

**[Transcript] The Rest Is Politics / 173. Question Time: Corbyn's expulsion from Labour, Belgium's sex education crisis, and how would Blair fare as PM today?**

Welcome to another episode of the Restless Politics Question Time with me, Alistair Campbell. And with me, Rory Stewart. Here I am, still in New York, and I'm going to begin with a question which I think is very topical. So, a friend of the show doesn't want to be named, says, what are Alistair and Rory's thoughts on India expelling a senior Canadian diplomat? After Trudeau suggested Delhi may have been involved in the murder of a Sikh separatist leader. So, just to remind people of what happened here, it's a pretty astonishing moment. A prominent Sikh activist in Canada was gunned down by two masked men in the street. And the Canadian government has now said they have credible evidence of the involvement of the Indian government, Narendra Modi's government, in assassinating a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil and have expelled a senior Indian government. But look, we're talking, we're talking on the main podcast about impunity. We've had situations in the UK where the Russians have wiped out people here. We had a situation was up in Manchester where Chinese diplomats were, diplomats in quotes, were involved in taking action against their own people on British soil. And I think if you go back to some of the discussions we've had in recent weeks about Modi, I think there is a real worry about the extent to which Modi is becoming more and more, how do we put it, extreme in his positions. And often if you become extreme in your positions, you become extreme in your actions. And I don't believe that Trudeau, I mean, Trudeau would be absolutely well aware of the consequences of him coming out and calling this out. So, I suspect when he says credible allegations of a link between the death and the Indian state, I don't think he'd say that lightly. We should point out that India has made clear in their view that what Trudeau is saying is absurd, that it is not true that they wiped out this guy on the streets of Canada. Yeah. Well, of course, I mean, this is a very deep issue. And when I was a minister, there was a strong issue about a British citizen who had been effectively kidnapped by the Indian government and was the credible allegations around his tortures against Sikh. There are very longstanding issues between the Sikh community and the Indian government with the Indian security agencies very involved. And of course, Indira Gandhi was assassinated in her home in New Delhi by two of her bodyguards who were Sikhs who were protesting against the actions that she'd taken against the Golden Temple in Amritsar. And tensions between Punjab and Delhi are very strong at the moment, partly because a lot of the air pollution in Delhi is blamed on crop burning Punjab, etc. So there are many issues in the background, but I think the most important issue is that to assassinate in that way, and in particular, sort of brutal public out of the back of a van machine gunning somebody down the streets in a friendly country is a step that I would never have expected the Indian government to take. I mean, that's going into full Russia territory. Yeah. Just to give people the issue that's at the heart of this, the guy who's been killed is called Nijay. He'd been campaigning for something called Palestine, which is the creation of an independent Sikh homeland in the Punjab region. And clearly, that's something that Modi doesn't like. Now, we don't know, you and I and none of our listeners have any clue as to who these people were that gunned him down. But in a way that I probably would be a little bit skeptical of listening to Modi's denials, I do attach a certain amount of credibility to something like Trudeau standing

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up and saying what he said. Now, Karyad, can you talk about the protests in Brussels happening over

compulsory Sikhs education? Well, it's not just in Brussels. This is happening in several parts of Belgium. Have you been following this one, Rory? No, tell us about it. Essentially, what's happened is that there have been a number of arson attacks on schools that have been teaching Sikhs education. And the Prime Minister, Alexander the Great, he's actually called in the government experts on extremism after I think six schools now have been torched. And this is something called the Evera program. And this is where children in schools are required to take four hours of Sikhs education split between aged 11 to 12 and 15 to 16. Now, you wouldn't think that was very dramatic or very radical. But it's gone from being voluntary, which it was, to now being compulsory because they feel that they've got issues of sexual health and sexual education that they need to address. And it's led to a number of schools being attacked. It's led to divisions with some Islamic groups who have complained that this is all about the what they call hyper sexualization of their children. And if, you know, back to our friend misinformation, online conspiracy theories, all sorts of nonsense has been flooding the internet that what this program Evera is about is actually sort of sexualizing children teaching children age five to be, you know, sexually active and all this sort of nonsense. So the government's out there trying to damp down all these rumors. And in the meantime, they're addressing a number of cases of arson. So it's pretty worrying and the local mayor in one of the areas where this happened has said this is no better and worse or two than terrorism. It is terrorism. Yeah, it's very striking. I mean, here in the States, I was talking to a group of people involved in the Biden Trump campaign. So the last couple of days. And I was making the point that I saw economics as being central to the fact that the 2008 financial crisis globalization had had such a bad impact on the incomes of many people in marginal bits of the US. And they came back with two things. I mean, one, they pointed out that actually incomes now outside London and the Southeast in the UK are somewhere between Mississippi and Alabama. In other words, we have very extreme version of the same thing. But also they said that it's a mistake to see much of what Trump is doing in terms of economics. It's largely culture war stuff. And of course, it's very much what the Soelle Braverman tendency in the Conservative Party lent into and that Boris Johnson was trying to lean into whenever he was sending people out to talk about statues, that there is a sense in which something about the modern political landscape means that you can get a long way in politics, talking about sex education or transgender issues or in the US issues around abortion, rather than focusing on issues like how you regulate AI or sort out the economy. Let's bring it home. Jeremy Corbyn, a new gauge on Wednesday's podcast, we already said Jeremy Corbyn has a problem with anti semitism

but should not have been dismissed from labor due to his status and history within the party. Isn't that like arguing that Louise Rubiales has an issue with sexual harassment but shouldn't be dismissed for the same reason? We talked a bit about your interview with Navarra Media last week and we talked a bit about it in our trips to Scotland and Bath.

The background first, I gave an interview to Navarra Media where I said that I thought it was mad and disgusting that Kiyosama had effectively de facto expelled Jeremy Corbyn from Parliament. I guess I was reflecting on a constitutional point that I care about a great deal and obviously maybe I care about it too much because Boris Johnson did the same thing to me into 20 other MPs

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who rebelled against his version of a no-deal Brexit. The point is that in the British system, there are two reasons why leaders should not be able to expel MPs. One of them is that in a first-past-the-post system, our parties need to be quite broad coalitions because the electoral system doesn't deliver diversity in Parliament. But the second more important constitutional reason is that we don't have a proper separation between the legislature and the executive.

And the only way in which we can have a functioning Parliament is if members of Parliament have considerable freedom towards their leaders and are able to exercise it. Otherwise, you end up basically with the kind of elective dictatorship. But the parties do have rules.

Yeah, absolutely. So I would say that maybe choosing Jeremy Corbyn as my hill to die on was an eccentric thing to do. But I still hold to the point which is absolutely there was horrifying antisemitism in Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party. Jeremy Corbyn equivocated around the report that was produced on antisemitism. And I think Keir Starmer is absolutely right to make it clear that he's going to root out antisemitism in the Labour Party. But there is a constitutional point which is that MPs should be removed through legal processes, through parliamentary committees. But I don't think it's appropriate for them to be removed by their leaders. And one of the reasons for that is that actually what it does is very quickly play into the Labour Left who feel that this is an alibi which is being brought together for Starmer to assert his power over the party. And obviously, I was hit very hard on this. I got attacked very hard by members of the Jewish community who said I was being insensitive to antisemitism. And I was also attacked very hard by the Jeremy Corbyn Left who said that I was giving in to people by saying that there was antisemitism in Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party. So I was being attacked very hard from both sides. And it's a very strange experience on social media to do that.

If there's any consolation, Roy, I was being attacked for not attacking you enough. And I was also being attacked for attacking you too much. So I think it's just one of those issues that it's very hard to have a rational debate. But there was another question from somebody called Aaron who just said, you know, you've kind of half addressed this. Has Roy read the EHRC report into the Labour Party and Corbyn's response to it? Corbyn was offered a way back in by apologising or withdrawing, but he simply refused. And I think that is the point. It's not that Keir Starmer was withdrawing the whip, kicking him out of the party because of being Jeremy Corbyn. It was the fact that he would not accept the process that they put in place. I'm afraid we live in a world and we have an unwritten constitution, and that means that we have to depend on unwritten rules and conventions. And before Boris Johnson...

Yeah, but the Labour Party has a written constitution. The Labour Party has a rule of...

Yeah, but aside from the Labour Party's written constitution, leaders before Boris Johnson did not act to de facto expel their MPs. And the reason why it's a de facto expulsion is in the first part of the post system. If you're stripped of the party whip and you try to stand again, it's almost impossible to get back into Parliament. So we have to be realistic about what's happening here, which is going to be very difficult for Jeremy Corbyn now to remain in Parliament.

And I do think there's a tendency now, and this was started by Johnson to say, well, is the leader right or wrong? So his supporters would say, in relation to throwing out me and Ken Clark and Winston Churchill's grandson and five cabinet ministers and the rest. Well, all that matters is that we were on the wrong side on Brexit and Boris had to get stuff done, had to drive through his no-deal Brexit. It's also one of the reasons I'm getting upset

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at the moment about the fact that Biden is supporting the use of cluster munitions in Russia and Ukraine. When I say I'm completely against cluster munitions, people say, do you want Russia to win? And I'm saying, no, I'm not saying I want Russia to win. I'm saying that we spend a long time bringing together conventions on trying to stop people doing this sort of thing. And sometimes you are able, and it's the difficult thing to say in the modern social media age, you're able simultaneously to say, I profoundly disagree with Jeremy Corbyn,

there was anti-Semitism in Corbyn State Party, but also, and this is a some Jonathan Sumption, who's a judge has said, leaders should not be expelling MPs from their parties in this way. So lots more questions come. Let's just take a quick break.

I'm Jason Pack, senior analyst at the NATO Defense 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.

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Question for you. Rob Wright, we have slipped inexorably from cabinet government.

Remember when Secretary of State used to make policy announcements to a presidential star, where number 10 and the PM decide and announce everything.

But our institutions haven't kept pace.

How can we trigger a review stroke reset of the Constitution?

Oh, I think if we were having a review stroke reset of the Constitution, which I think we talked about that in Bath, didn't we?

I'd like to start with a blank piece of paper.

But on that specific point, I guess what the question is about is the reassertion of parliamentary authority as Parliament being the place where ministers set out plans to the country.

And, you know, we got criticised a lot for bypassing Parliament.

I don't believe that we did.

But I think what's changed is the 24-7 media age, and now social media on top of it, is that the policy development process is very, very hard to keep a little knit.

People, I'm afraid, people talk far too much.

And they talk far too much about decisions as they're being made, as opposed to when the decision is made.

And therefore, it makes it very difficult for a policy decision to be made in Parliament.

The truth is we've gone way too far in the wrong direction.

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So, for example, if you go back to the last budget, I don't think there was anything on the day. Now, Chancellor's used to resign for the slightest hint of the budget being leaked, but now it's just become sort of par for the course that the budget gets sort of trotted out through the newspapers.

And it totally hollows out the significance of Parliament.

I mean, you know, it's more and more difficult to make journalists concentrate on what's happening in Parliament.

If nobody's concentrating, the standard of speeches drops.

MPs don't bother to attend the chamber.

The whole thing feels completely useless.

And one of the few ways of keeping Parliament central is to make sure that the big announcements are made and challenged in Parliament.

Absolutely.

And you can do that, by the way, even as all the stuff is going around, being dribbled out and leaked out.

I think as long as the number 10 machine is basically saying, well, that's not coming from us.

And you're saying, you know, we'll set this out next Tuesday and people can blather away all they want.

But that's when we're going to do it.

And I hope the Keir Starmer, if he does become Prime Minister, does reassert that.

Who comes up with Starmer's gags?

This is from somebody called Mark Eggy.

Starmer's inaction man gag was pretty good.

This is when he called Sunak the inaction man.

Will he have come up with that himself?

Or will he have got it from a colleague or aide?

Do leaders take these sorts of quips from the public on local visits?

What are the best gags, can you remember, were any of them given to you?

Well, give us, I mean, so you were talking about one of your favorite speeches, which you selected for Hansard.

That's one of your, one of the 100 best speeches of all time.

John Smith.

John Smith.

So tell us a bit about his gag.

It wasn't really a gag.

I mean, the headline of the speech or what became the headline of the speech was John Major, The Man with the Non-Midest Touch.

And John had done this whole litany of things that had gone wrong.

And he said, no wonder we live in a country where the Grand National doesn't start and hotels fall into the sea.

Because that week, the Grand National hadn't started, the beautiful start, and they had to get all the horses back.

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And also a hotel in Scarborough had fallen into the sea,  
which actually is quite sad for the people whose hotel it was,  
but John turned it into a joke and a sort of metaphor.  
I mean, it's interesting about speech writing.  
The reason I laughed when I read the question out was because  
I used to ask comedians for jokes, for conference speeches.  
And Roy Hud, do you remember Roy Hud?  
No, don't remember Roy Hud.  
You must remember Roy Hud.  
Well, Roy Hud used to give us some very, very funny, very funny lines.  
And some of them were just a bit too near the mark.  
So we used to go through his jokes.  
We used some of them.  
I can't remember what they were.  
We did use some of them.  
But the thing about, I don't know if you were like this as a speaker.  
I mean, Tony Blair is quite a serious guy,  
but for a party conference speech,  
he wanted at least three or four really good laughs.  
And I'm quite good at one-liners,  
and I'm quite good at telling funny stories.  
But, you know, sometimes you go out to the professionals.  
Anyway, what happened was that I can't remember how it got out,  
but somebody told the press that we were using Roy Hud.  
And all of a sudden, there was all this talk about,  
you know, we were a joke and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.  
So you've got to be careful with it.  
But yeah, and also the thing about getting them from people,  
the public on local visits,  
keeping your ears open to what people are saying about other politicians  
is sometimes worth doing,  
because you can get very, very good lines  
from what the public is saying about them.  
Finland's former PM, so Yuni Mata Kukenan,  
what's your view about Finland's former PM,  
Santa Marin, leaving the parliament so soon after the elections,  
contradicting her own assurances that she'll commit to work as an MP  
and taking job at Tony Blair Institute.  
This is something that I think is a bit sad  
in British politics and something that I've always  
admired Theresa May for doing,  
which is that she's remained in parliament.  
And she's going to stay for the next election.



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And kept working as a backbench MP.  
And I think that's a really good thing.  
And one of the things I wrote about in politics on the edge is that when David Cameron was interviewing me to be an MP, he said if he ever stopped being Prime Minister, he would continue as the MP for Whitney for the rest of his life. And of course, he stepped down almost immediately.  
Well, what do you think about this tendency of people saying they're going to stay on as MPs and then heading out?  
Well, I can say in my old boss Tony Blair's defence is that he always said that he was not going to hang around in parliament. He felt that primalists is hanging around. It made it very difficult for the departing Prime Minister, but also it could make it more difficult for the Prime Minister who followed. So he felt it was the best thing to do. I think if you say you're going to stay, frankly, it's better that you stay. But the fact, somebody like Santa Marin, I think she's still only in her 30s. I think she's 37. So she's a former Prime Minister age 37. Now, I assume she could go back into parliament. She could go back into politics. Perhaps she's made a judgment that the things that she's particularly interested in pursuing, she can do it better now with a more international focus. And I guess working for Tony Blair's Institute will give her access and opportunities. I think she'd probably have had those anyway as a former Prime Minister. I will at least now that she's in London, Rory, I think she's very, very... She's getting on the show. Definitely a very interesting prospect for the leading. So we'll go down that road. The fact is leaders are becoming leaders of countries much younger than they used to. And I think it means that the idea of people, somebody like her to sort of do a Ted Heath and hang around the Finnish parliament

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for the rest of her life,  
I can see why that would have been pretty unappealing.  
But it's also partly, I'm afraid,  
that politics has become such a brutal and unpleasant business  
that somebody like Gladstone,  
it was a relatively high status, low stress job sometimes.  
And it was something that you could imagine him  
stepping down as Prime Minister,  
remaining on the back bench,  
is giving it a few years,  
coming back in again as Prime Minister.  
I was talking to one of President Obama's aides,  
and he was saying how sad it is to get a sense  
that President Obama is a bit directionless,  
has slightly lost faith in the ability  
to really advocate for the center ground in politics,  
that there is a real sense of pessimism and degradation  
in a lot of these countries.  
And I think one of the reasons Theresa May is so impressive  
is the way in that she just hangs on in there  
and keeps standing for the kind of things  
that she got into politics to do.  
But I think for many other people,  
and presumably Santa Mara is one of them,  
and it's presumably true for the ex-Prime Minister in New Zealand too,  
that it's just so bizarre and horrible politics at the moment,  
you're asking a lot for people  
to keep slogging away for the rest of their lives.  
But it has, look, it either has to turn better or worse.  
And I think that one of the themes of your book  
and one of the themes of what we've talked about,  
Truss and Johnson, it's hard to imagine  
how politics is not going to get better in some way.  
You mentioned the Tory and Labour candidates  
that you met in when they came out to see you and Jordan,  
and I met them as well at the Ditchley Foundation.  
And I actually was quite encouraged  
by the sort of people they were, the sort of qualities.  
I mean, obviously, you're making very quick judgments  
because you're just having a few small, short chats with people.  
But I was pleased that the sort of people  
that I met, former soldiers, former business people,  
doctor, vet, different sorts of people



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who still felt, despite knowing all they know about politics, I still want to go in and try and make a difference. And I think eventually we will hopefully make a turn for the better. Talking about MPs, here's a good question, which you'll maybe have a better answer than I would. Emailing my MP, Tom Billington, I'm emailing to us as I'm at a complete loss and disillusion with this country. For the first time in my life, I've emailed my MP, Tulip Sadiq, Labour, and I just wanted to know from you what good this really does. What can I expect? Will it actually help? It's a good question, isn't it? Now, he attached the email he sent to Tulip Sadiq, which is that he'd waited for nine hours in A&E before he was seen for a broken nose. What do you think? I mean, I regularly say to people, write to your MP, do you think it does make any difference? Well, it's very difficult to know. I mean, one of the things is the volume's gone up. So, Woolly Whitelaw, who was my predecessor's predecessor in my constituency, received, his secretary said, six letters a week and he would reply to them all handwritten in the library. I counted in my first year in Parliament, I received 27,000 emails from constituents in a year. That's out of only about 70,000 voters. And how many of those would have been organised lobbies? How many of those would have been pro-Fox hunting or anti-Fox hunting or pro-fracking or anti-fracking? Maybe 30, 40%, not as many as you'd think. But you're right, there's those. And those are weird because you'll receive 300 identical emails, which you then have to reply to. I mean, it's important to understand that once the volume gets up, and if you're getting 5, 600 in a week, it's not reasonable to believe that the MP is actually drafting the replies to every one of those emails. So, what you end up with is big teams in your private office drafting, and then what I would do is I'd read through the reply and I'd edit it, or I'd add something at the beginning or the end, or I'd reject it if I didn't like it. But the work of the drafting is being done by the people. I mean, the other thing that was odd about it is that, of course, MPs don't have power of that sort.

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You know, we're not allowed to interfere.  
I mean, if you, Tulip Siddique, was to ring up the A&E and say,  
look, my constituents stuck at the back of the line.  
Can you put them up to the front of the line?  
She would get a pretty shirty response from the hospital.  
And the same is true if, you know,  
if you intervene on an immigration case,  
the Home Office writes back,  
it's one of the good things about the British system and says,  
oh, we're not having political interference and what goes on.  
MPs don't have budgets.  
MPs don't have power in their constituencies.  
The power of an MP is to vote on legislation and parliament.  
Now, it is true that when I wrote on behalf of constituents,  
nevertheless, what it does do is often make civil servants look for a second time at a case.  
And in perhaps almost half of cases,  
I was very struck that we were able to get things done  
by making the civil servant look at second time at some injustice  
that had been done to a constituent.  
That injustice was righted.  
But it did make me wonder, is this a sensible way of proceeding?  
Because, effectively, the people who are lucky enough to get in  
to see the MP in the surgery have a 50-50 chance of having a case turned round.  
Those that don't get to see the MP in a following the normal process,  
the normal procedures don't.  
So, a lot of questions about whether this is a sensible way to run a country.  
Yeah. I thought one of the interesting parts of our conversation with the two Andes,  
Andy Burnham and Andy Street, the mayors of Manchester and the West Midlands,  
was when Andy Street was saying that he thought actually it was harder to be the mayor  
with a government of the same party.  
And I wonder sometimes whether, for an MP, is it easier or harder  
if you're fighting on behalf of a constituent?  
Because you might know the minister,  
but the minister frankly isn't going to give too much attention  
to an individual constituent as you complain.  
Whereas an opposition MP might be able to generate all sorts of bad publicity  
for the minister if they don't.  
And it also depends whether it's a big majority.  
I mean, one of the problems is if there's a very slim majority,  
you've lost your majority in parliament,  
then MPs can really exercise often very unfair power.  
Here's a question I liked and I'm going to have a go and then give to you.  
Adam Serafin, does Rory think that sortition, choosing MPs by random lottery

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from a pool of volunteers is a viable option for modern democracy?

I'm very attracted by sortition because it's the basis, obviously, of juries.

That's how juries are selected and citizens assemblies.

And it's how ancient Athens worked.

People were selected by random lottery.

I wouldn't necessarily do it even from a pool of volunteers.

I'm very interested in what happens.

You do it from the whole public.

Now, I'm not sure I've fully thought that through,

but I do think there's something really attractive about the idea of a genuinely representative sample of people and being more honest about the fact that,

in a way, what MPs are there to do might be to represent the diversity in our society rather than particular forms of expertise.

And it will take the power away from the parties, which I'd like.

Maybe you were singing the praises of the New Zealand PR system, although we did have a few Kiwis hitting back at that.

But maybe that is the only way that it would work is if you had constituency MPs,

but you also had a different sort of MP who had a different sort of role,

which was not constituency-based, but which was almost like a sort of

a permanent citizens assembly or a permanent jury on the parliament.

But I don't think it's as barmy an idea as some people do.

When we were in Bath, by the way, on the way to the forum,

I went to do a talk in a primary school.

And one of the children there said to me,

asked me if I was in favour of keeping the voting age at 18,

or would I bring it down?

And I said, yeah, I would bring it down.

I'd bring it down to 16.

And this child in front of me, arms shot straight up and said, why not five?

And I said, I said, well, I said, no, you tell me what you think.

It should be five.

And she said, because, well, listen to how we've been talking to you.

We think about these things a lot more than grown-ups do.

I thought it was quite a good...

It was a fantastic...

I've got to say, it was a primary school in Jacob Rees-Mogg territory.

And the kids, I was there for hours.

The kids were just nonstop sort of questioning.

But and they knew a lot about climate change

and they were very, very worried about it.

And we also had a little...

I didn't even say what I thought about Brexit Rory.

Maybe some of their parents told them.

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But we had a little vote on whether we should go back in the European Union.  
100% in favour.

So very sensible children, I'd say.

So, question for you.

How would Tony Blair's Labour, Coopnell,  
Patrick Chapman, if Tony Blair's Labour was coming to power,  
post this Conservative Party,  
would they be successful in implementing change?

They inherited a decent economy in 97, but it won't be the case now.

Yeah, that's a very, very good question.

I think, look, it's true.

Look, Keir Starmer, if he becomes Prime Minister,  
he's not coming into a very benign economic landscape.  
But that's why some of the things that you talked about  
in your answer on the main podcast about, you know,  
how Labour should project themselves at the next election  
about developing an industrial strategy,  
about having a different sort of commitment to the regions and so forth.  
It's not all about money in the first stages, how I'd put it.

And I think that's what we did.

And don't forget, for the first two years,  
we did stick to Tory tax spend limits  
and then started to signal the changes and then made the changes.

So I think you can do a lot.

I think...

So I think Tony would have come in and wanted to take on  
some of the big challenges that we have now.

I think he probably would make a lot more of science and technology and AI.

I think probably would want to rebuild relations with the European Union.

But I was very pleased that even though I'm still raging about Brexit  
and still don't think Labour have called out the Brexit disaster nearly enough,  
I did sense this week the first signals of Keir Starmer.

He did an interview in the Financial Times where he said, you know,  
when it comes to renegotiating the trade and cooperation agreement,  
we're going to have to get something far better than we've got.

So there's an understanding at least that this thing's got to be fixed.

My final question, we haven't talked about films for a while.

Joe says, what films have really touched you both?

And what are your favourite films?

Of all the films I've seen recently,

I think the one that's touched me the most was Kenneth Branagh's Belfast.

We're about three quarters of the way through the once upon a time in Northern Ireland.

I do think Northern Ireland lends itself to amazing human drama,

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whether documentary or a feature film.

But I thought, I thought Kenneth Branagh's film captured something incredibly touching about what it's like to be a child growing up surrounded by these, these hatreds.

And I thought it was brilliant.

I think the film that really touched me, which maybe not everybody's seen, is a film called Call Me By Your Name, which is a 2017 love story set in Italy with Timothee Chalamet.

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Really, really beautiful movie set in, I guess, the early 1980s in Northern Italy, but it's essentially about a young boy falling in love with a slightly older man, and I think just beautifully paced, beautifully acted.

On literature also, I cannot resist saying thank you to you for all your support on the sales of book, because we've made it number one, non-fiction hardback politics on the edge, sold 44,592 copies across all editions in the first week.

So thank you very much for the support.

Well, there you go, well done.

Now, that's a big hit.

That's a big hit.

That's, that beats my first week, I think.

So what are you reading?

We know what you've written.

What are you reading?

Tom Holland, who does the Rest Is History podcast and very kindly did an event with The Barbican, has got me on to these Mick Herron spy books.

Oh, yeah.

Have you tried them?

Absolutely brilliant.

I get slagged off for mentioning the lighter because it leads to people turning up.

But those of us who are 365 day a year people, there is a sort of camaraderie and there's quite a lot of sort of book sending around.

So Martin, Martin, Martin, there are two Martins, but Martin knows which Martin this is. This is what the one we call Martin Highgate Cemetery, because he does, he does guide it to his Highgate Cemetery.

He got me on to the Mick Herron novels and they are very, very good.

I mean, just quickly for people who've not, not read them, they're set in Slough House and it's kind of, it turns being a spy and to living in a sort of grimy sort of version of a disheveled kind of regional, I don't know, social security agency.

I'm going to give another plug to the book I mentioned yesterday, LePierge.

And I'm going to do it in the context of, I'm sure there are lots of people in publishing, listen to our podcast.

Honestly, an English publisher needs to get hold of it.

It's a very, very good book.

You don't understand Putin and what's happened in Ukraine until you really fully understand

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what he did with Nord Stream.

So I'm reading that and I'm also reading a German novel by a guy, another book by a guy called Alex Kapus, who's not German actually.

I think he's Swiss, but he writes in German.

Very good.

Well, thank you, Alistair, very much.

See you soon.

Bye-bye.

Bye-bye.