

[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 172. Liz Truss returns, Putin's Western puppets, and Rory at the United Nations

Welcome to the rest of this politics with me, Rory Stewart and me, Alistair Campbell.

And a lot to cover this week.

We are just a year since Liz Truss' shambolic mini-budget, and she's been out making speeches justifying what she did to the British economy and politics a year ago.

We get a chance to dig into that a bit.

Secondly, it's UN General Assembly Week, and I'm in New York where I've been seeing President Malawi and the First Minister of Scotland, and I'm about to go into another big session on financing global development and talk a little bit about what the UN means in the modern world, why Rishi Sunak is not here.

And thirdly, we're going to talk about something that you wanted us to look at more seriously, which is the way in which Vladimir Putin deliberately got Europe hooked on Russian energy and used

that as a way of trying to control European politics and issues like Russia, Ukraine.

And finally, we were going to look at Libya after the terrible tragedy of the flooding and look back at what's happened over the last 10 years in Libya.

But first, Alistair, Liz Truss' mini-budget.

Well, I don't know whether Laugh or Cry are watching her yesterday or watching the news channels presented as some major event.

Rishi and Boris Johnson vie for the title of worst prime minister in history.

A year ago, as a result of the policies that she was defending yesterday, mortgage rates went up by a third, mortgage approvals fell by roughly the same amount, house prices went down.

Now, there are some people who would argue that was a good thing, but they wouldn't, the Tories wouldn't, and the 10-year gilt yields more than doubled, which raised the cost of public borrowing.

So the truth is, we're still paying a price.

And I think for her to come along, make a little joke about how, like, this September is a lot less stressful than last September, but then do this thing that Trump does, that Johnson does, that actually we're seeing Russell Brand do at the moment, which is essentially just cast around for blame.

They're all victims of a conspiracy.

It's all somebody else's fault.

She was back attacking the civil service.

I was at the football-burning game last night, but Fiona was watching Lord of Coonsburg's program on the state of chaos, I think it's called, and saying that it was just full of civil servants who'd been trying to make sense of the utter chaos that was being imposed upon them by the politicians, and also reaching the judgment that it's even worse than we thought.

So I just think from both Johnson and Truss, the less we hear of them in the future, the better.

Interestingly, by the way, not a single conservative MP was there.

The garage was there.

The ludicrous David Frost was there, but, you know, she wrecked the economy.

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Her arrogance, her utter, vain gloriousness was on full display yesterday, and you know better than I do, you've written about her in your book.

I begin to worry about what goes on inside her head.

It's amazing.

So the speech, which people who are really geeky, we can put into the newsletter which she gave at the Institute of Government, is a kind of insight into a very strange worldview on the right of the Conservative Party.

And their worldview is she thinks there's been 25 years of economic consensus which has led to stagnation.

So most of us think that actually the problem of the last 25, 30 years is that we pushed ahead with neothatrad economics, which were applied in a way that deepened inequalities between citizens, deepened inequalities between regions, deepened inequalities between countries, led to stagnant incomes, led to the erosion of our manufacturing base.

In a way, the 2008 financial crisis was the chickens coming home to roost, and we need now to have the kind of economic policy that Biden's looking at at the U.S., which is to have much more thoughtful industrial strategy.

Actually, it's a good chance maybe to plug the fantastic interview, I think, that we were lucky enough to be able to do with Andy Burnham and Andy Street from Manchester in the West Midlands, where they really are making a powerful case for how they're going to be able to turn around industrial strategy by leading it locally.

But she's gone in absolutely the opposite direction.

She and quasi-quoting are on the full Singapore on Thames.

Their story is not that economics was too right-wing or that austerity was too harsh.

Her view is that we've all been living in a social democratic universe for the last 13 years of Tory government, and that what we need now is radical tax-cutting, radical regulation-cutting, no industrial strategy.

She's holding up as her examples in that speech, Poland, the Baltic, Florida, and Texas.

She was almost suggesting she was going to try to create a flat rate of tax so there'd no longer be an income tax that took money from the wealthiest and redistributed to the poor.

The Mark Carney, former Governor of the Bank of England, he spoke at the conference that Keir Starmer was at with Trudeau in Canada, and we should also put Mark Carney's speech in.

If we're going to put Liz Truss in the show notes, we'd definitely put Carney's because it was actually an intelligent, thoughtful speech.

And he said that Quarteng and Truss wanted to deliver Singapore on Thames, but they gave us Argentina on the channel.

I think it was probably the line of the conference.

But if you just go through the highlights of what she's suggesting, the first one, which given that for 49 days in office, I think it was, she now has a six-figure plus.

She gets the pension anyway, she gets a massive final salary scheme on her pension, but she also gets an added allowance well into six figures.

And yet the first thing she's talking about is reducing benefits.

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She's talking about raising the retirement age, fracking, going pro-fracking, abolishing the windfall tax on the profits of fossil fuels, proper, as they call it, and of course Faraj and Frost sitting there purring away, proper divergence from the EU. She of course was a remain campaign about none of the Brexit people have actually explained how the Brexit they promised hasn't happened. Then of course, the new sort of thing of the populist right, delaying net zero commitments, abandoning the replacement of gas and oil boilers. And it's this sort of weird, fantastical, very bad ideas in their own merit, I would say. But even if you accept that they weren't, even if you'd think that it's a good idea to kind of carry on living beyond our means with fossil fuels and so forth, it's the fact that she comes along and projects herself proudly telling people the title of a book is Ten Years to Save the West. As John McTurnum, my former colleague said, given how much damage she did in 49 days, how much would you do in 10 years? It's utterly, I mean, I hate using the language of mental health in this, but it's absolutely completely starts there in mad. It's very weird, isn't it? Just to take people back a year to that moment, it was a fascinating political moment. One of the interesting things is that she had promised during the race, when she was running against Rishi Sunak, to do a lot of these things. So she'd promised to stop the rise in corporation tax, to cut income taxes, to reverse national insurance increases. So I guess that she and Quasi Quoting felt that the markets would have already factored in the promises she'd made during the race. What she added to it was just cutting the top rate of tax from 45 to 40, which in fiscal terms, financial terms, was a relatively small thing. But what seems to have happened is a sense of total lack of credibility. I mean, so much about the markets. I think this is going to be key when Keir Starmer becomes Prime Minister, is about projecting confidence. It's not about exactly how much you're borrowing or exactly how much you're reducing taxes or increasing them. It's about whether or not you're conveying a sense of predictability. And I guess it was sacking senior civil servants, not getting the office of budget responsibility to assess what she'd done, not informing the Bank of England, a general sense that people just couldn't trust the institutions of British government. You know, that's what's right at the heart of this whole thing, is that they're the people they're now blaming, Dominic Cummings with his blob, her again yesterday attacking civil servants, that they were against her. And the idea, I can get how somebody like Russell Brand, who even though he's got millions of followers, but you can see why, because he's edgy and he's different and all that, you can see why he says to himself, oh, I'm the victim of some sort of conspiracy, even

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though it's complete nonsense.

But to rise to become the prime minister of one of the five United Nations Security Council permanent representatives and say that you failed because of a conspiracy against you, it was actually a conspiracy that put her in there in the first place.

I just think this is a really dangerous thing.

It's why I do think it's worth just briefly reflecting on the Russell Brand thing because, you know, the ability that people have now, Cold War Steve, I don't know if you follow Cold War Steve on social media.

You shared an amazing image that you put together.

It was basically Russell Brand, we have to be careful here, but Russell Brand is essentially wearing Jimmy Savile's tracksuit in Kim Jong-un's car as he's surrounded by these dark-suited bodyguards who include Elon Musk, Dan Wharton, and we know, you know, there's been a lot of stuff about sexual allegations regarding him, which of course are a terrible conspiracy against him by the deep state.

This woman, Beverly Turner, who, to be fair to Andrew Pierce, something I very rarely say, he absolutely took her apart for her deciding on the basis of having followed Russell Brand on social media for years that he's a hero and, you know, I have a lot of criticisms of the newspapers and of the media more generally, but I can tell when an investigation is being properly rigorously done and properly rigorously legal and that is one of them.

Based on that, how many of these investigations take place?

I mean, it must be incredibly expensive.

How does the editor make a decision?

Because I guess you need a lot of journalists, not working on other stuff, you need a lot of time.

Did you get involved in long-form investigations when you were a journalist?

Yeah.

I mean, I often talk about Harry Evans, who was a great editor.

I think I'm not giving the Sunday Times a free pass here at all.

I think they are, you know, part of a lot of that's gone wrong with our media, but I think what good journalism does need is an editor who will say, if you think this is a serious story and you think it's worth pursuing it, you have time.

My best friend on the Daily Mirror, a guy called John Merritt, some years he would only write three or four stories because he was working on them for months.

And I think that has gone from our journalism.

Tell us about Harry Evans.

I just saw his wife Tina Brown last night here in New York.

Tell us about him as an editor and what made him.

Well, he was a Northeastern, started out one of the local regional papers in the Northeast, became Sunday Times editor, most famous for the Thuludamide investigation, but gave journalist time and also was obsessive about fact, which again, I think a lot of editors these days are perhaps less worried about fact than they should be.

But the point about about brand is this ability and it's not just him.

Trump has done exactly the same.

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You get accused of serious criminal offenses and you turn it into a money making venture. And what I see in trust and her speech yesterday, what I see in brand and the way that he's responded to this, what you see with Trump and yes, another interview at the weekend, what you see with Johnson constantly going around saying he's done nothing wrong. It's not just shamelessness, it's branding themselves through their shamelessness, no pun intended.

This trust literally projecting herself as a victim, who had she been allowed to do what she wanted to do, would have been a great success.

And by the way, dropping hints that, you know, she's not finished yet.

And meanwhile, I think that you talked about Keir Starmer there and how he's sort of projecting.

I do think Keir Starmer's moved up a gear.

I actually think that him being seen with Trudeau, today being seen with Macron, the other day at Interpol, just being kind of serious about stuff.

Whereas for Sunak to tolerate that nonsense yesterday, because it drowned him out, whatever he was trying to do yesterday, it drowned him out because Liz Truss was deemed to be more interesting.

And she's not finished.

I mean, it's perfectly obvious.

She and Johnson are not finished with Sunak at all.

Well, we're going to have a deep dive, I think next week into some very interesting polling that we've commissioned on views in the British electorate.

But one thing I think that Keir Starmer needs huge credit for is that he's come out with a very clear policy now on migration.

And what he said is something that we discussed in the podcast three, four weeks ago, is that he's essentially talked about coming to a proper agreement with France to say that people claiming asylum in France, we will be able to take a proportion, but in an orderly way based on need.

And that in return, we will return the boats back to France, which are very dangerous, which are often bringing a very random collection of people who aren't necessarily there on the basis of need, all of them, and who are risking their lives to make the crossing.

And I think it's the first leader really in Europe that's come up with a clear way of balancing our moral obligations towards migrants, demonstrating that we care about women judges facing persecution from the Taliban or people who are at risk of their lives in Somalia, while at the same time addressing what is clearly an impossible situation with these boat crossings.

I think I told you I was at the National Housing Federation the other day and Rachel McClain, who is the 15th housing minister since 2010, by the way, 1515.

And she was being interviewed by Lewis Goodall on stage and he said, look, come on, be honest, if you're writing down the top five priorities in the country at the moment, why are the boats there and housing is not?

And she sort of stuttered and spluttered and didn't really answer the question, which is fair enough, it's quite a hard question to answer it when housing is not seen as well as the government's priorities, when frankly, it should be.

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But then you look at what's happening in Italy and the island of Lampedusa, where this week there have arrived more people fleeing from Africa, often on small boats than the entire population of the island.

Now, you can see why for them, that is a massive priority.

But what's happened with with Rishi Sunak, he's made it into a massive priority in order to appease this politics that I believe he should be challenging.

And I'm going to put you on the spot now because last week we were in Edinburgh and Bath. And one of my favorite questions in Bath was when somebody said, he had an amazing name, McSpravert or something.

And he said, if I was put in charge of the conservative strategy, what would it be?

And you were asked if you were to project why people should vote Labour, why people should bat Labour now.

Now, I didn't do a very good job.

So there's no point wasting time on what I said.

Well, if you're going to ask me to do the Labour defence, I'll ask you to do the Conservative defence, otherwise it becomes a bit weird.

OK, well, all I said was, I think Rishi Sunak, what he should have done, and it may be too late, but I think it's where the strategy should be rooted, he should have, when he took over, said, I am going genuinely to be a departure from the Johnson Trust politics and era.

And when I say professionalism, accountability, integrity, that is what I mean, and that's what I'm going to do.

Instead of which, first thing, he just lets them pat the house of laws of his mate with their mates.

He doesn't really crack down on lots of different examples of lack of integrity, etc, etc.

But I think he needed that clean break from the past and he hasn't done it.

And that's why I think he's now president of the right.

You, on the other hand, gave a very, very good rallying cry for Labour.

So without caveat, Rory, because you did it very, very well.

And I think you got one of the loudest rounds of applause of the evening for it.

So give it another go.

Oh, blimey.

OK, I'll try to remember what I said.

So I think if I was a Keir Starman going to election, I would say, first see that 13 years for Conservative government has been a disgrace, that they haven't learnt any lessons, that wages are stagnant, that our tax rate is the highest it's been since just after the Second World War, that our debt is out of control and that there are no clear ideas for the future.

But that as Labour, there will be a proper industrial strategy, which is going to prioritise areas outside London and the Southeast, that we're going to make investments, not just on the basis of financial returns, but on the basis of the environment and social justice, that we are going to reach out into the world and not retreat into isolationism, that we're going to fulfil our moral obligations.

But we're also going to look after British interests.

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And above all, that Labour will be competent.

It will be a government that knows what it's doing, puts grownups in charge, sorts out public services and gets on top of the cost of living crisis, something like that.

If I was still in charge of the Labour Party social media campaign, I'd be clipping that right now and putting it out without any context whatsoever.

The but I think I think I think you're right.

And also, I think that interestingly, the policy you mentioned immigration every day since then, and I imagine this is being absolutely swamped into the social media feeds of people that they're trying to attract.

The Conservatives have been absolutely bombarding the message that this is Keir Starmer essentially open door immigration policy.

No recognition of the fact that we didn't have this problem pre Brexit, no recognition of the fact that they made promises on numbers, which they failed to keep.

So I think Keir Starmer is taking a bit of a risk in doing what you've praised him for. And likewise, even today, I think any sensible person is going to say, if he does become Prime Minister, redeveloping good relations with Macron as President of France, particularly after they were smashed by Johnson lying to Macron, which Macron will never forgive. And then the sort of trust aberration is a sensible thing to do. But again, the Conservatives are out all over the airways today, basically saying, this is Starmer ready to give Macron what he wants.

And it's the unraveling of Brexit.

So that again goes back to the point about we're not in sensible, grown up, serious politics anymore. And I do think you're right that if Labour were to come along and say, we're going to be serious and competent, grown up, that alone is a pretty powerful message.

I also think that it's good for Keir Starmer to do some things which are very clear, even if they're a little bit unpopular, because I think it's very important at this stage to establish that he's somebody with clear beliefs.

And I think he shouldn't be worrying too much about the detail polling.

What he needs to be worrying about is the impression he's giving of clarity and direction.

Yeah, and also being serious, which is why actually being seen with these guys is no bad thing. Now, talking about being seen with some of the world leaders, quite a few of them not there this week. You're at the UNGA, the United Nations General Assembly. Soon, that's not going. Is Macron going?

I know he's not there today.

Macron's not going either, no.

Putin's obviously not going. Putin's not here, yeah.

And Xi Jinping?

Xi Jinping, I think, is a Biden-ness.

I mean, it's very, very sad because, you know, I'm in New York, and as you can imagine, traffic has ground to a halt outside.

Yeah.

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It's not just the UN General Assembly, but it's also the big meeting on the Sustainable Development Goals and its UN climate week.

So everybody's gathering.

It's a big, big moment for the UN and for the idea of international cooperation.

I saw the President of Malawi yesterday.

I saw the First Minister of Scotland yesterday.

I was with Irish aid, which sent their best wishes to you.

Did you get, I've been working away with him for the podcast.

Did he say yes?

He did. He seemed to be very keen and enthusiastic.

So I think that's it.

I think we're hopefully there.

And actually, I was very struck by what Scotland and Ireland are doing, the ways in which they're showing leadership, particularly, and we don't talk enough about climate, but particularly around the issue of loss and damage and reparations.

Because one of the challenges with climate money is balancing two very different things.

One of them is the technological transition to cleaner forms of energy, which often means that the money is going into the polluting countries. And the polluting countries tend to be slightly wealthier, middle income, upper middle income countries.

Yeah.

So a lot of money will end up going to Indonesia, to China to do the transition.

But the people who are on the receiving end of climate change.

So I saw the President of Malawi yesterday and they have just had the most horrifying cyclone, probably the worst climate disaster event that they've had in Malawi's history.

And of course, it's one of the poorest countries in the world.

There's no resilience.

There's no savings.

So when I leave you, I'm going into another big session where we're trying to talk about financing development.

So all of this, I'm supposed to cut to the chase.

All of this matters.

I mean, there are \$200 billion a year of overseas development assistance, which are critical for poverty, critical for climate change.

And if nothing else, Rishi Sunak should be here simply to meet people.

I mean, it is the most efficient way.

For me, you know, I can meet African leaders.

I can meet so many heads of international NGOs without having to fly around because they're all here at the same time.

Do you, what are your memories of the of UN General Assembly and doing

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a bit Tony Blair and stuff?

Well, that mainly, the far more important than what was going on inside the assembly.

Although we did put a lot of work into those speeches, but they're very difficult.

Those United Nations General Assembly speeches, because unless you're like if Zelensky turned up today and did a big number, and I know he's going to see Biden, isn't it?

But if he, you know, a man of the moment type person can get command full attention.

If Mandela went there shortly after he came out of jail.

But the truth is that most of the time, most of the leaders are not that interested in what most of the other leaders are saying, because they're all over the place doing their own meetings.

And what my memories of the of the UNGA are all about endlessly rushing around from one bilateral to another, usually in terrible, pokey little offices.

The British mission in the United Nations building is it's like sort of like a large cupboard. It's unbelievable, isn't it?

And you actually to get there.

So it's very grand.

You think you're going there.

So I remember I went for a meeting with the president of South Sudan there.

And you literally walk as though you're at the back of a theater down these sort of fire escape panels and strange walls.

And then you end up at this thing where you've got the British flag sort of propped up rather precariously next to the flag of the other country.

And you sit and have your photographs taken.

Yeah, it's bizarre.

You know, I can remember if there were times, for example, during the when the Northern Ireland stuff was very, very difficult when, you know, you might obviously the Americans are important the whole time.

But there are other countries that you just want to to bring in and to be aware and to have them express support and so forth.

And you can get through an awful lot of work.

That's what I agree with you.

I think it's a mistake for the sooner not to go there.

I can't quite understand why I wouldn't unless he was, you know,

I think was it was it last year that he went and there were very scant interest in his his speech.

Maybe the maybe the back of his mind is just his worry that Britain is not seen as the as the big cheese that it was.

But I'm pleased what you're saying about Scotland Ireland, because I think that what they understand, what often what smaller countries understand is the importance of soft power.

And you can generate that at these gatherings on the sustainable development goals, by the way, if you haven't seen it already,

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do you know the famous Al Pacino halftime talk?

He's he's he's a coach in this fantastic film.

And it's called any given Sunday and he's he's doing this halftime team talk.

And honestly, you don't have to love sport to have the hair on your neck standing up and Richard Curtis, who's obviously I'm assuming Richard Curtis involved in this film, because it's a beautiful piece of film.

So they're using Al Pacino's halftime team talk to do a halftime team talk about the sustainable development goals and how we're nowhere near where we need to be and and sort of calling on the world again.

But you know, you were making the point.

There's not that much coverage about what's happening there.

Just it is very sad.

And I mean, I'm feeling a bit guilty because I kind of slightly sort of bounced it in as a topic because I happen to be here.

But I think one of the reasons that I've sort of bounced you with the topic is I don't think the UK press has been focusing on it very much.

And as you say, it's it's important.

I mean, the we are at the half point for the sustainable development goals.

They're meant to be delivered by 2030.

And one of them is ending global extreme poverty.

And we've talked a lot about that and I'm doing sessions here on this.

But the truth of the matter is that there are over 700 million people living on less than \$2.15 a day.

Now, the number of people in extreme poverty in Africa has gone from 170 million in 1980 to 470 million today.

And we are not remotely on track.

And there is a sense that many of the things that used to make it possible are falling away, including by the way, the power of the event, including the power of UN.

So one of the things we're trying to push here is setting up a global fund to address extreme poverty.

There have been these global funds on on vaccination, on addressing AIDS, on addressing HIV malaria.

But what I think we now need is to bring a global fund together that actually puts addressing extreme poverty at the center.

Start mobilizing some of the big money around it.

And of course, given my give directly links, I'd love to see much more of that going in unconditional cash transfers.

But this is the place where this should be discussed.

This is where all the African leaders are.

And it's very sad that that people like Macron and soon I cannot get joining in.

Just very, very briefly.

I know there are 17 of them.

But if I just list them now, I think in all of our heads,

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you and I and our listeners, just tick off how many of these we think are even remotely being met.

So number one is no poverty.

Number two, zero hunger.

Number three, good health and well being.

Number four, quality education for all.

Number five, gender equality.

That's gone backwards.

Clean water and sanitation.

That's gone backwards, including our country.

Affordable and clean energy.

Decent work and economic growth.

Number nine, industry, innovation, infrastructure.

Number 10, reduced inequalities.

That's gone backwards.

Sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption, production, climate action, life below water, life on land, peace, justice and strong institutions and the 17th is partnerships for the goals.

I mean, I don't be too pessimistic, but there has been you can point to progress in all of them.

You can point to progress, but you can also point to setback.

And it's also, I mean, I think what's interesting about sustainable development goals, which is different to the millennium development goals is this is an undertaking that every country makes not just internationally, but to do domestically.

And those 17 goals, I think are pretty good foundation for what a Kirstam and Manifesto could be, right?

Those are things that we should be caring about, not just internationally, but within Britain.

And they're also to loop back to your comment about Liz Truss, the sort of things that she's attacking implicitly in her speech that she I think would turn green at the idea of being signing up to sustainable development goals as a way of thinking about development.

But it's very, very sad that we came together just over seven years ago around a set of goals, which I think reflect good ethical insights, good ideas about where the real threats of our planet.

I'm very pleased you read them out, actually, because it's a real reminder of what we ought to care about and how much we're failing.

But the thing that's eroded it is nationalism, populism, America first, that approach. If you have that approach country by country, you're never going to have the international cooperation.

You need to meet something as big as the objectives that were set out, which as you say, when they were agreed, there was a sense of optimism

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that they could be. Yeah, we're much, much more discussed.
But thank you. Shall we take our break? Take a break.
I'm Jason Pack, senior analyst at the NATO Defence College Foundation,
an author of *Libya and the Global Enduring Disorder*.
And I'm Alex Hall Hall, a former British diplomat and ambassador to Georgia.
And we're the hosts of *Disorder*, a new podcast from Gullhanger.
We seek to explore those really easy questions like how did the world
get so disordered and what are the fundamental principles of our current
era of geopolitics. And during the podcast, we're going to be drawing
on our own direct personal experiences of this disorder,
as well as talking to people at the forefront of global affairs.
All seeking to work out why are the world powers no longer
coordinating as they once did?
How did we get here?
What can we do to fix it?
The *Disorder* podcast is out now.
Make sure you follow us so you can get every episode in your feeds.
Welcome back to the *Restless Politics* with me, Alistair Campbell.
And me, Rory Stewart.
And Rory, I really want to talk about Russia.
I know we've talked lots about Russia, but something very, very specific.
It's about the way that Putin used energy policy as an incredibly
successful strategic weapon.
A friend of mine, a French journalist, Marie-Anne Fan-Rentarem.
She's actually Belgian, but she works in France.
She's worked for *Le Monde*. She's worked at *Vanity Fair*.
She writes for *L'Express* now.
But she also writes books and she's written a book called *Le Piège*, *The Trap*.
And it reads at times like a kind of political thriller.
And *The Piège* is a trap set by Putin.
And the main character in the book is Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2.
And, you know, we've followed this story and, you know, we've talked about it before.
But when you see it set out in a very clear timeline,
interspersed with the investigation going on to bring it up to date
into who blew it up, which, you know, we can all have our guesses.
But what is extraordinary is just how Putin literally targeted
certain countries, certain politicians within those countries.
You remember, we talked when President Steinmeier, the German president,
when Zelensky snubbed him, we both said this was all a bit silly
and a bit ridiculous and blah, blah, blah.
When you read this book, you kind of get a better understanding of it
because, and Steinmeier, by the way, by no means the worst offender.
Shredder, after he lost the election to Angela Merkel, literally,

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I think it was 27 days after he left the chancellery, he joined the gas prom, the big Russian gas, the big Russian gas, the energy giant. Yeah. And this is a guy who's whose first speech about Putin was basically all about what a bad guy he was and how we've got to be very, very wary. He then makes a visit to Moscow and he comes back and he's the biggest defender of Nord Stream 1 and 2. It is very strange, isn't it? I mean, Shredder is such an interesting character. And I guess he's somebody that you would have known because he did represent something exciting. I mean, I think he was very much in the Clinton-Tony Blair tradition. He was somebody who transformed the German left, brought some very long needed structural reforms into the German economy, deregulation, privatisation, got German growth off the ground, laid the foundations for what became years of pretty successful, powerful German growth, which is now looking in a more difficult state. But then, slightly bizarrely, Sudney decided to sign up to gas prom, as you say, and become Russia's number one defender. I mean, without getting too deep into his soul, what on earth did he think he was doing? Well, the conclusion in this book is that it is a simple matter of guilt. It's about money. He's been very, very well-renumerated for many, many years. And he's continued to give Putin political support, including in recent years. He was at recently, he was at the Russian Embassy, Big Schindig in Berlin. And also, he was not alone. And the other thing to say about my friend Marianne is that she wrote a very, very, very sympathetic biography of Angela Merkel a while back. And she's quite close to Merkel. She knows Merkel and she interviewed her again for this book. But she's quite critical of Merkel because Merkel doesn't really call out what's going on. After that election, when Merkel was forced to go into a grand coalition with the Social Democrats and her leading Social Democrat figure was Siegmund Gabriel, he was another one who was pretty close to what was going on in Russia. I'm pushing for this energy reliance. And she portrays him in the book. She portrays Putin as operating almost like a drug dealer, who is getting his customers addicted, getting them hooked. And when you see the maps and you see how energy policy used to work and it had to go through Ukraine and the Ukrainians were warning the Germans throughout this period, once he gets Nord Stream 2, he's going to invade. They're sort of saying that in black and white and not just the Germans, by the way, François Fillon, he's another one who was he was appointed

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prime minister by Sarkozy.

So there's Putin thinking, well, I've got the German Chancellor, I've got the French Prime Minister that basically on my side with what this book projects as one of, if not the single most important economic strategic building blocks of the invasion of Ukraine. You sent us kind of some notes and some thoughts from reading the book. And one of the things that struck me from what you read is that in 1970, when the contract was signed for the first major Russian-German pipeline, NATO was assured by the head of the gas department, Norbert Plessner, that Germany would never rely on Russia for even 10 percent of its gas supplies. By 2020, Russia supplied more than half of Germany's natural gas and about a third of all the oil that Germans burned heat their homes, power factories and fuel vehicles. Yeah.

I mean, Gary Kasparov, who I know quite well and I've talked to lots and he always has this thing.

He always gets very offended if people say, oh, Putin's like a chess player.

He's always thinking of the next move.

And Kasparov says, no, he's not a chess player.

He's a poker player.

He's always doubling down and eventually he'll kind of, you know, he'll go bust.

Now, but the point is, when you read this, I'm afraid the chess does feel much more relevant.

So here's another one.

This isn't in the book, but this is something I've read elsewhere this week.

Before the invasion of Ukraine, two percent of Indian oil came from Russia.

Do you know what it was this July?

No. 40 percent. Unbelievable.

This isn't just two years.

Yeah. And they've got in India, there are these refineries which are part Russian owned, so they're partly owned by Russians.

So that these refineries are then refining crude oil and then selling it on.

And it's presumably, presumably India's getting it very cheaply.

I mean, that's the other advantage.

In a sense, India and China have got Russia over a barrel because of the sanctions.

They can get all this stuff much more cheaply.

And also, there's been a price cap.

There's a price cap of \$60 a barrel when the world price is closer to 100.

So they get a half price and then they're refining it and they're selling it on.

And the amount of refined product, particularly diesel,

that has gone from India to Germany has gone up 12 fold since the invasion.

So and the thing that I read estimated that Russia was making about \$17 billion in oil exports last month.

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So it's not just that they're getting round sanctions because of the energy addiction, it's if you read the sanctions that were actually imposed, there's a paragraph.

This is back in June 2022.

A temporary exception is foreseen for imports of crude oil by pipeline into those EU member states that due to their geographic situation suffer from a specific dependence on Russian supply.

Some of the African leaders I've been meeting have been complaining about this. They say that the sanctions are hitting them very hard.

So I was talking to an African government here that participates in African Union and UN operations, which are dependent on Russian helicopters. And they can't buy Russian helicopters.

And they claim that the United States and Europe get exemptions on things they really care about.

So if the United States needs to bring in particular bits of uranium from Russia, it's possible for them to do that.

And the African states very much feel that they're on the receiving end of this.

I mean, that's actually one of the themes here at the UN, that basically most of the states from the global south want people to be concentrating on climate change and global poverty and do not want to be dragged into the direction that Biden was taken into, which is Russia, Ukraine.

And one of the reasons for it is they feel there's an element of hypocrisy. Yeah. Yeah.

The other thing that came out, 50 percent of the ships into Russia that are then transporting oil out are Western hired or Western insured.

And, you know, when we were talking about Liz Truss, one of the things I remember of Liz Truss is when she was foreign secretary and the future was about to invade Ukraine.

And she said they were going to be the toughest.

It was going to be the toughest sanctions regime there had ever been.

And the sanctions are on paper, quite tough.

For example, here's another one, which I think will blow your mind.

Belgium, which has a massive LNG, liquefied natural gas terminal in Zeebrugge, is now the third biggest importer of Russia's LNG.

And he's then supplying that who knows where all over the place.

Now, why?

Because some of these products are not covered by the same sanctions regime.

So it's not just that they're getting around sanctions.

In some cases, there are no sanctions to get around.

There's no such thing to get around.

Yeah, which I think is the case with the uranium imports into the US.

The strong lobbying from the industry and they stopped to stop sanctions being imposed there.

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Well, really, really interesting subject.

I mean, just as we shift on from energy politics,

I think another big issue that we've already been looking at this week is Libya.

And Libya, of course, is a country where almost 100 percent of its budget comes from oil and where since the 2011 intervention,

it has been caught in these extraordinary geopolitical, often energy related conflicts.

So just maybe people can bear with a quick reminder of what's been happening in Libya.

2011, the aftermath of the Arab Spring, there were uprisings in a city called Benghazi.

It's the second city of Libya and Gaddafi, who ruled the country for decades

and who was a very remarkable figure.

I mean, he kept Libya under a sort of 10 rule.

It felt quite unified.

It wasn't a place that people at the time particularly thought was on the verge of civil war or becoming a failed state.

He was a famous exporter of terrorism.

They were very striking.

You know, we were talking about Zimbabwe and Emerson Mnangagwa

that in his youth, he'd been involved in Libyan funded training camps.

And, you know, Libya was engaged all over the world, including in Northern Ireland, including Northern Ireland and the Lockerbie bombing, of course, in Scotland.

So Britain, France, the United States push for a no fly zone to stop him

flying planes over bombing civilians and very unusually, Russia and China

abstain. They basically say that they will accept a no fly zone,

but they don't want the United States, France and Britain to go any further.

And it's an interesting moment in 2011 because it's a moment where it almost seems as though the Security Council is holding together and has a common view of what was then called the responsibility to protect.

But boy, did it not play out like that.

What actually happened, of course, is that Britain, France, the US pushed ahead with what was essentially regime change.

Russia and China were horrified and backed off and thought they'd been tricked.

And that's been part of the many, many problems that have gone on in the international community since then.

I turned up in Tripoli just after Gaddafi fell.

I saw this new interim government.

In fact, I arrived in Tripoli the day that he fell and I saw this new interim government takeover.

I saw the extraordinary devastation.

I went to his compounds.

I saw dead bodies.

I saw flattened buildings.

But it was still a country which had a lot of oil, quite an educated population that felt that it was going to be able to hold together.

And over the months and the couple of years that I visited, I was very struck by the idealism of

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Libyan civil society, but at the same time,

I was also very conscious when people were being optimistic that you were beginning to see militia groups driving around with pickup trucks and heavy machine guns.

Some pretty nasty Islamist factions emerging.

Fast forward a few years and essentially Libya broken to you had a man called Field Marshal Hifdar out at one end of the country.

And at the other end, the Tripoli government Hifdar was backed.

And this is where we get into what's happened as the US and Britain and others have withdrawn.

Remember, Samantha Power talked about leading from behind.

You actually end up in something that feels like I don't know, the 19th century.

So Hifdar was backed by the governments of United Arab Emirates, by Egypt and by Russia.

And the Wagner group ended up, our old friends, the Wagner group ended up being on his side.

And on the other side, you had Turkey and Qatar coming in behind the Tripoli government.

And France flirting with Hifdar, Britain more disposed towards the Tripoli government.

Some attempts at ceasefire, some attempts to bring it together, but essentially the country remains divided into.

And then you have the reason we're talking about Libya in particular is because you've had this horrific flood.

The storm is called Daniel.

These storms always have to have a name these days and two dams broke and the people there.

I mean, the death toll very, very hard to calculate, but well into five figures, it would seem now.

And as you say, you've essentially got two governments in the same country.

Now, I don't know what the official definition of a failed state is, but I think a country that is incapable of being governed by one government.

And of course, the government in Tripoli has constantly been promising elections, which haven't happened.

The power play around the two governments has been, as you as you indicate, going sort of ebbing and flowing.

And it's just been part of this, these bigger power plays going on between some of the bigger powers.

And in the middle of all this, sort of real human beings just get completely lost and forgotten.

And even after this, and for example, a guy called Saleh, who heads the parliament in the east, he visited the den in the site of these terrible, terrible floods.

And he basically said, no, there's no point blaming anybody.

This is all God's will, God wills and acts.

Don't say if only we'd done this or that, because this is just a natural catastrophe.

So all you've got is this sense of for the people of utter helplessness, because they don't have a government to turn to.

And it's horrifying inside Libya.

I mean, it's been a real reminder of things.

Because of course, it was tempting at the time to think

that Gaddafi was the great existential threat to the region,

funding terrorism in Ireland, funding terrorism up in Africa.

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People really saw Gaddafi as a major threat.

And one of the big things, of course, that Tony Blair did was to convince Gaddafi to give up his nuclear weapons.

Is that a moment you remember?

What was his sense of Gaddafi?

What was the sense of encountering him in there?

Well, I'd left by then, but I think it was 2004 that he sort of met him face to face in the Bedouin tent surrounded by all the glamorous female bodyguards that Gaddafi insisted on having around him.

But I do remember Tony, when he got back, he phoned me up and said,

God, I wish he'd been there.

He'd have absolutely loved it.

I said, which means it was the weirdest meeting I've ever had in my life.

The guy had, by that stage, become almost kind of mystical, I think, in the way that he spoke.

Tony said, you can't quite work out what he was talking about some of the time.

But he felt very, very strongly that there was an opportunity to get Libya to give up the weapons of mass destruction program.

Interesting what you're talking there about Gaddafi and how he was seen.

I mean, back in my journalistic days, he figured very, very, very prominently because, of course, there was the killing of WPC Yvonne Fletcher in St James's Square.

I can't remember the year of that, but I was a journalist then.

I camped out in that squid.

These are the days where journalism consisted of sort of standing outside buildings, waiting to talk to people.

And we stood there for days and days and days and days.

And that was, in a sense, it was one of those things that people knew was a state-sponsored murder, as it were.

But Gaddafi just used it to lambast the West.

As you said earlier, funding shipments of weapons to the IRA, the lock would be bombing.

I can remember as well, there were stories doing the rounds about Libya trying to infiltrate and support some of our trade unions.

I mean, he was a real kind of, for the size of country that it was, a real sort of meddler in different parts of the world.

But then, where I thought you were leading there, because this is an argument that used to get made to us about Saddam Hussein in Iraq, is that when you remove a dictator, you have to be very, very fearful of what follows.

And a lot of the stories that we've been talking about in the Sahel, which is these countries on the edge of the Saharan desert, are related to Libya.

It's weapons and often people flowing south from Libya.

A lot of the armaments that Gaddafi accumulated and a lot of the arms that have been pumped into the Civil War in Libya have found themselves flowing into Mali, Niger, Chad, have contributed to the rise of Islamist groups there.

And have ultimately helped trigger these military coups that have brought down these governments.

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So the collapse of Libya is right at the center of a lot of these problems that we're looking at. There we go, Libya.

I was at Notting Forest against Burnley last night and there was a minute silence for the victims of the floods in Libya and the earthquake in Morocco.

And I have to say, it was very, very, very well observed.

Good. Well, that's an encouraging thing.

And did you win the match?

Ruri, you're hitting a very, very sore point.

We drew one all and we had a goal disallowed because of VAR and virtually every single person on the planet is saying this morning it was an utterly ridiculous decision.

So technically we drew, but we actually did win.

It's just that we won't get three points for the win.

Very good.

Okay.

Well, better luck next time.

See you soon.

Bye-bye.

Thank you very much.

Bye.