

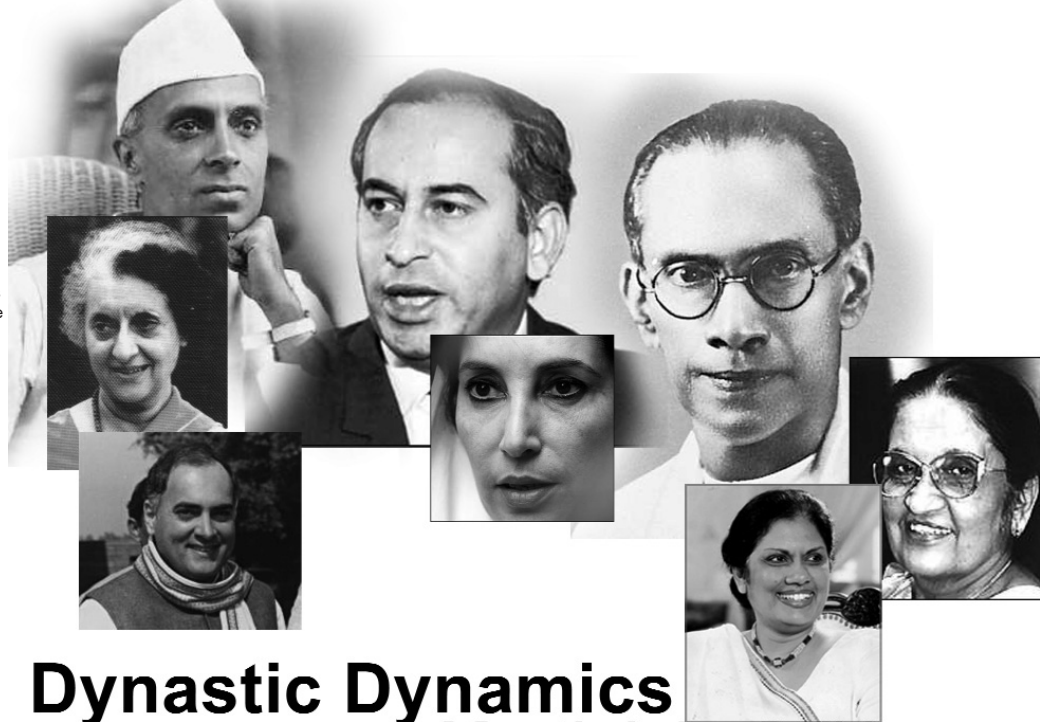
Now that Benazir Bhutto has passed the baton on the eve of her death to her son and heir Bilawal Bhutto Sardari, The ex-(bandit?) Queen of Sri Lanka would be dreaming of passing the baton to her son and heir Vimukthi Bandaranaike Kumaratunga!

Such are the twists and turns of dynastic politics in three countries in the region dominated by Nehru, Bandaranaike and Bhutto families.

Hema Chandra Ray should have lived this long to record the dynastic history of these three closely-knit, though vastly different, lands. He would have produced a masterpiece to rival his own Magnum Opus, the Dynastic History of Northern India. H. C. Ray was a proud Indian (a Brahmin, I think) who was professor of history in the university of Ceylon and later in the Kelaniya university.

There are striking similarities between the three dynasties. All flourished under the British Raj, coming from affluent and influential families. Brought up in the British tradition, educated at British public schools or at least Universities and at least two of them at Oxford and Cambridge, Their heirs and successors too had similar upbringing and education. All of them - at least the earliest ones - were the best democrats the three countries have had seen so far, All three have at least one assassination to contend with.

Nehru Dynasty stands out as the most stable and long lasting among the three. It has so far seen three generations at the helm of the largest democracy in the world. Jawaharlal Nehru took over from the British as the first prime minister of Independent India. He was followed by his daughter Indira Gandhi, whose assassination bought an unwilling son to the throne. Sri Lanka has an indirect involvement in Rajiv Gandhi assassination which brought into lime light the Italian born wife of the



Dynastic Dynamics of South Asian Politics

president in the daughter of a prime ministerial couple. That itself is a record to last for centuries. It has faced its share of coup d'etat, although unsuccessful. Bandaranaike's have had to contend with an insurgency from the south and a terrorist threat from the north.

came after his daughter was voted out by another leader. The coup leader is still riding high as a president minus the uniform.

came to prominence with the help of the US who did not welcome the involvement of Soviet Russia in Afghanistan. The rivalry between the US and Russia intensified with the overthrow of the US - backed Shah in Russia. As a result what happens in Palestine is connected with both Afghanistan and the Muslim world.

The confirmation of the validity of his recent re-election is again shrouded in mystery. Like his benefactor, the most powerful president in the world his confirmation has been questioned. Micheal Moore the director of the award winning documentary "Fahrenheit 9/11" said that George Bush was elected by the judges appointed by his father. Musharaf was confirmed by the judges he himself appointed.

Whoever was responsible for the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan will face both its causes and perpetrators for a long time to come. As long as Muslim fundamentalists are trained and nurtured on Pakistan soil then countries problems will continue unabated. US financial and military power will not be able to control that,

The current turmoil in Pakistan has been created by forces well beyond the country. The super powers of the world did play their part in making Pakistan the spring board for attacks against Osama bin Laden and Taliban. Bin Laden and Taliban

The monster created by the US will haunt the region for some decades, whether Benazir's son and heir ascends the throne or not.

Counterpoint by The Defector

dead PM. A hindu-dominated country almost chose a non-Indian Catholic as PM. Sonya Gandhi had the fore-sight and discretion to take a back seat and offer the job to Manmohan Singh.

Bandaranaike dynasty can claim a true democratic tradition. The second generation of the dynasty has seen and been partly responsible for, a rapid decline of democratic institutions and traditions in the country.

Although the first of the dynasty can easily stand out as the best democratic leader the country has had, Neither the country nor the

There is a fourth generation crown prince waiting in the wings. Rahul Gandhi very well can be the prime minister in the near future. Neru-Gandhi dynasty has been the most enduring of the three. Although they have experienced two assassinations India has been free of conspiracies and military overthrows of elected governments. With all its faults and the occasional allegations of corruption, India has remained a stable democracy with a free press which neither of the other two countries can boast of.

Have we seen the extinction of the dynasty? Not as yet. There is the former crown prince still languishing in the wings run out of puff. However the dynasty's days are numbered unless the ex-queen's dreams of resurrecting the dynasty through an imported crown prince from England becomes a reality. There is a danger though. There could well be a British trained crown prince standing in his way at Heathrow itself, from the now emerging Rajapaksha dynasty.

Bandaranaike dynasty started by the Oxford educated Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike, is almost over, with the second generation crown prince standing on his last leg not as a leader but as the last member of a fast vanishing dynasty. Though it has not seen a third generation in power Bandaranaike's have dominated Sri Lankan politics for almost four decades, with ups and downs. It produced the worlds first woman prime minister and perhaps the first woman executive

Rajapaksha's come from Ruhuna - the land which produced the heroes who saved the country from foreign invaders who dominated the northern part of island from time to time. Has the Bandaranaike mantle really fallen of the Rajapaksha's of Ruhuna?

Bhutto dynasty is of much more recent origin than the other two. However it has been far more upheavals. First it was the overthrow of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the popularly elected prime minister by the army chief, he himself appointed. Even his subsequent death by hanging is shrouded in mystery. The next coup de'tat

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