Twitter Thread by Ben Rhodes



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1. Three years ago, I set out to write a book to understand what happened to the world, America, and myself as the undertow of history pulled us into the currents of nationalism and authoritarianism – and what we should do about it. I hope you'll read it:

2. I travelled the world to learn the stories of individuals – dissidents, opposition figures, and young people making sense of it all. I found that the same things were happening everywhere in ways that let me understand better what's happening in America.

3. I talked to Russians like Alexei Navalny, who told me his story and what motivates him to risk his life for a Russia that isn't corrupt, that speaks to the grievances that Russians feel in their bones without enriching a cabal that has hijacked Russian identity.

4. I met with Hungarians who described how Viktor Orban transformed himself from an anti-Communist liberal to a far right autocrat, who pursued a playbook that is eerily similar to what the Republican Party has done in the US over the last decade. And what they're doing about it.

5. I met with Hong Kong protesters and young people whose movement should be heard as a courageous and innovative warning about the future of technology-fueled totalitarianism encroaching on their city, identity, and the wider world. And learned how people are wrestling with that

6. I was forced to question every assumption that I had as an American about who we are, and the gap between the stories we tell ourselves and the state of our democracy and our role in the world.

7. I came to see more clearly how 30 years of American hegemony made the world we live in – the ways that unbridled capitalism and the 2008 financial crisis, post-9/11 militarism and Us versus Them politics, and the explosion of social media have shaped life on earth.

8. I wrestled with how America's own legacy of racism infuses everything from our history and politics, to my own privilege, to the ways in which the Obama presidency was shadowed by America's ghosts.

9. I also found immeasurable hope in the stories of people who believe that we can be better, wherever we are – through the choices we make, the movements we join, and how those dissatisfied with the status quo must find solidarity.

10. It’s a personal book, inherently limited by my own lived history, enriched by the people I have been so proud to meet – extraordinary people who I would like you to meet.

11. By looking honestly at how America has gone wrong, I found I could love more fiercely what America is supposed to be – a country that encompasses all the contradictions and multitudes of humanity. We get to choose who we are, and it matters to people everywhere.

12. Through turbulent times, I’ve cherished engaging people, especially young people –through Pod Save the World, on platforms like this, at in-person events I miss. I hope you’ll consider pre-ordering this book and taking this journey with me. Thanks: https://t.co/1pCVBqXSME