# Twitter Thread by Bill Kristol



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**1. This thread is based on recent conversations with people whose information and judgment I trust, who in turn have spoken candidly with Trump appointees still on the inside.**

**Here's a question: Why did Trump and Barr, when they negotiated Barr's departure, settle on Dec. 23?**

2. It could, obviously, be kind of random--a date picked last week to allow Barr to get things in order, an accommodation of Barr's family schedule, etc. But it could also be that Barr very much wanted to get out before Dec. 24, and/or that Trump wanted him out by then.

3. One obvious possibility discussed in the White House: Trump has spoken about a bunch of pardons on Christmas Eve. Some of the names may have been too much for Barr--so they agreed on his departure on Dec. 23.

4. (Or the pardons will be a few days later, but the principle holds--Barr wanted out, or Trump wanted him out, first.) But it could be more than pardons. Yesterday Barr suggested there were several things he wouldn't do that Trump wanted him to do as AG...

5. ...ranging from appointing special counsels for Hunter Biden or election fraud, to giving a legal ok for seizing voting machines or for various types of Insurrection Act-type moves by the president. Can one be confident Barr's successor as AG, Jeffrey Rosen, will also say no?

6. I'm told not. I'm told the very ambitious Rosen has pushed on earlier occasions for carrying out Trump's will only to be stopped by Barr. And people who've worked with Rosen say they wouldn't be surprised to see him, as AG, hasten to try to do Trump's will.

7. In the past, Rosen has been allied with some in the White House counsel's office and others elsewhere in the White House who've been for going whole hog for Trump, as a friend put it. They've run up against resistance from Barr but also from WH Counsel Pat Cipollone.

8. The departure of Cipollone would be a signal, as one person put it, that "all bets are off."

9. I'm also reliably told senior military officials in the Pentagon are more, not less, alarmed than they were a few weeks ago when Mark Esper was fired. The new crew of Trump loyalists in the most senior civilian positions don't seem there only to burnish their resumes, as...

10. ...one person put it. They're trying to figure out, in coordination with people in the White House, "how to make things happen." The senior military obviously retain considerable clout, to say the least. But the discussions they're having among themselves are unprecedented--

11. ...more sober and weighty than those of 1974 in the weeks before Nixon's resignation. And the difference is that Jim Schlesinger was then Secretary of Defense, committed to checking an unstable and desperate president, not to helping one.

12. All of these alarms, one hopes and trusts, will come to nothing, or at least to not too much. And the coup, in the end, will fail. But that something more than we've seen so far won't be tried--of that people aren't so confident.

13. The first thing to look for is what, if anything, happens on Dec. 24.

END