

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 competition 1/

I'm sorry it's just insane that Democrats are like, 'we won everything and our opening position on relief is \$1.9T' and Republicans are like, 'we lost and our opening position is \$600B,' and the media will be like, 'Democrats say they want unity but reject this bipartisan deal.'

— 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 be 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/vNS1LiVKE> 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.