Twitter Thread by Bill Kristol



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1. A brief thread on why we should not panic but should worry, even be a bit...alarmed.

I've been speaking with former Trump Administration officials and with other former senior national security types who remain plugged in to the Pentagon.

2. They think we'll most likely "be ok;" but they are worried about what one called the three I's:
Iran.
The Insurrection Act.
and (White House and civilian DOD leadership) Insanity.

3. Iran.

January 3 is the anniversary of Suleimani's killing, followed shortly by the end of the 40-day mourning period for Fakhrizadeh. So there is the prospect of Iranian retaliation, to which a U.S. response (or conceivably preemptive action) would certainly be legitimate.

4. Iran (cont'd)

But of course there's also the possibility of the Trump Administration using an Iranian provocation to launch an action that's way beyond proportionate, as well as the possibility of simply inventing a predicate for U.S. action.

5. Iran (cont'd)

This obviously wouldn't stop the transition or even endanger it; but it would create an atmosphere of crisis and even chaos in which the second possibility--the Insurrection Act--might seem more doable.

6. The Insurrection Act.

As one former national security official put it to me, when you play out this scenario it's hard to see how it works--but even trying to invoke the Insurrection Act would create a full-blown constitutional and governmental crisis.

7. The Insurrection Act (cont'd)

The only reasons to worry about this are that Trump apparently has mention this to allies in recent days, and, I'm told, the senior civilians at DOD have been asking around--just in case!--about how it would work.

8. The Insurrection Act (cont'd)

And of course Trump is encouraging his supporters to come to D.C. on January 6; it's not at all unlikely there'll be turmoil, disturbances, perhaps violence, which would obviously be Trump's excuse for trying to invoke the Act.

9. The Insurrection Act (cont'd)

There have been preparations for such an eventuality among senior uniformed officials and others at the Pentagon who are on the side of constitutional government, and the reaction would be serious and even dramatic. And I think Trump knows that.

10. Insanity.

This the third "I" is kind of a catchall, meant to capture the real craziness of many of those with whom Trump is consulting, but also of many of the newly installed Trump civilians in the Pentagon.

11. Insanity (cont'd)

And even though the Trump appointees are serving in "acting" capacities, and are totally out of their depth, they do have actual authorities that are worrisome. Their orders could be resisted or appealed or leaked or challenged as unlawful--but...

12. Insanity (cont'd)

...as one person put it to me, these civilian officials do have levers to pull or at least try to pull, and that's worrisome.

"Let us therefore have that salutary fear of the future that makes one watchful and combative..."
-- Tocqueville, DA II 4.7

END