Twitter Thread by Noah Smith



Noah Smith
@Noahpinion



1/Politics thread time.

To me, the most important aspect of the 2018 midterms wasn't even about partisan control, but about democracy and voting rights. That's the real battle.

2/The good news: It's now an issue that everyone's talking about, and that everyone cares about.

https://t.co/ipQ7Y0JCnG

3/More good news: Florida's proposition to give felons voting rights won. But it didn't just win - it won with substantial support from Republican voters.

That suggests there is still SOME grassroots support for democracy that transcends partisanship.

https://t.co/jHHieSkzTg

4/Yet more good news: Michigan made it easier to vote. Again, by plebiscite, showing broad support for voting rights as an issue.

https://t.co/ffEwTP2SPq

5/OK, now the bad news.

We seem to have accepted electoral dysfunction in Florida as a permanent thing. The 2000 election has never really ended.

https://t.co/auFaCR7WvH

> Bad ballot design led to a lot of undervotes for Bill Nelson in Broward Co., possibly even enough to cost him his Senate seat. They do appear to be real undervotes, though, instead of tabulation errors. He doesn't really seem to have a path to victory. https://t.co/utUhY2KTaR
>
> — Nate Silver (@NateSilver538) November 16, 2018

6/Even worse news: What Brian Kemp did in Georgia was REALLY bad.

https://t.co/Bed8VRpopn

7/Kemp's success at engineering a victory for himself, through voter roll purges and other techniques of vote suppression, bodes ill for future elections, especially presidential elections.

The big worry is that it functioned as a trial balloon.

8/The worst news, of course, is Trump's continued lies about illegal votes - basically de-legitimizing democracy itself in the eyes of his base.

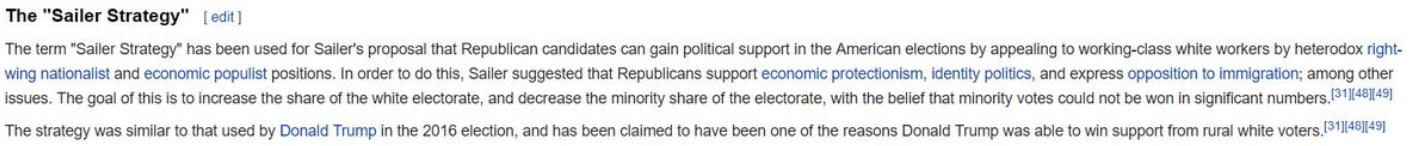
https://t.co/qcPP0wGGDR

9/The struggle over voting rights is important not just because democracy itself is important, but also because it tells us something about the future of race and partisanship in America.

10/After the 2012 election, the GOP had a big debate about whether to reach out to Hispanic voters or take a hard anti-immigration line - which would effectively represent a strategy of using xenophobia to try to win a bigger share of the white vote.

11/That debate was resolved when Trump won the 2015 primary.

The GOP abandoned hope of winning over nonwhite voters, and went with the "Sailer Strategy": https://t.co/jBH0K4JUv4 …

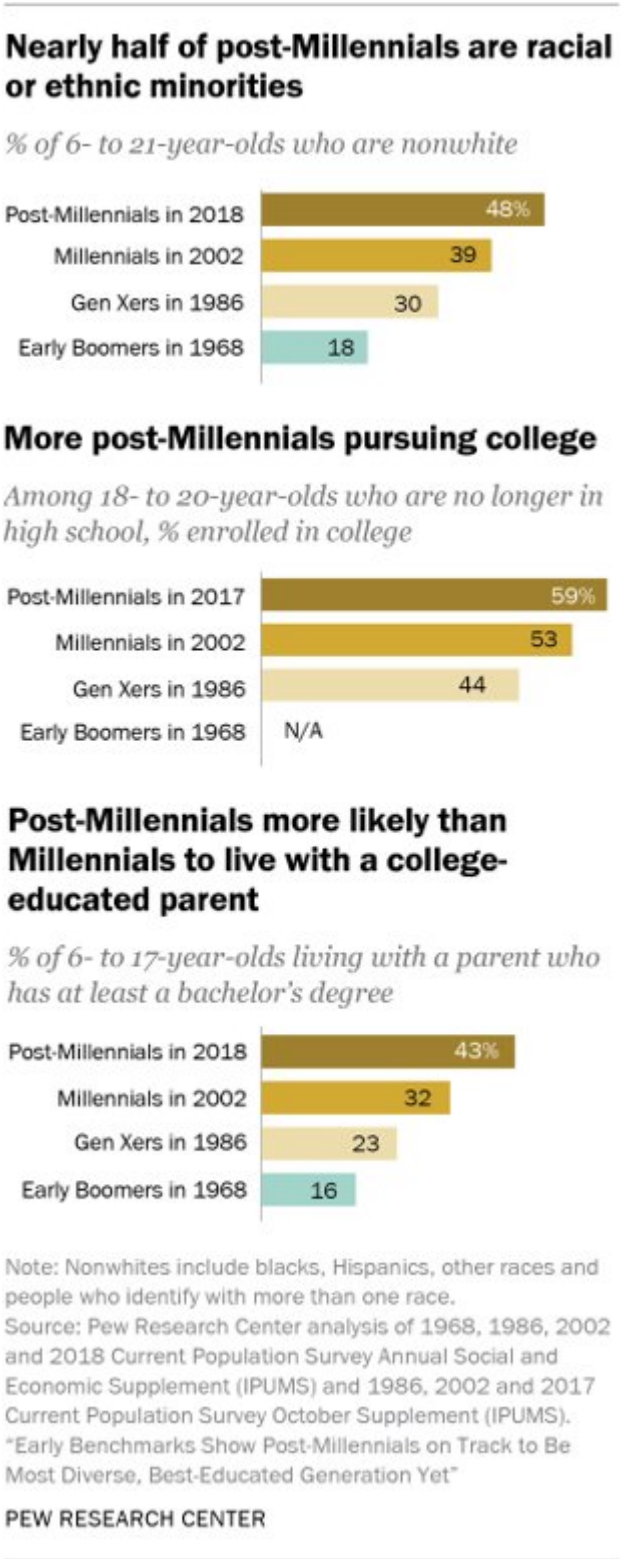


The "Sailer Strategy" [edit]

The term "Sailer Strategy" has been used for Sailer's proposal that Republican candidates can gain political support in the American elections by appealing to working-class white workers by heterodox right-wing nationalist and economic populist positions. In order to do this, Sailer suggested that Republicans support economic protectionism, identity politics, and express opposition to immigration; among other issues. The goal of this is to increase the share of the white electorate, and decrease the minority share of the electorate, with the belief that minority votes could not be won in significant numbers.[31][48][49]

The strategy was similar to that used by Donald Trump in the 2016 election, and has been claimed to have been one of the reasons Donald Trump was able to win support from rural white voters.[31][48][49]

12/But since whites are a shrinking % of the electorate, the Sailer Strategy implicitly requires increasing vote suppression, gerrymandering, etc. to reduce the electoral power of nonwhite voters.



13/It was clear from the moment Trump beat Rubio and Jeb that electioneering would be increasingly important for the GOP electoral strategy going forward.

Which is why voting rights have become such a central issue.

14/Therefore, the voting rights issue isn't just about democracy.

It's about breaking the Sailer Strategy, and putting to bed the idea that electioneering can make nonwhite voters disappear.

15/Of course, the Sailer Strategy will probably be broken in time anyway by the desertion of Millennial and Gen Z white voters, simply because Trumpism is so horrible.

https://t.co/p3vGgC3A1D

> DAAAAAAAAAAAAAAMN pic.twitter.com/hdZzNEvsjG
>
> — Noah Smith (@Noahpinion) November 15, 2018

16/But ensuring voting rights for all is the most important thing we can do to prevent our country from degenerating into a faux-democratic hell of ethnic bloc voting, racial division, spiraling distrust, and dirty electoral tricks.

(end)