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■ on Twitter and Mu*k, from the perspective of a journalist/activist from #Singapore (me)

1/ I am from a country that has significant issues with civil, political, and human rights. But my government also puts significant effort into public relations to bolster its reputation.

2/ I'm constantly meeting people who have no idea that, in #Singapore, you can be arrested for holding up a placard in public. That 11 men have been executed this year for #drugs. That we have serious issues with press freedom and media diversity.

3/ In this context, Twitter has been, and is, an extremely valuable tool in allowing me — a freelance journalist and activist with limited resources and no big institutional backing — to talk to people outside of #Singapore about our problems.

4/ Twitter has allowed me to talk to the world about the death penalty, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, politics and democracy, migrant workers and labour exploitation, LGBTQ+ and discrimination against minority communities, etc.

5/ I would not have started my newsletter, <https://wethecitizens.net>, if I hadn't been inspired by friends like @dmkmtoday, @miketatarski, @waltonkate — all of whom I first got to know on Twitter before we met in person.

6/ So it's unsurprising that I have an attachment to Twitter. I've made friends — to the point where people let me crash in their flats when I travelled to their city! — and I've found work via this platform. I've followed cat accounts and K-pop accounts and have lots of fun.

7/ This doesn't mean that I think Twitter is perfect — it has serious problems like every big tech company/social media platform has — but my experience has been a net positive overall. I don't want the platform to fail.

8/ But what's been unfolding since EM took over doesn't inspire confidence. As I told @erinhale, I don't think he really understands the complexities that exist in managing a global platform, where different countries have different concerns and dynamics. <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/11/7/asias-dissidents-anxious-over-musks-twitter-reign>

9/ In many ways my concerns aren't as serious or urgent (yet) as others, like HKer or Uyghurs who have used Twitter as an important tool for their activism, and who have valid and immediate fears that EM will throw them under the bus the moment China dangles a carrot before him.

10/ But one other thing we should all be concerned about is how a failure of a social media platform like Twitter to live up to its responsibilities with content moderation, dealing with misinformation and hate speech is that it opens the door for more authoritarian power grabs.

11/ We've already seen this. In 2018, the Singapore government took full advantage of the Cambridge Analytica scandal to say that big companies like Facebook can't be trusted be responsible, so the government needs to step in to regulate content on social media.

12/ We ended up getting anti-"fake news" legislation that allows the government to issue executive orders demanding individuals or tech companies post "corrections" (that the government drafts for you), or remove/block access to content they deem to be "false".

13/ If content moderation goes to shit on Twitter — whether on purpose, or 'cos the people who know what they're doing have been fired — and this platform ends up with even more problems with misinformation and hate speech, it once again gives governments an excuse...

14/ ...to justify passing more laws, implement more regulations, and generally give themselves more power to further regulate and clamp down on online expression. This might not be too horrendous if you have a democratically elected

govt with sufficient oversight...

15/ ...but it has serious implications if you have an authoritarian government from a country where freedom of expression is *already* restricted, where a platform like Twitter might actually be one of the last spaces where citizens can speak (relatively) freely.

16/ And this isn't even taking into consideration the ways in which governments, state organs and institutions might themselves be complicit or actively involved in spreading hate and peddling disinformation, as in Myanmar.