

Twitter Thread by Omar Wasow

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"We are now potentially dealing with a problem of *mass radicalization*. We're not talking about the case of a few people that got themselves caught up in an extremist milieu and then radicalized. We're potentially talking about millions of people."

One response to this tweet a few days ago was to dismiss the idea of "mass radicalization." Yes, it's unlikely millions of citizens are going to engage in violent insurrection against the US. That definition is too narrow, though. Radicalization isn't just about violence.

In any movement, people who commit violence will tend to be a small percentage of the group. That in no way precludes millions from sharing a radical ideology, endorsing violent tactics, using violent rhetoric, dehumanizing outgroups and working to undermine democratic institutions.

When a mainstream organization engages in radical behavior, it can be hard to reconcile the conflicting signals. The GOP is the second-oldest surviving party in the US. From statehouses to the ex-President, the GOP, is also increasingly opposed to core democratic principles.

.@ThePlumLineGS makes the case clearly. "Trump's acquittal only confirms what many observers had long pointed out: In some fundamental sense, much of the GOP is no longer functioning as an actor in a democracy." <https://t.co/59k4G589CY>

.@NormOrnstein & Mann: "GOP has become an insurgent outlier in US politics. It is ideologically extreme; scornful of compromise; unmoved by conventional understanding of facts, evidence & science; dismissive of the legitimacy of its political opposition." <https://t.co/59k4G589CY>

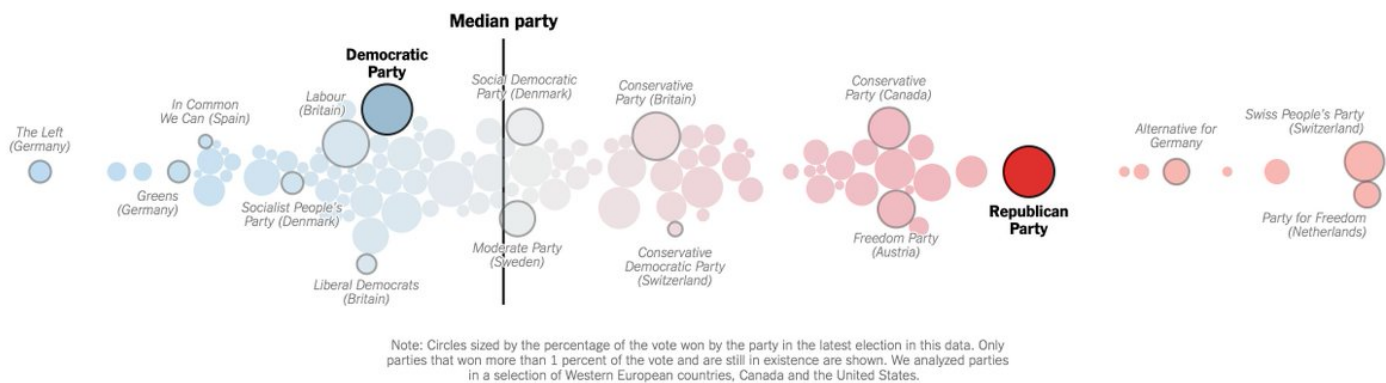
Levitsky & Ziblatt "lay out a four-part test for identifying authoritarian leaders: rejecting democratic institutions, denying legitimacy of political opponents, tolerating or encouraging violence and curtailing civil liberties." US now easily at 3 of 4. <https://t.co/D2VSnZNwUg>

Militant partisans on both left and right endorse violence. That doesn't mean it's symmetrical. Among GOP, "9% said military should overthrow new president; 25% said citizens should prepare weapons to resist the federal government." <https://t.co/WCCYAYdjzG>

What's important about the idea of "mass radicalization" is not extremists endorsing violence. Democratic governments can be overthrown both by insurrection and legally from within. Yes, political violence is serious but the bigger threat is the coup attempts that are bloodless.

From 2014: "Political scientists have known for years that political polarization is largely a one-sided phenomenon: in recent decades the Republican Party has moved to the right much faster than Democrats have moved to the left."
<https://t.co/yv5S79LhYK>

An analysis in 2019 looked at documents that lay out a group's goals & policy ideas. They found "The GOP leans much farther right than most traditional conservative parties in Western Europe & Canada, according to an analysis of their election manifestos."
<https://t.co/s2uhh4XwGq>



"In a backlash to historic voter turnout, and grounded in a rash of baseless and racist allegations of voter fraud, legislators have introduced well over four times the number of bills to restrict voting access as compared to roughly this time last year."
<https://t.co/hQ2cPFD9eu>

2021 Restrictive Bills

A map of the United States showing the status of 2021 restrictive bills by state. States are colored dark blue (pro-restrictive) or light gray (anti-restrictive). The map includes Alaska and Hawaii.

State	2021 Restrictive Bills Status
Alaska	Pro-Restrictive
Arizona	Pro-Restrictive
Arkansas	Pro-Restrictive
California	Anti-Restrictive
Colorado	Pro-Restrictive
Connecticut	Pro-Restrictive
Delaware	Pro-Restrictive
District of Columbia	Pro-Restrictive
Florida	Pro-Restrictive
Georgia	Pro-Restrictive
Hawaii	Pro-Restrictive
Idaho	Pro-Restrictive
Illinois	Anti-Restrictive
Indiana	Pro-Restrictive
Iowa	Pro-Restrictive
Kansas	Pro-Restrictive
Kentucky	Pro-Restrictive
Louisiana	Anti-Restrictive
Maine	Pro-Restrictive
Maryland	Pro-Restrictive
Massachusetts	Pro-Restrictive
Michigan	Pro-Restrictive
Minnesota	Pro-Restrictive
Mississippi	Pro-Restrictive
Missouri	Pro-Restrictive
Montana	Pro-Restrictive
Nebraska	Pro-Restrictive
Nevada	Anti-Restrictive
New Hampshire	Pro-Restrictive
New Jersey	Pro-Restrictive
New Mexico	Anti-Restrictive
New York	Pro-Restrictive
North Carolina	Pro-Restrictive
North Dakota	Pro-Restrictive
Ohio	Anti-Restrictive
Oklahoma	Pro-Restrictive
Oregon	Anti-Restrictive
Pennsylvania	Pro-Restrictive
Rhode Island	Pro-Restrictive
South Carolina	Pro-Restrictive
South Dakota	Pro-Restrictive
Tennessee	Anti-Restrictive
Texas	Pro-Restrictive
Utah	Pro-Restrictive
Vermont	Pro-Restrictive
Virginia	Pro-Restrictive
Washington	Pro-Restrictive
West Virginia	Pro-Restrictive
Wisconsin	Pro-Restrictive
Wyoming	Pro-Restrictive

"Thirty-three states have introduced, prefilled, or carried over 165 restrictive bills this year (as compared to 35 such bills in fifteen states on February 3, 2020)." <https://t.co/hQ2cPFD9eu>

A new Voting Rights Act would bolster US democracy but, “If filibuster remains in place, HR 1 dies in Senate.” So, HR1 hangs in balance of Manchin and Sinema’s opposition to ending filibuster. Where’s the pro-democracy movement to help get them on board? <https://t.co/IYXLMTWJh8>

Anti-democratic forces in US are strong but cross-national studies show pro-democracy movements can be a powerful check. Could a broad coalition, from activists to donors, mobilize enough pressure to advance voting rights? See @andrewmarantz's sage piece: <https://t.co/ALLuYjUQhA>