Twitter Thread by Robert Saunders

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"3 million people are estimated not to have official photo ID, with ethnic minorities more at risk". They will "have to contact their council to confirm their ID if they want to vote"

This is shameful legislation, that does nothing to tackle the problems with UK elections.THREAD

> Millions of people do not have photo ID. By forcing through mandatory voter-ID the government risk disenfranchising millions of legitimate voters. https://t.co/y0Upzof2FI
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> — Electoral Reform Society (@electoralreform) February 17, 2021

There is no evidence in-person voter fraud is a problem, and it wd be near-impossible to organise on an effective scale. Campaign finance violations, digital disinformation & manipulation of postal voting are bigger issues, but these are crimes of the powerful, not the powerless.

In a democracy, anything that makes it harder to vote - in particular, anything that disadvantages one group of voters - should face an extremely high bar. Compulsory voter ID takes a hammer to 3 million legitimate voters (disproportionately poor & BAME) to crack an imaginary nut

If the government is concerned about the purity of elections, it should reflect on its own conduct. In 2019 it circulated doctored news footage of an opponent, disguised its twitter feed as a fake fact-checking site, and ran adverts so dishonest that even Facebook took them down.

Britain's electoral law largely predates the internet. There is little serious regulation of online campaigning or the cash that pays for it. That allows unscrupulous campaigners to ignore much of the legal framework erected since the C19th to guard against electoral misconduct.

Any democrat should care about the purity of our elections. But that means tackling laws & practices that benefit the powerful & unscrupulous. It doesn't mean erecting new barriers to 3 million poorer voters, in the absence of any evidence they have abused their electoral rights.

British democracy has many flaws, but one great strength: it has generally made voting easy & resisted the temptation to suppress turnout. This law marks a step down a very different path, the effects of which are painfully apparent in the US. We should turn back now. [ENDS]

For the best available data on electoral fraud in the UK, the Electoral Commissions reports are online here: https://t.co/MkFX7ny1sg

For more on the danger to the electoral process posed by unaccountable money & digital disinformation, I warmly recommend @PeterKGeoghegan's book, "Democracy for Sale". Almost everything he describes currently sits outside Britain's outdated electoral laws https://t.co/mx8jmvATcV