Twitter Thread by Norman Ornstein



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. @brianstelter You need to have a sharp focus on the culpability over the past many years of the mainstream media. @paulkrugman, @jayrosen Tom Mann & I were among many who warned years ago of the transformation of the GOP from a regular political party into an insurgent outlier

A handful of good journalists like @JohnJHarwood @jackiekcalmes @JillDLawrence and others reported it honestly, but way too many did not. Abnormal behavior was normalized long before Donald Trump emerged. Malign behavior was sidetracked by framing it as strategy. 2

The both sides and false equivalence frame, brilliantly described by @JamesFallows was the norm in journalism. The fear of being labeled as biased towards liberals was exploited by the right. The norm of reporting both sides ignored the more important norm of reporting the truth.

The bandwidth for scandal meant that things like Obama's tan suit got the same breathless treatment as Trump violating emoluments clauses for personal enrichment or child separation. Emails were DEFCON1 for Clinton and ignored entirely for Trump and family.

When actors like McConnell and McCarthy know that they can get away with violating norms and blowing up institutions, they are encouraged to do more. When Sunday talk shows give equal stature and credibility to enablers of wrong behavior to others, they add to deterioration. 5

The kneejerk impulse to normalize abnormal behavior, to seek desperately for signs that Donald Trump was just another president-- eg, Van Jones gushing after Trump read from a teleprompter to Congress, that this is when he became president--gave him more legitimacy for sociopathy

Of course, many actors & many processes led us to this point. Far more culpable are all the Republicans in Congress who provided no check on Trump and his administration's lies, corruption and predations. Even those senators who openly criticized him voted for all the miscreants

So are police departments perfectly happy to bring in vile white supremacists and amoral figures into their forces, some of whom enabled and participated in the January 6 insurrection. So are social media outlets that put the last dime of profits ahead of protecting our country 8

But our mainstream media-- like the NY Times, Meet the Press, Face the Nation and This Week, CNN with its Trump apologists often spewing lies, AP and more-- need to face their own distorted norms and actions. If we fall back on old patterns, we will face even more grave threats 9