Twitter Thread by Henry Farrell

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1. Short thread - on the various claims we're seeing from Republican politicians over the last few days that the Democratic push for accountability is "divisive." Damn right it's divisive - that is what it has to be.

2. It is intended to enforce a clear division between those who accept and are committed to democracy and those who are willing to turn to violence when the vote doesn't turn out the way that they want it to.

3. One of the basic implications of Adam Przeworski's theoretic work is that democracy is made out of mutually reinforcing expectations, and those expectations are fragile. If some actors think they would be better off defecting from the democratic bargain, they will.

4. In other words: democracy and armed factionalism are far closer than we think, or we would like them to be. This means that it is incredibly important to police the boundaries between them. Allowing some to turn to violence can lead to expectation collapse and cascading ruin.

5. When we allow the divisions to become blurred, that means that we are running the perpetual risk of things getting fucked up. If a major faction turns to violence, and no-one responds, things can get really fucked up really, really fast.

6. The last three decades have seen the Republican party blur these boundaries more and more (nb - I am not accounting for pre-Civil Rights enclave authoritarianism, or claiming that the US was a stable democracy before - long history here).

7. This has become an accepted part of American politics - most observers shrugged their shoulders and thought of it as a sorta-deplorable-but-colorful minor aspect of the horse race that they were really paying attention to. They shouldn't have ignored it.

8. It is the main cause of our current crisis - and of the difficulty in solving it. Today's Republican party is one where it is considered divisive to take decisive action against a faction that was trying to hunt down Democratic _and_ Republican politicians a few days ago.

9. Just think about what that says. The reason why Republicans are saying that Democratic actions are divisive isn't because they threaten to split the country. It is because they threaten to split a Republican party that is a coalition between

those prepared to countenance this

10. And those (like Murkowski) who are belatedly coming to see this as a problem. But if the Republican party is ever going to be a healthy political party (a big if) it is going to have to go through this process of division. It cannot ignore it and remain small d. democratic.

11. That is the situation, that is why Republicans like Cruz, McCarthy etc are reacting, and that is why their reactions need to be ignored. Finis.