Twitter Thread by David Henig



David Henig
@DavidHenigUK

So, deal or no-deal? I'm afraid it looks gloomy. Too many outstanding issues, a political context that is not conducive to compromise, and a tunnel leaking like mad. Quite possibly forming between them a vicious cycle. So, is this it? I suspect not... 1/n

Recall, this UK-EU negotiation is attempting to put in place an agreement unusually extensive (haulage, aviation, security, as well as trade) in a record timescale (9 months start to implementation) at a time of pandemic. That was always optimistic. 2/

A process driven EU against a naive yet overconfident UK in a short timeframe was also never going to be easy. In particular the UK's sole evident negotiating strategy, to say we'll walk away, is still in overdrive, making compromise harder. 3/

On the up side the UK has been inching slowly away from the purist notions of sovereignty which would prevent any deal towards a more realistic haggle over details, but possibly too late to resolve them, barring unexpected deep late concessions from either side. 4/

Geography isn't changing, and trading more with neighbours isn't either. Virtually all countries in the world have deals with their neighbours. It is unrealistic for the UK to be the sole developed country exception. Even if it takes a while. 5/

Right now the politics is 'blame the French' on one side and 'don't trust the Brits' on the other. As I said, not conducive to deep compromises. The only real chance is to agree you don't trust each other, but would trust each other less without a deal. Which isn't great. 6/

But apart from petulance, why walk away? The EU don't, ever. However improbable a deal appears (hello India!). Why should the UK do so? As we've just seen, we need to talk with neighbours. And you can be not scared of no-deal and still prefer a deal. 7/

Time, as Brexit threadmeister @pmdfoster often says, for cool heads. A lot has been agreed. But negotiating teams are now tired and probably pretty grouchy. Member states, MEPs, MPs, all concerned about what might be agreed. No time to implement properly anyway. 8/

Yes, deal if we can today. But if we can't, far better for the two sides to take a pause, get ready for January 1, and come back with some renewed energy (and knowledge of why we need a deal). Yes it will be messy. But it will be anyway. Trying to be civil will really help. 9/

Throughout these talks we hoped for some kind of outside intervention to overcome fundamental differences. It hasn't happened and is probably still needed (hello Biden?). But the two sides have come through a lot. If they can't complete, at least don't throw it away. 10/10