Twitter Thread by John Hemmings



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Tons of respect to you @BDHerzinger, love your work, but your arguments in @LowyInstitute's Interpreter on why US needs to support transfer of sovereignty of #DiegoGarcia are both misguided & dangerous. Here's why:

1. Sovereignty: It's not our place to say it. US policy is NOT to take positions on sovereignty and for good reason. A great many allies have competing and counter-competing sovereignty claims. Extremely dangerous to take sides vis a vis our allies over sovereignty issues.

Doing so would cause a political crisis w a FVEY and @NATO ally. Our forces there do not alter this. We cannot make judgements on sovereignty based on the presence of US forces. Doing so would undermine our reliability with a great many relationships where US forces are present.

If the UK were itself to lead on this, then the US could certainly make its views known or take a position, but that is not the current UK position, so we must not / cannot do anything that could be construed as undermining an ally's sovereignty.

2. Legality The UK has stated - and with good reason - that an Advisory Opinion is advice provided to the UN General Assembly at its request; it is not a legally binding judgment. And there are many issues with Mauritius' own claims:

Mauritius has never held sovereignty for the islands so gifting them the islands would be the same as accepting Argentina's colonial-era claims over the Falklands. The "original inhabitants" were imported labor, the islands were uninhabited before France and UK administration.

3. Unintended Consequences: UK - a state we're pushing to join us in Indo-Pacific - loses regional capacity bc of the loss of DG. A US-UK crisis ensues, weakening our closest ally at the worst possible moment vis a vis the strategic environment.

Emboldened by their success, whichever large state -we can guess who- that organized & funded the UN shenanigans pour resources into other movements to reduce the strategic array of Western overseas territories; Gibraltar, Guantanamo Bay, New Caledonia, etc. Why wouldn't it?

Mauritius promises 99-year lease but could be pressured to change its mind (by PRC which owns 52% of its debt). If UK and US were told to withdraw all forces, fairly sure, Beijing would offer diplomatic support in UN and promise to defend M

sovereignty by force, if necessary.

Such scenario would compel US / UK to either withdraw or use force. Either way, a terrible outcome. The use of DG by PLAN and PLAAF gives the PRC strategic reach in the Indian Ocean Region, putting immense pressure on India and its navy. Secures PRC control over regional SLOCS.

In summary:
-We don't have sovereignty. Isn't a US decision.
-Changing US policy on sovereignty claims others a bad idea.
-Non-binding advisory opinion against our own ally & our common strategic interests (in widest Atlantic/alliance sense).
-Glass houses