Twitter Thread by Michael Dougan



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After my first reading of the draft EU-UK trade and cooperation agreement, here is a short thread with some initial thoughts:

1) this is a massive and complex document, covering very diverse & highly specialist fields. No single person could ever plausibly claim properly to master/understand it. So I've focused on my own ("big picture") interests. Not, eg the (in fact marginal) details of fishing quotas

2) Let's start with how draft treaty is being framed by UK Gov & client press. They compare it to "no deal" & thus treat it as some sort of triumph. Well: even on own terms, that is far from accurate: for many sectors, draft treaty is barely better than no deal at all

3) But of course: such UK Gov framing of draft treaty = entirely if sadly typically misleading. Real comparison should be draft treaty versus what UK already enjoyed for 45 years as a Member State of the EU. And judged by that benchmark: Johnson's proposed deal is truly pathetic

4) Draft treaty gives UK nothing it didn't already enjoy, in relations with EU, as a Member State in its own right. Eg Johnson boasts about "zero tariffs and zero quotas" – even though we had that already for decades and Brexit simply risked throwing even those basic things away

5) More important than slim pickings offered by draft treaty = what it doesn't cover & therefore what will be definitively lost. In that regard: some media attention, e.g. about UK deliberately turning back on Erasmus & (equally bizarrely) on structured foreign policy cooperation

6) But the losses go much, much further: eg no more free movement of goods (tariffs & quotas being only the most obvious & easiest trade barriers); no more free movement for services (indeed hardly anything at all for most sectors); almost total loss of movement rights for people

7) So: all this draft treaty offers is a few scraps from the table of what we previously enjoyed as full members of the club. Otherwise: Brexit takes away vast numbers of our rights, freedoms, benefits and opportunities; to be replaced by new barriers, costs, closures and losses

8) That damning analysis is reinforced by basic legal structures of draft treaty. Within the EU, rules & obligations = concrete rights for individuals & businesses that we can assert & enforce for ourselves. Our legal freedoms & protections are vested directly in us as citizens

9) By contrast: under draft treaty, even such meagre rules & obligations as will exist = only between EU & UK as international actors. We, individuals & businesses who are actually meant to live with those rules, can claim / enforce nothing for ourselves from / under this treaty.

10) So not only is Brexit the modern world's biggest exercise in cross-border economic & security segregation. It’s an equally serious legal disenfranchisement of the citizen – effectively stripped of myriad legal protections, right across Europe as well as within UK itself

11) And all of that is besides long term damage to UK’s leadership in Europe/influence across rest of world; UK reputation as trustworthy international actor; UK internal cohesion thanks to shocking treatment of Scotland & Wales – none of which this draft treaty even touches upon

12) What benefits do Brexitists offer as compensation for so much damage? “Sovereignty”. Something they had never lost in first place. & which in reality means: freedom to diverge [ie deregulate social standards] & strike trade deals with US [from position of relative weakness]

13) In any case: even most fanatical Brexit loon can’t believe we’ll ever forgive their cruelty to EU & UK migrant citizens, indifference to stability in NI, contempt for basic values of honesty/integrity, debasement of UK democracy – again, none of which draft treaty can repair

14) Johnson might think he "settled" UK's place in Europe “once & for all”. Starmer might be happy to play along. Those of us with principles & backbone think otherwise. As Brexitists lie in bed at night let’s make sure they're plagued by a little voice: “we’ll rejoin one day...”