods relates to how they first propped up Kanwarpal and then his son to compete against the Chaudharys to dent their political appeal among Gujjars. While this narrative has been confirmed by several informants in the field, Pradeep Chaudhary is now several-term MLA and currently an MP from Kairana. In that sense, he has now become a potential challenger to even the Masoods.

More importantly, unlike the Masoods, the Chaudhary family did not manage to create such a cross-cutting coalition of political elites for themselves, which meant that they remained Gujjar leaders and could not transform their appeal beyond their caste. The Masoods, on the others hand, had a more diverse support base and links to all major denominations in the district. However, there have always been other claimants to the Muslim vote in the district. Rasheed Masood in fact won his early elections in 1977 and 1980 against Muslim competitors (Zahid Hasan and Qamar Alam). They were again challenged by the Ali Khan family of Muzzafarabad in 1999 when Rashid Masood lost to Mansoor Ali Khan.[15] The Masoods, however, were able to survive this competition, because their network of elite cooperation went beyond just the Muslim community in the district to include business interests, electoral interests of allies and connections across district's political economy.

In short, while Yashpal Chaudhary's influence went deep into Nakur, Rashid Masood was able to spread his influence around, expanding much beyond Nakur to hold political sway over all of Saharanpur. In contrast, Rashid Masood manages to expand his influence - serves as a union minister, throws in his hat into the nomination for the Vice President of India, is elected to the Rajya Sabha after Lok Sabha losses, and becomes a member of the Congress Working committee (CWC). And, now Imran Masood has been given national-level position in the party.

5.6 The Rising families of Saharanpur

As argued in the previous chapter, there is continuous churning in the space dotted by political families. In the past decade, three new families have been seen emerging - the Ranas of Muzzafarabad, the Lakhanpal family of Saharanpur city and the Kanwar Pal family in Nakur. Just like the Masoods and the Chaudharys, these families belong to prominent

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[15]Rashid's son lost the 2014 Lok Sabha election from Kairana to the Hasan family.

caste-communities within the region, the Rajputs, the Brahmins and the Gujjars respectively. Unlike the former group, however, all these families are currently in the same party- the BJP. This means that while they may not have been direct electoral competitors so far, they may get into stiff competition with each other to secure nominations, at least for their loyalists as they plan to expand their network base. Raghav Lakhanpal won the 2014 Lok Sabha elections from Saharanpur and was the first runner up in 2019. Pradeep Chaudhary is an MP from neighbourig Kairana, but is likely to keep his base in the Nakur-Gangoh region secure. The Ranas, on the other hand, are facing a difficult time after a quick rise. In the following section, we present a brief overview of these families and their electoral histories.

The Rana family

Jagdish Singh Rana began his political career under the tutelage of Rashid Masood. He was elected as a Janata Dal MLA for the first time from the Muzzafarabad seat in 1991 and retained the seat for four straight terms (1991,1993,1996, and 2002 elections). This was the beginning of the rise of the Ranas as an important family in the district's politics as they began charting their independent political journey. Jagdish Rana contested and lost to Imran Masood in 2007 assembly elections but successfully managed to win the Saharanpur parliamentary seat in 2009 as a BSP nominee by defeating Rashid Masood. His brother Mahaveer Singh Rana, who was active in local politics as a district council member till then, contested and won the Behta assembly seat in 2012. However, after Jagdish Rana's loss in the 2014 Lok Sabha election to Lakahanpal and Mahaveer Rana's loss against Naresh Saini in the 2017 assembly elections, the political fortunes of the family has severely dwindled. They also have limited base for competing against other rising families.

The Lakhanpal family

Raghav Lakhanpal Sharma joined the electoral fray after his father Nirbhaypal Sharma was murdered in 2000. Sharma senior was then a sitting MLA from the BJP, representing the Sarsawa assembly segment. He entered politics in the 1980s and was a several term MLA. Raghav contested the bye-election from the seat that was vacant after his fathers' death and won by a huge margin. He, however, lost the Sarsawa seat in 2002. He then shifted to the Saharanpur urban assembly segment winning it in 2007 and 2012 before entering the Lok Sabha in 2014. Though he lost the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Sharma remains an important player with his diversified business and access to networks of upper caste and trading classes living in urban Saharanpur.

The Kanwarpal family

As mentioned earlier, Kanwarpal is known to have been propped up as an opponent to Yashpal Chaudhary by Rasheed Masood. In the years that followed, Kanwarpal went on to win the Nakur constituency on three different occasions. His son, Pardeep Chaudhary,

started as a close associate of Imran Masood. However, he too charted his independent political journey after a victory in the 2012 elections. In the 2017 assembly elections, Pradeep defeated Imran's brother Noman Masood. The BJP then nominated him to contest the Lok Sabha elections from Kairana in 2019 as there were internal family struggles in the Hukum Singh family which used to represent the party in the constituency. Pradeep Chaudhary won the elections against another prominent family – the Hasans. It is possible that in the upcoming elections, the Hasan's create hurdles for Pradeep Chaudhary in his home-turf of Nakur-Gangoh. The control over their local power base is very important for political families, and we'll discuss this aspect in greater detail in the next chapter.

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, with help of two-family histories – the Masoods and the Chaudharys – I have shown that despite having similar resource endowment, social status, and simultaneous beginnings of their political journeys, they now stand at very different vantage points. The Masoods managed political revival after dwindling fortunes in the mid-1990s, the Chaudharys never managed to fully recover. I show that access to networks of the local political economy, which is exemplified by a family's ability to diversify its economic and political portfolio, seems to be an important reason for distinguishing between a declining family and stable family. In the next chapter, I present a biography of Mulayam Singh Yadav (the founder of the Samajwadi Party) and his family, to show why the local power centre matters for political families even when they succeed in scaling their power to the state and national levels.

Figure 5.1: Assembly Segments in Saharanpur District
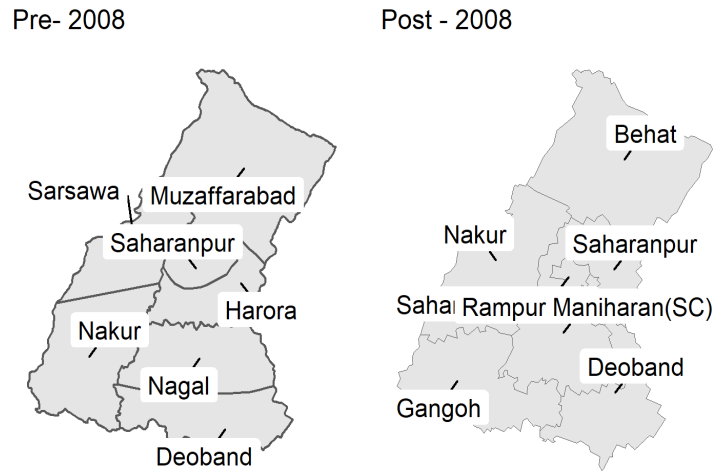
Source: Election Commission of India

Figure 5.2: The Masood Family
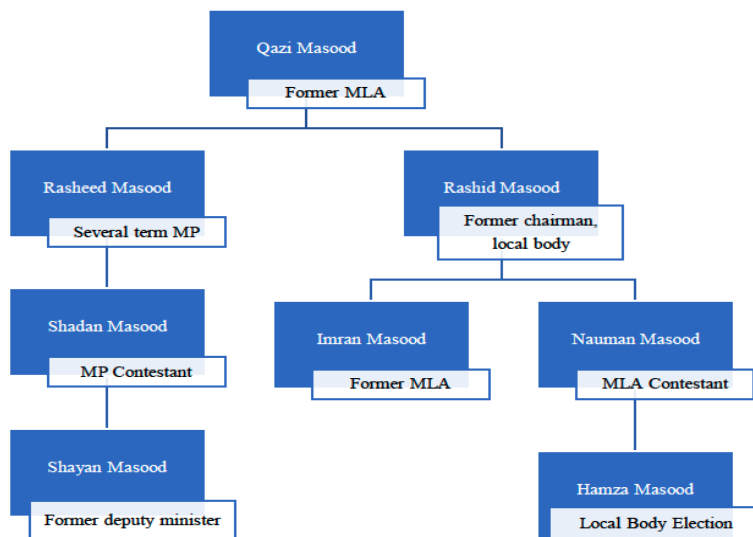
Source:Based on Fieldwork in Saharanpur District, 2019-20

Table 5.1: Electoral History of the Masoods and the Chaudharys in State Assembly and
Parliamentary Election

Year	Election Type	Masoods	Chaudharys
1952	Vidhan Sabha		Winner (Uncle)
1957	Vidhan Sabha	Runner-up (Father)	Winner (Uncle)
1962	Vidhan Sabha	Runner-up (Father)	Winner
1967	Vidhan Sabha	-	Runner-up
1969	Vidhan Sabha	Winner (Father)	-
1974	Vidhan Sabha	Runner-up	Winner
1977	Lok Sabha	Winner	-
1977	Vidhan Sabha	-	Winner
1980	Lok Sabha	Winner	-
1980	Vidhan Sabha	-	Winner
1984	Lok Sabha	Runner-up	Winner
1984	Vidhan Sabha	-	-
1989	Lok Sabha	Winner	Runner-up
1989	Vidhan Sabha	-	Runner-up (Nephew)
1991	Lok Sabha	Winner	Third
1991	Vidhan Sabha	-	Runner-up (Nephew)
1993	Vidhan Sabha	-	Winner
1996	Lok Sabha	Runner-up	-
1996	Vidhan Sabha	-	Runner-up (Nephew)
1998	Lok Sabha	Runner-up	-
1999	Lok Sabha	Runner-up	-
2002	Vidhan Sabha	-	Winner (Nephew)
2004	Lok Sabha	Winner	Third
2007	Vidhan Sabha	Winner (Nephew)	Third and Fourth (son & nephew)
2009	Lok Sabha	Runner-up	-
2012	Vidhan Sabha	Runner-up (Nephew)	Runner-up (Son)
2014	Lok Sabha	Runner-up (Nephew)	-
2017	Vidhan Sabha	Runner-up	Runner-up (Son)
2019	Lok Sabha	Third Position	-

Source: Election Commission of India

Figure 5.3: The Chaudhary Family
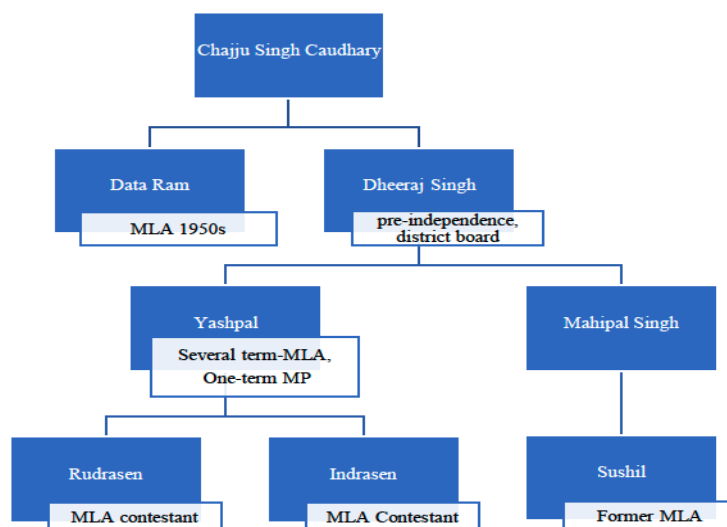
Source:Based on Fieldwork in Saharanpur District, 2019-20

Table 5.2: Assets Declared by the Masoods and Chaudharys in Election Affidavits

Candidate Name	Year	Total Assets (in Million INR)
Rasheed Masood	2009 LS	52.7
Imran Masood	2012VS	40.8
Imran Masood	2014 LS	47.2
Imran Masood	2019 LS	50.6
Shajan Masood	2009 LS	7.1
Shajan Masood	2014 LS	11.2
Nauman Masood	2017 VS	38.8
Rudrasen Chaudhary	2012 VS	46.5
Indrasen Chaudhary	2017 VS	10.8

Source: The Association of Democratic Reforms

Chapter 6

Scaling Up Power and Influence: A Biography of Mulayam Singh Yadav and his Family

6.1 Introduction

With sixteen closely related members of the family involved in politics ranging from the level of rural local bodies to the parliament of the country, the Yadav family of Uttar Pradesh is one of the largest families active in contemporary Indian politics.[1] The family patriarch, Mulayam Singh Yadav (henceforth MSY) has been the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh (UP) thrice, Union Minister for defence once, and several-term Member of the Parliament (MP) and Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). He founded the Samajwadi Party (SP) in 1992 which is currently the main opposition party in the state. MSY's son, currently an MP, served as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh between 2012 and 2017, and is now the national president of the Samajwadi Party.

As the patriarch of the Yadav family from Saifai in Etawah district, MSY has left an indelible mark on the vast and diverse political landscape of the state. He oversaw the clan's expansion as one of the most formidable political families in the country. From his rise as a firebrand socialist leader to a politician with deep links to some business houses, the five decades of MSY's career also maps on to the transformations within Indian politics - fragmentation of political space, rise of lower caste politicians, and decline of the Congress party. More importantly for us, it serves as a good case study to understand how some political families succeed in scaling up their power from the local to the national level.

This chapter also underlines a very important aspect about political families, that even when they manage to scale up their area of influence, they continue to keep their pocket

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[1]MSY's cousin Ramgopal Yadav, brother Shivpal Yadav, son Akhilesh Yadav, nephews Dharmendra Yadav and Akshay Yadav, daughter-in-law Dimple Yadav, and grandnephew Tej Pratap Singh Yadav are all in active politics.

borough under tight control. It is from here that their power and influence emanate. Perhaps, MSY understood this early on that the longevity in politics is determined by the politician's grip over local political economies, which produces a loyal network of mobilizers, acts as a constant source of patronage, and of financing political campaigns. For example, with the support from his family, MSY ensured direct control over block and district panchayat offices in Etawah, Mainpuri, and neighbouring areas. Similarly, he made early moves to garner control over the vast institutional network of the cooperative sector in Uttar Pradesh starting with the Etawah District Cooperative Bank (DCB).

In this section I provide a brief history of the family's political journey, their control over the family pocket borough of Etawah district and the extension of their influence across the state through networks of power that includes regional satraps in the Samajwadi Party, loyalists in the state bureaucracy, favourable business houses, and cultivated criminal entrepreneurs.[2] The description also alludes to how the roles and responsibilities are divided between the various clan members.

6.2 The Yadav Family and Samajwadi Party

MSY was born in the Etawah district of UP which borders the Bundelkhand region, one of the poorest parts of India. The region is marred with the lack of basic infrastructure, is stricken with dire poverty, and was infamous for dacoits (or bandits) even as late as the 2000s. As the president of the students' union of his college in Etawah, MSY got involved in politics from an early age. In these formative years, he was closer to the Lohiaite stream of socialist politics, championing the cause of backward castes, and firmly rooted in the concerns of the agrarian classes.[3] MSY's journey into active electoral politics began after a chance encounter with Nathu Singh (then MLA from Mainpuri) at a local wrestling match who not only mentored him early on, but also introduced him to senior politicians in the state such as Ram Manohar Lohia and Chaudhary Charan Singh. First elected to the legislative assembly in 1967, he would go on to be re-elected to the state assembly eight times, a remarkable feat in a country where re-election rates are low and incumbents routinely lose their seats. MSY made his mark in district politics when prime minister Indira Gandhi declared an internal emergency in 1975 and put many opposition leaders in jail. Spending nineteen months in jail during the emergency cemented his career and his politics.

After his short stint as a state minister of Cooperatives in the 1977 Janata government, and leader of the opposition in the UP legislative assembly in 1987, MSY was elected as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh for the first time in 1989. Ironically, he became the CM by

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[2]I rely on information collected from interviews conducted by a research assistant in Etawah, from media reports and articles and the available data on government portals or associated websites to create a brief, but detailed, summary of the life of MSY.

[3]Ram Manohar Lohia was one of the tallest socialist leaders of post-independence politics. He advocated that the backward castes should be allocated sixty percent share in government position.

defeating Chaudhary Ajit Singh, the son of his mentor Chaudhary Charan Singh.[4] Along the way, his associations with leaders such as Devi Lal and Mahendra Singh Tikait would establish him as the foremost voice of farmers in the state.[5]

His first two stints as a CM were rather short.[6] However, by this time MSY had consolidated his image as a backward caste leader, and his opposition to the BJP over Ram Temple mobilisation made him popular among the Muslims. A clearly articulated ideological position (or association with a significant social and political cause) also help in the projection of a larger-than-life image of some political leaders and their families. This may create enduring legacies (or political legitimacy) that helps political families in utilizing to broaden their scope of power networks beyond their districts. MSY position on critical issues of the 1990s provided him a platform on which he could launch a successful political party in 1992 (the Samajwadi Party) as well as expanded the family's pocket of influence beyond Etawah.

MSY took a plunge in the national politics after being elected to the Lok Sabha for the first time in 1996. However, his time as the cabinet minister for defence in the United Front government lasted for less than two years and remained largely uneventful. In the 2002 assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, the Samajwadi Party (SP) emerged as the single largest party. After a short-lived coalition government led by the BSP, MSY was elected as the CM for the third time and ruled the state for the full term.

Between 1996 and 2007, MSY reorganised the party and brought many family members into active politics. Shivpal Singh Yadav, MSY's younger brother, who was elected as a MLA for the first time in 1996, became MSY's eyes and ears in the party. The new SP with its deep presence in all important sources of political power, from student politics to Panchayati Raj institutions and co-operatives, was centralised in decision-making but delegated in terms of power and influence. Thus, while major political decisions were taken by MSY, the everyday business of politics had been distributed among the many local influencers and strongmen who were the face of the party in their regions.

MSY and the SP soon became the starkest examples of a political family. In the past decade, approximately two dozen members of his extended family have been elected to high political offices (See Figure 1). The only seats won by the party in the Lok Sabha elections of 2014 were held by five of the Yadav family members.[7] The family now presides over a

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[4]After his failed contest against MSY to become the Chief Minister, Ajit Singh made several unsuccessful attempts to launch a political party. His latest attempt, the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), however, never managed to emerge as a strong force, and Chaudhary Charan Singh's political family in its third-generation is now at the margins.

[5]The reform measures he undertook as a state minister of cooperatives in the 1977 Janata government made MSY popular among a section of the farmers.

[6]The Congress party which supported his government in 1989 withdrew support after 15 months, and a similar thing happened in 1995 when the BSP decided to walk out of the alliance after 18 months.

[7]In the 2014 parliamentary elections, Mulayam Singh Yadav (MSY), had contested and won two seats in Uttar Pradesh - Mainpuri and Azamgarh. Dimple Yadav had won from Kannauj. MSY's two nephews, Dharmendra Yadav and Akshay Yadav, had won Badaun and Firozabad seats respectively. When MSY vacated the Mainpuri seat, his grandnephew Tej Pratap Singh Yadav won in a by-election. According

vast network of allies and affiliates in the world of big-business, civil society, state machinery, among others. And through this veritable empire, even the party has become a personal fiefdom of the clan. It is thus not surprising that the Yadavs have massive influence over different areas of political power in UP, from presence in the District Councils (Zila Parishads) and District Co-operative banks to IFFCO and the State Rural Development Bank, with substantial control over the police, administration and the industrial houses of UP.

After the losses in the 2014 elections, a bitter family feud broke between Akhilesh Yadav and his uncle Shivpal Yadav over takeing control of the party before the 2017 assembly elections in UP. Shivpal had been MSY's point person in the party for over two decades and was a very powerful minister holding several portfolios in Akhilesh's cabinet. In a coup d'état, the SP unseated MSY from the post of the national president of the party and appointed Akhilesh. Shivpal Yadav was ousted and he formed his own party. The Samajwadi party lost the assembly elections held in the state in March 2017. In the 2019 parliamentary elections, Shivpal Yadav contested against Akshay Yadav, whose father Ram Gopal Yadav, a Rajya Sabha MP, is Akhilesh's closest advisor in the Yadav clan.[8] After the results were announced in 2019, Shivpal Yadav stood distant third in his seat, and only Mulayam and Akhilesh had won their respective seats. Despite these differences within the family, I still consider them as part of same political family for two reasons. Both have restrained themselves from speaking out against each other in public, and MSY continues to prod Akhilesh to bring Shivpal back into the party.

6.3 Influence Over Local Political Economy Networks

Even as the Yadav family has grown to heights of political power at the state and national level, all authority and legitimacy flows through Etawah. The family has carefully nurtured the district into their political fortress, strengthening their hold through significant control over all major activities - economic, political and social.

Emerging scholarship from different contexts in the developing world has shown that there is a well established link between economic control and enduring political monopolies. For example, Montero's (2011) research in Brazil shows that poverty and urbanisation plays a huge role in the level of concentration of political power. Similarly, it has been found in India that education levels can affect the extent of power concentration (Lankina and Getachew 2013) and that local socio-economic conditions determines citizens' ability to counter such monopolisation in Russia (McMann 2006). Summarising these conclusions, Sidel (2014) observes that 'variance in subnational authoritarianism corresponds to local con-

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ECI rules a by-election is held if a seat is vacated due to the death of a sitting member, resignation, or disqualification

[8]Ramgopal Yadav, while not a popular elected leader, has nevertheless played a crucial role in building the party. He began his political career with being as the president of Etawah district council in 1989, the same year that MSY first became CM of the state. He was later elected to the Rajya Sabha and has remained a MP since then.

stellations of economic power, with subnational authoritarian rulers' success in entrenching and perpetuating themselves in power contingent on their ability to constrain the economic autonomy of citizens, voters, local state agents, vote-brokers, and would-be challengers'(p. 165).[9] While this definition is based on recent comparative research on subnationalistic tendencies in democracies and is large enough to suit contexts across the developing world, it also suits our purposes of understanding entrenched dynastic power. To be clear, I do not conclude that all dynastic succession is authoritarian, but that the creation of modern political empires relies on tactics common to authoritarianism, such as concentration of power and stifling of competition. In other words, the sustenance of a political empire depends on the ability of the clan to control local political economy networks.

Shivpal Yadav, as the trusted right-hand to MSY, played a significant role in cementing the Yadav family's monopoly over local political economy networks in Etawah in particular, and adjoining districts in general.

Etawah : the Pocket Borough of the Yadav Family

The parliamentary constituencies of Etawah and Manipuri remains the home turf of the Yadav family. Since 1989, the Mainpuri constituency has been either won directly by the family or by a family loyalist. Similarly, the family loyalists continue to win a majority of assembly segments under Etawah district. To trace the existence and the functioning of power networks in the district, we first identified positions of influences (POIs).[10] To understand the presence and the dominance of caste networks through these positions of influences, we conducted a careful mapping of the people in the form of power nodes in the district (Figure 2). Local newspapers, network of local journalists and interviews with lawyers helped towards the initial network profiling. Subsequently contact-tracing through these power nodes was done to go down and further explore other linkages in the district. Efforts were also made to collect maximum the information possible about these power nodes to holistically understand their functioning at the grass root. This was done with the help of on-call interviews of contacts gathered through the initial tracing, through in-person meetups, and through relevant fieldwork across important organisations of influence in the district.

How did the Yadav family succeed in converting Etawah into their pocket borough? The primary reason is the substantial presence of the family and extended clan members in im-

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[9]Sidel (2014) defines 'subnational authoritarianism' as 'a local regime in which the local offices and agencies of the state have been captured by a single locally based individual, family, clan, clique, or organization, who enjoys and exercises the discretionary powers and resources of the state outside effective democratic accountability, electoral challenge, and the rule of law' (p. 163).

[10]With help of a research assistant based in Etawah, I collected this information in 2019-20. We adopted the same method as used by Agarwal et al.(2015) in the Allahabad district of Uttar Pradesh to map the still persistent caste hierarchies in major power institutions and communities of the district. The various positions of power and influence in case of the Allahabad study were the Press Club, the university faculty, the Bar Association, the police, and the commanding positions in trade unions, non-governmental organisations, media houses, among other public institutions.

portant positions in Etawah district and the nearby areas. They hold positions varying from Member of Parliament (MP), Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA), Member of Legislative Council (MLC), chairman of district cooperative bank, chairperson of Zila Panchayat (District Council) and Block council , among others. The Yadav family's influence in Etawah is also extends to trade associations related to local businesses, educational institutions and NGOs, the District cooperative bank among others. In fact, in the observed hotspots of domination, members of the community hold a majority of the leadership roles, and many of them openly owe allegiance to MSY's family or to the Samajwadi Party. Several prominent educational institutions in the district are owned by the same person who also happens to be a member of the local Yadav Mahasabha Etawah (a caste-community organisation of Yadavs) heavily patronised by MSY's family.[11]

The family members also have a very diversified set of economic portfolios. For example, Shivpal Yadav owns cold storage units, petrol pumps, a majority share in two companies related to the automobile sector (Anurag Auto Private Industries, JNK Auto Private Industries) among others. MSY's second son Prateek Yadav has investments in real estate sector in the state capital Lucknow - namely housing projects as well as commercial complexes. MSY's nephew Dharmendra Yadav owns White Bricks Buildtech Private Limited located in Kanpur. And, another nephew Akshay Yadav (Ram Gopal Yadav's son) has major investments in the construction sector (NM Buildcare Pvt Ltd), owns petrol pumps and a rice mill.

The data present in Figure 6.1 lists the total assets declared by the Yadav family members in their election affidavit. Three things become amply clear. First, while it is a common knowledge that the assets declared in these affidavits is far lower than the actual wealth of the candidate, the Yadavs are certainly among the top five percent of the candidates by declared assets in UP politics. Second, the total asset of each family member has increased multiple times in a matter of decade. And third, the Yadavs have accumulated far greater wealth than the Masoods or the Chaudhary, despite the fact that the Saharanpur families had much larger initial resource endowment. They also entered in politics much before MSY did.

Control over Business Associations in Etawah

According to the Socio-Economic and Caste Census of India conducted in 2011, approximately 10 percent of the households in the district have at least one person with a salaried job, which means that the remaining 90 percent depend on self-employment. Associations of business enterprises have extensive influence within the district. Though not all businesses generate enough revenue to be considered powerful, the *Vyapar Mandal* (association of traders and businesses) is still an important local institution. The business links of the Yadav clan span across petrol pumps, liquor stores, mining and brick kilns.[12] While the current

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[11]For example, Sir Madanlal Group of Institutions (SMGI), Sant Vivekanand Public School, Delhi Public School Etawah, H.N. Public School.

[12]The information regarding the business links were collected by a research assistant based in Etawah.

leadership of the Mandal does not have any evident direct links to the Yadav clan, cooperation with major local businesses in the district is very evident. For instance, a prominent petrol pump in the city, located at the major intersection (Shastri crossing) runs under the name of Late Darshan Singh Yadav, Member of Parliament, and a very close aide of MSY. In addition to this, another petrol pump near the local city hospital runs under the patronage of Shivpal Yadav. Similarly, a prominent restaurant, which has the only 'foreign-liquor' license for the city, runs under the patronage of Shivpal Yadav.

Control of Cooperatives in Etawah

A big contributor to the success of this strategy was control over cooperatives. Shivpal Yadav became the president of the District Co-operative Bank (DCB), Etawah in 1988 and within a decade, rose to the rank of president of Uttar Pradesh Co-operative Rural Development Bank. This helped spread the family's influence to all major aspects of rural financing: from rural banks to land co-operatives. And created another platform for the party to disburse patronage across rural areas in the state, from. The extent of his hold can be gauged from the fact that his son Aditya was elected as the Director of IFFCO, one of India's biggest co-operatives, at the age of 25. Shivpal's wife too has served as the chairman of the Etawah DCB, while other prominent posts also have been occupied by family loyalists.

The importance of co-operatives to political power must be understood in the context of the political economy of the region. Uttar Pradesh has close to 12,000 big and small co-operatives to manage the financial support for the primarily rural and agrarian economy of the state. While the cooperative sector in Uttar Pradesh is not endowed like Gujarat or Maharashtra, the patronage it can dispense remains significant. So while the Samajwadi Party lost to the BJP in the 2017 state assembly elections, it continued its hold over the co-operatives, chiefly arbitrated through the involvement of Shivpal in the Co-operative Management Committee for the state. The BJP government has been making serious efforts to lessen the hold of the Yadav family over the cooperative sector. For example, they made crucial changes in the State Co-operatives Act and gave more powers to government officials than those in elected positions.

6.4 Expansion of the Political Empire

The strategy of the Yadav family for establishing its political dominance in its local strongholds through a confederation of power networks was slowly replicated across the state. When MSY took the oath of the Chief Minister of UP for the third time in 2003, he was flanked by the representatives of big business houses. The construction boom in urban and peri-urban spaces in the state during the 2000s created an opportunity for political parties to seek rent from developmental projects. A particularly glaring example of the relationship between this business syndicate and the SP was the Uttar Pradesh Development Council, headed by

Amar Singh.[13] The stated aim of this council was to promote investment in the state and cut down bureaucratic delays. Through this new avenue, the Sahara group committed to investing INR 20,000 crores in housing and Reliance promised to invest INR 10, 000 crores in the power sector. Since these corporates were members of the Uttar Pradesh Development Council, and hence part of its policy-making process, routing investments through it raised charges of cronyism. Allegations of favouritism and undermining of due process in awarding big-ticket projects also dogged the group. The Yadav family didn't seem to be overly concerned by these charges, travelling across the state in private jets provided by the Sahara group.

Land deals, particularly around the National Capital Region (NCR) of Delhi, have also been a critical source of resource generation for the Samajwadi Party (SP) and its leaders, when the party is in power. Ram Gopal Yadav, MSY's cousin and the party's national general secretary, has been in charge of issues related to the allotment of prime commercial and industrial plots around the Noida-Greater Noida region.[14] These land deals were also used to build the party's network with the big business elites. The allotment of land was used to create patronage in two ways: one, the allotment of individual parcels of land to newly rich classes of contractors, lawyers and party loyalists etc; and two, the procurement of large areas of land from the villagers and handing it over to big corporate players. For example, in February 2004, the Mulayam Singh Yadav government acquired around 900,000 hectares to develop an SEZ (Special Economic Zone) in Dadri near Noida. Among other things, this SEZ was meant to house a mega power project owned by the Reliance group. The opposition later charged the government of allotting corporates land in this SEZ not just at throwaway prices, but also much more in excess of what the projects demanded. According to the then Congress leader Raj Babbar, the reconfiguration of the area as part of Greater Noida also created windfall gains for Reliance.

These local power networks have also embedded themselves in other booming businesses like sand mining and quarrying operations. In 2016, the Allahabad High Court ordered a CBI investigation into illegal sand mining in seven districts of Uttar Pradesh- Shamli, Hamirpur, Fatehpur, Siddharthnagar, Deoria, Kaushambi and Saharanpur. In Hamirpur, the investigating team looked into a nexus between an IAS officer, the SP member of the legislative council (MLC), mining department officials and sand mining lease holders.[15] According to a report in the paper Khabar Lahariya, illegal mining thrives in this region because "there is something in it for everyone - the administration, the police, politicians and the media" and even "journalists are rewarded for participating in the conspiracy of silence and punished

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[13]For this reason, it was dubbed in the media as the 'Amar Singh club'. https://frontline.thehindu.com/other/article30221215.ece

[14]It has been that Amar Singh made attempts to play a role in these land deals, which aggravated his tensions with some important members in the Yadav family, eventually leading to his exit from the party. https://www.dailyo.in/politics/amar-singh-up-elections-akhilesh-yadav-mulayam-shivpal-azamgarh/story/1/15093.html

[15]https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/ias-officer-legislator-among-14-raided-by-cbi-in-up-delhi/story-SEMXmCKETYNaCza2NCNRmM.html

for exposing it." [16] A police guard explained to the news outlet how networks within the bureaucracy are forged - "If we refuse to be involved in the collection of money, there is a lot of pressure from above," he said. "We have to turn in a certain amount of money a month. Between Rs 5 lakhs and Rs 10 lakhs is sent to the SP [superintendent of police] and CO [commanding officer] every month. Journalists are paid different rates, ranging from Rs 2,000 to Rs 10,000 a month."

At the centre of the storm over illegal mining was the former Minister for Mines Gayatri Prasad Prajapati who was charged in the case by the CBI. Prajapati had a surprisingly sharp rise in the party since his win from Amethi in 2012, although he had been unsuccessfully contesting elections since 1993. In a party convention in 2011, Ram Gopal Yadav announced that Prajapati had donated 25 lakhs to the party.[17] His business acumen and fund-raising abilities might have been one reason this one-time MLA grew so close to MSY and Ram Gopal Yadav, and was awarded the lucrative mining ministry. Even after being expelled from the party subsequent to corruption charges, he was soon brough back into the fold seemingly at the behest of MSY. He is also reported to had real estate dealings with Prateek Yadav, the son of Mulayam Singh Yadav.[18]

Instances of economic monopolisation by the Yadavs illustrated above are by no means the only forms of authority they wield. Criminality and command over a pliant bureaucracy are significant, and troubling, part of their consolidation. Nevertheless, legal control over local economic activity serves two important functions. First, it provides popular legitimacy in the eyes of voters in a way that relying on crime alone cannot. Second, it secures the family from challenges emerging both from political and private players. Linkages with business houses (discussed later in the chapter) led to further extension of economic resources. While such machinations create many conflicts-of-interest, in an economic environment characterised by stifling bureaucratic procedures and lack of competition and transparency, it is just another day in the life of a modern political family with deep roots in various state institutions.

The Nexus of Crime and Politics

The rise of 'backward' politics in Uttar Pradesh is often conflated in the media and popular imagination with the rise of crime and the criminalisation of politics.[19] This rather a historical claim overlooks the closely entwined history of politics, patronage and criminals in the state. The nexus between criminals and politicians predates the fruition of *Bahujan* politics and has been an attribute of state affairs since the 1950s and '60s, when dacoits were a common presence in the vast hinterlands of UP and MP. This is not to suggest however

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[16]https://scroll.in/article/876156/in-bundelkhands-illegal-sand-mining-ecosystem-journalist -and-others-are-paid-for-their-silence

[17]https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/from-sp-fringes-to-minister-with-mulayams-ear/

[18]https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/Why-is-Prajapati-important-to-the-Samajwadi-Party/article14518594.ece

[19]As Philip Oldenburg pointed out to me that everyday violence is the currency of most familial projects of political power

that criminality has no links with the caste context. A weakening in the hold of *zamindari* practices over land post-Independence gave rise to armed dacoits belonging to erstwhile large land-owning castes. The ostensible purpose was to continue to control land resources within the influential land-owning castes. With the changes in land-ceilings and production technologies along with the political assertion among the backward castes, the decade of the 1970s witnessed the rise of dacoits from various caste denominations. Many local politicians were known to openly patronise co-ethnic dacoits.

On a different occasion during this period, MSY as a young, and emerging Yadav leader, is known to have expressed displeasure at the apparent caste-based favouratism and discrimination by the police establishment in providing surrender opportunities to upper-caste dacoits, while targeting lower-caste dacoits (or killing them in fake encounters). In fact, newspaper archives from the 1980s suggest that MSY's political rivals accused him of harbouring dreaded dacoits and taking their help during elections. This sympathy for the cause of the dacoit rebels is further exemplified through MSY's close ties with Chhaviram, one of the leading dacoits of the area at the time. Reports from the 1970s also talk of some dacoits turning up in his election rallies. However, such linkages are neither atypical during those decades, nor hidden from the general public. MSY too luckily escaped a couple of life-threatening attacks.[20] The presence of known and wanted dacoits at campaign rallies and in proximity to senior leaders was common throughout the 1980s and the 1990s. It was common for a party or a leader at that time to actively campaign during the elections in which surrendered dacoits contested, at that time. These were the first visible signs of the direct entry of candidates with criminal records.

In a region where political power has often flown from the barrel of a gun, the entanglement of strongmen (muscle power) with political power exists because each side reinforces the other. After the largely rural and agrarian structure began to decline and dacoits lost relevance, politics turned to nurturing urban gangs and strongmen.[21] Interestingly, a layer of religious identity was added to the mix: the religious polarisation of the 1990s, along with Mandal politics, created many opposing groups and gangs, just as it formalised certain community ties. The SP and MSY emerged as strong patrons of community strongmen (mainly Yadav and Muslims) on the ground, especially in the western and eastern region of UP. Once enough material resources had been collected, many of them would graduate to formal politics, giving rise to the notion of the increasing criminalisation of politics.

The case of Nirbhay Gujjar provides a good example of the nexus between criminals

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[20]MSY once escaped a murderous attack on his vehicle in 1982 when assailants fired several rounds of bullets. Many believe that this attack on his life was masterminded by a minister in then Congress government in the state. Also, there are stories of MSY once cycling in the middle of the night through villages from Etawah to Delhi to save his life. Only upon reaching his Chaudhary Charan Singh's residence (his political mentor then) that he was assured of not getting killed in a police encounter. These incidents must have had a huge bearing on MSY's personality and politics.

[21]As the infrastructure sector boomed, another link was added to furnish a trifecta: builder-contractors emerged as powerful brokers and influencers in transforming the urban and semi-urban landscape of many Indian states (Verniers, 2018).

and the political mobilization of the Samajwadi Party. Like Mulayam, Nirbhay Gujjar
belonged to the Etawah district. In fact, he referred to Mulayam and himself as the two
lions of the town. The impoverished region of Bundelkhand straddling Uttar Pradesh and
Madhya Pradesh provided a suitable environment for Gujjar's criminal activities, making
him one of the state's most dreaded dacoits with over 180 criminal cases against his name,
including kidnaping and murder. Gujjar's criminal network was based on a very loosely
structured, often termed the "satellite gang" culture. [22] While Gujjar hid it out in the
ravines along the border, it was the satellite gangs that would organise the kidnappings. For
a cut, Gujjar would take care of the holding the victim and extracting the ransom, while
providing protection to the satellite gangs. These gangs were spread out as far as Kanpur and
Agra. It is reported that Shivpal Singh Yadav was the one who provided political protection
to these dacoits. Nirbhay Gujjar openly expressed the desire to make a well-orchestrated
surrender and enter politics through the Samajwadi Party. He perhaps hoped to tread
the path blazed by the famous dacoit Phoolan Devi. In his second term, Mulayam Singh
Yadav had withdrawn all criminal cases registered against the Phoolan Devi and fielded her
successfully from the Bhadohi constituency in the 1996 general elections. [23]

However, Gujjar started to become a political liability as he became emblematic of the
deteriorating law and order situation during Mulayam Singh Yadav's third term in office.
This was particularly so as Gujjar publicly declared Shivpal Yadav to be his elder brother
and Mulayam Singh Yadav as his *'mai-baap'* (Godfather). Some believe it was this pub-
lic embarrassment that might have prompted, his death (encounter by the police), shortly
afterwards. [24]

It is well known that Nirbhaya Gujjar often worked for state politicians, helping them
with maintaining control over their political opponents. According to a local newspaper, his
terror, or influence, ranged across 200 villages of this region, making him a critical player for
elections right in this region right from the panchayat level to the Parliamentary level. The
turnout of these villages for panchayat elections was especially low. One story presents him
as cutting off the nose of a Block Panchayat contestant for standing for elections against his
wishes.

How do its criminal links benefit the SP? The quid-pro-quo relation hinges primarily
on winnability and protection. Parties are mostly concerned with keeping and growing
political power. By inducting local strongmen, the SP management seeks to secure their
winning prospects, without accruing any financial risk. Strongmen generally self-finance
their elections, while also mobilising substantial support in their territories. Once elected,
the patronising party gets an additional legislator, while the criminal candidate gets legal
means of control over the state machinery. While no major political party has remained
unaffected by the taint of 'criminalisation', these charges tend to stick with the SP more

[22]https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/states/story/20051121-uttar-pradesh-gets-rid-of-dreaded-
chambal-dacoit-nirbhay-gujjar-786604-2005-11-21

[23]https://www.rediff.com/news/jan/25phool.htm

[24]https://www.patrika.com/kanpur-news/nirbhay-singh-gujjar-encounter-murdered-by-shivpal-singh-
yadav-news-in-hindi-1475314/

firmly than with other parties of Uttar Pradesh (Verniers 2018). In fact, while the BSP has cultivated an image of being hard on crime and criminals, the opposite is perceived to be true for the SP, their regimes are often compared to *'gunda raj'* in public memory. In some ways, the organisational structure of the SP discussed earlier contributes to this perception. While the BSP has a few strong regional leaders, the incentive structure of the SP is such that it pays local party leaders to have a strong base, ensuring their re-election. Thus, the criminal elements find greater freedom of operation and lesser interference in this model.

Protection under the politician-criminal nexus is even more multi-directional. Local mafias are simultaneously the '*source* of violence and the *provider* of protection from the violence they produce' (Martin & Michelutti, 2017, p. 697, emphasis added). In UP, the presence of many such local mafia groups produces greater demand for protection against them, as well as greater competition between different mafia organisations. The multi-polar nature of the political contest in UP has also been found to contribute towards greater criminality in its politics (Aidt et al., 2015). Polarisation, both caste and religious, are known to encourage greater criminalisation and conflict (Vaishnav 2017; Wilkinson, 2004). In the vituperative communal climate, such strongmen found their appeal in their ability to provide safety to their constituents against 'enemy' forces (Vaishnav, 2018; Martin & Michelutti, 2017). Financing this protection comes at a cost, most commonly borne by citizen-victims of racketeering and extortion. The proliferation of criminal forces who multiply their wealth from such activities also creates channels for financial kickbacks for the party in power. SP, more than others, is known to successfully patronise, and financially benefit, from criminal groups. 'Private accumulation' of this kind affords protection to all those involved: politicians, complicit officials and criminals (Harriss-White, 2003).

Criminal patronage, however, has its limits. As greater media reportage grew and middle-classes became a viable political voice in the state, linkages with criminal entrepreneurs escalated the reputation cost for the political party. The Samajwadi Party (SP) received a lot of bad press, when immediately after coming into power in 2012, the government instructed the local administration to withdraw over 3000 cases lodged against its party leaders and workers by the previous regime. [25] This included the cases against mafia-turned-politicians like Abhay Singh, Mukhtar Ansari and Vijay Mishra. To project a clean image for his son, Akhilesh, MSY swiftly parted ways from Mukhtar Ansari, known gangster and then four-time MLA from Mau in UP. [26] Recognising that the old guard is deeply entrenched in criminal networks that they have cultivated over the years, Akhilesh himself actively tried to distance his leadership from such allegations, eventually culminating in a bitter family feud

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[25] https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/lucknow/akhilesh-yadav-government-to-withdraw-criminal-cases-against-over-3000-sp-workers/articleshow/16494533.cms

[26] Mukhtar Ansari has been the poster-boy of criminalisaiton of politics for decades. A BSP loyalist, his stint with the SP was short-lived. As recently as in 2017, he won his assembly seat for the fifth time in the state's elections. Ansari has more than 50 police cases against him, including being accused in the murder of BJP MLA Krishnanand Rai in 2004. Under the BJP-led Yogi Adityanath government in UP, police retribution against Ansari and his gang has been swift. Nearly a 100 of his men have been implicated, arrested, or encountered. Ansari was arrested in 2019 but continues to be a MLA in the state assembly.

which led to the ouster of Shivpal from the party.

Bureaucracy and Patronage Politics

In the popular and academic discourse, the politics of ethnic parties such as the SP and the BSP, has often been described as one based on patronage in which they rely for votes based on delivering targeted benefits such as government jobs. A facet of such political patronage by the SP is colloquially referred to as the *'Yadavisation'* of state machinery, especially the police. The predominance of Yadav policemen as heads of local police stations became a common feature. Between 2003-2007, police selections were largely claimed to have been tilted in favour of Yadavs; the same charges resurfaced once again when the SP formed the government under the leadership of Akhilesh Yadav in 2012. Newspaper reports dating back to the early 1990s allude to the MSY's attempts to induct a high number of Yadavs in the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) and the state police. [27]. In areas where the SP dominates, as many as 60 percent of police stations could be headed by Yadav policemen. [28] Another such investigation finds glaring evidence of caste-based favouritism. During the State Civil Service Examination, the reports suggests that Yadav candidates were more likely to get selected and receive higher marks. In fact, as many as nearly 60 percent of the backward candidates to make the cut were Yadavs.

This strategy of distributing patronage through government jobs, in this case the police, has helped the MSY and SP in cultivating a strong network of loyalists in the state machinery. These officials are obliged to favour the party and the family even when they are not in power. With loyalists in the police and among criminal gangs, the SP's control over coercive machinery gave the party a free route to consolidation.

The Cultural Capital: Business Houses and Bollywood Celebrities

If control over the rural economy was arbitrated by Shivpal Yadav, MSY's introduction to the business world was orchestrated by Amar Singh, who straddled the worlds of Bollywood, business and politics simultaneously. Singh spent his early working with the Congress party in Kolkata along with running his business in the city. In the 1980s when the Congress was the ruling party in Uttar Pradesh, he became close to the then Chief Minister Veer Bahadur Singh which brought him closer to many other senior politicians and industrialists. Singh was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1996 with the support of the SP, along with becoming the General Secretary of the party. This was to be the beginning of a long and turbulent relationship between the two which would see many ups and downs. Touted to be the right-hand man of MSY, it was Singh's close connections with the business world that changed the character of the party otherwise rooted in rural areas. Most notable among these were his relations with the business houses such as the Birla family or Sahara group, and individuals

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[27]http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/36-pc-of-new-up-police-recruits-were-yadavs/226720/
[28]https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/yadavization-of-up-cops-behind-anarchy/articleshow/36165826.cms

like Sanjay Dalmia and Anil Ambani. The latter two were even nominated to the Rajya
Sabha through SP support.

Thus, the role of Amar Singh was instrumental in essentially scaling up the local network
model of power to construct a larger network encompassing business elite from across the
country. To the consternation of a number of old party loyalists - leaders like Beni Prasad
Verma, Raj Babbar and Janeshwar Mishra - who would subsequently be marginalised in
the party, Amar Singh rose rapidly through the party ranks to become the closest advisor
to Mulayam Singh Yadav. During his stint as the Union minister for defence, Amar Singh
facilitated his relationships with the bureaucrats and businessmen of Delhi, and helped him
navigate the murky world of defence deals. [29]

In his trademark flashy style of glitzy galas and dinners, Singh is known to have brought
the business world close to his friends in Bollywood, all for the purpose of creating and fur-
thering industrial interests in Uttar Pradesh. The Bacchan family had a long and favourable
relationship with Singh, and by extension with the SP: Jaya Bacchan is a four-time MP to the
Rajya Sabha on an SP ticket, while Amitabh Bacchan has been a regular in SP campaigns
and events. Actor Jaya Prada, a former two-time MP for the SP, has also attributed her
arrival within the party fold to Singh. The annual 'Safai Festival' is a lasting testament of
the relationship of the SP with the glamorous world of Bollywood, a relation which uneasily
sits with the socialist origins and rural roots of the party.[30]

In many ways, the distinct roles for Shivpal Yadav and Amar Singh reflect the two
different worlds that MSY tried to bridge through his politics. Early into his second innings
as CM in 2003, MSY began courting big business houses to invest in the state, in an attempt
to spread his reach beyond UP to the business lanes of Mumbai. This instinct was only
fanned further by the likes of Singh. However, this flamboyance never diluted the social base
of the party, evident from the organisational presence of party in the rural landscape of UP
that was overseen by Shivpal Yadav and other members of the Yadav family. Perhaps one
reason for the rift that ultimately led to the ouster of Amar Singh, and then even Shivpal
himself, was the steadily growing dependence of the party patriarch over these two men who
occupied polar positions in their spheres of control. While Singh was later recalled and even
sent to the Rajya Sabha and there might still be scope for Shivpal's return, the rift has
caused indelible damage to India's largest political dynasty.

6.5   Conclusion

Mulayam Singh Yadav's (MSY) entry in electoral politics in 1967 coincided with social and
political changes taking place in north India. The assertion of backward castes transformed
not just the position of his own community but also became an axiomatic illustration of the
power of caste-based mobilisation in the country. Even as the Yadav family has grown to

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[29]https://openthemagazine.com/feature/the-man-who-knew-too-much/

[30]Saifai is MSY's birthplace and the family has been hosting an annual festival held over a week that host
many popular Bollywood celebreties.

heights of political power at the state and national level, all authority and legitimacy flows through Etawah. The family has carefully nurtured the district into their political fortress, strengthening their hold through significant control over all major activities - economic, political and social. The Yadav clan functions like a neatly differentiated and structurally sound organisation, with different family members in charge of overseeing specific functions. This allows the family to have control over diverse state and non-state organisations, ranging from cooperative societies and sugarcane unions to associations within an elite business class.The near domination of the SP in such institutions in its home district is not an aberration, but a common strategy among political families to expand territorial control and gain further legitimacy in their local fiefdoms. This indicates that as long as the local state remains beholden to political families, they are likely to flourish in Indian politics and elsewhere, under different guises.

Figure 6.1: Mulayam Singh Yadav's Family in Active Politics
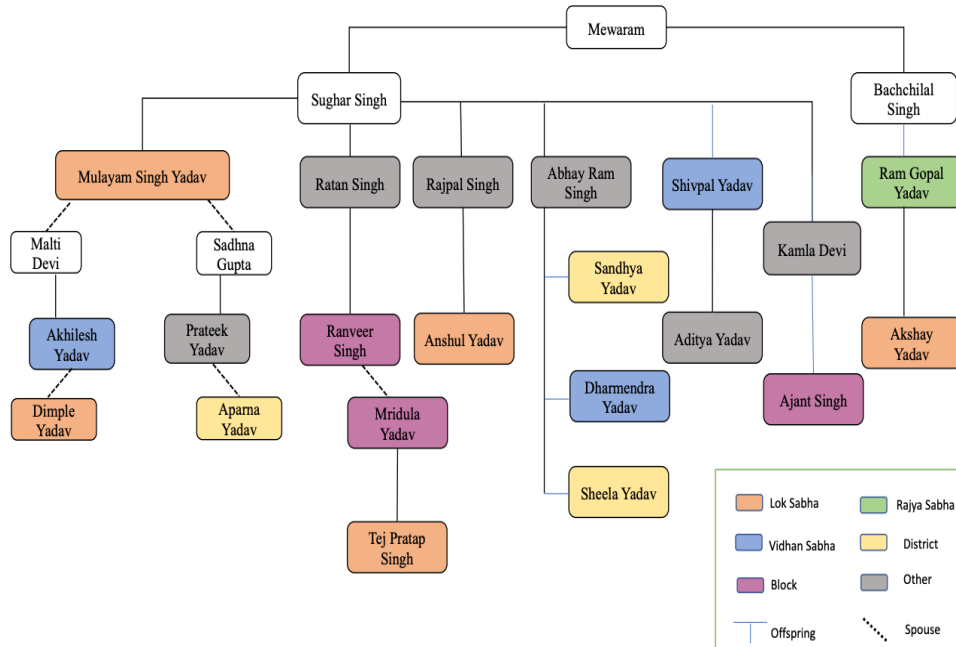
Source: Uttar Pradesh Political Family Dataset, 1974-209

Figure 6.2: Map of Power and Influence of the Yadav family in Etawah
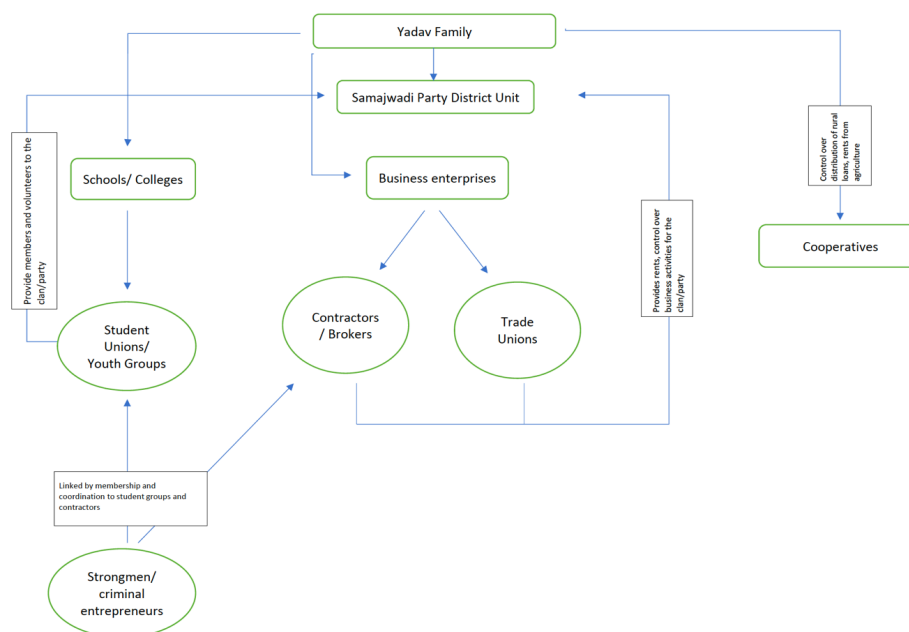
Source: Based on fieldwork in Etawah District, 2019-20.

Table 6.1: Assets Declared by the Yadav Family Members in Election Affidavits

Candidate's Name	Election Year/ Type	Total Assets (in Millions INR)
Mulayam Singh Yadav	2009 LS	22.39
Mulayam Singh Yadav	2014 LS	159.67
Mulayam Singh Yadav	2019 LS	205.60
Shivpal Yadav	2012 VS	60.32
Shivpal Yadav	2017 VS	93.58
Akhilesh Yadav	2009 LS	48.58
Akhilesh Yadav	2019 LS	377.85
Dharmendra Yadav	2009 LS	5.68
Dharmendra Yadav	2014 LS	24.98
Dharmendra Yadav	2019 LS	118.68
Dimple Yadav	2014 LS	280.51
Dimple Yadav	2019 LS	377.85
Akshay Yadav	2014 LS	100.88
Akshay Yadav	2019 LS	321.15
Aparna Yadav	2017 VS	229.65 n

Source: The Association for Democratic Reforms

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The pursuit of power is invariably also the pursuit of political perpetuation. This dissertation began with a simple assumption that a large section among successful politicians, if not all, would want to ensure their presence in politics (or continuance of their legacy) beyond their own lifetimes by having relatives, especially children, follow in their footsteps. This universalist claim however hides a more modest reality. Few politicians can lay claim to family empires and even fewer can sustain it beyond two generations or over multiple decades. How do some political families manage to perpetuate themselves? This dissertation argues that political families succeed through their capacity to exploit networks that control the local political economy. The diversification of their political and economic portfolios allow them to build and expand their networks. The main function of this integrated network of political families with local elites is to maximize power and influence and minimize uncertainties in a competitive electoral environment and opaque state.

Using a unique data set from Uttar Pradesh, I have mapped the familial connections of the winner and the runner-up from all elections held in the state between 1974 to 2019. This dataset allows us to conceptualise political families in a novel manner. For instance, the analysis shows that multiple members of the family contest at different levels, while diversifying in different areas of economic power ensures more surplus generation and more linkages with a diverse set of elites. Political families succeed by harnessing and nurturing a network of elites under their patronage. This relationship works both ways: network members look up to the political families for kickbacks using state resources, such as construction contracts, while the family gains by having access to more resources (financial, reputational, enforcer, among others) through these networks.

In this dissertation, I have focused on the perpetuation of political families in Indian politics, rather than the extent of their prevalence. In other words, my aim has been to reflect on the processes that enable politicians to perpetuate power within family networks, instead of taking their presence as a given. This chapter first begins with a summary of the

arguments laid out in this dissertation and evidence presented to put forward a theory of political perpetuation in electoral democracies. In section three, I argue that the nature of the Indian state has been both a cause and a consequence of such political perpetuation. In section four and five, I reflect on the normative debates on political families and democratic norms. I suggest that political families as a process are so do deeply embedded in local political economies, it is likely that they will find other ways to reproduce themselves even if certain top-down norms are brought about, such as one family, one post. Finally, I reflect on the future of political families in Indian politics.

7.2 Summary of the Dissertation

Why do some political families manage to perpetuate themselves and others fail? I use a case study from the Gonda district of Uttar Pradesh to exhibit the underlying dynamism of political families in the country. I argue that political families represent another form of elite control in contemporary electoral democracies which is perpetuated through close coordination among elites representing different verticals of power (Chapter 1). Available research generally takes a macro-level view of political families and focuses on the role of political institutions (state, electoral system and political parties) in explaining the extent of the prevalence of such families. In contrast, I take a micro-level approach and develop a political economy framework that political families are representatives of embedded networks of power, and it is the level of intra-elite competition between and within these networks that determines the longevity, the success, and the power that political families can command (Chapter 2).

I test this theoretical framework using a unique dataset from Uttar Pradesh that connects the top two candidates to their political family, between 1974 to 2019, spanning almost five decades. The dataset includes all local body, assembly and parliamentary elections conducted in this period. I find that 1138 political families exist in the state within this period and of these 322 are present either at the state or national level. The analysis shows that the politicians from dominant caste and those with greater economic endowment (measured in terms of agricultural land holding) are more likely to form successful political families (Chapter 3).

In addition to this broad-descriptive analysis, I take a closer look at dynamism within political families (chapter 4). The classification and study of the political class in terms of insular categories of dynast versus non-dynast hides much variation among politicians with dynastic lineage. Using Pareto's conception of 'the circulation of elites', I categorise political families into three distinct groups – families that have been in power for a long period of time, the old political families that have declined in power and status, and the new and rising political families. I show that families that successfully diversify their political portfolio (by contesting at multiple levels or gaining a ministerial position or in the party organisation) and economic portfolio (investment in rent-seeking enterprises) are more likely to perpetuate themselves. This diversification strategy, which in part comes from political family's access

to local political economy networks, allows them to project influence even during electorally leaner periods.

I take a closer look at three political families in Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh involving oral histories with key actors (chapter 5). While the Chaudhary family is on decline, the Masood family continues to play an important role in district politics. Both these families have been involved in electoral politics since the 1950s. An important point here is that by taking advantage of their social and political position, both these families, were able to create a symbiotic system that benefited family members and perpetuated a perverse power-sharing model with other elites in the district. The Masood family managed to create a more wider and diverse network, whereas the Chaudhary family's network was narrower. The former also managed to create more diversified economic resources compared to the latter. At the tail-end of the Chaudhary family's decline, some new political families have emerged on Saharanpur's electoral map.

While most successful political families remain largely confined to their local constituencies or at best in the neighbouring districts (region), a few manage to scale up their network and influence. The rise of Mulayam Singh Yadav and his extended family is one such example (chapter 6). In the past three decades, at least two dozen member of the family have been in active politics and half of them are active at the state and national level. I show that the theoretical framework developed in chapter 2 helps in understanding the rise of the Yadav clan fittingly. The clan functions like a neatly differentiated and structurally sound organisation, with different family members in charge of overseeing specific functions. This allows the family to have control over diverse state and non-state organisations, ranging from cooperative societies and sugarcane unions to associations within an elite business class. At the same time, their control of the Samajwadi Party helps them in maintaining direct influence in different kinds of associational networks not only in their pocket borough of Etawah and adjoining districts, but also in different parts of the state. Using these diverse networks, the family virtually has influence in various business operations, alleged links with strongmen, and a loyal set of officials across various levels of the state bureaucracy. Such relationship among political families with the bureaucracy (and other actors such as businesses or criminal enterprises) thrives fundamentally by hollowing out the state capacity, a fact which enables further elite control of the state institutions by a few.

The main purpose of this dissertation is to refine our understanding of political families by rooting it in the specific networks of relationships undergirding the local political economy. While this framework sheds some light on the persistence of political families in Indian democracy, it does not pretend to resolve the fraught normative debates that inevitably attach themselves to every discussion on the subject. Nevertheless, as it is clear from the summary of the dissertation presented above, it is difficult to escape the long shadow that political families cast on public life in India: on the functioning of the local economy, the nature of political participation, and the shape of our democratic institutions.

7.3   Resilience of Political Families in India

Although democracy is, in principle, antithetical to the idea of political dynasticism, families with multiple members in elective offices continue to be common around the world. In most advanced democracies, the proportion of such political families has declined over time (Smith 2018). For example, more than 15 percent of the House of Representatives (as well as the Senate) were members of political families in the early decades of American democracy, but this figure has declined by almost half by the mid-twentieth century. The involvement of the hereditary nobility in politics has also continuously declined in contemporary West European politics (Rush 2000). For example, Brenda van Coppenolle (2017) has shown that the share of political families in the British House of Commons declined from more than 30 percent in the late 1800s to less than 10 percent in more recent years. What explains the decline of political families over time? Some scholars have suggested that the processes of democratisation have steadily opened up the political sphere, including elective office, to a diverse range of citizens (Clubok et al. 1969). Others have argued that the inevitable decline of the patrimonial state with the rise of modernization and deepening of capitalism and spirits of the market, have led to a decline in the entrenchment of political families (Adams 2005).

India, including some other developing countries such as the Philippines, on the other hand continue to see a rising presence of legislators with family lineage. A common thread connecting these countries is the presence of extraordinary economic benefits and rents accessible through political office, especially as compared to other professions (Mendoza et al. 2012). Similarly, the exceptions to the general trend of declining political families among advanced democracies are Ireland and Japan. Scholars have suggested a candidate-centric electoral system with decentralized party organizations as the main reason for a relatively high proportion of legislators with family lineage (Smith 2018). And thus they suggest institutional changes, such as the development of strong parties or the introduction of primaries for candidate selection, as contributing factors in the diversification of the political elite.

In the past few decades, there have been substantial reforms of the Indian state and its political economy, particularly the push towards economic liberalisation in the early nineties. Similarly, certain electoral reforms though limited in nature (candidates declaring asset and criminal records) have also been undertaken. Furthermore, Indian politics has also shown a remarkable ability to accommodate emerging demands coming out of broader socio-economic changes. Over the last seven decades, Indian democracy has been deepened with waves of newly mobilized groups and freshly articulated aspirations regularly transforming the bases of political competition. Through all these changes, why have political families proved to be so resilient? They have survived through all the transformative processes that have shaped Indian democracy - changes in party systems, backward caste assertion, economic development, growth in middle class, liberalization and political decentralization.

The persistence of political families, in my proposed framework, is explained through its deep entrenchment in the local political economy - a stable set of relationships between local elites, stitched together by a relationship of mutual reciprocity. In essence, this ties back

to the nature of the Indian state with crony-capitalist political economy (Crabtree 2018, Rajsekhar 2020). The Indian state is simultaneously weak and expansive, inefficient and obtrusive (Luce 2010). Even in the post-liberalisation economy, the state has immense discretionary powers in the business sector. In such a scenario, a few major business houses have continued to dominate the domestic markets, and smaller businesses still remain hobbled by bureaucratic sluggishness. This deepened the nexus between politicians and businesses, especially in the sectors where the state has greater regulatory powers. Thus, creating conditions for the coming together of local elites in forging a network in lieu of *quid pro quo* returns. In the process, political families, have become the central node of such networks that are based on mutual trust and reciprocity.

7.4 The Consequence of Political Family Resilience

These elite networks engaged in rent-seeking of state resources create further conditions for the preservation of weak state capacity. There is emerging literature documenting the effects of political families on economic development in recent times, nonetheless, the findings on this relationship remain mixed. For example, Daniele and Vertier (2016) studiy the Italian mayors and find no effect on the average spending among dynast and non-dynast mayors. Besley and Reynal-Querol (2017) present evidence that dynastic politicians bring positive impact on economic growth, and Asako et al. (2015) find that districts represented by the dynast leaders in Japan have worse economic outcomes. In the Indian context too, the effect of political dynasticism on economic development and public good provision is not clear (George and Ponattu 2018, Dar 2020).

Furthermore, I argue that merely focusing on the economic outcomes has taken away the scholarly attention away from the political outcomes these families have shaped. A majority of mainstream political parties in South Asia remain are run by single political families. And, the local state continues to remain captured by a host of vested interests. The political economy machine presided over by these families in their fiefdoms very effectively marshals the local power centres in webs of relationships that leaves no sphere of the state (chapter 6). Thus, the effects of the dynastic machine are not only restricted to cornering the development funds or welfare schemes, but they also extend to the systemic costs of the constraining the capacity and autonomy of the local state - what Bardhan and Mookherjee (2012) have described as a capture-cum-clientelism model. Some of these effects are not easily quantifiable by economic metrics, and pervade the whole gamut of activities involving political parties and state institutions (Chandra 2016). The capture of the state machinery means the priorities of the local state (including the motivation of the bureaucracy) is likely to get reoriented from the effective provision of goods and services to the population to serving as a vehicle for generating rents for the dynastic machine.

As this dissertation has shown, political families eschew electoral competition not just by cornering party nominations and elected positions, but by also upholding a system which is sustained by the mobilisation of massive money and muscle power. This is not to argue that

political families create the criminals, brokers and corrupt bureaucrats, as they have independent reasons for existence in the local political economy. But political families nevertheless help entrench them as guardian-protectors for instrumental gains, and thus contribute to the firm integration of these elements in the local power structure (Singh and Hirani 2018).

The perpetuation of political families also leads to a system which erects remarkably high barriers of entry to ordinary citizens in political life. These high barriers, in effect, mean that for the vast majority of the population, the horizons of their political participation are limited to being either voters or as low-level party workers without a real shot at party nomination to contest elections or occupy important posts in the party organisation. The elected class in India is now coming from a more narrower pool of politicians with greater financial resources, rent-thick business interests, and access to criminal actors (Chapter 1). All of this in some ways has also contributed to general apathy among the citizenry against opting for politics as a vocation. Similarly, when these barriers assume a character of permanence, with the existing political elite having few incentives to enact reforms that open up the political structure to the wider participation of the society.

The political perpetuation of few families in democratic systems across the globe is a cause of serious concern. Gilens and Page (2014) have provocatively argue that it is more apt to call the United States an oligarchy than an electoral democracy. They base their claim on the limited ability of individual voters to make a difference, given the rising influence of money and capitalist connections in the US. Similarly, Stanley (2015) refers to the increasing influence of technocrats or the managerial class in advanced western democracies to suggest that their pre-eminence threatens the real democratic credentials of these nations. Thus, the increasing influence of political families in Indian politics indicates grave dangers to democratic norms. It is not a problem that can be wished away with mere legislative reforms involving changes in party organisation or electoral systems alone, but one that requires a careful consideration of the political and economic structure that challenges democratic deepening.

7.5 Political Families as Anti-thesis to Democratic Norms

Why is the increasing presence of political families a challenge to democratic norms? The persistence of powerful families in contemporary Indian politics is often framed as a serious lacuna, if not a downright failure, of Indian democracy. In this telling, the capture of the political space by a closed group of family networks is outrageous to a modern sensibility which holds that 'merit' rather than birth-based privilege is the precondition for social advancement, and represents a moral anathema to democracy.[1] For example, Malhotra (2004)

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[1] The political columnist Tavleen Singh in a cover story for the magazine India Today in 2015 lamented that "today political parties from Kashmir to Kanyakumari have been converted into private limited companies". This "spread of democratic feudalism", according to Singh, had perverse consequences for the country,

locates the prevalence of political families in the feudal instincts of Indian society where for "the bulk of the subcontinent's population, there seems nothing objectionable in political power passing from parent to progeny The vocal minority's denunciation of dynasties is indeed out of sync with the basic reflex of the silent majority" characterising this silent majority as "retarded socially" (sic). An opposing viewpoint holds that the prevalence of political families is neither exceptional by global standards, nor remarkable in comparison to other fields within the country. Because at least in electoral politics, family members are still accountable to popular legitimization and control. And, in some ways, the rise of political families, mostly rooted in post-independence politics has also contributed to the consolidation and stability of Indian democracy (Chandra 2016).

These two distinct and somewhat opposing views reflect on the challenges of understanding modern political families within a democratic framework. Broadly speaking, political families are consistent with a procedural conception of democracy, in which democracy is defined in terms of a minimum set of facilitative conditions - competitive elections, a multiparty system, freedom of association and participation, a free press, freedom of speech and so forth. However, the persistence of political families goes against the nature and conception of democracy itself. In a substantive sense, they do appear to be in stark opposition to the foundational ideals of democracy - political equality and popular participation. The promise of democracy is, in essence, the promise of devolution of power from an unaccountable, hereditary ruling class to the demos ('the people'). Therefore, in this substantive conception of democracy, the very presence of a hereditary ruling class, even if it becomes subject to democratic accountability, reflects only the partial fulfilment of the democratic promise.

Over the last decade, an impression has unmistakably taken hold that political dynasties in India are on the decline. In the popular discourse, they are often viewed as a lingering phenomenon from a bygone era, that will gradually wither away with further social and economic progress. The catalyst for this growing expectation has to a large extent been the rise of Narendra Modi, who made rhetorical attacks on political dynasties an important part of his 'anti-elite' and 'anti-corruption' platform. The defeat of a slew of high-profile political families across opposition parties in 2019, including the leader of the Congress party Rahul Gandhi, gave further fuel to the belief that an 'aspirational electorate' no more tolerated the 'feudal' hold of political families over their constituencies.[2]

Far from being a waning phenomenon, as we have shown in chapter 1, political families are on the rise in India. Over 30% of the candidates elected to the 2019 Lok Sabha, and approximately a quarter of parliamentarians between 2004 and 2014, belonged to political families.[3] Similarly, in the politically significant state of Uttar Pradesh, the proportion of

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and was a direct outcome of the "durbari" culture of the Gandhi family-controlled Congress party.

[2] "The ground has fundamentally shifted in today's India, where an aspirational electorate maintains a more transactional relationship with political leaders. If Mr Gandhi's defeat in his family borough of Amethi tells us anything, it is that leaders can no longer treat their constituencies like feudal pockets," Pratyush Rao, associate director for South Asia at Control Risks consultancy, quoted in a BBC article. `https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-48385611`

[3] Jaffrelot, Verniers (May 27, 2019) "Explained: Why so many MPs are dynasts", Indian Express.

family politicians in the current assembly election is higher than the previous election for all parties (chapter 3).

More importantly, ignoring the political economy reality that enables the perpetuation of political families has led to excessive focus on individual personalities, and not as a system of power. In the popular discourse, electoral defeats of candidates with dynastic lineages are described as a permanent setback to politics based on familial connects. Yet the entrenchment of political families is precisely based on their ability to weather occasional electoral losses. Successful political families not only have higher initial resource endowment, they create substantial resource advantage over their political challenger through investments in rent-thick business ventures (including investment in educational institutions that creates positive reputation). Furthermore, a few electoral defeats do not necessarily translate to complete loss of influence of political families in their constituencies. This is because their political power is diversified to cover an array of political offices in their constituency, and economic (and social) power is similarly dispersed across the veins of the local political economy, making them immune to a few losses.

As the scholarly attention has more been more on the prevalence of political families, I suggest, we have over-estimated the potential of the changing demographic composition of political families. In an important contribution on the prevalence of political families in India, Chandra (2016) has argued that political families have survived as they have been 'democratised' in some ways. In this view, while the aristocratic royal families, the remnants of India's feudal past, have slowly disappeared, the non-royal 'democratic dynasties' have risen because they are integrated in the processes of Indian democracy. Even as political families continue to be dominated by 'forward castes', they have also created space for under-represented groups in politics: women, youth, backward castes and minorities.

As the findings in this dissertation has shown, however, the mechanisms through which the political families operate, and maintain their stranglehold, are the same irrespective of caste or religious background. The dominant castes, nonetheless, have greater access to political economy networks Thus, even as political families now do reflect a broader social background, there has been little effect of the processes of democratisation on their functioning. We also find that this increasing social group representation among the political families has done little to reduce the advantages that criminal and wealthy candidates have in Indian politics (Chapter 3). At the same time, while it is true that women and younger politicians might find it easier to be elected through familial connections, the generally privileged nature of dynastic perpetuation itself has not changed (chapter 4). Thus even when the members of marginalised groups manage to create successful political families, this does not alter the system run by the local political economy network with vested interest. There is little incentive to challenge the structure of elite control, of which political family perpetuation is but one part, thereby further weakening the state capacity and eschewing electoral competition between a select few.

Another challenge to the 'democratizing' credentials of political families comes from the peculiar nature of its existence in Indian politics particularly, and developing countries generally. While elsewhere, especially in advanced western democracies, political families re-

produce themselves in the form of legacy candidates, in these contexts, we have mainstream political parties controlled by a single political family. This is nowhere as profoundly visible as in India. Barring the important exception of the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) and the Communist parties, most other major political parties in the country including the Congress party are largely run by at the beck and call of their first family. This also indicates that the study of political families in India (and many parts of South Asia) is not complete without deeply understanding the family-run parties (Chhibber 2013). It is not surprising then that political consensus on reforming parties as organisations is largely missing from the discourse. This aspect also makes legislative reforms to counter dynasticism difficult to implement. Therefore, the effects of dynasties on the quality of the democratic structure and the nature of political competition does not particularly vary according to a change at the top - the replacement of a royalty with non-royals or of forward castes with backward castes.

7.6   The Future of Political Families in India

What makes political families so resilient even amidst great political churning? It is in the nature of power to crave perpetuity. And no individual or organised entity should be expected to voluntarily give up power. Political families adapt to political churning and have been using the language of democracy, empowerment and representation to further their interests. Many of them now have family controlled political parties to further their interests. This also means that India's efforts at democratic deepening through top-down reform measures are less likely to succeed as long as the underlying structures create incentives for the local political economy networks to gain from familial legacies.

It is abundantly clear that old elite strangleholds over economic and political structures are undergoing a transition. The erstwhile elite are facing newer, and bolder, political challenges from sub-groups within their ranks. While there is a growing rhetorical space for anti-dynasticism in Indian politics as evident in public opinion polls that a large majority of citizens does appear to be adverse to dynastic perpetuation tendencies (cited from Lokniti-CSDS surveys, Chapter 2), but their effect has been minimal. We have shown that dynastic perpetuation derives power from ethnic linkages and kinship solidarity. I suggest that as long as the local state remains beholden to elite control, political families are likely to flourish in Indian politics and elsewhere, under different guises.

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