

**Teri Kanefield** @Teri\_Kanefield Tue Sep 22 01:30:04 +0000 2020

Dear Twitter:

We need to have a talk about the Strong Man Con.

My mentions today were flooded with people assuring me that Trump doesn't need legal grounds for challenging the election. He can challenge the election without cause, trigger a war, and keep himself in power.

1/ <https://t.co/jOVBvuF4AG>

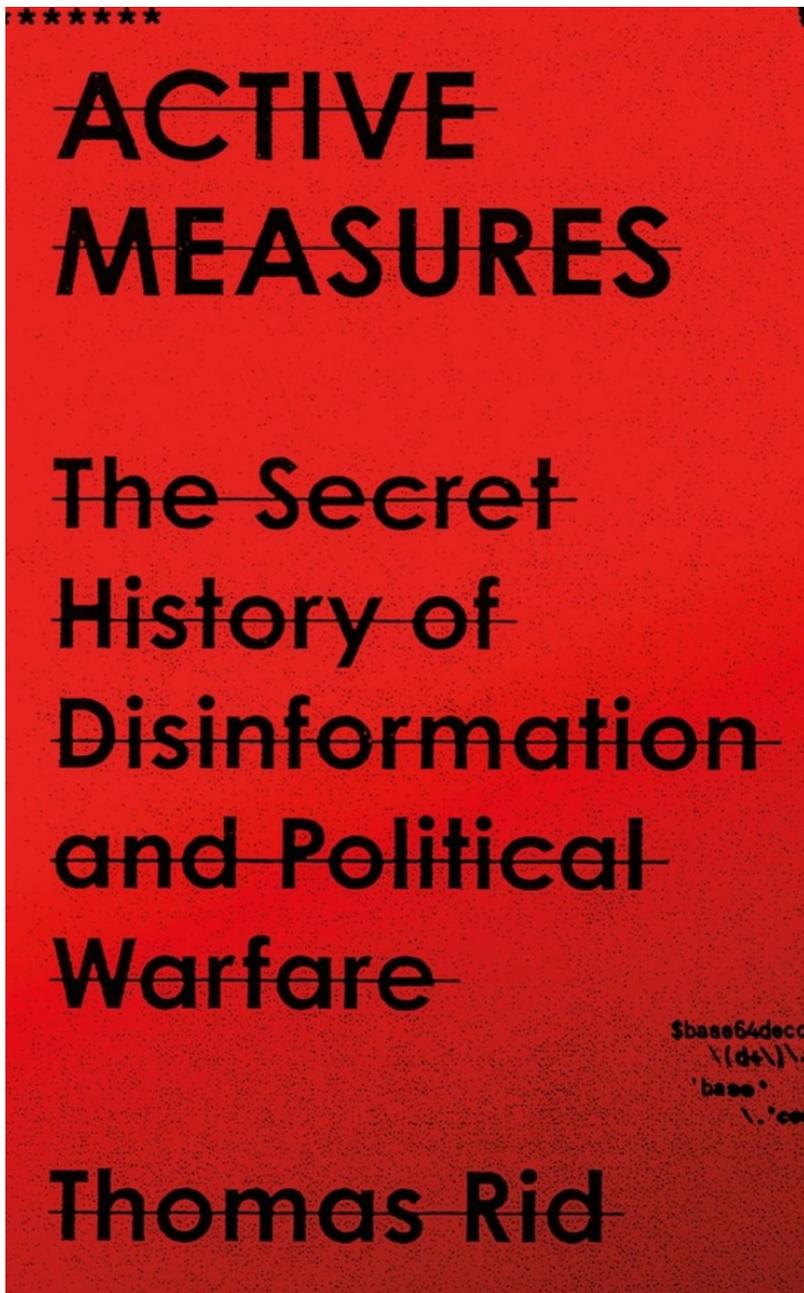
Trump has never needed legal grounds and Barr will back him on whatever he claims. He will need a few people "to do him a favor" and they will grovel and fight over who gets to do it.

5:38 PM · Sep 21, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

Or some variation of that. I won't add more screen shots. You get the idea.

Consider this: Thomas Rid, an expert in Russian disinformation tactics, said that the extent of Russia's interference in the 2016 election was "designed to be overestimated."

2/ <https://t.co/kfe1ujDYh9>



People totally forget that the GOP lost the midterms by 8.

Losing the midterms was not good for the GOP. If they could have avoided that, they would have.

They couldn't. They lost.

Now, why would someone like Putin want to be overestimated?

3/

Being overestimated is how wanna-be Strongmen appear powerful. It makes them feared and respected.

Trump is first and foremost a conman. He wants his supporters to think he is invincible.

He wants you to think that he can't be stopped.

4/

“ . . . even the best propaganda cannot conceal constant political failures.”

That quotation from Schulze-Wechsungen, a 1930s Nazi propagandist.

<https://t.co/QiRF2u1Z4W>

Trump has been compared to Hitler. The better comparison is Mussolini.

5/

Weber, in his classic essay, *Politics as a Vocation*, outlined 3 sources of authority for government:

<https://t.co/0c12FtX9Ae>

In a nutshell:

- Traditional (monarchy)
- Personal charisma (today we'd say 'cult leader' or demagogue)
- Legal / rational (democracy / rule of law.)

6/

Mussolini, like Trump, drew his authority from #2, what Weber called Personal Charisma.

Trump critics have a hard time with the charisma part. Michael Cohen explained it well■■■

<https://t.co/fmFn3nj0Fv>

The GOP is mesmerized by the idea of a Strongman.

7/

Mussolini spun elaborate lies and presented himself as invincible.

When asked his ideology, Mussolini said, "My ideology is to break the bones of the liberals and socialists, and the sooner the better. He also said: <https://t.co/gxu3bdjpP9>

7/ <https://t.co/Lih6ilPj0n>

*Democracy is beautiful in theory; in practice it is a fallacy.*

*All within the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state.*

*Yes, a dictator can be loved. Provided that the masses fear him at the same time. The crowd loves strong men. The crowd is like a woman.*

*If only we can give them faith that mountains can be moved, they will accept the illusion that mountains are moveable, and thus an illusion may become reality.*

*Italian journalism is free because it serves one cause and one purpose...mine!*

*Better to live a day as a lion than 100 years as a sheep.*

– Benito Mussolini

Mussolini seemed invincible. He appeared to be widely adored. Then he made his error: He got greedy and wanted some of the spoils from the war he thought Germany would win, so he entered a disastrous partnership with Hitler. He led Italy to ruin.

8/

This was a problem for Mussolini because he promised "winning," and Italy did not win. When it was clear he was losing, he crumbled. (Well, let's not get into the details).

We all know Trump is a conman. One of his cons is to present himself as a winner.

9/

We also know that he got where he is by cheating, but his base doesn't care. They think he's a winner because of how they define "winning."

If you think nobody has principles, the winner is the one who ends up on top.

10/

Trump's base thinks he "wins" because he:

- accumulated wealth (it doesn't matter how)
- fights their "enemies"
- breaks rules

The "breaking rules" part helps with his biggest con: Faking invincibility.

11/

Here's how the invincibility con works:

- First, Trump does outrageous and shocking things. He politicizes the DOJ. He openly violates laws.
- The rule-breaking stokes his base. They think: "Our team will win!"

12/

The rule-breaking creates panic meltdown in the opposition.

They tremble in fear.

Trump supporters and GOP leaders see the meltdowns and trembling and they think: "WOW Trump really IS a strongman."

13/

This makes them love Trump more.

Remember that one goal of Russian Active Measures is to get people to lose confidence in democracy, because when people lose confidence, they become apathetic, cynical, and then it's all over.

14/

Oddly, quite a few people have been insulting me today. Here's one example from [@Sam86743079](#).

Let's just deal with this one.

My husband experienced the Pinochet dictatorship. He still has the card he had to carry in his pocket to prove that he voted for Pinochet.

15/ <https://t.co/zNLNxDzhg>



**\*RIP RBG\*** ❤️ **Plato's Wall** @Sam86743079 · 25m

I'm guessing all your interactions with authority have always been from a place of great privilege and personal safety?

I'm a lawyer. My husband and I spent a few weeks in a detention center offering legal assistance to asylum seekers through [@RAICESTEXAS](#).

They needed Spanish speaking lawyers. We went as a team. He was my translator.

16/

The stories we heard were brutal. It was hard on him. We stopped going a year ago when I decided that my volunteer time would be better spent working on the election. I've done election work before. I've now worked elections in three states.

17/

Moreover, my legal practice was dedicated to representing indigents on appeal. Notice the indigents part. I have never represented a client who could afford to pay.

So spare me the insults, okay, [@Sam86743079](#) ?

(I do accept apologies).

18/ <https://t.co/fVpwzVw9yT>



The leaders (the true leaders) are not out there telling you it's all over, Trump has this in the bag.

Wanna know why?

Because they're leaders. They know Trumps happen. Trumps happen in every age in every country.

Its up to us now.

<https://t.co/YGwWbNbaqM>

I wrote quickly earlier: My husband I and went together to Texas to work (at our own expense).

We both do elections work. He's in charge of a polling place in California. He's been promoted over several elections. I'm currently on the Voter Protection Committee in Georgia.

I put this one up on my website, here: <https://t.co/JSEauWUJWi>

Well, I left out the little tirade between Tweets [#15](#) and [#18](#) ■

Dear New Followers: I have an FAQ on my blog addressing the most common Twitter panic questions.

I also have a page addressing very real concerns. I'll attach the links to the next tweets.

<https://t.co/6k64YN2In3>

Here's the FAQ: <https://t.co/nFbUXbWcsm>

I last updated it a few weeks ago, so it may not include whatever is latest, but it should get you started.

Here's a page on what can go wrong:

<https://t.co/L4pXg2Lqb7>

Fearmongering gets a lot of clicks. Everyone wants to be popular. People want free news, so news organizations rely on clicks for revenue. There is an industry since 2016 built on scaring people.

Liberals understand that Fox News is about about fear. . .

<https://t.co/0T9snBcpKK>

They understand that Fox survives by keeping its viewers terrified and therefore addicted.

They don't see how their own fears are also manipulated for profit.

Here was one response to this thread■■■

We should be worried . . . <https://t.co/1Qup6ASn5>

Replying to @Teri\_Kanefield

This was a lot of tweets to say "Trump can't steal the election 'cause that's illegal!"

5:15 AM · Sep 22, 2020 · Twitter Web App

But there is a fine line between healthy concern that motivates people to get involved, volunteer, and do their part to save democracy, and despair-mongering that causes people to shut down and give up.

This implies that we no longer have meaningful elections■■■ <https://t.co/BWk5NJPbtb>

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This was a lot of tweets to say "Trump can't steal the election 'cause that's illegal!"

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Voter suppression is not new. It's a problem we've been fighting for since the founding of the nation. Cheating is a thing. It happens. That's why people need to get involved.

Need ideas? See ■■■

But yes, America still has meaningful elections. <https://t.co/Er6v4syFQS>

Recall: Polling shows a steady race, with Trump 7+ points behind.

Why are people trying to persuade you that the election is fixed and Trump has it in the bag?

What good does it do, after voting has started, to get Trump critics paralyzed with fear?

Who does that benefit?

All the time spent demanding answers to these sorts of hypothetical "what if" questions should instead be spent mobilizing voters and making sure that Biden and Senate candidates win by wide margins so that the Democrats can take control and make rapid changes. <https://t.co/a7v21I4Onz>

#1: The 2020 election will be hacked by sophisticated computer hacking resulting in widespread flipping of votes.

#2: Trump will find a way to cancel or postpone the election.

#3: "The far right wing is packing the courts so we're screwed."

#4: "How long will it take to repair all the damage Trump has done?"

#5: "What if Trump refuses to concede and leave the White House after he loses?"

#6: What if all the Republican-led states get together and change their procedures so that their electoral votes go to Trump?

#7: What if Trump declares martial law and sends soldiers to all the polling places and shuts down the election? Or what if Trump mobilizes his supporters into militias to terrorize the polling places?

Think how much FDR was able to do in the first 100 days he was in office.

He was able to do it because he won by a large enough margin and had support in Congress. The Courts were against him, but were unable to stop him.

What makes it tricky is that fear IS warranted. What's happening IS frightening.

But panic meltdowns do not help. Making arguments for how Trump will steal the election because he is invincible does not help.

Constructive action helps.

<https://t.co/ZsKFuKPPqb>

This is an example of Democrats helping to create a reality based on a lie.

The lie is that Trump is an invincible strongman who can steal an election.

Democrats act as if he IS invincible and help hand him the election.

This is what Trump does. . .

<https://t.co/5zYhtxjVDw>

. . . he invents a story (a fiction) and forces us all to become actors in his reality show.

The con is that he is an invincible strongman. Everyone plays along, whipping ourselves into a panic and then acting from our panic, thus creating a new reality based on a lie.

These ideas come [partly] from Thomas Rid, who I quoted earlier. Rid is an expert in Russian tactics and a Professor of Strategic Studies at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies.

I should do a full thread on his book and Senate testimony. <https://t.co/HQZxWqxpwF>

