Twitter Thread by John Hayward



John Hayward
@Doc_0



Ever since 9/11, we've been instructed that tiny minorities of extremists are solely responsible for their reprehensible actions. There was no greater sin than blaming law-abiding people who share some of their beliefs.

That's how we got the "lone wolf terrorist" cliche. A great herd of lone wolves swept across the world, each completely isolated from anything but the most direct support for their heinous deeds. "Tiny minorities of extremists" were blamed for "hijacking" the beliefs of millions.

The Western world did backflips to completely firewall the actions of terrorists from the larger bodies of people they claimed to represent. We hired a legion of consultants to show us exactly where the line between extremism and legitimate belief was drawn.

We wouldn't even name the adversaries of civilization. We declared a "global war" on their methods, to avoid criticizing their beliefs. The Obama administration launched a huge, expensive "Countering Violent Extremism" initiative that pointedly treated extremism as generic.

The greatest of pains were taken to draw very sharp and bright lines between violent extremism and even the most provocative and incendiary acts of legitimate speech and political organization. This was true of the race riots in the Obama years, as well as terrorism.

Anyone who blamed the most fiery voices of racial hatred for inciting violence - even the ones who blatantly and repeatedly lied about the details of racially-charged criminal incidents, for the express purpose of whipping up violent hatred - was harshly slapped down.

This extended to the gigantic media apparatus that enthusiastically perpetuated the most divisive narratives and incendiary lies. We were not supposed to blame them for inciting violence in their mad rush for ratings and political gain.

This doctrine continued even after physical and verbal harassment was directed at Trump administration officials, and even after attempts were made to murder Republican lawmakers. Don't you DARE link those actions to the extremist rhetoric of Democrats and the media!

The media, and much of the left-wing Internet, actually thought it was amusing when Trump administration officials - even female ones - were confronted with violent threats from people hopped up on extreme Democrat rhetoric. No "safe spaces" for THOSE people!

Part of this strict division between heated rhetoric and violent extremism flows from the principle of zero tolerance for political violence. If you're going to have zero tolerance for something, it follows that you must define it very precisely. The line must be drawn clearly.

As we were told a thousand times after 9/11, if the line between legitimate expression and terrorism is not drawn very clearly, the actions of terrorists could be used to discredit, harass, and persecute law-abiding people. Likewise with rioters and looters vs. "activists."

As soon as someone steps across that line, they become a criminal, not an activist - and the people who stayed on the right side of the line were to be held completely blameless for their actions. Only the most explicit calls for violence should be denounced and punished.

During the racially charged riots of the Obama and Trump eras, we were told that even wildly out-of-control street actions that spawned riots and killings were beyond criticism. Only the specific people who looted and killed were to blame, and even THEY deserved latitude.

It was absolutely unthinkable to blame the people who organized those "protests," no matter how frequently they erupted into violence and destruction, as long as they didn't directly order destruction and murder in very specific terms. Otherwise they were legit "activists."

The speed with which that decades-old principle has been abandoned is breathtaking, and clearly indicates it was never a serious principle to begin with. But we SHOULD be absolutely intolerant of political violence, and very clear about where the line is drawn. /end