Twitter Thread by Jabin T Jacob ■■■



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This is supremely clever propaganda. A former PLA senior colonel, Zhou Bo, writes for the once balanced SCMP (what a fall!) about the "inevitable decline of the US" and wonders if it will be peaceful.

"inevitabile decline",
a) the "inevitability" itself is removed from the central focus, that from any challenge or question.
and
b) the old question of whether China's rise (again considered inevitable) will be itself be peaceful is completely ignored.
Interestingly, however,

he also states that "China's rise so far has been peaceful" - only "so far", mind.
Let's ignore for a moment China's actions against the Filipinos in the South China Sea, its provoking the Japanese SDF in the East China Sea or its initiating a major confrontation along the

disputed boundary with India in 2020. Zhou is signalling that if the US isn't going to be peaceful, don't expect China to be either.
"the Pentagon's unabated military interventions after the Cold War have reduced the US' national strength – a point few seem to disagree with now"

No definition provided for "national strength". Just a bald assertion. Accept it, swallow it - as Zhou rushes quickly to the next point
"when a democracy is in decline, it may become vitriolic and violent" - forget that authoritarian states are at all times vitriolic and violent

"Biden might now find himself in a situation echoing that faced by Abraham Lincoln, American's 16th president, after the civil war" -wildly exaggerated- that Chewbaca in pyjamas didn't strike me as Gen. Lee reincarnate
But the Chinese, hey, do know a thing or two about civil wars

"The bad news is Trumpism will not easily go away" - yes, that much is true in American domestic politics - but remember that's true of American foreign policy and hence, bad news also for China - the sustained targeting of China is not about to go away either.

"Biden can hardly be Moses who led the Israelites out of Egypt." When a PLA officer quotes the Bible, you gotta give points for effort.

the “city upon a hill” - again from the Bible but used by the Americans to signify their role as a model for the world. Now China wants to be

that model and Zhou is making the pitch in words a lot of Americans would get. The aim of this article - be the familiar voice in their ear, creating doubt. Weaken them from the inside.

But what i'd like to also point out is how well-informed the PLA is about American politics

US military officers are similarly well-informed about the world. That's how ambitious militaries are -area expertise is essential for expeditionary forces. How many America experts in the Indian military? Heck, how many experts on American history or politics in Indian academia?

"the American people are weary of the endless wars... A retreat to isolationism looks inevitable." short phrases and not particularly new but the msg the rest of us should take is that the Chinese state, at least, is actually seriously considering the possibility of wars and

prepping for them - consider Xi's frequent calls to the PLA to be prepared for "real combat" (■■, shizhan), China's diplomats becoming 'wolf warriors' in their work or the slow militarisation of Chinese society under "military-civil fusion" (■■■■, junmin ronghe)

"the core issue is that Europe regards itself as a world power, and the US looks increasingly unreliable to Europeans." But do the Chinese think Europe is a world power? Hell, no! Even as they con the EU into an investment treaty, they are engaged in divide-and-rule tactics with

the 17+1 initiative with Central and Eastern European countries.
"there is competition with China. In the era of great power competition, as defined by the US" - again, all propaganda is about reinforcing an idea and making sure no one questions it - here the idea is that China

is a "great power" - look at the casual insertion and framing - "era of great power competition". Never mind, the gaps in capabilities with the US. Or perhaps that is why it is important to reinforce through words the idea lest it be tested in practice - essentially,

'winning without fighting', ie, look a bigger threat than you are so that the enemy is constantly wary and second-guessing himself.
But the Americans (because they are at the top) might well re-define what 'great power' means and there are already at least a few, esp. military

leaders who challenge the notion that China is already a great power.
Certainly, India does not accept any categorisation in which China is a great power and India isn't; economic or military capability alone don't suffice as criteria and the latter is really moot wrt China

And the Chinese know it, which is why Sr. Col. Zhou concludes by saying "Biden... can save China-US relations from going into free fall." Hope springs eternal because otherwise, you are getting into a fight too early and therefore, likely to lose.

"Wouldn’t a similar [to China-Europe] China-US trade deal be better than Trump’s unsuccessful trade war with China?" You all know the drill by now, see the adjective "unsuccessful" thrown in so confidently? The trade war and Covid together have returned the Chinese govt to old

and bad habits of trying to invest in infrastructure its way out of a crisis. So its iron ore imports are once again booming, its trade surplus is growing and its local govt debt is hitting the stratosphere. So much for pushing up domestic consumption as the engine of China's

new growth strategy and so much for "dual circulation".

Is China, failing? No. Now don't get carried away and start crowing. China's too big to fail or to stop being a challenge, just like the US. The world is a messy place, nothing ever moves in straight lines. And you play

with the cards you are dealt with and you bluff when you have to. For India, the lesson is keep watching, keep learning, get the basics right and "don't lose your shape", to end with a cricketing metaphor.