Twitter Thread by Jeremy Wallace

Jeremy Wallace
@jerometenk

A few notes on @TheProspect article on "The China Hack"

In general, it presents a critique of American political economy as overly dominated by corporations (including non-profits, that is, universities) that sell out US national interests (principally considered in the national security sense) for profit.

Much of the argument is based on US military contractors seeking profits in China and pushing the US government to allow transfers of what should have been obvious dual-use (commercial but also military) technologies.

The tone of the piece is harshly critical of prior engagement, but the policy recommendations are mostly limited interventions pushing for more engagement on better terms.

What the piece did not have as much on but made me think about were counterfactuals, especially in geopolitics.

It's a dyadic discussion--US & China--which is fine. But shifting the nature of that relationship, especially decades ago would have made a very different world. Europe and European firms likely would have been the beneficiaries with America and American firms less central.

1. The quick mention of the Soviet Union has the history a bit backwards--Nixon's overtures to China were about profits but also expanding US influence and alienating the USSR as much as possible, not a consequence of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

2. While I'd prefer government rather than corporate led engagement, one is left wondering about the course of history if the US ignored China. We'd have seen much more European-Chinese collaboration and engagement, with European firms coming to more prominence.

3. More tension in the cross-Atlantic relationships as Eurasia clearly becomes the world's core economic unit, even if US remained the largest individual country.

The China-EU trade deal that recently was signed is one sign of this in our reality, as is this German-Chinese agreement about standards. https://t.co/yChMLVxsw6

Corporations control too much US governance, including the relationship with China, which China came to understand and take advantage of. But if we did things differently, we'd have a different world.