Twitter Thread by Rachel "The Doc" Bitecofer ■■■



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1. You also have to give them a landing. It's tempting, I know, to take the pent up rage out on the only ones who respond to you (like @ProjectLincoln!) or Never Trumpers like @RadioFreeTom or @BillKristol bc they were "guilty" in the past or "waited too long" like @WalshFreedom

> If we want more Republicans to exercise Murkowski-like courage, we desperately need election reforms to allow them to do so without fearing for their political futures. https://t.co/pre6aLpnje
>
> — Lee Drutman (@leedrutman) January 9, 2021

2. but at each of the big inflection moments where Trump lost support I've begged non-Rs to consider the fact that if Trump supporters see that they have nowhere to go, they will stay w the only people that DO accept them, & the price might actually be the collapse of democracy

3. which, until Weds, some people thought I was being hyperbolic about. I WASN'T! When the MAINSTREAM of a major political party divorces themselves from democratic norms & values & its supporters turn to a fictionalized world to justify their political party's actions, your

4. country's stability is at risk & one by-product of poor messaging on the Dem side is that extremism on the Right was able to not only take root in the Rep Party, it was able to take OVER the R party & become the party's mainstream- pinnacled w the presidential win via the EC

5. of Donald Trump, w/o the GOP paying any electoral price for their extremism. A healthy Rep Party might have found the courage to reject Trump's nomination & accept the short term costs that would have come w refusing to endorse his 2016 candidacy. But the Rep Party of 2016

6. was already quite "ill" w polarization & hyperpartisanship & was winning elections despite their extremism, which was never highlighted as a campaign issue even while the still-mod Ds were being erroneously classified as a party of socialists & communists in an increasingly

7. strident & intense right-wing media environment that was also being echoed in GOP campaign materials. Together, this environment was radicalizing the GOP electorate- dehumanizing Democrats & artificially inflating the stakes of campaigns to the point that GOP voters began to

8. become increasingly radical. The chickens came home to roost in the 2016 Rep primary when Donald Trump decided to run. His candidacy tapped into all of the dark undercurrents GOP politicians, media figures, and campaign strategists had been playing w- a fire that burned out of

9. control bc party primaries attract very small electorates and thus can advantage more ideological candidates although traditionally- the best known, best financed candidates win. Trump was a celebrity, that was very imp to his success.

10. Ironically, it was a commitment to pluralism & democracy by party leaders in that cycle who felt that since the voters chose Trump, their choice had to be honored w the party's nomination even though our poll of VA Reps in April of 2016 found shockingly high receptivity

11. to a brokered convention- w somewhere near 50% of surveyed Rs supportive of it, & maybe even higher though I can't recall what the exact % was except that I was floored by it- it played a big role in my falling into the trap in '16 that Trump was such a threat to democracy

12. there might really be more than 10pts of crossover Rep voter support for the Dem ticket in VA (there wasn't though- in the end HRC received almost exactly the modal 10pts of R crossover vote here & it was the LAST time I ever believed in crossover voting >10pts in prez

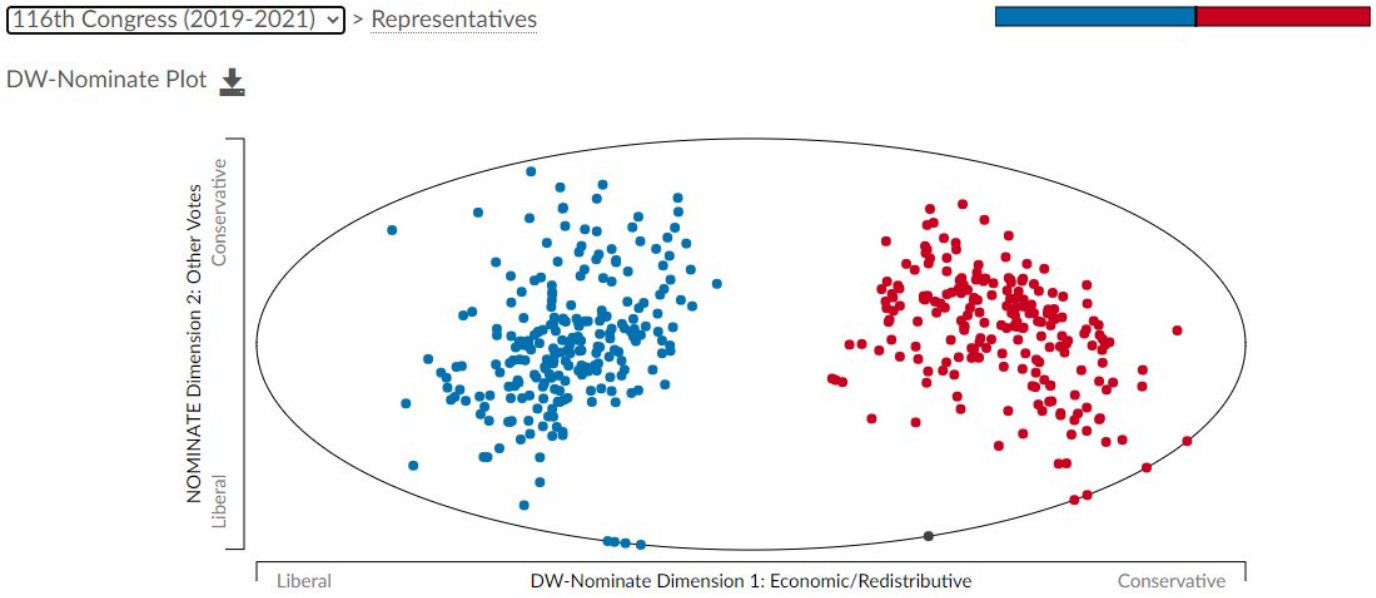
13. elections aside potentially the weirdo states (WVA, MD, MA) & ever so slightly AZ, where we HAVE seen some >10pts crossover I suspect is due to McCain Rs but which has really only emerged post Trump's actual win. Having been studying polarization as a grad student & doing

14. my dissertation on polarization, along w other scholars I was watching polarization & hyperpartisanship tear through the GOP like a wildfire- seeing its moderate wing get completely wiped out in just a couple of election cycles via ideological primaries till the people being

15. called its moderates were the people that 2 cycles ago had wiped out the moderates! And political scientists, empowered w a amazing quant tool called NOMINATE were showing the world the asymmetry between Rs & Ds- the ideological purge was only happening on the Right

& now anyone can use the NOMINATE tool bc its been put into an easy app on a site called Vote View (I used to have to make little gifs w the raw data to show Congress moving apart which did make me look cool on the job market!). Voteview is an amazing tool- very user friendly

16. which I've posted often on here & am putting here again so you can check it out. I'm also showing you the distribution of members in the 103rd and 116th Congresses. Each dot represents a member of the House or Senate(red Rs, blue Ds) & you https://t.co/0FGUaFjhKe



17. can see how the members are distributed relative to each other very differently over the two+ decades (earlier decade on the right) You'll note the space in the middle where there are no dots have grown and that in the images on the left, the most current session of Congress,

18. there are red dots that touch the cap of the "egg" when there weren't ANY that did so (or even any in that area of the graph!) in the Congress from the 1990s. Generally, after the end of segregation in the South, we only interpret the left/right part of these graphs but you

19. might notice, there is variation of the members on a Y axis too and NOMINATE produces 2 measures of ideology for each member with the one running on the X axis understood to be the liberal/conservative dimension and the only one used. BUT bc the data includes all members

20. of Congress & all non-unanimous votes from the 1st Congress till the current day a 2nd dimension (Y axis) exists for everyone although the belief is that the Y axis is non-interpretable beyond 1960s when segregation ended & race stopped being an explicit issue coming before

21. Congress. Don't forget, until recently, the GOP was at least pretending to be racially liberal by voting en masse to renew the Voting Rights Act every time it came up & only when Trump came along did it move from dog whistle politics to full bullhorns on race & ethnicity

22.(though the dog whistles were PLENTY obvious to anyone that chose to see them). So, the Y axis placements are generally not interpreted but is included so it can be plotted. These 2 congresses are separated by about 25yrs but are WORLD's apart in terms of the

23. voting behavior of men & women serving in the House & Senate- which serves as a proxy for ideology here. NOMINATE is nice bc it doesn't do what the websites that attempt to classify members ideologically does which is to make subjective determinations regarding various votes,

24. often choosing particular bills to include. NOMINATE is not subjective- it includes ALL votes & the program doesn't even know its coding votes or legislators- all it sees is a series of 0s & 1s and is concerned w how those 0s & 1s interact w each other, spatially. Its really

25. smart! Whether its capturing member's sincere ideological preferences or not, one thing is clear, it documents significant behavior changes in our Congress over what we argue is the polarized era AND verifies that the change is primarily isolated in the GOP. I threaded on

26. today bc the super pac launches Monday and is focused on drawing attention to the radicalization of the Republican Party- from the top (electeds/leaders) the bottom (average Rep voters) & how that has destabilized democracy in the US- placing continued stability of democracy

27. at threat. BC Trump was assisted so widely with his effort to steal the 2020 election by his Rep Party peers- including congressional party leaders who went so far as to hold that charade of the certification of the EC vote under the false premise of potential election fraud

28. the threats we are facing will extend beyond Trump's tenure in office & will require Americans to be diligent and aggressive in fighting the GOP, trying to force the party back to the mainstream. Along w the pac, I'll be releasing an analysis of polarization via my @substack

29. @The Cycle expands on the topic of this thread, shows that the Rep Party has polarized significantly over the past couple decades and is significantly more radical than the Dem Party. It is very important that the American public be brought up to speed as to what is at stake

30. in the 2022 midterms- winning 2020 will not be enough and people who wish to see America navigate this dreadful period need to buckle in- the work is just beginning. Happily, what we've seen from GA is the deep well of possibility!