Twitter Thread by Ronald Brownstein



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As 2nd impeachment looms, the Republican Party paved the way to this inevitable end of the Trump presidency by enabling, excusing & abetting an openly racist & authoritarian president who did not hide his contempt for the rule of law or disdain for democracy

Republicans found reasons to excuse Trump after "very fine people" in Charlottesville; "go back" to House D women of color; calling Black Lives Matter "a symbol of hate"; and repeatedly denigrating the intelligence of Black women legislators & journalists.

Rs found nothing to sanction (& often actively supported) as he weaponized the postal service, distorted the Census, obstructed the Mueller inquiry, blocked Congressional oversight, openly extorted the government of Ukraine, pressured prosecutors, dispensed improper pardons.

After the election, 2/3 of House Rs and Republican state Attorneys General backed the lawsuit 2 make him president again by invalidating 20m votes. Rs echoed his spurious claims that the election was stolen in large cities w/big Black populations, even as courts found no evidence

R electeds weren't alone. The conservative media ecosystem slavishly defended Trump. One pundit explained that while elites took Trump "literally not seriously," his common-sense supporters took him "seriously not literally." Another insisted: "There Will Be No Trump Coup."

Even as the behavior of Trump & his supporters became more menacing, Rs kept cheering. @marcorubio praised the TX Trump supporters who tried to run a Biden bus caravan off the road. @GOPLeader extravagantly welcomed Q Anon supporters to R caucus

GOP managed to find no fault even as the coronavirus outbreak produced unimaginable death tolls-beyond a Pearl Harbor or 9/11 a day. Intimidated by Trump, red state GOP governors kept the economy open amid the surging suffering & blocked local Ds from acting

Repubs up and down the ballot echoed Trump's "flight 93" rhetoric-his apocalyptic claim that any Democratic victory would end America as we know it-i.e., an America centered on White Christians. Trump told his voters Democrats were trying to steal "our country" & most Rs echoed

From such sustained subservience, Trump understandably concluded that Rs would not constrain or sanction him no matter how far he went in shredding the Constitution. So he took his term to its inevitable terminus: dispatching a mob led by white nationalists to subvert election

by physically attacking Congress. In many ways, he was proven right: even after the riot, a majority of House Rs voted to throw out the election results w/ the goal of installing him, in defiance of the will of the voters, for four more years.

Trump may face double-digit House R defections on impeachment, but vast majority will again find ways to oppose consequences for him. Senate more a wildcard if @senatemajldr actually votes to convict (we'll see). But even if more break in final days, they need only

look in the mirror to answer how the country has reached this perilous point. As his former DHS analyst Elizabeth Neumann told me, Trump has acted as "an accelerant" on white nationalism, making it socially acceptable to express openly racist & radical anti-government beliefs.

Rs chose to ignore or echo Trump on both fronts. Now they have a coalition that shares his rancid beliefs: more Rs in @PRRIpoll say Whites & Christians face discrimination than say that about Blacks & Hispanics & in another survey majority of Rs agree "the traditional American

way of life is disappearing so fast that we may have to use force to save it." Vast majority of Rs in multiple polls say they believe the election was stolen. Any barriers between party & far right extremists are in tatters (echo of GOP & John Birch Society in early 1960s).

Next stage is unclear. Trump's open incitement of insurrection appears to have finally forced the hand of more center-right Rs who don't share his nihilistic, anti-democratic vision. But their ability to redirect party may be limited if all that's left after Trump

is a coalition tilted more toward his core constituencies of non-college, non-urban and evangelical Whites who welcome his belligerent, confrontational culture war style. Only thing that's clear now is that Trump could never have reached this point alone.

It took the participation & more often the active support of an entire party to carry America to this brink-a moment when the cohesion of the country is under the greatest strain since the Civil War.