Twitter Thread by Sarah Khan



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Given BB's death anniversary on Dec 27, and all kinds of recent spotlight on Maryam Nawaz, I've been thinking about the gendered nature of dynastic politics in PK, and the research that has helped me understand it. ■/1

I explored this a bit in my chapter on women's exclusion from electoral politics in a volume on Pakistan's Political Parties edited by @NiloSiddiqui @sahar_shafqat & Mariam Mufti https://t.co/bKIlD0smTF

The book is out now in PK via @foliobooks: https://t.co/tLKsKs0fWD /2

Here's a figure from that chapter. The pattern extends beyond BB & MNS; women elected representatives with family connections make up a starkly high proportion of all women in national & provincial assemblies. There's a gender gap in dynastic connections /3

Family connections are on the one hand a "channel" for women, otherwise excluded, to enter a very very male dominated space of national and provincial level politics. At the same time, the *lack* of such connections poses a much higher barrier for women than it does for men. /4

This isn't a Pakistan specific pattern by any means. Amrita Basu explores this in her excellent chapter "Women, dynasties, and democracy in India" in a volume on Democratic Dynasties edited by Kanchan Chandra https://t.co/ZcRRKyvrrl /5

It isn't South Asia specific either. An amazing paper by @OlleFolke @johannarickne & @ProfDanSmith, which I love and cite in my chapter, explores this question in the case of Sweden and Ireland. Just out now: /6
https://t.co/mxThqdlGGR

> New article by @OlleFolke @johannarickne & @ProfDanSmith w new theory & findings explaining why women have been more likely than men to enter politics via family connection - but also explain why this effect is fading w time https://t.co/QwePOipVBB
>
> — Comparative Political Studies (@cps_journal) December 29, 2020

A key finding of this paper is that the trend of women being more likely than men to enter politics through family connections (what they call “dyanastic bias”) fades over time as more and more women enter. /7

their theory predicts (and they find evidence) that as more and more women enter politics, parties and voters will gain greater information about women politicians' and the reliance on political connections as a signal decreases, allowing more "non-dynastic" women to enter /8

So to the people who are Suddenly Very Concerned about Pakistani women politicians’ dynastic backgrounds: one possible way to change this is to fight for actual policies and social changes that will make it easier for more women, and more kinds of women to enter politics. /9

In the chapter, I suggest some ways to think about the role of family for women's presence in (lack thereof) in electoral politics outside of just family connections. /10

i was trying to summarize that part succinctly but failed so here is a screenshot, sorry ! /11

this is not specific to politics. it describes how "family" mediates women's entry, presence and absence from the public sphere more broadly

however these tendencies may amplified in electoral politics, esp. national & provincial, because of its highly public nature /12

all to say, the issue of the gendered role of family in politics is complex and fascinating.

many open questions for research, lots to learn from the experiences of Pakistani women politicians and candidates, lots to learn from research on this in other contexts. 12/12