Twitter Thread by Tim Bale



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THREAD on how the parties will vote on the EU-UK TCA today: Will they simply 'go gentle into that good night'? Or will they instead 'rage, rage against the dying of the light'? https://t.co/dDtxi57AyT 1/

For the vast majority of the @Conservatives MPs (most of whom, remember, have either always been or have become Brexiteers), sheer bloody relief, along with a natural inclination to toe the party line and support their leader, will prove a powerful painkiller. 2/

It will inure them to those parts of the deal that have involved more compromise than ideally they would have liked – so much so, perhaps, that they will deny, even to themselves, that any such compromises have even taken place at all. 3/

It's also important to note that the party in the media – the collection of leader writers and the columnists who write for Tory-supporting newspapers – seems to have made up its mind that Johnson has pulled off a miracle. 4/

Moreover, @ConHome's snap survey suggests getting on for two-thirds of grassroots Tories approve – not to be sniffed at when fear of one's constituency association has often decided which way Conservative MPs have jumped on the European issue. 5/

Should @UKLabour MPs vote for ratification so as to hasten Labour's reconciliation with the Leave voters who deserted the party after 2016 or, knowing there is no danger of the government losing, abstain and risk being accused of arguably counterproductive virtue signalling? 6/

In the end, though, most will just want the whole thing over with so the party can move on to attacking the government on what the public sees as its poor record on handling the Covid-19 crisis. 7/

For the UK's third and fourth parties, the SNP and the Lib Dems, however, such signalling makes perfect sense. 8/

For @theSNP, London has ripped Scotland out of the EU against its will – something they will be reminding voters of come spring's Holyrood elections, which will be the platform from which @NicolaSturgeon will launch her party's campaign for #indyref2 9/

Refusing to support ratification gives @LibDems an invaluable opportunity not only to differentiate themselves from Labour but to send a message to Remain voters in the numerous Tory-Lib Dem marginals they need to target if they are to win seats at the next general election. 10/

It should also provide them with at least a little airtime and a few column inches when both have been desperately hard to come by in recent months – something they could badly do with in crucial local elections taking place in a few months' time. 11/

All this, of course, assumes that Boris Johnson's achievement will have an electoral half-life longer than most political events ever do – even those that seem especially momentous at the time. 12/

Voters have both very long & very short memories. Last week's agreement could imprint itself indelibly. But don't bank on it. Given Covid & its economic consequences, a thin Free Trade Agreement with the EU may be the last thing on people's minds in four years' time. 13/ENDS