Twitter Thread by Michael Gerson



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President-elect Biden's Thanksgiving address was an important moment in the rhetorical and moral life of the nation. The remarks themselves were well-constructed, graceful and serious of purpose – an act of responsible governance even before taking the oath. 1/

The president-elect's speech also contrasted starkly with a president on a descending path of cynicism, destructiveness, desperation and self-delusion. We always knew it could come to this: A direct attack on the functioning and legitimacy of American democracy. 2/

The coup has already occurred in Trump's mind. Can there be any doubt he would keep power by overturning a legitimate election? Can there be any question he would snuff out the democratic voice of the nation if he could? He is incompetent. But can we doubt his intention? 3/

It is the interpretive key to Trump: He is anti-American. He has no respect for the country's institutions or values. He is ignorant of the nation's story, dismissive of its conventions and unmoved by its romance. 4/

Trump sees politics the way a Machiavellian would in any country – as the pursuit of power, not the stewardship of certain truths. 5/

The exceptional nature of American politics involves one vulnerability: our democracy must recreate itself in every generation by reaffirming the ideals that created it. 6/

Our institutions are not machines that automatically produce the common good. They depend for their survival and success on democratic values – on the constraint of power, not only by law, but by convention and conscience. 7/

This has been Trump's main threat to democracy. He has attacked the values –tolerance, civility, lawfulness, a belief in the common good– on which self-government rests. And this is the main damage by his enablers. They have given legitimacy to an anti-American view of power. 8/

GOP complicity in crimes against democracy is the most disappointing political development of our time. Elected Rs have accepted the votes of Americans and the honors of service, but refused the duties of responsible governance. Power has

been the solvent of their character. 9/

Biden’s message set out this holiday's context: the distance from friends and family, the closeness of suffering and death. But a crisis can be an occasion for courage. America has sources of unity that runs deeper than our fears, and a heritage of idealism in dark hours. 10/

Normalcy never felt so good. Biden is using the tools of rhetoric to reassert the democratic values that bind and define us. Our national winter was long. The thaw will be slow. But the Trump era is ending. The vaccine will arrive. Thanks be to God. 11/