A Positive Effect of Political Dynasties: 
the case of France’s 1940 enabling act

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ACES “Institutional persistence and change” session
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Introduction - Dynastic persistence

Dynasties persist even in democracies

[Dal Bó et al., 2009, Geys and Smith, 2017, Fiva and Smith, 2018]
Introduction - Dynasties

- Dynastic politicians underperform
  - Lower efforts in politics [Rossi, 2017]
  - Lower education [Geys, 2017]
  - Lower performance [Braganca et al., 2015]

But are they beyond redemption?
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But are they beyond redemption?
Introduction - Political dynasties during autocratic reversals

Dynastic politicians might protect the regime they originate from:

- Protection of the electoral and economic advantages [Dal Bó et al., 2009, Geys and Smith, 2017, Folke et al., 2017, Fiva and Smith, 2018]
- Cultural transmission [Bisin and Verdier, 2001] and democratic networks [Calvó-Armengol and Jackson, 2009]

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**Democratic dynasties** - A political dynasty whose founder:

- supported democratic reforms under autocracy,
- or belonged to a party supporting democracy as political system

As a result:

- Vested interests?
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- **1940 Enabling Act - A shock revealing preferences:**
  - 18 days after the 1940 armistice
  - Lack of synchronisation [Ermakoff, 2008]
  - De facto no party leadership [Wieviorka, 2001]

- **Observability:**
  - One case of autocratic reversal voted by a democratic Parliament.
  - Data on the vote - *Journal officiel de la République Française*
  - Biographical data - *Dictionnaire des députés et sénateurs français*

- **Turning point in French history**
  End of the longest french democratic regime / Collaboration with Nazi Germany

- **Lack of evidence on the individual determinants of the vote**
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« The French Assembly grants full powers to the Government of the Republic under the authority of Marshall Pétain to promulgate a new Constitution for the French State by passing one or several Acts. This Constitution will rest upon the values of Labor, Familly and Fatherland. »

Loi du 10 Juillet 1940

- Clear objective of the bill: “institutional alignment with authoritarian regimes” [Odin, 1946]
- Long-term consequences were expected (see newspapers - July 1940)
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- Long lived Third Republic (70 years in 1940)
- 15% of representatives
- Up to 70 cumulated years of national mandate in a family
- Diverse in terms of length, composition and political orientation

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Voted No
Son of a Republican

Jean-Pierre Plichon
Voted Yes
Descendent of a Monarchist
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- **Main variable of interest: Democratic Dynasty**
- **By using biographies:**
  - Almost exhaustive list of dynastic politicians (≠ Geys and Smith 2017, Fiva and Smith 2018; using surname similarity)
  - Possibility to distinguish dynasties along biographical elements (here dynasty founder political affiliation)

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Method

**Logit estimations:**

\[
Prob(Vote_i = No) = f(\alpha + \beta_1 DemocraticDynasty_i + \Gamma X_i + \varepsilon_i)
\]

- **DemocraticDynasty\_i**
- **X\_i**: Control variables (*Chamber, Political orientation, Religion, Free-mason, Age, Occupation, veterans, in an occupied territory, departement means*)
- **\(\varepsilon_i\)**: Error term

**Endogeneity:**

- Limited concern regarding reverse causality
- Adding numerous control variables to check for omitted variable bias
- Selection into the vote (sequential logit)
- Non-linearity and “selection into treatment” (Propensity score matching)
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First hints
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Robust z-statistics in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

- Democratic dynastic politicians have a 7.6 to 9.0 percentage points higher probability of opposing the 1940 enabling Act.
- Non-democratic dynastic politicians not different from non-dynastic politicians
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Robustness checks

- Robust to using alternative estimation methods
  - Propensity score matching (Selection into treatment)
  - Sequential logit (Selection in the vote)
  - Ordered logit or multinomial logit (Abstention as a level of opposition)
  - Different clustering methods
Transmission channels?

• **Likely not vested interests**
  • Control for political mandates, decorations, time holding a Cabinet position, # interventions in the Parliament, # applause in the Parliament, # boos in the Parliament.

= Results in line with Baseline results

• **Likely not preferences for checks and balances**
  • The democratic dynasty dummy does not correlate with opposition during previous delegations of power
  • Results in line with baseline results when controlling for opposition in previous delegations of power
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A temptative explanation - Local environment

**Local environment as a norms-enforcing device (Within-dynasties estimates)**

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**Additional result:**

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Conclusion

- **To our knowledge, this is the first paper:**
  - Showing a “positive” effect of political dynasties. They stabilize the political regime they originate from.
  - Showing an heterogeneous effect of political dynasties - “Democratic dynasties” vs other-types of dynasties

- The negative consequences of dynasties have to be weighed against their stabilizing properties.
- Pro-democracy environments monitor politicians and encourage democratic consolidation.
- “Democratic dynasties” might be a dimension of democratic capital [Persson and Tabellini, 2009].

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