Twitter Thread by David Henig

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We need to talk about UK politics. More specifically we need to talk about the absence of opposition to a no-deal Brexit risking Scottish independence, Northern Irish peace, the end of the mass market car industry, more expensive food, and damaged relations with US and EU 1/n

> UK cabinet to back Johnson over no-deal Brexit - The Times https://t.co/uCuOTsNdJL pic.twitter.com/88x5Tw2g53
>
> — Reuters (@Reuters) December 6, 2020

Project fear and the red wall. The first meaning that every serious threat, such as that of Nissan that their plant will be unsustainable, is dismissed with little discussion. The red wall, apparently so angry with Labour about the EU they are afraid to have a position. 2/

Because 'sovereignty' apparently. But a particularly nefarious form of sovereignty in which the normal kind of things you discuss in a Free Trade Agreement - shared rules, access to waters - become when discussed with the EU unacceptable infringements and threats. 3/

You note in the UK we aren't having a discussion on what level playing field rules or access to fishing waters might be acceptable. Or normal. Or even what we might want, like shared increased commitments on climate change. No, all rumours. Evil EU. Worse French. 4/

Those who follow closely see incredible briefings in the papers, like today claiming the EU demand for raising minimum shared standards was only raised on Thursday, treated as fact. This was known months ago. But the media too often just reports the spin as fact. 5/

Not one member of the Cabinet, knowing the disruption to come, the threat to the economy and international relations, is willing to publicly advocate a deal. Some have let it be known quietly they'd quite like one. But they're afraid of an EU-phobic Conservative Party. 6/

And let us be clear, government policy is being drived by an EU-phobia, not by a positive agenda. People who will always respond by blaming the EU, even when the question is what future they want for the UK. For whom hatred of the EU is their obsession. Reader, I asked them... 7/

The unwillingness to take the consequences of no-deal Brexit seriously is widespread. It stretches to diehard remainers almost hoping for huge disruption, and government ministers frantically crossing fingers. But none taking seriously a UK which loses international confidence 8/

For the worst that can happen is very bad indeed. It is the withdrawal of inward investment from international companies, loss of confidence in the UK as a lawful player, oss of political confidence of other major countries. Worst case. Low chance. Far from impossible. 9/

But we still don't talk about it. As we don't talk about how every other country in the world manages to do deals with neighbours, and those neighbours are not always easy countries to do business with, like China or the US. They have demands. As the EU does. 10/

No-deal is serious. Not some PM joke. Or remain campaign point. The US and EU are serious that the UK government is threatening the Good Friday Agreement. The Scots are serious no-deal means greater support for independence. Nissan are serious about leaving. 11/

It might be too late for the debate now. Positions of the EU (not covered in glory recently) and UK seem entrenched, domestic oponents of a deal emboldened, support for a deal shrivelling. But it doesn't end. Because the next pressure is to tear up the Withdrawal Agreement 12/

That worst case? That comes where the UK government follows no-deal by breaking the Northern Ireland protocol and WTO rules. Telling the US and EU they are wrong. Not worrying when the car companies leave because freeports. Then probably panic. With no counter voices. 13/

Maybe it won't happen. Maybe it is no-deal but the government tries to follow the Northern Ireland protocol, holds firm against the demands for a trade war with the EU, realises how damaging tariffs will be for UK producers. But we have to admit, we don't have confidence. 14/

The UK political debate has gone badly wrong. Abstract notions of sovereignty rule over real knowledge of international relations and international economics. That is costing us and will continue to do so. We need interventions and quickly, but from where who knows? 15/

We were warned. We joked @garvanwalshe was the Brexit cassandra. But so far his forecast from 2016 is the most accurate. There is time to change, time for politicians in particular to stand up for a more mature UK. And as they don't, the cost rises. 16/16 https://t.co/J4p0n1cEQs

PS someone on the inside getting worried and leaking? https://t.co/wIxBRce1JT

> Cabinet office doc seen by Guardian on no deal scene:"The likelihood of a systemic economic crisis has increased and will have major impacts on disposable incomes, unemployment, business activity, international trade/commerce, market stability, and security decisions/capability"
>
> — lisa o'carroll (@lisaocarroll) December 6, 2020

PPS I still haven't actually changed my long-standing fence-sitting position on UK-EU deal yes or no. I'll come off the fence when the PM does. There is no great technical difficulty to doing a deal. Politics and momentum are the problems, which I thought needed more focus.