

Starmer's no big deal

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Starmer wants us to think he's doing big foreign policy deals. He isn't. He's playing in the sandpit of international relations, and nothing is really changing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTbgahcj3aU&si=QhkGjfp0SkEp0fVM>

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=wbk6b-18b39b9-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

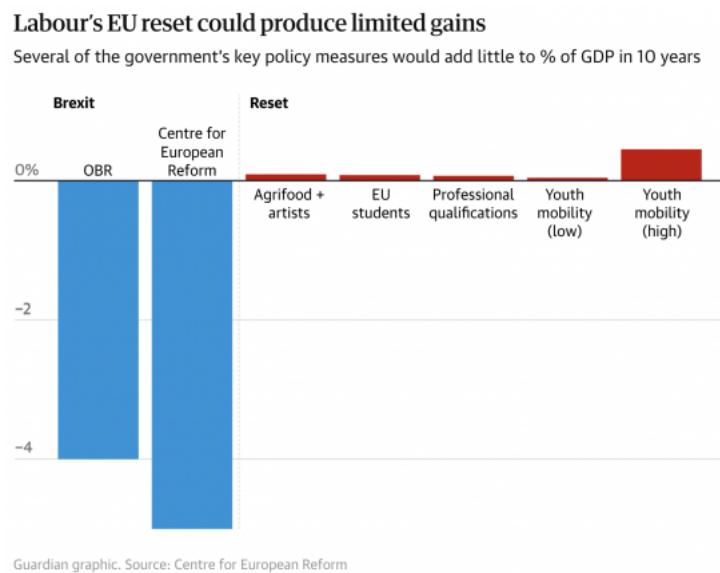
This is the transcript:

Starmer's claiming he's done a big deal with the EU. That is his contention after the arrangement that was signed on Monday this week. But is it true? I don't think it is. I think he might have shifted the dial very slightly on the relationship between the UK and the European Union, but that's the best we can say.

In the context of the harm done by Brexit, what I'm suggesting is that Starmer's deal is totally inconsequential.

The data shows this. This information comes from the Centre for European Reform, and it was published by the Guardian newspaper. And of course the figures are estimated. I don't pretend otherwise because all these things are subject to a reasonable number of

assumptions, but just look at that loss as a consequence of Brexit. That's the two blue columns there, and they are different estimates; they are of the same thing, but the sizes vary.



And then look at the red columns to the right. These are the issues that were going to be looked at in Starmer's deal.

Deals about food.

A little bit on EU students.

Some issues with regard to professional qualification recognition.

And two columns of varying estimates with regard to the impact of a deal for young people who might be able to move in Europe - and that deal has not even been concluded, and was the only big gain we could get.

The simple fact is that in the context of Brexit, this deal is little more than a 'worthless scrap of paper', to use the language that Neville Chamberlain once used to describe his 1938 agreement with Hitler. It simply doesn't matter in the grand scheme of things.

There is, I don't deny it, some good news on food. If you're a cheese manufacturer in the UK, or you make sausages, then the veterinary checks that are going to be required on the movement of your products are going. That makes life a lot easier in Northern Ireland because of the complications that the land border with Ireland had created. And that issue is largely going away, which I think is welcome.

There is also some good news for the fishing industry, but whether they will really want to recognise that is hard to tell because, remember, they were very pro-Brexit in the first place.

And there is some useful indication of movement with regard to chemicals, where some absurd, dual registration between the UK and the EU was required.

And I will welcome this: the Erasmus scheme is back for students, so that students from UK universities can now do a term or so of study in Europe, and vice versa, and get credits as a result. That is welcome.

But there are so many things that have not been addressed, including more free movement for young people.

There's no movement on the problems that touring artists from the UK are having in Europe, which has been such an impediment to our music industry, and those who want to simply go and meet the demands of audiences in those countries.

There has been no real recognition of any advance with regard to drugs. There has been a problem with dual registration being required here, which is significantly increasing the cost of drugs in the UK, and that issue has not been addressed.

There might have been a little bit of a movement on security, but frankly, that could have been done without this deal.

And, worryingly, the devolved nations have not been consulted on any of this. In other words, they have not been given the chance to make representations on how all of this impacts the people in their countries, and yet, under UK law, they should be consulted, and they haven't been.

So, Labour ministers are trying to claim that this is a big deal, but the reality is that this is not true. We still have no willingness on their part to renegotiate a deal with the EU. This minute change doesn't change that. So, what Labour is trying to do is to still renegotiate within the framework of the Brexit deal, which has destroyed 5% of UK gross domestic product, and within the context of a framework which has been established to emphasise the importance of English exceptionalism, which quite clearly doesn't exist.

In that case, Labour is trying to negotiate on the basis of a stupid deal, which cannot be credible. And the consequence is that Starmer might like to represent this deal as a success, but he can only do so within the framework of a deal that is itself disastrous, and until we actually recognise that we aren't going anywhere.

Is Starmer capable of recognising that? That's the question I need to ask, and frankly, I very much doubt that he is. The inevitable triangulation in which Labour is always engaged will prevent him from doing so. It will simply make it impossible.

If he wants to appeal to the Reform vote, which appears to be his greatest priority, he cannot move in any way towards Europe.

If he wants to appease the voters who want to be pro-Europe, as the vast majority of people in the UK now are, he can't keep Reform happy, and he can't move in the direction of the EU. Nor can he recognise the stupidity of Brexit, admit it, and move on. All of this creates a political agenda, which is totally impossible for Starmer to work within.

The consequence is that people realise the insincerity of what Starmer is doing.

He knows that this makes no sense.

He exudes that with everything that he says. Politically, he's aware of the position he's in and yet will do nothing about it.

What should we do as a consequence? We actually need to talk about getting closer to the EU. Whether that's rejoining or not, we still need to be better aligned with it. And Starmer moved so infinitesimally in that direction, in the deal that he's supposedly done, that he's made no real change.

Every serious politician, every business person, every person who thinks about where our foreign policy priorities should lie, should come to the conclusion that moving towards Europe makes sense.

But Starmer accepts the constraint that Brexit and Reform impose upon him, and as a consequence, he's going nowhere.

The result is, Starmer did no big deal. He is no big deal. There is no big deal to have whilst he's in office. And that is a massive impediment to progress in the UK.