Twitter Thread by Julia Azari



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This idea - that elections should translate into policy - is not wrong at all. But political science can help explain why it's not working this way. There are three main explanations: 1. mandates are constructed, not automatic, 2. party asymmetry, 3. partisan conpetition 1/

> I\u2019m sorry it\u2019s just insane that Democrats are like, \u201cwe won everything and our opening position on relief is $1.9T\u201d and Republicans are like, \u201cwe lost and our opening position is $600B,\u201d and the media will be like, \u201cDemocrats say they want unity but reject this bipartisan deal.\u201d
>
> — Meredith Shiner (@meredithshiner) January 31, 2021

First, party/policy mandates from elections are far from self-executing in our system. Work on mandates from Dahl to Ellis and Kirk on the history of the mandate to mine on its role in post-Nixon politics, to Peterson Grossback and Stimson all emphasize that this link is... 2/

Created deliberately and isn't always persuasive. Others have to convinced that the election meant a particular thing for it to work in a legislative context. I theorized in the immediate period of after the 2020 election that this was part of why Repubs signed on to ...3/

Trump's demonstrably false fraud nonsense - it derailed an emerging mandate news cycle. Winners of elections get what they get - institutional control - but can't expect much beyond that unless the perception of an election mandate takes hold. And it didn't. 4/

Let's turn to the legislation element of this. There's just an asymmetry in terms of passing a relief bill. Republicans are presumably less motivated to get some kind of deal passed. Democrats are more likely to want to do *something.* 5/ https://t.co/l9fmh45Sot

I think this was also said on the Slate political gabfest last week - if you care more, you are in a weaker position. This would seem to be the situation, regardless of election victory. 6/

Finally, control of both chambers is very narrow and in play in nearly every election. Republicans do not have an incentive to give Democrats a win? https://t.co/vNS1LiVKEx 7/

IMO this is why this is such a challenging problem. It has multiple dimensions and there are *multiple reasons* why Republicans have an incentive to act this way and Dems have at least some incentives to play along. 8/

Thinking this way is not as much fun as talking about how much Dem leaders suck - and to be clear, all leaders should be held to account - but we have to think about why interlocking incentives have created a situation in which the winner of elections can only sorta govern. fin.