Twitter Thread by Sanitary Panels

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@sanitarypanels

[THREAD]

Why ironically using terms like “aandolanjeevi” and “urban naxals” is unhelpful even when mocking, disagreeing, or “reclaiming” them.

Frank Luntz, a right wing messaging expert in the US, says that one of the key ways to create frames that stick with people is “consistency”, essentially, repeat things.

When terms like “urban naxals” and “aandolanjeevi” are used to describe dissenters, students, artists, we think it’s pretty ridiculous, so we either try and refute it, or we mock it.

In both the situations, we fall into their trap of speaking about ourselves in their terms. We end up using their words and terms over and over again, which is exactly what they want us to do, because it strengthens the connections associated with those words in people’s mind.

For eg, the “anti national” framing was so successful, and we mocked it (“if standing up to authority is anti national, guess I’m anti national too”), negated it (it’s not anti national to protest), or tried to flip it around (“actually those quashing dissent are anti national”)

We unwittingly reinforced their frame (not to mention the algorithm) of “anti national” to the point where it is now so widely used that it has become the lens through which the public views all political debate — “is this anti national or pro national”.

This is what allows the right to convince its supporters that anything anyone says against the BJP is automatically against India.

So what should we do instead? Tell them what we are, not what we’re not. Off the top of my head, say things like “we’re heroes of democracy” or “we are fighting for our country” or “we’re protesting for our future” or “we’re standing up to those dividing us”.

All the words they’re using are calculated, they have PR firms and messaging experts telling them what to say, when to say it, and how it will shape discourse.

Be careful to not fall into their trap. Tell them who you are so that we’re not always fighting on their terms.

If you wanna read more on political framing and narratives, you can read:

1) George Lakoff - Don't Think Of An Elephant
2) Frank Luntz - Words That Work