Twitter Thread by Mafevema #CommonGround

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Yesterday I spent time (&far too many tweets) trying to defend @Keir_Starmer 's position in a Guardian article which angered & disappointed many who, like me, are passionate pro-Europeans. I will try to explain why (thread)

> Have you read what he said in the Guardian? He has made it clear he accepts Johnson's awful hard Brexit deal as the permanent settlement of the European issue. There is understandable outrage from pro-Europeans. You seem oblivious to all this.
>
> — Charlie Kennaugh #FBPE #GTTO (@c_kennaugh) December 30, 2020

Starmer is like me a lawyer, not a trade specialist but he obviously took advice. He is also a committed pro-European. As a lawyer when looking at the TCA, I saw all the predicted negatives but also enormous potential for a pro-EU government which results from the

institutional structure of the deal. The TCA sets up 19 specialised committees (including on Customs Cooperation, SPS, Technical Barriers to Trade) dominated by an all powerful 50/50 Partnership Council (PC) which takes binding decisions with immediate direct effect by agreement.

These decisions do not have to be published or not in full. This is undemocratic but typical of FTAs and efficient. In my view there is huge potential to take big decisions, far from the emotional tone of the Brexit drama, decisions which will be crouched in technocratic language

"Removing the red tape" " Customs Simplifications Procedure" (a lesser form of CU), "mobility", "improving access for services (a lesser form of FoM): little by little, step by step, the most negative effects of the TCA will be undone out of the glare of the tabloid press until

we get very close to BRINO. This may not lead to rejoining -see Switzerland, Norway- but under the TCA Britain -which was respected as probably THE most influential member state at the stage of draft legislation -can still exert influence if it judiciously places its best people

-think people like Ivan Rogers, Charles Grant, David Henig, Sam Lowe - in the committees. I believe (but I am an optimist), that at some stage, rejoining -or something very close to it- will become an evidence unless the EU has changed in ways unamicable to the UK.

@keirstarmer is not saying anything in the Guardian article which contradicts this. Yes he says he could not envisage Europe or Brexit playing any part in the election campaign of 2024 – or featuring on any Labour MPs' election leaflets but he also says that Labour would make

"a case over the coming months and years about ways to improve the UK's relationship with the EU, including access to security data and the ability of artists and musicians to operate across Europe. "But there will not be an appetite for renegotiating the entire treaty."

This sound right to me. Proposing to renegotiate the entire Treaty first would really, really annoy the EU but also restart the Brexit drama & make it far more difficult to achieve meaningful changes. What is more appealing:

telling people you will pull your sleeves up to improve their lives/businesses or telling them you will restart all over again the war about our relationship with Europe? This is a wise and clever approach through which much can be achieved, including winning the next GE.

It will throw Johnson into a panic: Starmer will fight him not on the ideological grounds in which Johnson excels but on the dry terrain of competence, results, impacts. Starmer will set the terms of the debate. Johnson's hopes are that Starmer's divided party will do his job.

Ultimately (apologies for such a long thread) it is a question of TRUST: do we trust that Starmer is firmly pro-European or not? Does he need to be absolutely clear & transparent about his intentions? Just ask yourself: were the Leave camp?

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