Twitter Thread by jag



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The clearest lens through which I view the 1776 Report, Trump's apologia in response to the 1619 Project, is the same lens for viewing our overall political divisions: one of competing theories of American Exceptionalism:

Is America exceptional? How? Why? 1/x

The 1776 Report postulates that America is _inherently_ exceptional. We don't have to do anything in particular to be exceptional, and we remain exceptional no matter what we've done. It's deeply interwoven with white Christianity: a faith in inevitability of God's plan. 2/x

This religious inevitability of exceptionalism sharpens a lot about the Trump phenomenon, probably often confused for white supremacy, when it's really religious conviction. America simply can't lose, and they're defending America against critics, naysayers, and threats. 3/x

Trump's loss has caused complete disorientation. They view their faith as being challenged. They rise up in fulfillment of prophecy. They exegete the Constitution as sacred text for God's plan to keep Trump in office. They become apocalyptic at the end times. 4/x

But if the Constitution is their Old Testament, the 1776 Report is their gospel. It's important to distill the kernel of their faith: America is, always has been, and always will be inherently exceptional. That's what underlies the right's patriotic correctness. 5/x

The 1619 Project postulates that America never was exceptional. In fact it was exceptionally shitty from before it was even America. It shines a giant floodlight on the blisters, sores, and scars that have been handwaved past in other histories. It needs to be told. 6/x

But if the right's patriotism is faith, the left's is a dismal atheism. It focuses on failures, shortcomings, and injustices. It idolizes other systems in other nations that we should imitate. This self-deprecating shame underlies the left's political correctness. 7/x

But that's also why the 1619 Project was such a heresy to the right: a direct challenge to the core dogmatic axiom of exceptionalism, of inevitability, of the arc of justice. It placed America's founding among the Holocaust, Crusades and Spanish Inquisition. Blasphemy, right? 8/x

I think a healthy view of American exceptionalism is that our _potential_ is exceptional, but that it's up to us to live up to it. And we won't always. We'll fuck up splendidly. But our character is our willingness to grow. We don't always get it right, but we _can_. 9/x

Trump always tried to frame himself of the defender of American exceptionalism against heretics- Socialism! (((Globalists!))) China! The Bernie/AOC left speak their truth that American exceptionalism is a lie. But most of us are here in the middle, willing to work and grow. 10/10

Addendum: I'd be particularly curious what folks like @DavidAFrench think about this framing. And @AkivaMCohen, if the comparisons between the right's reaction to Trump's defeat and the end of the First Temple Period resonate with you. ■