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Welcome to The Restless Politics emergency podcast with me, Rory Stewart.

Me, Alistair Campbell. And Rory, thank you for doing it because I know you've just got off a plane. You'd be amazed at how much Twitter demand there was for us to do this. So we're getting towards 11 o'clock. Where I am getting towards one in the morning. I know. So thank you for that.

But I do think that what appears to be a very large nail going into the coffin of Boris Johnson's political career merits an emergency podcast. I don't know how much you've been able to follow. It's been a very, very, very strange day. You and I were in London together this morning.

And since then, first of all, we had Nadine Dorries saying on her TV station that she is not going to be provoking a by-election because at that time she thought she was going to be on a peerages list and she would sort of hang around for a bit. And then it turned out that she wasn't in Boris Johnson's resignation honours. And so she decided to throw choice out of the ground.

Sorry, just on that one. Am I right in saying she probably was in Boris Johnson's resignation honours but that Rishi Sunak decided to strip certain people out of Boris Johnson's resignation honours? That is what I suspect has happened. However, Rishi Sunak, Downing Street are claiming that Rishi Sunak had nothing to do with this. That I know to be nonsense because he has to have something to do with it because he has to sign off the resignation honours.

And indeed, on this podcast, you were encouraging him to try to strip some of the people out of Boris Johnson's resignation honours. You were complaining about him giving honours to people I was actually saying I think he should have told Boris Johnson and Liz Truss that they weren't entitled to them. And particularly because with Boris Johnson, this Privileges Committee report was hanging over him. So we had the whole farce of the honours today.

And then the full list came out and it was all Boris Johnson's supporters and it was people who worked in number 10 who helped him try to cover up the party gate stuff.

And then literally, just as that story was kind of dying down, well not dying down, but we're sort of absorbing all that, then the next thing we get this news flash that Boris Johnson is stepping down from Parliament having read the Privileges Committee and then coming out with this statement that is so full of self-pitying, narcissistic, whinging. And what is incredible, and it's amazing how history sometimes works like this, the same day we have Donald Trump claiming a kangaroo court is out to get him on this indictment, which I've managed to read it's very, very long and it's fascinating and we should probably put it in the show notes at some point. The 49-page indictment of Trump is pretty damning.

And at the same time as he's saying this is a kangaroo court and these enablers are coming out to say this is terrible what's happening, we then have literally on the other side of the Atlantic, on our side of the Atlantic, Boris Johnson playing exactly the same game.

The resignation statement, for those who haven't read it, it is the most bizarre document. It is a bit Trumpian because it's very sort of rambling. For somebody who was once meant to be one of the kind of masters of the 800 word column, extremely experienced journalists

who used to toss these things off at an hour, it's astonishing and maybe that's the sort of self-pitying thing. He sort of repeats himself, has one go at Harriet Harman, wanders off in another direction, criticizes Rishi Sunak, grumbles about the Conservative Party, has another go at

Harriet Harman, wobbles around again, says how much he loves his constituency, laments himself again. I mean, it's a very peculiar document. Well, it is Trumpian in that it's just sort of flying around blaming anybody but himself. I did think the, look, as you know, I'm no great fan of Rishi Sunak. As I said on the television this evening, I think if Rishi Sunak had not been following Johnson and Truss, he would be seen as a kind of middle ranking minister in the middle ranking department material but because he's better than those two, he's seen somewhat higher. But I think that Johnson basically saying, criticising Rishi Sunak for failing to do these things that Boris Johnson won his mandate on, Boris Johnson won his mandate on exactly the same things and he failed to do them and he had longer in the job than Rishi Sunak. Some of the things he's talking about in the resignation on his list are part of the sort of list trust legacy. He's still pushing for these very reckless unfunded tax cuts which basically bombed the British economy. So I think it's interesting. I mean, I think Boris Johnson having won this huge majority, I mean, a significant majority given that the Conservatives have been in so long, then did something almost unprecedented which was to blow up his own career

in a couple of years and he did it really through endless sort of examples of just lack of personal focus, integrity, seriousness revealed in a whole series of ways. And so I think a bit like Trump, the public thinking about him has a slightly muddled view of him because we can barely remember what it was that he did. I mean, was it that he paroled Parliament

or was it that he was sort of endorsing somebody who was going around feeling up other MPs or was it that he was sort of cheating on his wallpaper or not doing his COVID staff or getting someone to pay for the treehouse for his child? We hardly know because it just seemed as though every week that he was in, there was another one of these things.

Yeah. And you know, it's interesting tonight, because I was being inundated with bits to talk about it and I wanted to wait until we did the podcast but then I didn't know what time your flight was landing. So I did do a little bit of pedultery. I went out and did Sky News and the BBC and a bit of radio and it was interesting talking, you know, that thing when you have to listen to other people gabbing on before you get on. And it was interesting how many of the journalists

were, they were still judging him through this prism of, well, you know, never rule him out because he's a proven winner and never rule him out because the media love Boris Johnson because he gives so much material. And in one of the interviews on Sky, I said, listen, that mindset and that attitude is part of the problem that is given as this guy who has then done so much damage to the country. And I actually did say at one point, I think it was on the BBC, I said, look, when Steve Rosenberg, the excellent BBC Moscow editor, talks about Vladimir Putin, he regularly says Vladimir Putin, who we know has a track record of lying about these issues, the BBC and other media, they have to start doing the same about Boris Johnson.

The guy is a proven liar. And he's lying again tonight. And he's blaming other people tonight. And it's just horrible to watch. I actually think these conservative MPs on the committee, I think they've got a case of defamation, you know, for what he's been saying about them. Yes, exactly. I mean, I think a lot of these people, Bernard Jenkins, Alberto Costa are quite, you know, we'll see themselves as relatively serious, objective people trying to do their jobs. And he's basically suggesting it's a kangaroo court and that it was unfair from the beginning,

but it's part of the general populist playbook, isn't it? Because I think one of the things that populism has revealed in the collapse, I think of the right, I mean, something we were talking about actually, just something we were doing earlier today in an interview that's coming out leading with Michael Ignatieff in two weeks, he was saying that the collapse of the right wing parties into populism has been so dramatic. It's interesting, he's somebody like you from the left. And he was saying in quite a generous way that actually, some of the moderate conservatives were part of the creation of the post-World War order and he was paying tribute to Harold McMillan for his house building and stuff. But one of the key themes of Boris Johnson and these conservative populists is a sort of contempt for the constitution. They claimed that they were pushing through Brexit because they believed in the sovereignty of parliament.

But every time parliament has tried to question him, he's just tried to rubbish parliament. He's done it by trying to provoke them, by trying to ignore parliamentary votes and now going against the major privileges committee of parliament instead of doing the honorable thing, which is saying, obviously, I disagree, but I respect the institution and this is what they found that I'm going to have to go. It's very, very sort of petty and vindictive.

It's totally Trump. And of course, the other big point that he's hoping will land and he knows most of his right wing media enablers will pick up is basically already running the Brexit conspiracy card. This is all about people trying to undo his wonderful Brexit.

But just to depress you, I'm afraid my sense of the guy is that he doesn't want to give up and he's partly done this because he loves getting the headlines. He felt it was going to be uncomfortable sitting in parliament with all this stuff coming out, this report, COVID report, separate COVID report coming. So he wants to get the headlines, but I also think he still has a huge fantasy about being leader of the opposition. He's somebody who loves opposition because he's not very good at governing. He loves generating headlines. He sees himself sort of mocking Keir Starmer from the other side of the benches. And I think it's well within possibility that he may try to use this to get himself out of parliament so that he's not kicked out. He resigns before he's kicked out and tries to use it to come back again in the next election and take over the Conservative party. I think the other reason we really want to get out is because it's becoming embarrassing month after month seeing these registered members' interests and the vast sums of money that he's making for going around the world telling silly after-dinner stories, which he will no longer have to do. He may go away and make lots of money. One thing, sorry, that actually our producer pointed out is that in his resignation speech, he says, very sad to be leaving parliament dash at least for now. Oh, yeah, that's absolutely, absolutely signaling that he's going to hang around. Listen, we've said before that although that he's very Trumpian in a lot of his antics, he is more Berlusconi than Trump. He's somebody that thinks he always thinks he'll be able to come back. I've said many times about Johnson on this podcast that his entire life has been about getting into scrapes and then showing that he can get out of them when everybody says that he can't. But I think with this, if the Conservative Party seriously decides to bring this guy back in any capacity in the near future, I think they're in real mortal peril.

Is it remotely possible? It seems very, very unlikely, but is it remotely possible that the reason why Nadine Doris is going at exactly the same time as Boris Johnson is that he's actually planning to announce that he's going to stand in Nadine Doris' by-election and come back into parliament in six weeks' time? But he'd have to be accepted there, but I know they could have

the whole thing with a local party, but Richie Sunak would have the power to say, no, that's not going to happen. And by the way, we pleased to know, Roy, that in one of the interviews, one of the interviews was saying, but Boris Johnson makes the point that it should be, it should be the electorate that gets rid of MPs. This sets a very dangerous precedent, in which case he could have, you know, he could have, bear in mind, this report is not a definitive judgment. It's what is a recommendation to parliament. Parliament then votes he could have done that, and he could have stood if there had been a violation.

Well, but it's also that the journalist is, my apologies for this, the noise of a Jordanian strange musical gas tank going past. I think the journalist is wrong. I don't think you should be seeing this as setting a dangerous precedent. I think it's important that parliament is sovereign and parliament has power, and parliament has always had power to be able to remonstrate against MPs who have broken the rules of parliament or broken the rules of the nation. Yeah. We had one the other day with the SMP, Margaret Ferrier from the SMP, who was kicked out for God knows how long. But I think in the other point, I thought was quite interesting in terms of his take and the way that he was projecting all this. I think that you really do get a sense that now he really doesn't care about the future of the Conservative party. No, he never has. He never has. I mean, I think he's barely a Conservative. I think a bit like the way that Donald Trump was never really a Republican. I mean, he's somebody who fundamentally cares about power. He's somebody who, when he was six years old, said he wanted to be

world king and set out very successfully to turn himself into a major celebrity and take power. But I think one of the things that we don't want to fall into the trap of is giving him what he wants, which is getting another burst of press attention, getting a sort of martyrdom out of a particular fringe of the right of the Conservative party who thinks he's been badly treated. You know, he's recycling all the same conspiracy theories here about Sue Gray, for example, the senior civil servant who's now gone off to work for Keir Starmer, all the stuff that Jacob Riesmog and Nadine Doris have been parroting for months. He's now put into his resignation speech. But we must try to remind people that he is a bad man and that he was a very, very bad Prime Minister, because in the end, he did not have the seriousness or the thoughtfulness or the integrity to do that job. By the way, I did sort of refer to you because when they were telling me that, you know, the Parliament should have kicked him out, I said, well, maybe he should have thought

about that, about all the MPs that he decided weren't fit to stand, you among them and all the other people that weren't going to support his then policy on Brexit. It'd be interesting to know what Sunak is genuinely thinking about this. I mean, it does feel to me, this feels like I was on one of the programmes with Anne Widdicombe and she basically said this feels like it's irreparable in terms of the future of the Conservative party in the next election. I mean, Rishi Sunak must want him out of his hair, I just thought, he must want him off the scene. Was he trying to do a deal with him on these at this honours list? That's obviously gone wrong because of Nadine Dorries. The usual suspects, Rhys Mogg has already been out, Priti Patel has already been out, Simon Clark, all the ones who have been given baubles and gongs are all out saying kangaroo court, kangaroo court.

This guy, Campbell Bannerman, who runs this organisation that was set up basically to sort of try and get Johnson back, says this is a day facto split in the Conservative party, we're

rallying around Boris. So will there, you know, there is talk of whether he goes and forms a new party. If he does that again, I think that's really, really bad news for Rishi Sunak. So I think he'll just be hoping that he will go away, but Johnson won't go away. It's just that I think the longer, the more that people do get reminded of the lies of the mistakes and don't underestimate how awful he is going to come out of this COVID inquiry.

Yeah. And actually, what a privileged committee is going to report on Monday. I mean, I think the whatever he read that led him to trigger the by-election, I think is going to be eye-popping when we see it, when they will have concluded about the way that he behaved and the way that he misled Parliament, consciously misled Parliament, thought nothing of it, just thought that he could get away with just looking people in the eye and saying, there were no parties in Downing Street when he knew perfectly well that were, when his own staff were giggling about it.

Some of whom are being given nighthoods and peerages and all sorts of nonsense. Don't you think, Roy, that thinking of your favourite person on the planet, King Charles, don't you think he was put in a really invidious position here that, and I'm really shocked that the Palace didn't at least have a mind to, they knew this privileged committee report was going to come.

They could have had a fair assessment. They wouldn't have been hard for them.

To bear in mind, the King is allowed to look at any document that he wants about anything.

So, to have this timing of King Charles has graciously approved the honour of Bladi, Bladi, Bladi, Blah, and then you have these ridiculous people like Andrea Jenkins, so pleased that the King has chosen to all of me, blah, blah, blah, blah, and then literally hours later, the guy who has put those people in those honours, given those honours and peerages, has to resign in disgrace. I think that puts King Charles at a tall position.

And I think it was the same when Boris Johnson lied to Her Majesty the Queen about paroching parliament, claimed that he wasn't doing it with anything to do with Brexit in order to get the excuse to get the royal prerogative to parade parliament.

Is King Charles going to have to pin a medal on Jacob Rees Mogg's chest when he says it rise to Jacob? I mean, the whole thing's absurd.

I think it's deeply disturbing.

What do you think the King will be thinking, Rory?

Well, I'm going to stay off that subject. That's the subject I don't comment on, subject I don't comment on. But I do think your question, what Rishi Sunak's thinking, is very interesting because it's, as your great friend Emmanuel Macron likes to say, on the one hand, on the one hand, he's going to be thinking, thank goodness I got rid of this guy. And in fact, remember, you've been pushing for weeks now from just to fire him and get him out, get him out of parliament. So he's gone. And actually, in some ways, remember, he only managed Boris Johnson, he got about 20 people rebelling against the Windsor Framework, the Northern Ireland deal that Rishi Sunak brought together. So in some ways, Rishi Sunak has proved in a way that Liz Truss hasn't, that he can last. He will last through the next election. He's got a reputation at least amongst my friends in the Conservative Party for being much more serious, much more competent, much more focused on the details. But now he's got this great inflated elephantine buffoon prancing around outside parliament, trying to set up some splinter

opposition rebellion Conservative Party, aiming almost certainly to come back in the next election in a kind of Berlusconi-Trumpian way. And he's also got, as I've experienced, sort of doing the rounds tonight, he's also got quite a lot of media enablers who will continue to, the line being run out of these CBBs people is all, you know, this is a terrible betrayal, kangaroo court, usual stuff. CBBs is your word for GB News, is it? That's the one. That's the one. I don't take them terribly serious. Although I do think they're quite dangerous because they're funded by very, very right-wing people, mainly based abroad, who don't care how much it costs, as long as they start to have influence. I see that the Privileges Committee have said that they're going to speed up, they're going to meet on Monday to speed up publication of the report. And Uxbridge and South Rhyslip Conservative Party HQ has told people that anybody who's on the central party candidates list has got till 5pm Monday to apply.

So that could be your big chance, I do think it's straight than they're in Uxbridge. You've got till Monday. The chances may be at Toria P are very, very slippery. I think you have a better chance. I'm not going to get my name in by Monday. I do think though it illustrates something that we've been talking about, which is the knife edge that Rishi Sunak has been on, trying to hold the Conservative Party together. And as he has become more sensible, more moderate, has made decisions

like not trying to take through the bill of shredding all the EU legislation, getting the Windsor framework through not making reckless tax cuts, in fact, doing all the sort of things that people like me on the center left of the Conservative Party want him to be doing, he's taken this enormous risk with the rise of the Conservative Party. And I'm afraid with Boris Johnson's departure, there's a real risk that he will lose red wall Brexit voters. And Boris Johnson will, and this is the, this is why Boris Johnson is so disloyal and destructive and why no previous Conservative Prime Minister has ever done anything like this, not Ted Heath complaining about Margaret Thatcher, no Labour leader that I can think of has ever been just so destructive to their party as Boris Johnson is being. Because he's basically trying to remove from the Conservative Party the idea that they have anything to do with Brexit. So he's going to try to split them into and present himself as that true voice of Brexit, try to portray Rishi Sunak as a Remainer and an anti-growth Remainer. And by doing so, he's basically knifing his successor in the back. I think he's also trying to, I think he wants, he probably deep down now wants Sunak to lose because he wants to preserve the myth that he's a winner. And he wants to be leader of the opposition. And of course he wants Rishi Sunak to lose because if Rishi Sunak wins, Boris has no chance of coming back into the leadership. But you want, but to become leader of the opposition after election, he has to get a seat. Now, maybe he could get a seat. I suspect that what this is all about is creating the narrative that I was a winner, I got majority of 80. If only they'd kept me, we could have won again because I was a proven winner.

Soon that was a loser. He didn't want I tell him to do. And of course, he's got so many. He does still have so many enablers. He'll be pumping it out tomorrow. And I think, I think for the public though, I think I really do believe the public saw through this guy some time ago. But the promise the public isn't just one thing. And as we found with Donald Trump, there's always going to be a chunk of the population that bizarrely, the more that people like you and me attack them, the more that we point out their lies, the more that we point out their incompetence, the more they decide that they're martyrs. And that somehow they're martyrs to elite opinion or remainder opinion that's out to get them. They represent the real people.

It's astonishing. I mean, you can see these pictures now of Trump. Absolutely extraordinary pictures of him almost being portrayed in the United States as though he's Jesus, as though he's a sort of martyr on a cross. And we will get hopefully not as many, but there will be people out there presenting Boris to say misunderstood, wonderful, and actually bizarrely, even moderate conservatives are now getting in touch with me or were over the last few weeks saying, please stop attacking Boris, you're beginning to sound a bit bitter. Let it go. Don't keep harping on about him. He's not that bad. And a surprise when I say, no, he really is a very, very, very bad man. I mean, this is the worst, genuinely, the worst Prime Minister, I think, that the United Kingdom has ever had. And the worst sort of character that you could have as Prime Minister, because he just doesn't have any of it, it's not just the lack of focus, the lack of work, the lack of attention to detail, it's actually the lack of care and concern for the genuine national interest. We had a great example of the other day, I don't know if you follow this story about his negotiations with the Australians over the trade deal, where they absolutely basically took his pants down and spanked him and got the whole thing done totally as they wanted it done.

It's huge damage to British farmers.

Massive, massive.

My constituency, small Cumbrian farmers, very, very worried about that.

And he's still fantasising about a US trade deal that is never going to happen.

I know he's criticising Sunak on that. You're saying, why isn't Mr. Sunak gone and got the trade deal? Well, why didn't you answer because you lied about what your capacity to do so?

So, no. And I think that, look, you'll never write him off. I get that. But I still think that,

I do think tonight that the turd is being flushed away finally.

And let's please not forget what he represented. Post-truth, polarization, populism embedded in that man. This was somebody who deliberately tried to whip up people against the elites, frayed our constitution, broke the ministerial code, then tried to rewrite the ministerial code so he wouldn't have to resign from breaking the ministerial code.

And in all his actions showed such contempt for everything that we should hold dear about our constitution, our country, our traditions. And now he's attacking the very conservative party that enabled him and ripping it to pieces in his own fool.

And the parliament, for which he claimed he was fighting back to get sovereignty.

Well, listen, Rory, thanks for doing that. Thanks for getting straight from the airport into your humble abode in Amman. Well, thank you. Well, I mean, obviously,

it's 10 past one in the morning and I've wound myself up so much, I'm not going to be able to go to sleep. But I'm pleased he's left parliament anyway.

Yeah, I'm going tomorrow to the kite festival to talk about the best-selling book,

but what can I do? And then Fianna is going to pick me up and we're heading off to Windermere in your old part of the world to do the Great North Swim.

Oh, fantastic. Well, swim safely.

I will. All the best. See you soon.

All the best. Bye-bye.