Twitter Thread by Andrew Hammel



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1/ There are plenty of Euros smugly turning up their nose at America's "election chaos" who don't understand a number of key things about the USA. Almost all European countries (in fact, most countries) have mandatory government registration of all residents.

2/ Anytime you move, you must notify government authorities of your new address. Europeans, who have lived with strong centralized states for centuries, simply accept this and have a hard time imagining how it could be different. And it's easy to keep these records in small

3/ countries with small populations. So in Germany, when elections happen, the government sends a vote authorization notice to your address, which you then take to the polls along with your national ID card. This indeed makes for simple elections, since the state

4/ already knows who you are & where you live. In the United States, however, citizens are not obliged to register their address with the government as a general duty. There is no centralized register in the US of where every citizen lives. Americans are much more

5/ skeptical of gov't in this regard than Europeans are. They would never accept a duty to constantly inform the state where they live. Nor is there any national ID card in the US. The closest thing is a driver's license, but if you don't drive, it's quite possible you'll simply

6/ have no official government identity document at all. Most Americans also don't have a passport, since the USA is a very big country and many people live thousands of miles from the nearest national border. Further, the USA is a *thousand* times more federalist than any

7/ European nation. No European country even comes close to the level of devolution in the USA. Each American state can and does have its own election laws, and there is no move to make them more uniform, because Americans prefer to have most of the laws governing

8/ them be made at the state level, where politicians are more accountable and responsive. So, to sum up, there is no national registry of residents/voters, a wide diversity of ways to prove identity, and a diverse set of elections laws state by state.

9/ This means that in *very close* nationwide elections, results can take days, because the work of verifying identity and addresses takes place *after* voting, not *before*. However, the vast majority of elections are (1) not nationwide; and (2) not very close.

10/ Thousands of orderly local elections take place in the USA every year which attract zero attention abroad. And even when there are very close nationwide elections in which vote counting takes days or even weeks, there is never any serious unrest, because people accept this.

11/ The American voting system is hardly perfect, but it works well enough often enough that nobody sees it as a crisis. And the steps which would be needed to have lightning-fast European-style elections would never be acceptable to most Americans. END