Twitter Thread by Phil Syrpis



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The Govt, the Opposition, and the real Opposition. Some thoughts on Govt, Labour and the ERG/CRG.

Thread. 1/16

This is a Govt which is interested in the pursuit, and retention, of power (see this blog). It aims for short-term popularity, and is acutely sensitive to the public mood. 2/

https://t.co/vM2jjA7VZD

Its policies on the 2 big issues of the day - Brexit and COVID-19 - have not been successful.

We have not secured an easy trade deal with the UK and are facing a very hard Brexit, deal or no deal.

Both deaths and the economic damage from the virus are world-beating. 3/

What is (to me) interesting, and I think unusual, is that the loudest voices against the Govt's position, come not from the Labour party and other opposition parties; but from the fringes of the Conservative party (backed by many in the media). 4/

The possibly emerging deal with the EU is attacked not for the economic damage it will cause and the barriers it will create for people and business, but on the grounds that it represents an unconscionable imposition on the UK's sovereignty. 5/

The COVID response is not attacked because of the Govt's failure to build a system to enable us to 'live with' the virus, but because the rush to reopen the economy was (albeit belatedly) put on pause as deaths and hospitalisations rose alarmingly (and predictably). 6/

The debate, such as it is, is between the Govt's position and that of the ERG/CRG. It seems to be they who are the 'real Opposition'. 7/

The Labour Party (and other opposition parties) find themselves marginalised. And they have been presented with invidious policy choices. 8/

On Brexit, the 'choice' they have is between offering support for the Govt's deal... or facing no deal. Many in Govt are, or seem to be, very comfortable with no deal. There is no prospect of Labour opposition leading to a shift in the Govt position. 9/

On COVID, the 'choice' is between accepting the Govt's flawed tier system... or allowing the restrictions to lapse. There is no prospect of Labour opposition leading to a shift in the Govt position. 10/

The Opposition is - and I'm sure that the framing of the choices and the votes in Parliament is deliberate - asked to choose between offering support to a deeply flawed Govt policy, or being held at least in part responsible for a far worse outcome. 11/

It is often the fate of the Opposition to watch as a Govt with a large majority plots its own course. But it is, I think, unusual to see an Opposition so effectively marginalised. 12/

I wonder what the implications/consequences of this are. Two quick things do occur to me. 13/

First, the open divisions within the Conservative Party (for all that they may skew the debate and marginalise the Opposition) present opportunities for the Opposition. The majority of 80 is not necessarily a comfortable one. 14/

And second, it is imperative that the Opposition works much harder to establish an alternative narrative and to make its voice heard. It is not united. It has been chastened by the GE defeat. But still.

See thread on Brexit https://t.co/5dPxYdfPEr 15/

> Lots of talk again today about @UKLabour's positioning on Brexit.
>
> I don't think that finding the right path as complicated as many seem to believe. Thread. 1/19 (sorry it is so long!)
>
> — Phil Syrpis (@syrpis) November 24, 2020

There is a huge political space, inhabited by those who want a closer more cooperative relationship with the EU, and a more considered response to COVID, which currently feels very empty. 16/16