Twitter Thread by Don Moynihan



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A number of Trump appointees have tried to burrow into long-term public service jobs. Biden is firing them, which right wing commentators are trying paint as politicization. The reality is that this is correcting a Trump-era pattern of deprofessionalization. 1/

Lets step back to general principles here: political appointees selected on the basis of ideology are expected to resign when a new President comes into power. Career officials stay. For some positions its a little more complex but that is the basic governing logic. 2/

Trump blurred these basic differences between appointees and career staff. He ran out of time in his effort to turn potentially hundreds of thousands of career officials into appointees, and Biden reversed that policy. A good step to protect competence. 3/ https://t.co/mVLPHCmz97

Thats the big picture stuff, so lets focus on the specific case. The U.S. Agency for Global Media funds International broadcasters. The most famous is Radio Free Europe. Seven months ago a Trump appointee Michael Pack took over. 4/ https://t.co/WCwUJq4xG4

Pack engaged in extreme politicization of the agency. He hired people without relevant qualifications, stacked advisory boards with ideologues & conspiracy theorists, called reporters "deep state" & interfered in programming and political reporting to push a pro-Trump slant. 5/

Trump loses the election. Still, Pack and his pet board decide they want to keep control of USAGM. So they design contracts that say appointees can only be removed for cause, giving protections akin to a career official despite acting like appointees. 6/ https://t.co/ifzPJ3PCWQ

Coates is a political consultant and Trump appointee who needs a job after the election defeat. She was hired to lead Middle Eastern Broadcasting network, part of AGM, despite no real media background and limited Middle East expertise. Started Dec 22. 7/

Biden appoints a journalist with overseas experience - imagine that! - to lead AGM, with instructions to restore integrity. She fires Coates. Coates and supporters are *pointing to the contracts that Pack created to burrow in his ideological picks* to say she can't be fired. 8/

There will be a debate about the legality contracts, but to sum up:
1) Trump appointees engage in unprecedented ideological attack on mission of agency
2) Create contracts to give themselves quasi-career protections
3) Cry foul when they are treated as political appointees 8/

In other words, this is the ultimate "Biden says he wants unity" gag.
"Biden says he wants unity, but he refuses to keep in place a team of unqualified Trump appointees that oppose him and the core mission of their organization."

Follow David Folkenflik if you are interested in this topic. As he implies here, the ideal is to avoid AGM becoming a partisan mouthpiece, which means having leaders with bipartisan confidence. Trump broke that model and Biden has to fix it.
https://t.co/lOuid5WsRR

> This is the wrinkle for Biden team seeking to clear out Pack and his appointees from VOA, Radio agree Europe etc - it requires mass firings too
>
> Will new USAGM leadership rebuild professional minded team w bipartisan support from Hill? That\u2019s the claim.
> https://t.co/RWhG5S96nW
>
> — David Folkenflik (@davidfolkenflik) January 23, 2021