Twitter Thread by Adam Davidson

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The NYT amazing report on Trump's post-election insanity helps explain why he has so many almost-certainly-illegal projects around the world.

Over the past 25 years, there has been an astonishing amount of illegal money flowing out of former Soviet Union and...

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other highly corrupt economies. Trillions of dollars. Broadly called money-laundering.

The sophisticated oligarchs used top law- and accounting-firms, banks, and big hotels to clean their money.

But there were many hack oligarchs.

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Who were too blatantly corrupt, too tied to terror or other bad actors, to use the "legitimate" forms of money-laundering.

Consider Azerbaijan's Anar Mammadov. He spent years and millions of dollars trying to get someone, anyone, in the US to work with him.

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Or Indonesia's Hary Tanoe, a man shockingly corrupt and crude even in a shockingly corrupt country.

Or the Tiah family in Malaysia. Or his partner's in Toronto, Panama, etc, etc.

These were very rich losers. They had too much risk to cross over to the legit economy.

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Until they met Trump.

The Trump Org, like the White House, did have some good lawyers. They wouldn't touch these deals.

So, Trump brought in Michael Cohen--who is less of a lawyer than Rudy, Lin, Sidney, and Ellis--from a taxi dispatch office in Brooklyn.

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And the Trump Org did have experienced real estate execs, but these deals were handled by Don, Jr., and Ivanka.

Trump refused to pay for the barest due diligence but did pay for fig-leaf assurances from pay-to-play "due diligence" firms.

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Much like with the election, he made a series of hugely risky and self-destructive decisions, was counseled against them, and then got a bunch of losers to back him up.

He got away with it because America barely prosecutes international white collar crime.

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The only reason he didn't get away with this coup (yet) is that people with power and resources had a strong incentive to investigate and stop him.

That has not, yet, happened with his business. (God damn you, Robert S. Mueller).

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Investigating the business will be harder.

But it's necessary.

In the end, it will find scenes much like the ones in the NYT story: Trump being told something is illegal, unethical, and risky, and then finding some bottom feeder who will tell him the opposite.

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