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THREAD 1/9 Today, with no warning, amendments to Russian law were introduced to the Duma & immediately passed in 3 readings. They bring Russia much closer to full mobilization & stipulate harsh penalties for failing to report for military duty, surrendering, or refusal to fight.

2/9 Taken together with demands for “immediate,”—maybe even online—referendums in all parts of occupied Ukrainian territory on becoming part of Russia, the message is clear.

3/9 That message is: “You chose to fight us in Ukraine, now try to fight us in Russia itself, or, to be precise, what we call Russia.” The hope is that the West will balk at this.

4/9 Foreign troops crossing Russia’s borders, even if the border has just moved, will be used by Putin to justify renaming the “special operation” a war, moving toward mobilization, targeting Ukrainian sites it had previously avoided, & making its nuclear threats less abstract.

5/9 Some commentators are linking these new measures to the support and approval Putin supposedly got from major non-Western countries at the recent Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Samarkand.

6/9 I believe the opposite is true. Those countries signaled to Putin that he should end the war as quickly as possible, and stop claiming to represent the entirety of the non-Western world.

7/9 China by no means supports Russia’s actions in Ukraine, but Beijing’s doubts are rarely made public. This time they were, and clearly at China’s initiative. At the same summit, Russia’s Central Asian allies were less deferential to Putin than previously.

8/9 Moscow’s actions, therefore, are being taken to either end the war as soon as possible, or, if it that doesn’t work, to put the blame for that on other people, and turn Russia’s invasion of a neighboring country into a defensive war.

9/9 Moscow hopes that that distinction will make the conflict more legitimate in the eyes of ordinary Russians, leaving the Kremlin free to make whatever decisions and take whatever measures it deems necessary.