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US-China relations are entering perilous period. A short thread. 1/

The upcoming Biden-Xi phone call later this week, reported by @Dimi, is likely to force both sides into a box from which it will be hard to escape. 2/

<https://www.ft.com/content/7f2bbb6d-cf87-45e4-b8a3-3ead0eb7a898>

Xi will likely state in no uncertain terms and in tough language that Biden should stop Pelosi from visiting. He will also likely include vague threats of unspecified consequences should the visit go ahead. 3/

Of course, even if Biden believes Pelosi's visit to be unwise, he has no authority over her actions. The executive and legislative branches of government are separate but co-equal. But, b/c Pelosi and Biden are both Democrats, Xi will likely believe Biden has such authority. 4/

Xi's statement will be a personal one, too, from one leader to another. This will not be spokespeople trading jabs and barbs from behind a podium. 5/

Now, assume Pelosi goes ahead with the visit. This seems likely, as other members of Congress cast her visit as a question of what China can or cannot "dictate" to Congress (not what is sound vs unsound policy). 6/

<https://twitter.com/reprokhanna/status/1551687810691760131?s=21&t=ARQrkxYsjHK9pdMpB6b9nA>

Xi may now conclude that 1) the United States is continuing to "hollow out" its One China policy, perhaps to a point of no return, and 2) that he has been snubbed / scorned / slighted by Biden. 7/

Thus, the stakes for Xi in how to respond will be even higher, and create even stronger incentives for a forceful response, than if no phone call occurred. Policy, reputation, and credibility will be seen to be at stake. 8/

A somewhat analogous episode occurred in early Sept 2012, when Hu Jintao appealed to Japanese Prime Minister Noda to halt the purchase ("nationalization") of three the Senkaku islets at the APEC meeting in Vladivostok. 9/

http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-09/09/content_15745930.htm

So, buckle up, as Evan Medeiros, @BonnieGlaser, and others have noted, we are heading straight toward a Fourth Taiwan Strait crisis. END/