Twitter Thread by Tigger [redacted]



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I am in the market for positive, optimistic articles about Brexit - it may not be how I'm feeling but I'm sure I've missed things + want to avoid confirmation bias so I'm opening my mind, + this seemed like a good place to

Elliott argues that 'the UK has deep, structural economic problems' - true, but correlation is not causation: we look in vain for an argument that these problems are caused by EU membership and/or that membership is preventing them being tackled

The argument would be stronger if Elliott could show that other countries in the EU faced similar structural problems, but he doesn't + I don't think he could - the EU manages to incorporate a wide range of economic models, + regional inequalities vary hugely between EU countries

He does not attempt to acknowledge + explain the boom in inward investment in UK manufacturing in the last few decades, one of the few economic positives for 'left behind areas', though that may have been hard without referring to single market membership + European supply chains

'Brexit means that those farmers who want their fruit harvested will now have to...pay higher wages or invest in new machinery.' Maybe they will (but I'm not convinced) but this would have unintended consequences eg higher prices for healthy food

And even if so Elliott doesn't explain how it will drive the wider productivity revolution we need (agriculture is under 1% of the economy), nor how labour-intensive/publicly funded service sectors (most obviously social care) could adapt

'The City will continue to thrive' we are assured. Good. We are then reminded why we shouldn't have joined the single currency, which we didn't

Some criticisms of the EU's approach to Covid-19, which are irrelevant (since to all intents and purposes the UK was still in the EU last year + managed to enact a distinct + not wholly successful approach)

'The four freedoms of the single market – no barriers to the movement of goods, services, people and capital – are actually the four pillars of neoliberalism' hints at an economic vision based on a relatively closed economy, but there is no further explanation

‘Leaving the EU means UK governments no longer have anywhere to hide’ this implies UK Governments will suddenly become more democratic, accountable + effective, which I hope is true but the evidence of 2020 doesn’t give much cause for optimism

‘They have economic levers they can pull...and they will come under pressure to use them’ which implies there are easy solutions to the economic problems we face which UK Governments will be able + willing to put into place now we are outside the EU, again I’m not optimistic

What reasons are there to think that? what are the things we can do now we couldn’t do before? and what reason is there to think that outside the EU the UK Government will suddenly refocus? Elliott provides no hint of an answer

‘This, though, assumes that Britain will have rightwing governments in perpetuity’ Elliott does not even acknowledge the high risk post-Brexit of Scottish independence which does risk the rump UK generally having right wing Governments

‘It used to be the left who welcomed change and the right that wanted things to remain the same’ this is often untrue (see Thatcher) but in any case change is not good by definition, + Elliott doesn’t make the case that this is a change that the left should welcome

I didn’t expect to have my mind changed by Elliott but I hoped he would make me think ‘ah I can see there’s some things to be positive about’, but he didn’t

I’m left frustrated because he simply ignores the things that many of us are worried about - the economic costs and risks to inward investment of being outside the single market, with few benefits in practice, as well as the cultural baggage the right brings to Brexit

If he acknowledged those concerns + explained some positives to counter them, some specifics of things that could be better now, I would have found the article interesting and thought-provoking. As it is, I’m afraid just found it vague and unconvincing /ends