Twitter Thread by Antonello Guerrera

Antonello Guerrera
@antoguerrera

EXCLUSIVE. "We want a Brexit deal with the UK. But the EU is ready for No Deal"

I interviewed Joao @ValedeAlmeidaEU, EU's first ambassador to the UK. He expressed many interesting comments on the ongoing #Brexit negotiations

THREAD with some

1. Ambassador Vale de Almeida:

the aim is a "fruitful, ambitious, forward-looking relationship between the EU and the UK after Brexit". BUT "it is very important to make sure that the Withdrawal Agreement is fully and completely implemented".

#Brexit

2. Then he said:

Another challenge is "to engage with the British authorities, [...] Whitehall, No10, FCDO and beyond, but also with the DEVOLVED UK nations. This country is a union. It's not only the government in London, BUT ALSO the governments in the 3 devolved nations".

3. But we'll talk later about this.

Then the Ambassador said that #Brexit "is a moment of sadness because we're losing one member of the family, but also we [the EU] need to reflect, draw lessons from it" and "to be humble as well about Europe and the project itself".

4. Which lessons?

Amb: "We [EU] need to connect better with people, understand better what are people's concerns, accept that there are national situations that need to be given full attention. We need to be humble and question ourselves: "Are we doing the right thing"

#Brexit

5. But, the Amb continued

"I think we proved in July that we learned the lessons of our own crisis, that we are capable of moving forward and producing new ideas, proposals, solutions. The sadness of Brexit is now being compensated by the joy of Europe reacting in a solid way".

6. Then the Amb added:

"I would have preferred to keep the UK in the EU because it makes sense from an economic, social, and strategic point of view. They are Europeans" But "maybe there is more cohesion, more convergence of views among 27 than there was among 28".

#Brexit

7. Then Amb @ValedeAlmeidaEU praised EU after #Brexit:

"The EU will continue to be the second-biggest economy in the world
the biggest internal market in the world
the biggest foreign direct investor in the world
the main trading partner of 80 countries in the world (the US 20)"

8. Shortly after came some ouch ■

"We'll continue to have 5 out of 10 among the happiest countries in the world. And I can tell you that the UK is not one of the 10. These are statistics. EU's place in the world will remain absolutely essential, indispensable".

#Brexit

9. Then the Amb went into negotiations details striking down Johnson's Oct 15 deadline:

"We have a very narrow calendar because the UK didn't want an extension. You would need about two months for ratification. We have two, three, four, maximum four weeks ahead to sort this out"

10. The Ambassador went on

"We believe that the UK has to move on particular three issues [level playing field, fisheries and disputes jurisdiction] which are important and that's what we are waiting to happen".

#Brexit

11. Shortly after we talked about the WA, the IMB and Northern Ireland:

"I came back from NI with an acute sense of the seriousness of the IMB impact. Brexit was already a moment of uncertainty for the Peace process. Now the IMB has created additional uncertainty in NI"

#Brexit

12. Followed by some gloomy remark on the same subject:

The attitude of the British government, which we regret, has added uncertainty and volatility to the situation in NI. This is very dangerous in Northern Ireland. Yes, I'm worried. After visiting it, I'm even more worried".



13. Then I asked the Amb if he and EU were expecting such a judo move by Johnson with the IMB. He admitted:

"Everybody was surprised by those provisions in the Internal Market Bill. I wonder if some in the British government had fully anticipated the impact of it. I doubt it"

14. Then, given his international experience, I asked the Amb the consequences for the UK global reputation of such a blatant breach of international law:

"Any trade, any international treaty, any contract contains the principle of "good faith", now violated by the IMB"

#Brexit

15. Then he went on:

"This comes all the way down to trust. Trust is the most important commodity in international relations. If you don't trust the other side, ain't much you can do. That's why it was regrettable that the British attitude sort of undermined the trust"

#Brexit

16. And what consequences can be expected for the UK in the trade negotiations with the US:

"The influence of the Irish-Americans in the American system is huge... if the IMB is seen as something that can undermine NI, this creates an immediate reaction in the Americans.
#Brexit

17. What impact it will have on a UK-US trade deal?

Amb Vale de Almeida: "It's very difficult to negotiate a trade deal with the US, especially on regulations. And I have reasons to believe that maybe it will be more difficult for a single country than for a group of countries"

18. Why?, I asked. #Brexit was meant to facilitate striking trade deals around the world.

Amb: "We as EU had 520 million consumers at the time of TTIP negotiations. If you instead put 65 million is a bit less... for a single country is much harder. In trade, size matters".

19. He went on:

"The hard issues for the UK will remain the same that we had with TTIP, which is about the regulatory issues. Not tariffs, which are already very low. Instead, regulatory issues, consumers protection... all these issues will come back to haunt [the UK] in a way"

20. Ok, which block is gonna suffer most from No Deal?

Amb: "Everybody. It's a bad idea on top of another bad idea that makes two bad ideas. Nobody wins so. Or maybe those that win are not the ones we would like them to win".

Who?
"The bad guys..."

#Brexit

21. Hostile powers like Russia:

Amb: "Yeah. I mean, those who don't necessarily share our values, that are not necessarily interested in our cohesion. A bad deal doesn't serve our interests. We don't want a No deal, but we are ready for it. But let's try to avoid that".

#Brexit