Twitter Thread by Annibale



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The nonsense happening in DC last night is important for a lot of reasons, mainly two - it shows how Trump is different from Berlusconi, his probable inspiration; and is a textbook example of how chaos most often than not helps status quo/centrist/stability 1/

Our own Silvio went to power with large and stable support from NE right-wing industrialists who had felt excluded from power during the 1st Republic (1945-1992). He was also popular with the NE and Center professional and commercial middle classes 2/

Last but not least, while he was not amazingly popular with Italy's military, he never antagonized them, and he never alienated the Italian diplomatic corp (mostly a closed class). He had his own agenda, not always in line with "Atlantic interests," but played his cards well 3/

Berlusconi promised stability to center-right voters dismayed by the Democratic Christian party's collapse, "efficiency" to professional classes, keeping taxes down, etc. He acted as a virulent anti-communism, but by 1994 this was just a charade to keep his audience in line 4/

As by then, there was no credible "communist threat" around, and the splinters of the former Communist party were playing "who's more in love with the markets?". So you see, Berlusconi, for all his bluster, was you average conservative tycoon - just smarter than most. 5/

You see, Berlusconi was very good at choosing his real friends, mostly other tycoons terrified at the idea the Italian magistrature, politically aligned left, would "come for them" on corruption charges. But - unlike Trump - he was very good at choosing his ENEMIES 6/

Berlusconi made sure the people most vocal on accusing him of fascism/corruption/authoritarianism etc were either relics with little credibility, pathologically naive or self-aggrandizing bores, or left-wing apparatchik who preached always and only to the converted. 7/

He transformed every election in something centered around him, and for twenty years his opposers always swallowed the bait. He did lose a few elections, but unlike Trump he never played the "we'll stand up and fight" card - as he knew his base wanted stability. 8/

Also, he may really have rigged the 2006 elections (long story), but again it was something not open enough to enrage the establishment. In 2006 he was probably told to stop whatever funny trick he was trying, but he just did that. No big drama /9

Berlusconi's downfall came when he broke his own rule, and choose enemies too big for him - France, UK, the EU, the FMI - over foreign policy issues (Libya and Russia, "market reforms" unpopular with his voters, etc). /10

After a very aggressive smear campaign over the "bunga bunga" nonsense, he was replaced in a bloodless and tidy palace coup by the Monti government, a bunch of technocrats who proceeded to cut pensions, healthcare and welfare and do whatever the EU wanted them to do /11

Of course, everyone hated them, and at the next election it was the "populist" right who made a comeback, while the left, accused of "extremism" despite running a very generic and cautious platform, was hijacked by Renzi, a center-center Berlusconi clone, only less funny /12

So the cycle repeated, only with inverted sides: the "populist right" accused of being colluded with Putin, fascism and all other sins, and the "left" promising stability, Europe and saying Berlusconi was "the right's decent face". O tempora, o mores, as someone said /13

So Trump may have got inspiration from Berlusconi, but he has none of Berlusconi's finesse. And Trump's enemies, while not geniuses, show that to get the power, you must be ruthless, cunning, and love power. Trump seems lacking a bit lacking in the first two. /14

Trump doesn't get (or pretends to) that in the middle of the current chaos, people want stability. And inciting people to "storm" the Capitol while on TV it's a textbook political ad for those who "promise stability", no matter the cost /15

The fact no real resistance was made to this lame "assault" and on the contrary, it was made sure the whole silliness was seen by everyone in the world should ring a bell for everyone. The protest was (probably) genuine, but it only helped "the other side". /16

Of course, this doesn't solve the political crisis the US is facing. For that Biden should do large structural changes (healthcare for all, worker's rights, balance taxation, breaking monopolies, stop foreign wars etc) but that's not what his sponsors want /17

As the Dems have gutted their internal left and Saunders/AOC are sidelined, this opens an enormous space to an even more aggressive "populist" right, mixing genuine popular issues with nativism/authoritarianism of the worst kind. Trump may go, but someone else will come /18