

Welcome to the Restless Politics with me Rory Stewart and me Alistair Campbell and Alistair this week I think probably the most dramatic thing is that it looks like we're on to probably the hottest year on record. We just had the hottest June on record now looks like we're going to have the hottest July on record. One of the hottest temperatures ever recorded in over 100 years recorded in California, China off the charts, Greece wildfires, Italy temperatures almost up at 50. And it's all your fault Rory because you're never off aeroplanes. And it's all personally my fault. I must put my hands up I have tried really really hard this year not to fly as much and I've actually been pretty successful but I have made two journeys by aeroplane this week. So I apologize to the planet for that. Well, we'll definitely we've got to talk about that. We'll talk about that in the in the second half. I think we should kick off with labor. Yep. We had a big a big sort of analysis last week about whether Rishi Sunak can find a path to victory. Let's talk about where Kirstarmer and Labour are. So then maybe we should do the Trans-Pacific Partnership. So I think you've been talking a bit about this on the media but this is Britain announcing that it's joining a free trade deal in the Pacific. And it's a very very interesting deal. And it's also a slightly comical story about government claims around something whose economic impact looks like it's going to be pretty small. Then I think you wanted to do intelligence report on China. So the House of Commons Select Committee on Intelligence and Security has just produced a report warning about Chinese infiltration into Britain and the lack of government action. And then probably finally we should return to climate particularly given what's going on this week. Cool. Good. Well let's kick off with labor then. You're in Jordan at the moment. Have you been able to follow much of the domestic scene? Kirstarmer did an interview on the BBC at the weekend, dropped another pledge or what was thought to be a pledge on child benefit? Got a bit of flak for that. And today speaking at the Future Britain Conference which is hosted by the Tony Blair Institute and coming out I think with quite interesting speeches. Well anyway, give me your thoughts first before I give my I think the first thing is that Labour's policy has been to be super cautious fiscally. And I'm interested to hear from you whether this is that they're worried that it could be like 1992 where John Major's government looked like it was in a lot of trouble. But the Conservatives were able to spin Labour in those days Neil Kinnock as being irresponsible on the economy and they managed to pull off an unexpected victory. So maybe there is a fear from Labour's part of you that if they give an inch on seeming irresponsible on the economy they could be in trouble. But the result is that Rachel Reeves who's the shadow Chancellor has set up incredibly strict rules which are basically not allowing her to spend money on anything. She said that she wants to reduce debt as a proportion of GDP. She's only going to borrow for investment. And the result is that so many of the things free school meals, child benefit limit, DFID, the green investment fund, universal childcare, all of this they seem to be backing out of. You know when we talked to John Major on Leading, you mentioned John Major there and I said to him, do you think maybe you've been underestimated most of your life? And I'm beginning to wonder whether we're slightly underestimating Keir Starmer's ruthlessness in his determination to win. He's getting quite a lot of flack at the moment for some of these decisions that he's taking or more I guess you could say some of the decisions that he's taking not to do things. And obviously the comparison of the 1997, there are some similarities but the big difference is that the economy is absolutely tanking at the moment as we've said and that is going to

be the case if and when Keir Starmer becomes Prime Minister. Which famously it wasn't in 97 as John Major keeps complaining rather grumpily. The economy was doing reasonably well. It wasn't this sort of wonderful benign green picture that they claimed but it was certainly better than it is now. And so Labour will come in if Keir Starmer becomes Prime Minister and Rachel Reeves is Chancellor, come in with a hell of a difficult entree. And I think what they're trying to do is you know that famous phrase that Linton Crosby often use about getting rid of some of the barnacles off the bottom of the boat so as they can focus on the things that they really want to emphasise. I think maybe they're doing a bit of that but at the same time what I've noticed in Keir Starmer's recent speech is the best of which I thought was his education speech is actually sort of really hammering some of these bigger strategic points. And I think it's interesting that he's at that Tony Blair conference today because Tony's absolute obsession as I know from talking to him and from reading what he writes and says is that there has to be a completely different way of governing and it has to be rooted in fundamentally embracing the technological revolution in a way that currently we're not and that's the way to transform public services, it's the way to transform the jobs market, it's the way to transform pensions. You remember the article he wrote recently with William Haig about the digital identity card and it's interesting that Keir is there and sort of beginning I think to point in that direction as well. His big message seems to be we can do absolutely nothing that we want to unless we grow the economy and that means taking a completely different approach and I think that message is very frustrating for a lot of Labour people who are still in that place of well the Tories cut stuff and we spend stuff and he's trying to move away from that I think. Let me sort of push back for a bit. I mean one of the problems is that if that's their view they've created a problem for themselves by making announcements and then backing out of them. So, Bridget Phillipson announced that they were going to have something as exciting as the formation of the NHS which was going to be the provision of free child care all the way from the end of somebody's maternity or paternity leave all the way through to when they entered school. It's going to be a fantastically dramatic thing I think probably more generous than any other country in the world had. That was announced with a great fanfare, they've dropped it. Everybody's been pointing out that Theresa May's policy of putting a two-child limit on benefit payments has been very associated with the rise in poverty some people say in a 35 billion pounds a year however these things are calculated that's been dropped. They signaled that they were in favour of free school meals for everybody they've dropped that and this green investment fund which we were talking about six months ago which was almost the only thing in their economic policy they were going to be putting 28 billion pounds a year into borrowing for green investment. So, the first problem I guess from a communications point of view is why on earth announce all these things and then drop them? Well, that is a very, very good question but I think it's because this is the strategy that they've now fixed upon and I think there is a strategy to it. So, if you think about through my OST objective strategy tactic approach to campaigns objective absolutely to win that is the simple objective they have right now. Strategy is sort of cautious change it's change but with reassurance. When I talked about being ruthless he's not focusing on people like me he's not focusing on people that want to sort of you know get out there and campaign he's focusing on people who are a bit grumpy and a bit unsure

and the other thing I think that it that explains the the kind of downplaying of big promises one of the things that's being presented to this conference the future of Britain conference is some polling which I I just got sent literally just before we well before we started from the it's called the new Britain project and they've done this polling and it's very very depressing because what it shows is that people just don't believe the country can be transformed they don't believe the country can be improved very very negative views on politicians in general lack of optimism about Britain's future lack of optimism about our ability to meet the challenges and therefore I think part of the thinking is that in in not sort of saying we're going to transform everything overnight they're kind of playing into that mood but do you remember I once said to you ages ago there was a point at which when I didn't really rate David Cameron very highly this is when they were in opposition still and Tony Blair said to me yeah but you know what the public think he's good enough and and that was struck with stuck with me and I and I think that's kind of where Keir Starmer is at the moment I think people are sort of looking thinking yeah I think he's good enough particularly against against the 13 years that we've had and the other thing I just say about the promises I will lay you a bet now if we're still doing this podcast in a couple of years time I will lay you a bet now that if there is a Labour government they will lift the child benefit cap and if there is a if there is a Labour government they will they will do the child care so so publicly they refuse to say they're going to do any of that so they can get away with claiming they have fiscal discipline and then they can have Alistair out on the way of saying don't worry you're going to get all the goodies even though they're saying they're not going to get them all but we did it so for example I can I can vividly remember fairly early in our term because we in our first term because we'd said we were going to stick to the Tory spending limits for two years and we weren't raising taxes very similar approach if you think about it that one of the first things we had to do was to implement a benefit cut I can't remember all the detail but I remember Harriet Harman I think was Secretary of State at the time she was absolutely furious that this was something that she had to do but it was kind of we promised that we're going to do it now if you look at what she then subsequently did of benefits once we had started to get the the economy moving in the right direction which there was money once we have made being able to make changes elsewhere so I suspect I listen I think that's the strategy if not I agree with you I think it's all a bit baffling just to add to the bafflement for a second I mean this is an election which is more about the economy than almost any election I can ever imagine I mean that this is really where it's the economy stupid is really going to show through and they have nothing to say about the central issue in the election and there's still 20 points ahead in the polls listen I think they're saying quite a lot but what they're not doing is saying and the answer to all of these problems is that we now spend more money on this I was I was in I was quite intrigued by the way one thing I leapt out at me and gear Stalmers speech at the Tony Blair conference was that he was kind of absolutely clear that this I think he called it this disastrous Brexit deal had to be fixed I thought that was a step in the right direction and the focus on growth I think the you know remember Tony's sound bite asked me my three priorities not so education education education and Keir Starmer sort of aping that today with growth growth growth now where I agree with you is that what you wouldn't be able to take from that speech or any speech is made is there's a detailed plan for growth but I think what they're doing is signaling that that's where they're going

to be during the election campaign and the other point I think is worth making on this is that he just said you know they're not saying much about this is that where there's still 20 points ahead of the polls that's what I meant earlier when I was making the point about John Major being underestimated it is quite an achievement to be 20 points ahead of the polls and you've got these by elections coming up later this week now if you just think about when you were an MP the idea of Labour ever winning that Selby seat that is now up for grabs and the Tories are going around the place saying well you know if we hold on to Selby it'll be an amazing achievement and so you think that what's happening is that the time for change mood is so strong that what Keir I think is refusing to do is to make it all about him all about Labour while the while the government continues to create as much mess as it does we're in the classic game

of all the parties spinning one party saying the Conservatives saying you know we'll be doing well if we lose all the seats and they were saying we'll be doing well if we win one of them and look these things always have an expectation game being played I think the Tories have really really really hammering the idea that they're going to lose all three and it'll be an amazing try-up if they only lose Selby by 3000 remember you told them off for saying that you know they they tried to say last time you know we'll be lucky if we don't lose a thousand seats and then they ended up losing more than a thousand in the council elections so now they're going to have to be even more cautious that's the Alistair advice the other thing that I'm finding intriguing is that Peter Kyle who we're both like he is running Labour's campaign in mid-Bedfordshire and he's tweeting speeches every day of the campaign in mid-Bedfordshire but the Richard Nadine Dorris is still not having said she's going to leave she's still not left she's still taking the money doing her TV program and I wonder whether she's either she's waiting to do it at a moment of maximum damage to Sunak I don't know or she's just decided you know what I think I'll hang on a bit well I think she definitely it's it this is motivated by Nadine Dorris being angry with Rishi Sunak because she's not getting to go into the House of Lords so she's essentially I think just taking the piss she's going to turn up to parliament almost not at all take her salary let down her constituents let down her party let down everybody and she doesn't care yeah okay so let me create another challenge on this so we had the Kate Rower challenge which is the world is in real

trouble yeah climates in trouble the environments in trouble and no politician is being remotely brave

and stepping forward with solutions and I agree with that and I'm afraid that's true of the whole loss of them we're not hearing any courage from Keir Starmer on that but I'd add to that if you think about the things that matter to voters I mean so let's set aside winning the election for a second which I agree is a big deal and I think Keir Starmer is very likely to win that election and he's very likely to win it because the economy is in such trouble that that Rishi Sunak's not going to be able to deliver on getting inflation down and growth up and so he's finished but if you think about what voters really want currently many people are spending almost 80% of their take

home pay on their childcare so childcare is a huge issue for parents of young children at the other end of the extreme adult social care remains a completely shocking shameful disgrace people in Cumbria stills being seen by a care about 15 minutes a day so at those both ends of life there is an absolute crying need for someone to say we've got a policy on childcare and we're

going to try to address universal adult social care and that's where I want to see some signalling from Labour that they're going to do these things listen I agree with you it's been a it's been a sort of higgledy-piggledy route but they are signalling for example on childcare but what they're not doing is putting out detailed policy that allows the Tories to say these are just a bunch of spendthrifts who promise you everything and deliver nothing I think if anything what Kirsten was trying to do is under promise in the hope of over delivering based on the fact that he thinks he's going to win so here are some things they could be doing without getting hit by the Tories on the grounds that they're they're spendthrifts they could be I think putting up income tax for the wealthiest and taking some revenue from that they could be borrowing to build social housing they could be really investing in an industrial strategy that focused on where our real science strengths were so where we were with pool nurse going into the Crick Institute it's it's controversial because it would mean accepting that the competitive advantage that Britain has at the moment in science is London Oxford and Cambridge and you need to throw the kitchen sink at getting from the basic research into developing products and businesses those are things that they could be signaling and those aren't things that necessarily need to get them in trouble from the Tories yeah we should say by the way that pool nurse is our next guest on leading which will be out next Monday he's the Nobel Prize winning scientist who had some very interesting things to say about the failure of politics and I think he would agree with what you just said I still think some of these these things may come look I have got a long long experience going right back to when I was a journalist covering Michael Foot let alone Neil Kinnock, John Smith and Tony Blair and Gordon of Labour leaders get treated very differently in the run-up to a campaign we've seen so much of this every time Labour polishes and opens the mouth where's the money coming from

the Tories they don't even get asked anymore about Liz Truss's ridiculous Kamikaze budget that smashed a great hole in the in the economy Rishi Sunak comes it comes out all that stuff this week about education and university degrees I mean it was so sort of on the back of a fag packet that it was embarrassing and yet it sort of gets portrayed as these great detailed crusading plans I mean you're also right the the government's made huge concessions on salary's public sector wages which they promised they weren't going to do and they've now done and which they claim they're going to pay for how they're going to pay for it out of efficiencies and also out of charging more for migrant visas they won't be able to pay for those things exactly so that so I actually thought Rishi on the public sector pay that there was an element of them thinking okay you've been banging on about this here's your pay rise take it or leave it in any case we're not going to be the ones who're going to have to pay it because we'll be out of power by then it was an element to me that they they didn't even care that they hadn't got the detail on it so they they get treated in a totally different way and I just think here's being very very cautious but in a way that's very frustrating to a lot of people Labour Party members and so forth but I think I'm getting a better understanding as to why he's doing it like this well there we are you sounds like you're becoming more of a in favour of the Mingva strategy no I'm not in favour of the Mingva strategy because I still want them ahead of the election to have four or five really big things that the public are going to say yeah that's what I want I'll tell you another thing by the way we haven't mentioned this but I actually was quite taken with the speech that Angela Rayner made last week about standards in public life I really do think there is a there is my political mileage and the public are yearning for somebody to come along and say this is going to be a very different

sort of government and I know people don't believe the big promises but I think on that they will believe actually that Labour think the corruption that we saw during Covid the lying of Johnson the uselessness of trust and I thought her idea about sort of you know really getting trying to rebuild the sense of ethics and integrity in public life and that's not a big spending thing so I really hope that they go down that track as well good thing to be going on right so on to the subject of the trade partnership which the UK governments just signed up to so a little bit a little bit of background on this the comprehensive and progressive agreement for Trans Pacific Partnership CPTTP exactly amazing so just to give people the background and we'll then I think maybe divide this into two and let you talk about what the impact is on the UK and how this works as a response to Brexit but a little bit about what this partnership was it came out of an original agreement between Brunei New Zealand and Singapore and Chile in 2006 and increasingly interested President Obama and at its height this was going to be a trade partnership which would embrace the entire Pacific Rim so Chile, Japan, the United States it was going to be nearly 40% of world trade was going to be caught up in this thing and somewhere in the back of Obama's mind was an idea that this could be a counterbalance to China because the one

Pacific nation which was not being included in these things was China so it was part of Obama's tilt towards the Pacific it was going to be an economic counterbalance to China incredible amount of work went into it and these trade deals are so interesting when you look back at them there were huge fights with the green lobby there were huge fights about human rights legislation huge fights about whether companies had too much power over governments so basically what you're

trying to do is create an environment where companies feel secure investing in all these countries but the more you do to reassure the countries the more you limit the freedom of movement to the governments because the companies then can sue the governments if something changes

on the ground which infects their investment so all this controversy and the US eventually basically Obama managed to win most people around and it was pretty impressive had good stuff on labor rights child labor it was changing the way the Malaysians were dealing with human trafficking doing good stuff on illegal logging and then Trump announced when he was running for the election that he was going to pull out of the whole thing and the democrats followed suit they began getting increasingly quiet about this and this was all part of America's lurch from free trade to protectionism meaning that what was left were the countries without the United States and it's these countries that Britain's now joining this of course was part of the time when a guy at my namesake Kirk Campbell was in charge of this area of policy for Obama and he was the guy really who was behind this what became known as the pivot the pivot towards the east and central to that was this focus upon this you know what for the America would have been a big shift in trade policy and as you say part of their battle with China and I think it's very very interesting now the extent to which that's not even really part of the debate anymore in American politics and I've just been reading a book which I think you'd love actually called Sino Stan um I don't know if you've heard of this it's two guys Raffaello Pantucci and an American called Alexandros Peterson who sadly was murdered whilst writing the book in Kabul it's quite an incredible book actually because these these are two guys they're basically academics but they you lose count of how many times they've visited virtually all of the stands

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and what's really interesting though is just when you see the scale of China ambition and the pace the patience that they have in pursuing these very very long-term objectives and so you now see and the other thing that comes through very very interestingly is the extent to which the the tensions with Russia in that region are playing out an awful lot and I just think it's almost comical to to be I was reading this book which was at the time that the that our papers were full of this stuff about the about the CPTPP and Kemi Badenok in New Zealand telling us this was sort of marvelous win for Brexit and

the Daily Express telling us it was a I think it was a 12 trillion pound Brexit deal when in fact even by the government's own reckoning this is going to add 0.08% to the size of our economy over 10 years which does not remotely fill the gap left by Brexit but meanwhile the sense you get from this reading this book about China is that they're just absolutely on the march through that whole Central Asian region so I I think this is something that was interesting I agree with you that I think that you said at the start of this episode you said that it's a fascinating deal

I think you said I think it's a fascinating treaty I think the British part of the deal frankly is a bit of a joke and I saw somebody who was analyzing the coverage of this in in Asia fair to say it wasn't quite as exciting as it was in the Daily Express and the Daily Mail well I think as you as you pointed out one of the problems is the UK already has trade deals with nine out of the 11 countries that participate so it really doesn't make that much difference you're only talking about bringing in deals with two of those countries the other nine were already there in place and were rolled over from the EU deals the other thing I think that's interesting is the way that the world we often talk about that period sort of 2014 2016 as being a big turning point in the world a turning away from the old liberal world order of the 1990s which was all about open free trade democracies etc to the world of populism authoritarianism and we can see now

that this deal and Obama's hopes for it were the kind of last hurrah of the old period now in the US context protectionism is very much the order of the day it's no longer a people making traditional arguments about comparative advantage and how it's cheaper and better for everybody if goods are produced in the place where they can be produced most cheaply instead people are very much about industrial strategy about relocating chip factories thinking about security interests which I guess is something we'll get on to with the with the China report and and even I noticed there was a small detail on this just rather than in New Zealand had been challenging this deal because it allowed Vietnamese to buy property in New Zealand driving up property prices for New Zealanders and it was another sort of interesting example of how Brexit was part of a broader world moving away from open global free trade towards more protectionism more concerns about sovereignty

how do you prevent Vietnamese buying properties in your country whereas 10 years earlier the story was all about let's make it easier for Vietnamese investors to come in they've stopped talking about global Britain though haven't they yeah we haven't heard about that recently since since your friend Boris Johnson toddled off that he was a died with him and I don't I'm not convinced that the successors of these academics who've written this book about called Sino Stan I'm not convinced they'll be writing one about how Britain sort of transformed world trade through this membership the CPTPP I must say when I first heard it I got the number wrong I thought 0.8 percent that's not bad but 0.08 percent that's really not very impressive at all 0.08 percent is not not great

and also although he has dropped some of the Boris Johnson mantras I do think it's pretty incredible that when he has these newspapers these ridiculous newspapers like the express who will literally put on the front page now do they do it because they're asked you by number 10 or do they do it just because they're on kind of autopilot to give whatever they think the propaganda they think the government wants but surely if you're a serious politician and a newspaper says it's 12 trillion pound deal I saw ministers going out sort of defending it rather than saying no no that's obvious nonsense which is so and then and the other thing he did I'll see it don't tell you something else because you keep we keep going on about how you know grown up years and all that stuff I noticed after the NATO summit recently really soon I did a tweet saying labor asked me not to go to this but here's what I've achieved and that was based upon the fact that at the liaison committee I think it was Chris Bryant who by the way I missed I gave his book the wrong name last week it's not out of order it's code of conduct but Chris Bryant has sort of said you know you do seem to miss prime minister's questions quite a lot don't you think you should be in parliament a bit more often and on that basis he does a tweet saying labor didn't want me to go to the NATO summit so I think you know Rory we've got to call out his populist moves at the same time I think I think it's the desperation of the commons machines do you think it is I hope because I just think it's part of them playing into this post-truth world of which our newspapers are such a part I think it's even I mean if I think about people in Rishi Sunak's inner circle who I like and sympathize with most of them are not people who are populist most of them are people who were horrified by Boris Johnson but they shouldn't be he shouldn't he shouldn't be putting out stuff like that should he labor didn't labor didn't want me to go to the NATO summit it's astonishing how when the tension shows when people are 25 points behind in the polls when people are panicking what complete nonsense people come up with I agree right should we take a quick break let's have a break welcome back to the rest of politics and me Alistair Campbell and with me Rory Stewart we've put out two additional pods this week and so Alistair you've interviewed your friend Fergal Sharkey and we both interviewed Richard Engel who's done an amazing piece of reporting on pregotion pregotion being of course the the head of the Russian Wagner group who led a mutiny and raced up towards Moscow until at the last moment he gave up and he's told us the whole rich story he followed him through you know mercenary adventures in the Central African Republic through Syria through Ukraine he was personally threatened by pregotion he's got a fantastic recording of pregotion saying if you come near enough to me we will find out whether it is your Adam's apple or mine that gets squeezed no I really I really enjoyed talking to and I thought the we'll put the the film in the in the newsletter and I think people will really find it interesting and he's a proper old-fashioned journalist who just sort of you know does stuff from the ground doesn't really speculate just just digs out hard facts and a real and a real suggestion on that I mean I really struck by how difficult it was even for him to get commissioned so he is a big star American reporter he's one of the most famous American foreign correspondence but even he found it incredibly difficult in the modern world to get a commission to do a story on something like pregotion and they sort of let him do it a bit grudgingly but my goodness he's been vindicated he obviously had a nose for the story and also he um a big

part

of the story which I think was maybe part of the story that most people here will know less was it related to the the Central African Republic and I don't even aware of this but there's a referendum there on July the 30th where the the president is trying to change the constitution so he can stay on in power or always a good sign always a very good sign so powerful is the Wagner Group within the CAR that is being seen as a test of them as much as it is of the of the government well Richard explained to us that they've built an entire statue to themselves in the Central Square in the Central African Republic it's like a Wagner Group statue well he likes he clearly likes medals and statues and he's definitely one of those guys who sees himself as a sort of you know a big man of history and on anyway I thought he was great as a sort of old-fashioned journalist and I thought Fergal was terrific as an old-fashioned campaigner who I got some message a message from somebody who works at the the water industry who basically said that they they lie awake and are worrying about what Fergal Schuck is going to say likes which if you think about it I can't think of which politicians have led a campaign on water he has done it and I think that's you know big big big feather in his hat and I wonder is that something about the changing nature of the world that actually for a single issue campaign 40 50 years ago a backbench MP could really make their name around a single issue campaign and the were MPs who were very famous for

that I mean obviously you know right back to Wilberforce leading the campaign on on the abolition slavery but maybe today you've got more chance of doing it if you're a famous musician or you're a celebrity or someone then if you're an MP interesting you look at somebody like Carol vaudeville and the kind of impact that she's having particularly on social media John Bishop I noticed he's getting very very angry with the government footballers on free school meals yeah Marcus Rashford all that by the way the next time you I know you're not a massive football fan Roy but the next time you're in London go to see dear England I promise you will like it even though you don't like football okay and even though it is all about football incident are you really upset about what they're doing to the Barcelona stadium which is almost the only place I've ever seen a live football match and apparently they're now replacing it with a very kind of generic looking boring stadium does that matter to you as long as they don't change turf more which is the home of Burnley football club I will survive what Barcelona that's very good should we talk about your friend Julian Lewis the chairman of the intelligence committee in Parliament because I think this report was pretty surprising in a way my experience of the intelligence committee this is this is a committee of MPs who are allowed to see intelligence reports that most MPs do not and they've delivered a very very very scathing report which says that China is all over us in terms of you know our economic sector our university sector politics and that the government really doesn't have a strategy for it now the government's defense was that actually they brought in some changes in recent months which will have addressed some of these problems but what did you make of it well I think just firstly maybe give a little bit of background on on the committee so Julian Lewis is a veteran MP he actually is quite famous because he went in as a fifth columnist as a young conservative activist pretending I think to be allied to labour in order to infiltrate and disrupt labour meetings those kind of classic politics of the early 80s bastard bastard exactly and he was in my time a sort of character he's got a doctorate in defense studies and John Burko would love sort of chanting out he was then the speaker would love chanting out Dr Julian Lewis and this great thing and then Dr Julian Lewis

would speak he was my successor as the chair of the defense select committee so I knew him quite well I ran the defense that committee and then after I stepped down he ran and was elected as the chair and he then went on to run to be chair of the intelligence committee and the intelligence committee was always traditionally a bit of a place for a sort of grand individual so some Malcolm Rifkind was the person who had it and Boris Johnson thought that he could tear it up for his friend Chris Grayling so Chris Grayling having been through a number of government departments including the Ministry of Justice where he'd privatised probation and then we had had to turn around and renationalised probation and then gone through some pretty chaotic times with railways was rewarded by Boris Johnson for his support by being told that he could be the next head of the intelligence select committee at which point Julian Lewis thought he was having none of this and ran at the last moment getting a lot of Labour support and to Boris Johnson's absolute fury managed to take the chair and I had the whip removed from him briefly in revenge by Boris Johnson for him doing that. You did forget all this stuff I just completely forgot all of that. Yeah it was extraordinary because it's just part of Boris Johnson's total contempt for Parliament removing the whip from somebody who's been duly elected as a committee

chair because he's not the person that you wanted in so Boris Johnson then stuffed the committee with a lot of his sort of Brexiteer friends so on the Conservative side it's people like Sir John Hayes, Colonel Bob Stuart, Theresa Villiers and so it's and I think that's important because it's important to understand that one of the things that a lot of these Brexit supporters were saying during the Brexit campaign is that if you look at the economic evidence Europe is shrinking, China is growing dramatically and therefore what Britain needs to do is leave the European Union and connect itself with this enormous 7% rapidly growing a year economic powerhouse of China and how rapidly that's changed, how rapidly the US confrontation with China, the problems with Russia, Ukraine and now this big rush to try to de-risk or decouple from China finds these Brexiteers in this very awkward position where the logic is almost saying to them they should be returning to their natural allies in Europe rather than reaching out to places like China and Russia where they were hoping to get their economic growth from. Well we talked about the pivot under Obama and I guess there was something similar from David Cameron and George Osborne and when we talk to George Osborne if you remember he still defends that as a sensible thing to do and I think he is the one who would say that while we can de-risk that decoupling would be a very, very, very big mistake but I do sometimes wonder whether we underestimate the extent to which in terms of its intelligence operations China is now so powerful obviously there's still a lot of focus on Russia but what this report seemed to be saying is that if you analyze all the threats the bigger one comes from China. It's amazing I mean and the report for people who've got a bit of time is worth reading in detail it's a really impressive piece of work and although Dr. Julian Lewis was often told off for being a little bit earnest my goodness he's done his homework here. What it really seems to argue is that the UK is not a top priority for China. The Chinese intelligence services are enormous the number of their employees number in the hundreds of thousands it's believed they have

40,000 employees as the Chinese intelligence services overseas alone 40,000 that you know that's more than the entire deployable strength of the British military but in the case of Britain the way that they wield influence is much more through economic power so they've got 150,000

approximately Chinese students studying at British universities which contributes about 600 million pounds a year to the British university sector and that's in addition to them setting up centers means that university vice chancellors are a bit reluctant to host the Dalai Lama or come out criticizing Chinese human rights in Xinjiang listeners will remember that China was in poll position to build a lot of our digital network through Huawei the 5g network which was then stopped in 2020 they are in a commanding position for the next nuclear investment they've put 37 billion pounds into Britain since 2000 which is more than China's put into France Germany and Italy combined

but I guess one of the things I was left asking myself at the end of this report which of course as you can imagine like all these reports the conclusions tend to be less exciting the problems and the conclusions are we need a whole of government approach we need to think about the security implications of accepting Chinese investment but a loss of this is just another way of saying China is a giant economy and with enormous economic strength comes enormous influence and that would be as true for the United States all over the world as it is for China and of course in the case of China unlike the US they have a system that we don't like they're on the wrong side on democracy on the wrong side on human rights and so they'll be using those influences in a way that we don't like whereas when the United States uses its economic

influence we tend to be more supportive but I'm not quite sure this really adds up to a story about Chinese intelligence penetration so much as just a statement of Chinese influence and Britain is just one example of a hundred countries where this is true.

Well that book I mentioned is so evident that they literally went after all of the stands and have made considerable progress. By the way I was completely taken aback by one thing in the eye I didn't realise that when President Xi launched the Silk Road economic belt he did so in Astana in Kazakhstan and then the next big speech he did you know it was in Jakarta in the Indonesian parliament and I'll just go back to the point I made earlier the scale of their ambition is so vast they don't they don't go around the place saying global China they just sort of get on and do it he really does have to promise that over deliver.

The other thing that's been happening at the same time in parallel with this select committee is that the Americans in Congress have launched their own committee called the US Select Committee

on Strategic Competition between the US and China and we're going to interview in September Richie Torres who's a Democrat member of that committee and we'll be able to get into this a bit more but it's essentially become the central battleground now in American politics for people out competing themselves on who can be most anti-China most ramp up the Cold War rhetoric on China coming out of this congressional committee and it's led by a guy called Mike Gallagher who I know a little bit met a couple of times he's a very very impressively musky ex US veteran who served in Afghanistan did his three tours on the ground I think with the US Marine Corps and my goodness he sounds like it I mean you sound like you're being lectured by a drill sergeant when he talked to him and he's got this thing on China where he says this is a country that is committing genocide in Xinjiang that is covering up the COVID outbreak that has stolen hundreds of billions of dollars of intellectual property from the United States of America and is about to invade Taiwan and you really sense there the rhetoric but you also sense their problem which is they are still struggling to get allies apart from Japan South Korea Taiwan Philippines there are very very few

people who seem to be signing up to this US confrontation with China and what do the Democrats on that committee say do they feel under pressure to go down the same road well we should we should

push Richie on this so I'm really pleased that he's coming on he's just a guy you met on the plane exactly first gay african-american latino congressman and he is incredibly eloquent a very very good looking like most american politicians I always think that whenever I go to the US congress I remember I took the um took you really yeah I took the defense committee well dressed I'm not doing good looking I took the defense committee in the foreign affairs select committee to um to to the states and it was really extraordinary we all turn up so it's me it's Frank Roy we're all about five foot six we're not necessarily looking after ourselves that much did you wear good suits Rory wait no we didn't we all went shambling in and the security guards literally couldn't believe and then the americans or come out it's not just the white teeth they're all over six foot tall it's enormous handshakes these great kind of classic square jawed faces and again I think they found it quite difficult to believe that any of us could really be politicians at all well Julia Lewis doubtless will be heading over there I was grilled by the intelligence select committee over the the whole iraq weapons of mass destruction is one of the several committees that

I was in front of and you did get the feeling with some of them that they just loved the fact that they were allowed to read intelligence reports no no exactly it was it's an extraordinary thing it's very weird I mean I remember how much showing off they do in the House of Commons and and I feel having you know come from a kind of diplomatic background I feel that they are terribly terribly under equipped to perform the role they're supposed to be doing it's all very well producing reports on China but what they're actually supposed to be doing is overseeing the intelligence and security services yeah and that is very very difficult for them because it's not exactly as though John Hayes or Bob Stuart are the world's greatest experts on how those services work and what happens I'm afraid is that you get these very very charming presentations from the head of MI5 and the head of MI6 and quite a lot of control over which classified information they're shown and even if there isn't control over that very difficult them to know what to ask for so I think the oversight function I think remains very very difficult just to go on this point about the the shift in America I saw the director of the FBI giving evidence to committee of Congress the other day and my god they were vile to him and basically there were there were these are all the Trump people yeah essentially saying that he was and he's a declared Republican by the way this guy

you know we've got to be very very careful if we were ever to go down that road where people heading these important security agencies are being defined through their politics but I've just I've just dug up the report in New York Times Christopher A. Ray he's called and he he did the thing which we're all advised to do when we're in front of these committees this was all about the you know the role of the FBI in addressing extremist violence but it all turned into stuff about Trump and he says the idea that I'm biased against conservatives seems somewhat insane to me given my own personal background the FBI does not and has no interest in protecting anyone politically but I think you know at least we can say I think that if Ken McCallum the director general of MI5 or the head of MI6 or GCHQ I don't think even the Johnson death cult people as you call them Rory would say that they were politically biased no no I think they'd be treated with a lot of respect I almost think in Britain that

we're almost a little bit too shy to hold the military and our intelligence agencies to account we're a little bit too deferential and that's that's a bigger bigger conversation I mean I've testified to the US Senate and it's completely terrifying it's a much more serious deal than testifying to to British committees partly because they have these enormous staffs they've scheduled to the last 30 seconds the questions they're going to be asked they know exactly what sound bite they want to hit um I think we have to finish with probably the biggest story of the week which is what we began with which is this unbelievable temperatures it's awful isn't it El Nino which is the Pacific cycle is still quite moderate and so it seems as though there is a very strong correlation between these temperatures obviously and human made climate change and it's just an accelerating cycle year on year on year of these extreme temperatures now no it's it's um it's terrifying I find it absolutely terrifying you know I was at my Fiona's niece's daughter's christening at the weekend even though I don't do God I do witness God when other people do God and I did genuinely have this thought about you know what sort of world is this going to be by the time she's my age I find what's going on now absolutely terrifying the stuff in China 50 degrees plus and then you see this I don't know if you saw this stuff in Arizona where they're all the tourists are sort of you know flooding there so they can have their picture taken next to stuff say 100 and 100 x degrees it's um we're not we're not cracking this at all just while we're on China by the way Roy I was drawn to on social media to a picture a graphic of all the railway lines that have been built in China in the last couple decades and it is phenomenal when you think how long it's taken us to not build HS2 and you see this these trains going there and there's a guy called he's on Twitter as he's called at Kyle train emoji and he's just put together he just seemed to have a sort of fairly fun view of the Chinese generally but it's just absolutely article upon article upon article suggesting actually that China we've talked about China leading the world in lots of things but actually they are leading the world now in renewable energy these amazing pictures of you know vast as far as the eye can see solar panels in which they're now leading I think both in terms of manufacturing use I think this is why again I mean I think maybe we can link these two things together which is the climate change and the intelligence and security committee report because the danger of a new Cold War with China is that we desperately need China to fix all these global challenges so the US and China combined are about 40% of global emissions and as you say China is both one of the biggest emitters still building coal fired generation plants but also leading the world in the critical rare earths battery solar panels wind turbines and everything that's needed for the energy transition and we also need China as we said before desperately for AI regulation they've actually come out with more restrictive AI regulation than anyone could anticipate but again the US and China working together on AI regulation is vital for the next three years of humanity so I slightly am questioning whether we have the luxury to go on a Cold War against China particularly since the Chinese economy is now beginning to falter attention in China is going to turn more inward and I'm very very cheered up that Kerry's been visiting and working closely with the Chinese lead climate negotiator is John Kerry the American climate envoy John Kerry the American climate envoy another tall good-looking American square George the this this guy we should put in the in the newsletter some of the graphics that he posted one was from the Financial Times it's basically a graph that shows solar wind hydropower and other renewables and it's got China EU US India and China is frankly in a league of its own so you know then you look at some of the they've done three times as much new solar capacity

in the first four months of this year than they did in the same period last year whereas the others are kind of you know improving but lagging behind that sort of progress and it goes back to this point they made earlier about the scale of change that they can make when they want to and it goes back I'm afraid to the point that there's a lot it's a lot easier when you're not a democracy being told what you can and can't do that's the real worry well I think as maybe you know we're coming to the end of this but there's so much more to do on climate change and a couple of things I'd love us to pick up in another episode one of them is how far shorter I think the UK is going to come of its own targets to get to zero carbon electricity government's offering 2035 labor's offering 2030 both dates completely unrealistic and then the impacts of climate change on places like Somalia seventh year of drought we talk about climate change in terms of its impacts on olive growing in Italy but when you get to the extreme poor and you think about what it means for your only cow to be killed or your only half acre of maize to be wiped out when your child is already on the verge of starvation and the sense that too much of this conversation is about people talking about technology and mitigation and the middle-income countries and not enough effort is being put into the people who are at the worst receiving end of this and always well-being which is the people who've got no resilience at all no other options when climate change hits them and that's that's the extreme poor yeah just finally I found this we will definitely put this in the in the newsletter the the graphic showing china rail high-speed railways in 2008 uh next to non-existent again alongside what they have today um and then as if all the railway lines that have been laid in those in the last 12 years were laid one into the other they would wrap around the circumference of the earth wow um and we still can't quite get our act together sufficient to build hs to let alone the bit for the northern powerhouse that's been long been promised from mr osborne and others amazing well thank you honest very very much and um congratulations on that beautiful hawaiian shirt that you're wearing um i'm sporting in honor of your father a northern veterinarian's shirt yeah that is very much a penrith vet shirt that one definitely see you soon bye bye