

## [Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 126. King Charles III's coronation, the geopolitics of net-zero, and the power of oracy

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Welcome to The Restless Politics with me, Rory Stewart and me, Alistair Campbell.

We've got a lot to get through today, Rory. We're going to talk about the coronation of your friend, the king.

We're going to talk about the energy crisis across Europe and particularly something you've been picking up about worries in Germany.

We're going to give a little plug to our splendid leading interview with Tony Blair.

And we're going to talk about the BBC, ex-chairman and what the future of the BBC might be and what sort of person they should get.

And we're also going to talk about something called Orocy, which is, well, we'll explain what is later in the show.

And Alistair, I'm seeing you in a bookshop with your books behind you. Just a quick reminder, book now on sale.

They're not my books. I'm in the stockroom of a bookstore where once we've recorded the podcast, I'm going to sign,

I think it's about 700 books that Restless Politics listeners have asked for personal dedications.

I will have RSI by the end of the day. So I'm in the stockroom and you'll be pleased to know, Rory, given you're the arch monarchist in the team and the coronation is one of the things that we're going to talk about,

you can see that they've put out a load of Union flags behind me.

That's right, presumably for your benefit.

Where is yours?

Well, I feel ashamed now I see that you are doing a podcast with a Union jack behind you and I will try to sort that out in future.

So Rory, will you easily be able to find a Union flag in Amman? Will they be on sale?

Are people in Jordan getting ready for the coronation? I see it's live on Al Jazeera.

I've been thinking about this a lot actually because I was imagining that I was going to be assaulted by you

because you are, of course, under the surface basically a Republican despite some occasional expressions of sympathy for the monarchy.

But I've been thinking about it. One of the things that I think fascinates the world is ritual.

And I think one of the problems that many people, many of my friends have in Britain is with the whole idea of ritual.

They don't like the idea of symbolic traditional ceremonies. It makes them uncomfortable.

But the rest of the world is suffused with them.

I mean, I've sat in Pakistan for weddings which take literally four days where you have a day dedicated to turmeric on the face,

a day dedicated to henna, or in Java where you, you know, the groom breaks an egg with his foot and the bride throws a beetle nut.

So much the rest of the world is much, much more comfortable in weddings, in funerals, in presidential inaugurations with ritual.

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But hold on. We are, you talk about ritual. I mean, we're going to have an absolute surfeit of ritual, added to which they've now added to the sense of ritual by announcing that we're all sitting in front of our tellies watching the coronation supposed to join in this chorus of millions to swear allegiance to the king and his heirs. Now, you, I presume, Rory, being a kind of very, very firmly established member of the establishment and with your own royal connections, I presume you won't be in front of the telly that you'll be in the nave. Well, I think wherever one is, one's meant to be swearing allegiance. Can I, you're avoiding the question. You're avoiding, Rory is going to be televised, is going to be televised. You'll be filmed arriving. Are you going to be in the nave or not? I think at the moment we're holding off answering those kind of questions. I think even David Beckham hasn't said whether he's going to be there. It's the first one. I don't really know who's going to be there. But you'll find out. Obviously listeners will find out. Well, we know, we know the former prime ministers are going to be there. Are you going to be sitting behind or in front of Boris Johnson and Liz Truss? Can I, can I avoid your question and give you, give you just a little bit of context for listeners on this allegiance? So what used to happen and one of the strange things I think that the Archbishop of Canterbury, who's suggested that people should be invited to do this, has been struggling with, is that the last coronation obviously was 70 years ago in a very, very different world and a very different society. When you watch that coronation, it's extraordinary because you have all these ancient dukes and peers with their crowns coming on and off their heads. And they were all meant to come up at that coronation one after another. I think it was clergy, then the royal family, then the dukes, then the marquises, all in order. And they were supposed to say, I become your leech man of life and limb and of earthly worship and faith and truth that I will bear unto you to live and die against all manner of folks. So help me God. So I guess the problem facing the Archbishop was, what's he going to do about that? So presumably you'd agree as a starting point, it wouldn't have been very suitable today to have a procession of dukes, marquises and earls walking up, pledging their truth and nobody else saying anything. It depends, Rory, how much we are attached to old ritual, which you just told me a moment ago, we are attached to. Well, obviously, I quite like that. I'm loving the way, I'm loving the way I'm sensing here that this kite having been flown and it's not flying quite the direction that people want to, it's now all being landed upon the Archbishop of Canterbury as opposed to the royal household. But carry on with your excellent destination so far. Well, so I guess the point is that they've changed the ceremony a lot

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and I think there are a lot of things about it which are, which are smart.

I think a really, really good improvement.

So it's going to begin with processions of faith leaders from all faiths

and instead of what would have happened in the past, which is most of these amazing bits of royal rituals.

So there are, there's a glove, there's, there's three different swords,

there are two different septers, there are orbs, there are cloaks.

These things used to be generally handed over by ancient members of the aristocracy who had inherited these responsibilities, some of them in sort of 15 parts over 900 years.

But this time around, a lot of them are going to be done by people like your friend, Baroness Helena Kennedy.

There's going to be members of the House of Lords, but they're mostly life peers.

So Seyit Karmal, who's a conservative Muslim,

a life pair is doing the armills, which are the bracelets.

Julian Merrin, who's a labour peer and is from the board of British deputies, is going to do the robe.

The Renderer Patel, who's a crossbencher, is doing the ring.

Indrajeet Singh, who's a 90 year old crossbencher, is going to do the glove.

So anyway, lots of different changes.

And I guess somewhere in the middle of trying to change it up

is this question of the South of Allegiance, which obviously really sticks in your gullet and you don't like it.

Listen, I like the fact that the Archbishop's people,

when they were briefing it out at the weekend,

said there are going to be lots of new elements that reflect the diversity of contemporary society.

And you've alluded to some of those.

That was a very kind of multi-ethnic list of people that you read out there.

And that's great. I think that's a good thing.

I also like the fact that the languages of Britain, including Welsh with a hymn,

Scottish Gallic and Irish Gallic are all going to be used.

I think that's a good thing.

By the way, Rory, while we're on the subject of Welsh,

I don't know if you noticed, you got a lot of criticism from our Welsh listeners last week who felt that the word they kept using was snorted.

You snorted at me trying to stress the importance of Welsh as a language.

So do you want to deal with that one?

Because you're a big fan of the Union.

You presumably support all the languages of the Union.

I do. I do.

And I'm actually very interested in Welsh because I was a Cumbrian MP.

And Cumbria is, of course, the Old North.

And it's where a lot of the most ancient Welsh literature comes from Cumbria.

The Gadodin happens just across the border.

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I was snorting, I think, for a couple of things.

But one of them is I really hate lists.

And I think you produced the figure that it was the 50th most influential language in the world.

I have a Zippo idea how you arrive at the notion that it's the 50th most influential language.

I just said it was the world language barometer.

I don't know how they arrived at it.

So you weren't snorting the language. This is a firm rebuttal.

You were not snorting the language.

No. And actually, I want to take this opportunity to share my favourite Welsh word, which I was reminded of by a friend of mine called Roger Pauli.

And the word is kuh-nevin, which is written C-Y-N-E-F-I-N.

And it signifies all the different factors in your environment that influence you in ways that you can't understand.

Not just your sort of ecosystem, but temporal, physical, cultural, spiritual.

So that's my Welsh word for the day.

That's a good word. Well, I think that was a good comeback.

I think linking Cumbria to Wales, I think having a word up your sleeve, I think that was excellent.

Let's get back to the chorus of millions.

Now, you will be in the nave.

We've established that by your dodging my question.

We know that. And you'll be there.

And because you're quite an important person, you'll probably be there with your wife as well.

It's like even if I go to church, on the rare occasions I go to church,

I do find myself involuntarily sometimes joining in in the bits where you're meant to join in.

So I can understand why you will swear allegiance because the camera might be on you and if you don't swear allegiance, you'll be in trouble.

But are we seriously expecting people in their sitting rooms to swear allegiance to the king and his heirs?

And given the theme of the service, as I understand it, is about being called to serve, shouldn't the swearing of allegiance actually to be the idea of service to the country or the Commonwealth even rather than to an individual, the new king? Discuss.

Yeah, I think very good challenge.

And I think this all goes to the heart of what we think about kings and what we think about our constitution.

We are a monarchy and a lot of bits, the army, for example, still do feel that they are pledging to a monarch rather than a country.

And it's part of not being a republic.

Look, I suppose the best argument that I saw against the mass invitation to swear allegiance was made in the Guardian

where there was an article saying the problem with it is that it causes problems for people who are neutral.

There are many, many people out there who don't want to be put in the position of having to either swear allegiance or make a statement by not doing so.

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If it's the same piece I read, I think it was less about neutrality, more about indifference, people who don't really care.

So they don't want to be forced to make a choice?

Yeah.

And I can completely see that.

I can also see why they wanted to move away from the only oaths being made by the lords and the dukes.

But it's also similar things happen.

Remember, one of the things that I think may be stirring this up is that at the heart of the cultural wars in the US is the pledging allegiance to the flag.

So, you know, very close friends of mine, relatives of mine in the States, get very, very angry at being made to pledge allegiance to the flag in the United States.

I mean, let's just say what it is that we're expected to rise.

I'm not sure whether we're supposed to stay seated on the sofa in front of the TV or whether we stand to put our hand on our heart or on a Bible.

It's incidentally not compulsory.

It's okay.

But the words that we're invited to say together are, I swear that I will pay true allegiance to your Majesty.

He's there.

We're now assuming that he could hear us on our sofas and to your heirs and successors according to law.

So help me God.

So are we legally bound to swear allegiance to his Majesty and his successors?

So this is about George as well.

Yeah.

I don't know what the constitutional basis this is.

I mean, obviously in the Middle Ages, it was very, very fundamental, wasn't it?

Exactly.

Because they were the law.

They decided the laws.

I become your leech man of life and limb of earthly worship and faith and truth.

Yeah.

But we had a separation of powers, if you remember.

And we then had this parliament think cable on with they set the laws.

But now we've got the Archbishop telling us what the law is.

And as you know, Rory, I'm a fan of the Archbishop.

I like the Archbishop a lot.

Yeah.

Well, that's aside.

Let's get you on to the main thing.

What do you think about the main thing?

Do you enjoy the sense it's going to be a lot of ritual?

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Do you think it's a waste of time, waste of money?

Are you happy because it only happens once every 70 years to not care too much about it?

What's your basic emotional reaction?

Well, I've got to say that given that Prince Charles has had the longest apprenticeship in history, and I don't wish him ill at all, but it's not going to be another 70 years before the next one, is it?

Because if it is, he becomes the oldest person who ever lived.

First of all, will I watch it?

I probably will watch it.

Will I be interested in it?

I will be interested in it.

Will I find it both fascinating, but also slightly troubling?

I think I will.

I've always, I keep thinking I've said to you before,

my first ever major row with my mother was about my refusal to listen to Queen's Christmas Day message,

because I just didn't see what she had to do with my life as a six or seven year old, whatever I was.

And my mother felt that we should always sit down and listen to what her match had to say on Christmas Day.

And I do think there's something, I do think there's something quite strange about our relationship with the royal family.

And also, the reason why I think this thing is slightly backfired,

it goes back to the point you made about people don't like being told they have to do something.

And that was the, I know that wasn't the intention,

but that's how it was kind of projected through our, as ever, quite difficult media.

And it's why I don't enjoy weddings.

It's why I don't particularly enjoy Christmas.

We're all meant to feel the same and lots of people don't feel the same.

So that's very interesting.

I was going to ask about that because you're quite right to draw that analogy.

I think it is something like a wedding.

And formally, in fact, he's going to have a ring put on his finger.

It's a sort of ritual in which the king is marrying the kingdom.

Oh my God, so not only are we swearing allegiance,

we're actually getting married to the guy.

This is getting more and more baffling.

Yeah, and you'll see he keeps saying things like, I do, I will.

He keeps being asked these questions about whether he's going to fulfil his obligations towards the king.

Well, of course, he said that before, didn't he?

Are we allowed to talk about the past in his life that have not been perfect?

Yeah, I think we definitely can.

At the same time, I think I'm obviously a huge admirer.

I'm not just because I am a monarchist, but because I've seen him in Afghanistan,

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in Cumbria, in meetings on the environment where he is just exceptional.  
I'm going to give him the environment. I'm going to give him that.  
Yeah, I think one of the things that I have always been struck by is,  
and I remember in Afghanistan when individual Afghans working with his charities were  
bereaved on security issues, he would write handwritten letters to almost all of them.  
And again, on foreign trips, I've seen him often abroad doing 12 events, jet lagged,  
stopping to listen to everybody.  
I mean, he's got a pretty formidable sense of duty.  
I'm a monarch.  
Talking of your acquaintance with him,  
I was flicking through the Financial Times at the weekend,  
and there was a huge piece on Prince Charles' fashion choices.  
And one of the pictures was him coming out of a red brick building.  
And who should that be in the background?  
But a young Rory Stewart.  
So what was going on? Were you helping him pick that coat?  
I think this was a visit to Dartmoor Prison.  
So when I was prison's minister, he came around Dartmoor Prison.  
He's very interested in prisons as well.  
I mean, I think you'd like him very much.  
I mean, he loves music. He paints very well.  
It's a real joy in landscape.  
I think you'd share his Tree of the Day enthusiasm.  
Listen, I think there's a lot of good to be said for him.  
And I do think he was ahead of his time on the environment.  
I do think he's somebody like his mother who's committed to doing good.  
I hope he keeps up some of the causes that he's believed in,  
even though it's become more difficult.  
I just think that this point about us all having to feel the same thing.  
So I watched on Sunday night, I watched the BBC documentary,  
The Making of a Monarch.  
And listen, it was really interesting.  
There was some amazing old footage,  
which most of us I think had probably not seen that much of before.  
And I thought he came across very, very well.  
But it was essentially a one hour, if he was a politician,  
party political broadcast.  
For example, obviously you can't do an hour documentary  
without mentioning Princess Diana.  
But she sort of came and went in a flash.  
And there was no sense of it.  
He talked about his experience at Gordonston School,  
which everything I've ever heard and read tells me he absolutely loathed.

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And yet that too came and went in a flash with him,  
sort of saying, you know, it was very character building  
and it was very this and that and the other.  
So look, you and I would agree that politicians  
and even though a lot of them deserve a lot of approbrium,  
they have a very difficult media landscape.  
So do sports people.  
The royal family are given this kind of at that level,  
at his level, not like Harry and Meghan,  
but Charles is given this almost like a free pass.  
And I just think people resent it.  
Not when he was Prince of Wales, was he?  
I mean, of course, the awful thing is they have this schizophrenic thing  
with media where they can be held up in a pedestal  
and then they can be in the most sort of torrid phone hacking, grisly.  
Oh, for sure.  
I'm not saying they've had it easy,  
but I am saying that I think that sometimes  
that I think we would benefit.  
I mean, let's be honest, you won't be able to see it  
because you'll be in the nave with your friends.  
But with those of us who are watching on television,  
you know, we all know it's all going to be of one tone.  
I don't mean monotonous boring,  
but it's going to be of one tone.  
It's all going to be marvelous.  
People are going to be loving it.  
Everybody's going to be happy.  
Everybody's going to look wonderful.  
There's no sort of reality.  
There's no sort of reality.  
Which is you point out that in your wedding and Christmas,  
you don't feel very comfortable doing even a wedding in Christmas.  
Lovely piece, actually, by Tom Holland,  
who is our Rest is History co-podcaster,  
which we like to refer people to.  
And a couple of random facts about it,  
which people like me who are massive history geeks love.  
One of them is that the king's champion is turning up.  
And the king's champion,  
who's a man called Francis Dimoke.  
Oh, I thought it was Roy Stewart, by the way.  
So that hit their role.



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You would have loved this role, actually.  
I think you should have bid for it.  
Used to be to literally ride in a suit of armor on a horse  
into Westminster Hall and throw down a gauntlet.  
Love it.  
And challenge anyone in the kingdom who wanted to fight.  
See, now we're talking.  
Now we're talking.  
SkySport would love that.  
Exactly, exactly.  
Totally.  
And they've been doing this.  
Their direct access is all the way back  
to the champions of the Duke of Normandy  
nearly a thousand years ago.  
But their condition for doing it is they have to hold on  
to this single bit of land that they were given  
in exchange for doing this back in the early Middle Ages.  
That's how the land got given out, isn't it, Roy?  
That's why Scotland is owned by a handful of people  
and just happened to be good friends with the royals  
at one point.  
Well, in this case, it's a pretty tiny bit of land  
the poor guy's still got.  
I mean, a poor guy.  
I'm sure he's a very, very happy guy.  
But it's a very, very small thing.  
I think he's only got the gatehouse left,  
but he's clinging on and he remains as the king's champion.  
And my second random fact before we leave this  
is that they're going to be carrying something called  
the Cortana or Sword of Mercy,  
which is broken off at the top.  
And is first described in Time of King John,  
so Magna Carta King John.  
And he believed it to be the sword of the Assyrian knight Tristran  
and that the top of it got broken off  
in the giant Moor Holtz skull.  
There we are.  
So there's a bit of history.  
Roy, I know you're going to be busy on the day,  
but I think with the sort of knowledge that you have there,  
you should be doing maybe not the BBC,

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but ABC in America or something like that.  
That's the sort of stuff they're going to do.  
Now, finally, Roy, finally,  
just as my mother will be listening up in heaven,  
and she died nine years ago this week,  
but just so that people don't think I'm an absolute,  
sort of could never say a good word about these guys,  
the new book that you keep kindly plugging for me,  
what's it called again, Roy?  
It's not called What Can I Do, is it?  
It's called But What Can I Do,  
but if you go to page 154,  
I recall an event that I attended  
where the main guest of honor  
was the then Duchess of Cornwall.  
Camilla spoke of her visit to Auschwitz in 2020,  
saying she would never forget a speech  
given by Marian Turski, holocaust survivor,  
who had talked about the laws discriminating  
against Jews in Nazi Germany in the 30s  
and the relevance of this to our own time.  
He described, says Camilla, how people,  
victims, perpetrators and witnesses  
can gradually become decentralized  
to the exclusions, stigmatization,  
alienation of those who previously were friends.  
Marianne warned us this can happen again,  
but he gave us, too, the answer to preventing it.  
You should never, ever be a bystander.  
And then she went on to say,  
let us not be bystanders to injustice or prejudice.  
After all, surely our personal values are measured  
by the things we are prepared to ignore.  
So, Rory, if Suella Braverman is in the nave with you  
at the great event,  
if you could kindly take a copy of my book,  
give it to her and mark up Camilla's speech,  
that would be very, very kind.  
Anything to promote your book.  
I love that line, though,  
never be a bystander, says Camilla.  
I like that. I hope that's in the service as well.  
Never be a bystander.

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Very good.

Well, listen, I was in France last week and in Paris, I had a very interesting conversation about European energy.

And in particular, how Europe is going to respond to the energy transition.

And somebody said, in fact, actually it's a friend of mine called Ben Juda, who's a writer and who's got a great book on Europe coming out, you can almost see country's success in terms of the particular energy source.

So, coal made Britain, Germany, France in the 19th century.

Oil is obviously making the United States and the Gulf in this century.

But the real question is going to be the future of the post-carbon future.

And that is going to be a fight for minerals because battery technology depends very much on things like cobalt and lithium, a lot of which comes out of Africa and 80% of which is processed in China.

And as part of this story, Germany is in a very, very serious problem.

And before I turn to you, because I know you've just been reading a Der Spiegel article on this, one statistic before I turn to you.

In 2019, Germany produced 3.5 million automobile units a year compared to China's 0.5 million, half a million.

Three years later, by 2022, Germany was producing 2.5 million and China was producing 2 million.

Between 2019 and 2022, the closing gap between China and Germany is unbelievable and so much of Germany's industry depends on chemical processing, which is to do with energy, or creating parts for combustion engines which are exported to places like China, which aren't going to be needed if you move to electric cars that have far fewer moving parts.

Well, your point on minerals is one of the reasons why China has been so aggressive and active

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in what they would define as support for  
a lot of countries in Africa,  
whereas you and I have mentioned many, many times in recent months.  
Britain has withdrawn,  
not least through our lack of support  
in international aid and development.  
The Chinese have very much targeted those mineral resources.  
The article you mentioned that I've been reading in Der Spiegel,  
the headline is  
Der Große der Gefahrzeit Tesla,  
the biggest danger, the biggest risk  
to the German car industry since Tesla.  
And the piece really is about how Volkswagen,  
BMW and Mercedes have been really dominant  
of all the global brands in the Chinese car market.  
Germany has been right up there.  
And now we have these firms,  
which I must admit,  
and as I read this piece I didn't even know about,  
BYD, NIO and Geely,  
and these are Chinese e-cars,  
which the Chinese have got into their own markets,  
but now they're actually going to try and get into the European market.  
So the question that the article is asking  
is what can the Germans learn from the Chinese,  
and the answer might be from what you're saying  
that maybe they're a bit late to learn some of those lessons,  
because the other energy issue that the Germans are having to deal with  
is sort of post-Russian dependence  
and where they go for their energy of the future.  
So yeah, it's interesting that you were hearing that in France.  
I noticed you were getting out before the near riots of yesterday.  
I was hearing the same thing in Germany.  
So it's obviously the Chinese improving their hold  
on markets where we thought, not that long ago,  
these were going to be huge markets for Europe,  
but the rest of our lives, as it were, is changing very, very quickly.  
It's terrifying because, of course, energy costs  
are going to be vital in any kind of industrial production,  
and the fear is that Germany is in real trouble,  
that fundamental industries like chemicals, pharmaceuticals,  
and the motor industry and the parts for the motor industry  
are going to be under real strain over the next 10, 15 years.

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Some of the German business people I was meeting in Paris around table were saying that they've gone from sort of slightly looking in despair at Britain to fearing that they're about to become a version of Britain. They're very, very worried about their 5, 10-year industrial future. Of course, they are burning a lot of coal. There was the banning on nuclear. There's the fact that they're having to import liquefied natural gas, which is five to seven times more expensive than if you've got it in pipes on the ground, which is what you've got in Qatar or the United States. And it's doubled, the price of it has doubled since the invasion of Ukraine. Exactly. Overall, overall energy price in Europe have gone up by a third, 35%. And you have this weird thing which is very common in the way that we've responded to the climate crisis, which is we feel very good about ourselves, not burning carbon, and then we import stuff from China that's made using carbon burned in China. But in this case, Europe feels good about itself, not fracking, and then imports a lot of liquefied natural gas, which is simply fracked in the United States. It just seems strange as well that the German government, with the Greens quite powerful within it, have made this decision to turn their back effectively on nuclear and go for more coal. So the phrase, the geopolitics and net zero, I think is a really good one for us to look at in a future pod, because that's the mineral race, that's Indonesia and Chile restricting exports of these key minerals. That's China dominating the trade. That's the US trying to position itself on things like AI and synthetic biology. China positioning itself on manufacturing in Europe being a bit lost. I read a very interesting thing, because I knew you wanted to talk about this, by the energy saving trust, and they did a sort of country by country analysis of what different governments are doing

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to try to get people to reduce their energy.  
And I don't know if you came across this phrase in Paris,  
but their plan is to cut energy use by 10%  
in the next two years.  
And the strategy is called *sobriété énergétique*,  
energetic sobriety.  
This is all about going sector by sector  
to try to cut down on fossil fuels  
and reduce consumption.  
And I think they've been studying Tesco.  
Is it Tesco that have their thing?  
Every little helps.  
Their slogan is *chaque geste compte*,  
every gesture counts.  
So they're basically saying it's about, you know,  
turning off things that don't need to be on  
and keeping your lights off  
and keeping the heating down.  
Spain has brought in some quite interesting  
temperature limits.  
Croatia is really doing the stuff about,  
it's all about information  
and making sure people are aware  
that how they're consuming, what they're consuming.  
And we had this exercise in Britain recently  
where we all got the same message.  
We all got the same noise on our phone  
and the government were testing some kind of  
new alert system.  
And in California now,  
they send out texts  
to everyone in California  
at certain points.  
And the last one read,  
extreme heat is currently  
straining the state energy grid.  
Power interruptions may occur unless you take action.  
Please turn off or reduce non-essential power  
if your health allows from now till 9pm.  
Goodness.  
It actually stopped them having blackouts.  
It saw a massive  
diminution in energy use within the next 30 minutes

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following that message.

Oh, it's fantastic.

Yeah, it was good.

So those who were going for all the sort of conspiracy theories that were doing the rounds when we all had to do that thing, I think if it's used for that kind of thing, I would approve.

Yeah, that's amazing.

I mean, I wonder, that's an interesting thing from a comms point of view, whether the effect fades over time.

When you first do it, people respond, but eventually they get lazier.

Yeah, what all of these show is that it's about trying to get people to change their own behavior and not think that every little thing that you do doesn't over time have some sort of beneficial effect.

The Netherlands, they've lifted, like the Germans, they're lifting restrictions on coal-fired power stations, but they've also got an energy-saving campaign.

I was very touched by your Dutch friend saying that my Dutch accent was quite good when I was talking about bagpipes.

I wanted to judge you on this one.

They've got a thing called Z-U-G-D-K-L-O-P-O-M, which means turn the switch, and it's a specific thing aimed at SMEs on how you can save energy and boost sustainability to try and build up a macro picture.

Beautiful.

Well, I think on that amazing bit of Dutch, we should go to the break.

Dank of El.

Welkom Terug,

or welcome back to The Rest is Politics with me, Rory Stewart.

Ik helst Kambel on the Google Translator.

Thank you.

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I can't believe you looked up some Dutch or Google Translate in the break, but anyway, well done.

Very good.

Listen, one thing that we should be plugging is I really enjoyed the interview with Tony Blair, and people who want to pick it up, it's on our separate channel, which is our separate podcast channel, which is called Leading, L-E-A-D-I-N-G, which you can find in your podcast.

It was very intense because it was forcing Tony Blair to really focus in on the issue of the online peace process, but I thought he had...

It was actually, I thought rather wonderful, because he was really getting into what it means to be a politician, how leadership works, how persuasion works in those contexts, how you sometimes have to be constructively ambiguous.

Did you enjoy it?

Yeah, well, I said constructively ambiguous. He said tactically cute.

So don't search The Rest is Politics, people. Search Tony Blair Leading right now, and it will pop up.

Very good.

So let's talk BBC Chairman.

He's finally gone, Mr Richard Sharp.

You're too modest, Alistair, to mention, but it was one of the things that you predicted in the middle of the Gary Lineker situation that Richard Sharp was going to have to go.

But what's brought him down in the end is this extraordinary conflict of interest in the heart of it, probably the most shocking thing, which is that our Prime Minister then, Boris Johnson, while Prime Minister got himself into some extraordinary financial trouble, so much so that he somehow convinced the Cabinet Secretary, Simon Case, to get involved.

And Richard Sharp, who became the Chairman of the BBC,



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was involved in introducing him to somebody who lent him £800,000, and this was not declared. Did there somebody who was also weirdly a distant relative of Johnson, did he lend him the money or guarantor? Was he the guarantor? We still don't know where the money came from. His name was Sam Blythe, but he didn't lend the money, I don't think. So, Simon Case said it was OK to take the money because it was coming from a relative, but the point of the whole story is that Boris Johnson can't have known this relative very well if he had to be introduced to this person via Richard Sharp. It appears as though this person's a semi-stranger who needed to be introduced to him by Richard Sharp. I mean, I can remember. Certainly, as it were, a lowly special advisor to the then Prime Minister. But I can remember having the security people warning us of the dangers of blackmail and ending up owing. One of the things they asked you when you're vetted is whether you're in debt to anybody because that alone can produce a conflict of interest. It's absolutely unbelievable, absolutely unbelievable. So, Boris Johnson made Richard Sharp, one of the BBC after Richard Sharp had offered to help him out of his financial difficulties. I mean, there couldn't be a clearer conflict of interest. But somewhere in the heart of this also is something that we should talk about again, which is Simon Case, the Cabinet Secretary, who I believe you met recently, Alistair, but it's very, very odd. I was obviously singing the praises of people like Burke Trend and even Richard Wilson, who I think was a thorn in the side of you and your friend Jonathan Powell. But boy would Richard Wilson not, I think, have gone along with this kind of stuff.

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And I think one of the problems without sounding agist is that Simon Case became Permanent Secretary when he was barely 40 years old. He'd only been in the civil service for 12 years. Whereas traditionally, Cabinet Secretaries were people who had been in the civil service for over 30 years, had run big government departments and would have had the full confidence and he was brought in at a time when Boris Johnson and Dominic Cummings were firing a lot of the other senior Permanent Secretaries across the system, Foreign Office, Ministry of Justice, et cetera. And I'm afraid that's at the heart of this problem that we haven't had a Cabinet Secretary standing up to Permanences in the way that they ought to. No, and also there's these stories doing the rounds at the moment that Simon Case is at the heart of trying to stop Sue Gray do the job that she's been asked to do for Keir Starmer as Chief of Staff. And it is interesting how often his name pops up in these situations. But the real villains that I think you've named them is what was happening under Johnson and Cummings. And this book by Anthony Seldon, which George Hospital's recommendation I finally got around to taking a look at it, it is absolutely incredible. I mean, it's worse than you and I thought. If his account is accurate, it's worse than you and I thought. The levels of incompetence and chaos and the extent to which Cummings actually thought he, not Johnson, was the Prime Minister. Well, also, sorry, just on that, I'm very, very struck when I see you with Tony Blair or Jonathan Powell, how much you likes and respected each other, whereas Dominic Cummings from the beginning despised Boris Johnson.

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He was trying to run the country while making no secret of the fact that he had utter contempt for his own boss. Yeah, which you can't function like that. And also that's completely, it's completely sort of discombobulates the entire structure on which government is meant to run. And of course, the Cabinet Secretary is the most senior civil servant, is meant to be the person who's ensuring that there is good order within the government machine, that other departments are brought in at the right time, but also does have the role of speaking truth to power. And I think there comes a point with somebody like Simon Case, where if you are working alongside somebody like Johnson and Cummings, I think there does come a point where you say, look, I cannot on the one hand be expected to operate by standards that are expected of senior civil servants and on the other, go along with some of the nonsense that I'm seeing. And this was nonsense. The idea that this was not that this loan should not have been disclosed is absolute total nonsense. We've also been talking a little bit about how much our system relies on a strong civil service and we talked about it a little bit with Dominic Raab and bullying in civil service. But Simon Case's career, which I've been looking at, is also an example of another problem that's happening to our government. So July 2014 to July 2016, he goes through five jobs in four years. He was nine months as executive director of the improvement group in the cabinet office, nine months as a director at GCHQ, 15 months as a private secretary number 10, nine months as the director general

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for the EU, four months  
as the director general for Northern Ireland before  
he was moved to be private secretary to Prince William.  
Now, how is government supposed to  
function if people at a director general  
level, which remind people is right at the  
very, very top of the civil service? They're only in these roles  
for nine months or four months?

Well, especially if ministers are sort of changing  
every, in the case of

the trust Johnson here, every  
three and a half minutes. I think we shouldn't,  
given that we are goal-hunger podcasts, which  
you've been thrilled as I was  
to see we're at one stage goal-hunger, one, two,  
three in the charts this week, but we shouldn't  
neglect or forget

the central role that the GAFA, Gary  
Lineker played in these whole proceedings,  
still playing it, I see, the daily  
express front page, the day  
after Richard Sharp's  
resignation, and this is the  
paper, remember, that campaigns relentlessly  
against woke and for free  
speech, front page headline  
BBC must act

to silence Lineker.

And this was 30p Lee

Anderson saying that Lineker  
saying, making

exact, virtually word for word, by the way,  
what David Dimbleby said, namely,  
that no serving

government should choose the BBC  
chairman of the day, which  
you and I also agree with, and that  
somehow is elevated

into a front page story. So I think we should  
actually just, for a moment, remember

Gary's heroic role

in bringing order and sense

to the top of the BBC for a while. And also

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to remind people that the reason why the chairman of the BBC and the director of the BBC shouldn't be appointed by the government is that no government can really be trusted. So the conservators brought in Richard Sharp, but you, when you were in power, brought in Greg Dyke as director general who had donated money to Labour, you brought in Gavin Davis as the chairman of the BBC who was a Labour donor and his wife was the private secretary to Gordon Brown. I don't think we could bring in the director general, but the government does appoint the chairman. I should point out in my own defence, Rory, that that story ended with, how shall we say, somewhat bad blood between all of us, particularly between them and me, over the differences of opinion over Mr Andrew Gilligan, special adviser to Boris Johnson. Look, I think it's absurd. I think it's absolutely absurd. And the other thing I'd say is we need a strong BBC that is prepared to speak truth to power. We need it more than ever. You know, you've got these GBBs people and the talk TV people and they're, you know, they're essentially just sort of mini-Fox news that are being funded by, you know, very, very, very wealthy people who don't care whether they lose loads of money. And the BBC, we should support the BBC. And a shout out, by the way, for local BBC radio and television, which is being shredded at the moment, shredded. I had a message from somebody who works for the BBC up in Humberside who was saying that, you know, they're

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losing jobs, they're losing,  
they can't cover the area properly.  
And this does have long-term implications  
for the future of democracy.  
Well, it's awful for local democracy, isn't it?  
Because it means that you can't hold, you don't  
know enough about your local representatives.  
You can't hold them accountable for what's happening  
locally. BBC Cumbria has been  
shredded to pieces. The incredibly  
important and important for local identity, too.  
Just to give a positive shout out  
to the BBC, you and I, both big supporters  
of the World Service, which I often listen to in my  
car. Yeah, this is why you listen to the World Service, where we're  
in Britain. I said, because I'm in Britain, I'm listening  
to the World Service. Emergency radio  
service for Sudan is being  
launched on BBC News Arabic  
by the World Service. So that's proper public  
service broadcasting, in my view. That is, but  
unfortunately, they're about to end their  
Arabic language production. Exactly.  
Along with Chinese and Hindi. Exactly.  
So, BBC,  
we both support it. It's gone through a very bad  
phase. Richard Sharp should never have been there,  
good that he's gone, and now they need  
to get somebody in. Who would you have as BBC  
Chairman Roy? Please don't say me, because it's not  
going to happen. Sorry, it's going to say you or my me.  
I think one  
really good thing would be for it not to be a  
politician. I mean, obviously, that's slightly  
against my own interests, because I'm an XMP,  
but I think I don't see  
why so many of these jobs are going to people  
who've been members of parliament. One of the names,  
I can't remember, the name that is said to be  
Rishi Sunak's favourite is yet another  
one from the kind of world of finance and hedge  
fundery. I mean, it's got to be somebody  
who understands business and broadcasting,

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and it's got to be somebody  
who can stand up to pressure. Who was  
the best one you thought during your time  
that you remember? Who was a good chairman  
that you really thought was doing their job well?  
I thought Chris Patton was quite good,  
but he was a politician.  
How about Michael Grade?  
My opinions of people tend  
to be, because I'm very tribal,  
they tend to be coloured by people's position on  
Brexit. I never  
use Dyson hand dryers, and I will never  
go in a Weatherspoons. I mean, there are many  
reasons I won't go to Weatherspoons, partly the fact  
that I haven't had a pint of beer since 1986,  
but  
no, I'm not buying the  
love for Michael Grade. Very good.  
Okay, well, now the next thing you wanted  
to talk about was something called  
oracy, where initially I thought  
this is some misspelling. Do you mind  
telling us what on earth oracy is?  
It's like moracy, right? It's a pop  
group. Do you not know what oracy is?  
No, no, it's terrible. Well, oracy,  
the reason I wanted to talk about this is because  
I spoke at a conference  
last week  
organised by a group,  
a charity, an education charity  
called Voice 21.  
And Voice 21 was founded  
by my former number 10  
and labour colleague Peter Hyman, who left politics  
to go and become a head teacher  
and was a very good head teacher,  
but has now gone back into politics  
and he's now working for Kerstarma.  
But Voice 21  
is about trying to  
put oracy, which is about

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if you like, how we teach  
listening and speaking  
on the same  
par as literacy and numeracy.  
And there's a guy who  
did the main presentation, a guy called  
Professor Neil Mercer,  
who just gave a brilliant  
explanation as to why in the  
modern age in particular we have to be able  
to teach our children to communicate  
clearly and properly.  
And it's interesting, he's actually a Cumbrian  
roaring. He talked about how  
there's no such thing, we shouldn't  
get obsessed with sort of standardised English  
because when he's in Cumbria  
he admits he speaks differently  
to when he's in Cambridge.  
He speaks differently when he's doing a presentation  
to a room full of teachers  
as we were doing that day, to when he might  
be doing the same presentation to  
children or to people in a different part of the country.  
And what these guys do,  
the charity, what they do is they teach  
teachers how  
to educate children in the art of  
speaking and listening. And it's also about  
how you make decisions. You'll be pleased to know  
that the room was full of people  
who listened to our podcast and loved this  
idea of disagreeing agreeably.  
Somewhere in the hearts of this,  
I'm a little plug for my free part  
BBC  
Radio 4 series which was on Public  
Speaking and Reshwick and its use.  
And I was very struck  
particularly with an interview with  
two young men from  
St Francis Xavier School in Liverpool,  
State School in Liverpool



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who felt that their lives had been turned around by entering a debating competition Public Speaking and what they felt about it was it wasn't just about the confidence it was also about empathy that learning to do these debates forces you to understand the other person's position and forces you to enter their mindset in order to try to persuade them. Well at the start of this presentation and I write a whole chapter in my new book about the importance of this public speaking and it's not public speaking as in standing up and making speeches. It's public speaking as in when you're dealing with bureaucracy when you're trying to get something done over the phone how do you deal with people when you open a bank account anyway Neil Mercer when he started he said hands up this is a room full of several hundred teachers he said hands up if you were taught how to speak at school and about I don't know 15 to 20 hands went up he said put your hands down if you went to private school and I think they were left with two hands in the air so the private schools do teach when you were eating you were taught how to debate how to speak I remember Charles Kennedy used to say that one of the things that made him a politician he went to a state school in in Lekaba in the Highlands but they had school debating and he was a very good debater and that's what made him want to go to university and he was a great debater there and that's how he became a politician and I think we just need this more than ever

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and I hope that with Peter Hyman now  
inside Keir Starmer's office  
I think Oresie the idea  
that we teach in the modern age  
children how to communicate and by the way  
it doesn't mean they all have to sound like  
you know Queens English as it used to be  
called accents are incredibly important  
people being you know  
proud of where they come from is not inconsistent  
and even the thing about you know  
Ofsted for example there was a lot of  
kind of criticism of Ofsted  
at this conference because people were saying  
Ofsted go into schools  
where you know children  
because of where they're brought up and the  
accents of their parents and the way their parents  
might be you know we done  
rather than we did and all that sort of stuff  
that that kind of stuff gets loaded on the  
school and the school gets marked down  
and and so anyway I just think  
it's a really interesting area  
Yeah exactly well one of the things that I  
love about it is that  
in the heart of the idea of debate  
or argument is the idea of  
that you can actually change somebody else's  
mind and what I hope  
when doing is not just agreeing  
or disagreeing glibly but also  
the possibility of persuasion because that's  
incredibly important in a very polarised  
world and I think it's what  
Trump stood against. Trump  
fundamentally says  
my supporters and I have this fixed world view  
and nobody is going to  
change it and I'm not going to change anybody else's mind either  
And if you don't have my view you're just wrong  
Exactly and there's this lovely book  
by a Yale professor called Brian Gaston

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which is basically  
in defence of persuasion he argues  
that politics goes wrong  
when you give up on the idea of being able  
to persuade someone because then you give up on the idea of compromise  
you give up on the idea of shared truth  
you give up on the kind of humility which  
is embedded in politics.

By the way Orocy  
is now part  
of the curriculum  
in Scotland and Wales. Very good

So Michael Gove when he  
was pressed on this apparently used to say look we can't  
just have our kids sitting around chatting

There's Michael Gove  
who spends his entire life sitting around chatting  
with his Tory friends. And chats very well

He's a very good chatter

Yeah but so there we go

there's one for Labour

I hope Orocy. Let's make

Orocy a word that

I mean I'm amazed that even you didn't know what it was

Roy that really is. That's shocking

Isn't it? Shocking. Well on that

I think we'll bring it to an end

with a pin of praise to Orocy

Thank you very much

Thank you